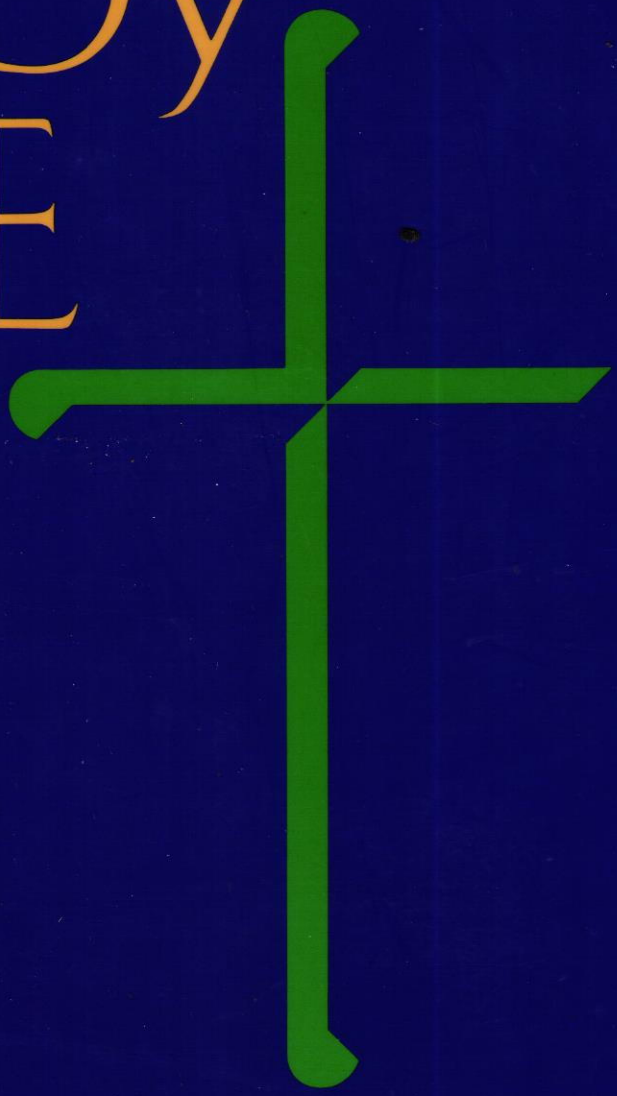
# THE CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE



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## NEW AMERICAN BIBLE

*Including the Revised Psalms*
*and the Revised New Testament*

*Translated from the Original Languages*
*with Critical Use*
*of All the Ancient Sources*

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# ABBREVIATIONS OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Acts** | Acts of the Apostles | **Jdt** | Judith | **Ob** | Obadiah |
| **Am** | Amos | **Jer** | Jeremiah | **Phil** | Philippians |
| **Bar** | Baruch | **Jgs** | Judges | **Phlm** | Philemon |
| **1 Chr** | 1 Chronicles | **Jl** | Joel | **Prv** | Proverbs |
| **2 Chr** | 2 Chronicles | **Jn** | John | **Ps(s)** | Psalms |
| **Col** | Colossians | **1 Jn** | 1 John | **1 Pt** | 1 Peter |
| **1 Cor** | 1 Corinthians | **2 Jn** | 2 John | **2 Pt** | 2 Peter |
| **2 Cor** | 2 Corinthians | **3 Jn** | 3 John | **Rom** | Romans |
| **Dn** | Daniel | **Jon** | Jonah | **Ru** | Ruth |
| **Dt** | Deuteronomy | **Jos** | Joshua | **Rv** | Revelation |
| **Eccl** | Ecclesiastes | **Jude** | Jude | **Sir** | Sirach |
| **Eph** | Ephesians | **1 Kgs** | 1 Kings | **1 Sm** | 1 Samuel |
| **Est** | Esther | **2 Kgs** | 2 Kings | **2 Sm** | 2 Samuel |
| **Ex** | Exodus | **Lam** | Lamentations | **Song(Sg)** | Song of Songs |
| **Ez** | Ezekiel | **Lk** | Luke | **Tb** | Tobit |
| **Ezr** | Ezra | **Lv** | Leviticus | **1 Thes** | 1 Thessalonians |
| **Gal** | Galatians | **Mal** | Malachi | **2 Thes** | 2 Thessalonians |
| **Gn** | Genesis | **1 Mc** | 1 Maccabees | **Ti** | Titus |
| **Hb** | Habakkuk | **2 Mc** | 2 Maccabees | **1 Tm** | 1 Timothy |
| **Heb** | Hebrews | **Mi** | Micah | **2 Tm** | 2 Timothy |
| **Hg** | Haggai | **Mk** | Mark | **Wis** | Wisdom |
| **Hos** | Hosea | **Mt** | Matthew | **Zec** | Zechariah |
| **Is** | Isaiah | **Na** | Nahum | **Zep** | Zephaniah |
| **Jas** | James | **Neh** | Nehemiah | | |
| **Jb** | Job | **Nm** | Numbers | | |

**Note** For greater clarity and convenience, the footnotes and cross-references are printed at the bottom of each page and cross-indexed in the text itself. An *asterisk* (*) in the text indicates that there is a footnote to the text in question. Each footnote is in turn clearly marked with the number of the chapter and the verse to which it pertains. Similarly a *superior letter* ([a]) in the text indicates that there is a cross-reference to a particular verse. The reference itself is also clearly marked with the same letter. Hence, the reader is always aware of a footnote or a cross-reference simply *by reading the text.*

[ ] Indicates a gloss. / = Divides verse // = Parallel

# SIMPLE KEY TO REFERENCES

*Gn1,1* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1.
*Gn 1,1a* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, the first part of verse 1.
*Gn 1,1f* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 and the following verse (2).
*Gn 1, 1–10* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verses 1 to 10 inclusive.
*Gn 1, 1–10.14* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verses 1 to 10 inclusive and verse 14.
*Gn 1, 1—2, 3* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 to chapter 2, verse 3 inclusive.
*Gn 1, 1; 2, 3* refers to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 and chapter 2, verse 3.

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The Catholic Study Bible

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The book you hold in your hand contains one of humanity's greatest treasures. No one can deny that the Bible has had a profound impact on world civilization. Its epic stories, its powerful language and images have left their imprint on human history, especially in cultures touched by Judaism and Christianity.

For the Christian, the Bible has an importance far more profound than its impact on culture. The Christian believes that through the turbulent and wonderful chapters of biblical history, God speaks to us. Although expressed in genuinely human terms and through very human authors, the Bible is, at the same time, the Word of God for us. Therefore, as Christians we reverence and love the Scriptures and seek to understand them as much as we can.

The purpose of this CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE is to enable the reader to read the Scriptures with new understanding and depth. The primary audience of this Study Bible is Roman Catholic. Some of the comments in the notes to the text, the Reference Articles, and the Reading Guides deliberately reflect Catholic experience and Catholic interests. However, the editors do not wish to exclude other Christian readers from the focus of this book. In most instances, the materials included here will be useful for all Christians who want to enter deeply into the mysteries and marvels of the Bible.

In this general introduction and the two following articles, we hope to: 1) Provide a general introduction to the Bible as a whole: the nature and diversity of its contents, and how it came to be; 2) Introduce the reader to the special resources for understanding the Bible provided in this CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE edition and to suggest more profitable ways of using them.

## Introducing the Bible

Although it is bound under one cover and bears a single title, the Bible is not a single, unified book. It is, in fact, a collection of some 73 different works by different authors, using very different styles and perspectives, composed over a span of several centuries, and in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). Most of the Old Testament (46 books) was written in Hebrew, but parts of the books of Daniel (2,4—7,28), Ezra (4,6—6,18; 7,12-26), and one verse from Jeremiah (10,11) were originally composed in Aramaic, a Middle Eastern

language related to but different from Hebrew. All 27 of the New Testament books were composed in Greek.

The rich diversity of the Bible is one of its glories because it allows the story of God's people to be told from various perspectives. It also presents a challenge to the reader who should be aware of the different cultural, historical, and literary contexts of each biblical book. But there is a deeper unity to the Bible that binds together these individual pieces of literature. Through the many biblical books flows the continuing saga of God's love for Israel and for the church. Each of the biblical authors, no matter how much separated in time, culture, and literary style, shares a conviction that God's presence is felt in human history and that God invites the human family to respond with faith and integrity.

## The Writing of the Bible

As its diverse makeup implies, the Bible was not written at a single point in history. The events covered in the Old Testament span nearly two thousand years of history, from the time of Abraham and the patriarchs (around 1800 B.C.) to the period of the Maccabean wars (140 B.C.). If one includes the epic accounts of the creation and prepatriarchal stories such as Noah and the flood, then the reach of the biblical saga goes back to the beginning of time. But the actual writing of the biblical accounts, although making use of earlier stories and traditions, is confined to a narrower period of time, probably beginning with the monarchy (around 1000 B.C.) and concluding in the century before the birth of Christ.

The New Testament books were all written during the latter half of the first century A.D. The letters of Paul were probably the earliest New Testament works to be put in writing, dating mainly from the decade of the fifties. The sayings of Jesus and the many stories about his ministry circulated in the Christian community all during these early decades of the church but were probably not put in writing until shortly after A.D. 70, with Mark the first Gospel to be written. Matthew, Luke (and his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles), and John follow, with the compositions of their Gospels taking place sometime during the last quarter of the first century. The other non-Pauline letters and writings, including the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse, also date from this period.

## Forming a "Bible" from Diverse Books: The Story of the Canon

The gathering of these diverse writings into a single collection or "book" (the literal meaning of the word "Bible") was itself a long-term and laborious process. The technical term for designating which books belong to the Bible is the "canon" (which means "measurement"). Both Judaism and Christianity had to make choices about which books to include and which books to exclude from their respective "Bibles." Judaism would not make any official decision about which books belonged to its "Bible" until the end of the first century A.D. But that does not mean it was without a Bible for so much of its history. There was little or no dispute about the major books of the Old Testament, books which were constantly used in Jewish liturgy and teaching. But there was debate about the inclusion of later and less central works such as Tobit, or the Wisdom of Solomon.

The Jewish or Hebrew canon ultimately recognizes 39 books, divided into three major categories:

1 The *Law* (sometimes referred to as the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
2 The *Prophets:* Subdivided into the "Former Prophets": Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings; and the "Latter Prophets": Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the "Twelve" (=Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).
3 The *Writings:* Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles.

As we shall explain below, not included in the official Jewish or Hebrew canon are seven other books that Roman Catholics (and Orthodox Christians) consider part of their Scriptures. Judaism reverences these books and considers them sacred, but they are not part of their "canon" or official list. These books are: Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch. There are also some additional passages in the books of Daniel and Esther.

The formation of the Christian canon also took place over a considerable period of time. In fact, the official Roman Catholic decision about the canon did not come until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, but by that time the choice of which writings were to be included in the Bible was well established. There were many sacred writings in the early decades of the church that presumably could have been included in the Bible. We cannot always tell what criteria or decision-making processes were used to establish the canon. Some "gospels" evidently portrayed Jesus in a way unacceptable to the vast majority of Christians and so were not included. Other early writings, however, such as the Didache (Greek, "teaching")—a short handbook of moral behavior and church practice—seem perfectly acceptable in content and tone but were still not included. Probably the early church considered a work's content, its authorship, and the frequency of its usage in the liturgy and teaching of the churches as important criteria for judging if a sacred writing was inspired by God and worthy of inclusion in its official canon or Scriptures.

All Christians agree on the 27 books to be included in the New Testament. But there is a dispute about some of the books in the Old Testament. As noted above, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians agree on the 46 books that make up the Old Testament (the Orthodox include additional books in their canon: 1 & 2 Esdras; the prayer of Manasseh; Psalm 151; 3 Maccabees). Judaism and Protestant Christians hold for the shorter list of 39 books sketched above; the remaining seven are designated as the "apocryphal" books.

The reason for this divergence is that earliest Christianity used an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint) as its Bible. This Greek version of the Bible included 46 books. Since most of the early Christians were Greek-speaking, this is the Bible they preferred. But when Judaism officially set out to determine *its* canon at the end of the first century, it drew up a shorter list of 39 books: those written in Hebrew. In the Reformation period, Protestants went back to this shorter, Hebrew canon, considering it more authentic.

Today, many of the doctrinal tensions that separated Catholics and Protestants have eased. Some Protestant editions of the Bible include the seven "aprocryphal" (what Roman Catholics call "deuterocanonical") books in an appendix of their Bibles or in a special section between the

Old and New Testaments. Following usual Catholic practice, the *New American Bible* integrates the "deuterocanonical" books into the order of the Old Testament canon.

## The Diverse Literary Forms and Historical Value of the Bible

The broad span of biblical history and the fact that the Bible is a collection of various books signal its rich diversity. The reader of the Bible needs to be attentive not only to the historical context of a particular passage but to the varieties of literary forms and the specific style and intent of each biblical author. The prophetic oracles of Isaiah or Jeremiah are very different in literary style from the legal codes of Leviticus or the narratives of Exodus. The long lists of wise sayings in Proverbs are dramatically different in tone, style, and theology from the sweeping liturgical poetry of the Psalms. So, too, do the parables of the Gospels differ greatly from the letters of Paul or the dramatic apocalyptic scenes in the Book of Revelation. The notes and Reading Guides found in this Study Bible help the reader to understand more about these various literary forms and their implications for interpreting the meaning of a particular biblical passage.

The presence of various literary forms or means of expression in the Bible also complicates the issue of the historical value of the Bible. Some Christians, particularly fundamentalist Christians, fear that admitting the Bible contains poetry, stories, and other literary forms is somehow an attack on the veracity of the Bible and dilutes its witness to history. They prefer to regard the story of creation in Genesis, or the episode of Jonah's sojourn in the belly of a great fish, as literally true.

Roman Catholic teaching—and that of many other Christian denominations—sees no incompatibility between recognizing the truth of the biblical witness and the fact that it is expressed in many forms of literary expression characteristic of human communication. Credible witness to the truth of history is not confined to an "objective" reporting of the facts in the manner of a police report or a mere "factual" description of what happened. All reporting of history involves a degree of interpretation. And such means as poetry, hymns, stories, myths, and other literary forms can also communicate historical truth about past events and the perspectives of our ancestors.

Undoubtedly, both the Old and New Testaments contain many accurate historical facts and descriptions reflecting the times and events of biblical history. But the biblical writers also wanted to interpret the *meaning* of that history and present it unabashedly from their perspectives. Previous traditions are given new interpretations and adapted to the circumstances of a different generation. In most instances their intent was not to provide a historical archive for subsequent generations but to see in the events of this history the presence of God's grace, and to communicate that conviction to their readers. The Bible is a witness to the vitality of the people who lived its events and pondered their meaning in a spirit of faith.

Each biblical passage, therefore, must be evaluated on its own terms in attempting to distinguish between factual historical data and the theological and historical interpretation provided by the biblical writer.

## The Transmission of the Biblical Text and its Modern Translations

Each modern reader of the Bible is in debt to countless numbers of people—Jewish and Christian—who lovingly handed on to the next generations the treasures of the Bible. For much of biblical history, such transmission of the biblical tradition was done orally, not in written form. Stories, sayings of great teachers and leaders, hymns and poetry were lovingly memorized and handed down from parents to children, teacher to disciple, from leader of prayer to congregation, and, thereby, formed the growing body of the biblical heritage.

In ancient (and some modern) cultures, oral transmission of important literature was not a casual, haphazard affair. For our modern culture, so dependent on written means of communicating information, it is hard to realize that in oral cultures subtle and often unspoken rules govern how information is shaped, retained, and transmitted from one person and one generation to another.

But as styles of writing and writing materials became more sophisticated in Israel and when it had the social organization under the monarchy to have archives and develop an educated class of scribes, then undoubtedly some parts of the Bible were preserved in written form as well.

In the New Testament, much of the Gospel materials were first preserved in oral form. Sayings of Jesus, his parables, the stories about his healings, his conflicts with opponents, and the narrative of his Passion would have been preserved and transmitted in a variety of settings such as the liturgy, instruction within the home or small Christian communities, or, perhaps even more formally, in some early centers of Christian learning. But eventually these oral materials were gathered and put in written form by the evangelists.

Paul's letters and other New Testament texts such as the catholic epistles and the Book of Revelation were composed or dictated into written form immediately.

No original manuscript of any biblical book exists. Copyists from one generation to the next transcribed the biblical materials and enabled them to be available for subsequent generations. The earliest written manuscripts we have of some biblical materials date from the first century B.C. These were part of the wealth of written materials discovered in 1948 on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea and thereafter named the "Dead Sea Scrolls." Most of the other early written materials for both the Old and the New Testaments would be papyrus fragments of biblical passages dating from the early second century A.D. and more complete manuscripts of the Bible on parchment from the third and fourth centuries A.D.

The biblical texts of the ancient Church did not have the neat format of our modern Bible. Division into the present system of chapters and verses was introduced only in the Middle Ages. Prior to that, demarcations between individual sentences and sections of a particular biblical book were much more casual and fluid.

The hands of many copyists, with different personal interests and levels of skill, inevitably introduced some variations and errors into the numerous editions of the biblical text. Ancient translations (or "versions") of manuscripts into other languages, such as Latin or Syriac or Coptic, could also introduce errors or varying interpretations not found in the original biblical language.

The science of Textual Criticism attempts to trace the relationships of ancient manuscripts to each other and to reestablish the most reliable form of the biblical text. The discovery of biblical texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls rolled back the age of extant biblical manuscripts several

centuries. Surprisingly, although some variants exist, there is still remarkable correspondence between the state of the biblical text in the first century B.C. and the third or fourth century A.D.—testimony to the accuracy and care with which ancient peoples handed on the biblical tradition.

## The New American Bible Translation

Most modern translations, including that found in the *New American Bible,* are based on the most reliable texts of the Bible we have and are translated from the original biblical languages rather than using any intervening translations. Many previous Catholic translations had been based on the Vulgate, or Latin version of the Bible, first prepared by Jerome in the fifth century.

As the preface to the *New American Bible* states (see pp. ia–iiia), its translation was a collaborative achievement of some 50 Catholic biblical scholars, determined to use the best of modern scholarship to bring a fresh and accurate translation of the Bible to the American Catholic community.

The first full edition of the Old and New Testaments appeared in 1970. A revision of the New Testament appeared in 1986, and a revision of the Psalms in 1991. It is this fully revised edition that is used in the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE.

Every translation, no matter how accurate and faithful, falls short in attempting to communicate the subtlety and meaning of another language. All translators have to make decisions about the purpose and audience of their translation and the consequent principles they will use in translating the Bible from its original languages to a modern language such as American English. And, to some degree, every translation is a subtle "interpretation" of the biblical text.

The translators of the *New American Bible* wanted as much as possible to accurately reflect the nuance and form of biblical Hebrew and Greek, while recasting the language to make it compatible with the rules and style of modern English and in harmony with traditional Catholic interpretations of Scripture. The translators, however, wanted to avoid making the *NAB* a "paraphrase" or quasi-interpretation of the biblical text. Some modern translations attempt this. While such paraphrases perhaps make the biblical texts more palatable to a modern audience, they also risk a high degree of subjectivity in recasting the contents of the Bible. The *NAB* translation is faithful to the biblical text and takes its place alongside rigorously literal translations such as the Revised Standard Version. This makes it particularly suitable for deeper study of the biblical message, as well as its use in prayer and liturgy.

Accuracy of translation from one language to another also involves issues that are more than linguistic. For instance, the editors of the revised New Testament translation had to struggle with the question of inclusive language. This is a sensitive issue in modern American culture and in the Catholic Church in particular. The translators adopted a compromise stance here. Where the original biblical language clearly intended a generic reference to human beings, the translation is careful to use inclusive language. Where the original text uses a gender specific reference, however, such as many references to God through male pronouns, the translation does not attempt to use inclusive language.

Modern political issues can also cause difficulties for the translator. Such geographical terms as "Israel" or "Palestine" have highly charged meanings in the political arena of today's Middle East. But their appearance in the biblical translation of the *New American Bible* implies no endorsement of any modern political stance on these difficult issues. So, too, can modern religious sensitivities come into play. Judaism in all its modern forms, out of reverence, avoids the use of the name "Yahweh" for God. Readers in the synagogue, for example, will substitute

"Adonai" ("My Lord") wherever the divine name appears in the biblical text. The modern translator and commentator have to make a decision on whether to try to respect this understandable religious sensitivity.

It should be noted that the Reading Guides and major Reference Articles included in the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE attempt throughout to use inclusive language, and, wherever possible, to avoid offense to modern religious sensitivities. The editors believed that such a spirit is in accord with both the biblical witness and sound Catholic tradition. Some use of the geographical terms "Israel" and "Palestine" was unavoidable in some of the Reading Guides, but no reference to modern geopolitical realities is intended.

## Reading, Studying, and Praying the Scriptures

From the beginning of its existence, the Bible has been the object of intense study, prayerful reading, and even heated debate. The Bible is not meant to be a coffeetable book.

One could say that the Bible was formed in a context of prayer and reflection. The various biblical authors reflected on significant events in the life of Israel, of Jesus, and of the early Church. Their discovery of God's presence working within history gives the Bible its force. For all Christians the Bible has unique authority as writings inspired by God's Spirit working within the communities of Israel and the Church, and impelling the biblical writers to give expression in human words to their faith perspective. [For a Catholic view of biblical inspiration, see "The Bible in Catholic Life," pp. RG 16–30].

Judaism has always maintained a rich tradition of reflection on its Scriptures. The rabbis lovingly studied every detail of the biblical text and saw an infinite possibility of applications to everyday life. The Scriptures were reverenced as God's Word and took a central place within the prayer life of the synagogue. Christian tradition has had the same character. Until the late Middle Ages, almost all of the Church's theology and teaching was little more than an elaboration of the biblical text.

Some of this biblical focus was lost in the Catholic Church when philosophical analysis—always important—became overdominant and theological reflection could often be far distant in focus and spirit from our biblical foundations. While biblical symbols remained dominant in Catholic liturgical life and architecture, in popular preaching and much popular piety, the Bible was a more distant echo. In the past fifty years, that trend has been radically reversed. The Second Vatican Council gave a strong impetus to a biblical renewal in every dimension of Catholicism [see "The Bible in Catholic Life," pp. RG 16–30].

One can approach reading and study of the Bible from several vantage points.

**The Historical Approach.** One purpose in reading the Bible is to comb through the biblical books, seeking leads to the historical context of a given period or culture. While this is a legitimate historical enterprise, it does not correspond to the fundamentally religious character of the Bible. The Bible does have strong historical value; but its purpose is not simply to inform the reader about history.

**The Theological Approach.** Another way of entering the biblical world is to seek what the Bible, or a particular biblical book, has to say on a specific doctrinal or moral issue. What, for example, does the Bible say about violence? Or what is the biblical perspective on justice? Because the Bible is such a rich and diverse body of literature, we soon discover that the Bible

will yield many perspectives on such important issues. There is seldom a single biblical viewpoint on any specific theological or moral issue. Only by first understanding the context of each biblical period and biblical book, and then interrelating the Bible's varied approaches to profound questions of faith, can one weave together a biblical theology.

**The Inspirational Approach.** For most Christians, reading the Bible has a more modest, yet still important goal. They turn to the Scriptures for inspiration in living out their life of faith. Such inspiration can be gained in many different ways.

For some, the Scriptures are an important stimulant for prayer. The words of the Psalms, the challenge of the prophets, the compassionate mission of Jesus, the soaring words of Paul—all of these give form and expression to the longing of our own hearts as we seek the face of God. Very often the biblical words are able to express the feelings and fears and hopes we could not put into words ourselves. And in reaching out to the Bible we unite ourselves with the faith of countless generations of Christians who found the same solace and strength in the Scriptures.

For others, probing the Scriptures either in private or with a group of fellow Christians helps guide and illumine their daily life. Study of the biblical text and discussion of its meaning with other thoughtful Christians can help us understand our own experience of faith and expand our perspective on what it means to be a believer in the modern world. This approach works best when the participant is not afraid to reflect on his or her own experience, and then relate that reflection to the ideas and images of the Bible. Very often the Bible opens its treasures when we bring to it questions and hopes that spring from our life of faith. Then, in turn, the biblical message can give new insight and nourishment to our faith experience.

A profound sense of grief or loss, for example, might lead a Christian to read with new understanding the lament psalms of the Old Testament [pp RG 242–243] or the passion of Jesus. And these biblical passages, in turn, can bring new strength to the one who suffers.

Whatever approach one takes to reading and praying the Bible, it is important from a Catholic perspective that it not be done in isolation. The Bible is the Church's book, not a private library. Only in the context of the Church's faith and tradition as a whole can the full meaning of the Bible be discovered. Some Christians who isolate themselves from common sense and from the sound wisdom of the Church community can interpret the Scriptures in a bizarre and even destructive manner. That is why the effort to understand the biblical text in its context, to sound out its possible meaning with other thoughtful Christians, and to be open to the guidance of the Church and its teaching forms the best context for full integration of the Bible into our lives.

The CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE is designed to open the beauty and power of the Bible to the reader. The editors and the Oxford University Press hope that the guides, articles, and other resources provided in this unique volume will serve you well as you step into the marvelous world of the Bible.

Donald Senior, C.P.
*General Editor*

# THE BIBLICAL TEXTS AND THEIR BACKGROUND

DONALD SENIOR

The biblical writings were created over a wide expanse of time. That broad historical and cultural canvas is one important cause for the Bible's rich diversity. In this Study Bible, the Reading Guides (see below) provided for each biblical book, and the introductions provided in the notes to the biblical text itself, offer specific information about the historical background of the individual books of the Bible. A clear and succinct historical summary is provided in the reference article on Biblical History (see pp. RG 31–35). The following paragraphs sketch the relationship of the biblical books to that evolving history.

The accounts of creation and the stories about the first ancestors of the human family, such as the tragic rivalry between Cain and Abel and the story of Noah and the flood, obviously do not have the same historical grounding that later traditions could. These stories answer the question about the origin of humanity and its plight in history. Firm historical traditions begin only with the forging of Israel into an identifiable people, an event that did not begin until probably around 1250 B.C. Traditions about the earlier patriarchal period starting around 1850 B.C. are much less certain historically, and even events from the time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt and during the period of the Exodus and early settlement in the land are sketchy since there were few means of preserving historical archives.

## The Major Periods of Biblical History

### The Time of the Patriarchs (1850–1250 B.C.).

The period from Abraham to Joseph is recounted in Genesis 12–50. Historically, this was a period of vast migrations in the Middle East, with clans of herders moving freely from Mesopotamia down through the Fertile Crescent into present-day Israel. Egypt had been a dominant power in the Middle East for more than two thousand years prior to that time. Egypt's might was counterbalanced by a succession of powerful dynasties at the eastern end of the Fertile Crescent, including the Persians, Assyrians, and Babylonians. Israel, located geographically between those two areas, would often be the battleground for those opposing forces. (See map #6.)

Few firm historical traditions exist from this period but the general picture provided in the biblical traditions about the patriarchs does reflect something of the nomadic life-style and familial religion typical of the period.

## The Exodus, Wilderness Wandering, and Settlement in the Land (1250–1130 B.C.)

This period is covered in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, and Joshua. The story of Israel as a unified people begins in Egypt with the stories about Moses and the miraculous exodus from Egypt. During a period of wandering in the desert, the covenant was formed with Yahweh, the LORD, the God of Israel. Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel finally breaks through into the promised land, driving the native Canaanites before them.

There is considerable debate about the historical background to this period. Some scholars, particularly conservative ones, are willing to accept the biblical portrayal at face value: namely that there was a mass migration of Hebrews from Egypt and that they invaded the regions of Israel with military force and thereby gained possession of the land.

The lack of clear archeological evidence supporting such a vast military conquest and some ambiguity in the biblical traditions themselves have led other historians to surmise that both the migration from Egypt and the possession of the land took place over a longer period of time. Some Hebrew tribes may have already settled in Israel prior to the Exodus, and joined with the incoming tribes at a later period. While some Canaanite cities may have been taken by force, some of the land was probably settled in a peaceful fashion.

In any event, the Bible sees this process as a dramatic act of deliverance by God and as the historic beginning of the story of Israel.

## The Period of the Judges (1130–1020 B.C.)

This early period of Israelite history is narrated in the book of Judges. It is clear that the Israelites at first resisted the idea of a strong central government. They preferred a loosely organized federation of clans or tribes ruled by charismatic leaders called judges. Only the LORD could claim the right to be called "King." This independent spirit and aversion to the monarchy goes deep into the consciousness of Israel.

## The Monarchy (1120–587 B.C.)

This long, but in fact highly diverse, period of Israel's history is taken up in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Kings; and a parallel account in 1 & 2 Chronicles.

The transition from the more informal and charismatic leadership under the judges to the more institutional form of the monarchy begins with Saul (about 1020–1000 B.C.) but reaches its zenith with David (1000–960 B.C.) and Solomon (960–930 B.C.). Threats from surrounding peoples and the need for more complex social organization gradually led Israel to adopt a monarchical form of government. David eventually unified diverse groups of people under a single government system, ruled from his new centrally located capital of Jerusalem. Under David and his son Solomon, Israel's territories greatly expanded.

The united kingdom forged by David did not last very long. Solomon strained it by increasing taxation and by lack of sensitivity to the old tribal loyalties. When Solomon's son Rehoboam ascended to the throne, the seams between north and south split and the separate

kingdoms of Judah in the south and Israel in the north began. This divided monarchy would last until 724 B.C., when the Assyrian empire would crush the northern kingdom. Judah would survive until the Babylonian invasion of 587 B.C.

The biblical account has little respect for the northern rulers and takes a critical view of most of the kings of Judah as well, considering them unfaithful to the covenant. During this period the great prophetic movement would ignite in Israel. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea were prophets in the northern kingdom. Isaiah served as court prophet to the kings of Judah.

## Exile and Return (587–332 B.C.)

This crucial period of Israelite history is narrated in 2 Kings 24–25 and in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Babylonian captivity would last almost 50 years. Systematic deportation as a way of subduing conquered peoples had been used first by Assyrians and then by the Babylonians. Only a small remnant of Israelites was left behind under the firm control of Babylonian officials. When the exiled Jews eventually returned, they considered the people who had stayed behind as somehow corrupt and would not allow them to take part in the reconstruction of Israel, a source of bitterness that would lead to the sharp divisions between Jew and Samaritans so obvious in the New Testament period.

Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, Jerusalem and its Temple were rebuilt. But Israel was now only a small and fragile nation, clustered around Jerusalem and very concerned with preserving its identity.

## The Greek Conquest and the Rise of the Hasmoneans (332–39 B.C.)

This is a turbulent part of Israelite history, reflected in 1 & 2 Maccabees and Daniel.

Alexander conquered Palestine in 332 B.C., beginning a period in which Greek culture would have a strong impact on the life of Israel. After his death, the Middle Eastern portion of Alexander's empire was divided between the Seleucid dynasty which ruled from Syria and the Ptolemies ruling from Egypt. The Ptolemaic dynasty controlled Israel from approximately 332 to 199 B.C. Their generally benign rule gave way to the Seleucids, who attempted to impose Greek culture and taxation in a more rigorous fashion. Seleucid ruthlessness eventually triggered the Maccabean revolt, which by 160 B.C. had thrown off the yoke of the Seleucids against incredible odds.

The Jewish dynasty of the Hasmonean family now begins a 100-year reign. The Hasmonean kings proved to be as corrupt and ruthless as the foreigners who had preceded them. Reactions by pious Jews to the compromises of the Hasmoneans and their Jerusalem aristocracy would give rise to protest groups such as the Essenes and Pharisees. By 60 B.C. Roman influence was growing in the Middle East and brought pressure on Israel itself. The Hasmonean period came to an end with the emergence of Herod the Great, a vassal of the Romans, who would unify the country and hold it in his grip.

## The Roman Period (39 B.C.–100 A.D.)

The New Testament writings emerge during this period of biblical history. With the death of Herod in 4 B.C., the Romans divided Israel among his three sons. Eventually the Romans removed the cruel and incompetent Archaelaus, taking over direct rule of Judah and Samaria.

Herod Philip and Herod Antipas would continue to govern in the regions of Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee, and the Transjordan (see map #12).

Roman rule and its heavy taxation proved intolerable to the Jewish people. Tensions mounted all during the first half of the first century, exploding into revolution in A.D. 66. That revolt would be violently suppressed by the Romans, climaxing with the destruction of Jerusalem and its great Temple in A.D. 70. That event would change the complexion of Judaism forever. Another short-lived revolt would break out in A.D. 132. The Romans would continue to occupy Palestine until the time of the Byzantine empire.

All of these events have left a profound impression on the writings of the New Testament.

# THE CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE

DONALD SENIOR

## How to Use This Study Bible

This one-volume Study Bible offers a full range of aids to help the reader discover the meaning of the Bible. The following description of its contents, and suggestions for using the book, might help you take full advantage of its unique resources.

### The Resources of the Study Bible

There are five major sections in this volume:

**THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE**

Beginning on page 1, following the Reading Guides, you will find the full text and notes of the *New American Bible.* Each major section of the Bible and each biblical book has a brief introduction. Extensive notes explaining words or individual verses are found at the bottom of the page. An asterisk (*) alongside a particular word or verse signals to you that an explanatory note is provided for that biblical text. These notes are the official notes that were prepared by the editors of the *New American Bible,* and they provide a wealth of information for the studious reader.

The *New American Bible* also provides cross-references to other related biblical passages. These cross-references are signaled by a small italic letter printed at the end of specific verses. The cross-reference is found at the bottom of the page.

Finally, along the side margins there is another set of cross-references, directing you to the Reading Guides and Reference Articles found in other sections of the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE. These cross references are indicated by page numbers enclosed within an outline. Page numbers for the Reading Guides and Reference Articles are preceded by the letters *RG.*

**THE READING GUIDES**

One of the special features of this Study Bible is the Reading Guides found in the front section beginning on page RG1. There are Guides for each book of the Bible and their purpose is precisely to lead the reader through the structure and basic message of each biblical book.

The notes found at the bottom of the page with the *New American Bible* translation provide information on specific details of a given verse. The Reading Guides add a new perspective by taking a broader look at each biblical book, tracing its major sections and themes,

and making suggestions about its meaning for today. Each of them also provides references to other books and articles for readers who want to continue their study of specific issues.

### THE REFERENCE ARTICLES

Another helpful feature of the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE is that it provides extensive and detailed studies of key issues for understanding and using the Bible.

In addition to this introduction, the reader will find the following Reference Articles:

- A "The Bible in Catholic Life" explains the Roman Catholic view of Scripture and the meaning of biblical inspiration.
- B "An Outline of Biblical History" offers a succinct overview of the major periods of biblical history.
- C "Introduction to the Pentateuch" provides a detailed orientation to the first five major books of the Old Testament.

The preceding three articles are found immediately following this "General Introduction," before the Reading Guides to individual books of the Bible. In addition, after the *New American Bible* text, there are further specialized Reference Articles:

- D "The Bible in the Lectionary" explains the role of the Bible in liturgy and, in particular, shows the rationale for the selection of biblical passages in the Lectionary. This will be useful for preachers or those who prepare liturgies.
- E "Biblical Archaeology" is a helpful explanation of the methods and major discoveries of biblical archaeology.

These articles will prove especially valuable for those who want to probe deeper into a particular question.

### THE GLOSSARY

The glossary provides clear explanations of the less familiar or more technical terms used in the Bible or in the Reading Guides and Reference Articles.

### GEOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLICAL LANDS AND MAPS

This section offers a full range of information on the geography of the biblical lands and its impact on the Scriptures. The Reference Article describes the geographical context of Palestine, and the extensive maps provide the reader with the entire geographical canvas on which the biblical drama is portrayed.

## Suggestions for Use

The resources of the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE enable the reader to use it in a variety of ways and settings.

### FOR INDIVIDUAL READING OR STUDY

If your goal is to read and reflect on a single biblical book or major passage of the Bible, the two key sections of the Study Bible to use are the biblical text itself and the Reading Guides. Both should be used in tandem.

You may wish to read through the introductions to the biblical book first, both the one found in the Reading Guide and in the *New American Bible* text. In turning to the Gospel of Luke, for example, one would read the introduction to the Reading Guide on pp. RG 417–422

and then turn to the Bible section on pp. 95–97. After that the reader can pick his or her way through the Gospel, noting the major characteristics of the biblical passage and its major motifs by attentive reading of the biblical text and its accompanying notes, and by referring to the information provided in the Reading Guide.

For the more ambitious reader, the "Suggested Readings" at the end of the Reading Guides and in the Reference Articles offer leads to further study.

### FOR GROUP STUDY

The CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE lends itself well to group use. If each member of the group has a copy, then the leader could suggest the reading of a specific biblical text and the accompanying section from the Reading Guide as a good means of preparing for the group session. Preparation always enhances group Bible study. Often the Reading Guide will provide some points of reflection that a group might find helpful as a starting point for discussion about the meaning of a passage.

Some of the Reference Articles such as the ones on "The Bible in Catholic Life" and "The Bible in the Lectionary" could also be fruitful sources for group study and discussion.

Where the group itself does not have access to individual copies, the CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE can serve as a resource for the leader or can be on hand for reference when the group discussion generates a question that needs further information.

### TEACHING RESOURCE

The CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE is particularly useful for the college or religious education classroom. It provides virtually a one-volume textbook and reference library on the Bible. Experienced and imaginative teachers will find their own way to best utilize a book like this. A few suggestions might help.

The Study Bible can certainly serve as a textbook for a course on the Bible as a whole or for introductions to the Old or New Testaments. Here again interplay between pertinent sections of the Reading Guides and the biblical text and notes is very important.

Teachers in a Catholic setting may want to give special attention to the Reference Article on "The Bible in Catholic Life" as an important summary of Catholic teaching on the role of the Bible in the Church's life and thought. The Reference Article on "The Bible in the Lectionary" will help Catholics (and Christians from other mainline denominations) understand how the liturgy is a major source of biblical inspiration for Roman Catholic tradition.

The volume will also support a course on the history and geography of the Bible. The Reference Articles on history and the archaeology of the Bible provide clear and useful information. The article on geography and the accompaning maps enable the teacher to discuss this important context of the Bible in detail. The maps can also be a useful illustration when studying such narratives as Exodus, the historical books, the Gospels, Acts, and Paul's letters.

### SERMON AND LITURGY PREPARATION

The thematic approach of the Reading Guides and the attempt they make to relate the biblical message to spirituality and Church teaching should prove useful for sermon and liturgy preparation.

The Reference Article on "The Bible in the Lectionary" provides important and often neglected information on the rationale for the selection and arrangement of biblical passages in the Lectionary, and offers good suggestions about relating the Bible to the liturgical year.

# THE BIBLE IN CATHOLIC LIFE

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## Church Life Today

One of the great achievements of the Second Vatican Council has been the renewal of interest in the Bible among Catholics. How dramatic this renewal has been can be grasped by comparing Catholic practice around 1950 and the situation in the closing years of the twentieth century.

At mid-century the Scriptures were read in Latin at Mass. There were few selections from the Old Testament, and a rather small number of New Testament passages dominated the one-year cycle. In response to Vatican II we now have a three-year cycle of Sunday readings and a two-year weekday cycle. (See "The Bible in the Lectionary," pp. 440–451.) The Old Testament is very prominent, and almost the entire New Testament (Gospels and Epistles) is represented. The readings, of course, are in the vernacular (English, Spanish, or whatever is the dominant local language).

At mid-century study of Bible texts was not an integral part of the primary- or secondary-school curriculum in Catholic schools. At best Bible content was conveyed through summaries of the texts. Catholic college students worked through the Bible with the aid of cautious textbooks as guides. Now the texts of the Bible form the primary resource for Catholic religious education at all levels. Bible courses are especially popular in adult education. At mid-century Catholic seminarians took most of their Scripture courses toward the end of their theology program; in comparison with dogma and moral theology, Scripture study was considered a minor course. Now biblical studies are a major component of the seminary curriculum at all stages. Such courses are very popular. There is also a lively dialogue between professors of Scripture and their theological colleagues. Students in Catholic seminaries assume that much of the preaching and teaching in the future will be devoted to the Bible.

The Bible is prominent not only in Catholic liturgy and education but also in popular piety since Vatican II. The revised prayers for the sacraments and other liturgical actions use biblical language almost entirely. Charismatic groups and base communities have found biblical reflection and prayer to be the source of great spiritual energy. Even traditional Catholic observances like the Rosary are (and always have been) thoroughly biblical. The language of Catholic prayer in almost every instance derives from the Bible.

The Scriptures have also been a major element in the ecumenical movement since the

council. The serious historical and theological differences between the Christian churches remain. But the most progress has been made where the different church groups have focused on the Bible as their common heritage and have reexamined their differences in light of the Bible's language and thought patterns. When this has occurred, the usual result has been the recognition that what unites the Christian churches is more important and fundamental than what divides them. In the marvelous new relationship that has emerged between Christians and Jews in recent years, Bible study has been a vital force toward greater mutual understanding and respect.

Catholic theology since the council gives far more attention to biblical sources and is likely to express itself in biblical rather than philosophical language. Official church documents on theological matters or current problems almost always begin from Scripture and ground their arguments in biblical texts. The Catholic Church today is far more "biblical" than it was in the mid-1950s.

## Bible Study in History

In order to understand the Bible's place in Catholic thinking today, it can be helpful to see how Christians in other times and places thought about the Bible. The Bible has not always been studied according to the principles of modern historical criticism. Nor should scientific study of the Bible be understood as superseding, and thus making obsolete, earlier approaches. A brief history of biblical interpretation will reveal important insights that remain valid today.

The Old Testament constituted the Bible for Jesus and the early Christians. According to the Gospels, Jesus frequently quoted or alluded to Old Testament texts in order to establish a theological point or to suggest a way of acting. He clearly accorded these texts a certain degree of authority. Nevertheless, Jesus emerges from the New Testament as displaying flexibility toward the Old Testament and even authority over it. He distinguishes what comes from God and what comes from Moses (see Mk 10,1-12), criticizes and goes beyond scriptural teachings (Mt 5, 21-48), and rates love of God and neighbor (Mk 12, 28-31) over strict observance of the Sabbath.

New Testament writers such as Paul and Matthew looked upon the Old Testament Scriptures as "fulfilled" in Jesus Christ. Basing themselves on what apparently was a widespread early Christian understanding, they interpreted the Scriptures in the light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Like other Jews of the time, they understood the Old Testament to be a "mystery"—that is, something that could not be understood without guidance or explanation. Whereas the Qumran community (which gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls) found the key to the Scriptures in their own sect's history and life, the early Christians discovered Jesus to be the key that opened up the mystery of the Hebrew Bible.

By the time of the so-called Fathers of the Church (the patristic period), the Bible contained both Testaments. These Fathers, or early theologians, generally adopted one or the other of two basic approaches to the reading and interpretation of Scripture: the allegorical and the literal methods.

The allegorical method, favored particularly by those theologians who lived in Alexandria in Egypt, emphasized uncovering the spiritual truths behind the surface of the biblical stories. This method had been developed by Greek thinkers who interpreted the stories in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as symbolizing emotional or spiritual struggles within the individual. It had also been

adopted by Jewish interpreters, like Philo of Alexandria, who used the method on the Hebrew Bible in order to appeal to Greeks and to Jews who had come under the influence of Greek culture. Christian theologians who used this method included Origen and Clement of Alexandria.

In contrast to this method was the more literal reading of the Bible, favored by those Christian thinkers who lived in Antioch, the capital of Syria in Roman times. A literal approach focused more on the historical realities described in Scripture, and taught that any higher or deeper sense should be based firmly on the literal sense of the text. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia were among others who used this approach.

It is important to recognize that these different emphases were not completely opposed to each other. Thus, the allegorical method did not always deny the historical truth of events in Scripture, and the literal method did not deny the spiritual meaning of those events. Later theologians tended to blend the two approaches, though favoring one tendency or the other: Augustine, for instance, tended toward the allegorical and Jerome toward the literal.

Medieval interpreters, building on both these approaches, distinguished four senses in a scriptural text: literal (what took place), allegorical (the hidden theological meaning), anagogical (the heavenly sense), and moral or tropological (the significance for the individual's behavior). The classic example was "Jerusalem" (see Gal 4,22-31), which can refer to a city in Palestine (literal), the church (allegorical), the heavenly home of us all (anagogical), and the human soul (moral). Since this wide-ranging approach to Scripture could easily degenerate into subjectivity, careful interpreters like Thomas Aquinas insisted that "nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense that is not elsewhere put forward by Scripture in its literal sense." Thomas Aquinas also used human reason as a tool in explaining the Scriptures and tried to bring together philosophical truth and biblical truth.

With the Renaissance and the rise of humanism came a new interest in studying the Scriptures in their original languages and their historical settings. Erasmus produced a new edition of the Greek New Testament to go along with his revision of the Latin Vulgate. He also used the Greek and Roman classics of paganism along with the writings of the Church Fathers to interpret the biblical texts. Catholic enthusiasm for the study of the Scriptures cooled, however, in response to the claims for the Bible made by Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers, especially their statements about the clarity of Scripture (so that there is no need for the church as the final interpreter) and its sufficiency (so that there is no need for church tradition). The rationalist claims of the so-called Enlightenment made matters even more complicated for Catholic interpreters of the Bible. For example, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza could maintain that when Scripture and philosophy come into conflict (as in the case of miracles), then Scripture is to be rejected. Thus the Catholic Church was backed into being the defender of biblical "truth," sometimes with unfortunate consequences.

This survey reveals some abiding principles of Catholic biblical interpretation: the central significance of Christ, the struggle to be faithful to the literal meaning while searching for spiritual meaning, the conviction that faith and reason are not opposed, the insistence that the Bible be interpreted in the Church, and the emphasis on biblical truth against the attacks of rationalism.

## Modern Developments

The gradual Catholic acceptance of scientific biblical criticism while remaining true to the Church's heritage can be traced with reference to a series of official Roman documents issued

during the past one hundred years. A cautious beginning was made with the papal encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1893, only to be blunted by fears of Modernism under Pius X and by Benedict XV's encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* issued in 1920. A new age dawned with the encyclical entitled *Divino Afflante Spiritu* that was issued by Pius XII in 1943, in which the historical study of the Bible was given official approbation. The approach outlined by Pius XII was put into practice by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in its 1964 *Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels.*

The culmination of official Catholic pronouncements on biblical studies was the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.* The nature of these documents is cumulative; that is, the latest document restates the teachings contained in previous documents and clarifies matters not discussed earlier in detail. The document of an ecumenical council has far more official weight than a papal encyclical or an instruction from the Biblical Commission. (For a discussion of the authority of various Roman Catholic documents, see Ladislas Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching* [Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987]). Moreover, the Council on Scripture was a "dogmatic constitution," the most authoritative kind issued by Vatican II. Thus Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* should be taken as the authoritative climax of a long series of developments in the Church's attitude toward the Bible.

Vatican II was a "pastoral" Council. It sought to address the needs of the Church and the world in the twentieth century. Its document on divine revelation (also known by its Latin title, *Dei verbum*) was addressed not so much to scholars or theologians as to the Church at large. In effect, the bishops with the people were saying, "This is what the Catholic Church thinks about the Bible." The document had a rocky history from its first draft in 1962 to its final form in 1965. Pope John XXIII's rejection of the initial draft, which favored a propositional understanding of revelation (revelation consists of statements of abstract truths) and a theory of two sources of revelation (Scripture and tradition), set the Second Vatican Council on its path of "aggiornamento" ("bringing up to date"). (All quotations are from the translation by Liam Walsh and Wilfrid Harrington in Austin Flannery [ed.], *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* [Northport, NY: Costello, 1975] 750–65.)

The six chapters in *Dei verbum* treat divine revelation itself, the transmission of divine revelation, Sacred Scripture—its divine inspiration and its interpretation, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Sacred Scripture in the life of the church. What the constitution teaches on these topics will be taken up in the remaining parts of this article. Here only what it teaches about scientific biblical criticism will concern us.

The conciliar statement about biblical criticism appears in paragraph 12, which is part of the chapter on the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture. It is prefaced by an acknowledgment that since God speaks in Scripture through human beings, and so in human fashion, interpreters should give careful attention to the ways in which the sacred writers thought and expressed themselves:

> In determining the intention of the sacred writers, attention must be paid, *inter alia,* to "literary forms for the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetical and poetical texts," and in other forms of literary expression. Hence the exegete must look for that meaning which the sacred writer, in a determined situation and given the

> circumstances of his time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary literary form. Rightly to understand what the sacred author wanted to affirm in his work, due attention must be paid both to the customary and characteristic patterns of perception, speech and narrative which prevailed at the age of the sacred writer, and to the conventions which the people of his time followed in their dealings with one another.

The statement, which is really a condensation of Pius XII's encyclical *Divine Afflante Spiritu,* makes three points. It first insists that we take into account the various literary forms in which the Bible is written, and it warns us against confusing historical, prophetic, and poetic texts. Next, it urges us to pay attention to the historical setting in which the sacred author wrote, suggesting that such historical awareness is necessary for grasping what the author intended. Finally, it recommends that we learn about the literary conventions and cultural assumptions that people accepted at the time the biblical books were composed. Thus the conciliar document encourages the literary, historical, and sociological study of biblical texts.

The acceptance of biblical criticism, of course, does not reduce the Sacred Scriptures to the status of other strictly human books. In fact, the very next sentence in the document affirms the divine authorship of the biblical texts and urges biblical interpreters to take that into consideration:

> But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts.

In this way the conciliar document achieves a balance between the human and divine contributions to Scripture. Interpreters are thereby encouraged to apply all the tools of biblical criticism, while bearing in mind the Church's longstanding conviction that the Bible contains "the Word of God in the words of men."

## Scientific Study of the Bible

The term *biblical criticism* refers to various methods of scientific biblical study that have as their goal establishing the text, understanding the content and literary style of biblical books, and determining their origin and authenticity. This undertaking is sometimes called the "historical-critical method"—"historical" because it focuses on the original historical setting of a biblical text, and "critical" because it applies reason to the text and makes judgments about it. Biblical criticism aims to understand what a text was saying to its original audience and to make clear its significance then (and now).

*Textual criticism* seeks to establish the wording of the biblical text as the biblical authors wrote it. We no longer have direct access to the manuscripts written by the biblical authors (autographs). Textual critics try to come close to the original texts by gathering all the pertinent manuscript evidence (Hebrew and Aramaic for the Old Testament, Greek for the New Testament, ancient translations for both Testaments). When the evidence has been assembled, textual critics determine where the ancient texts differ and proceed to decide which reading is original and to explain how the other readings arose. The rejected readings may have been unconscious mistakes (for example, confusing similar letters of the alphabet, omitting words or

phrases, inserting marginal comments into the main text) or deliberate modifications (for example, harmonizing with parallel texts, "correcting" grammar or style, removing "offensive" material). The accepted readings should be consistent with the content and style of the document and follow the rules of grammar and good sense.

*Literary criticism* attends to the words and images, the characters and their relationships, the structure and progress of thought, the literary form, and the meaning. These processes are used today in studying all kinds of literature; they are by no means confined to biblical study. Bible concordances, dictionaries, and encyclopedias make it possible to observe the development of a word (for example, "faith") or a theme (for example, "covenant") and to locate a particular occurrence within such a framework. Careful inspection of a text enables one to chart out the interactions among the characters or to outline the progress of the argument. The biblical writers used many different literary forms. The Old Testament consists of law codes, narratives, psalms, prophecies, proverbs, visions, and even love poetry. The New Testament contains stories of Jesus' words and deeds (Gospels), the actions of some apostles (Acts), letters (Epistles), and visions (Revelation). Rather than stating theological truths in the form of theses or propositions, the biblical authors conveyed their message in artistic and memorable ways. Literary criticism helps us to read the biblical books on their own terms and thus to appreciate their artistry and their truth.

*Historical criticism* uses literary criticism to find out about the origin and growth of the biblical documents. Scholars assume that sometimes a complicated process of composition lies behind a finished book of the Bible. Smaller literary units—for example, a saying from Jesus, a hymn to God—are told and retold, or used orally in worship. Later, perhaps, a collection of sayings or hymns is made. Still later, a writer creates a longer story into which various sayings fit, or which quotes a hymn in order to make a point. At each stage, the original small unit is being used in a slightly different context, and it may be changed in small ways in order to fit its new use better. Scholars have various names for this sort of investigation of a biblical text, depending on what level they are examining. *Source criticism* attempts to establish where previously existing material (for example, a hymn, a saying, or a vision account) has been used by a later author in a longer work, either by accepting what is stated in the work itself or by noticing differences in content and literary style. *Form criticism* seeks to classify literary devices and to isolate the historical settings in which the forms developed and functioned before they became part of the main text. A sermon, for instance, will have characteristics that are different from those of a letter. *Redaction criticism* deals with the ways in which a biblical author or editor ("redactor" means editor) used sources, and sometimes changed them, to address problems and concerns facing his readers. So biblical criticism takes account of historical setting at three levels: the sources, the small units, and the finished document.

*Archaeological excavations* and *textual discoveries* such as the Ugaritic texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls shed light on the material world and culture in which the biblical books were written. For example, ancient epics outside the Bible have helped us to appreciate the creation stories in the book of Genesis. And the Dead Sea Scrolls have illumined the thought and organization of the early church.

*Historical criticism* is sometimes narrowly defined to refer to the reality of the event behind the text, to determining what actually occurred at the first Passover or the first Easter. What really happened is often hard to say, since the biblical authors were often more interested in the meaning of the events than in their precise details. Some historical critics (in the narrow

sense) rule out the miraculous and divine intervention on philosophical grounds and make negative judgments about the communities that handed on the biblical texts, but this is not true of all historical criticism.

## Catholic Biblical Research

Catholic scholars make important contributions to scientific biblical research. The Vatican Museum and other such institutions conserve and make available important manuscript evidence. The publishing programs of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome), the Catholic Biblical Association (Washington), and the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (Jerusalem) are among the most ambitious. The research of Catholic scholars appears in prestigious journals published under Catholic auspices: *Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Biblica, Revue Biblique, Biblische Zeitschrift, Estudios Bíblicos,* and *Rivista Biblica Italiana.* Of course non-Catholic scholars are welcome to publish in these scientific journals. And Catholic scholars routinely write for periodicals not under Church auspices: *Journal of Biblical Literature, New Testament Studies, Vetus Testamentum, Novum Testamentum, Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,* and so forth. The major bibliographic services—*Old Testament Abstracts, New Testament Abstracts, Elenchus of Biblica, Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete*—emanate from Catholic institutions and publishing houses. Articles on biblical topics frequently appear in Catholic theological journals. And popular periodicals and books make available to a general audience the results of scientific biblical research.

Many Catholic biblical scholars receive their professional training at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem; or at European universities such as Louvain; German theological faculties; and American Catholic departments of theology. Others have gotten philological and archaeological training at Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, University of Chicago, and so forth. The major professional organization in the United States is the Catholic Biblical Association. Catholic scholars are also heavily involved in the Society of Biblical Literature, the American Schools of Oriental Research, and the Society of New Testament Studies.

Modern biblical scholarship is an international and interconfessional enterprise. The Catholic Church contributes to this dialogue by providing well-trained scholars and channels for publishing research. Two good examples of American Catholic biblical scholarship are the *New American Bible* and the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary.*

## The Traditional Character of the Biblical Writings

The official Catholic emphasis on attention to the literary forms, historical settings, and cultural assumptions of the biblical writings flows from the nature of the books themselves. Far from being individual creations generated in solitude, the biblical books include ideas, traditions, and even small pieces that already existed. Biblical literature is thoroughly and deliberately traditional.

The traditional character of the Old Testament has long been acknowledged. The first five books, which are customarily called the Pentateuch or Torah, are generally recognized to incorporate material from at least four different sources (Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, Priestly). See "Introduction to the Pentateuch," pp. 1–2. The historical books (Joshua to

2 Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah) include earlier accounts, memoirs, genealogies, etc. The prophetic books are anthologies of short pieces of poetry and prose, and the wisdom books contain ideas and even sayings that circulated in the ancient Near East for centuries before. The Psalms are a collection of varied kinds of songs used mainly in the Jerusalem Temple; in the Psalms there may even be remnants of non-Jewish hymns (see Psalm 29). So complicated and so rich is the process of transmission that it is difficult in most cases to speak of *the* author of a biblical book as one may speak of an author today. The situation is further complicated by the fact that in biblical times personal creativity and originality were not important values. One displayed creativity by using traditional ideas and expressions in new settings and in new combinations.

Given the nature of the Old Testament and the ancient concept of creativity, one would expect the New Testament to be thoroughly traditional also. And it is. The earliest complete documents in the New Testament are Paul's letters. Even these highly "original" and occasional pieces rely at key points on preexisting material (for example, Rom 1,3f; 1 Cor 13,1-13; 15,3-5; Phil 2,6-11). Those epistles whose direct Pauline composition is doubtful (for example, the Pastorals, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians) are best understood as later attempts to bring the figure and teaching of Paul to bear on situations facing the churches in the late first century. We often regard Paul as a "creative" genius. However, not only did he use some traditional material but, also, almost all his undisputed letters contain some indication of joint authorship (see 1 Thes 1,1; 1 Cor 1,1; Rom 16,22; etc.). Moreover, throughout his letters Paul gives credit to his "co-workers" and encourages the collection for the Jerusalem community as a sign of solidarity with the "mother church" there.

The complicated process of composition applies to the Gospels too. Most scholars today place the final composition of the four canonical Gospels in the late first century: Mark around A.D. 70, Matthew and Luke around A.D. 80–90, and John around A.D. 90–100. Yet all acknowledge that the evangelists used already-existing material in their Gospels. For example, Matthew and Luke each seem to have read both Mark's Gospel and a collection of Jesus' sayings that modern scholars call "Q" (from the German word "Quelle," which means "source"). John utilized a collection of miracle stories ("signs") and perhaps also some "revelation discourses." The Markan and Johannine passion narratives surely contain much traditional information, accounts that had been passed from one person to another.

The Gospels and the traditions incorporated in them tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified around A.D. 30. Like other Jewish teachers of his time, Jesus taught by word (parables, proverbs, debates, other sayings) and deed (examples, healings, symbolic gestures). His disciples remembered and retold his words and deeds, thus providing the basic materials for what became the Gospel tradition. Jesus did not write a book. What we know of Jesus comes to us through the process of tradition from Jesus to the early church and finally to the evangelists.

The nature of the Gospels demands that interpreters attend to three stages in their development. The *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei verbum* 19) captures that development in this marvelously concise statement:

> The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form, others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches,

> the while sustaining the form of preaching, but always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus.

The council's document affirms that the Gospels tell us the "honest" truth about Jesus. It recognizes that there was an intermediary stage in which traditions about Jesus circulated in oral and written forms as "preaching" about the significance of Jesus. It acknowledges that the evangelists give us only a selection (see Lk 1,1-4; Jn 20,30f; 21,25) of the traditions about Jesus. It also recognizes that the evangelists used the traditions about Jesus to address the situations of their own day. Therefore Catholics must read the Gospels as traditional documents (because they are such) and attend to three points in their development: Jesus, the early church, and the evangelists.

Although in the past there has been some Catholic resistance to accepting the "traditional" character of the biblical book, this emphasis is perfectly compatible with the principles of Catholicism. There is no obligation for Catholics to be conservative historians of early Christianity (nor is there any obligation to be reckless). As long as Catholic scholars make clear the link from Jesus through the early church to the evangelists, they remain faithful to their theological heritage.

In fact, an emphasis on the traditional nature of the biblical writings is fully consistent with certain distinctively Catholic principles. The Catholic stress on the communal character of our way to God and God's way to us sensitizes Catholics to the complexity of early Christian tradition and to the role of the Church in shaping it and being formed by it. The Catholic emphasis that encounter with God is rooted in history and is a mediated experience helps us to see the continuity between Jesus and the early reflections on him, as well as the significance and correctness of those reflections. The Catholic sacramental approach, which sees God in and through all things, leads us to view the very human process of tradition as a vehicle for expressing, safeguarding, and adapting divine revelation.

## Scripture and Tradition

The Catholic Church does not restrict divine revelation to the biblical text. Against the Protestant Reformation's slogan of "Scripture alone," the Catholic theologians insisted on "Scripture and tradition." The term "tradition" recognizes the fact that the living reality of the Church has the task of preserving the gospel and applying it in new situations. Catholic Christianity is not simply a "religion of the Book."

While acknowledging the twofold reality of Scripture and tradition, Catholic theologians have long debated the precise relation between the two. One way of approaching the problem was to assume that Scripture and tradition constituted two separate sources of divine revelation. The Second Vatican Council rejected this view in the second chapter of its *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei verbum* 10): "Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church." In other words, the Word of God (or divine revelation) is the source of both tradition and Scripture.

How Scripture and tradition are related remains a problem. The conciliar document uses the analogy of a wellspring to insist on their unity while preserving their diversity in *Dei verbum* 9:

> Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

The same paragraph rejects the "Scripture alone" principle and preserves the Catholic approach of "Scripture and tradition" by insisting that the Church does not draw certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence. Thus the Second Vatican Council insisted that Scripture and tradition flow from the same divine wellspring and that both must be accepted and honored. Without endorsing any one theological approach to their relation, the council rejected the opinion of those who wished to keep the two separate.

The same tension appears when the *Dogmatic Constitution* addresses the issue of authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures in *Dei verbum* 10:

> . . . the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.

On the one hand, this statement entrusts authentic interpretation to the magisterium (the bishops with the pope). On the other hand, it insists that the magisterium is the servant of divine revelation and can only teach what is drawn from the single deposit of faith constituted by divine revelation.

The precise relation between Scripture and tradition remains a problem. As a "pastoral" council, Vatican II avoided becoming an arbiter of theological disputes. Its insistence on the oneness of Scripture and tradition, however, did have a pastoral dimension. While not conceding to the "Scripture alone" position, it insisted that the Bible take again its rightful place in the center of Catholic life and that appeals to tradition be judged according to their consistency with Scripture.

## The Nature of the Bible

What is this book that it should be studied so intensely and guarded so carefully? The *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* made its own a theological formula that had become prominent before Vatican II: "the words of God, expressed in the words of men" (*Dei verbum* 13). That formula derives from the classical theological definitions of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. In speaking about the Bible in this way, the Second Vatican Council sought to hold together the transcendent nature of Scripture and its human form. Although the Bible may look like other books and may be studied profitably as other books are

studied (that is, with the techniques of biblical criticism), the Bible is different with regard to its origin and its nature. The "different" character of the Bible is expressed by means of some rather complicated terms: revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and canon. The Second Vatican Council used these terms without adjudicating the theological disputes surrounding them. As a pastoral council it sought to express the significance of those words for the way in which the Bible is read within the Church.

Revelation is fundamentally God's self-revelation; it is the communication of the mystery of God to the world: "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will" (*Dei verbum* 2). The Christian theological tradition affirms that God's self-revelation comes to us through creation, history, persons, society, and reason. It is also customary to refer to the Bible as a privileged revealer of God—that is, a place where it is particularly clear. This tradition appears prominently in *Dei verbum* 6:

> By divine Revelation God wished to manifest and communicate both himself and the eternal decrees of his will concerning the salvation of mankind.

The order adopted in this statement ("both himself and the eternal decrees") is significant, for it gives pride of place to the "personal" character of divine revelation without denying the content and the consequences. Although this point may seem obvious today, the council's emphasis on the personal dimension of revelation was correctly taken as a major step in clarifying Catholic attitudes toward Scripture. Through the Bible we encounter the mystery of God, not simply lists of commandments or interesting stories. The personal God makes those commandments and stories meaningful.

Two other theological terms for talking about the "difference" of the Bible from other books are inspiration and inerrancy. Again the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* asserts the basic point expressed by the terms without arbitrating the very complicated theological debates surrounding them. On inspiration it states in *Dei verbum* 11:

> The divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in the text of sacred Scripture have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 3:15–16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their powers and faculties so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.

The same paragraph treats inerrancy:

> Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures. Thus "all Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correc-

tion and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17, Gk. text).

The key expression in this statement is "that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures." Without explicitly embracing the theory of limited inerrancy, that statement suggests that the Bible's inerrancy consists primarily in its being a trustworthy guide on the road to salvation. Thus it expresses "inerrancy" in a positive way, and avoids conceiving it as a defensive program of protecting the Bible against accusations of scientific or historical error.

The council's statement on inspiration refers to the books of the Bible as "sacred and canonical." The word "canon" (whose root meaning is "reed" or "measuring stick") originally meant the rule or characteristic that decided whether a particular book is part of Scripture. It now usually refers to the collection of books that are acknowledged to be authoritative in the Church and by which the Church's faith can be measured. The canon of Old Testament books traditional in Catholicism contains all the books of the Hebrew Bible together with seven others that were part of the Greek Bible (Judith, Tobit, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom). All Christians today share the same canon of twenty-seven New Testament books. The history of the canon's development is quite complex. The final definitive list of biblical books (including the seven additional Old Testament books) was drawn up only at the Council of Trent in 1546, though there was little disagreement about the substance of the canon from the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Bible is different. How it is different has been expressed with the help of some traditional words: revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and canon. The Second Vatican Council in its authoritative declaration on Scripture (*Dei verbum*) took over those hallowed terms. In interpreting the council's use of these words we must take account of the pastoral orientation of the council as a whole. Rather than working out theological subtleties or choosing among theological schools, the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* used those words to convey basic attitudes about how the Bible differs from other books: God's self-revelation comes to us through the Bible; in some mysterious way God entered into the composition of these writings; the biblical books provide reliable guidance for those who walk the way toward salvation with God; these books constitute the norm or rule by which the life of the Church is to be guided and measured in all ages. These are the basic "pastoral" meanings of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and canon.

## The Authority of the Bible

The ways in which Christians express the "difference" of the Bible indicate that it possesses great authority. The Bible is "words of God, expressed in the words of men." It is revealed, inspired, inerrant, and canonical. The *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* goes beyond the general assertions conveyed by the traditional theological vocabulary and speaks about the authority of various parts of the Bible.

The Old Testament (see *Dei verbum* 15) prepares for and declares in prophecy the coming of Christ. It conveys our basic understanding of God and the human situation: "how a just and merciful God deals with mankind." It provides "sound wisdom" and "a wonderful treasury of prayers." The document also mentions "matters imperfect and provisional" in the Old Testament, without specifying precisely what these are (presumably sacrificial legislation, "vengeful"

psalms, and other such material). The unity of the two Testaments is traced back to God who "in his wisdom has so brought it about that the New should be hidden in the Old and that the Old should be made manifest in the New" (*Dei verbum* 16).

The Council accorded the Gospels a special place within the Bible "because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour" (*Dei verbum* 18). It insists on the historicity and apostolicity of the Gospels, while recognizing the complex process of their composition from Jesus through the early church to the Gospel texts. Catholics find a basic continuity between Jesus and the Gospel tradition under the guidance of the Spirit working in the church. Their tendency is to insist that the tradition is basically historical; the modifications and reinterpretations made necessary by changing circumstances do not do violence to the original teaching or event. The "apostolic" character of the Gospels refers not so much to their direct composition by apostles as it does to the faithful transmission of the material in them by those who had experienced the risen Lord and bore witness to his resurrection. The term "apostolic" describes the generation between Jesus' death (about A.D. 30) and the composition of the New Testament books. The claim implied by the term is that those witnesses have told us the "honest truth" about Jesus.

The New Testament also contains Paul's letters and other writings (Hebrews, the Catholic epistles, Revelation). After affirming their composition under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *Dei verbum* 20 describes the contributions that these writings make in the following way:

> In accordance with the wise design of God these writings firmly establish those matters which concern Christ the Lord, formulate more and more precisely his authentic teaching, preach the saving power of Christ's divine work and foretell its glorious consummation.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from this description that the epistles have a secondary status as supplements to the Gospels. In fact, Paul's letters (Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and so on) are the earliest complete documents in the New Testament from the standpoint of their dates of composition. Thus they give us precious information about how Paul and other early Christians understood the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They show us how early Christians struggled to articulate their new faith in an environment that was often hostile and foreign to them. They reveal the kinds of problems that early Christians faced within their own communities (see especially 1 Corinthians) and so warn us against too easily viewing the apostolic period as a trouble-free and conflictless "golden age."

Enough has been said about the Bible in general (revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and canon) and about its major parts (Old Testament, Gospels, Epistles) to indicate that it possesses great authority. But what kind of authority does the Bible have? It is surely not the coercive authority of a parent or the state or the police, which have the power to enforce a decision and to punish the uncooperative. It is not even the persuasive authority of the lawyer or the mathematician who convinces another by logic, arguments, proofs, and so forth. At some points in his epistles (for example, in 1 Corinthians 15) Paul does labor to make a convincing case on the basis of logic. But that is not his usual mode of presentation, nor is it the customary idiom of other biblical writers.

The authority that the Bible possesses can be best described as compelling. (These categories of coercive, persuasive, and compelling authority appear in Robert G. Bratcher, "Toward a Definition of the Authority of the Bible," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 [1979] 109–120).

ompelling authority is the authority of the witness, the expert, the participant. Much of the Bible concerns what God's people say about God's action on their behalf. Without narrowing the testimony of the Bible to the concept of an eyewitness, it is possible to describe the Scriptures as a collection of testimonies to God. The biblical descriptions of creation, exodus, monarchy, exile, and return from exile all stress God's relatedness to Israel and Israel's responses of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and so forth. The New Testament writers portray Jesus as the revelation of God's power (and weakness). The proper response is faith, hope, and love. Thus the biblical documents contain the proclamation and articulation of people's faith about God and God's ways with creation.

God is the real basis of the Bible's authority. Insofar as the biblical books bear witness to God and thus enable us to understand better who God is and how God acts, and to grow in love for and trust in the God of the Scriptures, the Bible can be aptly called the "word of God." And so Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,* which so emphasizes God's self-communication, is appropriately titled from its initial two words *Dei verbum* (Latin for "word of God").

## Scripture in Church Life

This essay began with a comparison regarding the Bible's place in church life of the 1950s and today. A look at Catholic liturgy, education, piety, and theology led to the conclusion that the Catholic Church today is far more "biblical" than it was in the 1950s. This development mirrors some powerful statements made in the final chapter of Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.*

The centrality of Scripture in Catholic liturgy involves both preaching and sacramental practice. *Dei verbum* 21 insists that "all the preaching of the Church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture." The same paragraph directly confronts and dissolves the opposition between word and sacrament that has been prominent since the Protestant Reformation. It does so with reference to the celebration of the Eucharist:

> The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ.

The council document insists that word and sacrament belong together in the Eucharist, to the point of asserting that they form "one table."

The popularity of Scripture in Catholic education and piety responds to a very strong statement in *Dei verbum* 22: "Access to sacred Scripture ought to be wide open to the Christian faithful." The document goes on to urge the production of modern-language translations made from the ancient biblical texts. It also encourages biblical exegetes to examine and explain the sacred texts so that preachers, teachers, and catechists "may be able to distribute fruitfully the nourishment of the Scriptures to the People of God" (*Dei verbum* 23).

The importance of Scripture for Catholic theology is stated in no uncertain terms: "The 'study of the sacred page' should be the very soul of sacred theology" (*Dei verbum* 24). The document mandates that all those officially engaged in the ministry of the word "immerse

themselves in the Scriptures by constant sacred reading and diligent study" (*Dei verbum* 25). The same paragraph recommends the preparation of volumes such as the present one: "translations of the sacred texts which are equipped with necessary and really adequate explanations."

There is overwhelming evidence that the Catholic Church has become more "biblical" in response to the Second Vatican Council. One of its most important documents was the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,* which has served as our principal guide in this article. At nearly every point the post-Vatican II Church has fulfilled the mandates of that council document and thus become more biblical.

The challenge facing the Catholic Church today is to look upon *Dei verbum* not so much as the end of a long development (which it was) but more the beginning of a process that will take us into the twenty-first century and beyond. A more biblical church will paradoxically be better able to adjust to the rapid changes that the new century will surely bring. A more biblical church will be better prepared to make common cause with other Christians, with Jews and Muslims, and with all truly religious people. A more biblical church will preserve its spiritual heritage and open its riches to others. An obvious step in the process toward a more biblical church is an increase in knowledge and love of the Scriptures.

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# AN OUTLINE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

PHILIP J. KING

## Patriarchal Period

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the pioneers of the Israelite nation, are commonly referred to as the patriarchs. Inasmuch as their spouses, Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel also had their part to play, "ancestors" seems to be a more accurate description than patriarchs. Genesis provides detailed information about the ancestors in the form of family tales based on oral tradition, but many basic questions remain unanswered: for example, were the ancestors historical persons and, if so, when precisely did they live? It seems safe to say that the stories about the ancestors have a historical basis; they may have lived some time after 2000 B.C., since many details in the Genesis narratives reflect the social conditions of that era.

The geographical background of the ancestors is Mesopotamia. Abraham, who was born at Ur in southern Mesopotamia, journeyed to northwest Mesopotamia and then migrated west to Canaan, making his first stop at Shechem. Later, Jacob and his family settled in Egypt's Nile delta region to escape famine in Canaan. They lived comfortably in their adopted country, so long as Joseph and his kinsfolk enjoyed the favor of the Pharaoh. When the situation eventually changed, they were enslaved.

## Moses and the Exodus

Then Moses appeared on the scene and played the leading role in the Pentateuch. Again, since there are many historical uncertainties about Moses, it is more useful to emphasize his theological significance, as the author of Deuteronomy does: "Since then no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He had no equal in all the signs and wonders the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and against all his land" (Dt 34,10f). Moses liberated his people, leading them out of Egypt to the border of Canaan. This decisive event was the all-important Exodus, which is the heart of the Pentateuch. On their way, the Israelites detoured to Mount Sinai, where the Lord promulgated the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) and then ratified the covenant with them. The two tablets of the

law were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, an elaborate wooden chest that served as a manifestation of the divine presence among the people. The remainder of Israel's journey to Canaan was circuitous, taking them through Transjordan so as to enter Canaan from the east. Before they crossed the Jordan river into Canaan, Moses died in Transjordan, east of Jericho (see Maps 1 and 2).

## Settlement in Canaan

Joshua, successor to Moses, led the people in their conquest of Canaan. Crossing the Jordan, the Israelites took Jericho, captured Ai in the central highlands, were equally victorious in the south, and then in the north where they captured Hazor, the largest city in Canaan. Afterward, Joshua divided the land among the tribes.

The conquest, however, did not occur quite so decisively as the book of Joshua describes. The book of Judges makes clear that large areas of Canaan still remained unconquered. Concerning the Israelite settlement in Canaan, Joshua and Judges already set the stage for differences of opinion among modern scholars. Joshua gives the impression of a comprehensive conquest of Canaan; Judges conveys the idea of a gradual infiltration of the land. Archaeology confirms that the Israelites settled alongside the Canaanites, adopting some aspects of their culture and way of life.

Judges is an important source for the events between the death of Joshua and the appearance of Samuel (1220–1050 B.C.). In a series of epiclike stories Judges relates the deeds of tribal heroes, called "judges," who defended the Israelites against the incursions of neighboring people including the Moabites, Canaanites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines. Despite the victories of the judges, Israel's situation in Canaan was still insecure, especially in view of Philistine expansionism. Because there was no Israelite national unity, it was a time of anarchy; as the editor of Judges remarked tersely: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what he thought best" (Jgs 21,25). So the rise of the monarchy, as a source of national unity, was inevitable.

## Rise of the Monarchy

Samuel, prophet and last of the judges, was responsible for establishing the monarchy. Although he was personally opposed for theological reasons to the appointment of a king, Samuel gave in to the inevitable by anointing Saul of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul established his capital at Gibeah, five miles north of Jerusalem. Although he was an effective military leader, Saul was inadequate in other ways. Quite simply, he was not meant for greatness, especially when compared with David, his successor, who was Israel's greatest king.

When Saul committed suicide on Mount Gilboa in the midst of defeat at the hands of the Philistines, David became king over Judah in the south. While reigning at Hebron, David was eager to unite the northern and southern tribes. To accomplish his purpose, he captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the political capital of the United Kingdom. Being on neutral ground between Israel (the north) and Judah (the south), Jerusalem was acceptable to both. By bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, David made the city also the religious capital of his kingdom.

In addition to being a statesman, David was also a great military commander; not only did he defeat the Philistines but he also expanded his small kingdom into an empire, its

borders reaching to the Euphrates. By putting his kingdom in touch with other nations, especially the Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon, David created a more cosmopolitan environment in his kingdom.

Solomon succeeded his father, David. It is said that Solomon had all of his father's faults and none of his virtues. It may be too harsh a judgment because Solomon also had his own gifts, being remembered especially for his proverbial wisdom. He was not a military leader, but a political figure whose despotism left a legacy that contributed to the dissolution of the United Kingdom. He reigned during a period of economic prosperity, when there was no war. He is perhaps best known for his lavish building projects, the most notable being the Jerusalem Temple and the adjoining palace complex. The Temple was a rectangular building measuring 105 feet long, 35 feet wide, and 52 feet high. Solomon imported both artisans and materials from Phoenicia for constructing the Temple. His building activities also included fortifications, consisting of six-chambered gates and casemate walls, at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Solomon reorganized the nation into administrative districts, superseding the old tribal boundaries. Israel was a powerful and prosperous nation during Solomon's forty-year reign, with many international connections. In the process of achieving these goals, however, Solomon alienated his own people through heavy taxes and forced labor. As a result, the northern tribes seceded and formed their own kingdom at the time of Solomon's death in 922 B.C.

## Divided Kingdom

The arrogant Rehoboam succeeded Solomon on the throne of the Southern Kingdom, and Jeroboam I became ruler of the rival Northern Kingdom. Having established his captital first at Shechem, and later at Tirzah, Jeroboam proceeded to set up official sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel, to discourage his people from worshipping at the Jerusalem Temple. During the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam their kingdoms were locked in civil wars. The kingdom of Israel in the north was larger and more prosperous than Judah in the south, but Judah was more stable and more secure.

Despite the political instability in the Northern Kingdom, a later king, Omri, established an impressive dynasty. One of his most astute maneuvers was to move the capital to the hill of Samaria. Overlooking lush valleys, it was strategically located on access routes in every direction. Omri also solidified Israel's relationship with Phoenicia by the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon. It is not surprising that some have called Omri the "David of the north." Ahab, too, was an impressive leader, although he allowed himself to be overly influenced by Jezebel. At least, the prophet Elijah thought so; he considered her the mortal enemy. Like his father, Ahab was prominent on the international scene; like Solomon he was a great builder, as the architecture at Samaria and Megiddo attests.

The Omride dynasty fell in 842 B.C. as the result of a bloody purge at the hands of Jehu, who in turn established his own dynasty. The greatest king of the Jehu dynasty was Jeroboam II, who was on good terms with the king of Judah, Uzziah (Azariah). Under these two eighth-century kings both Israel and Judah enjoyed stability and prosperity. Most of the wealth was in the hands of the upper classes, however, who had become rich by exploiting the poor. The prophets Amos and Hosea spoke devastatingly against these socioeconomic injustices, which were flagrant violations of Israel's religion.

The political situations of Israel and Judah changed radically in 745 B.C. when Tiglath-pileser

III ascended the Assyrian throne, becoming the founder of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Full of imperialistic ambitions, he cast his eye toward the west; it was not long before several kingdoms, including Israel, lost territory to Assyria, and became Assyrian provinces. As the Assyrian empire expanded, Syria fell in 732 B.C. and Samaria, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in 721 B.C. In accord with Assyrian policy, many of the inhabitants of Samaria were deported and replaced by foreigners. (This policy, by removing a large part of the population, including all the leaders, prevented rebellion.)

Hezekiah ascended the throne of Judah after the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria. With the encouragement of the prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah carried out several religious reforms, centralizing worship in the Jerusalem Temple and eliminating many idolatrous practices. He was eager to cast off vassalage to Assyria, which he inherited from his father Ahaz. In preparation for his rebellion against the Assyrian king Sennacherib, Hezekiah strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem and protected the vulnerable waters of the Gihon spring from sabotage. Sennacherib responded in 701 B.C. by laying siege to 46 cities of Judah, including Lachish, but spared Jerusalem when Hezekiah paid an indemnity.

Another reform king of Judah was Josiah (640–609 B.C.), who centralized worship in the Jerusalem Temple and purified religious practice throughout the country. Josiah died at the Megiddo pass, trying to block the Egyptians from coming to the aid of the Assyrians. Assyria collapsed in 612 B.C., and was soon replaced by the Neo-Babylonian empire. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. As a result, the Temple was destroyed, the city was razed, many people were exiled to Babylon, and Judah became a Babylonian province.

## Return from Exile

In 539 B.C., Babylonia in turn fell to Cyrus, king of Persia. Cyrus, who was an enlightened ruler, issued an edict allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. He was so highly esteemed that Isaiah calls him "messiah" (see note to Is 45,1 in *New American Bible*). The returning exiles undertook the rebuilding of the Temple, which was completed in 515 B.C. when Zerubbabel was governor of the province of Judah. About 75 years later Nehemiah, against the objections of Sanballat, governor of the province of Samaria, and Tobiah, governor of the province of Ammon, undertook the repair of the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The beginning of the hostility between Jews and Samaritans can be traced to this period. About 458 B.C., Ezra, priest and scribe, led a group of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, where he reinforced the observance of the Torah (Pentateuch).

## Alexander the Great and Hellenism

Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon, conquered Palestine in 332 B.C. He was responsible for the diffusion of Hellenism (Greek culture), which meant that the Greek language and thought dominated the greater Mediterranean region for 600 years (300 B.C.–300 A.D.). Greek became the second language of many people throughout the area. Consequently, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), and the New Testament was written in Greek. At Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his empire was divided among his generals, including Ptolemy I of Egypt, who ruled Palestine, and Seleucus I of Antioch, who ruled Syria and Mesopotamia. In 198 B.C., when Palestine became part of Syria, the Seleucids imposed Hellenism on their subjects, although many Jews were already quite receptive to Greek culture. Antiochus

IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.) went so far as to defile the Jerusalem Temple and to forbid use of the Torah. His hostile acts against the Jews appear to have triggered a revolt. Mattathias and his sons, notably Judas "the Maccabee," from the priestly family of the Hasmoneans, led a successful rebellion. Judas conquered Jerusalem in 164 B.C. and the Temple was rededicated. The Hasmoneans ruled an independent Judea from 142 B.C. until the Roman takeover under Pompey in 63 B.C. From then on, the Romans controlled Palestine throughout the New Testament period.

## Roman Rule

Herod the Great, mentioned in the New Testament Infancy Narrative, governed Judea for 33 years (37–4 B.C.). Jewish by religion though not by race, Herod never enjoyed the favor of the Jews but he was able to maintain the favor of Rome. Herod was an extraordinary builder within Palestine and elsewhere. The remnants of his extensive building program are still in evidence: the cities of Sebaste (Samaria) and Caesarea Maritima are but two examples. The most magnificent example is the Jerusalem Temple, which he rebuilt, doubling its size. The desert fortresses surrounding his kingdom, especially Masada on the western cliff of the Dead Sea, which he refortified, are further examples of "Herodian" architecture.

After Herod the Great's death, Palestine came under the rule of his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip, who were called tetrarchs (satellite rulers below the level of king). Archelaus was so tyrannical in his rule over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea that he was banished to Gaul in 6 A.D. Thereafter, Roman prefects governed Judea; among them was Pontius Pilate (26–36 A.D.), known for his cruelty as well as for his part in the trial and death of Jesus. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea ("beyond the Jordan") from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D., is the Herod most frequently mentioned in the New Testament, remembered especially for his part in the execution of John the Baptist. Philip ruled effectively over the districts of Iturea and Trachonitis, southeast of Mount Hermon. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, ruled a unified Palestine from 41 to 44 A.D.

Paul, originally named Saul, was born a Jew in Tarsus of Cilicia in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the early first century A.D. Converted to Christianity in Damascus (Syria), Paul spent a substantial portion of his life on missionary journeys that took him to the island of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia (the region north of Greece), Achaia (Athens and Corinth), and finally to Rome. He was probably executed by beheading in Rome about 67 A.D., while Nero was emperor.

When the Jews of Palestine revolted against the Romans in 66 A.D., Nero sent Vespasian to quell the insurrection. Vespasian was proclaimed emperor in 69 A.D., so his son Titus continued the siege until Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Simon Ben Koziba (nicknamed Bar Kochba) led a second revolt against Rome in 132 A.D. while Hadrian was emperor. Jerusalem was recaptured in 134 A.D., and reestablished as a Roman colony with the new name of Aelia Capitolina.

# THE PENTATEUCH

LAWRENCE BOADT

## The Nature of the Pentateuch

### On Beginning to Read the Pentateuch in the New American Bible

The text of the *New American Bible* already provides us with several helpful tools with which we can deepen our understanding of the text of the first five books of the Old Testament: (1) There is a brief introduction to the Pentateuch itself on pages 1–2, as well as specific introductions placed before the opening chapter of each individual book. These introductions sketch for the reader some of the key structures in the outline of a book, and some of the major religious themes that play a crucial role in the text's message for us. They also raise a few of the major concerns of biblical scholarship for the reader to consider. (2) There are the valuable notes at the bottom of each page of text that give us historical and scholarly information about difficult or confusing words in the text, or about the customs of ancient peoples, or about the meanings of obscure references. They sometimes also explain doctrinal beliefs of our faith that are rooted in particular biblical verses, or refer us to similar passages in other books of the Bible that throw further light on the subject under discussion.

As important as all these helps are, they are all very brief. It is the purpose of this study guide to do several things to supplement them so that a serious reading of the Pentateuch will be possible without getting lost in the forest because there are too many trees we do not know or cannot identify. Above all, these study aids will expand the most important elements mentioned in the introductions and notes of the *New American Bible* so that they can be understood as part of the larger picture that the Pentateuch paints. The unity and harmony of its inspired message will stand out more clearly when we have a better sense of how all five books relate to each other and have grown into their present shape both historically and literarily.

### What is the Pentateuch?

Beginnings are important. If we want to know what kind of a book we are reading, we skim over the first few pages to see its type; if we want to know what point of view an author is likely to adopt, we examine how he or she starts out. For this reason it is vital to recognize the special character of the first five books of the Old Testament. They stand apart as an introduction to the rest of the Bible and, more importantly, both the Jewish and the Christian faiths recognize them

as a foundation on which the rest of the Scriptures are built. They might be called a blueprint or a constitution which becomes the standard by which all other revelation is interpreted. The name "Pentateuch" comes from the title given in the earliest Greek translation that dates to the second century B.C., and means a five-part writing. This confirms that even from biblical times the Pentateuch has always been understood as a single work. Jewish tradition calls it "Torah," which does not so much mean "Law" as "Teaching." The Torah, or first five books, is the basic teaching of the Jewish faith.

The contents pages of the *New American Bible* (pp. vi–viii) include eight books in all under the title "Pentateuch." This is an unusual division, and it may be more helpful for us to look at the biblical arrangement in the threefold way that the Jewish Bible does rather than in the fourfold groupings that the *New American Bible* and other modern Christian Bibles follow. Thus, for the Jewish tradition there is the Torah (or "Law"), the Prophets, and the Writings:

| *The Law (Torah)* | *The Prophets* | *The Writings* |
|---|---|---|
| Genesis | FORMER PROPHETS | Psalms |
| Exodus | Joshua | Job |
| Leviticus | Judges | Proverbs |
| Numbers | I Samuel | Ruth |
| Deuteronomy | II Samuel | Song of Songs |
| | I Kings | Ecclesiastes |
| | II Kings | Lamentations |
| | | Esther |
| | LATTER PROPHETS | Daniel |
| | Isaiah | Ezra-Nehemiah |
| | Jeremiah | I Chronicles |
| | Ezekiel | II Chronicles |
| | The Book of the Twelve | |

The Catholic Bible also includes seven other books under the Writings which are lacking in Jewish and Protestant Bibles, and are often called, "Deuterocanonical" because they were written in Greek and not Hebrew: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

When ordered in columns like this, it becomes evident that prophecy includes both historical books and prophetic speakers. That is, both types are considered to call people back prophetically to the message in the Pentateuch and to show *how* that message was lived out or not lived out in history. The Writings, in turn, are a further grouping that should be understood primarily as books of reflection, piety, or further explanation to help us live the message of Torah day by day. In short, all the other books of the Old Testament flow from reflection on the Torah five.

## The Pentateuch as a Part of the Canon of Scripture

A "canon" means a rule of arrangement. Biblical books are in a certain order. We do not always know clearly why the Jews organized the Bible in exactly its present lineup, but we can be sure of one thing—it was never an accident. Every book is positioned with a very special reason in mind. They are read in that order, and how we interpret the message of a book is determined at least in part by where it stands in relation to other books. So, when we begin to study the Old

Testament, we must look for the clues that tell us why Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are lined up as they are. This must be done on two levels: (1) the *historical development* of how the books were put together and what pieces were added together to make up the contents of each; and (2) the *literary* shape or form of the books alone and together that give them such qualities as a plot, dramatic power, connected narrative story, and the like.

Study also involves another two aspects: (1) the *religious message* of these texts, and (2) whatever knowledge of Israel's *actual history* that we can discover. Thus, in all, when we set out to study the Pentateuch, we ask four questions: (1) What kind of literature is it? (2) What is it saying to us? (3) What really happened to Israel behind this account? (4) How did this literature reach this form? It is far easier to answer the first two questions about the literary qualities and the message of the text than to rediscover after more than two thousand years how accurately all the stories from Israel's history were transmitted, or the actual way the text itself was put together by generations of biblical editors.

## Moses as the Author of the Pentateuch

Traditionally, Moses has been considered the author of the Pentateuch. Nowhere do these books actually mention an author, but frequently they state that Moses taught the people their contents, especially the laws (see Lv 23, 1.23). If Moses is the actual author, then all the laws at least would have their origin in a direct revelation from God on Mount Sinai. The book of Nehemiah relates how Ezra brought forth "the book of the law of Moses which the Lord prescribed for Israel" (Neh 8,1), and insisted on a total commitment to its words. This passage has generally been understood to make the beginning of a concept of "canon," that is, that the book of the law of Moses was sacred and not to be revised or added to in the future. Ezra made his proclamation sometime after 458 B.C., far removed from the days of Moses in the late second millenium B.C. Moreover, the response of the people, and Ezra's efforts to explain it to them, suggest that they certainly did not already know this book as it was read out loud. Although they all recognized the teaching, they did not seem to be aware of this particular collection as a single work (read Neh 8–10).

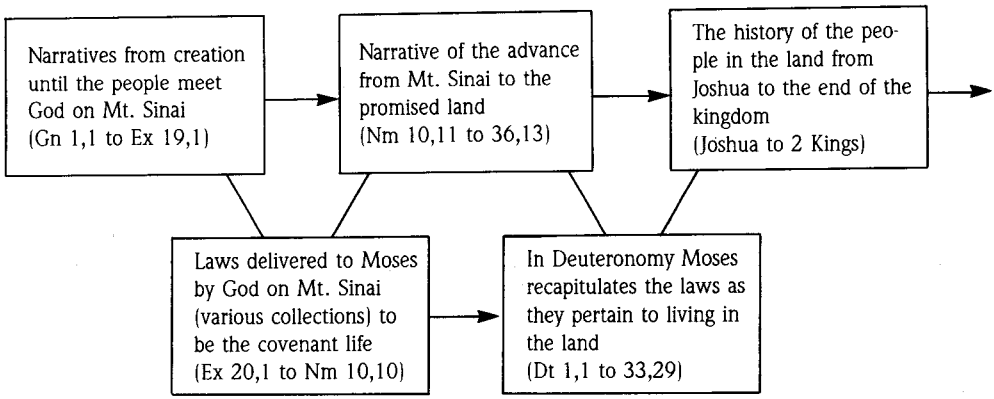
For this reason, and for many others, including the fact that many of the laws belong to situations much later than the time of Moses and the people in the desert (see, for example, the laws on worshiping at the one sanctuary in Jerusalem in Deuteronomy 12), modern scholars do not try to prove that Moses was the author of the written books of the Pentateuch. Rather, Moses was the founder of Israelite faith as we find it in the Bible. The Pentateuch, however, contains many, many traditions, laws, stories, hymns, and reflections added in by later generations right down to the time when Ezra finished it and declared it sacred so that further additions were no longer permitted.

## Story and Law

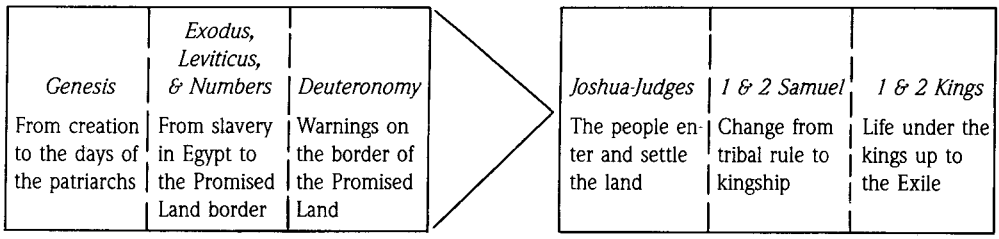
Before we begin to read the text closely, several preliminary issues must be discussed more deeply in order to answer our four questions. The first is: What kind of literature is it? At first glance, the *New American Bible* reveals that it is prose rather than poetry, except in a few places (for example, Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32). But what kind of prose? A quick survey of all five books reveals a mixture of two types: *laws* and *narratives*. Generally, they are separated into large sections of each, carefully alternated, but not completely. Every narrative part contains scattered commands and laws, and every collection of laws has a healthy episode or two of story. The books break down as follows:

| *Genesis* | *Exodus* | *Leviticus* | *Numbers* | *Deuteronomy* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALL NARRATIVES (Gn 1–50) | HALF NARRATIVE (Ex 1–19.24.31–34<br>HALF LAW (Ex 20–23. 25–30. 35–40) | ALL LAWS (Lv 1–27) | HALF LAW (Nm 1–10.18–19.27–30.34–36)<br>HALF NARRATIVE (Nm 11–17.20–26.31–33) | ALL LAWS (Dt 1–34) |

One could illustrate this dramatically by the following diagram:




These charts also indicate immediately that the laws are contained inside a story framework that traces the "history" events from the moment of creation down through time until the fall of the last independent part of Israel as a nation, the kingdom of Judah, before the attack of the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C. The Pentateuch has its own unity, but it is combined with the larger story of the nation that includes the books in the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings).



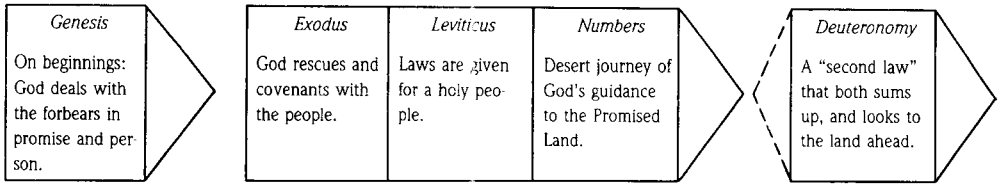

Because of this greater scope, we can be sure that the authors of the Pentateuch intended readers to see the many laws as part of the story. The mixture of law and story narrative seems boring to modern ears—we are not used to hearing long lists of regulations recited inside a good story. But to the ancient, the current laws that they lived by captured and expressed continuity with the stories of their past. They might say, "Our ancestors did *those* things, and we obey *these* laws, and as a result we are one!"

## The Structure of the Pentateuch

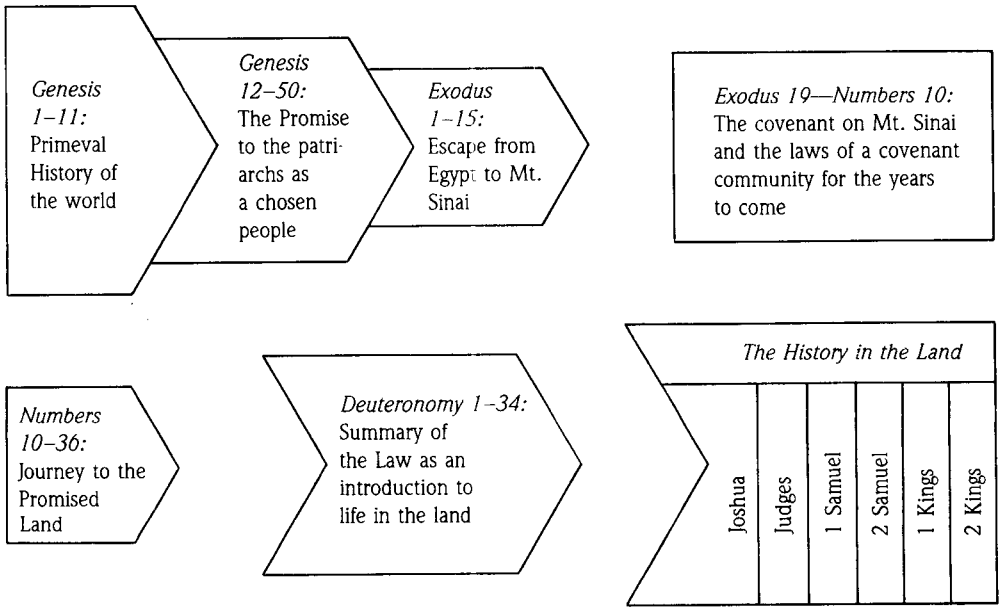
The present structure of the Pentateuch has a distinct shape to it. Not only is it story and law; it is also drama. Each book has its own subject matter that can be studied by itself, but only if the reader does not forget the larger movement of all five books. One way to look at this interlocking action among the books is to see three distinct stages:

- A The preparation period (Genesis)
- B The time of Moses in Egypt and Sinai (Exodus to Numbers)
- C The new preparation for life in the land (Deuteronomy)

This can be diagrammed as a forward movement:




This is the simplest diagram. Even more action appears when we trace the focus of God's "plan" through the developing plot. God creates the world for all peoples to praise the divine goodness, but humanity fails the divine hopes (Gn 1–11); so God chooses a single family or people that will prove faithful and teach all other nations (Gn 12–50). These in turn must learn the lesson of God's goodness through hardship and then deliverance (Exodus) and become obedient and formed as truly God's holy people (Leviticus and Nm 1–10). Then God will lead them to a Promised Land (Nm 10–36), which they will keep only if obedient and loyal (Deuteronomy). This new articulation can be diagrammed also:



Certain key themes flow through the five books, sometimes limited to only one book, sometimes found in several books. The most important are:

A The primeval history of the world before Israel's own remembered history began (Gn 1–11).
B The promises and blessings to the great tribal ancestors, the patriarchs and matriarchs (Gn 12–50).
C The rescue and exodus out of Egypt (Ex 1–18).
D The giving of a covenant and laws (Ex 19,1—Nm 10,10).
E Guidance in the wilderness (Ex 13–18; Nm 10,11—36,13).
F The conditional warnings that will guide Israel through its "salvation history" in the land (Deuteronomy).
G The conquest of the land (Genesis passim; Numbers and Deuteronomy).

These all interact. Note, for example, that the promise of land is announced as God's plan of action in Exodus 3,7-10; but it has been foreshadowed to Abraham in Genesis 12,1-3 and then noted as fulfilled in Deuteronomy 34,1-3, just as the conquest is to begin.

## The View of the Ancient Historian

This special character of the Pentateuch as both law and story alerts us to a fundamental problem that plagues most modern believers who read the Bible. Contemporary understanding of history differs greatly from that of the ancient world. Modern people expect proof through documents, witnesses, electronic records such as audio tapes or video recordings, and careful digging to find out just what happened, without all the propaganda and personal bias of a particular interest group. This is a difficult order to fill in any case, since all of us, even trained historians, have special points of view that color what we find. But it is an impossible order to demand of the ancient historian. They never thought this way, and as a result did not record the events of their time with such neutral objectivity, nor did they ever believe in telling the past as a simple and objective search for exactly what happened.

First, of course, they had no ways of getting much of the historical record. There were fewer written accounts and documents, there were no electronic or permanent ways of storing information in large and easy-to-produce books as we have, and there were no schools of science that valued exact observation as a primary end. Thus little or nothing was preserved for its own sake. Secondly, everything told us about something important for our lives. This meant that most "history" was seen as a lesson for humans to learn by. History was written largely to persuade people of a certain type of behavior or a certain outlook on the world. It was viewed much as we would understand propaganda for a good cause, perhaps like newspaper editorials that take sides to explain major events or argue for their favorite causes.

The bottom line, therefore, is that ancient "history" was more interested in explaining "why" something happened than what precisely took place, and more interested in the message it communicated for the audience, than in a record of accurate details for future study.

This insight will help us understand why they felt no awkwardness in adding long lists of laws to a good story. The laws were vital parts of the "message" that the story was supposed to tell.

### Looking at the Pentateuch as a Whole

Each book of the Pentateuch has its own unique flavor and each deals with a different part of the story and the laws by which Israel was to live. But even if we can read each one separately, it is even more important to read them together as a single story. We have already noted how these five books tell the history (in its ancient sense) of the world and of Israel in particular from the beginnings of creation down to the hopeful moment when Israel stands on the edge of a new land and a new home in Palestine. Two things can be noted about that history mixed with laws and lessons: the first is that it is to serve as a handbook or a rule book for how Israel is to live in the land it is about to possess (see Dt 4,1), and the second is that it certainly does not make a complete "history" although it is a complete story. It picks and chooses only certain events and certain themes to treat, and these all have very significant religious lessons to teach. That is, it is a theology book as much or more than it is a real history of the people.

It is hard for us to escape a desire to see a strict modern scientific history in the stories of the Pentateuch, but let's look at one illustration to help us. In Genesis 4, Cain kills Abel when they are the only two living children of Adam and Eve according to the story. Cain is punished by God and sent far to the East. Then the text says that "Cain had relations with his wife" in Genesis 4,17. But what wife was possible in a real history? Up to this point, the story has moved from the world's first killing to a new theme—how the world was populated—and it doesn't seem to bother the author that the second cannot fit this history just related. The only concern for the writer is to make a series of religious lessons that we can all learn from.

But the Pentateuch is not an idle story, either. It is very carefully crafted and put together to tell of the crucial things that happened in the past that we need to know in order to discover God. It tells of human weaknesses and urgings toward sin, about the failure of most of the world to know God, and the divine choice of Israel to witness the loving concern of God to others, and how God was revealed in a number of central events: (1) the choice of the patriarchs, (2) the giving of a covenant, (3) the law to be obeyed, and (4) the guidance through the wilderness to a promised land.

The Pentateuch is a great work of art. It tells a vital story of God's relationship to the world with power and beauty. It proposes history, but does not allow us to question it too closely about exact descriptions. It proposes religious and theological lessons but warns us not to treat it like a textbook full of lists of truths. It proposes a story that will teach us by sharing its experience with our experience. We must read it for enjoyment and for skillful storytelling. Once we have understood the whole as literature, we can ask, "How does this literary style give us history?" And how does it present its message? At this point, we can raise the critical questions of scholars about why and how it achieves its purpose.

## How Scholars Study the Pentateuch

### The Art of Interpretation

To get the most possible out of study of the biblical text, it is important to recognize that we need to read at two separate levels. On the first level, we appreciate the message of the Bible in the light of the faith that we have learned, often from childhood on. On the second level, we draw on the insights and expertise of scholarship in archaeology, history, ancient languages, and many other fields to better understand the cultural world behind the text and the thinking of those who wrote it. Both levels have in common that they do not come directly from our gifted

instincts, but from the learning of others. Both are necessary for a thorough understanding of the biblical message. The major task of the biblical scholar is to interpret the text by means of the scientific, linguistic, and cultural tools that are available. And the task of the theologian and religious leader is to interpret the biblical text by the traditions of faith.

This interpretation task works two ways: it tries to understand what the text *meant* to its original author and audience, and what it *means* now to the modern reader and believer. We bring our modern ideas and knowledge to bear on an ancient set of documents which expressed the ideas and knowledge of people long ago in order to discover how their thinking still has value for us in the present day. Many modern churchgoers have rejected all scholarly theories and approaches to the text because they think that these have robbed the Bible of its inspired character as God's word, and turned it into a completely ordinary literary document that can be treated like high school analyses of Shakespeare or Charles Dickens.

This viewpoint, however, misses something important: there really are two levels! Scientific study does not change the message of the text or deny its stated purposes, but it helps us to unlock and clarify what is going on in the text. It does this in three ways. (1) It relates the text to historical events that we may know about from other sources. (2) It explains unusual cultural customs. (3) It interprets special styles of expression. We might otherwise not know these things today, since they may have gone out of existence or have been forgotten in our culture, and only have been rediscovered in long-lost clay tablets that archeologists have recently dug up. At the same time, special studies of how human language works, how people hand down traditions, or how they record events, or even how they tell folk tales, help us to understand the ways in which biblical stories are shaped and laws are framed.

All writing is interpretation. The ancient scribe interpreted what he or she thought God was communicating; the churches and synagogue interpret what these words of revelation mean as norms for their congregations; modern scholars and believing readers in turn must interpret how these long-ago stories and events have any relevance for our lives today. The universal question of all who read the Bible is "What does it mean?" But this can be answered fully only when faith answers are aided by the scientific recovery of knowledge of the past. And nowhere in the Bible is this more crucial than in reading the Pentateuch. There is a long history of study of the Pentateuch which can help us to understand so much more than our ancestors two or three hundred years ago ever dreamed of knowing.

## A Brief History of Modern Critical Study

We can divide the development of study of the Pentateuch into five periods: (1) the exegesis (that is, the explanation of a biblical passage) of the Old Testament within the New Testament itself; (2) patristic (early church) exegesis; (3) medieval exegesis; (4) modern study from the Reformation on; and (5) current developments.

### (1) WITHIN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus himself and the various authors of New Testament writings often cite texts from the Bible, which of course was simply the Old Testament in their day. Almost always, they cite passages from the narratives, and rarely refer to the legal materials in Leviticus and Numbers, although the laws first given on Mount Sinai in Exodus 20–23 and then the speech of Moses on the law in Deuteronomy were known to them. Often the stories are cited as proofs for something that Jesus taught or that the apostles were preaching. An example is found in Jesus' teaching on

divorce that is found in Matthew 19,5 (and Mark 10,7f). Jesus quotes Genesis 2,24 "a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

A few stories from the Pentateuch are treated as a *type case.* Paul in Romans 4,9-22 cites the story of Abraham recorded in Genesis 15,1-6 and 17,1-5 as a forerunner of a chosen people having faith without having the law of Moses to live by. Abraham is viewed as a forerunner of the Christian believer; but in a general sense this usage may be seen as a type of prophecy—the Old Testament person foreshadows God's revelation to the Gentiles; like Abraham, they are called without living under the Law. Elsewhere, the authors of the Gospels and Acts quote Old Testament passages from the prophets and psalms as predictions of Jesus as Messiah and to help explain his death and resurrection. But occasionally, Paul uses an almost allegorical method of interpreting biblical texts. In Galatians 4,21-31, he treats the children of Hagar and Sarah, that is, Ishmael and Isaac from Genesis 16–21, as prototypes of Jews and Christians. The Letter to the Hebrews does the same with the story of Melchizedek and Abraham from Genesis 14,18-20 in Hebrews 7,1-10. The author wants to show that Melchizedek represents a foretype of Christ, who is the new and eternal high priest. To do this, however, he plays on the etymology of the name Melchizedek as "king of righteousness" and Melchizedek's position as king of Salem ("king of Peace") and fancifully builds up a case that since no mention is made in the text of the king's parents, his birth, or his death after the event, he prefigures the eternal character of Jesus as divine high priest.

Overall, however, New Testament use of the Bible is nearly always focused on showing the deep connection between the meaning of earlier revelation and the person and role of Jesus. A good source for all the quotations of the Old Testament in the New is R. Bratcher, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1987).

### (2) THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD

Many of the early Christian writers rarely cite the Bible at all since they are writing for Gentiles who are unfamiliar with the Old Testament. But soon the Church developed a whole approach to the Scriptures that was based on multiple levels of meaning. Generally there were three levels: the literal or historical meaning of the text, the moral lesson or purpose which we are taught, and the spiritual sense, which was a deeper, often hidden, meaning beyond the literal. This last was the most important. Since God's revelation often looked far beyond the understanding of the ancient writer who composed the Pentateuch to foreshadow Jesus, the meaning obviously was not simply tied to what the author knew or wanted to put down. Thus a passage often can be interpreted by a spiritual sense or an allegorical sense to arrive at a higher meaning intended by God. This led to elaborate allegories that often treated the basic meaning of the text as though it were merely a shell to be broken open and thrown away to get at the secret fruit within. Origen and his bishop, Clement of Alexandria, particularly developed the allegorical technique and it predominated among the patristic writers. One opposing school, founded at Antioch, wanted to keep the literal sense as the basis for all readings of the Scripture, but it was gradually rejected because of its connections to the heresy of Nestorius in the fifth century. Latin writers in the West generally followed the allegorical methods but were less flamboyant than theologians in the Eastern church.

The allegorical method flourished because all of these early commentators worked from the overriding conviction that the Old Testament should not be read for itself alone or for its

clearly stated message, but that every word contained a prophecy about Jesus, and thus always said more than it seemed on the surface.

### (3) THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

For much of the Middle Ages, Bible study was a pious exercise that relied on reading the various opinions of the early church writers on each passage of Scripture. One form that this took was the *catena,* or "chain" of quotes strung together and collected in books. The medieval world was largely a period in love with the allegorical approach. With the rise of Scholasticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, a significant change took place. Exegesis began to center on the theological meaning of passages, and valued a clear, literal interpretation of the texts. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, insisted on a thorough understanding of the literal meaning before proposing a spiritual level beyond it. These thinkers did not have command of Hebrew or Greek, unfortunately, and this limited their ability to understand the original words. They also still viewed the Bible largely as prophecy rather than as a history of a people's revealed knowledge of God. This problem created grave difficulties with taking the narratives seriously as stories about Israel rather than the Church.

The late Renaissance period and the Reformation's stress on the reading of the Bible by all Christians did lead to some advances in understanding the literal meaning of the text, but the reformers were still primarily interested in showing how their positions on Christ were predicted in the Old Testament. On the other hand, their interest in the text itself did lead to an explosion in knowledge of ancient Hebrew and Greek, and the production of dictionaries and grammars and other tools that would make a careful, scientific reading of the text really begin to develop in the decades ahead.

### (4) MODERN STUDY AFTER THE REFORMATION

The first (1678) truly modern Pentateuchal scholar was a French priest, Richard Simon. Simon noted after careful analysis that Genesis 1 and 2 seemed to differ in style, and that this was found elsewhere in Genesis, and probably showed that Moses used several different sources in writing the five books of the Pentateuch. For such a modest insight, his work was condemned by church authorities and put on the index. But it opened the door. He was followed in the next century by many others who gradually explored the differences between passages that constantly called God by the proper name "Yahweh," and those that called God by the more general term, "Elohim." The *New American Bible* always renders "Yahweh" by the English word "LORD," and "Elohim" by "God."

These could be traced as two complete parallel stories interwoven throughout the Pentateuch up to the Book of Numbers. Arguments developed over whether these had been originally two separate written works that told the same history of Israel, or whether there was one original version that was supplemented or added to over many centuries to make two variants with time. In the early nineteenth century, scholars began to note that the so-called "Elohist" passages really represented two separate accounts themselves, one more narrative and interested in the great interventions of God, the other more concerned with priestly and ritual actions. These were named in turn the Elohist and the Priestly strands.

By the mid-nineteenth century it was commonly agreed that there had indeed been three independent versions of the Pentateuch's basic story, which could be titled by the initials J (for

German "Jahvist"), E (for Elohist) and P (for Priestly). At the same time, the Book of Deuteronomy was acknowledged to be a fourth and totally separate source of its own which could be labeled D naturally enough. In 1878 Julius Wellhausen published his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel,* in which he not only brought together all of the arguments for the "four-source theory," as it was now called, but proposed dates for the original writing of each source and the four historical situations that led to the need to produce each different telling of the history.

Shortly after Wellhausen's great summary of the theory of four separate documents was published, attention turned to getting behind the four sources to the original units which made them up. Where did all the individual incidents and poems and stories and laws come from? Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century was born form-criticism, the search for the earliest and the smallest units of the tradition. The founder of this method was Hermann Gunkel, who wrote extensively on the form-critical analysis of Genesis and the Psalms. These scholars were interested in the literary *genres* that made up the four sources. If scholars could identify the special form of a poem or a hymn or a law or a narrative, they could probably identify the situation out of which it came. Thus the victory hymn of Israel over the Egyptians in Exodus 15 can be further specified as praise of God as a divine warrior who battles alongside Israel's troops and guarantees the defeat of the enemy. This helps us realize it originates in a tribal setting before the people were settled in a kingdom, and perhaps was sung at an annual festival of God's victory.

Form-criticism can even help distinguish different types of law. The ten commandments in Exodus 20,1-17 are simple and direct commands to do or not to do something. They differ completely from most of the laws in the Pentateuch which specify "if you do such and such, then the penalty will be the following." Because the laws had these two differing styles, scholars assume that the first kind was more like a catechetical instruction for children to help them memorize and summarize the law; while the second type came from actual court cases in which a decision had to be made.

It can honestly be said that the work of form-critical study of the Pentateuch has been the dominant task of scholarly study of the Bible in the twentieth century until recently.

### (5) CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Both source and form-criticism work directly from what we can know of the text by comparing it with other literary styles and literary works. Much of the inspiration for form-criticism, for example, came from the great work on the origins and development of fairy tales and folk stories by the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson in the last century. But these methods have been mostly analytical; that is, they break down the narratives and laws into smaller and smaller units and assign dates and origins to each piece. This makes it harder to read the biblical books as single works. There has been a definite movement to counterbalance this with rediscovery of methods that can be used to read the Pentateuch more fully as a whole story or literary work.

Some of these are (a) *rhetorical criticism,* that tries to show the literary artistry in the combination of pieces into a whole, and how the whole story is structured for effect; (b) *structural analysis,* which searches for the language patterns and levels of meaning that control both the plot and the underlying message by word clues; (c) *reader-response criticism,* that studies a text by paying attention to what the audience would hear and expect and how an author tries to reach that audience—it requires imagining ourselves in the world of the text. All

of these are under the broad category of modern literary theory, and have become very important new directions for biblical study, especially of the early books. Closely connected to these is (d) *canonical criticism,* which tries to understand how a book like Genesis or Exodus is read as part of the larger collection of sacred books. Is there importance in Genesis being first? What happens when we read the wisdom books before the prophets in the order of our present canon?

Still another major area of new study focuses on the contributions of the social sciences. Sociology gives us models for how various types of social groupings interact together that might throw light on how ancient tribal or town or small-kingdom forms of life were lived in the Bible. Anthropology and ethnology let us study people who are still living more like the ancients did than like us. Archaeology as well discovers and recreates life as it was from stones and human remains.

Truly, Bible study today employs all the tools made available by cooperative sharing of scholarly knowledge among different sciences. At the same time, none of the gains of one movement, such as those of the early source critics, are ever thrown away as useless. But they need to be supplemented and refined by later research. And whenever one branch of study concentrates too much on just a part of the picture, we can be sure that other scholars will arise to call us back to what we have neglected.

## The Fruits of Source Criticism

When scholarly criticism was born in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it first noted the difficulties in the text which suggested more than one style or author. Examples included the different names for God in the two creation stories of Genesis 1,1—2, 4a and 2, 4b—3,24. The first always calls the divine name "God," the second always uses the title "LORD God." The first is extremely formal and shows great reverence for God's transcendence, while the second makes God almost like a human being, working in clay to build a body and conferring in person with his creature. Many other places in the text show the same clear differences. Also, they noted many examples of double accounts which, except for some small differences, looked like exactly the same story being told twice. Compare Genesis 12 and 20 on Abraham passing his wife Sarah off as his sister; or the two accounts on how Hagar had to flee to the wilderness with Ishmael in Genesis 16 and 21.

After three centuries of study, scholars reached a general consensus in the late nineteenth century that there were indeed the four sources described in the section above. They can be briefly described in the following manner to reveal their individual characters and the probable date and historical situation from which they came:

### THE YAHWIST (J)

This is the earliest and most comprehensive source of the whole story. It was written in Judah, probably Jerusalem, under King Solomon or one of his successors in the late tenth century or early ninth century B.C. to show that the promises to Abraham were fulfilled in the empire of David. It uses the name Yahweh for God, and has a frank and earthy language about God's closeness to those he chooses. It naturally favors strong leaders of the type of David.

### THE ELOHIST (E)

When Solomon's kingdom fell apart and the north went its own way, it needed an official account of the tradition that reflected its anti-Jerusalem view. Written after 900 B.C., it prefers the

name *elohim* for God and strongly emphasizes Jacob and northern places such as Bethel, Shechem, etc.

**THE DEUTERONOMIST (D)**

Written in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. as a reassessment of the J and E traditions in light of pagan inroads and unfaithful kings, it agrees with the Elohist in its stress that the covenant with Moses is more important than kingship, and on the need for total loyalty to Yahweh; and it agrees with J on Jerusalem as the only center for worship after the fall of the north in 722 B.C.

**THE PRIESTLY SOURCE (P)**

Much of the P material on cult and law probably dates to the same time as Deuteronomy, but its ordering and some new materials are clearly reflective of the needs of the exilic community in the sixth century B.C. It stresses obedience to the law and the permanence of God's blessing no matter how desperate the situation, and it demands personal commitment to God. Most probably the P editors arranged all four of the sources into our present Pentateuch around 500 B.C. Both P and the Pentateuch as a whole reflect a definite Judean point of view in their final shapes.

J and E went along side by side as long as the two kingdoms lasted from 930 to 722 B.C. When the northern kingdom fell, its E story was carried down to Judah by refugees and there combined at some point around 700 B.C. with J into a single account. Still later, in the time of the fall of Judah itself in 587 B.C. and during its exile, D and P were also combined with JE to make our final JEDP. Editors and teachers from the Priestly circles put it into final shape, and possibly it was this work that Ezra the Scribe made all the people accept as the Book of the Law of God about 458 B.C. (see Neh 8–9).

## Form Criticism and the Process of Tradition

Although the results of source criticism have largely stood the test of time, the interest in going back behind these written sources led to the dominant role of form-criticism in this century. The heart of the form-critical method is recognition of the various literary genres and types used in biblical books. Each genre has a certain style and way of being expressed that corresponds to its purpose or function. So a letter always has a heading and salutation because a person who receives it will feel this personal touch and more likely pay attention to its message than if one just writes someone a list of facts on a page. In the opposite fashion, a telephone book always uses columns, alphabetic order, and a listlike format because a continuous letterlike paragraph would make it impossible to locate a name, which after all is the sole purpose of the directory.

Form-criticism assumes that communication is socially determined by rules that reveal what kind of thing someone is trying to say. Scholars recognized that, in ancient society especially, most people depended on oral recitation and memory aids because knowledge of writing was reserved to a few, and writing materials were scarce. Thus ancient ways of speaking were stereotyped—that is, they stuck to certain well-known patterns of saying things which were used according to the purpose that was intended, and these genres lasted over many centuries with little variation in form. Actually, each time something was said or passed on, speakers gave it a slightly different emphasis or touch. Only when it was written down and became fixed did it stop changing altogether—yet the basic form remained constant.

To understand Pentateuch texts from a form-critical viewpoint, first see if you can find the

beginning and end of a single section; (what are the limits of a unit?). Then attempt to name the genre or "form" (is it a hymn? law? temple lament? historical narrative? fable? myth?). Next, guess at what might have been its original purpose or setting in the ancient life situation (is it part of a long epic of great heroic ancestors? Is it from the temple liturgy? Is it part of a catechism for children? Is it propaganda?). Finally, ask what purpose does it play in this narrative or section (does it add a new episode to the plot? Does it support a line of argument? Does it explain the character of the hero?).

Our interest in the original form of a unit of biblical literature, and our investigation of where it came from in the life of ancient Israel, should draw our attention to a final critical consideration: that is to question the entire process of how traditions get passed on and grow or change. Both form and source criticism fall under a more general interest in the *transmission history* of the text (often called its "tradition history" or "redaction criticism"). Each original statement or story or law goes through a process of being combined with other units and then combined again in still larger works. Thus collections grow and stories are put in a new order or used in a different way for a new purpose. At the same time, each age looks at the old stories and laws and often rewrites or changes them to fit modern times.

The redaction critic tries to trace this history of transmission, editing, and adapting from the earliest stages right up to the final form as we have it in the Pentateuch today. It is a complex and difficult process that can only be done by those who know Hebrew, as well as the history and literary works of the Near East. But even the new reader can get some flavor of it by careful looking at a text, noting its structures and development, enjoying it as literature, and using the commentaries and other available tools.

## The Historical Background of the Pentateuch

### A Wide Diversity of Materials

The Pentateuch as a historical narrative begins with the creation of the earth and follows human history up to the time the Israelites enter the land of Canaan. In fact, however, few passages in the five books really reflect historical records of the past. First of all, many sections are made up of laws that have been included from collections dating to different periods in Israel's history. In a very loose way we could say they all belong under the name of Moses, the first lawgiver, because he founded the way of defining the covenant by means of religious laws.

Secondly, some stories are clearly not about ordinary time in history at all. All of Genesis 1–11 treats the creation of the world and the first events of human existence without any historical concreteness. As a literary genre, they do not fit the category of history telling. Instead they are about why things are the way they are—why God made humans this way, why we sin, why we die, why it is hard to obey God, why men and women are different, why the earth is plagued with floods, how God deals with evil. Such stories about the divine purposes at the beginning of creation, and about the nature of human life as we experience it, are usually called *myths* if they are told in story form. Genesis 1–11 is almost entirely based on the myth genre. And even the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis 12–50 are not a modern type of recalling history but largely model hero-stories built around folktale types of storytelling. Even though they are based on real history, it is often hard to pin them down to exact locations and events.

### Historical Dating of the Pentateuchal Traditions

Despite the difficulties in locating the exact historical events and pinning the materials to firm dates, the discoveries of other ancient tablets and chronicles, and the findings of archaeologists digging in ancient sites have given us a good idea of what each different period in the second millenium B.C., was like. With a certain amount of confidence, scholars have been able to identify the likeliest times for the different story complexes.

The patriarchal narratives fall somewhere between 2000 and 1500 B.C., the Exodus event between 1450 and 1250 B.C., and the invasion of the land of Palestine around 1250 to 1200 B.C. Some dates are more likely than others. Thus, because Egypt had foreign rulers between 1750 B.C. and 1550 B.C., the Joseph story fits best into this time frame; because Exodus 1,11 says the enslaved Israelites built the cities Pithom and Raamses, the Exodus can be dated to the reign of Ramesses II (about 1295 to 1235 B.C.). For further dates and times, consult an introduction to the Old Testament or a short history of Israel listed in the bibliography.

A brief chart of comparative events may also be helpful (see facing page).

## Reflecting on the Message of the Pentateuch

### The Theological Themes that Unite the Pentateuchal Books

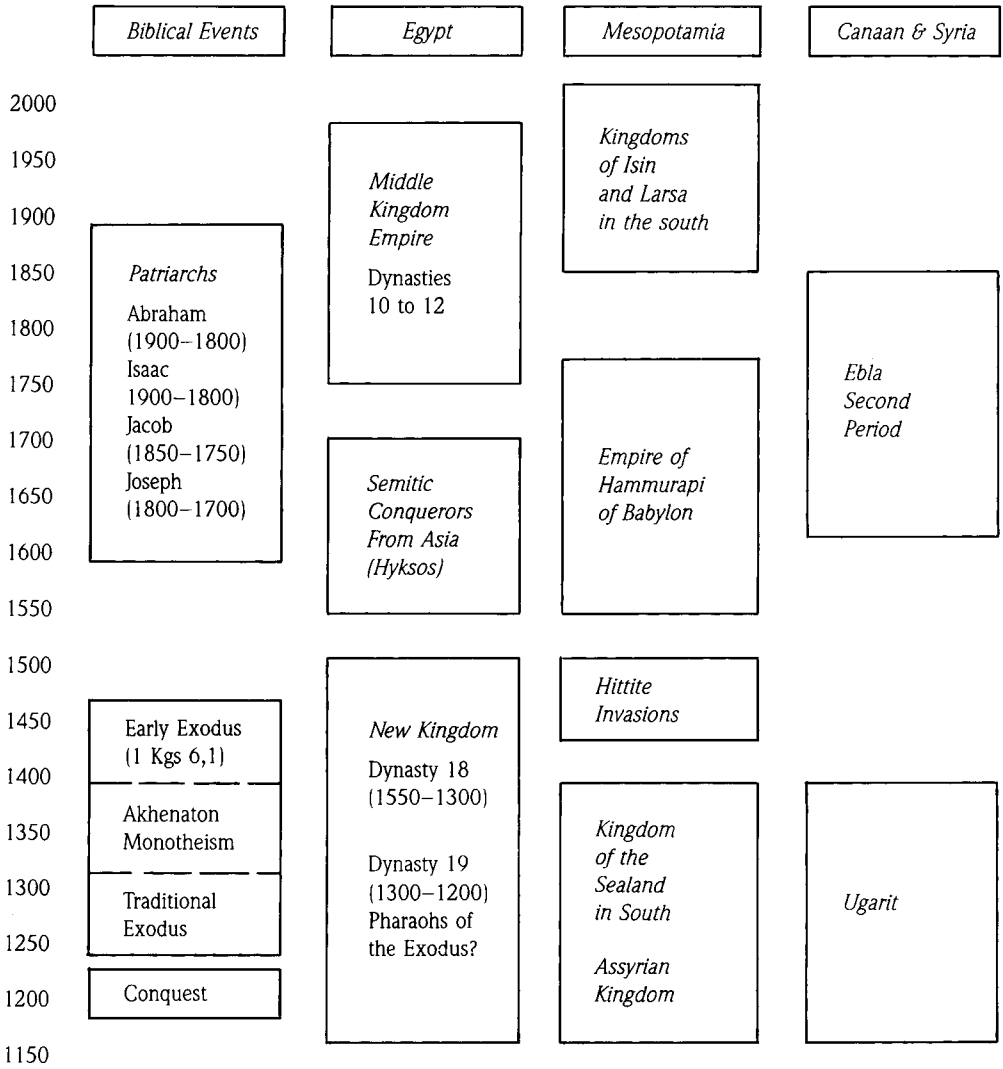
In reading the Pentateuch with its vast array of materials that reflect a world of thought so different from our own, we need some guideposts. We can generally find them in those themes and topics to which the books return over and over again. The demand for obedience to the divine will would be one such example. From Adam and Eve and their failure to obey, down to Moses' own failure when striking the rock for water in Numbers 20, great stress is laid on obedience. Another way of identifying central topics is to follow the dramatic action that focuses on a certain moment or specific action. The conferring of a covenant in Exodus 19–24 is an example of this type of guidepost. The biblical tradition is so rich that there may be trouble trying to limit such important topics to ten or twenty or even thirty. Nor would it be wise to do so, since every time we read we will discover new aspects of revelation that speak to us today.

Before listing any of the major theological themes of the Pentateuch, it will help us understand them all if we only remember that the Bible is not only a book *of* God, but *about* God. The central thread that weaves together all the other strands in these books tells of that God who acts in human history. More particularly, it almost never worries about the general need for a divine principle in the world, or about the gods of other peoples, but only about this God who has been revealed as the one God, and who chooses to be known to Israel in a special way. In short, the following themes all flow from the Lord's conversation with the people—and their response!

### Ten Central Themes

#### CREATION ESTABLISHES A GOOD WORLD

When Genesis 1 affirms that God created all things by speaking a word, it really means that all is ordered by the divine plan and works together in harmony. After creation was completed, God looked and "found it very good" (Gn 1,31). Thus, no matter what evil and failure will follow in world history, we are to recall that goodness will prevail.




**GOD HAS BLESSED HUMAN LIFE**

An important corollary of a good world is divine blessing upon it. Twice Genesis tells us that God blessed the human race (Gn 1,28; 9,1). Later, much is made of the blessing of Abraham (Gn 12,2), of Sarah and Isaac (Gn 17,16), of Jacob (Gn 27,27-29), of the whole people by Aaron (Nm 6,24-26), of the nation by Balaam (Nm 23,20), and, as the finale of the Pentateuch, of each tribe by Moses (Dt 33,1-29).

**HUMANITY HAS A TENDENCY TO SIN**

Much of the biblical story centers on the disobedience and sinfulness of God's creatures who refuse to heed or obey the divine will. In turn, many of the laws center on atonement (in

Leviticus particularly), and on the need for repentance and turning back to God (Deuteronomy particularly).

### GOD DELIVERS FROM ALL EVIL

If humanity tends toward rebellion, God tends toward forgiveness and mercy. God spares Adam and Eve, Cain and Noah, and others in order to give the human race a new start each time after it sins. God is revealed above all else as a liberating God in the Exodus event. This becomes the heart of Israel's praise for God in the Passover celebration.

### GOD FULFILLS THE PROMISES

The Pentateuch stressed again and again the fulfillment of the promise made to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses that God will make them into a great people. The Lord was never a god patterned on the recurring cycles of nature, but always a God of the future who calls forth in Israel a trusting hope that must expect new and greater divine acts still to come.

### THE COVENANT BINDS GOD TO ISRAEL

Naturally all people believe their god relates to the world somehow, but only in Israel do we find a union based on love and loyalty pledged to each other in a permanent union that actually respects the role of the human partner. The covenant is the heart of biblical faith because it expresses a unique bond between God and people, built on past deeds but committed to future collaboration.

### THE LAW EXPRESSES ISRAEL'S BOND TO GOD

The covenant establishes a relationship, but the laws of the Pentateuch show how that relationship can be lived out by the people—they are not restrictive rules, but a dynamic way of life that expresses faithfulness to God in actions as well as words, always with a touch of joy for flavoring.

### WORSHIP IS PRAISE IS THANK YOU

This may sound like a strange heading, but the point needs emphasis: to pray is to praise, and to praise is to thank God. The Pentateuch constantly points to what God has done for Israel, and the laws point to a spirit of rejoicing and thanksgiving on Israel's part in giving back to God a part of the gift to them: namely, praising the divine goodness in everything.

### RELIGIOUS LIFE IS LIFE IN COMMUNITY

Israel is a people, not a number of all-star individuals. Discovery of the divine will and proper praise can only be given by human voices joined together. God's many faces can be seen only when memories are shared and mutual goodness is shown in action to one another.

### GOD DIRECTS ALL OF HISTORY

The natural conclusion to be drawn from the preceding attributes of God is that everything falls under divine providence. The central conviction of Israel that there is one, and only one, God, leads to recognition of the divine lordship over all peoples and all events. God both blesses and punishes, sets obstacles as well as shows the way to pass through them. All things are in the hands of God, and so no course of action is thinkable except to walk in the ways of the Lord.

## Ten Themes of Biblical Spirituality for Today

If we trace the theological themes throughout the books of the Pentateuch, many rich implications will suggest themselves for our own spiritual life as disciples of the one God whom we find there. The following are a few important personal demands that listening to the message of the Pentateuch will place on our lives:

### ALL THINGS IN OUR LIFE MUST FLOW FROM FAITH

The great richness of biblical stories and topics you discover in these five books reveal no area of human activity divorced from the divine plan. Everything we do must be done from a deep faith in God's word that can be known and followed in each situation that we face.

### OUR PRAYER AND OUR DAILY LIFE MUST BE ONE

We cannot, like Solomon Grundy, pray on Sunday and go to hell for what we do on Monday. Nothing is so secular or so much part of civil life that God should not be a part of it. Our worship and daily prayer should bear upon the decisions and difficulties we actually face day after day. The Bible tells of wars and politics more than of anything else, but cannot find a single area where God is not present.

### WE MUST RESPECT GOD'S HOLINESS

Although the Bible has a tremendous ability to speak intimately of God in human terms, it never forgets that this is the all-powerful creator of the world who cannot be represented by idols or be treated like just another human being. The Pentateuch affirms both the closeness of God to the world and an abiding recognition that our proper place is to hear and obey the divine will, and never to try to manipulate God to do *our* will.

### WE MUST IN TURN IMITATE THE DIVINE HOLINESS

One of the greatest privileges granted to humans was to be made in the divine image and likeness (Gn 1,26). According to the laws of Leviticus, that must be translated into our daily actions as imitating the actions of the all-holy God who cares for the poor, the widow, the alien, and the orphan—that is, for all the weak who need help. See how Leviticus treats the duties to our neighbor according to this principle in Leviticus 19.

### HOLINESS NEEDS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO COMPASSION

Forgiveness is the hallmark of the divine holiness. When God identifies himself, it is as a God "bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation, on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex 20,6), and "forgiving wickedness and crime and sin" (Ex 34,7). The Israelites are often reminded that they must obey God because God delivered them from their suffering (Lv 19,33f).

### LIFE IS A JOURNEY

This may well be one of the oldest metaphors for human experience, but it is deeply rooted in the Pentateuch itself. Abraham is called to a new land; Jacob must find God far from home. Joseph must go to Egypt, and Israel must cross the desert to find a Promised Land. Not only does the journey motif stress the future to which we go, but also emphasizes our way of life as a *walking* with God and under divine guidance.

**ALL LIFE REQUIRES IS TRUST IN GOD**

What follows from the theology of a journey to God and with God? Trust! A key theme throughout the Pentateuch centers on divine guidance that does not fail even when the people turn from God's way. Once we know the way—that is, once we walk in the commandments of the Lord—we will develop the virtues of courage, confidence, and peace because we trust the covenant and the promise given to us as God's people.

**WE ARE PEOPLE OF THE LAND**

The goal of all the stories in the Pentateuch is the Promised Land. Israel never wanted to be a people divorced from the concrete realities of everyday life; and despite its own history of hardships, never embraced asceticism as an ideal. Its spirituality is a hardheaded one: wrestle with the proper use of the land and its resources, work for justice in social settings, mold the politics and economics to the demands of God's revealed law. As Genesis says, we are from the earth and to the earth we shall return (Gn 3,19). Then let us take the earth seriously!

**FAITH IS A FAMILY AFFAIR**

Israelite religion centered much of its practice in the home: sabbath observance, Passover, prayer, meditation and reading, education of children in the law. No faith grows unless nourished, and by paying attention to the home ambiance of many of the Pentateuchal stories, we can learn excellent lessons for how our families can celebrate together, teach one another about God, and give tangible witness to what we believe.

**PRAYER MUST FILL OUR LIVES**

Israel expressed itself in many public prayers on feast days, in sacrifices both daily and on special occasions, and in fasts at times of need; but it also emphasized the intimate prayers of the patriarchs, Moses, and others each time they experienced God's presence in their lives. In later biblical tradition this took shape in the Psalms, a collection of prayers and hymns that express the whole range of human feelings before God. Their boldness and yet humility can provide modern people with a profound way of dedicating their whole lives in prayer to God.

## A Short Reading List for Further Study

*General Introductions*

Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Paulist Press, 1985). A readable overview of all the critical and theological issues of Old Testament study.

Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress Press, 1979). A very technical but excellent introduction to each book of the Bible as it developed through the process of transmission and redaction.

*General Commentaries*

*The Collegeville Old Testament Commentary* (Liturgical Press, 1985–1987). Short, handy series written for Catholics.

*The Message of the Old Testament* (Michael Glazier, 1980–1984). Readable middle-level commentaries on the theology of each book of the Bible.

*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Prentice-Hall, 1990). A superb one-volume commentary on all of Scripture with fine background articles for study of the Pentateuch.

*Biblical Criticism*

Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (John Knox Press, 1982; second edition). Readable essays on each of the four sources.

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Summit Books, 1987). Most readable account ever of the excitement of discovering the four sources in the Pentateuch.

Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Fortress Press, 1971). Very fine explanation of how source theory works in the Pentateuch.

Terence J. Keegan, O.P., *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Paulist Press, 1985). It lives up to its title, giving a very readable explanation of all the modern critical methods of Bible study.

Margaret Nutting Ralph, *"And God Said What?"* (Paulist Press, 1986). A very understandable introduction to literary forms in the Bible.

Walter Rast, *Tradition History and the Old Testament* (Fortress Press, 1972). A simple, handy, introductory explanation of redaction and transmission history methods.

Gene Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Fortress Press, 1971). Very clear explanation of form-criticism.

*Bible Dictionaries*

Paul Achtemeier, editor, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (Harper & Row, 1985). Another excellent, up-to-date resource book.

John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Bruce Publishing, 1965). A superb work on almost every facet of Bible study.

*A History of Israel*

François Castel, *The History of Israel and Judah in Old Testament Times* (Paulist Press, 1985). An excellent history in just about a perfect size.

*The Individual Books of the Pentateuch*

Lloyd Bailey, *Leviticus* (John Knox Press, 1987). Very good handbook to the various laws in Leviticus.

Peter Craighie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Eerdmans, 1976). A readable and thorough explanation of the theology of Deuteronomy.

Conrad L'Heureux, *In and Out of Paradise: The Book of Genesis from Adam and Eve to the Tower of Babel* (Paulist Press, 1983). A delightful explanation of all the myths of Genesis 1–11.

Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (Schocken Books, 1966). Very fine explanation of the message and background of Genesis from a Jewish view.

———, *Exploring Exodus* (Schocken Books, 1986). The follow-up to *Understanding Genesis:* just as readable, just as informative.

*Other Literatures of Biblical Times*

Pritchard, James, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969). An excellent anthology. Referred to as ANET.

# GENESIS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1–62 of the Old Testament*]

## An Overview of the Book of Genesis

If we begin our study of the Bible with Genesis, it is important to remember that this is clearly *the beginning.* Whatever it contains has been chosen and put into place to provide the foundation for all that will follow. Although it makes great story reading in its own right, it also requires attention to the particular religious message and the key themes that it develops if we are to fully understand its purpose. This suggests that the best starting place will be a quick reading of the entire fifty chapters, just glancing over them to get the drift of the "plot." After a reader has the basic story in mind and has gotten a small taste of its style, or better, the varied styles that change throughout the book, a second detailed study of each section will reveal much more.

### Its Major Outline

Traditionally scholars have divided Genesis into two parts: Chapters 1–11 and 12–50. This is based on their subject matter and the type of literature that is found in each part. Both parts appear to be a single continuous story, but closer examination uncovers strong differences between them. Simply put, the first eleven chapters discuss the time of creation and the earliest human ancestors. The second part describes very particular traditions about the concrete clan or tribal ancestors of Israel itself. As literature, Genesis 1–11 is defined as "myth," in which every story seems to describe some sort of model, for bad or for good, of the proper relations of God to the world of humans. It is often referred to as the "primeval history." On the other hand, the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis 12–50 relate individual events and incidents that have shaped the special identity of Israel about itself. Both types of writing give us models to follow, but of course not in the same way. The world of the primeval history has little in common with what we ourselves experience in the world. It is a special world when things were different and the laws of time and intimacy with the gods were different from our own time. In contrast, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the others in Chapters 12–50 wrestle with the same world that we do, and their decisions have consequences which are concrete and very much part of the later history of a people.

We can perhaps note some differences between them in a chart:

| *Genesis 1–11* | *Genesis 12–50* |
|---|---|
| 1. It is set in time that is before human history | 1. It is set in historical times well known to ancient records |
| 2. Its exact place is vague—somewhere to the East | 2. It is set in Palestine and Egypt and northern Mesopotamia exactly |
| 3. The persons seem like symbols—nothing is known of their lives | 3. The persons have names and engage in actions typical of the second millenium B.C. |
| 4. Many of the stories have the form of myths like those known from Mesopotamia | 4. The stories are largely sagalike or epic history narratives similar to oral lore of tribal groups |
| 5. Most of the events seem to take place in a supernatural setting unlike our own | 5. The major stories keep events close to the type of experience all human eras share |

6. The purpose deals only with the beginnings of humanity long before Israel's time

6. The purpose is to trace the direct tribal and clan ancestors of Israel itself

## Subdivisions of Genesis 1–50

This two-part structure can be broken down further into smaller narratives that carry the story forward and are themselves joined by a variety of means that explain how they relate to one another:

*Genesis 1–3*

The story of God's creation and the first human sin

*Genesis 4–5*

The evil of sin grows and spreads through the world

*Genesis 6–9*

Evil overwhelms the world; God must begin again with a new blessing

*Genesis 10–11*

People again multiply across the earth but sin persists

*Genesis 12–25*

Abraham is chosen to receive God's blessing and give witness to others

*Genesis 21–27*

The son, Isaac, inherits the promise and passes it on

*Genesis 27–36; 48–50*

Jacob in turn receives the promise; he is blessed with and bears the 12 sons who will become Israel

*Genesis 37–50*

Joseph brings the promise to Egypt while remaining completely faithful

This is only a sketch for our study. Note how four major sections of the primal history match four sections of the great founding leaders of Israel. The dividing lines are not sharp, and many overlap each other, because the editors were skilled storytellers who wove the parts together to make one whole. But they hardly disguise their intention to show that there are stages in the history of humanity, and of Israel in particular, and each period can have major impact on what follows, so we should be prepared to look for the stages of developments.

Taking a cue from this grouping around major figures, other commentators break the book down into just four blocs of material:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | The prologue: all humankind's primeval history of blessing, and failure through sin | Gn 1–11 |
| B | The story of Abraham and his call, blessing, and promise | Gn 12–25 |
| C | The stories of his son Isaac and grandson Jacob and how they carry on the blessing. | Gn 26–36 |
| D | The story of Joseph in Egypt in preparation for God's great self-revelation in the Exodus. | Gn 37–50 |

These four sections indicate clearly enough that the "plot" of Genesis focuses on major decisions by key individuals. The unlikely conclusion of the story finds this people apparently in prosperity and blessing somewhere else than where they were promised. In this sense, the book of Genesis can be read as an unfinished plot of a mystery story.

### Division by the Special *Toledoth* Name Lists

The *New American Bible* points out in its introduction to Genesis that the book is divided into separate sections by genealogical notices, each of which begins "these are the descendants of . . ." In the list of eleven below, it should be noted that the *NAB* is not always consistent in the way it translates the same Hebrew phrase, nor should this particular method of dividing be considered necessarily the most important. It did serve one of the editor's purposes, namely to show that generations come and generations go, but God's plan moves ahead no matter what. Nevertheless, these lists are truly dividers since they often group all the members of a single family line or tribe in one place to mark a break with what has just gone before. However, sometimes the list is given before the events, and sometimes at the end. This can easily be discovered by looking up each example:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gn 2,4a | "The descendants of heaven and earth," that is, the second story of creation, begins after this statement. (Here the *NAB* refers to it as "the *story* of the heavens.") |
| Gn 5,1 | "[T]he record of the descendants of Adam," introduces the long break between the first family and the days of Noah. |
| Gn 6,9 | "[T]he descendants of Noah," introduces the story of the flood. |
| Gn 10,1 | "[T]he descendants of Noah's sons," marks the great expansion of peoples all over the world. |
| Gn 11,10 | "[T]he descendants of Shem," marks the addition of a new list of the nations of the world by the P source. |
| Gn 11,27 | "[These are] the descendants of Terah," begins the story of Abraham. |
| Gn 25,12 | "[T]he descendants of Ishmael," closes off the life of Abraham's "other" family through Hagar and Ishmael. |
| Gn 25,19 | "[T]he family history of Isaac," opens the story of Jacob's birth and destiny. |
| Gn 36,1 | "[T]he descendants of Esau," ends the role of the second brother, Esau, and directs us to Jacob's children, especially Joseph. |
| Gn 36,9 | This is a repetition within the Esau list which marks its conclusion. |
| Gn 37,2 | "This is his [Jacob's] family history," marks the opening of the story of Joseph and his brothers which goes to the end of Genesis. |

## The Primeval History in Genesis 1–11

In studying these chapters, several aspects should be noted. (1) They are generally described by form-criticism as a combination of myths and genealogical tables. (2) They are described by the source critics as a combination of the materials from the Yahwist (J) and the Priestly (P) sources. (3) Many of the individual stories have parallel narratives that are known from other ancient Near Eastern peoples, often much older than the biblical version. (4) The final masterpiece has its own purpose and beauty that makes it neither the same as other peoples' versions, nor very much like either the J and P accounts taken by themselves; and yet much more than just a collection of myths and genealogy lists.

### J and P Sources

If we remember that the J stories are much older (probably) than the P stories, and at first stood alone as the basic proclamation of the beginnings of the world, we can first glance at each group separately:

| J<br>*(10th century)* | P<br>*(7th to 6th centuries)* |
|---|---|
| | Gn 1,1—2,4a<br>The creation of the world |
| Gn 2,4b—3,24<br>The human condition at creation, and sin | |
| Gn 4,1-26<br>Cain and Abel: even the children sin but God continues to care. | |
| | Gn 5,1-32<br>The list of long-lived ancestors from Adam to Noah. |
| Gn 6,1-4<br>More evil caused by the sin of angels and humans. | |
| Gn 6,5—9,29<br>The flood story with 40 days and 7 pairs of clean animals, etc. | Gn 6,5—9,29<br>The flood story based on 365 days and one pair of each animal only, etc. |
| | Gn 10,1-7. 20-24<br>Table of all the nations |
| Gn 10,8-19. 25-30<br>Table of Nations from a different source. | |
| Gn 11,1-9<br>The story of the tower of Babel. | |
| | Gn 11,10-32<br>The continuation of the Table of Nations down to Abraham. |

It might be noted that there are several duplications in these lists: both J and P have a list of great ancestors between Adam and Noah (4,17-26 versus 5,1-32); both have a flood story that is now hopelessly intermixed as a single account; and both have a Table of Nations that spread over the earth in Genesis 10–11, that is also interwoven as a single narrative list.

## The Theology of the Yahwist Source

If we look at the incidents chosen by the J source to tell its story of the times of creation, we find that they generally center on the tension between God's goodness to the earth and the human response of disobedience or sin. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the angels and the women, the wicked generation of the flood, the sons of Noah, the people who build the tower of Babel, all are given ample signs of God's love and bountiful providence as they fill the earth. Even so, each generation rises in disobedience according to one of the deadly vices: greed, envy, lust, pride. The author uses a general pattern that structures the stories:

A God acts lovingly towards humanity,
B people disobey God and sin,
C God announces punishment,

D the punishment is given,
E God ends in compassion by showing mercy and a new blessing.

At the same time, there is a general message in the repetition of the pattern: humanity as a whole has failed to respond to the intimacy that God offered early humans when he spoke with them face to face. Sin spread until it contaminated all people, even in the second round (as is evident by the fact that all nations speak different languages in Gn 11,1-9). Recognition of God's mastery over all of the earth and all events in history, as well as of the divine love for humanity, will have to take a new form; and that form will be the choice of a single family or nation, through Abraham, which will respond to God's goodness and teach other people. That new promise will open Chapter 12.

## The Theology of the Priestly Source

We can assume that the priestly writers knew and accepted as basic the J account of sin, punishment, and grace with the hope of a chosen people still in the future. But they also knew that Israel might understand the J source as a promise of control over the land and of great power for the descendants of Abraham to rule over other nations (such as David had exercised). P was aware that by the sixth century B.C. Israel had also known defeat and the loss of ten of the twelve tribes, and they wished to add a focus to the promises of creation that stressed the divine control over world events which transcended any human powers and might be much larger in scope than Israel's own fortunes as an independent world power. Thus in Chapters 1 and 9, when God establishes and reestablishes the purpose of creation, P says that humans are made in the image of God (1,27 and 9,6) to govern the earth, and fill it. But the stress is on behaving as God would act. This is given a vast cosmic setting by P when it prefaces the history of the world by an overwhelming creation of all things by the divine word alone, by extending the lives of the great ancestral leaders to hundreds of years each, by describing the flood in solar years, and by giving the rainbow as a heavenly sign.

The very neatly ordered genealogies of Chapters 5 and 10–11 are also part of P's insistence that God has a plan that is not subject to human whims nor even upset by human sin—God is in charge—we must learn trust! Divine blessing can be relied on, even when punishment is needed, as J had pointed out. But P's larger vision was a perfect answer to an Israel which was despairing that God really stood by them in their times of defeat and exile.

## The Overall Message of Genesis 1–11

The act of combining J and P, as well as all additions and refinements made by others, including the editors who put it all together, emphasized the goodness of the creator and the moral demand on humans to obey the divine plan. God begins creation by speaking the world into being and seeing that all that was spoken is good. It is no accident that God then speaks to each of the first generations—Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, and finally Abraham—with directives. Nor is it an accident that these accounts stand as a prologue to the whole body of Torah teaching that fills the latter part of the Pentateuch.

The patterns of divine goodness established in Genesis 1–11 also demand that proper worship be given to God alone. Both the J and P use of myths and their sly attacks on pagan practices (such as their ridicule of excessive worship for the supposed supernatural power of

serpents in Genesis 3) are intended to show that only the moral goodness of God is an adequate basis for worship, and that most Canaanite religious practices and beliefs pervert God's plan.

## Some Particular Helps in Reading Individual Passages

Genesis is a literary masterpiece as well as an inspiring theological message. To appreciate it better, here are a few examples of what to note about sections as we read:

### Gn 1,1—2,4a

The six days of creation are divided into two panels of three days each that are matched:

***Prologue: Introductory statement that God can control Chaos***

| | |
|---|---|
| **Day 1** Heavens and light are made | **Day 4** Specific light fashioned in the sky |
| **Day 2** Waters established on their own | **Day 5** Fish and sea creatures made to fill the water |
| **Day 3** Dry land made and vegetation added | **Day 6** The animals are created for the land, and then, finally, humans |

**Day 7** Epilogue: God rests after completing all creation, and is in total control

A comparison of the two panels reveals that in the first three days God builds a stage of heavens, water, and land; and in the corresponding second three days fills this stage with its primary actors, each in turn. The last day in each panel, days three and six, have a double task. This serves to emphasize how especially fertile the land is. Moreover, the climactic seventh day is a celebration of the goodness of this creation, and becomes the model for human rest and celebration of divine goodness each week.

The pattern of creation was not invented by the P authors. The same order is followed in the ancient creation myth from Babylon called the *Enuma Elish* in which Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, and at the same time young king of all the gods, fashions the world from the body of Tiamat, the mother goddess whom he had slain in battle. Thus the *Enuma Elish* describes Marduk's creative actions in a sequence with many parallels to the account in Genesis 1:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| It begins with a conquest of chaos by order | = | The opening statement of Gn 1,1-2 |
| Heavens created and separated from the water | = | Day 2, the creation of heavens and separation of the waters |
| The earth is set over the waters | = | Day 3, the land appears from the waters |
| Creation of sun and moon | = | Day 4, sun and moon are set in heaven |
| (No mention of plants or animals) | = | (Days 5–6, the creation of fish, birds, and animals) |
| Creation of human beings | = | Day 6, the creation of humans |
| The gods rest and celebrate | = | Day 7, God rests |

**Gn 2,4b—3,24**

This is an independent account of the creation which is older than Genesis 1 and uses a number of mythic story themes known from Mesopotamia, although the biblical version is unique as a whole and far more sophisticated in its vision than anything else we have found in the ancient world. However, similarities exist between parts of Genesis 2–3 and the following:

**The Myth of Etana** (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* 114–118). A great eagle eats the young of a serpent, who in turn, with the help of the gods, catches the eagle and traps it in a pit. Etana, a first human being, is childless, and prays to the gods to get to heaven to eat of the plant of birth. The sun god Shamash leads Etana to the eagle, who promises to fly him to heaven to reach the plant of birth (or new life). The story breaks off but is seems that he gets there.

**The Myth of Adapa** (ANET 101–102). The gods create a first man, Adapa, who has great wisdom. He catches and breaks the wings of the south wind one day because it prevents him from fishing. When the gods begin to miss the breeze, they find out that Adapa has caused this, and so Anu, the head of the gods, summons him to heaven to account for himself. He is warned not to accept Anu's offer of the bread and water of life, because it is really food of death. When Anu extends the offer, Adapa refuses what really does turn out to be the bread and water of life, and thus loses the chance for immortality for human beings.

**The Myth of Baal, chief god of Ugarit** (a town in northern Syria; ANET 129–142). El is the father of the gods and lives as ruler of the heavens and the earth at the "source of the two rivers."

**Ezekiel 28,11-19.** This is an important version of creation related by Ezekiel about the king of Tyre, which possibly reflects Canaanite beliefs that the first man was a king, paradise was a sacred mountain, that it was covered with precious stones, and that the king was known for great wisdom. Then he sinned and was driven from the mountains by means of cherubim, a kind of protective animal god.

**Gilgamesh** (ANET 72–99). This Babylonian myth tells the story of the search for the gift of immortality, and involves punishment and death because the hero Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu cut down the sacred trees in the cedar forest of the gods, which is forbidden. Later Gilgamesh is given a second chance to hold onto the plant of continued rejuvenation, but loses even that to a serpent and must return home fully mortal.

More ancient parallels can also be found, but these should be enough to help us read the accounts of human origins and sin in the light of the pressing questions faced by all the ancient religious stories: why are the gods immortal but not we humans? Why do we receive punishment from the gods in life? What is our fate? The major differences between the biblical accounts and the stories of other religions center on the clear connection in the Bible between a single God's loving care for humanity, the moral refusal of people to obey God, and the rightful sentence of mortality that now burdens us, together with a change in our relation to the land that now requires backbreaking labor to make it a blessing.

**Gn 4,1-16**

The story of Cain and Abel tells a moral about how evil flourishes and leads even to fratricide. But it also builds on an age-old theme of the conflict between the farmer and the stockgrazer. The musical *Oklahoma* sings how the farmer and the cowman should be friends, but their

interests conflict—the farmer wants to fence in and protect his plot of land, the cowman requires wide-open spaces over which the cattle or sheep can move to new pastures. This was a conflict well known to the early Israelites, who as nomadic shepherds came up against the protected and settled lands of the Canaanite farmers. It is no accident that the evil that is displeasing to the Lord just happens to come from the (Canaanite) farmer Cain!

**Gn 4,17-22; 5,1-32**

The genealogies of Genesis 4–5 with the enormous ages of the patriarchs are not intended to be understood as literally exact. Do not fail to compare them with the enormous ages given to the primeval kings of Sumeria in an ancient list (ANET 265) of those who lived before the great flood!

| | |
|---|---|
| A-lu-lim | 28,800 years |
| Alalgar | 36,000 years |
| En-men-lu-anna | 43,200 years |
| En-men-gal-anna | 28,800 years |
| Dumuzi | 36,000 years |
| En-sipa-zi-anna | 28,800 years |
| En-men-dur-anna | 21,000 years |
| Ubar-tutu | 18,600 years |
| *The flood* | |

Such genealogy lists are typical of many peoples who keep largely oral traditions. The beginning and end names in a list are carefully preserved, but the middle names tend to change from place to place, depending on where those lists are recited. They are an exciting and mysterious device for dreaming how long the age that the world has existed. And they serve the biblical authors well as a way of linking the different events in those ancient days to the more historical times we all know about.

**Gn 6,1—9,27**

This section of the Genesis narrative centers on the flood. Two observations should preface serious study of what it means. The first is that it must have been very important to all biblical thinkers, because both the Yahwist and the Priestly traditions had separate versions of the flood and both were considered important enough to save. Secondly, it has a very strong resemblance to similar flood stories told in both Babylon and Syria, although it has some differences from both. The more famous parallel is in the Gilgamesh myth where the hero, Utnapishtim, is warned to build an ark and take some of every kind of animal on earth aboard before the gods destroy the world with a flood. After the flood has killed all living things left on the land, the hero sends out birds (just as in Gn 8,6-12) when the ark becomes stuck on a mountain peak. When the hero finally leaves the ark, he offers a sacrifice to the gods. They are so grateful that they bless him and make him immortal. This is quite close to the plot of Genesis except that in the pagan versions no real cause of human evil is given for why the gods decreed a flood; and in the biblical version, Noah does not receive immortality as a gift at the end. In still another ancient flood myth, *Atra-Hasis,* the authors retain the same basic plot, but suggest that the gods were tired of human noise that disturbed their sleep, and so decided to do away with humans.

Again, Genesis 6–9 must be read through the eyes of the ancient Israelite who knew of the pagan versions and their strained tensions between the divine and human worlds. The author

insists that the God of Israel acted out of justice and in response to moral evil in humans, but still continued to love them and hold out the promise of blessing at the end.

**Gn 9,28—10,32**

The second set of genealogies is placed after the flood story to link this terrible event long before the dawn of history with the call of Abraham in the very real and concrete towns of Ur and Harran in Mesopotamia. Like Genesis 4,17—5,32 it bridges the times between major moments in the history of divine interventions. This section is made up of two separate traditional lists of names for the world's peoples, one from the P school and the other from J. The earlier list of J can be generally recognized right away in 10,8-30 by its more narrative flavor; the P list in 9,28—10,7 and 10,21-24 (and continued in 10,31f) is much drier, simply presented as a list of names. But the editors of Genesis 1–11 have skillfully put them together to form a montage of different peoples spreading from the family home of Noah after the flood to fill the far corners of the earth.

**Gn 11,1-9**

The tower of Babel story is an excellent example of the J writer at work. It is told with humor and irony and makes a very pointed attack against pagan religious ideas. It is a story about words and speaking, but it is the misuse of words that is at stake. The plot pictures all people speaking the same language and this leads them in pride to want to have a temple to reach heaven that they might have "a name for themselves," that is, to be like God. But note that as they build this tremendous monument, God looks down from heaven and can barely make it out because it is so puny by God's standards. He must come down to see it. As a result he halts their sinful ambition by confusing their languages. The author then ends with a bit of sharp humor. The city of such arrogance was called *Babel,* but God made it *balal,* the verb in Hebrew for "confused in language." Verse 9 is a pun and mocks the claims of Babylon and its god Marduk to be so mighty over other peoples.

**Gn 11,10-32**

The primeval history now closes with a Priestly list parallel to that of Genesis 5,1-32. Each patriarch is recorded with the age at which he died. The lengths are much less than those of the ten before the flood, descending from 600 years for Shem, the son of Noah, down to the four hundreds for Arpachshad, Shelah, and Eber, and rapidly down to the two hundreds for the remaining names. Of course, like the ages in Chapter 5, these are not to be taken as actual ages, but as a device for showing that the "golden age" of old was rapidly coming to an end as the people became more and more like ourselves.

Name lists were important in the ancient world for remembering who was related to whom. And it will seem obvious, by the time we have looked at many of these lists, that the names do not really represent individuals at all, but whole tribes or peoples. This can be direct, as in 10,22 where P writes that Shem was the father of Elam, Assyria, and the Arameans; or indirect, when a nation is identified by a famous founder or hero, such as Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who is listed as the father of the Arabs in Genesis 25,12-18.

The name lists in Genesis 1–11 are very important parts of the overall story by highlighting the passage of time between crucial moments of sin and grace, and by serving as times of blessing between the particular stories of sin and punishment. Thus it can be charted (see facing page):

| *Key Moments of Sin, Punishment, Blessing* | *Genealogy Lists* |
|---|---|
| *Genesis 1,1—4,16*<br>The story of creation and the blessings and sins of the first generations | |
| | *Genesis 4,17—5,32*<br>The long age of blessing of the ten great patriarchs before Noah's time |
| *Genesis 6,1—9,27*<br>Sin, flood as punishment and blessing on Noah, followed by further sin by his sons | |
| | *Genesis 9, 28—10,32*<br>The lists of all the nations known to ancient Israel to show the divine blessing of fertility and having dominion over the earth |
| *Genesis 11,19*<br>Sin again rises up out of human pride after blessing | |
| | *Genesis 11,10-32*<br>God's blessing continues, now focusing on one family, that of Terah and Abraham |
| *Genesis 12,1—?*<br>The story of Abraham and the new direction of divine blessing | |

## Church Use of the Genesis Story of Human Creation

It is well to note that the account of making humanity in the divine image and likeness figures significantly in a number of official Catholic church documents. For example, Pope Paul VI looked to Genesis 1,28 as a significant reference in his development of the responsibility to subdue the earth and its resources intelligently (*Populorum Progressio* #22). And along the same vein, John Paul II went to Genesis 1,26-30 for a reference to the "goodness" of creation in the Creator's eyes, and therefore grounding the claim that redemption is possible (*Redemptor Hominis*). Likewise, the United States bishops in their pastoral *Economic Justice for All* used

Genesis 1,26f to show that all human relations must be based on the acknowledgement of the dignity of those created in God's image. This helps form the economic reflections of the letter.

## The Great Ancestor Narratives in Genesis 12–50

As already noted above, the second major part of Genesis is arranged around the lives of four patriarchal figures: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Each of these represents a forward step in the divine plan to bring about recognition of the divine blessing promised to the world if only humanity would obey and honor God. Since humans as a whole proved very stubbornly unresponsive to God's self-revelation through long ages, God decided to turn to a new plan and work through a single chosen people who would respond and witness God's blessings to all nations.

And where is this plan laid out? Why, right at the beginning of course, in Genesis 12,1-3. When we read this call of Abraham by God, all the subsequent themes are present:

verse 1 the promise of a land for his family;
verse 2 the promise of blessing through empire and fame, and probably children ("a great nation");
verse 3 the promise to rule other nations and to mediate God's blessing to them.

These themes will echo throughout the narratives to follow, especially the combination of (1) a son to carry on the name and (2) a land of promise. It is very important to understand that God never promised anyone a rose garden. The narrators make it a story of failure and success, obedience and disobedience, a lesson of deep faith in some stories, and of a sinful lack of trust in others. But divine providence and guidance overcome all the obstacles, to carry blessing to this small people even in the unlikely land of their enemy, Egypt.

### The Literary Questions of Genesis 12–50

Scholars have identified many individual passages of both J and P throughout the patriarchal stories, and have added one more source, the Elohist, which is quite close to J in spirit but does not yet use the name of Yahweh to refer to God. These sources can be identified by their parallel structures, which treat the same chief events in order. If we look just at the Abraham and Sarah story of Genesis 12–25, we can get a good idea of this overlapping:

| | *J* | *E* | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abraham receives a promise of land and/or a son | 12,1-3 | 15,1-6 | 12,4-9 |
| God makes a covenant with Abraham | 15,7-12 | 15,13-16 | 17,1-14 |
| A son is born and the line of the promise is secured | 16,1-16<br>18,1-19 | 21,1-21 | 17,15-27 |
| The final note of closing the life of Abraham | 25,1-6 | (22,1-13) | 23,1-20 |

Each source stresses a different aspect of the person of Abraham. J stresses his faith and trust in the promise of land and a son; E stresses his obedience even to sacrificing his heir; P stresses his fidelity in fulfilling all the divine religious prescriptions, especially circumcision.

But scholars have sought for more than these written sources alone; they wished to uncover the underlying traditions that existed before J, E, or P ever wrote a word. The form-critics have noted that for the cycles of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, most of the incidents

described are self-contained. That is, you could leave one or another of the events out, and the story could still go on. This suggests that a long history of oral stories existed about the patriarchs and matriarchs before they were finally used in written sources. The father of form-criticism was Hermann Gunkel, and he pointed to many characteristics of these particular stories that were similar to the characteristics of the Icelandic *sagas* of the Middle Ages. Some of these elements are:

A the stories are hero-centered around a major ancestor of a family or group;
B they don't really tell of private lives as much as of the national fortunes of their group in the past;
C they use many standard formulas, themes, and literary motifs common to folktales and hero legends;
D they are told with a highly dramatic, often poetic style of description, and not in simple narrative chronicle fashion;
E they identify major themes or beliefs of the group or tribe *today* that this ancestor initiated or began;
F they often delight in *etiological,* or causal, explanations of events or things (that is, in the why or how of the way things are)—see Genesis 17,5 where the editor explains the meaning of Abraham's name, or 21,31 which explains how Beersheba got its name.

However, even with so many similarities between the biblical stories and medieval hero legends or family sagas, we must not forget that they only hint at the way the oldest traditions about the founding ancestors were probably originally passed down. The actual passages that we now read in the book of Genesis were carefully composed by each of the literary sources with a special religious note, and they were combined and revised numerous times to point more clearly to the lessons in the stories for the faith of later generations of Israelites. We must try to read them with an eye both to the level of their original description of the experience of God and to the complete picture painted by the finished text which sees a clear guiding hand of God through history.

## The Historical Setting of the Patriarchal Stories

The general consensus of the scholarly world has been that the customs and movements described in Genesis 12–50 best fit the first half of the second millennium B.C., that is, from 1900 to 1500 B.C. Some of the main reasons for this view are:

A the names of the patriarchs are not used in later periods, but are known before 1500 B.C.;
B the wanderings from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt best fit the periods of Amorite migrations in the Near East and the time of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (2000–1750 B.C.);
C customs such as the adoption of an heir (Gn 15,1-3) and marrying a sister (12,10-20) reflect known legal procedures from Nuzi and other towns in the second millenium;
D the story of Joseph as a prime minister in Egypt would fit well the period in Egypt when it was ruled by the Hyksos, a group of Semitic invaders from Palestine and farther East that controlled northern Egypt from about 1750 to 1500 B.C.;
E Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are described as seminomadic clans that settled near

urban centers and dealt with the local rulers about rights for grazing, water, and travel, a way of life known from Mari documents of the eighteenth to seventeenth centuries B.C.

None of these examples proves the dating of the Genesis stories, since many of these customs were also practiced at later dates. But they seem overall to best fit the conditions that generally prevailed in the Near East before the rise of strong Egyptian control about 1500 B.C. Moreover, archaeological finds for this part of the world present a picture much in conformity with the descriptions found in Genesis. Thus, for example, the apparent weakness of local rulers over the hill country of central Palestine in Abraham's time is supported by archaeology's failure to find any major settlement there from 2000 to 1500 B.C., except possibly Shechem.

## Genesis 12–25: The Story of Abraham and Sarah

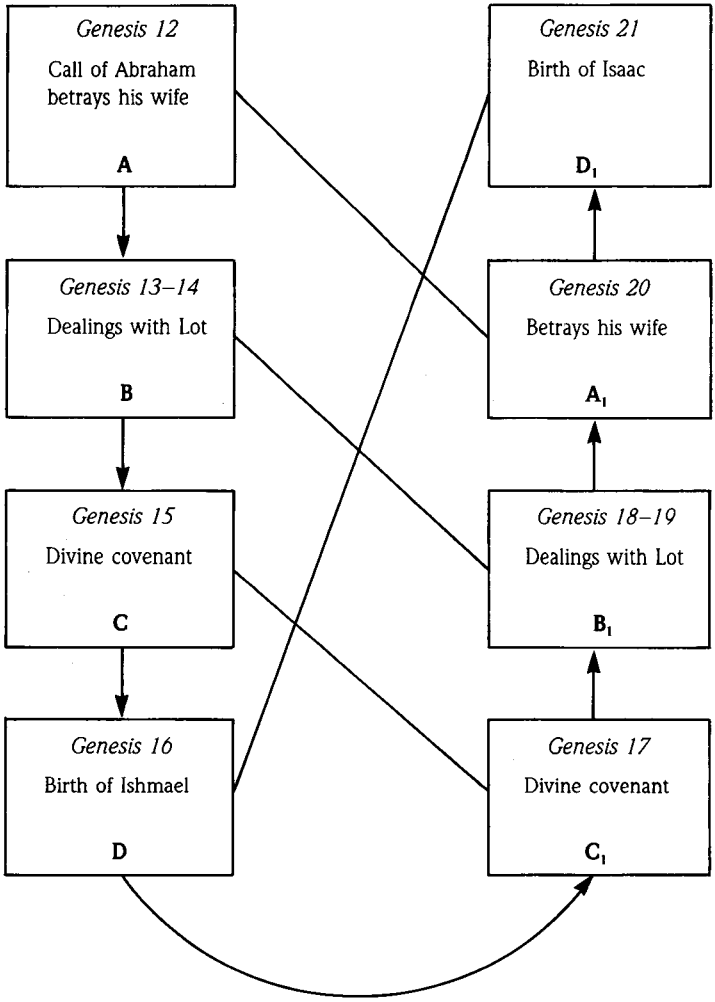
There are several keys to getting more out of the Abraham narratives. One way is to read the story as Abraham's journey from being a landless alien in Chapter 12 to its completion in Chapters 23 and 25 when Sarah and then Abraham are buried in a tomb they own and in land they possess. Another way is to follow the series of promises to Abraham and Sarah as they are slowly but surely fulfilled. There are two major series in parallel: (1) the promise of land and (2) the promise of a son to carry on the family name and to become a great people:

| *Promise of a son* | | *Promise of land* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gn 12,2 | I make you a great nation | Gn 12,1 | "go to a land I indicate" |
| Gn 15,5 | at the night covenant | Gn 12,7 | at the terebinth of Moreh |
| Gn 17,4 | the P covenant | Gn 13,14 | at the departure of Lot |
| Gn 17,16 | the promise of Isaac | Gn 15,18 | at the night covenant |
| Gn 18,10 | the three angels | Gn 17,8 | the P covenant |
| Gn 18,18 | recap of 12,2f | Gn 24,7 | the messenger for Isaac |
| Gn 21,12 | a promise to Isaac | Gn 26,4 | repeated promise to Isaac |
| Gn 22,17 | at the sacrifice of Isaac | | |
| Gn 26,4 | promise repeated to Isaac | | |

Genesis 12–25 can also be viewed as the story of a struggle to have trust and faith in God. Abraham and Sarah create as many obstacles to God's plan as they do helpful responses built on faith:

| *Trusting Response* | | *Obstacle* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gn 12,1-9 | Abraham leaves home | Gn 12,10-20 | Abraham in Egypt |
| Gn 14,1-24 | War and blessing of Melchizedek | Gn 13,1-18 | Lot allowed to choose the land |
| Gn 15,1-21 | The covenant with God | Gn 16,1-14 | Abraham has a son by his slave wife |
| Gn 17,1-27 | Abraham's covenant renewed | Gn 18,1-15 | Sarah doubts the promise of a son |
| Gn 18,16-33 | Abraham intercedes for Sodom | Gn 20,1-18 | Abraham nearly repeats his denial of Sarah |
| Gn 21,1-20 | The birth of Isaac | Gn 22,1-14 | Will Abraham pass the test of sacrificing Isaac? |
| Gn 21,21-33 | Abraham establishes rights to water | | |
| Gn 23,1-20 | Abraham buys land | | |

Still another structure can be found in the drama that leads up to the birth of the promised son, Isaac, from Chapters 12–21. Here the series of major events are balanced in two blocs that each focus their climax on the birth of a son. Diagrammed it looks thus:




According to this diagram, the story artistically focuses toward the great moment of the test in Chapter 22. When Abraham proves himself fully obedient to God's will at that awful moment, the story comes to a rapid conclusion. The promise of a son is secured, purchase of a tomb guarantees a claim on the land, and so Abraham's role now passes on to Isaac.

## Genesis 24–27: The Story of Isaac and Rebekah

Isaac plays an important role in the life of Abraham as the promised son, but it is a passive role, even in the great scene where he is about to lose his life in Chapter 22. He briefly comes to the fore in two chapters in which he is shown to carry on the style of life and the concerns already noted about Abraham. His encounter with Abimelech and the concern with water rights reflects

the Abraham story from Chapters 20–21; the long account of his marriage links Isaac back to the family roots in northern Mesopotamia reported in Chapter 12. In turn, Isaac will receive a renewal of the promises of land and descendants given to Abraham before him (Gn 26,4).

Isaac's role might be best understood as a transition from the role played by Abraham before him to the role played by Jacob after him, except for one thing: the remarkable person of Rebekah! The scene of the messenger persuading Rebekah and her brother Laban to let her marry Isaac, and the journey home to Palestine, is a masterpiece of ancient writing art. In studying the text in Genesis 24, pay attention to how much emphasis is given to this one event—a total of 67 verses. Rebekah will become the key player in the next step of God's plan, the selection of the child Jacob over his older brother, Esau. In Chapter 25, the stage is set for a great conflict that shall shadow the promise for many years ahead, the hatred of two brothers for one another, trickery on the part of Jacob, and the triumph of the younger brother over older. And through it all, Rebekah steers a clear course that will end up winning the day.

## Genesis 27–36: The Story of Jacob

In reading the story of Jacob, modern Christians are often horrified by the trickery and dishonesty involved in the way his career is presented in the text. In order to appreciate the religious message of this part of the patriarchal history, we must be willing to read with our eyes wide open to all the possible levels that can be discovered in this very powerful piece of literature.

The following are a few initial observations and guidelines to help a better reading of these chapters: (1) Remember the overall purpose of Genesis 12–50 is to carry forward God's promise *despite all obstacles.* Thus we can expect that Jacob, like Abraham, will himself be one of those obstacles. (2) These chapters really are made up of many old sagas or folk-type hero stories. Although they have been gathered and polished and finally given a very religious edge, some of the early and less edifying nature of such traditions has been kept and cherished. (3) You as *reader* live in the twentieth century with a modern refined ethical sense that is far different from the more basic standards of honor and fair play and honesty of the ancient world; it is possible to understand the text without necessarily agreeing with everything in it. (4) This is intended as an exciting action narrative where the outcome hangs in doubt, and we should not expect it to be a nicely stated, pious biography of a saint.

With these cautions in mind, we can look at all the elements that have been collected to make up the narrative as a whole:

### ORIGINAL SOURCES

The materials from which the narrative develops can be grouped into four types:

1 The conflict between the two brothers, Jacob and Esau,
25,19-34 27,1-45 32,3-21 33,1-17
2 The conflict between Jacob and Laban, and the founding of a family,
27,46—28,9 29,1—32,2
3 Divine appearance by God to Jacob to guide him,
28,10-22 32,22-32 33,18-20 35,1-15
4 Special sources on the homelands of Jacob and Esau,
34,1-31 36,1-43

In looking at these groupings, it immediately becomes clear that the cycles of stories about Jacob and Esau, and Jacob and Laban, are really about the struggles for identity and status of the Israelite tribes against the Edomites (Esau's people) and against the Mesopotamian roots of Israel's ancestors (Laban's claim over the family). These are old tales at heart that were once recited orally to glorify Israel's past. To a modern sensitivity, Jacob may appear to be a deceiver and dishonest, but to an ancient, his antics were clever, wily, and proved to be far wiser and more skillful than those of either the Edomites or Mesopotamian powers.

Note, for example, that in the various conflicts between Jacob and Esau, four acts are developed:

1 There is a struggle in the womb between them, with a prophetic word that Jacob shall triumph over Esau, his older brother (25,21-28).
2 There is a struggle over the birthright (25,29-34), which Jacob wins.
3 There is another struggle over the family blessing (27,1-45) and Jacob wins again.
4 Finally, there is a great confrontation years later (32,3—33,17), which ends in a reconciliation between the brothers.

These incidents probably originated in bragging stories around the campfires of Israel's ancestors about how their founder Jacob outsmarted the Edomites. But they now form a series of obstacles that Jacob must overcome to carry on the divine plan. These, in turn, end in a healing finale that proves how everything works for the good in God's plan. And the same patterns can be detected in the Laban stories over the question of which wife is truly Jacob's primary spouse (and naturally therefore which sons are more important!), whose are the family gods, and whose are the possessions; in every case Jacob emerges the winner.

### MAJOR THEMES OF THE JACOB STORY

These narratives are not intended to be a chronicle of historical events narrated in the real order that they happened. In several cases the ancient folk theme of the competition between the hunter and the sheepherder, or the struggle of a young shepherd against an established older one, forms the basic thread of an incident. In the other passages it is a nationalistic boast that our clan is better than your clan. Like true sagas, these personal battles are really the tensions between nations. Jacob's twelve sons each has the name of a real tribe; Esau is called "red and hairy," which in Hebrew is Edom and Seir, the names of the enemy country. It is also about roots—to whom is Israel related? Certainly to the Arameans in Mesopotamia, and certainly to the Edomites. And, of course, another theme is how God writes straight with crooked lines—including the choice of a younger son over the rightful leader, the older son, and following the advice of a mother rather than the good judgment of the father of the promise, Isaac himself.

### THE APPEARANCES OF GOD

Most importantly, the authors have added into the older folktales accounts of how God spoke to Jacob at various times in his life. These are also likely to be old stories that were cherished and retold at various shrines that grew up at the spots where God appeared, that is, Bethel and Paddan-Aram and Penuel. But it is precisely at these moments that the authors reveal the real purpose of the story. In the first vision at Bethel in Chapter 28, Jacob receives the promise made to Abraham and Isaac; he is designated the father of Israel as a nation, and his name is changed to match. In Shechem, he acknowledges that God is the only god of Israel; at Paddan-Aram in

the final scene (Chapter 35), God reconfirms that Jacob will from now on be Israel and the promise of a great nation of descendants is on the verge of fulfillment.

**THE RESULT**

When we combine all the elements that we have looked at, it presents us with a complex picture of Jacob as the model of Israel as well as its founding father. God is now about to make these twelve sons to be the future great nation, but it isn't done without problems and human blindness and often using very disobedient or shortsighted or even slightly unscrupulous humans. But Jacob uses his human talents to pursue faithfully the course that God shows him; and lo and behold, God's plan comes about!

## Genesis 37–50: The Story of Joseph

As in the preceding stories the drama of Joseph's story can be read on two levels. The first is the search for the interesting traditions and themes that reach far back into Israel's history. The second is the overall theological purpose that the story now plays as part of the larger religious message of Genesis.

On the first level, many scholars have traced the combination of the Yahwist and Elohist sources woven together to form a unified series of adventures. Perhaps even a modern reader might notice what appears to be slight differences and inconsistencies that give away the fact that there were originally two accounts. One of the easiest places to see this is in the opening of the story in Chapter 37, where J can be found in verses 3f, 12-17, 23, 25-28, 31-34, and E in verses 1f, 5-11, 18-22, 24, 28-30, and 36. Note, for example, such disagreements as:

| J | E |
|---|---|
| The father is named Israel | The father is named Jacob |
| The brother Judah intercedes | The brother Reuben intercedes |
| The merchants are Ishmaelites | The merchants are Midianites |
| The long coat causes the brothers' jealousy | Joseph's dreams cause the brothers' jealousy |

Scholars also point to two separate journeys of the brothers back and forth to Egypt; the first one, in Chapter 42, is seen as E, the second, in Chapter 43, is usually understood as J's parallel account.

Still on the first level, research has pointed to the great number of parallels in the Joseph story to ancient Egyptian literary masterpieces that have been discovered. One such story tells of seven fat years followed by seven lean years of harvest (compare this to Chapter 41,1-32), while another tells the story of a young man who resists the attempts of his older brother's wife to seduce him, with the result that she screams and falsely accuses him of trying to rape her (see Chapter 39,6-20). Another famous Egyptian tale of one Sinuhe recounts how he fell out of favor with the pharaoh, but was restored to favor when he proved to be a truly faithful servant of the king's interest (Joseph's imprisonment and rise to power shares some of this theme). There is yet another interesting parallel to be found in an account found on a statue of King Idri-mi of Alalakh, a city in Syria, to be dated about the fifteenth century B.C. It tells how Idri-mi's father was dethroned and the family forced to flee into exile, and how Idri-mi could not get his brothers to help win back the father's kingdom; but when he managed it alone, he forgave them and took them back into his confidence.

All of these examples share some theme or another with the Joseph story but none is by

itself very close in its entirety. They do, however, confirm that the basic motifs and descriptions of Chapters 37–50 belong to the world of Egypt in the second millenium B.C., and are unlikely to be some later imaginative creation without any basis in the early period of the patriarchs. Indeed, the whole way in which the Joseph story is presented connects well to vague memories of the Hyksos period in Egypt (1750 to 1550 B.C.) when Semitic conquerors ruled much of the northern part of the country.

A third series of motifs on the first level of tradition is derived from the wisdom schools, probably as they flourished in the days of David and Solomon. Wisdom themes abound in the person of Joseph, who fits the ideal of both Egyptian wisdom reflections and those of the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. He speaks only what is appropriate, keeps his own counsel, accepts misunderstanding, shows great skills as an administrator of public affairs, is adept at translating dreams, is skillful in political intrigue games, and avoids entanglement with foreign women. Above all, Joseph is attentive to God's plan, which works differently from the course of human planners (note especially the remarks of Joseph in 45,5-8 and 50,20, and compare these to Proverbs 16,9 and 19,21).

So far these observations have led us to find the separate traditions that have gone into these chapters. What is remarkable about this particular narrative of Joseph, however, is precisely its dramatic integrity. Each step of the plot lays the groundwork for the next event. If you took away one of them, such as Joseph's imprisonment, there would be no way to get him into the king's favor in Egypt. If he didn't trick his brothers into bringing their father, Jacob, to Egypt, the master plan of God to rescue them at a later date would never have been put into place. Some scholars liken Joseph, not to the string of sagalike stories that make up the previous chapters, but to a modern short story of fiction with a very carefully constructed plot. Some genius, perhaps the J source itself, or one of its later editors, has taken all the old themes and separate traditions and created a literary work of art, the earliest such masterwork that we know anywhere. Once we recognize its dramatic unity, we can begin to understand its theological message on the second level of the book of Genesis itself.

Certainly, Joseph must first be understood as one of Jacob's twelve sons. Through him, one of the youngest, God will work his plan, despite the ambitions or hopes of the older and supposedly more deserving brothers. What Joseph does is entirely done through divine guidance. Joseph's vanity causes his initial problems with his brothers, and only the divine gift of dream interpretation eventually gets him out of a hopeless prison situation. By ironical twists of fate and the reversal of roles, God brings about the totally unexpected end in which a lowly Palestinian shepherd becomes the second most powerful official in Egypt. In what looks like the final triumph of a blessing of success and power above anything promised to Abraham and Isaac, Jacob moves into Egypt. Genesis now closes with a question for all readers: what has happened to the hopes and promise to Israel that it would be a great people in possession of Canaan? Genesis ends with a clear message that God's work, as great as it has been, is not yet finished.

L.B.

# EXODUS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 63–107 of the Old Testament*]

## General Structure of the Book of Exodus

Exodus begins where Genesis leaves off. It carries the story line from security in the land of Egypt through enslavement, deliverance, escape in a desolate wilderness to a meeting with God at Mount Sinai. But this journey takes the reader only halfway through the book, to Chapter 19. The second half dwells at length on two key activities that take place at the mountain. The first is the making of a covenant between God and the people, and the second is the description of the key elements of divine worship: the building of a sanctuary tent and an ark to serve as God's throne, and the establishment of priestly ministers. So the book is really an intricate mixture of narratives and legal regulations for the community. This did not happen by accident. The story of God's act of merciful liberation from slavery lays the foundation for his merciful guarantee to be with the people for all times that is reflected in the laws and institutions for public worship.

### Overview

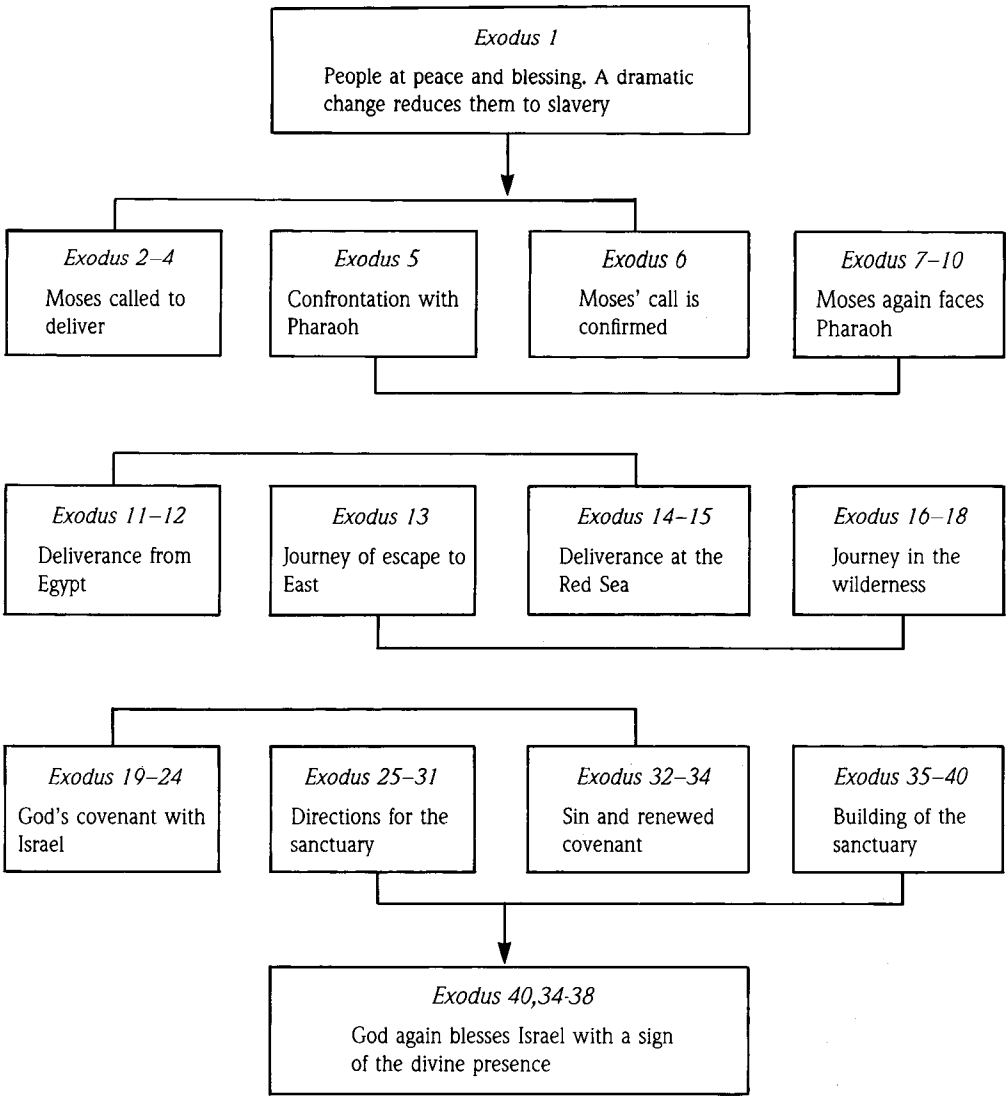
We must therefore expect that this book, too, as with Genesis, will be structured quite artistically and purposefully. It begins with a dramatic change from success to terrible slavery. Is God's promise in doubt? It seems so; yet at this same moment, God is already setting a new plan in motion with the birth of Moses. Will Moses respond to God's plan as Joseph did? Can God overcome the magic power of pharaoh? Will the people follow Moses? When God delivers, will they believe enough to leave Egypt? In the trials of the desert, will they remain faithful? Each question receives its answer. Each stage prepares for the next. So we can diagram the book as an interlocking puzzle (see facing page).

Chapters 1–18 create an exciting action story that keeps the reader wondering whether the people will really reach their goal of freedom and a new security. This is achieved by returning to each theme again and again so that they are never quite resolved; and a certain tension remains whether God will be completely successful, and then whether the people will continue to follow where Moses is taking them—right up to the moment that they arrive at the mountain of God. The second half of the book also maintains this tension, as observed in the people's idolatry in Chapter 32; but, much more so than in the first half, it establishes an orderly balance and state of security by the proclamation of the law by God and the people's oath to keep the covenant, followed by the orderly and well-planned description of the sanctuary and its auxiliary elements. This effect of balance is also achieved by interlocking the legal and liturgical descriptions. Finally, the descent of the glory of God into the sanctuary in 40,34-38 concludes the book, with the people united to the divine presence in harmony as they were at the beginning of the book in Chapter 1, but now far from their condition there.

### Another Look at the Book

Besides the larger and more complicated plan of the book, we might better divide it for ease of study into three geographical regions in which God meets Israel:

A Exodus 1–12 In the land of Egypt God works wonders to free the people from slavery;




B Exodus 13–18 In the wilderness God guides the people to safety and a personal encounter;

C Exodus 19–40 At Mount Sinai God establishes a community in covenant, law, and worship

In each of these sections, Moses plays a leading role as God's agent, but there is never any doubt who controls the action. This is a story where God acts in each and every place with power and authority—no land or king is outside of the divine lordship.

In tracing the thread of divine action through the long series of events described in the

Book of Exodus, we need to be alert to the sudden and unexpected. Much is made of what often appears to be a hopeless situation where everything may be lost, when suddenly the divine presence changes near-defeat into victory, near-despair to triumph. In a certain way, the story is constructed like the traditional psalms of lamentation that we find so often in the Psalter. A situation of desperate need calls forth a cry for help to God; God hears and answers their prayers with aid; and the people sing the divine praises (compare Pss 7, 10, and 53).

## Helps for Individual Sections of Exodus

In studying Exodus 1–18, there will be very little problem following the story line or plot of the drama. We must recall that there will be a number of inconsistencies and duplications because of the combination of the three major sources which all reported the Exodus event. But these have been worked together smoothly for the most part, and only a careful examination will show how they are present. For many passages in these chapters, however, selected pieces of historical information or examples from other ancient peoples' literatures may help us to understand them more deeply.

### Exodus 1: The Egyptian Setting

The narrative begins with a time of success in Egypt, but soon moves to a pharaoh "who knew nothing of Joseph" (vs. 8), and began to oppress the Hebrew people. But who was this new pharaoh and when did this happen? To answer these questions, we can consider some significant kings of Egypt for the period between 1700 and 1200 B.C.:

**Dynasties 14–17:** Hyksos rule by foreign semitic conquerors

**Dynasty 18:** Revival of native Egyptian kings from Thebes
- THUTMOSE I 1512–1500 B.C.) extended Egyptian power to Asia
- THUTMOSE III (1490–1436 B.C.) subdued much of western Asia
- AMENHOTEP III (1402–1363 B.C.), pharaoh during period of unrest in western Asia
- AKHENATON (1363–1347 B.C.) founded a new religion centered on one god only, the Aton, or sun-disc
- TUTANKHAMUN (1347–1338 B.C.), boy-king whose tomb was found completely untouched; restored earlier religion of the god Amun to power
- HOREMHAB (1333–1303 B.C.), a usurper of the throne who ended the dynasty by dying childless

**Dynasty 19:** A period of trying to hold on to the large empire
- SETI I (1300–1290 B.C.), major shift in policy toward the lands in Asia, possibly strong against local semitic-population groups
- RAMESSES II (1290–1223 B.C.), moved the capital to the Delta area nearest Asia to fight against Semites
- MERNEPTAH (1223–1210 B.C.), left behind an inscription stating he conquered "Israel" in Palestine

**Dynasty 20:** Period of loss of empire
- RAMESSES III (1198–1166 B.C.) had to fight off the Philistines

Some scholars note that the Bible itself gives suggested dates for the time of the Exodus. 1 Kings 6,1 says the Temple of Solomon was built 480 years after Israel left Egypt; Exodus 12,40 states that the Israelites had been in Egypt 430 years when they departed with Moses. If such dates are exact—probably they are not, but either general or symbolic, for they appear to be rounded out or even symbolic (12 times 40 years suggests twelve generations)—two different centuries are at stake. If the Temple was built around 960 B.C., it would place the Exodus in 1440 B.C.; if the Joseph traditions are associated with the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, then a date around 1270 B.C. is probable. Of the two, most scholars favor the latter possibility. It falls in the time of Ramesses II who did build the towns of Pithom and Raamses as Exodus 1,11 says, and the thirteenth century B.C. was generally a troubled time in which a band of refugees just might be able to make their escape. A major departure under the strong rulers of the eighteenth dynasty, especially under the most powerful of all Egyptian kings, Thutmose III, seems much less likely.

## Exodus 2–4: The Choice of Moses

There are several difficult questions raised by the story of Moses' origins. He is pictured as an Israelite, but his name and raising are Egyptian. He seems to know he is a Hebrew when he kills the Egyptian in Chapter 2, but is not trusted by his own people. He flees and makes his home among Midianites, and seems to meet God not in the midst of his own people but in a nomadic area. Even his rescue from death by means of a basket in the river is strange. It looks very much like a long-known legend of a great king of a thousand years earlier, Sargon of Akkad, who was supposedly left to die as an infant by his royal parents, was secretly saved in a basket on the river, and came back to rule years later.

To Israel, Moses was a figure larger than life. Although well known as a person from their actual past experience, and central to the most important event in their history, he is still described in terms more like the great mythical heroes of Genesis 1–11 or of the founding fathers Abraham and Jacob. He dominates every book of the Pentateuch except Genesis and, when his death is finally recorded in Deuteronomy 34,1-8, he leaves the earth at 120 years old in the full vigor of youth and to a grave unknown. Thus, we must expect the initial encounter with such a person will be spectacular.

Note that Chapters 2–4 form a series of scenes in a play: (1) The birth of the hero in a nearly miraculous fashion forces us to wonder what his mission in life will be. (2) The situation begins to look desperate—he is not respected nor successful and ends up fleeing to barbarians for his safety. (3) There he is called to a nearly impossible task by God and accepts reluctantly (Ex 3,1-12). (4) God gives him a special revelation of the divine name and an intimacy in communication not offered to others (Ex 3,12-22). (5) God is forced to confirm the promise, reassure Moses about his mission, and give him his brother Aaron as a helper to speak on his behalf (Ex 4,1-22). (6) Finally, the people accept him and his mission (Ex 4,28-31).

Two notes might be added to help understand this section better:

a) *The call of Moses* has a certain pattern to it that is used throughout the Bible as the model of a call of the great prophets and leaders. Note that it is made up of the following stages:

1 God appears or speaks to Moses (Ex 3,1-4)
2 He explains the reason for his coming (Ex 3,4-9)
3 He commissions Moses to his task (Ex 3,10)
4 Moses objects (Ex 3,11)

5 God reassures him and insists (Ex 3,12)
6 God follows with a sign or prediction (Ex 3,12; 4,1-5)

Note similar patterns for the call of the prophets and others:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 God appears | Jgs 6,11f | Is 6,1f | Jer 1,4 | Ez 1,1-28a |
| 2 The reason | Jgs 6,12f | Is 6,3-7 | Jer 1,5 | Ez 1,28b—2,2 |
| 3 Commission | Jgs 6,14 | Is 6,8-10 | Jer 1,5 | Ez 2,3-5 |
| 4 Objection | Jgs 6,15 | Is 6,11 | Jer 1,6 | Ez 2,6.8 |
| 5 Reassurance | Jgs 6,16 | Is 6,11f | Jer 1,7f | Ez 2,6f |
| 6 The sign | Jgs 6,17 | ------- | Jer 1,9f | Ez 2,8—3,11 |

b) *The revelation of the divine name* to Moses is a very special moment in the story. Note how it may be the combination of both the J and E sources because of the way it starts in Exodus 3,1 with "the LORD" (J), and continues with "God" (E). To prepare Moses to understand the meaning of the name, God first reveals that this is the same God known to his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (a statement repeated three times in this chapter for emphasis!), and that God is showing love and compassion as he had done in the past when giving the promises to those earlier generations. It then comes to the moment in verse 13 when Moses asks for God's identity more clearly. The text gives several versions of the divine name: "I am who am," "I AM," and "He who is" (or better, "He who causes to be"). The one certain thing is that all of these come from the same verb in Hebrew, *hayah,* the verb "to be." It is not usual to use the verb "to be" in this way; so, on the one hand, God refuses to give a regular name, in a sense hiding his real identity behind his power and being. And, on the other hand, the name stresses the concrete nature of existence itself: God exists for something; in this case for the salvation of Israel. All other texts of the Bible always use the third person form, *Yahweh,* and not the unique first person "I am who am," which we find only here in Exodus 3,14. Yahweh must mean either "He who makes this happen" (that is, the great act of salvation about to be performed), or, just possibly, it identifies God as the creator that causes all things to be. At least in this one event, the addition of the first person "I am" strongly suggests that God is, above all, assuring Israel that "I am with you totally."

Yahweh occurs 6,823 times in the Old Testament and, following a very ancient Jewish custom, we traditionally do not use this name in prayer, but replace it out of reverence for the divine greatness with the more formal "LORD." This is the practice throughout the *New American Bible* translation. Whenever the word appears in that way, printed in capitals and small capitals, it means that the underlying Hebrew word is Yahweh.

## Exodus 5–12: Confrontation with the Pharaoh.

The structure of these chapters also follows the pattern of a drama. There is Moses' initial attempts to show God's power to pharaoh, and his subsequent frustration when the powers of Egyptian magicians seem as strong as God's (5,1-13). Then the people themselves grumble that Moses is making things worse (5,14-21). Chapter 6 opens with what seems to repeat the call of Moses from Chapters 3–4. Scholars think it belongs to the P source, as its original call story. Nevertheless, the authors use it to emphasize that God will not abandon Moses or the people, but will carry out what was promised.

The battle heats up when God begins to send plagues upon the land. It is a series of natural

disasters that the *New American Bible* notes (at 7,14) are typical of what regularly troubles Egypt. The miracle is not in the actual plague, such as hail or gnats or flies, but in the timing of the contest between God and the pharaoh, who places himself higher than the Lord. It is a little like the old children's story of "the little train that thought it could." Can God actually overcome the hardheartedness of the pharaoh? Each time, the plague seems to work; then it fails as the pharaoh changes his mind. The train of events struggles forward towards the climactic moment when God will send the tenth and last plague in Chapter 12,29-36.

There are a few inconsistencies in the overall plot that reveal that originally several sources were combined. Note, for example, that sometimes Moses stretches out his staff (9,22f) and sometimes Aaron does instead (8,1-3). The first usage is E, the second J. So, too, sometimes pharaoh hardens his own heart, (9,34), and sometimes God hardens his heart (10,20). The first is J, the second is E.

The tenth plague will be an act of terror and of death. When the firstborn are slain, it symbolically ends the rule of pharaoh and transfers Egypt's leadership and favor from God to the firstborn who were spared, Israel. It is at the moment when God confirms that his favor will stand by Israel that they become in a sense God's firstborn of all nations. It is not an accident, therefore, that this event is prefaced with an elaborate description, not of a meal as it might have been actually eaten in fear and haste, but of the full liturgical ritual of the annual feast of Passover. This feast was developed as a liturgy to recall and relive the miracle of the Exodus, the "passing over" of the angel of death and the liberation of Israel from slavery. Part of the significant theology of the Book of Exodus is the unity between later rituals and the original events. What our ancestors experienced in the land of Egypt, we relive and celebrate anew in our feasts. Christianity has at least one excellent parallel to this way of thinking in that the synoptic gospel accounts of the Last Supper recount Jesus' words over the bread and wine just as they were recited in home eucharists of the first century. To see this for yourself, compare Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 11,23-26 with Luke 22,14-20.

## Exodus 13–15: The Escape through the Sea

These chapters can be divided into three parts. The first, in Exodus 13,1-16, lists two further practices that the Israelites are to do to remember how God saved them from the angel of death: avoidance of leavened bread on the feast of the departure itself, and the consecration of all firstborn males to God. The second part, in Exodus 13,17—14,31, gives a detailed account of how the Israelites once more escaped from the hands of the Egyptians, this time through the sea when it seemed impossible. And the third part, in Exodus 15,1-21 recites a song of victory that celebrates the escape through the sea, and may have been a hymn for a feast day.

In structure, then, the second part, which is the account of the great act of rescue in Chapters 13–14, is preceded and followed by materials that come from the religious practices of later Israelite times. This is in line with the attitude expressed in the previous chapter that saw no problem relating past events side by side with a description of the much later rituals that celebrated those events. No doubt both the avoidance of leaven and ceremonies of special dedication of a firstborn to God were practiced by Israel as well as its pagan neighbors long before the time of the Exodus. But now they are given new meaning as a reminder that the real source of Israel's life is a God who delivered them from death.

The form of the third part, the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, is quite old. Some scholars consider it to be the oldest written text in the Bible. It uses extensive poetic parallelism for

effect, and breathes the spirit of God as a warrior chieftain in battle who comes to the rescue of his besieged people. It can be divided into two parts for study purposes: verses 1-12 and 13-18. The first part tells of the actual battle that God wages; the second part recounts how God then led victorious Israel through the desert to the promised land. The first half is probably older than the second half since, at this stage in the story, the events that are told in verses 13-18 have yet to happen. Nevertheless, the hymn as a whole still preserves an idea of God that belongs to the time before Israel settled in Palestine and developed a monarchy. Thus it may well have been composed sometime in the two hundred years after the Exodus, during the age of the judges.

Luckily we also possess several Egyptian documents that help us to understand better the background of Israel's flight from Egypt. One from shortly after the time of Moses is a report of a frontier official in the Sinai which he sent back to headquarters in Egypt, and reveals that Egypt regularly allowed groups of tribes to pass in and out of Egypt in times of drought or famine to save their lives:

> We have finished letting the bedouin tribes of Edom pass the fortress of Mer-ne-Ptah Hotep-hir-Maat which is in [the eastern Delta area] to go to the pools of Per-Atum . . . to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive.

The second document is from the same period (about 1200 B.C.), and describes Egyptian military searches for runaway slaves:

> I was sent forth from the broad halls of the palace . . . after two slaves . . . Now when I reached the fortress, they told me that the scout had come from the desert saying that they had passed the walled place north of the fortress of Seti-Mer-ne-Ptah . . . Which watch found their tracks? What people are after them? Write to me about all that has happened to them and how many people you sent out after them.

If the Egyptian government went to such lengths for two escaped slaves, no wonder pharaoh wanted a whole national group returned!

## Exodus 16–18: The Hardships in the Desert of Sinai

The next stage of the journey takes the Israelites from the location of the sea to the foot of the mount of Sinai in two months. The journey follows an itinerary which is listed for us, but unfortunately few of the places can be identified with any certainty. Even the location of Mount Sinai is open to discussion. But we can at least note some aspects with the aid of a map of the Sinai peninsula. See map 2 at the back of this book.

If we back up to the first part of the journey in Chapters 13–14, we discover that Israel did not travel directly toward Palestine on the main highway along the coast. Egyptian forts guarded this way, and so they avoided it (13,17f). Instead, they moved along the edge of the fertile Delta area just where it met the Sinai desert. The place names in 14,1-3 might be located either very close to the Mediterranean coast or perhaps near a swampy lake that lay along the depression line now followed by the Suez canal.

The name "Red Sea" is not certain. The Hebrew name can also mean the "reed sea" or the "sea of chaos." Possibly today's Red Sea was called the "Sea of Reeds," but it is just as possible that another body of water was meant. The name "reed sea" may well designate one of a

number of swampy lakes; on the other hand, if "sea of chaos" was intended, it could be anywhere, since the name is to be taken in a symbolic sense for the place where the Lord would finally defeat pharaoh's army as the servants of chaotic evil.

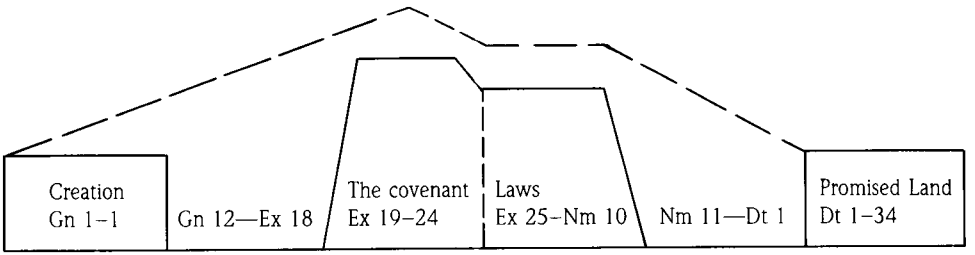
Thus scholars who try to identify the place names in 15,22 and after have trouble knowing where to start. *Marah, Elim,* the desert of *Sin,* and *Rephidim* all remain mysteriously difficult to pinpoint. There are quite a number of oases throughout the Sinai, north and south, but none can be identified for certain with these names.

Usually three possible options for the route of the journey are given. The most northern route is the so-called "Way of the Philistines" and was of necessity avoided. The second route also went across the North somewhere and was a major caravan route to both Beersheba in Palestine and to Petra in Edom. It would also have two other strong claims: it passes very near Kadesh Barnea, Israel's main camping place where according to Deuteronomy 2,14, they spent thirty-eight years; and it was territory known to support nomadic groups such as the Midianites with whom Moses had spent time. It is listed on the chart as "The Way of Shur." A third possibility, and the one favored since Byzantine monks arrived at the very impressive mountain Jebel Musa in the sixth century A.D., is the circular route along around the southern part of the Sinai peninsula. It has in its favor that Jebel Musa and its neighboring peaks are by far the most impressive mountains in Sinai. Moreover, there is strong evidence that Egypt itself mined the Sinai for gems and minerals in this area, using semitic slaves. Such a mine has been found at Serabit el Khadim and it is just possible therefore that Moses knew the place. Finally, this longer route would permit the large number of moves that the books of Exodus and Numbers say the Israelites made. This is all we can say with our present knowledge.

Geography does not answer the question why the Israelites journeyed the way they did. More helpfully, we can look at the message of these chapters. The events of Exodus 15,22 to 18,27 are not related to trace the physical steps of the people so much as to show the tension between them and Moses. This is, above all, a tension between their frustrations with hardship and their duty to show gratitude to God for their freedom. At Marah, their grumbling leads to the lesson that God is a healer (15,25f). At Sin, the dispute over food leads God to reaffirm his goodness as provider, and reinforce his demand that the Sabbath be observed (16,16-36). At Rephidim, the people's anger over the lack of water leads to God's gift of water from the rock as a reminder of the miracle at the Red Sea (17,1-7). The final two events, both in Chapter 18, show first a divine rejection of the Amalekites, and second, a positive relationship between Israel and the Midianites, who help organize judges and leaders to assist Moses. This is done with the assistance of Moses' father-in-law, Jethro. But it is a preparation for the greater organization around the divine commands which are about to be given on Mount Sinai.

## Exodus 19–24: The Covenant with God

These chapters describe the high point of the Pentateuch. If we wanted to draw a diagram to show this, we might draw a highway between point A, the moment of creation, to the final point, Z, which would be the border of the promised land. This would cover the Pentateuch as a journey from Genesis 1 to Deuteronomy 34. The highway would climb steadily through Genesis and Exodus 1–15 to the top of Mount Sinai, go along its crest from Exodus 19 to the end of Numbers 10, and then descend forcefully to the shores of the Jordan River from Numbers 11 to the end of Deuteronomy:




On the crest of the mountain there is a long pause while God teaches Moses the laws by which Israel is to live. But these laws themselves are the fulfillment of the covenant that is established between God and the people in Exodus 19–24. So, ultimately, they are one.

To understand these chapters, we should first note how they are orgnanized into four scenes:

| 19,1-25<br>A | 20,1-21<br>B | 21,22—23,33<br>C | 24,1-18<br>D |
|---|---|---|---|
| The purification of the people to meet God | The ten commandments as a summary of the covenant | The individual laws by which the people are to live | The solemn acceptance of the covenant |

In scene A, Moses goes up and down the mountain several times, which may be a sign of more than one source combined. But it all serves to create an aura of holiness and reverence. Indeed, it so resembles the awesome experience of the Temple that many scholars have understood this to be a very late introduction built around the beautiful theological definition of Israel found in verses 4-6. Israel is to be God's special possession.

Scene B records God's first words as a kind of summary of all that will follow. These are the key demands of any relationship with God; they cover duties toward God and toward one another, and are limited to ten for easy teaching to children who can count them on the fingers. Many of the commandments also have a special covenant motive for why they should be kept.

This is continued in scene C with an entirely different type of requirement. Unlike the ten commandments, which simply demand response, with no answer to what will happen if you don't obey them, these give a practical situation and the proper settlement of each case. The laws of Chapters 21–23 are usually called "The Covenant Code," and are similar to civil laws throughout the ancient Near East. It is a minisample of how to act justly under the covenant.

Finally, in scene D, the people give their full assent to the divine offer of a covenant, and it is sealed by two rituals, again, perhaps, once separate from each other: a sprinkling with blood (24,3-8), and a covenant meal in which Moses, Aaron and the seventy elders banquet with God (24,1f.9-11).

The entire series thus combines lawgiving and ritual in an awesome setting of divine holiness and human sanctification to impress on the reader that this is the foundation stone of Israel's relationship to God and the source of all its religious obligations.

## Exodus 25–40: Establishing God's Home in Israel

Once the Lord and Israel have been solemnly joined together, the dramatic action turns toward establishing a permanent dwelling for God in the midst of the people. Chapters 25–31 and 35–40 largely repeat each other as (1) a series of directions for building and appointing, and (2) the carrying out of those directions described in detail. Their major themes of God's house and the service of a special office of priests who will be consecrated and set aside for divine service seem to stem largely from the later P source, which was concerned to show that the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem had its original mandate at Mount Sinai. The desert tent and ark are described in terms of what a nomadic people of the wilderness might use, and that are portable in construction; but all the major vessels and objects of the later Temple are already given a place during this desert period. In this manner, the text shows the unbroken continuity between God's earliest covenent bond and all later expressions of it. At the same time, these stories emphasize that the covenant cannot be observed unless worship is at its heart.

With this purpose in mind, the authors have taken the stories of Israel's first failure to keep the covenant, its idolatry with the golden calf and Moses' breaking the tablets of stone, and the regiving of the covenant words (Chaps. 32–34) and inserted them between the two halves of the sanctuary narratives. Worship and covenant are thus inseparably interlocked.

| *Exodus 19–24* | *Exodus 25–31* | *Exodus 32–34* | *Exodus 35–40* |
|---|---|---|---|
| covenant given | sanctuary directions | covenant renewed | sanctuary built |
| A | B | A | B |

## The Theology of the Covenant

Before moving on to the Book of Leviticus it will be worth a short reflection on the meaning of the term "covenant" for the faith of Israel as presented in the Pentateuch. There are several points to keep in mind:

a) A covenant is a solemn agreement made with a religious ritual. In the early days it may have been mostly oral and put to memory, but in later biblical times it was always written in a formal document. It serves the same purpose as a contract—it is legally binding on both parties.

b) Covenants can be made between individuals or between nations. Examples of individual covenants in the Pentateuch can be found in Genesis 26,26-28; 31,44-46. National covenants are mentioned often in the historical books: Jos 9,3-15; 1 Kgs 5,2-12; 1 Kgs 15,19. It can also be made between a god and a people. For example, at the time of the Flood, God promises Noah a covenant in Genesis 9,4-12; and Abraham receives a covenant in Genesis 15,10-21.

c) These covenants between nations or with gods are modeled after typical treaties known throughout the ancient Near East. The particular type found at Mount Sinai is called a *vassal treaty* because it is made between a great king or ruler and a lesser subject state. A vassal treaty is not an equal deal. The great king promises kindness and favor; the vassal promises a long list of particular obligations that will be performed faithfully.

d) These treaties were considered to be valid for all time. They could not be taken back or rejected once solemnly made.

e) The typical form of a vassal-type treaty is known from examples found among the Hittites of the thirteenth century B.C. It has six parts:

1 A preamble stating the name of the parties.
2 A historical listing of all the good things the great king has done for the vassal.
3 The laws and obligations that the vassal must perform.
4 A directive that the document be saved and read publicly.
5 A list of gods who witness the treaty.
6 Lists of curses the gods will bring on those who break the treaty, and the blessings given to the parties if they keep it.

f) If we take these six steps, we can see them present in Exodus 19–24 in a general way:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Ex 20,2 | the preamble |
| 2. Ex 20,2 (19,4) | the historical list of favors |
| 3. Ex 20,3-17; 20,23—23,17 | the obligations of the vassal |
| 4. Ex 24,3-8; 24,12 | oath ceremony and saving the tablets |
| 5. --------- | no divine witnesses |
| 6. Ex 20,5f; 23,25 | blessings and curses |

No gods witness the treaty because in Israelite belief there are no other gods who can testify to what the Lord does. However, we must not push these similarities too far. Exodus describes, first of all, a momentous event of encountering, and then promising exclusive worship to, the Lord who has saved and shown himself a benefactor to this small refugee people.

Only later did the full legal treaty language become fixed in the tradition, such as in the covenant summary statement often found in the prophets, "You shall be my people and I will be your God" (Jer 7,23; 11,4; 24,7; Ez 11,20; 14,11; Hos 2,25, etc.). Perhaps closer to the original formula of the covenant relationship is the moving proclamation put first on God's own lips in Exodus 20,5f and then again in the renewal of the covenant in 34,6f: "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin; yet not declaring the guilty guiltless . . ." This same text, as indicated by John Paul II in *Dives in Misericordia,* is the basis of Israel's hope, and therefore the hope of the modern world (#4).

We can appreciate the power of the idea of a covenant because it confirms the special relationship that Israel claimed with the Lord based on a unique and moving personal experience of the favor of that God for them. At first the covenant was mostly celebrated in worship with a national sense of destiny. Only with time do we find that later prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel express a growing concern to stress the legal relationship that cannot be broken even by disasters, but can require punishment and legal penalties if the covenant terms are broken.

L.B.

# LEVITICUS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 107–140 of the Old Testament*]

## Reading the Book of Leviticus Today

Jewish tradition has given a very honored place to the Book of Leviticus because it contains a significant number of the laws and commandments by which Judaism defines its life and practice. Six hundred and thirteen commandments have been identified in the Pentateuch

which are binding in Israel, and of these some 247 occur in Leviticus. The early rabbinic commentators of the Talmud spent many volumes examining the meaning of the statements in Leviticus and establishing practical ways in which they could still be observed many centuries after they were written down. The learned teachers of the law in the first centuries after Christ (from about 70 to 500 A.D.) never tired debating the myriad ways of understanding the legal materials in Leviticus and elsewhere. This may seem particularly surprising since nearly all of the laws of sacrifice that fill the first quarter of the Book of Leviticus had been rendered impossible to perform by the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of its Temple in the year 70 A.D. It indicates, however, how richly diverse are the contents of the book, that even with the inability to perform so much of its commands, it still remains the most important statement of Torah for Judaism.

It is therefore important to recall that in Judaism *Torah* does not have the narrow and constricting meaning of "Law" so common among modern people. Torah means "teaching" or "way" and it can be best understood as a means of expressing ourselves before God as a faithful and obedient and beloved son or daughter. Law for a Jew should always be linked to simultaneous joy. Note the extremely upbeat and positive nature of the Bible's most famous hymn in praise of the Law, Psalm 119. The opening verses read,

> Happy are they whose way is blameless,
> who walk in the way of the Lord.
> Happy are they who observe his decrees,
> who seek him with all their heart,
> And do no wrong, but walk in his ways.

and it continues in this manner for another 173 verses, over three times the length of any other psalm in the psalter!

How opposite has been the reaction of the Christian church as it reads Leviticus. Most Christians are horrified by the idea of animal sacrifices, and consider the questions of what should be eaten or not eaten by far too restrictive; many even experience a mild case of disgust at the topics of the purity and impurity of bodily functions. Since many of the actions described in the first half of Leviticus are tied to priestly roles in the Temple, the book has become a negative symbol for Christians who emphasize the so-called "freedom from the Law" that Paul speaks of in his letters in the New Testament. Even the current name of the book means basically "That which pertains to the levitical priests," although in Hebrew it is called simply by its opening word, *wayyiqra'* ("And he called"). Thus it is very likely that a Christian reader will come to this book with a certain prejudice that it will be boring, irrelevant, and largely supplanted by a newer theology of the freedom of the spirit. This is not a good starting point to discover any treasure in the book, nor to realize, even in regulations that a Christian no longer observes, how profound insights into the mystery of God shine through regularly.

To gain as much appreciation for the book as we can, we need to reflect on its message on two levels. First, we can explore what religious insight and meaning the various laws and practices had for an ancient Israelite. Second, we can look at the major themes it treats in terms of how they reveal the enduring character and purpose of God, which gave direction and vitality to Israel's fidelity and witness through the centuries, and that have become central to Christianity's own teaching. An example would be the idea of sacrifice. Without knowing the central role

of sacrifice in Leviticus as a means of relating to God, the meaning of Jesus' own death and the explanation of the Eucharist would be seriously weakened and perhaps even incomprehensible.

## The Overall Structure of the Book

Leviticus can be identified entirely with the style and theology of the Priestly source found throughout the Pentateuch. It is very interested in classifying and listing all things in their proper place, just as the P story of creation does in Genesis 1 or the list of nations does in Genesis 11,10-32. It is also very concerned with distinguishing the realm of the sacred from that of everyday life. Most of the topics it treats deal directly with this question of what is appropriate or inappropriate in matters of approaching the divine.

The book has really two major divisions that are quite different in spirit. Chapters 1–16 give regulations for matters that are handled directly by the priests; Chapters 17–27 treat the larger social areas of community behavior and public worship that express the spiritual heart of living within the covenant. In a diagram it might look like this:

***Outline of the Book of Leviticus***

*PART I*

*Leviticus 1–7*
Laws of sacrifice → *Leviticus 8–10*
Priestly anointing and the first sacrifice

*Leviticus 11–15*
Laws of proper foods and states of purity → *Leviticus 16*
The ritual of the Day of Atonement

*PART II*

*Leviticus 17–20*
Moral and ethical laws on holiness

*Leviticus 21–25*
Ritual requirements for holiness

*PART III*

*Leviticus 26*
Conclusion of both chaps. 17–25 and to the entire book

*Leviticus 27*
Appendix of laws on vows

### Explanation of the Outline

The initial collection of various regulations on sacrifice in Chapters 1–7 is followed by a narrative explanation of the proper role and status of the priestly officials, illustrated by Aaron's first major sacrifice under the covenant (Chaps. 8–10). Beginning in Chapter 11, the collection

of rules and distinctions that govern the proper respect for food and bodily functions is followed in Chapter 16 by an elaborate description of the annual ritual that atoned for and cleansed the people of all guilt from their sins. In both parallel patterns, laws are followed by actions. Neither set is intended to be all the laws that must be observed, nor do the rituals described exhaust all ways of celebrating or performing sacred liturgical actions. What they do above all is establish a close connection between how we live and what we celebrate in worship.

For the authors of Leviticus, this structure emphasizes that holiness is central to Israel's relationship with God, and that holiness may be defined as respect for the sacred mystery of life and for the divine presence that is found everywhere, even in ordinary day-to-day life.

The same spirit of a holiness that sets off the areas of special divine reverence from ordinary ways of acting also governs the second part of Leviticus. Often called simply "The Law of Holiness," it has special characteristics that mark it as a set of laws separate from Chapters 1–16. It can be divided roughly into two parts: Chapters 17–20 stress the ethical areas of life that bind us socially in communal life; while Chapters 21–25 concentrate on the sacred areas of priestly ministry and worship. Chapter 26 concludes this body of law, but it is so impressive in scope that it really serves as the conclusion of the whole book. Chapter 27 was added later as an appendix.

## The Literary Unity and Diversity of the Book

All scholars today recognize the basic unified viewpoint that the book takes. It is priestly. This means that it gathers together laws and directions that govern activities that should be monitored by the priests in the community. Some of these, as in the chapters on sacrifices and major feasts, have to do with public worship. Others have to do with personal behavior and conditions that affect our proper place before God. These may involve laws on food, clothing, skin diseases, sexual activity, as well as truly ethical decisions about justice, love, and right behavior between members of the covenant community.

All these laws, however, are seen to be part of what separates the sacred from the ordinary. God is holy and not to be treated in just any old way. Judaism and Christianity have always made the transcendence of God a first priority; that is, they have recognized the gulf that divides ourselves as creatures from the one who creates. Certain moments of our lives and certain activities highlight this profound difference. Humans enter into the realm of the sacred that is set apart on a holy day or at a holy place or by the rituals performed by a consecrated (thus "holy") person. Certain features of our being, too, are holy, such as sexuality, birth, and death, because they are at the heart of the mystery of divine creation and divine control over our existence. They are to be treated with special reverence. Exodus covered the making of all necessary sacred objects and some ordination rites; Leviticus concentrates on how Israel is to act according to holy principles.

Although this theme controls every topic treated in Leviticus, the book was not written all at once. The signs of different groups of laws that at various times were joined into larger and larger collections can be seen when we look closely at the text. As an example, if we read the sacrifice rules in Chapters 1–7 quickly, they may appear to be all in the same style. But we could then go back and look at particular expressions. In Chapters 1–3 the sacrifices are regularly "brought *before* the Lord," so that there will be a "sweet-smelling oblation" to the Lord. These expressions are rare in Chapters 4–5. Instead these chapters deal with a special type of offering for sin, and use the label "The Lord said to Moses" more frequently. They also stress that the

*priest* will make atonement for others. Chapters 6–7 are arranged according to a still different formula, "This is the ritual of. . . ."

Probably, then, there are three slightly different sets of sacrifice laws that have been combined to make up these seven chapters. Again, the style of listing laws in Chapters 1–16 is so different from the more preachy style of Chapters 17–26 that all commentators have been convinced that we have separate origins for these two halves. Nevertheless, the editors have made this into one of the most unified books that we have in the Pentateuch, second only to Deuteronomy.

## The Major Themes of the Individual Sections

Since much in Leviticus is foreign to modern Christian religious observances, it will be worth looking at each section of the outline above with a few charts and background aids to understanding.

### Leviticus 1–7: The Topic of Sacrifice

Several different types of sacrifice are named in these chapters:

**THE HOLOCAUST OR WHOLE BURNT OFFERING** (Lv 1,1-17)
This is an animal that is entirely burned on the altar to God. It can be one of three types: cattle (3-9), sheep and goats (10-13), or birds (14-17). The animal must be male and without any blemish. Since it is entirely given over to God, it is an act of pure acknowledgement of divine lordship over life. It is also understood in these chapters to be offered as an atonement for the sins of the offerer (v. 4). But in other passages it was for glad moments (see 22,17).

**THE GRAIN OFFERING** (Lv 2,1-16)
Or "cereal offering" as the *New American Bible* calls it, is called in Hebrew simply "the gift offering" (*minhah*). It may be understood in part as a substitute for expensive animals so that the poor can afford a holocaust. But more usually it was a thanksgiving to God for good crops and to celebrate joyful times. Since only the symbolic bits of grain, oil, and frankincense on the top were actually burned up, the rest went for the support of the priest. Since they lived by it, they kept it for themselves.

**THE PEACE OFFERING** (Lv 3,1-17)
This might better be called a "well-being sacrifice," for its main difference from the holocaust was that it was not burned up but was largely saved and eaten by the offerers and their families. It could be taken from either cattle or sheep and goats, but not from birds. Since it was for a group, a bird would have been too small. Like the holocaust it had to be without blemish, but unlike the holocaust it could be either a male or a female of the animal. Only the fat parts (tail, inner organs and their fat, the two kidneys) were burned to God.

**THE SIN OFFERING OR "PURGATION OFFERING"** (Lv 4,1—5,13)
A sacrifice that dealt with those times when a sacred thing had been violated, often by accident or without knowing it. The sacrifice was necessary in order to atone for the loss of holiness and proper purity of holy things by an act of cleansing. This required a bull to be killed if the offender were the whole people or a priest; a goat sufficed for a lay offender. The key part of the ritual was the sprinkling of the animal's blood on the altar. For the lay offender, the blood of the goat

was sprinkled on the altar of sacrifices in the outer courtyard; but if it had been a congregational or priestly offense, the blood of the bull had to be sprinkled on the altar of incense in the holy interior and on the curtain that leads to the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant was kept.

**THE GUILT OFFERING** (Lv 5,14-26)
This is sometimes called a "reparation offering." It differs from the sin offering slightly in its focus. Where the sin offering was to cleanse the defiled sanctuary and persons, the guilt offering is strictly to give back a reparation or "payment" to God for failure in something we ought to have given or done. That is, we have cheated God or a member of the covenant community, and so not only does the wrong itself have to be fixed up, but God must be given a reparation offering over and above the actual amount that was neglected. For this offering a ram sheep is specified, and the blood is sprinkled on the altar itself. It is clearly a ritual of atonement for sin to heal the sinner of guilt.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DIFFERENT SACRIFICES** (Lv 6,1—7,36)
The specific actions of the priests for each of the above types of sacrifice are now spelled out in more detail in 6,1—7,10. Special instructions for the lay participants in the peace offerings are added on in 7,11-36. This was necessary because, in these particular sacrifices, the offerer and his party ritually ate most of the sacrificed animal and thus needed instructions similar to those given to the priests. It did not hurt, of course, from the priestly point of view, to reemphasize to those who brought sacrifices their obligation to supply a portion to the priests for their livelihood.

**CONCLUSION** (Lv 7,37-38)
The last two verses of Chapter 7 are an especially solemn closing that underscores for the reader how seriously sacrificial regulations and the importance of this practice for the faith was to be understood.

## The Anointing and Service of Aaron and His Sons (Lv 8,1—10,20)

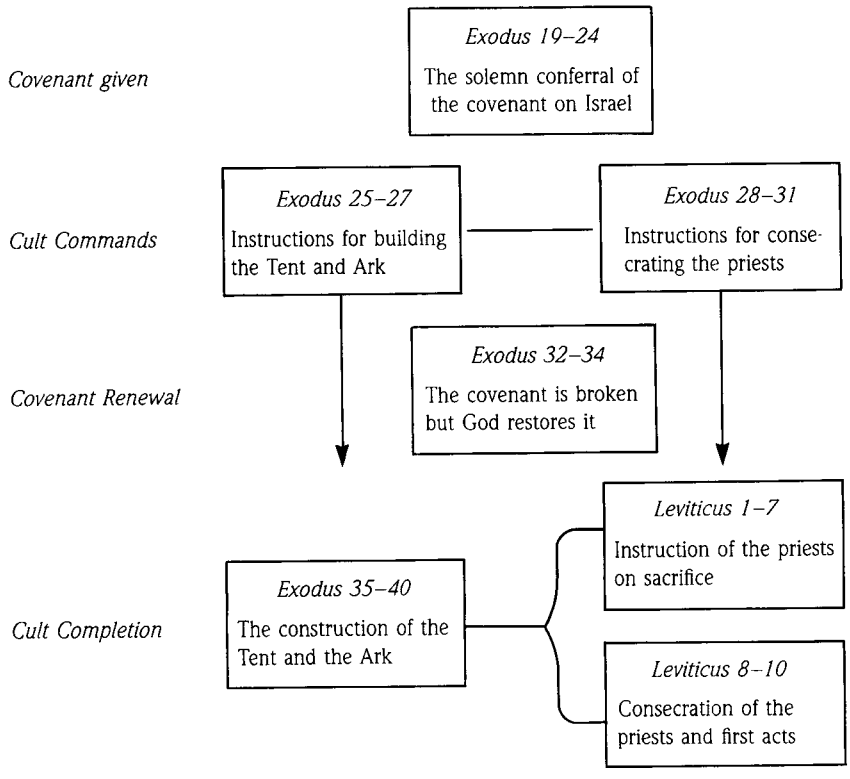
Once the instructions on how sacrifice is to be done have been thoroughly learned in Chapters 1–7, the action can begin. These next chapters deal with the installation of the proper priesthood, that is, Aaron and those descended from him (Chapter 8); the model performance of the first sacrifices (Chapter 9); and several crucial problems that need a solution (Chapter 10). Thus the section is very well organized even though there are several signs it may have originated from a variety of sources. The description of the first sacrifice in 8,14-30 seems almost to be duplicated in the octave-day sacrifices of 9,1-21. The story difference is that in the first, Moses actually leads Aaron; in the second, Aaron does it on his own authority.

The details of Chapter 8 fulfill the requirements for proper priestly performance of the sacrifices. Verses 1-13 carry out the commands on the appointment of priests found in Exodus 29; verses 14-30 correspond to the sacrifice laws in Lv 1,1—5,13.

In Chapter 9 three events are recorded: the first sacrifice of atonement for Aaron and the priests (9,8-14), the first sacrifice to atone for the whole people (9,15-21), and finally the blessing over the people (9,22-24). This text reinforces the lesson that sacrifices must be done correctly and with a special awareness of their sacred character. Only if they are done with such careful reverence will the glory of the Lord be present in their midst (9,6.22-24).

In Chapter 10, the lesson about God's holiness is driven home with still greater force. In the first case, verses 1-5, even the sons of Aaron will be stuck down if they fail to observe the proper awe and correct manner of approaching the divine presence. In the second case, verses 6-11, the priests must refrain from a number of customs that would profane the sense of holiness in the performance of their duties. These include improper dress, stepping beyond the boundary of the Tent of Meeting, and using alcoholic beverages. But they are also given the positive duty of teaching the law in its entirety to the people (v. 11). And in the third case, verses 12-20, the correct manner of eating the sacrifices is dealt with. It is illustrated by an unusual exception that tests the rule: Eleazar and Ithamar don't eat the sacrifice as they should but give it all up as a burnt offering to God. Their excess zeal is permitted because it offered to God what they were entitled to have for themselves. If they had instead done the opposite, and taken part of God's share for themselves, one is left to imagine the death they would incur as punishment.

Chapters 8–10 serve two functions. They show how the laws in Chapters 1–7 are performed by the true priests (see the diagram above, p. RG 86) and they fulfill the instructions given in Exodus 25–31. Those chapters gave the Lord's commands both for building a tent and ark, and for consecrating priests. But only the building program was completed by the end of Exodus. Only now does the priestly consecration finally take place. We could show the development by a diagram:



In this schema the editors have inserted Exodus 32–34 from the older J story of the covenant in order to integrate the two traditions of J and P, and because it reinforced the notion that the people easily fall into idolatry and transgress the holiness of God and so need the priestly carefulness in the cult to preserve their proper relationship to God.

## The Laws of Purity (Lv 11,1—15,33)

These chapters take up four separate types of uncleanness associated with living beings:

| | |
|---|---|
| (1) Lv 11,1-47 | Animals |
| (2) Lv 12,1-8 | Childbirth |
| (3) Lv 13,1—14, 57 | Contagious diseases |
| (4) Lv 15,1-33 | Genital discharges |

The collectors have made a number of important distinctions within these categories. In Chapter 11, for example, some animals are considered clean, that is, fit for eating, while others are not. In general, those same animals that are unclean for eating also contaminate anyone who touches their dead bodies. In the third category, contagious diseases, special procedures are required for each different case—if it is a human skin disease, the person must be quarantined; if it is a fungus on a house wall, the building is quarantined. If it is a matter of sexual emissions, different rituals are prescribed for men and women.

These purity laws are based on a simple consideration, namely that many areas of human life touch the mystery of the divine, and in those areas there can be nothing that is impure or unworthy. Thus, it is not just sacred spaces, such as temples, or sacred moments, such as birth, marriage, and high holy days; but also those areas of everyday experience that involve life and death, including the mysterious power of sexual activity and the sometimes dangerous loss of blood and other bodily fluids.

Uncleanness refers specifically to the areas of life that prevent us from approaching the divine in a worthy manner. It cannot be taken lightly. The final word on the question of those who defile God's house by appearing in it in a state of uncleanness is a warning that it will cause their death (Lv 15,31). At one point, also, the command to avoid swarming insects as unclean is identified with loyalty to God himself, and its violation defiles God's own holiness (Lv 11,44f). Moreover, the laws can have devastating effects on the individuals involved. If the skin disease does not go away, the person can be permanently exiled from the community.

Many scholars have debated the reasons why some animals are considered clean and therefore edible, while others are forbidden. Frequently they argue for a primitive science of hygiene which recognized that the unclean animals were possible carriers of disease. An example would be the pig, long known to be a possible bearer of trichinosis. Others argue that the real basis is a religious reflection on the proper order of creation as told in the Genesis creation stories. Only fish that swim, birds that fly and animals that graze are fully in God's plan; all others seem to be not quite perfect—flightless birds such as ostriches, sea creatures that walk like animals, animals that crawl close to the ground like insects, etc. A little of both views may well have influenced the theologians who made up the lists. We just do not know.

The categories covered in Leviticus 11–15 do not exhaust the realm of the clean and unclean. The Passover regulations of Exodus 12–13 deal with old leaven which was unclean; Deuteronomy 20 demands purity conditions for waging war in God's name. But the four areas found in Leviticus usually touch those matters that come under the supervision of the priests,

often require one or more sacrifices for the purification of the individuals affected, and might involve situations where the unclean person joins those who come into the temple, and would thereby consciously or unconsciously defile God's dwelling place.

## The Day of Atonement (Lv 16,1-34)

In one sense, Chapter 16 takes up where the story left off in Chapter 10 with the death of Aaron's sons and the need for atonement. In another sense, the ritual of a Day of Atonement that is described here heals all the cases of uncleanness and impurity that have defiled the land during the year. It thus sums up the proper response of the people to the dangers of impurity named in Chapters 11–15. In a still larger sense, it is the climax of all the laws on sacrifice, priestly service, and purity from Chapter 1 onward, since they all involve the need for atonement at one level or another. The sacrifices always include some atoning function; priestly service risks constant danger of some fault in its performance that may demand atonement; and, of course, all daily cases of impurity need atoning. Going further, verse 21 tells us that the Day of Atonement ritual was to purify the people and the land of *both* unintentional *and* intentional sins and transgressions.

The actual rite is probably pre-Israelite. Similar ceremonies of transferring the sins of the people onto animals and then slaughtering them were known in many ancient cultures, including those both of Babylon and Rome. Similarly, smearing the blood of a sacrificial animal on the walls of a temple to purify it was done at Babylon. The reference to Azazel in verses 8, 10, and 26 remains uncertain. It probably refers to an ancient belief that there was a desert demon by this name that claimed the goat sent out to it. But there is no evidence for belief in any such demon here—it is a poetic way of casting out sin to the realm of evil, the desert. It is as though the people said to the goat, "Go to hell!"

Chapter 16 carefully describes each step. It lists first the proper procedures and clothing for Aaron or any high priest to enter the presence of God in the holy of holies; then outlines each step of the ritual, including the prayer and hand gestures over the goat; and finally closes with a command to do this forever. This is the ritual of Yom Kippur still celebrated annually by Jews each September-October, the ninth day after Rosh Hashanah (the New Year). For the mixing of past and present, this passage should be compared to the parallel directions for Passover in Exodus 12.

## The Holiness Code (Lv 17,1—25,55)

In Chapters 1–16 all the topics dealt with things that needed to be observed or performed to overcome the barrier between God and human beings. Thus even the sacrifices can be included under the rubric of concern for being clean before God. Chapters 17–25 take up the opposite, and just as necessary, qualification of holiness—what we do positively to relate to God. The first sixteen chapters center on removing the blocks to our relationship, Chapters 17–25 propose building new blocks in communal action in imitation of God. Actually, both areas overlap considerably with one another, and there is an excellent harmony between Chapters 1–16 and 17–25.

There are nevertheless some differences. The style of 1–16 was largely listing what had to be done, but 17–25 is more like a sermon exhorting people to fidelity. Almost all of the first sixteen chapters were ritual requirements; most of 17–25 deals with ethical and social obliga-

tions. In 1–16 the accent fell on what we as mere creatures need to do to bridge the gap to the divine; in 17–25 the accent falls on how a holy people live in the image and likeness of God. In many ways the Holiness Code of 17–25 resembles the homiletic style of the Book of Deuteronomy and the impassioned warnings of the prophet Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 22 for a good comparison with Leviticus 18–20). It probably originated in the same period as Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, near the time of the Exile of 587 B.C., or a little earlier. It is also a moving call to holiness and integration of all aspects of our lives around God as our central concern.

In structure, 17–25 can be divided into two parts: (a) Chapters 17–20, which cover ethical demands on the whole community, and (b) Chapters 21–25, which deal primarily with priestly matters of public worship. Each part has a well-ordered progression:

*a) Part 1 (Chapters 17–20)*

17,1-16 All sacrifices must be done at the central sanctuary; there must be great reverence for life by respect for the blood: it is not for human consumption but to be given back to God.

18,1-30 Sexual behavior must be regulated by careful respect for appropriate human relationships, so that lust and orgiastic urges are controlled and so that Israel does not become as carnally bankrupt as its pagan neighbors.

19,1-37 Contains a wide variety of norms for dealing with one another as members of the covenant with God; and as verses 19-36 make clear, far differently from the way the Canaanites behave. The laws are especially concerned with protecting the rights of the weak so that there will not be a degraded serf class as was found among the Canaanite city states.

20,1-27 Repeats many of the commands already given, but adds penalties to each, often severe in respect to idolatry and incest. Once again it ends with a warning to avoid the practices of the Canaanites.

*b) Part 2 (Chapters 21–25)*

21,1-24 The role of priest demands wholeness and particular witness, so special rules governing marriage, deformities, and uncleanness are spelled out.

22,1-33 Regulations for the wholeness and fitting perfection of the animals sacrificed are made parallel to those governing the priests.

23,1-44 The annual feast days must be regulated with the same care as the priests and sacrifices. This section treats the weekly sabbath as the model feast (23,2f); and then seven annual feast days: passover, first fruits, weeks, New Year, the day of atonement, booths, and the eighth day of booths.

24,1-23 Still further regulations of worship follow. These explain how the lamps and the showbread in the sanctuary are handled; also the death penalty for blasphemy is explained by a concrete case.

25,1-5 A special concluding description of the sabbatical year every seventh year when no planting may be done; and of the jubilee year, every fifty

years, when all property and debts return to their original owners. Both probably originated as acts of acknowledgement that God owned the land. Now they are explained as acts of social justice to restore help to the poor and landless.

These laws are an ideal code and it is not absolutely certain that some of the most idealistic among them, such as the very unlikely jubilee year, were ever put into actual practice. They stand together, however, as a vision of Israel living completely under the dominion of God and in obedience to the divine will—they are holy as God is holy, and all Israel's actions respect the integrity and purpose of God's creation. This is made clear over and over again in these nine chapters by repeating the formulas "I the Lord am your God," "I am the Lord," or "I the Lord am holy." To these is often added the reminder "I the Lord led you out of Egypt." Israel who received such divine compassion must always act in turn out of a like compassion for others!

## The Conclusion to the Holiness Code (Lv 26,1-46)

This is the true conclusion to the Holiness Code, but it stands apart by its form as a series of blessings on all who keep and curses on all who violate the covenant. In this way, it now stands as the general conclusion to both Chapters 1–16 and 17–25. The regulations on approaching God in worship and obeying him in society have been spelled out, and now Israel must choose. Its covenant structure resembles very closely the vassal-treaty form discussed above at Exodus 19–24, and it has strong similarities to a similar closing list of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27.

It also reflects the thinking of the priestly editors at the end of the exile. Not only does it foresee both blessing and eventual curse for disobedience, but it adds a short concluding word on a renewed blessing and a promise that God will not forget his covenant with Israel completely (vv. 40-46). It is imbued with the spirit of the exilic prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel that God was about to instill a new covenant, written on the hearts of Israel, so that no longer would obedience come in response to an external law but would rise from an interior consent born of the knowledge and love of the Lord. It is at this point that the original Book of Leviticus ended on a note of great hope for the future.

## The Appendix on Gifts Vowed to the Sanctuary (Lv 27,1-34)

This section was added sometime after Leviticus was completed, to take care of an important problem that touched on holiness: how to handle various offerings that were vowed to the Lord but are not always appropriate for sacred use. These include such diverse subjects as persons, animals, houses, land, firstborn animals, objects vowed, and tithes. If something is not fitting to be consecrated to God it should be sold for money for the sanctuary or brought back by the offerer. While this is an important area, it can be subject to rash vows by people. Note Jesus in Matthew 5,3-9 condemns those who vow to God what belongs to the support of their parents.

L.B.

# NUMBERS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 140–186 of the Old Testament*]

## The Nature of the Book of Numbers

Generally, commentators have trouble explaining the organization and purpose of the Book of Numbers. They identify a rough outline of three divisions, but judge that the materials in each section are not well ordered and seem to be loose collections of topics and events that do not belong anywhere else. This approach, however, does not help us to study the book easily, and it probably reflects the difficulties that modern minds have with ancient ways of thinking, rather than being an accurate statement of what the authors and editors of the Book of Numbers thought they were doing. Several considerations might help us find more purpose and order in the book than would appear in a hasty reading.

### NUMBERS IS PLACED SQUARELY IN THE MIDDLE

It stands between the events described in Exodus and Leviticus and the situation found in Deuteronomy. It is about a journey which moves the people from Mount Sinai (Exodus and Leviticus) to the border of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy). The focus of all the stories and legal lists is either on preparations for the journey, or on problems encountered on the journey, or on attitudes that threaten the journey.

### NUMBERS DEPENDS ON LEVITICUS

Numbers naturally flows from the materials treated in Leviticus right before it. The central theme of Leviticus is holiness in the ordinary areas of life, such as food, clothing, sickness, moral ethics of society, and regular worship. Numbers intensifies the expectations of holiness by stressing the need for dedication and total commitment to God for Israel to succeed as a nation. Its goal is to live prosperously in the Holy Land.

### A COMBINATION OF NARRATIVES AND LAWS

The book contains a combination of narratives and laws just as do Exodus and Leviticus. Each collection of laws relates to the experiences and lessons learned from the past. Israel enjoyed reading these living connections between the deeds of their ancestors and the laws they kept and cherished in memory of those long-ago times.

### THIS JOURNEY IS NO ORDINARY TRIP

It is a military campaign of Israel as an army advancing against the enemy. It is a journey of conquest, and it will not be completed until the end of the Book of Joshua when the people have rest in the Promised Land. Most of the laws, as well as the elaborate preparations for leaving Sinai and the detailed descriptions of battles on the eastern side of the Jordan River, are framed around proper military behavior. A soldier on a war for God had to be holy and single-minded.

### FINALLY, THE BOOK CENTERS ON THE PROMISE OF THE LAND

The people are on the move as a great and fearsome force; they no longer need worry about the promise of a son that was the central concern in the stories of Genesis. Now the land dominates their thinking. It dominates as a hope for prosperity that will be in stark contrast to the deprivation and suffering of their time in the desert. And it dominates in the reflections and legal directives on how to live faithfully and loyally in the land as a people of the covenant.

## The Outline of the Book of Numbers

The most common division of the book is into three large blocs that correspond to major stages of the journey narrative:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nm 1,1 —10,10 | The proper preparation of a military expedition in a holy war. |
| Nm 10,11—20,13 | The journey through the desert and the trials of the people's faith in God. |
| Nm 20,14—36,13 | Final directions and campaigns to prepare for assault on the Promised Land. |

This breakdown of the book's order highlights that it remains controlled by the overall sense of movement toward the divinely promised goal of the land first stated at Genesis 12,1-3. The first bloc is a flurry of activity in getting ready to depart; the second is an actual journey from Sinai to the oasis of Kadesh Barnea; and the third division has them move on through the transjordan area of Edom, Moab, and the Amorites to arrive in battle array across the river from the major Canaanite stronghold of Jericho. Numbers 33 summarizes the movements of the Israelites from Egypt until they reach the edge of the Jordan by listing the stopping places where they camped. Such a record of the stages by which they traveled calls attention to the fact that, at each one, God gave special guidance and assistance, and that no movement took place without the divine initiative.

But each major division of this journey contains those ritual and legal concerns that seem to fit best at that spot:

***The Divisions of the Book of Numbers***
***with a summary of the contents of each chapter***

| *Nm 1,1—10,10* | *Nm 10,11—20,13* | *Nm 20,14—36,13* |
|---|---|---|
| The camp is prepared for a holy war battle march | The journey to Kadesh with challenges to Moses' rule | Events and rules stemming from the arrival at Jordan |
| ***Chap.*** | ***Chap.*** | ***Chap.*** |
| 1 Census of males for armed service | 10 The battle order: the Ark is first | 20 Move through Edom; death of Aaron |
| 2 Order of the camp | 11 Two occasions of rebellion | 21 More victories and more murmuring |
| 3 Special role for Levites | 12 Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses | 22–24 Balaam tries to stop Israel |
| 4 Levitical roles in bearing the Ark | 13 The spies scout the Promised Land | 25 The people abandon God at Baal-Peor |
| 5 Laws of purification for battle | 14 People resist taking the land | 26 The census repeated and land promised |
| 6 Vows of Nazirite dedication | 15 Laws relating to possessing land | 27–30 Laws on inheritance, vows, and worship |
| 7 Sacrifices and gifts for leaving | 16 Levite rebellion against Aaron | 31 The Midianites are defeated |

Levites anointed for service
9 Passover celebration; camp is broken
10 The trumpets sound the departure
17 Aaron's authority restored
18 Proper portions for priests and Levites
19 Atonement for any uncleanness
20 Murmuring over water
32 Transjordan conquests of 2½ tribes
33–34 Stages of the march and boundaries
35 Special levitical cities and laws
36 Inheritance laws and conclusion

## The Development of the Major Themes in Numbers

To help us appreciate a little more the dramatic flow of the book, it might be useful to describe it narratively:

### Numbers 1,1—10,10

The book opens with the census of all males able to go to war (1,45). Levites, who serve in the sanctuary, are exempted. In Chapter 2 these newly commissioned soldiers are then organized into a military camp prepared for defense as well as a quick march in time of danger. The book then turns to the special role of the Levites who are to dwell around the tent and ark at the center of camp; they represent God's ransom of all firstborn males (3,5-12). In this way, all the fighting force becomes a consecrated army linked to holy service of the Lord through the levitical substitutes. Then follow the duties of the Levites for moving the sanctified objects of the sanctuary when on the march (Chap.4), and a set of laws on uncleanness, theft, adultery, and other sins that would defile the army's holy status to fight for God (Chap. 5). Chapter 6 completes this preparation of the camp by giving rules for those who take extra vows of rigor, the Nazirites. Chapters 1–6 end with the blessing of Aaron over the camp (6,22-27).

Chapters 7–10 then move on to the questions of proper ritual actions for the sanctuary itself, including the giving of gifts (Chap. 7); the care of the lampstands, the purification of the Levites for service in the tent, and time limits for their years of duty (Chap. 8); and finally the solemn celebration of the first Passover since leaving Egypt, which is to take place on the first anniversary of the miracle itself (9,1-14). This larger division then concludes with a notice that the divine pillars of cloud and fire would move with the people and they are to be summoned to departure by the silver trumpets (9,15—10,10).

### Numbers 10,11—20,13

This traces the actual journey from Sinai toward the land of Canaan. The cloud moves, the tribes set out in marching order, all appears to be proper. But trouble immediately looms with the repetition of the grumbling of the people that had so characterized the period between their deliverance in Egypt and their arrival at Sinai in Exodus 13–18. Many of the chapters in Numbers repeat and duplicate the same grumblings recorded in the Exodus narratives. First, people complain about the lack of meat (Chap. 11) and are punished by fire; but Moses intercedes and saves them. At this point, too, some of Moses' authority is shared with the elders (11,24-30). In the next chapter, even Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses' authority and are struck with leprosy, but again Moses intercedes successfully. Next they arrive near the southern boundaries of the Promised Land and are able to advance straight into it. The scouts return with

glowing reports of its bounty, but only Joshua and Caleb are fearless enough to want to attack the inhabitants. The people cringe in fear and reject Moses' leadership. God wishes to destroy them all, but Moses once again intercedes and God once again relents. But he does decree that not one shall enter the Promised Land from this generation except Caleb and Joshua, who were loyal (Chaps. 13–14).

Here the editors insert laws that will be required when Israel gains possession of the land (Chap. 15). But again, rebellion flares up as several Levites now refuse to follow Moses. They receive death as their punishment (Chap. 16), and Aaron then assumes the priestly role of reconciling and purifying the people in their relationship to God (Chap. 17). This in turn is followed by a number of laws that regulate the proper payment due to priests and Levites for their service to the sanctuary, and which, to the minds of the ancient editors, fitted perfectly here after the discussion of Aaron's role.

Since uncleanness has been a major theme of these narratives, especially in the case of those who go near God's sanctuary unworthily, Chapter 19 follows with a ritual which uses the ashes of a red heifer for preparing a permanent holy water to sanctify those found in an unclean state. This whole division now ends with a final case of grumbling over the lack of water in which even Moses and Aaron fail in their trust in God and are told that they, too, cannot enter the Promised Land.

The materials from Chapters 10 to 20 have thus emphasized the fragility of the people's loyalty to the Lord, even in their state of military awareness. They also underline the need for constant purification of action, and loyalty to God, if Israel is to succeed in possessing the land. Above all, they emphasize the central role of the priests and Levites in that process of purification, and their role in developing complete fidelity through proper ritual and holiness.

## Numbers 20,14—36,13

The action now turns to the actual conquest of the land. Their march takes them around the land of Edom and up the desert highway along the east side of the transjordan plateau. They bypass the land of Moab and attack the Amorites farther north. This victory in Chapter 21 leads the king of Moab to try to stop them. He hires a famous prophet, Balaam, to curse them. Chapters 22–24 are a very old series of stories about Balaam's efforts and his failure. It does provide a climactic statement to the patriarch's promise as Balaam foresees the greatness of Israel in the centuries ahead.

In sharp contrast to this future greatness, however, the very next chapter records how Israel betrayed even the first commandment and fell into idolatry and the orgiastic practices of the Canaanites. All who participated are executed (Chap. 25). This sets the stage for a renewed military dedication to the cause of the Lord, symbolized by taking a second census in Chapter 26 to summon forth the fighting men for the war ahead.

But before any battles are fought, there is an interlude of four chapters (27–30) in which another series of regulations and laws are set forth that pertain to the organization of Israelite society when it is settled in an agricultural and urban type of life. These laws are triggered by the problem of relations between families and their obligations to one another which the taking of the census leaves unanswered. They cover inheritance laws for the widows and daughters of men who might be slain in battle or die prematurely. They also involve the proper rules for celebration of the feast days in a new land, and the rules governing different types of vows made by different classes of people.

Finally fighting resumes with a major victory over Midian that is interpreted as revenge for the Midianites' part in the idolatrous acts at Baal Peor (Chap. 31). Shortly after, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh conquer territory on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Chap. 32). This is permitted only with deep reservations since it may mean accepting less than the Promised Land itself. But those tribes promise to do their part in the conquest of Palestine when the moment comes.

The final chapters of Numbers sum up. Chapter 33 lists all the camps through which Israel had journeyed, ending with the final stopping place on the river across from Jericho. They are given a solemn command to take the land, drive out its inhabitants (33,53-56), and divide the land among the tribes so that they fill the generous boundaries which Moses describes (34,1-15). The book closes with a series of laws that reflect the tricky problems of legal boundaries and multiple jurisdictions. These include laws on special cities for the Levites, towns set aside as asylums for accused persons, murders in open territory between tribes, and property rights for women and the defenseless. Once again the laws illustrate the nature of the narrative that had immediately preceded them.

### Conclusion

The developmental pattern of Numbers not only tells a story of adventure and difficulty, it ties this story to lessons that must be applied when the people live a totally different type of life in the Promised Land. Laws and regulations that would never apply in nomadic or seminomadic situations will become crucial when the circumstances change dramatically and they become a settled population. The book, however, manages to unite the dramatic history of their time in the wilderness as a people on the move without home or power with the later needs and practices that characterized their life in Canaan in the years after.

There are few parallels to this type of writing in modern literature, but we can learn to value and even enjoy this intense combining of laws and past lessons if we can forget our world a bit and imagine ourselves as one of those Israelites whose unique and passionate faith in a single God will set them apart from other peoples. How do they preserve the ties back to the days of salvation and guidance in the desert without losing them in the culture of the people they conquer? They remember the ways in the desert and observe them!

## Major Religious Topics of Numbers

Like Leviticus, Numbers reflects throughout the hand of the Priestly source guiding its order and structure. Only in two sections can we find the J and E sources from the older tradition still present: (1) in the narrative stories of Chapters 10–16; (2) in the Balaam cycle (Chaps. 22–24) and the conquest of the east bank of the Jordan (Chap. 32). These priestly editors have emphasized certain themes above others while keeping the journey narrative moving ahead. Certainly ritual matters were important to them, for scattered references to various states of uncleanness and the rites to overcome them occur frequently. So also, numerous passages distinguish particular duties of priests and Levites. Legal regulations for various social areas of conflict that would arise when land is involved are also interspersed at fitting places in the text. And finally, the theological themes that center on God's power to bring about the promise are continued from the books of Genesis and Exodus. These include: (1) questions on the authority

of Moses, Aaron, and the elders; (2) murmuring and lack of trust on the part of the people; (3) the power of the prophetic word in Balaam; and (4) the decisive victories God bestows in battle.

In order to better grasp the main religious message of these various topics scattered throughout the book, it is worth listing some of the groupings in more detail:

## Priests and Levites

Genesis 34,24-31 and 49,5-7 both view Levi as a violent and renegade tribe; the Book of Exodus, however, not only notes that Moses and Aaron are from the tribe of Levi, but also praises the Levites in 32,25-29 as the only tribe that remained faithful to the Lord during the golden-calf incident. It is therefore worthy of priestly service to the Lord. Deuteronomy 33,8-11 adds that the Levites alone were faithful at Massah and Meribah when Moses struck water from the rock, although the two accounts (Ex 17,1-7; Nm 20,2-13) never mention any levitical role. There may have been two separate traditions about the Levites, one positive and one negative. Certainly there is some reason to wonder, since in several places such as Deuteronomy, Joshua, and a few prophetic texts (Ez 43,19—44,15; Mal 2,4), the Levites are referred to as priests; while in the majority of other references they are an auxiliary group to help in the temple but are distinct from the priests, who can only be from the house of Aaron. Perhaps these conflicting reports stem from the historical reality that originally Levites were priestly in character but became subordinated to a particular branch of the family of Aaron after the Exile in 586 B.C.

In Numbers, however, the Levites receive very high honor, even though the book takes the position that they are not the same as the priests and must not seek to perform priestly offices. Four sets of regulations pertain to the Levites:

- A They alone have the privilege of carrying the ark of the covenant (1,49-53), and they are also responsible for the other sacred objects in the sanctuary and for its transport during the desert years (4,1-49).
- B They are honored to be set aside as a ransom for each firstborn male among the people as a whole. Thus they are consecrated to God and may not have military roles nor possess land (3,5-20; 3,40-51; 8,3-24; see Dt 18,1-5).
- C In Numbers 16–17, some Levites under Korah rebel against Aaron and Moses, and demand equal priestly rights. God punishes them severely, and the story serves as a motive for why Levites are not allowed to do priestly ministry.
- D Certain cities are set aside by Moses in Numbers 35, 2-8 as refuge centers for people suspected of crimes. This contradicts claims in other books that Levites had no title to land. It also provides a basis for seeing an important role for the Levites in the local administration of justice in Israel; probably they also serve as local religious leaders who functioned as priests in the small communities far from Jerusalem.

## The Holy War

There is always a great amount of uneasiness when modern readers hear the stories of sacred campaigns in which the enemy—men, women, and children—are doomed and executed if Israel is victorious. Such an example takes place in Numbers 21,1-3 when Israel fights Arad, and again in Numbers 31,1-54, in the battle against the Midianites. Similar military campaigns are described in Joshua, Judges, and the books of Samuel. It is worth noting about these, however,

that, to the Israelite reader of the Bible who lived many years after the days of Moses, Joshua, and the judges, these accounts then belonged back in the founding days. They had a special character because it had been a life and death struggle between the Lord and the Canaanite gods that demanded drastic action. They knew that in their earliest traditions, God was a warrior who fought on their behalf against overwhelming odds; note in particular the description of God as a warrior in the oldest poem in the Pentateuch, Exodus 15.

Numbers gives one of the fullest explanations of Holy War theory in the passage on the Midianites in Chapter 31. It is quite fierce. But in another account from about the same time as Numbers or a little earlier, Deuteronomy 20, a number of restrictions are put on such a war so that it is less than a total massacre. So, too, the first chapters of Numbers try to expand the concept of the Holy War to include the whole people as an army of the Lord on the move to Palestine. Purity and obedience are the keynotes of this army, not vengeance, and we might safely assume that already the editors of Numbers wanted to soften the stories of the old total war. They suggested, instead, to the readers that now this was lived out by a total commitment of life to the way of the Lord. The battles against Arad, Midian, and finally Canaan, were still stirring episodes from the past, but they were not the way of the present! This would fit the picture painted by several prophets that war was not the way to do God's will; peace and faith were (see Is 7,1-14; Hos 10,13f; Jer 21,3-10; 34,1-5). There was a development in theology and attitude over the centuries, and Numbers at least shows some of both viewpoints mixed together.

## The Murmuring Tradition

One striking aspect of the stories in Numbers 10,11—20,13 is the recurrence of so many incidents of grumbling and rebellion against God by the people in the desert that resemble accounts in Exodus 14–18. Note the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nm 11,1 | People grumble against Moses at Taberah; fire comes down. |
| Nm 11,4 | People grumble about the lack of meat at Kibroth-hattaavah; God sends a plague, but then a gift of quail for food. |
| Nm 12,1-16 | Miriam and Aaron rebel against the sole authority of Moses; Miriam becomes a leper, but God later heals her. |
| Nm 14,1-38 | The people refuse to attack Canaan; God will make them die in the desert and their children wander for forty years. |
| Nm 16,1-36 | Korah, Dathan and Abiram all rebel against Aaron's authority; they are consumed by fire from heaven. |
| Nm 17,6-15 | The people again grumble against Moses and Aaron; the scourge of punishment is lifted by Aaron's actions. |
| Nm 20,2-13 | The people complain about lack of water; God has Moses strike the rock for water, but keeps him from entering the Promised Land. |
| Nm 21,4-9 | The people again grumble about food, and God sends fiery serpents to bite them; they are saved by a bronze serpent made by Moses. |

These incidents may be compared to similar examples from the Book of Exodus: Exodus 14,10; 15,23; 16,3; and 17,2. The last case is a duplicate of Numbers 20,1-13 in which Moses strikes the rock for water. Numbers 11,4 seems to be the same as Exodus 16,3, in which God sends the people quail to eat. These two cases may actually borrow material from J or E sources. The other examples in Numbers, however, all seem to have a similar interest in how God punished the people and then allowed Moses or Aaron to intercede and restore them.

Numbers, true to its priestly concern, wishes to emphasize the need of the community to atone for its sin and rebellion, and turn back to God through liturgy and purification. Even the bronze serpent in Numbers 21 implies healing through some ritual action. According to 2 Kings 18,4 this object was receiving special veneration right up to the time that King Hezekiah reformed the religion in 715 B.C. and after. Hezekiah smashed it. Numbers tells the story despite the obvious danger that it might be considered magically powerful to illustrate the need to turn to God for healing.

## The Balaam Oracles

The story of Balaam, the mysterious prophet summoned from the East to curse Israel, is perhaps the most fascinating part of the Book of Numbers. It contains some of the older materials derived from the J and E sources that have been incorporated into the priestly view of the conquest. In studying this part of the book, several points should be noted:

### THERE ARE MIXED VIEWS OF BALAAM IN THE BIBLE

Numbers 22,1—24,25 presents him as a prophet from Mesopotamia who is hired to curse Israel, and then is forced by God to bless them. Indeed, the folk story about Balaam and his ass in Chapter 22 presents him as willing to do whatever the Lord wants. Thus one might conclude that he is presented sympathetically and even as an instrument of God. But later on in Numbers 31,8 and 16, Balaam is slaughtered by the Israelites as a Midianite king because he led people astray at Baal Peor. This must stem from a separate tradition than that of Numbers 22–24. This double view reappears in the Book of Joshua where Balaam is the seer who curses Israel in 24,9-10, but was among the Midianites in 13,22. Deuteronomy 23,4f; Micah 6,5, and Nehemiah 13,2 all view Balaam as the seer. On the other side, Genesis 36,32 describes him, under the name of Bela, as a king of Midian (also known as Edom).

Interestingly enough, the New Testament must pick up a still later tradition that Balaam was greedy for money. 2 Peter 2,16; Jude 11; Revelation 2,14 all see him as a false teacher motivated by greed. The real Balaam may never be known, but he seems to have been famous as a prophet in other nations than Israel. A sixth-century B.C. Aramaic text speaks of him in this vein. So at least the basic point of Numbers 22–24 seems to be based on very old traditon.

### THERE ARE FOUR ORACLES IN CHAPTERS 23 AND 24

Most scholars hold that the two in Chapter 23 are from the Elohist (E) source, and the two in Chapter 24 are from the Yahwist (J). Look at them closely, and note the elaborate formulas of introduction in 24,3f and 24,15f that imply a very formal manner in which prophets in Judah may have normally spoken. These also stress the glory of the king (24,7.17), a viewpoint typical of the Davidic monarchy. On the other hand, the two from the E tradition lack such elaborate formulas and stress the blessing on the whole people given by God.

**SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE THE WORDS OF BALAAM FORMED THE ENDINGS TO BOTH THE J AND THE E NARRATIVE SOURCES**

In this view, the prophet looks ahead to the fulfillment of the promise in the days of the monarchy many years hence. If Chapter 23 does end the E story, and Chapter 24 the J story, then further stories of the conquest in Numbers 32 and in the Book of Joshua that have concerns similar to those of J and E would have to be explained. We could at least say this much—that the final form of the Book of Numbers sees the Balaam prophecies as important. They confirm with a divine word the coming victory of Israel's battle for the lands on both sides of the Jordan.

## The Conquest by the Tribes

The end of Numbers records the controversies among the tribes over whether they all must enter the land, or whether Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh may live on the transjordan side of the river. A similar suggestion that harmony did not always prevail among the tribes stands out in the conflict between Joshua, Caleb, and the other scouts in Numbers 13–14. In fact, such divisions within the twelve tribes appear frequently in the books of Joshua and Judges as well.

There are also numerous differences within the lists of the tribes themselves that suggest the tradition was not always uniform about which tribes made up the original people of Israel. There are seven separate listings of the tribes in the Book of Numbers and they do not always agree:

*The Tribal Lists in the Book of Numbers*

| Nm 1 5-15 | Nm 1 20-43 | Nm 2 3-29 | Nm 7 12-83 | Nm 13 4-15 | Nm 26 5-50 | Nm 34 19-28 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reuben | Reuben | Judah | Judah | Reuben | Reuben | Judah |
| Simeon | Simeon | Issachar | Issachar | Simeon | Simeon | Simeon |
| Judah | Gad | Zebulun | Zebulun | Judah | Gad | Benjamin |
| Issachar | Judah | Reuben | Reuben | Issachar | Judah | Dan |
| Zebulun | Issachar | Simeon | Simeon | Ephraim | Issachar | Manasseh |
| Ephraim | Zebulun | Gad | Gad | Benjamin | Zebulun | Ephraim |
| Manasseh | Ephraim | Ephraim | Ephraim | Zebulun | Manasseh | Zebulun |
| Benjamin | Manasseh | Manasseh | Manasseh | Manasseh | Ephraim | Issachar |
| Dan | Benjamin | Benjamin | Benjamin | Dan | Benjamin | Asher |
| Asher | Dan | Dan | Dan | Asher | Dan | Naphtali |
| Gad | Asher | Asher | Asher | Naphtali | Asher | |
| Naphtali | Naphtali | Naphtali | Naphtali | Gad | Naphtali | |

In Numbers 34, the two tribes that stayed across the Jordan, Reuben and Gad, are omitted; otherwise every list includes twelve tribes. None of these, however, mentions Levi, although he is included in all lists in Genesis and Exodus (Gn 29,31—30,22 plus 35,16-20; 35,22-26, 46,8-25; 49,2-27; Ex 1,1-5). In his place, the lists in Numbers always give Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as two tribes that replace those of their father Joseph and Levi. Several lists begin with Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob; but others with Judah, the chief tribe in the priestly view. Moreover, the tribes occur in varied orders throughout the seven lists, as well as in lists in other books.

Each list came down with its own purposes in mind, of course. Numbers 2,3-29, for

example, reordered tribes to fit in a neat square around the tent and ark. We will not be too confused if we pay attention to the divergent materials and viewpoints that have been collected in Numbers and in other texts that deal with how the conquest of Palestine took place. They had no modern historians on the scene, so that much of the traditional narration of these events was in the form of hero stories, great legendary actions of the tribes, and local memories preserved by one tribe or another. They have been organized with more neatness and more attention to continuity than may have actually been the way the events themselves happened.

No doubt some tribal groups entered Palestine separately from the main body of attackers under Joshua, while some tribes may have had large numbers of their members already in the land. Finally, the constant substitution of Ephraim and Manassah for Joseph may indicate that it was these two tribes in particular that did most of the fighting and conquering with Joshua. Indeed, to support this, we can note that the Book of Joshua indicates the action against the Canaanites did largely take place in the territory of those two tribes. And the controversy with the two and a half tribes that did not want to go with the rest may only be the tip of a very large iceberg, in which the much larger hidden part is the reality of how few actually joined the invasion with Joshua.

## The Theology of the Priestly Writers

The P source probably had many earlier written pieces to draw on in putting together its descriptions in the Book of Numbers. Such might have been lists of tribal leaders (Nm 1,5-15; 2,3-31; 7,12-88; 10,14-28); the descriptions of the battle camp in Chapters 2 and 10; census lists of some kind for Chapters 1 and 26; Sinai place-names in Numbers 33; and, of course, J and E for such passages as Numbers 13–14, 22–24, and 32.

The P school has already stated its primary emphasis for Israel's life in Exodus 25–40: the divine presence will be known in Israel in the sanctuary (a tent in the desert years, a temple later) and will manifest its glory there. The proper response of Israel will be observance of sacrifice and the laws of holiness. This "holy" community is given its final climactic description at the end of Leviticus in Chapter 26, in the form of a warning speech.

To this, the P authors have added in Numbers some important specifications about how this holiness can be carried out through national institutions and in the relations among the tribes with respect to their possession of the land. Moreover, the cultic organization of Israel's life must be observed even in a state of exile (the idea of the battle camp in the wilderness), and even when the proper order is threatened and broken down by disobedience (the meaning of the numerous rebellions against Moses in Chapters 11–21). God will certainly punish this disobedience, but the mediation of priests and leaders (Aaron and Moses) can turn away God's wrath and restore blessing. Most of all, nothing will deter the divine fulfillment; yet at the same time, God does not depend on any one leader no matter how great (even Moses can be denied entry to the Promised Land!). Although the people have no land or home now, they have all the necessary means of worship and obedience to hold on until the divine promise is fulfilled just a short time ahead.

Seen in this light, Numbers is the final statement of the Priestly theology in the Pentateuch. Now Moses can depart (note how his death should follow at the end of Numbers 36 but it is delayed until Deuteronomy 34 for editorial reasons), and the conquest begin. But first, an interlude with the Book of Deuteronomy.

L.B.

# DEUTERONOMY □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 187–227 of the Old Testament*]

## The *New American Bible* and the Book of Deuteronomy

The introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy in the *New American Bible* points to a number of significant aspects for any deep study of the book. First, its style is distinctive and not like any seen up to this point in the Pentateuch. It is more like a sermon with its urgent appeals to obedience and loyalty to God and its thundering warnings of the dire consequences that will occur if the people do not follow the deuteronomic teachings. Secondly, the *NAB* notes that scholars believe it was written near the end of Israel's time as an independent kingdom, that is to say, about the seventh century B.C., and comes not at all from the time of Moses. It actually looks back on Israel's history although written as if it looked ahead to their possession of the land. Thirdly, the *NAB* notes how significant deuteronomic theology is for the understanding of the New Testament world of Jesus. Fourthly, the *New American Bible* gives us a simple outline of how to approach the book.

We can expand on all of these to assist us in the study of the book, as well as add some reflections on three other points: (1) The particular theological and historical perspective the book offers on Israel's earlier traditions; (2) the theology of the covenant that permeates the book; (3) its connections to the wider grouping of the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, all of which seem to receive their inspiration from Deuteronomy. We will order these seven areas according to their logical development.

## The Outline of the Book

The following detailed breakdown of the contents of Deuteronomy expands the *New American Bible*'s outline and reorders it slightly to combine its parts I and II, and divide its part IV into two sections:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1,1—11,32 | I. *Introduction to the Deuteronomic Law Code* |
| 1,1—4,43 | A. General Historical Introduction |
| 1,1—3,29 | 1. Historical survey |
| 4,1-43 | 2. Summary about the Law's goodness |
| 4,44—11,32 | B. Particular Introduction to the Law |
| 4,44-49 | 1. Introductory context |
| 5,1-33 | 2. Moses and the Ten Commandments |
| 6,1-25 | 3. Instruction on obeying the Law |
| 7,1-16 | 4. Attitudes toward foreign gods |
| 8,1-20 | 5. The desert lesson: depend on God! |
| 9,1—10,22 | 6. The golden calf lesson: idolatry |
| 11,1-32 | 7. General urging to love covenant |
| 12,1—26,19 | II. *The Deuteronomic Law Code* |
| 12,1-31 | A. The Introductory Law: one sanctuary |
| 13,1—26,15 | B. The Individual Laws |
| 13,1-19 | 1. Laws on idolatry |

| | |
|---|---|
| 14,1-29 | 2. Ritual food laws and tithes |
| 15,1-18 | 3. Sabbatical release for the poor |
| 15,19-23 | 4. Sacrifice of the firstborn |
| 16,1-17 | 5. Pilgrim feastdays binding on all |
| 16,18—18,22 | 6. Officials: kings, priests, prophets |
| 19,1-21 | 7. Cities of refuge |
| 20,1-20; 21,10-14; 23,9-14 | 8. Rules for the Holy War |
| 21,1-9 | 9. Unknown murders |
| 21,15—22,12 | 10. Laws on social problems |
| 22,13—23,1 | 11. Sexual and marriage laws |
| 23,1—25,19 | 12. Divorce, marriage, and charity |
| 26,1-15 | 13. Tithes on first fruits |
| 26,16-19 | C. Conclusion: Summary of the Covenant |
| 27,1—30,20 | III. *Final Speeches on the Covenant* |
| 27,1—28,68 | A. The Covenant Ceremony |
| 27,1-26 | 1. Curses and blessings |
| 28,1-46 | 2. Added curses and blessings |
| 28,47-68 | 3. An exilic expansion |
| 29,1—30,20 | B. Moses' Final Exhortation on Covenant |
| 29,1-27 | 1. Covenant warning to exiles |
| 30,1-20 | 2. Promise of mercy in exile |
| 31,1—34,12 | IV. *The Final Conclusion of the Pentateuch* |
| 31,1-13.23-29 | A. The Choice of a Successor |
| 31,1-13 | 1. Joshua selected |
| 31,23-29 | 2. Law placed in the Ark |
| 32,1-44 (31,14-22) | B. The Song of Moses |
| 31,14-22 | 1. Moses commanded to sing |
| 31,30—32,44 | 2. The song of Moses |
| 32,45—33,29 | C. The Blessing of Moses |
| 32,45-52 | 1. Moses' last view of the Land |
| 33,1-29 | 2. Moses' final blessing |
| 34,1-12 | D. The Death of Moses |

The outline shows that the basic structure is built around a new presentation of the Law that restates many of the earlier laws of Exodus through Numbers. There is further internal evidence from the original Hebrew text of the book that it was not all written at the same time. Some of the speeches in Chapters 1–11 and 26–30 are addressed to the individual Israelites: "you," while others are addressed to the plural "ye" or "you all." Certain sections, such as Chapters 1–3 are almost entirely in this plural form, while other sections, such as Chapters 4–11, are almost completely in the singular. This has led scholars to detect separate stages of development in the book.

It might be noted, especially, that the materials gathered in Chapters 31–34 are not quite as tied to the laws as are those of Chapters 1–30. These last four chapters gather together all of the diverse traditions and long-established works belonging to the memory of Moses that have

not found any other place in the Pentateuch. These final chapters in some way form an appendix to the first thirty chapters.

## The Covenant Structure of the Book

In looking at Exodus 19–24, some general similarities stood out between the description of how Israel received its covenant and the general shape of ancient secular covenants between kings. There were six typical parts to a covenant treaty which are reflected in a vague way in the structure of the dramatic account of those chapters. These six parts were: (1) a preamble that identified the great king giving the treaty; (2) a historical prologue listing his gracious deeds to the lesser king; (3) the legal stipulations binding on the lesser king (the vassal); (4) the provisions for public reading of the document; (5) the list of gods who witnessed the treaty; and (6) the curses and blessings on those who break or keep the treaty.

The same pattern can be found in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapters 1–30:

| | |
|---|---|
| A the great king's self-identification | Dt 1,1 |
| B the historical prologue | Dt 1,2—4,43 |
| C the laws binding on the vassal | |
| 1. exhortatory introduction | Dt 4,44—11,32 |
| 2. the law code in detail | Dt 12,1—26,19 |
| D provisions for reading the law aloud | Dt 27,8 |
| E witness of the gods | none |
| F curses and blessings | Dt 27,1—28,68 |

In examining this structure, it becomes certain that the final form of Deuteronomy is made to be in the general shape of an actual treaty document. As in the Exodus narrative, there is no suggestion of divine witnesses, since there can be no other gods beside the Lord to perform that role. But, in distinction to the Exodus story, this covenant account ends with a very long series of curses and blessings that fill Chapters 27 and 28. In this way it resembles the types of treaty covenants we know from the Assyrian period, especially in the seventh century B.C., rather than the earlier Hittite models that perhaps influenced the Exodus accounts of the original covenant.

It is important to note at this stage, however, that the book as a whole, beginning with the first sentence and concluding with the notice of the great leader's death, is framed as a farewell speech of Moses to the people. It might also be compared to an aging father's advice to his son so that the son might gain wisdom. Both forms are well known in ancient literature. Joshua 23–24 has been structured as a deathbed speech to the people, and 1 Samuel 12 serves as the prophet Samuel's farewell speech. In the New Testament, John's Gospel has gathered many of Jesus' words into a long farewell speech at the Last Supper (John 13–17). On the other hand, the form of both Proverbs 1–9 and the Book of Ecclesiastes is that of a speech from an aged father who passes on the wisdom he has learned to his sons and disciples. Many Egyptian wisdom works also use this technique. Quite possibly Deuteronomy combines elements of both the deathbed legacy of the great leader and the wisdom of a father that is handed on to his sons.

The nature of the book as a covenant structure, and its impassioned language of urgency suggest that the authors saw it as a program for renewing the covenant by the people. Indeed,

this will prove to be an important factor in trying to date the document to the seventh century B.C.

## The Unique Style of the Book

Deuteronomy has long been recognized as an independent source within the Pentateuch that has no direct connection with any of the other three sources, J, E, or P. Not only is it entirely self-contained, as a speech from beginning to end, but its vocabulary and phraseology are generally unmatched anywhere among those sources. A good flavor can be found by reading Chapters 4–11, where expressions such as the following occur repeatedly:

1 These are the ordinances, statutes and decrees which the LORD, your God, has enjoined on you (cf. 4,45; 5,1; 6,1; 6,20; etc.).
2 Take care to observe them (4,5; 5,1; 6,3; 7,12; 8,1; etc.).
3 You must learn them, or teach them in the land (5,1; 5,31; 11,19; etc.); and teach them to your children (4,9; 4,10; 11,19; etc.).
4 In the land you are about to enter to possess (5,31; 6,1; 6,10; 6,18; 9,5; etc.).
5 So that you might live long and prosper (4,40; 5,33; 6,2f; 6,24; 11,9; etc.).
6 You will love the LORD, your God (6,5; 10,12; 11,13; etc.).
7 With all your heart and soul (4,29; 6,5; 10,12; 11,13, etc.).
8 Take to heart these words (6,6; 11,18).
9 Walk in his ways and fear the LORD (8,6; 10,20; 11,22).
10 Do not turn aside after other gods to serve them (6,14; 7,4; 8,19; 11,16; etc.).
11 Lest God's anger flare up against you (6,15; 7,4; 11,17; etc.).
12 Do not forget the LORD (8,11; 6,12; etc.).
13 I set before you today a blessing and a curse (11,26; cf. 30,19).
14 The land which the LORD swore to our fathers (6,10; 6,18; 6,23; 7,13; 10,11; etc.); a land flowing with milk and honey (6,3; 11,9; etc.).
15 Do what is right and good (6,18; cf. 12,28; 13,19; etc.).

Deuteronomy has a repetitive style which serves well the preacher's need to get a message across. The type of language, with its intense use of imperatives and rhetorical piling up of several synonyms in a row for the same idea, hardly qualifies as plain narrative. It is persuasive language, calculated to move an audience to decision or change. Similarly, it uses several rhetorical devices to emphasize its major theme of obedience *in the land.* On one hand, it rarely speaks of the land simply, but names it as the land flowing with milk and honey, a good land, a land that God swore to your ancestors, and other phrases of appealing description; and secondly, it constantly recalls all the good deeds of the Lord toward Israel that involve divine care and help in the land, especially against foreign opposition. The authors have a perspective that seems extraordinarily concerned with warning about misuse of the land through serving other gods and at the same time disobeying all of God's commands.

## The Historical Development of the Book

Arguments for dating Deuteronomy sometime in the later part of the monarchy of Judah, rather than in the time of Moses, can be given briefly. These points will focus some of the background

problems and crises facing those who put it together, so that the religious message can stand out more sharply for modern readers.

Second Kings 22,1—23,30 narrates the events of the reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.). In the eyes of the authors of Kings, by far the most important single action of the king was his decision to reform the religious practice of the people and to renew the covenant commitment of the nation, as a result of finding a "Book of the Law" in the Temple during its rebuilding. The king immediately consults a well-known prophetess, Huldah, who delivers a divine oracle (2 Kgs 22,16f) that can be compared to the list of deuteronomic phrases in the section immediately above. Almost all of Huldah's words are duplicated in typical deuteronomic passages. 2 Kings 23 then records the effects of Josiah's conversion and his decision to institute a major reform. What he did conforms almost exactly to the program laid down by the law code of Deuteronomy. Note the following parallels:

| *2 Kings 23* | | *Deuteronomy* |
|---|---|---|
| 23,4.6.7.14 | abolition of the asherim | 7,5; 12,3; 16,21 |
| 23,4f | destroy the host of heaven | 17,3 |
| 23,5.11 | end worship of sun and moon | 17,3 |
| 23,7 | stop sacred prostitution | 23,18 |
| 23,10 | end the cult of Molech | 12,31; 18,10 |
| 23,13 | tear down heathen high places | 7,5; 12,2f |
| 23,13 | remove the foreign gods | 12,1-32 |
| 23,14 | destroy the "pillars" | 7,5; 12,3 |
| 23,21f | set up one Passover to be observed only in Jerusalem | 16,1-8 |
| 23,24 | forbid necromancy | 18,11 |

According to the text of 2 Kings, the lawbook was found in Josiah's eighteenth year (622 B.C.) just as he became interested in reform. In a second version, told in 2 Chronicles 34, he became interested in reform in his twelfth year (628 B.C.), and the book was discovered after the changes were well under way. In either case, the similarities between this lawbook that was found in the Temple during Josiah's reign (and which led to or supported a massive reform) and the urgent preaching of Deuteronomy are too close not to refer to the same book. Scholars conclude from this that at least the core of our present book of Deuteronomy was known by 622 B.C.

Close examination of the contents of Deuteronomy, however, reveals that it has strong similarities with many ideas and books that came down from the northern kingdom of Israel when it was destroyed in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians, almost exactly one hundred years earlier. It shares a strong interest in the love of God, the covenant as relationship, and the imagery of a father leading a son, all of which made the northern prophet Hosea so unique. It has a strong polemic against Baal and the gods of Canaan, a major temptation for Israelites who lived in the northern area nearest Tyre and Sidon; it has a fierce, warlike campaign strategy against Canaanite religion typical of some of the stories told of the northern prophets Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 10. Moreover, its attitude of doubt about the king's faithfulness in Chapter 17 is more typical of a northern viewpoint than of the kingdom of Judah where the house of David ruled. It also strongly supports the role of Moses as a charismatic leader, much in the style of the E source in the pentateuchal traditions of Exodus and Numbers. One could also

point to the location of the covenant ceremony of curses and blessings in Deuteronomy 27–28 at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, the traditional centers of the northern kingdom.

Could there be a northern origin to the earliest level of deuteronomic traditions? The answer is a possible yes if we look to a passage in 2 Kings 18, 3-7 in which the authors state that King Hezekiah of Judah began a similar reform to that of Josiah around the time he became king, perhaps 715 B.C. But did Hezekiah know of the teachings of Deuteronomy back then? Again, it is possible that the refugees from the north brought down the fundamental deuteronomic laws and traditions with them as they fled the Assyrians a mere seven years earlier, and it was these that Hezekiah decided to put into practice even in Judah.

What happened to the Book of Deuteronomy between Hezekiah and Josiah is unknown. According to the Book of Kings, King Manasseh, who ruled for most of the intervening years, violently opposed all reform (2 Kgs 21,1-15; 23,26f), and probably persecuted its leaders. They in turn either hid the already-written book, or kept their teachings to themselves until a more favorable king came to the throne in Judah.

## The Development of the Religious Perspective of the Book

With such a long and complicated history behind Deuteronomy, we must be cautious in trying to answer what particular point of view it represents. Possibly it developed in the following manner:

1) When the northern kingdom went its own way after the death of Solomon about 930 B.C., it claimed that it was more faithful to the older covenant of Moses and was opposed to the claims of the house of David in Jerusalem that God redirected the covenant through the royal promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. The new northern kings, however, quickly adopted all sorts of Canaanite practices and allowed devotion to Baal, Asherah, and other deities to exist alongside the worship of the Lord. This violated the fundamental law of the covenant that there must be no god beside the Lord. The most likely source for sustained opposition to these policies came from the circles of prophets around Elijah and Elisha who violently opposed any compromise with the cult of Baal, and from among the levitical priests charged with teaching and maintaining the covenant demands. They began to put together a new statement of the law centered on the warning that if Israel did not do better and keep its covenant, it would lose its land.

2) The defeat of the north by Assyria in 722 B.C. proved these reformers right, but also left them homeless. Many fled to Judah and there the terrible lesson that disobedience led to disaster impressed Hezekiah and his Judean priests. They tried to implement the Deuteronomic reform ideas in Judah, which did not really take hold at that time because Judah felt little need to reform after the miraculous escape from an Assyrian invasion in 701 B.C., during the later years of Hezekiah. The people of Judah credited this to God's promise to David never to abandon his dynasty nor his city, Jerusalem. The southern kingdom became convinced God would protect them no matter what they did.

3) In the days of Josiah, Judah began to expand and retake the old northern kingdom of Israel because the Assyrian empire was falling apart. To win over the half-believing northerners to his side, Josiah wanted something to unite the country in faith. Once he became aware of Deuteronomy's program, from the discovery of the book in the Temple, he decided to use it. It

was at this stage that the book was enlarged to its present size, except for a few chapters at the beginning and end.

4) This new setting in the kingdom of Judah led to the particular southern emphases in the book on (a) a single place of worship where God's name would dwell (Chap. 12,1-14), and (b) the frequent use throughout of the verb "choose" to describe the place God has chosen to set the divine name. The Hebrew verb is used to describe God's choosing David and is a kind of sacred term for the royal dynasty in Jerusalem—that God chose them—stressing God's special choice of both the house of David and the Temple of Jerusalem.

5) Also in the time of Josiah, or shortly after, the followers of Deuteronomy began to expand its call to obey God faithfully in the land. They wrote a history of Israel from Joshua down to the last kings so that each period of time and each ruler was judged according to the standards of Deuteronomy. Now the influence of deuteronomic thought filled not only the Book of Deuteronomy itself, but also Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. It had become a major reform movement in Israel based on historical experience.

## Important Themes of Deuteronomy

The development of its historical and religious perspective led Deuteronomy to give great stress to certain areas of faith over others. In reading the long introduction in Chapters 1–11 and looking at the particular points that the body of laws covers in Chapters 12–26, note these frequent themes:

### The Importance of the Covenant

Deuteronomy is edited in the form of a covenant treaty between God and the people, but it is also a speech of Moses which recalls all the covenant benefits that God has done for Israel in the desert. There is also an emphasis throughout the book on the love of father and son as a way of speaking about God and Israel. The deuteronomic authors borrowed this from standard covenant treaties of the times, which used the motivation of love to encourage loyalty between the parties. In can fairly be said that for Deuteronomy, covenant love and fidelity are everything!

### The Law is Not Simply Laws, But Total Commitment

Another way of approaching Deuteronomy's message is to say it demands a full commitment of heart and mind and strength to God. It is no accident that the most important statement in Deuteronomy (6,4f) has become the daily prayer and confession of faith of Jews everywhere, and was cited by Jesus himself as the greatest commandment for Christians: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Even the piling up of words for law, "the commandments, the statutes and decrees" (6,1), or "ordinances, statutes and decrees" (6,20), and similar phrases, emphasize that the great multitude of laws really points to a deeper and more permanent commitment to the Lord that lies beneath.

## There is Consistency to God's Dealings with Israel

One of the significant elements in Deuteronomy's presentation is the recital of Israel's history and the looking forward to still more problems that the people will face in the years ahead. The book sees a design in how God works in history. The pattern can be summarized briefly in this challenge: There are two choices before you--the first is to obey God, follow his ways, and be loyal with all your heart, then you shall receive the blessing of prosperity and long existence on the land; the second is to abandon God, follow the ways of the pagan gods such as Baal, and receive divine punishment and God's curse by which you will be thrown off the land and subjugated to your enemies. This pattern is given very concrete form in Chapters 7 and 8, and again in 30,15-20. A corollary of this is that God's wrath blazes out against any idolatry on the part of Israel.

## God's Blessing is Conditional

One of the themes that sets Deuteronomy apart from earlier thinking in Israel is that God's promises either to Moses or to David are not simply guarantees that God will stand by this people with protection and help, no matter what they do. Earlier theologies of God as a divine warrior that always fights for his people is now transformed into a new view of a God who will uphold the covenant and all of its terms, including blessing and curse, according to how Israel keeps its part of the treaty. The stress falls on both faithful worship and social justice as ideals for Israel. Repentance and change of heart are often required if Israel is to return to covenant loyalty.

## The Land Itself Is Conditional

Deuteronomy stresses that the covenant is tied to life in the land; misuse of the land, failure to create a just society, and dishonest policies of rulers will cost Israel its right to the land. One reason why the authors put the book into the form of a farewell speech of Moses in the desert is that it makes the warning come from a time when they had no land yet, and hints that this may happen again if the people do not heed his words. Perhaps the book became most influential once the exile began (598 to 587 B.C.), since then the readers could recognize that they were now indeed in their sorry state because they had not obeyed the Lord as Moses had warned. It spoke to their misery and to their repentant hearts!

## There Is to be One Sanctuary

An important part of the program of Deuteronomy was to center the people's attention on Jerusalem and away from the local shrines and cultic centers that too often had connections to pagan beliefs and practices. It was an attempt to make the people think as a single mind about unified obedience to the Lord, a unified commitment to each other as a people, and a unified source of all blessing. The kingship of the Lord over the land will then be recognized by all, so that finally the land, the law, and the people will be united as one.

## Deuteronomy Updates the Covenant Law

A final point worth noting is how often the laws listed above in the outline of Deuteronomy match those of the earliest law code in Israel, the "Covenants Code" found in Exodus 20,22—23,33. In each case, however, the older laws are stated in a way that makes them more adapted to life in the towns and cities of a kingdom in the eighth to sixth centuries B.C. They accent the

obligations of citizens and members of the covenant to one another and to the weak and dispossessed so that justice can be done.

In your own study, compare the two sets of laws listed here to see if you can tell the differences:

| *Exodus 21-23* | *Deuteronomy 14-19* |
|---|---|
| Ex 21,1-11 | Dt 15,12-18 |
| Ex 21,12-14 | Dt 19,1-13 |
| Ex 22,29f | Dt 15,19-23 |
| Ex 22,31 | Dt 14,3-21 |
| Ex 23,1 | Dt 19,16-21 |
| Ex 23,10f | Dt 15,1-11 |
| Ex 23,14-17 | Dt 16,1-17 |

## Connections of Deuteronomy and the Historical Books

Scholars in this century have stressed the strong connection between the theology of Deuteronomy listed above and the viewpoint that can be found throughout the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The same emphasis on having a choice to obey or disobey, with the resulting blessing or curse, seems to underlie how these books evalute each major historical period and each individual leader. In comparing the Book of Deuteronomy to the historical books, read together the beautiful passage in Deuteronomy 6,3f about loving the Lord with all your heart and soul and strength, and the statement made at the end of the Books of Kings about King Josiah: "Before him there had been no king who turned to the LORD as he did, with his whole heart, his whole soul, and his whole strength, in accord with the entire law of Moses" (2 Kgs 23,25). Note also the echoes of Deuteronomy in the praise given to King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18,5f. These are enough to give a flavor of how Deuteronomy's thought pervades the historical accounts. For further study, look also at these key passages in the histories that reflect Deuteronomy most strongly:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jos 1,11-15 | The promise |
| Jos 23–24 | The covenant renewal at Shechem |
| Jgs 2,11-23 | The pattern of sin and curse |
| 1 Sm 12 | Samuel's final warning on fidelity |
| 2 Sm 7 | The promise to David |
| 1 Kgs 8–9 | The conditional promise to Solomon |
| 2 Kgs 17 | The reason for the fall of the North |
| 2 Kgs 23,25-27 | The final evaluation of Judah's kings |

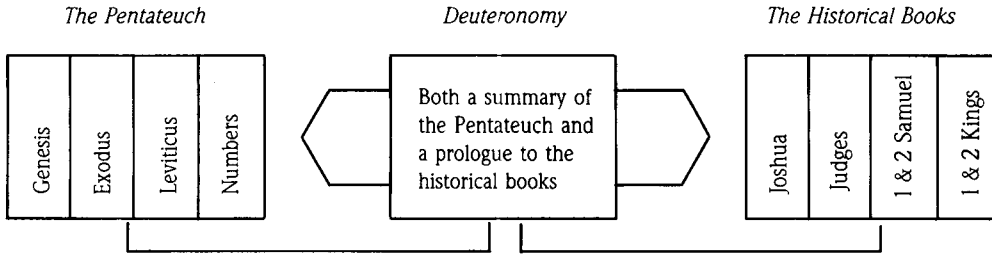
## Deuteronomy and the New Testament

The *New American Bible* lists two important citations of Deuteronomy used in Matthew's Gospel to explain the temptation in the desert and to answer the question of which was the greatest commandment. We can, however, see a much greater influence of Deuteronomy than merely these two direct quotations from the book itself. It is in the attitude. The heart of Deuteronomy is covenant loyalty, and Deuteronomy stresses the idea of God's fatherhood and love for the people as his children. Deuteronomy also focuses on wholehearted obedience that

does more than the minimum required. It sees all of life as a walking in the way of the Lord. And finally, of course, it understands life to be full of choices made by faith; to obey or disobey. These are all the themes of Jesus' own life. Some scholars have called Luke's Gospel a new Deuteronomy. But this could be truly said of any of the Gospels. If we understand the demand of Deuteronomy for singlemindedness, together with its vast vision that all of life must be an integrated whole, we will be prepared for a deeper reading of the New Testament.

## Conclusion

Deuteronomy sits last in the Pentateuch, and so sums up in a "Second Law" (the meaning of the Greek *deutero-nomos*) the essential message of the earlier Pentateuchal stories for Israel's existence as a kingdom rather than as a tribal alliance in the desert. But it also looks ahead from the time of Israel's beginnings to that later life as a kingdom which is told in the historical books. Thus it serves as both a conclusion to the desert period and a preface to the possession of the land. It links the Pentateuch traditions with the works of the historians of its own school that put together Joshua through 2 Kings. A diagram brings this out, and so prepares us to take up the study of the historical books themselves:




L.B.

## Note to the Reader: The Historical Books

Within the parts of the Bible that tell the story of the Israelite people, scholars now distinguish three major works, each one made up of several books of the Bible. Though the Bible does not give titles to these larger units, they are referred to by some appropriate description or by one of the books within them. Thus, the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—see Reading Guides above) are called the Pentateuch (Greek for "five scrolls"). The next group (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings), discussed in the Reading Guides that follow, is called the Deuteronomistic History because the Book of Deuteronomy is a sort of preface to it (the Book of Ruth was placed within this group at a later date). The last group (1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah) is called the Chronicler's History because it begins with the Books of Chronicles.

Biblical scholars study the writing style, subject matter, and major themes in each of the works. Based on this examination, they believe that each major collection was conceived and put into final form by one person or a small group working together. These matters are treated in the Reading Guides.

The ancient authors used stories and traditions that already existed; each major work covers many centuries of history, and therefore it cannot be an eyewitness account by one person. The ancient authors created the final form of each work. Sometimes they took over older accounts with little or no change; sometimes they rewrote their sources. It is important, however, to pay attention *both* to the older materials (they tell us important things about the ancient traditions) *and* to the final form of the documents (they tell us what the authors thought was important and therefore emphasized). The Bible often tells the same story from different points of view; this gives us a clue that the perspective itself, and not just the story, has something to teach us.

# THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

PAULINE A. VIVIANO

## Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings

Though we often treat the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings as separate and independent works, we must recognize that actually they form part of a continuous story that begins in Genesis and ends in 2 Kings. This complex of books was put together and edited in the years subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Before Genesis to Kings was put into its present form, the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, with the Book of Deuteronomy as its introduction, formed the Deuteronomistic History. There were multiple stages of development from the individual traditions that make up these books to their final form as part of the Deuteronomistic History. Though it is not possible to delineate all stages of development, it is clear from the unified theological character of the work that it emerged from one dominant school of thought, the deuteronomic school, and that this school revised and updated the history when necessary. We shall refer to the authors of this complex work as the deuteronomistic writers.

## The Literary Character of the Deuteronomistic History

The style and vocabulary of the deuteronomistic writers is easy to recognize, for it is filled with clichés and repetitions. Some characteristic deuteronomistic phrases are: "to follow other gods," "to serve other gods," "the city that the LORD has chosen," "to sacrifice and burn incense at high places," "you will know that the LORD alone is God," "to walk in the ways of the LORD," "to keep all the commandments," "to provoke the LORD to anger." This sampling is meant for illustrative purpose only; it is by no means complete.

Interspersed throughout the Deuteronomistic History are speeches or essays that are related to one another in style, vocabulary, and theology. The speeches (Jos 1,11-15; 23; 1 Sm 12; 2 Sm 7; 1 Kgs 8,14-61) are put in the mouths of leading characters at key moments in the history. Where no leading character is available an essay is inserted (Jos 12; Jgs 2,11-23; 2 Kgs

17,7-23). In these speeches and essays we find a "looking back" at where Israel has been and a "looking forward" to where Israel will be. In each case the course of events is explained in terms of deuteronomic theology: if Israel is obedient to the law of the LORD all will go well, if Israel is disobedient it will be punished. These speeches and essays are basically hortatory in character, that is, though they seek to explain Israel's situation, at the same time they urge or exhort Israel to be obedient to the law.

## Sources Used by the Deuteronomistic Writers

It is certain that the deuteronomistic writers used sources in writing the history of Israel. Some of the sources are mentioned in the history itself: "The Book of Jashar" (Jos 10,13; 2 Sm 1,18), "The Book of the Chronicles of Solomon" (1 Kgs 11,41), "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (1 Kgs 14,29, and fourteen more times), "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (1 Kgs 14,19, plus 16 times). These writers must have other sources as well that formed the bases for the Books of Joshua and Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings.

The deuteronomistic writers impressed upon their sources an overall unity. Nevertheless there are contradictions, inconsistencies, and duplications throughout the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings that will become clear as we work our way through the books themselves. Because of these inconsistencies we can see that, though the deuteronomistic writers have their own distinctive view of events, they respect their sources and allow them to speak for themselves, even when they are not in agreement. The fact that the Deuteronomistic History is the work of more than one individual also causes discrepancies. Subsequent additions and corrections to the work produce at times contradictions and inconsistencies. These later insertions are frequently noticeable in the final product.

## Date and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History

The final edition certainly dates from the postexilic period, but much of it may have been in written form at the time of Josiah, king of Judah, (d. 609 B.C.) The fact that it existed in earlier and later versions makes the determination of its purpose particularly difficult. As a whole, the history shows Israel that it deserved destruction because of its sin. The LORD had repeatedly sent warnings and showed mercy, but Israel refused to turn from its sinful way so the LORD was forced to destroy Israel. This essentially negative outlook has superseded a more positive approach to the history of Israel taken in earlier editions. The promise to David of an everlasting dynasty provides an element of hope. The recurring pattern of sin, punishment, cry for help, and deliverance also provides a basis for hope. That is, Israel has sinned and been punished, but if Israel will return to the LORD and cry for help, the LORD will deliver Israel as in the past. It may well be that earlier editions saw in Judah's continued existence after the fall of the northern kingdom, the fulfillment of the promise to David, but a later edition obscured this basis for hope after Judah had been destroyed in 586 B.C. (See Historical Outline, pp. RG 31–35.)

## Theological Concerns of the Deuteronomistic History

The size and complexity of the Deuteronomistic History preclude any simple statement of its theology. Some of the themes of the individual stories and their reinterpretation by the

deuteronomistic writers will be found in the study guides for each book of the history. What follows is only a general outline of the overriding theological concerns of the deuteronomistic writers.

The Book of Deuteronomy provides the key to understanding the Deuteronomistic History. That book sets forth the requirements of the Law (Dt 4,44—26,19) which will become the criteria by which the deuteronomistic writers organize and evaluate Israel's history. According to the Book of Deuteronomy, obedience to the laws of Moses brings covenant blessing (28,1-14); disobedience brings curse (28,15-68). The deuteronomistic writers see in the events of Israel's history the realization of blessing or curse depending on Israel's obedience or disobedience to the laws of Moses.

Of the deuteronomic laws, the most important for the deuteronomistic writers is the first commandment of the decalogue: "I, the LORD, am your God . . . you shall not have other gods besides me" (Dt 5,6–7). Exclusive worship of the LORD is so crucial to the deuteronomistic writers that virtually the entire history of Israel is told in terms of Israel's obedience to this one law. The deuteronomistic writers' concern for centralization of worship in Jerusalem rests upon their interest in exclusive worship of the LORD. The deuteronomistic writers' interest in the Temple stems from their concern for obedience to this commandment. Though the deuteronomistic writers speak frequently of obedience to the laws, and statutes, and commandments, in reality all laws, statutes, and commandments are reducible to one law: worship the LORD and the LORD alone.

For the deuteronomistic writers it is the word of the LORD that defines and determines the history of Israel. That word is expressed in deuteronomic law and reiterated by the prophets. A true prophet is one who speaks the LORD's Law and warns the people of the consequences of disobedience (Dt 18,9-20). The people cannot plead ignorance of the Law, for the prophets testify to the Law and call the people to repentance on the basis of it (2 Kgs 17,13).

It is important to recognize these theological concerns from which the deuteronomistic writers operate, for it determines what they select from their sources and how those sources are used. We do not have a complete history of Israel. We have Israel's history told from the theological perspective of the deuteronomistic writers: when Israel worshipped the LORD, and the LORD alone, all went well for the nation, but because Israel chose to abandon the LORD to worship the gods of its neighbors, the LORD punished them with defeat and exile.

## How to Read the Deuteronomistic History

The literary material in Joshua–2 Kings is predominantly narrative in form. Here and there one finds other literary forms such as poetry (for example, Jos 10,12-13; Jgs 5,1-31; 1 Sm 2,1-10) or lists (for example, Jos 12,1-24; 13,8—21,42; 2 Sm 23,24-39), but by and large the work is a series of stories combined to form one story. The various kinds of stories that form this history we will consider in the context of the reading guides, but it is important to understand in what sense we are to read the Deuteronomistic History as history.

We normally think of history as recounting "what happened," but we must recognize that there is no history which simply recounts what happened. All history involves the selection, organization of sources, and interpretation of events. There is no such thing as a totally "objective" history, that is, we do not have facts that exist in isolation from the way a historian has used them. The deuteronomistic writers tell the history of Israel from their own unique

perspective. They have a message to get across to their audience. The deuteronomistic writers' distinctive view of Israel's history is a theological interpretation of Israel's past. In reading this history the issues of concern center not on what actually happened, but on the theological message that the deuteronomistic writers wished to convey and that will be the focus of our study.

## For further reading

There is very little written on the Deuteronomistic History that is available to the lay audience. The following articles provide an overview of the theology of the deuteronomistic writers.

Ackroyd, Peter R. "The Historians and Theologians of the Exilic Age, the Deuteronomic History." In *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* Philadelphia: Westminister, 1968. Pp. 62–83.

Wolff, Hans Walter. "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomic Historical Work." In *The Vitality of the Old Testament Traditions,* 2nd ed. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982. Pp. 83–100.

On the compilation and redaction of the Deuteronomistic History the reader may wish to consult:

Freedman, David N. "The Deuteronomic History." In *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement.* Ed. George Buttrick. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976. Pp. 226–28.

Fretheim, Terence E. *Deuteronomic History.* Interpreting Biblical Texts. Eds. Lloyd R. Bailey and Victor P. Furnish. Nashville: Abingdon, 1983.

Mayes, A.D.H. *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile.* London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1983.

# JOSHUA □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 227–252 of the Old Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

In the background of the Book of Joshua lies a long and complicated history of formation. At each stage of development the original traditions upon which the book is based have been added to, modified, and altered. It will be easier to work our way through the Book of Joshua if we understand something of the formation of the book, the kinds of literary material that make up the book, and the editorial activity of the deuteronomistic writers.

### The Formation of the Book of Joshua

Though it is not possible to reconstruct in detail all stages of development, we can identify some of the layers that make up the Book of Joshua. The redactional activity of the deuteronomistic writers is obvious. Their distinctive vocabulary and theological perspective are found in Jos 1,1-18; 8,30-35; 12; 21,43—22,6; 23,1-16 and in some verses that link together other blocks of material.

When we eliminate the passages associated with the deuteronomistic writers, in one or more editions of the history, we discover in Chapters 1–12 stories associated almost exclusively with the tribe of Benjamin and its sanctuary at Gilgal. These stories were originally associated with isolated military success or defeats and cultic matters. Some of these stories may have been

combined before being taken up by the deuteronomistic writers; it may also be that their present organization derives exclusively from the deuteronomistic writers. In either case, they do not give a complete picture of the conquest of the land of Canaan.

In the background of Chapters 13–21 are several geographical lists, either town lists or boundary lists. They are used by the deuteronomistic writers to show the extent of the conquest.

## The Stories and Lists that Form the Book of Joshua

The story of Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan in Chapters 1–12 is itself composed of various stories. These stories are classified as sagas; that is, stories that bear some relationship to fact but whose main concern is the universal truth, the typical event that finds expression in the story. Sagas tell the events of the past in such a way that the audience gains insight into its own present experiences. The story of the conquest then becomes a story not simply of the past, but a story in which Israel can see its experience with its God as it continues to realize its present.

Many of the sagas in this first half of the Book of Joshua are etiologies or contain etiological elements. An etiology is a story which explains something: the name of a place, a particular custom, and the like. For example, the city Gilgal gets its name by association with the events that took place there (5,9), or the Valley of Achor (misery) receives its name from the "misery" encountered there (7,24-26).

Chapters 13–21 of the Book of Joshua are concerned with the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel. This section is composed from official lists; that is, government documents that were probably used for taxation purposes or to settle land disputes. These lists most likely represent various tribal territorial claims or boundaries that existed at different times in Israel's history, but they are used by the deuteronomistic writers to indicate the extent of the conquest and the territorial claims of each tribe. Though dating such lists is always difficult, it is most probable that these lists come from an early period in Israel's history.

## The Book of Joshua in Context

The Book of Joshua cannot be considered in isolation from the ongoing story of Israel as the LORD's covenanted people, which began with the call of Abraham. By the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, Israel is a numerous people and it has entered into covenant with the LORD its God. Thus the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12,1-3 has been partially fulfilled. What remains to be fulfilled is the promise of land. By the end of the Book of Joshua, Israel is in possession of the land of Canaan and all elements of the promise have been fulfilled.

As the Book of Joshua cannot be considered in isolation from Israel's story in Genesis to Kings, neither can it be seen in isolation from the Deuteronomistic History (the Books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings) of which it is an integral part. In the Book of Deuteronomy, which introduces the Deuteronomistic History, Joshua is appointed the successor of Moses and the conditions for a successful conquest and occupation of the land are laid down. If Israel obeys the laws given by the LORD and mediated by Moses, it will conquer the land and live in it in peace and prosperity (Dt 30,15-20). The Book of Joshua presents the first step, the conquest and distribution of the land; the succeeding stages of development, ultimately unsuccessful because of Israel's refusal to obey the law of the LORD, will be found in the Books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings.

## The Book of Joshua in Outline

The Book of Joshua clearly divides between the conquest of the land of Canaan (Chapters 1–12) and its distribution (Chapters 13–21). The concluding chapters (22–24) contain the dismissal of the transjordan tribes, Joshua's farewell address, and the Shechem assembly.

### The Conquest of the Land of Canaan (Jos 1,1—12,24)

The first major division of the Book of Joshua sets forth the conquest of the land. It is composed of the following units:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1,1-18 | Introduction |
| 2,1-25 | Joshua Sends Spies to Jericho |
| 3,1—5,1 | The Israelites Cross the Jordan |
| 5,2-15 | Final Preparations for the Conquest |
| 6,1-27 | The Conquest of Jericho |
| 7,1—8,35 | The Sin of Achan and the Conquest of Ai |
| 9,1-27 | The Covenant with the Gibeonites |
| 10,1-27 | The Battle at Gibeon |
| 10,28—11,23 | The Conquest of the Entire Land |
| 12,1-24 | List of Conquered Kings |

### Distribution of the Land (Jos 13,1—21,45)

The conquest of the land is followed by its distribution to the tribes.

| *13,1—19,51* | *Tribal Allotments* |
|---|---|
| 13,1-33 | Introduction and distribution of the land to the Eastern tribes: Reuben, Gad, half-tribe of Manasseh |
| 14,1—17,18 | Distribution of the land to Caleb, Judah, and the Joseph tribes |
| 18,1—19,51 | Distribution of the land to Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulon, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Dan, and the personal territory of Joshua |
| 20,1-9 | Cities of Refuge |
| 21,1-45 | The Levitical Cities |

### Conclusion (Jos 22,1—24,33)

Three distinct units form the conclusion of the Book of Joshua:

| | |
|---|---|
| 22,1-34 | Dismissal of the Transjordan Tribes and Their Altar |
| 23,1-16 | Joshua's Farewell Speech |
| 24,1-28 | The Shechem Assembly |

## Reading Through the Book of Joshua

In this section we will look at some of the historical, cultural, and literary background necessary to enable us to read the Book of Joshua with understanding.

## The Conquest of the Land of Canaan (Jos 1,1—12,24)

The conquest of the land of Canaan is an important part of the theological schema of the deuteronomistic writers, for in conquering the land the promise to Abraham (Gn 12,1-3) finds complete fulfillment. The conquest is thus a testimony to the faithfulness of the Lord.

### INTRODUCTION (Jos 1,1-18)

The opening chapter of the Book of Joshua lays down in deuteronomistic theological terms the basis for success in gaining possession of the land of Canaan. Though the achievement of conquest rests with the LORD, and not with the people, nevertheless, the faith and obedience of the people play an important role. If the people trust in the LORD and obey the laws which the LORD has commanded, then the conquest moves forward swiftly and smoothly; if they disobey, the conquest is halted or modified. The stories that follow show how this deuteronomic theological principle is worked out in the course of the conquest.

Two important theological concepts are set forth in this introduction and are assumed in the background of the stories that follow. They are the notion of the LORD as a Warrior God who leads Israel in battle and the land as the gift of the LORD to Israel. These concepts are so central to Israel's theological development that we must look at them in greater depth.

**The LORD as Warrior God/Holy War.** One of the most pervasive images of God in the Old Testament, especially prominent in the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, is that of the LORD as a Warrior God who leads Israel in Holy War. Oftentimes, modern readers find this image of God offensive. Our own experience of modern warfare and the real threat of nuclear holocaust make it difficult for us to relate to a Warrior Lord. From a Christian perspective the injunction to "love your enemies" stands in sharp contrast to the command of the Old Testament God to take up arms. In spite of our apprehensions about war, we cannot simply eliminate or ignore the notion of God as Warrior for it forms Israel's earliest and foundational experience of God in the Exodus, and it dominates the material under consideration. At the same time, though war is taken up into Israel's theology and forms a part of the biblical narrative we should not conclude that it receives unqualified approval from God.

To understand the concepts of the LORD as Warrior and of Holy War, it is important to remember that these concepts emerge from Israel's experience, just as our own views of war are formed by our experience. Israel lived within the cultural and theological milieu of the ancient Near East and was influenced by the common life it shared with neighboring countries. In the ancient Near East war was a part of the fabric of life. Indeed so pervasive was the reality of war that 2 Sm 11,1 can speak of the "spring (*NAB,* turn) of the year" as the time when "kings go out to war (*NAB,* on campaign)." War was a yearly and commonplace event.

In addition, the notion that the gods act within war, either leading their nations to victory, or punishing them through defeat, is found throughout the ancient Near East. It is true that Israel will develop and expand on this notion, but the notion itself Israel shared with its neighbors. Even the practice of *herem,* that is, the sacrifice of the spoils of war to the deity, is not exclusive to Israel. There is testimony to the practice of *herem* in an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab in the ninth century B.C. It states that the inhabitants of the land were slaughtered in accordance with the sacrificial ban to Chemosh, the god of Moab.

It is not unusual, then, that we find in Israel concepts of God as Warrior and of Holy War. These ideas formed Israel's life and experience as a nation. The Exodus was understood in terms of the LORD's defeat of Pharaoh and his forces in order to lead Israel to freedom. In response

Israel became the people of the LORD. As Covenant Lord, the LORD governed all aspects of Israel's life, even, and most especially, war. Warfare was seen as an expression of the LORD's care for Israel. The LORD fighting on behalf of Israel testifies to the LORD's love for Israel. Later, when Israel is defeated by Assyria and Babylon, rather than view this defeat as signifying the weakness of the LORD, Israel, through the prophets, will view its defeat as the LORD's war against the people in order to punish the nation for its failure to keep covenant.

There can be no doubt that much of what is presented in the Books of Joshua and Judges with respect to Holy Way and the practice of *herem* is a theological reconstruction of the deuteronomistic writers to bring the conquest into line with Deuteronomic Law (Dt 20,16f). The deuteronomistic writers present an idealized picture of the conquest as a Holy War fought by the LORD (Jos 10,14) in which all is utterly destroyed (Jos 11,20). That this is a theological construct is clear from the incompleteness of the conquest (Jgs 1) and the fact that in reality the land is not entirely in Israel's control until the time of David.

It is important to bear in mind that whatever our views with respect to war, Israel's understanding of the LORD as Warrior is an affirmation of the LORD's love and concern for Israel.

**The Land as Gift.** The land of Israel most obviously refers to the actual territory that Israel came to occupy, but because of the covenanted relationship between the LORD and Israel the land will take on other meanings as well. The land is included in the promise given to Abraham, and though Abraham travels to the land of Canaan he does not gain possession of it. Rather he is a sojourner in a land not his own. The land will not belong to Israel until the LORD dispossesses the Canaanites from the land at the time of conquest. The land is the LORD's land, won by the LORD in battle (Jos 10,14). The LORD gives the land to Israel in fulfillment of the promise (Jos 21,43-45; 23,14). The land is a gift to Israel. It is a good land, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3,8; Jos 5,6). It provides a homeless wandering people a place to live. It gives them a new identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of security. The land is the LORD's gift to be used and enjoyed, but at the same time a sacred trust.

Though the land is a source of blessing for Israel, it is also a source of temptation. On that land the fertility gods had been worshipped by the Canaanites. With Israel's settlement in the land, fertility becomes a major concern and thus Israel is tempted to worship the gods of the Canaanites. As long as Israel abides by the terms of the covenant and resists the temptation to worship other gods, it will live in the land in peace and prosperity (Jos 1,18). Israel's failure to live in accordance with the demands of covenant will result in the loss of the land. The story of Israel's life on the land as it unfolds in the Books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings is the story of its failure to obey the covenant, thus forcing the LORD to take back the gift of the land.

## JOSHUA SENDS SPIES TO JERICHO (Jos 2,1-25)

The actual taking of the city of Jericho is in Chapter 6 and it is difficult to reconcile this story of the spies with the miraculous takeover there. It may be that the deuteronomistic writers are attempting to reconcile variant accounts of the conquest of Jericho. The conclusion of this story in 6,25 suggests that its purpose was to account for the fact that the family of Rahab was not destroyed, but allowed to continue living in the land.

**THE ISRAELITES CROSS THE JORDAN** (Jos 3,1—5,1)

In spite of the duplications and chronological confusion in this story, its theological message is clear. In an event similar to that of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14) the power of God is shown to be operative, Joshua is affirmed as leader, and the people are committed in obedience to the LORD and the leaders the LORD has selected.

Explicit identity between the crossing of the Red Sea and this event is drawn in Jos 4,21-23, thus the power of the LORD is revealed to the generation that has not seen the "signs and wonders" associated with the Exodus from Egypt. The LORD commands the people to follow the Ark. The Ark, symbolizing the LORD's presence, leads the people through the river, and finally the LORD commands that memorial stones be erected to commemorate the event. The action of the LORD arouses fear in the nations that will be driven from the land. The Holy Way of conquest has begun and, before a battle has been fought, the nations tremble with fear (5,1).

The leadership of Joshua is accentuated by the clear parallels drawn between him and Moses. Like Moses, Joshua is obedient to the LORD's commands. The LORD exalts Joshua and assures him that he will be with him as he was with Moses (3,7; 4,14). The most obvious parallel is the event of the crossing itself and the correspondence drawn between the roles of Moses and Joshua in the crossings.

Though all success rests with the LORD, nevertheless the obedience of the people is important. They are to do their part: to follow obediently, to teach their children the significance of the event, to recognize that the LORD is in their midst and that Joshua is the LORD's appointed leader.

The liturgical overtones of the passage are clear. Before the action can take place, the people must sanctify themselves; that is, they are to put themselves in a state of ritual purity in order to partake in the crossing. The priests play an important role in the story as those to whom the Ark is entrusted. The event is commemorated and its significance is to be taught to future generations.

Many of the themes that are found in this story will recur throughout the Book of Joshua.

**FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONQUEST** (Jos 5,2-15)

In this chapter three separate units are set side by side: circumcision of the wilderness generation (vv. 2-9); celebration of the Passover (vv. 10-12); and the meeting of Joshua with the captain of the "host" of the LORD (vv. 13-15). What unites these three different traditions is that they now form part of the final preparations for the Conquest.

Circumcision was practiced by many ancient peoples. It probably began as part of a puberty ritual, but with Israel it becomes a sign of its identity as the people of the LORD. As the text presents it, circumcisions were not performed during the wilderness wanderings; thus, for this generation to be identified as Israel, the men must be circumcised. At the beginning of the story the event takes place appropriately at "Hill of the Foreskins" (see note [*NAB*] Jos 5,3). At the end an etiological element is added to explain the name "Gilgal" (*glgl*) as a pun on "remove" (*gll*).

In verses 10-12 Israel again shows its obedience to the LORD by celebrating the Passover at the prescribed time. This first celebration in the land in which Israel eats of the bounty of the land anticipates Israel's eventual possession of the land and the celebration of future harvests.

The final unit of this section appears to be a fragment of the commissioning of Joshua. He is not actually commissioned here, but like Moses he confronts a mysterious being and is told to

remove his sandals (Ex 3,5 parallels Jos 5,15). Joshua's obedience to the divine being indicates his obedience to the LORD; the encounter itself confirms him as leader.

**THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO** (Jos 6,1-27)
Many motifs already found in the Book of Joshua come together here. The role of Joshua as leader and the battle as a Holy War again finds expression. The Ark is carried into battle signifying God's presence. The promise to spare Rahab and his family (Jos 2,12-14) is realized here.

The complex intertwining of these motifs with the siege of Jericho suggests a long prehistory of the transmission of the story. It may well be that we are dealing with a popular war story that was expanded as the story was told and retold. What is clear from the story in the form in which we have it is that the LORD fights for Israel. The miraculous nature of the defeat of Jericho accentuates the role played by the LORD in this event. The exhortation to obedience (verses 17-19) and the affirmation that the people did obey the laws of Holy War (*herem*) bring to the fore the deuteronomistic theology that victory depends upon the obedience of Joshua and the people to the commands of the LORD.

When we recognize that the deuteronomistic writers have reformulated this story in light of their theology of conquest, it is not surprising that archaeological evidence does not support the picture given in Joshua 6. Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that Jericho was occupied at the time of Joshua. A city wall, once believed to date from the time of Joshua, is actually from the third millennium B.C. and was destroyed long before Israel entered the land of Canaan.

**THE SIN OF ACHAN AND THE CONQUEST OF AI** (Jos 7,1—8,35)
The narrative skill of the ancient historians is shown in their ironic treatment of disobedience and defeat in this story. In contrast to the self-confident boast of the spies, Israel suffers an ignoble defeat. Without the LORD they cannot even conquer a ruin (Ai). Because the ban (*herem*) was broken, the people became banned (*herem*). The misery caused by Achan's disobedience to the law of *herem* is forever immortalized in the name "Misery" (Achor) given to the valley.

As the story of the taking of Jericho functioned as a paradigm for a successful battle, the attempt to take Ai is a paradigm of how not to fight a battle. Achan has failed to keep the law of *herem;* the people adopt the battle plan suggested by the spies without proper consultation of the LORD. The intertwining of these two motifs makes the point that disobedience and self-reliance lead to defeat. Defeat is turned to victory only after a formal complaint has been raised, the source of the defeat acknowledged and punished, and the LORD has issued the plan of attack which is then followed by Joshua.

Deuteronomistic theology of conquest is most apparent in the concluding passage of this section. The necessity of obedience is underscored as Joshua carries out the command of Moses and renews the commitment of the people to the law.

**THE CONVENANT WITH THE GIBEONITES** (Jos 9, 1-27)
It is difficult to reconcile this story with what is known of Gibeon. It figured significantly in Israel's history at the time of David and Solomon, but there is no evidence that the city was

occupied at the time of the conquest. It has been suggested that the story was created by the deuteronomistic writers to show how the Gibeonites became slaves of Israel.

By posing as foreigners the Gibeonites induce Israel to enter into covenant with them and thus hope to escape the fate of Jericho and Ai. The ruse works, and with Israel's pledge to protect the Gibeonites a covenant is made. This deception by the Gibeonites puts Israel into a position where it broke its own law (Dt 7,2). Though the covenant is based on deceit, nevertheless an oath has been taken and cannot be broken. Joshua's solution to the dilemma is to enslave the Gibeonites. It is important to note that in this story as in the previous story, Israel has made a decision and taken an action without consulting the LORD, and thus finds itself compromised.

**THE BATTLE AT GIBEON** (Jos 10,1-27)
The account of this battle is a composite of various traditions. It is linked by the treaty with the Gibeonites to Chapter 9, but another version of the defeat of Adonizedek (Adonibezek in the Septuagint) is found in Judges 1,4-8, also as Adonibezek. The story as formulated by the deuteronomistic writers shows that Israel kept its treaty with the Gibeonites and came to its defense. The story includes the elements of a Holy War narrative: the enemy fears Israel (verse 2), a salvation oracle (verse 8), the LORD fights for Israel (verse 14b). The miraculous element is enhanced by hailstones that fall from the sky killing the enemy. The addition of an ancient poem (verses 12b-13) also heightens the miraculous element. The poem oddly enough is addressed to the sun and moon, gods among Israel's neighbors, but it is used to show that the LORD prolonged daylight, enabling Israel to achieve a total victory. Even the story of the incident of the five kings in a cave becomes a part of Holy War. Though in Chapters 7–8, and in 9 Israel has been disobedient or not consulted the LORD, this chapter shows Israel's total obedience to the laws of Holy War. Joshua continues as the exemplary leader in his total obedience to the LORD.

**THE CONQUEST OF THE ENTIRE LAND** (Jos 10,28—11,23)
The northern and southern campaigns are presented in summary form. The cities taken in the south are simply listed. Interwoven throughout is the refrain that no survivors were left (verses 28, 30, 33, 37, 39, 40). A campaign against a northern coalition and the taking of Hazor is all that we have of the conquest of the north and even these battles are briefly told. Summary statements indicate that Joshua did all in obedience to the LORD (11,15), that all the people were exterminated (11,20), and that the conquest is total (11,23).

**LIST OF CONQUERED KINGS** (Jos 12,1-24)
The list of kings drawn from ancient sources is used by the deuteronomistic writers to impress upon their readers the extent of the conquest. The conquest section of the Book of Joshua is formally drawn to a close with this chapter. It will become clear shortly that the conquest is not complete but, nevertheless, as Chapters 1–12 tell the story, the LORD has fought for Israel and the land is taken. Their success rests upon the LORD, and is realized when they rely wholly upon the LORD and are faithful to the commands of Joshua, the successor of Moses.

**Historical Reconstruction of the Conquest.** It is clear from our analysis of the stories which make up the conquest that the historicity of this event is called into question. It will become apparent in Chapters 13–21 that much of the land remains under Canaanite control. Moreover, an alternative tradition of the conquest, which suggests a more gradual process of takeover, is presented in Judges 1. Archaeological discoveries have complicated the picture even more, for

little that is found in the Book of Joshua can be supported by archaeological evidence. At times the evidence directly contradicts the picture presented in Joshua. Jericho and Ai, for example, were already in ruins at the time of Joshua.

From an analysis of the data, biblical scholars have attempted to reconstruct the events surrounding the conquest. That some cities were conquered through military activity can be substantiated by archaeological evidence. Lachish in the south and Hazor in the north show evidence of violent destruction. Though some scholars use this as evidence to support a view of the conquest as the result of a military invasion, it is impossible to determine the identity of the conquerors responsible for the destruction. There is evidence in the official correspondence between Egypt and the Canaanite city-states that there was much turmoil in the land at this time. Thus other scholars view the conquest as the result of a peasants' revolt from within the land of Canaan itself. The fact that many cities show no evidence of violent destruction has led other scholars to the view that the Israelites gradually infiltrated into the land and dominated after a period of settlement. Each of these views may represent part of the truth. One thing is certain, the events that led up to Israelite possession of the land of Canaan were far more complicated than is indicated in the version of the conquest found in the Book of Joshua.

## Distribution of the Land (Jos 13,1—21,45)

The second major division of the Book of Joshua begins, as does the first, with a command from the LORD. Joshua is to distribute the conquered land, and that distribution occupies the chapters that follow. Interestingly, the first verse of this section concedes that a large part of the land remained unconquered. This contradicts the statement of 11,23 that Joshua conquered the whole land. What we find here is a conflict between theological presuppositions and historical reality. It is only with the coming of David that Israel gains control of the entire land. Nevertheless, by collapsing a few hundred years of history, the deuteronomistic writers are able to present the conquest as an accomplished fact, and thus the LORD has shown his faithfulness to the promise made to Abraham. At the same time, the sources bear witness to the fact that Israel's takeover of the land of Canaan was a long process. The conflict between these different views of the conquest suggests that we are to understand the total conquest view of the Book of Joshua as an anticipation of what will come to pass. For the deuteronomistic writers Israel's failure to finish what Joshua had started is due to Israel's disobedience. The LORD has been faithful, but Israel has not.

### CITIES OF REFUGE (Jos 20,1-9)

In Israel the life of one who killed was forfeit. When a monarchy is established it is the duty of the king to see to it that justice is done, but in tribal society it was the family of the victim that bore that responsibility. Cities of refuge (*NAB,* asylum) were set up to protect an individual who had accidentally killed another from blood revenge of the family of the deceased.

### THE LEVITICAL CITIES (Jos 21,1-45)

A similar list of cities is found in 1 Chronicles 6,39-66. Though we know little of the early history of the Levitical tribe, it is clear that they had cultic duties and may have had some political authority in the time of David. The economic position of the Levites was precarious. As priests they were to devote themselves to the service of God, and not to be concerned with their financial security. It was the duty of the other tribes to support them. The cities given to the

Levites enable them to have some economic security, while at the same time not compromising their priestly duties.

The conclusion of this chapter (verses 43f) gives the theological perspective from which the Book of Joshua is to be read: The LORD has fulfilled all that was promised.

## Conclusion (Jos 22,1—24,33)

In the final chapters the theology of the deuteronomistic writers dominates.

### DISMISSAL OF THE TRANSJORDAN TRIBES (Jos 22,1-34)

In Chapter 1,12-18 the eastern tribes were called upon to help with the conquest of the west. They acted in accordance with this command of Moses and now they can return to their own territory. The core of the story which follows the dismissal of the transjordan tribes concerns the boundary established between the eastern and western tribes. The altar established stands as "witness" to the unity of the tribes.

The story as told by the deuteronomistic writers becomes an opportunity to warn the tribes against the establishment of illegitimate cultic centers. It is assumed by the deuteronomistic writers that only one cultic center is allowed and thus the establishment of an altar by the transjordan tribes, whatever its original purpose, is viewed as an act of apostasy. It is noteworthy that Joshua has no role to play in this story. This may indicate its original independence from its present context.

### JOSHUA'S FAREWELL SPEECH (Jos 23,1-16)

At a point of transition, Joshua, like Moses, gives a farewell speech. The conquest is complete, Joshua is an old man, and so the time has come to set before the people the conditions under which their life in the land will be blessed. In a speech characterized by deuteronomistic theology and vocabulary, Joshua exhorts the people to remain faithful to the LORD. Though the conquest is complete and thus the promise fulfilled, still some nations remain in Israel. These nations will be driven out by the LORD if Israel is obedient to the LORD and does not follow after the gods of these remaining nations. If Israel fails to worship the LORD and the LORD alone, it will be forced off the land. This speech foreshadows the history to come. With Israel's failure to be obedient to the LORD the curse becomes effective.

### THE SHECHEM ASSEMBLY (Jos 24,1-28)

The relationship of Chapters 23 and 24 has been the subject of much debate. It seems to be a second "farewell speech." Though the theological perspective is similar to that of the deuteronomistic writers, the language is not typical of them. The chapter contains a report of the renewal of the covenant at Shechem and seems to have been based on ancient traditions of covenant making (Ex 19–24). The chapter is developed in accordance with ancient covenant forms:

Preamble (v. 2)
Historical Prologue (vv. 2-13)
Stipulation (vv. 14, 16, 18b, 21, 23, 24)
Attention to Treaty document (not found here)
Invocation of witnesses (vv. 22, 27)
Blessings and curses (vv. 19f)

By using an ancient covenant form to express the relationship between Israel and its God, the deuteronomistic writers give prominence to the stipulation that Israel is to worship the LORD and to put away the other gods. Blessings become reality if Israel lives in accord with this stipulation; curses are put into effect if they do not. This moment in the Book of Joshua stands as testimony to the willingness of the people of Israel to accept the LORD as their God. The rest of the history shows only too clearly that Israel failed to keep the covenant command and thus its destruction was inevitable.

**DEATH AND BURIAL OF JOSHUA** (Jos 24,29-33)
The Book of Joshua draws to a close with the death and burial of its hero. Joshua, like Moses, was faithful to the commands of the LORD, and thus his leadership was blessed with success.

## The Continuing Significance of the Book of Joshua

The Book of Joshua affirms that the LORD is a faithful God. Again and again this faithful God acts within the history of Israel to bring to fulfillment the promise given to Abraham. The remembered past is not seen in isolation from the action of God. When there was war, it was the LORD who fought; when there was peace, the LORD was responsible. The LORD's care and concern for Israel is affirmed in all that happens to this nation.

At the same time the responsibility of the people is not ignored. They are to acknowledge the goodness of the LORD and to remain faithful to their God. In their obedience to the laws of covenant, they realize the blessings of peace and prosperity. P.A.V.

## Further Reading

These three commentaries give a good general introduction to the Book of Joshua for a beginner.

Grindel, John A. *Joshua, Judges.* Collegeville Bible Commentary, Old Testament, 7. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985.

Hoppe, Leslie J. *Joshua, Judges: With an Excursus on Charismatic Leadership in Israel.* Old Testament Message, v. 5. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982.

Maxwell, Miller J., and Tucker, Gene M. *The Book of Joshua.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Those who wish a more detailed treatment should consult the following commentaries:

Boling, Robert G. and Wright, G. Ernest. *Joshua.* The Anchor Bible, v. 6. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.

Butler, Trent C. *Joshua.* Word Biblical Commentary, v. 7. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983.

Soggin, J. Alberto. *Joshua: A Commentary.* Old Testament Library. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972.

Studies of individual topics that play an important role in the Book of Joshua are available.

On the topic of war in the Old Testament:

Craigie, Peter C. *The Problem of War in the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978.

Lind, Millard C. *Yahweh Is a Warrior.* Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980.

On the topic of the land in the Old Testament:

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Land.* Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977.

This work makes critical use of archaeological data combined with a sensitivity to literary form to discuss the social patterns of ancient Israel as it moved from its earliest days toward the establishment of a monarchy:

Coote, Robert B. and Whitelam, Keith W. *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective.* The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series, 5. Sheffield, Eng.: Almond Press, 1987.

# JUDGES ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 253–278 of the Old Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Like the Book of Joshua, the Book of Judges has undergone several stages of development from the oral retelling of stories about "judges" (heroes or leaders) to the final incorporation of these stories into the history of Israel. To properly understand the material at hand it is helpful to know something of the formation of the book, the kinds of stories of which it is composed, and the redactional or editorial activity of the deuteronomistic writers.

### Formation of the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges was formed from unrelated stories that were originally concerned with the actions of local heroes. These stories were then collected and put into the context of Holy War. Holy War was a battle believed to be fought by the LORD on behalf of Israel. In a Holy War context the heroes ("judges") become instruments of the LORD who fights for Israel. The deuteronomistic writers then take up the collection and add it to the stories of Jephthah and Samson, and an introduction (2,6—3,6). The deuteronomistic writers weave in and around these stories a repetitive framework: Israel sins by abandoning the LORD for other gods; the LORD punishes Israel by allowing it to be conquered by an enemy; Israel cries to the LORD for help, and the LORD sends a deliverer (a judge) who delivers Israel from the enemy. The land then is at rest, until Israel sins again and the whole process starts all over again. At a later stage Chapters 17–21 are added. These chapters lie outside the deuteronomistic framework of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance and there is no hero that functions as a "judge" to be found in them. Chapters 1,1—2,5, which reinterpret the conquest, are also a late addition to the deuteronomistic work.

### A Story Composed of Stories

As with the Book of Joshua, the Book of Judges is composed of stories that once circulated independent of their present context and independent of one another. The stories in which a "judge" figures prominently are hero sagas; they relate the activities of local leaders. They may contain certain "burlesque" features, or exaggerations and embellishments, as found in the

Samson cycle of stories or the Ehud story. Etiological elements, that is, elements that seek to explain or account for names, customs, or cultic places and activities, are often found in these stories. For example, the yearly custom of mourning by the women of the village for four days each year is associated with the sacrifice of the virginal daughter of Jephthah (Jgs 11,29-40).

There can be no doubt that many of the stories in the Book of Judges have some basis in fact, but by the time they are edited into the Book of Judges they have lost touch with their original base. They are given a new context and are reinterpreted for a new age. It is best to read the Book of Judges as a complex of disparate stories whose threads are woven together by the theological frame with which the deuteronomistic writers surround the work. Whatever the original meaning or purpose of the stories, they now function as vehicles of deuteronomistic theology: sin brings punishment, repentance brings deliverance.

### The Book of Judges in Context

As the deuteronomistic writers understood Israel's history, there was a time that the nation existed as the people of the LORD before the inauguration of kingship. Their identity came from the Exodus experience and the covenant relationship with the LORD that was instituted at Sinai. Though it is clear that Israel's possession of the land (conquest) was not fully realized until the time of David, nevertheless the conquest was viewed as achieved when Israel gained a foothold in the land under Joshua. In such a schema there is a gap created between the leadership of Joshua and the leadership provided by a king. The Book of Judges fills in that gap, and the period of the Judges becomes a transitional stage between the conquest and the establishment of the monarchy.

Within the context of deuteronomistic theology, the Book of Judges shows Israel's failure to live in accordance with the central demand of covenant: worship the LORD and the LORD alone. Because of their failure the people of Israel risk the loss of the gift of the land. Time and again the LORD punished them by sending oppressors. Only when Israel returned in obedience did the LORD send them a deliverer who freed them from oppression and brought peace to the land. But again Israel would abandon the LORD and again the LORD would punish them. The frequent repetition of that cycle accentuates the conditional basis upon which Israel lives in the land. It gives expression to Israel's repeated failure to obey the LORD, who in patience refrained from total destruction until there was no other recourse (2 Kgs 17;25). The Book of Judges gives testimony to the necessity of strong and faithful leadership, thus preparing the way for the establishment of a monarchy.

## Working Through the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges can be divided into three major sections: the introduction (1,1—2,5), the exploits of the judges (2,6—16,31), and appendices, (17,1—21,25). A more detailed look at each section follows:

### An Alternate Tradition about the Conquest (Jgs 1,1—2,5)

Here we find fragments of alternate conquest tradition woven together to show that Israel was not able to occupy the entire land. The reason given for this situation is Israel's failure to be obedient to the LORD (2,2).

### The Exploits of the Judges (Jgs 2,6—16,31)

The theological framework of 2,11-19 provides the interpretive key for the Book of Judges. The remainder of the section consists primarily of the activities of the major judges and surrounding events. It can be outlined accordingly:

| | |
|---|---|
| 3,7-11 | Othniel |
| 3,12-30 (31) | Ehud (and Shamgar) |
| 4,1—5,31 | Deborah and Barak |
| 6,1—8,35 | Gideon |
| 9,1-57 | Abimelech |
| 10,1-5 | "Minor Judges" |
| 10,6—12,7 | Jephthah |
| 12,8-15 | "Minor Judges" |
| 13,1—16,31 | Samson |

### Two Appendices (Jgs 17,1—21,25)

The two appendices are related in that they both deal with the affairs of Levites. The first appendix (Chapters 17–18) concerns the events surrounding the establishment of a cultic center at Dan; the second (Chapters 19–21) describes the outrage against the concubine of a Levite and the war against the Benjaminites which ensued.

## Reading Through the Book of Judges

There is one overriding theme that dominates the Book of Judges: the sin of idolatry leads to punishment; but if the people of Israel turn back to the LORD, the LORD will deliver them from their enemies. In the discussion that follows we will look at some of the original concerns of the stories in Judges and the transformation of these stories by the deuteronomistic writers. To further our understanding we will discuss the historical conditions and theological concepts that form the background of these stories.

### An Alternate Tradition about the Conquest (Jgs 1,1—2,5)

Ancient fragments have been used to form an alternate presentation of the conquest. The takeover of the south is attributed primarily to the tribes of Judah and Simeon (1,2-21). Bethel is taken by the house of Joseph (1,22-26). The rest of the account only notes instances of the failure on the part of the tribes to drive out the various peoples occupying the land of Canaan. The passage indicates that the conquest, in spite of the position presented in the Book of Joshua, was by no means complete.

In 2,1-5 the angel of the LORD appears at Bochim and gives the theological explanation for Israel's inability to conquer the entire land: Israel had disobeyed the LORD. As a result of Israelite disobedience, the inhabitants of the land will not be driven out and apostasy will be a constant temptation for Israel. The response of the people to the words of the angel provides an explanation of the name of the place. Because they wept there, the place is called "Weepers" (Bochim).

## The Exploits of the Judges (Jgs 2,6—3,6)

Into the theological framework of "sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance" the deuteronomistic writers have incorporated various stories that relate the deeds of local heroes. For the deuteronomistic writers the unity of all the tribes is an important concern; thus, in their historical schema, these heroes become leaders for all Israel. Each rules all Israel in succession, but the activity of each "judge" is incorporated into the framework of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance, giving the book a cyclic character in spite of a forward progression in time.

The operative theology by which the deuteronomistic writers interpret Israel's history finds its clearest expression in 2,11-19. Israel inexplicably abandons the LORD for other gods. Though the LORD punishes them, nevertheless the LORD does not abandon them, but hears their cries for deliverance and sends someone to save them from their oppression. Israel, however, does not learn its lesson and again abandons the LORD, and the cycle repeats itself. The conclusion of this section reiterates that the other peoples were left in the land as a test to Israel (2,1-3).

### WHO WERE THE JUDGES?

The term "judge" is commonly used to refer to the heroes of the Book of Judges, but it would be misleading to think of these heroes as judges who decide cases. The term "judge" has a much broader meaning in Hebrew. It can be used to designate very different kinds of leaders. The deuteronomistic writers use the term to designate military leaders. The judges deliver Israel from the oppression of their enemies; the spirit of the LORD descends upon them and enables them to lead Israel to victory (3,10; 6,34; 11,29; 14,6; 15,14). The term "judge" is also applied to individuals whose activity is unclear. These "judges" are mentioned in 3,31 (Shamgar), 10,1-5 (Tola, Jair), and 12,8-15 (Ibzan, Elon, Abdon). They may have been local leaders or elders of the tribes who settled disputes that would have arisen within or among the tribes, but so little is said of them that it is difficult to determine what authority they carried.

### OTHNIEL (Jgs 3,7-11)

The account of the activity of the first judge, Othniel the Kennizzite, is artificially structured in accordance with the deuteronomistic schema of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance. Indeed, little more is said than that people sinned, were punished, cried for help, and were delivered by Othniel. This is the first mention of the spirit of the LORD coming upon a person. The function of the spirit is to transform the persons who will become judges, equipping them with what is necessary for leadership. Those upon whom the spirit has come are the LORD's instruments in the deliverance of the people from oppression.

### EHUD (Jgs 3,12-30)

The story of Ehud was originally a secular narrative about a local Benjaminite hero, but it is now given theological import by its association with Holy War and its incorporation into the deuteronomistic schema that dominates the Book of Judges. The hero, Ehud, puts his personal "handicap," his left-handedness, to good use in dispatching Eglon, the king of Moab. Elements of humor are found in the depiction of the king as so fat that Ehud's sword disappears when he strikes the king in the belly, and in the conversation of the servants who think that Eglon is simply taking a long time in the bathroom when in reality he is dead. The humor in the story may strike us as crude, but it is typical of the type of humor often found in folktales.

**DEBORAH AND BARAK** (Jgs 4,1—5,31)
Both Chapters 4 and 5 treat of a battle which Israel wins against the superior forces of the Canaanites. The poetic version is the older of the two versions, but gives only an incomplete account of the events. The prose version in Chapter 4 complements the poetic version, but at times is in conflict with it.

**The Prose Version** (4,1-24). Typically, the events take place within the deuteronomistic framework of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance. It is surprising to find a woman among the judges; nevertheless Deborah is presented as one who renders judgment to the Israelites. She is called a prophetess and relates to Barak the word of the LORD regarding the battle. Though she does not lead the battle, she calls the tribes to join in Holy War. Though Barak is to lead the troops, he will not do so unless Deborah accompanies him. The battle narrative follows a generalized Holy War schema in which the LORD defeats the enemy (verse 15). The final scene wherein Jael kills the Canaanite general Sisera is a flagrant violation of the laws of hospitality, but in this case it serves to show that even the general did not escape, but fell at the hand of a woman. The conclusion affirms that the victory was the LORD's victory.

**The Poetic Version: The Song of Deborah** (5,1-31). It was common practice for women in ancient Israel to greet returning soldiers with a song in celebration of their victory (Ex 15; 1 Sm 18,6-8). The Song of Deborah is an example of such a song. It is a hymn of thanksgiving for victory in battle. Its theme is that the LORD delivers Israel as a warrior who fights on behalf of the people.

The poem begins with a call to praise (verses 2f). The LORD's presence in the battle is signaled right at the beginning: the LORD comes down from Mount Sinai (verses 4f). It is typical of a theophany (a manifestation of God) that the LORD's appearance be accompanied by the elements of a storm. When the LORD appears all of nature responds, thus the mountains quake and the heavens drop. The situation in Israel is described as one of economic hardship and religious infidelity (verses 6-8a). Israel is not prepared for war (verses 8b-9). After another call to praise (verses 10-12) the tribes are mustered, but some of the tribes do not respond to the call of Deborah (verses 13-18). They stand implicitly condemned for their failure to join in this Holy War. The battle is won as a result of the storm (verses 19-22). Meroz, otherwise unknown, stands condemned for its failure to help Israel (verse 23). Jael is to be praised for her actions in killing the Canaanite general, Sisera (verses 24-27). The final scene switches to Sisera's home where his mother longs for the return of her son (verses 28-30). The pathos of these verses cannot be overlooked, for they stand in stark contrast to the scene of Sisera's death (verse 27). The song concludes with a curse upon the enemies of the LORD.

The Song of Deborah embodies the theology of Holy War. The LORD brings victory against overwhelming odds and by unusual means (the storm, Jael's killing of Sisera).

**GIDEON** (Jgs 6,1—8,35)
The account of Gideon is composed of the following episodes:

| | |
|---|---|
| 6,1-10 | The Oppression of the Midianites |
| 6,11-17 | The Call of Gideon |
| 6,18-24 | The Altar of Yahweh-shalom |
| 6,25-32 | Destruction of the Altar of Baal |

| | |
|---|---|
| 6,33-35 | The Muster of the Troops |
| 6,36-40 | The Sign of the Fleece |
| 7,1-25 | The Campaign against the Midianites |
| 8,1-3 | Gideon's Dispute with the Ephraimites |
| 8,4-21 | Gideon's Dispute with the Citizens of Succoth and Penuel |
| 8,22-23 | The Offer of Kingship to Gideon |
| 8,24-27 | Apostasy |
| 8,28-35 | Death of Gideon |

The prehistory of this section is very complex. There is no doubt that the different episodes that form the Gideon story are drawn from various traditions and have been altered to fit their present context. Gideon is given the name Jerubbaal in an attempt to unite the Gideon (Chapters 6–8) and Abimelech stories (Chapter 9), but it is likely that Gideon and Jerubbaal were originally two different people. There is some overlapping of events, such as the two stories concerning altars (6,18-24 and 6,25-32).

The story is brought into the deuteronomistic framework with the notice that the people have sinned against the LORD and were delivered over to the Midianites. The oppression of the Midianites is described at length. Its cause is explained by a prophet (6,7-10) in typically deuteronomistic terms: the Midianite oppression is the result of the disobedience of the people. Against this background the angel of the LORD appears to Gideon and commissions him to deliver the people from the Midianites. Though Gideon objects he is of little account, the angel overrides his objection and assures Gideon that the LORD will be with him. The confirmation of this commissioning will come in the account of the fleece (6,36-40).

The two altar accounts contain etiological elements. The first explains the name of the altar, "Yahweh-shalom," that is, "the LORD is peace." It was believed that one could not see God face to face and live. Gideon fears that he will die, for the divine has been manifested to him (in the form of an angel). The assurance of the angel that he will not die, "Peace be to you," becomes embodied in the name of the altar. In the second altar account, Gideon destroys an altar dedicated to Baal. This was considered a sacrilegious act and the people threaten to execute him. Joash, Gideon's father, protects his son by challenging Baal to act in his own defense. Thus Gideon receives a new name, Jerubbaal, a play on the words "Let Baal act."

After the troops are mustered and Gideon's call confirmed in the sign of the fleece, the actual campaign against the Midianites begins. The Israelite army is reduced from 32,000 to 300 to emphasize that the victory achieved rests upon the LORD and not upon Israel's strength. The war strategy of a night attack with swords, trumpets, jars, and torches, is confusing, but apparently we have here a conflation (merging) of different sources. The action taken by the Israelites is intended to surprise the Midianites and cause havoc in their camp and it does. The Israelites are then able to defeat them.

Gideon's disputes with the Ephraimites and later with the citizens of Succoth and Penuel are intended to show the importance of all Israel acting together. As a result of Gideon's victories he is offered the kingship, but refuses to accept it because the ruler of Israel is the LORD. These verses contrast sharply with the account of Abimelech's demand to be made a king (9,2f).

From the spoils of war Gideon makes a golden ephod. It is not certain what an ephod is. It is said to be a garment worn by the priests (1 Sm 2,18), but is also presented as a means of

consulting the LORD for an oracle (1 Sm 14,3.18f; 23,9). It is associated with the idols (teraphim) in Judges 17,5; 18,14.17f.20. The fact that it is made from gold would suggest that in the Gideon story the ephod is an idol. For the deuteronomistic writers it is a source of idolatry and because of it the family of Gideon will be destroyed. The final section prepares the way for the story of Abimelech.

**ABIMELECH** (Jgs 9,1-57)

The story of Abimelech interrupts the deuteronomistic framework of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance. After acknowledging the sin of the people of Israel, rather than a notification of punishment, we find the story of Abimelech. The context suggests that the usurpation of royal power by Abimelech is a part of the sin of the people or its punishment. In either case the actions of Abimelech are cast in a negative light.

Abimelech is introduced at the end of 8,29-21 as a son of Gideon's concubine. After Gideon's death it is noted that the people again turn to the Baals in worship, but it is also stated that they were no longer grateful for the good that the family of Gideon had done. This suggests that there was some dissatisfaction with the rule of Gideon's sons and provides a context for Abimelech's request to rule over the Shechemites. With the financial support given by the Shechemites, Abimelech hires ruffians, slaughters the other sons of Abimelech, and is proclaimed king by the Shechemites. At this point Jotham, a son of Gideon who had escaped the massacre of Abimelech, issues a fable whose meaning is hard to miss: like the bramble (*NAB* buckthorn) kings are those who have nothing to offer.

In spite of Jotham's harsh words, Abimelech rules for three years, but then Gaal leads a rebellion against Abimelech. Abimelech successfully counterattacks, but Shechem is destroyed and its inhabitants are killed. When Abimelech attempts to conquer a neighboring city, he is fatally wounded by a millstone thrown by a woman from the besieged tower. It was considered a disgrace to be killed by a woman, thus Abimelech asks his armor-bearer to kill him with his sword.

Abimelech's story could be understood in purely political terms as a failed attempt to establish a monarchy in Israel, but the events are given a theological interpretation in verses 23f and 56f. Because Abimelech had ruthlessly killed his seventy brothers, God instigates the rebellion against him which leads to his death. Moreover, the story of Abimelech brings to the fore an important concern of the deuteronomistic writers, the nature of leadership from a theological perspective. Abimelech is not appointed leader by the LORD. The people of Shechem do not consult the LORD in accepting the leadership of Abimelech; his leadership is unauthorized, the people act according to their own will. Consequently both suffer for their disregard of the will of the LORD: the Shechemites and their city are destroyed, Abimelech is killed.

**Attitude Toward Kingship.** The Book of Judges presents an ambivalent attitude toward kingship. The story of Abimelech, especially with Jotham's fable, clearly displays a negative attitude towards kingship, but the movement of the Book of Judges shows how the community becomes increasingly chaotic and splintered without a stable form of leadership. That "everyone did what he thought best" (17,6; 21,25) suggests that centralized leadership is necessary in order to preserve order and justice. This ambivalence towards kingship rests upon both theological belief and political experience. It will reach a climax in the acceptance of kingship in 1 Samuel 12 and we will review the issue again in the Reading Guide to that passage.

**"MINOR JUDGES"** (Jgs 3,31; 10,1-5; 12,8-15)
It has been assumed that the people mentioned in these short notices were officials who occupied a permanent office, but the brevity of information does not allow us to determine what would be the duties or responsibilities of their office. It is pure conjecture to attribute to these people a judicial function. All we can say with certainty is that the numbers given for their period of judgeship are not stereotypical and thus appear to be based in fact. In all these citations there is included some picturesque detail, and it is probably for this reason that these "judges" were remembered.

**JEPHTHAH** (Jgs 10,6—12,7)
The opening verses of the story of Jephthah are dominated by the deuteronomistic theological schema found elsewhere in the Book of Judges. Israel has worshipped other gods, the LORD has punished them by sending the Ammonites to oppress them. The people cry out to the LORD, and Jephthah is sent as deliverer.

Jephthah is introduced as the son of a harlot who is driven away by the legitimate sons of Gilead. He becomes a raider with a band of followers. Ironically when Israel is attacked by the Ammonites, the elders of Gilead want Jephthah to lead them in battle against the Ammonites. He accepts the commission, and if successful he will accept the position of leader. The negotiations between Jephthah and the Ammonites argue for Israel's right to the land as a gift from its God. The argument is not accepted by the Ammonites and thus there will be war.

The spirit of the LORD comes upon Jephthah as with other judges, and Jephthah makes a vow hoping to insure victory by promising the deity a sacrifice. It was not unusual to take such a vow; what is unusual is that Jephthah vows to sacrifice a human being to the LORD, and not only does the LORD accept the vow, but once victory is gained the LORD accepts the sacrifice. There is no way to excuse either Jephthah or the LORD in this story, but it suggests that the story must have originated in circles where human sacrifice was accepted. Indeed, the willingness of Jephthah's daughter to fulfill the vow taken by her father is comprehensible only if human sacrifice was a commonly accepted practice and that to be chosen as the sacrifice carried honor. We must be careful not to read our horror over human sacrifice into an earlier age where it functioned as an acceptable cultic practice. The horror in the text seems to be that Jephthah's daughter is his only child and because of this sacrifice he will have no future progeny. Because Jephthah's daughter will die a virgin, she requested time to mourn that fact. The cultic custom of mourning each year by the Israelite women is thus explained. It is difficult to know how the deuteronomistic writers intended this story to be viewed in context for there is no comment at all on the actions of the main characters.

The final episode in the Jephthah story concerns a dispute between Ephraim and Gilead, a dispute that led to war. It is another example of intertribal warfare, but connects only loosely with the preceding events.

**SAMSON** (Jgs 13,1—16,31)
The Samson story presents a more-or-less unified story consisting of several episodes centered on a single person, Samson. Unlike other judges who fight for the well-being of all Israel, Samson's exploits are based on personal vendettas in which only his own well-being is at issue. The "spirit of the LORD" which descends upon him (14,6.19; 15,14) serves no other purpose than to give him strength. The Spirit does not enable Samson to lead all Israel as a warrior "judge," nor does he liberate the people from Philistine domination. He scores personal victories

over the Philistines. With the exception of the statements that Samson judged Israel (15,20; 16,31) we would have no reason to include Samson among the judges. The story is not, however, without theological significance, as we shall see below.

The story of Samson is composed of several episodes:

| | |
|---|---|
| 13,1-25 | The Birth of Samson |
| 14,1-20 | The Marriage of Samson |
| 15,1-8 | Samson's Revenge Using Foxes |
| 15,9-17 | Samson against the Philistines with Jawbone |
| 15,18-19 | The LORD Provides Water for Samson |
| 16,1-3 | Samson Eludes Capture |
| 16,4-22 | Samson and Delilah |
| 16,23-30 | The Death of Samson |

The story begins with the events surrounding the birth of the hero. His mother is a barren woman; his birth is announced by an angel of the LORD. The motif of barrenness indicates the special nature of this child. God has interceded directly to ensure his birth and the destiny of the child is set by God. Underscoring the special manner of his birth is the dedication of this child as a Nazirite (13,5).

Nazirites were people who took vows of dedication to the LORD. Some were consecrated at birth. In the course of time, Nazirites will be identified as such only for the duration during which they live under vow, but Samson is Nazirite for life. The vows taken by Nazirites are given in Numbers 6, 2-8. Though the origin of these vows is not known, it is certain that the vows are ancient. Nazirites were to abstain from wine and strong drink. They could not cut their hair. They could not have contact with a dead body. Abstaining from wine may have something to do with a nomadic reaction to settled life in the land of Canaan. The growing and fermenting of grapes is possible only when Israel is settled in the land. The offering of hair was an offering of one's life, for hair was associated with the life of a person. Why one does not cut the hair is not clear, but in the case of Samson the hair is associated with strength. Contact with the dead rendered the high priest ritually unclean. This aspect of the vow gives a priestly status to the Nazirites. For one specially consecrated to God ritual cleanliness was important.

Samson is not faithful to these vows. He has contact with a dead animal, even eats food from it. He is indirectly responsible for having his hair cut by Delilah for he betrays his secret to her. Though it is not explicitly stated that he drank wine, he hosts a drinking party (*NAB,* banquet, literally drinking party) which leads us to assume that he fully participated in the festivities. That Samson suffers from breaking his vows is clear, for he repeatedly gets into trouble as a result.

It is surprising that Samson wants to marry a foreign woman, indeed one who is a Philistine. But, instead of blame, his action is given theological justification, for the LORD is behind his request, seeking to find some opportunity to act against the Philistines (14,4). The taking away of this woman by the Philistines to marry her to another gives Samson an opportunity for revenge upon the Philistines.

Samson is found in the bed of a harlot in 16,1, but he is not condemned for this. Rather it becomes an opportunity to make the Philistines look like fools. Delilah is the source of his final downfall. Certainly the story is not holding up the actions of Samson for imitation; rather it

clearly shows that he repeatedly got in trouble for his inability to control himself where women were concerned.

The story climaxes in the death of Samson. Captive of the Philistines, he is brought in to provide entertainment at their victory celebration, but their source of amusement becomes the source of their death. The LORD answers Samson's prayer for vengeance against the Philistines. His strength returns and he pulls down the columns supporting the Temple, killing himself as well as the Philistines.

**Theology of the Story of Samson.** The activity of the LORD gives us an indication of the theology that is in the background of the story of Samson. The LORD is responsible for Samson's birth, for Samson will be the LORD's instrument in defeating the Philistines. To defeat the Philistines is also the reason that the LORD is behind his marriage to a Philistine woman (14,4). The LORD gives Samson strength in his encounters with the Philistines. The LORD responds to Samson's prayers: for water (15,18) and for vengeance (16,28). That the LORD is active in all that Samson does is clear. We can wonder about a chosen hero who has a weakness for women, but it is clear that his bedroom exploits, though not explicitly condemned, are not approved of by the authors. Indeed, his downfall rests upon his inability to say no to a woman. Also operative theologically in this story are the consequences of breaking a vow. Samson is a Nazirite, but fails to live in accordance with their code and suffers as a result of his disobedience. At the same time, even his defeat becomes an opportunity for the LORD to gain victory over the Philistines.

## Two Appendices (Jgs 17,1—21,25)

The final chapters of the Book of Judges stand outside the deuteronomistic pattern of sin-punishment-cry for help-deliverance. There are no "judges" or heroes who lead Israel to victory in these chapters, and there is little that is obviously identifiable as deuteronomistic redaction. Nevertheless the chapters are worked into the final edition of the Book of Judges, showing the disintegration of Israelite society due to the lack of leadership, thus paving the way for the transition to kingship in 1 Samuel.

### THE SANCTUARY AT DAN (Jgs 17,1—18,31)

The absence of an outright condemnation of the establishment of a cultic center at Dan and the use of images at that center is surprising in view of the concerns of the deuteronomistic writer so evident elsewhere in the Book of Judges. There is a subtle polemic against the sanctuary, but it lacks the force of deuteronomistic condemnations. At best it is implicit in the fact that the sanctuary is built by money taken in theft. Though all money belongs to the shrine when it is returned, only a little of it is actually for the shrine. The actions of the Levite also give a pejorative cast to the story. He shows no qualms in leaving the service of Micah and following the Danites. His services go to the highest bidder.

### OUTRAGE AT GIBEAH AND CIVIL WAR (Jgs 19,1—21,25)

This story is difficult for many reasons. Who cannot be horrified at the Levite's blatant disregard of his concubine? All his actions seem heartless and self-serving. He callously leaves her to the mercy of the corrupt men of the city, and after allowing her to be abused all night shows no concern for her as she lies dead at the entrance of the house. The tribes come together to right

this great wrong, but in the process they nearly wipe out the tribe of Benjamin. Having vowed that none of the tribes would allow their daughters to marry the Benjaminites, they get wives for them by killing all the men and nonvirginal women of Jabesh-gilead. More women are needed and they simply abduct them from Shiloh in the middle of a festival celebration. There are few that cannot be shocked by the events of this story, but we must be careful not to read back into the story our own concerns. The period of judges was a time when women were considered little more than chattels, especially concubines, and the actions of the Levite would probably not have appeared as negatively as we see them today. It is the men of the city who stand condemned, for they violate the rules of hospitality in demanding that the host turn over his guest for their pleasure. It is a positive element in the story that all the tribes of Israel come together to right this injustice, though they carry their vengeance to an extreme. Nevertheless the tribes take action to right even the wrong created by their excess of enthusiasm in punishing the Benjaminites.

The positive elements that the story may originally have had are colored by the context of the story. It becomes an example of the disintegration of Israelite society, for it was a time when "there was no king in Israel; everyone did what he thought best" (21,25). Thus these final chapters of the Book of Judges become a preparation for the transition to a monarchical form of government.

## Continuing Significance of the Book of Judges

There is much in the Book of Judges that a present-day reader might find troubling, but that should not blind us to the theological reality that it affirms. While we may not approve of the continual violence and bloodshed that mark the stories about the period of the judges, we must bear three things in mind: First, these are powerful depictions of the action of God on the side of those who are politically oppressed. Second, in the view of the deuteronomistic writers, no action that is not supported by God, or that is not in conformity with God's will, can ultimately prevail. Third, Israel learned in defeat the importance of living in accordance with its call to be in covenant with the LORD. Defeat became an opportunity for the recognition of guilt and the need for repentance. In this way the negative experiences in Israel's history become a lesson for the future.

While recognizing this, we may still not completely agree with the position taken in the Book of Judges that sin inevitably brings punishment, and reliance upon the LORD brings deliverance. Taken in isolation, this view is too limited, but within the larger context of the deuteronomistic history it is the LORD's patience and willingness to forgive, given only that people would repent, that receives emphasis. Punishment is inevitable only when there is the refusal to repent. Moreover, we must remember that, outside the deuteronomistic history, the simple equation between sin and punishment is challenged, particularly in the Book of Job. There the theological position of the deuteronomistic writers is countered and complemented.

P.A.V.

## Further reading

The three commentaries listed here provide a good introduction to the Book of Judges for a lay audience.

Grindel, John A. *Joshua, Judges.* Collegeville Bible Commentary, Old Testament, 7. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985.

Hoppe, Leslie J. *Joshua, Judges: With an Excursus on Charismatic Leadership in Israel.* Old Testament Message, v. 5. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982.

Martin, James D. *The Book of Judges: Commentary.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge, Eng./New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Those wishing a more detailed discussion of the Book of Judges should consult the following:

Boling, Robert G. *Judges.* The Anchor Bible, 6A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.

Soggin, J. Alberto. *Judges: A Commentary.* Trans. John Bowden. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia, PA: Westminister Press, 1981.

# RUTH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 278–282 of the Old Testament*]

The Book of Ruth contains a rare and delightful story that continues to captivate its audience no matter how often it is read. Few can forget the loyalty of Ruth, the bitterness of Naomi, the forthright Boaz. The story has been of special interest to Christians for Ruth, as great-grandmother of David, holds a special place in the history of salvation.

## Ruth as Story

The Book of Ruth is a short story. It is an artistically told tale with a simple plot. Its characters are ordinary people; its events, mundane. Its closeness to life enables us to identify with its characters, to sympathize with their situation, and to rejoice when their problems are solved.

We have no way of verifying the events of the story, but the Moabite ancestry of David may be based on historical fact. In view of the frequent wars and hostile feelings that often characterize the relationship between Israel and Moab, it is unlikely that a Moabite ancestry for David would have been created. Furthermore, a connection with Moab would explain why David brings his parents to Moab for safekeeping after Saul turns against him (1 Sm 22,3f).

Whatever its historical base, the story as we have it is an artistic creation. It is composed in a rhythmic prose, using key words and symmetry to unify its scenes. The author anticipates coming scenes by a subtle use of foreshadowing. Some events are quickly told, forcing the reader to move on; others are drawn out at great length, giving the reader ample opportunity to linger and look more closely at the event.

As story, its purpose is to entertain and delight, and this it does, but at the same time it also instructs. The characters are presented as models who live faithful to the spirit of the covenant even in the difficult situations of life. What the covenant law spells out in theory, Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi embody in practice. Though God never directly speaks or acts in the story, nevertheless it is clear that the story has something to teach us of the way that God is present in life.

### Dating

It is difficult to date the Book of Ruth with any certainty, for though it has been argued that it is postexilic in origin, more and more frequently arguments for a preexilic date are being advanced. Those who postulate a postexilic date see the Book of Ruth as a polemical work

challenging the policies of Ezra. In his reform of the postexilic community, Ezra implemented a policy forbidding intermarriage with foreign women. The Book of Ruth questions such a policy by showing that Ruth, though a foreign woman, is pious and faithful. Moreover, the kinship between Ruth and David indicates that David, the greatest of Israel's kings, was himself of mixed blood. Such a challenge to Ezra's policies would emerge close to the time of Ezra's activity, c. 450 B.C.

The evidence for a preexilic date comes from an analysis of style and theology. There is nothing in the style of the book that would force one to assume a late date. Its theology is similar to that of the Joseph story (Gn 37–50) and the court history of David (2 Sm 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2), both thought to be preexilic in origin. We cannot resolve here the complex issues surrounding the date of the Book of Ruth, but the diversity of opinion cautions us against easy answers.

### Theology in the Book of Ruth

As indicated in the *New American Bible* "Introduction" (p. 278) the Book of Ruth is placed after Judges and before 1 Samuel in the Greek and Latin canons because the action of the story is situated in the period of the judges. Our translation continues this practice. It should be noted that in spite of its placement, the Book of Ruth is not a part of the Deuteronomistic History, the story of Israel from conquest to exile found in the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. It does not reflect the thought or style of the Deuteronomistic History; it does not have deuteronomistic theological overtones (see section on Deuteronomistic History). In the Jewish canon, the Book of Ruth is found among the *megilloth,* or little scrolls that are read on feast days. The Book of Ruth is read on the Feast of Weeks, a harvest festival, because one of its major scenes takes place at harvest time.

In the story of Ruth human actors occupy center stage. God is present, but hidden in the words and actions of the main characters. It is important to note how much God stays in the background of the story. The providence of God directs the action, but the focus of the story is on the human actors and what they do. God's providential care is there, but it is seen only in the faithful love with which the main characters in the story treat one another.

## How to Proceed . . .

The book is short and it can be read easily in one sitting. Because a story conveys its meaning in terms of what is said of its actors and their actions, it is important to pay close attention to the characterization of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, and what they do. Pay particular attention to the subtle presence of God in the story. Notice, too, recurring motifs and patterns that will function as clues to meaning.

### The Book of Ruth in Outline

The story is worked out in scenes set between an introduction that presents the problem, and an epilogue that follows the resolution of the problem.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **A** | 1,1-5 | The Scene is Set |
| **B** | 1,6-22 | Naomi Returns to Bethlehem with Ruth |
| **C** | 2,1-23 | Ruth Gleans in the Field of Boaz |
| **D** | 3,1-18 | Boaz and Ruth on the Threshing Floor |

E 4,1-12 Boaz Pursues his Claim
F 4,13-17 Ruth Gives Birth to a Son
G 4,18-22 Genealogical Appendix

## Reading Through the Book of Ruth

In this section we will work through the story of Ruth, highlighting some of its themes and motifs, delineating its theology, and explaining some of the customs that are in the background of the story.

### The Scene is Set (Ru 1,1-5)

The extreme brevity of this section is apparent when we realize that these few verses cover the events of well over ten years. The narrator presents here only what is essential for the narrative which follows: Naomi is left without husband or sons. How will she be able to survive?

#### THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

The events recounted in these opening verses reflect conditions typical of life in ancient Palestine. Famine was a relatively frequent occurrence in this territory and it was not unusual for a family to seek "greener pastures" when famine struck (Gn 12,10; 26,1). Moab occupied the region east of the Dead Sea between the River Arnon and the Brook Zered. Though not all of its land was cultivable, a narrow strip of land running north and south in the center of the land was well watered and fertile.

In the patriarchal social structure of the ancient Near East a woman was cared for by her father, husband, or sons. A widow of advanced age with no sons was in a particularly desperate situation. She had little hope for anything other than a life of poverty and destitution. The biblical exhortation to care for widows and orphans recognizes the problems of survival faced by those without male support, but all too often the exhortation was ignored.

#### THE MOTIF OF EMPTINESS

With great artistry the author of Ruth weaves into the story a motif of emptiness that sets the action of the story in motion, and will be reversed by the end of the story. The emptiness of the land (famine) causes Naomi to leave the land. The emptiness of the land gives way to the emptiness of Naomi in the loss first of husband and then sons. Naomi dismisses her daughters-in-law because her "emptiness" cannot be cured. She is too old to give birth again. Naomi's emptiness is accentuated when she contrasts her previous abundance with her present destitution (1,21). In the final scenes of the story, Naomi is no longer empty. She has a descendant, through Ruth. She who was empty is now full.

### Naomi Returns to Bethlehem (Ru 1,6-22)

The length of this scene indicates its importance for the author of Ruth. Naomi decides to return home because the famine is over in the land of Israel. Also motivating her decision must be the realization that she will have a better chance of survival among her own people than as a defenseless widow among foreigners. Naomi's words to her daughters-in-law accentuate the tragedy of her situation. She is too old to marry and can no longer bear children. She can hope for nothing. Her daughters-in-law share Naomi's desperate situation, but she advises them to return to their people. Among their own people they may be able to find husbands and thus

secure their future. With Naomi there can be no future. Ruth's loyalty is shown in her refusal to abandon her mother-in-law in spite of the hopelessness of Naomi's future; she will stay with Naomi even in the face of a life of poverty.

### THE CHARACTER OF RUTH

By drawing out the hopelessness of Naomi's situation coupled with Ruth's refusal to leave her mother-in-law, the author lets us see into the character of Ruth: she is faithful. While there is nothing wrong with Orpah's returning home, Ruth's character is shown in sharp relief by the contrasting actions of these two women. Ruth is willing to share the plight of Naomi. Her loyalty will draw the attention of Boaz, which leads to the resolution of the problem facing Ruth and Naomi, and thus all in the story depends upon the character of this young widow.

### GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE STORY

It is important to note that, in the story of Ruth, most often God is referred to in the blessings and oaths that are spoken by the main characters. Naomi blesses her two daughters-in-law (1,8f); Boaz blesses Ruth for her loyalty to Naomi (2,12) and her good character (3,10); Naomi blesses Boaz for his kindness to Ruth (2,20); the blessing of fertility is bestowed upon Ruth by the citizens at the city gate (3,10). All of these blessings are issued in God's name, but it is through the actions of the main characters that the blessings are fulfilled. God stands behind all as cause (4,14), but God's activity is mediated by those who live faithful lives.

Other references to God in the story also reveal that God is the cause of all that happens. God is the one who has ended the famine in the land of Israel and filled it with food (1,6). God is blamed for Naomi's destitution (1,20f); God is also responsible for Naomi's abundance at the end of the story (4,14), by enabling Ruth to conceive and bear a child (4,13). The hand of God is to be found in all that happens in the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

## Ruth Gleans in the Field of Boaz (Ru 2,1-23)

Ruth takes the initiative in this scene, requesting permission from her mother-in-law to go and glean in the fields. Though Ruth, seemingly by chance, enters the fields of Boaz, a prominent relative of Naomi, God's providential guidance is certainly at work behind the scenes. Boaz has heard of Ruth's kindness to her mother-in-law, and sees to it that she is protected and allowed to gather a considerable amount of barley.

### GLEANING

Israel's law shows a marked concern for the poor, for widows and orphans, and provides for their care in various ways. One way was to allow the poor to glean the fields, that is to gather up the grain that the threshers had dropped or passed over, and keep what they collected. According to the law a landowner was not allowed to glean his fields after harvesting a crop (Lv 19,9f; 23,22; Dt 24,19). What remained in the field was left for the poor.

### THE CHARACTER OF BOAZ

The generous and noble character of Boaz is revealed in his actions. He insists that Ruth glean only in his fields, he extends his protection to her, he provides her with food and water, and he sees to it that she will prosper in her gleaning. The motive for his behavior towards Ruth is her kindness and loyalty to Naomi. We see in his gracious response to Ruth's faithfulness that Boaz is a person of integrity and honor.

## Boaz and Ruth on the Threshing Floor (Ru 3,1-18)

It is not clear exactly what Naomi has in mind when she sends Ruth to the threshing floor where Boaz is sleeping, but the sexual overtones of the incident cannot be ignored. Ruth is told to bathe, dress in her finest clothes, see Boaz on the threshing floor as he sleeps, lie at his feet, and wait to see what he will do. The compromising position into which Naomi sends Ruth is clear when one realizes that the term "feet" in Hebrew often refers to the male genitals. The double meaning may be intended to rouse the interest of the audience, "to raise a few eyebrows," only to show that the unusual steps taken by Ruth do not end up in an illicit sexual union, but reveal the honorable character of Boaz. He does not take advantage of Ruth, but agrees to take the necessary steps to marry her. He ensures that her reputation is not ruined and sends her away with six measures of barley.

## Boaz Pursues his Claim (Ru 4,1-12)

The events that take place in this scene are difficult to understand because our knowledge of ancient customs is limited. It is clear that Boaz is doing something to ensure that he will marry Ruth, but exactly what is being done remains obscure. Scholars have attempted to understand the sequence of events against the background of the laws of levirate marriage and land redemption.

### LEVIRATE MARRIAGE AND LAND REDEMPTION

A levirate marriage was the marriage of a woman with the brother of her deceased husband. This was mandated if the marriage was childless (Dt 25,5-10). The practice developed to ensure that the line of the deceased man would continue, in spite of the fact that he died before his wife bore him a child. Though Boaz claims Ruth as wife to raise up a family for her late husband, he is not her brother and thus the law of levirate marriage would not apply. It may well have been that the law was extended to more distant relatives in extenuating circumstances, but this is not so stated in Deuteronomy. It is possible that there were many local variations on the law of levirate marriage that are not accounted for in the text of Deuteronomy, but it may also be that levirate marriage is not really the issue.

The situation reflected in the text may be better accounted for by reading it against the laws of land redemption. It was the obligation of the nearest relative to redeem the land of a kinsman who was forced to relinquish his land because he had fallen into debt (Lv 25,25). That Naomi has land comes as a bit of a surprise in 4,3. However, it may be that she has the right to redeem the land, but not the land itself. We can perhaps assume that Naomi's husband sold the land when the family moved to Moab, but she is too poor to redeem it now that she has returned. The responsibility for redemption of the land then falls to her nearest kin. Though Naomi's unnamed kinsman is willing to redeem the land, Boaz has set up the case so that taking the land would entail marriage to Ruth and the raising up of children for her deceased husband. The kinsman is willing to redeem the land, but for some reason he is unwilling or unable to marry Ruth. It may be that he is afraid he will lose whatever financial advantage the land represents if Ruth has children who will claim the land as their inheritance.

Though this reconstruction explains some aspects of the situation, we must recognize that it assumes several things left unsaid in the text and so remains speculation. Moreover, it does not address the issue of why redeeming the land would necessitate marriage to Ruth as Boaz

claims. We must accept the fact that our knowledge of ancient customs is limited. Whatever is at issue, it is clear that Boaz takes the necessary steps to resolve the matter.

### A Child is Born (Ru 4, 13-17)

Ruth's marriage to Boaz is immediately blessed with a child. Naomi's loss is replaced by Ruth's gain; the tragedy of death, with which the story opened, is balanced by the joy of new life and the continuance of the family line. Not only will the line be continued, but from this line will come the future King David.

### Genealogical Appendix (Ru 4, 18-22)

The climax of the story is reached in verse 17. It may be that a later editor added this genealogy to give an expanded genealogy for David.

## Continuing Significance of the Story of Ruth

Though we live many centuries removed from the events recounted in the Book of Ruth, the theological value of the story transcends time and place. The story affirms that the hand of God is at work even in the midst of tragedy. Tragedy can be transformed by allowing God's love to be mediated by us. In the lives of those who are faithful, God's love becomes actualized. In the love that we bear toward one another, God's purposes are realized. The story of Ruth testifies to the value of our own acts of kindness and faithfulness in God's plans for salvation. P.A.V.

## Further Reading

Campbell, Edward F., Jr. *Ruth.* Anchor Bible, vol. 7, 1st. ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957. E. Campbell's detailed study of the composition, theology, and content of the Book of Ruth provides a thorough analysis for the reader willing to work through this comprehensive treatment.

Craghan, John F. *Esther, Judith, Tobit, Jonah, Ruth.* The Old Testament Message, vol. 16. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982. Pp. 195–227. J. Craghan provides a good introductory overview to the Book of Ruth.

Hals, Ronald. *The Theology of the Book of Ruth.* Facet Books, Biblical series, 23. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969. This short book focuses exclusively on the theological concerns of the Book of Ruth.

Murphy, Roland Edmund. *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.* The Forms of Old Testament Literature, vol. 13. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981. Pp. 83–95. R. Murphy's brief introduction to the Book of Ruth leads the reader through the literary movement of the story.

# 1 AND 2 SAMUEL □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 284–345 of the Old Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

There can be no doubt that the stories found in 1 and 2 Samuel are among the most beautiful, profound, and moving stories in the Bible. The characters in these stories come to life in all their uniqueness, and yet at the same time these characters have a timeless and universal quality that enables them to continue to speak to us today. Before considering the stories themselves, it is important to know how the Books of Samuel were formed, the kind of literary material out of which they are composed and where they fit within the Deuteronomistic History.

### The Formation of the Books of Samuel

The Books of Samuel are composed from separate stories that received their present and final form only after a long period of transmission. Many stories about Samuel, Saul, and David, were told in the community. Some of these stories may have been combined to form blocks of material (for example, the Ark Narrative, 1 Sm 4,1—7,1; the History of the Rise of David, 1 Sm 16,14—2 Sm 5,10; the Succession Narrative 2 Sm 9–20, 1 Kgs 1–2), before they were incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History. Nevertheless, the present arrangement of the material comes from the deuteronomistic writers (see the section on the Deuteronomistic History, pp. Reading Guide 116–119). The redactional activity of the deuteronomistic writers, that is, the editorial comment that shapes the individual stories and links them together, is less obvious in the Books of Samuel than in the Book of Judges, but the same theological stance is nonetheless operative in the selection and presentation of the material gleaned from their sources.

### A Story Composed of Stories

The kind of literature a people produces changes in correspondence to other changes in social structure. When tribal institutions dominated in ancient Israel, sagas were produced. Though these stories spoke of personal and private affairs, they nevertheless embodied the identity of the tribe. In sagas, God directly intervenes in the lives of the people; the incredible is commonplace. With the establishment of a state, sagas give way to historical writing. In historical writing, public events take precedence over private affairs. In the Books of Samuel we find a blend of saga and historical writing. The David and Goliath story (1 Sm 17) is an example of a saga, whereas a text like 2 Samuel 8 functions as a historical report. At times it is difficult to draw clear lines, especially in 2 Samuel 9–20, often called the Succession Narrative. This narrative deals with the private affairs of David's household, but these affairs have profound consequences for the history of the nation. The Succession Narrative has been classified as historical writing, but it reads more like a novel with a vivid presentation of characters that is often lacking in historical writing.

We must bear in mind that all history is interpreted history. Facts are not simply reported, but selected and organized according to the interpretive stance of the historian. The deuteronomistic writers have their unique theological perspective and it governs their selection and arrangement of the material from which they compose Israel's history. For the deuteronomistic writers, Israel's history becomes the story of its success or failure in wor-

shipping the LORD at Jerusalem. The deuteronomistic writers approach the issue of kingship and its resolution in terms that fit into this theological schema: David, the king who conquered Jersualem and made it the religious center of the kingdom, must have been chosen by the LORD. We do not have a complete, nor even a chronologically accurate picture of Israel's move to a monarchical form of government. What we have is the theological interpretation of the deuteronomistic writers of the establishment of a monarchy in Israel.

### The Books of Samuel in Context

As the story of Israel has unfolded, the promises given to Abraham have been realized fully in the conquest (Jos 21,45). With the gift of the land, the LORD has shown faithfulness; Israel is required to be faithful to the LORD in response. In the period of the Judges, Israel's failure to live in accordance with the covenant demand of faithfulness results in punishment. Repeatedly Israel is oppressed by its enemies, but upon its repentance the LORD sends a judge to deliver the people. The Book of Judges ends with a picture of the increased fragmentation of Israelite society. The lack of strong leadership has an adverse effect on the people: "everyone did what he thought best" (Jgs 21,25). The Books of Samuel present the story of Israel's successful move towards kingship. It is a time filled with acceptance and rejection, promise and disappointment, faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

## Working Through the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

The stories that make up the Books of Samuel surround three major figures: Samuel, Saul, and David. Their stories overlap, and thus dividing lines are difficult to draw. The major divisions of the following outline attempt to respect the contours of the life of each.

### The Birth and Youth of Samuel (1 Sm 1,1—3,21)

The significance of Samuel is clearly brought to the fore in the events surrounding his birth and youth. He is a special child, for he is born of a barren woman, dedicated as a Nazirite from birth, raised a priest, called by the LORD to be a prophet.

### The Loss and Return of the Ark (1 Sm 4,1—7,1)

The scene shifts from Samuel's early years to war with the Philistines and the fate of the Ark. Into this story the fate of Eli and his sons is interwoven.

### Samuel as Judge (1 Sm 7,2-17)

Samuel appears as military leader, successful in battle against the Philistines.

### The Establishment of the Monarchy (1 Sm 8,1—12,25)

Samuel is opposed to kingship, but under direct command from the LORD he eventually accedes to the people's request for a king. Saul is presented in a positive light as the LORD's chosen. He is the LORD's anointed, a modest person, yet able to lead Israel to success in battle. The negative overtones in Samuel's speeches, in spite of his eventual acceptance of kingship, prepare us for the downfall of Saul. This section is composed of the following events:

1. 8,1-22 Samuel's opposition to the people's request for a king
2. 9,1—10,16 Saul is anointed king by Samuel

| | |
|---|---|
| 3. 10,17-27 | Saul is chosen king by lot |
| 4. 11,1-15 | Saul and the defeat of the Ammonites |
| 5. 12,1-25 | Samuel's address and the acceptance of kingship |

## The Reign and Rejection of Saul (1 Sm 13,1—15,35)

Very little of Saul's actual reign is recounted. The focus of this section is on his rejection as king in spite of some success in fighting the Philistines. Jonathan, the son of Saul, is introduced for the first time. The following events make up this section:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. 13,1-14 | Saul disobeys Samuel and he is reproved |
| 2. 13,15-22 | The Philistine monopoly on iron |
| 3. 13,23—14,52 | Jonathan and the defeat of the Philistine garrison at Michmash |
| 4. 15,1-35 | War with the Amalekites and the rejection of Saul |

## David Becomes King of Judah and Israel (16,1—2 Sm 5,5)

The story of Saul's decline, accompanied by David's increasingly successful move toward kingship, is a literary masterpiece. The story is made up of the following components:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. 16,1-13 | Samuel anoints David |
| 2. 16,14-23 | Saul, the tormented king, and David, the musician |
| 3. 17,1-55 | David and Goliath |
| 4. 18,1-5 | David and Jonathan |
| 5. 18,6-16 | Saul's jealousy of David |
| 6. 18,17-30 | David marries Saul's daughter Michal |
| 7. 19,1—28,2 | Saul pursues David but David escapes |
| 8. 28,3—2 Sm 1,16 | The final days of the reign of Saul |
| 9. 2 Sm 1,17-27 | David mourns the deaths of Saul and Jonathan |
| 10. 2,1-7 | David becomes king of Judah |
| 11. 2,8—5,5 | David becomes king of Israel |

## The Reign of King David (2 Sm 5,6—24,25)

The reign of David with its military successes and its personal failures is depicted at some length. The following episodes form the story of his reign.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. 5,6-16 | The conquest of Jerusalem |
| 2. 5,17-25 | David and the Philistines |
| 3. 6,1-23 | David brings the Ark to Jerusalem |
| 4. 7,1-29 | Promise of a dynasty to David |
| 5. 8,1-18 | David's wars |
| 6. 9,1-13 | David and Meribaal |
| 7. 10,1-19 | David and the Ammonites, and Arameans |
| 8. 11,1—12,25 | David and Bathsheba |
| 9. 12,26-31 | David and the Ammonites |
| 10. 13,1—14,33 | The rape of Tamar and Absalom's vengeance |
| 11. 15,1—19,44 | Absalom's rebellion |
| 12. 20,1-26 | Sheba's rebellion |

### Appendices (2 Sm 21,1—24,25)

These last chapters deal with various miscellaneous items that have to do with the reign of David.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. 21,1-14 | Seven sons of Saul are killed by the Gibeonites |
| 2. 21,15-22 | Battles with the Philistines |
| 3. 22,1-51 | Song of David |
| 4. 23,1-7 | Last words of David |
| 5. 23,8-39 | David's warriors |
| 6. 24,1-25 | The Census: punishment and atonement |

## Reading Through the Book of Samuel

It is important to keep in mind the theological perspective of the deuteronomistic writers for it permeates the presentation of the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David. For the deuteronomistic writers, obedience leads to success and disobedience to failure. The primary law to which obedience is demanded is total loyalty to the LORD. Though the reader may wonder at the harsh judgment Saul receives in relation to his offense, and the relatively light treatment of David's sins of adultery and murder, it must be remembered that the deuteronomistic basis for judgment is very narrow. David succeeds, therefore he must have been loyal to the LORD, in spite of his sins; Saul fails, he must have been disloyal to the LORD.

### Samuel's Birth and Youth (1 Sm 1,1—3,21)

For the deuteronomistic writers Samuel is a dominant force in the events that lead to the establishment of a monarchy in Israel. He is the last and greatest of the judges, a priest and a prophet; he is a person empowered to make and break kings. The great figure that Samuel was to become is foreshadowed in the manner of his birth and in his call.

**CHILD OF A BARREN WOMAN AND A NAZIRITE** (1 Sm 1,1—2,11)

The motif of a barren woman who gives birth is found frequently in the Old Testament (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother). In these stories the accent falls on God's intervention in an otherwise impossible situation. The son who is born is special; he has an important destiny. The child is a gift from God. Samuel is the son of a barren woman, given to Hannah in answer to her prayer. There is a special poignancy in this story. Hannah, though beloved of her husband, is despondent because she is barren. She suffers from the reproach of Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, who has borne many sons and daughters. Hannah suffers the rebuke of the priest who thinks that she is drunk, when in reality she is upset over her barrenness. All is reversed when the LORD hears her prayer and she conceives Samuel. The child is dedicated to the LORD and will live as a Nazirite (1,22). (See section in Reading Guide to Judges for description of a Nazirite.)

Into this section is inserted the Song of Hannah. It is only loosely connected to the events in Hannah's life. Indeed it includes a reference to the LORD's anointed king (2,10) which certainly dates it to the period of the monarchy. The hymn itself focuses on reversals of fortune caused by the LORD: mighty/powerless, full/hungry, barren/fertile, death/life, rich/poor. It is a testimony to the power of God and the concern of God for the lowly of the earth.

**SAMUEL AS PRIEST AND PROPHET** (1 Sm 2,12—3,21)
Samuel, dedicated to the service of the LORD, is raised by Eli the priest at the shrine in Shiloh. Positive reports about Samuel are interwoven with reports about the corruptness of the sons of Eli. They who are supposed to serve God as priests, use their position to satisfy their own greed. They cannot act as mediators between God and the people, but Samuel, who grows in stature and in worth before God and humanity (2,26), will do so.

The call of Samuel (3,1-21) underscores his special destiny. He is the chosen of the LORD. Raised as a priest, he will now function as a prophet by mediating the word of the LORD to Israel. His first prophetic act is to announce the LORD's judgment upon Eli and his household. When Samuel appears in Chapter 7 he functions as military leader (judge). Samuel combines within his person the major institutions of ancient Israel: priest, prophet, judge.

## The Loss and Return of the Ark (1 Sm 4,1—7,1)

The political and historical events alluded to in this story are of interest only insofar as they concern the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a box that contained the tablets of the Law, but it is also viewed as the throne of the LORD, and thus signifies the presence of the LORD. It was Israel's holiest cult object. In this story its primary importance is military. With the Ark, the LORD is present on the battlefield with the people of Israel, fighting on their behalf. The capture of the Ark is particularly devastating. Taking the gods of a defeated enemy and depositing them in your temple signified the powerlessness of the enemy's gods before your gods. This story, however, shows that even though the Ark has been captured the LORD is still in control. The Philistines thought that they had won the day, but in capturing the Ark their troubles have just begun. In their temple even Dagon, the god of the Philistines, falls prostrate before the LORD and the continued presence of the Ark in their midst causes disease, plague, and turmoil. The trouble caused by the Ark can be eliminated only by the return of the Ark and the sacrifice of guilt offerings.

The theme of this story centers on the issue of who is the more powerful god: the LORD or Dagon. However, the deuteronomistic writers use this narrative to show the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Samuel (2,27-36). The Ark has been captured in order to bring the LORD's judgment upon the house of Eli. These events anticipate the complete fulfillment of Samuel's oracle in 1 Sm 22,11-23.

## Samuel as Judge (1 Sm 7,2-17)

Samuel reappears in Chapter 7, but now the role he plays is that of judge. Like the warrior-judges called to bring a victory for God's people in times of crisis, Samuel emerges as a military leader who successfully leads the fight against the Philistines. The contention that the Philistines were subdued, never again to enter the territory of Israel during Samuel's lifetime (7,13), is an overstatement. The Philistines continue to cause problems throughout Saul's reign and are finally subdued only by David. The statement does have a theological purpose, especially appropriate in view of the fact that the next chapter brings up the issue of kingship. It affirms that Israel does not need a king to fight its battles. The LORD fights successfully through the one the LORD chooses.

## The Establishment of the Monarchy (1 Sm 8,1—12,25)

In these chapters we have different views of kingship that are set together side by side, not always in harmony. It is impossible to determine which position accurately reflects the historical situation, which position, antimonarchy or promonarchy, represents the earlier position taken, or if indeed both existed at the same time. The deuteronomistic writers have intermingled both positive and negative views of kingship to make a theological statement about Israel's move toward the adoption of a monarchy. The negative overtones, all of which emerge from Samuel, cast an ominous shadow over the monarchy. We are prepared for the downfall of Saul, indeed for the pejorative assessment of the whole monarchical period given in the Book of Kings, by the juxtaposing of favorable and unfavorable pictures of the monarchy.

### THE REQUEST FOR A KING AND SAMUEL'S OPPOSITION (1 Sm 8,1-22)

The request for a king is set against the legitimate complaint of the people that Samuel's corrupt sons are unfit to lead. By the end of the chapter, however, it is clear that the request for a king is bound up with the concern for military strength (8,20). Samuel's opposition to kingship is spelled out in terms reminiscent of the reign of Solomon. A king will institute a program of taxes and forced labor; thus the people will lose their freedom. In spite of Samuel's disapproval, the LORD grants the request of the people. The ambivalence of the text is difficult to explain. The people think that a king will bring justice, but Samuel does not agree. Wanting a king is a rejection of the LORD, yet the LORD accepts a king. It may be that historical reality and theological reflection come into conflict here. Though the request for a king is theologically repugnant because the LORD is king in Israel, nevertheless kings did emerge and ruled for centuries in Israel, so kingship must have been accepted by the LORD.

### SAUL IS ANOINTED KING BY SAMUEL (1 Sm 9,1—10,16)

There can be no doubt that this story once circulated independent of its present context. Only in these chapters is Samuel called a man of God and presented as a professional diviner. There is no connection of this chapter with the demand for a king of Chapter 8. Saul is anointed king to deliver the people from the Philistines (9,16), yet this has been accomplished by Samuel (7,13f).

The story of Saul's anointing contains a typical folklore motif of a hero who goes in search of something lost, and ends up with something wonderful but unexpected. It has been worked into the sequence of the larger story by keeping Saul's anointing a secret. The story presents Saul in a positive manner. His stature and good looks (9,2) show that God's favor is with him. His anointing will be confirmed in the fulfillment of three signs: the asses will be found (10,2), he will be offered bread intended for sacrifice (10,4), and the spirit of the LORD will come upon him (10,6). The most important sign is the coming of the spirit, which designates Saul as the one who will deliver Israel. The spirit likewise had come upon the "judges" who were to deliver Israel (Jgs 3,10; 6,34; 11,29; 14,6; 15,14).

### SAUL IS CHOSEN KING BY LOT (1 Sm 10, 17-27)

A different account of how Saul becomes king follows the story of the secret anointing. It begins with a negative statement from Samuel: choosing a king is a rejection of the LORD (verse 19). Though there is nothing in the story of casting lots that is, in itself, negative, nevertheless, the context puts Saul's election under a dark cloud. The ambiguity of Chapter 8 continues here. The LORD accepts kingship and Saul is the chosen one of the LORD, yet in wanting a king the people have rejected the LORD.

**SAUL AND THE DEFEAT OF THE AMMONITES** (1 Sm 11,1-15)
Again we have a story that does not connect with the preceding events. There is nothing in the story to indicate that Saul has been appointed king. In this battle with the Ammonites, Saul is presented like a warrior judge who, possessed by the spirit of the LORD (verse 6), leads the people to victory.

**SAMUEL'S ADDRESS AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE KINGSHIP** (1 Sm 12,1-25)
The function of Chapter 12 is to formally ratify the LORD's acceptance of kingship. Samuel opens the ceremony by declaring his innocence, and recounts the LORD's saving acts on behalf of Israel. The request for a king is inexplicable in light of what the LORD has done; nevertheless the LORD allows a king. Life under a king is conditioned by the obedience or disobedience of the people to the covenant demand that Israel worship the LORD and the LORD alone. In this chapter kingship is set up over and against the actions of Samuel, the prophet. Though kingship may ultimately fail the prophet will nevertheless intercede and pray for the people. The power of the prophet is demonstrated in the thunderstorm. The chapter concludes with a final warning against worship of idols.

The deuteronomistic writers bring the era of the judges to an end with this address of Samuel. The LORD has acceded to the request for a king, but the demand for obedience to the LORD remains. The role of the prophet now becomes important. The prophet will intercede for the people and teach them what is right. The prophet will exhort the people to worship the LORD, and the LORD alone, and warn them of coming punishment when they are disobedient. Kings will not have absolute power in Israel. They remain subject to the Law of the LORD and the prophet will stand over against the king to mediate the LORD's judgment.

## The Reign and Rejection of Saul (1 Sm 13,1—15,35)

The deuteronomistic writers show little interest in the reign of Saul, but move immediately to his rejection as king. Whatever the original context of these stories about Saul, the deuteronomistic writers use them as examples of why Saul's kingship failed.

**SAUL DISOBEYS SAMUEL AND HE IS REPROVED** (1 Sm 13,1-14)
The first story of Saul's disobedience is placed in the context of Saul's attack on a Philistine garrison. In his anxiety over the desertion of his soldiers Saul offers sacrifice before Samuel arrives. Samuel had told Saul to wait until he came to Gilgal (10,8), but Saul disobeys Samuel's command. In his disobedience to the LORD's prophet Saul has shown himself disobedient to the LORD, and therefore his rule will not continue.

**THE PHILISTINE MONOPOLY ON IRON** (1 Sm 13,15-22)
After Saul's rejection, the narrative of the battle continues with the notification that the Philistines controlled the iron industry. As a result Israel is not armed with swords. In view of the disparity in armaments any victory that Israel achieves can only come from the LORD.

**JONATHAN AND THE DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINE GARRISON AT MICHMASH** (1 Sm 13,23—14,52)
The interpretation of this story is problematic. There is ambiguity as to who is at fault, Saul or Jonathan. The problems are compounded by the differences in translation in the Greek and Hebrew texts of these chapters. In the first half of the story neither Saul nor Jonathan consults

the LORD before encountering the enemy. Jonathan expresses the hope that the LORD is with him, but tells no one what he is doing except his armor-bearer. Saul, though he calls over the priest to get an oracle about what to do, is impatient and does not wait to receive the oracle, but rushes into battle. In spite of the fact that neither consulted the LORD, the first part of the battle goes well. They rout the Philistines because the LORD is with them.

In the second part of the story, Saul forbids the soldiers to eat before evening; Jonathan, not knowing of this command, breaks it by eating honey. Although the LORD is consulted no word is forthcoming. Why? Is it because Saul has acted rashly or because Jonathan has broken the oath? For 14,24, the Hebrew text, literally translated, reads, "The Israelites were distressed on that day; and Saul laid an oath on the people . . ." The Greek text can be translated "And Saul acted in great ignorance on that day, and vowed . . ." The *NAB* translation of verse 24, "Saul swore a very rash oath that day . . ." is not supported by either the Hebrew or Greek texts of the Old Testament, but is itself an interpretation of Saul's act as rash. Was it rash to make such a vow? Jonathan thinks so, but perhaps Jonathan is simply trying to excuse his own actions. When the oracle is consulted the blame is placed on Jonathan, not on Saul. Objective and subjective guilt is not an issue in this story. The act is wrong and Jonathan stands guilty, even though he acted in ignorance of Saul's vow.

All of the problems presented by this story cannot be resolved here. As the story comes after the first rejection of Saul, it may stand as an example of his unsuitability to be king. But its real purpose may be to indicate that Jonathan is unacceptable as the future king. In the previous story it states that Saul's kingdom would not endure (13,14), but it does not say whether Saul or a dynasty based on his line has been rejected. It may well be that this story shows that dynastic succession is out of the question.

Though the chapter ends with notice of Saul's victories against other nations, the war with the Philistines continues. Though Jonathan's life has been spared, a sense of foreboding remains.

**WAR WITH THE AMALEKITES AND THE REJECTION OF SAUL** (1 Sm 15,1-35)
The point at issue in this story is Saul's failure to obey a command of the LORD mediated by the prophet Samuel. Saul is commanded to destroy the Amalekites and all their herds, because the Amalekites had opposed Israel after they left Egypt (Ex 17,8-14). Saul stands indicted because he spared the life of the king of the Amalekites and the best of the herds in disobedience to the LORD's explicit command. Saul's attempt to blame the violation of the ban on the people is unsuccessful. By his disobedience Saul warrants the loss of kingship. Though he will continue to bear the title of king, this chapter marks the beginning of the end for Saul.

## David Becomes King of Judah and Israel (1 Sm 16,1—2 Sm 5,5)

This complex of stories centers on David's move toward kingship. It has been assumed that it stems from a document called the History of the Rise of David (1 Sm 16,1—2 Sm 5,10) which was concerned to show that David was the legitimate successor to Saul because the LORD was with him. Whether such a document existed is the subject of debate, but it is certain that the deuteronomistic writers, whatever their source or sources, have adapted the material to fit their theological concerns.

**SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID** (1 Sm 16,1-13)
The anointing of David sets the theological context for the interpretation of all the events that lead David to the throne. The intrigues, the plots, even his marriages—all receive their sanction

from the fact that David is the LORD's chosen one. Obstacles to the throne become opportunities; in opposition support is found. The LORD is with David, therefore nothing David does can go wrong; the LORD has abandoned Saul, thus nothing Saul does can go right.

**SAUL, THE TORMENTED KING, AND DAVID, THE MUSICIAN** (1 Sm 16,14-23)
The subtle irony of this story cannot be ignored. Saul, abandoned by God, subject to the dictates of an evil spirit, erratic and irrational in behavior, brings David, his rival and successor, into his service to console him. The contrast between the two is sharply drawn. David is skilled, able, handsome—his future is before him; Saul is in decline.

**DAVID AND GOLIATH** (1 Sm 17,1-55)
The story of David and Goliath was not originally connected to the two preceding events. David is a shepherd boy, he is unknown to Saul. There is no hint that David has been anointed, nor that he has become Saul's armor-bearer and harp player. Apparently it was put here to show us something of David's character and his superiority to Saul in military matters.

The story is an "underdog story" wherein the small and weak win out against the big and powerful. It is a masterpiece of story telling. Sharp contrasts are drawn between the size and obvious superior military skill of Goliath, and the youth of David, his lack of experience and arms. The slow motions of a giant in armor stand out against the quick movements of a boy with a slingshot.

The theological element of the story comes to the fore in David's unshakable faith in the LORD. He shows nothing but courage in the face of Goliath's challenge. David recognizes that the LORD is the source of his victory. In this story David shows himself to have the qualities necessary for kingship: courage and military skill; and, most important for a king in Israel, David has faith in the LORD.

**DAVID AND JONATHAN** (1 Sm 18,1-5)
The relationship between Jonathan and David has become the paradigm for friendship. In this first encounter their friendship is established. Jonathan gives David his mantle, military dress, and arms. His generosity can be seen as a symbolic act whereby he turns over to David the right of succession.

**SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID** (1 Sm 18,6-16)
Saul's decline becomes more and more apparent. David's military success arouses his jealousy and he attempts to kill David. He appoints David field officer, hoping to be rid of him, but success follows David whatever he does and wherever he goes. As David grows in the estimation of the people, Saul's jealousy likewise grows. It seems that both Saul and David are caught up in a destiny that they cannot control. Whatever Saul does to David, whether his intent is for good or evil, contributes to David's success; every action taken by David, whether motivated by self-interest or honest concern, cannot help but succeed.

**DAVID MARRIES SAUL'S DAUGHTER MICHAL** (1 Sm 18,17-30)
Saul's ambivalence towards David is manifest in this story. He promises David his daughter Merob, only to marry her to another man. When Saul offers David his daughter Michal in marriage he attaches to the offer a price seemingly too dangerous for any soldier to undertake: the foreskins of a hundred Philistines. Nevertheless David is able to pay double the price, and thus achieves a great military victory and gains a royal wife at the same time. Once again Saul's

attempts to rid himself of David have backfired. Saul's growing recognition that the LORD is with David causes him to fear David all the more.

**SAUL'S PURSUIT OF DAVID AND DAVID'S ESCAPES** (1 Sm 19,1—28,2)
The events of these nine chapters are unified around the theme of Saul's pursuit of David and David's repeatedly successful escapes from Saul. Saul's ambivalence dominates the beginning of Chapter 19. He wants to kill David, but accepts Jonathan's testimony to David's loyalty and allows David to return to court. Within a short time he again turns against David and tries to kill him. Michal, Saul's own daughter, helps David escape. With the assistance of Samuel, Saul's attempts to capture David are frustrated. In Chapter 20 the friendship between Jonathan and David is affirmed in their promises of mutual protection. Throughout this section David's innocence is reiterated. He did not flee from Saul because he was disloyal, nor did he flee to seek his own personal gain. He was forced to flee because of Saul's unfounded and inexplicable attack on his life.

David had gained prophetic support from Samuel (19,18-24), now he gains priestly support from Ahimelech (21,2-10). The narrator shows no interest in the fact that David gets what he wants by deceiving the priest. Rather this event is recounted because it will lead to Saul's slaughter of the priests of Nob and priestly backing for David. The priests give tacit approval to David as future king by giving him bread and the sword of Goliath. It is not clear why David goes to the king of Gath at the time (21,11-16). He assumes that he won't be recognized, but when he is he feigns madness in order to escape. After seeing to the safety of his parents David returns to the land of Judah in accordance with the word of the prophet Gad (22,3-5).

All of David's actions are exemplary (his lie to the priest is ignored). By contrast all of Saul's actions are more and more irrational. It is ironic that Saul, who did not carry out the LORD's command to totally destroy the Amalekites (1 Sm 15), does not hesitate to kill the priests of Nob who had unwittingly assisted David. Indeed, he has the entire city of Nob with its "men and women, children and infants, and oxen, asses and sheep" destroyed (22,19). In the tragic events of Chapter 22,6-19 the prophecy of 1 Samuel 2,27-36; 3,11-14 is fulfilled. In the process Saul loses all priestly support, and David gains the support of the one surviving priest.

David continues to flee Saul, but he does nothing without first consulting the LORD. The LORD enables David to gain victory over the Philistines (23,1-6) and to continue to elude Saul's grasp (23,7-14.19-26). Both Chapters 24 and 26 emphasize the nobility of David, who did not act against the LORD's anointed even when he had the opportunity to do so. Even Saul concedes that David is innocent, and like Jonathan (23,15-18), recognizes that David is to be the next king (24,21f).

Between the two accounts of David sparing the life of Saul, the story of David and Abigail again underscores the magnanimity and innocence of David. David's request for provisions from Nabal is presented as a legitimate request in view of the protection that David had given to the shepherds of Nabal. Nabal's refusal shows him to be a selfish and ungrateful person, a fool that lives up to his name (Nabal means "fool"). Abigail, Nabal's wife, keeps David from rashly exacting reprisals upon Nabal, by reminding him that the LORD is guiding his destiny and that he should not incur blood guilt by destroying Nabal. Though Nabal dies because of the insult to David, David himself is innocent of his death.

In the final chapter of this section David joins forces with the Philistines. This desperate move on David's part is justified in view of Saul's continued antagonism toward David. While

David is a vassal of the Philistines he is careful to make raids against the enemies of Israel, not Israel itself. His reports to the Philistines, who think he is raiding his own people, are ambiguous. In this way the deuteronomistic writers give a positive interpretation to David's vassalship to Israel's greatest enemy. The issue of David's loyalty comes to the fore in the last verses of this section. David is asked to join the Philistines to fight against Israel. David's positive answer is left in the air as the story turns once again to Saul. Will David compromise his loyalty to his own people?

**THE FINAL DAYS OF THE REIGN OF SAUL** (1 Sm 28,3—2 Sm 1,16)
The tragedy of a person abandoned by the LORD is no more evident than in the final days of Saul's life. The LORD provides no direction and guidance for Saul. Saul, in his desperation, turns to necromancy (summoning the dead) to make contact with the LORD. The attempt is successful and Saul receives a message from the ghost of Samuel, but it is a message that confirms what he already knows. He stands rejected as king, the kingdom has been given to another. Moreover, the Philistines will win the upcoming battle; Saul and his sons will die.

The scene shifts back to David and the dilemma that he faces. Will he serve the Philistines and fight against his own people? Once again the course of events moves in David's favor. As a loyal vassal of Achish he has agreed to fight against his own people, but the other Philistine military commanders do not trust him and he is forced to leave. Once again David's behavior is impeccable. He betrays neither his Philistine overlord nor his own people. Rather he goes in pursuit of Amalekite raiders, traditional enemies of Israel. Every action he takes in this battle speaks well of him. He consults the LORD, he shares the booty with equity among the warriors, and even sends gifts to the elders of Judah. His total success contrasts dramatically with Saul's total failure.

The tragic end of Saul is told with great simplicity. He chooses to take his own life, rather than allow himself to be taken captive by the Philistines. In spite of his suicide, there is a certain heroism in his death that cannot help but arouse pity for Saul. That the warriors of Jabesh-Gilead march all night to retrieve and bury the body of Saul is a testimony to the greatness of Saul who inspired such loyalty.

The beginning of the second Book of Samuel has another account of the death of Saul that is not easily reconciled with the picture presented in Chapter 31 of 1 Samuel. It is possible that the Amalekite youth is lying in the hopes that he will be rewarded by David for killing David's supposed enemy, but it may be that we simply have a variant tradition of Saul's death used by the deuteronomistic writers because it focused on David's reaction to the news of Saul's death.

**DAVID MOURNS THE DEATHS OF SAUL AND JONATHAN** (2 Sm 1,17-27)
Far from rejoicing over the death of the person who had relentessly pursued him, David expresses great grief at the loss of Israel's first king and his son Jonathan. David's elegy, a heroic lament, conveys the depth of his sorrow.

**DAVID BECOMES KING OF JUDAH** (2 Sm 2,1-7)
Following the death of Saul, David becomes the king of Judah in Hebron with the LORD's approval. The motive for his message to the people of Jabesh-Gilead is not given, but it may have been a diplomatic gesture to gain the support of territory traditionally loyal to Saul.

**DAVID BECOMES KING OF ISRAEL** (2 Sm 2,8—5,5)
Though David has become king of Judah, the northern territory is ruled by Ishbaal, Saul's son. He was placed on the throne by Abner, the general of Saul's army, which suggests that Abner is the controlling power of Israel.

The fight between the warriors of Joab, David's general, and Abner (2,12-16) sets the scene for conflict between Israel and Judah, but it is not clear what is actually happening. It may be that a mock duel is staged, but it gets out of hand and a battle ensues as the result of the death of the warriors. Or the incident may have been a contest to the death between representatives of both sides. Victory would be claimed by the side whose champions are still alive at the end of the contest. The outcome in this contest remains undecided because all the champions die. As a result the troops begin battle. Whatever the situation, it is clear that the result is civil war between Israel and Judah.

The events recounted in 2 Samuel 2,17--4,12 are intended to show that David is innocent of the deaths of Abner and Ishbaal. Abner had abandoned Ishbaal and thrown his support to David (3,6-21), but he is killed by Joab (3,22-30). Abner's death is an act of blood revenge by Joab for the death of his brother Asahel (2,18-24). David is innocent. Without Abner's support or protection, Ishbaal is killed (4,1-7). The assassins go to David and far from rewarding them for the murder of his enemy as they expected, David has them executed (4,8-12). There is no hint of David's involvement in the deaths of either Abner or Ishbaal; nevertheless David gains the most as a result of their deaths. He becomes king of Israel (5,1-15).

No reason is given for David's request that Michal, Saul's daughter and David's former wife, be returned to him (3,13f). It may have been a political move, for any child of Michal's would have a claim to the throne and could easily gain the support of those who had supported Saul. From the archives the deuteronomistic writers have included a notice of the sons born to David in Hebron (3,2-5). This insertion is probably meant to highlight that David is blessed by the LORD. The foundation for a dynasty is being realized.

## The Reign of King David (2 Sm 5,6—24,25)

The material dealing with the reign of David draws from many sources, which complicates the tracing of themes. It seems that most of it (2 Sm 9–20) is concerned with who will be king when David dies. The circumstances surrounding the birth of Solomon are told in detail. The deaths of Amnon and Absalom clear the way for the eventual succession of Solomon in 1 Kings 2. Nevertheless, while it cannot be doubted that the events recounted lead inexorably to Solomon's enthronement, we cannot say that this is the sole, or even the dominant, concern of the story of David's reign. The focus of the entire section is on David, his successes and his failures. Interwoven into that story is the theological stance of the deuteronomistic writers: the LORD is with David, bringing to success all his endeavors, but he will not escape the consequences of his sins.

**THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM** (2 Sm 5,6-16)
Jerusalem was a Jebusite city at the time of David. It had been a city for a thousand years and had a reputation for impregnability. There is not much information about how David took over the city, and what is reported is not clear. In spite of this, however, the event is emphasized since it is the first act of David, now king of both Israel and Judah. The political and theological significance of the conquest of Jerusalem cannot be overestimated. Jerusalem becomes the

capital of the Davidic empire. The entire religious history of Israel is bound up with Jerusalem. For the deuteronomistic writers, Jerusalem is the only place where the LORD can be worshipped authentically.

That the LORD is with David is directly affirmed in verse 10 and reiterated in verse 12. The fate of Israel is bound up with the exaltation of David as king (verse 12). The LORD's presence in David's life is further indicated by the continued blessing of children (5,13-15).

**DAVID AND THE PHILISTINES** (2 Sm 5,17-25)
The Philistines attack immediately upon hearing that David has been made king of both Israel and Judah. Their defeat is the LORD's work, for David acts only as directed by the oracle of the LORD (5,19.23f). The first part of the word of the LORD of 2 Samuel 3,18 is fulfilled with the defeat of the Philistines, the second part of that word will be fulfilled in 2 Samuel 8,1-14.

**DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM** (2 Sm 6,1-23)
The conquest of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Philistines has prepared the way for David to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Up to this time the Ark has been in the house of Abinadab where it was brought after it was returned by the Philistines (1 Sm 7,1). The transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem, though accompanied by great joy and celebration, is not without mishap. It must be remembered that the Ark is a holy object which symbolizes the very presence of the LORD. As such it can only be handled by those who are consecrated. Uzza's attempt to keep the Ark from tipping may have been warranted, but he stands condemned because he is not authorized to have contact with the sacred. That Uzza dies as a result may seem particularly harsh, but the point of the story is the utter holiness of the Ark. The Ark is brought into Jerusalem only after David is assured that it is safe to transfer. This is signified in the blessing that it brings to the house of Obededom.

Attached to the story of the Ark's transfer is an account of the rejection of Michal. Michal rebukes David for exposing himself while dancing enthusiastically in front of the Ark. He in turn rebukes her, making it clear to her that he has been chosen over Saul and that his enthusiasm before the LORD will not be diminished by her disapproval. The narrator's comment, that Michal remained childless, is further indication of the LORD's rejection of the house of Saul.

**PROMISE TO DAVID** (2 Sm 7,1-29)
There are few texts of the Bible that have been as theologically important and influential as 2 Samuel 7. The promise of a dynasty to David occupies a central place within the history of Israel and becomes the basis for messianic expectation after the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Davidic dynasty in 586 B.C. The promise to David permeates the New Testament in its affirmation that Jesus is the Son of David. 2 Samuel 7 is a key text within the deuteronomistic shaping of Israel's history. It is the climax of 1 Samuel 16—2 Samuel 6, David's rise to power. At the same time it prepares the way for the future in which the Davidic dynasty will have a major role. The chapter itself is very complex, admitting of several reworkings.

In ancient Near Eastern literature we find a connection between temple building and the establishment of a dynasty, especially in Egyptian literature. This connection may be at the core of the text, contained in the play on the word "house" which also means temple and dynasty in Hebrew. David wishes to build the LORD a house (temple); the LORD will build David a house (dynasty). The original oracle is then modified in view of the fact that David did not build the temple. Hence, Nathan's initial positive response is overruled by later revelation. The LORD does

not want a temple, for the LORD cannot be contained in one place. This theological explanation reflects a negative attitude towards temple theology. However, not only is a temple eventually built in Israel, but it comes to occupy an important place in later Israelite theology. The text attempts to reconcile this by including within the oracle the statement that David's son will build the temple (7,12f). Thus in a series of editorial reworkings, the deuteronomistic writers are able to respect their historical data and yet modify it to account for later theological and historical development.

In the prayer of David (verses 18-29) the promise of an eternal dynasty is put on a par with the Exodus and the election of Israel. It becomes one of the LORD's acts performed on behalf of the people. The ominous overtones present at the establishment of the monarchy (1 Sm 8–12) are absent here. Kingship is approved and endorsed by the LORD.

**DAVID'S WARS** (2 Sm 8,1-18)
Various items have been brought together to summarize David's wars and to show the extent of David's kingdom. Again it is affirmed that David's victories come from the LORD (verses 6. 14). David, as an ideal ruler, achieves victory and administers justice to all Israel (verse 15). A list of David's officials, probably taken from the royal archives, follows (verses 15-18). This same list, with some variations, appears also in 2 Sm 20,23-26.

**DAVID AND MERIBBAAL** (2 Sm 9,1-13)
The oath of loyalty between David and Jonathan lies in the background of this story. David had given Jonathan his word that he would protect his family (1 Sm 20,15f) and now consonant with that vow he extends his protection to Meribbaal, Jonathan's lame son. The lameness of Meribbaal is stressed since it plays a role in 2 Samuel 19,25-30.

**DAVID AND THE AMMONITES, AND THE ARAMEANS** (2 Sm 10,1-19)
The story of the Ammonite war becomes the framework into which the story of David and Bathsheba is placed. We have not been told of any previous contact between David and the Ammonites, but it is assumed in this story. The reason for war is the ridiculing of David's envoys, which was intended as an insult to David and perhaps to nullify any previous agreement between Hanun's father and David. Joab is sent to do battle with the Ammonites. David becomes directly involved in the battle, because the Arameans have entered the war in support of the Ammonites. Though David defeats the Arameans, the conclusion of the battle with the Ammonites does not appear until later.

**DAVID AND BATHSHEBA** (2 Sm 11,1—12,25)
The vividness of the narratives of David's personal affairs mark these stories as among the most unforgettable in the whole of literature. Though appalled at David's actions, we cannot help but sympathize with his all-too-human character. The skill of the narrator is evident throughout these chapters. With remarkably few words scenes comes to life, characters are delineated, and the drama unfolds.

The story opens with the picture of an idle king taken by the beauty of a woman bathing. Without hesitation he gives into his lust and takes the woman to his bed. Of the woman's feelings we are told nothing, for the focus of the story is entirely upon David. We know that she is married to a man who is fighting David's wars. We know that she is not pregnant (verse 4), but becomes pregnant with David's child (verse 5). She is not mentioned again until the end of the chapter.

David's attempted cover-up of his sin contrasts sharply with the noble and pious Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. Though David does what he can to get Uriah to have sexual relations with Bathsheba, his plotting is unsuccessful. Uriah is fighting Holy War and, in accordance with the laws of Holy War, he is abstaining from sexual relations. David is driven to more drastic means to cover his sin. Uriah's death, planned by David and carried out by Joab, frees Bathsheba to marry David. From all appearances David has been successful in committing adultery and in covering up that sin by murder. But God sees all.

Nathan, the prophet, is sent by the LORD to indict David for his crimes. David is drawn into the parable related by Nathan and unwittingly condemns himself. The sentence passed upon David is realized in the stories that follow. The murder of Amnon (13,29-33), the rebellions of Absalom (15,7-12) and Sheba (20,1-23) give concrete expression to the sword that will never depart from David's house (12,10). When Absalom takes his father's concubines and lies with them on the rooftop (16,21f) the second part of David's sentence is fulfilled (12,11).

The depth of David's character is revealed in the acknowledgement of his sin and his repentance. In spite of this, however, his sentence stands, and though the LORD will not require David's life in answer for his crime, the child born of his illicit union will die. Though David tries to avert the death sentence on his child by fasting and other acts of penitence, the child dies. A second child born to David and Bathsheba will be blessed with the LORD's love and that child will become the next king of Israel and Judah.

**DAVID AND THE AMMONITES** (2 Sm 12,26-31)
The account of the Ammonite war, interrupted by the David and Bathsheba story, is resumed. David gains a total victory over the Ammonites. This achievement marks the height of David's power.

**THE RAPE OF TAMAR AND ABSALOM'S VENGEANCE** (2 Sm 13,1—14,33)
Though David is remembered as the greatest of Israel's kings, his rule was not without problems. None of these problems are mentioned until after the David and Bathsheba story. In doing so the narrator has tied together David's sin and the problems encountered during his reign. The rape of Tamar and subsequent events are set in motion by David's sin and they become the means by which the LORD punishes David for that sin.

The consummate skill of the narrator is again evident in this story of the royal family's private affairs that have profound public consequences. With great insight the narrator describes Amnon as a man obsessed with lust who will do anything that is necessary to satisfy it. Lust ruled his actions as it did his father's. The young virginal daughter of the king, unlike the silent Bathsheba, cries out against her fate, but Amnon is stronger and his will dominates. Amnon could have asked to marry Tamar. It was not unusual for half-brothers and -sisters in royal households to intermarry. But Amnon has a callous disregard for anything other than the satisfaction of his lust. David's weakness where his sons are concerned is clearly shown in the fact that he takes no action against Amnon. Tamar is left alone, unconsoled, in the house of Absalom, her brother. Absalom, filled with hatred, waits until he can take action against Amnon. Two years later Absalom plots to kill Amnon and successfully carries out his plan. His action is justified as revenge for his sister's rape, but, at the same time, Absalom, with Amnon out of the way, becomes the next in line for the throne. David is caught between his grief over the death of Amnon and his love for Absalom, who lives in exile after murdering his brother.

Joab intervenes and, with the help of the woman of Tekoa, forces David to see that Absalom should be brought back from exile. By the end of Chapter 14 father and son are reconciled.

**ABSALOM'S REBELLION** (2 Sm 15,1—19,44)

Absalom's designs on the throne are now brought out into the open. First, he attempts to gain the support of those seeking judgment from the king by implying that David is lax in the administration of justice; if Absalom himself were king, justice would prevail. Using Hebron as a power base he continues to gain support for his rebellion.

It is not clear why David's first action upon hearing about Absalom's rebellion is to flee from Jerusalem, but the flight of David becomes a literary device that unifies the entire section. David travels away from the city, meeting various people along the way. Once the rebellion is put down, David returns to the city in triumph, meeting the same people in reverse sequence. The loyalty of Ittai, a foreigner, contrasts sharply with the disloyalty of Absalom, the king's own son. In sending the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, back to Jerusalem, David shows his submission to the will of the LORD. At the same time, with the priests in Jerusalem, David has a source of information about the activities of Absalom. David, barefoot and weeping, continues his journey. This procession of the king away from the city resembles a penitential rite. David prays that the counsel of the traitor Ahithophel will come to folly; immediately Hushai appears to spy for David and do what he can to undermine the counsel of Ahithophel. David next meets Ziba, who gives food and supplies to the king and insinuates that Meribbaal has remained in Jerusalem in the hopes of regaining the throne of his grandfather, Saul. Further on, David is cursed by Shimei for taking over the throne of Saul by bloodshed. Rather than act against Shimei, David once again bows to the will of the LORD.

The scene shifts from David on his journey to Absalom in Jerusalem. We see put into action David's plans to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel. Rather than allow a small force to pursue and kill David as Ahithophel counseled, Absalom agrees to Hushai's plan to call up all the fighting men of Israel and go after David. We return to David as his spies report what Absalom will do. David plans to go into battle, but his soldiers refuse to allow him to risk his life. David's love of Absalom is apparent in his command that they are to deal gently with Absalom. The battle is over quickly, and against David's direct command Absalom is killed by Joab, David's general. The picture of David in grief over the death of his son is particularly moving. It has an adverse effect on the troops, however, who should be rejoicing in victory, but are dismayed by the grief of the king. Joab reminds him of his duty to the troops as king, and gradually the king wins back their support.

As David returns to Jerusalem he meets Shimei, who has cursed him earlier. David spares his life, even though by cursing David he merited the death penalty. Next he confronts Meribbaal, who affirms his loyalty and excuses himself for not following the king because of his lameness. David is unable to decide if Ziba had lied or if Meribbaal is now lying, but settles the matter by dividing the property he had given to Ziba. David finally encounters Barzillai, who had brought food and water to him at Mahanaim (17,27-29). Though Barzillai declines David's offer to come to Jerusalem as counselor to the king, he sends Chimham in his place.

The final section of this story indicates that there was tension between Judah and Israel. This tension provides the background for the next rebellion.

**SHEBA'S REBELLION** (2 Sm 20,1-26)
Sheba is from the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. That his rebellion gained the support of the northern tribes shows their dissatisfaction with David's rule. Amasa, who had been Absalom's general, was to gather the Judahites in counterattack. Because Amasa delayed in mustering the troops, Joab is sent out to lead the fight against Sheba. It is not clear why Joab murdered Amasa, but his action is consistent with the ruthlessness that he has displayed previously (2 Sm 3,22-30). The rebellion itself comes to an end with the death of Sheba.

## Appendices (2 Sm 21,1—24,25)

These last chapters are not integrated well into the story line and themes of the previous chapters, but give the appearance of a haphazard collection of material whose only common base is that all items relate to the reign of David.

**SEVEN SONS OF SAUL ARE KILLED BY THE GIBEONITES** (2 Sm 21,1-14)
In the background of this story lie ancient beliefs: national disasters are due to sin, which must be expiated to restore order in nature. In this case the lack of rain is caused by Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites in disregard of the treaty made by Joshua (Jos 9). We have no record of such a slaughter, but it is not inconceivable that Saul attempted be rid of the Gibeonites. The seven sons of Saul are executed to expiate for Saul's actions. The loyalty to Saul shown by one of his concubines, who protects the bodies of his seven sons, spurs David to provide proper burial for Saul and Jonathan.

**BATTLES WITH THE PHILISTINES** (2 Sm 21,15-22)
Collected here are four anecdotes that have to do with giants in Gath. The statement that Elhanan was responsible for the death of Goliath stands in contradiction to 1 Samuel 17, where David kills Goliath. Various explanations have been offered, but it is most likely that the story of the killing of Goliath grew as it was transmitted and a better-known hero was substituted for a lesser-known hero.

**SONG OF DAVID** (2 Sm 22,1-51)
The Song of David appears again with some variations as Psalm 18. The Psalm is a hymn of thanksgiving for victory in battle. In the context of 2 Samuel it becomes a reflection on victories achieved by the LORD through David. It expresses the confidence that the LORD has delivered the psalmist in times of distress, but that deliverance is linked with the psalmist's obedience to the LORD's commands (verses 21-25). The promise to David of an everlasting dynasty is reiterated at the end of the Song (verse 51).

**LAST WORDS OF DAVID** (2 Sm 23,1-7)
This short poem, almost a summary of David's life, acknowledges the status of David and his successors. David, son of Jesse, has been exalted by the LORD. He is the anointed prince; his words are like those of a prophet. The promise to David is an eternal covenant. In justice and fear of the LORD, the kings will rule and mediate the blessings of God, life and fertility, to the people.

**DAVID'S WARRIORS** (2 Sm 23, 8-39)
Within this list of the warriors of David the exploits of a small group are presented. There are many grammatical problems in these verses that make any translation uncertain; the main thrust of these anecdotes is, nevertheless, the piety of David and the loyalty of his warriors.

**THE CENSUS: PUNISHMENT AND ATONEMENT** (2 Sm 24,1-25)
This story is similar in theme to that of 1 Samuel 21,1-14: a natural disaster is interpreted as the punishment for sin, but divine favor is restored upon atonement. The census is wrong because a census was taken to determine the fighting strength of the nation and thus implied a lack of faith in the LORD as the warrior of Israel who fights on its behalf. It may be difficult for us to accept the assertion that God incited David to take this census and then punished the people for it, but we must recognize that the theology is based on Israel's early experience and is itself corrected by Israel's later understanding. At an early period the most dominant characteristic predicated of God is that God is all-powerful; thus God causes whatever happens. It is only as Israel reflected upon its experience of God that it came to the conclusion that God is all good and therefore cannot "cause" evil. This later theology is reflected in 1 Chronicles 21,1 where, in the retelling of this story, the LORD is replaced by Satan (*NAB,* a satan).

## Continuing Significance of the Books of Samuel

The stories of Samuel, Saul and David testify to the complexity of the human person, especially in relationship to God. On a personal level, these stories will have meaning for us where we find the truth of our own lives reflected in the lives of these leaders in Israel. On a more general level, we can recognize that the Books of Samuel affirm the presence and activity of the LORD in our lives as individuals and in our life as a nation. It is to the credit of the deuteronomistic writers that they do not see history existing apart from the purposes of the LORD. The role that the LORD continues to play in our lives and in our world is not always easy to determine, but that the LORD continues to guide and act upon our world cannot be denied. We need to learn to see where the hand of God has touched our lives and our world. P.A.V.

## Further reading

These commentaries provide an introduction to the Books of Samuel for the beginner:

Bowes, Paula J. *First Samuel. Second Samuel.* Collegeville Bible Commentary, vol. 8. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985.

Conroy, Charles. *1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings.* Old Testament Message, 6. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983.

The more detailed studies found in the following commentaries provide the advanced reader with various different approaches to the Books of Samuel:

Hertzberg, Hans Wilhelm. *I & II Samuel, A Commentary.* Translated by J. S. Bowden. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964.

Klein, Ralph W. *1 Samuel.* Word Biblical Commentary, v. 10. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983.

McCarter, P. Kyle. *I Samuel,* First Ed. The Anchor Bible, v.9. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980.

———. *II Samuel,* First Ed. The Anchor Bible, v.9. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984.

A literary approach to the stories of Saul and David can be found in these studies:

Gunn, David, M. *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story.* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement series, 14. Sheffield, Eng.: University of Sheffield, 1980.

———. *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation.* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement series 6. Sheffield, Eng.: University of Sheffield, 1978.

A more detailed look at the stories of David and their significance is provided in this study:

Brueggemann, Walter. *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

# 1 AND 2 KINGS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 346–407 of the Old Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The Books of Kings contain the history of Israel and Judah from the time of Solomon through the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms into the period of exile, roughly from 961 B.C. to 561 B.C. To understand the history as presented in the Books of Kings it is important to attend to matters of formation, literary character, and the context of these books in the deuteronomistic history.

### Formation of the Books of Kings

The Books of Kings, like the other books of the deuteronomistic history, admit of a long period of transmission in which the work was edited and reedited before reaching final form. In order to discuss this process it is necessary to outline some of the major events of Israel's history. Under the rule of David and Solomon the northern tribes and the tribe of Judah were united. Immediately upon the death of Solomon, however, the northern tribes repudiated Davidic leadership and established their own kingdom, Israel, leaving Judah as a separate kingdom in the south. The first king of Israel, Jeroboam, in order to secure the loyalty of his own people, established Dan and Bethel as centers of worship to rival Jerusalem. Whatever Jeroboam's original intent, the deuteronomistic writers perceive this action as tantamount to idolatry, since it involves the people in worship at a shrine other than Jerusalem. Hence all of the kings of Israel are condemned and the downfall of the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. is seen as a consequence of this sin.

Of the kings of Judah, only Hezekiah and Josiah receive unqualified praise. Both of these kings attempt cultic reform, of which the most significant was that under Josiah in 621 B.C. In the course of Josiah's reform a law code was found in the Temple. This law code bears some resemblance to the law code of the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 12–26) and may have been an ancient version of this code. Its implementation becomes a significant part of Josiah's reform. One of the most important aspects of this reform for deuteronomistic theology was the centralization of all worship in Jerusalem. Though Josiah achieved some success in his program of reform, he himself died in battle with Egypt. Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon less than twenty-five years after the death of Josiah.

With this in mind we can now return to our discussion of the formation of the Books of Kings. An early version of the Books of Kings was written at the time of Josiah: between 621 B.C.,

the date of the reform, and 609 B.C., the date of his death. This version takes up the issue of why Israel was destroyed but Judah continued in existence. The answer is given is accordance with deuteronomistic theological principles: Israel sinned by following in the sin of Jeroboam; Judah was assured the LORD's blessing because of David, and now Josiah embodies that same loyalty to the LORD. Support is given to Josiah's reform because he is a king like David, wholly after the heart of the LORD.

The promise of Josiah's reign was short-lived, and with the destruction of Judah the Books of Kings were revised to account for the fall of Judah. The blame is cast upon Manasseh, the predecessor of Josiah. The evil committed and endorsed by Manasseh had to be punished; the goodness of Josiah could only postpone the inevitable, not nullify it. The themes of earlier and later editions overlap in the final edition of the Books of Kings.

## A Story Composed from Annals, Archives, and Prophetic Narratives

It is clear that the deuteronomistic writers had sources that they used in the composition of the Books of Kings. Frequently the reader is referred to the chronicles of Solomon (1 Kgs 11,41), of Judah (1 Kgs 14,29, and fourteen more references), or of Israel (1 Kgs 14,19, and sixteen further references), for further information about the reign of each king. These chronicles were probably official court documents or annals that contained the dates and record of each king's reign. Though these annals contained a more complete picture of the political and economic activities of each king, the deuteronomistic writers are highly selective in their account of the reign of the kings. They are only concerned with loyalty or disloyalty of the kings to the LORD in terms of worship in Jerusalem. What we discover of Israel's history or the larger international scene is incidental to the theological concerns of the deuteronomistic writers.

The deuteronomistic writers show a great interest in the Temple, frequently focusing more on what happens in relation to the Temple than to the nation. The many details about the Temple, especially in its building and furnishing, must also come from official documents, either court annals or temple archives.

The deuteronomistic writers incorporate into their history prophetic narratives of various kinds. Many of these stories are included because of their interest in the prophetic word and its eventual fulfillment. The stories about Elijah and Elisha highlight the person and activity of each prophet. These kinds of stories circulated among the disciples of the prophets, and in the course of their transmission they gained legendary and folkloric characteristics. Often in these narratives the miraculous is accentuated in order to enhance the character and power of the prophet (2 Kgs 2,19-22; 4,1-7.38-41.42-44; 6,1-7).

## The Books of Kings in Context

The deuteronomistic history moved forward from the last days of Moses (Deuteronomy) through conquest (Joshua), to the period of settlement (Judges), and the establishment of a monarchical form of government complete with dynastic succession under David (1 and 2 Samuel). The Books of Kings continue that story, covering the next 400 years of monarchical rule, and concluding with the destruction of both Israel and Judah. Many historical events are ignored or only mentioned in passing as the deuteronomistic writers concentrate on the religious behavior of each king and the word of the LORD as mediated by the prophet.

# Working Through the Books of 1 and 2 Kings

There are three major sections in the Books of Kings: the Accession and Reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1–11), the History of the Two Kingdoms (1 Kgs 12—2 Kgs 17), and the Kingdom of Judah after the Fall of Israel (2 Kings 18–25). Extensive prophetic material has been woven into this history, giving prominence to the word of the LORD as it directs the course of events in the history of Israel and Judah.

## The Accession and Reign of Solomon (1 Kings,1—11,43)

The building, furnishing, and dedication of the Temple dominate the story of the reign of Solomon. The wisdom of Solomon, the administration and wealth of his empire, even the deuteronomistic judgment against him receive less attention than the Temple in Jerusalem. The section can be divided as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1,1—2,46 | Solomon Becomes King |
| 3,1-22 | The Wisdom of Solomon |
| 4,1—5,6 | The Administration of Solomon's Empire |
| 5,9-14 | Solomon's Reputation for Wisdom |
| 5,15—6,37 | The Temple is Built |
| 7,1-12 | Solomon's Palace |
| 7,13-51 | The Temple Furnishings |
| 8,1-66 | The Dedication of the Temple |
| 9,1-9 | Warning to Solomon |
| 9,10—10,29 | Various Items Relating to Solomon's Reign |
| 11,1-43 | Judgment Against Solomon |

## The Two Kingdoms: Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12,1—2 Kings 17,41)

Each king of Judah and Israel is evaluated, but only where there is significant prophetic activity do we find a more extensive treatment of the reign of that king.

| | |
|---|---|
| 12,1-24 | Division of the Kingdom |
| 12,25—14,20 | Reign of Jeroboam, King of Israel |
| 14,21-31 | Reign of Rehoboam, King of Judah |
| 15,1-8 | Reign of Abijam, King of Judah |
| 15,9-24 | Reign of Asa, King of Judah |
| 15,25-32 | Reign of Nadab, King of Israel |
| 15,33—16,7 | Reign of Baasha, King of Israel |
| 16,8-14 | Reign of Elah, King of Israel |
| 16,15-20 | Reign of Zimri, King of Israel |
| 16,21-28 | Reign of Omri, King of Israel |
| 16,29-34 | Reign of Ahab, King of Israel, Begins |
| 17,1-6 | Elijah and the Drought |
| 17,7-16 | Elijah and the Widow's Last Meal |
| 17,17-24 | Elijah and the Widow's Son |
| 18,1-46 | Elijah and the Prophets of Baal |

| | |
|---|---|
| 19,1-18 | Elijah on Mt. Horeb |
| 19,19-21 | Elisha Called |
| 20,1-43 | Ahab and an Unnamed Prophet |
| 21,1-20 | Elijah Condemns Ahab |
| 22,1-40 | Ahab and Micaiah |
| 22,41-51 | Reign of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah |
| 22,52—2 Kgs 1,1-18 | Reign of Ahaziah, King of Israel |
| 2,1-18 | Elijah Transfers Authority to Elisha |
| 2,19-22 | Elisha and the Bitter Waters |
| 2,23-25 | Elisha Mocked by the Boys of Bethel |
| 3,1-3 | Reign of Joram, King of Israel, Begins |
| 3,4-27 | Elisha and the Campaign against Moab |
| 4,1-7 | Elisha and the Widow's Oil |
| 4,8-37 | Elisha and the Shunammite Woman's Son |
| 4,38-41 | Elisha and the Poisoned Stew |
| 4,42-44 | Elisha Multiplies Loaves of Bread |
| 5,1-27 | Elisha Cures Naaman's Leprosy |
| 6,1-7 | Elisha and the Iron Axhead |
| 6,8—7,20 | Elisha and the Aramean Siege |
| 8,1-6 | The Shunammite Woman Obeys Elisha |
| 8,7-15 | Elisha, Hazael, and Ben-hadad's Death |
| 8,16-24 | Reign of Jehoram, King of Judah |
| 8,25-29 | Reign of Ahaziah, King of Judah |
| 9,1—10,36 | Reign of Jehu, King of Israel |
| 11,1-20 | Reign of Athaliah, Queen of Judah |
| 12,1-22 | Reign of Joash, King of Judah |
| 13,1-9 | Reign of Jehoahaz, King of Israel |
| 13,10-25 | Reign of Joash, King of Israel |
| 14,1-22 | Reign of Amaziah, King of Judah |
| 14,23-29 | Reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel |
| 15,1-7 | Reign of Azariah, King of Judah |
| 15,8-12 | Reign of Zechariah, King of Israel |
| 15,13-16 | Reign of Shallum, King of Israel |
| 15,17-22 | Reign of Menahem, King of Israel |
| 15,23-26 | Reign of Pekahiah, King of Israel |
| 15,27-31 | Reign of Pekah, King of Israel |
| 15,32-38 | Reign of Jotham, King of Judah |
| 16,1-20 | Reign of Ahaz, King of Judah |
| 17,1-6 | Reign of Hoshea and the End of Israel |
| 17,7-41 | Condemnation of Israel and Warning to Judah |

### The Kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 18,1—25,30)

After the fall of Israel in 722/721 B.C., Judah continues in existence for a little more than a hundred years. The reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah dominate the section because the reforms initiated by these kings were of interest to the deuteronomistic writers.

| | |
|---|---|
| 18,1—20,21 | Reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah |
| 21,1-18 | Reign of Manasseh, King of Judah |
| 21,19-26 | Reign of Amon, King of Judah |
| 22,1—23,30 | Reign of Josiah, King of Judah |
| 23,31-34 | Reign of Jehoahaz, King of Judah |
| 23,36—24,7 | Reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah |
| 24,8-17 | Reign of Jehoiachin, King of Judah |
| 24,18—25,7 | Reign of Zedekiah and the End of Judah |
| 25,8-26 | Judah after the Babylonian Conquest |
| 25,27-30 | Jehoiachin Released |

## Reading Through the Books of Kings

It is important to pay close attention to the theological perspective from which this material is written. The deuteronomistic writers are concerned with each king's success or failure in purely religious terms and each reign is evaluated positively or negatively in accord with whether or not the king worshipped in the Temple in Jerusalem. Attention needs to be given to the role of the prophet and the relationship between prophets and kings, for this also plays a significant part in the Books of Kings.

### The Accession and Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 1,1—11,43)

Against the background of court intrigue, Solomon emerges as king after David. Of the many accomplishments of Solomon, the building of the Temple is highlighted. The concluding comments on Solomon's reign bring to the fore the theological concerns of the deuteronomistic writers and, at the same time, anticipate the political turmoil that will follow after the death of Solomon.

**SOLOMON BECOMES KING** (1 Kings1,1—2,46)

The issue of succession, raised in 2 Samuel 9–20, is now brought to resolution. As the scene opens David is presented as a doddering old man who is given a young woman to care for him. The fact that he does not have sexual relations with her symbolizes his loss of the power to rule for it was thought that a nation's prosperity and the fertility of its land were bound up with the king's virility. With David unable to rule, Adonijah, one of his sons, lays claim to the throne. Nathan, the prophet, intervenes and with the help of Bathsheba, gains David's support for Solomon. Though the story leaves much unsaid, we can surmise that there must have been factions existing in the court. Adonijah had the support of Joab, David's general, and Abiathar, David's priest, but for reasons unknown Nathan supported Solomon. Also on Solomon's side were Benaiah, soon to be his general, and Zadok, who will replace Abiathar as priest.

In David's final instructions to Solomon, the deuteronomistic writers take the opportunity to reiterate the promise to David, though here it is stated in conditional terms: only if his sons are faithful to the LORD will the Davidic dynasty remain in power. Though Solomon's takeover

is ruthless, the instructions of David regarding Joab and Shimei provide an excuse for Solomon's behavior. In having Joab, and eventually also Shimei, killed he is simply carrying out the commands of his father. However, the fact that he has Adonijah killed and banishes Abiathar goes beyond the commands of David and we are forced to conclude that the attempt to absolve him of guilt in his callous disregard of all who opposed his rule does not succeed.

It is not known why Adonijah asks to marry Abishag, but Solomon interprets the request as a claim to the throne and for this Adonijah is executed. The basis for Solomon's interpretation rests in the custom of a king asserting his claim to the throne by taking over his father's harem (2 Sm 16, 21f).

It is surprising that there is no condemnation of the ruthlessness of Solomon, but we must remember that the deuteronomistic writers have a very narrow base of evaluation. They are concerned only with exclusive worship of the LORD. Whatever else Solomon may be guilty of, early in his life he was loyal to the LORD and he is responsible for the building of the Temple.

**THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON** (1 Kings 3,1-22)

Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian princess is mentioned more than once in the history of Solomon's reign (3,1; 7,8; 9,16.24f; 11,1). This repetition may indicate the political importance of this marriage, but it also reveals a concern of the deuteronomistic writers. Marriage to foreign women brings with it the temptation to worship other gods, a temptation that even Solomon succumbed to in his old age (1 Kgs 11,4-10).

**High Places.** The deuteronomistic writers introduce the story of Solomon's confirmation as king with a reference to high places. These high places were Canaanite sanctuaries and were used as such by Israel when they came to occupy the land of Canaan. High places were located on tops of hills, and were equipped with an altar, stone pillars and trees or wooden poles. These pillars and trees/poles represented the fertility deities of Canaan. Though worship at high places is repeatedly condemned by the deuteronomistic writers, they were probably for the most part local centers for authentic worship of the LORD. It is with the centralization of cult (that is, formal worship) in Jerusalem at the time of Josiah that these centers are viewed with suspicion and condemned. Though Solomon worships at high places he is not condemned, because the Temple has not yet been built.

**Royal Legitimation.** There are similarities between the royal legitimation story in 3,4-15 and Egyptian models. In both, the king receives a revelation in a dream, uses conventional language to express humility ("I am a mere youth" 1 Kgs 3,7), and offers sacrifices in response to the revelation. These legitimation stories precede innovative acts of the pharoah, such as the building of a temple. Solomon will begin building the Temple in Chapter 5.

There is a marked difference in the confirmation of Solomon's kingship and that of Saul and David. Saul and David were anointed kings by the prophet Samuel, and the spirit of the LORD descended upon them in confirmation of that anointing (1 Sm 10,6.10; 16,13; 2 Sm 23,2). There is no story of Solomon's anointing nor any indication that the spirit of the LORD is with him. This remains true for all the kings who succeed him. The spirit of the LORD is found in the Books of Kings, but in association with the prophets, not kings. The important role played by the prophets in the Books of Kings is underscored by the fact that they have the spirit of the LORD. The kings may rule the people, but it is the prophets who represent the will of the LORD and speak the LORD's word.

The wisdom Solomon asks for in 3,6-9 is not to be understood in an abstract or philosophical sense. He prays for a pragmatic wisdom to be able to judge the people and to distinguish right from wrong in order to rule the people. Later in the account of his reign, Solomon's wisdom is equated with encyclopedic knowledge (5,9-14), and with his ability to answer all questions (10,1-10). As the tradition develops, Solomon becomes the wise king par excellence.

The story in 3,16-28 is similar to folktales that present a model of true motherhood. In these stories the true mother will make any sacrifice for the good of her child. In the context of the history of Solomon's reign, the king, who is never named in the story, becomes Solomon whose judgments reveal his wisdom. The wisdom that Solomon prayed for has become a reality.

**THE ADMINISTRATION OF SOLOMON'S EMPIRE** (1 Kings 4,1—5,6)
The content of this section was taken from archival material to show the administrative aspects of Solomon's reign. The country was divided into twelve districts to ensure a more efficient collection of taxes. The wealth and extent of Solomon's empire conclude the section.

**SOLOMON'S REPUTATION FOR WISDOM** (1 Kings 5,9-14)
Included with miscellaneous items concerning Solomon's empire is another statement of Solomon's wisdom. Here wisdom is understood as encyclopedic knowledge and the making of proverbs and songs.

**THE TEMPLE IS BUILT** (1 Kings 5,15—6,37)
From this section we gain some insight into the commercial activities of Solomon, but the primary concern of the passage is the building of the Temple. The description of the Temple contains many technical architectural terms whose meanings have been lost, and thus many details of the building are obscure. Nevertheless, we have a general idea of the structure of the Temple. It was a rectangular building modeled after pagan temples. The building was divided into three sections: a vestibule, a main room or temple proper, and the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was placed.

The reference to forced labor (5,27-32) assumes importance in light of later events. Solomon's policies of forced labor and taxation proved very unpopular and may have precipitated the split of the kingdom after his death.

**SOLOMON'S PALACE** (1 Kings 7,1-12)
Only the most prominent buildings of Solomon's palace are described.

**THE TEMPLE FURNISHINGS** (1 Kings 7,13-51)
In the description of the Temple furnishings much remains obscure. We do not know the purpose of the freestanding pillars or the sea. Like the other implements mentioned, they must have had some function in worship as it was conducted in the Temple, but their precise use remains unknown.

**THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE** (1 Kings 8,1-66)
There is no doubt that sources were used in the compliation of this chapter, but the chapter itself is primarily an expression of deuteronomistic theology. It begins with an account of bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the Temple. Once the Ark is in the Temple, a cloud fills the Temple signifying the presence of the LORD and thus the LORD's acceptance of the Temple. The darkness of the cloud preserves the mystery of God.

In Solomon's address and prayer, conflicting theologies of Temple, both pre- and postexilic,

are interwoven by the deuteronomistic writers. Verse 13 speaks of the Temple as the place where the LORD will abide forever, but there is the danger of thinking that the LORD actually can be confined to one place (verse 27). To preserve the transcendence of God, the deuteronomistic writers speak of the Temple as the place where the LORD's name dwells (verse 20, "honor" in *NAB,* "name" in Hebrew). In Solomon's prayer (verses 23-53), the Temple is defined as the place where the LORD will hear the prayer of the people, particularly the prayer for forgiveness. It is the one place where Israel can pray with the assurance that God is accessible.

Solomon's address to the people (verses 14-21) relates the establishment of the Davidic dynasty to the building of the Temple and the fulfillment of the promises of the LORD. The blessing in verses 54-61 affirms again that the LORD is faithful in the fulfillment of promises and that faithfulness will continue. The people, for their part, must respond in obedience to the laws of the LORD.

**WARNING TO SOLOMON** (1 Kings 9,1-9)
The theology of the deuteronomistic writers dominates in this second appearance of the LORD to Solomon. Once again the importance of obedience is affirmed. If the king is obedient the LORD's name will dwell in the Temple and the nation will be preserved. Failure in obedience will lead to the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Davidic dynasty. The fate of the nation is bound up with the king's faithfulness to the laws of the LORD.

**VARIOUS ITEMS RELATING TO SOLOMON'S REIGN** (1 Kings 9,10—10,29)
In a collection of various items that deal with the financial aspects of Solomon's reign, the deuteronomistic writers present a picture of the most prosperous period in Israel's history. The issue of forced labor emerges again, but here it states that the Israelites were not part of the forced labor program initiated by Solomon. The visit of the Queen of Sheba probably had to do with trade and commerce, but it stands here as another example of Solomon's wisdom (10,1-13). The splendor of Solomon's reign is illustrated by the revenue and the wealth of his empire (10,14-29).

**JUDGMENT AGAINST SOLOMON** (1 Kings 11,1-43)
Consistent with deuteronomistic theology the judgment against Solomon is based on his failure to worship the LORD and the LORD alone. Solomon's behavior is seen as the direct result of his large harem of foreign women who had led him astray. His guilt is mitigated by the fact that he gave into them only in the weakness of old age, but nevertheless his idolatry must be punished. Because the LORD is faithful to the promise made to David, the Davidic dynasty will continue to rule, but their rule will extend only to the tribe of Judah. The causes of the division of Israel are more complex than indicated by the deuteronomistic writers. The unity between north (Israel) and south (Judah) was precarious even under David, but the policies of Solomon, particularly the program of forced labor and excessive taxation, served to deepen the dissatisfaction of the northern tribes. Whatever political and economic forces were at work causing the division of the kingdom after Solomon, the deuteronomistic writers are only concerned with theological causes. For them the kingdom split because Solomon was not entirely faithful to the LORD.

Without respect to chronological order the deuteronomistic writers have gathered together material that shows all was not peaceful during the reign of Solomon. Problems with the Edomite Hadad, with Rezon who became king in Damascus, and with Jeroboam indicate the LORD's dissatisfaction with Solomon. This is underscored particularly in the treatment of Jero-

boam. We are given little information about the rebellion of Jeroboam (verse 40), rather Ahijah's prophecy takes precedence. It affirms that in the events which will follow, the LORD is bringing about the punishment announced in 11,11-13.

## The Two Kingdoms: Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12,1—2 Kings 17,41)

In a rather uneven treatment of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, the deuteronomistic writers focus on the reason for the downfall of Israel: the kings did not worship the LORD in Jerusalem, but persisted in the sin of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12) and worshipped in Dan and Bethel. In their treatment of the reigns of the kings of Israel the deuteronomistic writers interweave prophetic traditions, especially of Elijah (1 Kgs 17,1—2 Kgs 1,16) and Elisha (2 Kgs 2–13). Very little is said of the kings of Judah beyond an evaluation of their reigns in deuteronomistic terms.

The deuteronomistic writers have a particular understanding of the nature of kingship and prophecy that dominates their presentation of the history of Judah and Israel.

**Kingship.** There were different forms of kingship in the ancient Near East. Both Egyptian and Mesopotamian kings ruled as representatives of the gods, but in Egypt the pharaoh was believed to be divine, whereas in Mesopotamia, the king was an "adopted" son of the deity. To maintain order in society, by defending the nation and upholding justice, was an important task of the king. Even more important was the religious function of the king, for it was believed that the order of the cosmos itself was bound up with the king's rule. Kingship and priesthood went hand in hand, and the role of the king was absolute.

In Israel the king represented the LORD as an "adopted" son (Ps 2,7). Like the kings of the ancient Near East, Israel's kings were in charge of the military and were to uphold justice. A king in Israel could, and often did, offer sacrifices and was identified as priest (Ps 110, 4), but we lack the information necessary to draw a more complete picture of the exact religious function of the king in Israel. For the deuteronomistic writers the nature of kingship is defined in Deuteronomy 17,14-20. The king is to fear the LORD and keep the commandments. He does not have absolute power, but is ruled by and is to rule with the Law of Moses. Then and only then will there be peace and prosperity in the country. In view of the position taken by the deuteronomistic writers, it is not surprising that in the Books of Kings the only real focus of the history is whether or not the kings lived in accordance with the law, especially in terms of centralization of worship.

**Prophecy.** The primary function of a prophet was to speak the word of the deity to the king and/or to the people. For the deuteronomistic writers a prophet mediates the LORD's word in adherence to the law (Dt 18,9-22) and issues judgment on the basis of that law (1 Sm 3,11-18; 15,10-23; 2 Sm 12,1-12). The primary and dominant role of a prophet in the Books of Kings is to indict the king, and by extension the people, for their failure to live according to the commandments, and to warn of coming judgment in the hopes that the king and people will repent. The fulfillment of the word spoken by the prophet stands as an important element in the determination of a true prophet (Dt 18), and in the Books of Kings the prophetic word is explicitly fulfilled repeatedly. Though a prophet may perform wonders, as do Elijah and Elisha, more important for the deuteronomistic writers is that the prophet encourage the people to worship the LORD and the LORD alone (Dt 13).

**DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM** (1 Kings 12,1-24)
The basis of complaint against Davidic rule is the forced-labor program of Solomon, but as the story unfolds it is clear that the purposes of the LORD are being worked out in the foolish actions of Rehoboam. The word of the LORD is to be fulfilled; the kingdom will not longer be united under Davidic rule. The king's failure to reestablish control of the north likewise fulfills the prophetic word (12,23).

**THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM, KING OF ISRAEL (922–901 B.C.)** (1 Kings 12, 25—14,20)
The prophecy spoken to Jeroboam (11,29-39) has been fulfilled, but whatever hopes had been associated with his kingship are immediately dashed by the establishment of Dan and Bethel as rival shrines of Jerusalem. Jeroboam's actions were intended to secure the loyalty of his people by having them worship in the north and these shrines were probably centers of authentic worship of the LORD. But for the deuteronomistic writers any worship outside of Jerusalem is unacceptable and, by the establishment of alternate shrines, Jeroboam condemns himself and ultimately dooms the north to destruction.

The prophetic condemnation of Jeroboam comes without delay in Chapter 13 and is reiterated in Chapter 14. There is no doubt that the story found in Chapter 13 is an older story that has been reworked by the deuteronomistic writers and used for their purposes. The oracle against the altar in 13,2f finds fulfillment in 2 Kings 23,16-18, but the story itself affirms that the word of the LORD stands in spite of any attempt to nullify it.

In the story, the man of God is given a command not to eat or drink in Bethel, signifying a total alienation from the city and its cultic center. He is also commanded not to return by the way he came, signifying the absoluteness and irrevocability of the oracle against the altar. The oracle and the commands are thus integrally related. That the man of God is led to break these commands, even if unwittingly, raises questions about the fulfillment of the oracle. We are not told why the old prophet lied to the man of God, but it may be that his intent was to negate the oracle. The events of the story show that the oracle stands, in spite of the disobedience of the man of God, and the old prophet himself affirms the validity of the oracle. The deuteronomistic writers use this story to indicate the inviolability of the word of the LORD.

In the story of Chapter 14 Jeroboam seeks a favorable oracle for his sick son, but his attempt is unsuccessful because the LORD reveals to the prophet the identity of the disguised woman. The prophet uses this opportunity to reiterate the LORD's judgment against Jeroboam and his house. Again the deuteronomistic writers use an older story as a means of underscoring the sin of Jeroboam and its inevitable punishment.

**REIGN OF REHOBOAM, KING OF JUDAH (922–915 B.C.)** (1 Kings 14,21-31)
Contrary to their normal procedure, the deuteronomistic writers do not evaluate the king, but instead evaluate the people of Judah. The people are guilty of apostasy in worshipping at local shrines. They have incorporated the symbols of the fertility deities into their worship and use pagan styles of worship as their own. The invasion of Shishak and the looting of the Temple (verses 23-28) are to be understood as punishment for the failure of the people to worship the LORD and the LORD alone.

**REIGN OF ABIJAM, KING OF JUDAH (915–913 B.C.)** (1 Kings 15,1-8)
Except for war between Abijam and Jeroboam (verse 6) we know nothing of the reign of Abijam. He stands condemned, but the LORD allows his son to rule and Jerusalem to endure in faithfulness to the covenant with David.

**REIGN OF ASA, KING OF JUDAH (913–873 B.C.)** (1 Kings 15,9-24)
Asa receives a more positive evaluation than his father. Though he did not remove the high places, he banished temple prostitutes and took away the pagan images. He even deposed the queen mother for making an Asherah. The war with Israel continues (14,30; 15,6) during his reign, but he buys the support of Aram against Israel with gold and silver taken from the Temple.

**REIGN OF NADAB, KING OF ISRAEL (901–900 B.C.)** (1 Kings 15,25-32)
Nadab is struck down by Baasha, and his entire household killed. Thus the prophecy of Ahijah is fulfilled (14,10f).

**REIGN OF BAASHA, KING OF ISRAEL (900–877 B.C.)** (1 Kings 15,33—16,7)
The prophetic condemnation of Baasha by Jehu, a prophet, dominates the notice of Baasha's reign.

**REIGN OF ELAH, KING OF ISRAEL (877–876 B.C.)** (1 Kings 16,8-14)
The word spoken against Baasha by Jehu is fulfilled in the coup led by Zimri.

**REIGN OF ZIMRI, KING OF ISRAEL (876 B.C.)** (1 Kings 16,15-20)
Though Zimri's reign lasted only seven days, he is condemned by the deuteronomistic writers in the same terms as other kings of Israel.

**REIGN OF OMRI, KING OF ISRAEL (876–869 B.C.)** (1 Kings 16,21-28)
The coup of Zimri is ended by Omri, but the people are divided and he is not able to gain total control until his rival, Tibni, is eliminated. Tibni's strength is indicated by the fact that it will take a few years before Omri is able to rule unopposed. Omri's reign is dismissed in a few words by the deuteronomistic writers, but we know from Assyrian documents that Omri was one of the strongest and most successful rulers of Israel. His reign is characterized by great prosperity and he was able to establish a dynasty that lasted through four generations.

**REIGN OF AHAB, KING OF ISRAEL BEGINS, (869–850 B.C.)** (1 Kings 16,29-34)
What is told of Ahab stands as preface to the prophetic activity during his reign. He is condemned because he married a foreign princess and, like Solomon, was led to worship false gods.

The rebuilding of Jericho is used by the deuteronomistic writers to show Ahab's disregard for religious tradition in ignoring the curse issued by Joshua (Jos 6,26). At the same time, it is another example of the fulfillment of the word of the LORD as that curse becomes a reality.

**ELIJAH AND THE DROUGHT** (1 Kings 17,1-6)
Elijah appears unannounced. As one who serves the LORD, he declares that there will be no rain except by his word. The stories that follow are placed within the context of drought, but the issue of the rain itself is not taken up again until Chapter 18. In this first story the prophet is taken care of during the drought by the LORD. He is fed bread and meat by the ravens, and water from the stream satisfies his thirst. The theme of a hero being fed by animals is found in

many folktales. An Exodus dimension is added to the story by the fact that Elijah, like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, is kept alive with the LORD's assistance.

**ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S LAST MEAL** (1 Kings 17,7-16)
The LORD continues to care for the prophet, but now that care extends to the widow who shares her last meal. The motif of an unfailing supply is found frequently in folklore. Here this motif serves to enhance the character of the prophet who performs this miracle.

**ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S SON** (1 Kings 17,17-24)
The presence of a holy person should bring blessing, but the widow's son becomes ill. Her fear is that some hidden sin has been exposed by the presence of Elijah and, as punishment, her son has been taken from her. There is an element of contactual magic in the story when Elijah stretches himself upon the child to transfer the health from his body to the child. Nevertheless, it is clear that it is the LORD who responds to the prayer of Elijah and restores the child to health.

**ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL** (1 Kings 18,1-46)
The story of the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel occupies a central place in deuteronomistic theology. At issue in the story is which god controls the fertility of the land, Baal or the LORD? In the Exodus and conquest, the LORD was seen as a Warrior God; but once Israel settled in the land the fertility of the land assumes great importance and Baal was the god of fertility in Canaan. Israel did not abandon the worship of the LORD, but simply worshipped Baal in addition. This kind of syncretism was strongly opposed by the deuteronomistic writers. The LORD does not tolerate the worship of any other gods, and the dramatic encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal shows without doubt that the LORD is the God who answers, and is therefore the God in control of the fertility of the land.

Several aspects of this story are significant. It reveals the hostility of Jezebel to the LORD's prophets and her attempt to make the worship of Baal and his female counterpart, Asherah, dominant in the land. The unpredictability of Elijah is highlighted at the beginning of the story. He cannot be summoned by the king; only the LORD controls his life. The behavior of the prophets of Baal give us an insight into activity of ecstatic prophets. The calm, mocking Elijah stands in sharp contrast to the frantic prophets of Baal. The LORD responds to the simple prayer of Elijah, showing beyond any shadow of doubt that the LORD is God and responds to the intercession of the prophet. That Elijah kills the prophets of Baal may strike us as excessive and unnecessary, but by this action Elijah fulfills the law of Deuteronomy (Dt 18,20). Before the rain comes, Elijah runs before the king's chariot, showing superhuman powers, but that is to be expected because the LORD is with him (verse 46). Again the special power of the prophet is accentuated.

**ELIJAH ON MT. HOREB** (1 Kings 19,1-18)
Though this story of a despondent Elijah seems out of place after his triumph on Mt. Carmel, it does prepare the reader for stories that follow. In the story itself there are clear parallels drawn between Elijah and the Exodus tradition. Elijah goes to meet God on the same mountain that Israel met its God. Israel journeyed for forty years in the wilderness; Elijah's journey takes forty days and nights. As the Israelites were cared for by the LORD during their journey, so is Elijah cared for on his journey. On the mountain the will of the LORD is declared to Elijah as it was to Moses. Both Elijah and Moses hide in clefts of rock. The Exodus parallels underscore the importance of Elijah's pilgrimage. He seeks to make contact with the God of Israel at the holy

mountain where Israel first became the people of the LORD. It is significant that the LORD is not present in usual elements of theophany (wind, earthquake, fire). God's presence need not conform to our expectations, but can be found in the unexpected, in the still voice (*NAB,* "whispering sound").

Up to this point all has been introduction to the real focus of the story: the LORD has not deserted the people of Israel. The LORD continues to direct the history of Israel as indicated by the command to anoint Elisha and Jehu, and the LORD even directs the history of another nation, for Hazael is to be anointed king of Aram. In addition, Elijah is told that because some have remained faithful to the LORD, a remnant of the people will be preserved. The remnant becomes the basis for hope in the future and an important prophetic concept. Elijah does not directly carry out these commands of the LORD, except with respect to Elisha, but they are carried out by other prophets.

**ELISHA CALLED** (1 Kings 19,19-21)
In context, this passage is probably to be seen as the "anointing" of Elisha as Elijah's successor, but actual anointing takes place. The mantle of the prophet was associated with his power, and by throwing the mantle over Elisha, a transference of power is signified; thus Elisha is "anointed" successor. We do not hear of Elisha again until 2 Kings 2.

**AHAB AND AN UNNAMED PROPHET** (1 Kings 20,1-43)
The events recounted in this chapter take place during the reign of Ahab, but it is an unnamed prophet, not Elijah, who issues the judgment of the LORD against the king. Many of the elements of Holy War found in the stories of the judges recur here. The LORD promises victory and, in the course of the battle, the LORD is revealed as a Warrior God who can achieve victory in the plain as well as on the mountain; that is, in the whole earth. The LORD expects that the king of Aram will be sacrificed in accordance with the custom of Holy War known as *herem* (the sacrifice of the spoils of war to God) (see "The LORD as Warrior God/Holy War" in the Reading Guide to Joshua). Ahab, like Saul fails to carry out *herem* against the defeated king and so stands condemned.

**ELIJAH CONDEMNS AHAB OVER NABOTH'S VINEYARD** (1 Kings 21,1-20)
A second time Ahab receives prophetic condemnation, but this time the prophet is Elijah, and Ahab is condemned for his disregard of the covenant law. The king wishes to purchase the vineyard of Naboth, but Naboth refuses to sell it because it was forbidden by Law (Lv 25). The land belongs to the LORD and cannot be sold at will. Jezebel contrives to gain the land, and her hand in the matter is underscored, but she must have had the authorization of Ahab. They act as absolute monarchs, setting themselves above the Law of the LORD with total disregard for the lives of their subjects. However, in Israel, the king is to be ruled by the Law (Dt 17,14-19), and so Ahab and Jezebel stand condemned. The punishment involves the total annihilation of the house of Ahab but, because the king repents, that punishment is deferred to his son.

**AHAB AND MICAIAH** (1 Kings 22,1-40)
In 1 Kings 20 the unnamed prophet condemned Ahab to death. Though the total destruction of his dynasty has been deferred in 1 Kings 21,27-29, the condemnation of Chapter 21 stands. Though Ahab attempts to stifle the word of the true prophet by arresting him, though he disguises himself on the battlefield to escape detection, the word of the LORD will be fulfilled. Ahab cannot escape his fate.

The story as used by the deuteronomistic writers becomes another example of the fulfillment of the prophetic word, but it also gives an insight into some aspects of prophecy in ancient Israel. Prophets were consulted by kings to determine the will of the LORD, particularly with respect to the outcome of a battle, but prophets did not always agree. Zedekiah's use of horns shows that prophets used symbolic acts to underscore their word.

**REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT, KING OF JUDAH (873–849 B.C.)** (1 Kings 22,41-51)
We learn little about the reign of Jehoshaphat, but he receives qualified praise from the deuteronomistic writers.

**REIGN OF AHAZIAH, KING OF ISRAEL (850–849 B.C.)** (1 Kings 22,52—2 Kgs 1,1-18)
Beyond the negative evaluation of Ahaziah, the deuteronomistic writers include a story of conflict between the king and the prophet Elijah. Ahaziah seeks an oracle from the god of Ekron regarding his recovery from an accident, but as far as the prophet is concerned this is tantamount to a denial of the LORD, and the king is condemned for his lack of faith in the LORD. The king sends forces to arrest Elijah in order to annul the unfavorable prophetic word, but each time the fire of heaven consumes the soliders. Once again, all attempts to evade or nullify the word of the LORD, spoken by the true prophet, are in vain.

**ELIJAH TRANSFERS AUTHORITY TO ELISHA** (2 Kings 2,1-18)
There are many aspects of this story that remain enigmatic. Elijah is taken up into heaven, but nowhere does it say that he died. The appearance of fiery chariots and horses is unusual, and this is the only instance of prophetic succession that we find in the Old Testament.

Despite the uniqueness of this story its purpose is clear: Elisha is the true successor to Elijah. He follows in Elijah's footsteps (verses 2-9), he fulfills the condition for succession imposed by Elijah (verse 10), he divides the waters of the Jordan as did Elijah (verses 13f), and the sons of the prophets recognize the spirit of Elijah is with him (verse 15).

**ELISHA AND THE BITTER WATERS** (2 Kings 2,19-22)
At Jericho, Elisha's first act is to purify the spring water, demonstrating that he has been endowed with the LORD's power and is the rightful successor of Elijah.

**ELISHA MOCKED BY THE BOYS OF BETHEL** (2 Kings 2,23-25)
It is difficult to accept the actions of Elisha at face value. The punishment of death for calling the prophet names strikes us as out of proportion to the offense. However more may have been involved in the incident than is apparent. Whatever the original meaning of the story, as it appears in this context it again demonstrates the power of the prophet, but here for curse, not blessing.

**REIGN OF JORAM, KING OF ISRAEL, BEGINS (849–842 B.C.)** (2 Kings 3,1-3)
Though Joram receives a more positive evaluation than his predecessor, he continues to follow in the sin of Jeroboam.

**ELISHA AND THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MOAB** (2 Kings 3,4-27)
As in 1 Kings 20 and 22, this chapter presents a battle narrative that highlights the role of the prophet and is used by the deuteronomistic writers to show the fulfillment of the prophetic word. The narrative gives some insight into the mechanics of prophetic activity. Music is used to put the prophet in a state of receptivity to the spirit. The oracle uttered by the prophet assures

the kings that water will be available and they will gain victory over Moab. This is fulfilled in verses 20 and 25.

Though Israel retreats after the sacrifice of the Moabite king's firstborn, it is not clear why. They give up in the face of wrath, but whose wrath is not stated. Perhaps the wrath of the god of Moab, Chemosh, is intended, suggesting that the sacrifice was effective, but the deuteronomistic writers would hardly agree to such an interpretation.

**ELISHA AND THE WIDOW'S OIL** (2 Kings 4,1-7)
The story of Elijah and the widow's last meal (1 Kgs 17,7-16) is echoed in this story of Elisha and the widow's oil. In both is found the motif of an unfailing supply, and in both the LORD helps those in need—through the prophet. It is not unusual to find these kinds of stories attached to religious leaders.

**ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN'S SON** (2 Kings 4,8-37)
As with the previous story, this story bears marked similarity to a story told of Elijah (1 Kgs 17,17-24). The same point is made in both stories that life and blessing come from the LORD, through the prophet. In this version the character of the women is more carefully delineated. She possesses a quiet dignity in refusing to take advantage of the prophet, and yet when her son has died she is determined to confront the prophet. As Elisha refused to leave Elijah (2 Kgs 2,2-6), so this woman will not leave Elisha until her son is restored.

The inability of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, to rouse the boy, heightens the impact of the prophet's personal appearance and eventual success. Like so many of these prophetic narratives, in this story, also, the character and power of the prophet is revealed and enhanced.

**ELISHA AND THE POISONED STEW** (2 Kings 4,38-41)
The story seems to serve no other purpose than to reflect the authority of the prophet and the effectiveness of his intercession on behalf of his followers.

**ELISHA MULTIPLIES LOAVES OF BREAD** (2 Kings 4,42-44)
Once again the concern of the prophet for his followers is revealed. In the land of Canaan it was thought that Baal, the god of fertility, provided bread for the people, but this action by the prophet shows that the LORD is really the source of abundant food.

**ELISHA CURES NAAMAN'S LEPROSY** (2 Kings 5,1-27)
Though this story is more complex than previous stories, it is similar in that a problem needs resolution, and that resolution comes through the intercession of the prophet. Delays encountered in the course of events (the king of Israel's negative response, Naaman's refusal to do as the prophet instructed) serve to heighten suspense and underscore the eventual healing of Naaman. Naaman's knowledge of the prophet stands in sharp contrast to the king's ignorance. Naaman recognizes that the LORD is the source of his healing and confesses that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. This is an astounding confession coming from a pagan, and accentuates the greatness of Israel's God.

An added element in this story is the duplicity of Gehazi, Elisha'a servant. His greed and deception set him apart from the prophet, whose only concern is to mediate the blessing of the LORD to Naaman. In the exchange between Elisha and Gehazi, Gehazi's deception is revealed and his punishment, assuming the illness of Naaman, is seen as appropriate in light of his actions.

**ELISHA AND THE IRON AXHEAD** (2 Kings 6,1-7)
Elisha responds immediately and decisively to a need of one of his followers, once again showing his concern and willingness to use his power for the good of his fellow prophets.

**ELISHA AND THE ARAMEAN SIEGE** (2 Kings 6,8—7,20)
The first part of this story incorporates a folktale motif wherein a strong enemy is tricked by a seemingly powerless hero. The LORD stands behind his prophet and repeatedly frustrates the actions of the enemy. Even the king of Israel, normally hostile to the prophet, defers to the authority of the LORD's prophet. As the story unfolds the humorous and confident tone of the beginning is replaced by utter seriousness and despair. The siege against the city has resulted in famine. The full horror of the situation is graphically expressed as the citizens resort to eating their own children to survive. The prophet is blamed, but unknown to all the word of the LORD is in the process of fulfillment. In the conclusion of the story the ironic humor returns as the entire army of the enemy flees before a few lepers looking for a meal. Once again the word of the LORD, spoken by a true prophet, finds fulfillment.

**THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN OBEYS ELISHA** (2 Kings 8,1-6)
This incident continues the story of 4,8-37, but apparently the prophet is not dead. By following the prophet's earlier advice the woman has been put into a worse situation than during the famine. In leaving the country she lost claim to her husband's land and thus has no means of support. The solution to her problem is effected by the king, not the prophet, but he does so because of the reputation of the prophet.

**ELISHA, HAZAEL, AND DEATH OF BEN-HADAD** (2 Kings 8,7-15)
Like Ahaziah in 2 Kings 1, the Aramean king, Ben-hadad, seeks an oracle of recovery. There is some ambiguity in this story. Elisha announces both the recovery and death of the king, but only the latter is fulfilled. It is not certain that Hazael actually kills the king as suggested by the English translation. The Hebrew version is less clear on the relationship between Hazael's actions and the death of the king. The prophet is shown to have knowledge of the future, and indeed what he has seen comes to pass. Aram, under Hazael's rule, emerged as a serious threat to the peace and security of Israel.

**REIGN OF JEHORAM, KING OF JUDAH (849-842 B.C.)** (2 Kings 8,16-24)
The fact that Jehoram marries the daughter of a rival dynasty indicates the weakness of Judah. Though not explicitly stated, it is probable that Judah was a vassal of Israel at this time. Jehoram receives a strong condemnation from the deuteronomistic writers who compare his evil to that of Ahab, but punishment is delayed because of the promise given to David.

**REIGN OF AHAZIAH, KING OF JUDAH (842 B.C.)** (2 Kings 8,25-29)
Though Ahaziah reigns only a year he receives the same strong condemnation given to his father.

**REIGN OF JEHU, KING OF ISRAEL (842-815 B.C.)** (2 Kings 9,1—10,36)
The focus of the deuteronomistic writers is on the religious, not the political, aspects of the rebellion of Jehu. The command of the LORD to Elijah in 1 Kings 19,16 to anoint Jehu is realized through Elisha and the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah in 1 Kings 21,20-29 finds fulfillment in the actions taken by Jehu. The story is told with great dramatic effect and builds suspense even though the end is a foregone conclusion.

Jehu's usurpation of the throne is supported, indeed instigated, by the prophet as the anointing of Jehu shows. The willingness of the army to back Jehu indicates some dissatisfaction with the rule of the Omride dynasty, but the story does not expand on the political situation. Rather it moves toward the inevitable fulfillment of the word of judgment against the house of Ahab. The assassination of Joram and Ahaziah, the death of Jezebel, the slaughter of all claimants to the throne of Israel and the kinsmen of Ahaziah, are excused in the name of religious zeal. The brutality of Jehu is not condemned by the deuteronomistic writers, but it will receive prophetic condemnation in the Book of Hosea (1,14).

Beyond the rebellion of Jehu the only event of interest to the deuteronomistic writers is his attempt to wipe out the cult of Baal introduced into Israel by the Omride dynasty. The manner in which he abolishes the cult of Baal reveals once again the brutality of his character, but his actions are supported by the religious establishment. In spite of the promise seen in Jehu's religious zeal for the LORD, his reign receives a negative evaluation by the deuteronomistic writers. Though he brings to fulfillment the word of the LORD, though he removes the cult of Baal from Israel, nevertheless, like his predecessors, he continues in the sin of Jeroboam.

**REIGN OF ATHALIAH, QUEEN OF JUDAH (842–837 B.C.)** (2 Kings 11,1-20)
Nothing is told of the reign of Athaliah except the manner in which she assumes the throne and her removal from that throne. As a daughter of Ahab, she has no loyalty to the Davidic dynasty and ruthlessly slaughters all claimants to the throne of Judah. Her plans are thwarted by Jehosheba, sister of the king, who saves an infant son of the Davidic monarch. Seven years pass before the priest, with the support of the military, overthrows the rule of Athaliah and returns a Davidic monarch to the throne. The destruction of a Baal temple in Judah parallels the actions taken by Jehu in Israel and shows a religious fervor that dominated the entire country in this period.

**REIGN OF JOASH, KING OF JUDAH (837–800 B.C.)** (2 Kings 12,1-22)
The account of repair of the Temple during the reign of Joash shows the interest of the deuteronomistic writers in anything that has to do with the Temple. The king is put in a positive light for developing and then revising the method of collecting money that will ensure the ongoing repair of the Temple. The account is critical of the priests who do not respond when the king takes the initiative. Even the workmen are more trustworthy and concerned about the Temple than the priests.

It is surprising that Hazael's incursion into Judah and the assassination of Joash are treated with such brevity, but it is consistent with the lack of interest shown by the deuteronomistic writers in the political and economic affairs of state.

**REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, KING OF ISRAEL (815–801 B.C.)** (2 Kings 13,1-9)
Deuteronomistic theology, expressed in terms found in the Book of Judges, is embodied in this notice of the reign of Jehoahaz. The LORD's anger is provoked by sin, punishment is sent by the LORD, and, in response to prayer for relief from oppression, the LORD sends a savior to deliver Israel. In spite of this deliverance, the people continue in the sin of Jeroboam. This section cannot be harmonized with 13,22, which states that Israel was oppressed during the entire reign of Jehoahaz, but the passage is probably here to show that the LORD did not abandon the people.

**REIGN OF JOASH, KING OF ISRAEL (801 – 786 B.C.)** (2 Kings 13,10-25)
The reign of Joash receives the typical negative evaluation of the deuteronomistic writers. The focus of attention shifts from Joash to Elisha, who has not been mentioned since 9,1, forty-five years earlier. Before Elisha dies he commands the king to perform certain actions. By these symbolic actions the king is given the power to defend Israel against its enemies. The fact that the king strikes the ground only three times suggests a lack of resolve or faith on his part, and thus his victories will be limited.

The final story in which Elisha plays a role is unlike anything in the Old Testament. Nowhere else is a dead person restored to life upon contact with the corpse of a holy person; nevertheless the story is consistent in demonstrating the power of the prophet that is effective even after death.

The chapter concludes with a testimony to the graciousness of the LORD (13,23) and the fulfillment of the words of Elisha (verses 24f).

**REIGN OF AMAZIAH, KING OF JUDAH (800 – 783 B.C.)** (2 Kings 14,1-22)
Amaziah's reign receives qualified approval from the deuteronomistic writers. He pleased the LORD, but did not remove the high places. The king is said to adhere to deuteronomic law (Dt 24,16) by not executing the children of those who murdered his father. The account of his challenge to Israel and subsequent defeat is included probably because of the interest of the deuteronomistic writers in the Temple. It is plundered by the king of Israel. Little interest is shown in the conspiracy against Amaziah and his assassination.

**REIGN OF JEROBOAM II, KING OF ISRAEL (786 – 746 B.C.)** (2 Kings 14,23-29)
The reign of Jeroboam II was a period of peace and prosperity for Israel, but the deuteronomistic writers are concerned only that he continued in the sin of Jeroboam. The prophetic word in verses 25-27 accentuates the graciousness of the LORD. In language reminiscent of Exodus 3,7 it is affirmed that in spite of their sin the LORD seeks not to destroy, but to save the people.

**REIGN OF AZARIAH, KING OF JUDAH (783 – 742 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,1-7)
Nothing is known of the fifty-two year reign of Azariah, also known as Uzziah. No reason is given for why he is afflicted with leprosy, but it probably is to be seen as a punishment for not removing the high places.

**REIGN OF ZECHARIAH, KING OF ISRAEL (746 – 745 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,8-12)
The last king of Jehu's dynasty is killed near the place where Jehu had the princes of Judah massacred (10,4). With the assassination of Zechariah the prophetic word of 10,30 is fulfilled. The brevity of this notice and the ones which follow suggest the rapid decline of Israel.

**REIGN OF SHALLUM, KING OF ISRAEL (745 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,13-16)
The very short reign of Shallum (one month) before his assassination reflects the instability of Israel. His successor, Menahem, secures his authority by a brutal attack on the town of Tappuah.

**REIGN OF MENAHEM, KING OF ISRAEL (745 – 738 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,17-22)
The reign of Menahem is pro-Assyrian, though it is not clear that he was actually a vassal of Assyria at this time.

**REIGN OF PEKAHIAH, KING OF ISRAEL (744-732 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,23-26)
Pekahiah continues the pro-Assyrian policies of his father, but his rule is cut short by assassination.

**REIGN OF PEKAH, KING OF ISRAEL (738-732 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,27-31)
Like the kings who preceded him, Pekah's rule also ends with his assassination.

**REIGN OF JOTHAM, KING OF JUDAH (742-732 B.C.)** (2 Kings 15,32-38)
The selectivity of the deuteronomistic writers is apparent in this brief notice on the reign of Jotham. We learn only that Jotham built the Upper Gate of the Temple and that he was attacked by Rezin of Aram, and Pekah of Israel. This attack is the beginning of the Syro-Ephraimite war. Israel and Aram joined forces in order to fight the Assyrians, but Judah refuses to join this coalition and war results.

**REIGN OF AHAZ, KING OF JUDAH (732-715 B.C.)** (2 Kings 16,1-20)
The interest of the deuteronomistic writers in the Temple is apparent in their more extended treatment of the reign of Ahaz. Most of the account of his reign is a description of the installation of a new altar into the Temple. The altar was constructed according to the design of an altar that the king had seen in Damascus, but we are not told what motivated the king to have this altar built. Ahaz had sought and received the help of Assyria in his battle with Israel and Aram (the Syro-Ephraimite war), and did send money taken from the Temple to Assyria in payment for that help, but it is not certain that he was obligated to make changes in the Temple because of his relationship to Assyria. For the deuteronomistic writers the introduction of this altar is a corruption of the worship in the Temple and Ahaz receives a harsh condemnation from them. He is compared to the kings of Israel and is accused of introducing the religious practices of Canaan into Judah.

**REIGN OF HOSHEA AND THE END OF ISRAEL (732-722 B.C.)** (2 Kings 17,1-6)
We do not know why the deuteronomistic evaluation of Hoshea's reign is not as negative as the evaluation of other kings of Israel. His vassalship, conspiracy with Egypt, and refusal to pay tribute, which lead to the destruction of Israel and the exile of its people are simply recorded. The interpretation of these events is found in the lengthy expression of deuteronomistic theology which follows (verses 7-23.34-41).

**CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL AND WARNING TO JUDAH** (2 Kings 17,7-41)
In 17,7-20 the deuteronomistic writers account for the downfall of Israel in familiar terms: Israel engaged in pagan worship, it did not repent in spite of repeated warnings from the prophets, therefore the nation was defeated and its people exiled. Throughout the Books of Kings the overriding sin of Israel has been the sin of Jeroboam, but this is alluded to as the cause of the fall only in verses 21-23. The sins listed in verses 7-20 are more characteristic of Judah as recorded in the Books of Kings than of Israel. Under the guise of indicting Israel, the deuteronomistic writers issue a warning to Judah: if Judah continues to engage in pagan practices, the country will be punished for its sins as was Israel.

The incident in 17,24-33 is used by the deuteronomistic writers to reiterate the importance of exclusive worship of the LORD (verses 34-39). If Judah is to hope for deliverance, it must fear the LORD, serve the LORD, and obey the LORD.

## The Kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 18,1—25,30)

The final section of the Books of Kings covers the reigns of the kings of Judah after the fall of Israel in 722/721 B.C. Hezekiah and Josiah receive unqualified praise from the deuteronomistic writers for their reforms of the cult; because these reforms failed to have any lasting effect, however, Judah, like Israel, will be destroyed. Though the thrust of the history is negative, it ends on a positive note: the release of Jehoiachin from jail.

### REIGN OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH (715–686 B.C.) (2 Kings 18,1—20,21)

It is difficult to reconstruct the historical events referred to during the reign of Hezekiah. Not only does this account draw upon different and sometimes conflicting sources, but the account cannot be harmonized with Assyrian accounts of the same event. According to Assyrian documents, Hezekiah was a key figure in a coalition that opposed vassalship to Assyria. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, destroys that coalition. He captured forty-six cities of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. Hezekiah paid tribute to Assyria and for this the city of Jerusalem was spared. Hezekiah remained a vassal of Assyria throughout the remainder of his reign. The account in 2 Kings gives the impression that Hezekiah was the victor and that Jerusalem was miraculously spared.

The perspective taken in 2 Kings can be seen as an attempt by the deuteronomistic writers to present the events in conformity with their theological purpose. The cultic reform of Hezekiah fulfills the condition for deliverance set out in 17,34-39. By ridding the Temple of any pagan elements, Hezekiah shows that he fears the LORD and worships the LORD alone. The challenge of the Assyrian official (18,29-35) and the king himself (19,10-13) takes up the issue of deliverance and the power of any god to deliver a nation from Assyrian rule. The power of the LORD over Assyria and the LORD's approval of Hezekiah's reform is demonstrated by the deliverance of Jerusalem. The fact of Hezekiah's continued vassalship to Assyria is ignored by the deuteronomistic writers.

Into this account is interwoven the assurance from the prophet Isaiah that Jerusalem will not be destroyed (19,5-7.21-34). The fulfillment of the prophetic word in 19,35-37 is intended to show that the LORD delivered Judah even though the fulfillment does not conform exactly to the words of Isaiah in 19,7. The king of Assyria is assassinated (verse 37), but not until 681 B.C., twenty years after he abandoned his siege of Jerusalem.

In the final two stories concerning Hezekiah, the prophet Isaiah figures prominently. Acting more like Elijah than like the prophet Isaiah of the Book of Isaiah, he heals the king. This healing shows the LORD's blessing upon Hezekiah for his faithfulness. Isaiah's reaction to Hezekiah's meeting with the king of Babylon shows that the doom awaiting Judah cannot be avoided (19,17).

### REIGN OF MANASSEH, KING OF JUDAH (686–642 B.C.) (2 Kings 21,1-18)

In accordance with deuteronomistic theological principles punishment is always the result of sin. The reforms of Hezekiah and later Joseph direct the nation away from the sin of idolatry, but in the end Jerusalem was destroyed so there must have been a king whose evil outweighed the positive effects of the reforms. For the deuteronomistic writers that king is Manasseh, who is condemned in the strongest possible terms. He counters whatever good was achieved by the reform of Hezekiah and reintroduces into the land pagan practices that turn the people from the LORD. The extent of his evil is so great that even Josiah's reform cannot offset the punishment willed by the LORD. It is not possible to reconstruct the events of Manasseh's long reign (the text

puts this at fifty-five years [21,1] but external evidence suggests forty-five years as more likely), but we do know that Manasseh was a loyal vassal of Assyria and probably made accommodations in worship to gain Assyrian favor. Any accommodation to pagan practices is seen by the deuteronomistic writers as a direct challenge to exclusive worship of the LORD and cannot go without punishment.

**REIGN OF AMON, KING OF JUDAH (642–640 B.C.)** (2 Kings 21,19-26)
Amon receives a negative evaluation from the deuteronomistic writers for he continues the policies of his father. It may be that growing dissatisfaction with accommodation to Assyria was the reason for his assassination.

**REIGN OF JOSIAH, KING OF JUDAH (640–609 B.C.)** (2 Kings 22,1—23,30)
Josiah receives unqualified praise from the deuteronomistic writers for the reform that he initiates. This reform takes place when the Assyrian empire is on the decline, but only the religious significance of Josiah's actions is of concern to the deuteronomistic writers. The discovery, authentication, and implementation of the law code, found while repairing the Temple, is of great importance in the course of Josiah's reform and as the basis for deuteronomistic theology. The authentication of the scroll by Huldah the prophetess indicates the importance of the prophet as God's agent in a moment of crisis.

The thoroughness of the reform is indicated by the lengthy treatment of Josiah's purge of pagan elements from the cult in Jerusalem and Judah, and the extension of the reform into the northern territory. The prophetic word of 1 Kings 13 is fulfilled when Josiah desecrates the shrine at Bethel. However, in spite of the very positive presentation of Josiah's reform, the sin of Manasseh still leads inexorably to punishment. The promise of Josiah's reign ends with his death in battle.

**REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, KING OF JUDAH (609 B.C.)** (2 Kings 23,31-34)
Jehoahaz reigned only three months. He was deposed by the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, and Jehoiakim was put on the throne as a vassal of Egypt.

**REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM, KING OF JUDAH (609–598 B.C.)** (2 Kings 23,36—24,7)
During the reign of Jehoiakim, Egyptian vassalship is replaced by Babylonian vassalship. During this period Judah vacillates between allegiance to Babylon and turning to Egypt for assistance in rebelling against Babylon. This vacillation brings Babylon to Jerusalem in a punitive attack. The deuteronomistic writers see only the relationship between the sin of Manasseh and the inevitable destruction of Judah.

**REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN, KING OF JUDAH (598 B.C.)** (2 Kings 24,8-17)
Jehoiachin's reign is cut short by a Babylonian invasion in 597 B.C. Prominent and powerful citizens are exiled with the king to lessen the chances for rebellion in the future.

**REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH (597–586) AND THE END OF JUDAH** (2 Kings 24,18—25,7)
Zedekiah is put on the throne by Babylon. His rebellion against Babylon leads to the destruction of Jerusalem, including the Temple. The account affirms that these events are the actions of the LORD in bringing the promised punishment to pass. The capture and fate of the king, the destruction of the Temple and of all important buildings, the execution of officials, the removal of vessels from the Temple, all these events show that in the land of Judah there is no hope. Only with the exiles in Babylon will hope be found.

**JUDAH AFTER THE BABYLONIAN CONQUEST** (2 Kings 25,8-26)
A fuller account of these events is given in Jeremiah 40,7—41,18. Gedaliah is appointed governor by the Babylonians and rules but a short time before he is assassinated. The assassination of Gedaliah serves to underscore the hopelessness of the situation in Judah.

**JEHOIACHIN RELEASED (561 B.C.)** (2 Kings 25,27-30)
The release of Jehoiachin from prison contrasts with the harsh treatment of Zedekiah. As the last event recorded in the Book of Kings, it points to hope for those in exile in Babylon.

## Continuing Significance of the Books of Kings

Certainly the Books of Kings affirm that the LORD is neither a capricious nor an unjust God; but the history was not written simply to justify the actions of the LORD in the punishment of Israel and Judah. It was written to teach Israel what is necessary to lay a foundation for a new community: absolute loyalty to the LORD. Only in an uncompromising fidelity to its God will Israel, and by extension all who affirm the LORD as God, find their true destiny. Punishment is understood, then, not as the end, but as an opportunity for a new beginning. P.A.V.

## Further reading

These commentaries give the beginner an introduction to the issues surrounding the Books of Kings.

Conroy, Charles. *1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings: with an Excursus on Davidic Dynasty and Holy City Zion.* Old Testament Message, 6. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983.

Laffey, Alice. *First Kings, Second Kings.* Collegeville Bible Commentary. Old Testament, 9. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985.

Robinson, J. *The First Book of Kings.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. London: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

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A more detailed analysis of the content of the Books of Kings can be found in the commentaries listed below:

Cogan, Mordechai, and Tadmore, Hayim. *II Kings.* The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988.

DeVries, Simon J. *1 Kings.* Word Biblical Commentary, v. 12. Waco, TX: Word, 1985.

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Long, Burke O. *1 Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature.* Forms of the Old Testament Library, v. 9. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984.

The Books of Kings are explored from a pastoral and theological perspective in these books:

Brueggemann, Walter. *1 Kings.* Knox Preaching Guides. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982.

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# THE CHRONICLER'S HISTORY AND THE LATER HISTORIES

LESLIE J. HOPPE

## 1 CHRONICLES □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 408–439 of the Old Testament*]

### The Chronicler's History of Israel

As the "introduction" to this book notes (OT, p. 408), the First Book of Chronicles is part of a larger work that includes the Second Book of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. This larger work, the Chronicler's history, begins with Adam (1 Chr 1,1) and concludes with the writer's own day: the fifth century following the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple after the Babylonian Exile that lasted from 587 to 539 B.C.

Like Genesis 1, the Chronicler's history begins with Adam yet it repeats none of the familiar stories found in the Priestly history. The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are almost completely without narrative material. The text is little more than genealogical lists that the author gleaned from biblical texts and other sources available to him. The narrative proper begins with the story of Saul's death and burial (10,1-14). Perhaps this is the Chronicler's way of stating that it is with David, Saul's successor as king, that Israel's story really begins (see note to 1,1—9,34, OT, p. 409).

Like the Deuteronomic history of Israel (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, with Deuteronomy as its preface), the Chronicler's history tells the story of the Israelite kingdoms and their fall. The Deuteronomic history tries to explain why these kingdoms fell. Its views on how Israel might secure its future are not so easy to determine, though the Deuteronomist certainly believed that there was a future for Israel as God's people. Though the Chronicler also tells the story of Israel's past, it is clear that the real purpose of the work is to sketch out the prospects for Israel's future.

For the Chronicler legitimacy of restored Judah's cultic institutions and continuity with the past are what count. One aim of the work is to defend the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty and the Temple of Jerusalem. Another purpose of the Chronicler's work is to show that Israel can secure its future by continuing to worship God according to the pattern set by David. The

Chronicler tried to present the Judah of his day as a worshiping community that was a direct extension of the worshiping community that God established centuries before through David. Its social and religious structures were precisely those that David created at the command of God. Israel's hope, then, did not reside in the revelation that a messiah could offer sometime in the future. Israel could secure its future by the careful observance of the cultic institutions revealed by God to David, handed down by Judah's priests, and kept alive by the remnant that survived the exile and returned to Jerusalem. For the Chronicler, the exile was little more than an unfortunate interruption in the otherwise unbroken history of Judah as a worshiping community.

## Position in the Canon

The Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) entitled the Books of Chronicles *Paraleipomenon* (that is, "that which was left out"). [This was also the name for Chronicles used in the Douay-Rheims version and some other Roman Catholic versions.] Evidently those responsible for the Septuagint considered Chronicles a kind of supplement to the Books of Samuel and Kings. Perhaps that is why the Septuagint places Chronicles immediately following Kings. Jerome followed this order in the Vulgate (his Latin translation of the Bible). English Bibles used by both Protestant and Catholic Christians also follow this order.

The placement of these books differs in Bibles used by Jews. In Christian Bibles, the Old Testament ends with the prophets. The final text is Malachi's prophecy of the return of Elijah, who will announce the "day of the Lord" (Mal 3, 23f). The Church reads a messianic meaning in this text and, following the lead of the New Testament, identifies John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus as the returning Elijah (Mt 11,11-14; 17,11-13). A prophecy regarding the precursor of the Messiah is the perfect way to lead into the story of Jesus' birth with which the New Testament begins.

In the Hebrew Bible as arranged by the rabbis, the prophetic books follow the Books of Moses (the Torah or the Pentateuch), since the early rabbis viewed the prophets as expositors of the Torah. The rabbinic Bible has a third division, called the Writings that is a miscellaneous collection of books that belong neither to the Torah nor the Prophets. The last books of this collection are 1 and 2 Chronicles. Thus the Hebrew Bible ends with the decree of Cyrus (2 Chr 36,23) that calls for the people of Judah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. For two millennia then, religious Jews scattered throughout the world have found that the last words of their Bible were a call to return to Jerusalem (see also the note to 2 Chr 36,22f, OT, p. 475).

## Reading the Book

The First Book of Chronicles has a very simple arrangement. The first nine chapters (1,1—9,34) contain genealogical lists. The rest of the book narrates the story of David (9,35—29,30).

### Genealogical Lists: (1 Chr 1,1—9,34)

The genealogies of Chronicles represent an extraordinary achievement by the author. The genealogical lists extend from Adam (1,1) to the returnees from the Babylonian Exile (9,2-34). The author uses the genealogies from the Book of Genesis in his own tables that begin with the descent from Adam to Abraham and his sons (1,1-27; see Gn 5; 10; 11). From there the focus is

on the twelve sons of Jacob (1,28—2,2). Once the genealogy reaches Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons, the Chronicler arrives at the centerpiece of his presentation: David (see note to 2,3—4,23, p. 410). There is a genealogy of Judah down to David and his relatives (2,3-17) along with lateral branches of the descendants of Judah (2,18-55; 4,1-23). Chapter 3 lists David's descendants, all the Davidic kings and their descendants into the postexilic period.

The genealogies of the other tribes follow (4,23—8,40). These lists are not as extensive as the one for Judah except for the genealogy of the tribe of Levi (5,27—6,6; see note to 5,27—6,66, p. 414). Another interest of the Chronicler was the priestly tribe of Levi and the cult in which they ministered. Genealogies of Saul's descendants (8,33-40; 9,35-44) frame a list of those who returned from the Babylonian Exile (9,1-34).

The impression left from reading these genealogies is that the true beginning of Israel was not at Sinai with the giving of the Torah, as the Priestly Document would have it, but with the rise of David. The Chronicler's unique appreciation for David and his achievements becomes clear in the next section of the book.

## The History of David's Reign: (1 Chr 10,1—29,30)

This section begins with a report on Saul's death and burial (10,1-12), together with a short editorial comment on the dangers Saul's reign posed for Israel because Saul was not faithful to God (see note to 10,13f, p. 420). For the Chronicler, Saul is little more than a foil for David, whose portrait the Chronicler painted with the strokes of piety and fidelity.

The Chronicler does not always include details about David's rise to power from the Deuteronomic history (2 Sm 1–20), which was one of the sources he used. This is especially true when these diverge from the image of David that the Chronicler wishes to create. First Chronicles wishes to make his version of David's rise to power (11–16) even more impressive than the version in 2 Samuel. For example, 2 Samuel 2,4 states that "the men of Judah" anointed David as the king of their tribe following Saul's death. David ruled over Judah for seven years before the elders of Israel chose him as king over the rest of the tribes (2 Sm 5,1-5). The Chronicler, however, states that "all Israel" made David king immdiately following Saul's death (1 Chr 11,1-3). While the Deuteronomic historian portrays David's decision to bring the Ark into Jerusalem as a decision made by David alone (2 Sm 6,1f), the Chronicler describes the same event as an act sanctioned by all the people (1 Chr 13,1-5). The story of the Ark's entrance into Jerusalem highlights the role of the Levites. David appoints them to carry the Ark into the city (1 Chr 15,11-15). Since David also commissioned them to be singers in the temple (1 Chr 15,16-22), they sing a psalm (1 Chr 16,7-36). The Ark narrative in the Deuteronomic history (2 Sm 4–5) does not contain these details.

The Chronicler devotes the rest of David's story (Chapters 17–29) to the plans for the building of the Temple, which Solomon will carry out. This, of course, makes Solomon a central figure in the Chronicler's story (see note to 22,2ff, OT, p. 431). None of the negative features of the Deuteronomic version of the story of David and Solomon are part of the Chronicler's text. For example, the Chronicler omits the entire story of how Solomon succeeded David as king (2 Sm 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2) from his narrative. The Chronicler says nothing about David's adultery with Bathsheba and the events that followed it, including Nathan's condemnation of David (2 Sm 12,1-12). Similarly the Chronicler makes no mention of the two revolts against David (see 2 Sm 15–18; 20,1-22).

Solomon's role is to complete the work begun by David (1 Chr 22; 28; 29). The Chroni-

cler's story of Solomon's succession to David appears to be a deliberate effort to imitate the account of the transition from Moses to Joshua that make up Deuteronomy 21 and Joshua 1. The Chronicler considered Solomon's succession to David's throne as important as Joshua's succession to the Mosaic office.

## The Establishment of the Temple

The Chronicler paints the portraits of David and Solomon so as to underscore their respective roles in the establishment of the Temple and its liturgy. Worship then is one of the Chronicler's principal concerns. The God who is present in Judah's experience evokes a response in worship from the people whose destiny this God guides. The Chronicler tries to show that Judah's future is dependent upon its fidelity to the proper forms of worship that God has revealed through David. There is a reciprocal relationship between God and Judah. God blesses Judah and Judah worships God.

For the Chronicler, the Temple and its liturgy were symbols of God's continuing presence among the people of Judah. As long as the priests offered the correct sacrifices at the appropriate times in the presence of a grateful people, the Lord would dwell in Judah's midst. For the Chronicler, the history of Israel was not a series of unrelated actions by kings and prophets. Its nucleus was the cult which the descendants of the priests appointed by Moses and David directed. The Chronicler recognized that there were times when Judah's sin prevented the proper execution of the cult, but Judah's sin was never fatal. Judah was always able to recover, reinstate the proper cult, and be certain of God's abiding presence. The only way to avoid disaster in the future was to maintain the cult which insured that the relationship between God and Judah was all that it should be.

## The Importance of the Temple

For proper worship of the Lord, a Temple is indispensable. Like the Deuteronomists, the Chronicler recognizes the legitimacy of only one temple—the Temple at Jerusalem. At the time of the composition of the Chronicler's history, the worshippers of the Lord were not unanimous in recognizing Jerusalem's Temple as the only legitimate place of worship. There was a temple dedicated to the Lord in Samaria, and at Elephantine (a Jewish military colony located on an island near the modern city of Aswan in Egypt). In telling the story of the Northern Kingdom, the Chronicler does not even choose to mention the sanctuaries at Dan or Bethel that Jeroboam I built (see 1 Kgs 12,26-29). For the Chronicler there could be only one Temple. David built this Temple under the same kind of divine guidance that led Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness. The Lord gave David the plans for the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Chr 28,19). The Chronicler considered sacrifice at any other place to be illegitimate.

## The Temple Personnel

Chapters 23–27 appear to be intrusive in the Chronicler's story about David and Solomon and are probably later additions. First Chronicles 23 deals with Levitical class; Chapter 24 with priestly classes; Chapter 25 with Levitical singers; Chapter 26 with the gatekeepers of the Temple, and Chapter 27 with army commanders, tribal leaders, and royal advisers.

The texts on the Temple personnel are important for the Chronicler's general purpose. Not only is the proper place for worshiping God crucial but so is having the proper personnel to officiate at the rites (see also 2 Chr 13). The Chronicler provides quite a lot of detail about the

people whom God chose to officiate at the liturgy in Jerusalem. At one time, any male Israelite could offer sacrificial worship. Gradually, however, members of the tribe of Levi became the preferred ministers of the ritual. The Book of Ezekiel and the Priestly document of the Pentateuch made a distinction between members of this tribe. Some were priests who were able to offer sacrifice; the rest were simply "Levites" who did several menial tasks connected with the ritual. The Chronicler maintained the distinction between the priests and the Levites.

## The Priests

Though the Chronicler recognized the priests as the chief religious officials, there are clear indications that he did not regard them too highly (2 Chr 29,34; 30,3). Among the duties of the priests, there was the responsibility to blow the trumpets (1 Chr 16,6), to minister in the inner sanctuary (2 Chr 5,14), to offer sacrifice on the altar (2 Chr 29,21), to burn incense (2 Chr 26,18). Though the Deuteronomist recognized that others besides members of the tribe of Levi could serve as priests, the Chronicler makes no exception other than David himself. For example, the Deuteronomist relates that David's sons were priests (2 Sm 8,18), but in a parallel passage (1 Chr 18,17), the Chronicler calls them "chief assistants to the king" [see the note to 18,17, OT, p. 428]. The Chronicler does depict David as exercising priestly prerogatives: he wore priestly vestments (1 Chr 15,27), he blessed the people (16,2) and he offered sacrifice (16,26). David, however, was the only exception.

## The Levites

The Chronicler asserts that the Levites did more than a few menial chores connected with the liturgy of the temple. They carried the Ark (1 Chr 15,15). They were singers (15,16-22) and gatekeepers (15,23). The Levites fulfilled all their responsibilities under the direction of priests (1 Chr 23,27-32). The Levites were a type of "lower clergy." They also had roles that were not directly related to worship. The Levites were judges (2 Chr 19,8.11), prophets (2 Chr 20,14f), fund raisers (2 Chr 24,5; 34,9).

## Temple Slaves

The Chronicler also describes a third group of religious personnel: the "temple slaves" (Ezr 8,20). The Chronicler mentions them only a few times in his history. They were the lowest class of cultic functionaries (Neh 7,72) and their task was to help the Levites (Ezr 8,20).

## Roman Catholic Priesthood

The sacrament of Orders in the Roman Catholic Church is largely a part of our heritage from ancient Israel. The rituals of ordination recognize this heritage. The division of orders in the Roman Catholic Church into the episcopacy, presbyterate, and diaconate mirrors to some extent the Chronicler's division of temple personnel into priests, Levites, and temple slaves. Of course the status, role, and interrelationships of the orders in the Church are different from those of the Old Testament's cultic personnel, yet the concern in the Church for a hierarchy among the people directly concerned with worship is similar to that of the Chronicler.

There is not a single instance in the New Testament of anyone called a "priest" presiding at Christian worship. It is the Chronicler who tries to make the reader sensitive to the presence of God in the act of sacrificial worship led by "official" ministers. For the Chronicler the priests and Levites were those through whom God's abiding presence among the people was evident. The

rituals which they conducted were a source of blessing for the people and an act of devotion to their God. The Chronicler's God was not a hidden God. The people experienced God in worship more than anywhere else. It should be clear that the value that the Church places on the liturgy and priesthood finds a strong support in the Chronicler's history. L.J.H.

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# 2 CHRONICLES □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 439–476 of the Old Testament*]

## Chronicles and the Israelite Kingdoms

The Second Book of Chronicles continues the story of Israel with the accession of Solomon to the throne of David. Comparing the way Chronicles tells this story with the narratives in the Deuteronomic history (1 and 2 Kgs) helps to see the purpose of the Chronicler. For example, after Solomon's death and the breakup of the Davidic-Solomonic empire into the two national states of Israel and Judah, the Chronicler all but ignores the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and its kings. He focuses his attention on the Southern Kingdom (Judah). The Chronicler mentions Israel only when the story of Judah makes it necessary to do so. By contrast, throughout the Deuteronomic narrative about the two kingdoms, the author makes continual attempts to synchronize the reigns of the kings in the south with those in the north (for example, 1 Kgs 15,1.9.25.33). In 2 Chronicles there is only one such synchronization: 2 Chronicles 13,1. The Chronicler wishes to focus on the Davidic dynasty and what was, in his opinion, its finest achievement: the Temple in Jerusalem.

## Reading the Book

### Solomon

The story of Solomon (2 Chr 1–9) deals exclusively with the building of the Temple as envisioned by David. Again the Chronicler does not repeat the negative aspects of Solomon's story that the Deuteronomic historian includes. For example, the Chronicler omits the details about how Solomon secured his throne through the execution of potential opponents, including his half brother Adonijah (1 Kgs 2). Also unmentioned is Solomon's marriage to the daughter of

Pharaoh (1 Kgs 3,1) that the Deuteronomist viewed as a compromise of the exclusive loyalty that Solomon owed to the God of Israel. In his description of the wealth and glory of the Temple, the Chronicler goes beyond the words of the Deuteronomist (compare 2 Chr 3–4 with 1 Kgs 6–8). After Solomon's prayer of dedication, fire falls from heaven and consumes the sacrifice. God's glory fills the temple (2 Chr 7,1f). Here the Chronicler models the story of the Temple's dedication on that of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex 40,34f). Throughout the description of Solomon's achievement in building and dedicating the Temple, the Chronicler reminds his readers of David's preparations (2,6.13.16; 3,1; 5,1; 6,3-11). In the eyes of the Chronicler, the Temple was the combined enterprise of David and Solomon, who each made his own contribution to the completion of this great work.

## The Kingdom of Judah

The remaining chapters of the book (10–36) rehearse the history of Judah to the Babylonian Exile from the singular perspective of the Chronicler. The Chronicler passes over much detail important to the Deuteronomic historian without a mention because of his special purpose. On the other hand, the Chronicler mentions various building activities, military and administrative matters that the Deuteronomist ignores. Most of these reports occur in passages about kings the Chronicler evaluates positively.

Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, builds fortifications (11, 5-12) at the beginning of his career. His failure to remain completely faithful to the Law of God results in the partial conquest of his realm by the Pharaoh Shishak (12,1-5). The Chronicler is favorable to Abijah, Rehoboam's successor, in contrast to the Deuteronomist, who calls him Abijam (1 Kgs 15,1-8). At the outset of a war he wages against the Northern Kingdom, Abijah addresses a long theological speech to his opponents. In it he states that the legitimate cult of Judah guarantees its victory over Israel because Israel has forsaken the true worship of the Lord (2 Chr 13,4-12).

Both Asa and Jehosophat, Judah's next two kings, receive a positive evaluation from the Chronicler, who recounts their building, military, and cultic projects (14,5—15,15; 17,6-9; 19,4—20,30). According to the Chronicler, then, the first four kings that ruled Judah following the breakup of the Davidic-Solomonic empire were, for the most part, conscientious, qualified, and loyal to the Lord.

Following the lead of the Deuteronomist, the Chronicler rates other kings from the Davidic dynasty positively: Uzziah (2 Chr 26,4; see 2 Kgs 15,3 which calls him Azariah; see also the note to 2 Kgs 14,21, OT, p. 393), Jotham (2 Chr 27,2; see 2 Kgs 15, 34), Hezekiah (2 Chr 29, 2; see 2 Kgs 18, 3) and Josiah (2 Chr 34, 2; see 2 Kgs 22,2).

Chapters 29–31 describe a thoroughgoing reform of the cult under Hezekiah. This reform included a confession of past neglect of the cult (2 Chr 29,5-11), the cleansing of the Temple (29,16f) and the celebration of the Passover. Hezekiah invited the northerners who survived the Assyrian conquest to join the people of Judah in the renewal of the convenant (30,1-9). The Deuteronomic account of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kgs 18–20) says little about Hezekiah's reform because the Deuteronomist wishes to portray Josiah as a second David who restored the covenant (2 Kgs 22–23). The Chronicler here recalls a reform of the cult that was unprecedented since the time of David.

In another striking contrast to the Deuteronomist, who portrays Manasseh as the most evil of all kings, one whose sins were responsible for the fall of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kgs 21,1-18), the Chronicler speaks about Manesseh's conversion that led to his cultic reforms (2 Chr

33,11-17). This inspired the apocryphal work known as the *Prayer of Manasseh,* a second-century B.C. work that is a classic of penitential devotion. [Although Jerome included a translation of this work in the Vulgate, the Council of Trent decided not to include the Prayer of Manasseh in the canon of the Old Testament.]

The Chronicler's version of Josiah's reform (2 Chr 34–35) has Josiah conducting his reform in several stages. This probably reflects the actual event more accurately than the account in 2 Kings 22–23 that telescopes all the activities of the reform into a single year (see the note to 34,3, OT, p. 472).

The Chronicler evaluates the last three kings of Judah (Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah) negatively (2 Chr 36,5-14). After an editorial comment explaining the cause of the exile (36,15-21), the book ends with the decree of Cyrus that calls for the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of its Temple (36,22-23).

## The Purpose of the Chronicler

Why did the Chronicler bother to retell the story of the monarchy in the South? After all, there already existed a history of the Davidic dynasty (the Deuteronomic history) which the Chronicler used as one of his sources. When we look more deeply, however, we can see that the basic purpose of this new version of the story of David and his dynasty was to show that the Jerusalem community that was in the process of reestablishing itself following the exile was the successor of that dynasty. In the eyes of the Chronicler, the one lasting contribution of the Davidic monarchy was the Temple, its rituals and its priesthood. Once the people rebuilt the Temple and reinstituted its cult, the essential elements of Jewish life were in place. According to the Chronicler, David and Solomon combined forces to establish a divinely ordained liturgy in Jerusalem. The people, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, have reestablished that same cult. In the Chronicler's scheme, the reestablishment of the monarchy was not as crucial as the reestablishment of the cult of the Lord in Jerusalem. The people who supported the Temple and its cult have fulfilled all the important tasks of monarchy.

## The Theology of the Chronicler

The Chronicler's account of the ancient Israelite monarchy differs markedly from that of the Deuteronomic historian as found in the Books of Samuel and Kings. Although the Chronicler used these books as sources for his own work, he reinterpreted the material in them in order to provide his readers with a new understanding of the Davidic dynasty. While the Deuteronomist emphasizes the failure of the dynasty, the Chronicler puts the dynasty in the best possible light. The Chronicler wants to assure his readers that Judah's future depends upon the cult of the Lord as practiced in the Temple that David planned and Solomon built and that most of their successors tried to maintain.

There may have been political considerations at work in the Chronicler's telling of the story of Judah's monarchy. Determining this depends upon the question of dating the Books of Chronicles. The "introduction" to First Chronicles dates these books to "the end of the fifth century B.C." [OT, p. 408]. At this time, relations between the people of Judah and the people of the former Northern Kingdom were strained. Apparently the Northerners were attempting to exert political control over Judah. This caused the animosity that grew over the years and

continued into the New Testament period. The people of Judah came to regard the Northerners, whom they called "Samaritans" after their ancient capital Samaria, as apostates. Both theological and political considerations combined to lead the Chronicler to reinterpret the history of Israel's monarchy in the way he did. He believed that the future of Judah depended on its absolute commitment to the authentic worship of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple.

## Jews and Samaritans

The Books of Chronicles reflect one stage in the division that arose between the Jews and the Samaritans. Historical reconstruction has not been able to identify any sudden and dramatic act that divided the two groups irrevocably. According to Samaritan sources, the division took place at the end of the period of the judges (eleventh century B.C.) when Eli left Shechem and established a high-priestly line at Shiloh. According to the biblical tradition (2 Kgs 17), the separation took place in the eighth century B.C. when the people of the former Northern Kingdom intermarried with foreign peoples whom the Assyrians introduced into their territory. Although it is not possible to treat either of these two accounts as straight history, they do point to important concerns. In the Chronicler's perspective, the Samaritans did not have the true priesthood (2 Chr 13,9) and therefore their cult was worthless.

Aside from the polemics of Jewish and Samaritan sources, the Samaritans were one example of the rich diversity in early Judaism. Their religious traditions developed independently of the leadership of the community that arose around the priests of Jerusalem. Other examples of the variety of religious perspectives in early Judaism include the *hasidim,* the Essenes, and the Pharisees. An important moment in this development was the building of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerezim (near Shechem) sometime in the early Hellenistic period (late fourth century B.C.). It was the building of this temple by the Samaritans and its later destruction by the Jewish king John Hyrcanus in 128 B.C. that led to the definitive break between the Jews and the Samaritans.

It is within this context that one should read John 4 in which Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well in Shechem. Her comments reflect the religious and historical conflicts between her people and the Jews. Jesus, of course, says that there will come a day when true worship of God will transcend the conflict between Jew and Samaritan (Jn 4,21).

The Chronicler's attitude toward those outside the community that worshiped the Lord centered on Jerusalem offers a striking example of an unwillingness to accept too great a diversity among those who considered themselves to be worshipers of the Lord. The reasons for the Chronicler's attitude are complex. In part they were political and economic. Apparently the province of Samaria wanted to control Jerusalem while the leadership of the Jerusalem community wished to remain independent of such control. In part the reasons were religious and liturgical. Although the people in the north wished to help with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple (Ezr 4,2), the Judahites refused their help. Perhaps they did not believe that the northerners were sincere because of their continued use of the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel. The Judahites considered the cult at these sanctuaries to be illegitimate. In part the reasons for the rift were historical. The Israelite tribes in the north and the south developed somewhat independently of one another and the northerners cherished this independence fiercely. The union between North and South under David and Solomon was an exceptional interlude.

Whatever the reasons for the Chronicler's attitude toward the northerners who considered themselves to be authentic worshipers of the Lord, it was decidedly negative. It contributed to the rift between Jew and Samaritan that has lasted into the present.

The Chronicler's approach to the problem of religious diversity was understandable given the political and religious realities of the fourth century B.C. The rigid application of the directives of Ezra and Nehemiah and the intensity of the Chronicler's rhetoric (see 2 Chr 13, 4-12) made it difficult for succeeding generations to overcome the division between Jew and Samaritan. Indeed further divisions occurred within the Jewish community. The Essenes opposed the Hasmoneans. The Pharisees disputed with the Sadducees. The Herodians fought with the Zealots. In the middle of all this, Christianity emerged. Eventually, because of historical circumstances, the Pharisaic party survived the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and was the precursor of rabbinic Judaism. The Kairites of Babylon refused to accept the authority of the rabbis. Even within Judaism today, some Orthodox rabbis do not accept the legitimacy of Conservative and Reform Judaism. The Chronicler did not succeed in eliminating religious diversity among those who considered themselves worshipers of the Lord.

## Relationships among Christian Churches

Until the Second Vatican Council, the attitude of Catholics towards other Christians was similar to the lack of tolerance that the Chronicler showed towards religious diversity. One of the principal concerns of the Council was promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians (*Decree on Ecumenism,* 1). Like the Chronicler, who is in part responsible for the rift between Jew and Samaritan, the Catholic Church, according to the Council, shares in responsibility for the divisions among Christian churches (*Decree on Ecumenism,* 3). One way to overcome these divisions is through dialogue that leads to a knowledge and appreciation of the doctrine and religious life of the many Christian churches.

Of the two main kinds of division within the Christian community, that which separates the East from the West resembles the separation between Jew and Samaritan that developed in the last four centuries before Christ. Although there were tensions between East and West for a long time, these came to a head in A.D. 1054 with the excommunication of the Patriarch of Constantinople by the papal legate and the patriarch's consequent excommunication of the pope's delegate. Four centuries later, other divisions arose in western Christianity as a result of the Reformation. The differences between Christian churches are not simply theological but are also historical, political, sociological, cultural, and even psychological.

To help overcome these divisions within Christianity, the Council suggested that dialogue among Christian churches focus first on elements which the various Christian churches share: the Scriptures, belief in Christ, baptism and the Eucharist. The diversity of customs and doctrines will not then necessarily be obstacles to unity. We will recognize them as contributing to the Church's beauty, helpful adaptations to differences of culture, necessary for the good of the faithful.

To the Christian churches which today are struggling with the project of restoring the Church's unity, the Chronicler presents an object lesson regarding what can happen when concern for the survival of one religious community leads to a type of narrow exclusivism that ignores the values of other people's approach to God. The tasks of Ezra and Nehemiah and the duty of the Chronicler were clear: to ensure the survival of the small community of the Lord

surrounding Jerusalem whose continued existence was in doubt. They fulfilled their responsibilities. The responsibility of Christian churches is somewhat different today: to restore Christian unity. To make unity a possibility, Christians will need to be more willing to live with religious diversity than they have been. The Chronicler's hesitancy regarding religious diversity is understandable. Judaism was struggling for its very survival. Christianity today is not as beleaguered as was Judaism in the Chronicler's day. Achieving unity while respecting diversity should be easier for us.

L.J.H.

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# EZRA □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 476–487 of the Old Testament*]

## The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

This book and the Book of Nehemiah are the only narrative accounts of the postexilic period to have survived in the Hebrew Bible. Originally the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were a single work. The Book of Nehemiah does not even have its own title in Jewish Bibles. There is simply a marginal notation alongside Neh 1,1 which reads "The Book of Nehemiah." In most editions of the Septuagint (the second century B.C. Greek version of the Hebrew Bible), the two books form a unit.

The Vulgate (St. Jerome's translation of the Bible) separated the two books and this is how the separation came into our English Bibles. It was only during the sixteenth century A.D. that what was one book became two in Jewish Bibles (see the "introduction" to the Book of Ezra, OT, p. 476).

There is some internal evidence that these books form a coherent unit. The whole period of the restoration as covered by the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah is one great era of return and rebuilding framed by two celebrations of the Feast of Booths. (Booths was the fall harvest festival also known as Tabernacles and as Sukkoth, its Hebrew name.) The first celebration takes place after the return (Ezr 3,4) and the second after the rebuilding is complete (Neh 8,13-18). Both celebrations are in accord with what is "written" in Torah (Ezr 3,4; Neh 8,14.18).

## The Restoration

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the restoration of Judah following the years of exile in Babylon (587–539 B.C.). These books deal with two phases of the restoration. The first is the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the second is the reordering of Jewish life. The Temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. Determining the dates for the work of Ezra and Nehemiah, who were responsible for the reordering of Jewish life in Jerusalem, is one of the more perplexing problems for the historian of early Judaism. The problem centers on Ezra 7,7f and Nehemiah

2,1. The former asserts that Ezra's ministry began in the seventh year of Artaxerxes's reign while the latter states that Nehemiah's projects began in "the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes." There were, however, three Persian monarchs who had this name and who are potential candidates for the Artaxerxes mentioned in these texts.

The biblical text appears to assume that Ezra's ministry preceded that of Nehemiah. The chronological priority is due less to historical memory than to the Bible's view that Ezra was the real restorer of Jewish life following the exile. Although there is no real consensus on this issue, it is probable that Nehemiah's ministry preceded that of Ezra. Ezra's work appears to presuppose that the reconstruction and repopulation of Jerusalem had taken place, but it was Nehemiah who was responsible for restoring the city. Second the high priest during Nehemiah's time was Eliashib (Neh 3,1.20; 13,4) while the high priest during Ezra's time was the son of Eliashib, Johanan (Ezr 10,6; see note on this verse, OT, p. 486). The order and names of the postexilic high priests are additional problems for historians; still it seems likely that Nehemiah preceded Ezra. It is more likely that the restoration of communal life in Jerusalem preceded the restoration of religious life. Nehemiah, then, worked during the reign of Artaxerxes I and arrived in Jerusalem in 445 B.C. while Ezra worked during the reign of Artaxerxes II and arrived in Jerusalem in 398 B.C.

Clearly the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah do not give a reliable chronology of the restoration in Judah. Reconstructing this chronology is not very easy. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are more interested in presenting the religious dimension to the activities of the two men whose names they bear. Despite the many problems in reconciling the details of this narrative, the author of Ezra and Nehemiah achieved his principal goal: to describe the beginning of renewal in the life of Judah.

There are important political reasons that explain why Persian rulers expressed concern about conditions in Judah. The beginning of both Nehemiah's and Ezra's missions coincided with Egyptian revolts against Persian hegemony. It was important for the Persians to have a sympathetic if not supportive Judah in their rear as they moved against the rebellious Egyptians.

## Reading the Book of Ezra

The Book of Ezra falls into two parts covering the two periods of postexilic history. Chapters 1–6 cover the themes of the return from exile and the rebuilding the Temple. Chapters 7–10 describe the mission of Ezra to reconstitute Judah as a community living in accord with the Torah.

### The Return from Exile and Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezr 1,1—6,22)

**ARAMAIC**

The most striking feature of this section is not apparent to those who read it in translation. While the rest of the Book of Ezra is in Hebrew, 4,7—6,18 are in Aramaic. The reason for the use of Aramaic here is due to the author's citing of a few official Persian documents relating to the restoration of Judah. Aramaic was the common language of the diverse peoples that made up the empire and was the official language of the imperial administration. The alternation between Hebrew and Aramaic shows that the people for whom the author wrote were bilingual.

Originally Aramaic was the language of the Arameans. It is a Semitic language which is

akin to Hebrew. Because the Arameans were active in commercial affairs in the ancient Near East, the language became widely known. Aramaic came to be the language of diplomacy. According to 2 Kings 18,26, both the Assyrian and Judahite officers understood the language while the common people did not. By the sixth century B.C., however, it became the most commonly used Semitic language. It was in general use in Palestine until Greek became the language of commerce, government, and literary culture after the conquests of Alexander in the fourth century B.C. Aramaic, however, remained the language of the common people until the seventh century A.D. when Arabic replaced it. Aramaic was the language in which Jesus conversed, although he may have known Greek as well. Hebrew was not a language of everyday conversation. Rabbinic traditions, however, continued to be transmitted in Hebrew. The *Mishnah,* a collection of legal traditions, and the *Midrashim,* homiletic texts, were composed and transmitted in Hebrew. Because people did not regularly converse in Hebrew, however, it became necessary for Jews to make Aramaic versions of the Old Testament called the Targums. Aramaic is also the language of the Talmud (the compendium of Jewish law dating from the sixth century A.D.). It was not until the twentieth century that the Hebrew language was reborn and once again became a language of ordinary discourse in the modern State of Israel.

### THE RETURN OF THE EXILES

Chapters 1–3 cover the return from exile. First there is a proclamation made by Cyrus, king of Persia, that every exile from Judah who was ready to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its Temple should do so (1,1-4). Then the following verses describe the return itself (1,5-11). Chapter 2 gives a list of the returnees. At the top of the list is Zerubbabel, a member of the Davidic family, and Jeshua, a member of a prominent priestly family. In Chapter 3, these two play important roles in the revival of worship in Jerusalem. Sacrifices begin on a provisional altar (3,1-3). The people observe the Feast of Booths (3,4) and they initiate the regular sacrifices (3,5). Most important of all, they prepare for the rebuilding of the Temple (3,6-13).

There were problems with the rebuilding. The author lists these in 4,1—6,13. Opposition to the project came from "the enemies of Judah and Benjamin" (4,1) and "the people of the land" (4,4). Both groups tried to convince the Persians that the restoration of Jerusalem was an act of political disloyalty. In 4,7-23 there is opposition to rebuilding the walls of the city. In the end all opposition failed and the people of Judah successfully completed their project with the full support of the Persian imperial authorities (6,14.22).

## Ezra's Mission (Ezr 7,1—10,44).

### EZRA'S COMMISSION FROM THE PERSIAN EMPEROR

The account of Ezra's activity begins with Chapter 7 and concludes with Chapter 10 although Nehemiah 8 also mentions Ezra. Ezra 7–8 provide an account of Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. The genealogy in 7,1-5 shows that Ezra was a Zadokite priest [The Zadokite priests were those associated with the Jerusalem Temple in the preexilic period. Zadok was the priest who served David and Solomon.] He was an expert in the Torah (7,6) which the priests who were in exile developed while in Babylon. Another Aramaic document (the credentials that Artaxerxes gave to Ezra) takes up 7,12-26. This imperial commission includes information about contributions to the Temple in Jerusalem (vv. 13-25) and the order to reestablish Judahite

society based on the "law of God" (vv. 13-15.25). By their acceptance or rejection of the Torah, the Judahites define themselves as belonging to or rejecting membership in the Jewish community. The emperor granted Ezra power to establish an executive structure for the governance of the Jewish community. This means that in the view of the Persian government the priestly version of ancient Israel's ancestral faith was the "official" religion of Judah.

The account of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem begins with a list of those returning with him (8,1-14) and Ezra's persuading of the Levites who had been unwilling to make the journey (vv. 15-20). The author seems to have modeled the rest of the chapter on the description of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 14) and the crossing of the Jordan and the occupation of the land (Jos 3–4).

### THE PROBLEM OF MIXED MARRIAGES

The remaining two chapters deal with Jews who have married outside their religious community (9,1). Ezra finds their behavior unacceptable and recites a long penitential prayer on their behalf (9,5-15). The people decide to set matters straight (10,1-3) and they ask Ezra for help (10,4-6). After a public assembly takes place, a special commission begins work (10,7-17). It produces a list of those who married Gentiles (10,18-44). The text of 10,44 does not make sense in Hebrew ["and there were from them wives and they put sons"]. The translators based their rendering of this text on the LXX (standard abbreviation for the Septuagint). The Hebrew text is unclear about the action taken in this matter, but some Jewish men probably divorced their non-Jewish wives in response to Ezra's urging.

### EXCLUSIVISM IN EZRA

In denouncing mixed marriages, Ezra speaks of the Jews as a "holy race" (Ezr 9,2). He accuses the people of Judah of desecrating themselves with "the peoples of the land." The Jewish community of the fifth century B.C. faced the same types of threats to its existence as did the Israelite tribes centuries before the establishment of the Israelite national state (13th–11th centuries B.C.). At that time the Israelites faced hostile neighbors. They were unable to defend themselves adequately. There was little unity or even cooperation among the tribes. In the eleventh century B.C., the prophet Samuel, responding to these problems, complied with popular sentiment and established the monarchy. The king provided order and stability to the foundering Israelite tribes. The Davidic dynasty that lasted from the eleventh to the fifth centuries B.C. furnished a sense of continuity. In the fifth century B.C., Persian hegemony made the reestablishment of Judah's native dynasty impossible. Ezra provided the community with another source of stability and continuity.

Ezra offered the Jewish community the Torah, which the Jews came to see as encompassing an eternal order given to Moses by God. This notion of Torah had some profound effects in the social order. It made the Jewish community exclusive. It led to the idea of a "holy race" (Ezr 9,2) which was to remain unsullied by contact with the nations. Ezra believed that the Jews were in danger of being absorbed by the non-Jewish culture that surrounded them, and therefore becoming extinct. In response to this threat, he taught that there was a very specific criterion for membership in the Jewish community. A principle of heredity supplied the Jewish self-definition. It was a definition that was clear to every member of the community. Earlier traditions also attempted to deal with the loss of identity through assimilation by intermarriage with Gentiles (Ex 34,16; Dt 7,3; 23,3-5). Such marriages were acceptable in some traditions (Gn 41,45; Ru 1). Even Moses himself married a non-Israelite (Nu 12,1). With Ezra this all

changed and mixed marriages were no longer permissible. Under Ezra, the Jewish community was not open to outsiders.

The elevation of heredity to the position of defining the people of God is understandable, yet it compromised Israel's role as a source of blessing for the nations (Gn 12,2f) and as God's servant bringing the Torah and its peace to the nations (Is 49,1-7). The Samaritans whom Ezra's decrees excluded from the people of God considered him their archenemy. Samaritan writings are full of derogatory comments about Ezra. In contrast, the Talmud considers Ezra to be a second Moses (Sanhedrin 21b) because he restored observance of the Torah when the people had forgotten about it (Sukkah 20a). Early Christianity also had to deal with Ezra's legacy as it faced the consequences of its highly successful mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10,1—15,35). The early Church abandoned the views of Ezra on membership in the people of God.

## THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EZRA

Without the efforts of Ezra, though, the Jewish community may very well not have survived the threats to its identity that were so serious in the Persian period. It is also important to remember that along with Ezra, the Bible has included the stories of Jonah and Ruth, both of which offer voices of dissent against the exclusivism of this book.

We need to see Ezra's notion of a "holy race" against the backdrop of the cultural assumptions of ancient Near Eastern people. The key word here is "holy." The solution to Judah's problems according to Ezra was the determination of the Jews to observe the Torah. Part of observance revolved around the notion of separation from all that was not *ritually* pure. "Holy" here is a cultic term rather than a moral one. Ezra did not imply that the Jews were morally superior to the other nations. He did believe that they are in a unique position to offer the God of their ancestors the type of worship that this God required. Unfortunately the more the Jews associated with Gentiles the more difficult it was for them to remain ritually pure. Both Ezra and Nehemiah demanded that the Jews remove this danger to their religious observance. Books such as Jonah and Ruth reminded their readers that the Jews could not claim moral superiority. The Gentiles too could please God.

## THE CALL TO INCLUSION

The Book of Ezra speaks to a beleaguered religious community on the brink of extinction. It sees assimilation as one of the main threats to that existence. It fosters an attitude of separation and exclusion. Today the threat to human existence comes precisely from the ignorance, prejudice, and hatred that keeps the peoples of the world apart. The Second Vatican Council recognized this when it decided to issue a separate document dealing with non-Christian religions. Originally *Nostra Aetate* (1965) was to be just a chapter in the schema on ecumenism. The bishops of the Council became aware of the importance of this topic and developed this full-scale document.

The basic assumption of *Nostra Aetate* is that all peoples comprise a single community. They all have a single final goal: God. The religions of the world result from the universal human attempt to probe the mystery of the divine. The bishops of the world encouraged Catholics to speak and work with followers of other religions. They are to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral values found in non-Christian religions.

Singled out for special attention in the Council's declaration are the two other monotheistic faiths: Judaism and Islam. In particular, the Council repudiated any form of persecution and hatred that existed between the Christians and Jews at any time and from any source (*Declara-*

*tion on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,* 4). The Church also rejected any type of discrimination directed at people because of their religion. The bishops called upon all Catholics to maintain "good fellowship" with all peoples by living with them in peace.

The circumstances faced by Ezra's community in Jerusalem are not those faced by the human family today. The Book of Ezra stands as an object lesson in the kind of decisive action that is necessary to respond to critical circumstances. Christians cannot make use of the specific way that Ezra responded to the problems faced by the Jewish community of his day. Christians, however, can imitate his passionate commitment to the survival of his people. L.J.H.

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# NEHEMIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 487–503 of the Old Testament*]

## The Relation between the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

The "introduction" to this book [OT, p. 476] assumes that Ezra and Nehemiah are components of what was originally a single work. The Book of Nehemiah deals with the political and administrative side of the restoration while the Book of Ezra focuses on the establishment of Torah as the "constitution of the returned community."

Besides these different concerns, there is one striking difference between the two books based on literary form. According to Nehemiah 1,1 ("The words of Nehemiah . . ."), the book is an account for which Nehemiah himself is responsible. A significant portion of the book is written in the first person [1,1—7,5; 12,31—13,31]. These are the so-called "Memoirs of Nehemiah" (see the "introduction," OT, p. 487).

It is important to see the work of both Nehemiah and Ezra against the deplorable conditions that the prophet Malachi depicts (see Mal 1–2). Without the type of concrete communal structures that Ezra and Nehemiah were to provide, the people found it impossible to live according to the high ideals of their ancestral religion since they lacked a healthy social and religious life.

## Reading the Book

This book describes the work of Nehemiah (1,1—7,72) and the place of Torah in the restored community of Jerusalem (8,1—13, 31).

### The Rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh 1,1—6,19)

Because of the bad reports that came to the Persian imperial court from Jerusalem, the emperor Artaxerxes agreed to send Nehemiah, his cupbearer, to rebuild the city (1,1—2,8). There was opposition from both within and without the Judahite community to this project. Though Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, was Nehemiah's principal antagonist, opposition came from governors of other neighboring provinces as well (4,1), They mocked Nehemiah's plans (2,19f; 3,33-37) and even proposed military action against Jerusalem (4,1-5). When their criticism and plots failed to dissuade Nehemiah from his mission, they began plotting against his life (6,1-14). There were also some elements within Judahite society that associated themselves with these plots against Nehemiah (6,17-19). This internal opposition came from the upper classes who had a stake in maintaining the status quo. Their unjust behavior led to disturbances that hindered the task of rebuilding the city (5,1-5). Nehemiah realized that rebuilding the city's walls was not enough to insure stability. He ordered the people of means to stop their economic abuse of the poor (5,6-13). Despite all the opposition, Nehemiah completed the project of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in just fifty-two days (3,1-32; 4,9-17; 6,15-19).

From the time of David, Jerusalem was the central city of ancient Israel—at least for those devoted to the Davidic monarchy. No doubt David and Solomon intended that their Temple in the city would solidify their capital's importance in the hearts of their people. The Babylonians leveled the city and its Temple in 587 B.C. (2 Kgs 25,10). Although the Temple was rebuilt and Nehemiah refortified the city, the second Temple was far less ornate than the one built by Solomon (Ezr 3,12) and Nehemiah's walls enclosed only a fraction of the preexilic city. Jerusalem was no longer a symbol of the unity of north and south or the seat of the Davidic dynasty. It was the center for preserving the particular worship of the Jewish community.

### The Population of Jerusalem

Chapter 7 provides a transition from the description of Nehemiah's successful rebuilding project to the promulgation of Torah. Following the comment about the meager population of Jerusalem (7,4), there is a repetition of the list of those who returned from Babylon (7,6-72). This list duplicates the one found in Ezra 2,1-67.

### The Promulgation of Torah (Neh 8,1—13,31)

At this point the Nehemiah memoirs break off. Chapters 8–10 describe a ritual that Ezra conducts. This ceremony brings to closure both the rebuilding of the city and the reconstitution of its religious life. The community of Jerusalem heard the words of Torah (8,1-12). It responded by celebrating the Feasts of Booths according to the prescriptions of the Torah (8,13-18). Two weeks later the community began a fast (9,1-3) and then Ezra made a great confession of sin in the name of the people (9,6-37).

## Torah

An important theme in both Ezra and Nehemiah is the Torah as a written authoritative guide for the life of the Jewish community. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra reads the law. In Nehemiah 9, the people of Jerusalem confess their failure to observe the law. In Nehemiah 10, the people agree to live according to its precepts. Unfortunately for our understanding of these passages, too many Christians have a very distorted notion of the Torah. These distortions have arisen because of the polemical atmosphere in the Gospels which recount Jesus' debates with the Pharisees regarding the interpretation of Torah (Mt 5,21-48; 23,13-36) and the bitter exchanges between Paul and some early Christians who considered the observance of the Torah essential for all (Gal 3,10-14).

Despite their disputes with those who opposed their teaching on the law, both Jesus and Paul could be effusive in their praise of the Torah: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets . . . Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. . . . "(Mt 5,17-19) and "So then the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom 7,12). Still, the word "law" has a pejorative ring to it in the ears of most Christians.

The key to understanding and appreciating the Torah is to begin with the biblical context from which it emerged. But like most theologically important words in the Hebrew Bible, the text uses the term "Torah" in several different ways within the Bible. There is even some dispute over the etymology of the word. Some hold that the word "Torah" derives from the Hebrew word *yarah* which means to throw or to cast lots. Thus the original meaning of Torah may have referred to the determination of the divine will with some sort of a lot-oracle. In another linguistic form *yarah* means to point the way, to instruct. Thus Torah may have originally derived from the instructions priests gave to the people.

In the Bible Torah usually refers to God's instructions to Moses at Sinai that he handed on to ancient Israel. Sometimes these instructions deal with specific sacrificial laws, ethical norms, regulations dealing with purity and impurity (Lv 4,1—7,38; 10,10; 11,1—13,59; 14,57; 23,1-44). In the Book of Deuteronomy, Torah takes on a more comprehensive sense and becomes that which determines Israel's cultural, religious, and national identity. Torah is the written authoritative law which is Israel's "constitution" for life in the land which was its inheritance from God (Dt 28,61; 29,20; 30,10; 31,26).

The Deuteronomic history of Israel (Joshua to 2 Kings) follows the lead of Deuteronomy and speaks of Torah in the comprehensive sense as "the book of the Torah" (Jos 1,7f; 1 Kgs 2,3; 2 Kgs 23,5). The prophets use the term Torah in a variety of senses. Sometimes it refers to cultic regulations (Hos 4,6); sometimes it includes God's moral commands (Is 5,24; 30,9), and ethical norms (Hb 1,4). It is also divine teachings given through the prophets (Is 1,10; 8,16). Sometimes the prophets use Torah in the comprehensive sense (Jer 6,19; 9,12; Is 42,21.24; Mal 3,22).

The Psalms praise both the Torah and those who live by it (Pss 1,2; 19,8; 37,31; 40,9; 94,12; 112,1; 119,97). Psalms 19 and 119 reflect the joy of ancient Israel in the Torah. Proverbs speaks of Torah as the advice of parents or a sage (1,8; 3,1; 13,14). Later Jewish sages identify wisdom and the Torah (Sir 24,1-31; 39,1-11). Ezra (3,2; 7,6.10) and Nehemiah (8,1; 9,3; 10,30; 13,1) assume a fixed written Torah.

The early rabbis believed that they were responsible for transmitting not only the written Torah but also an oral Torah which contained the teachings of revered sages who advanced the

obligations of the law beyond the words of the written Torah and thus made violations of the written Torah more difficult. These rabbis traced the origins of this oral Torah back to Moses (*Pirke Avot,* 1,1). Around A.D. 200, Rabbi Judah the Prince committed this oral law to writing in a work called the Mishnah. This was the beginning of the Talmud (the code of rabbinical teaching on the manner of observing the law.) Thus in contemporary Judaism Torah refers not only to the Books of Moses but to the Talmud and the entire Jewish ethical tradition.

Proverbs 1,8 and 3,1 may provide the key to appreciating Torah. These texts speak of Torah as parental guidance for a child. The Bible often speaks of Israel as God's children (Ex 4,22; Dt 14,1; 32,10-12; Hos 11,1; Jer 31,9.20; Is 66,13). Some people then understood Torah as the teaching imparted by the parent God to the child Israel. In this light, the giving of the Torah is an act of the highest love.

Another key to appreciating the Torah is the recognition that it refers not only to the vehicle of revelation but also its entire content. Torah contains both the story of Israel's election and salvation and the stipulations of its covenantal relationship with God. Torah then includes the story of the free acts of God which presented ancient Israel with the model of righteousness. It also includes specifications of how Israel should live in obedient response to those free acts of God. The people of ancient Israel did not experience the Torah as a burden that they had to bear with patient endurance but as the way to life and a source of joy.

In the perspective of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, obedience to the written, authoritative Torah is a condition for survival. Without careful observance Judaism is in danger of being lost in the sea of assimilation. It is assimilation that will do to the Jewish community what the exile failed to do. Thus the Torah is Israel's life. The devotion to ethical principles, the enduring attitude of self-examination and self-correction that observance implies, the maintenance of self-identity by an explicit moral code—all these are values that Christians could learn from Judaism, ancient and modern.

The word "Torah" has many meanings and reflects many different values. Perhaps only those who observe the law as an act of obedient love for God can experience its fundamental meaning. For the observant Jew it is the truth revealing God's election and salvation of Israel. It is also the way to respond to God's graciousness. It is finally the way to life. For Ezra and Nehemiah the Torah was Judah's way to the future.

## The Promulgation of the Torah

The elements of the ritual found in Nehemiah 8 may have served as the model for the synagogue service that developed somewhat later in Judaism. There is the bringing of the Torah scroll (8,2), the mounting of the platform that contains the desk for reading (8,4), the opening of the scroll (8,5), the blessing (v. 6a), the communal "Amen" (8,6b). The "interpretation" that 8,8 refers to may be an Aramaic translation of the Torah which Ezra read in Hebrew. Aramaic was the language common to all the peoples of the Persian empire. Beginning with the sixth century B.C. Aramaic was replacing Hebrew as the language of everyday speech in Judah. It may have been that some people needed an Aramaic translation of the Torah since they no longer understood Hebrew very well.

## The Confession

Nehemiah 9,6-37 is one of the important creedal statements in the Old Testament. It recounts Israel's communal experience of God from the time of Abraham (9,7) to the period of restora-

tion (9,33). The purpose of this confession of faith is to acknowledge Israel's failure to keep the commandments despite God's goodness and fidelity. It is a remarkable act of faith in divine forbearance. There is a similar prayer of confession in Ezra 9,7-15. The note to Ezra 9,7 (OT, p. 485) suggests that these two confessions were originally parts of the same prayer.

## The Agreement of the People

Chapter 10 contains a written pledge made by those listed in verses 1b-29 to observe the Torah of Moses. As the note to 10,1-40 (OT, p. 498) suggests, this text should come after Nehemiah 13. This chapter lists reforms of Nehemiah. The pledge made by the people could hardly be made before Nehemiah initiated the reforms. Among the specific points made in the pledge are the prohibition of marriage with Gentiles (10,31; see 13,20-23a) and observance of the sabbath (10,32; see 13,15-22). Those who made the pledge also promise to provide firewood for the altar (10,35; see 13,31), first fruits for sacrifice (10,36f; see 13,31) and tithes for the support of the Levites (10,38-40; see 13,10-14).

## The Resettlement of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 11 begins with a lottery used to resettle Jerusalem (11,1-3). Then follow lists of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (11,3-24) and of the rural areas of Judah (11,20-30), and of the Benjaminites (11,31-36). Nehemiah 12 begins with lists of priests and Levites (12,1-26). Then follows a description of the dedication of the walls (12,27-43). The book concludes with a listing of the various reform measures begun by Nehemiah (12,44—13,31), to the observance of which the people pledged themselves in Nehemiah 10.

## Ritual Purity

Like the Book of Ezra (9,1f), Nehemiah condemns mixed marriages (13,23-29.). These books reflect the belief that if the Jews were to survive as a people they had to keep themselves separate from other ethnic and religious groups. An important emphasis in both books then is the *purity* of the reconstituted community. On a surface level this concern appears to be a type of racial or ethnic discrimination. There could have been some of that at work here; however, it is important to note that this emphasis on purity concerns cult and ritual. The call of Ezra and Nehemiah for purity is a call for *ritual* not ethnic purity. Ritual purity was in some sense dependent upon ancient Near Eastern ideas of order. Mixing two peoples through marriage or in worship offends this notion of order. Exclusion of Gentiles from the cult then does not come from a belief in ethnic superiority. The call for separation from others is pervasive in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezr 4,1-3; 6,21; chapters 9–10; Neh 2,20; 3,3; 9,2; 10,29; 13,23-29). It is a component of the directives associated with rebuilding the Temple and in the rest of the restoration program led by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

The New Testament affirms that the Christian cult transcends these patterns. According to John, Christians worship in "Spirit and truth" (Jn 4,23). Classifications based on "flesh" are no longer relevant. Paul makes it clear that in Jesus there is "no Jew nor Greek" (Gal 3,28). Matthew writes that Jesus' final command was to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28,19). This insight did not occur to the first Christians automatically. The Acts of the Apostles shows that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christian community was a matter of spirited debate among the Jewish Christians (Acts 15,1-35).

The Synagogue also struggled with the question of the exclusion/inclusion of the Gentiles.

Some rabbis favored the more exclusive strain found in books such as Deuteronomy (Dt 23), Ezra, and Nehemiah. Others endorsed the more inclusive tendencies in texts such as Isaiah 56 which stated that the Temple was to be "a house of prayer for *all* peoples" (Is 56,7).

### The Conclusion

The last sentence of the book ("Remember this in my favor, O my God," 13,31) may give an insight into the purpose of the book. This formula is similar to those attached to texts inscribed on walls of ancient Near Eastern temples. From the location of these texts *within* temple, clearly those who made them were addressing the deity since only priests entered the temples themselves. This same formula, petitioning for divine remembrance, is typical of memorial inscriptions found in Jewish monumental buildings such as synagogues from a much later period. Besides being an act of piety, inclusion of this formula was probably an attempt to commend this work to its readers. L.H.J.

## Bibliography

See the Bibliography of the article on 1 Chronicles and of the article on the Book of Ezra.

# TOBIT □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 503–519 of the Old Testament*]

## The Moral of the Story

The Book of Tobit is a complex literary work with a very uncomplicated moral. The book narrates important incidents in the lives of three people: Tobit, Sarah, and Tobiah. It tells the story of their tragedies and triumphs. The author weaves the stories of these three people together very skillfully so that the book results from the intersection of three different but related plots. This rhetorical feat of weaving the stories of these three people so tightly has a theological purpose. The author wishes to show how God can manage the circumstances of people's lives in order to bring God's plans to fulfillment. Its primary religious message is simple: God rewards those who are faithful.

## Approaching the Book: The Literary Form of Tobit

The "introduction" to this book describes Tobit as a "religious novel" (OT, p. 503). The historical and geographical details given in the book are there simply to provide a plausible setting for the story. The author confuses the kings of Assyria, shows an ignorance of the topography of Mesopotamia, and dates Tobit's exile earlier than it could have been (see notes to 1,2.15; 5,6; and 14,15). There is little to suggest that the author of Tobit meant his readers to consider his work as historical.

Though calling Tobit a novel may not be entirely satisfactory, the book is the work of a single author and not a product of tradition despite the author's attempt to associate his principal character with Ahiqar, a very popular figure of ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition (see note on 1,21; OT, p. 506). As a novel, the Book of Tobit presents three characters in an intricately developed plot that the introduction summarizes on pp. 503—504 (OT).

What is especially important to notice is how the author of Tobit tells the stories of Tobit and his relative Sarah. Both suffer undeservedly. Tobit became blind while doing an act of charity by burying the dead. In his despondency, he prays for death. Sarah believes that she will remain a childless widow. A demon has killed each of her seven husbands on their respective wedding nights. Sarah too prays for death. God answers their prayers by enabling Tobiah, Tobit's son, to cure Tobit's blindness and break the power of the demon that was killing Sarah's husbands. Tobiah is able to accomplish this with the help of the angel Raphael. The action of Tobiah resolves the tension in the stories of both Tobit and Sarah.

Since Tobit is such a cleverly told story, it is important that one read the story through in order to appreciate the author's message. Tobit is short enough to read in a single sitting. One key to understanding the author's purpose is the unfolding of the story and how God answers the prayers of the innocent Tobit and Sarah in a way they hardly expected.

## The Religious Horizons of the Book

The basic concern of this book becomes clear as God acts through Raphael to solve the problems of Tobit, Sarah, and Tobiah. Each problem contains the germ of a solution for the others. Tobit is going to die so he sends his son Tobiah to collect an outstanding debt. This brings Tobiah in contact with Raphael who gives him a way to cure his father and to eliminate Sarah's problem. In the process of traveling to collect the debt, Tobiah meets Sarah and falls in love with her. Tobiah is able to break the power of the demon that tormented Sarah. In the end, the medicine Raphael gives Tobiah cures Tobit's blindness, Tobiah recovers the money owed to his father, Tobiah marries Sarah, and together they raise a family.

The purpose of this engaging tale is to show that God controls events and manages the circumstances in order to ensure that God's own purposes come to fruition. The story assumes God's sovereignty in people's lives and God's determination to reward the just. When the just suffer, there is a limit to that suffering. Once that limit occurs, God will intervene. Sometimes that intervention is miraculous.

Tobit's reaction to his suffering and its alleviation underscores the religious views of the book. At first Tobit's response is one of despair, since he sees death as the only way of deliverance. Once he experiences God's deliverance, Tobit is eloquent in his praise of God's mercy. The book's answer to the problem of suffering is in 11,15: ". . . it was he who scourged me, and it is he who has had mercy on me."

## The Judaism of the Book

The "introduction" (OT, pp. 503–504) states that the Book of Tobit appeared fewer than two hundred years before Christ. It reveals a form of Judaism that accepted magic. Raphael, an angel of God, suggests the means for negating the power of the demon (6,7-9), and so the magical means of dealing with demonic powers must be legitimate for any Jew. Mysterious powers in the entrails of a fish serve not only to cure illnesses but they serve to bind the demonic powers that harm people.

Tobit, then, represents a Judaism that sees angels and demons as having important roles to play in the drama between God and human beings. This contrasts sharply with books such as Judith and Esther where human beings are in control of their own destiny without any intervention of angelic and demonic powers. The author of Tobit considers angels to be more than simply God's messengers: they mediate prayers in God's throne room (3,16; 12,12-15);

they oppose demons (8,2f); they commission the writing of books (12,11f). Belief in demons accompanies a belief in angels. While angels make their interventions for the good of people, demons are hostile powers.

The book also reflects the importance that the Book of Deuteronomy came to have in early Judaism. This is especially clear in Tobit 14,4-7 which asserts that the exile happened because of Israel's infidelity (see Dt 28,15-68), that the exile is not God's final judgment on Israel but that there is hope for mercy (see Dt 30,1-4) and that the Temple of Jerusalem is the only legitimate place for worship (see Dt 12,1-14). The Judaism which Tobit depicts is a Judaism that measures fidelity to God in terms of fulfillment of the Torah, which is just what Deuteronomy preaches.

Finally Tobit seems to reflect the circumstances of Jews in the diaspora (Jewish settlements outside of Palestine). The book portrays Gentiles as unsympathetic to Tobit's activities (2,8) and as those responsible for persecuting him (1,16-20). The book presents marriage within Judaism as a duty. It teaches that God is sovereign over all people and that God is present to those in exile even in the midst of their suffering. It underscores the need to maintain Jewish identity in the diaspora. The means to accomplish this is the family. The book's emphasis on the family is one reason that Tobit remained popular in the Church even though the book did not become part of the Jewish canon of the Old Testament.

## Reading the Book

The only way to savor the book's literary artistry and to appreciate its religious perspectives is to follow the way the author unfolds the events related to Tobit's life. Notice the suffering of Tobit, Sarah, and their families in the first part of the book. In despair they pray for death since they do not experience God's presence in this life. Notice how the stories of Tobit and Sarah parallel one another:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tobit's piety (2,1-7) | Sarah's innocence (3,14) |
| Tobit's blindness (2,9-10) | Sarah's demon (3,8) |
| Tobit's reproach (2,14) | Sarah's reproach (3,7-10) |
| Tobit's prayer (3,1-6) | Sarah's prayer (3,10-15) |

God hears these prayers but responds to them in a totally unexpected manner. Raphael stands as a symbol of God's presence with both Tobit and Sarah. Though they felt abandoned by God, nonetheless God was with them in the midst of their suffering. When Tobiah finishes his journey and Tobit realizes the presence of God in his own life and in the lives of his son and new daughter-in-law, he breaks into enthusiastic and joyful praise of God. The reader should notice the movement in the book from despair to thanksgiving and praise.

### Angels and Demons

There are two important nonhuman characters in the book: Asmodeus, the demon who torments Sarah (3,8) and Raphael, who reveals himself as one of the seven angels who "serve before the Glory of the Lord" (12,15). The Book of Tobit then reflects the belief of early Judaism in angels and demons as supernatural beings. The first form of this belief seems to be "the messenger of the Lord," which belongs to the earliest narratives in the Hebrew Bible. In some of these stories, clearly the messenger of the Lord is not different from the Lord (see Gn 16,13; 21,18; 31,13). Since God confronts people directly in many of the early stories, the appearance

of angels is somewhat irregular. As people begin to think of God as transcendent, far beyond the human sphere, angels become a more regular feature of the narratives. Ideas develop about good angels and bad angels (the demons), a hierarchy of angels, the various duties of angels. In Tobit, Raphael is one of the seven holy angels who offer up the prayers of the pious (Tb 12, 15).

Angels and demons play a prominent role in the noncanonical literature of early Judaism. For example, in the Book of Enoch, Raphael is an archangel (1 Enoch 20,3). He heals the illnesses and injuries of human beings (1 Enoch 40,9). By the time of the New Testament, angels became spiritual beings who were God's allies in opposition to Satan and his "angels," the demons.

It is possible to see popular imagination at work in the description of angels. They wear white garments (Dn 10,5f; 1 Enoch 87,2). The angels have wings (Dn 9,21 [note that the *NAB* follows the Septuagint and translates the Hebrew phrase "borne in winged flight" as "came . . . in rapid flight"]; 1 Enoch 61,1). Finally, around the turn of the era, there appears in a few Jewish texts what seems to be the belief that it was permissible to portray figures from Israel's past, especially Adam and Jacob, as angels. Evidently some Jews held that it was possible for a select few to transcend humanity and become angels.

Belief in angels was not universal in early Judaism. Acts 23,8 asserts that the Pharisees representing more liberal and popular beliefs acknowledged the existence of angels while the more conservative and aristocratic Sadducees rejected the existence of angels along with belief in spirits and the resurrection.

## The Purpose of the Book

Why did the author tell the story of Tobit? Was it simply to entertain? Even though the book is highly entertaining as a short novel, its purpose goes far beyond the enjoyment of its readers. The author tells his story to teach while entertaining. The book calls for prayer, fasting and especially almsgiving (4,7-11; 12,8). It presents the Jewish family as the means of maintaining fidelity to the ancestral religion of the Jews (4,12f). It affirms that it is possible to remain faithful to God and the Law even in the difficult circumstances of the diaspora. Finally it presents repentance as the key to the future of Judaism (13,6).

The author addresses his message to people who must have felt like the main character of this book. They wondered about the value of fidelity to their God since it sometimes brought them undeserved difficulties. Tobit reaffirms the value of fidelity. While there may be difficult times, God will never desert those who remain faithful, and the God who controls human events will ensure that the faithful will find their reward.

Finally the author wishes to affirm the importance of the community. One's commitment to the community is the measure of one's commitment to God. It is important to support the poor, bury the dead, honor one's parents, marry within the community. The Jewish community will have a future as long as there are Tobits who pledge themselves to its preservation.

The purpose of the book is to move its readers from despair to prayer. The figure of Tobit is a paradigm for the pious Jews who experience not God's presence but his absence in their suffering. The central affirmation of the book is that God is with Tobit even when Tobit does not experience the divine presence. Once Raphael makes Tobit aware that God was always with him, Tobit launches into a song of praise (13,1-18). L.J.H.

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# JUDITH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 520–536 of the Old Testament*]

## The Book's Literary Form

There have been several attempts at classifying the Book of Judith according to its literary type. Clearly the book is not a history. The "introduction" points out the uselessness of trying to read this book against the "backdrop of Jewish history in relation to the empires of the ancient world" (OT, p. 520). There are just too many historical errors and anachronisms in the book. For example, the book describes Nebuchadnezzar as the king of the Assyrians (1,1) when he was king of Babylon. His attack against Judah supposedly took place after the return from exile (4,1-3)! The book is not a historical account of ancient Israel's experience with Nebuchadnezzar or the Assyrians. Is it then a historical novel, *midrash* (the expansion, probing and exposition of biblical texts to find new meaning in them), or a fictional drama? None of these classifications is completely satisfactory. This book is the result of a conscious, systematic, and faith-filled meditation on God's providential care for Israel. The book attempts to show how the invisible hand of God rescues Israel through the hand of Judith.

## Reading the Book

As the "introduction" notes (OT, p. 520), the tale of Judith is well known. Over the centuries her story has attracted a remarkable amount of attention from writers, artists, and composers. Mozart and Beethoven chose Judith as the subject of oratorios. Painters have represented her story on canvas and the sculptors of the facade of the cathedral at Chartres have depicted her story in stone. One reason for all this attention is that Judith's story is such a good one. It is a heroic tale in which an unlikely character overcomes the cowardice of her own people in the face of the enemy. She defeats an arrogant general who thought that he was invincible in love and war. The plot begins in part I (1,1—7,32) with the introduction of the antagonists: Nebuchadnezzar and his general Holofernes.

**A) 1,1-16:** Nebuchadnezzar declares war on the Medes and demands that his vassals aid him in his campaign. His vassals, Judah among them, ignore his call. Despite this, Nebuchadnezzar is victorious.

**B) 2,1-13:** Nebuchadnezzar commissions Holofernes to punish the disloyal vassals.

The story develops by focusing on the fate of Judah whose king and people ignored Nebuchadnezzar and now await his retribution. In telling the rest of the story, the Book of Judith arranges the details in two chiasms. [A chiasm is a type of inverted parallelism.] This rhetorical device surfaces regularly in biblical literature. Each incident leading up to a central event is balanced in reverse order with a similar incident following the central event.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | 2,14—3,10 | Holofernes begins campaign; nations surrender | A) | 8,1-8 | Introduction to Judith |
| | | | B) | 8,9f | Judith plans to save Israel |
| 2) | 4,1-15 | Israel prepares for war | C) | 10,9f | Judith leaves Bethulia |
| 3) | 5,1—6,11 | Holofernes talks with Achior | D) | 10,11—13,10a | Judith overcomes Holofernes |
| 3') | 6,12-21 | Achior talks with Israel | C') | 13,10b-11 | Judith returns to Bethulia |
| 2') | 7,1-15 | Holofernes prepares for war | B') | 13,12—16,20 | Judith plans to destroy Israel's enemies |
| 1') | 7,6-32 | Holofernes begins campaign; the people wish to surrender | A') | 16,21-25 | Conclusion about Judith |

Part I delineates the struggle. That it is a religious and political conflict is clear from the words of Holofernes deriding the Israelite hope for victory when be boasts: "Who are you, Achior . . . to tell us not to fight against the Israelites because their God protects them? What god is there beside Nebuchadnezzar?" (6,2)

Part II (8,1—16,25) introduces Judith, the heroine who relieves the tension created by Part I. She defeats Holofernes and proves that the Lord alone is God. Part II portrays Judith as a model of faith. She not only crushes the arrogance and pride of Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes, but overcomes the cowardice and timidity of her fellow Jews who are ready to surrender. She takes her action without any guarantee from God that she will be successful. Her only guarantee is her faith.

## THE IMAGE OF JUDITH

The heroine's name is probably not a proper name. It means simply "Jewish woman." Judith then is more than an individual; she is a composite of all the women who have saved Israel in the past by their piety, wisdom, and action. On one level, the Book of Judith is a tribute to those women whose achievements and memory ancient Israel cherished. Like Miriam (Ex 15,20f) she led Israel in a song of thanksgiving following God's deliverance of the people (Ex 15,14-16.17). Like Deborah (Jgs 4,4-9) she aroused the flagging faith of Israel, besieged by its enemies (Jgs 8,9-27). Like Jael (Jgs 4,17-21) she assassinated her people's adversary. Like the wise woman from Abel Beth-maacah (2 Sm 20,15-22) Judith challenged the strategy of Israel's leaders and substituted her own (8,16; 9,2). By telling the tale of Judith, the storyteller was in effect honoring all the women whose memory ancient Israel revered. These women saved the people of ancient Israel at times when the more usual channels of leadership were not able to meet the challenges to their faith.

The first people to hear the story of Judith lived in a traditional society in which the roles assigned to men and women were distinct and in which change, if it took place at all, occurred very slowly. The Book of Judith is a story that offers a surprising dissent from the assumptions of its culture about the role and status of women. In this story, the men proved to be utter failures in the face of the threats of Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes. As in the past, God chose a woman to be the instrument of salvation; a woman is the channel of God's deliverance. The usual vehicles (the king, priests, and other notables) proved to be utter failures. The impact that this story made on a traditional society like that of early Judaism is difficult for us to appreciate who live in a society where change occurs with greater frequency and rapidity.

On the other hand, the Book of Judith is quite conservative in its outlook. By rescuing her people from destruction at the hands of Gentiles, Judith is a model for the Jewish woman as the conservator of tradition. Her socially assigned role is to preserve tradition and keep her family

protected from the pressures to assimilate to the dominant non-Jewish culture that threatens to envelop it. Judith is a paradigm for the Jewish woman who protects her family against incursions from the outside that threaten to dilute their loyalty to their ancestral religion. The heroine of the book carries out the role assigned to her by her culture, but also transcends that role.

## The Image of Women in the Church

A similar type of tension is evident in the first draft of the American Bishops' Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for Church and Society entitled *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* (1988). This first draft attempts to integrate the responses the bishops received from Catholic women as a result of the conversations that were part of the preparation of this first draft. Reading these responses makes it clear that there is a great diversity among Catholic women. There is no typical Catholic woman, easily defined and understood. The bishops recognize that Catholic women are diverse in their concerns (para. 12). Like Judith, Catholic women see themselves as conservators of what is best in the tradition, though some are ready to cross what they perceive as artificial barriers set up by that tradition. The Book of Judith offers a model for the process of contemporary theological reflection on the role and status of women in the Church. It is itself one product of early Judaism's reflection on the role of women in its own social and religious system. At the very least, the book sees women as at times better fit to be instruments of salvation than men—a conclusion that was an unexpected one given the cultural milieu in which it arose.

## The Irony in the Book

The story of Judith is full of unexpected turns. The first and most obvious, especially to those who first hear or read Judith's story, was that a woman—not a man—saved Judah in its time of severe distress. Judith is more faithful and resourceful than any of the men of Bethulia. She is more eloquent than the king and more courageous than any of the leading citizens of the city, yet Judith is a very unlikely heroine. She is a childless widow and as such she occupied a very low place in the social hierarchy. While the king, the priests, and other leaders of Judahite society show themselves incapable of dealing with the crisis, Judith stands up to the threat posed by Holofernes and takes decisive action to end that threat.

The means that Judith used to accomplish her end may offend some. She used her beauty to gain access to the enemy camp and to beguile Holofernes. Judith, though, was using the one weapon that she had available to her, and it happened to be a weapon that exploited the weakness of Judah's enemy. This leads to the second irony. Judith destroys Judah's enemies not with military might but with her beguiling charm and disarming beauty. The Bible sometimes portrays a woman's beauty negatively as a snare (2 Sm 11,2-5; Prv 6,26; Sir 9,2f), but here it is the means of deliverance.

Finally, Judith is a childless widow, yet the book portrays her as the mother of faith. It was her faith that gave new life to Israel. That is why the high priests and elders praise her so highly (15,9). The Latin hymn, *Tota pulchra es,* applies these words of praise to Mary. The liturgy finds the story of Judith as an appropriate image to speak of the Virgin Mary who is the Mother of the Church.

## The Judaism of the Book

The Book of Judith asserts that the deliverance of the Jews in Bethulia depends not on power and might but on fidelity to the law. This is the point that Achior makes to Holofernes (5,5-21) and that Judith makes to the elders of Bethulia (8,17-21). The author portrays Judith as living according to the law as Jews interpreted it at that time. As a widow, she lived in a state of mourning marked by fasting (8,4-6). She prayed daily at the hour of the incense offering in the Temple (9,1). She observes the Jewish dietary laws (10,5 and 12,2.19). She purifies herself by bathing in running water at the appropriate time (12, 7-9). Judith criticizes the people of Bethulia for violating the law of first fruits and tithes (11,11-14).

The book departs significantly from earlier tradition as it describes the conversion of Achior the Ammonite (14,10). According to Deuteronomy, the Israelites were never to admit an Ammonite into their community (Dt 23,4). Presumably the author was able to justify this by the example of Ruth, who as a Moabite woman belonged to the other nation that Deuteronomy excludes from ever becoming part of the Israelite community. While the Book of Judith presents obedience to the Torah as the key to Israel's deliverance, it shows a type of flexibility that is able to respond to a person such as Achior who wishes to join the Israelites in the service of God. The issue of inclusion and exclusion was a perplexing one for Judaism, as it was for the first Christians (Acts 10,1-49; 11,1-18; 15,1-12).

## The Religious Horizons of the Book

Though this book may be as late as the first century B.C. (see the "introduction," OT, p. 520), its religious perspectives are similar to traditions that are much earlier. It is an eloquent statement of traditional worship of the Lord. It affirms belief in the one God (6,2; 8,16f; 14,18; 16,13). It asserts that this one God guides all human events toward their intended goal (9,5f). Finally it describes this God as One who is present with the weak and oppressed (9,11).

The storyteller paints a portrait of Judith much like the Israelite storytellers who told of the exploits of Ehud (Jgs 3,12-30), Jephthah (Jgs 11,1-40), Samson (Jgs 13–16) and David (1 Sm 16,1—1Kgs 2,10). Their personal character and the means they used to save Israel did not come under careful moral scrutiny. Judith uses seduction and assassination to achieve her ends, though the text is careful to state that Judith did not have to complete her seduction of Holofernes before she could kill him (13,16). Like these earlier stories, the Book of Judith shows that God brings deliverance out of the evil that people create for themselves. Though the book is ostensibly about Judith, its pivotal affirmation is about the God of Israel:

> "Your strength is not in numbers,
> nor does your power depend upon
> stalwart men; but you are the God
> of the lowly, the helper of the
> oppressed, the supporter of the
> weak, the protector of the
> forsaken, the savior of those
> without hope" (9,11).

The Book of Judith then is a profession of faith in the God of Israel who saves the lowly. The story of Judith is simply an illustration of this article of ancient Israelite faith.

The book also asserts very forcefully that God's deliverance does not come except through the faithful action of people such as Judith. Unlike the king, the priests, and the elders of Bethulia who were content to pray and then surrender to Holofernes, Judith's prayer leads her to take action to save Bethulia. Though she receives no divine guarantee, her faith supplies the support she needs to begin and complete the perilous adventure that saved Israel. God saves the lowly and prayer puts people in contact with that God, yet God's presence among the people does not absolve them from the duty to act on their beliefs. Judith is a mother of faith not because she believed and prayed but because she acted on her belief. L.J.H.

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# ESTHER □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 536–549 of the Old Testament*]

## A Threat to the Jewish Community

The central concern of the Book of Esther is the survival of the Jewish minority in the midst of a world that is growing more hostile to it. This book tells the story of one threat to that survival and the removal of that threat by relating the tale of Mordecai, a Jewish courtier in the service of the Persian emperor. The Book of Esther makes it clear that God will act in order to preserve the Jewish community. God does not intervene directly to resolve the problem but though this divine action may be hidden it is nontheless real.

## The Additions to the Book

### An Element of Confusion

A perplexing aspect of the shape of this book in the *New American Bible* is the order and numbering of its chapters and verses. Besides the familiar pattern of such references common to the rest of the Bible, there are six chapters that have alphabetic identification scattered in the midst of ten chapters that have the more familiar numerical identification. This is a result of the way the Book of Esther has come down to us.

The "introduction" notes (OT, p. 536–537) that the Book of Esther has survived in two forms: a shorter Hebrew text and a longer Greek one. The Greek text has about 107 verses

more than the Hebrew. When Jerome revised the Old Latin translation, he compared these two ancient versions and concluded that the extra verses of the Greek were not inspired. Jerome took these out of their proper context within Esther and put them in an appendix to the book. When chapter and verse numbers were given to biblical texts during the Middle Ages, these additions received their numbers according to the position they had in Jerome's Vulgate rather than according to their proper position in the Greek version of the book.

The Greek additions did not become part of the Jewish canon and their place in the canon of the Roman Catholic church was a matter of debate until the Council of Trent, which decided in favor of including the additions. [The Protestant churches do not accept the additions to Esther as canonical.] The arrangement of the text of Esther in the *New American Bible* reflects the attempts to follow the order of the Greek version of Esther while preserving the traditional numbering of chapters and verses following Jerome's arrangement. This seems to be the best solution possible in the circumstances. It allows the reader to find the additions in their proper contexts and it preserves the numeration of chapters and verses that is universally followed.

### Their Purpose

The function of the Greek additions to the Hebrew version of Esther is clear. First, the additions introduce religious elements (for example the prayers of Mordecai and Esther C,1-30). The Hebrew version lacks a single reference to God (except for the possible allusion in 4,14). The Hebrew version of the book is a secular tale about how Jews were able to outsmart their enemies.

Second, by introducing "documents" (B,1-7; E,1-24), the additions lend an air of authenticity to the book. The additions make the book read as if it were a historical work. This is important to encourage the celebration of the Feast of Purim with which the story of Esther became associated.

## The Story

At first the story sounds like a typical tale of palace intrigue. Two royal officials, Mordecai the Jew and Haman the Agagite, vie for power and position in the court of the Persian emperor. They do not hesitate to hatch plots against each other in order to secure a more important status for themselves. In Chapter 3 the story takes an ominous turn. It is no longer a tale about personal enmity between rival courtiers. Haman's plots threaten not only Mordecai but also the entire Jewish community of the Persian Empire. Additions A and F (Mordecai's dream and its interpretation) with their imagery of the two dragons and the phenomena in heaven and earth (A,4-10) transport the conflict to a cosmic level. Addition F makes it clear that it was God who saved Israel (F,5-9).

The story which the "introduction" summarizes (OT, p. 536) takes place in the diaspora (the Jewish settlements outside of the land of Israel) and it contains no references at all to the homeland of the Jews. The tension in the story revolves around the rivalry of Haman and Mordecai but soon all the Jews find themselves swept up in the conflict because of the specifically Jewish patterns of behavior (3,8). When Esther joins Mordecai in a plan to frustrate Haman's murderous plots, the tension becomes resolved. What was to be a pogrom, an officially organized massacre, against the Jews becomes a celebration of the Jews because Haman and his conspiracy fail.

## The Personalities in the Story

### HAMAN AND MORDECAI

Haman, the enemy of the Jews, is a descendant of Agag (3,1). Agag was the king of the Amalekites whom earlier traditions remembered as the most dangerous of ancient Israel's opponents (Ex 17,14; Dt 25,17-19). Mordecai's genealogy (1,1) makes him a descendant of Kish, the father of Saul (see 1 Sm 9,1). At the conclusion of his conflict with Agag, Saul wanted to spare the life of this enemy of Israel (1 Sm 15,8f). Mordecai makes no such mistake regarding Haman (Est 7,9f).

### VASHTI AND ESTHER

The story of Esther begins with the deposition of Vashti, the queen of Persia. She refuses to obey the command of her husband, Ahasuerus, the king of Persia. During a banquet he gave, the king became drunk and in that state he ordered his wife to "display her beauty" before his male courtiers (1,11). Because she refused to submit to this indignity, the king's officials advised the king to remove her as queen. They feared that otherwise their own wives might imitate her example and refuse to obey their orders (1,16-18). The king issued "an irrevocable royal decree" deposing Vashti and insisting that "every man should be lord in his own home" (1,19-22). Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl who was the ward and cousin of Mordecai, won the beauty contest that determined Vashti's replacement (2,1-10). [The name Esther was a Mesopotamian name; her Jewish name was Hadassah (see note to 2,7; OT, p. 539).] Unlike Judith, Esther is hardly a model for feminists. She participates in the process to replace Vashti, who is the real heroine in this story according to a feminist reading of the text. Vashti refuses to become an "object" and insists on her dignity as a person even though this means that she would lose her position as queen. In a sense, Esther betrays Vashti by seeking to replace her.

## The Historical Character of the Book

The author of Esther shows a familiarity with the royal court and administrative system of Persia. That is why interpreters favor a date toward the end of the Persian period for the bulk of the text (see the "introduction," OT, p. 536). While the author describes the circumstances in the Persian court accurately, still the story of Esther is fictional. It is a novella on the theme of the persecuted righteous and their deliverance. The story does have a historical "flavor" but it does not intend to report an actual event. (See notes to A,1, OT, p. 537 and 1,9, OT, p. 538 for two historical problems with the story of Esther.)

# The Book of Esther and the Feast of Purim

According to F,10, God wished the Jews to celebrate a feast on the 14th and 15th of Adar to celebrate their deliverance. This is the Feast of Purim. The name of the feast (*purim*) means "lots" and is a reference to 3,7 and 9,24.26. The Bible mentions this feast nowhere else except in a possible allusion in 2 Mc 15,36 that mentions "Mordecai's Day." The relationship between Purim and the Book of Esther is not absolutely clear. Did the feast come first and the story later or did the feast come from the book?

It may be that the Jews in the Persian diaspora adopted a local spring festival and attached a story of deliverance to it. Passover, the principal Jewish spring festival, shows a similar origin since Passover was a festival celebrated by nomads as they changed grazing areas in the spring.

The Israelites attached the story of the deliverance from Egypt to this celebration. Since the Torah did not mandate the observance of Purim, the story of Esther serves to promote its observance. In time, the Jews of Palestine came to observe this feast, as Josephus (a first-century A.D. Jewish historian and apologist) reports.

It is a mistake, however, to regard 9,20-32 as nothing more than an addition to the book that justifies the celebration of Purim. It is true that this portion of the book does make an institution of the feast and requires that future generations of Jews celebrate the festival. The text fixes the exact time and manner of its celebration. The effect of these verses is to transform the story of a frustrated pogrom and the secular triumph of the Jews over their enemies into a religious observance.

The Jews are to observe the feast of Purim by mourning and fasting, by the giving of gifts—especially to the poor—and by remembering the story of Esther (9,22). These prescriptions give a religious dimension to what was a purely *secular story.* For succeeding generations the observance of Purim is to be a *religious experience.* The Jews are to understand their survival not just in nationalistic terms but as a religious obligation. Thus 9,20-32 reinterprets the Book of Esther for its readers. Even though the Hebrew version of the book makes no reference to God, celebration of Mordecai's victory as a religious feast makes it clear that the victory came from God.

## The Theological Horizons of the Book

Like the Joseph story (Gn 37–50) and the Succession Narrative (1 Sm 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2), God remains in the background in the Book of Esther. The Hebrew version of the story never mentions God except for what may be oblique reference in 4,14 (see note to 4,14 on p. 542, OT), The rise of Esther to the position of queen of Persia allowed her to defend the Jews just as Joseph's rise to the position as second only to the Pharaoh in Egypt (Gn 41,37-43) placed him where he could save his family (Gn 50,20f). Similarly the succession of Solomon to David's throne was according to the divine will (2 Sm 12,24f) but it occurred without direct divine intervention. Solomon ascended the throne of David following the successful machinations of Bathsheba his mother (1 Kgs 1).

The story of Esther describes the Byzantinelike intrigue and plots by the antagonists and counterplots by the protagonists. The biblical text does not approve the actions of either Esther or Mordecai but only their result. What God intended was the survival of the Jewish community. God did not dictate the means to insure that survival; the human personalities involved determined these. The refusal to speak about God directly may have been a deliberate attempt to underscore the importance of the Jews taking the matter of their survival into their own hands.

The additions to the Hebrew version show that some people saw this reticence as something that needed correction. These additions make the religious dimensions of the story more explicit:

*Additions A and F*

The story of Mordecai's dream and its interpretation make it clear that God controls the final destiny of Israel. Esther is the deliverer that God chose in answer to the prayers of the Jews.

*Addition B*
The decree of the Persian monarch against the Jews emphasizes the peculiarity of Jewish customs and alleges that the Jews are not loyal to the king (especially 4–7).

*Addition C*
This addition contains the prayers of Mordacai and Esther. The text makes it clear that the deliverance of the Jews is in response to those prayers. C,26-29 answers any objections that readers might raise about the propriety of Esther's marriage to a non-Jew. The reference in C,20 to the Temple is an anomaly in the diaspora setting of the book.

*Addition D*
Verses 2 and 8 assert that the king's change of opinion regarding the Jews resulted from God's response to the prayer of Esther.

*Addition E*
God condemns the enemy of Israel (verses 2-6). The king finds the Jews innocent of all the accusations that Haman brought against them (verses 15-16). The king acclaims the God of the Jews as sovereign over all (verse 21).

## A Christian Reading of the Book

The presence of this book in the *Christian* Old Testament is a problem for some readers because of its Jewish nationalism. One way to deal with this problem is to "excuse" the book's story of revenge on the enemies of the Jews by observing that the command to love one's enemies had not yet been taught by Christ (see "introduction," OT, p. 537). In effect, people will dismiss the book's message because it is supposedly "sub-Christian."

The message of the Book of Esther, however, has an important and positive role in the *Christian* canon. It offers an opportunity to check the tendency to spiritualize the people of ancient Israel and their contemporary descendants. The biblical text moves Christians beyond the statements made about the Jews in the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*), article 4. The Council affirmed that there is a spiritual bond between Jews and Christians, that the Church received the revelation of the Old Testament from the Jews, and, above all, that the Jews are not responsible for the death of Jesus. The Book of Esther asserts that the preservation of the Jewish people is a *religious obligation.* The presence of this book in the Christian canon is a statement of the religious significance of the Jewish people as an ethnic group. It makes the sin of anti-Semitism even more reprehensible than the irrational injustice that most Christians understand it to be today.

## Tales from the Diaspora and Today's Migrants

Stories about life in the diaspora (Esther, Tobit, Daniel 1–6) seem to say that fidelity to Jewish religious traditions is not easy for Jews living outside Palestine. The special circumstances that come from living outside the promised land and apart from the community of faith contribute to a special feeling of vulnerability. They experience their new surroundings as hostile to the maintenance of their very identity as Jews. They see political authorities as potential or real

threats to their religion and very existence. These stories show how people cut off from their roots can feel lost and menaced.

With the greater mobility that is characteristic of our age, there are more and more people who can identify with the Jewish characters in these tales from the diaspora. Immigrants sometimes feel that they must choose between economic and political security and their own cultural and religious identities. Aware of those needs, Pope Paul VI issued his *Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People Who Migrate* (1969). Responding to the pope's initiative the Bishops of the United States issued *The Church and the Immigrant* (1976) and established the Bishops' Committee on Migration to respond to the needs of immigrants to this country. One of the main duties of the Bishops' Committee on Migration is to help today's immigrants adjust to their new life in a new and sometimes threatening cultural milieu. Specifically the committee concerns itself with immigration laws, the problems of undocumented immigrants, economic and social discrimination experienced by people on the move, and pastoral initiatives to help people who feel the dislocation that comes with being an immigrant. One of the achievements of this committee was the preparation of *Together, a New People,* a pastoral statement on migrants and refugees published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986.

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# 1 MACCABEES □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 550–584 of the Old Testament*]

## The Maccabees

The word "Maccabee" derives from the Hebrew word for hammer and was a nickname for Judas, a leader in the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes (165–161 B.C.). (Seleucid is the name of the Greek dynasty that ruled in Syria following the death of Alexander the Great. It is derived from the name of Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals.) The nickname "Maccabee" later became a designation for other members of Judas's family who succeeded him as leaders in the revolt. Thus Judas and his brothers came to be known as "the Maccabees." The term "Maccabean" came to designate the period of Jewish history that witnessed the successful revolt against the Seleucid empire.

After the revolt, the descendants of the Maccabees assumed religious and later political leadership of the Jewish community in Palestine. They ruled an independent Judah from 135 B.C.

until Pompey conquered Palestine for Rome in 67 B.C. The name given to this dynasty, the post-Maccabean generation of high priests and kings, was the "Hasmonean" dynasty. That name derives from the ancestor Asamonaeus whom Josephus (a first-century A.D. Jewish historian and apologist) identifies as the father of Mattathias, who was himself the father of Judas and his brothers. It was Mattathias who started the revolt against Antiochus (1 Mc 2,15-30).

### The Maccabean Literature

There are four books "of the Maccabees" that have survived from early Judaism. None of the four are in the Hebrew Bible and therefore are not in Jewish or Protestant Bibles. Jerome included the first two books of the Maccabees in the Vulgate (his translation of the Bible into Latin) so those two books became part of the Roman Catholic canon. Third Maccabees has canonical status in Eastern Christianity. No Christian tradition accepts the Fourth Book of Maccabees as divinely inspired, though some Eastern churches include it as an appendix to the Bibles, and it has influence in their spirituality.

The four books of the Maccabees do not form a continuous narrative like the Deuteronomic history of Israel (Joshua—2 Kings). The First Book of Maccabees is historical narrative of events in the life of the Jewish community in and around Jerusalem from the reign of the Syrian king Seleucus IV (175–164 B.C.) to the accession of the Jewish ruler, John Hyracanus (134–104 B.C.). The Second Book of Maccabees is an abridgement of a five-volume history of the Maccabees that no longer exists. It covers the period of Jewish history in Palestine from the time of the high priest Onias III (180 B.C.) to the defeat of the Syrian army by Judas Maccabee in 161 B.C. Third Maccabees is a misnomer. It has nothing to do with the exploits of the Maccabees. The book is a first-century B.C. work that describes the persecution of the Jews in Egypt under Ptolemy IV (221–203 B.C.). The Fourth Book of Maccabees is a first-century A.D. discourse on religious reason as exemplified by Jewish martyrs during the Maccabean revolt.

### History and Theology in First Maccabees

Unlike the Books of Tobit, Judith, and Esther which use historical events and persons as a backdrop for what are fictional tales, the First Book of Maccabees is a historical narrative that is one of the main sources available for reconstructing the history of the Jews in Palestine during the middle of the second century B.C. This book, however, is more than a catalogue of events. Its author tries to show the significance of those events. The purpose of the work was to assert the legitimacy of the Hasmonean high-priestly dynasty. The book implies that the right of the Hasmoneans to rule is clear from the achievements of their ancestors: 1) the Maccabees saved the Jews from persecution; 2) they restored observance of the Torah; and 3) they inaugurated an era of peace and prosperity. The author of this book believed that God willed that the Hasmoneans assume the mantle of leadership over the Jews of Palestine.

## Reading the Book

### Setting the Scene

The story told in this book is a small part of a much larger story: the hellenization, the shifting of cultural orientation from East to West, in the eastern Mediterranean region. Alexander conquered this area in the fourth century B.C. It was his dream to take the culture of Greece and wed it to the cultures of the ancient Near East so that people could benefit from the best of each.

Alexander's premature death in 323 B.C. prevented him from fulfilling that dream. Alexander's generals divided his empire among themselves. The area of the former Israelite kingdoms came under the control of Ptolemy, who ruled from Egypt. Ptolemy permitted the Jews to practice their ancestral religion without much interference. The process of hellenization proceeded in the cultural, political, and economic spheres. The response of the Jewish community to hellenism was equivocal: some Jews resisted hellenization; others eagerly accepted the new wave which was sweeping the world.

The region of the ancient Mesopotamian empires fell to another of Alexander's generals: Seleucus. He thought that the territory of the old Judahite and Israelite kingdoms rightfully belonged to him. The Ptolemies and Seleucids fought over this region until it passed into the hands of the Seleucids in 200 B.C. At first the Seleucids continued to permit the Jews to practice their ancestral religion without interference. But circumstances changed in 168 B.C. when the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes seized upon the opportunity provided by divisions within the Jewish community. He favored the hellenizers, who then gave him the economic support he needed to finance his efforts at adding Egypt to his empire. To ensure the victory of the Jewish hellenizers, Antiochus forbade the practice of the Jewish religion. Without anyone to resist his policies, the future of Judaism seemed bleak.

## Mattathias (1,1—2,70)

The first chapter sets the scene for the bloody confrontation between the Jews and the Seleucids. It describes the hellenization of Jerusalem (1 Mc 1,11-15), the military attacks on the city by two Seleucid armies (1 Mc 1,16-40), and the prohibition of Jewish religious practices (1 Mc 1,41-61). Antiochus's efforts at obliterating the Jewish religion culminated in the erection of an altar dedicated to Zeus Olympus upon the altar of holocausts, the holy place in the Temple where burnt offerings were made. This effectively transformed the Temple into a shrine to Zeus (1 Mc 1,54). Tradition remembered this act as the "horrible abomination" (Dn 11,31; 12,11). But there was opposition to the royal decrees (1 Mc 1,62f).

The second chapter is important because it describes the specific type of opposition that the Maccabees and their followers were mounting against the hellenization of Antiochus and his Jewish collaborators. Though there were many Jews who opposed Antiochus, their responses were not always the same. For example, the Book of Daniel inculcates a type of passive resistance to the Seleucid program of forced hellenization. The response of the Maccabees in the person of Mattathias is militant opposition. A key text is 2,23-46 which describes Mattathias's fury at the prospect of Jewish apostasy. The author editorializes as he compares Mattathias's response with that of Phineas (see Nm 25,6-14). With this comparison, the author implies that Mattathias's action prevented God's anger from consuming the Jews because of the apostasy of some, and that this zealous action merited the high-priestly office for the Hasmoneans. Besides Numbers 25, other examples of zealous action leading to priestly credentials include Ex 32,25-29. Mattathias became the leader of a large guerilla force whose aim was to end Seleucid military domination of the Jews and the proscription of their religion.

## The Militancy of First Maccabees

The response of Mattathias to the proscription of his ancestral religion was militant: he and his followers took up arms against the Seleucids and their Jewish collaborators. The United States

Bishops' Pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace,* asserts the "the sacred scriptures provide the foundation for confronting war and peace today" (# 27). In trying to formulate a Christian response to these issues, one has to face the militancy of 1 Maccabees. Mattathias and his sons responded to the Seleucid persecution with armed resistance. Their theological support for such a response was taken from the religious traditions of ancient Israel (see Dt 20).

It is also important to remember that the response of 1 Maccabees to the threat posed by Antiochus was not the only one among religious Jews in Palestine. Though there was agreement among religious Jews that they ought to resist Antiochus, there was a variety of viewpoints on how resistance ought to proceed. First Maccabees reflects the view of those who insisted on violent resistance. There were others who opted for martyrdom, nonviolent resistance, and even pacifism in the face of the threat posed by Antiochus's anti-Jewish laws.

While 2 Maccabees shares the militancy of 1 Maccabees, it looks at the revolution against the Seleucids from a somewhat different perspective. To the usual ideas associated with holy war, it added martyrdom as another way the faithful may contribute to the final victory over their enemies. Military prowess is not the only way to victory. The blood of martyrs who died rather than violate the Torah cries out to God for vengeance and thereby seals the victory for the Jews.

The Book of Daniel likewise reflects the traditions of holy war, but it believes that the real conflict takes place not on earth but in heaven, where God will be victorious over the powers of evil. Antiochus will fall, but not by human hands (Dn 8,25). The Book of Daniel holds that resistance is necessary but this resistance is nonviolent. It expresses itself in willingness to undergo suffering and even death for the sake of the Torah. Daniel can offer nonviolent resistance as an option because of its confidence in the resurrection of the faithful (Dn 12,2f). The actual warfare against the forces of evil is left to God and Michael (Dn 12,1). The faithful do not need to fight against Antiochus since God has sealed his fate already (Dn 7,26f). All the faithful need do is to stand up to the king by not complying with his orders to abandon their ancestral religion. The Book of Daniel gives the whole credit for the inevitable victory over Antiochus to God's initiative. Daniel gives no credit to the contributions of the Maccabees at all.

Further reflections can be based on the Testament of Moses, a noncanonical work that originated during the crisis brought about by Antiochus. The Testament has no room for the militancy of 1 Maccabees. It expected deliverance to come by direct divine intervention. The catalyst for the deliverance of the Jews is the death of those who have remained faithful to God and the Torah. The result of this deliverance will not be a Jewish state but Israel's separation from the nations and its exaltation in the heavens.

The militancy of 1 Maccabees represents just one response to the problems that the Jewish community in Palestine had because of Antiochus's persecution. The Bible and other noncanonical Jewish literature offer others. In their pastoral letter, the bishops recognize that the scriptures reflect many varied historical situations (28). They could also have noted that the scriptures also reflect varied responses to the same historical circumstances. While we can understand the militancy of the Maccabees, such a response makes little sense in a nuclear age. There is no comparison between warfare of the second century B.C. and warfare today. That is precisely why the bishops of the United States spent so much time dealing with this issue and why they join recent popes in calling for nuclear disarmament.

## Mattathias's Farewell

Chapter 2 concludes with Mattathias's testament (vv. 49-62) in which he consigns his military authority to his sons (vv. 65-66). Before doing that he commends the example of Israelite heroes of the past (vv. 51-60) to his sons in order to support his militant ideology (vv. 50, 66-68). He is certain that Antiochus will fall and the suppression of Jewish religion will end with him (vv. 61-63).

## Judas (1 Mc 3,1—9,22)

About forty percent of the story in 1 Maccabees centers on the exploits of Judas, who succeeded his father as leader of the Jewish guerilla forces. Though the text acclaims Judas's exploits and applauds his bravery (3,3-9; 9,22), the author is very careful to imply that Judas's victories came about because of divine help. Judas prays before he begins any battle (3,46; 4,30-33; 5,33; 7,40-42). He boosts the morale of his army by reminding his men of how God has helped their ancestors in the face of overwhelming odds (4,8f; 7,41). Judas's preparations for battle (3,47-49), his dismissal of those whom Deuteronomy exempts from war (3,56, see Dt 20,5-8), and the way he dealt with the defeated enemy and the spoils of war (5,28.35.51) all exemplify the beliefs of a man who was certain that he was fighting in accord with a divine command. Finally Judas praises God when he celebrates his victories (4,24.33.55).

## Hanukkah, or the Feast of the Dedication

Hanukkah is a Jewish feast celebrating the purification or rededication of the Second Temple during the Maccabean revolt. It was Judas Maccabee who mandated the observance of this festival (1 Mc 4,59). Antiochus polluted the altar of the Temple (1 Mc 1,54). This was probably the "horrible abomination" of Daniel 9,27. When the Maccabees gained control of the area of the Temple, they purified the Temple and rebuilt the altar three years to the day of Antiochus's desecration (1 Mc 4,36-58).

Josephus calls this festival "the feast of lights" (*Antiquities* 12:7:7) because the rededication of the Temple also involved rekindling the Temple's menorah (a lamp stand with seven branches). Jews observe this festival at home by lighting one candle on a special Hanukkah menorah each night. The Talmud relates the story of how one day's supply of holy oil lasted for the full eight days of the original festival until the priests could obtain more oil for the menorah in the Temple. The significance of this festival lies in its glorification of the deeds of those who would not acquiesce to the proscription of their ancestral religion. They took up arms and won their freedom. The victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus undoubtedly enabled Judaism to survive.

## Jonathan (1 Mc 9,23—12,54)

Judas dies in battle and his brother Jonathan succeeds him. While the text hails Jonathan's military exploits, of particular importance is his acceptance of the appointment as high priest from the Seleucid king Alexander who succeeded Antiochus (10,20f).

## Simon (1 Mc 13,1—16,24)

After the followers of Tryphon, a pretender to the Syrian throne, assassinate Jonathan, the succession passes to his brother Simon. A stirring speech by Simon (13,3-6) moves the people to acclaim him as their ruler (13,8f). Later a formal assembly composed of priests, elders, and

leaders of the people ratifies this popular action (1 Mc 14,41). The First Book of Maccabees reaches its climax with the accession of Simon as leader and high priest. The purpose of the book is to present the establishment of the Hasmonean house as the legitimate political and religious dynasty for the Jews of Palestine.

The poem in 14,4-15 is an amalgam of biblical motifs suggesting that with Simon a state of peace and prosperity has come to the Jews the likes of which had not been seen since the days of David and Solomon. With Simon a new "golden age" has dawned. The change effected by the rule of the Hasmoneans over the thirty years since Mattathias's revolt began is dramatic. A beleaguered minority within the Jewish community stood up to a powerful empire for the sake of its religion, and prevailed. The author of 1 Maccabees believed that God was working through the Hasmonean family.

The book closes on a tragic note. After an aged Simon appointed his two eldest sons, Judas and John, as his successors, a political rival murdered Simon along with Judas and another one of his sons, Mattathias. John captured the assassin and had him executed. The succession was safe and another Hasmonean, John Hyrcanus continued the line of those "men to whom it was granted to achieve Israel's salvation" (5,62). John ruled the Jewish community in Palestine as high priest and "ethnarch," a title whose Greek etymology means "ruler of a people."

## The Legitimacy of the Hasmoneans

The purpose of 1 Maccabees is clear: it defends the legitimacy of the Hasmonean dynasty. The members of this dynasty, who assumed both religious and political leadership in the Jewish community, were not without their opponents. After all, they ruled as kings when many Jews believed that the only legitimate political leaders ought to be descendants of David. As a priestly family the Hasmoneans were not members of David's tribe (Judah) let alone his family. Second, the Hasmoneans functioned as high priests even though they were not descendants of Aaron as required by tradition. The principal opponents of the Hasmoneans were the *Hasidim* (the Pious Ones) who were the spiritual ancestors of the Essenes and the Pharisees.

The *Hasidim* saw themselves as careful observers of the law but held the Hasmoneans to be illegitimate interlopers as religious and political leaders. 1 Maccabees tried to show that the Hasmonean dynasty owed its origin to a revolutionary movement that had zeal for the Torah at its heart. The *Hasidim,* on the other hand, were not always very prudent in their self-styled devotion to the Torah. In their concern to have a high priest from the family of Aaron, they accepted a collaborator who betrayed them (7,8-18). According to 1 Maccabees the victories that God granted the Maccabees must have been a sign of the legitimacy of the Hasmonean dynasty. The most prudent approach is to accept the dynasty until a "true prophet" says that God wishes otherwise (14,41). This is precisely what most of the Jewish people and their leaders did (14,28).

The First Book of Maccabees reflects a type of pragmatism that was incompatible with the religious zealotry of the *Hasidim.* For example, 1 Maccabees 8 is lavish in its praise of the Romans. This shows that the Hasmoneans were willing to compromise with foreigners when circumstances made it necessary. Later, the Pharisees will adopt this same position and so will the early Church (see Rom 13,1-7 and 1 Pt 2,13-17).

This book is not content with establishing the legitimacy of the Hasmonean dynasty on purely religious grounds. First Maccabees shows that the major political powers of the day recognized the Hasmoneans as the political leaders of the Jewish people. The book cites several

Seleucid documents to the effect (10,18-20; 10,25-45; 11,30-37; 13,31-40; 15,2-9). Both the Spartans (12,5-23 and 14,16-23) and the Romans (8,1-32; 12,1-4; 14,16-19) acknowledge the Hasmoneans as the leaders of the Jewish people.

## First Maccabees in Catholic Tradition

This book is not part of the Hebrew Bible. There is no evidence that it formed part of the Qumran library and Josephus did not include it on his list of sacred books. The book fared better among Christians. Reverence for the book by the Church's early theologians was perhaps one reason that the Councils of Florence and Trent both affirmed its canonicity. This book, however, has had no real impact on Christian theology. Its use in the liturgy is minimal. The liturgy does not make use of 1 Maccabees during the cycle of Sunday readings but reads portions of Chapters 1–6 on four successive weekdays in Year II (nos. 497–502). Appropriately enough, the text from Chapter 4 about the rededication of the altar in the Temple is a suggested reading for the Mass on the occasion of the dedication of an altar and 2,49-52.57-64 is the reading for the votive Mass for Persecuted Christians. L.J.H.

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# 2 MACCABEES □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 584–610 of the Old Testament*]

## The Relationship Between 1 and 2 Maccabees

The Second Book of Maccabees does not continue the history of the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire and its aftermath that is the subject of First Maccabees. The second book is an abridgement of a five-volume work on the Maccabees by one Jason of Cyrene (2,23). This longer work has not come down to us. The unknown editor who is responsible for the present form of 2 Maccabees wished to simplify Jason's work so that readers could remember its most important features (2,25).

Second Maccabees begins its story of the Jews in Palestine with the reign of the Syrian king Seleucus IV when Onias III was the high priest and ends with the defeat of the Syrian army by

Judas Maccabee. The period extends from approximately 180 to 161 B.C. Thus the story of 2 Maccabees overlaps with that in 1 Mc 1,10—7,5. In particular, there is quite a lot of similarity between 2 Mc 8–15 and 1 Mc 3–7.

While 2 Maccabees does not cover as much of the history of the Maccabees as does 1 Maccabees, it is a more polished literary work. Also 2 Maccabees is less of an apology for the Hasmonean dynasty and more of an attempt to illustrate an important theological theme: God's justice in rewarding the faithful and punishing the impious. The book provides an inventory of how God dealt with both Jews and Greeks who disregarded the divine will. Its focus, however, is on those Jews who accepted death rather than be guilty of an act of disobedience. The stories that 2 Maccabees does tell teach the value of fidelity to God by affecting the emotions of the reader.

## Reading the Book

### Letters to the Jews in Egypt (2 Mc 1,2—2,18)

The book begins with two letters directed at the Jewish community in Egypt. Both call upon that community to celebrate a festival in honor of the rededication of the Temple following the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucids. The feast in question is Hanukkah. Since the Torah could not mandate the celebration of this feast, the leadership of the Jewish community had to take this special step to encourage its observance.

The Jewish community in Egypt built its own temple under the direction of Onias IV, the son of the last legitimate high priest. Perhaps one purpose of these letters was to redirect these peoples' loyalty to the community in Jerusalem. Encouraging the Jews in Egypt to celebrate a festival in honor of the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem may have been an attempt to keep them from forgetting their ties with Palestine.

Also it may be that the person responsible for the present form of 2 Maccabees added these letters to the story of the triumph of the Maccabees in order to make the book into a festal scroll for Hanukkah as the Book of Esther is for the Feast of Purim.

### The Author's Preface (2 Mc 2,19-32)

The person responsible for this preface is the individual who has decided to abridge the work of Jason of Cyrene. He states that he wishes to simplify Jason's work to make it helpful to more people (2,24-26). He also advises his readers that he will add his own touches to Jason's work (2,29). Second Maccabees, as it stands today, is not simply a digest of a much longer work. There are portions of the book that do not come from Jason but were the product of the same person who made the abridgement.

## Hellenization

Second Maccabees, like First Maccabees reflects those circles in second-century B.C. Judaism that rejected the program of enforced hellenization imposed by Antiochus. It offers the example of martyrs who died rather than abandon their ancestral religion. Despite this strong objection to hellenism, even the most pious Jews could not avoid its influence completely.

Hellenism is a term that describes the culture, ideals, and institutions that reached their apex in fifth-century B.C. Athens and that came to have a momentous influence throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. Until the time of Alexander the Great, this region was oriented

culturally to the East. The Israelite kingdoms could not help falling under the political, economic, and cultural sway of the eastern empires: Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. Alexander did more than bring Palestine into Greece's political orbit, he effected a genuine cultural reorientation. Until the Moslem conquest in the seventh century A.D., the entire eastern Mediterranean region, including the territories of the former Israelite kingdoms, would fall under the cultural sway of the West.

The city or *polis* with its marketplace (*agora*), colonnaded streets, temples, theater, and gymnasium was the instrument of economic prosperity in the Near East and of the diffusion of hellenism as well. Throughout Palestine the Greeks remade ancient cities. There was Ptolemais (Acco) along the Mediterranean in the north, Gaza along the Mediterranean in the south, Scythopolis (Beth Shean) in the Jordan Valley, Marisa (Mareshah) in the South. Even Jerusalem was made over (1 Mc 1,11-14).

It is not surprising that there was resistance among some Jews to hellenization. After all, the Jews had a very traditional culture in which change occurred only gradually. There were, however, people—especially among the aristocratic stratum of Jewish society—that embraced the new cultural wave. At first, the hellenism that the Jews faced was a mild type. From the time of Alexander's death in 332 B.C. to about 200 B.C. the Ptolemies ruled Judah from Egypt. The Ptolemies were the least culturally aggressive of all the hellenistic dynasties. Matters changed dramatically under the Seleucid king Antiochus IV who imposed hellenism upon the Jews. Antiochus's policies sparked the Maccabean revolt.

Like 1 Maccabees, this work is also opposed to the forced hellenization program of Antiochus. Second Maccabees is intensely devoted to the Torah. Death—even suicide (2 Mc 14,37-46)—is preferable to violating the Torah. The reward for such loyalty on the individual plane is resurrection, and on the communal plane it is the possession of Jerusalem. Despite this opposition to Antiochus's program of hellenization, hellenistic rhetorical forms emerge in 2 Maccabees. In the world of 2 Maccabees, it is impossible to escape the influence of hellenistic culture.

At times hellenism plays into the hands of the author. For example, 2 Maccabees appeals to the emotions of its readers. The work does not hesitate to describe the death of Jewish martyrs in vivid detail. This approach is typical of hellenistic history writing. The same is true of appeals to the supernatural (for example, 2 Mc 3,22-30). The miraculous episodes in 2 Maccabees are comparable to episodes in Greek histories.

In addition, as opposed to the Greeks as 2 Maccabees is, it is not simplistic in the way it deals with Jews and Greeks. It presents some Greeks as sympathetic to the Jews. Antiochus even converts on his deathbed (9,11-18). Clearly the Jews do not object to the rule of the Greeks as such. The Jews can be good citizens. What they do object to are the abuses that came with Antiochus.

There comes a point when the pious must choose. Antiochus made the choice unavoidable. With hellenism there came a whole bevy of gods and goddesses. There were even deified kings. More subtle were the novelties in philosophy and ethics. For the pious Jew, hellenism represented a religious ideology and practice that was completely foreign. Jewish literature of the period shows an extreme distaste for non-Israelite religion (Dn 3,6; 1 Mc 1,43; Wis 13,10-19; 14,12-21). But there was no escaping the influence of Greek culture at this time and on into the future. For example, almost seven hundred years later during the Byzantine Period (fourth

to sixth centuries A.D.), there were a few synagogues in Palestine which had decorative motifs that included a zodiac complete with the god Helios in the center of a mosaic floor.

Second Maccabees represents the earlier view that rejected any compromise with hellenism. There are absolute values that do not allow for any compromise. Even in the face of death, the righteous will chose fidelity to the Torah. Second Maccabees can be confident that such a choice is not in vain because of its belief in the resurrection.

## The Story of the Maccabees (2 Mc 3,1—15,36)

A theological purpose dominates the way the author presents the story of the Maccabees. This purpose is to show how the events of Jewish history from the time of Onias the high priest to the time of Judas Maccabee disclose a God who cares for the Jewish people by rewarding the faithful and punishing evildoers. In telling his story, the author uses a scheme first devised by the authors of the Deuteronomic history of Israel, who told how Israel came to own the land under Joshua and then how Israel lost the land under its kings. It is the story of how Israel's infidelity transformed the blessing into a curse.

The story begins with a period of *blessing* (3,1-40) during the time of Onias III when people observed the Torah (3,1-3). During the time of the high priests Jason and Menelaus the people and their leaders *sin* by violating the Torah and following the customs of the Greeks (4,1—5,10). This inevitably leads to *punishment* (5,11—6,17). Antiochus is the agent of God's judgment.

In the midst of Antiochus's persecution of the Jews, the prayers of the people and especially the heroic death of the Jewish martyrs leads to a *turning point* (6,18—8,4). The refusal of the martyrs to sin, their obedience to the Torah, and their innocent death bring a change in circumstances. God finally shows the Jews mercy and brings an end to their persecution. Although the book is aware that it was the military victories of Judas Maccabee that ended the domination of Antiochus, it assumes that it was the death of the martyrs that turned God's anger to mercy and made the Maccabean victories possible.

This section of the book has influenced the development of the notion in Christian theology that suffering can have a positive value. Suffering can be a form of divine education (6,18—7,42). God did not design the suffering of the Jewish people under Antiochus to destroy the people but to discipline them. God may discipline God's people but God does not abandon them (6,12-16).

The suffering of the innocent leads the author to affirm his belief in the resurrection of the dead (7,9.11.14.23; 14,46). This belief enables the Jewish martyrs to accept their suffering; God will deliver the pious despite their death at the hands of the impious. (See the Reading Guide on Daniel, Chapter 12).

The history ends with a summary of Judas's victories (8,5—15,36) that brings *salvation* to the beleaguered Jewish community. The cycle is complete: *blessing* has returned to the Jewish people.

Parallel to this story of salvation is another story of retribution. The enemies of the Jews come to a terrible end: Antiochus dies in agony (9,8), the Greek who murdered the good high priest Onias is himself killed (4,38) and the general who commanded the siege against Jerusalem is dead and his head hangs from the citadel of the city (15,35). The wicked among the Jews also

suffered under divine judgment. The wicked high priests Jason and Menelaus both come to miserable ends (5,1-10 and 13,7f).

## Prayers for the Living and Dead

One of the most significant texts in this book for Roman Catholic theology is 12,42-46. Here the author tries to show that Judas Maccabee believed in the resurrection of the dead since he ordered prayers and sacrifices for those who had fallen in battle. The author concludes that such prayers would be futile unless Judas believed that they would rise again (12,44). Sometimes this text is used as support for the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory and the efficacy of the prayers of the living for the dead.

Another significant text for Roman Catholics is 2 Maccabees 15,12-16. Here Judas Maccabee has a dream in which he sees the prophet Jeremiah praying for the Jews and Jerusalem. Catholic tradition accepts this text as one support for the belief in the efficacy of the intercession of the saints.

### The Epilogue (2 Mc 15,37-39)

The author ends his work rather abruptly with a hope that readers will find his work pleasant reading. L.J.H.

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See the Bibliography in the article on 1 Maccabees.

# THE WISDOM BOOKS

DIANNE BERGANT

## Introduction

Some of the literature that originated in the period of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy (tenth century B.C.) suggests that at that time human fulfillment began to be viewed in a new light. Every aspect of life took on a new importance. Israel maintained that it encountered God *through* human experience, not *in addition to* it. A new question was being asked: What kind of role does God play in everyday life? The answers to that question did not contribute to the national story that we have come to know as "salvation history." Instead, they form a kind of "guide for successful living." Since every person in every culture must struggle with the questions of life, there is a universal character to the literature in question. This might explain why, even today, people of other religious cultures often can more readily identify with the teaching of the wisdom books than with the uniquely Israelite or Christian theology found in other sections of the Bible.

The Israelites came to believe that their God was the great Creator-God, the one responsible for the world and everything in it. Observing the regularity in creation, they concluded that there was some kind of order inherent in nature itself. They believed that, if they could discern how this order operated and then harmonize their lives with it, they would be successful and at peace. The ability to perceive this order and to live in accord with it was known as wisdom.

The primary interest of the wisdom tradition is instruction in the proper ways of living. The writers make use of various teaching techniques such as story-telling, exhortation, warning, and questioning. In addition to the standard proverb, they use riddles, parables, and metaphors to instruct, advise, and persuade. There are usually very definite lessons that they want to teach, and so we should not be surprised when we come across what appears to be "the moral of the story."

The sages were humanists; that is, concerned with the study of human beings and attentive to human welfare, values, and dignity. They taught that whatever benefited humanity was a good to be pursued; and whatever was harmful should be avoided and condemned. Training of any kind, whether within the family, the court, or in preparation for a profession, ought to impart the skills needed to succeed in the respective occupations. The criterion for judging the value of any venture was the degree of success or happiness that it brought. The sages regarded well-being and happiness as evidence that life was in accord with the order of

creation. They were not advocating the pursuit of happiness for its own sake, but as a by-product of the right kind of life. Success and happiness were also considered concrete evidence of the wisdom of the person who succeeded. The judgment of right or wrong, and the laws that supported this judgment, grew out of just such a critical reflection on the experience of life.

Although the wise women and men believed that there was a right way of behaving, they did not insist on a rigid standard that would fit every circumstance. Each case was different. The wise person was the one who had a store of wisdom gained from experience and who knew which way of behaving was appropriate to each situation.

There is a great deal of pragmatism in such a way of viewing life. If an approach did not accomplish the desired goal, it was discarded for one that would. This is not a case of the end justifying the means. Rather, the Israelites had a sense that goodness was a force that determined life. They were convinced that goodness became evident in whatever built up, sustained, or enriched life. From this point of view, the consequences of an action or the quality of the end were seen as evidence of the goodness of the means.

Such an understanding of life presumed that conformity to the inherent governing principles of the world would result in a life filled with success and prosperity. On the other hand, adversity was attributed to some failure to observe these authoritative directives. On occasion, the early traditions do acknowledge the limitations of this point of view. (Job and Ecclesiastes are examples of this.) Nonetheless, the theory of retribution (the good shall be rewarded; the evil shall be punished) undergirds most of the wisdom literature.

Israel's wisdom tradition did not develop in a vacuum. It was part of a much broader movement within the ancient Near Eastern world. Reference to the sages of foreign nations can be found throughout the biblical text itself, usually within passages that depict an Israelite outstripping a non-Israelite in wisdom. It was Joseph who succeeded in interpreting Pharaoh's dream when the magicians and sages of Egypt failed (see Gn 41). Job had a reputation which surpassed that of all the sages of the East (Jb 1,3).

There is a remarkable similarity between the biblical wisdom material and some Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite texts. There is common subject matter, the literary forms are similar, and the worldview corresponds with that of Israel. Critical examination shows that the non-Israelite texts are significantly older than comparable biblical material. More likely than not, Israel borrowed from its neighbors and adapted and reinterpreted when necessary. While there are Egyptian and Mesopotamian works that are very similar to both Job and Ecclesiastes, this borrowing is most evident in the Book of Proverbs.

Despite these similarities, Israel's wisdom tradition is clearly in accord with its Yahwistic faith. It may not focus on specifics of religion but it is highly ethical, fundamentally monotheistic, and, at times, equates wisdom with fidelity to the law of Israel.

# JOB □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 612–645 of the Old Testament*]

## About the Book

Certain aspects of the Book of Job have evoked as many interpretations as there are interpreters. Since the way we explain these points may influence our understanding of the message of the

book, it might be helpful to consider some of them before proceeding. There is no agreement about the book's date, its place of origin, or the source of some of its parts. There is not even total agreement as to its principal theme. In fact, the richness of the book and its universal appeal prevent us from easily categorizing it.

Evidence from the book itself is often given in support of a preexilic dating (seventh century B.C.). Job's complaints are reminiscent of the lamentations of Jeremiah, and some consider the book an outcry against the impending destruction of Jerusalem and deportation into exile. However, similarities with the theology and style of Deutero-Isaiah (the portion of Isaiah beginning with Chap. 40) seem to outweigh this data, tipping the scale in favor of a postexilic dating (sixth–fifth century B.C.). The book certainly appeared prior to the third century B.C., when "Satan" appears as a proper name (1 Chr 21,1) instead of as the designation of a role (an adversary, as in a court of justice) as it is found in Job.

Job's struggle with suffering is a universal and perennial problem and there is much in the book that has international flavor and appeal. There are older ancient Near Eastern accounts of innocent sufferers that may have influenced the author of Job. Several characteristics of the book (for example, the names and places of origin of the three visitors) suggest foreign influence and even borrowing. Still, whatever in the book that may have originated elsewhere has been used here with Israelite theology in mind.

Like most pieces of ancient literature, Job is a composite rather than the work of a single author. It appears to be a prose folktale (1,1—2,13; 42,7-17) within which extensive poetic speeches (3,1—42,6) have been inserted. In the book's present form, the two parts of the folktale serve as prologue and epilogue to the speeches. Even within these speeches, we can detect units believed to have originated from someone other than the principal author (for example, the Wisdom Poem [Chapter 28], the Elihu Speeches [Chapters 32–37], the second Speech of the Lord [Chapter 40]). Regardless of when or from whom these different sections originated, they all belong to the final form, and it is this final form that has been handed down to us as sacred Scripture. Therefore we should read it as a unified literary work.

Finally, the universal appeal of the book stems from the nature of the questions posed by the tormented Job. Who has not struggled with the dilemma of incomprehensible suffering? Who has not cried out to God: "Why?" The principal theme of the book has been variously identified as human integrity; innocent suffering; disinterested piety; human limitations and the incomprehensibility of God; ultimate trust. Actually, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive; they are interrelated. They each express a different nuance of the all-encompassing mystery of the manner in which God is present in the world and they suggest how we should respond to that presence.

## The Literary Style

Most people know the story of the innocent man who was mysteriously stricken yet who remained steadfast in his loyalty, to be rewarded in the end for his faithfulness. This simple understanding does not accurately represent the story; it is merely the plot of the folktale that frames the dialogues. The principal part of the book is the poetic dialogues. The prologue and epilogue merely set the stage and bring to conclusion the real drama. The more we understand how the form of the book works, the more we will discover the message within it.

The dialogues consist of speeches in Hebrew poetic form. Each time Job cries out against

his sorry state either Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar offers him counsel or attempts to convince him of his error. The orderly manner in which this exchange takes place constitutes the cycles of speeches. The third set of speeches is somewhat fragmented. Bildad's remarks are abbreviated, Zophar's are missing altogether, and Job's replies are inordinately long, often containing material that seems to contradict his basic point of view. Some scholars believe that these discrepancies resulted from the dislocation of material that really belongs to either Bildad or Zophar, and these scholars reconstruct the speeches accordingly. This explains why the verses are sometimes out of numerical order in some translations.

The speeches of Elihu do not fit into any of the three cycles. While there are some differences between this Elihu section and what precedes it, the theological point of view expressed by this character neither fundamentally departs from nor significantly adds to that of the first three counselors. This fact has led some commentators to conclude that either the speeches are a later literary and theological addition of the original author or they are the work of another writer. This section is now part of the book, however, and cannot be discounted.

The literary form and the content of the Lord's speeches are reminiscent of an ancient Near Eastern pattern known as *onomasticon* (a Greek word meaning "naming"). This was a constructed listing of names of things that had similar characteristics; for example, cosmological, meteorological, or other natural phenomena. These listings were probably prescientific attempts at classifying natural phenomena. They demonstrate the universal human search for understanding the universe. In the Book of Job we find a creative use of this form. The author casts God in the role of wisdom teacher who poses challenging questions that test Job's comprehension of the wonders of the universe, a teaching technique typical of the wisdom tradition. The content and the form of these questions are similar to the *onomastica.*

The use of nature as a means of instruction is also characteristic of the wisdom tradition. While this occurs throughout the entire book, nowhere else does it have the effect that it does in these speeches. Because God does not directly address Job's demands, some commentators have concluded that God ignores Job's concerns. In saying this, they have not adequately considered the way the author makes use of this literary form.

The poetry found within the book is unlike most classical or contemporary poetry. There is virtually no rhyme, and the rhythm follows tonal patterns that are usually lost when the original Hebrew is translated. One characteristic that is identifiable even in translation is the correspondence of thought in successive half lines. This feature is known as parallelism. The thought in the first line can be repeated:

> Does God pervert judgment,
> and does the Almighty distort justice? (Jb 8,3)

or contrasted (there are no clear examples of this in Job):

> Hatred stirs up disputes,
> but love covers all offenses. (Prv 10,12)

or advanced:

> Pity me, pity me, O you my friends,
> for the hand of God has struck me! (Jb 19,21)

Parallelism is used effectively in Job as an aid in furthering the arguments of the various speakers.

There are two other literary forms that should be mentioned. They are the lawsuit and the lament. Elements of these forms are found throughout the speeches of Job. Again and again he demands that God meet him in court where his (Job's) case will be tried and he will be found innocent (for example, 23,2-4). Even more frequently, Job cries out to God in complaint. He laments the day of his birth (3,1-10), and life itself (10,1-7), and he pleads for help (13,20-27). In all of these ways, the literary style of the author contributes to the development of the book's message.

## The Drama

Each section of the book has its own dynamic, and carries the story forward to its conclusion. The prose prologue plays a very important role in the unfolding of the theological message of the book. It is there that Job's innocence is established beyond any doubt, and it is there that we see who is responsible for Job's misfortune. It is God who permits this righteous man to suffer in order to test the quality of his integrity. Job never knows this, nor do his visitors. Only the reader has witnessed what took place in heaven. It is important that we know this as we listen to the theological debate that follows.

The arguments in the poetic speeches are repetitious and appear to be quite monotonous, but this is an essential part of the author's treatment of the problem. By adding layer upon layer of the same accusation and rebuttal, the author brings us into the very midst of the impasse. It does not take long for us to recognize the pointlessness of the debate. Job makes his claims and his counselors make theirs. Neither side is convinced by the other. Only some manifestation from God can resolve the impasse.

Job demanded a hearing and, finally, God does confront him, but in a manner surpassing Job's imagining. God breaks the cosmic silence and thunders through the heavens. Job had made his appeal to the justice of God. God answers Job from the midst of creative power. Even though his questions are not answered, the opposing tensions with which Job had struggled are clearly reconciled. But why? and how?

The epilogue and its last verses of prose complete the reworked folktale. Job is vindicated and, as was the rule in this ancient society when someone has been unjustly dispossessed, he is compensated for his losses by double payment. However, his question: "Why" is never answered. As the book ends, all he knows is that the innocent can indeed be afflicted for no apparent reason and with no guarantee that the reason will ever be disclosed.

## The Message

While the Book of Job is a poetic narrative, it is also a theological statement made up of several themes intricately interwoven. The way we understand this theology will influence the way we perceive the arguments in the book. The themes are treated here not in order of importance but as they appear in the book.

### Reward and Punishment

As mentioned earlier (Introduction), the theory of retribution undergirds most of the wisdom literature. It is, after all, the basis of any notion of justice. Goodness should be rewarded and evil

should be punished. This theory probably originated from the experience of life itself. Actions frequently generated their own consequences. When it appears that this will not happen in the natural course of events, someone in authority steps in to see that justice is done. We not only expect this to happen; we need it in order to live with a certain degree of security.

This theory clearly plays an important role in the Book of Job. Although Job endures insufferable loss and physical distress, his real agony seems to lie in the incomprehensibility of his situation. He has been a righteous man and righteous people are not supposed to be so afflicted. Job's claim of righteousness is not an empty one. The author has taken great pains in the prologue to show us that Job is indeed a man of unsurpassed integrity. Then why should he have to bear the burden that, according to this theory, is the consequence of wickedness? Has God forgotten Job's faithfulness? Or, even worse, is God indifferent toward it? These are the kinds of questions at the heart of Job's dilemma.

It is quite clear that those who visit Job consider the theory of retribution a valid way of interpreting life. Since Job is suffering, he must be guilty of wrong. Since his suffering is so comprehensive and so intense, his sin must be serious. His visitors use every argument they can devise to convince Job of his error and persuade him to repent. They draw their conclusions about the morality of his behavior from the nature of his present situation. They do not question Job's suffering, and so they assume that he is guilty. (This same kind of thinking prompted the apostles to ask Jesus whether it was the sin of the blind man or of his parents that resulted in the man's blindness [see Jn 9,2].)

Job himself adheres to the same theory, but he makes his claims from a different point of view. He knows that he has done nothing to deserve such misfortune. Still, a strict understanding of retribution offers no other explanation for his troubles and, therefore, Job blames God. Being a man of faith, he believes that God is the architect of the order in the universe. God is the one who has made things to work as they do. Ultimately, God is the one who decides who will be rewarded and who will be punished. God usually accomplishes this through the laws that were set at creation. When they seem to fail, God can and, as the traditions of Israel claim, God does intervene to enforce justice. From Job's point of view, God has failed to do this in his case.

Since the bulk of the speeches deals with arguments in defense of or in opposition to Job's righteousness, one would think that when the Lord spoke the matter would be clarified and we would know who was correct. When God finally does thunder from the whirlwind, the question of justice is not addressed. Instead, the issue is the creative wisdom and power of God. Still, this should not be seen as avoidance of the question. Remember, in this book God is cast in the role of wisdom teacher. It is characteristic of such a teacher to ask rhetorical questions and to make reference to the natural world in order to make a point. By means of such questioning, God leads Job to see that, as there is much in nature that Job cannot understand, so there is much in human experience that is beyond him. Indirectly, God reveals the inadequacy of the theory of retribution. God shows Job that happiness and success are not demonstrable rewards for righteous living, nor are grief and failure punishment for unfaithfulness. The lesson to be learned is that suffering is not the sure sign of alienation from God.

The theory of retribution continues to be operative in our thinking today. When we fall upon hard times or are victims of some tragedy, we frequently ask: What have I done to deserve this? Why is God punishing me? We have a sense of how things are supposed to work and when they don't, like Job, we demand an explanation from God. Perhaps, again like Job, we will have

to learn that not everything can be explained according to the theory. Life is too complex to be forced into one pattern.

## Theodicy

Once we are convinced that certain suffering is undeserved, we are faced with a very troubling question: Why does God seem to allow injustice to occur? Theodicy (from the Greek for "justifying God") is the name given to our attempt to explain the problem of evil, while at the same time maintaining the belief that God is a moral creator who is in control and who loves those who suffer.

If Job did not believe that God is a moral God, the question of evil would take a totally different turn. If God is not just, then Job's suffering might be equally difficult for him to bear but it would not be the puzzle that it is. He would know that he could not depend upon God for justice. Instead, his happiness and unhappiness would hinge on the whims of a capricious God. It is clear that such a view was foreign to Israel's faith. Job's counselors never question God's integrity, and Job does so only reluctantly and at the risk of falsely accusing God.

According to another view, God could be moral but not able to control evil completely. This is the theory advanced by several post-Holocaust thinkers who cannot explain why God allowed so many millions of innocent people to be exterminated during the Second World War. It is also a view expressed in a contemporary book by Harold S. Kushner, *Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* Although a number of recent thinkers have held this view, it is not found in the Bible. Israel believed that its God was the undisputed almighty creator (see Is 45,7; Am 3,6). None of the characters in the Book of Job doubts God's control. In fact, if Job could believe that God was not somehow responsible, his torment might even be lessened.

Finally, perhaps God is both moral and omnipotent, but unconcerned about simple people. Surely the almighty God has more important things to do than to worry about the fortunes or misfortunes of one man. The traditions of Israel contradict this notion as well. From the earliest stories of the ancestors (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel and Leah) we see God portrayed as attentive to the most personal needs of the individual. This is the memory of God that Job recalls as he laments his present predicament (29,1-6). How could a gracious God who cared for him in earlier years turn against him now?

Theodicy is not an issue for the visitors, since Job's misery is not a puzzle to them. Job himself is intent on defending his own integrity rather than God's, and so theodicy is not a concern of his either. However, it is of major importance to the author of the book, who depicts God as all-powerful and provident and a God of unchallenged goodness. At the end of the book, the question of suffering may be left unanswered, but the integrity of God is no longer questioned.

## Disinterested Piety

In a very real sense, the drama of the book stems from Satan's challenge found in 1,9: "Is it for nothing that Job is God-fearing?" He insinuates that Job is righteous because of the rewards that he now enjoys and will continue to enjoy as long as he remains faithful. It is easy for Job to be loyal to God when things are going right and he is happy with life. Take away his prosperity and the good things of life and he will not only give up his way of integrity, but he will actually curse God. The reader should note that God takes the dare.

Twice Job is assaulted. His initial response to the tragedy that has fallen upon him proves that Satan's accusation was groundless. Job neither curses God nor veers from his attachment to God. Despite his complete reversal of fortune, Job's confidence has not been shaken and he actually praises God (see 1,21 and 2,10).

It is clear that Job had not been God-fearing simply for the sake of blessing. His afflictions did not diminish his devotion. Even in adversity he maintained that all things are in God's hands, and God would render whatever God deemed fit. Still, it is probable that Job did expect to be blessed for being faithful. The admonitions of his visitors as well as his own later assertions mark an expectation common to all of them (see 4,7; 8,20; 11,15; 13,16). All seem to believe that goodness will not go unrewarded nor will wickedness fail to be punished—a conviction that is fundamental to the notion of justice. The question still remains: Was Job faithful for the sake of reward or was his piety really disinterested?

The content of Job's laments and pleading show that Job does not look for recompense; he wants vindication. He is not concerned about possessions; he insists that his integrity be acknowledged. When he finally understands the lesson that God set out to teach him, he is silent and seems content with his new insights. It is apparent that the depth of Job's piety is based on his relationship with God, not on some promise of reward.

We must remember that at this time Israelites did not have a clear idea of reward or punishment in an afterlife, as Christian theology teaches. If justice was not meted out in this life, they had no hope at all for retribution. This makes Job's disinterested piety even more admirable. It also serves to challenge the quality of our own fidelity.

Job's faithfulness can also be an encouragement to us. Here is a man who is not willing to accept unquestioningly what he considers a grave injustice. He rejects the instruction and counsel of those regarded as teachers of the religious tradition. Job is not blindly docile in his suffering. Nor is he afraid to complain to God in his frustration. At this point we must be careful to understand Job's anger correctly. He does not really argue with God because he is suffering, but because he sees a conflict between his unwarranted suffering and his faith in the justice of God. The Job who accuses God is no less pious than the man who acknowledged, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away" (1,21). Devout people certainly do have their differences with God. We are reminded of the great Teresa of Avila, who in frustration complained to God, "No wonder you have so few friends."

## Suffering

Although the customary way of understanding suffering was as punishment for sin, the Book of Job does provide other explanations for it. The prologue itself tells us that God allowed Job's misfortunes to befall him so that Job's integrity might be tested (1,11; 2,3.5). A similar incident in the cycle of stories about Abraham comes to mind. There, "God put Abraham to the test" (Gn 22,1) and told him to sacrifice his son Isaac. There is a significant difference here, however. In the end, Abraham was told that he had been tested (Gn 22,16), while Job never knows about God's dealings with Satan. Job himself never regards his misfortune as a test.

Suffering is also sometimes seen as a source of moral discipline. Elihu claims that pain and sickness sometimes act as warnings against sin and as a defense against pride and complacency (33,15-24).

Other interpretations of suffering include vicariously enduring the punishment of others (the Suffering Servant: Is 52,13—53,12); undergoing purification (Ps 66,10); a necessary way

of accomplishing the will of God (Joseph in Egypt: Gn 50,20). Only the first two explanations are found in the Book of Job.

The ancient Near East offered another explanation referred to as the "curse of the evil deed." It claimed that those who engage in evil infect themselves in the process. This notion is behind the saying: "He who digs a pit falls into it" (Prv 26, 27). Just as the Israelites had a sense that goodness was a force that determined life, so they believed that evil carried its own consequences. It must be noted that this view differs from that of retribution since it does not believe that God intervenes to punish. In fact, it tends to exclude divine activity. This may explain why, in Israel, it seldom appeared by itself. It is always tempered by belief in God's ultimate control of good and evil.

Actually, the biblical writers appear to be more interested in the reason and purpose of suffering than in its origin. They addressed the fact of suffering and tried to give meaning to this reality that no one can escape. They offered provisional explanations intended to strengthen people in their struggle. These explanations were not meant to be conclusive answers, because circumstances change and they might cease to be appropriate, which is precisely the case in Job. The instruction and advice offered by his visitors may very well have been fitting in other circumstances, but in Job's situation they are empty of meaning. No one seems able to offer him an adequate explanation for his suffering.

Most likely, it is because of this very theme that Job has always enjoyed a place of prominence in the literature of the world and in the hearts of countless people. No one is protected from undeserved personal misfortunes such as the sudden and tragic death of loved ones, human exploitation or betrayal, the unexpected collapse of a business or career, or from disasters such as flooding or fire or other ravages of nature. The horrors of war, of ethnic, racial, sexual or other social discrimination or brutality victimize untold children, women, and men and defy all standards of justice. Over the centuries this pitiable man has stood as proof that suffering is not a sure sign of infidelity. He continues to be a source of consolation for many today who suffer innocently.

## Experience and Tradition

This brings us to a fundamental principle that underlies wisdom thinking and which plays an important role in the Book of Job. It is the relationship between experience and tradition in the formation of new theological understanding. We have all been taught the importance of conforming our lives to the teachings of our religious tradition. A new and sometimes conflicting attitude is developing today: that it is the tradition that must conform to contemporary life. In fact, a more complete understanding shows that there should be a dynamic relationship between the two where each is influenced and refashioned by the other.

In the Book of Job we see that neither Job nor the men who came to advise him took note of this dynamic. In the final summary of his cause, Job insists that he has always complied with the prescriptions of the law (see Chapter 31). In fact, he went far beyond the demands of the law. It was precisely because of the faithfulness of his behavior that he expected a life of peace and prosperity. From where he stands, there is something seriously wrong with the order of things. Job is not willing to question his own integrity, and he is not ready to challenge the tradition. That is why, as stated earlier, he finds fault with God.

The others also evaluate Job's life according to the tradition. Adhering to the conventional way of interpreting suffering, they insist that his present state of misery is the direct conse-

quence of some sin. From where they stand, God is justified in afflicting Job and the tradition is adequate in explaining the situation. They discount the authenticity of Job's experience of innocent suffering.

We might miss this important theme were it not for something that God says to Eliphaz in the epilogue: ". . . you have not spoken rightly concerning me, as has my servant Job" (42,7). Where were these men wrong and Job right? What did they say that was not part of the traditional teaching? The only issue over which there was serious disagreement was that of Job's innocence. Job insists that God has afflicted him without cause. Upholding an inflexible interpretation of the tradition, the visitors maintained that God would never act in such a manner. We know that they are the ones who were wrong.

Job's experience of innocent suffering calls for a new and more critical look at the tradition. It is strange that neither Job nor his counselors challenged this unbending interpretation of theology, because it is precisely the ability to be faithful yet flexible in new situations that constitutes wisdom. Perhaps the author of the book wanted to demonstrate what can happen when theology is rigidly applied.

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have consciously included reflection on contemporary experience in the process of writing their most recent pastoral letters. They are keenly aware of the need to be faithful to official teaching while at the same time realistic about changes in the world. They have frequently held open hearings in order to gain insights from the experience of other people before writing their documents. This practice can both endorse new wisdom and contest the old. For that reason it has been applauded by some and criticized by others.

### The God of Mystery

Up to this point, most of the themes we have considered focus our attention on Job. Now we turn our gaze toward God. How is God portrayed? In his complaints, Job characterizes God as powerful and oppressive when near and unconcerned when at a distance. Job's companions describe God as a prosecuting judge. The image unveiled in the speeches of the Lord is quite different, however.

God is indeed powerful, but it is a wondrous, awe-inspiring power (see 40,3-5). It is also true that God is transcendent, but this does not prevent God from being solicitous for even the mountain goat about to kid (see 39,1). Finally, God does not assume the role of divine judge, summoning Job before the divine tribunal, there to find him guilty and to sentence him. Instead, Job is questioned by the divine teacher and led to new horizons of understanding. What he understands is that he has been treading on mystery—"things too wonderful for me" (42,3). In the Book of Job, God is the provident but nonetheless mysterious God of creation. It is the same God who works in the life of each of us, yet remains a mystery.

## The Dramatic Effect of the Story

While it is true that we can dip into any section of the Book of Job and draw out bits of profound teaching, the best way to read it is as a drama from beginning to end. Only in that way can we feel the frustration of the counselors mount and the desperation of Job deepen. As is the case in every good story, there is a dramatic movement here that sweeps us up into itself. We might best appreciate the richness of its message and the true-to-life description of its complexity by

identifying first with Job and then with one of the visitors. Our own experience of suffering should help us to understand Job's plight. It is revealing, however, to realize how easy it is to offer empty words in our sincere attempts to console others, and how quickly we can become indignant when our advice is ignored.

The final effect of reading the book in this way includes an admission of the incomprehensibility of much of life. Whether we have identified with Job or with one of the others, we come to the speeches of the Lord and we realize that no one can answer the questions put to Job. Everyone—Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, the reader—once confronted with this incomprehensibility in human life, stands silent before this transcendent God. D.B.

# PSALMS □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 645–747 of the Old Testament*]

## About the Book

The Book of Psalms, also known as the Psalter, is really a collection of books each of which ends with a short doxology or hymn of praise. This is very clear to anyone who looks closely at the arrangement of the psalms. The editors of *The New American Bible* have indicated this order by adding subdivisions within the text itself. "The First Book—Psalms 1–41" ends with a doxology in 41,14; "The Second Book—Psalms 42–72" ends with 72,18f; "The Third Book—Psalms 73–89" ends with 89,53; "The Fourth Book—Psalms 90–106" ends with 106,48; "The Fifth Book—Psalms 107–150" ends with an entire psalm of praise, Psalm 150.

There is evidence within the Book of Psalms itself that our present anthology was composed of even earlier collections. Several psalms, found principally in the first "Book," are attributed to David. (This may account for the popular but probably not historically accurate tradition that David himself wrote most of the psalms.) Several psalms in the second and third "Books" are ascribed to Korah and Asaph, the two great guilds of temple singers during the period of the Second Temple (confer 1 Chr 6,33ff; 25,1f). These groupings may have been the original collections around which other psalms clustered. Finally, the fifth "Book" is made up of a number of Songs of Ascent and psalms of praise known as Hallel or the Hallelujah collection.

These collections have another distinguishing characteristic: variations in the preferred name for God; *Yahweh* (translated LORD) is generally used in the first, the fourth, and the fifth collections. This has led some to refer to them as the "Yahwist Psalter." The name *Elohim* (translated God) is preferred in the second and third "Books" and thus they are sometimes called the "Elohist Psalter." Most scholars believe that Elohim is a substitution made by a postexilic editor who wished to show reverence for the divine name (Yahweh) by avoiding its use.

All of these various collections overlap and so it is difficult to identify precisely the original groupings. It is enough to know that the final compilers had an array of psalms from which to choose. The presence of psalmody in places other than the Psalter (for example, the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 and the Song of Deborah in Judges 5) indicates that there were many more psalms current than have been preserved here.

## Types of Psalms

Commentators classify the psalms in slightly different ways. (The categories here are quite general.) There is widespread agreement, however, that the major headings are three: hymn; lament; and thanksgiving. In addition to these major groups, there are royal psalms, wisdom poems, and some psalms that might fit into more than one category. Since psalms are the prayerful responses to life experiences, a study of their form as well as their content will throw light on the life situation of the community from which they sprang.

### Hymns

The hymn is a song of praise of God. While many hymns appear to be the prayers of individuals, most of them seem to have been composed for use in the liturgies of Israel's major festivals. The reason for praising God, as expressed in the psalm itself, enables us to further classify certain hymns as psalms of the kingship of the LORD or as songs of Zion.

The structure of the hymns (Pss 8, 19, 29, 33, 100, 103–104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 135, 136, 145–150) is quite simple. It begins with a call to praise, which suggests that this type of psalm originated within a community setting and at this point some kind of liturgical leader is calling the others to prayer. This introductory exhortation is followed by an account of the wondrous acts of God, deeds that cause us to stand in awe. Depending upon the psalm, God is praised for the glories of creation (for example, Ps 8) or for the marvelous feats performed specifically for the people of Israel (among others, Ps 114). Having proclaimed God's glorious deeds, the psalm ends with a repetition of the initial call to praise, some expression of exaltation of God, and a plea for God's blessing. (This is a general description of the conclusion. Not all of the elements are present in every psalm.)

Hymns of the LORD's kingship (Pss 47, 93, 96–99) are a distinct group among the psalms. Their focus is the LORD, the universal king, and they have many images and motifs in common. Some scholars claim that these psalms were composed for an annual celebration: the feast of the Enthronement of the LORD. They therefore refer to this group as "enthronement psalms" and place them in a category of their own. No account of such a festival can be found in the Bible itself, however. For that reason, and also because this group of psalms fits the general hymnic pattern perfectly, they are here included in this category.

The songs of Zion (Pss 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122) extol Zion as God's holy mountain and Jerusalem as the city God chose to inhabit. There is a variation in the structure of these psalms. Both the introductory and concluding call to praise, which are typical of hymns, are missing. Still, the body of the psalm celebrates the mighty God of Israel, who held back every kind of primeval attack on the city and who now dwells on its sacred mountain. As with the psalms in praise of the LORD's kingship, we are not certain about the cultic setting at which the songs of Zion were sung. We may be heirs to Israel's songs but we do not know more than a few general facts about its cultic calendar and we cannot reconstruct its system of worship.

### Laments

The type of psalm that occurs most frequently in the Psalter is the lament. Nearly a third of all the psalms belong to that category. Depending on who the speaker is supposed to be, they are further classified as community laments or laments of the individual.

The structure of the lament is not exactly the same in every case. Not all laments appear to be complete, and even when the most common elements are present, they do not seem to have any fixed order. Still, laments are usually comprised of an invocation similar to the hymnic introduction; the actual lamentation which describes the suffering endured by the one(s) praying; a plea for deliverance from this misfortune; some kind of praise of God, often an expression of confidence that God will come to the rescue of the community or the individual; a vow to perform an act of worship in gratitude for God's intervention. Some laments also include an ackowledgment of guilt or an assertion of innocence. Finally, there is frequently a curse hurled against the one(s) believed to be responsible for the intolerable situation that precipitates the lament. This feature has caused considerable difficulty for those who wish to use the psalms in their own prayer.

It is quite clear that the community laments (Pss 12, 14, 44, 53, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 90, 94, 106, 123, 126, 137) were somehow associated with the official cultic worship of Israel. Most probably they were used when the people gathered to fast and pray on special occasions arising from national humiliation or distress. The enemies referred to are usually national rivals who, by being opponents of Israel, were viewed as opposed to the LORD. These psalms often contain a recital of the former marvelous deeds that God had accomplished in the history of the nation. This was to remind God of past favors and thus encourage God to grant new ones, as well as to remind the people of God's earlier blessings in order to instill confidence in their hearts.

The laments of the individual (Pss 3–7, 13, 17, 22, 25–28, 31, 35, 36, 38–40, 42/43 [considered a single psalm, as explained in the *NAB* footnote], 51, 52, 54–57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69–71, 77, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140–143) were most likely prayerful responses to personal misfortunes such as illness or persecution. Commentators believe that they were an integral part of personal liturgical devotion. Frequently people who were suffering went to the Temple, or to another shrine, to make a formal request to God for deliverance. Laments, with their declaration of trust in God, were simultaneously prayers to God and testimonies of hope for the benefit of the community gathered around the one suffering.

## Thanksgiving

It is rather difficult to classify these psalms. Expressions of confidence and gratitude are often found within laments. This has led many interpreters to list these psalms with either community or individual laments. There are some psalms, however, that might be considered explicit psalms of confidence, both communal (Pss 115, 125, 129) and individual (Pss 11, 16, 23, 62, 91, 121, 131). Psalms of thanksgiving, again both communal (Pss 65–68, 75, 107, 118, 124) and individual (Pss 9/10, 30, 32, 34, 41, 92, 116, 138), also comprise a distinct category.

It is the subject matter rather than the form that characterizes this type of psalm. Thanksgiving psalms are similar to hymns in that they extol the marvelous works of God. What distinguishes the two is the sentiment that each elicits. Hymns call forth praise; thanksgiving psalms are expressions of gratitude. Like the laments, they were probably part of the communal and personal liturgical life of the people and were used in cult and devotion when thanksgiving was in order (perhaps at a harvest festival, or after a threat by an enemy had been successfully resisted).

## Royal Psalms

There are several psalms that pertain specifically and exclusively to the king. Some scholars believe that they point to a prominent royal role in the cult. Others contend that the king did not have to be a cultic leader to enjoy a significant place in the ritual. His political and religious importance were enough to assure him of a cultic function. We must remember that this is a nation that perceived its king as the representative of the whole people before God and as God's special envoy for the people. This shared perception entitled the king to the prominence he enjoyed.

Various occasions in the life of the king constitute the setting of these psalms. There are coronation hymns (Pss 2, 72, 101, 110), an anniversary hymn (Ps 132), a royal wedding song (Ps 45), petitions in behalf of the warrior-king (Pss 20, 144), and prayers of thanksgiving for his successes (Pss 18, 21). These royal psalms are often referred to as "messianic psalms," since "messiah" means "anointed one" and that is precisely what the king was. They take on new meaning in the Christian tradition when they are applied to Jesus, the king par excellence and the one "anointed" by God.

## Wisdom Poems

These poems (Pss 1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128) are clearly different from those psalms which probably originated in and were used during liturgical celebrations. They differ in both content and style. The wisdom tradition in general is concerned with the problem of evil, the suffering of the righteous, and the justice of God. These same themes, along with language and imagery characteristic of that tradition, are found in the wisdom psalms. Finally, the manner of address here is intended to instruct rather than to evoke a response. The wisdom psalms call people to listen and learn, not to pray.

Although these psalms do not follow a uniform style, they do have some distinctive literary characteristics. The sages of ancient Israel made use of several techniques that were judged helpful for learning. Some of these techniques appear in the wisdom psalms. One of the most popular ones was the acrostic arrangement. This is a poetic form in which the alphabet determines the initial letter of the first word of each successive line. Several wisdom poems follow this arrangement (for example, Pss 37; 112 along with the hymn 111; 119). Because they conform to this pattern, some commentators include as wisdom poems some of those psalms listed here under other categories (hymn—Ps 145; lament—Ps 25; thanksgiving—Pss 9/10, 34).

It may be difficult to understand how and why this type of psalm originated and was included in the various collections. What may be even more puzzling is the fact that the Psalter begins with a wisdom poem (Ps 1). Most likely a postexilic compiler placed this psalm first at a time when there was neither Temple nor temple worship, and those responsible for the religious life of the community wanted to keep the psalms alive in Israelite devotion. At this particularly critical time the psalms might be seen as a treasury for much-needed instruction as well as for prayer. The organization into five "Books" might well have been patterned at this time after the Torah or five books of Moses, wherein the major teachings of the faith were found.

## Various Psalms

There are other psalms that quite obviously were used during a pilgrimage to or procession around Jerusalem and the Temple. The Songs of Ascent, one of the early collections mentioned

above, preserves the memory of such psalms. In addition to this group, there are other psalms that were sung during processions (Pss 15, 24, 95).

A few psalms appear to have been composed after the style of prophetic speech (Pss 50, 81, 82). Since people frequently came to the Temple or to a shrine in search of some word from the LORD, it is understandable that traces of this form would remain in some psalms.

Finally, a small number of psalms seem to defy classification. They are either historical recountings of the feats of the LORD (Pss 78, 105), composites of other psalm forms (Pss 108, 133, 139), or general liturgical songs (Ps 134).

## The Piety of the Psalmist

The psalms generally speak *to* God rather than *about* God. Although most of the important historical events of the nation, as well as the universal needs of women and men, are described or addressed somewhere in these prayers, the psalms are just that—prayers *to* God. If we look carefully at the sentiments expressed in these songs, we will be able to detect the major outlines of the piety of ancient Israel, a piety to which we are heirs.

We have already seen that it is possible to classify the psalms according to literary form (hymn, lament, thanksgiving, etc.). A further look at these forms will show us that different types of psalms express different sentiments of devotion. Therefore it will be helpful to return to these classifications as we explore the piety of Israel contained in the psalms. (The reader is advised to consult the listings of the psalms belonging to each category. These listings are found under the heading Types of Psalms.)

### Praise

Praise is that sentiment that wells up within us as we are overwhelmed by the wonders around us or by the provident concern afforded us by the events of life and life itself. It is not so much something that we are taught as it is something that we experience. Praise of some sort is natural to human beings. Who has not been swept away by the extravagance of a sunset, by the delicacy of spring's reawakening, by the refreshment of a gentle summer breeze, by the magnitude of the ocean's horizon or the night sky's depth? We stand in awe before the splendor of creation and we are drawn out of ourselves. If we are attentive to the religious tendencies within us, we will be moved to praise.

We discover this same sentiment in the hymns. The psalmist does not seem able to find words adequate to describe the grandeur of creation (Pss 8, 29, 104, 148), and so all the forces of nature are called upon to join the psalmist in glorifying God. Underlying such sentiments of praise is the belief that God is the creator of all things and that all that God has created is beautiful, deserving of our respect, and a reminder of the majestic creator.

Other hymns applaud God for the marvelous feats performed on behalf of the Israelites (Pss 105, 114, 135). Again and again the miraculous power of God intervened for them, thus saving them from certain extinction. Since the initial and preeminent experience of deliverance was liberation from the oppression of Egypt, the Exodus became for them the symbol of all liberation. In these psalms God is perceived as tireless savior, and the psalmist's praise is an acknowledgement of the nation's total dependence on God for its continued survival.

These hymns presume that nature is benign and that God is committed to the well-being of the people. Such a view of life does not usually emerge spontaneously. It arises either from an

experience of life that is basically untroubled or from a religious belief that God is indeed on our side and life should really favor us. The biblical hymns are not the flights of fancy of people who have been protected from the hard realities of life or from the indifference of nature. They are songs of praise of people who, despite misfortune, persist in their reliance on an all-powerful yet attentive God.

The LORD is also acclaimed as the sole and eternal king over all nations. The God of Israel earned this title as champion in the primordial struggle with chaos (Pss 96, 4f; 98,1), undermining the influence of the other gods and ascending the heavenly throne to reign with universal and undisputed authority. The concept of God as victor in the cosmic conflict embraces the notion of creator, for creation frequently was understood as the establishment of order out of chaos (see the creation narrative in Genesis 1).

Unlike the hymns discussed above, the psalms lauding the kingship of the LORD acknowledge the threatening powers present in the universe. Chaos was conquered by the LORD, but not totally destroyed. Admission of this in no way detracts from the universal reign of God proclaimed in the psalms. Instead, it was a way that Israel dealt with the fact that creation is not always friendly and life does not always appear to be favoring us. Despite this, Israel believed that the LORD is truly in charge, involved in creation while ruling from the divine throne in the heavens, controlling all of the forces of the universe and, therefore, deserving of our undivided allegiance.

The songs of Zion contain some of the same imagery as do the psalms in honor of the LORD-King. Ancient Canaanite mythology, from which much of the Israelite imagery originated, recounts the cosmic battle described above. After the forces of evil have been quelled, a palace is built for the victor on the summit of the highest mountain. From this vantage point the conquering hero holds sway over the entire universe.

Israel revered Zion as this sacred mountain and revered the Temple as the palace of the victorious creator-God. A significant shift can be detected in these psalms. Zion and the Jerusalem Temple move the drama from the cosmic scene of primordial creation to the political and cultural world of Israel. The reality of God's divine creative power is now associated with one nation and, because of the close connection between Zion and David, specifically with the monarchy.

The songs of Zion depict God as unabashedly committed to the welfare of Israel over all other nations. The creator-God who is praised in these psalms is not distant from this people, but lives in their very midst, allowing them to approach the divine presence that is somehow mysteriously dwelling in the Temple. (There was an attempt to balance this apparent exclusivity by inviting all other nations to worship the LORD on Zion [see Is 2,2f; Mi 4,1f].) Thus God is perceived as near and accessible, and Zion and the Temple command veneration.

The hymns provide us with several perceptions of God: the creator of the universe; historical liberator; cosmic champion. At times these perceptions overlap, producing a collage of images intended to call forth praise. The psalmist extols God for the wonders of creation, for continued deliverance from destruction, for God's victory over the forces of evil, and for the fact of God's presence in the midst of the people. These are some of the sentiments voiced in the biblical hymns.

## Grief, Fear, Repentance, and Confidence

We all have a certain sense about how life is supposed to unfold. We learn this as we are fashioned in and by the various social groups of which we are a part. While societies may differ over values and lifestyles, all agree that basic to our nature as human beings is the desire to be happy. Our social groups train us in the acceptable ways of achieving and maintaining the happiness we seek. When we have not attained what we believe is our right, or when having once attained it, we lose it, we cry out in protest. We tend to balk at the unfairness of adversity regardless of whether we are in any way responsible for it. We do expect that life will be good to us.

This natural human instinct, coupled with the conviction of God's special love and care, led Israel to expect security in a hostile world, success in its undertakings, and a life of serenity and prosperity for the nation as a whole and for each individual within that nation. Such a state of affairs is what the Bible refers to as *shalom* or peace. Psalms of lament grew out of the absence of just such peace.

The references in communal laments apply to some national disaster that has already taken place. Depending upon the dating of the particular psalm, this calamity could have been the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (about 722 B.C.), the Babylonian exile (about 586 B.C.), or the Maccabean conflict (about 167 B.C.). Allusions to the vulnerability of the nation would fit any one of these three emergencies. Any description of the destruction of the Temple, however, must be dated after the time of the exile and before the rebuilding of the Temple (515 B.C.—see Reading Guide to Ezra and to Nehemiah).

The fact that the psalmist cries out to God demonstrates Israel's belief that God has both the power and the will to intervene and deliver the nation from its present distress. Several psalms themselves indicate that this belief is based on former saving-events in the history of the people (for example, Pss 44,2-4; 74,2; 83,10). Israel believed that God's might was in no way exhausted in earlier feats. On the contrary, Israel held that the all-powerful God was always ready to defend the nation whenever it was threatened with extinction. Even as the people cried out in complaint, they were proclaiming God's all-encompassing power and declaring their trust in God's continued concern for them, a concern based on divine covenantal promises. An expression of confidence, then, is an important characteristic of the lament.

As there were times when Israel felt that it was the innocent victim of the aggression of another nation, there were also instances when it admitted that the straits in which it found itself were directly related to its own sinfulness. Suffering at the hand of another was seen as punishment from God for violation of the covenant. In some of the laments, Israel admits its guilt, pleads for forgiveness and for an end to its suffering, and promises to amend its ways.

One of the communal laments recounts the nation's history as if it were no more than a series of offenses against a loving God (Ps 106). Others plead that God forgive the people for their sins and restore them to divine favor (Pss 80,5-8, 90,7-17). In these psalms, suffering is understood as recompense from a God who is just, but also forgiving.

Many of the sentiments found in the communal laments are present in individual complaints as well. The authors of these prayers claim that they are physically or spiritually afflicted or that they are being wrongfully oppressed by others. In their distress they turn to God for release. They do not doubt God's ultimate control over the workings of nature or the social order. Nonetheless, they might, on occasion, question why God allowed them to be besieged in

the first place. Their confidence in God rests on both the recollections of past blessing and reliance on God's own faithfulness to covenant promises.

## Gratitude

Little need be said about the expression of gratitude found in the psalms. Prayers of thanksgiving are similar to those of confidence in that the latter expect blessing and the former thank God for it. At times this gratitude flows from favors already received. At other times it anticipates the blessing that the psalmist is confident will come. The structure and content of the thanksgiving psalm resemble those of the hymn. There can be no thanksgiving until God has first been praised for the goodness that God has accomplished.

## National Loyalty

The royal psalms emanated from national pride and spirit. Allegiance to the king was regarded as loyalty to the nation. Since the king was perceived as the representative of the whole people before God and as God's special envoy for the people, loyalty to the king and to the nation was considered an act of devotion to God. These psalms originated out of various royal settings and they express sentiments appropriate to the respective occasion (for example, coronations, weddings, danger to the king during warfare, etc.). Despite their diversity, the sentiments of all of these songs flow from what today would be considered a type of patriotism.

## An Understanding Heart

The wisdom poems generally do not address God. They are usually directed toward the community. The piety of the psalmist is not as explicit here as it is in the prayers we have already examined. Still, it can be discerned by looking carefully at the way the poet treats the themes that appear to be prominent.

The problem of evil, the suffering of the righteous, and the justice of God are principal concerns of the wisdom tradition and are all facets of the same issue—the right order of the universe. It is clear that the wisdom psalmist presumes that there is an order to the world, and that there is a way in which we can live in this ordered world so as to be secure and prosperous. It is also evident that the psalmist sees God as the source and guarantor of this order.

On the other hand, evil that clearly is not punishment can challenge the sovereignty of God. When this evil raises his head, God is expected to step in, subdue it, and restore the world to its former and appropriate state. When this does not happen, the power of God or the uprightness of God may be questioned. Either God cannot repress the evil or is unwilling to do so. While Job and Ecclesiastes live with the unanswered question of innocent suffering, and Job even demands that God take responsibility for it, the wisdom psalms do not challenge the prevailing situation. They seem to presume that the suffering of the righteous is for some legitimate purpose which God will reveal at the appropriate time and then correct.

The themes, language, and imagery of the wisdom poems depict God as creator of all. In this they resemble the hymns and psalms of thanksgiving. In their insistence on justice, they are like the laments. These similarities explain why commentators classify the wisdom poems in different ways. These psalms may not be explicit expressions of Israelite piety, but they do reveal a trait characteristic of religious sentiment, that is, an understanding heart (see 1 Kgs 3,9.12).

### Enthusiasm, Humility, and Faithfulness

The processional psalms are charged with excitement and anticipation. They invite the observant Israelite to participate with heart and soul in various liturgical celebrations. The major festivals of ancient Israel (Passover or Unleavened Bread, Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks, Sukkoth or the Feast of Tabernacles) were all commemorated with pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Psalms were sung as the people approached the city. There were shouts of profound joy as well as humble acknowledgements of the need for pure hearts when approaching the holy city and the Temple of the LORD.

Prophetic psalms were also linked closely to the Temple. They embrace sentiments of humility and religious devotion and they summon the people to be faithful to their covenant commitment.

The wide range of religious sentiment found in the Psalter reveals the extent of Israel's piety. Every human emotion is tapped because Israel believed that God is involved in every aspect of life. It is no wonder that the psalms have touched the lives of women and men throughout the ages and that they continue to inspire the human spirit even to our own day.

## The Theology in the Psalms

The expressions of piety found within the Book of Psalms give us insight into the theology of ancient Israel. Although much of this theology has already been noted, it will be helpful to look at it in a more systematic fashion.

### The God of Israel

The portrait of God that is sketched in the psalms draws together all of the divine faces found in the rest of the Israelite tradition. This God is the creator of the universe (Ps 8,4) and the source of all life (Ps 36,10), enthroned in heaven (Ps 47,6) yet dwelling in Jerusalem (Ps 76,3). Initially the LORD may have been perceived as Israel's exclusive liberator (Ps 66,6), but the universal scope of God's power and protection came into view as the nation moved closer and closer to a monotheistic faith. Although uniquely committed to Israel by means of the Mosaic covenant (Ps 114,2), and to the monarchy through the royal covenant with David (Ps 132), God is envisioned as concerned about the well-being of all people (Ps 117).

This majestic God inspires both fear (Ps 89,8) and confidence (Ps 23), is both demanding (Ps 75,8) and forgiving (Ps 85,3). Above all else, the God of Israel is "merciful and gracious . . . slow to anger, abounding in kindness" (Ps 103,8; see Ps 86,5). The key characterization of the LORD is "covenant partner." Everything that is important to Israel flows from this perception of God.

### The Image of God

The human person is held in high regard in the psalms. (It must be noted that the psalms come from a society where the male person was the norm for what is human. The language and imagery that issued from this fact have caused great distress to some feminists. Without perpetuating this male-preferred situation and by making appropriate substitutions while reading or meditating, we can still value the psalms for their religious insight and sentiment.) Honored as the culmination of creation, humanity is given responsibility for the other living creatures of the earth (Ps 8; see Gn 1). Again and again the psalmist marvels at this singular

work of divine artistry. Why should God be personally committed to such an insignificant being (Pss 8,5; 144,3f)? As extraordinary as they are, humans live a fleeting life (Ps 39,5f) and then perish like the flowers of the field (Ps 103,15f). Realization of the impermanence of life becomes even starker when we recall that the psalmist did not have any clear notion of life after death. Human dignity was related to life in this world.

There is no doubt in the mind of the psalmist that human beings are thoroughly understood by and totally dependent on God (Ps 139). God provides for their basic physical needs (Ps 65,10-14) and protects them from harm (Ps 121). In a special way, God is the guardian of the poor and afflicted (Ps 40,18), the defenseless widows and orphans (Ps 68,6), and the *anawim* or lowly (Ps 147,6). The psalmist goes to great lengths to show that what appears to be the insignificance of the human creature is, in fact, the occasion for the solicitude and tender care of God.

## Natural Creation

The psalms reveal a special regard for creation as the handiwork of God (Ps 104). This may well originate from a polytheistic belief that the mysterious powers in nature are really manifestations of various deities. As Israel's understanding of God developed, expanded, and incorporated within itself reverence for these extraordinary manifestations, these came to be seen as expressions of the LORD. God is revealed in the thunderstorm (Ps 29) and in the design of the natural world (Ps 65, 7). Creation is no longer seen as a rival for the homage of the people. Instead, it is a partner in the praise of God (Ps 148).

## The Future

Ancient Israel was interested in both the future of the nation and the fate of the individual. The positive view that it takes on this issue, which is called eschatology, stems from its faith in the goodness of God toward all of creation. Despite the struggles that the nation faced in its attempts to survive and to flourish in a contentious world, Israel believed that the final victory would be the LORD's and that it would prosper from God's triumph. Individuals also looked to God to remedy the injustices of a burdensome life. They clung to the conviction that God would eventually right all wrongs and they would then enjoy the happiness that was their due.

The psalms that praise the kingship of the LORD and describe God's defeat of the forces of evil, also promise the restoration of the nation (Ps 14,7). When this happens, the gods of the other nations will be recognized as the empty idols they are (Ps 96,5) and all the peoples will join in praising the LORD (96,7-10). According to some of the royal psalms, this decisive turning point in history will be brought about through the agency of a "messiah" (Ps 2,7-9).

Great attention is paid to the fate of the individual. Although earlier theology taught that reward and punishment would be worked out within the community or down through the generations (see Ex 20,5), the postexilic prophets taught that retribution would be meted out according to one's own deeds (see Ez 18). In the face of this, the prosperity of the wicked challenged the theory of retribution. In response, the psalmist claimed that such prosperity would not last and so the upright should not envy sinners (Ps 37,1). Still, the apparently peaceful death of those who were wicked and prosperous and the unmerited suffering or adversity of the righteous remained an unresolved problem.

The psalms say very little about life beyond the grave but they frequently mention the shadowy existence known as *Sheol* (Ps 49,15). This was not a place of retribution; there was

neither reward nor punishment here. It was merely a place of darkness and dust. It was probably nothing more than the grave, the abode of the dead. Still, it suggests that while Israel did not have a clear idea of life after death, it entertained the possibility that the dead did not thereby cease to exist.

### The Psalms and the New Testament

We may not always appreciate the specific theological importance of the psalms because today we tend to distinguish between explicit theological statements on the one hand and prayer on the other. In many ways, this is a false distinction. Statements of faith may well be the reflection on or development of theological thought, but prayer is theology as it is experienced. It is quite clear that the early Christians seldom made such distinctions. For them, the psalms were not only vehicles of prayer, but they also contained important statements of faith, statements that found their fulfillment in the person and mission of Jesus (see Lk 24,44).

The New Testament both alludes to and specifically cites various psalms. Five of them seem to be referred to more than the rest. They are the messianic psalms 2 and 110; the individual laments 22 and 69; and the communal psalm of thanksgiving 118. The first two are cited in discussions of Jesus' messianic preeminence (see Acts 13,33; Heb 1,5). Motifs from the two laments are used in descriptions of his passion and death, suggesting that the psalmist was really foretelling Jesus' suffering. Psalm 118 speaks of the rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone (v. 22; see Mt 21,42) and the blessedness of the one who comes in the name of the Lord (v. 26; see Mk 11,9), themes that the New Testament writer sees fulfilled in Jesus. Thus the early Christian theologians developed the theology of the psalms in ways that would enhance their understanding of Jesus the Christ.

## The Psalms Today

Most people become acquainted with the psalms because they are incorporated into the regular prayer life of the church. Others may be more familiar with some of them through their own personal use in private devotion. Everyone interested in the psalms will also want to know more about how they function as means of prayer. Moreover, a study of the psalms would be incomplete if we did not address the role that they have played and continue to play in shaping the minds and hearts of believers. We cannot arrive at this insight by limiting our examination exclusively to historical or literary analyses. While the psalms are certainly religious literature they are at the same time means to spiritual transformation.

### Poetic Imagery

The psalms are poetry. They are, in fact, some of the most beautiful poetry that the human spirit has created. The imagery is vivid, the verbs are energetic, and the sentiments expressed are shared by all. One need not be familiar with the historical situations from which the psalms sprang in order to appreciate their enduring worth. Like all classic literature, they express fundamental human values that speak to every culture and every age. By merely reading the psalms thoughtfully and respecting their integrity, we can be touched by their lyrical artistry and drawn into the dynamic world that they envision.

This reflective—even contemplative—reading can plunge us into the religious dispositions of the psalmist, for the words and the images that grew from these dispositions can now readily

serve as vehicles carrying us back into them. We may not come to the psalms with hearts filled with praise or thanksgiving or grief, but the world mirrored them—a world that is real, though perhaps not identical with ours—often resonates deep within us. It is as if we know that world, or at least we sense that we should know it and, recognizing it, we cry out in praise or thanksgiving or grief. In this way the poetic imagery can be the starting point of our meditation on the psalms.

## Genuine Prayer

For Jews and Christians, the psalms are much more than profoundly moving poetry. They are the voice of our respective religious faiths. First heard centuries ago in a land far removed from us, they have been on the lips of believers in every historical period since that time. It is not merely that we use the psalms to express our devotion; our religious consciousness is in fact profoundly shaped by them. The psalms have served as a prism that spreads before us the many facets of our relationship with God. Gilead, Manasseh, and Ephraim (see Ps 60,9) may be unfamiliar names to many, but they were beneficiaries of God's promise of protection of which we are heir, and so we identify with them. We "join in procession with leafy branches up to the horns of the altar" (Ps 118,27) convinced that our prayers too will be answered.

Liturgy is not merely a celebration of some past event. It is an enactment in which and through which promises and claims that were made in the past become present realities. The Exodus was certainly a concrete historical event. Whenever Israel reenacted this event, however (see Jos 24), the reality of the Exodus became present with all of its power and possibility. The participants of the liturgical celebration were not participants of the original escape. "When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt . . ." (Dt 26,6-8a).

The psalms have a role to play in this creative reenactment. Not only do they address God in sentiments appropriate to what has been described, they fashion a world wherein *we* interact with God by means of these very sentiments. When we really enter the world sketched in the laments, *we* are plunged into fear and distress and *we* cry out to the Lord. Now this is *our* world; these are *our* sentiments; this is *our* prayer.

When we pray the psalms in this way, we are not simply using their religious imagery to express our own personal devotion. Nor are we merely calling to memory events of the past in order to be inspired by the saving acts of God in our history. We are entering into and carrying forward our creative, dynamic religious heritage. In this way the heritage becomes the inspiration of our personal devotion, and our devotion is shaped by this biblical heritage.

## The World Beyond the Psalms

The psalms not only invite us into the world created by their imagery and sentiments, they also prompt us to move beyond this world, back into our own world and circumstances, there to engage in the transformation we ourselves have already undergone. The implications of this transformation of our world and the forms it may take will vary according to the sentiments found within the psalm. (Once again it will be helpful to return to the classification of psalms outlined above under the heading Types of Psalms.)

As we praise God for the splendor of creation and acknowledge that the universe belongs to this divine architect and not to us, we should also be moved to profound respect for the world

of which we are a part. We may have dominion over the animals with whom we share the earth, but we exercise this rule in God's stead. The hymns of praise can instill in us the dispositions necessary to become responsible stewards of the treasures of creation.

The hymns extolling the LORD for having delivered Israel from the threats of extinction depict God as an ever-present savior. This nation has been rescued from oppressive policies that threaten its well-being and prevent its self-determination. In praising God as a faithful liberator, Israel is also acknowledging God's enduring commitment to justice. God's people—and that includes *all* people—must be free to follow the inspiration of God as they receive it. As we pray these hymns, we too should find ourselves committed to justice toward and respect for the autonomy of all nations.

The LORD is also acclaimed as champion in the cosmic struggle with the threatening forces of chaos. Acknowledging that these forces were never completely destroyed, these psalms claim that the LORD is nonetheless in charge and, thus, deserving of our undivided devotion. If we praise the LORD in this fashion, we can hardly allow anything—wealth, power, national loyalty—to rival the allegiance we have pledged to God.

The final division of hymns consists of the songs of Zion. These psalms honor Zion as the mountain on which the LORD dwells, from which the LORD reigns, and to which all the nations are invited. We have seen that here the drama has moved from the cosmic plane to the world of history. The LORD is not in some distant remote place, inaccessible to the people. On the contrary, God is in the midst of the people, approachable, even inviting. We may have no allegiance to Zion, but with these psalms we are really acknowledging God's commitment to our well-being and God's faithful presence in our midst.

A word of caution is in order here lest we fall into the trap of national chauvinism. Zion has significance because the LORD chose it, not the reverse. Whenever the nation confused being *elect* with being *elite,* it faced prophetic condemnation (see the prophet's reprimand of Jerusalem and the Temple in Jer 7; 26). We are not above this same temptation. The songs honoring Zion must be understood for what they are—hymns in praise of God, not simply songs of national pride.

The laments, the largest category of psalms found in the Bible, continue to cause considerable difficulty for many contemporary believers. Some people think that prayer should be primarily praise, petition, or thanksgiving. The fact that many of the sections of the laments, which contain accusations against God of the cursing of antagonists, have been deleted from liturgical texts seems to support this misconception. We have become so accustomed to seeing ourselves as "Alleluia People" that we relegate any mention of suffering and pain to the prayers of petition. This is unfortunate because it prevents us from dealing honestly and straightforwardly in worship with the grief and frustration we experience in the face of national crisis or personal misfortune. It is natural to complain, even to complain to God.

Laments do not originate in the hearts of nonbelievers. They spring from the conviction that God is on our side, willing and able to provide for us in our distress. Remembrance of past protection is at the heart of this conviction, which itself actually engenders both the protest and the confidence. The compassionate God of the past has turned away from us; surely the compassionate God of the past will once again deliver us. The laments are not only protests of our grief or fear or anger, but also testimonies of our trust in God's faithfulness to covenant promises.

There is another way to enter the world of the laments. It is through solidarity with those

who suffer and are oppressed. While laments may not come easily to the lips of the comfortable, they are integral to the prayer of those who are in distress. As we share their suffering, their prayer becomes our own; as we enter into the sentiments of the laments, we begin to understand and identify with their suffering. Laments can strengthen us in our commitment to justice and peace.

Finally, laments are often admissions of guilt, pleas for forgiveness, and promises of amendment. When we pray the laments in this spirit, we confess that God is a just yet forgiving judge and we pledge ourselves to lives of faithfulness to our own covenant responsibilities.

It is very difficult to be sincerely grateful when we think we deserve the good fortune that is ours. Psalms of thanksgiving help us to remember that whatever we enjoy has come to us from the hand of a gracious God. When these psalms are associated with laments, they serve as expressions of gratitude for deliverance. This suggests that Israel recognized that its own security and prosperity were blessings from God. Psalms of thanksgiving will only be genuine prayer when they spring from the conviction that our blessings also are gratuitous gifts from God. We cannot claim them by right, and so we would do well to be as generous with them toward others as God has been with them toward us.

As with the songs of Zion, we must be on guard against national chauvinism when praying the royal psalms. Israel may have believed that loyalty to the king and to the nation was an act of devotion to God, but the king was accountable to the same covenantal responsibilities as were the rest of the people, and the law of the nation was an early attempt to guarantee protection and prosperity to each member of the community. (Since this was a patriarchal society, full membership was restricted to adult men.) Rather than exempting Israel from covenantal obligations, the royal psalms proclaim that the blessings of fidelity will come through the agency of the king. These psalms provide us with language and imagery to celebrate the benefits we receive from God as citizens of our own country.

One of the characteristics of the wisdom poetry is its lavish use of nature imagery. The balance and regularity of the natural world are held up as examples after which society and human relationships should be patterned. This may help us understand why several "New Age" or "Creation-Centered Spirituality" movements turn to the wisdom tradition of the Bible for their inspiration. We can all benefit from the insights of these groups, for this dimension of our tradition has for too long been overlooked and we only can be enriched by reclaiming it. Still, we cannot allow reflection on the harmony in nature to hinder us from addressing the more challenging issues of the wisdom psalms. These poems challenge us with their interest in the problem of evil, the suffering of the righteous, and the justice of God. As these hymns become our own, their interests will become our commitments.

The excitement and enthusiasm that permeate the processional psalms reveal a nation that takes its liturgical celebrations seriously. There is unfeigned joy at the thought of approaching the throne of God, but there is also the humble recognition that only the pure of heart will be granted access. These dispositions issue from a sense of the holiness of God that is not held by most people today. In rejecting an earlier conviction that we are all unworthy to approach God, here we have emphasized a kind of familiarity with God. In many ways our access to the divine is no longer restricted. This same air of familiarity, especially in a society so focused on human progress and human accomplishment, together with technological advances and the secularization of our society, may account for the apparent loss of people's appreciation of the transcen-

dent. Processional psalms remind us that, while God is indeed in our midst and accessible to us, God is still God—holy and transcendent.

It should be clear from this consideration of the psalms that their real importance lies not primarily in their literary meaning but in their religious nature. As believers, we cannot be uninterested in our study of the primary prayers of our tradition, for we come to the psalms not only with open minds but also with open hearts.

# PROVERBS □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 748–781 of the Old Testament*]

## About the Book

Proverbs is probably the biblical book that best characterizes the wisdom tradition. It appears to be the "guide for successful living" referred to in the Introduction. Its primary purpose is to teach wisdom. It makes its appeal to various groups of people in different walks of life. It exhorts children (not necessarily or only young children) to heed the teaching of their parents (1,8), and it directs citizens to act with respect toward the king (16,10-15). It warns young men of the dangers of undisciplined living (5,1-14; 23,29-35), and it offers a portrait of the model wife for women to emulate (31,10-31).

The book itself is composed of eight discernible collections of didactic teaching. These are quite distinct sections. Several of them are identified within the biblical text itself. Others can be distinguished by their particular literary forms.

The first section consists of a general introduction to the entire book (1,1-7) and a collection of instructions (1,8f.18). It is in this section that we find the student addressed again and again as "my son" and exhorted to listen to the teaching that is advanced. Fifteen of the twenty-three instances of this address appear in the first seven chapters of the book. The form clearly marks this section as instruction.

The second section (10,1—22,16) is explicitly identified as "The Proverbs of Solomon" (10,1). Each verse in this section is a saying in its own right. Its meaning does not depend on what precedes it nor on what follows it. Some scholars classify this as sentence literature. A second characteristic of this section is the antithetical nature of each proverb. (This poetic feature will be discussed below.) These characteristics clearly delineate the section as a distinctive collection.

It is possible that the third section of the book (22,17—24,22), instructions entitled "The sayings of the wise" (22,17), is patterned after a collection of an Egyptian scribe, Amen-em-Ope (22,19). If this is the case, it is probably the most obvious example in the wisdom tradition of Israel's literary borrowing (see Introduction).

The fourth section (24,23-34), a group of sentences designated "also . . . sayings of the wise" (24,23), is quite short. It is followed by a much longer collection of sentence literature (25,1—29,27) entitled "the Proverbs of Solomon" (25,1). This collection is further linked with the sages of the court of Hezekiah, the Judean king who ruled around the turn of the seventh century B.C. It appears that he inaugurated a period of religious reform and literary activity. The mention of his name in a collection of proverbs may be evidence of this movement.

The sixth section, called "The words of Agur" (30,1), is the shortest (30,1-6). It is followed

by a collection of proverbs that are distinguished by their literary form (30,7-33). These numerical proverbs, so named because of their use of numbers, have much in common with the riddle. The latter is a form mentioned in one of the introductory verses (1,6) and in other places of the Bible (see the riddle of Samson, Jgs 14,12, and the test of the queen of Sheba, 1 Kgs 10,1), but found nowhere in the Book of Proverbs itself. The eighth and last section can be divided into two parts: instruction (31,1-9), entitled "The words of Lemeul" (31,1); and a poem describing the ideal wife (31,10-31).

The first verse of the book states that Solomon is the author of the proverbs. There was a tradition that this king was not only versed in human wisdom (see 1 Kgs 3,16-18) but had encyclopedic knowledge as well (see 1 Kgs 3,4-14). Ancient people believed that wisdom belonged by right to the god and, since the king was the human representative of the god, it was the special possession of the king. Since Solomon ruled during a time of splendor and enlightenment, he became known in popular devotion as the wise man par excellence. His reputation gave credibility to wisdom writing and, as more wisdom writing was attributed to him, his reputation grew. Ascribing Solomonic authorship to Proverbs gives the book the status of official teaching and credits the king with comprehensive wisdom.

There is a possibility that the *real* royal authority behind the Proverbs is Hezekiah. Collections of proverbs could well have been compiled during the time of his religious reform and *he* could have ascribed them to Solomon. We do not have enough information to accurately reconstruct this historical period. The Book of Proverbs itself, however, attests to both Hezekiah's influence (25,1) and Solomon's reputation (1,1; 10,1, 25,1).

## The Proverb

There is no English word that adequately translates the Hebrew *mashal.* It embraces a broad category of literary forms: oracle (Nm 23,7); discourse (Jb 29,1); parable (Ps 78,2); taunt-song (Is 14,4). In each case there is a lesson to be learned, and for this reason the *mashal* might best be understood as "an example from life" intended to instruct. (Although some scholars understand *mashal* in the limited sense of a specific form, it will be used here as a general category unless otherwise indicated.) This is the word that identifies two major collections as "The *Proverbs* of Solomon" (10,1; 25,1) and from which the book itself receives its name.

The root meaning of *mashal* is "likeness" or "comparison" as in "Like mother like daughter," or in the contrast "Better safe than sorry." As a comparison, it usually consists of two parts in some kind of poetic construction. The sentence (10,2ff), the purest form of the proverb, is distinct from the instruction (22,17ff), which is a much longer unit, sometimes almost a short essay. Sentence and instruction alike, however, are expressed in poetic form, the two parts being either compared or contrasted in parallel balance of "thought rhyme." This parallelism is an easily recognizable feature of Hebrew poetry (see Job, Literary Style).

There are three major types of parallelism. The simplest type is called synonymous parallelism. In it the second half of the line repeats the thought of the first with a slight variation:

> On the way of wisdom I direct you,
> I lead you on straightforward paths. (4,11)

Antithetic parallelism contrasts ideas. These contrasts are not precise opposites and ultimately they communicate the same idea:

The memory of the just will be blessed,
but the name of the wicked will rot. (10,7)

The third type of parallelism is called synthetic. The second part of this saying neither repeats nor contrasts the initial idea. It advances it and moves it toward a new thought:

Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained by virtuous living. (16,31)

It is clear that synonymous parallelism does not demand exact equivalence, antithetic parallelism does not require precise contrast, and synthetic parallelism extends the scope of the proverb. Because of this, the second part of each of these poetic lines can be drawn from a wide variety of possibilities. The result is a collection of sayings which are remarkable for their accuracy of insight and fluidity of expression. It is precisely this openness to interpretation and application that distinguishes a proverb—in the strictest sense—from a simple simile or metaphor whose interpretation is indicated and whose use is thereby limited.

It is important to appreciate the prominence of poetry in the Bible. Israel did not casually choose to express itself in poetic form. Its very perception of reality was poetic. The modern world of science and technology does not always grasp, much less appreciate, the aesthetic perspective of the ancient world. We insist on the language of the exact sciences because we tend to perceive reality scientifically. Ancient Israel did not. Its encounter with reality was aesthetic and, therefore, it expressed itself in artistic thought patterns and literary forms. This does not minimize the validity of its perception and the truthfulness of its expression, or ours for that matter. They are two very different ways of looking at reality and talking about it.

The proverb itself serves two important functions. It depicts a situation from the past and, from this depiction, it suggests a way of acting in the future. Understanding how this literary form works should help us to grasp the dynamics of the wisdom tradition. Wisdom is not a collection of quaint catchy phrases which in some simplistic fashion suggest that life will unfold according to plan if we just follow the directions. Proverbs are artistically honed images of specific facets of life, and from these we can learn something about our own living. They direct our attention to the commonplace and there, usually by some type of comparison or contrast, provide us with an opportunity to gain insight into the complexities of life. Different proverbs do this in different ways. The wise person is the one who understands life from more than one proverbial point of view and can discern the appropriate way of responding to it.

Our comprehension of proverbs depends upon our ability to recognize what very different things might have in common:

The way of an eagle in the air,
the way of a serpent upon a rock,
The way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of man with a maiden. (30,19)

It is apparent that none of these "ways" is a distinctly defined route. This kind of analogy operates according to the same principles as do the riddles which people might use to challenge each other's wit.

Proverbs do not command, they persuade. They do not dictate what must be done, they describe how things work. Their purpose is not to indoctrinate, but to educate. They are not

precepts that call for obedience, but adages that invite prudent response. The Book of Proverbs clearly insists on the importance of living an ethical life. The ethics it promotes, however, issued from reflection on life rather than from conformity to law.

## The Teacher and the Student

Scholars hold various opinions regarding the identity of the wisdom teachers and the settings within which they taught. Some believe that there was a professional class of teachers attached to the court and appointed to train young men in the arts of diplomacy. They claim that much of the wisdom that we find in Proverbs is specialized knowledge imparted in well-defined schools. Others maintain that the elders of the family were the recognized teachers of wisdom who handed down the tradition to the next generation. These others believe that wisdom was part of the common cultural heritage of the people and all members of the society were fashioned in its teaching.

All scholars agree that the primary education of ancient Israelite youth took place in the home and was the responsibility of the father and, as Proverbs 1,8 tells us, the mother. (Some commentators do not believe that women played a role in the education of sons. They contend that the inclusion of "mother" is merely for the sake of poetic parallelism [see above]. While that may be the case in this instance, such a poetic construction probably would not have been envisioned without some grounding in experience.) The pertinent information and operating principles of hereditary occupations were also handed down within the confines of the family, perhaps an extended family. Such hereditary professions included the monarchy, the priesthood, and the scribal class. Education in these professions might well have been an extension of family training.

The biblical texts show that Israelite kings modeled their courts after the pattern of other ancient Near Eastern nations. They appointed men to advise them, to administer royal policies, and to keep official records. It is obvious that these men had to be trained. We should not, however, automatically conclude that such centers were the exclusive or even principal settings for the teaching of wisdom. Some insist that since the relationship between teacher and student was analogous to that between father and son, (in patriarchal societies women seldom benefit from the educational system) the address "My son," should not be viewed exclusively as familial. While this is true, the inclusion of "your mother's teaching" (1,8) argues for a family setting.

If wisdom is basically the way a culture addresses the fundamental questions of life, then all members of the society are trained in it and all possess this wisdom in varying degrees and live it out in their lives in diverse ways. The "way of wisdom" may have been either very general and indistinguishable, or specialized and distinctive. Intelligence is an innate quality, but wisdom is acquired by learning from others and from life experience. Such wisdom is neither static nor the exclusive domain of an official class. It grew up within the people and it was their public property.

## The Way of Wisdom

Wisdom came to be understood in several ways. Consequently, "the way of wisdom," a phrase that scholars use, refers to a manner of operation which is proper, whether in human society, in the world of nature, or on the cosmic plane. The first of these is the kind of wisdom that has

been described thus far. Often called practical or folk wisdom, it is primarily concerned with the consequences of social interaction. Since peace and harmony can exist only where some kind of social order is maintained, whatever guaranteed such order was pursued, whatever threatened it was avoided. This, in fact, is the dimension of wisdom thinking that gave rise to the theory of retribution—the wise will enjoy peace and security; the fool will suffer the consequences of foolishness:

> The virtue of the upright saves them,
> but the faithless are caught in their own intrigue. (11,6)

Proverbs declare that there are only two ways open to women and men: the way of the wise (those who learn from experience) or the way of the foolish (those who do not). Since successful living demands an ongoing search for meaning, one can never settle for the solutions of the past. New situations constantly present themselves; new choices must be made. The ever-developing tradition of wisdom provides various examples of behavior that resulted in success as well as behavior that ended in disaster. The wise, enriched by this store of practical knowledge, will take to heart these lessons. They are the ones who have developed a certain facility in drawing from the accumulated wisdom of the past and, in an imaginative way, successfully bring it to bear on new situations. Thus do they follow "the way of wisdom."

A second kind of wisdom deals with our need to survive and prosper in the natural world. Reflective observation of nature and the movements within it led people to recognize a certain amount of regularity in its operations and similarity in its various manifestations. This regularity was charted, the similarities noted and a kind of nature wisdom developed that was a precursor of the physical sciences. People learned how to live in harmony with nature and, through comparison and contrast, they drew lessons from nature for their daily lives:

> Like snow in summer, or rain in harvest,
> honor for a fool is out of place. (26,1)

This too was "the way of wisdom."

Some have questioned the religious value of folk wisdom, because there is no mention of God. The proverbs appear to be anthropocentric (human-centered) rather than theocentric (God-centered). We must be careful not to compare an ancient Near Eastern humanistic point of view with a kind of modern humanism that is faithless. Biblical Israel was not a secular society. It never questioned the divine power working to hold the world in proper balance. It might not understand God's actions, but it did not doubt God's power. The wisdom tradition was built on the conviction that God expected people to use their human abilities to the fullest. Whether or not there is explicit mention of God, Israelite wisdom was religious teaching and the ethical orientation of the proverbs should be seen as evidence of their religious character.

Finally, the ancient Near Eastern world believed that there was a kind of wisdom that was beyond their grasp and their comprehension. Their belief rested on the conviction that there was some kind of cosmic order within which they lived, an order that was reliable though mysterious, an order that revealed the wisdom of the creator-god. They maintained that this cosmic order not only predated the natural world, but was actually somehow responsible for its existence. The primordial wisdom associated with this cosmic order fashioned the world and keeps it functioning properly. Of all the kinds of wisdom, it alone contains the secrets of the universe and the complete answers to all questions. The sages knew that this was the only

wisdom that would satisfy the human search for meaning. Since it was clearly beyond human reach, it was considered a cosmic reality and described as such:

> From of old I was poured forth,
> at the first, before the earth. (8,23)

Creation is "the way of wisdom" on this cosmic plane.

Israel believed that God was creator of all things, and thus it spoke of a theological dimension to each of these three manifestations of wisdom. Although theological expression is more explicit in later writings, it was never absent from Israel's worldview. The optimistic view of life that permeates the Book of Proverbs flows from the conviction that there is an order to the universe and, with God's help, we can discover it, live in harmony with it, and thus enjoy peace and prosperity. This, above all, is "the way of wisdom."

## The Teachings of the Wise

Before we look at some of the specifics of the wisdom teaching, it is important for us to remember a few fundamentals of the movement. Here emphasis is on the human person in general rather than on the nation as a collective group. Its scope is universal, not exclusively Israelite. The counsel offered addresses issues from everyday life rather than from cultic experience. It is concerned with pragmatic ends, not transcendent values. If we expect this teaching to address questions not found within its range, not only will we find it wanting but we might even fail to appreciate the riches that are to be found there.

### Fear of the Lord

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Several variations of this familiar saying appear in the Book of Proverbs (1,7; 9,10; 15,33). This notion of fear is based on the recognition of the holiness of God. There may very well be an element of terror in those who behold the awesomeness of God and realize their own deficiency, but this is not the primary meaning that "fear of the Lord" intends to convey. This fear is better characterized as awe and reverence than as terror and dread. Awe, not dread, is awakened when one realizes the transcendence of a God who is protective, not threatening.

Israel did not view this reverential fear as merely an attitude of mind. It was the foundation of its moral conduct. It included respect, loyalty, obedience, and covenant love. Owing to the special character of Yahweh, "fear of the Lord" (the Hebrew word that we translate as Lord is Yahweh, the name of Israel's God) becomes a uniquely Israelite expression. Eventually, this phrase became the summation of Israelite religion and piety. Many modern scholars consider it the best expression of the religion of Israel (or Judaism).

In Proverbs "fear of the Lord," which is a reverential disposition toward God, is linked with wisdom, which is practical knowledge that comes from reflection on experience. These are two quite distinct ideas that, when brought together, significantly reinterpret the meaning of wisdom. This can be seen by comparing:

> The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom; (4,7)

with:

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD, (9,10).

In the first proverb, ordinary life is the source of wisdom. In the second, wisdom flows from religious faith. This change in perspective may be the result of sages trying to bridge the gap between the wisdom teaching that they held in common with other Near Eastern nations and that which was distinctively Israelite.

"Fear of the Lord" might be understood in another way. The Israelites believed that behind the breathtaking order of the universe was an all-wise and all-powerful God. They believed that the more they knew about their world, the more they would discover about God. The reverse was also held. Knowledge about God was the beginning of true knowledge about the world. The more one was committed to God, the more one was in harmony with the orders placed in the world by this same God. Thus, the proper religious attitude toward the Lord was the source of wisdom.

## Training in Virtue

As stated above, the emphasis in the wisdom tradition is on the individual person rather than on the nation. This should not be understood as a kind of privatized individualism as we know today. It was precisely as a member of the covenant community that an Israelite searched for meaning in the events of life. The social ramifications of one's personal life were seldom far from the minds of the people. (It is merely for the sake of this investigation that we separate personal virtues from social virtues. The former should characterize one's behavior in every kind of situation. The latter suggest specific social settings that are implied in the proverbs themselves.)

The connection between wisdom and personal virtue is clear and frequently stated. The way of wisdom is the way of virtue. It is also the only way to happiness (see Prv 10–13). Many proverbs praise self-control, especially restraint in speech (21,23). When one does speak, it should be with words that are pleasing (16,24) not foolish (14,23). One should be disciplined in other areas of life as well. For instance, the student is counseled: "With closest custody, guard your heart" (4,23). Honesty (13,5), diligence (6,6-11), docility (13,10) and humility (22,4) are but a few of the virtues that are recommended to the young. If they live their lives according to this counsel, they are promised a good reputation (22,1) and long life (10,27). Once again we see that they are advised not to be overconfident of their own ability, but to put their trust in the Lord (3,5).

There are numerous warnings against the seduction of adulterous women. In a strict patriarchal society, the virtue of men would be of primary concern; women were treated as property and confined in restrictive seclusion in order to guarantee their fidelity and thus assure the legitimacy of the male's offspring. Only women of questionable virtue moved freely in such societies and these are precisely the women about whom the young men are cautioned (see 2,16-19; 6,20-35).

A significant amount of instruction is unmistakably social in its focus. It is bent on developing relationships necessary for societal tranquility. The proverbs themselves provide us with hints about the social settings within which they might have been effective. It is obvious that the family plays a prominent role as the initial setting for education. Several proverbs admonish young people to heed the teaching of their parents (1,8; 6,20). The sages realized that the family is the foundation of society and social virtues were cultivated there. They understood

that the lessons of respect and obedience learnt within the family will go a long way in other less personal social situations. A fair amount of counsel about training and chastisement can also be found (22,6; 13,1; 24; 19,18.) This advice might be directed either to training within the family or to occupational education (see subsection: The Teacher and the Student).

The distinct influence of Yahwism may not be easily detected in some proverbial instruction, but the covenant's call to justice is obvious. It manifests itself in concern for the relationship between the rich and the poor. Despite the fact that riches were viewed as fitting reward for righteous living, the inherent dangers of possessing wealth were still acknowledged (28,3.8; 11,28; 21,13). The poor were to be respected for they too came from the hand of God (14,31; 22,2) and were sometimes more virtuous than the rich (28,6).

Advice is given to both the ruled and the ruler. Subjects are told to esteem the king because he exercises considerable power over them (16,14f). Kings, on the other hand, are bound to be fair and upright (16,10-12). Once again, the influence of Israelite teaching can be seen. In other nations of the ancient world, the king had the last word, and that word could not be questioned. This was not so in Israel. The king may have been revered as the legitimate representative of God, but he too was a member of the covenant community and obliged to obey the Mosaic law.

This kind of moral teaching presupposes an almost mechanical view of retribution. The universal order upon which the world depends is neat and reliable. The rewards and punishments that are the consequences of particular styles of living seem almost to issue from impersonal laws inherent in the actions themselves, or they are the direct intervention of a God who is executing justice. We may think that the Book of Proverbs tends to oversimplify the complexities of human life. It does not question the status quo. One will have to look elsewhere for a critique of social structures or of the prevailing philosophy of life. The applicability of the theory of retribution is not challenged here as it is in Job and in Ecclesiastes.

## The Figure of Wisdom

An interesting feature of this book is the figure of Wisdom personified. In the very first chapter (1,20-33), wisdom is depicted as a woman who goes through the city looking for disciples. Many of the traits that characterize her are found throughout the book in proverbs that describe either the wise teacher or the wisdom teaching itself. This woman is frequently contrasted with a second woman, Folly (9,13), who attempts to seduce the simple into her ways. These characterizations are probably nothing more than imaginative literary ways of distinguishing between the way of wisdom and the way of folly. Israel did not have to borrow them from its neighbors.

It is not unusual to find personification in Hebrew poetry. The prophets used it:

> Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! (Is 52,9)

as did the psalmists:

> Let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy (Ps 98,8)

What is unusual is that wisdom is characterized as a woman. Several explanations for this have been advanced. Some believe that this is a remnant of ancient Near Eastern (even Israelite) worship of a goddess of wisdom. Others see it as merely a development from the feminine form

*hokmah,* wisdom. The most widely accepted explanation for this can be found in the nature of the society itself. Wisdom was regarded as the most desirable possession. In this patriarchal male-preferred society, it is understandable that it was personified as a woman. The same is true for folly. Women are no more inherently seductive than are men. However, they are a better representation of what men find enticing.

This might explain certain features of the figure of the woman in the market place (8,1-21), but the real mystery lies in the identity of the figure that was present at creation (8,22-31). Over the centuries this figure has been interpreted in various ways.

The Bible quite explicitly states again and again that God alone is the creator. However, wisdom claims to have had some part in creation (8,30). This claim must be reconciled with the traditional faith. One way to do this has been to understand the figure of wisdom as the personification of a divine attribute. According to this view, the personification is merely a stylistic feature of the author. Such an imaginative technique is not foreign to the Bible. The kindness, truth, and justice of God have also been personified (see Ps 85,10-14).

As helpful as this explanation may be, it does not take into account the fact that wisdom is identified as an entity separate from the creator (8,22). This characterization is more than personification. It is closer to hypostasization (taking what is normally a personal trait and transforming it into a person with its own existence). It is apparent that once wisdom is created, she has a life of her own. It is also clear that she is a creature with cosmic dimensions. She existed before the rest of creation, and she appears to be active beyond the confines of space and time. According to some commentators, this suggests a mythological origin. Such an interpretation would not be against biblical religion for there are several other sections of the Bible that contain mythological elements (for example, the garden with the talking serpent [Gn 2–3]; the sea dragon [Is 27,1]).

A third interpretation of this mysterious figure is gaining more prominence today. It claims that Wisdom was originally a goddess. Some claim that she was a Canaanite deity, others say that she was early Israelite. Scholars have long believed that Israel moved from believing in many gods (polytheism), to believing that other nations may have their gods but Israel worships only one (monolatry), to believing that there *is* only one God (monotheism). It is possible that the ancestors of Israel believed in a goddess of wisdom from whom this figure originated.

Whatever the origin of this enigmatic figure, she is no longer perceived as a goddess. She probably represents that inaccessible dimension of wisdom that we all desire but which resides with God alone, the kind of wisdom that is within creation but beyond us. This is the wisdom that explains the universe but which we cannot attain. This mysterious figure, whatever her origin, reminds us that the fullness of wisdom cannot be gained through human experience. It belongs to God.

## The Role of Wisdom Today

There are several reasons why Proverbs may not be popular reading. It seems to describe a world that does not exist, a world where life has a proper order and events follow a cause-and-effect sequence. We know to the contrary that life is very unpredictable. We may be able to discern some of the order in nature, but the events of life itself cannot be charted or foreseen. Consequently, Proverbs appears to be very naive and somewhat static.

Furthermore, the world of Proverbs seems to be the world of the comfortable, not the

world of those who struggle. Even directions about justice are given from the point of view of those who are in charge. The advice given does not question the way things are. Since people supported by the status quo seldom challenge it, Proverbs might well be perceived as a guide to "Win Friends, Influence People and Get Ahead in the World, As We Have." Advocates of justice and peace usually turn to the prophets for inspiration, not to the proverbs.

Such an evaluation of the wisdom tradition misses a few very important points. First, proverbs do not claim to describe everything, but they *do* depict a bit of the world. Each proverb reflects a snippet of life. Together they offer a collage, not a blueprint. Second, the process that produces proverbs may be more significant than the content of the proverbs themelves. It teaches us the importance of serious reflection on experience and the need to adjust our behavior as circumstances change. The wise person is the one who can adequately assess the demands of a situation and who is experienced and flexible enough to behave in a way that is appropriate to that particular situation. If we read proverbs as directions that we must follow rather than as examples from which we can learn, we will misunderstand the force of their teaching. The way of wisdom is neither naive nor static.

Although people do not turn to the proverbs for prophetic inspiration, the wisdom method of reflection on life experience found there has gained prominence in recent years. Frequently experience is the starting point from which contemporary theologians develop their insights. This approach has also spread from the base communities of Latin America to the Bible-discussions groups of North America. People are beginning again to realize that they encountered God *through* human experience, not *despite* it.

The charge that Proverbs is a book of upper-class ethics is debatable. It is true that several proverbs seem suited to the court or to some other diplomatic setting. However, most of them could easily have been used in the normal training of youth. They do presume an underlying order that is stable and reliable, but that is common in most initial training programs. Proverbs is the kind of teaching that socializes members into the group. It does not question the credibility of the group and so it lacks a prophetic edge. What Proverbs does offer is an appreciation of life and an encouragement to live it to the fullest. D.B.

# ECCLESIASTES □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 781–791 of the Old Testament*]

Ecclesiastes does not enjoy the renown that belongs to other writings from the wisdom tradition, specifically Job or Psalms. However, even people who are unfamiliar with the book often use expressions that arise from its provocative view of life. Sayings such as "You can't take it with you!" or "There's nothing new under the sun!" show that the thinking of Ecclesiastes is not foreign to our own contemporary worldview.

## About the Book

Ecclesiastes manifests some of the literary characteristics of a Royal Testament, a common type of literature in the ancient Near East intended for the instruction of the king's successor. It was written in the first person and claimed to be advice gleaned from the experience of life. Although the book itself begins with a kind of third-person descriptive prologue (1,1-11) and

ends with an epilogue also in the third person (12,9-14), everything else suggests but one speaker and, despite some conflicting statements, one point of view.

There are several unresolved literary questions regarding the book. They have to do with authorship, dating, place of origin, and the composition and structure of the book itself.

The very first verse of the book describes rather than identifies the speaker as "David's son, Qoheleth, king in Jerusalem." (See the Solomonic attribution of the Book of Proverbs, early in the guide to that book.) There is no biblical mention of a Davidic son by this name and so there must be some other connotation intended. The exact meaning of Qoheleth is debated. It probably comes from the Hebrew word *gahal,* assembly, and refers to someone who calls forth or presides over a meeting, perhaps for the purpose of teaching. (The form of the word Qoheleth suggests that it is not a name, but rather a participle that designates someone who does something. The Greek word used to translate *gahal* is *ekklesia,* a citizens' assembly in Greece. The one who presides over this particular assembly is called Ecclesiastes or Preacher.)

The man is further designated as the son of David, king of Israel. The reference is obviously to Solomon, the one revered in popular devotion as the wise king par excellence. The author is claiming that Solomon is the speaker, and therefore his teaching has the authority of Solomon's wisdom. Although this claim of royal authority appears only in the first two chapters, it sets the tone for the rest of the instruction. From the outset it has authority even though it may prove to be unorthodox.

The language of the book resembles the kind of Hebrew that appeared during a very late biblical period and was used almost exclusively for literary purposes. The inclusion of several Aramaic words has led scholars to date the book around the third century B.C. The place of origin is more difficult to determine. Some say Phoenicia, others suggest Egypt. The international character of the wisdom tradition adds to the complexity of precise identification (see latter portion of Introduction to the Wisdom Books).

There are also different opinions regarding the structure of the book. Some believe that it is simply a collection of wisdom pieces without any organization. Others divide the book into two major parts: Qoheleth's observations of life, and the conclusions that he draws. (The *New American Bible* belongs to this latter group.) Since there is only one speaker, a structure based on alternate speeches is ruled out.

The author makes use of several teaching techniques other than the instruction. These include proverbial quotations, contrasting proverbs, and rhetorical questions. Several of these forms are mentioned in the prologue to Proverbs, ". . . proverb and parable, the words of the wise and their riddles" (Prv 1,6). All of this fosters the characterization of Qoheleth as a respected teacher of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes is one of the five books that make up the *Megilloth,* or "Scrolls." This refers to a special collection in the Hebrew Bible that also includes Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, and Esther. These books were read during various liturgical festivals and were gathered together for the sake of convenience. Ecclesiastes was read during the harvest celebration of Sukkoth, also known as Tabernacles or Booths. This major pilgrim feast was so called because the harvesters lived in booths as they gathered in their crops. It is not clear how this practice began or why Ecclesiastes was chosen. Perhaps the somber tone of the book, the seasoned reflections of an aging sage, fit the maturity of harvest and the dreariness of autumn. Although reading the book was not always a consistent synagogue practice, Ecclesiastes continues to be considered part of the *Megilloth.*

A note about the final ending is in order. The book clearly begins with the distinctive "Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" (1,2) and ends on the same tone "Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, all things are vanity!" (12,8). What some consider a kind of prologue (1,1-11) might well come from the original author. The epilogue (12,9-14) is different: at least one, possibly two people besides the main author have added something. Verses 9-11 praise Qoheleth as a wise teacher and compiler of wisdom sayings. Whoever added these verses plainly agreed with Qoheleth's conclusions despite their critical and sometimes unconventional viewpoint. The tone changes, though, with verse 12, which begins with the same Hebrew word as does verse 9. (This might be textual evidence of a second epilogue.) The student, identified only here in the manner found frequently in Proverbs, is warned against too much speculation and is advised to trust in the retributive justice of God, a theme that Qoheleth, in contrast, consistently challenged.

It would appear, then, that the author created a literary character, Qoheleth, and ascribed Solomonic authority to him in order to give his own instruction credibility. A later editor further authenticated this teaching by explicitly assuring the reader of Qoheleth's wisdom. However, with two short verses a second editor tried to temper some of Qoheleth's statements.

There are two possible explanations for this inconsistent ending. 1) The book was already well enough accepted so that it could not be dismissed by its critics. Still, someone was in a position to append a caution to what might be considered questionable teaching. 2) If there was only one editor who agreed with Qoheleth's teaching, that person realized that without some kind of tempering it would not be preserved. The last verses restate the traditional view of retribution and seem to return the entire teaching to the circle of orthodoxy.

## A Critical Point of View

There is a wide range of scholarly opinion regarding the meaning of the book. Qoheleth has been described as a skeptic, a cynic, or, more positively, a pragmatist. His view of life has been called everything from pessimistic and fatalistic to realistic. Some judge his religious outlook hedonistic or pleasure-seeking, while others think it is faithful to Israelite values. It is clear that he is disillusioned with certain facets of his society, yet he lacks the enthusiasm of a reformer and the vision of a mystic. This has led some critics to label him a frustrated man who is resigned to the injustice and meaninglessness of life and who is intent on making the most of any fleeting pleasures, in the spirit of Epicureanism.

It is difficult to make a distinction between a challenge to the way life is understood and dissatisfaction with life itself. Perhaps in the actual living of life, it is impossible to separate the two. A careful reading of Qoheleth, however, will show that he does not really despair of life, but of unrealistic expectations regarding it. Qoheleth's real struggle is with the meaning of life, especially from the perspective of the theory of retribution (see Introduction).

### A Chase after the Wind

Qoheleth sets out to discover everything within human experience (1,13). Since he is a king, he has both the wealth and the leisure to embark on this quest. As possessor of extraordinary wisdom (1,16), he of all people is equipped to experience life to the full. He has acquired wisdom, but what he sought was always beyond his grasp, "a chase after wind" (1,17). It is clear that in his search for wisdom, he was looking for something else as well. Qoheleth next turned to the pursuit of self-

gratification and in many different ways he was successful, but still he was not satisfied (2,1-11). It seems that he accomplished everything to which he had set his mind in his search to answer the fundamental question:

> "What profit has man from all the labor
> which he toils at under the sun?" (1,3)

He consistently arrived at the same conclusion, however. There is no lasting gain, no tangible dividend, ". . . with nothing gained under the sun" (2,11).

The theory of retribution claims that there is a direct relationship between the uprightness of one's behavior and the good fortune that one enjoys. According to this theory, Qoheleth's wisdom and wealth would be perceived as concrete proof of his goodness and a guarantee of future prosperity. But Qoheleth does not really enjoy his good fortune and so he questions its value. Since death comes to all, he wonders: ". . . why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me?" (2,15) It is not life as such, nor the search for fulfillment in life, that frustrates him. What he loathes (2,17) is the profitlessness of human striving. It is not fulfilling. Since Qoheleth did attain the wisdom and wealth and pleasure that he sought, his frustration must stem from his failure to attain something in addition to these goals. Qoheleth is asking more of life than merely success and prosperity.

He is also troubled about the inevitability of death and the sense of futility it often imparts. Regardless of how one lives, death is the ultimate fate of all. Any advantage that one might have because of righteousness, wisdom, or wealth is only temporary and, therefore, questionable. In fact, the fool who disregards societal rules may actually have an edge over the one who conforms to them at the cost of enjoyment. Death and the total relinquishment that it demands force Qoheleth to question the value of any human accomplishment and to wonder if perhaps life itself is "a chase after the wind."

## Nothing is New under the Sun

We have already seen how the wisdom teachers appealed to the obvious order within the natural world as they urged people to live in compliance with acceptable social custom (see Introduction, beginning; Proverbs: The Way of Wisdom). The author of Job used the same technique with a slightly different twist. There Job was overwhelmed by the wonders of nature and led to acknowledge the incomprehensible dimension of life (see Job: Reward and Punishment). The author of Ecclesiastes also directs our attention to the regularity in nature (1,2-11), but does so in order to highlight its monotony. The earth does not change, it seems constant. The sun rises and sets and rises again and sets again in the same mode day after day. Although the wind appears at times to be irregular, it follows certain paths that, upon observation, can be predicted. Even the sea, though constantly fed, is never full. The regularity detected in nature appears to be devoid of any progress. There is nothing new under the sun.

What advantage does the earth have in being constant? What does the sun accomplish by rising and setting if it must repeat the cycle again and again with no variation and no advance? What profit comes from the wind's endless movement if it never arrives at any destination? To what avail do the streams nourish an insatiable sea? This sage urges us to learn yet another lesson from nature. Human striving for gain is nothing but wearisome labor that must be repeated and repeated with no promise of conclusion and no assurance of gratification.

Human life is basically the same regardless of the society or the generation into which one

is born. Life itself follows the same cycles, and experiences are quite similar. Momentous events do occur, but they seldom interfere with the fundamental rhythms of existence. Nature repeats itself and so does human history. Nothing seems to have lasting significance.

In what may be the most familiar section of the entire book (3,1-9), Qoheleth declares that each event of human life has its own appointed time. Here each event is linked in poetic construction with its opposite. There are two ways of understanding this pattern. First, juxtaposing opposites is a poetic way of expressing totality. It creates an inclusion that encompasses both poles and everything in between. Examples of this include: "knowledge of good and evil" (see Gn 2,9.17) meaning comprehensive knowledge; "bone and flesh" (see Gn 2,23) referring to the entire body. The contemporary phrase "flesh and blood" has the same meaning.

The second way of understanding this poetic form is as an expression of relativity. There is an inevitability to human events that is nonetheless relative. The circumstances of life determine what is fitting and what is not. What is appropriate at one time or in one situation can be out of place when the circumstances change. This may be the author's way of insisting that there are no absolutes; that is, everything is always relative to all else. There is a time to die as well as a time to be born. Neither seems to have an advantage over the other. Still, we do not know the rules that govern these appointed times and so we are helpless to control them and we may feel that we are at their mercy.

The task of living is not easy. Qoheleth explains why in 3,11. This verse may be the most difficult one of the book because of the questions surrounding the translation and interpretation of the Hebrew *olam.* Although some versions translate this word as "world," or "future," or even "ignorance," the *New American Bible* renders it as "the timeless." God has put *olam* in the human heart and we want to know, to understand, even to conrol everything in the world. It seems that while the human beings are finite, their desires transcend the limits of time. Qoheleth has described the world as fixed and closed. There is, nonetheless, an urgency within the human heart that seeks to burst the confines of restrictive determinism in order to delight in the wonders of freedom and mystery. We are reminded of St. Augustine's famous saying: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

## All is Vanity!

This is the expression that has come to characterize the entire book. The Hebrew word *hebel,* which is here translated as vanity, can also be rendered as vapor or thin air. It means pointlessness or futility and refers to something that may be real but that has little or no lasting substance.

We have seen that Qoheleth has accomplished everything he set out to do. He has acquired wisdom and wealth; he has enjoyed pleasure and prosperity; he has achieved all of his goals. And yet he declares that "All is vanity!" All of the energy he put into his projects was pointless; all of his toil was futile. One might expect him to advise against ever trying to be happy, but he does not. Quite the contrary! We will see that he urges people to enjoy what they have. Then what about life does he regard as vanity?

Qoheleth observed in the lives of others what Job experienced in his own. That is, the righteous do not always enjoy the good things of life, nor are the wicked always deprived of them (4,1; 8,10f). Life itself has shown these two men the inadequancy of the theory of retribution. It may be helpful in explaining some things and in encouraging a certain kind of behavior, but it falls short in many areas. While Qoheleth shares this insight with Job, his

ıissatisfaction in the face of his own prosperity and success has led him a step further in challenging the theory. It is not only that a righteous person sometimes does not prosper; it is also that, even when one does realize some desired goal, there is no guarantee of fulfillment. To suppose that the attainment of goals, even noble goals, can fulfill human longings is, according to Qoheleth, vanity!

## The Wisdom of the Sage

The wisdom of Qoheleth consists not only in a critical examination of everything that is supposed to bring happiness, but also in positive advice. Although he finds fault with some aspects of human striving, he encourages something that is often overlooked in times of feverish activity. It is something that is always within reach and may well be the key to true fulfillment and contentment. He exhorts his hearers to relish the simple pleasures that are at hand (2,24; 3,13.22; 5,19; 8,15; 9,9). These pleasures can be experienced in the very act of living: in eating, in drinking, in the work itself rather than in the wealth that one may hope to produce by it. This pleasure, like everything else in life, has come from the hand of God and should be enjoyed.

One cannot calculate this enjoyment or manipulate it as might be possible in a purely business transaction. Life is not a business transaction and to expect a strict quid pro quo (this for that) return, as in a rigid interpretation of retribution, will only end in disappointment. Qoheleth believes the enjoyment should be sought in the doing rather than in the outcome. To wait in anticipation of something more than the natural satisfaction that accompanies human activity is foolish, because the future is uncertain.

Qoheleth does not spurn the search for wisdom or the normal human striving for success and prosperity. He objects to making human accomplishment the primary or exclusive goal in life. He calls upon all to find pleasure in what they are doing and, if they are fortunate enough to become successful in the process, to see this as a gift from God as well.

## A Challenge for Today

Ecclesiastes is not an account of Qoheleth's journey in faith. It is more like jottings for a report on his experiments in living. He did not share Job's struggle with theodicy (a defense of God against the accusation of injustice). Qoheleth addressed human misconceptions, not the incomprehensible, and, thus, easily misunderstood divine activity. He seems to have gone right to the core of things. He scrutinized some of the primary undertakings and fundamental goals of people.

Qoheleth would probably be unrelenting in his criticism of many of the attitudes found within our contemporary society. He knew that prosperity is often fleeting and cannot ensure happiness even when it is at one's disposal. The complexity of modern society and the instability of the world's economy make it more difficult to amass wealth today than may have been the case in the past. For this reason, the strain and conflict that often accompany the struggle for "upward mobility" have been heightened. This is true for nations as well as for individuals. Much of the injustice in present society stems from greed and an avaricious devouring of the wealth of the world. People believe that having more will make them happy.

Qoheleth never disparaged ingenuity or hard work. Rather, he criticized those who judged the worth of human endeavor by the amount of output rather than the quality of input. There is

a very thin line between directing all of one's energies toward accomplishing a noble goal and sacrificing everything for the sake of success. Qoheleth wholeheartedly endorsed the former while he condemned the latter. He would most likely criticize any attitude or system that placed more value on the product than on the person producing it. Today's business practices, whether local, national, or international, would come under his scrutiny in this regard.

The struggle for "upward mobility" is not the only dimension of contemporary society that Qoheleth would most likely challenge. Many people spend a lifetime climbing the ladder of prominence and power. Others will do almost anything to gain acceptability in prestigious social, professional, or political circles. And who does not aspire to a reputation for wisdom or exceptional intelligence? Qoheleth would challenge us to put all ambition in the right perspective.

Qoheleth was not blind to the many disappointments and tragedies of life, but neither was he an advocate of social change. He cautions against wishing for what cannot be and he urges his hearers to make the most of what they have. This may not be an encouraging message for those who are deprived of the necessities of life, but most likely it was not intended for them. He is not contesting the justice of the social order. He is questioning the value of the motivation behind striving for success.

Finally, Qoheleth is convinced that the future is not totally under our control. It cannot be manipulated by human decision nor determined by human behavior. A strict interpretation of retribution frequently includes the notion that God is bound to respond to our actions with appropriate reward or punishment, whichever the case may be. This normally unconscious attitude surfaces when we are faced with unexplained reverses of fortune. We wonder what we have done to bring adversity upon ourselves or we accuse God of behaving unfairly towards us. Qoheleth would remind us that God is not bound by our interpretive theories. We can accurately predict neither success nor failure.

Qoheleth would insist that the primary goal of life is living. All work, all progress have one principal purpose and that is the enhancement and promotion of life. Every other end is at best secondary or otherwise "a chase after the wind." This is a profoundly religious teaching, for Qoheleth believes that it was the creator who placed the desire for happiness within each human heart, made living an exciting adventure, and willed that every person be given the chance to find pleasure in life. He would strongly object to any materialistic point of view that might minimize or deny this basic conviction. Qoheleth was a champion of the greatest of God's gifts—life itself. D.B.

## THE SONG OF SONGS □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 791–798 of the Old Testament*]

No book of the Old Testament is more difficult to interpret than The Song of Songs. It is clearly a collection of love poems full of sensuous imagery. It promotes no apparent theological or moral values and never even mentions God. It is no wonder that its acceptance into the canon of inspired writings was seriously questioned. The very character of the book has led to many quite distinct interpretations.

## About the Book

Scholars vary in their explanation of the book but they agree that it did not originate as a single composition. They concur that it is a collection of poems of various lengths, but they propose different ways of gathering these poems into sections. Some have suggested a pattern of longing, union, and separation that is repeated through the eight short chapters. Others maintain that while the lyrics do express such sentiments the poems themselves lack any definite pattern. There may be no clearly defined structure, but the book is marked by frequent repetitions (for example, 2,7; 3,5; 8,4). Since there is no narrative plot and the speakers are neither identified nor introduced, one can only speculate about the original intention of the compiler.

This relatively short book has an unusually large number of uncommon words. Its 117 verses contain 49 words that appear nowhere else in the Old Testament. This adds to the difficulty of comprehension, for we are prevented from comparing the meaning of the word in one context with its meaning in another. This obscure vocabulary also opens the poem to a multiplicity of interpretations, thus making it somewhat cryptic but also allowing for a rich diversity.

Like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the Song is associated with Solomon. This ascription to the famous king is found only in the editorial introduction (1,1) and is preceded by a preposition that can be translated in various ways: "by" Solomon; "to" Solomon; "for" Solomon; "of" Solomon; "concerning" Solomon. The attribution need not imply authorship. Still, ascribing the book to Solomon probably gave it credibility, linked it with the other wisdom traditions, and contributed to one of its best-known allegorical interpretations. The book does include other references to Solomon (3,7.9.11; 8,11f), and this has convinced some interpreters of the Solomonic identity of the amorous shepherd. However, in none of these passages does Solomon speak and the references could actually be merely figurative allusions to fabulous wealth.

The geographic references within the Song are quite wide-reaching. Northern locations are mentioned (2,1; 3,9; 4,8; 6,4; 7,5-6) as are places in Transjordan (4,1) and Judah (1,14; 3,5). This variety may reflect the early northern Israelite source of some of the original poems and a later southern, perhaps Jerusalem, setting for the final edition. The appearance of the Persian word for orchard or park (4,13) suggests a postexilic date (after 539 B.C.).

The Song of Songs is also found in the *Megilloth* scroll (see guide to Ecclesiastes: About the Book). It is read on the last day of the celebration of Passover. Perhaps the announcement of the end of winter (2,11) made the poem suitable for use during a spring festival. Reference to the horses and chariots of Pharaoh (1,9) is a clear allusion to the Exodus, the event commemorated at Passover.

## Voices in the Song

There are letters in the left-hand margins of the *New American Bible* that identify the speaker of the verses. These letters are in fact an interpretation. The references to the "Daughters of Jerusalem" (see 1,5; 2,7; 3,5; 5,8.16) do not present any problem, but the meaning of "bride" (see 4,8-12, 5,1) is not clear. The Hebrew text clearly refers to the young woman in this way, but the word itself designates a woman who is betrothed but not yet married to a man. While the text does allude to the sexual union of the lovers, it never describes a marriage and so the male partner is not necessarily a "groom." (The reference in 3,11 is to the splendor of Solomon, not to the marriage of the lovers in the Song.) Furthermore, there seem to be two distinct

portraits of this elusive lover. One of them is a royal figure from Jerusalem (see 1,12-17; 3,6-11) and the other is a rustic youth from the north (see 1,7f; 2,8-17). Nowhere in the book do we find an explicit combination of the two.

Who are these mysterious lovers? The way one understands the meaning and function of the book will influence the way one identifies the characters within it. If these are ancient wedding songs, then, of course, the lovers are a bride and a groom. If this is love poetry of the type we know existed in ancient Egypt, then "bride" can be understood in the figurative sense of a lover and her partner is the man with whom she is intimately involved. He is called "lover" (see 1,13; 2,16; 5,8; etc.), not husband. It is only as the result of some interpretive approach that one might identify the young man as Solomon and thus understand the Song as a poem composed on the occasion of one of his marriages to some foreign princess.

## Form and Meaning

For more than two thousand years, the Song of Songs has been not only a fascination but also something of a riddle. It is its very uniqueness that has made it a challenge to understand. There are basically four ways of interpreting it: allegorical, cultic, dramatic, and literal. Each of these interpretive approaches reveals different facets of the literary quality of the book and opens up possibilities for our religious enrichment. All of them have gained acceptance within Roman Catholic tradition. The book itself contains characteristics of each of these methods, thus lending itself to any one of the approaches. It is interesting to note that while the first and preferred method of interpretation of most of the Bible has been the literal approach, the opposite has been true with this book. It seems that much of the sexual imagery has been so explicit or suggestive as to offend the sensitivities of many of the faithful. Therefore commentators have presumed that the poems were not intended to be understood literally and must have some concealed religious meaning.

When we talk about interpretation, it is important to distinguish between what the book *meant* in the past and what it *means* for the present. Those interpreters who employ a strict historical-critical approach (cf. Harrington) insist that the original sense must be the focus of our explanation. For them, discovering the earliest form and meaning of the book is crucial. They believe that it is this original meaning that continues to be revelatory for us today. Other commentators believe that the book can be interpreted in various ways. These latter interpreters do not categorize methods as "right" or "wrong" but as "helpful" or "not helpful." They would be more open than the former group to various interpretations of the Song of Songs.

### Allegorical Interpretation

An allegory is a comparison, or analogy, between two areas of human experience, usually a more concrete or everyday area and a more abstract one, further removed from ordinary experience. Our understanding of the more abstract area is helped by the analogy with our everyday experience. For example, Justice in our courts is often represented as a beautiful woman wearing a blindfold and holding balancing scales. The woman's beauty symbolizes the attractions of Justice: we are drawn to beauty so we should be drawn to Justice. Her blindfold symbolizes the impartiality of Justice: no matter how important or unimportant the person who appears before her, she is only concerned with the merits of the case each presents. The balancing scales symbolize the objective nature of Justice: decisions are made according to

public standards and anyone can observe how they are made. Thus by using concrete images the allegorical figure helps us understand our ideals of Justice.

An allegorical method of interpretation presumes that the real significance of the material under consideration is more than just its factual or historical content. The surface meaning is a figure of speech that signifies some deeper spiritual truth. This interpretive approach was quite prevalent in ancient Jewish circles (Philo, 20 B.C.–54 A.D.) as well as among early Christian writers (Origen, A.D. 185–254). Jewish commentators who allegorize the Song interpret it as symbolizing God's dealings with Israel. They claim that the book narrates this relationship, tracing it from the time of the Exodus to the coming of the messiah. They believe that it extols the steadfast love that God bestowed on Israel and describes the fickleness that characterized Israel's attitude toward its divine lover.

As the Christians began to read the Hebrew traditions in light of their faith in Christ, this allegorical method produced new meanings. One of their interpretations identified the lovers as Christ and the Church. Another read it as a description of the mystical union of God and the individual soul. Some of the most profound theology in the Christian mystical tradition is grounded in this kind of allegorical interpretation of the Song. The works of Saints Bernard of Clairvaux and John of the Cross are the chief examples of this kind of writing.

The bride has even been explained as the Virgin Mary. Although this interpretation is not easily accommodated to the poems, it has become quite prominent within Roman Catholic tradition. One reason for this is the belief that Mary is the exemplar of the individual soul in union with God. A second and probably stronger reason for the acceptance of this representation is the fact that sections from the Song are read during the liturgy on several Marian feasts. Thus by association this particular allegorical interpretation has come into popular devotion.

## Cultic Interpretation

A second way of understanding the Song of Songs assumes that it was originally a liturgical reenactment of a drama that takes place in nature each spring. This drama is reflected in a well-known fertility myth of the ancient Near Eastern world. The great god (the Canaanite Baal or the Babylonian Tammuz) dies after the harvest and is mourned by the fertility goddess (Anath or Ishtar respectively). She frantically searches for him during the barrenness of winter. Her efforts are successful and they are finally united. Nature is revived with the coming of spring and the cycle of life continues. The fact that this book was read during the spring festival of Passover seems to support the theory that Israel was indeed influenced by the agricultural celebrations of the time.

There is ample evidence in the Bible of Israel's appropriation and subsequent reinterpretation of Canaanite cultic practices. Passover itself is probably a combination of two festivals: an early nomadic celebration intended to ensure the fertility of the flock, and an agricultural one, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, intended to ensure the growth of the crop. The nomadic festival took on historical meaning as it was used to commemorate God's deliverance of the people from Egyptian bondage, and it was associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread after the people had settled in Canaan and had moved from a nomadic to an agricultural form of life. These two very different festivals merged into one celebration and elements of both became details of the standard story of the first Passover celebration (see Ex 12).

The Song itself includes several features that are characteristic of fertility liturgies. Women always play a prominent role in these cultic reenactments. There is frequently a chorus of

women and the chief character is a goddess who is separated from her lover. The speakers are seldom named and their speeches are more monologues than dialogues. The goddess is sometimes a bride, sometimes a sister, sometimes a mother; the beloved is depicted as a king, but more frequently as a shepherd. It is quite possible that, while this ritual drama was never incorporated into the official liturgy of Israel, it enjoyed widespread acceptance in the isolated rural communities (see Ez 8,14). Those who endorse this theory of interpretation contend that the book was included in the canon precisely because of this popular use.

Commentators who reject the theory do so because there is no explicit evidence that Israel included the rite of the dying/rising god in its own ritual. They do not deny the possibility of popular acceptance, but they insist that any association with fertility religion would work against the book's inclusion in the canon. They regard the cultic interpretation as merely a sophisticated form of the allegorical approach.

## Dramatic Interpretation

The third approach has a long history in the church's tradition. As early as the second century of the Christian era, Origen claimed that the Song was a wedding poem written in dramatic form by Solomon himself. Some interpreters today divide the book into a drama of five movements (for example: the anticipation and tryst [1,1—2,17]; the separation [3,1-11]; reunion [4,1—5,1]; a second separation [5,2—6,3]; final union [6,4—8,14]). Such a division attempts to show how the Song includes the dramatic elements of conflict and resolution. The fact that there are only speeches and no narrative sections lends support to this theory of interpretation. It is the commentators who assign the speeches to the characters, as is done in the left hand margins of the *New American Bible,* and who identify the various scenes by means of subtitles within the text.

The two major characters of the drama are, of course, the royal shepherd and the Shulammite maiden. A two-character interpretation has serious deficiencies, however. There is no dramatic development and the book lacks ethical purpose. A three-character approach developed to address these weaknesses. It distinguishes two male individuals, the king and the shepherd. The former tries to win the love of the beautiful maiden but she remains faithful to her shepherd lover. The difference between these two interpretations is obvious. In the first one, the royal shepherd is noble and worthy of the faithful love of the Shulammite. This royal personage might well represent Solomon. In the second interpretation, the king is a villain who tries to seduce the maiden with the promise of luxury and comfort. One wonders how such a disapproving portrait of Solomon could survive as part of the wisdom tradition, a tradition ascribed to the wisdom of the very king who is maligned by this depiction.

The weaknesses of this approach are obvious. Since the biblical text does not supply speech designations, the decisions about their identification are influenced by the biases of the interpreter. Stage directions are also imposed from without rather than discovered within the poems themselves. Finally, there is neither story line nor character development, essential traits of good drama.

## Literal Interpretation

It may be that the original meaning of the Song is found in its literal interpretation. Most likely, the Song of Songs is simply a collection of love poems that neither symbolized divine love nor developed from fertility rites. It teaches no lesson; it tells no story. It simply celebrates the

passion of human love. Some believe that the poems are secular. Others doubt that purely secular love songs would ever be admitted to the canon. These latter commentators believe that the poems are examples of Judean wedding songs. They also discover there traces of a poetic form called the *wasf,* an Arabic word meaning description. These are poems that use images from nature to describe parts of the male or female body. This literary form might explain some of the strange imagery found in the Song (see 4,1-5; 7,2-6).

If this is really the meaning of the Song of Songs, a fundamental question surfaces: Why was the book considered inspired and thus included in the Bible? One can only offer a hypothetical answer. Israel may have followed the same wedding customs as did its Syrian neighbor, celebrating the event for seven days. During the festivities the bride was characterized as "maiden" and the groom as "king." On the eve of the wedding itself the girl would dance for her lover and recite *wasfs* for his enjoyment. The representation of the man as "king" and the extravagance of the celebration could blend quite easily with the tradition about Solomon's erotic adventures (see 1 Kgs 11,1). Some believe that one of the poems was actually composed on the occasion of one of his marriages [3,6-11]). Thus what was initially a collection of wedding songs was now regarded as a description of the king's sexual adventures and was joined with two other writings that claim divine inspiration and Solomonic authorship (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes).

Each of the three books explicitly attributed to Solomon addresses some of the central issues of life, issues that are basic to the wisdom thinking of the ancient Near East, Israel included. Proverbs provides directions on how to achieve peace and prosperity. Qoheleth addresses the search for meaning in life. The Song of Songs celebrates a fundamental human emotion—erotic love. None of these books fits into the category of "salvation history" but each one is an example of the "way of wisdom."

Once writings were associated with Solomon and the wisdom attributed to him, it was not long before they possessed their own authoritative significance. This seems to have been enough to ensure inclusion in the canon. The three books may be quite distinct from each other, but they have come to represent different moments in the life of the same man. The Song of Songs reveals a young, passionate, unguarded Solomon; Proverbs shows a moderate but optimistic man who has learned from his experience of life; the musings of Qoheleth come from someone who comes to the end of life challenging the enduring value of human accomplishment. The quality of these anthropological, but nonetheless theological, concerns is evidence of their religious value. Solomonic ascription provided them with canonical status.

## Wisdom Teaching

Each of the interpretive approaches described above leads us to the central question: What is the book's theological value? Since it belongs to the wisdom tradition, we might also ask: What does it teach us? We have considered four different methods of interpretation, and we should not be surprised if we discover four quite distinct answers to these questions.

The allegorical approach provides us with a figurative way of understanding the nature of our relationship with God. It portrays the relationship as dynamic, energizing, mutually loving, and intensely intimate. This depiction of God runs counter to the images of an impassive creator or an avenging judge, characterizations that may be the prominent images of God held by many people. We may be familiar with the notion of God as a loving parent or of Jesus as a faithful

friend, but the Song of Songs offers us a portrait of a passionate lover, one who desires union with us. Some might find this notion scandalous, but the wisdom tradition (specifically Job and Ecclesiastes) repeatedly teaches something about God or human nature that has been unconventional.

At the heart of the dying/rising ritual is the conviction that death does not have the final victory. The love of the grieving goddess is strong enough to bring her lover back to her and to revitalize the lifeless earth. To the proverb: "For love is strong as death" (8,6—*Revised Standard Version* translation), one might add: "In Spring a young woman's fancy turns to thoughts of love."

The dramatic interpretation renders an example of faithful love. Whether one favors the two- or the three-character account, the fidelity of the bride is held up for all to admire and imitate. She is unrelenting in her search and steadfast in her commitment. This image of a faithful woman conforms to the one found in other places of the wisdom tradition (see Prv 31,10-31).

The literal understanding of the Song skirts all symbolic interpretation and makes no apology for its erotic imagery. It affirms that sexuality is one of the gifts that God gave for our enjoyment (see Prv 5,15-21; Eccl 9,9). The sexual pleasure, however, is not sought promiscuously. It is pursued only within the context of faithful and exclusive commitment.

The portrait of the maiden is exceptional for literature from a patriarchal and male-centered society. This is not the image of a sexually naive and passive woman, dependent upon a man for protection and sustenance. Quite the contrary, it is the woman who takes the initiative in this romantic pursuit. She utters almost twice as much of the erotic poetry as does the man. Her language is quite explicit and she shatters any stereotypes that suggest that women may be romantic but they are not sexually inclined. The Song is devoid of male dominance and female subordination. The maiden is an independent person. She has her own vineyard (1,6) and is encouraged to pasture her flocks (1,8), occupations normally assigned to men. This wisdom book teaches that human passion is both noble and ennobling. Furthermore, its attraction and vitality are natural to both women and men. D. B.

# WISDOM □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 799–821 of the Old Testament*]

## The Hellenization of the World

The last half of the fourth century B.C. saw rapid and sweeping changes in the ancient world. The conquests of Alexander the Great had brought the entire eastern world under the influence of Greek culture. This served to unify an otherwise diverse and disorganized world. It also threatened the integrity of other cultures and religious perspectives. With Alexander's death in 323 B.C., the empire was divided among his followers and three independent and mutually hostile kingdoms were formed. Two of these kingdoms played significant roles in the affairs of the Jewish nation. Ptolemy gained control of Egypt and established himself in Alexandria; Seleucus triumphed over Babylon and made Antioch his center. In its own way, each kingdom contributed to the shaping of biblical tradition.

The Hellenization that was forced upon the Jewish community by the Seleucid ruler

Antiochus Epiphanes was the background for the Jewish war of independence known as the Maccabean revolt (167–142 B.C.). This struggle is narrated in 1 and 2 Maccabees (see Reading Guides on Maccabees) and is the real context for the story found in the Book of Daniel. The military and religious victory the Jewish people gained at this time is celebrated each year at the feast of Hanukkah.

The influence of the Ptolemies is more relevant to an understanding of the wisdom literature. It occurred earlier than that of the Seleucids and appears to have been quite well received. A large colony of Jews lived in Alexandria and accommodated itself to Greek language and culture. This was the group that translated its religious traditions from Hebrew into Greek, thus producing the basis of what has come to be known as the Septuagint (Latin for seventy, frequently designated LXX). A tradition grew up claiming that seventy scribes, working independently of each other, labored over the translation for seventy days in seventy different locations and produced identical versions. This was seen as evidence of the inspired nature of the translation. Most likely, the task took decades, but this fact did not detract from the reverence accorded the Septaugint over the years.

The Alexandrian or Greek version was probably the one in popular use during the first century of the Christian era. During this same period, however, the Jewish community adopted the older Palestinian or Hebrew version of the Bible as its official text. The Christian practice of adding its own writings to the collection may have contributed to this decision.

Christians continued to revere the Alexandrian tradition. In fact, by comparing the Old Testament citations used by New Testament writers, scholars conclude that a good number, if not most of them, come from the Alexandrian rather than from the earlier Palestinian version. At the time of the Reformation, the official version of the Old Testament became a point of disagreement among Christian denominations. Protestant churches retained the shorter Hebrew canon and thus preserve the more ancient Jewish version of the tradition. The Roman church accepted the wider Greek canon and thereby preserves an authentic early church tradition. Those books not found within the Hebrew canon are called Deutero-canonical (second-listing) by Roman Catholics and Apocrypha (originally meaning "hidden," now understood as inspirational but not canonical) by Protestants. This explains why some Bibles include such books as Wisdom and Sirach, while others do not.

## About the Book

Over the centuries this book has been called "The Book of Wisdom" (from the Latin translations), "The Wisdom of Solomon" (from the Septuagint), or variations of either title. Although the author does not explicitly identify himself as Solomon, speaking in the first person he described himself as such (7,5; 8,21; 9,7f; see 1 Kgs 3,5-15). This might be due to the author's presumption that the somewhat unconventional character of the book's ideas might require Solomonic authority to be accepted as orthodox teaching. (For an explanation of Solomonic authorship see Proverbs: About the Book; Ecclesiastes: About the Book; Song: About the Book; Literal Interpretation.)

The book itself suggests an origin from within the Jewish community of Alexandria. It is clear that the author was steeped in the history of the Exodus (11,2-16; 12,23-27; 16,2-19.22), was acquainted with the religious practices of Egypt (15,14—16,1), and was well versed in Hellenistic philosophy and science (6,22—11,1). The author reinterpreted his own religious

heritage and critiqued the traditions, practices, and insights of the other two cultures. He did this in an attempt to support those Jews who were questioning the relevance of their ancient faith in the face of the radical cultural changes they were undergoing.

Most scholars date this book somewhere during the first century B.C. At this period of history, the primary threat did not arise from the Hellenizing Greeks but from the Hellenized Jews themselves. The oppression from outside the community that had led to the Maccabean Revolt had given way to a subtle undermining of traditional teaching and values. Even the religious leaders were not immune to this kind of worldliness. The author appears to have been concerned that the pious not be led astray, that those enthralled by Greek culture be convinced of the excellence of their own religious heritage, and that those already carried away by the currents of change be rescued.

Literary features of the book confirm that it originated in Greek. The form of the language is natural and free-flowing, not awkward as might be the case if this was a translation from Hebrew. The extensive scientific vocabulary reveals an author who possessed an exceptional comprehension of Hellenistic learning. References to earlier religious tradition correspond to the style of the Alexandrian rather than to that of the Palestinian version. The thought is similar to what is found in Jewish-Alexandrian works of this period. The author frequently employed a form of expression that resembles the diatribe—a method of argument developed by the Cynic and Stoic philosophers of Greece that creates imaginary opponents who raise questions that the philosopher refutes.

Despite these Greek characteristics, this is basically a Jewish work. It is not difficult to detect the influence of Hebrew parallelism in the poetry. (For an explanation of parallelism see Job: The Literary Style [end]). The description of God's care during the Exodus is a kind of homiletic *midrash* (a method of interpretation that the Jewish community devised in order to apply the Bible to new situations). Thus a law (*halakah*) was restated or a narrative (*haggadah*) retold in such a way as to give direction to a new generation. The Greeks, on the contrary, and specifically Philo, developed allegory as a principal method of interpreting traditions. It is significant that the author of Wisdom employed *midrash* rather than allegory. This further substantiates the Jewish, rather than Greek, origin of this book.

The structure of Wisdom is a matter of dispute. There are not the obvious divisions as can be found in some books of the wisdom tradition. The editors of the *New American Bible* have adopted a fairly general thematic division: 1) The Reward of Justice; 2) Praise of Wisdom by Solomon; 3) Special Providence of God during the Exodus.

## Wisdom Teaching

The unifying theme of this biblical book is "the praise of wisdom." Each of the three major sections addresses this theme from its own distinctive point of view. A cursory examination of each section will highlight significant theological elements found there.

### The Reward of Justice (1,1—6,21)

The first section is often called "The Book of Eschatology." (Traditionally, eschatology refers to the last or final things: the end of the age, death, judgment, reward, and punishment.) In it we find the destinies of the righteous and of the wicked described in vivid contrast. The former, regardless of their obvious suffering, "are in the hand of God" (3,1), while the latter "shall

receive a punishment to match their thoughts" (3,10). This entire section serves as a summons to fidelity to the religious traditions of Israel, a fidelity that will guarantee the rewards of wisdom.

At first glance this teaching might seem to be merely a restatement of the doctrine of retribution. A closer look will show that it is instead a radical departure from the traditional understanding. The author not only challenged some traditional views but also introduced several radically new ideas. First, he insisted that childlessness, a condition that by itself brought reproach in ancient society (see Gn 16,4; 1 Sm 1,7) is not a mark of divine displeasure (3,13f; 4,1). Regardless of the importance of offspring for the survival of the race, moral not physical fruitfulness is emphasized.

The author further denied that suffering itself presupposes sin. In fact, an untimely death may be a righteous person's rescue from the wickedness of life (4,14). We are reminded of the adage: The good die young. This author agreed with both Job and Qoheleth that virtue is not always rewarded in this life, nor is evil punished. He went on to suggest, however, that whoever thinks that the death of the righteous is affliction or destruction is foolish (3,2f). It is, rather, a trial that they must endure in order to be with God (3,5f).

Here, for the first time, the reader is introduced to the Greek concept *psyche* (soul, 1,11; 3,1). Although in some passages the word is used with the same meaning as the Hebrew *nephesh* (being or life, 12,6; 14,5; 16,9), in other places it clearly marks adoption of the body-soul dualism which was part of the Greek understanding of human nature. The Greeks held that human nature was a combination of an impermanent material body and an eternal spiritual soul. This combination was dissolved at death. But caution is in order here. We must be careful not to take accommodation to Greek thought further than the author did. Nowhere does this book speak of an immortal soul.

A second and related idea is that of life after death. This notion is quite different from the earlier perceptions of Sheol, the abode of the dead (see Psalms: The Future). There is just enough ambiguity in the use of the words "immortality" (3,4; 4,1; 8,13.17; 15,3) and "incorruptibility" (2,23; 6,18f) to prevent us from making too many definite statements about the author's view. One thing does seem clear, however. Immortality is not an inherent quality of human nature; it is the fruit of union with wisdom (8,13.17; 15,3). Although 2,23 claims that God made humans to be incorruptible (imperishable), 6,18 suggests that incorruptibility is contingent upon fidelity to wisdom.

We are not sure whether the author was speaking merely of physical death, or of physical death followed by spiritual death, or of spiritual death alone. The thought does seem to pass over physical death and attention is directed toward spiritual death. St. Paul will have to face this same question when dealing with the unexpected deaths of Christians (1 Thes 4,13-18). Unlike the author of Wisdom, his answer is quite specific.

Finally, the author brought the two earlier creation narratives together and reinterpreted them. The statement about being made in God's image (2,23), an allusion to Genesis 1,16.28, is followed by the claim that the devil's envy brought death into the world (2,24), a reinterpretation of Genesis 3. (A few commentators believe that the latter reference is to the envy of Cain which resulted in the death of Abel [Gn 4,1-8]. However, another writer of this time stated that Satan led Eve astray [1 Enoch 69,6]. This latter citation supports the interpretation offered here.) The author of Wisdom was the first biblical writer to identify the serpent of the Genesis account with the devil.

## Praise of Wisdom by Solomon (6,22—11,1)

The second major section of the book is an address acclaiming the glories of wisdom. It is from this section that the book receives its name, and it is here that we find a representation of personified Wisdom (see Proverbs: The Figure of Wisdom). This characterization of Wisdom is quite different from that found in the earlier tradition. The author may have realized the unconventional nature of his depiction and felt that claiming Solomonic authority would be necessary in order to gain acceptance for this reinterpretation. At any rate, this section begins with an account of his humble origin, his own prayer for wisdom and God's bestowal of this immeasurable gift in answer to his pleading (7,1-7; also see 9,1-18). This is unquestionably an allusion to the prayer of Solomon (1 Kgs 3,5-15) and it characterizes the author as the wise king.

The actual description of Wisdom is composed of elements from Israelite tradition (7,22a; see Prv 8,30), from the cult of the Egyptian deity Isis (goddess of wisdom and patron of culture whose praises were extolled in the form of listings similar to that found in 7,22—8,1), and from Hellenistic philosophy and science (see 8,7 for mention of the cardinal virtues of Plato). This section may well be the heart of the author's argument in favor of the superiority of the religion of Israel. The author confers characteristics of Isis on the figure of Wisdom already found in the Israelite tradition, and draws upon Hellenistic religious and scientific concepts to praise her as he aruges that *real* wisdom is a gift from God bestowed on the faithful.

Earlier traditions spoke of "a spirit of wisdom" (Is 11,2), but here Wisdom itself is called a spirit (1,6; 7,22). The author has brought two quite distinct and dissimilar concepts together by merging the notion of intelligence, the basic meaning of wisdom, with that of energy or power, the central idea in spirit. Having done this, he could then speak of the wisdom-spirit as "an aura of the might of God" (7,25).

It is in this book that Wisdom is referred to as "the spirit of the LORD" (1,7). (The theology in this verse functions significantly in the liturgy of Pentecost.) Although spirit played a major role in Stoic philosophy, it was clearly a prominent theme in Jewish tradition as well. In his description of the nature and dignity of Wisdom (7,22-24), the author may well have employed the attributes of the world spirit, a concept found in Stoic philosophy. However, when he recounted the early history of Israel he equated Wisdom with the spirit of the Lord. He did this by ascribing to Wisdom what earlier Israelite writers attributed to the spirit of the Lord: the creative power in the world (7,22a; see Jdt 16,14); the source of Joseph's honor in Egypt (10,13; see Gn 41,38); the inspiration that prepared Moses for the Exodus and led the people through the wilderness (10,16f; see Is 63,11.14).

There has been a significant amount of discussion regarding the influence of this figure of Wisdom on New Testament writings. Some scholars believe that the influence is direct. Others hold that the obvious similarities suggest that there was a general treasury of thought, imagery, and language that served as a common source. Whichever the case may be, the figure of personified Wisdom was reinterpreted by early Christian theologians as they struggled to understand Jesus the Christ.

Paul explicitly referred to Christ as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1,24.30). The most obvious example of this reinterpretation, however, is found in the Gospel According to John. There we find Jesus described in ways that Wisdom had been depicted earlier: as being with God in the beginning before the world existed (Jn 1,1; 17,5; see Wis 2,22); as sent from heaven to accomplish the will of God (Jn 6,38; see Wis 9,10). Current scholarship is only beginning to pursue the implications of this imagery for Christology.

This section ends with a summary of the way that Wisdom guided the ancestors of Israel, brought them out of Egypt and, through the agency of Moses (see Hos 12,14), enabled them to prosper (10,1—11,1). It is clear that this Wisdom, once thought to be the possession of the king, was now considered the constant companion of true Israelites, those faithful ones of the past as well as the committed Jews of the present.

### Special Providence of God During the Exodus (11,2—19,22)

At this point there is an observable shift in focus. The poem in praise of Wisdom gives way to *midrash* that extols the ancestral God of Israel. This version of the experience of the Exodus and the time in the wilderness illustrates two points: 1) the sufferings that befell the Egyptians were the direct result of their sinfulness (11,16); 2) the very elements that afflicted the Egyptians benefitted the Israelites (11,5). This rereading of the past is done through a creative selection of biblical data as well as the addition of material not found elsewhere.

The author did not set out to recount historical facts or to repeat traditional testimonies. He seemed intent on addressing the challenge raised by Hellenism. His goal was to remind Alexandrian Jews that once before they had suffered at the hands of the Egyptians and, in the face of impossible odds, has been rescued. This *midrash* provides "historical" basis for continued trust in the God of Israel.

There are two digressions within this third division of the book. Both of them are found in the second example of God's providence. The first is a testimony to God's mercy (11,17—12,22). Although it breaks the *midrashic* line of thought, it may have been prompted by the mention of punishment in the preceding line (11,16). The second digression is a condemnation of idolatry (13,1—15,17). It follows the claim that the Egyptians "saw and recognized the true God whom before they had refused to know" (12,27), but they continued in their idolatry. It should be noted that the language used in the condemnation of nature worship (13,1-9) may be the best example of the author's broad grasp of scientific knowledge.

## Theology in a New Context

The author of Wisdom did not set out in search of new theological insights. Since he was committed to prove the enduring value of the religion of Israel, he explained traditions and themes that were familiar to the Jews of his day. What made his contribution unique was the method that he employed as he went about his task.

Throughout its history, Israel had been forced by circumstances to deal with the religious and cultural traditions of other societies. The Bible itself shows that these encounters were sometimes peaceful and beneficial and at other times violent and destructive. Whatever the situation may have been, elements from those cultures found their way into the traditions of Israel. It was the religion of Israel, however, that had reinterpreted features of the other cultures and then assimilated these new ideas into its own perspective. Israel seldom had taken seriously the religious worldview of the other culture.

This attitude changed with the Hellenization of the world. It was precisely the attraction of Greek civilization that threatened Jewish faith. The community wrestled with an agonizing dilemma: Could one accept the prevailing culture and remain faithful to the traditions of the ancestors? The author of Wisdom undertook the task of answering this question in the affirmative. In doing this, he did not try to reconcile Judaism with Hellenism. Instead, he used the

ideas, the language, and the literary style of Greek culture to demonstrate the excellence of the Jewish faith.

In taking Greek culture seriously, this theologian did what theologians after him would have to do whenever cultural lines were crossed. The challenge of interpretation facing him was not so different from the one facing us; that is, to render a religious heritage that originated in one cultural context into another. His purpose was apologetic, a defense of the ancestral faith. Ours is usually evangelical, the proclamation of the word of God. We have much to learn from both the message of this wisdom teacher and from his method of theological reinterpretation.

D. B.

# SIRACH (ECCLESIASTICUS) □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 822–876 of the Old Testament*]

## About the Book

Over the years the Book of Sirach has been known by different names: "The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira" (of which Sirach is the Greek form); "The Book of Sirach" (a shortened title; "Ecclesiasticus" (from the Latin for Book of the Church, a designation that probably stems from its frequent use as a catechetical aid in the early centuries of the Western Church).

Sirach is the only biblical book that identifies its author (50,27), refers to its translator (a grandson of the Ben Sira), and dates its translation ("the 38th year of the reign of King Euergetes," sometime after 132 B.C.[information found in the Foreword]). Although the prophetic books claim to originate from the prophets and do locate their ministry during the reign of specific kings (for example, Hos 1,1; Is 1,1; Jer 1,2f; etc.), the references there are to prophetic activity and not to the books that bear the names of the prophets. Here we have a clear reference to literary activity.

The Foreword also provides us with some interesting information about the composition of the biblical canon (the official list of inspired books). Three times the grandson of Ben Sira speaks of "the law, the prophets, and the later authors" (or "the rest of the books"). This reference tells us that by the second century B.C. the Jewish community already had what has come to be known as a tripartite (three part) Bible. Scholars believe that the first two parts (the Law and the Prophets) most likely include the books as we have them today. The third part (the Writings) was probably quite fluid until well into the Christian era.

Like the Book of Wisdom, Sirach belongs to the collection called Deutero-canonical by Roman Catholics or Apocrypha by Protestants (see Wisdom: The Hellenization of the World). The Foreword, which is considered historical introduction and not inspired instruction, recounts the translator's arrival in Egypt, where he discovered that the Jews' "valuable teaching" has been rendered from Hebrew into Greek, the language of the day. This inspired him to undertake the translation of his own grandfather's teachings. The Hebrew version from which he worked seems to have dropped out of sight until copies of it were found in 1896.

It is not clear why the Jews did not accept Sirach as canonical. Some commentators offer a twofold reason: 1) Ben Sira was interested in the Temple and the cult (concerns of a first century A.D. group called Sadducees); 2) he did not seem to believe in the resurrection of the body (a position held by a rival religious group of the first century called the Pharisees).

Therefore the Pharisaic rabbis who decided on the canon rejected Sirach. Whatever the case may be, its absence from the Jewish list explains its exclusion from the Protestant canon.

The manner in which the high priest Simon is described (50,1-21) leads one to conclude that he had only recently died. This would locate the writing of the original Hebrew version of Sirach sometime during the first quarter of the second century (200–175 B.C.) The description of Simon's priestly performance suggests that the author was quite familiar with the Jerusalem ritual, perhaps was even a resident of the city. Many commentators believe that Jerusalem was in fact the place of composition.

The book itself appears to be a collection of proverbs organized in such a way as to resemble short essays. While there is no explicit arrangement in the book itself, one can divide the material both thematically and according to literary form. Chapters 1–43 principally deal with moral instruction, a characteristic that Sirach has in common with the rest of the wisdom literature. Still, this first section can be subdivided into two parts, each of which is introduced by a poem praising wisdom (see 1,1-29 and 24,1-31). The entire first section ends with a poem extolling God's activity in nature (42,15—43,35).

The poems acclaiming time-honored heroes of Israel (44,1—49,16) and the high priest Simon (50,1-24) are followed by a kind of epilogue, which contains a denunciation of some of the traditional enemies of Israel and a subscription identifying the author (50,25-29). The book closes with two appendices: a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from danger (51,1-12); and a personal testimony in the form of an acrostic poem (51,13-30; see Psalms: Wisdom Poems).

## The Reason for Writing

The Hellenization of the Near East had already taken hold among the educated upper classes by the time Ben Sira put his teachings into writing (see Wisdom: The Hellenization of the World). Many Jews must have wondered whether their ancient traditions could match the comprehension and depth of Greek thought. Being a well-traveled man (34,11), Ben Sira would have witnessed the decline in fervor that overtook his coreligionists. Being an observant Jew, he would have been greatly troubled by this. It seems clear that his object in writing was to show the Jews of his day that real wisdom was to be found in the traditions of Israel and not in the godless philosophy of the day. He intended his work to be a comprehensive authoritative reference wherein could be found guidance and instruction for every circumstance of life.

Ben Sira exhorted his readers to study the ancient traditions to find there the kind of direction needed to cope with their new and challenging situation (2,10). He warned against trying to live according to the standards of both Judaism and Hellenism (2,12), and he condemned those who chose the latter over the former (2,13f). Using a traditional wisdom figure of speech ("those who fear the Lord"), he identified the wise as those who were faithful to the religion of Israel (2,15-17).

Although the content of most of his wisdom teaching is quite conventional, the way Ben Sira blended it with Israel's history and its legal and cultic traditions is distinctive. Earlier wisdom writing showed little interest in specifically Israelite matters. Ben Sira claimed that true wisdom resides in Israel (24,1-21), and later he used history to support this claim (44,1—49,16). He identified Wisdom with the Law of Moses (24,22), and in that way he accorded the latter a place of honor above the traditions of other cultures. Unlike other wisdom teachers, he

demonstrated a profound concern for the cult and the role of the priesthood (46,6-20; 47,12f; 50,1-21). All of this was, no doubt, Ben Sira's way of arguing in favor of fidelity to Judaism.

If we are correct in determining the date of the translation, then it is probable that the final form of this book appeared after the Maccabean Revolt but before the writing of the Wisdom of Solomon. Such historical reconstruction will help us to see how Israel's response to Hellenism varied with time. Ben Sira did not accommodate to the process of Hellenization to the extent that the author of Wisdom did. If "traditionalist" means maintaining unchanged the answers of the past because they alone are adequate to meet the problems of the present, then Ben Sira can be called traditionalist in his response to Hellenism.

## Wisdom Teaching

In many ways the teaching of Ben Sira resembles that of the Book of Proverbs. Its primary focus is moral guidance. The book lends itself to being an instructional manual containing maxims, many of which are grouped according to topic. The result is a series of short essays addressing topics such as duties toward God, toward one's parents, and toward rulers. There are instructions on how to train children, how to choose friends, and how to guard one's speech. There are warnings against excess, sloth, and foolishness. Whatever one needs to succeed in life, while at the same time remaining faithful to the traditions of the elders, is addressed in the instructional section of this book.

Sirach is also like Proverbs in its celebration of the glories of personified Wisdom (Chapter 1 and 24). It is distinctive, however, in the way it takes this characterization a step further than did the earlier work. Here we see Wisdom searching for a place to dwell and finally pitching her tent in Jerusalem. Traces of this poetic characterization can be found in the Prologue to the Gospel of John where the Word, present with God from the beginning and involved in the creation of all things, "pitched his tent among us" (Jn 1,1-14).

Ben Sira's poems describing the role of divine wisdom in creation (16,22—17,18; 39,12-35; 42,15—43,35) are really commentaries on the opening chapters of Genesis. The rather technical way he developed his thought shows us the extent to which Ben Sira was influenced by the scientific knowledge of his day.

This book contains some of the harshest statements about women found in the Bible. Proverbs may have warned the naive youth to beware of wily and seductive women, but this author seems to speak disparagingly against women in general. Ben Sira is the one who blames woman for sin and death (25,23). It is further apparent that he expected wives to be subservient to their husbands, for he seems to advocate punishment, even including divorce, if they refuse to obey (25,24f). Perhaps the worst example of this misogyny is found in the description of the unwed daughter (42,9-14). The author clearly considers her a liability and his concern is exclusively with the reputation of the father.

The author holds a thoroughly traditional view of retribution (4,11-19; 7,1-3; 16,1-21; 21,1-10). The possibility of rewards or punishments after death does not seem to have been considered by this wisdom teacher (14,15-19). He counsels mourning at the death of another, but he admonishes his reader to moderation even in the acceptable expression of grief. The reason why the display should be temperate is that the dead are dead and nothing can be changed by uncontrolled sorrow (38,1-23).

While this view of life and death may have been in agreement with earlier notions of

retribution, it was clearly not universally held in Israel at this time. Hope of reward after death for fidelity during persecution is found in other writings of this period (for example, Dn 12,1-3; 2 Mc 7,9.23.29). Although Ben Sira probably lived before the Maccabean Revolt (events surrounding this period are recorded in the other books mentioned above), his grandson-translator certainly lived after the rebellion and he upheld his ancestor's traditional view.

Ben Sira's adherence to the traditional notion of retribution and its consequent rejection of any notion of life after death, coupled with his support of the priesthood and interest in the cult, has prompted many interpreters to regard him as a Proto-Sadducee. Although such a group probably did not yet exist until after the Maccabean Revolt, many of the theological views found in this book were eventually adopted by the Sadducees, an aristocratic priestly party.

## The Influence of Sirach

Since the New Testament writers seem to have preferred the Alexandrian Bible, it is not surprising that the influence of Sirach can be detected in some of their writings. The Letter of James is a clear example of this. Both books address questions of pride (Sir 10,7; Jas 4,6) and humility (Sir 3,18; Jas 1,9), of rich and poor (Sir 10,19-24; Jas 2,1-6), and of true wisdom (Sir 19,17-21; Jas 3,13-17), to name but a few instances.

There are also obvious parallels between directives found in Sirach and those found in the gospels. This includes teaching on magnanimity (Sir 29,12; Mt 6,19) and forgiveness (Sir 28,2; Mk 11,25) and against placing false hope in possessions (Sir 11,18f; Lk 12,16-21).

Although the canonical status of Sirach was and remains a question for debate, from the time of its appearance it has exerted significant influence on both the Jewish and the Christian communities. Over the years it has served as a kind of handbook of practical ethics and its teachings can be found in the liturgical texts of both religious groups. The discovery at Qumran of a scroll of Sirach is evidence that the book was venerated as Scripture by this Jewish sectarian group. It also appears in copies of liturgical scrolls that were read in synagogues around the tenth century A.D. Finally, the book is also quoted as Scripture at least once in the Talmud.

The early church theologians Cyprian (third century A.D.) and Jerome (fourth century A.D.) attest to Christian use of the book. Clement of Alexandria (second century A.D.) quotes it so often that his citations have come to be considered an authoritative version of the text. This controversial book continues to exercise its influence even today. Passages from Sirach are used as lectionary readings. For many, perhaps most, Catholics, the liturgical celebration is their primary exposure to the Bible. Within this context the teachings of Ben Sira continue to exhort hearers to fidelity to the tradition and upright moral living.

It is interesting to note that in response to the Vatican document *Decree on the Training of Priests* (16), moral theologians are reexamining the moral instructions found in Scripture. They do not turn there in search of ageless answers to contemporary questions, but in an attempt to discover how moral decisions were made in the past. Biblical specialists provide them with insights into the manner in which writers, especially the teachers of wisdom, brought the time-honored religious tradition to bear on new situations.

The Book of Sirach, with its essaylike instruction, remains a source of information in this area. It opens a window into a community struggling with its identity as it finds itself at the crossroads of traditional religion and contemporary culture. Sirach and Wisdom provide us with two ways of responding to this challenge. While we may not be able to follow their specific

advice, we can learn from their example how to reinterpret the tradition creatively, yet remain loyal to its revelatory message. D. B.

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# THE MAJOR PROPHETS, BARUCH, and LAMENTATIONS

CARROLL STUHLMUELLER

## ISAIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 878–949 of the Old Testament*]

Isaiah is the premier prophetic book of the Old Testament and, after Psalms, the most valuable Old Testament book for the New Testament. Throughout this book God is fulfilling the Hebrew meaning of the prophet's name, "The LORD saves." Isaiah represents a theology of salvation which evolved over a long stretch of time, from prophet to later generations of disciples to final editor, all under divine guidance. Within the inspired words of this prophecy the Lord comes as savior, intially for the chosen people Israel, now for all the world.

After being introduced to the *importance and identity of Isaiah* as prophet and tradition, we look at *Isaiah the Book* as we find it in our Bible. From this background we seek to acquaint ourselves better with *Isaiah the Person.* Finally we are in a position to appreciate *Isaiah as a Message* of salvation for his time and ours.

### Importance and Identity of Isaiah

#### A Most Important Book

Judging from its length Isaiah ranks high among Old Testament books. Except for Psalms, Isaiah is the longest book in the Bible. Its three major sections—Chapters 1–39; 40–55; 56–66, for convenience generally called First, Second, and Third Isaiah—span several centuries of time, from 742 to at least 500 B.C. The Book of Isaiah records a prominent religious tradition across three crucial periods of Israel's history: 1) the great attempt, especially during the reigns of kings Ahaz and Hezekiah, to preserve the Davidic dynasty and the holy city of Jerusalem, 735–687/6 B.C.; 2) the destruction of dynasty and city and the traumatic experience of the exile, 587–539 B.C.; and 3) the endeavor to revive or sustain hopes during the dismal time of the early postexilic age, 537–500 B.C. (See the Historical Summary in this Reading Guide.) The Book of Isaiah, therefore, has this initial mark of distinction: fidelity in testing ideas and hopes over several centuries.

The Book of Isaiah carries another hallmark of distinction, that of innovative insights into older traditions. We are given the unique opportunity to pursue the interpretation of earlier prophecies and to study the ways in which they were fulfilled. This process turns out to be far more complicated than reading the biblical word and knowing immediately what God must do. By connecting justice with compassion in God's design for Israel and the world, for instance in Chapters 1 and 57–58, the book allows us to peer ever more deeply into the mystery of messianic promises. Our human ways of responding (or not) to the needs of one another and of maintaining peace and trust within nations provide the setting for God's fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah's view of Israel's religion slowly changed from self-centered attention to one of universal salvation. The foreign nations were no longer summoned as God's instrument for punishing a sinful Israel, as in the Book of Judges, but were called to a positive role, to particicpate in Israel's salvation.

The brilliant *literary qualities* of this book, another hallmark of distinction, are discussed in the subsection *Isaiah the Person.*

The popularity of Isaiah in ancient times can be seen from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Isaiah appears prominently among this ancient body of literature with nineteen manuscripts of the book and five commentaries. The tendency to break loose beyond the boundaries of Israel insured a privileged place for Isaiah in the prayer and reflection of Jesus, as well as in the writings of St. Paul and other New Testament authors. The Book of Isaiah is second only to Psalms in the number of times it is cited in the gospels and is sometimes called the "fifth gospel," so closely did it anticipate what Jesus and his first disciples taught and did. John the Baptist (Lk 4,4-6) and Jesus (Lk 4,17-22) were both introduced to their public ministry through the prophecy of Isaiah. St. Paul made it his favorite Old Testament book. It was at the beginning of his commentary on Isaiah that St. Jerome penned the famous line: "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." Here is another hallmark of greatness: continuous influence on creative minds and zealous, energetic workers.

## The Isaiah School

Isaiah is best characterized as a long-standing school or tradition of disciples (see 8,16; 30,8; 50,4; 54,13). New calls to prophesy are recorded for Second and Third Isaiah in 40,1-11 and 61,1-3, similar to that given to First Isaiah in Chapter 6.

Major differences separate Chapters 1–39; 40–55; 56–66. These, in turn, reflect diverse eras of world history. As to *topics,* First Isaiah is absorbed with the role of Jerusalem and especially the Davidic dynasty; Second Isaiah ignores the Davidic dynasty except for 55,3, mentions the Temple only once in a disputed passage (44,28) and considers Jerusalem principally as a religious symbol (Chapter 54); Third Isaiah completely ignores the dynasty, decries the superstitution in the Temple ritual, and contemplates a new messianic Jerusalem (62,1-5; 65,17—66,24). *Politically,* First Isaiah names the Davidic kings at Jerusalem and considers Assyria the major threat to the nation; Second Isaiah never mentions these political details but speaks about the Babylonians and the Persian Cyrus (44,28; 45,1); Third Isaiah makes scarcely any references to local or international politics. *Stylistically,* the tone of threat and condemnation in First Isaiah modulates to comfort and hope in Second Isaiah. The melancholy tone that sets in with Second Isaiah, Chapters 49–55, becomes even more pronounced in Third Isaiah. First Isaiah is succinct and direct; Second Isaiah expansive, solemn, and lyrical; Third Isaiah less confident than the other two.

Despite these notable differences, the editor or compiler who brought all the pieces together secured a strong unity within the sixty-six chapters: a) The city of Jerusalem and its Temple, which preoccupied First Isaiah, becomes a symbol in Second Isaiah (see Chapter 54) and a major center for messianic hopes in Third Isaiah (see 65,17-25; 66,7-24). b) The three sections manifest a slow but steadily increasing way of including the Gentile nations within Israel's salvation. c) A sense of justice pervades the entire book. On God's part, justice means for the chosen people the complete fulfillment of hopes and promises within a community of compassion and holiness. Even in punishing Israel, God is preparing for a still greater fulfillment of divine promises. On Israel's part, justice does not so much secure the rights of individuals as it leads them to unite with others in a family spirit of care and respect. The long tradition of First, Second, and Third Isaiah gradually extended this family to embrace all the peoples of the world. Throughout the sixty-six chapters we find an inspired, growing Isaiah tradition.

## Isaiah the Book

We begin with a summary or road map for reading the book according to First, Second, or Third Isaiah and the dates of prophetic activity and composition. We then scan the sixty-six chapters to appreciate better the overall structure as well as the editorial work involved in this sweep of history and theology. In the next major section we return to individual passages for special comment.

### Summary

| | |
|---|---|
| *First Isaiah:* | *Chapters 1–39* |
| chap. 1 | Solemn Introduction (after 701 B.C.) |
| chaps. 2–12 | Major Discourses of Isaiah |
| 2,1-5 | New Introduction |
| 2,6—5,30 | Earlier Preaching (742–735 B.C.) |
| chap. 6 | Transition |
| chaps. 7–11 | Book of Immanuel (735–687/6 B.C.) |
| chap. 12 | Conclusion |
| chaps. 13–23 | Oracles Against the Nations (742–539 B.C.) |
| chaps. 24–27 | Cosmic Renewal (after 500 B.C.) |
| chaps. 28–33 | Other Preaching and Threats |
| chaps. 34–35 | New Promises (after 537 B.C.) |
| chaps. 36–39 | Transition to Exile and a New Theological Perspective (around 550 B.C.) |
| *Second Isaiah:* | *Chapters 40–55 (550–530 B.C.)* |
| chap. 40 | Prophetic Call and Overture |
| chaps. 41–48 | Initial Enthusiastic Preaching |
| chaps. 49–55 | Later Somber Preaching |
| *Third Isaiah:* | *Chapters 56–66 (530–450 B.C.)* |
| chaps. 56–59 | Salvation, Indictment, and Lament |
| chaps. 60–62 | Centerpiece: Prophetic Call and Salvation |
| chaps. 63–66 | Lament, Indictment, and Salvation |

### Editorial Work

Editors carefully stitched this book together. Chapter 1 functions as a solemn introduction—placed here somewhat late, actually forty years into the ministry of First Isaiah. It presumes the Assyrian invasion of the land in 701 B.C. (1,4-9). After a new foreword at 2,1-5, we hear some of Isaiah's earliest preaching against a sensual and selfish people in Chapters 2–5. Chapter 6 is transitional; it redirects the account of Isaiah's call to prophesy in 742 B.C. (6,1-8) against the people's calloused indifference to his first preaching (6,9-13). Chapters 7–11 wrestle with the apostasy of King Ahaz (756-715 B.C.) and with the initial great hopes and later disappointment in his son King Hezekiah. Because of the famous prophecy in 7,14 these chapters are called "The Book of Immanuel." Chapter 12 provides a melodious conclusion.

While Chapters 1–12 focus upon the Davidic dynasty and the capital city Jerusalem, Chapters 13–23 reach out to the neighboring nations and Chapters 24–27 involve the heavens and earth in the message of salvation. Chapters 28–33 incorporate some of Isaiah's threats and condemnation, omitted from Chapters 1–12, and are followed again by world-embracing hopes in Chapters 34–35. Chapters 36–39 are entitled a historical appendix in the *New American Bible;* they mark a transition to the time of the Babylonian exile (587-539 B.C.) where Chapter 40 picks up again.

Chapters 40–55 come from the golden pen of Isaiah's most gifted follower, who lived at least 150 years later. The person's name is lost somewhere in the sands of Babylon and so scholars speak of the "Great Unknown" or Second Isaiah. While Chapters 1–27 move from Jerusalem (Chapters 1–12) to the nations (Chapters 13–23) and the cosmos (Chapters 24–27), Second Isaiah begins, sketching a scenario across the cosmos in Chapter 40, reaches out to the nations, and continuously foresees a new exodus from Babylon back to Jerusalem.

Chapters 56–66 find us back in Jerusalem in the company of another anonymous disciple, Third Isaiah. These chapters presume a time when the Temple is rebuilt (therefore, after 515 B.C.), except in the agonizing prayer of 63,7—64,11. Good people are lamenting idolatry and other excesses within the Temple as well as injustices in daily living. The disciple (or should we speak of more than one?) attempted a radical reform by announcing that Gentiles will be priests at the Temple (56,6-8; 66,18-21). Toward the end of this section we are privileged with a vision of new heavens and a new earth (65,17—66,16). The book ends as it began, at the Jerusalem Temple (see Chapter 1; 66,22-24). Because the scene in the final verse is so devastating, when this passage of Isaiah is read aloud in the synagogue, rabbis will end by reading verse 23 again.

## Important Sections

These are subdivided according to the three parts of the prophecy.

### First Isaiah (Chapters 1–39)

**Chapter 1: Summary of the Prophet's Preaching.** This chapter not only represents two key moments of the prophet's career but it also displays how prophetic preaching was edited at a later age. After the identification of the prophet and the time of his ministry (1,1), we listen to an early example of his preaching, threatening Jerusalem with severe punishment if the people do not repent by caring for the poor and defenseless in their midst (1,2f.10-20). This sermon is cast in the form of a legal procedure at the city gates (Dt 17,5; 21,18):

| | |
|---|---|
| vv. 2f, appeal to witnesses | vv. 13-15b, indictment |
| v. 10, summoning of culprit | v. 15c, verdict |
| vv. 11-12, interrogation | vv. 16-20, sentencing |

The verdict of guilt is expressed: "Your hands are full of blood"; in the sentencing God grants probation.

The people refused to obey the conditions of their probation and to reform their cold indifference toward the poor. God carried out the punishment through a military invasion of the Assyrian army (vv. 4-9). The editor stitched vv. 4-9 into place by repeating key words from the earlier discourse at the beginning and end: *sons* and *children* in vv. 2 and 4; *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in vv. 9 and 10.

Still another discourse (vv. 21-26) was added in order to explain that this punishment of Jerusalem was intended by God not for the people's destruction but precisely for their purification. Typical of Hebrew rhetoric, this sermon begins and ends with the identical phrase, *faithful city.* Whatever the punishment, God will be faithful to his promises to Jerusalem of compassion and survival. Finally, in an appendix (vv. 27-31) four verses are added, each an independent unit, dealing with the purification of Jerusalem.

**Vision of Peace** (2,1-5). These verses probably represent an original introduction to the preaching of Isaiah. Like some other prophetical books, it contains first the name of the prophet (again as in 1,1 Isaiah is said to *see a vision* of what he is to preach), then an opening hymn. For other examples of introductory name and hymn, see Amos 1,f; Micah 1,1-4; Nahum 1,1-8.

The structure of the hymn is impressive. After acclaiming the exalted heights of Jerusalem (more of a theological statement than a geographical fact, for the neighboring Mount of Olives is higher in elevation), the prophet sees many nations streaming up the mountain while instruction about peace and justice flows down, leading to the well-known statement, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." This idealistic expectation is repeated in Micah 4,3, but is reversed in Joel 4,10. We are reminded of the enigmatic but realistic appraisal in Ecclesiastes 3,8b: There is "a time of war, and a time of peace."

Vatican II's document on the "Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*) (n. 78) as well as the American bishops' pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and our Response," (n. 37), cite this passage as the divine goal to remove violence and the instruments of war.

**Prophetic Call and Affirmation** (Chapter 6). Generally the prophet's call is found in the opening chapter, as in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In Isaiah it appears as Chapter 6, so clearly the editor sees it as more than a call to prophesy. The chapter functions first as a divine affirmation of the discourses in Chapters 2–5 and a solemn introduction to Isaiah's major contribution in Chapters 7–11.

The prophetic "call narrative" has certain typical features which can be outlined as follows:

| | *Ex 3* | *Jer 1* | *Lk 1* | *Is 6* | *Is 40* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| God's Presence | vv.1–4a | v. 4 | v. 28a | vv.1–4 | —— |
| Opening Word | vv.4b–9 | v. 5a | v. 28b | v. 8a | vv.1–2 |
| Commissioning | v. 10 | v. 5b | vv.30–33 | v. 9 | vv.3–5 |
| Objection | v. 11 | v. 6 | v. 34 | v. 5 | vv.6–7 |
| Reassurance | v. 12a | vv.7–9 | v. 35 | vv.10–13 | v. 9 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sign | v. 12b | vv.9-10 | vv.36–37 | vv.6–7 | —— |
| Acceptance | —— | —— | v. 38 | v. 8b | —— |

The two Isaiah passages juggle the details and therefore do not follow the literary form meticulously. In fact, Isaiah 6 and 40 have many similarities with a vision of the prophet Micaiah (see 1 Kgs 22,19-23) which is not a prophetic call but dramatic preaching. Micaiah sees a scene in the throne room of God that gives rise to a message of woe to the kings of Judah and Israel. Isaiah ends up with a similar message of woe and destruction. Such has been the direction of the prophet's preaching in Chapters 2–5 and it will become ever more specific in Chapters 7–11.

In verses 9-11 the prophet is sent "to make the heart of this people sluggish, to dull their ears and close their eyes," just as God is said to harden the heart of Pharaoh in Exodus 4,21; 7,3; see also Ezekiel 20,25f and the notes in the Reading Guide to Ezekiel. While people act freely in their choice of sinful alternatives, God's master plan foresees such evil actions as contributing to the eventual salvation of Israel, "writing straight with our crooked lines." This passage of Isaiah is quoted frequently in the New Testament (Mt 13,13-15; Jn 12,40; Acts 28,26; Rom 11,8), to point out that the way towards salvation for all people, Jew or Gentile, was advanced by the death of Jesus and the temporary estrangement of Israel from the gospel.

**Book of Immanuel** (Chapters 7–12). The important messianic passages in this section (7,14; 11,1) are discussed below in Isaiah, The Message: Messianic Salvation. Here we comment on the overall direction of Chapters 7–12. The editor has combined many discourses of Isaiah which span several decades and include dramatic turns of events historically: the Syro-Ephraimite war in 735 B.C., when Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim—see 7,17) invaded Judah during the reign of King Ahaz (7,1-2); the collapse of this coalition by 732 B.C. (7,4-9); an allusion to the coronation of King Hezekiah in 715 B.C. (9,5f); his revolt against Assyria and the latter's ferocious invasion of Judah in 701 B.C. (10,5-34). The conception and birth of two children are announced (7,14; 8,1-4), whose symbolic names, along with that of another child of Isaiah, are woven into the accounts: *Immanuel* (7,14; "God with us") provides the key to 8,5-10; *Shear-jashub* (7,3; "a remnant will return") the key to 10,19-32; 11,10-16; *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* (8,1; "quick-spoils; speedy-plunder") the key to 10,1-6. Truly, as Isaiah declared: "Look at me and the children whom the LORD has given me: *we are signs and portents* in Israel from the LORD of hosts who dwells on Mount Zion" (8,18).

History provides the backdrop and setting for the preaching of Isaiah, but it is not the principal preoccupation of prophet or editor. Instead, they weave together an extraordinary document of faith. This theology is succinctly expressed in 7,9b, "Unless your faith is firm you shall not be firm." This proverb declares: unless we allow ourselves to be rooted in God with total confidence and obedience, we will sway with the wind and eventually collapse. Yet collapse becomes the occasion for God to bring new life and new hope, as when through the spirit of God "a shoot shall sprout from the [seemingly dead] stump of Jesse [father of King David], and from his roots a bud shall blossom [to fulfill the promises of an everlasting dynasty]" (11,1). The American bishops' pastoral letter on "The Challenge of Peace" (n. 35) refers to Isaiah 7,1-9; 30,1-4; Jeremiah 33,10 as a prophetic condemnation of those leaders who depend on their own strength or alliances for security, instead of on God.

**Oracles Against the Nations** (Chapters 13–23). Sections like this one, common to many prophets (Am 1,3—2,16; Jer 46–51; Ez 25–32), probably developed out of sanctuary liturgies, prayers in the Temple for the well-being of the nation in time of war or military invasion. The prophets modified the style to teach that God does not tolerate cruel injustice indefinitely, nor does God permit nations to do other than conform to a divine plan of purifying Israel through suffering.

The original oracles of First Isaiah (for instance, 14,24-32; 17,1-14; 19,1-15; 20,1-6; 22,1-19) were expanded and rearranged by Isaiah's disciples to include other nations, particularly Babylon. The editors tended to modify the negative attitude of these oracles and to open them up more favorably toward the nations. A remnant will remain of Moab, a country east of the Dead Sea (16,14), the Ethiopians will bring gifts to Mount Zion (18,7), the merchandise of Tyre will be sacred to the LORD (23,17f). The most spectacular change occurs in 19,16-25, where Egypt and Assyria are to be blessed *equally* with Israel. In fact 19,25 appeared scandalous to later rabbis, and when they translated the verse into the daily language of the people, Aramaic in Palestine and Greek in Egypt, the meaning was even reversed:

> *Hebrew* (*NAB*): Blessed be my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and my inheritance, Israel.
> *Greek:* Blessed be my people who are in Egypt and who are in Assyria, and my inheritance Israel.
> *Aramaic:* Blessed be my people whom I brought out of Egypt. Because they sinned before me, I carried them into exile to Assyria, but now that they have repented, they shall be my people and my inheritance Israel.

This example shows how the rabbis kept earlier texts from being applied inappropriately. The rabbis were not literalists nor rigid conservatives, but looked upon the Bible as a living document.

**Apocalypse of Isaiah** (Chapters 24–27). The *New American Bible* title links these chapters with a style of literature which received a strong impetus with Ezekiel (Ez 1; 38–39) and developed to full maturity with Daniel 7–12. Apocalypse, according to the meaning of this name, "draws aside the veil" from God's mysteries to reveal them with a high, even extravagant use of symbols (see also the Reading Guide to Daniel, pp. RG 342–352). Isaiah's apocalypse is comparatively subdued and joins the ranks only by its outreach to the heavens and into life after death.

The victory banquet in 25,6 adds another model to the sacred meals of the Old Testament, which are absorbed into the New Testament theology of the Eucharist. Other models included the manna that provided food for the journey through the wilderness (Ex 16,6-36), as the Eucharist imparts spiritual strength for the difficulties and opportunities of life (Mk 8,1-10). Another model, the ritual meal or peace offering at the sanctuary (Ex 12,1-28; Ps 22,27) enables the company of believers to celebrate their faith in God's presence (Lk 22,14-20). Here in Isaiah 25,6 the sacred meal anticipates the heavenly banquet of eternal life (Jn 6,25-59; Rv 7,15-17).

The announcement in 25,7f.19 about the destruction of death is just as revolutionary as that about universal salvation in 19,16-25. Up to this point the Old Testament seldom professed any knowledge of what happens after a person dies. The classic text states that "it is not the

nether world [of death] that gives you thanks, nor . . . do those who go down into the pit [of the grave] await your kindness" (Is 38,18-19). The Israelite idea of future survival was almost exclusively limited to each individual's offspring and to God's care for the whole nation Israel (Gn 15; Ex 3,1-17; 34,1-9).

**Later Additions** (Chapters 28–33 and 34–35). It should already be clear that a book such as Isaiah is the product, not so much of an individual, but of a tradition. That tradition must include those who collected and edited the materials; we are therefore justified in speaking of the inspiration of the whole tradition. (See the Reading Guide for Jeremiah: *Jeremiah, The Book: Editing of Jeremiah's Preaching* for further discussion.) After one editor had arranged Chapters 1–27, another editor gathered other discourses of Isaiah from the oral tradition of the people and placed the material here. Once again, the editor moves from a concern for Jerusalem to a universal outlook that sees God bringing the Israelites back to their homeland from their scattered places of exile.

Important verses occur here: 28,16; 30,15-18; 35,5-6. For the "sure foundation" in 28,16, see the note in the *New American Bible.* Isaiah 30,15-18, like 22,1-14, expands upon the basic attitude of faith in 7,4.9b, passages leading up to the Immanuel prophecy in 7,14. In 30,15-18 Isaiah advises us that there are times when every imaginable response is fraught with too much danger for us to do anything but remain silent and trustful in God's care. Finally, 35,5-6 sees blind, lame and deaf people marching, even leaping like a stag, on the journey to the new Jerusalem. These are the very ones whom Jesus invites to be his followers (Mt 11,4-6), whose healing by Peter is described in the language of Isaiah (Acts 3,8).

**Historical Appendix and Theological Transition** (Chapters 36–39). Drawn mostly from 2 Kings 18,13—20,19. Appendixes like this occur elsewhere: for instance, 2 Samuel 21–24; Amos 9,7-10; Jeremiah 52; even Isaiah 1,27-31 is a miniappendix to Chapter 1. These chapters of Isaiah, especially Chapter 39, by giving us a summary of the history surrounding these oracles, prepares us for the Babylonian exile and the prophet of that later period, Second Isaiah. The portrait of Isaiah in this appendix is different from the man in the earlier chapters of this prophecy. Here alone he appears as someone who intercedes with God for the king and who works a miracle (38,1-8). While the rest of the prophecy announces the destruction of Jerusalem, the appendix concentrates upon God's miraculous deliverance of the city (37,33-37).

Most important of all, Chapters 36–39 link the message of First Isaiah with a tradition otherwise distant to him. This link occurs in 36,1—39,8 which with the exception of 38,9-20 the editor drew from 2 Kgs 13—20,19. The Second Book of Kings belongs to what is called the Deuteronomic Tradition, an interpretation of Israel's history based upon the book of Deuteronomy. In its early formative stages Deuteronomy developed in the northern part of the land, not at Jerusalem; its spirituality and attitude strongly colored the thinking of two prophets from the north, Hosea and Jeremiah. It focused upon the Mosaic covenant of Mount Sinai instead of the covenant with the royal family of David. It stressed God's compassionate love. This tradition put less emphasis upon the historical value of the Davidic family and the geographical location of Jerusalem; it allowed these great institutions to become *symbols* to be reinterpreted and applied in various new ways. The holy city and its Temple could then be shared with Gentiles. What First Isaiah only hinted at—universal salvation—is brought to center stage, especially in the prophecy of Second and Third Isaiah. This "appendix," therefore, turns out to be a crucial link for the survival of the Isaiah tradition and its extraordinary development.

## Second Isaiah (Chapters 40–55)

**Solemn Overture** (Chapter 40). This chapter majestically blends most of the themes and attitudes of Chapters 40–55. The prophet enthralls us with a panoramic sweep across heaven and earth. In this majestic setting God responds with tender, loving care for the chosen people Israel, discouraged and ready to give up.

While First Isaiah's call to prophecy occurred within the Jerusalem Temple (Chapter 6), that of Second Isaiah takes place within the temple of the universe (40,1-8). In a heavenly throne room, unseen, the Lord calls upon the angelic attendants to comfort Israel. One of them summons the prophet to prepare a sacred way for Israel to return from exile, to the amazement of the nations. Second Isaiah continues to speak within this worldwide, cosmic setting.

The condemnation of idolatry and greed in 40,12-20; 44,9-20 corroborates the American bishops' critique of capitalism without conscience in their pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All" (n. 33).

**Something New for Servant Israel** (Chapters 41–48). These chapters allow us to appreciate Second Isaiah's rich concept of "servant," one that continues through his writings into those of Third Isaiah. In a *positive* way the servant is God's beloved one, either all Israel (41,8-9; 43,10; 44,1f) or the prophet and his disciples (42,1; 49,3.6) as these attract the admiring or awestruck attention of Israelites or the nations (50,10; 52,13; 53,11). Even the foreigner Cyrus (44,28) is included among God's beloved servants. In a *negative* way the servant is either Israel, blind, deaf, and robbed of dignity (42,19), guilty and sinful (43,23), or surprisingly God, for in 43,24 servant language is used with reference to God, burdened and wearied by Israel's sins (43,24). In the last two cases a verb instead of a noun expresses the idea of servanthood. Third Isaiah uses only the plural form, *servants,* either for faithful Israelites (63,17) or for foreigners called to serve at the Temple (56,6). For the suffering servant songs, see Chapters 49–55 below and the section *Isaiah, the Message.*

Another key idea for Second Isaiah comes forward here: the *new exodus* which renews the days of Moses and brings the people wondrously yet tenderly back to their homeland (41,17-20; 43,1-7.16-21).

Finally, this section includes poems which speak about first and last things (for instance, 41,21-29; 43,8-13). For Second Isaiah, first things are earlier prophecies now fulfilled, especially the threats against Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty; the last thing is his own new prophecy about Israel's redemption from exile. These poems, especially in 48,3.6b-7.12f, focus ever more clearly on the person of the Lord, who declares: "I, it is I who am the first, and also the last am I" (48,12b). These "I am" statements of Second Isaiah probably influenced Jesus to declare, for instance, "I am the light of the world . . . You shall surely die in your sins unless you come to believe that I AM" (Jn 8,12.24; 9,5), or again, "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11,25). More than words to be pondered or things to be done, prophecy ultimately leads us into God's mysterious, loving presence, full of surprises.

**Comfort and Redemption** (Chapters 49–55). The tone becomes somber. We sense that the prophet himself has been given a cold shoulder, perhaps subjected to persecution by fellow Israelites. As a result, Second Isaiah becomes totally identified with the suffering people of exile, even while being rejected by them! God declares to him, "You are my servant . . . Israel" (49,3). In this poem, sometimes called the second of the suffering-servant songs, the influence of

Jeremiah is very pronounced (see 49,1 and Jer 1,5). These songs are discussed further in *Isaiah, the Message,* below.

In the encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy),* n. 4, Pope John Paul II relies upon Isaiah 51,4-16, along with Micah 7,18, in a prophetic call for reconciliation among peoples and trust in the mercy of God.

## Third Isaiah (Chapters 56–66)

For the differences of style, subject matter, and place of origin, see above, Importance and Identity of Isaiah: The Isaiah School.

In this "day of small beginnings" (Zec 4,10) back in the land of Palestine, a disciple of Second Isaiah attempts religious reform by keeping alive the message of the Isaiah tradition. He not only weaves phrases and ideas of the master into his own preaching (compare 57,14-19 with Chapter 40) but he also provides a new context, reaching out more explicitly to the Gentiles and accentuating hopes for the new heavens and new earth. In fact, these ideals form an envelope around his preaching (56,1-8; 65,1—66,24) and show up prominently at the heart of this section (Chapters 60–62).

**Salvation, Indictment, and Lament** (Chapters 56–59). Third Isaiah merges two concerns, one more priestly about Temple sabbath and worship, the other more prophetic about justice and compassion. The scale tilts decidedly in favor of the latter, especially in Chapters 58–59. In 56,1-8 the prophet opens the gates of the Temple to groups like eunuchs who were barred from entrance even by the laws in Deuteronomy, a law code otherwise compassionate (Dt 23,2-9). In the ancient Near East people who worked at the court were sometimes castrated so that they could be trusted with the king's harem. Jewish men who had been castrated for purposes like this were welcomed back. Foreigners, even living outside the promised land, were granted full rights at the Temple, even to "minister" there, a word for presiding at services. Third Isaiah's statement about the Jerusalem Temple, "a house of prayer for all peoples," is repeated in Matthew 21,13; Luke 19,46, but each time without the phrase, "for all peoples." Was it too radical even for Luke's gospel? See the *New American Bible* note for Matthew 21,13.

Fifty-eight,1-12 becomes a central text in the document of Vatican II on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (n. 43) to illustrate the prophetic unwillingness to separate religious duty and secular responsibility. Christians are called to service and witness in the world. John F. Kennedy quoted verse 7 in his inaugural address:

> Sharing your bread with the hungry,
> sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
> Clothing the naked when you see them,
> and not turning your back on your own. (58,7)

Injustices against upright people pushed Third Isaiah in the direction of life after death (57,1f)—an insight that was not generally accepted in ancient Israel (see comments anent this in Apocalypse of Isaiah, above).

**Centerpiece: Prophetic Call and Salvation** (Chapters 60–62). This section brings Third Isaiah very close to his master, the Isaiah of the time of the exile. Yet there are small but important differences. Third Isaiah seems indifferent to world events and draws names from the distant Book of Genesis (Is 60,6-7; Gn 25,4.13; 28,9); Third Isaiah is serious about Temple worship,

even to the point of anticipating a universal order of priests (61,6). The restoration of Zion forms the larger setting for the prophet's call in 61,1-3.

This prophetic call echoes phrases from the songs of the suffering servant in Second Isaiah: anointing by the spirit (42,1); humble ministry of compassion (42,2f.6f); year of favor (49,8). "Glad Tidings" recalls Isaiah 40,9; 41,27; mission to the lowly, Is 41,17; 51,21. Jesus turned to Third Isaiah to inaugurate his own public ministry at Nazareth (Lk 4,16-21). Prophetic preaching, here and in the case of Jesus, sought a total transformation, bodily and spiritual, for the individual and society.

**Lament, Indictment, and Salvation** (Chapters 63–66). These chapters return to topics which were already addressed in Chapters 56–59, yet in reverse order, so as to end with salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike, each represented within the temple priesthood (66,21). Dark areas of human emotion erupt here: angry outrage in 63,1-6; pathetic helplessness in 63,7—64,11; sarcasm in 66,3.

Edom, in the ruthless language of 63,1-6, epitomized cruel, rapacious people, a word like Hun or Nazi today. The Edomites plundered and kicked Judah at its weakest moment, after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. The next section (63,7—64,11) records the other side of emotion, delicate yet reaching into the heavens, with words that echo at Jesus' baptism (63,19; Mk 1,10) and in Paul's vision of the cross of Jesus (64,3; 1 Cor 2,8f). The phrase "grieved his holy spirit" (63,10), almost reaches beyond the bounds of orthodox theology: does God grieve?

Too much darkness and violence burdened the picture within the final verse 24, so that when this passage was read in the synagogue the rabbis would repeat verse 23.

## Isaiah the Person

### Prophet, Disciples, and Tradition

"Isaiah" represents a long, inspired tradition, originating with the prophet of Jerusalem whom we call First Isaiah, and continuing long after his death, during and after the exile, with disciples whom we name Second and Third Isaiah. Here we summarize the facts to draw a portrait of these major representatives of the Isaiah tradition.

The *prophet,* First Isaiah, preached between 740 and 687 B.C. when Jerusalem and the Davidic kings rejected his reforming ideals and acted against his advice. King Ahaz betrayed the nation's independence to save the throne; Judah became a vassal of Assyria and was dragged into the major power politics of that time. Ahaz's son and successor, King Hezekiah (715–687/6 B.C.), took another reckless venture and, contrary to Isaiah's recommendation, revolted against Assyria. Assyria swept its army through Judah with burning revenge; only Jerusalem survived. While the holy city seemed miraculously saved, people pointed to the devastated land as proof that the LORD did not care for them.

The *disciples* spanned a period of cataclysmic upheavals: the collapse of Assyria in 612 B.C.; the short-lived Babylonian empire (612–539 B.C.), long enough in power to destroy Jerusalem and drag the remnants of the people into exile; the emergence of the Persian empire, whose benevolent monarch, Cyrus the Great, permitted all exiled peoples to return to their homelands. The disciples continued the tradition of Isaiah after the return to Jerusalem, which began in 537 B.C. *Isaiah the book* took shape within the next fifty to seventy-five years, that is, in the period 535–460 B.C.

### First Isaiah

First Isaiah was every bit a city person, probably a court official, on familiar terms with kings (7,3f; 38,1-8). Politics were at his finger tips. If his message sometimes appears obscure or complex, none of his contemporaries ever missed a single reference to kings and counselors as well as to cities and streets (7,1-9; 22,20-25), even to jewelry and cosmetics (3,18-23). He was married to a prophetess (8,3). They had at least two sons, each with a name symbolic of the message of the book: *Shear-jashub* (7,3 = "a remnant will return," as announced in 10,19-22) and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* (8,1 = "quick spoils; speedy plunder"—with the quick, total plundering of Jerusalem, as threatened in 10,2.6).

Isaiah is characterized as a "seer," a man gifted with visions and keen perception (1,1; 2,1; 2 Chr 32,32). For versatility and brilliance Isaiah probably has no equal in the Bible: for instance, the lawcourt scene in Chapter 1; the vision in 2,2-5; the haunting lyrics of 5,1-7; the solemn cadence of 9,5f; children's tales in 11,6-9; the bitter sarcasm in 28,7-13. He delighted in paradox and surprise (1,2f; 7,7-9; 9,1-3). Although he insisted upon faith and waiting upon God (7,4.9b; 30,15-17), Isaiah worked more seriously at his task than any other prophet! Strong in personal integrity, he fearlessly faced opposition in high places (7,13; 28,7-13) and was undaunted by ridicule from dilettantes (Chap. 20).

### Second Isaiah

Second Isaiah ingeniously blended his master's traditions with others furthered by Hosea and Jeremiah. These latter traditions favored the covenant of Sinai instead of that with the Davidic family, the wilderness as a place of purification and bonding with the LORD instead of the Jerusalem Temple. As a result, Second Isaiah expanded the hints of universal salvation in First Isaiah, turned politics into a way of recognizing the role of Cyrus the Persian as an instrument of God, and stressed far more the *way* rather than the actual arrival, the new exodus more than the goal, Jerusalem.

Stylistically, Second Isaiah is the master of sound and music, of panoramic vistas across heaven and earth, mountains and valleys. He matches vigor with tenderness, ideals with humble compassion, brilliance with modesty, perseverance with suffering. He is best remembered for his vision of mountains collapsing and valleys lifted up (40,3-5) and his personal witness of silent suffering for others (52,13—53,12).

### Third Isaiah

Third Isaiah accepts the role of the Jerusalem Temple, even in its bleak, superstitious condition in the early postexilic age. He seized the opportunity to open its doors to the nations of the world and to invite them into the ranks of Israel as the Lord's chosen people. When this plan was rejected by the religious authorities, Third Isaiah dreamed still bigger things of new heavens and new earth, with the Lord enthroned above it all. Third Isaiah is the least original, yet by his dependency he ensured the continued effectiveness of First and Second Isaiah. Chapters 56–66 appear to be more the product of an inspired community than of an individual prophet.

## Isaiah, The Message

The Isaiah tradition took shape against the background of world empires and several centuries of time. It recognized *a divine plan* for world salvation, which manifested the *justice of God* in

fulfilling promises beyond the hopes of the sinful people Israel. God inspired Isaiah and his disciples to further this plan by announcing a *messianic deliverance* either through an offspring from the house of David (Chaps. 1–12), or through a suffering servant (Chaps. 40–55), or through immediate divine intervention (Chaps. 56–66). We look at each of these three aspects of the message within the prophecy of Isaiah.

## Plan for World Salvation

Within each major section of the book, we see that the prophets and editors were consistently attempting to recognize ever more clearly the inclusion of non-Jews or Gentiles within God's plan of salvation for Israel. Theology was taking shape from the impact of politics, as Israel was becoming ever more involved with the world scene.

Chapter 1 opens, calling upon the heavens and the earth (1,2). Chapters 2–12 begin with a vision of the nations streaming up to the Temple mount and end with: "among the nations make known [the Lord's] deeds" (12,4). Chapters 13–23 not only treat Egypt and Assyria as equal to Israel (19,25) but also conclude with the merchandise of Tyre at the Jerusalem Temple (23,17f). Chapters 24–27 see the Lord wiping away "the tears from all faces" (25,8) and bringing outcasts from Assyria and Egypt to "the holy mountain, in Jerusalem" (27,13). Chapters 28–33 plus 34–35 summon blind and lame people as well as sick and underprivileged persons to march joyfully towards salvation (34,17-24). Chapters 36–39 prepare for the songs of consolation in Chapters 40–55, where Israel becomes a light to the nations (49,6). Chapters 56–66 enlist foreigners even among the priests and Levites (56,6; 66,21).

The movement towards world salvation begins at Jerusalem with its rich heritage of faith in the Lord and invites people of the world not only to participate in Temple worship but also to enrich it with their leadership, customs, and moral values. Isaiah offers a model, indeed a mandate, for church unity and outreach.

## Justice

No word is more persistent in the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah than justice, interlocking the three principal sections of this book. Biblical justice is much more than giving *individuals* their due, whether it be wages for work, punishment for evil doing, or respect for human rights. Because biblical people felt strongly bonded in blood and treaty, justice primarily safeguarded *relationships* in the extended family, tribe, and nation.

God freely entered into a special relationship with Israel, bringing this people out of Egypt (Ex 20,2) and forming a covenant with them (Ex 24). At Mount Sinai the Lord declared: "you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people" (Ex 19,5). For God, then, justice is living according to this covenant with Israel. Again on Mount Sinai God pledged to live up to this covenant as "a merciful and gracious God" (Ex 34,6). Justice includes compassion. Punishment is not destructive but purifying and restorative.

Most of these aspects of justice are present in Chapter 1, the overture to the Book of Isaiah, which begins with the language of home: "Sons have I raised and reared" (verse 2). A family is to look with special regard for the needy: "Hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow" (verses 17 and 22f). Punishment does not destroy, but purifies with new lifeblood: "I will . . . refine your dross in the furnace, removing all your alloy. . . . After that you shall be called city of justice, faithful city" (verses 25f). God's justice restores the family rather than measures out to individuals what is their due. The lawcourt style of Chapter 1 (see above, Important Sections:

First Isaiah: Chapter 1) indicates that family justice is more than a recommendation. In fact, Isaiah turns attention to the legal proceedings at the city gate where the rights of the poor are safeguarded (5,23; 29,21; 59,4).

Whatever be the troubles or even the punishment, Israel is to wait confidently and patiently upon the LORD; the LORD, in turn, is waiting upon Israel:

> By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, . . .
> The LORD is waiting to show you favor, . . .
> For the LORD is a God of *justice:*
> blessed are all who wait for him! (30,15.18)

Justice, therefore, is the necessary ingredient for worshipping God in spirit and in truth (see 64,5; 65,16; Jn 4,24), and awaiting the promised messiah.

Justice becomes another word for salvation in all its fullness. Only in such wonderful ways can the Lord be true to the covenantal promises: "my *salvation* is about to come, my *justice,* about to be revealed" (56,1). Second Isaiah summarizes the transformation and new creation of Israel this way:

> Let *justice* descend, O heavens, like dew from above,
> like gentle rain let the skies drop it down.
> Let the earth open and *salvation* bud forth;
> let *justice* also spring up!
> I, the LORD, have created this. (45,8.7)

While First Isaiah remained more within the legal setting of treaties between nations and the procedures at the city gates, Second Isaiah viewed covenant and the claims of justice more in terms of family and spousal love. God will no more forget Israel than a mother forget the child of her womb (49,15). "The LORD calls you back, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit . . . with great tenderness I will take you back" (54,6f). This transition happened through the influence of Hosea and Jeremiah (see Hos 1-3; Jer 31).

Justice is also absorbed within that richest of all Hebrew words, *shalom*—peace—which comes from the full, joyful possession of life within family and community. The word is difficult to translate: in 48,18 the *New American Bible* calls it "prosperity" and in 53,5, "that [which] makes us whole." The latter citation brings us to the process by which suffering by the innocent contributes to a peaceful possession of justice. People looked upon the silent suffering servant, and with amazement declared:

> He was pierced for our offenses,
> crushed for our sins,
> Upon him was the chastisement that *makes us whole . . .*
> Because of his affliction
> he shall see the light in fullness of days;
> Through his suffering my servant shall *justify* many. (53,5.11)

Justice is a long process within a family where each suffers for and with the others, each in their innocence for the faults of the others, each in their faults receiving from the goodness of others. Such also was the bonding of Jesus with our human family and his way of justice in our salvation

(see 1 Cor 1,30). Jesus, all innocent, bonds himself so completely as to appear sinful with us (2 Cor 5,5), that we may be transformed into his likeness (Gal 2,20).

Finally, justice as the fullness of God's plans for salvation reaches out to transform the universe. Third Isaiah recognizes justice as the final word in creating the new heavens and the new earth:

> For I, the LORD, love what is *right,* . . .
> I will give them their recompense *faithfully,*
> a lasting covenant I will make with them. . . .
> For [God] has clothed me with a robe of *salvation,*
> and wrapped me in a mantle of *justice,*
> Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem,
> like a bride bedecked with her jewels.
> As the earth brings forth its plants,
> and a garden makes its growth spring up,
> So will the LORD God make *justice* and praise
> spring up before all the nations. (61,8.10f)

The complete transformation of the universe for the sake of a chosen people who include men and women of every nation—this ultimately is God's justice in the Book of Isaiah.

## Messianic Salvation

In many ways the study of this theme overlaps with the preceding ones on world salvation and justice. "Messianic," an English word derived from the Hebrew, *meshiah, the anointed one,* strictly applies only to kings, later to priests, who were anointed with oil in the ceremony of installation (1 Sm 10,1; Lv 8,30). Only after the end of the Old Testament, for instance in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament, was the term applied to God's mediators in the *future* salvation of Israel. Third Isaiah anticipated this new use of the term (61,1). We employ the word in a general way to embrace Israel's major hopes for salvation beyond the lifetime of the prophet.

We detect three stages, depending upon the life setting of Israel. In *First Isaiah* when the Davidic dynasty ruled from Jerusalem, Isaiah relied upon this institution for the fulfillment of divine promises. Even in its failure, the prophet expected a new, still more glorious Son of David to lead the people into the final age (Is 11). In *Second Isaiah* (Chapters 40–55) the dynasty has been swept away and the Davidic promises have been returned to the people (55,3-5). Salvation will result from God's *immediate* presence (45,8), with a special role for the suffering servant (see below). *Third Isaiah* (Chapters 56–66) reflects the dismal situation after Israel's return to Jerusalem, and projects new heavens and a new earth encircling Jerusalem and its Temple.

In *First Isaiah* Chapters 7–12 provide the major source for studying messianic salvation. One of the key texts here is 7,14:

> Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child,
> and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

The note accompanying this passage in the *New American Bible* states the principal facts of interpretation. The word "virgin" can translate the Hebrew *almah,* even if the latter has a more

generic sense of young woman of marriageable age. Isaiah assures King Ahaz, fearful about the future of the dynasty, that the Davidic family will survive, but not by the king's devious political ways. His new wife will conceive a child, to inherit the throne. Before that child grows to the age of reason, the forces which Ahaz fears will be eliminated (7,16) and his own land will eventually be devastated by Assyria in whom Ahaz places his confidence (7,17-25). Assyria itself will be destroyed, but God's promises for Israel will endure. This sequence of events is developed more poetically in 8,5-10.

In writing about Mary in the encyclical *Mater Redemptoris, Mother of the Redeemer,* Pope John Paul II speaks of a "pilgrimage of faith," which is "the history of the whole people of God," reaching back into Old Testament times (n. 3, 5). Isaiah 7,14 followed a long pilgrimage before it reached Matthew 1,23. It was rooted in the eternal promises made to the family of David (2 Sm 7,12-16), but with the collapse of the dynasty the promises were transferred to the captial city, Jerusalem, as we see in Psalms 46–48.

Jerusalem was considered the throne of God's presence, and everyone who entered the Temple had to be continent at the time (Lv 15), the same norm as for the people at the base of Mount Sinai (Ex 19,9-15). Third Isaiah, in continuity with Isaiah 54, regards Jerusalem as the bride of God and as the mother of an extraordinary number of faithful Israelites (Is 62,1-5; 66,7-11). Jerusalem is virgin, totally consecrated to God, and mother, fruitful with life through the marvelous grace of God. Because of this religious background, the Greek Septuagint translated *almah* in Isaiah 7,14 with the strict word for *virgin.* Matthew 1,23 quotes from the Greek.

The evangelists saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in Mary's virginal conception of Jesus. This fulfillment reached beyond the horizon of the prophet, but such is always the way of fulfillment. Old Testament prophecy is enlightened by New Testament revelation and still later by Church tradition. Mary, as mother of Immanuel (spelled "Emannuel" in the Greek), is the new Jerusalem, the virgin daughter of Isaiah 62,1-5. Luke 1–2 centers the annunciation to Mary and the infancy of Jesus upon Jerusalem. In this context we understand Pope Paul VI's bestowal upon Mary the title "Mother of the Church." For Christians, Mary symbolizes the Church as the new Jerusalem (Rv 21,2).

The other major messianic passage in *First Isaiah* is Chapter 11. Here is the prophet's final solution to the eternal promises made to the family of David (2 Sm 7,12-17. 25-29; Ps 89,20-38). He refers to David's father, Jesse:

> A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
> and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
> The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. (Is 11,1f)

There follows a description of a new paradise in 11,6-9. Despite the idyllic beauty of this scene the text speaks of tragedy: the tree of David or Jesse will be cut to the ground. Only in the distant future will God's spirit raise up a successor to realize the eternal promises. The New Testament sees this prophecy fulfilled when Jesus was raised from the grave and sends the Holy Spirit into the church (Acts 2,32-36; 13,32-41).

"Shoot" becomes the most common Old Testament title for the future, promised messiah, as we see in Jeremiah 23,5; Ezekiel 17,22, and Zechariah 3,8. Because of the way it signifies the mysterious rising of the promised one, it was gradually associated in the Greek Bible with the rising star or rising sun which appears almost miraculously out of darkness. The prophecy was then related to the announcement in Numbers 24,17, "a star shall advance from Jacob."

Allusions to this rich tradition show up in the New Testament: the star that led the Magi to the newborn king (Mt 2,2) and "the daybreak from on high" (Lk 1,78; Rv 7,2). See notes for these texts in the *New American Bible.*

One of the titles most commonly attributed to Jesus in Christian piety, that of "redeemer," began in early biblical times as the word for kinsperson of the same family or tribe (Lv 25,25. 41; Ru 2,20). Second Isaiah turns this secular word into a sacred title for God. In redeeming Israel, God is living up to his role as parent (Is 43,1-7) and spouse (54,1-10). In this capacity God gloriously leads Israel back to the promised land (41,17-20; 43,16-21). Applied to Jesus, the title "redeemer" reminds us, almost beyond the limits of orthodox theology, that Jesus acted out of "obligation" for us, his kinsfolks. This obligation was freely undertaken.

"Redeemer" brings Christians to another aspect of Second Isaiah's theology, that of suffering servant. Second Isaiah's hopes were repudiated by the people as fantasy, perhaps as too liberal in accepting apostate Israelites and even foreigners into the ranks of God's chosen people (Is 44,1-5) and in considering the Persian Cyrus a new Moses (Is 44,28—45,1). At this point of rebuff Second Isaiah composed the Suffering Servant songs. The four songs together are: 42,1-7; 49,1-7; 50,4-9a; 52,13—53,12. While confessing to have "toiled for nothing and . . . uselessly spent my strength," Second Isaiah identified with all Israel, depressed and humiliated in the land of exile. The servant's weakest moment became the best moment for Israel. As the servant experienced rejection for reaching out to the nations, Israel glimpsed in the servant her own call for a mission to the Gentiles (49,1-6).

By remaining bonded with sinful Israel, the servant became the source of salvation for those who rejected him. They contemplate this silent servant in a song of thanksgiving:

> Who would have believed what we have heard? . . .
> It was our infirmities that he bore,
> our sufferings that he endured. . . .
> He was pierced for our offenses,
> crushed for our sins,
> Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
> by his stripes we were healed. (53,1.4f)

This description of the suffering servant, modeled upon Moses (Dt 1,37; 34,5) and Jeremiah (Jer 12,1-5; 15,10-21), itself influenced the writing of Psalm 22, and so became the typical expression of innocent sufferers who contribute to redemption of a community that persecutes them.

In the New Testament the servant is principally Jesus, although Paul adapts these passages of Isaiah to himself (Acts 13,47; Gal 1,15; Rom 15,21). Jesus is servant in various ways: at his baptism, which identifies him with all Israel in search of redemption (Mk 1,11; Jn 1,34); with suffering and disabled people (Mt 8,17); with people in their humility and sinfulness (Phil 2,7; 2 Cor 5,5). Jesus thus appears as redeemer by plunging his own life and goodness into the midst of Israel and all the world, bearing the full brunt of sin and sorrow, and thus overcoming evil by his own divine goodness.

This tradition of an innocent sufferer, of Israel at its prophetic best, sustained Jesus in his own rejection (Mt 8,17) and inspired the church in its understanding of a suffering Messiah (Phil 2, 6-11). Jesus identified with this tradition and brought the theology of redemption to a sublime perfection. C.S.

## Further Reading

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# JEREMIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 949–1017 of the Old Testament*]

More than anyone else Jeremiah steps out of the pages of the Old Testament, a type and model of Jesus Christ. Isaiah announces the promised Messiah by words, Jeremiah by his life. As we glance through this prophecy, so many details parallel the life and ministry of Jesus that it is not surprising to hear the answer to Jesus' question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, *still others Jeremiah* or one of the prophets." (Mt 16,14)

Because with Jeremiah it was more a matter of works than words, God was offering in Jeremiah a model for imitation rather than a message for study. The same event in Jeremiah's career—for instance, called from the mother's womb—applies to others besides Jesus, in this case the suffering servant of Isaiah (Is 49,1) and John the Baptist (Lk 1,39-45). Rather, both Jesus and especially the evangelists turned continually to Jeremiah to contemplate and illuminate the mystery of where God was directing their life and ministry. Jeremiah's prophecy, therefore, offers us a large setting from Jewish tradition for appreciating Jesus' words and actions.

The following points of resemblance, by no means exhaustive, show up between Jesus and Jeremiah: a) confirmed in grace from the mother's womb (Jer 1,5; Lk 1,26-38); b) unmarried (Jer 16,1f); c) hounded by hometown citizens and family (Jer 12,6; Lk 4,24.29); d) weeping over Jerusalem (Jer 8,23; Lk 19,41); e) speaking of the Temple as "a den of thieves" (Jer 7,11; Mt 21,13); f) consulted secretly and fearfully by those who believe (Jer 37,17; Jn 3,1f); g) foreseeing a new covenant (Jer 31,31-34; Lk 22,20).

In approaching this prophetic book, we first reflect on the implications of *the person as the message.* Then we turn to the *book* itself, its format and major sections. From this background we summarize the biographical details about the *man Jeremiah* and the principal *topics* of his message.

## The Person, the Message

With Jeremiah the prophet's life is as much the message as any of his words. The same can be said of Hosea. Yet only within the first three chapters does the personal trauma of Hosea's tragic marriage become the warp and woof of God's message. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, hopes and visions, doubts and hesitations, anger and resentment, arguments and pleading, persecution and rejection, perseverance and bonding—all these emotions and events tear apart the prophet's fragile temperament and fling themselves upon the pages of this prophecy. Nowhere else in the Old Testament does the eternal, invisible God become so involved in human experience and communicate so much within it as in the person of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's name, in Hebrew, means *The Lord raises up.* It is the Lord who is rising within the preaching and living of Jeremiah. The more the prophet himself endures what his ministry is said to inflict upon others—rooting up and tearing down, destroying and demolishing—so much more does the Lord rise in a new building and a new planting (1,10).

"The person, the message," as seen in the case of Jeremiah, exemplifies what Pope Pius XII wrote in his encyclical on Holy Scripture, *Divino Afflante Spiritu:*

> The sacred writer . . . is the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit [and] impelled by the divine motion, he so uses his faculties and powers, that from the book composed by him all may easily infer 'the special character of each one and, as it were, his personal traits' [quoting Pope Benedict XV]. Let the interpreter, then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research, endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expressions he employed. (n. 33)

The humanity of the inspired writer includes the struggles to know what God wants and then the courage to seek it, step by step, at times with missteps and a return to the right path, eventually with wisdom and peace.

Jeremiah's struggles tell us that the biblical message comes to us not simply as a finished, polished discourse (as we find often in the prophecy of Isaiah) but as an intuition, or to use Jeremiah's words, as a "fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones" (20,9). Jeremiah frequently provides us with a message on its way to becoming the final word of God, struggling to come to birth and seemingly lost in the dark birth canal, an example used by Jeremiah (20,17).

Prophecy, accordingly, with all of its human involvement, requires us to face up more directly to the impediments and barriers along the way than to bask in the complete light at the end of the way. This fact helps to explain the attention which Jeremiah, like Hosea, gives to the important image of the Exodus and Israel's wandering in the wilderness (Jer 2,1-6; Chap. 31; Hos Chaps. 2 and 11). God intends prophecy to guide us *through* the path of our human, emotional reactions, not round about them. If we transfer this approach into New Testament

thought, Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14,6)—therefore, as much the way through human life as its destination, as much the truth that gradually emerges along the way forward as its definitive statement, as much life in its stages of growth as it is life bearing fruit at harvest (Mk 4,26-29).

If the person of Jeremiah is the prophetic message, then we must deal with a person who paradoxically combines exceptional obedience to God with vigorous argumentation against God (12,1), who struggles with doubt and anger, and at times succumbs to them, only to rise purified and transformed (9,1; 15,19). This aspect of Jeremiah's prophecy appears most forcefully in his confessions (see below). Yet it is likely that Jeremiah never intended these poems to be part of his book as dictated to Baruch (36,32). Paradoxically what was meant to be private and confidential communicates some of the most striking sentences of the prophet. Again the person is the message.

Jeremiah does not allow us to detour round a difficulty. Persons gifted with keen, sensitive emotions, and thoroughly involved in their work and message, do not normally avoid the excesses of these virtues! They plunge straight ahead. Some sections of Jeremiah are so emotionally distraught that the rules of Hebrew grammar splinter apart. The English translation may not always communicate this fact, though we sense it at times:

> My bowels! my bowels! how I writhe!
> Oh, the walls of my heart!
> Turbulent my heart,
> I cannot be quiet. (4,19—literal translation)

At other times Jeremiah's pain, close to despair, bitterly explodes on God, again in a literal translation that defies theological restrictions:

> Ah! You become, as it were, a liar!
> Like water that cannot be trusted. (15,18)

The message in these lines is grammatically and theologically disoriented and is to be gauged across a larger context and period of time. Ungrammatical sentences shout how torn apart the person is emotionally; untheological statements rush recklessly and resolutely beyond the limits of the mind, to declare how mysterious and unfathomable are the ways of God (see also Is 64,1-3; Job 42,1-6; Ps 139). Not even biblical language can contain the divine immensity. Ecstatic silence is one way of reaching beyond reason; emotional disturbance does it another way. Jeremiah chose both ways.

We find the message of Jeremiah reverberates in our own lives, as we struggle and fall and rise, as we agonize and flee and return. The name for this is that of Jeremiah himself: *The Lord rises* in our collapse, to show that the new life is God's more than our own. Individual moments of life, like individual lines of the prophet, are to be judged across the wider pattern and longer way of our existence. When anger, revenge, or depression seem to get the better of us, we, like Jeremiah, are being invited to be more trusting in God and more courteous toward our neighbor. God is again writing straight with our crooked lines.

If Jeremiah the person is the message as much as his words are, then we need to read the Book of Jeremiah with our finger on the pulse of emotions, with our judgment suspended till we come to the final line, or even to a later chapter, with the conviction that the *way forward* is every bit as important for discerning God's message as is the end of the journey and the finished

theological statement. The Bible does us a notable service in diagnosing where we are rather than stating where we ought to be. Taken in its entirety, the Bible never abandons us but invites us to see how God is rising and leading us onward.

# Jeremiah, The Book

## Format and Organization

The Hebrew text, from which derive the Bibles of Judaism and western Christianity, is one-eighth longer than the Greek version and is organized differently. The Oracles against the Nations have been shifted to the end of the book to become Chapters 46–51, away from the center (after 25,13) where they were originally. This fact alone implies a long editorial history and alerts us to many stages in the composition of the book. Not only Jeremiah the man but also Jeremiah the book underwent a long, difficult journey before arriving at the permanent word of God for us.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The outline, provided in the introduction of the *New American Bible,* highlights the historical underpinning of Jeremiah's ministry and enables us to review the politics of the time.

| | |
|---|---|
| Chaps. 1–6. | Reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.)<br>Collapse of the Assyrian empire<br>Independence of many vassal states, like Babylon and Judah<br>Excitement of the Deuteronomic Reform at Jerusalem (2 Chr 34f); reunification of all Israel (2 Kgs 23)<br>Violent death of Josiah while attempting to block the Egyptian army at the pass of Megiddo (2 Chr 35,20-25)<br>Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, taken captive to Egypt; another son, Jehoiakim, installed as king (2 Chr 36,1-8) |
| Chaps. 7–20. | Mostly during the reign of Jehoiakim (609–597 B.C.), a ruthless tyrant, despised by Jeremiah<br>Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated Egypt at Carchemesh in Syria (605 B.C.), takes Jerusalem by 603 B.C. for the Babylonians and confirms Jehoiakim in office<br>In 601 B.C. Jehoiakim revolts. He is dead when the Babylonian army arrives (597 B.C.). His son, Jehoiachin, is taken captive to Babylon and Zedekiah installed as king (2 Chr 36,9f) |
| Chaps. 21–33. | Reign of Zedekiah (597–587 B.C.). Chaps. 30-33, however, come from an earlier period. |
| Chaps. 34–45. | Fall and last days of Jerusalem (587–583 B.C.)<br>City and Temple are destroyed, August, 587 B.C.; most of the people deported<br>Gedeliah governor; Jeremiah remains at Jerusalem<br>Gedeliah assassinated; people flee to Egypt, dragging Jeremiah with them, 583 B.C.<br>Third Babylonian deportation, 582 B.C.<br>Jeremiah dies in Egypt |

| | |
|---|---|
| Chaps. 46–51. | Oracles against the Nations |
| Chap. 52. | Historial Appendix |

Glancing through this history, we recognize how the life of Jeremiah spanned a tumultuous age, religiously, politically, militarily: national independence and religious revival, downfall of the Assyrian empire and the establishment of the Babylonian one in its place, the defeat and violent death of Josiah, the collapse of his reform, Judean kings as cunning and ruthless as Jehoiakim or as vacillating and cowardly as Zedekiah, the Temple's disintegration in fire and smoke. How could a prophet as emotionally high-keyed as Jeremiah was remain normal and serenely objective?

**LITERARY BACKGROUND**

Since moral and religious teaching, not history, impelled Jeremiah to preach, and the editors to preserve the preaching, we arrive at an alternate plan of the book, based on the literary forms of the prophet's own preaching and a disciple's biographical account:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chap. 1. | The prologue or prophetic call from God |
| Chaps. 2–25. | the preaching of the prophet |
| Chaps. 26–45. | a disciple's justification of the prophet with a message of hope from Jeremiah in Chaps. 30–33 |
| Chaps. 46–51. | the Oracles against the Nations |
| Chap. 52. | a fulfillment of Jeremiah's threats, concluding hopefully with the release from prison of King Jehoiachin. |

This arrangement deserves a few comments. 1) The ordering of material, especially in Chapters 2–25, still remains close to the chronology of the prophet's life. 2) The Oracles against the Nations, at the end, balance well with Jeremiah's call to be "a prophet to the nations" at the beginning (1,4f). Like the prophecy of Isaiah, Jeremiah looks beyond Judaism to the wider world of the Gentiles. 3) While Chapters 30–33 may well represent the prophet's earliest preaching, their position near the center of the book proclaims that Jeremiah's followers never gave up on his hopes, despite the tragic events in Chapters 2–29. 4) The Book of Jeremiah is clearly a *tradition,* begun by the prophet and continued by disciples who composed a major part of what is entitled in 1,1 "the words of Jeremiah." "Words" mean actions as well as statements, disciples' response as well as the master's leadership.

## Major Sources of the Book

The organization or format of the book discloses a long, complex development. At the source we find the *sermons of the prophet himself,* generally in poetry. Jeremiah is associated with traditions that had evolved in the northern part of the promised land, traditions about the Exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Horeb, the northern name for Sinai, traditions about punishment for sin that leads to repentance and new life. Jeremiah stands shoulder to shoulder or, better, heart to heart, with the Levites whose sermons are collected in the Book of Deuteronomy, with the stories collected in what are called the Deuteronomic Books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings, and with prophets like Elijah and Hosea. (See below, Jeremiah the Prophet.)

By contrast First Isaiah, whose record we find in Isaiah 1–39, was a "southerner," attached

to Jerusalem and its Temple, to the covenant with the Davidic dynasty, and to the eternal promises granted to each of these institutions.

Jeremiah steps from the ranks of his predecessors of the north, to show his own individuality. The basic or core material in Chapters 2–25 and 30–33 carries telltale signs of Jeremiah: highly personal, agonizing, continuously interacting with the community and God. The quintessence of Jeremiah appears in sections called the "confessions," where he argues with God: 12,1-5; 15,10-21; 17,12-18; 18,18-23; 20,7-18. The confessions may have originated as a diary, split up and inserted by the editor into the nearly completed book. Where they appear, the sequence of verses is often disturbed: for instance, in the *New American Bible's* insertion of 12,1-6 between verses 18 and 19 of Chapter 11.

Two long *prose sections about Jeremiah* (Chapters 26–29; 34–45) are generally attributed to the secretary, Baruch. Their purpose, however, is more theological than biographical. The message of the prophet is to be found in his actions as well as in his words, in suffering that affirms his message as authentic.

The Book of Jeremiah contains *sermons,* replete with phrases from the discourses in Deuteronomy: 7,1—8,3; 11,1-17; 16,1-13; 21,1-10. We detect duplication with other parts of the prophecy by comparing 7,1—8,3 with 26,1-7; or 21,1-10 with 37,3. It is possible that these sermons represent exhortations, preached by disciples of Jeremiah upon the prophet's words or actions.

## Editing of Jeremiah's Preaching

This process began with his secretary, Baruch, in the years 605/604 B.C., thirty-two or thirty-three years after Jeremiah's call to be a prophet:

> Jeremiah took another scroll, and gave it to his secretary, Baruch, son of Neriah; he wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words contained in the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire, and *many others of the same kind in addition.* (Jer 36,32)

The italicized words indicate that the secretary turned out to be also an editor, sharing in the inspiration of the original prophet. Author and editor are reflecting upon a long ministry of preaching.

This first record of Jeremiah's preaching is dated "in the ninth month, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim" (36,9), that is, December, 604 B.C. A year earlier, in 605 B.C., Jeremiah had dictated another scroll, which King Jehoiakim burned column by column (36,1.23). Both of these dates associate the writing down of Jeremiah's words with dramatic events for Judah: 605 B.C., when Babylon decisively broke the power of Egypt over the Near East; 604 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar captured Ashkelon, a coastal Philistine city. The *written form* was not a normal way for prophets to communicate. They resorted to it when disaster was threatening the continuity of oral traditions.

Chapters 2–25, at least the poetical sections, represent the contents of this scroll. The date in 25,1 is identical with 36,9. The next date in the process of gathering together Jeremiah's words occurs at the very beginning of the book which states that the word of God continued to come to Jeremiah "until the downfall and exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, . . . king of Judah," that is, until August 587 B.C.. Because many of the events

in Chapters 40–45 occurred after this date. we know that at least the biographical sections were composed still later (see above, Jeremiah, The Book: Major Sources of the Book).

Several sections seem to have existed separately: a) Chapters 30–33, a small "book of consolation," probably dating to the earliest preaching of Jeremiah between 627/6 B.C. and 621 B.C.; b) the confessions or private prayers; c) the Deuteronomic sermons, preached by Jeremiah or, more probably, by disciples upon earlier "texts" of the prophet.

The book was first assembled in Egypt, where Jeremiah died. This text was lost in its Hebrew original and survived only in a Greek version. Interestingly enough, the the Dead Sea Scrolls contain several witnesses to this lost Hebrew edition. Our present Hebrew text turns out to be one-eighth longer; it also shifts the Oracles against the Nations to the end of the book, away from their original place immediately after 25,13, and rearranges the order of the oracles.

Looking back over this complex history of the text of Jeremiah, we find: a) the prophet's words were originally preserved in separate booklets; b) several editions were made during the prophet's lifetime, several more afterward; c) what the opening title describes as "the words of Jeremiah" turn out to include not only the preaching of the prophet but also an extended account *about* him and sermons based upon his words; d) Jeremiah may not have intended all of his words, at least his confessions, to become public property. Therefore, as in the case of other major prophets, we need to speak of an *inspired Jeremiah tradition,* in which inspiration was shared among disciples and worshipers.

## Major Sections

### Introduction and Call to Prophesy (Chapter 1)

This chapter has the telltale signs of later editing: a) the superscription and historical identification (verses 1-3) have a later date than the scroll written down in 36,9; b) the call of the prophet is recast in a standard, stylized form (verses 4-10), like others in the Old and New Testament (Moses in Ex 3; First and Second Isaiahs in Is 6 and 40; Zechariah and Mary in Lk 1,5-25.26-38; see the study of Is 6); c) two separate visions (verses 11-16) anticipate the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem; d) the final words of encouragement (verses 17-19) echo elsewhere in the book, especially in the confessions.

This chapter, therefore, represents more than God's call to the prophet. Jeremiah or the disciples recast the call in the accepted form of describing a prophetic vocation. They thereby affirmed what God wanted for the prophet and for the people Israel. To be formed by God from the womb and dedicated before birth as a prophet to the nations meant that God foresaw an entire lifetime and the repercussions afterwards. It was only among distant disciples like Second Isaiah, author of Isaiah 40–55, a person strongly influenced by Jeremiah, that Jeremiah ever became "a prophet to the nations." The other phrase of Jeremiah, to be called from the womb, became a standard way of finding strength in the mysterious darkness of a vocation (Is 49,1-7; Ps 22,10f; Ps 139,13-24; Job 3; Gal 1,15).

### Oracles from the Reign of Josiah (Chapters 2–6)

This preaching commenced "in the thirteenth year of his reign" (1,2) and continued between 627/6 B.C. and at least 621 B.C., when Josiah began a vigorous religious reform, based upon the Book of Deuteronomy, rediscovered while repairing the Temple (2 Kgs 22,8). It is possible that

Jeremiah did not continue preaching during the reform, disapproving of its autocratic and at times violent imposition (2 Kgs 23,4-24).

Jeremiah's basic attitude centered upon the tender love of God as manifested in the covenant during the days of Moses (2,2f). Sin, he announced, brings its own punishment, but this punishment can be purifying and transforming (2,19.30; 4,14). Verses 3,12 into Chapter 4 repeat one of Jeremiah's key words: turn or return to the Lord. Three,19-25 gently weave together words from God, from the people, and from the prophet, words combining strong appeal, hopelessness, and encouragement.

Some very radical observations are interspersed in these chapters. For instance, 3,14-18 anticipate a new series of religious and civil leaders, remove the necessity of the Ark of the Covenant, and welcome foreigners to the new Temple.

## Oracles from the Reign of Jehoiakim (Chapters 7–20)

Here we meet the first of the famous Deuteronomic Sermons, composed by disciples upon earlier texts of Jeremiah (compare Chapter 7 with the earlier, more action-filled Chapter 26, where priests and temple prophets angrily respond to his words by demanding his death and almost succeed except for the interception of the laity). Chapter 7 is the most important of these. Here Jeremiah shows his true colors, his bloodline from a priestly family, presently at Anathoth (1,1) but originally at Shiloh in charge of the Ark of the Covenant before the destruction of this shrine-city by the Philistines (1 Sm 1–4). When Jeremiah threatened the destruction of the Temple, the people shouted "Blasphemy!" Yet Jeremiah remembered such an occurrence of an earlier age ("just as I did to Shiloh") as an act of God. The preservation of the Temple did not depend blindly upon divine promises nor feverishly upon more and better ceremonies but on the following condition:

> "if you thoroughly reform your ways . . . if each of you deals justly with his neighbor; if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow, . . . will I remain with you." (7,5-7)

The first of Jeremiah's confessions occurs at 12,1-5. Jeremiah's complaint against God is simultaneously:

> courageous in verse 1, "I must dispute with you";
> tender in verse 3, "LORD, you know me and see me; you explore
> the darkness of my heart within me"—a literal translation;
> impatient in verse 4, "How long?";
> obedient as implied in verse 5.

God never answers Jeremiah's initial question but addresses his faith, poetically saying that you must persevere even as things get much worse, "running against horses . . . in the thickets of the Jordan."

Symbols and prophetic parables communicate the message of the prophet. In Chapter 16 Jeremiah's celibacy is explained as a bonding with people in their agony of homes destroyed, family members killed, themselves scattered in exile. People look to faithful Jeremiah. In his peace and goodness they discover the mysterious presence of God once again. A series of parables come to our attention: for instance, not only Jeremiah's celibacy in Chapter 16 but also

the potter and his work in Chapters 18–20 and the purchase of a field in Chapter 32. Similarly, we have already met prophetic visions: for instance, the watching-tree and boiling cauldron in Chapter 1; the loin cloth in Chapter 13. Visions and symbolic actions become a prominent part of the prophecy of Ezekiel, surrounding him with a mysterious aura and endowing him with mystical insight.

## Oracles from the Last Years of Jerusalem (Chapters 21–25)

Most of Chapter 21, like Chapter 7, represents a Deuteronomic sermon. In Chapter 22 Jeremiah explodes with anger against the greedy, cruel, and devious King Jehoiakim, wishing for him "the burial of an ass!" (verses 13-19). More respect is shown his royal remains in 2 Kings 24,6! In the elegy to his successor, King Jehoiachin, Jeremiah weeps over the loss of this young man to Babylonian exile. Jeremiah declares: "write this man down as one childless" (verse 30). According to 1 Chronicles 3,17 he had children, an indication that prophets can allow their extreme emotion to reach rhetorically beyond the limits of God's plans. This is one indication among others of unfulfilled prophecy in Jeremiah (see 31,1-20).

In Chapter 23 Jeremiah reaffirmed his loyalty to the Davidic dynasty, but only on the condition that the family tree be cut down to the roots and the incumbent kings removed (verses 1-8). Then God will raise a new shoot in the distant future. See Isaiah 11 for a further development of the messianic theme of "shoot"; also Ezekiel 17,5-8; Zechariah 3,8. Chapter 23 inveighs against false prophets. They are individuals who claim insight into God's ways but are only dreaming, to foster their greed and immorality. They condone sin in others to excuse their own sin. (See below, The Message of Jeremiah: True and False Prophecy.)

Chapter 25 announces the *seventy years* of the exile (verse 11). Jeremiah uses the same phrase several times: here in 604 B.C. (verse 1); again in 593 B.C. (28,1 for the date; 29,10 for the prophecy). The "seventy years" occurs again in 2 Chronicles 36,21-23; Zechariah 7,1.5. Seventy, therefore, like seven, should be taken as a number symbolic of completion. In other words it announces that the exile will run its full course, but it will also be completed and come to an end.

## Biographical Account about Jeremiah (Chapters 26–29 and 34–45)

Here the secretary, Baruch, (see 36,5.32) shows how Jeremiah was not a blasphemously false prophet in announcing the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. This collapse is exactly what God directed to happen. In these chapters Baruch leads us through fire and debris, through a colossal disruption of life, to recognize the central figure of Jeremiah as true prophet. Even though the prophet disappeared within the silent sands of Egypt, the prophecy continued to speak his presence, instructing Israel in prayer and preparing for the messianic age.

## The Book of Consolation (Chapters 30–33)

The editor gathered this material from various moments in the life of Jeremiah, principally from his earliest preaching. He placed it here between Chapter 29, a letter of encouragement to those in exile since 597 B.C., and Chapters 34–45, detailing in blood and smoke the end of Jerusalem and the second deportation, 587 B.C. These chapters, therefore, mirror several stages of interpretation and reinterpretation.

Originally when Jeremiah began prophesying in 627/6 B.C., the fall of Assyria raised hopes that the people of the former northern kingdom of Israel, Jeremiah's closest kinfolk, would be

permitted to return home to "the mountains of Samaria" (31,5). When these ten lost tribes never returned, the passage was reread as encouragement that the Lord would bring back other remnants from the new deportations of 597 and 587 B.C. Rachel's tears will eventually be wiped from her face (31,1-17). This passage is given still another interpretation in Matthew 2,16-23, when the holy family returns from their exile in Egypt. The new covenant in 31,31-37 is discussed in The Message of Jeremiah, below.

### Oracles Against the Nations (Chapters 46–51); Appendix (Chapter 52)

As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew text, different from the Greek, shifted Chapters 46–51 from after 25,13 to the end of the prophecy, to show that God will overcome all hostile powers and secure the divine plans for the whole world. Israel's exile into foreign lands does not mean the extinction of Israel. The Appendix, Chapter 52, ends with a ray of hope for all exiles. King Jehoiachin is released from prison. Prophecy must never end in despair. It is significant that even a prophet of doom like Jeremiah ends on a hopeful note.

## Jeremiah the Prophet

### Jeremiah's Ancestry

Jeremiah's ancestry can be traced back to Eli, the priest in charge of the sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sm 1-4; 14,3; 22,20). King Solomon exiled Eli's great-great-grandson, Abiathar, to Anathoth, a town 3.6 miles northeast of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2,26). Jeremiah hails from this town (1,1). His father, Helkiah, may have been the one by that name who found the book of the law of Moses (the Book of Deuteronomy) during the repair of the Temple (2 Kgs 22,8). This fact partially explains the influence of Deuteronomy upon Jeremiah.

### Politics

Politics helped to form the message of Jeremiah. When the last great Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, slipped into old age, cracks in the strong armor of Assyria began to appear almost everywhere. King Josiah at Jerusalem was converted to the Lord and somewhat later openly repudiated the Assyrian gods. To have done so earlier would have been an act of treason and cost him his throne.

In the year that Ashurbanipal died (627 B.C.), civil war wracked the empire and Babylon successfully secured its independence. That same year Jeremiah received a call to prophesy (Jer 1,1f); and in 621 B.C. King Josiah inaugurated his great "Deuteronomic reform" (2 Kgs 22,1—23,27). Politics and prophecy were both seizing the opportunity, each in their own way for their own purpose.

### Ministry

Jeremiah's ministry began in 627 B.C.. With the collapse of the Assyrian empire, he ecstatically announced the return of the northern tribes, carried off into exile a hundred years earlier (2 Kgs 17). We place the core of Chapters 30–31 at this time. He also condemned idolatry at Jerusalem (Chapters 2–6). It seems that Jeremiah turned silent during the Deuteronomic reform. He was in favor of its goals but differed from the ruthless ways of Josiah (2 Kgs 23,4-20).

Josiah was killed in battle by the Egyptians in 609 B.C. (2 Kgs 23,29f) and was eventually succeeded by his son Jehoiakim, a wily, unprincipled man, whom Jeremiah despised (Jer 22,13-

19). By this time Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, had become the world power in place of Assyria. When Jehoiakim revolted, the Babylonians recaptured the city, plundered it and took many prominent Israelites into exile. Jehoiakim was dead; his son, Jehoiachin, as well as the prophet Ezekiel were among the deportees. Jeremiah urged the next king, Zedekiah, to restrain from joining the Egyptian party in another revolt. Weak and easily swayed, Zedekiah secretly consulted Jeremiah but publicly sided against him (Chap. 38). In July 587 B.C. the Babylonians stormed the city and a month later burned Jerusalem with its Temple to the ground. After the king witnessed the slaughter of his sons, the Babylonians blinded him and carted him off into oblivion (2 Kgs 25; Jer 52).

Jeremiah was treated well by the Babylonians, probably because he persistently spoke against revolt. The Babylonians gave him the choice either of enjoying a palace in Babylon or remaining behind in the land. He chose the latter (40,1-6). When the remnant in Jerusalem rejected his advice and fled into Egypt, they dragged the prophet with them (Jer 42,1—43,7). There Jeremiah died, to become a tradition and a book.

### Character

The character of Jeremiah shines translucently from any page of this extraordinary book: joyful optimism (Chap. 31); honest, painful struggling with God (12,1-5; 15,10-21; 20,7-18); courage in confronting kings (Chap. 37); agony over the tragic fate of Jerusalem (8,18—9,10); perseverance amid continuous rejection (20,9). If at times he appears petulant and revengeful (18,19-23), these moments show up in his confessions, a prayer-diary never intended for the public eye (12,1-5; 15,10-21; 17,12-18; 18,18-23; 20,7-18).

Jeremiah tenderly responded to life and beauty, to the growth and blossoming of nature: the almond tree's first flowering in spring (1,11); the silence of the air when the last bird has flown away (4,25); the gurgling freshness of spring water (2,13). Celibacy was not an easy decision and he felt its loneliness severely (16,1-4). Strangely, it bonded Jeremiah with the people in their most difficult moments of loss and so led the way to peace with God.

### Style

Stylistically Jeremiah gave a solid impetus to the piety of Israel, especially the lament against pain and evil and the argumentative questioning of God. Many laments in the Book of Psalms show the influence of Jeremiah: for instance, Psalms 22 and 69. Early examples existed of people, even Moses (Ex 32,11-14), arguing with God. A contemporary of Jeremiah, Habakkuk, built two chapters of his prophecy around challenges hurled against God. Jeremiah's confessions, however, pushed this moment of defiance to its extreme, never to be forgotten. The Book of Job picks up where Jeremiah left off, in demanding an audience with God to press his case (Job 13,14f; 19,26; 31,35-37). What originated as a human question put to God, by its presence in Holy Scripture becomes a divine message from God to us! Questioning is a way of seeking and arriving at that One who is beyond our control and understanding.

## The Message of Jeremiah

Issues of messianic hope, centering upon the Davidic dynasty and the Temple, were highlighted much more in the prophetic school of Isaiah. Other prophets like Amos and Micah felt more keenly about social justice. The touch of Jeremiah shows up rather in compassion and prayer as

well as in fidelity to a covenant inscribed upon the heart. We confine ourselves to four themes within his message.

## The New Covenant

The key passage occurs in the small "Book of Consolation" (Chapters 30–33). It seems to have been originally addressed to people of the former northern kingdom of Israel and was adapted to the inhabitants of Jerusalem within the southern kingdom of Judah.

> The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts. . . . No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. . . . I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. (31,31-34)

The opening phrase "days are coming" had a strong impact on the Jewish community who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, on Jesus and the New Testament writers, as well as on the early church. Before Jeremiah, the Israelites thought mostly in terms of a future fulfillment of promises in a single great day of the Lord. Under Jeremiah's influence this future "day" began to appear in stages: first, an initial time of suffering; then, "the coming days" or in-between period; and finally, the absolute and definite completion of hopes and promises. The in-between period offered consolation to the followers of Jesus when his ministry, and especially his passion-resurrection, did not immediately usher in the final age. These events of Jesus' earthly life initiated the messianic age and led to the "in-between period," but we still await Christ's second glorious coming.

Jeremiah's "new" covenant on the heart is closely tied with the Mosaic covenant of Mount Sinai. Already in Exodus 34,6f the Mosaic covenant had bonded Israel with a compassionate, forgiving God. Deuteronomy had highlighted the interior attitude of the devout Israelite:

> Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. (Dt 6,4-6)

Jeremiah's convenant was "new" only to the extent that it newly emphasized what the people were neglecting. Jeremiah was not eliminating teachers and preachers; otherwise, he himself would have no right to preach! But he was rejecting authoritarian styles of leadership.

Jesus and the early church never repudiated the covenant of Israel. In his first epistle John paradoxically plays with the idea of the old and the new:

> Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. And yet I do write a new commandment to you, which holds true in him and among you, for the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. (1 Jn 2,7f)

The old became new in a distinctive way within the "coming days," not only through the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1,1-4; 1 Cor 15,12-28), but also through the example of Jesus' personal piety (Mt 11,25-28). This new covenant is commemorated in each Eucharist (Lk 22,20; 1 Cor 11,25). The "newness" of the new covenant appears ever more clearly in one of

the final New Testament compositions, Hebrews 11,7-13. Finally, Vatican II's document on the Church turned to this passage as a biblical foundation for rediscovering a communitarian model of the church as the "people of God" (*Lumen Gentium,* n. 9).

## Sin and Atonement

The prophet declares realistically that sin inevitably brings its own sorrow. If the people "went after empty idols, [then they] became empty themselves" (2,5). We read again in the same chapter: "Your own wickedness chastises you" (2,19). We are transformed for good or bad into that which we desire.

Another aspect of Jeremiah's theology of sin and atonement comes to our attention through the Hebrew word for "chastise": *yasar.* It stresses the purifying and strengthening results of punishment as well as God's compassion:

> I hear, I hear Ephraim pleading:
> You chastised me, and I am chastised; . . .
> If you allow me, I will return, . . .
>
> Is Ephraim not . . . the child in whom I delight? . . .
> My heart stirs for him,
> I must show him mercy, says the LORD. (31,18.20)

This sequence of sin—suffering—repentance—forgiveness—new life undergirds what are called the Deuteronomic Books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings. See Joshua 2,10-23. Again Jeremiah makes the old something new.

In this movement from sin to suffering, Jeremiah was never far removed from the agony of the people Israel (3,19-25). In this way he understood his call to celibacy (16,1-4). Yet, as another passage points out, hope is always stirring within the barren earth (17,5-8).

## Faith and Prayer

Jeremiah is continually laying bare the anguish of his heart. Nowhere, however, does he wrestle with God so fiercely as in his "confessions": 12,1-5; 15,10-21; 17,12-18; 18,18-23; 20,7-18. Here Jeremiah confronts God with defiant questions, yet standing on the solid rock of faith in God's fidelity and concern.

In 12,1 Jeremiah begins with faith but immediately proceeds to question that faith. Translated literally, verse 1 sternly speaks its message:

> You [are] just, LORD! Yet I must argue my case publicly against you. Why does the way of the godless prosper?

God never answers Jeremiah's question but rather expects his faith to become even sturdier. A literal translation of 12,5 reads:

> If running against human beings wearies you,
> how will you race against horses?
> If you are secure only in a land of peace,
> what will you do in the thickets of the Jordan?

Symbolically Jeremiah is admitting that things must get worse before they can get better. He will still plunge ahead.

## True and False Prophecy

Jeremiah defies all pat answers for determining the credentials of an authentic prophet. First of all, he seldom if ever claims the *title;* editors or biographers bestow it upon him. Another proof for an authentic prophet's mission from the Lord was to be found in the *fulfillment of prophecy* (Dt 18,21f; Jer 28). On the other hand, Jeremiah's prediction about the return of the northern tribes in 31,1-20 never came true, at least as initially intended by the prophet. Matthew 2,16-23 projects a fulfillment symbolically in Jesus' resurrection as the new Israel, a notion far beyond the horizon of Jeremiah's mind.

Another indicator of a false prophet is *unauthorized or bogus ways of contacting the other world.* Deuteronomy 18,9-14 condemns fortune-tellers, necromancers, and the like. Jeremiah too condemned such people (23,25-32). Yet he was not repudiating all contact with the world of spirits. Rather he sought some control on truthfully relating the dream or vision. On occasion Jeremiah himself experienced visions and supernatural visitations (1,4-10; 24,1-10). Like Micaiah (1 Kgs 22,19-23) or Isaiah (Is 6,1), he stressed the importance of his own presence in the divine council. Jeremiah sternly confronted false prophets:

> Now, who has stood in the council of the LORD,
> to see him and to hear his word? (23,18; see verse 22)

Again, in Chapter 23, Jeremiah stressed *moral integrity* as a sign of true prophecy. He lashed out angrily:

> Concerning the prophets:
> My heart within me is broken,
> my bones all tremble . . .
> Because of the LORD,
> because of his holy words.
> With adulterers the land is filled. . . .
> Both prophet and priest are godless!
> In my very house I find their wickedness,
> says the LORD. (23,9-11)

In calling the priests and temple prophets adulterers, Jeremiah is speaking metaphorically; in their ministry they have betrayed the supreme and intimate love of God. To justify their own halfhearted and wicked ways, they failed to warn the people, who are guilty of injustices and sensuality.

Yet holiness is a difficult criterion of true prophecy. Few if any prophets were without faults. For instance, someone might use against Jeremiah and Amos their own bitter, revengeful language (Am 4,1; Jer 18,19-23; 22,18f).

Some may think that prophets are genuine if they carry within themselves a *strong conviction* of their divine call. Against this credential is Jeremiah's own indecisiveness, waiting "some time" (28,12) or "ten days" (42,7) before replying. His confessions reveal still more trepidation and uncertainty. Still another credential, advanced for true prophecy, comes from *community acceptance.* Against this condition we think at once of Jesus' remark: "no prophet is

accepted in his own native place" (Lk 4,24). Jeremiah is the classic example of the rejected prophet.

The response in judging a true prophet combines all these qualities. Jeremiah's prediction about the return of the northern tribes not only provided the language but also an impetus for hope which outlasted his own lifetime and so was open to reinterpretaton and new application. Despite continuous rejection and persecution, Jeremiah eventually became one of the most popular of prophets. His influence upon the piety of the people evinces the overall impression of heroic holiness. His spontaneous and continuous interaction with God, openly and without personal gain, authenticated the genuineness of his visions.

When all is said and done, we judge prophets' credentials by their wholesome, religious impact upon the people Israel, where they persevered through thick and thin. Eventually the people found their best selves and especially their finest hopes from God reflected in the true prophet. Tradition and discipleship authenticate the true prophet. Long-term community acceptance also decided which of the many true prophets were to have their words enshrined in what eventually came to be called the Bible. C.S.

## Further Reading

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Jeremiah* (Knox Preaching Guides). Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987. Background and summaries lead up to solid application.

Boadt, Lawrence. C.S.P., *Jeremiah 1–25. Jeremiah 26–52, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum* (Old Testament Message, 2 vols.). Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier Inc., 1982. Good for a second round in studying prophecy, this time for its religious value.

Bright, John. *Jeremiah* (Anchor Bible). Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965. Older solid work with a new translation of the biblical text; clear historical background; succinct notes.

Carroll, Robert P. *Jeremiah* (Old Testament Library). Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986. Of the books here listed this one presumes the most extensive background.

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# LAMENTATIONS ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1017–1025 of the Old Testament*]

The introduction in the *New American Bible* orients us to the historical and literary background: these are poems, in the strict and disciplined acrostic form (see below, Orderly Disorder) that mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Here we reflect upon the religious, pastoral setting.

## Prayer Beyond Theology

This book allows us to remain with grief and tragedy long enough to mourn beauty and goodness as they deserve. If we do not mourn adequately, we may assume that nothing too precious was lost. We remain with God, even if events seemingly destroyed God's promises and, in the case of Lamentations, God's presence with us in the Temple. If our sorrow extends beyond the limits of our reasoning, then we plunge into a moment of time not for arguing theology but for allowing emotions to rush forward. Lamentations gushes from the dark, subterranean wellsprings of faith and sears the highest heavens in an outcry of anguish.

Jewish people sang these laments on the ninth day of Ab (July-August in the Gregorian calendar), sorrowfully remembering the two destructions of Jerusalem, by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. and by the Romans in 70 A.D. Jewish Bibles, therefore, place Lamentations with four other liturgical books (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) in a section called *Megilloth* or Scrolls, unrolled for special feasts.

The ancient liturgy of the church called for chanting these laments during Holy Week on what was named the *Tenebrae* or Darkness Service before daybreak. Each Holy Week, Christians lament the death of Jesus as though clocks stopped at that moment. On Good Friday the celebration of the Eucharist is suspended. Sacramental symbols surrender to the agonizing reality of Jesus' death. The music for the Tenebrae services ranks among the masterpieces of Gregorian Chant. The Hebrew letter beginning each new verse, preserved in the Latin text, echoes hauntingly through the church and afterwards through everyone's memory.

Without ever giving a reason, the Book of Lamentations allows us to absorb a good purpose even in meaningless suffering. God, compassionate enough to bear our human outrage, walks us through dark gullies to a plateau of peace.

This book is a triumph of faith over theology, at least theology in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. Because the Davidic dynasty and the holy city of Jerusalem received promises of God's eternal protection (Pss 46; 89; 132), priests and other prophets wanted Jeremiah killed for threatening the city with destruction (Jer 26). National laments, other than Lamentations, had already plunged beyond the limits of theology. In its second part of lament and reflection (verses 10-23), Psalm 44 reverses the theological statements of the introduction (verses 2-9) and introduces its final section almost blasphemously: "Awake! Why are you asleep, O LORD?" Blasphemous, because Psalm 121 declares: "The LORD who made heaven and earth . . . neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel" (verses 2 and 4). It is not that theology is false, only that it has its limits. At such times contemplative prayer does what nothing else can do for us; it sustains us in God's presence with our agony and outrage.

Israelites prayed to God in the place which God had abandoned (Ez 10,18-23). They gathered in the Temple ruins (Jer 41,4-7), a dead place that paradoxically comes alive to address the assembly:

> Come, all you who pass by the way,
> look and see
> Whether there is any suffering like my suffering . . .
> When the LORD afflicted me
> on the day of his blazing wrath. (Lam 1,12)

Other prayers besides Lamentations were being composed: for instance, Isaiah 63,7—64,11; Psalms 79 and 80. Israel seemed to survive less by theological tradition, more within a community at prayer before a compassionate God. This same God admits publicly in Second Isaiah that Israel has received double for all her sins (Is 40,2), that is, too much. There are instances, again beyond the limits of theology, where God *regrets* divine anger and punishment (Ex 32,14; 2 Sm 24,16; Jer 42,10).

## Orderly Disorder

The literary structure of Lamentations blends rigid forms of Hebrew poetry with exceptionally free movement. The first four poems follow the alphabetic or acrostic arrangement: the first letters of the stanzas in Hebrew are the letters of the alphabet, in order. In Chapter 3 all three lines of a stanza start with the same letter, with all the stanzas running through the letters in order. There are deviations from the strict form: in the second and fourth poems, two of the letters are reversed (*ayin* and *peh*) and the fifth poem is not alphabetic at all.

The first four songs follow the *qinah* meter of lament, one of the clearest metric styles in Hebrew poetry. The common Hebrew poetic line has two parts with equal number of accents in each part. *Qinah* has five beats, 3 + 2, so that something is always missing in the second part. The final moment remains suspended and unfinished!

An exceptional variety of attitudes follow one another: national and individual laments of misery (1,12-16; 3,43-45); prayer for help (1,9c); confidence (3,22-25); faith in the wisdom of God to assure that all receive what they deserve (3,26-42); hymn of praise (5,19). Jerusalem is addressed by the congregation (1,1) and also speaks in her own name (1,12-16).

While lamenting how chaos erupts everywhere, even cannibalism in 2,20 and 4,10, the author surrounds the entire exposition with the strict rules of alphabetic poetry and *qinah* meter. The poetry implies that God is still in control; all is not lost. Good order must return and Israel's theology must absorb and teach the lessons of Jerusalem's destruction and exile. At least Second Isaiah, author of Isaiah 40–55, will atttempt this task. Lamentations, however, asks that this process not be hurried. Israel needs space for mourning, time for disorder. Theology too cannot be hurried in unraveling an explanation of redemptive suffering.

## Elusive Authorship and Place in the Bible

The irregularity of the book shows up in still other ways. Despite later tradition, quite a few signs point to someone other than Jeremiah as the author. Lamentations speaks favorably of the Davidic kings (4,20), whereas Jeremiah suffered severely from them (Jer 22,13-19; 37). Lamentations hopes for Egyptian assistance (4,17), while Jeremiah condemned Egypt for stirring up revolt (Jer 37,7f). Lamentations and Jeremiah evaluate the visions granted to other prophets (Lam 2,9c; Jer 23,25-32) quite differently.

In later tradition Jeremiah gradually emerged as the author. We read in 2 Chr 35,25:

> Jeremiah also composed a lamentation over [King] Josiah, which is recited to this day by all the male and female singers in their lamentations over Josiah. These have been made obligatory for Israel, and can be found written in the Lamentations.

In fact, Christian tradition points to a hillside cave north of the walled city of Jerusalem as the place where Jeremiah wept over the city and composed these laments. The Greek translation,

accordingly, transferred this book and that of Baruch (see Jer 36) to a place immediately after the prophecy of Jeremiah. Lamentations especially was subsumed under the name of Jeremiah, so that when the Council of Trent, in a solemn definition of faith, enumerated the inspired books of the Old Testament, Lamentations is not named, only "Jeremiah with Baruch" (Session IV, 8 April 1546). Theologically, therefore, Lamentations becomes a part of the tradition of Jeremiah in reflecting upon suffering as a way of expiating sin. (See the Reading Guide to Jeremiah, The Message of Jeremiah.)

Lamentations reaches out to bond with the prophecies in the second and third parts of Isaiah (Is 40–55 and 56–66). Each deals with the horrendous problem of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the return to a miserable postexilic Jerusalem. The traditions meet each other in a number of images: of the tongue parched with thirst (Lam 4,4; Is 41,17); of the pouring out of wrath (Lam 2,4; 4,11; Is 42,25); of the call to the mind or heart (Lam 3,21; Is 44,19). The almost hopeless agony and strong pleading of Lamentations still resound for us today:

> Our holy and glorious temple
> in which our fathers praised you
> Has been burned with fire;
> all that was dear to us is laid waste.
> Can you hold back, O LORD, after all this?
> Can you remain silent, and afflict us so severely? (Is 64,10f)

Prayer bonded the disciples of Isaiah in exile with those of Jeremiah among the ruins of Jerusalem. This association with Second and Third Isaiah extended to another biblical tradition, found in Deuteronomy and Hosea. These books, with their stress on sensitivity, compassion, and fidelity, enabled the authors of Lamentations to remain faithful to God when God seemed totally absent.

Even though the five poems of Lamentations have much in common, it is difficult to decide upon a single author. They are better explained by traditions of prayer amid Israelites struggling to survive in the rubble of Jerusalem.

## Praying with the Book

The five chapters are not intended to solve the problem of suffering; rather, they let us remain, sorrowing in God's presence. Prayer, like friendship, is not meant to accomplish something, only to be aware of the one we love. Nonetheless, we may find help in a few markers along the way.

The *first* lamentation begins with the sorrow of the author at the sight of the ruined city (verses 1-11). Then Jerusalem herself confesses her sins, her hopes and her anger against the enemy (verses 12-22).

The *second* lamentation lays the devastated city before God (verses 1-10). Technically this is the style of a lament: simply to present the situation as it is in its pain and horror. Strictly speaking, a lament is not a petition for help nor an act of faith. After an intermezzo when the prophet reveals the sorrow in his own heart (verses 11f), the poet addresses the city from the depths of compassion (verses 13-22), beginning: "To what can I liken or compare you, O daughter Jerusalem?"

The *third* lamentation turns into an *individual* cry of sorrow. It begins with an assertiveness that startles us at a time when people's spirits, like their homes are broken apart:

> I am a man who knows affliction
> from the rod of his [God's] anger.
> One whom he has led and forced to walk
> in darkness, not in the light.

While the poet speaks in his own name during most of it, in verses 25-47 other voices speak from a group of sages or wise persons and other friends, baffled by the tragedy (verses 40-47). This poem is the most complex of all.

The *fourth* lamentation returns to the style and mood of the first two. The opening verses tell the end of nobles and children (verses 1-10), followed by a meditation on Jerusalem (verses 11f). After the responsibility is placed upon the religious leaders (verses 13-20), the poem ends with a curse upon the enemy (verses 21f).

The *fifth and last* lamentation was entitled by the Latin Vulgate "The Prayer of Jeremiah." This liturgical prayer sustains its beauty and serenity despite its topic of rejection and tragedy. It asks very little, only that the Lord remember. C. S.

## Further Reading

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# BARUCH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1025–1033 of the Old Testament*]

With only a couple of exceptions, and the Book of Baruch is one of them, the entire Old Testament centers God's action with the chosen people Israel *in the promised land.* The Pentateuch gathers the laws and customs for living rightly upon arrival in this land. The Deuteronomic books from Joshua to 2 Kings lead up to the tragedy of exile from the land due to Israel's sins. The preexilic prophets from Amos to Jeremiah announce this dire punishment if the people do not repent. The prophets of the exile, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah (Is 40–55), prepare

for the return, the latter prophet even using the motif of a new exodus. The postexilic prophets, from Haggai to Malachi, as well as the latest books, like Daniel, presume that Israel receives the promised messianic era within this land. At the end of the Book of Psalms the most important minicollections are pilgrimage songs for going up to Jerusalem (Pss 120–134) or Hallel (Praise) psalms to be sung while at Jerusalem for the three major festivals (Pss 113–118).

## Baruch, A Spirituality for Displaced People

Only a few books admit the possibility of an Israelite living permanently *outside the promised land:* Tobit, Baruch and Wisdom, possibly Esther. The first three never became established within the Hebrew or Palestinian canon of sacred books and so are not part of the Jewish and Protestent versions of the Bible. "Apocryphal" is the Protestant name for these books, originally a Greek word that means "hidden." Catholics call them Deuterocanonical, again from the Greek signifying "second canon," separated from the other, first canon, which contains books universally accepted as inspired and part of the Bible. Even Esther contains notable additions from the deuterocanonical section (see *New American Bible* introduction and the Reading Guide to Esther). As part of the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical Books, Baruch manifests its homelessness or foreign existence.

Jerusalem, nonetheless, is not forgotten in Baruch, particularly in the introduction (1,1-14). The holy city remains the souce of unity and tradition. Granted this, Baruch also declares that we find God in foreign territory.

Baruch, like Tobit and Wisdom, turns out to be the book for people who are separated or lost, physically or emotionally, from their normal environment. True, many aspects of life today in alien or foreign territory are too unique to our own times to find a witness in Baruch. The Bible always needs to be adapted within the contemporary world and church. Yet Baruch helps people, displaced physically or mentally, to get established and going in the right way at peace with God and their neighbors.

In our homelessness Baruch seeks to impart a sense of a) *prayer*—whatever be the situation, we can turn to God; b) *biblical traditions*—some, like Isaiah 40–66 and Job 28, offer special assistance within mysterious situations; c) *hope*—the odds are not too strong against us; d) *strength*—we must not throw precaution and human dignity to the winds of a foreign subculture; e) *realism*—we come to practical terms with life where we are; and, finally, f) *humility*—by fasting and admitting mistakes we remove guilt without projecting it elsewhere.

## Reading the Book of Baruch

We begin with the book, its historical background and religious teaching, and gradually piece together our picture of the author. Baruch, we will see, is an honorary title, inspired by the person with this name who wrote down and preserved the preaching of Jeremiah (Jer 36,5.32). Early Christians considered this book a strong proponent of the Jeremiah tradition. Baruch was a popular title; two other late books, which were not included in the Bible, were attributed to Jeremiah's secretary.

### Summary

After an introduction which recalls the feast of Tabernacles of Jerusalem and the renewal of the covenant (1,1-14), the first part offers to God a humble confession of sin (1,15—3,8) and

receives its response of consolation in the third part (4,5—5,9). In between, a reflection in the style of wisdom literature bridges the way to conversion and renewed loyalty to God's law (3,9—4,4).

If we accept Chapter 6 as an integral part of the book, then we find another touch of orderly arrangement: the opening and closing sections are composed in prose (1,1—3,8 and Chap. 6), the two sections at the center in poetry (3,9—4,4 and 4,5—5,9). Because the form and shape of the biblical books show a careful editorial hand at work and come under divine inspiration as much as did the original author, we look more closely at the sequence within these six chapters.

## Development.

**The Introduction** (1,1-14). Abounds with historical anachronisms. Its purpose is not to provide details but to set a mood, that of exile and separation. The dating is imprecise—"the fifth year" of what? Outside of this passage we know nothing about the high priest Jehoiakim at this period, nothing about the return of silver vessels to the Temple. The Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar never had a son called Belshazzar, a difficulty shared with Daniel 5,2, but a Prince Belshazzar was coregent (joint ruler) with the last Babylonian king before the Persian conquest. The introduction may be referring to the entire time of the exile by naming the first and last of the kings. We must accept all that exile entails.

The inspired literature of the Bible, even when careful about historical details, never intends simply to record history, but to communicate God's attempts to save and sanctify the chosen people within the reality of human existence. Details about the exile provide a setting with which people can identify who are displaced within their own estrangement, physical or emotional. The details are not chosen at random, but carefully for their message. For instance:

> [The people,] small and great alike, . . . wept and fasted and prayed before the LORD, and collected such funds as each could furnish. These they sent to Jerusalem (1,4-7).

Displaced people need solidarity, religious assemblies, outreach in helping others, and a point of contact for unity.

**A Penitential Prayer** (1,15—3,8). Like many others in the Bible: Ezra 9,6-15; Nehemiah 1,5-11; 9,5-37; and especially Daniel 9,4-19. Rather than think that some of these prayers are derived from others, it is better to conclude that Baruch belongs to a common treasury of prayers for exiles. Baruch shows a theological conservatism, typical of people scattered in distant places. Admitting no conscious survival after death (2,17), Baruch lags behind Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7.

This prayer backs off from any type of violence to regain freedom. It encourages acceptance of the incumbent government (2,21-24) and insists that it is not necessarily military, but moral, weakness that brings about sorrow. Throughout, however, Baruch remembers that God witnessed with compassion the suffering of the ancestors in Egypt and remained at their side during their trek through the wilderness.

Typical of biblical literature of the late postexilic period, the Bible quotes the Bible. In Baruch 2,21–23 several prophecies of Jeremiah are blended: Jeremiah 7,34; 27,12 and possibly 29,5-7. The Bible does not quote the Bible literally but with adaptation to the new situation.

The prophecy of Jeremiah by this time has acquired divine status; to disobey the prophecy is to disobey the Lord. The reference to an eternal covenant in 2,34f brings to mind the covenant announcement in Jeremiah 31,31-34; 32,40. God's eternal plans converge on the present moment.

The *New American Bible* translation of 3,4, "Hear the prayers of Israel's *few,*" reads literally in the Greek "Hear the prayers of Israel's *dead.*" If we trace the Greek back to the original Hebrew, we come upon a Hebrew word that with a slight change of vowels, reads "people" (*math*) instead of "dead" (*muth*) and in Isaiah 41,14 a *few* or insignificant people. Here is one of the reasons to support a Hebrew original for Baruch.

**In Praise of Divine Wisdom** (3,9—4,4). Baruch parallels sections of Job 28 as well as Sirach 24, the latter book a Deuterocanonical or apocryphal work, composed around 180 B.C., before the great persecution signaled in Daniel 7–12. This poem of Baruch in turn influenced one of the "Psalms of Solomon," a work written around 50 B.C. at Jerusalem, popular in Judaism and similar to other psalms found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Baruch is an important link between the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and later Jewish works. Even though Judaism ignored Baruch, the tenacious hold of Baruch upon earlier tradition assured it a place in later tradition. The "exile" is coming home!

God's wisdom lies hidden in creation (3,15-31), to be revealed piecemeal in the statements of the law of Moses (3,32—4,4). The references to Canaan, children of Hagar, merchants of Midian and Teman bring a new respect for the land of exile. The text reminds us of the desert bedouins, the wily Midianite merchants, Caanaanites who discovered the alphabet and controlled commercial life, and the learned people at Teman from whose midst came one of Job's comforters (Job 2,11). God's wisdom, however, eludes the world's greatest. Obedience to the law keeps a people within a wholesome morality and draws each one into the mysteries of love and family.

**Lament and Song of Consolation** (4,5-29). The exiles, meditating upon Isaiah 40–55 and 56–66, allow the quiet weeping of the earlier verses (4,5-29) to modulate into tranquil hopes. Speakers merge from section to section: 4,5-9a, the prophet talks encouragingly to the people Israel; 4,9b-16, Jerusalem addresses a lament about her lost children to her neighbors; 4,17-29, Jerusalem turns and speaks to her people in exile; 4,30—5,9, the prophet addresses Jerusalem.

**Letter of Jeremiah** (Chapter 6). Drawing upon a tradition about Jeremiah as a letter writer (Jer 29) and a depositor of divine secrets (2 Mc 2,2), the author, most probably one of the synagogue preachers, attacks idolatry with the irony and sarcasm of earlier prophets (Jer 10,1-16 and Is 44,9-20). If the seven generations of verse 2 begin with one of the deportations from Jerusalem (597 or 587 B.C.), we arrive at a date around 317 or 306 B.C. The colossal city of Babylon, once famous for its hanging gardens, was now crumbling into ruins, a stark reminder of what happens to all idols and their worshipers. The sermon gathers momentum with its frequent refrain which the congregation would quickly learn and repeat: verses 14, 22, 28, 39, 44, 50, 56, 64, and the grand finale, 71f.

Ridicule is not the only Old Testament response to idols and the gods. At best, foreign people did not worship idols any more than Israelites worshiped the cherubim who upheld the throne of God (Ex 25,17-22). Yet the danger was always present (2 Kgs 18,4). The multiplication of gods and statues (their footstools on earth) led to ever-greater and more ridiculous

superstition. The worship of fertility gods also produced lewd forms of prostitution within the Temple precincts (verse 10). Another reaction to idolatry came when other nations conquered Israel and attributed their victory to their gods. Israel pictured the Lord fighting fiercely against these deities (Is 51,9f; Ps 89,11), so that the gods of the nations appeared real and formidable. Here in Baruch, on the other hand, idolatry seems more foolish than threatening. Israel's diatribes against the gods, therefore, depended upon the strength or weakness of her conquerors, or upon the danger of Israelites being assimilated within foreign cultures, to the loss of their own religious and national identity.

## Religious Teaching

The author, we have seen, drew heavily upon Jeremiah and Second Isaiah (Is 40–55), and also upon postexilic writers like Job, Third Isaiah (Is 56–66), and even one as late as Sirach (around 190 B.C.), to produce something different from any one of these. The Bible, in quoting or alluding to the Bible, is no literalist, but finds the living word of God at home with God among the people of each age.

Because of the dangers of living in exile, a strong doctrine about God appears here, especially monotheism. The sorrows of exile lead to extended reflection upon sin, repentance, and idolatry. The author remains a person of hope, yet his desires are small! He does not adopt traditions about life after death, nor does he await a messiah. Enough if the exiled family survives with peace and dignity.

□ *Monotheism* is beyond dispute, the gods are to be scorned (Chap. 6)! Israel's God created the heavens, the earth and all they contain (3,32-35), and is enthroned eternally in the highest heaven (3,3). God is rightly the supreme source of wisdom (3,12.32), just (1,15; 2,6-10) and merciful (2,27; 3,1; 5,9).

□ *Sin* disrupts and repudiates God's wisdom for the universe (2,12); it is an act of rebellion (1,22; 4,7). The sins of individuals, however, receive little attention. Typical of older traditions, Baruch thinks of *all* Israel and national apostasy (1,16-20; 2,1-6). In this way Baruch parts company with Jeremiah (Jer 31,29f) and Ezekiel (Ez 18). Yet Baruch's insistence that sin always brings suffering in its wake (1,13.15; 2,1-5) moves closer to Jeremiah (Jer 2,5.19).

□ *Repentance* is the principal reason for putting together the Book of Baruch. Israel needs to be honest in confessing her faults (2,14; 3,2) and returning to the sole fount of goodness (2,8; 4,28).

□ *Hope* emerges as the dominant attitude in this book. Even though the author or editor limits life to this earth and to the future generations (2,17) and never connects with earlier traditions about a promised messiah, nonetheless, *eternity* becomes a key word: an eternal covenant (2,35) with God who abides eternally (3,3). Salvation, therefore, comes from an eternal God (4,8). Eternity pervades sentences about God's consolation to Israel (4,10.21-24.35; 5,2) as well as announcements of eternal joy (4,23.29; 5,1.4).

## Author and Canonical Status

Jerome was the only stubborn, discordant voice. Other than Jerome, church writers from 150 A.D. unanimously accepted Baruch as part of the inspired Scriptures. It is just the opposite with Jewish tradition, which ignored the book. At the time of the Protestant reformation and the

return to the original texts, Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New, Baruch was relegated to an appendix with other books not found in the Hebrew Bible.

Because Jerome rejected, and therefore refused to work on, the text, the Vulgate continued the Old Latin, a version transmitted freely in Africa and then Europe and damaged in the process. Modern translations return to the ancient Greek manuscripts. Textual difficulties become more compounded. The Greek separated the books differently: after Jeremiah, it placed Baruch Chapters 1–5, then Lamentations, and finally Baruch Chapter 6. It is quite likely that a Hebrew text, no longer in existence, lies behind the Greek. Some fragments of the Greek have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Finally, we ask: who was Baruch? If the author was a single individual, at least for the first five chapters, then this person was able to pick and choose through a variety of sacred traditions: at times siding with Jeremiah, at times going in a different direction; extending the interaction to Isaiah 40–66, Job, and even Sirach. The Sirach reference places him after 190 B.C. Although writing from outside Jerusalem, the author still continued in close enough contact to write originally in Hebrew and to believe in the Holy City as the bond of unity.

The diversity within the Greek text leads in the direction of a tradition of prayer and preaching in the synagogue. An editor from somewhere in exile gathered the material into a single book, at the earliest about 180 B.C., possibly at the end of the Maccabean revolt around 150 B.C. C.S.

## Further Reading.

Dancy, J. C. *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972. The emphasis is upon literary and historical details.

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# EZEKIEL □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1034–1086 of the Old Testament*]

We approach this prophecy first according to our overall impression, that of *Ezekiel the paradox;* then we study what comes immediately to our attention, *Ezekiel the book* as we find it in the Bible; third, we attempt to appreciate one of the most obscure individuals in the Bible, *Ezekiel the person.* Finally we summarize the major themes within *Ezekiel the message.*

## Ezekiel The Paradox

Ezekiel combines so many different traditions and literary styles as to end up a paradox. The diversity seems so extensive, even outrageous at times, that some have doubted the prophet's

mental equilibrium. Or were his editors responsible for the way by which life-style and literary content are pushed to one extreme or another? Rather than eccentric, however, Ezekiel may turn out to be one of the most brilliant, versatile speakers in the Bible.

## Priest and Prophet

Ever since the prophet Amos clashed with the high priest Amaziah (Am 7,10-17) and the prophet Jeremiah condemned the Jerusalem Temple (Jer 7; 26), prophecy and priesthood seemed absolutely opposed to each other. Ezekiel remained closely in touch with the earlier prophetical movement and strongly influenced its future direction. Like them he severely condemned priesthood and Temple in Chapters 8–11. Yet among the prophetical books Ezekiel's turns out to be the most priestly.

Ezekiel deserves his title "the father of Judaism" for his part in influencing the laws and customs in the Books of Moses, particularly the Holiness Code within the Priestly tradition (Lv 17–26). He was instrumental in persuading later prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, and Joel to work in concert with priesthood. Yet the paradox remains. Despite this honorary title for Ezekiel, his book was still in doubt among some rabbis in the time of Jesus. They spotted contradictions with the Priestly Law of Moses.

## Self-Conscious Yet Impersonal

All forty-eight chapters of this prophecy bear the imprint of "I, Ezekiel." Unlike many other prophetical books, this one includes no "biographical" account *about* the prophet, as found in Amos 7,10-17 and especially in Jeremiah 26–29; 34–45. Despite the continuous use of the first person singular, I or me, this prophet steps forward from the pages of his book almost faceless—as though peering at a distant vision or remorselessly announcing destruction. There is only one exception to such a cold, passionless approach, the instance about the death of his wife, lovingly called "the delight of your eyes" (24,16f). Even here, however, he is ordered not to act humanely nor to mourn her sudden passing.

The speeches of Ezekiel lack the creative touch of an Amos or Jeremiah, each with their strong personal investment, each with images from their daily life and with words of striking force. Ezekiel's discourses come across stereotyped and repetitious. We lose the identity of the real Ezekiel beneath this cloak of generic speech.

## Organized Disorder

The paradox continues in that no book at first reading seems more carefully organized, yet under close scrutiny no book in the Hebrew Bible is textually more disturbed. Literary difficulties appear at once in the opening three verses of the book. Verse 1 states very precisely "In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month," yet fails to give a point of reference: thirtieth year of what! It continues typically in the first person singular, "I was among the exiles . . ." Verse 2 clarifies only "the fifth day of the month" by placing it within "the fifth year, that is, of King Jehoiachin's exile," leaving "the thirtieth year" of verse 1 dangling. Verse 3 introduces a reference by the editor to Ezekiel in the third person: "The word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel," but continues immediately in the first person: "The hand of the LORD came upon *me*." Clearly one or more editors is annotating the words of Ezekiel and confusing us.

The *New American Bible* frequently changes the sequence of verses within chapters in an

attempt to clarify a disorderly situation. The principle of the *NAB* editors seems to be: hypothetical clarity is preferable to sure obfuscation. For instance, in Chapters 8–11, the *NAB* retains the heading of each chapter yet drastically rearranges chapters and verses:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chap. 8 | 8,3.5–18; |
| Chap. 9 | 9,1-11; 11,24f; |
| Chap. 10 | 8,1f.4; 10,20-22.14f.9-13.16f.1-8.18f; 11,22f; |
| Chap. 11 | 11,1-21. |

This section in the *New American Bible,* as compared with the Hebrew text or with the Revised Standard Version translation, shows still other modifications.

The paradox of Ezekiel's prophecy meets us in still other ways. His prose turns out to be repetitive and wordy; his poetry, on the contrary, is among the sharpest and most succinct in the Bible. Writing in prose, Ezekiel is meticulous to the point of being a bore, all the while confusing us with the proliferation of details, as in the description of the four living creatures in Chapter 1 or in the measurements of the new Temple in Chapters 40–42. Yet through the centuries the prose passages have inspired an unusual fellowship of Black or African-American Spirituals, revival preachers, and Roman Catholic canon lawyers drawing up rules for priesthood and ritual!

## Ezekiel the Book

Like other major prophets, here too the name Ezekiel stands for a book, a person, and a message. Our study of the book begins with the overall plan and then we walk through the book by concentrating upon the rich literary style.

### The Plan

The outline of the book is clearly discernible. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus, writing some years after the Jewish revolt against Rome, stated that Ezekiel "left behind him in writing *two* books" (*Antiquities,* Bk. X, ch. V). Josephus, however, was probably referring to the two major sections, one condemning Jerusalem to total destruction (Chapters 1–24) and the other announcing the resurrection of a new people and a new Jerusalem (Chapters 25–28).

Another bipartite division is identifiable: Ezekiel the Prophet (Chapters 1–39) and Ezekiel the Priest (Chapters 40–48). Other subdivisions emerge to direct our reading:

*Chaps. 1–39, Ezekiel the Prophet*

| | |
|---|---|
| Chaps. 1–3 | the call to prophesy |
| Chaps. 4–24 | the condemnation of Jerusalem |
| Chaps. 25–32 | the oracles against the nations |
| Chaps. 33–37 | Israel's revival and transformation |
| Chaps. 38–39 | the final defeat of world forces |

*Chaps. 40–48, Ezekiel the Priest*

| | |
|---|---|
| Chaps. 40–43 | the new Temple |
| Chaps. 44–46 | the new way of life |
| Chaps. 47–48 | the new promised land |

## Major Historical Developments

The format of the book follows national and world events as these affected the people Israel. The nations are God's instruments for punishing a sinful people (Chapters 4–24). Once the Israelites are exiled in the foreign land of Babylon, the prophet prepares for the rebirth of his people, first through oracles that proclaim the destruction of those foreign nations responsible for Israel's suffering and exile, especially Egypt and Tyre (Chapters 25–32), then through speeches and visions that announce Israel's religious renewal beyond all expectations (Chapters 33–37). Because the restoration was not as final as one would have wished, Ezekiel foresees another victory for the Lord, this time definitive against mammoth world forces (Chapters 38–39). Then will the Lord finally achieve the total peace of Jerusalem and the transformation of the promised land into paradise (Chapters 40–48).

A series of dates within the book enables us to locate the prophecy of Ezekiel within national and international events. These dates all follow the same format, identifying the day, month, and year from the coronation of King Jehoiachin at Jerusalem. Unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel never accepted the legitimacy of Jehoiachin's successor, Zedekiah, installed at Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

| *date* | *event or prophecy* |
|---|---|
| 598 B.C. | Jehoiachin king at Jerusalem |
| 597 B.C. | First exile; Jehoiachin and Ezekiel are taken to Babylon. Zedekiah is installed as king |
| 594/3 B.C. | Zedekiah, against Jeremiah's advice, plans to revolt |
| 593 B.C. | Ezekiel's call to prophesy: 1,2; 3,16 |
| 592 B.C. | Vision of corruption in the Temple: 8,1 |
| 591 B.C. | History of rebellion: 20,1 |
| 589 B.C. | Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem |
| 589 B.C. | Jerusalem, a fiery cauldron: 24,1 |
| 588 B.C. | Hophra, pharaoh of Egypt |
| 588/7B.C. | Ezekiel's oracles against Egypt: 29,1; 30,20; 31,1 |
| 587 B.C. | Zedekiah is captured; Jerusalem destroyed |
| 586(5)B.C. | News of Jerusalem's fall reaches Ezekiel: 33,21 |
| 586 B.C. | Further oracles against Tyre: 26,1; against Egypt: 32,1.17 |
| 585 B.C. | Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Tyre |
| 573 B.C. | Vision of the new Temple: 40,1 |
| 571 B.C. | Egypt will be conquered instead of Tyre: 29,17 (latest date in the book) |
| 568 B.C. | Nebuchadnezzar invades Egypt |
| 562 B.C. | Nebuchadnezzar dies; Jehoiachin is released from prison (Jer 52,31-34) |
| 539 B.C. | Cyrus conquers Babylon and orders the release of all captive peoples |

According to the first and the final dates in Ezekiel (1,2; 29,17) the prophet's ministry extended at least from July 593 B.C. to April 571 B.C.. As we shall see, disciples and editors further adapted the prophecy, to bring it up to date with later political changes across the world.

## Literary Unity

Two principal ways by which the editor holds this complex prophecy together, are: a) identical words and phrases which appear throughout the book; and b) visions, especially that of the four living creatures in Chapter 1.

**Words and Phrases.** Whatever be the later editorial modifications, identical words or phrases show the touch of Ezekiel throughout the book. Together with the stereotyped formula for dates, the following examples, though by no means complete, can be cited:

"The hand of the LORD came upon me": 1,3; 3,14.22; 8,1; 33,22; 37,1; 40,1.

"know that I, the LORD": 6,7.10.13.14; 7,4.9.27; 11,10.12; 32,15; 33,29; 38,23.

"I, the LORD, have spoken": 5,13.15.17; 12,25; 17,24; 21,22; 22,14; 34,24; 36,36.

Many other phrases can be listed: for instance, "glory of the LORD"; "rebellious house"; "abominations"; "stretch out my hand against."

**Visions.** The book is also bonded together by a series of visions, especially that of the four living creatures in Chapter 1. Ezekiel frequently felt "the hand of the LORD upon" himself, a signal in the book that he is being drawn into a mystic phenomenon. Visions introduce key sections of his prophecy: the vision of the four living creatures that witness his call to be a prophet (1,4—3,15); the vision of idolatry in the Temple that seals the fate of Jerusalem (Chapters 8–11); the vision of dry bones that prepares for the resurrection of exiled Israel to new life (Chapter 37); the vision of the new Jerusalem (Chapters 40; 43) and the vision of a miraculous stream of water flowing from the altar (47,1-12) that draw the prophecy to a conclusion.

These visions come publicly certified. Ezekiel did not dream alone in bed at night but in the presence of the elders (8,1); he announced the vision to all the exiles (11,25). The scene becomes all the more dramatic. In one instance, Pelatiah, an Israelite leader against whom Ezekiel was prophesying, collapsed dead on the spot, and Ezekiel himself fell prone, crying out in a loud voice, "Alas, LORD God!" (11,1.13).

# Major Sections of the Book

## The Four Living Creatures (Chapters 1–3)

This opening vision sets the tone and creates the stage props for the entire book.

□ *1,4-28* introduces the prophet's call to ministry. In Chapter 3 the vision is interspersed with other topics to be introduced at key transitions later in the book: 24,25-27 and Chapter 33 present the prophet as watchman and as stricken with dumbness.

□ *8,1-4; 10; 11,22f* provide the setting to announce the destruction of the Temple.

□ *37,1* introduces the vision of dry bones and completes what was begun in 3,22f where Ezekiel is led out onto a plain but with no further action.

□ *43,1-9* terminates the vision of the new Temple in chapters 40-42. These verses not only echo phrases from the opening vision (for instance, "the roaring of the many [or mighty] waters" in 1,24; 43,1) but also undo the curse placed upon Jerusalem with the departure of the glory of the Lord in 10,18-23.

The editors, accordingly, have united the entire prophecy of Ezekiel around the cherubim, the four living creatures who once upheld the throne of the Lord in the Holy of Holies of the

Jerusalem Temple (Ex 25,17-22). Not only Ezekiel's vocation in Chapter 1–3 but the history of Israel center upon an image derived from the Jerusalem Temple.

## Symbolic Actions (Chapters 4–12)

Not only the visions but many symbolic actions surround Ezekiel with an aura. At first these actions stir curiosity, but very soon curiosity is overtaken by anxiety and fear. After fixing everyone's attention upon his strange movements, Ezekiel startled his observers with an explanation as devastating as any verdict can be. Each account follows a precise pattern: 1) a command from the Lord; 2) its careful execution; and 3) its meaning for Israel. The "autobiographical" element is so absorbed into a command from God that Ezekiel almost appears to be an automaton, acting blindly on divine orders.

The first set of four symbolic actions occurs in 4,1—5,17. Once the fiery destruction of Jerusalem and the fearful trek into exile are prophetically acted out, they cannot be reversed:

□ *4,1-3* The siege of Jerusalem is portrayed with allegorical signs for a ramp, battering rams, and further sealing off of the city.

□ *4,4-8* The siege is symbolized by the prophet's lying 390 days on his left side for the sins of the northern kingdom of Israel and 40 days on his right side for the sins of the southern kingdom of Judah, all the while bound with cords. Israel must endure the full length of the siege.

□ *4,9-17* The hunger and thirst of a long siege is anticipated in the prophet's eating and drinking only very limited amounts at scheduled times as he lies on his side. Bread is baked over human excrement, indicating the uncleanness of exile lands.

□ *5,1-17* The prophet shaves the hair from his head and beard (for an Israelite man something very demeaning—2 Sm 10,4) and then proceeds to burn a third, strike a third with the sword, and scatter a third to the winds, to symbolize the burning of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the survivors.

In each of these cases the action and the explanation make little sense by themselves. Only when action and words are combined does each clarify and strengthen the overall impression. When Ezekiel pronounced the words "This is Jerusalem" over the actions, the people realized that the destruction of the city and the exile had begun. Symbol is prophecy in the first stages of fulfillment.

These examples from Ezekiel offer an important biblical parallel for sacramental theology in the church. Sacraments consist of words; materials like bread, wine, oil, or water; and actions like eating, washing, or anointing. In the Eucharist, bread and wine by themselves would say very little but physical nourishment; the eucharistic words "This is my body broken . . . my blood shed," remain a vague reference to the death of Jesus. When these words are spoken over bread and wine, by faith we find ourselves before the body and blood of Jesus, recalling for us the Lord's death on the cross and his bodily resurrection. Just as Ezekiel's actions and words sealed the destruction and exile as absolute, irreversible facts, likewise, the sacramental actions and words together achieve what they symbolize. The symbolism of the Eucharist denotes the continued impact of Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives, enabling us to live and proclaim the death of Christ (1 Cor 11,26).

Editors reinterpreted Ezekiel's symbolic actions and visions. We find additions, for instance in 5,3f, where a small amount of hair is preserved in the hem of the garment, to indicate that

not all the people will be lost in the oblivion of death and exile. In fact, this fourth symbolic action is given four interrelated but separate interpretations: 5,7-10.11-13.14f.16f.

We read of other symbolic actions of the city's destruction and of exile. At times the standard literary pattern is missing; in Chapter 21, the Hebrew text is almost hopelessly disturbed. These sections kept the pressure upon Israel that God is prepared to sacrifice everything, even that which is most sacred, like the Temple, to achieve a new people with interior dedication and social justice toward the neighbor. We note these symbols of the exile: 12,1-16: packing one's baggage and crawling through a hole in the city wall; 12,17-20: eating and drinking with trembling and horror; 21,11f: groaning bitterly; 21,19-22: clapping hands and waving a sword; 24,15-17: not mourning the death of his wife, just as the people are not to mourn the death of Jerusalem; 37,15-28: tying two sticks together, indicating that the remnants of the northern and southern kingdoms will be united peacefully under a Davidic prince around the sanctuary. Symbolic actions thus extend into hopeful prophecies for the future.

## Other Literary Forms (Chapters 13–24)

The momentum toward destruction and exile continues in a wide variety of literary forms. These chapters manifest the masterful versicular ability of Ezekiel.

□ *13,1-23* two *prophecies of woe,* one against male prophets for proclaiming peace that is nothing other than a whitewash over sin, another against female prophets because of black magic. The American bishops' pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* (May 1983; no. 35) refers to verse 16 and its condemnation of false prophets who speak of peace while condoning social injustice and religious idolatry.

□ *14,1-23* a *legal case* against idol-worshipers, so serious that even the greatest of intercessors—Noah, Daniel, and Job, three traditional representations of righteousness—cannot help; only personal responsibility will prevail. This section so impressed Sirach that he mentions only two details about Ezekiel: "the different creatures of the chariot" (in Chap. 1) and "Job, who always persevered in the right path" (Sir 49,8f).

□ *15,1-8* a scornful *disputation* with the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they are a wine without fruit, useful only for firewood, and hardly much good at that! The uselessness of the vine that produces no grapes, or inedible ones, is an image of the people who, in spite of God's best efforts, continue in idolatry and injustice. The image is based on the fact that the wood of the vine cannot be used for building or carving; it only splinters, and therefore is only good for firewood. See also Isaiah 9,1-7.

□ *16,1-63* an *allegory* about Jerusalem, beloved and richly gifted by God, flaunting herself as a prostitute, just like the foreigners from whom she sprang.

□ *17,1-24* a *fable,* featuring an eagle, a cedar, and a vine, in style like the riddles of wisdom literature (Prv 1,6) and similar to Judges 9,7-21. Ezekiel connects with the tradition of a tender shoot as a symbol of a Davidic prince (Is 11,1; Jer 23,5; Zec 3,8).

□ *18, 1-32* a long *disputation* on personal responsibility. Like Jeremiah 31,27-30 Ezekiel condemns the misuse of a proverb as a cover-up for one's own sins.

□ *19,1-14* a funeral *dirge,* bordering on cruel ridicule. Jerusalem, while still alive, is mourned as one would address the dead.

□ *20,1-44* a *prophetic speech* about God's interventions to save Israel, normally a "creed" of salvation (Dt 26,1-11), here like Psalm 106 a litany of the people's infidelities. Theologically verses 24-26 constitute one of the most difficult passages in the entire Old

Testament. God declares almost perversely: "I gave statutes that were not good, and ordinances through which they could not live. I let them become defiled by their gifts." For Ezekiel God is mysteriously beyond human explanations and rules. Other sections, like Chapter 18, provide another insight into personal responsibility, or, like Chapter 16, into a personal God close to the people.

□ *21,1-37* Three *prophecies of doom* linked by the image of a sword. God's decision is set for Nebuchadnezzar to advance against Jerusalem.

□ *22,1-31 Prophecy and allegory* decree the punishment of Jerusalem, a city of blood and guilt.

□ *23,1-49* a long *allegory* about two immoral sisters, lewdly squandering their rich blessings.

□ *24,1-14* (an *allegory*) and *24,15-27* (a *symbolic action*): the filthy pot or cauldron cannot be cleansed, only destroyed. Do not mourn.

So ends the first major part of Ezekiel's prophecy. It abounds with a wealth of literary forms, introduced in creative ways. It frequently touches down in the complex history of Israel. From the beginning God is determined to destroy Jerusalem, too wicked to be purified any further. Ezekiel will now await the news of the city's destruction in Chapter 33 and then begin to reconstruct a new people. First, however, the editor records the oracles against the nations.

## Oracles Against the Nations (Chapters 25–32)

Prophetic speeches, condemning foreign nations and, with mockery, singing dirges over their death, have become a biblical pattern: Amos 1,2—2,16; Isaiah 13–23; Jeremiah 46–51. The practice probably originated in Temple petitions for victory and in ritual curses against the enemy.

Ezekiel concentrates principally upon Egypt, which was often responsible for fomenting useless and costly revolts against Assyria and, later, Babylon, and upon Tyre, typical of Canaanite influences that corrupted Israelite morals. There are seven oracles altogether against the nations. Seven not only typifies the complete removal of hostile forces (seven, a perfect number) but represents the seven nations of Palestine that Joshua was told to dislodge in favor of Israel (Dt 7,1-4). In many prophetical books the oracles against the nations are placed between the section condemning Israel and that announcing her revival. This allocation theologically shows that God overcomes every obstacle, first in Israel's sins (Is 1–12; Ez 1–24; Zep 1,2—2,3) and then in the nations' opposition (Is 13–23; Ez 25–32; Zep 2,4-15), before resurrecting the people Israel to new life (Is 24–26; 34–35; Ez 33–48; Zep 3,1-20).

□ *28,11-19* represents an alternate version of the story of creation and the fall. Here the mythological aspects are much more apparent than in Gen 2,4—3,24. Both places draw upon a reservoir of ancient myths, theologically adapting the details for their own special religious message.

## Message of Consolation (Chapters 33–37)

The opening chapter recalls earlier passages and moves us into a new age for Israel. The prophet as watchman (verses 1-9) links up with 3,16-21 and Ezekiel's initial call; the passage on individual retribution (verses 10-20) with Chapter 18, a centerpiece of Ezekiel's theology of sin, guilt, and punishment; the arrival of the fugitive from Jerusalem and the end of Ezekiel's muteness (verses 21f) with 3,22-27 and 24,25-27. The final verses 23-33 insist that salvation is

reserved for those in exile, not for those left behind in the land, but only for those exiles interiorly transformed. The passage is anticipating 36,16-38.

Chapter 34—a long tradition, particularly in Jeremiah, of referring to kings as shepherds lies behind this chapter: 2 Samuel 5,2; Micah 5,4; Jeremiah 2,8; 3,15; 23, 1-6. Ezekiel's passage in turn influenced Zechariah 11,4-17, and together they helped to form New Testament readings like Mark 6,34 and John 10.

□ *36,16-38* makes an interesting study with Jeremiah 31,31-37. Both speak of an interior renewal. Ezekiel, showing himself to be more and more the priest, introduces a number of ritual or external details to accompany the interior transformation: cease to profane my holy name; prove my holiness; sprinkle with clean (or holy) water; cleanse you of idols; observe my decrees. (See the Reading Guide on Jeremiah, The Message of Jeremiah.)

□ *37,1-14* uses two different images to recount Israel's revival. In verses 1-11 dry bones scattered across a field are fitted together, covered with sinews and flesh, and finally brought to life by the breathing of the spirit; in the other image the bones rise out of a grave (verses 12-14). God deliberately waits upon Ezekiel to prophesy over the dead bones and to summon the spirit.

## The Lord's World Victory (Chapters 38–39)

Ezekiel and his editors wrestle with a serious pastoral problem, potentially more dangerous than any foreign military force represented here by Gog and the land of Magog. After the purifying renewal of Israel during the exile and the return to the promised land, why did Israel not experience the final glorious fulfillment of God's promises? Jeremiah had begun to answer this question by referring to "the coming days" (Jer 31,31—see Reading Guide on Jeremiah, The Message of Jeremiah). This in-between period spanned the time between the *initial* renewal of Israel and the definitive *everlasting* victory of peace which was still to come. Ezekiel also refers to this interim time: "after many days" (38,8).

The crisis behind Chapters 38–39 may be the long, dreary, frustrating stretch of existence after the return from exile. The prophecies of Haggai and First Zechariah (Zec 1–8) are also responding to this discouraging "day of small beginnings" (Zec 4,10). We are witnessing the origins of a literary form called Apocalyptic. Symbolism is central, frequently drawn from ancient times, usually with clashing shapes, colors, and sounds, normally in need of angelic interpreters, always agreeing that God's mighty intervention alone will overcome the monstrous forces of evil. During periods of severe crises, preachers and writers turn to the final day of the Lord, as in the case of Daniel 7–12, the Book of Revelation, and Christian sects through the centuries.

Chapters 38–39, despite many editorial additions, show the strong hand of Ezekiel. As the note in the *New American Bible* points out, the name of the enemy, Gog, may derive from Gyges, king of Lydia (or Magog); or it may have stemmed from Agag, an Amalekite king and traditional enemy of Israel (Ex 17,9-15; 1 Sm 15). Gog and Magog reappear in rabbinical literature, responsible for the final terrifying distress upon Israel; similarly, in Revelation 20,7-10 they begin the ultimate, decisive conflict with the forces of the anti-Christ. Many biblical allusions are woven into these chapters: for instance, the foe from the north (38,6; see Jer 4,6; 6,22); the day of the Lord (38,10; see Am 5,18; Is 4,2; 7,20-25; 11,10); plunder and pillage (38,12; see Is 8,1 and note of *NAB;* 10,2.6); a great shaking (38,19; see Hg 2,6f); birds of prey and wild beasts (39,4; see Jer 12,9; Mt 24,28; Lk 17,37).

The final verses of this section (39,21-29) may once have concluded the Book of Ezekiel; they summarize well the goals of his preaching.

## Vision of the New Temple, Land, and Community (Chapters 40–48)

Visions surround this final section (40,1—44,4; 47,1-12); between these visions and after 47,12, Ezekiel provides ordinances or instructions for the community and its leadership which his disciples or editors develop still further. Several key passages deserve attention.

□ *43,1-9* In Chapter 10 the glory of the Lord moved from the Holy of Holies to the threshold or door of the sanctuary, then to the eastern gate of the Temple courtyard, and finally across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. The glory of the Lord now reverses the journey and returns from the Mount of Olives to its place above the Ark of the Covenant between the wings of the cherubim (see Ex 25,10-22). In the days of Moses the descent of the glory of the Lord consecrated the first meeting tent (Ex 40,34-38). Its departure in Chapter 10 left the Temple open to pillage and destruction; the return in Chapter 43 promises the Temple a place in the final age. Ezekiel was certainly more committed than Jeremiah to the Temple and the Ark (see Jer 3,16-18; 7,14). The Book of Revelation describes the heavenly Jerusalem without Temple and Ark of the Covenant (Rev 21,22-27). In John 2,21, Jesus becomes the Temple of the Lord; St. Paul insists that Christians, by bonding with Jesus, are that Temple (1 Cor 3,16f; Eph 2,21f). In these and other ways the Bible vigorously reinterprets earlier promises about the edifice of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Bible does not favor a literalist interpretation.

□ In *44,4-31* Ezekiel takes a strong stand against the more open positions of Deuteronomy and Third Isaiah (Is 56–66). In verses 5-9 Ezekiel prohibits all foreigners from entering the Temple. Deuteronomy 23,2-9 at least offers ways for their conversion to Judaism; Isaiah 56,6-8 and 66,18-21 are still more open-minded and permit them to function as priests. Both Deuteronomy 10,16; 30,6 and Jeremiah 4,4 already spoke of circumcision of the heart, which foreigners as well as Jews, women as well as men, can receive from God. It is more important than any physical sign for membership in the people of God (see Rom 2,28f; Col 2,11).

Ezekiel manifests as well a restrictive approach towards Levites in order to enhance the priestly family of the Zadokites. While Deuteronomy 18,1-8 insisted that Levites from any part of the country possessed equal rights to minister at the sanctuary and to live from its stipends, Ezekiel 44,10-31 carefully demotes all Levites except those of the family of Zadok. In fact, he insists that "these are . . . the only Levites who may come near to minister to the LORD" (40,46; 43,19). These Levites spell their name with a capital "L"!

□ *45,18-23* include a calendar of feasts. The exact day for Atonement or *Yom Kippur* is still unsettled. The *New American Bible* follows the Greek version at 45,20, placing atonement on the "first" day of the seventh month; the Hebrew text states "seventh" day. Nehemiah 9,1 seems to identify the 24th day for repentance. Zechariah 7 itemizes several periods of fasting when the people inquire about their binding force. The long explanation and elaborate ritual in Leviticus 16, placing *Yom Kippur* on the tenth day of the month (16,29), represents the end of a long process beyond the time of Ezekiel.

□ *46,2* drops the title of king and reduces the heir of the Davidic royalty to the rank of a "prince"! Forty-three,7-9 already spoke against the profanation of the Temple by the earlier kings; 45,7f and 48,21f restrict the property rights of the prince. In 44,3 the prince no longer approaches the altar to lead the people in prayer and offer sacrifice, as did Solomon in 1 Kings 3,4; 8,54-66. Royal privileges and powers are being transferred to the high priest. Biblical

passages about the eternal promises to David are no longer addressed to any incumbent heir but are understood as promises for the future Messiah. Important passages about the Davidic dynasty, like 2 Samuel 7, Psalms 2 and 110, are being reinterpreted, a process begun in Ezekiel, continued in Zechariah 3,1-10; 6,9-15; 12,1-14, completed by the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament (see Mt 22,41-46; Acts 2,32-36; 13,32-34).

□ *47,1-12* offers a vision of fresh water, flowing from the altar, down the Kidron Valley, into the Dead Sea. It is part of a biblical tradition, symbolically declaring that all life flows from God, enthroned at the Temple (see Ps 46,5; Jl 4,18-21; Zec 14,8). The long passage in Sirach 24 transforms this stream into the four rivers of paradise, awaiting the wise person and true worshipper. The Temple accordingly becomes a symbol of the messianic era and mirrors God's true and everlasting home in heaven (Is 66,1f). The passage from Ezekiel, especially its opening words, has inspired the ancient paschal hymn, in Latin *Vidi aquam,* "I saw water." Water became an important feature in the Easter liturgy. The Book of Ezekiel ends fittingly with the new name for Jerusalem, "The Lord is here" (48,35).

## Ezekiel the Person

Here we summarize the material in the preceding two sections and add a few other details, so that we become better acquainted with the prophet behind the book and tradition.

### Biographical details

The book opens in 593/2 B.C. with Ezekiel already in exile at a village called Tel Abib (1,1; 3,15). The city was on the banks of the river Chebar, actually a canal running south from the capital city of Babylon. In Hebrew, the city's name means "Hill of the Ear [of grain]" or "of the Springtime"; in the Akkadian language of the local area, "Hill of the Flood." It is not clear when Ezekiel made the 900-mile trek across the Fertile Crescent, northward from Israel, eastward across Syria, then southward (in modern Iraq) down the Euphrates river. The Babylonians may have deported him in 597 B.C., the year of Jerusalem's first collapse, when King Jehoiachin was also taken captive. Or he may have gone freely to join the exiles sometime before 593/2 B.C. The latest date in the book is 571 B.C. (29,17). He prophesied for at least twenty-one years. He was born of a priestly family (1,3) and was married (24,16-18).

Although most of our attention is given to the book—that has to be our starting point—nonetheless, writing was secondary for Ezekiel. Throughout the book he is being continually ordered to prophesy and say, hear the word (6,2-3; 13,2; 34,2); speak and say (14,4; 20,3); propose a riddle and speak this proverb (17,2); raise a lament and say (19,1-3; 27,2f).

These facts about Ezekiel, "the public person," enable us to appreciate better how he could be objective and distant and yet intensely present with his audience. The setting of prayer and worship easily induced gestures, symbolic actions, public demonstrations of faith, serious confrontations, absorption in God, a mystic aura around the divine presence.

### Strong and Enigmatic

Ezekiel's elusive presence is nowhere more evident than in the title, "son of man," which occurs 92 times. Ezekiel sinks into the common flesh and blood of humanity, especially Jewish humanity. Despite the continuous use of the first person singular throughout the book, Ezekiel showed little initiative and remained completely obedient to God, like clay in the hands of the

potter. He never questioned God's complete control, and so could write the baffling statement about God's giving "statutes that were not good" (20,25) and could act as though nothing unusual happened when his wife suddenly died (24,15-24). (The first part of this Reading Guide explores this aspect of the prophet and his book.)

We saw already how his prophetic career was colorful, even puzzling, with all kinds of strange symbolic actions. He was gifted with visions and mystical insight. Perhaps the moments of levitation were the most miraculous of all: he was lifted up bodily by the spirit (3,12.14; 8,3; 11,1.24; 32,5). This phenomenon occurred with other prophets, especially with Elijah (1 Kgs 18,12; 2 Kgs 2,16), and is recorded as well in the New Testament with the deacon Philip (Acts 8,39f) and possibly with Paul's out-of-the-body travel (2 Cor 12,2). Ezekiel's transportation to and from Jerusalem (8,3) is sometimes explained by what is called the "double ministry" theory, that is, he prophesied first in Jerusalem according to events in Chapters 4–11, and later in Babylon. While the double ministry theory removes the necessity of a miraculous flight to and from Jerusalem, it has to revise much of the book and still leaves unanswered the many other mystic phenomena.

However we react to the prophet's unusual behavior and miraculous gifts, he remained a strong, influential person in his community. Elders gathered around him (8,1; 14,1; 20,1) as they did with the prophet Elisha (2 Kgs 4,38; 6,1.32). The messenger or fugitive from Jerusalem came first to Ezekiel (33,21f) as did other people (33,30-33). Finally we need to take into account Ezekiel's extraordinary influence upon later prophecy and the history of Judaism. If Ezekiel had been a fake or someone completely disoriented, he could not have bluffed his way through 21 years of ministry!

## Theological Background

We already observed how Ezekiel mastered all kinds of literary styles. He was equally at home with diverse theological traditions. With Hosea, Jeremiah, and prophets usually associated with the northern part of Israel, Ezekiel merges the exodus tradition into his prophecy (Chapters 16 and 20). Jeremiah and Ezekiel both speak of a new covenant inscribed interiorly (Jer 31,31-34; Ez 36,26f), expecting personal responsibility (Jer 31,27-30; Ez 18). With Isaiah, Micah, and traditions associated with the south and Jerusalem, Ezekiel emphasizes the importance of the holy city and its Temple, particularly the latter.

Ezekiel shows contact with still earlier, northern traditions, not only with Elijah and Elisha but also with the stories of the judges and early prophecy clustering around Samuel. Here we note the important role of the spirit (see Nm 11,24-30; 1 Sm 10,5-8), something which drops away from classical prophecy, except for rare occasions, as in Isaiah 11,2, but reappears spectacularly in Ezekiel, as in Chapter 37.

The ritual and traditions of the Temple impacted Ezekiel most profoundly. This fact may explain his penchant for symbolic actions, even his ability to weave sacred mythology into his preaching (28,11-19). Religions that are highly ritualized and symbolic easily absorb stories and ceremonies from the local area and give them new meaning. We note in passing that Vatican II reassessed and removed accretions such as these within the Catholic Church: for instance, stories or legends about some of the saints or elaborate forms of ritual taken over from the age of royalty in Europe.

Ezekiel exerted unusual influence upon the Priestly Tradition in Leviticus 17–26, a section

called the Holiness Code. Ezekiel's priestly background may explain his penchant for details in his narratives. Priesthood and a prophecy blended thoroughly within the person of Ezekiel.

## Ezekiel: the Message

The messageof Ezekiel, like his person, is intricately involved in the *paradox* confronting and even bewildering us throughout this prophecy. What we saw scattered in our walk through the major parts of the book, we now summarize under five topics: 1) centrality of the Temple and the Lord's presence; 2) the awesome wonder of God; 3) individual responsibility; 4) prophecy and beyond; and 5) the influence of Ezekiel upon the New Testament.

### Centrality of the Temple and Lord's Presence

The prophecy opens with a vision of the Lord enthroned as in the Temple; the prophecy closes with the sacred stream flowing from the Temple altar (47,1-12) and with the proclamation of Jerusalem's new name, *yahweh shamah,* "The LORD is here" (48,35). God is portrayed either in the Temple or according to Temple style.

The inaugural vision in Chapter 1, as we saw earlier, dominates the book: anointing Ezekiel as a prophet (Chap. 1); departing from the Temple and the city and so precipitating their destruction (Chap. 10); preparing for the resurrection of the people (37,1; compare 3,24); reconsecrating the new messianic Temple and city (43,1-9).

Prophecy enters into this priestly or ritual symbolism. Prophecy insists that the Temple is not holy of itself but only because of the Lord's presence; the Lord's presence requires justice in Israel's daily living. Therefore, the Lord can depart from the Temple and reappear in foreign territory, areas that the priests considered unclean (see Am 7,17). Yet prophecy never wandered too far from priesthood; foreign lands never become a normal home for the Lord.

The announcement in Chapter 34 of the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple led to the second major period of Ezekiel's preaching, to be focused upon the new purified Israel. Yet even here phrases appear which are much more at home in Temple worship (see Major Sections of the Book, Chapter 36). When the revival of Israel was snarled with new problems, Ezekiel drew upon a legacy of prophetic images to announce the invasion by Gog from Magog (Chapters 38–39), a foreign horde to be overcome by the Lord's shaking of the earth and the sea and the summoning of terror from all sides. The Lord's final fictory is proclaimed with ritual and liturgical language: "the nations may know of me, when in their sight I prove *my holiness* through you, O Gog" and "I will make *my holy name* known among my people Israel" (38,16; 39,7).

### Awesome Wonder of God

Ezekiel is very unlike prophets of a northern background. The Lord is not someone to be argued with, as in Jeremiah; nor someone agonizing over the fate of the people, as in Hosea. Unlike the second and third parts of Isaiah (Is 40–55; 56–66), Ezekiel does not portray the Lord as parent or kinsperson, as happens in Isaiah 43 and 54, as well as in Hosea 2 and 11 and Jeremiah 3 and 12. Ezekiel's God is overpowering and awesome, reaching far beyond human relationships (24,15-24) and human explanations (20,25f).

The visions and many symbolic actions of Ezekiel, especially in Chapters 1–12, indicate a God who is close, yet transcendent. Without hesitation the respectable Ezekiel at once obeyed

God and performed symbolic actions that seem weird and ridiculous. Not only the message but the medium for communicating the message reaches beyond normal human behavior. Underlying these actions and vision must be a faith in an awesome, mysterious God.

Another phrase, reflecting God's majestic and overpowering presence, is woven through the book: *the glory of the Lord;* for instance, it occurs at 1,28; 3,12.23; 8,4; 10,4. This phrase usually accompanies the vision of the cherubim or four living creatures. Still another word is *holiness.* Although only once is the Lord called holy (39,7), nonetheless the *name* of the Lord is frequently qualified as holy: for instance, 20,39; 36,20-22; 39,7; 43,7-8. These two words, glory and holy, each communicate a sense of being drawn beyond normal human existence: the Hebrew word, *kabod* or glory, connotes "heaviness," and therefore majesty—like royalty heavy with their brocaded vestments and strong armor; the other Hebrew word, *qadosh* or holy, originally meant distance or separation.

The Lord's glory appears distant even from the cherubim or the prophet. In Chapter 1 the cherubim or four living creatures constitute the throne of the Lord; yet the Lord is never explicitly said to be present with them! Although the Lord is continually communicating through the prophet, the character of the prophet is lost within the overpowering message of the Lord. Despite the prophet's insistence upon individual responsibility in Chapter 18, Ezekiel himself manifests very little individuality, hardly any initiative!

## Individual Responsibility

Ezekiel is generally cited in any discussion of this topic. Here is another instance of paradox, for this statement clashes with the preceding section. With Jeremiah he quotes a well-known proverb, only to prohibit its use: "Fathers have eaten sour grapes, thus their children's teeth are on edge" (Ez 18,2; Jer 31,29). Both prophets insist that this proverb is a deceitful flight from responsibility, blaming one's misfortunes on the sins of one's ancestors. In a long chapter Ezekiel insists, "only the one who sins shall die" (18,4). Throughout his prophecy, Ezekiel leaves no doubt that the present generation, whether prince, priest, prophet, or common people, has committed far more than its share of sin (Chapters 8–9; 11; 13). For this reason the Lord has sealed their destruction.

Ezekiel links up with the Mosaic tradition which looked upon the entire nation as God's chosen people (see Ex 19,3-6). Ezekiel extends this election with its serious personal responsibilities to each individual Israelite. Each person lives or dies according to his or her virtuous or wicked way of life. Each, moreover, must persevere: if the virtuous person turns sinful, he or she dies; if the wicked person is converted to a good way, that one lives. True as this statement is—and it is repeated many times in Chapter 18—it remained too generic to cover every individual case. For this reason the just man Job underwent a long, excruciating struggle with God.

While Chapter 18 deals mostly with an individual's external behavior, Ezekiel looks intensely at an interior transformation in 11,19; 18,31; 36,26f. Here, as with Ezekiel 18,2 we see important points of comparison with Jeremiah (see Jer 31,31-34; see the Reading Guide for Jeremiah, The Message of Jeremiah). Both prophets speak of a new heart. Ezekiel alone adds many ritual or Temple actions in the larger context of 36,16-38.

## Prophecy and Beyond

Ezekiel remained firmly entrenched within the tradition of Israel's prophets. Yet Ezekiel also transformed both the movement and its style of speaking or writing into something new.

Prophecy will never again be the same. After the return from exile, prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi seem as much priest as prophet, more concerned about liturgical action in the Temple or about the Temple itself than about social justice and compassion.

Ezekiel had turned the style of prophecy in the direction of the apocalyptic movement. "Apocalyptic" means "drawing aside the veil" so as to perceive mysteries hidden in God. So awesome are the mysteries which the prophet sees about Israel's future that apocalyptic prophets are called "seers" more than prophets. They must deal more with symbols rather than plain speech, and the symbols are heaped one upon another, without any sense of coordination. After all, God's secret stretches beyond human rationalization and imagination. There is need of angels to interpret the vision. Apocalyptic seers are addressing the present moment, a time when all the normal institutions of Israel have collapsed. What they are in the present moment is projected as a vision given long ago to some important person. Prepared long in advance by God, the vision is certain of fulfillment, although it seems so outlandish and impossible that it can best be expressed in symbols as though for the distant future.

## Influence upon the New Testament

Ezekiel's shadow across the gospels shows up in Jesus' custom of referring to himself as the "son of man—*ben-adam.*" This title reflects someone absorbed within humanity (*adam*) and overwhelmed before God's mighty presence (Ez 2,2f). Ezekiel's notion seems to have been more influential on Jesus than the more exalted son of man in Daniel 7,13f, except for Jesus' statements about the end of the world and his own death (Mt 16,17f; 19,28; 24,30f). Ezekiel's image of the shepherd, as in Chapter 34, colored Jesus' discourses about the good shepherd (Jn 10).

It is in the Book of Revelation particularly that the influence of Ezekiel shows up: the four living creatures (Ez 1; Rv 4,6-9); a voice like the sound of many waters (Ez 1,24; Rv 1,15); Gog from the land of Magog (Ez 38–39; Rv 20,8); the seer's being carried to a high mountain (Ez 40,2; Rv 21,10). The Book of Revelation tends to modify or simplify the more bizarre features of Ezekiel's discourses.

C.S.

## Further Reading

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# DANIEL AND THE MINOR PROPHETS

JOHN J. COLLINS

## DANIEL □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1086–1108 of the Old Testament*]

As the Introduction says (*New American Bible* p. 1087), the Book of Daniel falls into three sections. The first (Chapters 1–6) consists of stories in which Daniel and his three companions are the heroes. The second (Chapters 7–12) is made up of revelations told by Daniel in the first person. The third (Chapters 13–14) contains short stories which are not found in the Hebrew/Aramaic text of Daniel, but only in the Greek and Latin versions. Jews and Protestant Christians do not accept these stories as canonical but Protestants include them in the Apocrypha, a collection of ancient Jewish writings which they consider edifying even if not inspired. The different kinds of material in the three divisions of Daniel reflect the gradual growth of the book. The stories in 1–6 are the oldest part, and may originally have been independent stories. We know that the revelations were composed during the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria in 168–64 B.C. The "Additions" were added some time later, probably before the beginning of the Christian era.

### The Tales

The stories in the first six chapters are similar in kind to historical novels—they mention historical names and places but are none the less fictional. At several points they contradict what we know from other sources about the history of the times. For instance, Belshazzar is presented as a king of Babylon and son of Nebuchadnezzar. Ancient Babylonian inscriptions show that he was son of Nabonidus (a slightly later king) and that he served as deputy ruler in Babylon but was never king. Darius the Mede is not attested independently of the Book of Daniel, but Darius was the name of an early Persian king.

In each of these cases the Book of Daniel has a smattering of history, but is not ultimately concerned with historical accuracy. The stories are means of conveying a religious message, like the parables of Jesus, and so the occasional historical characters and places are not the main

point. Daniel, like Noah and Job (with whom he is mentioned in Ez 14,14), may never have existed, but the religious value of the stories is none the less for that.

The stories paint a picture of the life of Jewish exiles in Babylon. It is an ideal rather than a realistic picture, but it expresses hopes and defines acceptable behavior. There is a certain analogy between the situation of the Jews in a pagan world and the modern situation of Christians in a secular world, which makes the message of the tales still relevant today. This message has two facets: it affirms the possibility of life in a Gentile environment while insisting on the importance of fidelity to the essentials of the Jewish tradition.

## Affirmation of the Gentile Environment

Daniel and his companions are taken into the service of the Babylonian king and are trained in "the language and literature of the Chaldeans." They express no reservations about this training. Indeed they outshine the Babylonians at their own skills (1,20). The point of Chapter 2 is that Daniel can interpret the king's dream when the Babylonian wise men fail, because of the assistance of his God. His superior ability to interpret mysteries is again in evidence in Chapters 4 and 5.

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2 provides an interesting case study in Daniel's attitude to Gentile kingship. The dream concerns the famous statue of four metals, symbolizing four kingdoms, which will all be destroyed by a stone, which symbolizes the kingdom of God. This dream foretells that ultimately all Gentile kingdoms will be destroyed. There is no urgency about this prophecy, however. God has allotted a lengthy period of time for Gentile rule, and during that period Jews can find fulfillment in the service of a pagan king. The spirit of the passage is similar to that of Jeremiah 27, 6-8, which affirms that all nations must serve Babylon until its time too shall come.

Chapters 4 and 5 present two case studies of pagan rule in action. In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar becomes proud because of his great kingdom. For this he is punished by being reduced to the condition of a beast. After a time his reason is restored and he gives praise to God. He is then restored to his kingdom. In Chapter 5, Belshazzar behaves arrogantly at a feast and profanes the sacred vessels of the Jews. Mysterious writing appears on the wall, which only Daniel can read. It pronounces judgment on the king. Because Belshazzar did not learn from the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, he is weighed in the balance and found wanting, and his kingdom is given to the Medes and the Persians. In short, Gentile kings must be subject to God in the fundamental sense that they must temper their arrogance and behave with restraint. If they do this, Daniel has no objection to their rule, and indeed he shows sympathetic concern for Nebuchadnezzar. Only when the kings exceed their limits do they incur the judgment of God.

## The Importance of Fidelity

Despite their success at the pagan court, Daniel and his companions remain faithful to their Jewish religion. In Chapter 1, they refuse to eat the king's food, because it is not *kosher.* (See the laws concerning clean and unclean food in the Book of Leviticus). In Chapter 3, the three youths refuse to worship the king's statue, at the risk of death, and in Chapter 6 Daniel likewise refuses to depart from his custom of daily prayer even at the cost of being thrown into the lions' den. In each case the Jews ultimately win the respect of their rulers and emerge more successful than before. The stories of the fiery furnace and the lions' den, like all miracle stories, are meant to arouse a sense of wonder. They are not realistic stories. The long history of Christian

martyrdoms and of the persecution of Jews (down to the lethal furnaces of Auschwitz) shows that God does not usually intervene to rescue the innocent. Christian tradition appropriately understood the stories of the furnace and lions' den as representing resurrection from the dead. The essential point in Daniel's stories, however, is that God has the power to save, or to do whatever is for the best. Daniel and his companions have trust in God, and this liberates them to do whatever they ought to do regardless of the immediate consequences. The attitude of the tales is well expressed in the words of the three youths (3,17f): "If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue which you set up." Their fidelity is not conditional. It is a matter of integrity, and this integrity is the key to their success.

The tales in Daniel 1–6 have a very optimistic view of the Gentile world. The Jews have enemies at the royal court, largely for reasons of envy, but the kings are well disposed and repeatedly praise and acknowledge the God of Daniel. In Chapter 6, King Darius is dismayed when he is tricked into throwing Daniel to the lions. He is delighted when Daniel survives, and readily confesses "the living God, enduring forever." The stories stop short of having the king convert to Judaism. In a sense it is even more gratifying to have a pagan king acknowledge the power of the God of the Jews. These tales express confidence that the truth of Jewish religion is powerful enough to impress any person of goodwill. Judaism has nothing to fear from the Gentile or secular world.

Daniel 1–6 conveys a sense that God is in control and that all will work out for the best. The kingdom of God can be exercised through the rule of pagan kings. True religion does not require any particular political system. This optimistic view of the world arose from the experience of Jews in foreign lands in much of the ancient world. It is similar to the liberal theology which has flourished in modern times wherever Christians or Jews have lived under tolerant political regimes. It is an attractive view of the world, which emphasizes the good in human nature, and is a viable theology in normal times. Unfortunately, times are not always normal, and there are occasions when we have to give more recognition to the forces of evil in the world. One such occasion in antiquity was the persecution of the Jews in the Maccabean period (see historical sketch, pp. RG 34–35) and it was in this situation that the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 7–12 were written.

## The Revelations

### The Apocalyptic Genre

Daniel's visions belong to the genre of apocalyptic literature, which takes its name from the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. "Apocalypse" (*apokalypsis*) is simply the Greek word for revelation, but the word has come to be associated with a particular kind of revelation, with certain recurring characteristics.

One trademark of the Jewish apocalypses (though not of the Book of Revelation) is pseudonymity—that is, the real authors (whose names are not known) wrote under the names of famous people who had lived long before. Enoch, the most popular visionary, was supposed to have lived before Noah and the Flood. (He appears in Gn 5,18-24.) Surprisingly, the people of the second century B.C. do not appear to have been skeptical about his authorship. Rather, his great antiquity added to the prestige of his writings.

Another trademark of an apocalypse is the presence of a mediating angel. An angel explains the visions to Daniel. In other apocalypses, which are not included in the canon, a visionary such as Enoch is taken on a tour of the heavens, accompanied by an angel as tour guide. The presence of the angel emphasizes the supernatural character of the experience and adds to the sense of mystery. (The interpreting angel first appears in biblical literature in the Book of Zechariah.)

Apocalypses also have a typical subject matter. This deals on the one hand, with the heavenly world of the angels and, on the other, with predictions of the future, especially of a final judgment. This kind of writing was developed in Judaism from the third century B.C. on, and was very popular in early Christianity. The most important Jewish apocalypses are *1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, 2 Esdras, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch.*

No genre of biblical literature is more difficult for the modern reader than the apocalypses. This literature is exceptional even within the Bible. In the modern world liberal Christians tend to avoid it, while fundamentalists too easily adapt it to their own ends. Several factors contribute to the difficulty:

### THE HEAVY USE OF SYMBOLISM

Apocalypses do not speak directly, but veil their meaning in symbolic language which is closely related to the language of dreams. All scholars agree that King Antiochus Epiphanes is a major figure in Daniel 7–12 (see note on 7,7). Yet he is never mentioned by name. Instead we read of a beast with ten horns which sprouts an eleventh, and we can infer from other historical information that the eleventh is Antiochus. The text gives us a clue. It tells us that the four beasts, of which the horned beast is the last, are four kingdoms, but it never identifies them explicitly. The lack of specificity is typical of oracles in the ancient world. It adds a sense of mystery, and strengthens the impression that the prophecy is of supernatural origin. It also has an effect on the long-term interpretation of the apocalypse. Two hundred years after Daniel was written, people could interpret the fourth kingdom as Rome, and the eleventh horn as a Roman emperor. Down through the centuries, the beast could be interpreted as the villain of the day. This kind of reinterpretation is helpful if it is done with proper understanding. The apocalyptic vision describes *types* of characters who reappear in history. Antiochus Epiphanes was not the only tyrant worthy of being described as a beast. One of the uses of an apocalyptic vision is that it gives us language to describe new situations: the scene of beasts rising from the sea could be applied appropriately to the outbreak of the Second World War. It is important to realize, however, that Daniel was not predicting the Second World War. He was speaking of a persecution in the second century B.C. and his vision can be applied to other situations only by analogy. Fundamentalists often read Daniel or the New Testament Apocalypse as if they were written to predict our modern situation. In fact they were written for their own time and place, but they can help us understand our modern situation because they describe patterns that recur throughout history.

### ANGELS AND DEMONS

Some modern Christians find the prominence of angels and demons in apocalyptic literature to be a problem. For Daniel, the battles between Jews and Greeks are only a reflection of a battle in heaven. Moreover, it is not God who fights for the Jews but the archangel Michael, who is mentioned here by name for the first time. Most people in the ancient world believed that the heavens were peopled with supernatural beings. Usually these were called "gods," but Jewish

and Christian tradition makes a sharp distinction between the supreme deity and the lesser heavenly beings, called angels. The modern secular world, with its scientific approach to the heavens, has little room for such beings. An apocalypse, however, is not a scientific treatise but a work of imagination. To say that there is a battle in heaven between the patron angels of Greece and Judah is to say that earthly war is not entirely subject to human control. Angels provide a vivid way of dramatizing providence or divine control. To understand an apocalypse, we should ask, not, "Do these angels exist?" but, "What do they stand for?" and especially, "If we imagine a world with angels, what effect does this have on the way we view human life?"

**PSEUDONYMITY**

We have noted above that all Jewish apocalypses are pseudonymous. This device added to the authority of a book. In an apocalypse it had another advantage: it enabled Daniel to "predict" four hundred years of history which were really past when the book was written. Since the "prediction" was demonstrably accurate over these four hundred years, people were more likely to believe the real prediction of what was still to come. From a modern viewpoint this practice seems deceptive and therefore unethical. We consider pseudonymous writing a forgery. The practice was widely accepted, however, in the Greek and Roman world as well as in Judaism. While the common people presumably believed that the revelations were genuinely old, the real authors must have been known to an inner circle. It is difficult for us to reconstruct the mindset of people who wrote pseudonymous books, but it is certain that they did not regard their work as deceptive. It is possible that the authors put themselves in the place of Enoch and Daniel, and imagined that they were actually describing the visions of these ancient worthies. In any case, the enduring value of the apocalypses does not lie in the accuracy of their predictions, but in the kind of conduct they inspired and supported. In the case of Daniel, the question is not whether Daniel really predicted all these things in advance, but whether his stance in the face of religious persecution is a good one.

**DETERMINISM**

Apocalyptic literature typically assumes that history has a fixed duration and can be divided into a set number of periods (for example, 4 kingdoms or 70 weeks of years). The course of events can be predicted centuries in advance. Consequently history appears to be predetermined. It is important to realize that this does not mean that human decisions are predetermined. On the contrary, the Book of Daniel is basically a call for decision in a time of crisis. The course of history is set, and the fate of the righteous and the wicked is predetermined. The fate of any individuals, however, remains to be decided, and will be determined by the kinds of decisions they make.

**PREDICTIONS OF THE END**

Perhaps the aspect of apocalyptic literature which most offends modern sensibilities is the attempt to predict exactly the time of the end. (In Daniel, the end in question is the end of the persecution. In later apocalypticism it is often the end of the world.) Down through the centuries, apocalyptic groups have often set a date for the end of the world, only to see it come and go. Naturally such predictions have been discredited by their frequent failure. The Book of Daniel actually gives three very precise dates for the end of the persecution. In 8,14, an angel says that the Temple will be desolate for 2,300 evenings and mornings or 1,150 days. At the end of Chapter 12, however, we are given two different figures: 1,290 days and 1,335 days.

Presumably the number was increased when the end was delayed. We can understand the function of these numbers in the time of persecution: it was easier to keep going if one believed that relief would come on a specific day. Remarkably enough, however, the failure of these exact predictions did not discredit the Book of Daniel. Later interpreters assumed that the figures must have some symbolic meaning and were not to be taken literally. In fact, the attempt to predict the end is only a very minor element in apocalyptic literature and its importance should not be blown out of proportion. It served a limited purpose in its historical setting, but it must be admitted that such attempts were ultimately counterproductive. This is not an aspect of apocalyptic literature which anyone should try to imitate in a modern setting.

### INFORMATION OR EXHORTATION?

The problems of interpreting apocalyptic literature in the modern world can be summarized by asking whether we should read these books for information or for exhortation. It is a fact that any apocalypse combines the two aspects. It tries to teach us a view of the world, and if we accept that view we will be disposed to act in a certain way. The problem is that the apocalyptic view of the world is no longer acceptable. Angels and demons are not part of our universe, and we can no longer believe that the duration of history is coming to an end. Much of the "information" provided by an apocalypse is now incredible if taken literally. It still has value, however, if we regard it as symbolism and focus on the attitudes and actions it was designed to support. Such an ethical focus is fundamentally important for understanding the Book of Daniel and its relevance to modern times.

## A Symbolic Vision

Daniel Chapter 7 is one of the most famous and influential of all apocalyptic visions. In part it resembles Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Chapter 2: it describes four human kingdoms which will be followed by a kingdom set up by God. The imagery, however, is very different. Instead of four metals, Daniel 7 describes four beasts which rise out of the sea. In biblical poetry the sea is often a symbol of chaos, of all that is opposed to God, and it is sometimes said to be inhabited by monsters (for instance Is 27,1: God "will slay the dragon that is in the sea"; compare Is 51,9f). When Daniel 7 represents the pagan kingdoms as beasts from the sea, then, the point is that they are rebellious and opposed to God. This represents a view of the pagan kingdoms which is much more negative than anything in Daniel 1–6.

After the vision of the four beasts Daniel sees a judgment scene in which an "Ancient One" sits on a throne, surrounded by thousands of angels, and the fourth beast is condemned to the fire. Then "one like a son of man" appears on the clouds of heaven. Christian tradition, beginning with the Gospels, identified this figure as Jesus Christ, but the passage could not have been understood in that way by Jews in the second century B.C. Jewish tradition identified the "son of man" as the messiah. Modern scholarship is divided between two interpretations: some see the figure as a collective symbol for Israel, others as the archangel Michael. It is quite clear that he represents the triumph of the Jewish people over their persecutors. The issue in dispute is how that triumph was understood. The view that the "son of man" figure is Michael relies on the analogy with Daniel 10–12, where Michael represents Israel in a heavenly battle with the angelic prince of Greece. The triumph of the Jews, then, is imagined in the apocalypse as a victory by their heavenly patron. The "son of man" is always understood as a heavenly individual in other Jewish apocalypses (*1 Enoch, 2 Esdras*).

Daniel 7 was written during the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria, which is described in 1 and 2 Maccabees. The experience of persecution colored the author's perception of all Gentile kingdoms. The message of the vision is that pagan rulers are evil and in rebellion against God, but that they will be defeated by the power of God. The symbolism of the vision, however, with its beasts and fire and figure riding on the clouds expresses this idea with exceptional power and vividness. Consequently, the imagery has been used over and over again in new situations. It provides language which can express the evil which erupts from time to time in human affairs (think of the Holocaust as a modern example) and which can also express a hope that does not depend on human power. The message of the vision is one of hope. Although the forces against us may be demonic, the power of God and the angels will ultimately prevail. The imagery of this vision is used repeatedly in the Gospels and most elaborately in the Book of Revelation.

Daniel 8 is a symbolic vision very similar to Chapter 7. Even some of its imagery (the little horn) is taken from the earlier chapter. In this case the central episode of the imagery concerns the revolt of the little horn against the host of heaven. There is a reminiscence here of the morning star, son of the dawn, in Isaiah 14. Antiochus Epiphanes is identified as an example of the general pattern represented by the Isaianic passage. Again, the prophecy is one of hope since the pattern guaranteed the fall of the rebel.

## A Prophecy Reinterpreted

A different kind of revelation is found in Chapter 9. In this case, a biblical prophecy provides the point of departure. Jeremiah had prophesied that the land would be subject to Babylon for 70 years. According to 2 Chronicles 36,20f, this prophecy was fulfilled by the restoration under Cyrus of Persia (although only 50 years had elapsed). Zechariah 1,12 related it to the rebuilding of the Temple (about 66 years after its destruction). The author of Daniel evidently did not think that the restoration of the Persian period satisfied the prophecy. Rather than discard the prophecy as a failure, however, he reinterpreted it. Seventy years really means 70 weeks of years, that is 490 years. The way of interpreting Scripture here is basically the same as the way of interpreting dreams and visions in the previous chapters. (It is also typical of the *Pesharim,* or biblical commentaries, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.) The numbers in Jeremiah's prophecy are taken as symbolic. The implications of this procedure are far-reaching. When the visionary says that only three and a half years are left before the end, we cannot be sure that this will not turn out to mean three and a half weeks of years. In short, the impression of precise prediction which we get from the use of numbers is misleading. What Daniel ultimately affirms is not the particular timetable, but the reliability of the promises of God, however mysterious their timing may be.

Chapter 9 also includes a remarkable prayer on the lips of Daniel. The prayer is of a type common in the post-exilic period. (See for example Nehemiah 9.) Its theology is typical of the tradition influenced by the Book of Deuteronomy. Israel is punished for its own sin, and can only appeal for the mercy of God. This theology is rather different from the usual theology of Daniel. The primary cause of Israel's suffering in apocalyptic theology lies in the wickedness of the nations that rebel against God, and indeed in the predetermined plan of history. In response to the prayer, Daniel receives a revelation, but there is no question of forgiveness, or that the time of trial can be shortened because of repentance. From the viewpoint of the Book of Daniel,

it is appropriate to express repentance, as Daniel does, but we should not expect our prayers to alter the course of events.

## Another Dimension of History

Daniel's apocalyptic view of history is most fully laid out in Chapters 10–12, which make up one long vision. There an angel explains to Daniel that there is an ongoing battle in heaven between the archangels Michael and Gabriel on the one hand and the angelic "princes" of Persia and Greece on the other (10,13.20f). This battle is reflected on earth in the wars of the Hellenistic age, which are described at length in Chapter 11, and especially in the career of Antiochus Epiphanes who takes up approximately half the chapter (11,21-45). At the end Michael will arise in victory (12,1) and the resurrection will follow.

This long passage makes several claims about history which would not be apparent to the typical observer.

*First,* what is involved is not just warfare between human kingdoms, but a battle between angelic powers, and the outcome of this cannot be decided by human power.

*Second,* the course of history is fixed in advance. The battles of the Hellenistic age can be revealed to Daniel in the Babylonian exile. In fact, the passage was written during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. It gives an accurate account of history down to that time (11,39). Such "prophecy after the fact" implies that the course of history is predetermined, and inspires confidence in the actual prediction with which the passage concludes (in this case, the imminent death of the king 11,40-45, and the resurrection, 12,1-3).

*Third,* history culminates with the resurrection of the dead. Daniel is the only book in the Hebrew Bible which clearly affirms the resurrection of individuals. Earlier prophecy sometimes uses the language of resurrection for the restoration of the Jewish nation, as in Isaiah 26,19 and Ezekiel 37. The Book of Wisdom, which was composed in Greek about the time of Christ, also has a clear doctrine of immortality. The idea of resurrection had probably been introduced into Judaism before the time of the Maccabees. The noncanonical *1 Enoch,* Chapter 22, which describes the abodes of the dead as they wait for resurrection, is probably older than Daniel. There is no doubt, however, that the experience of martyrdom in the time of persecution made the Jews more receptive to belief in resurrection than they had been before. The importance of resurrection in that setting can be seen from the story of the seven brothers in 2 Maccabees 7.

Belief in resurrection made an enormous difference to Judaism, and was essential to the origin of Christianity. Traditional Jewish religion had taught that the reward for a just life was to see one's children's children, to the fourth generation, and the welfare of the nation as a whole. In the time of the Maccabees, however, pious Jews were put to death precisely for obeying the Law, and so were cut off from the traditional reward for a just life. Belief in life beyond the grave, in the company of the angels, provided an entirely new perspective. Martyrdom was no longer an absurdity, but the means to a greater end. So Daniel announced that the wise would take their stand in the time of persecution, even though some of them would fall (11,33-35). These "wise" do not, apparently, join the Maccabees to fight for national independence. Rather, they put their trust in Michael and the heavenly world and chose the way of passive resistance.

The stand of these "wise" teachers exemplifies the ethical stance of the Book of Daniel, which is the most enduring message of the book.

There is clear continuity between the apocalyptic message of Daniel 10–12 and the older stories of the fiery furnace and the lions' den. On the one hand there is the belief that God rules all kingdoms and has the power to save. On the other is the conviction that one must act with integrity even at the cost of life itself. The belief in resurrection makes this conviction easier to maintain.

The apocalyptic visions offer a much less optimistic view of the Gentile world than the tales of Chapters 1–6. This again is not a view for all seasons, but for situations of crisis which we should hope are exceptional. Pagan powers are not always "beasts from the sea," although they may be so on occasion. The ethical stance advocated by the "wise" in Daniel 11, that of passive resistance, is not necessarily normative for all situations either. The militant revolution of the Maccabees is also canonized in the Old Testament. The Book of Daniel exemplifies one possible way in which a faithful Jew or Christian may respond to a situation of oppression and persecution. Whether it is the right way can only be decided in light of the specific circumstances of each situation, but it always demands serious consideration.

## The Additions

Daniel 13 and 14 are rightly labeled as an Appendix in the *New American Bible,* as they are independent stories in which Daniel happens to play a part. Susanna is placed before Daniel 1 in one Greek translation (that attributed to Theodotion), since Daniel appears there as a young boy, but there is no doubt that the story was originally independent.

### Susanna

In the story of Susanna, Daniel appears as the wise judge. This role is suggested by his name (*Dan* comes from the Hebrew verb, to judge) but not by anything in Daniel 1–12. His judgment recalls that of Solomon in 1 Kings 3. The story as a whole may be described as a parable, insofar as it is a short story which reverses our expectations in some important respect. (Compare Nathan's parable in 2 Samuel 11 and several of Jesus's parables.) Normally elders who have been appointed judges are the righteous ones, and the word of a young woman would carry little weight against theirs. Yet it is characteristic of biblical narrative that the underdog prevails or is justified. (A comparable story involving a woman, Tamar, can be found in Genesis 38.) The story of Susanna loses some of its dramatic effect by telling us at the outset that the judges are wicked. Nonetheless the story provides a nice illustration of the unreliability of conventional expectations.

In one respect, at least, the story of Susanna has the same viewpoint as the rest of the Book of Daniel. In verse 23, when she is trapped, she declares: "Yet it is better for me to fall into your power without guilt than to sin before the Lord." This is the same lesson that we learned from the three young men, from Daniel in the lions' den and again from the martyrs of the Maccabean period. The story is closer to Daniel 1–6 than to 10–12, since it envisages salvation in this life, and, appropriately, the execution of Susanna's accusers.

## Bel and the Dragon

Daniel 14 contains two stories which make fun of pagan idolatry. These stories are caricatures. They should not be taken as accurate descriptions of Babylonian religion, any more than anti-Catholic caricatures should be taken as fair representations of the Catholic veneration of statues. The Babylonians in the stories are excessively stupid, and their devices are too easily exposed. The story of the dragon shares with Daniel 6 the motif of the lions' den, but does not necessarily depend on the earlier chapter. All we can say is that Daniel was associated with the lions' den in oral tradition, and that both these stories made use of the motif. Bel and the Dragon is more fantastic than Daniel 6: he remains in the den for six days and the prophet Habakkuk is transported from Judea by an angel to feed him. These fantastic elements give the tale a light-hearted quality, but the background here is more tense than in Daniel 1–6. Daniel confronts the Babylonian religion in a way that he never does in the earlier chapters. The Babylonians threaten him because of his religious zeal, not because of professional envy as in Chapter 6. There is a sense here that Judaism and paganism are fundamentally incompatible. The king is still benevolent, but the Babylonians suspect that he has become a Jew. There is, of course, ample precedent for demanding a clearcut choice between the Lord and other deities (compare Elijah in 1 Kings 18). Daniel 1–6 also presupposed such a choice, but did not present it as starkly as Chapter 14. There are times when confrontation can be avoided and fruitful interaction is possible. Bel and the Dragon, on the other hand, does not allow for any ecumenical relations with pagan religion. Presumably this attitude reflects the situation in which the story was written. Here again we see that the biblical stories are not timeless in character but are shaped by historical circumstances. Their modern relevance, likewise, depends on the circumstances in which we read them.

J.J.C.

## For Further Reading

Collins, John J. *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees* (Old Testament Message 15; Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1981). Introductory commentary, along the lines of this Reading Guide.

For more detailed, scholarly commentary see:

Hartman, L. F. C.SS.R. and A. A. DiLella, O.F.M., *The Book of Daniel* (Anchor Bible 23; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978). Less detailed than Montgomery, but still a useful reference book.

Lacocque, A. *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: Knox, 1979). A rich commentary by a Belgian Protestant.

Montgomery, James A. *The Book of Daniel* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: Clark, 1927, reprint,1979). Still the best scholarly commentary, although out of date in some respects.

For the Additions to Daniel see:

Moore, C. A. *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah. The Additions* (Anchor Bible 44; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977).

The noncanonical apocalyptic literature can be found in:

Charlesworth, J. H. ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. I* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983)

Sparks, H. F. D. ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

For a study of this material see:
Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).

## THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

The Book of the Twelve is a collection of prophetic oracles over a period of about 300 years. The number 12 is probably chosen because of the twelve tribes of Israel. At least in some cases the books are artificial—for example, it is quite clear that Zechariah 9–14 do not come from the same prophet as Zechariah 1–8.

While we will review the books in their canonical order, it may be helpful at the outset to group them according to their origin.

a) Three prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, were active in the eighth century B.C., and were contemporary with the earlier part of Isaiah's career. Hosea was a northern prophet and Micah a southern, while Amos was a native of the southern kingdom who prophesied in the north. (On the two kingdoms, see the historical sketch, pp. RG 33–34.)

b) Another cluster of three prophets can be dated in the Babylonian period, towards the end of the seventh century B.C.. Zephaniah is dated to the time of King Josiah (640–609, B.C.), Nahum proclaimed the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., and Habakkuk prophesied when the Babylonians were already advancing westward (605–597 B.C.).

c) Two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah are known to have been active in the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple in 520 B.C. As we noted above, only Chapters 1–8 of the Book of Zechariah can be attributed to this prophet.

d) The remaining four books, Joel, Jonah, Obadiah and Malachi, and the latter part of Zechariah, come from the postexilic period, but their date cannot be determined precisely. Malachi may be roughly contemporary with Ezra in the fifth century B.C.. The Book of Jonah and the second part of Zechariah could be as early as the fifth century or as late as the Hellenistic period (after 330 B.C.).

Most of these books are made up of short poetic oracles. (The Book of Jonah, which is a short story, is an exception.) It is the nature of prophecy that it addresses specific situations, and so it is important to know something of the time and place of the different prophets, when this is possible. At the same time, these oracles were preserved because they had enduring relevance, and could be applied to new situations by analogy. All of this material was handed down orally for some time before it was put in written form. Consequently, there is often reason to doubt whether a particular prophecy was actually uttered by the prophet to whom it is ascribed. So, for example Micah 4,1-3 contains a passage which is also found in Isaiah 2,1-4. We cannot now be sure which, if either, of these prophets originally spoke these lines. Moreover, these books were edited in the postexilic period and the editors added some passages too. While it is always helpful to know the situation in which an oracle was originally given, it is not possible to be sure of the original setting of each passage.

As we might expect, there is considerable diversity in this collection, but there are also some dominant themes:

1. Most of these prophets focus their attention on the sins of their own people. There are exceptions. The oracles of Obadiah and Nahum consist entirely of condemnations of foreign nations. Haggai and Zechariah, in the period immediately after the Babylonian exile, are exceptionally supportive of their leaders and institutions. Nonetheless, most of these prophets were characterized by their critical spirit.

2. The sins they denounced were both social and cultic. The social agenda of prophecy was set by the great eighth-century B.C. prophets, especially Amos and Micah, but concern for the weak and unprotected persists throughout the corpus, down to the oracles of Malachi. Hosea engages in extensive polemic against the worship of gods other than the Lord, and this concern reappears from time to time in the other prophets. The prophets were even more concerned, however, with abuses in the worship of the Lord, even when there were no pagan elements involved. Amos and Micah denounced the cult of their day because it made the people complacent and distracted them from the injustice of their society. At the end of the collection, we still find Malachi criticizing the priests for failing to live up to the ideals of their office. People who performed the prescribed rituals were not necessarily pleasing to God for that reason. The prophetic critiques do not mean that ritual is not important. On the contrary, it is precisely because it is vitally important to the religious life of a community that they devote so much attention to it.

3. It is common in biblical theology to say that God acts in history. The prophets say more than this: they teach that whatever actually happens is the work of God. So they understood the great calamities which befell the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah in 587/6 B.C. as acts of divine judgment. Indeed these catastrophes added to the authority of the prophets, since they were seen as the fulfillment of their oracles. The constant reference to historical events ensures an element of realism in the preaching of the prophets. They are not only concerned with moral ideals, but also with what works in practice.

4. The theme of judgment undergoes some development in the later prophets. This can be seen by following the motif of the Day of the Lord. This motif first appears in Amos. In the context it seems clear that the Israelites expected the Day of the Lord to vindicate them against their immediate enemies. For Amos, however, the Day of the Lord would be the occasion of judgment on Israel. In the postexilic period, Joel anticipates a day of judgment for all nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat. In Zechariah 14 it is the day when all the nations assemble for battle against Jerusalem, to be defeated by the Lord. The Book of the Twelve ends with a forward look to "the day of the Lord, the great and terrible day." Increasingly, it is a day of definitive universal judgment.

5. The theme of the salvation of Israel is also more prominent in the postexilic period. Already in the eighth century B.C. Hosea looked beyond the impending destruction by the Assyrians and spoke of a new beginning like the Exodus of old. After the exile it made little sense to speak of further destruction of Israel. Very often the prophets imagine a situation that is different from the present. When Jerusalem was in ruins, or restored in only modest circumstances, they revived the dream of Zion, the holy mountain and divine abode (so Joel, Zephaniah and a postexilic passage in Micah 4). Similarly, the hope for a restored Davidic monarchy is at home in the period after the exile (Micah 5, Zechariah 9). The phrase "on that

day" frequently introduces prophecies of the great transformation that is to come (for example, Zec 14,6.8.13.20). It is likely that at least some of these oracles were inserted by those who put this collection together, gathering and arranging the scattered materials. These editors wanted to ensure that the recollection of the past did not outweigh the hope for the future. The tendency of the editors to put the words of judgment in perspective is most strikingly evident at the end of the Book of Amos. After the prophet's threat that God would wipe Israel off the face of the earth, the editor adds, "but I will not destroy the house of Jacob completely" (9,8) and goes on to prophesy the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

Taken as a whole, the Book of the Twelve is both a reflection on the past and a lesson for the future. The order of the oracles is not easily apparent, and this makes reading through the collection difficult. They are certainly not arranged in chronological order, and even the thematic order is only occasional. We can, however, find a pattern, in which sin is followed by judgment and judgment by salvation. Not all the individual prophets saw this full pattern. Some, like Amos, simply announced the imminent judgment. Others, like Haggai and Zechariah, focused on the moment of restoration. The editors of the prophetic books were heavily influenced by the theology of Deuteronomy. According to that theology, sin does not go unpunished, but God is ultimately merciful and wants only the repentance and restoration of Israel. The collected prophets, then, can be read as a call for repentance, to be sustained until the final Day of the Lord. The first book in the collection, Hosea, ends with the invitation, "Return, O Israel, to the Lord, your God." The final book, Malachi, ends with a reminder to keep the law of Moses, and a promise that Elijah will come to reconcile parents and children. In this way, the lesson of the prophets is tied in nicely with that of the Pentateuch. J.J.C.

## For Further Reading

For a reference book on the scholarly discussion of the prophets see:

Blenkinsopp, J. *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983). The best general introduction to the prophets is still that of G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology,* Vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

## HOSEA □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1109–1121 of the Old Testament*]

Hosea is not the first of the prophets chronologically, but he provides a good introduction to the prophetic corpus, as he is unrivaled for the beauty of his poetry and the emotional power of his oracles. He lived at a time of great crisis for the northern kingdom of Israel. He began his career in the middle of the eighth century (about 750 B.C.). Little more than a decade later Israel came under threat from the mighty Assyrian empire, which was expanding westward. The king of Israel became a vassal, or subject, of Assyria in 732 B.C. and the kingdom was brought to an end, and its capital Samaria destroyed, in 722 B.C. In the period between the death of King Jeroboam II (who is mentioned in Hos 1,1) in 746 B.C. and the first submission of Israel in 732 B.C. no fewer than five kings sat on the throne (and a sixth succeeded in 732 B.C.). It was, then, a period of great

instability. While we cannot specify the occasions of Hosea's individual prophecies, it is important to be aware of this general background.

As noted in the *New American Bible* p. 1109, the first three chapters stand apart from the rest of the book because of the theme of the prophet's marriage. It is difficult to discern any pattern in Chapters 4–14. Most of the oracles proclaim the destruction of Israel, but the book ends with an invitation to repentance (14,2-9). There is also an important prophecy of restoration at 11,8-11.

## The Metaphor of Marriage

The attractiveness of Hosea's prophecy springs from his use of metaphor and symbol, especially imagery drawn from human relationships. His most fundamental metaphor is that of marriage. The book opens with one of the most bizarre commands in all the Bible, "Go, take a harlot wife . . ." It may be that the woman, Gomer, was not a harlot when she married, and that the command anticipates her later behavior. There is an alternative view, however, held by many scholars, which sees the choice of a harlot wife as a deliberate symbolic act on the part of the prophet (compare the bizarre symbolic acts in Isaiah 20 and Ezekiel 4). Some scholars think that Gomer was not only a prostitute but a cult prostitute, devoted to the worship of the pagan god Baal. By marrying such a person, Hosea would have attracted considerable attention, and dramatized his message that "the land gives itself to harlotry" (1,2). In any case the prophet uses the experience of infidelity in marriage, all too familiar to his audience, to convey an understanding of Israel's behavior towards the Lord, the God of Israel. The metaphor was appropriate for several reasons:

a) It is a fundamental presupposition of Hosea that Israel is bound to God by the covenant given to Moses. A covenant is a contractual arrangement, like a marriage. The relationship can be expressed in the declarations "You are my people" and "My God" (Hos 2,25) on the analogy of the standard marriage formula "she is my wife, he is my husband."

b) One of the major problems addressed by Hosea was idolatry, specifically the cult of the Canaanite god Baal. The word *baal* was used in Hebrew as the common word for husband. Moreover, Baal was attractive to the people because he was a fertility god who was supposed to guarantee the productivity of land, animals, and people. The worship of Baal may have included sexual acts with sacred prostitutes. If, as some scholars have supposed, Gomer was such a cultic prostitute, the comparison with the cult of Baal was all the more pronounced. Hosea was contrasting the covenant with the Lord, understood as a marriage, with the cult of Baal, understood as prostitution. The prophet's wife exemplified the behavior of Israel, by straying from the marital relationship.

c) Hosea's whole understanding of God is based on the assumption that God is like the best in human nature, only more so. Since marriage is the culmination of love between man and woman, it is appropriate that it should also provide the analogy for understanding the love between the Lord and Israel.

The fact that the prophet uses the most intimate aspect of his own life to convey his message is indicative of his total involvement in his prophecy. The involvement extends to his

children, who are given such symbolic names as "not pitied" (Lo-ruhama, 1,6) and "not my people" (Lo-ammi, 1,8). There is no concern for private, personal life. The prophet and his family are at the disposal of God for the welfare of the people.

### The Lord and Baal

In the great poem in Chapter 2 Hosea argues that the people are mistaken when they credit Baal with providing the grain, the wine, and the oil. It is the Lord who really controls fertility. What is involved here is not simply a matter of knowing the most appropriate name for the God of nature. To acknowledge the Lord as lord is to accept the Sinai covenant, with its code of ethics for society. Israel's infidelity in worshipping Baal is the symptom of a pervasive disease. Hosea's grievance against the people is summed up in 4,1-3:

> There is no fidelity, no mercy,
> no knowledge of God in the land.
> False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery!
> in their lawlessness, bloodshed follows bloodshed.
> Therefore the land mourns . . .

The list of offences closely follows the ten commandments, but the point is not just that specific laws are broken. It is a question of fundamental attitude. Infidelity manifests itself in sexual behavior, in idolatry, in the repeated assassination of rulers, in wavering political alliances. This lack of constancy certainly had an effect on the political fortunes of the nation. Hosea believed that it also had an effect on the land itself. He may have been right insofar as the rulers neglected the proper care of the land because of intrigue and opportunism.

## Land and Desert

In the poem in Hosea 2, the prophet plays on the rich associations of the promised land. The foundation of Israel's identity was the story of the Exodus. The escape from Egypt had been followed by forty years of wandering in the desert. After that experience, Israel had looked like "a land flowing with milk and honey." Now the prophet threatened to take all that away: "I will make her like the desert, reduce her to an arid land." To appreciate the full force of this threat we must remember that for ancient Israel the gift of the land was the primary expression of salvation. There was no belief among Israelites of that time in a blessed hereafter. To reduce the land to a desert would be, in effect, to undo the Exodus. In fact, the devastation of the Assyrian invasion might well be said to do that, some years after Hosea spoke.

The desert, however, was not only a place of death. It was also a place of hope. Israel wandered in the desert in "the days of her youth." Hosea changes his metaphor in 2,16 and plays on the positive connotations of the desert, as a place where a man might take a young woman in privacy, away from the town, to court her. What he is suggesting is that the destruction at the hands of Assyria is not the end. It is rather a transitional stage, necessary to clear away the cult of Baal and the other abuses in Israel. When Israel has been stripped down, so to speak, by the Assyrians, a new beginning will be possible, in effect a new Exodus.

The motif of a new Exodus, introduced here for the first time, would later be important for Second Isaiah (Is 40–55) after the Babylonian exile. It would be taken up again by the people

who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, shortly before the time of Christ, and it is implied in the career of John the Baptist (Mk 1,2f).

## Criticism of the Cult

The cult of Baal was attractive in part because it was a matter of ritual rather than of ethical conduct. The Israelites were also willing to perform rituals for the Lord. Hosea complains at the facile way in which they professed repentance, only to have the sentiment vanish as soon as they left the Temple (6,1-4). In the course of this passage the Israelites say: "He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up." This reference to raising up on the third day has often been related to the resurrection of Christ. In its context, however, it simply expresses the hope that God would restore the fortunes of the people after a short time.

Hosea goes on to enunciate one of the classic formulations of biblical religion in 6,6: "It is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts." Sacrifice was not bad in itself, but it was only as good as the attitude it represented. Without the love that expressed itself in ethical conduct, sacrifice was meaningless, no matter what it cost. The inadequacy of sacrifice without the practice of justice is one of the major themes that runs through the prophetic corpus.

### The Importance of Metaphors

The power of Hosea's prophecy comes in large part from his stock of striking metaphors. Israel is compared to a "cake unturned" (7,8), a "wild ass" (8,9), or a "luxuriant vine" (10,1). These metaphors have an emotional effect because of the associations they carry with them, and this enhances their power of communication. Nowhere is this more evident than in Chapter 11, which begins "When Israel was a child I loved him." The reference is to the Exodus, but the effect is very different from the rather violent accounts in the Pentateuch. By comparing Israel to a child, Hosea paints a vivid picture of God as the loving parent, teaching the infant to walk and lifting it up. By implication, Israel should have the same kind of elemental bond with the Lord that a toddler has with its parents.

Development of this metaphor leads Hosea to one of the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament. The thought of destroying his or her own child is repugnant to any normal parent. The Lord, too, asks "how could I give you up, O Ephraim?" (11,8). Following the thrust of the metaphor the answer is inevitable: "I will not give vent to my blazing anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again." The rationale may surprise us, however—"for I am God and not man." Human parents are fallible and may be overcome by anger; God is not subject to weakness. The difference between God and humanity is that we fall short of what we know to be best, while God has no such limitation.

Hosea, like all the great prophets, was a realist. He recognized that Israel would be destroyed, and whatever actually happened was the work of God (a point which will be made again by Amos). The same God whose heart is stirred to pity in Chapter 11 declares that "My eyes are closed to compassion" in 13,14. There is an apparent contradiction here. The mood of the prophet might naturally swing with changing circumstances, but if the Lord is "God and not man," we expect consistency. Hosea was not a systematic theologian, however, and all his insights do not fit neatly together. He was a shrewd enough observer to realize what would

befall Samaria at the hands of the Assyrians—little ones dashed to pieces, expectant mothers ripped open (14,1). Yet he affirmed that God still loved Israel like a child, or, in the imagery of Chapter 2, that after God had divorced Israel he would start over again with a new courtship. In this his faith is like that of a modern Jew who still believes in the love of God after the Holocaust. The conviction that God is love, despite all the evidence for random brutality and hatred in the world, is also an integral part of Christian faith.

One of Hosea's harshest words of judgment is given an ironic twist in the New Testament. In 13,14 the Lord asks, through the prophet, "Where are your plagues, O Death! where is your sting, O nether world!" The point of the passage is that God is about to use the sting of death against Israel. In 1 Corinthians 15,54f St. Paul quotes this passage. In this case, however, the question is a mocking one—the sting of death has been broken by the resurrection of Christ. While Paul changes the meaning of the passage he quotes, the new meaning is not altogether alien to Hosea, since he too looked beyond the death of the nation Israel and hoped for its "resurrection."

### The Relevance of Hosea

Hosea's message of divine love and the need for fidelity has lost none of its relevance in the modern world. The most important lesson to be learned from Hosea, however, may well be a matter of theological method. The way to the knowledge of God is through the observation of human experience. We know that it is better to pity than to destroy because of our experience in raising children. We know that infidelity is destructive because of the experience of our relationships, or because we have seen it in the relationships of others. Our knowledge of God is inferred from those basic human values which we know intuitively. Essentially the same theological method can be found in the parables of Jesus (for example, the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan) which are based to a great degree on the observation of human relationships.

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## JOEL □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1121–1125 of the Old Testament*]

In sharp contrast to Hosea, the Book of Joel makes no reference to known historical events which would enable us to establish when it was written. It is safe to say, however, that it is one of the later prophetic books, and the date 400 B.C. (*NAB* p. 1121) is a reasonable guess. Two considerations favor a relatively late date. First, according to 4,6 some people of Judah were sold as slaves to the Greeks. This reference suggests a date after the Babylonian exile, when Judah

was weak and contacts between the Greeks and the Near East were increasing. Second, the imagery of the Day of the Lord and the judgment of the nations has a strongly apocalyptic character. Such imagery is characteristic of the postexilic period.

The reference to Jews sold into slavery is indicative of the circumstances in which the book was written. It was a time of deprivation and exploitation. The first two chapters refer to a plague of locusts which had ravaged the harvests of Judah, thereby aggravating the problems of the poor. These circumstances are significant for understanding why the prophet predicts cosmic upheaval and radical change.

The book is characterized by movement from specific concern with the plague of locusts to a more general prophecy of universal judgment. One,1 to 2,17 combines description of the plague with exhortations and prayers for deliverance. Two,18 to 27 give a reply and reassurance from God. All of this may reflect an actual temple liturgy for relief from the disaster. Chapter 3 is concerned with a future time, when God will intervene to pour out the spirit and save a remnant of the people. Chapter 4 proclaims the final judgment of the nations and salvation of God's elect.

## The Day of the Lord

The theme of the Day of the Lord runs through the book as a unifying thread. The earliest mention of the Day of the Lord is in Amos 5,18. It is apparent from that passage that it was originally a festive day, to which people looked forward in joyful anticipation. Amos, however, declared that it would be a day of darkness and not light. By the time the Book of Joel was written, any great disaster could be dubbed a "Day of the Lord." In Joel 1–2 the reference is quite specifically to a plague of locusts, which transforms the land from being like "the garden of Eden" to a "desert waste" (2,3). Joel speaks of the locusts as an invading army, with the Lord at their head (2,11)—whatever actually happens is the work of God. The people respond to the emergency in ways typical of the ancient world, by bringing offerings and libations. It is characteristic of the Hebrew prophets, however, that a crisis such as this is made into an occasion for reform and repentance. The exhortation in 2,13 is a classic expression of the prophetic view of proper ritual: "Rend your hearts, not your garments."

In the modern secular world we do not usually regard natural disasters such as locusts or tornadoes as visitations from God, nor do we rely on rituals for relief. It would indeed be unfortunate if recourse to ritual kept people from taking whatever practical measures were possible to resolve their problem. The situation in Joel, however, was beyond human control, at least in that time and place. The ritual, then, was all that people could do. It was their way of expressing their desperate concern and their hope that God would give them relief. In urging them to use the crisis as an occasion for reform, the prophet is bringing some good out of a bad situation. He is also recognizing that all of life has religious significance. The prophetic idea of salvation is primarily concerned with the welfare of the people on earth. Anything that threatens that welfare is worthy of the prophet's attention, even if it is not the result of human activity in any evident sense.

The plague of locusts was undoubtedly traumatic for those who experienced it, but it was not an event of great historical moment. We do not even know when it took place. In the context of the Book of Joel it takes on a broader significance. It is a prefiguration of a greater Day of the Lord, when God will come to judge the nations. The destruction of the land by the locusts

is a small-scale rehearsal for the final judgment. In Chapter 3, then, the Day of the Lord takes on a different meaning from what it had in the first two chapters. It now refers to the Day of Judgment. The description in 3,1-5 has become a classic passage because it is quoted in Acts 2,17-21. The imagery suggests the end of the world—the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood. Such imagery is increasingly common in prophecy of the postexilic period (compare Is 13,9-11; 34,1-4).

Despite the vividness of the imagery, Joel does not envisage the end of the world, in the sense familiar from the Book of Revelation. The language here is metaphorical. The darkening of sun and moon is a way of expressing that there will be a time of great tumult and confusion. The world order as we know it will be turned upside down and, most importantly, the foreign nations who have oppressed the Jews will be overthrown. The magnitude of this upheaval is expressed through the imagery of the physical universe. This kind of imagery is very common in the apocalyptic literature from the second century B.C. onward, (see the Guide to Daniel above). The later apocalyptic writers, however, took the imagery more literally and came to believe in an actual end of the world. This is not yet the case in Daniel, but it is commonplace by New Testament times. In *2 Esdras* 7,30 (a Jewish writing from the end of the first century A.D.) the earth is turned back to primeval silence for seven days before the resurrection, so that the new creation is clearly separated from the old. Joel, in contrast, has no resurrection, and looks for a transformation of this world rather than a new creation.

## A Vision of Plenty

There are two aspects of Joel's hope for the transformation of the earth. First is the universal human hope for freedom from hunger. This is a natural reaction to the locust plague. In a time of scarcity Joel comforts his people with the promise that they will eat and be filled (2,26) and even rhapsodizes that "the mountains shall drip new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk" (4,18). This kind of prediction is very common in the prophets (see, for example, Isaiah 11). It evidently involves a strong element of wish fulfillment. More than two thousand years later, the world is still a long way from being rid of hunger. The optimistic prophecy has two functions. It gives hope to the poor, not certainty indeed but a hope that is within the bounds of possibility, and it reminds us all of a goal toward which we should work. The role of the prophecy is to sustain energy and morale in depressing times. In itself, the prophecy did not feed the hungry, but then humanity does not live by bread alone, and the prophet supplied strength in other ways.

## Vengeance on the Nations

The second aspect of the Day of the Lord is one that Christians sometimes find distasteful, although Christians have certainly indulged it in the course of history. This is the desire for vengeance. It is not enough that Judah flow with wine and milk, the hated neighbor Edom must be a desert waste (4,19). If the Philistines have sold Jews as slaves, their own children must be sold in turn (4,4-8). Where other prophets called on people to beat their swords into plowshares (Is 2,4; Mi 4,3), Joel reverses the call, and looks forward to a showdown in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Vengeance is not one of the nobler human emotions, but it is certainly understandable and sometimes irresistible. Distaste for vengeance should not distract us from the more fundamental problems that give rise to it. The prophets' call for vengeance is usually a call for

justice. In the case of Joel it is a protest of the powerless who had seen their children sold into slavery. Slavery was a far more fundamental sin against humanity than vengeance, real or imagined.

In the modern world, the vengefulness of the prophet often finds its counterpart in the feelings of Third World countries toward the more developed West. Vengeance is all the more distasteful when it is directed against ourselves, for reasons we seldom understand. Since the Hebrew prophets are part of our own tradition, they may help us reach some understanding of the mentality of those who see themselves as oppressed and want to see the tables turned on their more powerful neighbors. This is not to approve of vengefulness, but to affirm that we can learn something even from a somewhat distasteful text. J.J.C.

## For Further Reading

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# AMOS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1126–1135 of the Old Testament*]

Amos is the earliest of the prophets who have books in their names. In fact, his oracles were transmitted orally, and only collected in book form much later. The opening verse mentions the kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel, who are the earliest kings mentioned in Hosea 1,1. The later kings listed in connection with Hosea are not mentioned in Amos. The historical background of the two prophets is very much the same. The dominant factor is the threat of destruction by Assyria. Nonetheless, the problems on which the two prophets focus are quite different. Hosea paid great attention to idolatry and cultic behavior, which symbolized the deeper problems of the society. Amos also comments on the cult, but scarcely hints that idolatry is a problem. Instead he speaks directly to the issue of social justice, with a vigor unparalleled anywhere in the Bible.

## The Career of Amos

We know very little about the career of Amos. He came from the village of Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah, but he delivered his oracles in the northern kingdom, especially around the temple of Bethel, just north of the border. He did not, in any case, attach great importance to political boundaries. It is a theme of his prophecy that all peoples are equal in the sight of God.

Only one episode from his career is recounted in the book. In 7,10-17 we hear of an encounter between Amos and the priest of Bethel. The priest was worried because Amos was prophesying against the king in the temple precincts. The priest could not afford to offend the king, and so he told Amos to go back to Judah. Amos's reply has given rise to much debate. Literally the Hebrew says "No prophet I, nor the son of a prophet." The *New American Bible* opts for one possible interpretation of this utterance: "I *was* no prophet" (until the Lord called me). An alternative view is that he rejected the very name "prophet." In either case, the point at

issue is that Amos is not a member of a guild of professional prophets, such as we see in action in 1 Kings 22, the story of Micaiah ben Imlah. He was an independent agent. He was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores (the fruit, resembling a fig, had to be tended in order to prevent insects from destroying it), and so had his own means. He did not depend on king or priest for support, and so was not beholden to them, and did not require their permission to prophesy. This independence left him free to speak the truth as he saw it, without political constraint.

The style of Amos is blunt, even offensive. He calls the women of Samaria "cows of Bashan" (4,1) and tells the priest Amaziah that his wife will be a harlot in the city (7,17). This is not the way to make friends and influence people, and it is not a style recommended by professors of homiletics. Amos makes no attempt to win the sympathy of his audience, as Nathan did with David (2 Samuel 12) or as Jesus does in the parables. He is a prophet in the mold of Elijah, whose denunciations come close to cursing. This crude style of preaching must be seen in its social context. Nathan was a trusted adviser to David, and could expect to have an effect on him. Amos, like Elijah, was an outsider. He did not have the ear of the king, and saw no likelihood that the upper classes would change their ways. Consequently, he does not appeal for repentance. He simply proclaims the doom that is coming. He testifies to the conditions of his time and puts them on record, but he does not suggest that the catastrophe could be avoided.

The oracles of Amos are grouped in distinct blocks. The first two chapters contain a series of oracles against various nations, culminating in a denunciation of Israel. Three,1—5,9 contains three long oracles (or strings of short utterances) which are introduced as "words." These are followed in 5,7—6,14 by three "woes" against Israel and Judah. (The verses in 5,7-9 are out of order and must be rearranged. See *NAB* p.1130). Seven,1—9,8b contains a series of visions of destruction. Nine,8c—15 is an epilogue which was probably added by a later editor.

## The Oracles Against the Nations

The book begins with oracles of judgment against Israel's immediate neighbors, in the area now occupied by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and part of the occupied territory of Palestine. The oracle against Judah may have been added by the editor of the book to bring it up to date, after Israel had been destroyed. It was not unusual in the ancient world for a prophet from one country to denounce or curse other nations—see Numbers 22–24, where Balaam is called to curse Israel. What is unusual here is that Amos doesn't stop after he has denounced the other nations, but pronounces a similar judgment on Israel. His listeners would surely have expected to hear that Israel would be glorified when Edom was humiliated (as we saw in Joel 4). Amos, however, insists that Israel is no different from other nations in the eyes of God. Any nation that sins deserves punishment. The sins of the other nations are not all offenses against Israel. Moab is condemned for burning to lime the bones of the king of Edom (2,1), which is an outrage against humanity as such, or against natural law. The sins of Israel, too, are sins against humanity: they sell the just man for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals (2,6).

The oracle against Israel in Amos 2,6-16 can be read as a "covenant lawsuit," that is, a speech in which the prophet indicts Israel for failing to keep the Sinai covenant. The covenant had three essential elements: i) the recollection of salvation history, culminating in the Exodus; ii) the commandments, and iii) blessings for keeping the commandments and curses for breaking them. The history as well as the curses and blessings both provided motivation to keep the

commandments. The typical argument of a "covenant lawsuit" is that i) God earned the loyalty of Israel by bringing it out of Egypt but, ii) Israel proved disloyal by breaking the commandments. In Amos 2, the sins of Israel are listed first (6-8). Then the prophet recalls the Exodus and the obligation it entailed. He concludes with a threat, which is in effect a curse: "Beware, I will crush you into the ground" (2,13). Many scholars think, however, that the recollection of the Exodus here was added by an editor, who wanted to put the prophetic preaching in the context of the theology of Deuteronomy (which is also exemplified in the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). Amos himself had a wider frame of reference. The practices he condemns are, to be sure, forbidden by the law of Moses, but that is not the point in Amos. People of any nation should recognize that it is criminal to sell a just man for silver. So it makes no difference to Amos whether or not a particular nation knows the law of Moses. The basic requirements of justice should be obvious to all. In short, Amos appeals to natural law, as it was understood in the ancient Near East. The law of Moses coincided with that law to a great extent, but the essentials of ethical behavior should be known even to pagans. In the New Testament, St. Paul makes the same point in Romans 1, where he says that pagan idolators have no excuse, "for what can be known about God is evident to them."

## Amos and the Covenant

The equivalence of Israel and other nations in the sight of God is a theme which runs through the Book of Amos. It raises a question as to whether the prophet regarded Israel as a chosen nation in any sense. He was certainly familiar with the story of the Exodus, and the recitation of salvation history. For Amos, however, the Exodus guarantees Israel no privilege, but only adds to its responsibility. Two other passages in the book address this question very directly.

a) In 3,2 we read "You alone have I favored; more than all the families of the earth." We expect this statement to be followed by a reassurance, such as "therefore I will protect you like the apple of my eye" or the like. Instead we read "Therefore I will punish you for all your crimes." Here, as in the oracles against the nations, Amos deliberately shocks his audience by telling them what they neither expect nor want to hear. (Jesus uses a similar technique in the parable of the Good Samaritan.) In a sense he is only spelling out the implications of the covenant, which always carried the threat of the curses for breaking the laws as well as the promise of the blessings for obedience. This is not how most people in Israel understood the covenant, however. They thought, naturally enough, that the Exodus guaranteed them divine protection, that they were already "saved." According to Amos, the only way Israel differs from the other nations is that it should know better, and is all the more blameworthy for its crimes.

b) Amos puts the Exodus in perspective even more bluntly in 9,7: "Are you not like the Ethiopians to me? . . . Did I not bring the Israelites from the land of Egypt as I brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" Israel is special in the eyes of God . . . but so is every other people. The Philistines and Syrians had their "salvation history" too. None of this means that the Exodus was not important. It was absolutely fundamental to the identity of Israel. It did not, however, mean that Israel would be

favored in any way, except that it should know more clearly than others what was demanded of it.

Amos's sustained denial that Israel was any different from other peoples has its best parallel in the Wisdom literature (especially Proverbs) which ignores the special revelation to Israel and focuses on the universal moral law. Amos would seem to have been an educated man. He displays an impressive knowledge of international affairs, and was certainly no ignorant peasant. We do not know how he acquired his learning. He was probably well versed in traditional wisdom, whether he was formally educated in a school setting or not.

## The Words and Woes

The three "words" of Amos are really a string of shorter oracles, mainly concerned with the sins of the Israelites. In 3,3-8, however, he lays out some of his theological presuppositions. He assumes that there is an order in nature and things do not happen by chance ("Does a lion roar . . . when it has no prey?"). This order is the work of God. Amos is a radical monotheist, not only in the sense that he ignores other gods, but in the sense that he regards everything that happens as the work of the Lord. Religious people always credit God with the good things that happen. Amos goes further: "If evil befalls a city, has not the Lord caused it?" God is responsible for the bad as well as the good. (Remember the Israelite religion at this time had no devil on whom evil could be blamed.) The acts of God in history, then, are not confined to special events like the Exodus, but embrace everything that actually happens. This conviction lays the foundation for a thoroughgoing realism in his view of international politics. If Assyria is more powerful than Israel, this is not by chance but is the will of God. Jeremiah took a similar view of the power of Babylon when it destroyed Jerusalem.

Amos directs many of his oracles against the cult at Bethel. When people go to make offerings to atone for sin at Bethel, Amos says that they "come to Bethel and sin" (4,4). There is a pun in the Hebrew because of the similarity of the terms for "sin-offering" and "sin," and Amos uses the word play to equate the two. His sharpest critique of the cult, however, is delivered in the famous "Woe" against those who yearn for the Day of the Lord (5,18-25). The Day of the Lord was a major festival day, most probably the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkoth, a harvest festival in the Fall. It was an occasion for celebrating the victory of the God of Israel and the defeat of his enemies. Amos, characteristically, tells the people that it will be the opposite of what they expect. The real Day of the Lord, when God appears before the people, will be a day of judgment. Amos was the first prophet to speak of the Day of the Lord as a day of judgment on Israel, and thereby he introduced one of the major themes of the prophetic literature.

Amos goes on to issue a broadside against all the festivals of Israel. He implies that Israel survived for the forty years in the desert without offering sacrifices (5,25). His point is not that all ritual is necessarily bad, but that it is not of the essence of religion. For Amos, the essence of religion is social justice. If ritual furthers justice, well and good, but too often it does not. In the prophet's view, the Israelite cult only made the upper classes complacent. They identified themselves as "Israel" and felt that they were God's chosen people. Their cultic celebrations reminded them of the Exodus and the great things God had done for them, and reassured them God would deliver them from danger again. They need not, then, be too concerned about the plight of the poor. When the festival was over, they could go back to cheating in the marketplace (8,5). Amos insisted that all this was self-delusion. God would not overlook the injustice of

the society because of the sound of the harps, and the Assyrians would rudely shatter the naive belief that God would protect Israel no matter what.

The final "Woe" in Chapter 6 paints a vivid picture of "the complacent in Zion [and] the overconfident on the mount of Samaria," the upper classes of both kingdoms of Israel. These were the people who sold the poor into slavery while they lived in luxury themselves. Amos announces with evident anticipation that these would be the first to go into exile. This was not mere wish fulfillment on the prophet's part. He knew the practice of the Assyrians, which was to take the upper classes into exile so that there would be no one left to lead a revolt. In his view, it was a fate that they richly deserved.

## The Visions

Chapters 7–9 are primarily visions of the destruction of Israel. At first the prophet is moved by the enormity of the destruction and intercedes. After the vision of the locusts and of the fire, God relents, but the time for forgiveness runs out. The message is summed up in the vision of a basket of ripe fruit. The Hebrew here involves a pun. The word for "ripe fruit" is very similar to the word for "end." Eight,2 "the time is ripe" can also be translated "the end has come." This was the first time the idea of an "end" was proclaimed in ancient Israel. The end in question was the end of Israel as an independent nation. Later biblical writers would extend the idea and envisage an end of history or of the world. (The technical theological term "eschatology," which refers to the doctrine of the last things, is derived from the Greek word for "end.") Amos, however, was not speaking of the end of the world. The end of Israel in the eighth century B.C., which he predicted, was final, in the sense that the political entity that had existed for 200 years was wiped off the map and never restored. The influence of Amos on later tradition was undoubtedly increased by the fact that his prophecy was so completely fulfilled.

The Israel whose end Amos announced was primarily the Israel of the upper classes, who held political power. They were the ones who identified themselves as Israel in the cult and in international political relations. The peasants would undoubtedly suffer during the Assyrian invasion, but ultimately it may not have made much difference whether one paid taxes to a foreign power or to predatory Israelite landlords. From the viewpoint of the peasants, and of Amos, the survival of Israel as a nation was not of great importance. What mattered was not political identity but the living conditions of the poor within the society.

## The Epilogue

Much of the force of Amos's prophecy derived from its finality. When he said that God would destroy the kingdom of Israel off the face of the earth (9,8), that was his last word. A later editor felt that this stark conclusion did not do justice to history. Israel in the broader sense of the people of the Lord, north and south, was not terminated. The message of the prophetic corpus as a whole is ultimately not one of destruction but of hope. What the epilogue does, then, is put the prophecy of Amos in a broader perspective. Death and destruction have their time and place, but there remains the hope for an ideal future, as we have seen in the prophecy of Joel. This ultimate optimism is an essential ingredient of biblical faith.

Three points in the epilogue deserve special attention.

i) Amos 9,9f suggests that God's judgment on Israel will be selective, so that only the sinners will die. Obviously the Assyrians were not so selective, nor were the Babylonians

after them. The preexilic prophets spoke of the fate of the whole nation, not of individuals, and this was realistic if divine judgment was executed through warfare. In the postexilic period, however, there is increasing sensitivity to individual responsibility. (See the great reflection on this subject in Ezekiel 18.) In the apocalyptic literature (for example, Daniel) the problem is resolved by the belief that just and wicked receive their appropriate retribution after death.

ii) The hope for the future is focused on "the fallen hut of David." This oracle probably comes from the period after the exile when there was no longer a Davidic king on the throne in Jerusalem. The hope expressed here is messianic, but should not be confused with the later Christian understanding of the Messiah. The hope here is that the native Jewish kingship will be restored.

iii) Finally, the ideal state of the end-time is decidedly earthly in character. The hope is for peace and prosperity, with an abundance of wine and fruit. One of the major points that the Hebrew Bible can contribute to Christian spirituality is a healthy appreciation of the good things of this world.

## The Relevance of Amos

No prophet is more easily related to the modern world than Amos, for the social inequities that he denounced in eighth-century B.C. Israel are still very much with us. The U. S. bishops adopt a much milder tone than Amos in their Pastoral Letter on the Economy, but their concerns are very much in line with his. The Bishops insist that "government has a moral function: protecting human rights and securing justice for all members of the commonwealth" (*Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U. S. Economy,* p.35), and that "the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority" (p.27). In the ancient world it was the role of the prophet to be the conscience of the nation and speak up for the powerless. In the modern world, that role falls to religious leaders, who are not themselves involved in the business of government and so can view it with some perspective.

The first lesson to be learned from Amos is that social justice is the business of religion. The test of piety is what happens in the marketplace rather than what happens in the church or temple.

A second lesson is less obvious at first, but bears some thought. Amos was convinced that there is an intrinsic connection between the justice of a society and its long-term prosperity. This conviction arose from his radical monotheism. The God who gives prosperity is also the God of justice. In the modern world we are hesitant to see such an immediate connection between morality and success. Nonetheless it is probably true that the greed of the Israelite upper classes contributed to their own downfall. On the one hand their aspiration to power and independence brought them into conflict with Assyria. On the other hand the exploitation of the poor, and the individualism of the rich, weakened the society internally. The Assyrians might have rolled over Israel whether it was a just society or not, but the blow might not have been so severe if its leaders had been less concerned with political power and more concerned with equality and justice.

J.J.C.

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# OBADIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1135–1137 of the Old Testament*]

With only 21 verses, the Book of Obadiah is the shortest of the prophetic books. It consists of a series of short oracles against Edom (1-14), then an oracle against all the nations (15f), followed by a prediction of the restoration of Judah. Edom was a small state to the south of Judah. (It was later called Idumaea.) The Edomites incurred the lasting hatred of the Jews in the sixth century B.C. by exploiting the weaknesses of Judah and pillaging its territory after the Babylonian invasion. Relations remained very bitter when the Jews returned from the exile and restored the city of Jerusalem. The prophecy of Obadiah belongs to this general period (sixth or early fifth century B.C.) but contains no indication of its specific date. The hatred between Judah and Edom was intense and lasting. Long after Edom had ceased to be a threat to the Jews, the name Edom was used in rabbinic literature as a code name for Rome, the hated enemy of the day.

## Oracles against Edom

Oracles of vengeance against Edom were common in the postexilic period. Compare the related utterances in Jeremiah 49,7-22. For the modern reader, these oracles pose the usual problem of how to deal with vengeance. In fairness, it should be noted that the logic of Obadiah is quite similar to that of Amos. There is a natural moral law which applies to the actions of all peoples. That law forbids violence against one's neighbors and gloating over their distress. One who violates that law, however, loses its protection. The underlying principle is succinctly stated in verse 15: "As you have done, so shall it be done to you." The natural law requires that the punishment fit the crime. Obadiah indicts Edom for behavior similar to that for which Amos indicted Israel. While it may seem more noble to direct criticism against one's own people, the moral principle is the same. Edom deserved the prophetic denunciation.

## Judgment upon the Nations

In broadening his attack to all the foreign nations, Obadiah uses the now familiar motif of the Day of the Lord (see the guide to Amos above). Here the judgment is directed only against the foreign nations. Israel did not need a word of judgment at this time. The Day of the Lord here is simply the day of judgment. It implies a decisive change in the course of events, but nothing like the end of history or of the world. The judgment will be governed by the law of retribution: as you have done, so shall it be done to you. Obadiah applies this principle to whole nations rather than to individuals.

## The Restoration of Judah

The idea that a remnant will be saved on Mt. Zion was developed especially by Isaiah. In the present context one is struck by the modesty of the hope. The kingship of God does not imply that Judah will rule all the nations, only its immediate neighbors who have most recently afflicted it. While a note of vengeance is present it should not be exaggerated. The oracle is really a testimony to the indomitable hope of a people who had been reduced to poverty and insignificance, and were at the mercy of their neighbors. Belief in the kingship of God on Mt. Zion was a deep-rooted part of the Jerusalem cult under the monarchy (see for example, Psalms 93; 97—99). In the aftermath of the exile it became a source of hope for deliverance. J.J.C.

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# JONAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1137–1139 of the Old Testament*]

The Book of Jonah is unique among the prophets for two reasons. First, it is not a collection of oracles but a narrative, and second, Jonah is in many ways an antiprophet, whose behavior is approximately the opposite of what we expect from a prophet. The story may be termed a fable, because of the role of the fish (compare the role of animals in Aesop's fables). It can also be considered as a parable, in the sense that it is a short story that goes against our expectations, like many of the parables of Jesus. The story is set in the Assyrian period (like the prophecies of Hosea and Amos), but there is general agreement that it comes from a much later time. While we cannot pinpoint the time of composition, it was certainly sometime in the postexilic period. The actual setting, then, was close to the time of Joel and Obadiah, but Jonah has a very different perspective on the problems of the period.

The division of the book is adequately represented by the chapters. The long psalm in Chapter 2 stands out from its context. It may have been added by a later editor who was more interested in the miracle of Jonah's survival than was the original author.

Three considerations are especially important for appreciating the Book of Jonah:

1 the story is quite deliberately humorous,

2 its primary subject matter is the proper attitude to foreign nations, not Jonah's miraculous escape from drowning, and
3 the story gives a mildly critical perspective on the religious zeal which is a trademark of prophecy.

## The Humor of the Story

The humorous quality should be apparent from the opening verses. Where else do we ever hear of a prophet who so flagrantly disobeys a divine command? The idea that one could get away from the Lord by sailing to a remote place is not only naive but deliberately ridiculous. The pagan sailors exhibit more "fear of the Lord" than does Jonah. When he finally goes to Nineveh, the Assyrians respond with a fervor unparalleled in Israel. Even the animals join in the repentance. The author of this passage is not concerned with historical plausibility—everyone knew that Assyria had never turned from its "evil way." The fantastic repentance of the Assyrians simply adds to the enjoyment of the tale.

The centerpiece of the humor of the story is even more fantastic than the repentance of the Assyrians. A great fish arrives just in time to catch Jonah when he is thrown overboard and vomits him up on the shore. Nothing could be more remote from the spirit of this story than to believe that this actually happened. The episode of Jonah and the fish has rich theological implications, especially for Christians, but there is no theological virtue in mistaking a fantastic joke for literal fact.

The humor of the story has an ironic quality. It refuses to give the prophet the dignity associated with the office, or to take his convictions seriously. It invites us to reconsider our stereotypes of both pagans and prophets. Unlike the oracles of Amos, it assumes the goodwill of its readers and tries to lead them to new insight.

## The Attitude to Foreign Nations

The primary subject matter of the book is indicated at the outset when the prophet is sent to preach to the Assyrians rather than to his own people. The wickedness of Assyria is not in doubt; it is the premise of the story. Jonah, naturally enough, wants to see justice done and is upset at God's excessive mercy. The incredible repentance of the Assyrians forces the issue: does Assyria, the most destructive tyrant of its day, deserve divine forgiveness? It is as if the Nazi leaders made a show of repentance after World War II and were pardoned. Jonah is not exceptionally narrow-minded here. His demand for justice is just as reasonable as the Nuremberg trials. It is not accepted, however. God speaks here as creator, to whom the Assyrians are as important as the Israelites (or, in modern terms, Nazis are as important as Jews or Christians). The concluding verse of the book recognizes that "the Assyrian in the street" is no more guilty of the crimes of his nation than are the cattle, but guilt or innocence is not the point. The Book of Jonah sees God in the same terms as the much later Book of Wisdom 11,24: "For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made, for what you hated, you would not have fashioned." The magnanimity of this sentiment is astonishing, especially when we consider the situation of the Jews in the postexilic period, when they had every reason to resent foreign powers. We may compare this story to Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable presupposes that most Jews would have regarded "good Samaritan" as a contradiction in terms. The penitent Assyrian is at least as great a contradiction, and as hard to accept. Admittedly,

when the Book of Jonah was written the Assyrian invasion was already ancient history, and did not arouse emotions to the same degree as the holocaust in our time. Nevertheless, it is not that Jonah was exceptionally narrow-minded here, but rather than God is exceptionally tolerant.

## The Perspective on Prophetic Zeal

Jonah reacts to God's mercy by sulking and praying for death (4,8). He is not the first prophet to do so. The great Elijah also sat under a tree and asked God to take his life (1 Kgs 19,4f). Elijah, more than any prophet, was known for his zeal in destroying sinners (witness his treatment of the prophets of Baal in 1 Kgs 18,40). Jonah is a prophet in the same mold. In this case, however, the zeal of the prophet does not meet with approval. The Book of Jonah sees the limitations of prophetic zeal. God's rebuke is mild. Jonah is well-intentioned and is acting in accordance with a long tradition. Conformity with tradition is not enough, however. Hosea had marked a breakthrough in the Israelite tradition by the recognition that it is more fitting for God to have mercy than to punish. The Book of Jonah extends that insight to the treatment of foreign nations. Even the prophet must learn that reconciliation is a higher value than strict retribution. Not all the prophetic books reflect this insight, but it is certainly the view affirmed for Christianity in the Gospels.

### The Sign of Jonah

The episode in the belly of the fish is a minor humorous motif in the original story, but it acquires greater significance in later tradition. In Matthew 12,39f Jonah's stay in the belly of the fish is taken to prefigure Jesus' time in the tomb, and Jonah is often used as a symbol of resurrection in early Christian art. The symbolic significance of this episode appears already in the psalm in Chapter 2. There the belly of the fish is equated with the netherworld, and Jonah's rescue is equivalent to resurrection from the dead. In the context of the Old Testament, the resurrection is metaphorical, and means simply that the psalmist is delivered from desperate circumstances. It is a confession of the power of God to give life and take it away. We should note that what Jonah regrets about the netherworld is that he is separated from the presence of God. What he asks is not just continued survival, but restoration to that presence. Fullness of life, for most Old Testament writers, is not life without end, but the experience of God's grace, which is so satisfying that it is better to have "one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps 84,11).

### The Relevance of Jonah

Jonah's message of tolerance and forgiveness is as urgent in the modern world as it was in the fifth century B.C. It is a hard word, and should not be sentimentalized. It demands not only tolerance and understanding for those who are different from us, but forgiveness for those who have truly behaved wickedly, if they are willing to accept it. It is not yet a demand for unconditional forgiveness, since it has the precondition of repentance, but it is not an easy demand for all that.

The sign of Jonah caught the imagination of later generations as a sign of hope. That hope nicely undergirds the message of tolerance and forgiveness, since the wicked deeds of the oppressor are not as final as they seem. Those who hope for deliverance from the belly of death can afford to forgive the injustices of life. Belief in resurrection is often associated with the hope

that the wicked will be damned. The Book of Jonah, read in the light of the New Testament and Christian tradition, suggests that resurrection can also give a larger perspective on life, which has room for tolerance and forgiveness. J.J.C.

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# MICAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1140–1146 of the Old Testament*]

Micah was a prophet of the eighth century B.C., contemporary with Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. As a prophet of the southern kingdom of Judah, he most closely resembles Isaiah. The book that bears his name does not all come from his hand. There is general agreement that his words are preserved in Chapters 1–3, probably also in Chapter 6 and in parts of Chapter 7. Chapters 4 and 5, however, were probably added after the Babylonian exile. The original words of Micah, like those of Amos, are largely preoccupied with issues of social justice and the coming Assyrian invasion.

## The Impending Judgment

The first oracle begins with a classic description of a theophany, or apparition of God. Traditionally such a theophany was associated with divine deliverance, as in Deuteronomy 33, Judges 5. Compare also the theophany on Sinai. Micah's theophany, however, is like Amos's Day of the Lord. God is not coming to save, but to judge. The immediate presence of God is destructive for a sinful people. In eighth-century B.C. Israel, the presence of God was not experienced as fire and earthquake, but as the invasion of the Assyrian army. The destruction would fall most heavily on Samaria and Jerusalem, the major cities, homes of the royal houses and ruling classes.

The reasons for the coming destruction are spelled out most clearly in Chapter 2. The problem is that the rich devise ways to force the smaller landowners into debt and then seize their property. Isaiah 5,8 complains about the same problem ("Woe to you who join house to house, who connect field with field, till no room remains, and you are left to dwell alone in the midst of the land"). From the prophet's viewpoint, it was only fitting that this land would be siezed again by the Assyrians, so that the greed of the big landowners would be in vain.

Micah also discusses another fact of life in ancient Israel, which was only hinted at by Amos but was later a major theme in the prophecy of Jeremiah. The professional prophets were leading the people astray (3,5). This is why Amos made his protest "No prophet I." The phenomenon is natural enough. Prophets found that people liked to be reassured and told that all was well, and they tailored their message to their market. They were concerned with their own wellbeing more than that of the nation. A classic illustration of the professional prophets in action can be found in 1 Kings 22. In contrast, Micah saw the task of the true prophet as "to

declare to Jacob his crimes and to Israel his sins" (3,8). Compare the assertion of Jeremiah that "From of old, the prophets who were before you and me prophesied war, woe, and pestilence" (Jer 28,8). Such a prophet would never be popular, but at least there could be no doubt about his sincerity.

The true prophet here, as so often in the history of Israel, finds himself in opposition to the religious leaders, the priests, and the official prophets (3,11). On the surface of things, the priests appear to have great faith: no evil can come upon Israel because the Lord is in its midst. Such faith is no virtue for Micah. Rather virtue lies in the practice of justice and in facing reality honestly. He regarded the Temple on Mt. Zion, often the focal point of Jewish religion in antiquity, as a negative force. According to the Psalmist, Mt. Zion was "the holy dwelling of the Most High. God is in its midst; it shall not be disturbed" (Ps 46,6). If kings came to attack it, they would be seized with terror and put to flight (Ps 48,5f). Micah realized that the Assyrians would not panic at the sight of Jerusalem. The belief that Zion could not be destroyed was a source of complacency and illusion. So Micah uttered his radical prophecy that Zion would be plowed like a field. This prophecy is quoted in Jeremiah 26,18 as a precedent for the equally radical prophecy of Jeremiah. It was not fulfilled in Micah's time, but it was not forgotten either, and it was justified in time. Faith cannot be based on any religious institution, no matter how sacred. No temple is permanent, and no one is guaranteed the unconditional protection of God.

## The Indictment of Israel

Chapter 6 presents an example of the "covenant lawsuit" which we have discussed above in connection with Amos. According to the logic of the Sinai covenant, Israel was bound to keep the commandments because God had brought it out of the land of Egypt. If the people kept the commandments they would be blest, if not they would be cursed. In Micah 6,1-5 God indicts Israel by recalling that the divine part of the obligation had been satisfied in the Exodus. It is not necessary to spell out how Israel has failed to keep its part, or what the consequences will be.

Micah does not suggest that the Israelites were indifferent to religion. On the contrary they were willing to perform any ritual that might further their interests, even human sacrifice (6,7). According to 2 Kings 21,6, a king of Judah, Manasseh, immolated his son by fire in the seventh century B.C. The prophet cuts through the pretenses of such superstition with a succinct formulation of the essence of religion: "to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6,8). No special beliefs are required, or cultic observances. There was general agreement on what it meant to do the right. The anguished quest for the right sacrifice, then, is shown to be mere hypocrisy. The business of religion is quite straightforward. It only requires the will to do what we know we ought. It is significant that the U.S. Bishops used Micah 6,8 as a summary of the heritage of the biblical prophets in setting the tone for the entire letter *Economic Justice for All* (n. 4). We might compare this passage with the Judgment scene in Matthew 25,31-46. There the Son of Man does not ask about beliefs or ritual practices, but whether one fed the hungry and clothed the naked.

## The Faith of the Prophet

The prophets only rarely provide glimpses of their personal faith, such as we find in the "confessions" of Jeremiah. One such glimpse is provided in Micah 7,7-10. Micah appears as a lonely figure, as we might expect in view of his relationship to the other prophets. His attempt

to reach his public appears to have failed but he is sustained by the conviction that God will vindicate him. In all of this he resembles Jeremiah, whose trials are described at greater length. The experience of prophets such as these contributed to the ideal of the Suffering Servant (Is 53), which has played such an important part in Christian theology.

## The Prophecies of Restoration

The oracles inserted in Micah 4–5 in the postexilic period include two that are especially memorable. The prophecy of the restoration of the house of the Lord in Micah 4,1-3 is also found in Isaiah 2,2-4. The author of this oracle is unknown. The idea that all nations would find a spiritual center in Jerusalem may be quite old, but it flourished especially in the postexilic period when Jews who lived in other lands went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. The prophecy is artfully placed here, immediately after the prediction that Zion would become a plowed field. The editors of the prophetic books typically placed an oracle of hope after one of judgment. In Micah's day the influence of the Temple was such that he needed to remind people that it would not last forever. By the time the book was edited, the need for judgment had passed and it was appropriate to remember the potential of the Temple for good.

Micah 5,1-4 speaks of a ruler who will come from Bethlehem. This prophecy has been treasured by Christians for obvious reasons. In the Jewish context, the significance of Bethlehem lies in the fact that it was the birthplace of David. The prophecy, then, is that the Davidic line will be restored. In mentioning Bethlehem rather than Jerusalem, however, the prophet is making a further point. He is recalling the humble origins of the monarchy, when it was associated with a village rather than with a city, and was not yet tainted with the corruption of Solomon's empire. The hope for restoration of the native kingship, which would bring peace to the land, is similar to what is described in more rhapsodic language in Isaiah 11. J.J.C.

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# NAHUM □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1147–1149 of the Old Testament*]

The oracles of Nahum are concerned with a single event, the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. The euphoria of the prophet is understandable. Never again would Judah be invaded by Assyria. Some centuries later the author of Jonah might pity Nineveh, but that was more than could be

expected at the time of its downfall. It is characteristic of biblical prophecy that the fall of one Gentile nation at the hands of another is assumed to be the work of the Lord.

## A Jealous God

The opening verse of Nahum's prophecy is somewhat shocking to modern ears: "A jealous and avenging God is the Lord." Such a characterization of God was not new. One of the oldest descriptions of the biblical God is found in Exodus 15,3: "The Lord is a warrior" and on Sinai the Lord declares that he is a jealous God (Ex 20,5). This aspect of the divinity was never thought to be incompatible with mercy and love. It is simply the expression of justice: "the Lord never leaves the guilty unpunished." The wrath of God is only the manifestation of the moral order in the universe. Events like the fall of Nineveh were precious, because they showed that justice eventually prevailed. Nahum also says that the Lord is slow to anger (1,3) and emphasizes his goodness to the righteous (1,7). The immediate demonstration of that goodness was that God gave the smaller peoples of the Near East the satisfaction of seeing the fall of Assyria.

## A Short-Sighted Prophecy

The most striking thing about Nahum's prophecy, however, is how short-sighted it was. While Judah was freed from one oppressor it would soon be subjected to another, no less destructive. A mere 15 years after Nahum proclaimed security, Jerusalem would again be under siege.

The lesson to be learned from Nahum is two-edged. The fall of Assyria is a reminder that all tyrants fall sooner or later, and therefore a cause of hope. The hope is tempered by the realization that the fall of a particular tyrant is not the end of all tyranny. History is full of surprises, not all of them pleasant. Nahum's exultation over the fall of Nineveh is echoed in the New Testament in John of Patmos's anticipation of the fall of Rome (Revelation 17–18). John uses the image of the harlot, which is found in Nahum 3,4. Rome, too, fell eventually, but other tyrants took its place. Yet there is consolation in the knowledge that no power lasts forever.

J.J.C.

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# HABAKKUK □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1150–1153 of the Old Testament*]

The prophecy of Habakkuk is considerably more reflective than that of Nahum. He prophesied a few years later, when the Babylonian threat had become obvious. Habakkuk, however, not only reacts to the immediate danger, but ponders the underlying problem. Why do the wicked circumvent the just? Why do the wicked devour those more righteous than themselves? Granted that the blame falls on humanity, why does God allow such a situation to prevail? The question, in short, is one of theodicy, or the justice of God. It is more typical of wisdom literature than of prophecy. The classic treatment is found in the Book of Job. The question of

theodicy arises later in the apocalyptic literature especially in the great apocalypse of *2 Esdras,* which is printed with the Apocrypha in Protestant editions of the Bible.

Habakkuk was concerned first of all with the injustice within Jewish society. It is illuminating to compare the "woes" in Chapter 2 with Jeremiah's critique of King Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.) which accuses the king of oppression and exploitation, especially in building a cedar palace by forced labor (Jer 22,13-19). Jehoiakim might well be accused of storing up what is not his (Hb 2,6), and of setting his nest on high (2,9), and even the violence done to Lebanon (2,17) may refer to his use of cedar. The critique, however, is couched in general terms and can apply to any wealthy and arrogant man.

Habakkuh's answer to the question of theodicy anticipates the kind of response that the apocalyptic writers would later offer. He does not provide an explanation, but a promise that the situation will be rectified in time. At first the solution seems worse than the problem—God will raise up the Babylonians (1,6-11). Isaiah (Chapter 10) had spoken of Assyria as the rod of the Lord's anger. Babylon apparently fills this role in Habakkuk, by bringing about the downfall of King Jehoiakim. In Isaiah the rod itself would eventually be broken. The eventual destruction of Babylon is implied in Habakkuk too. The prophet cannot have been unaware that Babylon was a prime example of the wicked who devours one more just than himself and whose throat was insatiable as death (2,5). Because of the similarity between the behavior of Babylon and that of the wicked in Judah, it is sometimes unclear to which Habakkuk is referring. The lesson, however, is clear. Even though justice is not apparent in the world, one should trust in the Lord and be patient.

## Righteousness and Faith

The most famous utterance of Habakkuk is undoubtedly 2,4, "the just man, because of his faith, shall live," which acquired pivotal importance in the theology of Paul (Rom 1,17; Gal 3,11). In its original context, "faith" does not have the pregnant sense that it has in Paul. It is simply the trust in God which enables one to wait for the future, closer perhaps to hope than to faith in the traditional Christian sense. The contrast here is between the rash man (the fool, in the terminology of Proverbs) and the one who is able to take a longer view. The person who judges only in light of the immediate present sees no justice in the world and may be tempted to conclude that there is no divine control. The righteous, or wise, person, in contrast, trusts that justice will prevail and is content to wait for it.

The faith of Habakkuk finds its most poetic expression in Chapter 3. The description of the theophany, which has God come in triumph as a warrior, stands in a long tradition of such hymns (compare Deuteronomy 33, Judges 5, Micah 1). The early hymns of this kind referred to God's past activity on behalf of Israel. Habakkuk expects such a manifestation in the future. It will be directed against "the people who attack us" (3,16), presumably the Babylonians, although Jewish oppressors may also be included. What the prophet envisages is a decisive intervention of God, to wipe out all wickedness and oppression. In this he is close to the kind of future hope that we find later in the apocalyptic literature, except that he does not envisage any judgment of the dead. It is not surprising then that Habakkuk was popular in apocalyptic circles. The Dead Sea Scrolls include a commentary (called a *pesher*) on Habbakuk which interpreted the prophecy with reference to the history of the Qumran sect (taking the Chaldeans as the

Romans). The notion that "the vision still has its time" (Hb 2,3) is echoed in Daniel 8,17, in a context where people were again asking "how long, O Lord?"

The faith of Habakkuk is a faith against appearances: "Though the fig tree blossom not nor fruit be on the vines . . . Yet will I rejoice in the Lord" (3,17f). It is based on the conviction that God is just, and so justice must ultimately prevail. The only question is "how long?" It is a question that has been repeated in every generation, and has yet to receive a final answer. In the meantime, those who share the faith of Habakkuk find strength to go on. The value of such faith does not depend on the fulfillment of its expectations, but on its power to transform the lives of the faithful. J.J.C.

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# ZEPHANIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1153–1157 of the Old Testament*]

Zephaniah prophesied a little earlier than Nahum and Habakkuk in the reign of Josiah, the king who instituted the Deuteronomic reform (2 Kgs 22–23). One of his themes concerns idolatry (1,4-6). He may have been active before the reform, but Josiah was not very successful in his attempt to stamp out foreign cults in any case. Indeed the prophet inveighs against the king's sons for adopting foreign customs (1,8). Zephaniah was contemporary with the early career of Jeremiah. The surviving oracles are almost entirely taken up with the proclamation of the Day of the Lord.

## A Day of Judgment for Judah

The first oracle on the Day of the Lord is directed against Judah. The main offences which he denounces are idolatry and lack of faith in the Lord (1,12). In the context of Josiah's time, rejection of the Lord was rejection of the Deuteronomic law. The emphasis of Zephaniah is not on the sins of Judah but on the destructiveness of the Day of the Lord. It is portrayed in cosmic terms: God will make an end of all who live on earth. The day of judgment is seen as the vindication of the majesty of God against the unworthiness of the people. Compare the destructive effect of the holiness of God in Isaiah 6.

## A Day of Judgment on the Nations

The wrath of the Lord is not only directed against Judah. Chapter 2 catalogues the surrounding peoples, most of whom have been guilty of offending Judah in some way. The list extends to Assyria, the most arrogant of all. The boast of Nineveh ("There is no other than I") is the same as that of Babylon in Isaiah 47,10. The most fundamental human sin is self-divinization. This was already the temptation of Adam and Eve, and it is a charge often made by the prophets (see,

for example, Isaiah 14 and Daniel 4). Zephaniah's prophecies of the Day of the Lord dramatize the gulf between God and humanity and are basically a put-down of all human pride.

## Reproach and Promise for Jerusalem

The final chapter does not use the catchword "Day of the Lord" but deals with related themes. The phrase "on that day" (3,11) refers to the Day of the Lord and is often used to introduce additions to the prophetic books in the postexilic period.

In the opening oracle of the chapter (3,1-8), Jerusalem is denounced as the tyrannical city which accepts no correction. The reference may be to the failure of the Deuteronomic reform, or simply to the rejection of the prophet himself. The concluding oracle, however (3,11-20), prophesies restoration for Jerusalem, when God "will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly." The motif of the remnant is familiar from the preaching of Isaiah, a century before Zephaniah, and there is no doubt that Isaiah had considerable influence on the later prophet. It is possible, then, that Zephaniah uttered this oracle, but it is more likely that here we have another example of an optimistic oracle added on to the end of a prophetic book by an editor.

While the concluding oracle may not have come from Zephaniah, it has its own validity. The judgments of the Assyrian and Babylonian eras were not God's last word to Israel. Even after the destructive Day of the Lord, hope was still possible. J.J.C.

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# HAGGAI □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1157–1159 of the Old Testament*]

The activity of Haggai can be dated quite precisely to the year 520 B.C. almost two decades after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. During that time various problems had beset the returned exiles and they had not succeeded in rebuilding the Temple. We know from Ezra 5,1f that it was at the urging of Haggai and Zechariah that the task was finally brought to completion. The Book of Haggai preserves both the words Haggai used to exhort the Jews to finish the building and his attempt to cope with their disappointment after it was finished.

## The Exhortation to Rebuild

The first chapter of Haggai paints a vivid picture of the impoverished state of the Jewish community after the return. The difficulty of their situation was compounded by drought and crop failure. Haggai offered a daring interpretation of this situation: their difficulties were due to the fact that they had not rebuilt the Temple but had concentrated instead on rebuilding their own houses.

We find here a classical case study in religious priorities. Socially minded critics tend to see Haggai as merely superstitious. The people needed the shelter of their own houses. God did not

need a temple. This criticism is congenial to modern thought, but we also find it in antiquity. The anonymous prophet in Isaiah 66,1-2 asks: "The heavens are my throne, the earth is my footstool. What kind of house can you build for me?" That passage very probably comes from Haggai's time, and suggests that there were other prophets who opposed the rebuilding. Yet there was social wisdom in Haggai's position. The morale of the community was at a low ebb. One way of raising that morale was to engage in a community project, which would encourage people to think of the good of the community as a whole rather than dwell on their own misfortune. This is not to suggest that Haggai thought consciously in such sociological terms but, in fact, by urging the people to think of God rather than of themselves he was directing their attention to the greater good of the community. A comparable situation occurred in the U.S.A. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The immigrant communities from Europe were made up of poor working-class people. Nonetheless they took pride in erecting great churches and schools in cities like New York and Boston. These edifices were put up at no small sacrifice, but their value to the communities was enormous. While success was difficult for individuals, it was possible for communities that banded together. The buildings were simultaneously an offering to their God and an expression of their own self-worth.

## The Reaction to the Finished Temple

We are told in the Book of Ezra that when the foundation of the new Temple was laid, the old men who remembered Solomon's Temple cried out in sorrow, and their laments could not be distinguished from the shouts of joy. This was because the new Temple was puny in comparison with the old (Ezr 3,12f). Haggai 2,3 records this reaction. Besides, the completion of the Temple did not bring about the dramatic reversal of fortunes that Haggai had predicted. Haggai's reaction to this situation is typical of prophets through the ages whose predictions have not come to pass. First, he tells the people to wait "a little while." The prediction is not wrong, only the time is delayed. Second, he diagnoses a reason for the delay. The people are not observing purity laws and their offerings are unclean. He ends by reaffirming that God will shake the heavens and the earth when conditions are right.

It must be admitted that this reaction shows some embarrassment on the part of the prophet, which can only have increased with the passage of time when his predictions remained unfulfilled. The case of Haggai points out the Achilles heel of predictive prophecy. The hopes raised by the prophet were good for the morale of the community, but only for a time. When they were not fulfilled they led to disillusionment. The same problem would beset the apocalyptic and messianic expectations of later generations, and eventually tend to discredit them.

### The Lesson of Haggai

There are, then, two lessons to be learned from Haggai. One is that hope should not be focused on specific predictions. The faith of a Habakkuk was secure because it was a faith in ultimate justice and did not depend on specific events coming to pass within a short space of time. Haggai's more specific prediction gives rise to problems. On the other hand, he has a positive lesson to offer on the value of religious symbols and ritual as a means of bringing the community together. It was largely through his efforts that the Temple was rebuilt. While the Temple may not have satisfied immediate expectations, its contribution to Jewish life over the next 500 years

was enormous, and would far outweigh the initial disappointment which many felt when it was completed. J.J.C.

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# ZECHARIAH □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1159–1169 of the Old Testament*]

The Book of Zechariah contains the work of more than one prophet. It takes its name from the contemporary of Haggai who was also instrumental in the completion of the Temple. "Deutero-Zechariah" (Chapters 9–14) comes from a much later time. Some scholars even distinguish "Trito-Zechariah" in Chapters 12–14.

## The Original Zechariah

The original oracles of Zechariah are characterized by a series of visions which are explained to the prophet by an angel. The interpreting angel appears here for the first time in biblical literature. It becomes a standard feature of apocalyptic literature, beginning with Daniel 7–12. These symbolic visions disclose the prophet's view of what is really going on in the postexilic period, by revealing a dimension of these events which is hidden from the ordinary observer. So the first vision shows four (presumably angelic) horsemen whom the Lord had sent to patrol the earth. The implication is that God is indeed in control, although the divine activity may not be obvious. The visions in Chapter 2 show four heavenly blacksmiths coming to beat down the horns of the nations and an angelic "man" making preparations for the restoration of Jerusalem. In all of this the hidden, heavenly activity is reassuring and a source of confidence for the fledgling Jewish community.

## High Priest and King

Down to the time of the Babylonian exile the prophets had been sharply critical of the monarchy and usually also of the priesthood. When Zechariah prophesied, the monarchy was no more, but Zerubbabel, a descendant of the Davidic line, held the position of governor, under the rule of the Persians. In the absence of a king, the High Priest enjoyed new power and authority. Both Zerubbabel and the High Priest of the day, Joshua, had their critics. Zechariah, in sharp contrast to earlier prophets, came to the defense of the community's leaders. The vision in Chapter 3 is a remarkable defense of the High Priest Joshua. In the vision, Joshua stands before the angel of the Lord and is accused by Satan. This is one of the earliest appearances of Satan in the Old Testament. (He also appears in Job 1–2 and 1 Chr 21,1.) He has not yet taken on the character

of the Devil of later mythology. Rather he is an angel in the service of God, whose mission is to detect and prosecute wrongdoers in the manner of a Federal Attorney. The fact that Satan is said to bring accusations against Joshua is the prophet's way of dramatizing the opposition to the High Priest in the Jewish community. Satan symbolizes Joshua's critics. He receives a stinging rebuke from the angel of the Lord. The point is not that Joshua is faultless, but that criticism is not appropriate when the community is struggling. Joshua is "a brand snatched from the fire" (3,2)—that is, most of the leadership and institutions of Judaism had been destroyed, and what was left should be supported not criticized. So Joshua's faults are cast aside like dirty clothes and he is affirmed in the sight of the Lord. Zechariah does not give Joshua a blank check. He is charged to walk in the ways of the Lord (3,7). Nonetheless the contrast with earlier prophetic attitudes to the priesthood is striking. In earlier times, religious institutions were often problematic in so far as they bred complacency in the people, and so a prophet like Amos spoke as if the sacrificial cult could be abolished. After the experience of the exile, however, Zechariah recognized the importance of institutions. While they are not an end in themselves, no society can live without them.

The prophet is equally positive about Zerubbabel. The two leaders are pictured as olive trees in Chapter 4, because both priest and king, were anointed with oil. Hence the title "messiah" or "anointed one." The people of the Dead Sea Scrolls followed the lead of Zechariah and expected two messiahs, a priestly messiah of Aaron and a royal messiah of Israel. In Chapter 6, Zechariah goes further, and says that he has been commanded to make a crown for Zerubbabel. The coronation of a Davidic prince would have been a highly dangerous undertaking, as the Persian overlords would surely have taken it as a gesture of rebellion. We do not know whether Zechariah ever carried it out. The understanding of the monarchy became increasingly idealized in the period after the exile, when the shortcomings of the actual kings were forgotten. The future king would be the messiah, the anointed one who would make Jerusalem again a holy city (8,3). Zerubbabel could hardly have lived up to those expectations if he had been crowned, but his career, and that of Zechariah, helped keep alive the dream of justice and freedom.

## The Appreciation of Ritual

Just as Zechariah shows a renewed appreciation for the institutions of priesthood and monarchy, he also has a more positive view of ritual than some earlier prophets. In 5,5-11 he sees Wickedness in the form of a woman, who is put in a bushel container and carried off to Babylon. The vision suggests that Wickedness can be gotten rid of by a symbolic physical action. This idea is very similar to the Scapegoat ritual in Leviticus 16, and shows that the prophet appreciated the power of ritual. While wickedness cannot be put in a container and disposed of, the ritual action expresses the human desire, and strengthens the resolve to rid the society of evil. It has its effect on the emotions and motivations of the people who perform it.

Zechariah also appreciated the limits of ritual. In Chapter 7 he is asked about the proper number of fast days. He answers that motivation is more important than keeping the exact number. What is most important is to "render true judgment, and show kindness and compassion toward each other" (7,9). Here Zechariah echoes the sentiment of Hosea 6,6: "it is love that I desire, not sacrifice." After the experience of the exile, and the destruction of the Temple, Zechariah knew that sacrifice was important too, but his priorities are still the same as those of Hosea.

# Zechariah 9–11

Two passages in Chapters 9–11 merit special attention, the messianic oracle in Chapter 9 and the allegory of the shepherds in Chapter 11.

## The Messianic Oracle

The messianic oracle in 9,9f is famous because of its association with Palm Sunday in Matthew 21,5 and John 12,15. The ass was not as humble an animal in the ancient world as in modern times and was the vehicle of nobility in Genesis and Judges, but in the postexilic context it was a throwback to an earlier, simpler time. The hope is for a ruler who will restore Solomon's empire ("from the river to the ends of the earth") but will avoid the arrogance of the monarchy (symbolized by horses and chariots) and will be closer in style to the Judges.

As in Micah 4 and Isaiah 2, the messianic age will be a time of universal disarmament. One could scarcely describe Zechariah 9 as pacifistic, however. The logic of the passage is that the Lord will fight for Judah so that "they shall drink blood like wine" (9,15). The mentality of this passage is close to what we find later in the apocalyptic books. In Daniel, it is Michael the Archangel who fights the battles of Israel. The human role is to maintain purity and be obedient to the law. For Deutero-Zechariah, the Lord assumes the role of warrior directly, in accordance with much of Israelite tradition (for example, Ex 15,3). The Jewish people will not need the warrior's bow because God will kill their enemies for them.

This oracle could have been written at almost any time in the postexilic period, when the monarchy was no more and the Jewish people were not equipped with horses and chariots in any case. If the reference to Yavan (Greece) in verse 13 is original, the setting may be about the time of Alexander's conquests. The modest Messiah, riding on an ass, provides an attractive contrast to the mighty Macedonian conqueror.

## The Allegory of the Shepherds

The allegory of sheep and shepherds is very widespread in the ancient Near East, with the shepherds representing kings and rulers. The allegory of Zechariah 11 must be understood against the background of two passages in Ezekiel. Ezekiel 34 has an extended prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, who exploited their flock. The movement of the prophecy, however, is from judgment to salvation, as the Lord takes over the job of shepherd. In Ezekiel 37,15–22, the prophet takes two sticks, representing Israel and Judah and joins them together, signifying that they would henceforth be one nation under David their king. In Zechariah 11 we also find exploitative shepherds (compare Zec 10,2f), but there is no movement to salvation. The flock is designated for slaughter from the outset. The prophet is assigned to shepherd it for a while, but even he gives up on it and in the end they are given over to a foolish shepherd who takes no care of them. The wage of the prophet is the price of a slave, which is the value that the sheep merchants (foreign powers) attach to the God of Israel. It is also the wage of Judas in Matthew 26,15. The two staffs of Zechariah 11 symbolize two covenants, one with the nations and the other between Judah and Israel. Both are broken in the course of the prophecy. In all, then, Deutero-Zechariah reverses Ezekiel's predictions of salvation.

There is no agreement among scholars as to just when this prophecy was written or what context it addressed. All we can say is that it is an expression of extreme dissatisfaction and disillusionment from the postexilic period. The author of this passage is very far from the

trust in the institutional leaders that characterized the original Zechariah in Chapters 1–8. There is no confidence here either in the Jewish leaders or in their foreign masters. All the prophet can do is protest, in the traditional language of prophecy: "woe to my foolish shepherd . . ." Like every great prophet from the time of Elijah, the anonymous speaker of these lines uses the power of the word to proclaim judgment and even to curse. Even if there is little hope of changing the situation, it is the duty of the prophet to testify, and to ensure that people see reality for what it is.

## Zechariah 12–14

The last three chapters of Zechariah are even more confusing than Chapters 9–11. There is persistent criticism of the rulers. Chapter 13 includes a "song of the sword" (compare Ez 21) against the "shepherd" and predicts that only one-third of the people will be spared. More surprising than this is the prediction of the end of prophecy (13,1-6).

### The Decline of Prophecy

Prophecy had been discredited for various reasons. One was the failure of predictions, especially the prophecies of glorious restoration after the exile. Another was the conflict between prophets themselves and the willingness of some to mislead the people for their personal gain. This had been a problem already in the time of Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kgs 22) and was severe in the time of Jeremiah. It was only natural then that prophets would come to be viewed with suspicion. In Zechariah 13,3 even a prophet's parents assume that an oracle spoken in the name of the Lord is a lie.

After Haggai and Zechariah, prophets seem to have lost status. We do not even know the real names of the prophets whom we call Third Isaiah, Deutero-Zechariah, and Malachi. The visionaries of the Maccabean period attributed their visions to ancient heroes such as Daniel and Enoch. Undoubtedly there were prophets in Judaism in the Hellenistic period (John the Baptist is a late example), but they did not command the same respect as those of the Assyrian and Babylonian eras.

### The Final Battle

The motif that runs through these chapters is that of a final battle in Jerusalem. The traditional motif was that in the last days all the nations would assemble to fight against Mt. Zion (for example Psalm 2; Ezekiel 38–39). This motif is elaborated here in Chapters 12 and 14. Chapter 12 suggests that there has been some tension between Judah and Jerusalem. Judah must be saved first, so that Jerusalem will not gloat over it. Rivalry between city and countryside is natural enough, and does not help us identify the situation in which the oracle was composed. In Zechariah 12 the emphasis falls on reconciliation. Jerusalem and the Davidic house will be compassionate and will "look on him whom they have thrust through" (12,10). This enigmatic allusion has given rise to endless speculation. Some scholars have thought that the reference was to King Josiah, who was killed in battle at Megiddo in 609 B.C., but this oracle is certainly from a much later time. Others have thought the figure is deliberately mysterious like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. John 19,37 saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in the piercing of the side of Christ on the cross. We cannot now be sure whether the passage referred to a specific individual in its Jewish context. What is clear is that the prophet looked for a time when the leaders in Jerusalem would show compassion for the people they had oppressed and be reconciled with them.

The final oracle, in Chapter 14, also envisages reconciliation between Judah and the nations, so that even the Egyptians will come up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a threat of coercion, which betrays the prophet's awareness that such a conversion of the Gentiles was implausible. Nonetheless, the future hope of the Zechariah 14 is remarkable for its broad-minded universalism, insofar as it wants to include the Egyptians in the worship of the true God.

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# MALACHI □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 1170–1174 of the Old Testament*]

The three chapters which make up the last book of the prophetic corpus are, like Deutero-Zechariah, anonymous—we do not know who wrote them. "Malachi" is not a proper name but means "my messenger." The word is taken from 3,1 ("Lo, I am sending my messenger") to designate the one through whom this word of the Lord was given. The book is made up of 6 oracles: 1,2-5; 1,6—2,9; 2,10-16; 2,17—3,5; 3,6-12; and 3,13-21. There are two short appendixes in 3,22-24.

The first oracle, 1,2-5, is a standard polemical oracle against Edom, Judah's neighbor and bitter enemy in the postexilic period. This oracle is rather atypical of Malachi, however, as the others are all critical of Judah itself. He is especially critical of the priesthood and of breaches of faith by the people.

## The Priesthood (1,6—2,9)

Malachi stands in a long line of prophets, beginning with Amos, who were critical of the priesthood. In this case, the charge is that the priests have been offering cheap sacrifices, disposing of sick and lame animals instead of offering the best. The logic of Malachi's argument deserves notice. No one would offer a sick animal to the governor, yet the priests make such offerings to God. An offering has symbolic significance and reflects the attitude of the one who brings it. Malachi is not opposed to the priesthood as such. Far from it. He speaks of a covenant with Levi (2,4) which is never mentioned in the Pentateuch or historical books. (Levi is, however, set apart for a special role in Dt 10,8f and 33,9f). He has the greatest respect for the ideal of the priesthood. Because so much is expected of the priests they are all the more guilty.

The most striking statement in this passage, however, is the declaration that "from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations" (1,11). The Gentile nations certainly did not worship the Lord explicitly, so it is not certain what the prophet had in mind. One theory holds that the reference is to the Jewish Diaspora, the scattering of Jewish exiles among the nations, but Jews were not supposed to offer sacrifices outside of Jerusalem, although they sometimes did. Two considerations may throw light on this problem. First, the Persian kings were generous in providing funds for the support of the Jewish Temple, and Malachi may have recognized this support as an offering to the Lord. Second, in the official correspondence in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Lord is called the God of heaven (for example, Ezr 6,10). The High God of the Persians, and other sovereign deities could also be acknowledged as "the God of Heaven," and so the Gentiles could be understood to worship the same God as the Jews. This view of pagan religion would be decidedly broad-minded and liberal.

## Breaches of Faith

The most controversial passage in the book of Malachi is found in the third oracle, 2,10-16. The prophet begins with the rhetorical question: "have we not all the one Father?" He goes on to denounce two breaches of faith. First, Judah "has married an idolatrous woman" (literally, "the daughter of a foreign god," 2,11). The second problem is the divorce of "the wife of your youth," (2,14).

It is reasonable to assume that the background of this oracle is related to the situation described in Ezra 9, where the leaders of the people inform Ezra that "neither the Israelite laymen nor the priests nor the Levites have kept themselves aloof from the peoples of the land . . . for they have taken some of their daughters as wives . . ." The usual explanation of the passage in Malachi is that Jewish men were divorcing the Jewish wives of their youth and marrying Gentile women, possibly for social reasons. Inevitably, they then became implicated in the cult of pagan deities. On this interpretation, the question, "have we not all one Father?" is addressed only to Jews, and is not as universalistic as it initially seems.

This interpretation is certainly possible. There is no doubt that Malachi disapproved of mixed marriages. There is no other evidence, however, that Jews in the postexilic period divorced their Jewish wives. In fact, the only instance of divorce for which we have evidence is found in Ezra 10, where the Jewish men who had taken foreign wives send them away at Ezra's command. Malachi's categorical statement, "for I hate divorce, says the Lord" (2,16), is hard to reconcile with Ezra's policy. It is possible, then, that Malachi is quite universalistic, despite his disapproval of mixed marriages. Once a marriage had been entered into, it was sacred. The Jewish men should have taken care that their offspring were "godly" (2,15) rather than try to undo the marriage. Conversion of the spouses, rather than divorce, was the solution. On this interpretation, the "one Father" is the creator of all, Jews and Gentiles. Ethnic distinctions do not matter if one is willing to recognize the one God. The "daughter of a foreign god" only becomes so by her choice of which God to worship. If this interpretation is correct, Malachi exhibits some of the spirit of St. Paul in his openness to the Gentiles. He would have been in direct conflict with Ezra, if they were contemporaries. We know that there was some diversity of opinion in Judaism at this period. Ezra 44,7 insisted that no "foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh" be admitted to the Temple. In contrast, an oracle preserved in Isaiah 56 shows

a very open attitude to "the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord," and assures them of a place on the holy mountain. Malachi may be seen as part of this "liberal" tradition, which welcomed foreigners if they were willing to convert to Judaism.

## The Day of the Lord

The final chapter of the book is dominated by the expectation that God will come in judgment. The image of the refiner's fire is embedded in the memory of Christians by Handel's Messiah. The idea of a day of destructive judgment is, of course, an adaptation of the traditional Day of the Lord. The most distinctive aspect of Malachi's use of the theme is the motif of the messenger who prepares the way. In the final appendix, this messenger is identified as Elijah the prophet. Since Elijah had not died, but was taken up alive to heaven (2 Kgs 2,11), there was speculation that he would return to complete his earthly course. In the New Testament, John the Baptist is cast in this role (Mt 11,14; 17,12f). Elijah's task is to warn the people and give them a last chance at repentance. It is likely that the prophet we call Malachi saw himself as performing this task.

The final oracle of Malachi is also the conclusion of the prophetic corpus. The editors of the prophetic books specifically wanted the collection to reinforce the laws of the Pentateuch: "Remember the law of Moses . . ." (3,22). They also underlined the theme of the coming judgment, which runs throughout the collection. The purpose of the collected prophetic books is not only to remind us of the past, but especially to motivate us in the present by making us look to the future. J.J.C.

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# THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

DONALD SENIOR and PHEME PERKINS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

*The Similarities and Differences Among the Synoptic Gospels*

Because of their striking similarities, the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke have traditionally been called the "synoptic" Gospels, from the Greek meaning to "view together." The observer of these three Gospels would, in fact, notice many parallels among these stories of Jesus if they were laid side by side.

At the same time, the general structure and style of the Synoptic Gospels are distinctively different from John's Gospel. For example, in each of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus begins his public ministry of teaching and healing in Galilee, travels with his disciples on a single purposeful journey to Jerusalem, and there experiences final rejection, death and, ultimately, resurrection. Jesus' sayings in these Gospels are generally either succinct and pointed or in the story form of the parable; his actions are characterized by marvelous healings and exorcisms; a major theme of his preaching is the advent of the "Rule of God." In John, on the other hand, Jesus moves back and forth between Galilee and Judea and his teaching is often expressed in long, meditative discourses. There are no parables in John, no exorcisms, and fewer healing stories; the Rule of God motif plays a very minor role.

But it would be a mistake to consider Matthew, Mark and Luke as carbon copies of each other. As the Reading Guides and *New American Bible* introductions make clear, modern biblical scholarship has emphasized the unique style and theological perspective of each of the Gospels. While obviously related to each other in form and content, the three Synoptic Gospels develop their own distinct view of Jesus and his mission. Mark, for instance, begins his story of Jesus with his baptism at the Jordan, whereas Matthew, by means of the Infancy Narrative at the beginning of the Gospel, traces Jesus' origin back into the history of Israel. Luke, too, begins with an infancy narrative, but gives much more positive emphasis to Jerusalem than either Mark or Matthew. In Luke's Gospel the young Jesus goes to Jerusalem to listen to the teachers in the Temple courtyard, and the disciples of Jesus will gather to pray after his resurrection in the Jerusalem Temple. Luke also adds a second volume to his Gospel; the Acts of the Apostles picks up the story of Jesus and his apostles where the Gospel left off, and shows its continuing force as the community of the Risen Christ moves out into the world.

## The "Synoptic Problem"

Both the similarities and the distinctive differences among the Synoptic Gospels have led to ongoing debate about their interrelationship, or the "Synoptic Problem" as it is called. The canonical order of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke—influenced scholars in the early Church, such as Augustine, to assume that Matthew was the first Gospel written, with Mark and Luke dependent on it.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, this general consensus was challenged. Analyses of the style and content of Mark led scholars to conclude that Mark was the first Gospel written, with Matthew and Luke directly dependent on Mark. The presence of other material in Matthew and Luke that was not found in Mark, such as the sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, led to the hypothesis of an additional source for Matthew and Luke. This hypothetical source of material—which scholars call "Q" (from the German word *Quelle* or "source")—was probably a collection of sayings and parables of Jesus that circulated in the earliest Christian community. Independently of each other, if this hypothesis is correct, Matthew and Luke blended this source with their new renditions of Mark and perhaps with some other materials or traditions specific to their own communities.

This hypothesis about the interrelationship of the Synoptic Gospels is called the "Two-Source Hypothesis" because it postulates two literary sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, namely the Gospel of Mark and Q. It presumes that Mark was the first Gospel to be written and that Mark, in fact, set the basic format for the story of Jesus, a format that both Matthew and Luke used as the starting point for their own narratives. This relationship would account for the similarities among the Gospels. Each gospel writer's particular interpretation of Mark, the use of other sources, and the unique pastoral and theological perspectives of the writers and their local churches, would lead to the distinctiveness of each of the Synoptics.

Most New Testament scholars today, including Roman Catholics, accept the Two-Source hypothesis as the most plausible explanation of the interrelationship among the Synoptics. But even though a majority of scholars accept it, it is still a theory and therefore vigorous debate continues about other solutions to the "Synoptic Problem." There are those who are convinced that Matthew or even Luke should be considered the first Gospel to be written, or others who are not persuaded that there was any literary contact among the Synoptic Gospels, but rather than each developed independently from a common Gospel tradition.

The issue of the relationship of John's Gospel to the Synoptics is even more problematic. Until the midpoint of this century most modern biblical scholars assumed that John knew of the Synoptic Gospels and that his own Gospel was a very distinctive variation on the Synoptic tradition. But more recently, a significant number of scholars speculate that John may represent an independent stream of tradition that had little, if any, contact with the Synoptic Gospels.

## The Synoptic Gospels and Their Portrayal of Jesus

Whatever may be the ultimate solution to the Synoptic Problem, it is clear that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have made an essential contribution to our understanding of Jesus and his ministry. The strongly transcendent Jesus of John's Gospel, with its emphasis on the pre-existent Word and the incarnation of that Word in human flesh, has had a profound influence on Catholic christology. But in the twentieth century, Catholic theology has turned with renewed energy to the portrayals of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. The overarching symbol of the Rule of

God proclaimed by Jesus in the Synoptics has provided an important framework for understanding the social and liberating implications of Jesus' message. Modern christology's deep interest in the humanity of Jesus also turns to the portrayals found in Mark, Matthew, and Luke. The trauma of the Holocaust and the Christian-Jewish dialogue have led to a new appreciation of the Jewishness of Jesus and here, too, the Synoptics' portrayal of Jesus and his milieu has provided an important backdrop. Interest in the literary quality of the Gospels has also focused attention on the Synoptic Gospels with their rich variety of sayings, parables, healing stories, conflicts, and other types of literary forms.

In short, the Synoptic Gospels are a major and essential source for a genuine understanding of Jesus and his message. That richness is described in detail in the Reading Guides that follow.

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# MATTHEW □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 2–65 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

As pointed out in the "Introduction" (NT pp. 2–7), Matthew's Gospel has long held a special place in the life and teaching of the church. The special character of this Gospel alerts us to some things to keep in mind as we set out to study it more closely.

### A STORY

Like each of the Gospels, Matthew's work is a story or a narrative. It begins with the roots of Jesus' family tree, describes the circumstances of his birth, and then turns to the events of his ministry, culminating in his death, resurrection, and final appearances to his disciples.

Even though Matthew's way of telling a story is influenced by his time and culture, his narrative has many of the same characteristics as storytelling today. There is an unfolding "plot" that carries the story from the beginning of Jesus' life, with its mixture of success and opposition, through to the death and triumph of its conclusion. There are "characters" (Jesus, the disciples, the opponents, etc.): some of them are quite developed (for example, Jesus and Peter), some seem one-dimensional (for example, the Pharisee opponents), others have only minor roles (the mother of James and John). All of these elements play a part as one reads or studies the Gospel of Matthew.

In describing Matthew's Gospel as a "story" we are not implying that it has no historical basis. There is no doubt that Matthew uses materials rooted in history (most of which he draws from the Gospel of Mark, one of his principal sources). But the evangelist, or Gospel writer, casts these traditions about Jesus into the form of a running story. A story or narrative helps catch up the reader into the dynamism and feeling of the events being recounted. This feature of the Gospel can engage us when we come to study or read it in more depth.

### A FUND OF TEACHING

While Matthew's Gospel remains a dynamic story, it is also enriched—more than any of the other Gospels—with the sayings of Jesus. This feature has led commentators over the centuries to consider Matthew a kind of "catechism" or teacher's manual. In addition to the basic story of Jesus' life and ministry, which Matthew drew mainly from the Gospel of Mark, he also had a fund of the important sayings of Jesus (many of which he shares in common with the Gospel of

Luke). The evangelist has organized many of these sayings into discourses or speeches of Jesus [see "Introduction" pp. 3–5]. These are not "transcripts" of actual talks given by Jesus because there is little logical progression found in the discourses as a whole. Rather the evangelist has clustered the sayings of Jesus around basic motifs. Explanations of many of the sayings are found in the notes to the biblical text; later in the study guide we will discuss some of the major themes of the discourses. These discourses bring the reader of Matthew's Gospel into vital contact with the power of Jesus' teaching.

### THE JEWISH HERITAGE OF JESUS AND THE EARLY CHURCH

While all of the New Testament writings illustrate the essential dependence of Jesus and the early church on Judaism, none does it more forcefully than Matthew's Gospel. In fact one of the primary purposes of this Gospel may have been the attempt to link the story of Jesus with the history of Israel. Any reader of Matthew who wants to go deeply into this Gospel must be alert to its Jewish background.

This feature of Matthew springs to our attention from the opening lines of the Gospel, which begin with a genealogy or family tree, tying Jesus into the history of Israel. The frequent use of Old Testament quotations, the concern with the Jewish law and customs of purity and prayer, the sharp critique of the Jewish leaders for their rejection of Jesus and for their failure to lead a life of holiness—all of these show that Matthew was absorbed with Jesus' Jewish heritage.

But it is also apparent that Matthew is concerned with how this Jewish Jesus is Messiah for the whole world. As we will indicate below, the universal mission of the church is also a prime motif of this Gospel. In fact, Matthew seems to be telling the story of Jesus so that it can help both the Jewish Christians and the Gentile converts of his community. After reading the Gospel they would be able to understand that Jesus fulfills the hopes and dreams God planted in the people of Israel, and now extends the offer of God's salvation to all the world.

Strange as it may seem, Matthew's Jewish roots may also explain another difficult feature of his Gospel: his strong critique of the Jewish leaders. The Jesus of Matthew's Gospel blisters his opponents for their hypocrisy and lack of faith. They are held up to the reader of the Gospel as negative examples of what an authentic disciple should avoid becoming. The sharp edge to Matthew's critique may stem from the tragic division and hostility that grew between Judaism and Jewish Christianity in the early decades of the church. For Matthew, the fact that most of Israel did not accept Jesus or the Gospel—while many Gentiles did accept it—was a baffling and unexpected turn in salvation history, and his telling of the story of Jesus reflects this. Unfortunately, Matthew's characterization of the Jewish leaders also provided an opportunity for later anti-Semitism to develop (itself a violation of the Gospel's teaching).

## How to Proceed . . .

Since Matthew's Gospel is a story, it would be best to "begin at the beginning"! Although one could approach the Gospel thematically, that is, taking a certain topic (for instance, discipleship) and tracking passages throughout the Gospel that relate to this theme or motif, the best method might be to let the story line of the Gospel be your guide. Begin where Matthew begins (chapter one, verse one) and let overarching ideas or themes emerge as the story of Jesus unfolds. This will be the method of the study guide: for each major section of the Gospel, we will discuss

some key themes. You will find more detailed commentary on each section in the ample notes that accompany the Gospel text itself.

## Working through Matthew's Gospel

The outline or major segments of Matthew's Gospel can be determined only by paying attention to the contours of his story. In harmony with the discussion found in the "Introduction" [see NT, pp. 2–7], we propose the following division:

a) **1,1—2,23** ***The Origin of Jesus.*** Here Matthew presents the events surrounding Jesus' birth and infancy.

b) **3,1—4,7** ***Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus.*** The test in the desert and the ministry of John the Baptist help prepare for the formal beginning of Jesus' mission.

c) **4,7—16,12** ***The Galilean Ministry of Jesus.*** This major section spans the ministry of Jesus from his entrance into Galilee until his announcement of the passion and his intent to go to Jerusalem. It can be subdivided into other important segments:

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| 1 | 4,17—7,29 | The Sermon on the Mount. |
| 2 | 8,1—9,35 | Jesus the Healer. |
| 3 | 9,36—11,1 | The Mission Discourse. |
| 4 | 11,2—12,50 | Mounting Hostility to Jesus. |
| 5 | 13,1-53 | The Parable Discourse. |
| 6 | 13,54—16,12 | The Kingdom and the Disciples (a section that includes the ongoing activity of Jesus and reaction to it, but with special emphasis on Jesus' relationship with Peter and the rest of the disciples). |

d) **16,13—20,34** ***The Way to Jerusalem.*** Jesus' fateful journey to Jerusalem with his disciples dominates this section. Three times during this journey Jesus predicts his passion and resurrection (16,21; 17,22f; 20,17-19) and instructs his disciples on the cost of following him. There is also the important discourse on community life (18,1-35).

e) **21,1—25,46** ***Final Teaching in Jerusalem.*** This section of the Gospel takes place in Jerusalem. It concentrates on Jesus' final exchanges with his opponents (esp. 21,12—22,46), his condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees (23,1-39), and the long discourse on the final age and judgment (24,1—25,46).

f) **26,1—28,20** ***Death and Resurrection.*** The concluding segment of the narrative contains the passion narrative and the account of Jesus' burial (26,1—27,66), the events surrounding the discovery of the empty tomb (28,1-15), and Jesus' final appearance to the eleven disciples on a Galilean mountaintop (28,16-20).

## Reading through Matthew's Gospel

This section traces major themes and characteristics in each segment of Matthew's Gospel. It supplements the introduction and notes that accompany the Gospel text itself.

## The Origin of Jesus (Mt 1,1—2,23)

The first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel are like a prologue to a great drama, sounding major themes that will be played out in the rest of the story. In this way the evangelist or Gospel writer alerts the reader to the particular tones he will give his portrayal of Jesus.

### A MESSIAH ROOTED IN THE HOPES OF ISRAEL

The Jewish heritage of Jesus is stressed in the very first lines of this Gospel. He is "Son of David, Son of Abraham" (1,1) and his messianic lineage is traced through Jewish history from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of Mary (1,2-18). Explicit quotations from the Old Testament (for example, 1,23; 2,6; 2,15; 2,18; 2,23) are augmented by numerous allusions to Old Testament figures and events (for instance, the hostility of Herod recalls the rage of Pharoah against Israel; the reference to a star recalls the prophecy of Balaam about a future deliverer for Israel in Nm 24,17). In all these ways Matthew proclaims something that echoes throughout the Gospel: Jesus is the promised Messiah, the one through whom God's longed-for salvation would be achieved. Thus continuity with the Old Testament is stressed (compare Mt 5,17).

### A MESSIAH CLOSE TO HIS PEOPLE

The experiences of Jesus and his family evoke another theme important to this Gospel, namely Jesus' identification with the "least." The Matthean Christmas story has a sober mood to it. Right from the beginning, Jesus and his family are threatened with death by a tyrant. Innocent people are killed because they are identified with Jesus. The holy family is forced into exile (just as Israel had been in its tortured history). Even when they return from Egypt (a new exodus?) they are unable to go home to Bethlehem but must become displaced persons, living in Nazareth (2,22f).

This identification with the great events of Israel's struggle to be free may help explain one of the names given Jesus in Matthew's story. He is to be called, "Emmanuel," that is, "God is with us" (1,23). As subsequent events of the Gospel will show, the Matthean Jesus has extraordinary compassion for the suffering (see, for example, the healings in Chapters 8–9), explicitly identifies himself with the "least" (see Mt 25,31-46; 10,42), and promises to remain with his church as it continues its mission in the world (28,20; 18,20).

### JESUS AS MESSIAH OF ISRAEL AND SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

While Matthew stresses the Jewish roots of Jesus and his messianic mission, he also signals the ultimate worldwide scope of that mission. As Herod and the leaders of Jerusalem plot to destroy Jesus, the magi, Gentile wise men, come seeking to pay homage to him (2,1-12). Even in the family tree of Jesus, Matthew may be hinting at the wider horizons of Jesus' mission. While most of the genealogy traces the male line of Jesus' ancestry, there are several women mentioned—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba—all of whom were foreigners whose entry into Jewish history was under unusual, sometimes even scandalous, circumstances. Even Mary, the Mother of Jesus, seems to be put in this category since her association with the royal Davidic line is not by natural means but only through the initiative of the Spirit—something that causes consternation to Joseph (1,18-19).

Thus from the beginning "outsiders" had been part of Jesus' history. This is a major theme of Matthew's Gospel. He will emphasize the rejection Jesus experiences from the Jewish leaders, and at the same time provide scattered examples of Gentiles groping towards faith (for example, the centurion in 8,5-13; the Gadarene demoniacs in 8,28-34; the Canaanite woman

in 15,21-28). Matthew carefully notes that Jesus' historical ministry focused on Israel (10,5) but with the new age of resurrection that mission of salvation would now extend to all nations (28,19).

The infancy narrative also hints at the kind of salvation Jesus will bring. Of all the Gospels, Matthew alone stresses the significance of the name "Jesus." The angel gives the divine instruction that the child is to be named Jesus "because he will save his people from their sins" (see the explanatory note at 1,21). Jesus is depicted as "savior" throughout the Gospel as he delivers people from their burdens of sickness, oppression, and sin. This is a Jesus who thirsts for justice or righteousness (3,15) and blesses those who, like the prophets before them, suffer in the pursuit of justice (5,10). Jesus exercises divine power in forgiving sins (see 9,1-8) and urges his disciples to reflect this same sense of reconciliation in dealing with each other (see especially 5,43-48; 18,21-35).

The overall mood of Matthew's Christmas story is quite different from that of Luke's. There are no triumphant angels, no picturesque gathering of shepherds, little focus on a tender vision of mother and child. Instead there are ominous plots against the child, outbreaks of violence, displacement and exile. But throughout there is also the promise of God's abiding presence, bringing salvation in spite of sin and rejection. Perhaps we can think of Matthew's infancy Gospel as an "adult" Christmas story, one that has a special truth for the many people experiencing violence and persecution today. It tells a story that begins in the strength and beauty of a particular history and culture but will ultimately reach across boundaries to touch all peoples. In any case, these two chapters prepare us for the story that will follow, a story that will trace Jesus' mission of salvation through bitter rejection to ultimate triumph.

## Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus (3,1—4,17)

This transition section brings the reader from the infancy narrative into the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. It opens with the preaching of John in the desert and closes with the first footstep of Jesus into Galilee, the northern region of Israel where he proclaims the advent of the Kingdom.

Two characteristic Matthean themes dominate this segment of Matthew's narrative.

### THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

Throughout his Gospel Matthew is conscious that the coming of Jesus was the decisive turning point in the history of salvation. In Jesus, God was offering the world salvation; the final age longed for by Israel was now beginning. This conviction is expressed through the figure of John the Baptist, whose appearance is reminiscent of Elijah the great prophet expected to return at the end of the world (see note to 3,4) and whose message heralds the imminent approach of God's Kingdom (3,2). That message will be driven home by Jesus himself. He, too, preaches the nearness of the Kingdom (4,17). Whereas John is clearly a prophet preparing the way, Jesus is the one who brings the Kingdom to reality. Jesus is clearly superior to John: the Spirit of God descends on Jesus (3,16) and a "voice from heaven" (a Jewish way of speaking obliquely about God) declares that Jesus "is my beloved Son" (3,17). Jesus' entry into the region of Galilee and the start of his mission there will be light and hope to people who languish in darkness and the fear of death, (see 4,13-16). Even at this early stage of his Gospel, the evangelist hints at the universal scope of Jesus' message (see note to 4,12-17).

**REPENTANCE AND GOOD DEEDS**

Both John and Jesus call people to repentance. The reality of God's kingdom and the consciousness of living in a new and decisive age of salvation should move Israel to change its way of thinking and its way of acting. Throughout his Gospel Matthew will insist that the touchstone of authentic repentance is good deeds. So here John the Baptist challenges the Jewish leaders: "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance" (3,8). It is not sufficient for them to claim to be children of Abraham (3,9); status within God's reign is not dependent on blood lines or rank but on one's response to God's love embodied in Jesus.

The testing of Jesus in the desert also illustrates this point (see notes to 4,1-11). As was the case in the Infancy Narrative, Jesus recapitulates the experience of Israel. In the desert, wandering Israel and its leaders had often failed God's covenant, but Jesus, faithful Jew and faithful Son of God, will not fail, despite the efforts of Satan to draw him away from his messianic mission. The Jesus of Matthew's Gospel shows a fierce and loving loyalty to God—as he tells John, he must "fulfill all righteousness" (3,15). Jesus is not content merely to preach fidelity to God; he demonstrates it here in the mysterious realm of the desert test and in his commitment to his mission even to the point of death on the cross.

## The Galilean Ministry of Jesus (4,17—16,12)

A major section of the Gospel begins with Jesus' entry into Galilee and the inauguration of his ministry of teaching and healing. We will consider the material in six segments, following the flow of Matthew's narrative.

**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT** (4,17—7,29)

The Sermon on the Mount, the first of Jesus' five great discourses in this Gospel, is perhaps the best-known passage of Matthew's Gospel.

The sermon itself spans Chapters 5 through 7 but preparation for this great discourse begins in Chapter 4. After sounding the theme of the Kingdom of God (4,17), Jesus calls his first disciples to follow him and to share in his mission (4,18-22). Jesus is committed to teaching, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and healing (4,23). That liberating mission draws a response from every point of the compass as throngs of broken and needy people surge towards Jesus and his message of God's mercy (4,24f). Jesus' teaching, Matthew implies, is not mere abstract truth; his words—like his healing touch—have the power to transform lives.

The Sermon on the Mount does not have a neat progressive structure; rather, sayings of Jesus are clustered around basic motifs. We will note some of them here:

**A New Teaching for a New Age.** Matthew's conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore the authoritative teacher of God's will runs throughout the Sermon. With Jesus the final age of salvation dawns and, with it, new insight into God's will. Matthew's Jesus sees that will of God as being in continuity with the revelation that came through the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, but now bringing that law to its fullest and most compelling expression. In the opening verses of the Sermon Jesus states: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (5,17; see the comments in the notes to this text).

The conviction that the end of the world will be a triumph of God's grace—a conviction based on belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—runs throughout the Sermon and gives it special force. The false values assumed by the world are crumbling. This is the message

of the beatitudes (5,3-12): those who are "poor in spirit" or who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" or are "peacemakers" are blessed because God will vindicate their hopes. Similarly, because it is a new age with new possibilities, the old wisdom is no longer adequate. A series of six antitheses or contrasts mark off the difference between former interpretation of the Jewish law and Jesus' own radical teaching (see 5,21-48).

**The Supreme Law of Love Expressed in Committed Action.** Matthew's emphasis on good deeds, cited above (see comments on Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus [3,1—4,17]), is clearly in evidence here. The words of Jesus at the conclusion of the Sermon are unequivocal: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (7,21). But the Sermon demonstrates that Matthew's Jesus is not simply talking about frenetic action. The heart and soul of Jesus' teaching is the command to love. That comes to its fullest expression in the last of the antitheses where Jesus tells his disciples they are to love even the enemy (5,44) because God's own love is lavish and indiscriminate, bathing both just and unjust in its light and refreshment (5,45). Matthew is consistent on this point throughout the Gospel (see 7,12; 22,34-40). Asking his disciples to strive for love of enemies—the most challenging demand that can be made on the human heart—expresses the ultimate spirit of all of Jesus' teaching on human relationships. For this reason, the disciple is to strive for complete honesty (5,33-37), is to avoid retaliation for injury (5,38-39), and is not to violate another through lust or manipulation (5,27-30).

Jesus' teaching roots all of this in God's relationship to us. The teaching on love of enemy and nonretaliation is, therefore, not a peripheral part of the Gospel nor is it an abstract ideal. For this reason, the American Bishops began their pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace,* by wrestling with what this Gospel teaching demands of us who live in a violent world poised for nuclear destruction.

**Revelation of a Close and Compassionate God.** Jesus' teaching in this part of the Gospel also gives a profound insight into the Gospel's image of God. God's boundary-breaking love is not based on merit but reaches out even to the unjust and the "enemy" (5,45-48). God cares for us more than for birds of the air or the wild flowers, whose freedom and beauty are signs of God's provident love (6,25-32). Therefore, the disciple is to have complete trust in God and to pray with confidence and without pretense (7,7-11). Jesus' model prayer (6,9-15) catches up much of the spirit of the entire sermon. There is a wonderful simplicity and honesty about the instructions on piety in the sermon (6,1-18); God's relationship to us is direct and close—there is no place for posturing before such a loving God.

**The Authority of the Sermon.** How to live with the Sermon on the Mount has been a constant point of discussion in the church. Are these demanding words to be taken as impossible ideals, meant only for a perfect world or for perfect people? Or do they make sense only in the setting of Jesus' own times, when people thought the end of the world was near and so might be capable of responding heroically in such an emergency situation?

None of these solutions are adequate. The instructions of Jesus are not a system of clearcut laws spelling out exactly how we are to act in every circumstance, nor are they abstract or impossible ideals. These teachings give us practical guidance as we seek to live a life faithful to the Gospel. They illustrate the core spirit of Jesus' teaching, a spirit we must embody in our own

circumstances. The possibility of living in accord with the teaching of Jesus is based on God's grace; the Sermon illustrates the difference grace can make in a person's life and relationships.

**JESUS THE HEALER** (8,1—9,34)
*Introduction:* This is a powerful section of the Gospel in which Matthew displays another dimension of Jesus: he teaches, he also heals. As the notes to the text state (see comments under 8,1), Matthew draws most of these stories from his source, Mark's Gospel, but the evangelist significantly reedits this material. He abbreviates many of Mark's stories, omitting some of the colorful details in order to concentrate on Jesus' essential actions and accompanying words. Matthew also clusters the nine major stories of these chapters into three segments (a tenth miracle is reported but barely narrated in 9,32; it serves to contrast the reactions of the Pharisees with that of the crowds); 8,1-17; 8,18—9,17; 9,18-34.

Each of these clusters of stories seems to have a dominant motif. In 8,1-17 the emphasis falls on Jesus' power to heal. The second section, 8,18—9,17, concentrates on the demands of discipleship. And the final section, 9,18-34, illustrates the essential role of faith in the healing narratives. These motifs are by no means exclusive, however; the richness of the healing stories allows the Gospel to proclaim many levels of meaning at the same time. We will examine more closely each of these dominant themes.

**Christology.** By narrowing the spotlight on Jesus in the first three stories, Matthew emphasizes the divine power that works through the Messiah. Jesus cleanses the leper, heals the servant of a Gentile soldier, and dispels the fever of Simon's mother-in-law. Except in the case of the centurion, there is little attention to the plight or disposition of the sick person in these stories. The concluding verse of the section (8,17) makes Matthew's intended point; by his healing touch Jesus fulfills the prophetic promise of Isaiah 53,4: "He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."

By their very nature the healing stories serve Matthew's purpose. All of us experience sickness or disability at one time or another in our life. We all experience our limitations and realize too well that death looms before us. Jesus is moved with compassion (9,3.36) and does not hesitate to stand in solidarity with those whose condition makes them "outsiders" (see his association with the leper, the Gentile, the tax collectors).

**The Conditions of Discipleship.** In the second set of stories Matthew illustrates some of the demands of discipleship. Only those fully committed to proclaiming the Kingdom of God and following Jesus are able to go with him across the sea (see 8,18-23). But even for those who remain, following Jesus can mean the threatening experience of the storm at sea (8,24-27) and strange encounters with the power of evil (8,28-34). The true disciple is one who learns that mercy and compassion drive Jesus, a lesson the Pharisees (whom Matthew consistently portrays in negative tones) seem unable to grasp (9,9-13).

**Faith.** The healing stories often serve to illustrate the meaning of faith. Faith is, first of all, trust in Jesus' power to heal and transform us. That faith is evident in the leper who approaches Jesus (even though the law forbade him to do so), in the centurion who pleads on behalf of his servant (see 8,10), in the friends who bring the paralytic to Jesus (9,2), in the woman with the hemorrhage who touches the tassel of his cloak (9,22), and in the two blind men who trust that Jesus can do what no one else can (9,28f).

Note, too, the faith illustrated in these stories often takes a very active form. The leper

boldly comes up to Jesus; the woman dares to touch him; the Gentile swallows his pride and pleads with a Jewish healer; the friends of the paralytic gain him access to Jesus. The sick and disabled can teach us this lesson: trusting in God does not mean mere passivity, waiting for a bolt from heaven. Transformation comes when we exercise our trust in God, and commit our own resources to seeking a new life.

**THE MISSION DISCOURSE** (9,35—11,1)

Now that Matthew has completed his portrait of Jesus as teacher and healer, he moves to a new segment of the Gospel. Using his own mission as a model, Jesus gathers his twelve apostles and commissions them to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and to heal. The motivation for their mission is the same that animated Jesus' own energetic healing in the previous two chapters: the crowds are "troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd" (see Mt 9,36-38).

This forms the second of the five great discourses of Matthew's Gospel. The evangelist draws some of the material in this discourse from Chapter 13 of Mark's Gospel (see especially the material in Mt 10,16-23); the rest comes from Q, the sayings source he holds in common with Luke (see introduction), or from Matthew's own sources.

Note that the discourse can be read from two different perspectives: 1) as part of the unfolding story of Jesus' ministry and his relationship with his disciples; 2) and an instruction for the post-Easter church. In the former time frame, Jesus tells his apostles to restrict their mission to Israel, the chosen people of God (10,5f); but in the new age, when the Gospel must be proclaimed to all the world (see 28,16-20), Jesus' words apply to the universal mission of the church.

Typical Matthean themes run through the discourse. The Twelve (including the tax collector, Matthew, 10,3) share in Jesus' own mission of proclaiming the Kingdom and healing those in need (10,7f). Note that the apostles are not yet commissioned to "teach"—that comes only after the resurrection (see 28,20) when they have a deeper grasp of Jesus' mission. Any disciple who follows Jesus can expect to meet indifference, hostility, or rejection (see, for example, 10,16-25.34-39). The discourse is not naive but clearly warns the apostles about the cost of proclaiming the Gospel in an authentic way.

But there is also strong affirmation of the power of the Gospel and of the sense of confidence that should go with those on mission. They are not to be afraid of those who threaten their lives (10,26-28), or flinch before the divisions that may come. The loving God who has an eye for the sparrows and counts the hairs on our heads will not abandon those who follow the way of Jesus. Christians who live in the persecuted churches of Latin America and Eastern Europe understand well these words of Jesus. Those who live in more comfortable circumstances need to ask themselves if the Gospel values they reverence are not sometimes co-opted by the seductions of the dominant culture.

Matthew's concern with the mission of the church will reemerge in the final scene of the Gospel when the mission of Jesus, confined to Israel during his lifetime, bursts out into the world through the mission of the church (28,16-20).

**MOUNTING HOSTILITY TO JESUS AND HIS MISSION** (11,2—12,50)

In the mission discourse Jesus warned his disciples to expect opposition when they preached the Gospel. Now Jesus himself becomes embroiled in conflict because of his mission. For the next two chapters Matthew traces the opposition that swirls around John the Baptist and Jesus.

The motif of conflict is apparent from the first words of Chapter 11—John the Baptist is in

prison and soon to die. He sends his disciples to Jesus with the key question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (11,3). That question leads to a summary of Jesus' great deeds, and to Jesus' reflection on John's ministry and his own.

The opposition to Jesus is crystallized in "this generation" (11,16) which understood neither the ascetical John nor the gentle and compassionate Jesus (11,18f). "Wisdom"—that is, God's message to Israel embodied in Jesus himself—will be proven present in the liberating works that Jesus performs in his ministry (11,19).

Matthew weaves together in this section profound insight into the bond between Jesus and his Father (11,25-27)—one of the most beautiful passages of the Gospel—with tumultuous scenes of conflict, as the enemies of Jesus fail to perceive that he is the Messiah and attack him for healing on the Sabbath (see the series of stories in Chapter 12). Another typical Matthean motif emerges from all this—that of judgment. The Jewish towns that refuse to transform their lives in the light of the Gospel bear the responsibility for their failure. Matthew's emphasis on judgment goes hand in hand with his emphasis on the necessity of good deeds. Living out the Gospel should not be confused with mere noble aspirations and religious rhetoric. A tree is known by the fruit it produces (12,33).

The section closes with this insistence: the true family of Jesus are not those who merely claim kinship with him but those who do the will of God (12,50).

**THE PARABLE DISCOURSE** (13,1-50)

Parables are the trademark of Jesus. As the notes to the text explain (see 13,11), these pointed stories both reveal and veil the mystery of the Kingdom. Unless the listener is willing to probe beneath the surface of the parables, the true meaning of Jesus' words will escape them (13,14f).

Typical themes of Matthew's Gospel emerge again in this discourse. The certain triumph of the Kingdom—a strong theme of the Sermon on the Mount—dominates the parable of the sower (13,1-9), as well as the parables of the mustard seed (13,31f) and the yeast (13,33f). Discipleship motifs stand out in the parables of the treasure and the pearl (13,44-46): true followers of Jesus are to put aside everything and be fully committed to the compelling beauty of God's reign.

Many of the parables in Matthew's Gospel have obvious moral messages (see also the stories in Chapters 24 and 25). The parable of the weeds sown among wheat (13,24-30; explanation, 13,36-43) makes the point that the church, like the world itself, is a mix of good and evil. The disciples should not be discouraged by this but be confident that God's grace will triumph at the end of time and evil will be punished. The theme of judgment present in the previous section of the Gospel reemerges here.

The conclusion of the parable discourse seems almost to be a signature of the Gospel writer (13,52). The Scribe who is instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the householder who can bring from the storehouse "both the new and the old." Preserving the best of the past and yet making it come alive for a new generation seems to be one of the main purposes of Matthew's Gospel (see introduction p. 3). Matthew was convinced that Jesus did not destroy the beautiful traditions of Judaism but gave them new meaning. Bridging past and present in an open and respectful manner is one of the greatest challenges of religious leadership in any age.

**THE KINGDOM AND THE DISCIPLES** (13,51—16,12)

It is difficult to characterize this long section of Matthew's story under any single heading. Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing continues but now begins to burst beyond the confines of

Galilee into Gentile territory. Clashes with his opponents—mainly the Pharisees—also continue to erupt.

But the haunting story of Jesus' walking on the water and Peter's awkward attempts to trust his master (14,22–33) may give us a clue to the special character of this section. With new intensity Jesus begins to instruct his disciples on the mystery of the Kingdom and they begin to realize the awesome identity of the Messiah.

Several motifs run through these chapters:

**The Inclusive Mission of Jesus.** Following the lead of Mark's Gospel, Matthew begins to trace the boundary-breaking nature of Jesus' ministry (see Reading Guide on Mark's Gospel, p. RG 411). After another conflict with the Pharisees (15,1-20), Jesus ventures into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon and there encounters a "Canaanite" woman (15,21-28). This is one of the most intriguing stories in the Gospel. At first Jesus resists the woman's entreaties on behalf of her daughter—he is still committed only to the people of Israel (see above, 10,5f). But the woman's insistence—her active faith—breaks down Jesus' resistance and seems to open the horizons of his own vision. Matthew uses this story to instruct his own church: they, too, may have had too narrow a concept of their mission, thinking that only Jews could become Christians. But the needs and genuine faith of the Gentiles showed the early church that God intended to extend the boundaries of the Kingdom to include all people.

The two stories of the miraculous feedings (14,13-21; 15,32-39) give a similar impression of expansiveness. Jesus will not let the vast crowds go hungry and uses the occasion to instruct his disciples. Another epic scene takes place on the mountain top, a favorite place of revelation in Matthew's Gospel (15,29-31). Similar to the vista at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (see 4,23-25), vast crowds of the sick and disabled surge toward Jesus and he cures them. Once again the disciples can observe the boundless compassion which drives Jesus.

**Opposition and Rejection.** Despite the mercy of Jesus, his opponents continue to resist and misunderstand his message. The Parable discourse had warned that some would prefer not to "see" and not to "hear" what Jesus preached. That prediction comes true in Nazareth (13,54-58) where Jesus' own people rebuff him and take offense at his "wisdom and mighty deeds." The story of Herod and the death of John the Baptist (14,1-12) are early warning signs about Jesus' own fate. His enemies were so immersed in their opposition that they would carry it to the point of trying to destroy Jesus.

In this conflict about the tradition of washing hands before eating (15,1-20), the Gospel offers one explanation of the intransigence of Jesus' opponents. They have allowed their own traditions to "nullify the word of God" (15,6). In other words, they had lost a sense of priority, placing good but not essential values ahead of those that were most fundamental. Matthew continues to stress that Jesus was not opposed or indifferent to the Law but wanted to inject new life into its observance by insisting that the love command was the basis of all fidelity (see discussion above at 5,17).

**The Disciples.** The story of Peter's walking on the water—material unique to Matthew's Gospel—illustrates both the importance of Petrine traditions in this Gospel and the evangelist's view of discipleship. Peter begins to sink in the waves because he "doubted" or "hesitated" and because he has "little faith" (14,31). The latter phrase is particularly characteristic of Matthew's

Gospel (see p. 5). Matthew's portrayal is sympathetic and realistic: the disciples believe but their faith is weak. Deeper trust in Jesus is needed.

At the same time, the disciples are quite different from the opponents of Jesus. While the opponents reject Jesus and align him with Satan (12,24), the disciples acclaim Jesus as "the Son of God" (14,33). The enemies of Jesus cannot understand his teaching but the disciples—albeit hesitantly—do "understand" (16,12; see also 13,16.51).

## The Way to Jerusalem (16,13—20,34)

A dramatic shift in the setting of the Gospel story is about to take place. Jesus goes with his disciples to the northernmost reaches of Israel, Caesarea Philippi (16,13). There he will ask the fundamental question of the Gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" (16,15). Jesus' question and Peter's response represent a turning point in the narrative. "From now on" (16,21) Jesus will begin to speak openly about his approaching death, and the action of the Gospel will point toward Jerusalem and the events of the Passion and Resurrection.

The announcement of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (16,21) thus introduces the motif of a "journey," a theme already present in Mark's Gospel (see comments on Mark 8–10) and one greatly expanded in the Gospel of Luke (see comments on journey narrative in Luke pp. RG 429–431). The threefold prediction of the passion (in Matthew, see 16,21; 17,22f; 20,17-19) punctuates the journey and keeps the reader's attention directed to Jerusalem and Jesus' death and resurrection. That great climax to the Gospel, already alluded to as early as the infancy Gospel (see comments above p. RG 392), dominates the entire narrative and gives urgency to Jesus' teaching. The transfiguration reflects this: immediately after Jesus predicts his death for the first time, the light of resurrection glory seems to emanate from his person in a mountaintop scene reminiscent of the revelation given to Moses on Sinai (see the notes to 17,1).

During the journey narrative, the spotlight seems to fall with new intensity on Jesus' relationship with his disciples. Although some conflicts with the Pharisees take place (see, for example, the dispute about divorce, 19,1-12), most of Jesus' words are directed to his disciples, revealing to them what it means to follow a Crucified Messiah. Special Petrine traditions are present in this section, too, including Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and Jesus' blessing upon him, his mediating role in paying the Temple tax on behalf of Jesus and himself (17,24-27), and his lead question about forgiveness in the discourse on community life (18,21).

### THE MINISTRY OF LEADERSHIP

Matthew gives special attention to Peter in his Gospel (see above, comments on 14,22-33). Although the disciples had already confessed Jesus as "the Son of God" (14,33), Peter himself has an opportunity to confess his own belief that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (16,16). Thus the focus in the Caesarea Philippi scene is not on the disciples in general but on Peter and his faith in Jesus. Peter's firm belief in Jesus is rewarded by a special blessing. He receives a new name, "Peter" or "Rock" (see comments in notes to 16,18) because he will be the foundation upon which Jesus' "church" will be built. Peter is given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" and empowered to "bind" and "loose." Both of these images, as the notes to the text indicate, refer to the responsibilities of leadership entrusted to Peter. He becomes, in effect, the prime minister of the community.

Matthew will balance out this focus on Peter by also asserting the authority of the

community in Chapter 18 (see comments below), but at this point in the Gospel he is showing the important role entrusted to the leader of the community. Undoubtedly this reflects a ministry of leadership already present in Matthew's church. The Gospel uses Peter as a model for leadership. Historically, Peter had been an important leader in the church. In Acts we are told that he helped mediate between the Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem and the emerging Gentile churches (see Acts 10–15). Paul, too, acknowledges the importance of "Cephas" (see, for example Gal 1,18; 2,11-14). And the Letters of Peter, even if not written directly by the Apostle, testify to the importance of his memory in the early church (see Reading Guides to 1 and 2 Peter)

While it would be going too far to impose on this Gospel scene the full-blown institution of the papal office, Roman Catholic tradition can legitimately see in the figure of Peter the founding model for the later emergence of this office in the church. Peter is blessed because of his strong faith in Jesus and because he served a key role in maintaining the unity of the church. Equally important to remember however, is that the Gospel refuses to idealize Peter or to place him above the demands of the Gospel. The same Peter that Jesus blesses lavishly here is also called "Satan" and "obstacle" (16,23), will underestimate the need for reconciliation (18,21), and will deny his discipleship in the face of the Passion (26,69-75). Leaders within the community must remain disciples (see 23,10).

## LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

The fourth discourse of Matthew's Gospel, the Discourse on Community, occurs in this section of the Gospel (18,1-35). The notes supply detailed commentary on this powerful example of Jesus' teaching. Matthew gathers here two parables of Jesus (the Lost Sheep and the Unforgiving Servant) and several sayings, and molds them into a discourse.

Two key sayings divide the chapter and strike its major themes. At the end of the first major section, Jesus tells the disciples: "In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost" (18,14). The call to urgently seek out and care for the "little ones," that is, the weak or alienated members of the community, dominates the first half of the discourse. The members of the community are not to seek their own aggrandizement (18,1-5) and are never to "scandalize" or despise those on the margins of the church (18,6-10). Matthew's version of the Lost Sheep parable drives that lesson home: the leaders of the community are to seek out the stray, not condemn him.

The second half of the discourse concludes with another key saying: "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother (or sister) from the heart" (18,35). The need for reconciliation dominates the latter half of the discourse. Disputes are to be settled in a fair and practical manner (18,15-17), and even if strong discipline must be taken towards a recalcitrant member, he or she is to be treated "like a Gentile or a tax collector"—a poignant note in a Gospel where Jesus seeks out just such people! (see, for example, 9,9-13). Those who have experienced limitless forgiveness from God should not put limits on reconciliation within the community. That is the radical message of Jesus' reply to Peter and the concluding parable of the story. Its message is similar in content to Jesus' teaching on love of enemies in the Sermon on the Mount (see 5,43-48). We are to strive to love even the enemy because God's own love is lavish and indiscriminate.

This entire chapter offers a remarkable model for the church. There is little concern here

for structures and budgets (important as they are for us and may have been for Matthew's community, too); emphasis falls on the care we need to have for each other if we are to be followers of Jesus.

## Final Teaching in Jerusalem (21,1—25,46)

The Gospel drama now enters Jerusalem, the capital city, where Jesus will experience death and resurrection. The great Temple of Herod dominated this city in the time of Jesus and its shadow falls across the scenes Matthew narrates in these chapters.

Jesus the Messiah enters his city in triumph, but he is seated on a donkey's colt, which Matthew interprets as a sign of Jesus' humility (see comment on 21,5). As a fearless prophet, Jesus cleanses the house of God, another sign of his God-given mission to call Israel to repentance. The next day Jesus returns to the Temple compound and begins to teach the crowds (21,13). There follows a number of key texts which reveal the heart of Jesus' message. But the Jewish authorities (the Pharisees now joined by the "chief priests and elders of the people," all members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body whose base would, in fact, have been Jerusalem) remain hostile to Jesus and his message. This section of the Gospel is filled with sharp clashes between Jesus and his opponents.

Two important clusters of sayings and parables are found here. In the first, 23,1-39, Jesus excoriates the scribes and the Pharisees, portraying them in purely negative tones for their hypocrisy and lack of fidelity. As we will discuss below, this is Matthew's most intense assault on the Jewish leaders. The second collection of sayings and parables forms the fifth and final discourse of the Gospel, the so-called "Eschatological Discourse" or discourse on the end of the world (see the note to 24,1). While gazing at the stunning Temple from the Mount of Olives, Jesus reflects on the fate of the Temple and the end of human history. This leads to a series of parables, some of them unique to Matthew, urging the disciples to remain faithful and to exemplify that fidelity through good deeds (see 24,36—25,46).

### THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Matthew portrays Jesus in strong, authoritative tones in this section. The Messiah enters the royal city in triumph with the acclamations of the crowds filling the air (21,1-11). "The Lord of the Sabbath" (12,8) asserts his authority over the Temple by driving out the merchants and moneychangers, reclaiming God's house (21,12-17). He meets head on the challenges of each of the major religious authorities of Israel: the scribes, the Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the elders of the people, the Sadducees. Even though Jesus will soon be a prisoner, Matthew wants to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader: Jesus is the Messiah, the true Teacher of Israel.

The foundation of that authority is Jesus' identity as God's Son. The parable of the Tenants reaffirms that (21,33-46); Jesus describes himself in this allegory (see note in text) as the son of the vineyard owner, the "heir," whose maltreatment will bring judgment on the tenants. He is more than David's Son—even David the King had to call the future Messiah "Lord" (22,41-46).

Matthew also presents Jesus dealing with questions of the law in characteristic fashion. The law is not rejected out of hand but reinterpreted. The dispute about the greatest commandment of the law (22,34-40) is most revealing: "the whole law and the prophets" depend on the

love command. The core of Jesus' teaching and the basis for all interpretation of tradition are the values of love and compassion (see 5,43-48, and comments on Chap. 18).

### JESUS AND HIS OPPONENTS

In Chapter 23 Matthew presents Jesus as launching into a fierce assault on the hypocrisy and infidelity of the scribes and Pharisees. As the notes observe (see comments on 23,1-39), they become, in effect, negative examples—the reverse side of the portrayal of the faithful disciple found in the Sermon on the Mount. Reading this discourse tells us what values Matthew's Jesus holds most dear: practicing what one preaches (23,3), being compassionate rather than laying heavy burdens on others (23,4), not using religion as a means of self-aggrandizement (23,5f), having a proper sense of values and therefore understanding that mercy and justice are always the highest priority in interpreting the law (23,23-28), church leaders who have a sense of solidarity with the community rather than viewing others as inferior and subordinate (23,8-12).

As the notes suggest, this strong indictment of the failings of the leaders is not intended solely to pummel the opponents of Jesus. Rather it is meant as a sober instruction for the Christian readers of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the negative stereotyping of the Jewish leaders, especially when it is read apart from its historical context in the Gospel, can have destructive effects. We who live in the horrible shadow of the Holocaust must be responsible readers of this Gospel and, while taking to heart the important lessons of this discourse, must not allow its negative image of the Jewish leaders to influence our attitude to Jews today. Every modern Pope, including John Paul II, has attacked anti-Semitism and reminded Catholics of their spiritual and historical roots in the living faith of Judaism.

### JUDGMENT

The parables that make up the eschatological discourse have a familiar Matthean ring to them (see 24,36—25,46). Once again the evangelist dwells on the importance of doing good deeds as the authenticating expression of one's discipleship. The "faithful and prudent servant" is the one who is found taking care of the household and distributing food to those in need (24,45f); the wise virgins have their lamps filled with oil and are ready to respond at the proper moment (25,1-13); the servant who employs his or her talents is the one blessed on the master's return from a long journey (25,14-30); those who will be invited to inherit the Kingdom are those who carried out the love command—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, welcoming the stranger (25,31-46).

The climactic parable of the sheep and the goats illustrates how far Matthew is prepared to press his insistence on good deeds. The "sheep" had not even recognized the Risen Lord present in the needy, but yet acted out of compassion. They are blessed by the Son of Man in his glory because they have proven to be faithful servants. More than once in his Gospel Matthew has stated that doing the good deeds of compassion and justice weigh far more than knowing the right words and wearing the right vestments (see a similar message in the parable of the two sons, 21,28-32). There is little tolerance for religious hypocrisy in this Gospel.

## The Death and Resurrection of God's Son (26,1—28,20)

### THE PASSION (26,1—27,66)

The Passion story moves quickly from Jesus' prediction of the plot against him (26,1-5), through the last supper with his disciples (26,20-30), his anguished prayer and arrest in Gethsemane

(26,36-56), the interrogation and trial before the Sanhedrin or Jewish Council (26,57-75), the Roman trial before Pilate (27,1-31), and the final scene of crucifixion, mockery, and death (27,32-56). The burial in Joseph's tomb and the Pharisee's demand that Pilate post a guard (27,57-66) prepare the reader for the explosive events of the resurrection.

The peculiar emphases Matthew gives the Passion story can be summarized under three major themes:

**The Majesty of Jesus.** Even in the passion story, Jesus remains the majestic Messiah of Israel. This is already true in Mark's account but it is given particular emphasis by Matthew. Jesus is imbued with prophetic knowledge of the events about to take place: he predicts the plot of the leaders (26,1f), is fully aware of his impending death (26,12.18), knows the identity of his betrayer (26,25), and the certainty of Peter's denials (26,34). His captors cannot seize him until Jesus confronts Judas with his treachery (26,50). And when the High Priest commands with an oath that Jesus reveal his identity, Jesus predicts with calm majesty his eventual triumph as the Son of Man who will be exalted at the right hand of God (26,64). Death cannot destroy or defeat God's Son—that is the heart of Matthew's message in the passion story. The parade of mockers who file past the cross jeer Jesus and ridicule his claim to be God's Son (27,39-44). But as death comes, Jesus is acclaimed as the true Son of God and nature itself erupts in testimony to Jesus' victory (see comments on 27,51-54).

**The Dawn of the New Age.** The death of Jesus is the center point of sacred history in Matthew's perspective. As discussed above (see comments on p. RG 400), Matthew, along with all of the New Testament, considered Jesus as the advent of the final and decisive age of salvation promised by God to Israel. The death of Jesus was the climactic act of his entire mission: here all of his love and commitment were compressed into one intense act of fidelity to the will of his Father. Thus the death of Jesus becomes in a special way the turning point between the old and the new age. With the death (and resurrection) of Jesus the final age of human history had begun and, therefore, humanity must respond to God's grace in a new way.

Several features of Matthew's passion story proclaim this theology of history. At the moment of death (27,51-57) signs of the new age break out: nature convulses, the tombs are split open, and the dead are liberated—just as the dream of the prophet Ezekiel had envisioned, with the dead bones of Israel's hopes taking flesh and escaping the tomb (see Ezekiel 37). The age of death is over; the age of resurrection begins.

The attention Matthew gives to the response of the leaders and people of Israel to Jesus is another part of his theology of history (see, for example, 27,24f). Paradoxically, because Israel rejects Jesus, the way will now be open for the Gospel to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. This does not mean that Matthew despairs of having the Jews accept the message of Jesus (he seems to offer some hope of this in 23,39), but he does believe that the mission to the Gentiles is now possible in the new and final age of salvation, and one of the catalysts for that mission was the fact that the mission to Israel had failed. Paul, too, has a similar theology in Romans 9–11, where he reminds his readers that in the mystery of God's providence the failure of Israel becomes a moment of grace for the Gentiles. For Paul, Israel remains special because God is faithful and will never forget the promises made to the chosen people. This biblical teaching is echoed in the theology of Vatican II where it is insisted that the Jewish people have a special place in the history of salvation (see decree on non-Christian religions), and therefore Christians should not impose conversion on the Jewish people.

**Examples and Counterexamples.** The Passion story also serves Matthew's teaching about discipleship. In the crucible of suffering and death, one's true character is revealed. The Passion is filled with examples—both positive and negative—of how people respond to the Gospel in crisis. The leaders remain implacably hostile to Jesus and demand his death. Peter and the rest of the disciples prove their "little faith," with Peter denying he knows Jesus and the others fleeing in panic. Judas betrays his master and gives in to despair rather than seeking repentance (27,3-10).

There are also bright moments: the woman of Bethany who performs a last kindness for Jesus, anointing him despite the protests of the disciples (26,6-13); Pilate's wife who pleads on behalf of "that righteous man" (27,19); the centurion and his companions who acclaim the crucified Jesus as the "Son of God" (27,54); the women who stand by Jesus at the cross and see to his burial (27,56); Joseph of Arimathea, the rich disciple, who risks his reputation by burying a publicly executed man in his own new tomb (27,57-61). And, of course, Jesus himself is the examplar of fidelity; seeking God's will despite the threat of death, refusing violence at the moment of his arrest, and trusting in God even as his life's breath is taken from him.

There is no doubt that Matthew intended the readers of the passion to place themselves in the story and to ask the troubled question posed by the disciples: "Is it I, Lord?" (26,22).

**THE RESURRECTION** (28,1-20)

The Gospel concludes with the events surrounding the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to his disciples. None of the Gospels attempt to narrate the resurrection itself, but Matthew comes closest to that in mentioning an "earthquake" and an "angel of the Lord" who comes from heaven to roll back the stone from the tomb (28,2). Marvelous events such as these and the opening of the tombs at the moment of Jesus' death (see 27,51-53) continue to signal the final and glorious age when God's presence would be felt in a vivid way.

Mark's original ending does not include the report of any appearances of the Risen Christ; the discovery of the empty tomb and the words of the heavenly messenger about Jesus' triumph over death are enough to proclaim the message (see Mk 16,1-8). But in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus appears first to the women as they leave the empty tomb (28,9f), and then to the eleven disciples in Galilee (28,16-20). Matthew's denunciation of the Jewish leaders continues right to the end of the Gospel: when the chief priests and elders learn from the soldiers about the astounding events at the tomb, instead of believing in Christ's triumph, they concoct a false story about the disciples stealing the body of Jesus (28,11-15).

The final scene of the Gospel (28,16-20) is on a mountaintop, the favored site of special revelation throughout the Gospel (see, for example, the temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, the transfiguration, the healing of the crowds, 15,29-31). The Risen Christ comes in triumph, as he had predicted during his passion, and commissions his disciples (now "eleven"—Matthew does not forget Judas's tragic fate) to go to "all nations," making disciples, baptizing them into the community, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus had commanded.

Major themes of the Gospel are compressed into this scene: Matthew's concern with the universal mission of the church; his emphasis on Jesus as teacher; his realistic portrayal of the disciples (who even now "hesitate" as they encounter the Risen Christ, see 28,17!); his interest in the church. Above all, the Gospel's majestic portrayal of Jesus as the church's firm foundation and abiding hope is reaffirmed. No matter how turbulent will be the church's future, the Risen Jesus will not abandon it. Matthew concludes his Gospel with the final promise of one who was

named "Emmanuel," "God is with us" (see 1,23): "I am with you always, until the end of the age." (28,20).

D.S.

## For Further Reading

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# MARK □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 65–95 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

As the introduction in the text suggests (see p. 65), Mark's Gospel was probably the first Gospel to be written. Mark can take credit for shaping the Christian message into its most effective and moving form, that of a story about Jesus. The evangelist knitted together sayings of Jesus and stories about his ministry into a single dynamic narrative, tracing the life of Jesus from his first encounter with the Baptist at the Jordan to his dynamic mission in Galilee, and on to his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Mark's purpose was not simply to preserve the church's memory about Jesus but to make that memory take on new force in the lives of his readers.

Mark probably wrote for Roman Christians, shortly after the persecutions of Nero (64 A.D.), when the community was still reeling from that tyrant's cruelty. Some Christians had reacted to Nero's attacks with heroic martyrdom, but others had betrayed the community or slipped away in fear. Mark's story of the crucified Jesus and his disciples who struggled to remain faithful would have been a powerful lesson for this early Christian church.

### Characteristics of Mark's Gospel

There are some typical features and motifs, or themes, of Mark's Gospel that the reader should be alert to.

#### A THEOLOGY IN NARRATIVE

One of the most obvious features of Mark's Gospel, but one that should not be overlooked, is the fact that it is a narrative, a "story," about Jesus. Mark proclaims to his readers the good news of salvation (the literal meaning of the term "gospel"), but he does it not by a series of abstract statements or propositions but through a dynamic story that grips the reader with its force and emotion.

Some of the characteristics of Mark's narrative style reveal his theological message. The pace of the story is urgent. Jesus moves rapidly from place to place; there is little wasted motion and a minimum of verbiage. The dynamism and urgency of the Gospel coincide with Mark's

conviction that the mission of Jesus is compelling and one must respond to it without hesitation. The Gospel is also filled with conflicts between Jesus and his opponents and between Jesus and the demons; the climactic passion story dominates the whole Gospel. Here, too, Mark's theological perspective is at work: because the message of Jesus calls for radical change and challenges the powers of this world, it is not surprising that conflict and suffering have such a major role to play in Mark's story.

### CHRISTOLOGY

The central and guiding question of Mark's Gospel is posed in 8,29: "Who do you say that I am?" Understanding the mystery of Jesus' identity and responding to it with faith are the major concerns of the Gospel. Mark proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah, typical convictions of the entire New Testament, but the evangelist proclaims this fundamental faith by means of his story. Jesus' healings, his parables, his instruction of the disciples, his encounters with demons, his conflicts with opponents, and, above all, his death and resurrection reveal the profound mystery of Christ. Jesus' dynamic ministry of healing and exorcisms demonstrates that, through him, God's liberating rule was now breaking into history and freeing people from the grip of death.

For Mark, however, the most important means of revealing Jesus' identity was the cross. The cross becomes the touchstone of all authentic faith in Jesus; in his death for others Jesus reveals the heart of his mission. All of the other titles and images applied to Jesus such as "Messiah" ("Christ"), or "Son of Man," or healer, take on their true meaning when seen in the context of Jesus' redemptive death. Throughout Mark's narrative we will see this focus on Jesus at work.

### DISCIPLESHIP

Mark's Gospel is also concerned with what it means to follow Jesus; the disciples of Jesus play an important role in Mark's story. Jesus commissions them to follow him early in his ministry (1,16-20), and they are present for almost every scene. One of the intriguing features of Mark's portrayal is that the disciples have a hard time understanding Jesus. As the Gospel drama unfolds and as the passion of Jesus approaches, the disciples begin openly to misunderstand Jesus and eventually fail him. The Gospel will end, however, on a note of reconciliation and renewal: the heavenly messenger at the tomb tells the women to instruct the "disciples and Peter"—all of whom were absent at the crucifixion—to go to Galilee where they will once again encounter Jesus (16,7).

There is little doubt that Mark sees the disciples not simply as historical figures from the past but as representative of the Christians of his own time. The instruction Jesus gives his followers, the difficulty they encounter in understanding, and Jesus' unbreakable bonds with them despite their failures, are all meant as challenge and consolation to the Christians who read the Gospel.

## How to Proceed

The best way to study Mark's Gospel is to follow his story of Jesus from beginning to end. Mark's brief narrative is taut and compelling; it can be read in one sitting, and, in fact, that is a good thing to do before concentrating on a particular passage of the Gospel. To prepare the

reader, we will trace the main segments of the story line and then discuss in more detail some of the major themes of each section.

The evangelist uses geography to organize the main lines of his story: the Gospel drama opens in the Judean desert with John baptizing at the Jordan river, then moves to Galilee where most of Jesus' public ministry takes place, and finally to Jerusalem for the climactic events of the passion and resurrection. (See map 13.)

## Working Through Mark's Gospel

**OVERTURE IN THE DESERT** (Mk 1,1-13)
The Gospel drama begins in the Judean desert where the prophet John preaches a baptism of repentance. Jesus, the Galilean, makes his way south to the desert to proclaim his dedication to God. At the moment of Baptism his true identity as the Son of God is revealed. A haunting scene in the desert follows where Jesus struggles with Satan.

**THE GALILEAN MINISTRY OF JESUS** (1,14—8,21)
This major section covers most of Jesus' public ministry. It takes place in Galilee, the northern region of Israel (see Map 13).

a) 1,14f. The keynote of Jesus' ministry: "The Kingdom of God is at hand."

b) 1,16-45. The call of the first disciples and the first day of Jesus' healing ministry.

c) 2,1—3,6. A series of conflicts with the religious leaders that ends with their determination to destroy Jesus.

d) 3,7—4,34. The ministry of Jesus continues and so, too, does opposition to him. The misunderstanding of his family and the accusations of the Pharisees are reflected in the parable discourse of Chapter 4 where Jesus states that the mystery of the Kingdom is revealed only to the disciples, not to those who oppose the Gospel.

e) 4,35—8,26. The mission of Jesus widens in scope as he moves across the lake to Gentile territory and travels beyond the borders of Israel to Tyre and Sidon.

**THE JOURNEY FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM** (8,27—10,52)
This major section begins in the northernmost reaches of Israel, the town of Caesarea Philippi, where Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. The attention of the Gospel now begins to fix on the upcoming passion (8,31; 9,31; 10,32-34), as Jesus and his disciples move south to Jerusalem. The section is also filled with Jesus' teaching on the meaning of discipleship. Two stories of Jesus healing blind men frame the entire passage (8,22-26; 10,46-52), stories which symbolize the difficulty the disciples have in grasping Jesus' teaching.

**DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN JERUSALEM** (11,1—16,8)
The rest of Mark's story takes place in Jerusalem, the temple city.

a) 11,1—12,44. Jesus' prophetic sign condemning the Temple introduces a series of controversies with the Jewish leaders.

b) 13,1-37. In the shadow of the Temple Jesus predicts its destruction and counsels his disciples on the struggles of the community as it awaits the consummation of human history.

c) 14,1—15,47. The climactic Passion account.

d) 16,1-8. The Gospel closes with the discovery of the empty tomb and the heavenly messenger's announcement of Jesus' victory over death.

As the notes explain (see comments on 16,9-20) there are additional endings appended to

Mark's Gospel, but these were added later by someone other than the evangelist. In our comments on the Gospel we will assume that the original ending to Mark's Gospel was 16,1-8.

## Reading through Mark's Gospel

The goal of this section is to trace major themes and characteristics of each segment of Mark's Gospel. What is said here complements the more detailed commentary found in the introduction and in the notes to the biblical text.

**OVERTURE** (Mk 1,1-13)

Like an overture to a musical piece, these verses sound major themes that will echo throughout Mark's Gospel. The setting for these opening scenes is the Judean desert, that haunting place so full of symbolism in the Bible. It was in the desert that Israel was first forged into a people, as God led them from slavery to freedom and sealed a covenant with them at Sinai. So the desert was a place of new beginnings and Jesus, like John, comes here to start his mission. But the desert is also a place of testing, the parched arena where the children of Israel rebelled against God and where the forbidding terrain revealed the true character of those who dared its stretches. So here, too, Jesus would be tested by Satan before the beginning of his mission in Galilee.

Mark signals several major themes in these brief opening scenes:

a) John comes dressed like Elijah (see note to 1,6), the great prophet who was expected to return at the end of the world. By presenting John in this fashion, Mark indicates that the old age is coming to an end and *a new age is beginning.* That is the reason for the urgent message of repentance John preaches. This sense of a new age dawning with Jesus moves throughout the Gospel.

b) Mark also clearly identifies Jesus as the *Son of God.* The divine voice from heaven leaves no doubt about Jesus' awesome identity (1,11). The Spirit of God descends on Jesus and imbues him with the power to carry out his mission as the Messiah, God's anointed one who would liberate the world from death (1,10). As we noted in the introduction, christology is a major concern of the Gospel.

c) The desert test (1,12f) where Jesus wrestles with the demon is also *a preview of the ministry of Jesus.* In his mission of healing, Jesus casts out demons and liberates the sick and disabled from the shackles of pain. To carry out his mission, Jesus must often struggle with opponents; right from the opening scene of the Gospel, Mark tells us that the process of saving human life can be filled with conflict. Experience bears this out: very often true liberation from sin and false values only comes through great struggle.

**THE GALILEAN MINISTRY OF JESUS** (1,14—8,21)

This major section spans almost one half of the Gospel, and covers Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing in the northern region of Galilee. We can divide it into five segments, each with distinctive tones.

**The Keynote of Jesus' Mission** (1,14f). These two verses condense much of the Gospel message. As he enters into his home region of Galilee, Jesus sounds the major theme of his ministry: "the kingdom of God is at hand" (1,15). Each phrase evokes a major Markan theme:

□ *"This is the time of fulfillment"* (1,15). The new and final age of salvation—longed for by Israel over centuries—now dawns with the advent of Jesus. That new age will call for new

responses by those graced to experience it (see Jesus' teaching on catching the mood of the times and the need to pour new wine into new wineskins, 2,18-22).

□ *"The kingdom of God is at hand"* (1,15). This biblical symbol expresses Israel's hope for salvation, for the time when God would come to rule Israel with justice and peace, not in the manner of the Jewish kings who so many times had failed the people and been themselves agents of oppression. The Gospel portrays Jesus not only as the messenger of that coming Kingdom but as actually inaugurating God's rule through his healing touch, his commitment to justice, and the liberating act of giving his life for others.

□ *"Repent, and believe in the gospel"* (1,15). God's offer of salvation through Jesus calls for a response. Those who hear the good news should "repent." The literal meaning of the Greek word *metanoiein* means to change one's mind or perspective. Throughout his Gospel Mark uses images of perception—"hearing," "seeing," "understanding"—to describe faith. The disciples of Jesus are asked to see reality—God's reality—with the new eyes of faith and to transform their lives accordingly.

**The Call of the Disciples and Jesus' First Day of Ministry** (1,16-45). The remaining verses of Chapter 1 present the first day of Jesus' dynamic mission. This section is most characteristic of Mark's portrayal of Jesus: After choosing his first disciples, Jesus plunges into the sickness and pain of his world, healing and casting our demons. The action takes place around Capernaum, the small fishing village on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, the arena for most of Jesus' ministry in Mark's account.

□ *The Call of the Disciples* (1,16-20). The meaning of discipleship is a major theme of the Gospel. Right at the beginning of his mission, therefore, Jesus calls disciples to follow him and to share in his own ministry of fishing for people. This rapid-fire story condenses the early church's theology of discipleship: a)discipleship is a gift; all of the initiative comes from Jesus, not from the disciples themselves; b) the essence of discipleship is following Jesus, an allegiance that takes precedence over every other value; c) the disciple is privileged to share in the mission of Jesus, here expressed in terms of "fishing" for people. In the Bible (see, for example, Jer 16,16; Hb 1,14f), that image of fishing is used to describe the gathering of people for the final day of judgment. Jesus' own ministry has similar strong tones.

□ *Exorcism and Healing* (1,20-45). This whole section is filled with reports of exorcisms and healings. The first action of Jesus is typical of his entire ministry. He enters the synagogue of Capernaum on a Sabbath and liberates a man whose life was tormented by an "unclean spirit" (1,23). Exorcism, or the expulsion of evil spirits who hold human beings in their tormenting grip, is frequently mentioned in Mark's Gospel. Here the demons recognize that they are struggling with "the Holy One of God" and know that Jesus has come to destroy them. The people who witness the liberation of the man respond: "A new teaching with authority!" For Mark, such liberating acts are precisely the "new teaching" of Jesus, and that is why the evangelist highlights the exorcisms. They present in dramatic form the ultimate meaning of Jesus' ministry: he has come to destroy the power of death in all its forms and to free humanity from its grip.

The ancient world attributed many psychic and physical ailments to the power of evil spirits, a recognition that their lives were ruled by powers they could not control. While our own modern world view may be less inclined to attribute illness to evil powers, the message of the Gospel is still relevant. We can still learn from Jesus' fierce commitment to alleviating pain

and to freeing people from situations and powers that oppress them. And there are many situations where human beings are caught in the grip of overpowering evil, whether it be economic oppression, systemic violence, obsessive or addictive behaviors, or racism—situations often beyond the control of any individual. The Gospel tells us that God's will and the goal of all authentic Christian mission is to liberate humans from such tyrannies of evil.

**Conflict** (2,1—3,6). The reader will notice a significant change of tone in this section of the Gospel. As Jesus continues his ministry of healing, he meets with strong oppression from the Jewish leaders. The five conflict stories in this section reach their climax in 3,6 where the leaders begin to plot Jesus' death. Right from the beginning of his story Mark draws our attention to the passion. Like some distant tolling of a bell, warnings had already been given in 1,14 where Mark, almost offhandedly, mentions that Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee "after John had been arrested." And the fierce struggle with the demon in the synagogue of Capernaum (1,21-28) was a preview of more deadly conflicts to come.

An important point to notice in these stories is that the conflicts revolve around the central values of Jesus' ministry. The scribes object because Jesus claims the power to forgive sins and to heal (2,1-12). Pharisees take offense at his association with sinners and outcasts (2,16f), and at his compassionate interpretation of the law (2,23-28). His healing of a man's withered arm on a sabbath is the final affront (3,1-6). Thus Mark implies that fidelity to the good news of mercy and compassion can, paradoxically, lead to conflict with those who have other values and other priorities.

The discussion about fasting that stands in the middle of this section (2,18-22) gives the reader another clue about Mark's message. A series of sayings emphasize that, with Jesus, a new age has dawned. It is the time of the "bridegroom"; a time for replacing the whole cloth, not just a patch; a time for new wine and new wineskins. Each of these images stresses that the new age of salvation is present in Jesus and, therefore, new things are possible. The Pharisees and scribes miss this reality and blindly oppose Jesus. As we mentioned above, Mark employs perception metaphors—seeing, hearing, understanding—to describe the experience of faith (see comments above, p. RG 409).

Finally, in this section, we should not overlook Mark's continuing concern about discipleship. Another call story similar to that in 1,16-20 takes place when Jesus encounters the toll collector Levi, sitting at his customs post (Capernaum was a border town between the territories ruled by the vassal kings Herod Agrippa and Phillip). Once again, the call story emphasizes that faith and discipleship are a gift to which we must respond. This story also reminds us that the community is open to everyone: just and sinner. The opponents of Jesus are blind to this fact, too, and take offense at his sharing a meal with "tax collectors and sinners" (2,16). But Jesus responds that being a "physician" to the sinners was precisely his mission (2,17).

This entire section has strong lessons for Christian life. It reminds us that true fidelity to the Gospel has a price and that we should not be surprised to encounter opposition and conflict, even deadly hostility, from those whose values are challenged by the justice and compassion of the Gospel. Jesus' compassion and his strong commitment to including the disabled, the sick, and other social outcasts in the community can also instruct us on the nature of the church and its mission.

**The Mystery of the Kingdom** (3,7—4,34). By means of a summary, Mark continues his reporting of Jesus' dynamic ministry of healing and exorcisms (3,7-12). The disciples' stake in all

this is made clear in 3,13-19: Jesus climbs to the top of a mountain (a typical place of revelation in the Bible) and solemnly commissions the twelve "to be with him," "to preach," and "to have authority to drive out demons." The disciples share fully in the ministry of Jesus.

But the note of conflict and misunderstanding sounded in the previous section continues to dominate here. All of the people close to Jesus seem to be out of sympathy with him. His own relatives want to take him back home because they think "he is out of his mind" (3,21). Mark follows through with this incident in a later scene where Jesus' "mother and his brothers" arrive to take him back home (3,31-35). But Jesus puts distance between himself and his uncomprehending family when he looks at the circle of disciples who are inside the house with him and says: "Here are my mother and my brothers, whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (3,35).

The parable discourse (4,1-34) attempts to give a reason for all this misunderstanding. The parables, like Jesus himself, are a mysterious revelation of the Kingdom of God. Those not in sympathy with Jesus cannot understand his words. But those called to be disciples are "granted the mystery of the Kingdom of God" (see notes to 4,11-12). While honoring human freedom, Mark wants to affirm that God's providence guides all of human life, even the darkest moments such as the rejection of Jesus.

Mark's reflection on the parables also reaffirms that faith in Jesus is a gift; it is not something we control or achieve solely through our own efforts. The disciples are "given" the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Other important themes of Mark's Gospel are communicated in the parables. The stories of the sower casting small, vulnerable seeds on rough ground (4,3-9), the tiny mustard seed (4,30-32), and that of the seed growing without the farmer's knowledge (4,26-29) affirm, on the one hand, that the reality of God's Kingdom seeps into our lives in a hidden and often unnoticed fashion. Such is often the case in Mark's Gospel when people fail to recognize who Jesus is because they are looking for another type of Messiah. On the other hand the parables proclaim that God's kingdom will be wonderfully triumphant despite opposition: the harvest of new life and peace will be abundant, "thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Throughout this section Mark's portrayal of the disciples remains constant. Even though they are privileged to be chosen as followers of Jesus, they still have a hard time understanding his message (4,13).

**The Universal Mission of Jesus** (4,35—8,21). This concluding section of Jesus' Galilean ministry embraces a large amount of material that can be loosely gathered under the theme of the universal scope of Jesus' mission. The Sea of Galilee begins to be an important factor, not simply as a geographical phenomenon in the center of Galilee, but as an important symbolic boundary between Jew and Gentile (consult the map of Galilee, Map 13; the region to the west of the Sea was mainly Jewish in population, while on the eastern shore the population was mainly Gentile).

Jesus and his disciples cross the sea several times in this section, occasionally having to endure its turbulent storms. The first time is in 4,35 when they cross through the storm and arrive in the Gentile territory of the Gerasenes (5,1). There Jesus will liberate a Gentile man from a terrible demon. Another missionary journey begins in 7,24, after Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees. This begins to the northwest where Jesus encounters the Syrophoenician woman (7,24-30), and will extend around once more to the Decapolis on the eastern side of the lake

(7,31). The entire section ends with Jesus and his disciples again in the boat together heading for the Gentile shore (8,13).

Other important blocks of material give a mission flavor to this section such as the commissioning of the Twelve and sending them out (6,7—13,30f). The flashback to the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod is a reminder about the true cost of discipleship (6,14-29). So, too, are Jesus' continuing disputes with his opponents (see, for example, 7,1-23 and 8,11-13). Two of Jesus' greatest signs also tell us something about the nature of Jesus' mission; once on the Jewish side and once on the Gentile side of the lake, Jesus miraculously feeds massive crowds of hungry people (6,34-44; 8,1-10).

The following are some of the major themes of this section:

□ *The Universality of the Gospel.* Even though Jesus' ministry was confined mainly to Israel, Mark's Gospel shows the universal character of Jesus' words and actions. God's saving love was not meant exclusively for one group or one region. The stories of Jesus' healing Gentiles such as the Gerasene man (5,1-20), the Greek woman's daughter (7,24-30), and the deaf-mute from the Decapolis (7,31-37) illustrate this. So, too, does the fact that Jesus feeds Gentiles as well as Jews.

But crossing religious and cultural boundaries, and being open to people who are different from us, does not come easily for the human spirit, as history has repeatedly demonstrated. The early church, too, struggled with the need to reach out beyond its own boundaries (see, for example, the story of Cornelius's conversion in Acts 10–11). Mark hints at this in his Gospel, too. To cross to the Gentile side of the lake, Jesus and the disciples must brave the terror of the storm (4,35-41). Jesus himself seems hesitant before the request of the Syrophoenician woman (7,27). And the disciples want the crowds to be sent home rather than take the responsibility to feed them (8,4).

The universal character of the church has become most apparent to Christianity in the twentieth century as the church has become less dominated by its European and Western traditions (see the important statement of Paul VI on evangelization) but we still struggle to be open to people of different races, nationalities, and economic status. And racism is still strong. This section of Mark's Gospel reminds us that the message of Jesus was inclusive from the beginning.

□ *Nourishing God's People.* The two feeding stories are eloquent statements of Jesus' mission. As God did during the exodus from Egypt with manna, so Jesus, too, feeds God's hungry people. These feeding stories illustrate the justice dimension of the Gospel; the hungry are not to be sent away on their own thin resources (as the disciples suggest to Jesus!). Jesus came to feed them—a clear instruction for the mission of the church. At the same time, the feeding stories also evoke the Eucharist (Jesus' gestures of blessing and distributing the bread are identical to the last supper, 14,22); Jesus' mission was to reach across boundaries and to gather God's people into one body.

□ *The Struggle of the Disciples.* As the Galilean ministry of Jesus comes to a close, the disciples' difficulty in understanding Jesus only seems to increase. They are completely baffled at his mysterious power in calming the storm (4,38-41), and walking on the sea (6,45-51)—two haunting stories that reveal the divine power of Jesus. They are out of sympathy with Jesus' compassion for the crowds (6,35f; 8,4). And the section ends with their complete confusion about Jesus' words and deeds (8,14-21). Jesus had come to break one loaf for the

many but there is still a long journey ahead before the disciples would grasp the meaning of that mission.

**THE JOURNEY FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM** (8,22—10,52)
Mark's story now comes to a major turning point. Jesus and his disciples travel to the northern boundary of Israel, to the town of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, Jesus poses the key question of the Gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" (8,29).

The Gospel has been answering that question for the reader all throughout the preceding chapters as it revealed through Jesus' eloquent words and powerful ministry of healing his identity as God's Messiah and savior. But Jesus' opponents proved blind to that revelation and even the disciples have been unable to grasp it. In this section Jesus will provide more urgent instruction on his mission and the demands of discipleship. For the first time in the Gospel he will begin to speak openly of his death and resurrection. Three passion predictions punctuate these chapters (8,31; 9,31; 10,33-34). The cross, as a sign of Jesus' total commitment to his Father's will and his compassionate and selfless love for others, becomes the touchstone for understanding who Jesus is and what discipleship means.

Geography and the symbol of a journey also give a special character to these key chapters of the Gospel. Jesus and his disciples will travel from Caesarea Philippi in the north to Judea and its capital city of Jerusalem in the south (see Map 13). But this is no routine journey in Mark's perspective. This purposeful journey toward Jerusalem is also Jesus' journey toward the cross where he will experience death and victory. The disciples must follow this same path if they are to be faithful to Jesus and his message. Thus this journey evokes other biblical journeys, especially the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land; that, too, was a journey from death to life. As we will see in the next section of the Gospel (11,1—13,37), Jerusalem, with its great Temple and the priests who attend it, becomes a negative symbol in Mark's theology. There Jesus will suffer his final rejection. Because of that, the Jerusalem Temple will give way to a new temple, Jesus himself.

The disciples are also an important focal point in this section. While disputes with opponents, and other incidents, take place, most of the action revolves around Jesus and his followers. After each of the passion predictions, the disciples display their extraordinary lack of understanding of Jesus and his message. Peter attempts to silence Jesus (8,32); all of the disciples argue about which of them is the greatest (9,33f); the sons of Zebedee ask for special places of influence and power with Jesus, triggering the jealousy of the rest of the disciples (10,35-37.41). The disciples also try to discourage the children from coming to Jesus (10,13), are unable to perform an exorcism on a sick boy (9,18)—despite being given the power to do so (see 6,7)—and continue to be baffled by Jesus' teaching (see, for example, 10,24-26).

In response to their lack of understanding Jesus gives even more intense instruction on the meaning of discipleship after each of the passion predictions. The disciples must be willing to "take up the cross" and follow Jesus; to "lose" their lives for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel (8,34-38). Instead of being absorbed with self-aggrandizement, the disciples should imitate the child and seek to be the "servant of all" (10,35f). To follow Jesus means putting aside whatever holds us back from being free to serve others, such as excessive possessions (10,17-31). True greatness is not defined by "lording it over" others but by giving our lives for them (10,42-45).

In all of these instructions, the image of the cross is key. Jesus, the Son of Man (see the note to 8,31 for this important title in Mark), came not to be served but to serve, "to give his life as a

ransom for many" (10,45). The death of Jesus on the cross is seen not as a tragic failure but as the ultimate expression of Jesus' entire mission. His death—like his life—was an act of love for others. Therefore the disciple, too, must "take up the cross" and make giving of life for others the animating principle of every action.

Because the disciples were absorbed in their own interests and fears, they understood Jesus' message dimly at best. Mark frames this entire section of the Gospel with two stories about Jesus' healing blind men. In 8,22-26 it is a case of deep-seated blindness. Jesus must lay hands on the man's eyes twice before he can see clearly. In the beautiful story of Bartimaeus (10,46-52), the focus shifts to the blind person's own determination to reach Jesus. Even though the bystanders attempt to stifle his cries for mercy, Bartimaeus's pleas reach Jesus' ears. Jesus poses a profound question: "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus replies: "Master, I want to see." That humble trust and honest expression of need save Bartimaeus. He receives his sight and begins to follow Jesus on the journey of discipleship (10,52). Mark has clearly interpreted this healing story as a discipleship story.

These two stories are penetrating commentary on the plight of the disciples. The disciples are blind in a sense far more disabling than that of physical blindness; they have a deep-seated block to understanding Jesus and his message. Bartimaeus, by contrast, reaches out to Jesus in his need and asks for the light of faith; that is the solution the disciples have yet to discover.

**DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN JERUSALEM** (11,1—16,8)

Beginning with Chapter 11, Mark's story enters its final phase. Jesus and his disciples have completed their journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. As the triumphant Messiah, Jesus enters the city of David where he will face determined opposition, death itself, and then final victory.

The material in these chapters can be subdivided into four major sections: the first two focusing on the Temple; the latter two comprising the passion narrative and the discovery of the empty tomb.

**Jesus and the Temple** (11,1—12,44). Jesus enters Jerusalem in seeming triumph; there are admiring crowds and acclamations of Hosanna. For this brief moment, at least, the true identity of Jesus—so prone to be misunderstood by the characters in the Gospel—shines out clearly. But the mood of this section soon turns somber. Mark surrounds the story of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (11,15-19) with the curious incident about the fig tree (11,12-14,20f). The fig tree is cursed and withers because its fruits are not ready at the proper time for Jesus to harvest them. The fruitless tree becomes a sign of the Temple's own failure. Jesus' stern prophetic actions in the Temple area take on added meaning in Mark's text—the Temple is not only cleansed of abuses, it is declared no longer valid. Mark's Gospel foresees a new temple and a new worshipping community emerging in Jesus and his future community of disciples. This will be reaffirmed in the passion story when Jesus is accused of predicting a temple "not made by hands" (14,58) and when the temple veil is torn asunder at the moment of Jesus' death (15,38). This same motif is alluded to at the end of the parable of the tenants: the rejected Son who is killed by the tenants will become the "cornerstone" of a new edifice.

Thus Mark takes a dim view of the Jerusalem Temple because he sees it as symbolic of religious practice that has become hollow. This also emerges in the conflict stories which abound in this section. Like a great champion, Jesus seems to wrestle with each faction of the leaders: the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Sadducees. They challenge the authority of Jesus but are reduced to silence by his penetrating answers.

These scenes underscore the power and majesty of Jesus, even as death approaches. He is indeed one greater than David (see 12,35-37), one who is Lord of the Temple. But the encounters with the Jewish leaders also help reaffirm important facets of Jesus' teaching. A scribe (who, in fact, seems in sympathy with Jesus) is led to an insight that goes to the heart of Jesus' message: "to love God with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifice" (12,33).

The entire section ends with sharply contrasting images that also ram home the message Mark emphasizes in this section of the Gospel: Jesus excoriates the leaders who love the trappings of religion while "devouring the houses of widows," but he blesses the poor widow who gives everything she has to God (12,38-44).

**Toward the Endtime** (13,1-37). This final discourse of Jesus to his disciples is one of the most enigmatic yet important passages in Mark's Gospel. It provides us with a powerful reflection on the ultimate meaning of history. The setting for the discourse is Jesus' prediction that the majestic Temple of Herod would one day be destroyed (as it was in A.D. 70), thus continuing the negative view of the Temple from the previous section.

But the real focus of the chapter is on the future of the Christian community as it will carry out its mission in history, after the death and resurrection of Jesus. This discourse is not a transcript of a single speech by Jesus. The evangelist weaves together in this chapter sayings of Jesus with numerous quotations from the Old Testament, especially the apocalyptic literature which dwells on crisis. The chapter's main themes represent a profound reflection on the community's future:

□ *Warnings About Persecutions and Divisions as the Community Carries Out Its Mission.* Mark clearly asserts that before the end of the world can come, the church must complete its mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all the world (13,10). In the course of that mission, however, will come persecution from both Jews and Gentiles (13,9-11) and internal divisions (13,12f). Mark's story has already illustrated how Jesus himself experienced opposition from his opponents and misunderstanding by his family and disciples.

□ *The Christian is to "Stay Awake".* As the community moves out into history, it must be alert and sober, ready to catch glimpses of God's presence breaking into history (13,33-37). Mark makes it clear that this does not mean that the community is to be anxiously scanning the calendar and speculating about the end of the world. In fact, such doomsday predictions are branded as the words of "false Christs" and "false prophets" (13,5f.21f). Rather, the Christian is to be committed to proclaiming the gospel and to living with the realization of God's imminent presence in history.

□ *God's Triumph in History.* The most important message of the chapter is to affirm that the final moment of human history will not be chaos or the defeat of goodness but the triumph of grace. Jesus, the Son of Man, will return to gather his disciples from the four corners of the earth and lead them to God (13,24-27). While acknowledging the reality of human suffering and the crises that the Christian community will have to face, Mark's view of history is ultimately full of hope.

**The Passion** (14,1—15,47). These two chapters form the longest single narrative in the whole Gospel, reaffirming the importance the Passion holds for Mark's perspective. Jesus' death for others sums up his entire mission and is the ultimate revelation of his identity as the Son of God.

The passion story moves rapidly to its climax at the cross. The opening scenes (14,1-11) set the mood as the leaders and Judas plot Jesus' death while a faithful woman anoints his body for death. The last supper with the disciples dominates the next section (14,12-31); the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup are living signs of Jesus' impending death for others. The mood darkens when Jesus and his disciples go to Gethsemane (14,32-52). While Jesus earnestly prays for the strength to follow God's will, the disciples sleep. Then Judas leads an armed band into the garden to arrest Jesus. In the face of that threat, the disciples all flee in panic. The trials before the Sanhedrin (14,53-72) and before Pilate (15,1-20) dominate the rest of the passion narrative. The crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus bring the great drama to its conclusion (15,21-47).

Two major motifs move throughout the passion story:

□ *The Crisis of Discipleship.* The disciples' inability to understand Jesus, so apparent throughout the Gospel, leads ultimately to their failure in the crisis of the passion. Despite their bravado at the last supper (14,31), all of the disciples abandon Jesus at the moment of his arrest (14,50-52) and Peter publicly denies he even knows Jesus (14,66-72). Marks gives his reader a sober lesson: suffering and persecution can prompt heroism but it can also expose weak faith and superficial commitment (see 4,17).

The disciples' failure is in sharp contrast to the courageous loyalty and faith of other characters in the drama, such as the anonymous woman who anoints Jesus (over the protests of some of his followers, 14,3-9), the Roman centurion who acclaims Jesus at the moment of his death (15,39), the faithful women who stand by the cross (15,40f), and Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, who takes courage and asks to bury the crucified Jesus (15,42-47). These "unexpected" people—women, a Gentile soldier, a member of the opposition—illustrate the true meaning of faithful discipleship, an obvious lesson for the church.

□ *The Revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.* The passion story provides the final answer to the question that underlies all of Mark's Gospel: Who is Jesus? As Jesus courageously proclaims to the Sanhedrin: he *is* the Christ, the Son of God (14,61f). But coming in the midst of the passion narrative, with Jesus standing as a prisoner about to be condemned and executed, the use of these titles takes on new meaning. Jesus is the Christ or Messiah, God's royal son who comes to liberate Israel; but he is not a liberator or monarch in the usual triumphant mode one might expect. Jesus liberates not through dominating power but by giving his life for others. Jesus truly is the Son of God, but the God he reveals is not an exalted potentate, but a God revealed in the apparent "weakness" of a life totally committed to others.

In the perspective of Mark's Gospel, the passion provides the right context for understanding who Jesus is. (See a similar conviction in Paul's 1 Cor 1,18-31.)

**The Empty Tomb** (16,1-8). Although brief, this concluding scene of the Gospel proclaims a substantial message. An author later than Mark added a longer ending but this story of the empty tomb was probably the original conclusion to Mark's story (see the discussion in the notes to 16,1-8).

□ *Jesus' Victory Over Death.* The fundamental message of the passage is that the crucified Jesus is triumphant over death. That is the powerful symbolism of an empty tomb and the explicit message of the mysterious "young man" the women discover there: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here" (16,6). Without this assurance Mark's story would not be "gospel"—good news.

□ *Reconciliation with the Disciples.* This scene also picks up the story of the absent disciples. The women are instructed: "But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you' " (16,7). Even though the disciples had deserted and denied Jesus, the Risen Christ does not abandon them. He had promised that at the last supper: "after I am raised up I shall go before you to Galilee" (14,28). Now that promised reconciliation is about to take place. In a very true sense, the disciples had "died" during the passion; now they, too, would experience resurrection to a new life of discipleship.

□ *Back to Galilee: The Mission Begins.* The disciples will "see" Jesus in Galilee, the place where Jesus had carried out his universal mission of healing and teaching, and the place where he had first called his followers to be with him and to share in his ministry. What precise meeting with Jesus does Mark have in mind—resurrection appearances? Or the final meeting with the Risen Christ at the end of the world? Or does he mean that the Risen Jesus would be with his disciples as they take up their mission? Mark leaves the question unanswered and perhaps has all of these encounters in mind.

The Gospel ends on a note of awe; the women leave the tomb, trembling and bewildered, struck silent by the awesome message entrusted to them (16,8). Some interpreters understand their silence as another instance of discipleship failure; the message given them is never delivered because of paralyzing fear. But it is unlikely Mark wants to suggest that the women never told the disciples about the empty tomb. Rather the notes of awe and silence and fear are Mark's way of expressing profound reverence for the events he narrates. In Jesus' victory over death, God's power has transformed the world forever. D.S.

## For Further Reading

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# LUKE □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 95–145 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Luke tells us that he was not an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' ministry. He is dependent upon others, who have already taken the testimony of such witnesses and put it in narrative form (1,2). Scholars have identified three of the sources that Luke used: Mark's Gospel; a collection of Jesus' sayings that was also used by Matthew, called "Q"; and a source for additional material about Jesus, which scholars designate "L" (see *New American Bible,* Introduction, p. 96). This introduction suggests that Luke is a third-generation Christian looking back

on the traditions which he has inherited. Details in the gospel narrative itself suggest that he was not very familiar with Palestine or with Jewish customs. His ability to write in different styles—including that of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Bible for most of the early Christian communities—and to use conventions of hellenistic literature, such as the prologue with which the gospel begins, all suggest that Luke was an educated person. To have received a literary education of this sort, Luke probably came from a prosperous urban family. Unlike the other gospel writers, Luke's account did not end with the gospel. He wrote a second volume, Acts, which showed that God's salvation, begun in Jesus, moved beyond Jerusalem and the pious of Israel into the whole world.

Luke's Gospel provides an account of Jesus' life and teaching for that universal mission. Today, people sometimes think that Christianity and its Gospels belong to North American and European culture. They wonder whether Christians can spread the message to people in other cultures without destroying those cultures. We need to remember that the story of Jesus originated in a Semitic culture. Luke and other early Christians were already engaged in intercultural dialogue when they retold the story of Jesus for the Greek-speaking, non-Jewish converts of the cities in the eastern part of the Roman empire. Their experience shows us that the gospel message is not limited to any one culture. The story of Jesus belongs to all peoples.

## An Assured Teaching

Luke's desire to show that Christianity belongs to the larger world of the Roman Empire is evident in references to Roman emperors and events. For example, he links the birth of Jesus to Caesar Augustus (2,1). People have sometimes thought that these references proved that Luke was attempting to write a history of Jesus and the earliest disciples. Most of the "historical" references, however, are not accurate even by ancient standards. Luke calls his work a *diegesis,* meaning a "narrative account," not a history. He claims that it is thorough, accurate, and orderly. He has traced the events which have occurred among "us" (that is, the Christian community) from the beginning (1,1-4). Luke says that the purpose of his writing is to provide *asphaleia,* "assurance" for the instruction that Christians give. In other words, Luke's purpose is to show that what the church preaches is rooted in the ministry of Jesus and the preaching of the first apostles.

Luke takes patterns for his story from biblical history. This literary device is especially evident in the Infancy narratives, which show God's promises of salvation being fulfilled in Jesus. When Luke claims that his narrative is "orderly," he refers to the literary order which sets out the periods of salvation. Luke also provides assurance for the Christian preaching by showing that the Spirit of God has guided the whole process from Old Testament times through the ministry of Jesus and in the second volume through the developments in the early community.

## An Ordered Narrative

Luke has told us that he is dependent upon earlier accounts, but that he has reworked his material to provide a more accurate and orderly account. We have seen that accuracy and order do not refer to historical inquiry but to Luke's desire to set forth the way in which God's plan of salvation is fulfilled in the Christian movement. Scholars have made detailed studies of additions, deletions, and changes that Luke has made in the order of material taken over from Mark. There are three major additions that even the beginning gospel reader can spot. Mark begins abruptly with the appearance of John the Baptist. Luke (as does Matthew) begins with an

account of Jesus' birth (1,5—2,40). He adds a tale about the child Jesus (2,41-52). Then between the Baptism and Temptation stories Luke reintroduces Jesus by giving his genealogy (3,23-38). Much of the teaching of Jesus—especially the parables that Luke has taken from Q and from his special tradition, and told in a way that serves as instruction for the church—takes place during a long section in which Jesus is journeying toward Jerusalem with the disciples (9,51—19,27). Mark's Gospel only has a short section of instruction to the disciples on the trip to Jerusalem.

Finally, you will notice several differences in the Passion and Resurrection materials. Mark ends with the women running from the empty tomb. Luke 24, on the other hand, has accounts of appearances by the Risen Lord as well as instructions to the disciples. Luke's Passion Narrative differs from Mark (and Matthew) as well. Jesus is never formally tried by the Jewish court. There is an unusual episode in which Pilate sends Jesus to be investigated by Herod (23,6-12). Pilate persists in declaring that Jesus is innocent of the charges against him (23,4.14f.22). The dying Jesus prays for forgiveness for his enemies (23,34) and enacts the message of the Gospel by promising salvation to the repentant criminal who dies with him (23,39-43).

Each of these sections contributes to our sense that God's plan of salvation is being worked out through the events that are occurring. The Infancy narratives recapitulate the hopes of the faithful people of Israel. As Jesus begins the journey to Jerusalem, he knows that he is to be taken up from there in death. This journey is a time to prepare the disciples both for the events that will occur in Jerusalem and for their future role as witnesses to Jesus' teaching. In the narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection, Luke emphasizes the fact that it "was necessary"—that is, part of God's plan already set out in the prophets—for the Messiah to suffer and die in Jerusalem (see 22,22; 24,26f). The episode with the repentant criminal shows that even in death Jesus extends salvation and forgiveness to others.

## The Tragedy of Israel

Luke's strong narrative sense of a divine plan moving toward its fulfillment often dominates our imagination as we read Luke-Acts. If we allow this sense of divine purpose to lull us into thinking that all the events through which God's plan is achieved are "all right," then we will miss another component in Luke's story; the tragedy of Israel. The Infancy stories awaken the joyful expectation that Israel's messianic king has arrived to bring salvation. Through him, God's peace and blessings will come to both Jews and Gentiles. Yet, as the story unfolds, this glorious promise will not be fulfilled.

Persistent rejection, first of Jesus and then of the disciples' mission, leaves Israel excluded from the day of salvation that has dawned with the coming of Jesus. Luke points out the tragedy of this situation in a series of prophetic laments that Jesus utters over the city, Jerusalem, and her inhabitants. The first is a "Q" tradition (13,34f; Mt 23,37-39), which Luke has attached to an episode from his special tradition (13,31-33). The episode contained a warning that Herod was seeking Jesus' life. Jesus connects the divine necessity that he die in Jerusalem (13,33) with a lament for the city. The second, from Luke's special tradition, occurs as Jesus is looking out over the city where he is to die (19,41-44). Jesus weeps at the thought of the peace which will elude the city and the terrible devastations of war that she is to suffer. The final lament, also from "L," occurs as Jesus is on the way to his death. He looks out at the weeping women of Jerusalem and warns them to weep for themselves instead (23,27-31).

The church has constantly reminded Catholics that, even though the ancestors of today's Jews chose not to accept Jesus as Messiah, Christians cannot reject or persecute Jews. She has also insisted that Christians share a common heritage with the Jewish people that is rooted in the Old Testament story of salvation. Luke's narrative insists that the heritage of the Christian movement lies in the faithful and just persons of Israel. Jesus' own family are among the righteous ones who trust in God for salvation. Though Luke's Passion Narrative holds certain Jewish leaders responsible for the events, Jesus does not condemn them but speaks of forgiveness. Luke also presents us with a Jesus who is able to weep as he foresees the terrible fate of Jerusalem. The prosperous and beautiful city of his day will be reduced to the rubble of war. She will not enjoy the peace that God so longs to give the people.

## Reading through Luke

Before you sit down to study Luke, read through the whole Gospel. Many of the stories will be familiar to you, since Luke contains some of the best-loved stories in the gospels. You will notice that Luke is a gifted storyteller. Even in the parables of Jesus, he creates short episodes, and switches from the third-person report into dialogue between the characters. Young children often enjoy the stories in Luke more than those in any of the other gospels. As you are reading, you might note passages that particularly appeal to you. Do you find any common themes in those stories? Here are some of the themes that you will find running through the Gospel.

### Salvation is a joyous surprise

You will soon notice that Luke has many images of celebration and rejoicing. From the very beginning of the story to the very last verse, people are praising and thanking God for the salvation that they experience in Jesus. Salvation is a "surprise" or gift because those who receive it could never have anticipated that it would come. Mary's Magnificat (1,46-55) sets the tone. God has come, and rescued the humble, poor, oppressed, and lowly people of the land. Jesus begins his ministry (4,18) by quoting a promise from Isaiah: a threefold "release," from poverty, from sickness, and from sin. Luke drives home this point about salvation by showing that Jesus has the power to forgive sins and to heal people (see 5,17-26). Even the rich tax collector, Zaccaeus, hears the message, demonstrates his repentance by making restitution to those he had cheated, and his joy by throwing a banquet (19,1-10).

God's mercy is the source of this salvation. Christians are to show mercy in the same way that God is merciful (6,36). When Jesus gives examples of what God's mercy and forgiveness are like, he uses very active images. God is not waiting for people to come crawling back, begging forgiveness. God is out looking for people to help like the shepherd and the lost sheep, the woman and the lost coin, or the wayward son's father, who goes running out of the house and immediately orders a large celebration (see 15,3-32). The elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son shows us the other side of the coin. Jesus recognizes that some people find it difficult to accept this open-handed offer of forgiveness to sinners when they themselves have struggled all their lives to do everything that they are required to do and have never even had a banquet to celebrate.

## Salvation includes everyone

In Acts, Luke will show us that God directed the disciples to take the gospel to all the peoples of the earth. The gospel demonstrates the universality of God's love and salvation in a different way. It stresses the fact that Jesus' ministry reached out to all sorts of people, even to those who had never before had a chance at salvation. Zacchaeus is an example of the sinful tax collector. The Samaritans, traditional enemies of the Jews, turn out to be examples of Jesus' teaching. The mercy shown by the Good Samaritan (10,37) is so well known that we can speak of anyone who shows mercy or unmerited assistance to another as a "Samaritan." Less well known is the Samaritan leper (17,12-19) who is the only one of the group healed by Jesus to return and give him thanks. Women—another group that was often excluded in antiquity—are constantly included in Jesus' ministry. The sinful woman provides a better demonstration of love and hospitality than the Pharisee. Her sins are forgiven (7,31-50). Mary is permitted to sit and listen to Jesus as a disciple. She does not have to busy herself with the traditional woman's business of serving the male guests that has her sister so distracted (10,38-42).

Today, many women experience the tension between Martha and Mary in their own lives. On the one hand, they are anxious to participate in opportunities for education, careers, and involvement with the community outside the home. On the other, they are still responsible for most of the work and care-giving that goes on within the home. Some women who are financially able to devote themselves to homemaking and volunteer community activities on a full-time basis report that they feel "looked down on" because they do not have a paying job. When Jesus defended Mary's place as listening to his teaching, he was not condemning Martha's devotion to serving her guests or the traditional tasks of women in the home. Jesus was really issuing an invitation to her to join her sister. Martha was so busy about "many things" that she was missing the one necessary thing, to hear Jesus' message about the Kingdom (10,41f). As our lives continue to fill up with activities at home, work, and in the community, we need to ask whether we are shoving out the time we need for the one necessary thing, hearing the word of the Lord.

## Special concern for those in need

We have already seen that salvation has very concrete aspects in Luke. Those who are poor, helpless, in prison, sick, and the like are promised release. Jesus and the apostles are able to relieve the suffering of the sick by healing. Acts contains many stories in which God intervenes to free the apostles from prison. To achieve this goal, however, miraculous events are not required. The story of the Good Samaritan (10,25-37) shows how this salvation can come about through the concrete actions of Christians. The Samaritan uses his own resources to help the victim and to see that he is restored to health, even though the victim is his "enemy" because the victim is a Jew. The parable of the Great Supper in which the host replaces with the poor the friends who refused to come, and the sayings about showing aid to those who cannot repay (14,12-24) is another example of how salvation can come to those in need.

You may have noticed in reading through Luke how often he returns to the theme of rich and poor. The rich often fail to receive salvation because they are locked in their own desires for money or pleasure (see 12,13-21; 16,19-30). Even those who are "good people" like the Rich Ruler (18,18-24) are so locked in by their possessions that they cannot achieve the eternal life they really desire. That does not mean that Luke thinks all rich people are excluded from the Kingdom. The Samaritan, Zacchaeus, and anyone else who is willing to share their possessions

generously with those who are in need can become a disciple of Jesus. Acts will return to this theme in its picture of sharing possessions in the early community. Luke also retains the sayings of Jesus which call upon followers to renounce all of their material goods in order to become disciples (6,35; 9,3; 10,4; 12,33; 14,33; 16,13). By doing so, Jesus, and later the apostles, demonstrate that their mission is completely dedicated to God. They are not preaching in order to enrich themselves. But Luke knows that such discipleship is only possible if the basic needs of the group are met through the generosity of others. He reports that a group of women followers provided the necessary support (8,1-3). In Acts, he reports that Paul achieved the same end by laboring at his trade (Acts 20,33-35).

### Mary is the first disciple

Catholic Christians have always paid special honor to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Since much of the elaborate Marian piety of the church did not develop until medieval times, people sometimes feel that Mary has been left out in the biblical renewal. Luke's Gospel provides the basis for the devotion which we show to Mary. Her assent to God's work of salvation initiates the whole story. Her Magnificat is a strong affirmation of God's faithfulness and mercy to all the covenant people. Sometimes people think that we honor Mary simply because she experienced a miracle in Jesus' birth. That is not Luke's picture of her at all. For Luke she is both the epitome of the faithful people of Israel who wait confidently for God's salvation and the beginning of the new life of those who will be disciples of Jesus. Jesus defines her role in 8,21. She is one who hears and does the word of God. He repeats this affirmation in 11,27f. The crowd praises Jesus' biological mother. Jesus corrects them by insisting that hearing and keeping the word of God constitutes the true source of blessing.

The Infancy Narrative demonstrates that Mary has this quality of true discipleship. She has accepted God's will in the Annunciation scene. Later she keeps in her heart words spoken to her about Jesus, as well as the extraordinary events which she witnesses (2,19.51). Simeon includes her in his oracle about the impact of Jesus' ministry in Israel (2,34f). She too will be caught in the divisions to come. But Mary remains among the faithful disciples of Jesus. Luke reminds his readers that she was present among those disciples gathered in Jerusalem after Easter (Acts 1,14).

## An Outline of Luke

Luke's Gospel falls into a neat pattern that moves from the Infancy Narrative, in which we are among the righteous of Israel in Jerusalem, through the ministry in Galilee, back to the Jerusalem Temple, and finally to Jesus' death and resurrection. The Gospel leaves us with the disciples in Jerusalem awaiting the coming of the Spirit. Acts will take the Gospel from Jerusalem out into the world. Jerusalem forms a symbolic center to the Gospel, as much of the narrative takes place either in or on the way to the holy city. The major divisions in the story are clearly marked transitions in the unfolding of the plot:

*Prologue* (1,1-4)
*Infancy Narrative* (1,5—2,52)
*Preparation for the Public Ministry* (3,1—4,13)
*The Ministry in Galilee* (4,14—9,50)
*The Journey to Jerusalem* (9,51—19,27)

*Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem* (19,28—21,38)
*The Passion Narrative* (22,1—23,56)
*The Resurrection Narrative* (24,1-53)

Now it is time to read through Luke in detail. We will be looking to see how Luke develops a picture of Jesus, salvation, and Christian discipleship. Since Luke preserves important blocks of the teaching of Jesus, we will also be interested in how Luke presents the teaching of Jesus for Christians in his time. Discipleship requires doing the word as well as hearing it.

## Prologue (1,1-4)

Luke introduces his Gospel with a prologue, because he considers that his work belongs alongside other Hellenistic literature. The prologue consists of a single complex Greek sentence that ends with the word *asphaleia,* "assurance." Luke intends the orderly account of the events that constitute the Christian story of salvation to demonstrate the integrity of the Christian message that the church in his day proclaims. (A close parallel for this use of *kathexes,* "orderly," appears in Acts 11,4. Peter is going to narrate the events which led him to baptize the Gentile Cornelius and his household and to share table followship with them. This account will persuade the leaders of the church in Jerusalem that God was operating behind those events.)

## The Infancy Narrative (1,5—2,52)

### Structure of the Lucan Infancy Narrative

This section is built on an elaborate parallelism between Jesus and John the Baptist. In each case, Jesus is greater than the Baptist, who is only the forerunner of the Messiah. The most detailed parallels occur between the two angelic birth announcements (John, 1,5-25; Jesus 1,26-38): (a) neither parent is expecting a child; (b) an angel appears, the parent is troubled and told not to fear; (c) the child is announced; his name given and a statement is made about his future greatness; (d) the parent raises a question about how this can happen; (e) the angel gives an assertion that it will happen, and a sign; (f) Zechariah is forced to be silent; Mary's spontaneous answer affirms God's will. The Birth Announcements are followed by an episode that brings the two together and confirms the angel's statement to Mary, the Visitation (1,39-56). In this episode the Baptist testifies to the presence of Jesus as savior by moving in the womb.

The next cycle recounts the births (John, 1,57f; Jesus, 2,1-20) and circumcision/naming of the two children (John 1,57-80; Jesus 2,21-40). Each birth section includes an affirmation of the joy attending the birth. Each naming section concludes with an affirmation that the child grew. This cycle is followed by an episode that prefigures Jesus' last days, the Finding in the Temple (2,41-52). Jesus will return to the Temple to teach before his death (see the outline of the Gospel). The narratives make it clear that God is responsible for the origins of both children. For the Baptist, God has overcome the barrenness of his parents, just as other barren women in the Old Testament, like Sarah and Hannah, had been given children. For Jesus, God has done something even greater by bringing the child into existence in the womb of his virgin mother.

### Songs of Salvation: The Canticles

The carefully structured episodes contain several canticles which have become a treasured part of Christian worship: Mary's Magnificat (1,46-55); Zechariah's Benedictus (1,68-79); the canti-

cle of the angels (2,13f); Simeon's "Nunc Dimittis" (2,29-32). Many scholars think that Luke has taken the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and perhaps the Nunc Dimittis from a Jewish Christian source. They contain a mosaic of expressions taken from the Greek Old Testament. The Magnificat is especially close to the Song of Hannah (1 Sm 2,1-10), which may have been its model. After celebrating God's greatness toward the lowly handmaid, the second strophe (verses 51-53), in a series of strong, active verbs, alludes to God's past deeds of salvation. The final verses (54f) relate the career of Jesus to the covenant God had made with Abraham. Scholars think that this hymn originated among Jewish Christians who identified themselves with the "poor ones," the *anawim,* of Israel. The term designated those who were unfortunate, lowly, sick, downtrodden. The rich and powerful, those who felt no need of God, are opposed to the *anawim* (see Ps 149,4; Is 49,13; 66,2). The "poor ones" are the righteous remnant in Israel who know that they must look to God for salvation.

The Benedictus takes up the promise of a Davidic king (based on the dynastic oracle spoken of David, see 2 Sm 7,12f) who would save the people from their enemies so that they could worship God in holiness and without fear. It affirms that Jesus will fulfill this messianic role. The Baptist will prepare the people for his coming (verses 76f). We are reminded that God comes to save the people out of merciful compassion for them (verses 78f). Luke will make the theme of mercy a central motif in the ministry of Jesus.

The Nunc Dimittis draws upon two passages of Isaiah (Is 40,5; 49,6). Simeon has now seen the salvation which they promised. The final verses (31f) also point to a theme that will be developed in Luke's account of salvation history: God's salvation is given for all peoples. Once again the story recalls the Old Testament picture of Samuel being presented in the Temple (1 Sm 1f). Endowed with the prophetic spirit, the aged Simeon not only recognizes that through the child peace, salvation, and light will come to Israel and through Israel to the Gentiles, but he also acknowledges the divisions which Jesus' coming will bring about in Israel. The hymnic celebration of salvation is tempered with the prophetic oracle that follows. God's plan includes the rejection of the Messiah by his own people (see 4,29; 13,33-35; 19,44.47f; 20,14.17).

## Virgin Birth and Christology in the Infancy Narrative

We have already seen that the canticles celebrate Jesus' coming as the fulfillment of all God's promises to the faithful people of Israel. The Benedictus pointed to Jesus as the anticipated Messiah of the Davidic house. The most striking christological statements in the Infancy Narrative occur in the angelic birth announcement (1,28-37). The announcement proceeds in two stages. Verses 32f parallel 2 Sm 7,9.13.14.16. Jesus will inherit the Davidic throne and rule over Jacob's house forever as "son" of God. The second stage in the announcement moves beyond these messianic promises to the special sense in which Jesus is Son of God: Jesus is begotten through God's intervention. Some scholars suggest that Luke has created this two-step process from older christological affirmations like Romans 1,3f. There Jesus is "Son of David" during his earthly life and is designated "Son of God" through the power of the Holy Spirit when he is exalted to God's right hand at the resurrection. The announcement to Mary speaks of God's Spirit overshadowing her and bringing into being a child who is Son of God from the time he is conceived. For Luke, Jesus is fully human but is never just another ordinary human being.

Mary's virginity serves to sharpen the christological focus: the child to be born is God's Son. The step-parallelism between the Baptist and Jesus provides additional literary evidence that Luke considers the birth of Jesus to be an even greater example of divine power than that of

the Baptist. Mary is not like the barren woman, someone whose womb could unexpectedly open and produce a child. As virgin, there is no human way for her to have a child without God's unique presence in that process. Luke would never concur with some radical modern readers who have attempted to argue that Mary may have conceived Jesus in the normal human way. Mary's virginity is essential to the claim that Jesus is uniquely Son of God. The honor that she enjoys is not due to the physical fact of her virginity but to her willingness to accept a role in God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

A second angelic announcement, that of the angels to the shepherds, accompanies the story of Jesus' birth (2,1-20). Luke introduces this section with a reference to Caesar Augustus and the expansion of Roman rule evident in the census. Historically, there was no worldwide census under Quirinius. In A.D. 6 the Romans took over administration of Judaea and took a census at that time. Residents of Galilee, however, which was still ruled by one of Herod's sons, would not be obligated to return to an ancestral village in Judaea. Matthean tradition claims that Jesus was born toward the end of the rule of Herod, the Great, who died in 4 B.C. Luke has not provided historical information in this scene, but the Roman associations permit a symbolic contrast. Augustus emphasized the fact that his rule had brought peace in the world. The doors to the temple of war, pictured on coins, were shown closed. Luke has an angelic announcement that the true source of peace lies elsewhere: in the Savior, Messiah, the Lord who has been born in the Davidic town, Bethlehem.

## Preparation for the Public Ministry (3,1—4,13)

Many of the themes in the ministry of Jesus have been anticipated in the Infancy narratives. We have seen that Jesus fulfills God's promises of salvation, and we have heard some of the major christological titles: Son of David, Messiah, Savior, Lord, and Son of God. The Spirit which overshadowed Mary at his conception will remain with Jesus throughout the ministry. Mary's Magnificat introduced the images for salvation as "reversal," a lifting up of the "poor ones," those who have no one but God to turn to in their need. We have seen the importance of thanksgiving, rejoicing, and prayer, as well as the posture of the faithful disciple who hears the word of God. But we have also heard the warning that all of Israel will not rush to greet its Messiah with the same joy found in these stories. Before Luke begins to recount the public ministry, he introduces three further blocks of material: (a) the Baptist's mission in preparing the way for Jesus and Jesus' baptism; (b) a genealogy, and (c) the Temptation of Jesus.

### The Baptist's Ministry (3,1-22)

Luke has gathered together traditions about John the Baptist from different sources. John is fulfilling the mission given him to serve as forerunner for God's Messiah. Luke has arranged his account so that the fiery preacher of repentance also serves as precursor to Jesus in the content of his message: (a) repentance and forgiveness, two of the effects of salvation in Luke, and (b) the requirements for dealing with material possessions: share with those who have nothing, avoid greed and injury to others, act fairly. The ethical section of John's preaching (verses 10-14) illustrates the "good fruit" which must come from repentance (verse 9). When we bear in mind the whole sweep of salvation history in Luke, the warning that God can raise up children of Abraham from the stones takes on a more ominous note. As the episode comes to a conclusion, the Baptist responds to speculation about his own status by separating himself clearly from the

Messiah who is about to come with the Spirit and fire. John belongs to the age of prophetic figures. Jesus will inaugurate the messianic age. Luke then completes the story of the Baptist by reporting the fact that John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas before Jesus appears on the scene. This order creates some chaos in the account of Jesus' baptism which follows it (verses 21f). For Luke, the baptism of Jesus can never suggest that Jesus was dependent upon the Baptist. Rather, the episode permits a divine affirmation of Jesus' divine sonship and also provides the occasion for the Spirit to descend on Jesus and inaugurate his ministry.

### Genealogy of Jesus (3,23-38)

This unusual genealogy corrects a misapprehension about Jesus. People may think he is the son of Joseph. The Christian community knows better. It knows that Jesus traces his ancestry back to the first "son of God," Adam.

### Temptation of Jesus (4,1-13)

Jesus goes to the desert under the impulse of the Spirit. The temptations Satan poses are challenges to Jesus' identity as "Son of God," which has been the central title in Luke's narrative to this point. "Temptation" in this sense is not an impulse toward some sinful act. Rather, as in the testing of Abraham by the demand that he sacrifice Isaac, temptation puts the person before a crisis that will demonstrate whether or not the individual's faith in God can be destroyed. Jesus refuses to use his status as Son for personal gain contrary to the mission God gave him. Though Satan is silenced, the story ends on an ominous note. Satan may yet return. In Luke 22,31f Jesus speaks of a confrontation with Satan on behalf of his disciples. Though they will be seriously tested by the events of the Passion, Jesus has prayed that their faith will not fail. When the temptations are finished, Jesus has demonstrated that he is the obedient Son of God. The readers knows that, as he begins his ministry, Jesus will carry out God's plan of salvation whatever that might be.

## The Ministry in Galilee (4,14—9,50)

The introduction to this section (4,14f) brings Jesus' ministry under the power of the Spirit.

### In Nazareth and Capernaum (4,16-44)

Luke's tradition had Jesus' ministry begin in Capernaum (see Mk 1,21-35). Luke has reordered events (verse 23 indicates that he had the Capernaum order before him) to open with a sermon in Nazareth that will set out his program. Throughout Luke-Acts, the heroes consistently appear in synagogues and at the Temple. Luke's reader already knows that Jesus fulfills the words of the prophet as he claims to do here (verses 17-21). Luke's genealogy has also prepared us for the skepticism attributed to those who think that Jesus cannot possibly be the anointed of the Lord, since he was considered to be Joseph's son (3,23; 4,22). Once again, Luke provides a preview of the story to come. Jesus points to Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha who were directed to assist persons who were not Israelites. His words provoke a deadly hostility in the hearers (verses 25-30).

The rest of the chapter consists of short incidents of healing. The demons who are exorcised recognize that Jesus is "from God." These miracles contribute to Jesus' reputation

among the people. The resulting popular acclaim finally makes it so difficult for Jesus even to move about that he goes to preach in the synagogues of Judaea (verses 42-44).

## Jesus Gathers Disciples (5,1-39)

Jesus' activities in Nazareth and Capernaum come before he has acquired any disciples. Luke may have created this arrangement in order to provide those who are called with some reason for following Jesus. By the time he gathers his first disciples, Jesus already has a reputation among the people as healer and teacher. Simon Peter's call to follow Jesus is linked with a tale of a miraculous catch of fish. Peter's acknowledgment that he is a "sinner" would make the ancient reader think of stories like those in Homer that he or she heard at school. Mortals cannot see the gods but certain events make their presence evident. So Peter, viewing the catch, announces that he is unworthy to be in the presence of the divine (verse 8). Peter's reaction to the catch is also similar to the "fear" exhibited at the appearance of the angels in the birth announcement stories. Like the angel, Jesus first tells Peter not to be afraid. Then he states what Peter's future destiny is to be: "from now on you will be catching men" (verse 10). The Christian reader knows of Peter's role as missionary apostle in Acts. Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, respond as exemplary disciples. They will leave everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus continues to establish his authority through healings, first of a leper (verses 12-16), then of a paralyzed man (verses 17–26). Luke inherited the second as a controversy story over Jesus' authority to forgive sins (see Mk 2,1-12). The reader already knows that Jesus has the power to heal anyone he wishes. In this case, the miracle becomes both an occasion to free the man from sin through forgiveness and a demonstration of the authority by which Jesus can claim that the man's sins have been forgiven. Luke introduces this episode in a way that recalls the boy Jesus in the Temple: there are Pharisees and scribes gathered from the villages of Galilee and Judaea as well as Jerusalem. Though the crowd goes home praising God, the Pharisees and scribes have become suspicious of Jesus. His offer of forgiveness appears to be a blasphemous attempt by a human being to seize a power that belongs to God (verse 21). Luke's reader knows that Jesus is not just any human being, but the obedient Son of God. The reader also knows from the Temptation story that Jesus would never seize any power that rightly belongs to God.

As Jesus calls his next disciple, the toll collector Levi, he incurs further complaints from the Pharisees and scribes. They go to Jesus' disciples to ask why he eats with persons who are considered sinners. Jesus first cites a proverb in defense of his actions and then insists that the goal of his mission is to call sinners. He is not out to preach to the righteous.

Jesus is accused of not instructing his disciples in piety as a true teacher would do. The disciples of both the Baptist and the Pharisees fast. Jesus' disciples do not. Jesus' defense consists of a brief parable and a string of proverbs (5,33-39). The first employs a human analogy: it is impossible to fast at a wedding. The abundance of the wedding feast was also a common metaphor for abundance in the time of salvation. When Jesus is no longer present, Christians will fast (verse 35). The proverbs demonstrate the absurdity of trying to mix the old with the new time of salvation. Persons accustomed to the "old" may find it difficult to accept the new (verse 39).

Jesus then defends his disciples against charges of breaking the Sabbath (6,1-5), first by appeal to the Old Testament, then by insistence upon his authority as Son of Man (compare 5,24) and finally on humanitarian grounds. It is always right to preserve rather than destroy life

(verses 6-11). The section concludes with the choice of Twelve from the larger group of disciples who will share Jesus' mission and serve as witnesses to what Jesus has done and said.

## Sermon on the Plain (6,17-49)

Jesus' first major sermon sounds familiar notes of reversal from the Magnificat as well as the opening of his ministry (4,18). The Kingdom is good news for the poor and oppressed, and divine judgment against the wealthy and prosperous. As the experience of the Christian missionaires in Acts will demonstrate, Christians must expect to experience rejection and persecution for their preaching about Jesus (see Acts 7,52). Juxtaposing the commands to love enemies with sayings on persecution provides a concrete context in which that love is to be exemplified (verses 27-30). Luke generalizes this command. It covers all forms of mercy which might be modeled on the mercy of God. His examples point to general ethical precepts: give to one who asks; lend to those who cannot repay; treat others as you would be treated. Judgment sayings strengthen this ethical teaching. We are judged by the judgments we make about others (verses 37-42).

## Jesus is the Promised Savior (7,1—9,18)

Jesus' ministry in Galilee continues with a series of traditional miracle stories told so that they testify to Jesus' identity: (a) cure of the Centurion's slave indicates that there is greater faith among the Gentiles than in Israel (7,9); (b) the widow's son evokes the allusions to Elijah and Elisha in the opening sermon (4,25f); awestruck the people acknowledge that a great prophet has arisen (7,16). Further miracles demonstrate the truth of Jesus' reply to the Baptist's disciples, that he is indeed the one to come (verses 18-23). Luke edits his traditional material to draw a distinction between those who received John's baptism and who receive Jesus with praise, and those who reject the plan of God—the lawyers and Pharisees (verses 28-30). The call of Levi (5,27-32) illustrated the conversion of tax collectors. This contrast prepares the reader for the sharp contrast between the Pharisee Simon who failed to show Jesus the hospitality due an honored guest, and the sinful woman who anoints Jesus and whose sins are forgiven (7,36-50). The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector makes a similar point (18,9-14).

Examples of women who followed Jesus (8,1-3) and Jesus' mother as model disciple, one who hears and keeps the word of God (8,19-21), frame the instruction about discipleship provided by the Parable of the Sower (8,4-15), the Lamp (8,16-17) and a general warning to be careful how one hears the word (verse 18). The interpretation of the Sower indicates the threats to discipleship: (a) some will not believe the initial preaching; (b) some will be turned from discipleship by temptation, cares, riches, and pleasure; and (c) still others will lack the patient endurance necessary to bring forth the harvest.

Another series of miracles emphasizes Jesus' power to save. The disciples are rescued from the storm (8,22-25); the Gerasene from the multitude of demons which made it impossible for any human bonds to restrain him (verses 26-37). The concluding instructions are pointed toward Christians as well: go and declare what God has done for you (verses 38f). The healing of Jairus's daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage focus on the faith of the recipients (verses 40-56). Jesus expands his mission of preaching and healing by sending out the Twelve (9,1-6). The brief notice about Herod's perplexity raises expectations about Jesus' true identity. If he is not the Baptist returned, then he must be like one of the great prophets of old such as Elijah (9,7-9). This section concludes with the feeding of the 5,000. As Luke shapes the story,

this miracle represents food for the hungry (6,21) as well as a response to Satan's challenge to turn stones into bread (4,3f). Jesus does live by the word of God alone.

### The Messiah who Must Suffer (9,18-50)

None of the external opinions about Jesus' identity capture the truth that Jesus is the Messiah who must suffer. Luke generalizes the application of this insight to the followers of Jesus by insisting that the disciples must be ready to take up the cross "daily" (9,23). Not only does God affirm Jesus' sonship at the Transfiguration, but Moses and Elijah as well converse with Jesus about his coming departure from the world at Jerusalem (9,30f). Luke has omitted Markan material critical of the disciples' response to Jesus' prediction, to the Transfiguration and their efforts to heal the possessed boy. In doing so, he brings the dramatic theophany of the Transfiguration into closer proximity with the predictions of the Passion. God prevents the disciples from hearing what Jesus has said to them. Their arguments over greatness and jealousy of another who uses Jesus' name to exorcise show that they are not yet ready to follow Jesus in suffering.

## The Journey to Jerusalem (9,51—19,27)

The journey to Jerusalem is the time of preparation for the disciples. Teachings of Jesus, especially extended narrative parables, dominate this section of the Gospel. Miracles underline Jesus' conflict with the Pharisee teachers over the merciful application of the Law (13,10-17; 14,1-6); point to the virtues of faith and gratitude (shown by a Samaritan, 17,11-19) and anticipate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (18,35-43). We will pick out some of the key themes in this section.

### Criticism of the Pharisee Opponents of Jesus

The shape of this criticism was anticipated by the story of the sinful woman in the house of a Pharisee (7,36-50). Luke sharpens the charges and also generalizes them to apply to Christians as well: (a) it is hypocritical to use the Law to condemn in one case what one's actions in another approve; applications of purity regulations demonstrate this principle (11,37-44); (b) lack of love of God leads to self-aggrandizement and even persecution of those sent by God (11,45-52). The Pharisees are persistently pictured as driven by love of money, desire for honor among others, and self-justification that stems from their application of the Law. The first two characteristics (16,14f) reappear in Acts as typical of magicians and false prophets in paganism (see Acts 8,9-25).

Luke is using the Pharisees as characters to warn Christians about dangers that they face. We should not take a superior attitude as though such failings only happened to persons who rejected Jesus' teaching. Legalistic condemnation of one group for actions which our own practices tolerate in another context, such as racism or other forms of discrimination, cannot be acceptable Christian behavior. Nor can we claim to be Christians and yet spend our lives pursuing money, social status, and other forms of power over others.

### Warnings about Judgment

Luke does not anticipate the return of Jesus in judgment in the immediate future. Consequently, warnings to be watchful apply to both Jesus' opponents and Luke's Christian readers. Jesus speaks prophetic woes against unrepentant cities (10,13-15). Demands for a sign only prove that

there was more wisdom among Gentiles in the past than among God's people in the present (11,29-32). Hypocrisy can never be hidden from God's judgment (12,1-3). The stories of faithful and unfaithful servants warn against presuming that the delay in Jesus' return means that all restraints are removed (12,35-48). Though they can read the signs of the weather, Jesus' contemporaries are unable to see what is before them in Jesus (12,54-56). People must not fall into the false confidence born of the tragedies which happened to others. The fact that we have not suffered the disasters which happen to others does not mean that they were worse or that God is pleased with us (13,1-5). The parable of the Barren Fig Tree provides an alternate reading of the situation. It could be that we are like the tree being given its one last chance (13,6-9). The Narrow Door and Shut Door warn that Jesus' audience could be excluded and replaced with foreigners in the Kingdom (13,22-30). Framing the parable of the servants entrusted with the master's wealth with the parable of the ruler who had gone into a distant country emphasizes the problem of discipleship in a time of delay (19,11-27). Delay need not mean the absence of the Kingdom. Luke preserves sayings that point out the presence of the Kingdom for Jesus' disciples as well as its sudden arrival (17,20-37). Luke expands the traditional saying about the coming of the Son of Man in judgment with another affirmation that the Son of Man must first suffer and be rejected by his own generation (17,25).

## Discipleship: Renunciation, Devotion, and Suffering

The journey opens with sayings which warn would-be disciples that they must be completely devoted to the Kingdom (9,57-62). Such disciples renounce normal human ties to family. They are the ones sent to heal and to preach the approach of the Kingdom (10,9). Their words are equivalent to the word of Jesus (10,16). Luke 10,17-20 acknowledges the potential dangers that the missionary disciple faces. Satan's fall from heaven indicates that the mission is weakening the demons' hold on humanity. The missionary is to be confident in Jesus' power. The stories of the apostles in Acts will illustrate the certainty of divine protection. Sayings against anxiety require the disciple to have confidence in the generosity of others (12,22-34). Luke's addition to the traditional saying, sell possessions, give alms and so provide yourself with heavenly treasure (verse 22), points to one way in which the material needs of some persons were met.

The church's economic teaching reminds Catholics that they have a moral obligation to work for a society that provides for the needs of its weakest members. The good news for the poor depends upon consistent efforts by all Christians to help those who are disadvantaged. Our social programs should not make such people feel despised or rejected. Jesus and the early church welcomed such people into the community, as well as providing food and clothing.

The Martha and Mary story (10,38-42) also illustrates a discipleship that abandons the cares of this world, even the obligations of hospitality, for the one thing necessary to salvation—hearing and keeping the word of Jesus (also see 11,27-38).

Disciples must also expect division. Jesus' ministry brings division even within families (12,49-53; also 2,34f). Jesus challenges disciples to recognize the full cost of being a disciple: both suffering and patient endurance to follow Jesus to the end are required (14,25-33). The slave can never tell the master, "I quit" (17,7-10).

## Discipleship and Material Possessions

Riches can be a major hurdle to becoming or remaining a disciple of Jesus (8,14; 18,18-25). Disciples have left everything to follow Jesus (18,26-30). Lucan parables demonstrate the folly

of being possessed by wealth: the rich farmer dies before he can build his barns (12,13-21), and the rich man who cannot see the poor Lazarus at his door is so blind to his sinful behavior that he thinks he can even bargain with Abraham from hell (16,19-31). Alongside the call for renouncing everything, Luke presents another way in which Christians can exhibit discipleship in their use of material possessions: they can share them with the unfortunate as the Good Samaritan does (10,30-36). Instead of feasting friends, they can provide for the poor, lame, homeless persons who have no resources (14,12-24). The parable of the Dishonest Steward serves as a warning to Christians that they cannot expect to mix service to God with the pursuit of wealth (16,1-13).

### Prayer in the Life of Disciples

The Infancy Narrative showed the exemplary piety of those righteous persons for whom the Messiah came. Jesus frequently turns to prayer (3,21; 6,12; 9,18.28; 11,2; 22,32.41; 23,46). The disciples are instructed about prayer twice. First, as a response to their request to be taught as the Baptist had taught his disciples (11,1; see 5,33). Luke follows the Lord's Prayer (11,2-4) with the parable of the Persistent Friend (verses 5-8) and instruction on the efficacy of prayer (verses 9-13). The issue of efficacy returns in the parable of the Importunate Widow (18,1-6). If an unjust judge with no moral conscience can be badgered into hearing the widow, how much the more quickly will God respond? After all, God is not withdrawn, waiting for humans to come begging, but is actively seeking those who are lost (see Chap. 15).

## Jesus' Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem (19,28—21,38)

Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem brings the narrative back to its beginning.

### The Messiah Comes to City and Temple (19,28-48)

Jesus' lament (19,41-44) warns that the Messiah who should have brought peace to this city will not be able to do so. Luke has revised the story of Jesus' entry (Mk 11,1-10) so that the crowd is composed of disciples from Galilee testifying to the works they had seen Jesus do there (verse 37). Jesus proceeds directly to the Temple. His entry reflects the Greek version of Mal 3,1, "the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his own temple." But Luke will insist (19,11; Acts 1,4) that Jesus has not come to establish the kingdom of David. The conclusion of the acclamation resembles the angelic announcement (2,14). There, peace was coming to God's faithful ones on earth. Here, perhaps because the city is viewed from the perspective of the prophetic lament, peace comes to the heavens, not to those on earth. The sense of divine destiny increases with the allusion to Hb 2,11, the stones crying out from the walls against a nation which plunders the people in 19,39f. Jesus purges the Temple so that it can be a place of prayer as well as the location for Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem (19,45-48).

### Jesus Teaches Daily in the Temple (20,1—21,4)

Luke has used a traditional series of pronouncement stories to provide the content of Jesus' teaching now that he has returned to "his Father's house," (2,49).

#### THE AUTHORITY FOR JESUS' ACTIONS

Jesus meets the challenge with a counterquestion and an ironic hint that those who question Jesus do not believe the Baptist. Jesus' answer in 20,8 resembles the response he gives the

Council when they demanded a response to the question of whether Jesus is Messiah. If Jesus speaks they do not believe; if Jesus asks a question they do not anwer.

**WICKED TENANTS**

This parable is another traditional Christian allegory. Jesus' opponents recognize that he directs it against them. Luke has expanded the allegory with the owner's soliloquy and the increasing rejection and violence against servants on three separate occasions. Luke also adds the image of persons being crushed by the rejected stone (compare 2,34), which intensifies the judgmental overtones of the saying.

**TRIBUTE DUE GOD AND CAESAR**

Luke's addition of verse 20 intensifies the hostility implied in the question. Jesus' opponents are seeking evidence for the charges of stirring up political rebellion which they will bring against Jesus at the trial (see 23,2-5). In order to ask their malicious question, the spies must acknowledge that Jesus' teaching exhibits a godlike characteristic. He does not show partiality toward persons. Again, Jesus meets the challenge with a counterquestion that forces the opponents to acknowledge that they are carrying coins with Caesar's image and to utter Caesar's name. Their behavior suggests that Jesus' reply can be seen as a judgment against their failure to pay God the honor due God. The earlier treatment of discipleship indicated that Jesus' disciples left coins and human positions of honor behind. They recognize that only God claims our loyalty. This passage does not support a doctrine of separate spheres of church and state.

**RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

The final challenge receives a double answer. The absurd case of levirate marriage (that is, that a man must marry his dead brother's wife if she had not yet borne children [see Dt 25,5; Gn 38,8]) probably came from the debates between Sadducees and Pharisees over resurrection. Jesus' first reponse affirms that the "children of God" (note the contrast with the woman who dies childless) are resurrected to an angelic existence. The second answer (20,37f) points to the revelation of God to Moses. If God is God of the patriarchs, they must be living. Luke interprets the argument to assert immortality rather than bodily resurrection.

**JESUS CHALLENGES THE OPPOSITION**

Having silenced those who came to question him, Jesus poses challenges of his own. The question about how David's Son can be greater than his ancestor draws upon Psalm 110,1, a text frequently used in early Christianity to speak of Jesus' exaltation. The warning about the scribes (20,45-47) invokes the Lucan contrast between the wealthy and the oppressed poor. Jesus emerges as advocate for the poor. Finally, the comment on the widow's offering (21,1-4) repeats the contrast between a poor person and the wealthy. The radical gift of the widow condemns the abundance that stands behind the gifts of the rich. Jesus is not approving the poverty in which the widow lives. He is asserting that her acts demonstrate a piety greater than theirs.

## Fate of the Temple and the Coming End-time (21,5-38)

The Jerusalem teaching ends with Luke's version of the apocalyptic saying in Mark 13. He has recast the traditional material to support the view that the end-time is not about to come by separating the destruction of the Temple (21,5-7) from events which come before the end-time.

Even traditional signs of the end, false messiahs and rebellions, do not point to an immediate second coming (verses 8-11). They are part of a time of persecution. God protects the Christian who must face hostility or even death from Jews, Gentiles, and even family (21,12-19). The fall of Jerusalem does not lead to the end-time. Instead it inaugurates a new stage in salvation history. Jerusalem will be overrun until the age of the pagans reaches its conclusion (21,20-24). After all these events the Son of Man will return in glory (21,25-28). The Christian who lives in the world between Jesus' ascent to heaven and the second coming can remain confident that Jesus' words will never pass away (21,29-33). Christians remain watchful and pray for strength to endure and appear before the Son of Man (21,24-36).

## The Passion Narrative (22,1—23,56a)

The Passion Narrative is not a report of what happened but a narrative shaped by the conviction that Jesus is the suffering Messiah, the obedient Son who has been raised by God. Apologetic motifs dominate Luke's version of the Passion. Political charges (23,2.5.18f) are false and recognized as such by Pilate, who declares Jesus innocent three times (verses 4, 14f, 22). Pilate yields to pressure from Jewish leaders, to whom he hands over Jesus for crucifixion (23,23-26).

### Conspiracy to Kill Jesus (22,1-6)

Luke blames only Jewish leaders for the plot that costs Jesus his life. Acts 1,16-20 reports a legend of how Judas met his death in divine retribution for his deeds.

### Last Supper (22,7-38)

Jesus is fully conscious of the suffering he is to undergo. He provides a symbolic interpretation of the cups before and after the meal, as well as the bread. The new covenant is made in the death of Jesus, not with the blood of animal sacrifices. As the Jews had been told to remember the Exodus during Passover, Jesus tells his disciples to remember this new focal point of salvation history.

The second element in the Supper scene is the farewell speech. Such speeches were delivered by dying patriarchs to their children, encouraging them to remember the ancestor's example, to remain faithful to the Law and predicting their failures to do so. Luke creates Jesus' speech out of four independent sayings: (a) oracle against the betrayer (22,21-23); (b) the disciples' place in the Kingdom (verses 24-30); (c) prophecy of Peter's denial and eventual restoration (verses 31-34), and (d) saying about two swords (verses 35-38). Jesus sets the disciples an example in his death. The worst sin to be committed by disciples is Judas's betrayal, and it is rendered all the worse by the overtones of covenant sacrifice associated with the meal.

Division and backsliding are a set theme in such a context. Luke situates the dispute about greatness at the supper where it forms a contrast with Jesus' example as "one who serves" (23,27). The sayings include a critique of the cultural pattern of benefactor and client that dominate social relationships in the society (verses 22-25). Jesus' earlier instructions to invite persons who cannot repay you to your banquet, rather than those, like you, who can afford to give dinner parties, and his own appearance as slave rather than master, provide additional illustrations of the Lucan theme of reversal in the Kingdom.

Beyond the ominous events of Jesus' death, Judas's betrayal and Peter's denial, the discourse presents images of fulfillment. The Twelve who stand by Jesus will occupy the twelve

thrones of the tribes of Israel. (Judas will be replaced, see Acts 1,15-26). The meal anticipates a future celebration with Jesus in glory—a communal celebration with Jesus, not the ranked banquets of those whose idea of greatness Jesus rejects. Before this banquet can occur, Jesus must suffer to enter glory, and Satan exhibits his presence in Judas (22,3) and in testing Peter. Jesus' prayer prevents the sifting of the disciples from being more severe (22,31f; for sifting as an act of judgment see Amos 9,9). This perception that the coming time will be more difficult than the immediate past appears in the saying about the swords. Jesus cancels the old missionary rules against provisions (10,1-12). Missionaries may now provide themselves with purse, knapsack, and sandals.

## Arrest of Jesus (22,39-53)

Jesus demonstrates his fidelity to God as obedient Son in the prayer he makes. Luke moderates the traditional criticism of the disciples for failing to stay awake by alluding to their grief. However, they are warned that they must pray to avoid being tested. Jesus does not submit to arrest as a criminal. He reminds them that they did not arrest him when he taught in the Temple, but the present hour of darkness is permitted by God's plan (verse 53).

## Trial of Jesus (22,54—23,25)

Fulfillment of Jesus' predictions provides further evidence that God's will, not human passions, controls the events of the Passion. Luke tells the whole story of Peter's denial before the trial of Jesus begins. Jesus reminds Peter of the earlier prediction by looking at him. Peter breaks down in tears. Jesus' captors challenge him to prophesy as they are abusing the prisoner. The Peter episode shows the reader that Jesus is a true prophet. Luke does not report a formal trial by Jewish authorities. The false accusations and the verdict are fixed before the Passion even begins. Jesus responds to the question about his messiahship with a judgment saying about the Son of Man. Annas concludes that Jesus claims to be "Son of God" (22,66-71). Jesus' prayer (22,42) has shown the reader that Jesus will suffer death as the obedient Son of the Father.

Luke's version of the trial before Pilate insists that Jesus was innocent of the charges of stirring up political rebellion that were used to seek his death. Luke adds the geographical note, "from Galilee to this place" (23,5), and then clears Jesus in Galilee by having him appear before Herod (verses 6-12). This scene represents the climax of the earlier accounts of Herod's reaction to Jesus, a reaction which shifted from fascination to opposition (9,9; 13,31-33). Herod's curiosity desires a miracle, but all he sees is the silent prisoner who is the object of violent accusations and mockery. Ironically, the incident creates peace between the old enemies, Herod and Pilate (verse 12). Though Pilate persists in affirming Jesus' innocence, backed up by the fact that not even Herod found anything against Jesus, he is manipulated by the angry crowd into handing Jesus over for crucifixion. The leaders who orchestrated Jesus' death are really the ones fostering rebellion. They ask for the release of a known murderer and rebel.

## Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus (23,26-56a)

As he is led to his death, Jesus prophesies the terrible fate awaiting Jerusalem once more (23,26-32; 19,41-44). Though scorned and considered a criminal, Jesus is able to offer salvation to the repentant sinner (23,39-43). The crowd challenges Jesus to save himself from his fate, which, as it turns out, is the entry into paradise for both himself and those who repent and are forgiven (see

22,28-30; the disciples who feast with Jesus in the Kingdom are those who have endured with him in his trials). This episode shows the reader that God's mercy can be experienced even in the midst of brutal hostility. Apocalyptic signs accompany Jesus' death, which is witnessed by the women and other followers from Galilee. The centurion proclaims Jesus' innocence while the crowd laments (23,44-48).

Joseph, a member of the Council, buries Jesus as an act of piety. He represents the righteous of Israel who sought the Kingdom of God (verse 51). The women prepare to anoint the body, but they are interrupted by the Sabbath. The burial scene shows that Jesus was buried with honor, not like a criminal, and that the place was known to his followers. Luke is telling us that when the women return to complete the anointing there can be no possibility that they have mistaken the place of burial.

## **Resurrection of Jesus** (23,56b—24,53)

Jesus' departure takes place in Jerusalem on Easter (24,21.51). Luke has rewritten traditional stories about the empty tomb and about mealtime appearances of the Risen Lord, in order to show us a sequence of three scenes. Luke arranges these scenes so that the Resurrection faith is more and more explicitly spelled out. The Gospel concludes with the disciples offering prayer and praise in Jerusalem while waiting for the Holy Spirit to initiate the next stage in the drama of salvation, the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the whole world.

### The Women at the Tomb (23,56b—24,12)

The first of the three scenes opens when the women return to the tomb. Angels chide them for seeking the living among the dead (compare 20,38). Instead of a simple proclamation of the Easter faith as one finds in Mark 16,6b, Luke's angels remind the women of Jesus' predictions of the Passion and Resurrection. The women report that the angels said Jesus was alive (24,22f). When Luke repeats variants of a scene, we can expect the subsequent versions to expand on hints in the first version.

### Jesus Appears on the Road to Emmaus (24,13-35)

Confirmation of the women's report about the tomb had not yet led to disciples seeing the Risen Lord. In the second scene, Luke uses a folktale motif: the appearance of a divine being disguised as a stranger who must be shown hospitality. Jesus expands on what the angels at the tomb said and interprets Moses and the prophets in order to demonstrate that the suffering of the Messiah was God's plan. Then a new theme comes in: the manifestation of Jesus in the breaking of bread. (John 21,1-14 contains a variant of the manifestation of Jesus in the guise of a stranger at a meal.) The Messiah has suffered, entered into glory, and now renews his presence to the disciples in the meal.

### Jesus Appears to the Disciples in Jerusalem (24,36-43)

Luke knows the tradition that Jesus had appeared to Peter (24,34; see 1 Cor 15,5) but only recounts the appearance to the disciples at a meal. The third appearance confirms the fact that the Jesus who appears is the crucified one, raised up by God, not some ghost or other psychic phenomenon. The body that was missing from the tomb has been taken up by the risen Jesus.

That transformation distinguishes Christian belief in resurrection from theories about the immortality of the soul or claims that near-death experiences or psychic phenomena provide support for our Christian faith in resurrection.

### Jesus Commissions the Disciples (24,44-49)

In the third scene, as in the previous two episodes, Luke reminds us that the Messiah had to suffer and die in order to fulfill Scripture (verses 44-46). The story then takes up the central element in all Resurrection appearance stories: commissioning the recipients. These stories all point to the future mission of the disciples and founding of Christian communities in which Jesus continues to be present. The commission in verses 47-49 is a prelude to the story of the first apostles which Luke will tell in Acts. The disciples' mission to preach repentance and baptism to all nations in Jesus' name, beginning from Jerusalem, both continues the preaching that occurred during Jesus' ministry and reflects a new stage in salvation history. (Matthew 28,19f reports a variant tradition in which the disciples are to make disciples of the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe Jesus' teaching.)

### Jesus Departs (24,50-53)

The ending of the Gospel reflects the departure which Jesus discussed with Moses and Elijah (9,31), as well as showing the Son of Man in glory at the right hand of God (22,69). Jesus' resurrection appearances are understood to be from his place of glory with God (24,26). The stories have introduced ways in which Jesus will now be present to the church, through the Spirit promised by the Father (verse 49) and in the breaking of the bread (verse 35). The church's mission will be to take Jesus' teaching throughout the world.

## Things We have Learned from Luke

### Jesus is Savior for All Peoples

From the very beginning, Luke shows that the hopes which poor, weak, suffering, righteous persons have are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. The Gospel shows that women as well as men; foreigners and Gentiles as well as Israelites; sick, weak, sinful, and despised persons as well as the well-off and respected people can come to Jesus. God seeks to reverse the situation of the poor and suffering. Consequently, Jesus comes as a suffering, servant Messiah, not as a liberator or king who will take his place with the powerful of this world. Jesus' parables reveal the love and mercy of God which prompt this gift of salvation.

### Disciples Participate in the Mission of Jesus

The disciples do not simply preach about Jesus or the Kingdom of God, they also participate in the reversal of roles, status, and concerns that the coming of salvation brings. Some disciples renounce everything that ties them to the social structures of the world. Others use their material resources in ways quite different from those around them. They do not seek exchanges between friends which would create obligations to reciprocate. They do not try to pile up wealth or to indulge themselves and their friends in consuming luxurious goods. Their lives are not dominated by concern for acquiring and preserving material things. Instead, they aid people who will never be able to repay them. They give away wealth to meet the needs of other people.

Their only "anxiety" is acquiring heavenly treasure. All disciples are willing to follow Jesus' example of suffering service rather than demanding that others honor and serve them.

### Prayer and Worship are the Center of Christian Life

Even acts of mercy and compassion would not establish a relationship with God if people did not praise God in worship and ask God's assistance in meeting the challenges which the life of discipleship poses. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus sets the example. He worships with others in the synagogue and withdraws for prayer at critical moments. The disciples turn to prayer and praise after Easter. Luke also contains examples of prayer in the Lord's Prayer and the canticles of the Infancy Narrative. Jesus warned disciples in the garden that they would have to pray to be spared testing, a reminder of the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. In Acts, the early community will continue to follow the example set by Jesus. P.P.

## Further Reading

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Marshall, I. H. *The Gospel of Luke.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978.

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# JOHN □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 145–183 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The Fourth Gospel has a double conclusion. After the Resurrection stories in Jerusalem we are told that Jesus did many other signs but that those in the book seek to lead to belief in Jesus as Son of God (20,30f). After the Resurrection stories in Galilee, we learn that the Beloved Disciple was the source of the Johannine tradition and that all the things Jesus did could not be written down (21,24f). Thus, we are told that the point of narrating the story of Jesus is to inspire faith. Throughout the Gospel we see that faith in Jesus is the key to eternal life.

### Composition of the Fourth Gospel

The double ending suggests that John went through more than one edition. Other additions to the narrative and awkward transitions between sections also lead to this conclusion (see *New American Bible* Introduction to John). For example, John 14,31 brings the discourse to an end. Yet the Gospel as we have it contains three more chapters of discourse material. John 12,44-50 appears to be tacked on to the conclusion of Chapter 12. Some of the additional material may have been added to the Gospel by later disciples of the author. As you read the Gospel, you will also see that Jesus often identifies with great religious symbols like light, life, water, bread, shepherd, and vine. The author of the Gospel assumes that its readers will recognize that these symbols have roots in the Old Testament. This symbolic way of speaking of Jesus was probably

developed within a unique community of Christians. That community included the disciples of the evangelist who compiled the final edition of the Gospel and the teacher who wrote the Johannine letters. We refer to them as Johannine Christians.

## The Fourth Gospel and the Other Gospels

John is very different from the other gospels. You will immediately notice that Jesus speaks in long symbolic discourses, not in short sayings and episodes that end in sayings. The only piece of ethical teaching in the Fourth Gospel is the love command. There are also major differences in the order of events. John pictures Jesus' ministry extending over three Passovers. The cleansing of the Temple comes at the beginning (2,13-22), not the end of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' death is attributed to the following that he gained when he restored Lazarus to life. John attaches symbolic discourses to many of the miracles so that the miracle becomes a claim about Jesus' relationship to God. Most scholars think that John draws on traditions about Jesus that were independent of those preserved in the synoptic (Matthew, Mark, Luke) gospels.

## Symbols, Irony, and Misunderstanding

The Fourth Gospel uses symbols to present its message that Jesus is the unique Son of God. No one who persists in taking Jesus' words literally can understand the truth which Jesus reveals (see the rejection of literal understandings of Jesus' words and deeds in 3,4-10; 4,10-15; 6,26-33). The reader knows the true meaning of Jesus' words when the characters in the story do not.

## The Fourth Gospel and the Jews

Though some Jews like Nicodemus are sympathetic to Jesus (3,1-11; 7,50-52; 12,42), the Gospel often uses the expression "the Jews" as a symbol for all those who oppose Jesus. They display a murderous desire to kill God's envoy and will be condemned by the founders of their own tradition, who testify to Jesus (Moses, 5,41-47; Abraham, 8,48-59). The hostility in the Johannine account may have had its roots in the expulsion of Christian Jews from the synagogues, referred to in John 9,27 and 16,1-4a (see *New American Bible* Introduction).

If you read carefully, you will notice that John often does not bother to include the various groups within Judaism of Jesus' day such as Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, lawyers, Pharisees. He often speaks of "the Jews" as though summarizing a story in which Jesus is facing "the bad guys." This habit creates a tension between the fact that Jesus and his followers were also Jews and the way in which the Gospel is using "Jews" as a term for a role in his story. John 18:35f illustrates this tension. Pilate treats Jesus with scorn because Jesus is a Jew, handed over by fellow Jews. Jesus' answer distinguishes himself and his followers from "the Jews," that is, the group opposed to him. John is not making a statement about the Jewish people when he uses "the Jews" to fill the role of "bad guys." The Vatican has recently reminded Catholics that anti-Semitism is one of the worst forms of racism. We must acknowledge that in the past people have not distinguished between John's use of "the Jews" as characters and the Jewish people from whom Jesus came. Today, we must be very careful not to continue that misreading. In some contexts, it might be appropriate to substitute another phrase like "Jesus' enemies" or a more literal rendering of the term used for "the Jews," "the Judeans," when retelling the Johannine story in order to avoid the confusion. Such substitutions are particularly important when

working with young children who cannot make the distinction easily between "the Jews" as characters in a story and their Jewish classmates and neighbors.

## Reading through John

In reading John, we must be sensitive to the use of symbols, irony, and misunderstanding. The characters who interact with Jesus in the story are at different levels of understanding as to who Jesus is. The disciples begin with faith that Jesus fulfills the messianic promises to Israel, but this faith is not yet knowledge of Jesus as the revelation of God. Their faith must be completed by the post-Easter process of coming to understand Jesus, the perspective which the evangelist shares with the readers (16,25). Jewish sympathizers and the crowds have an unclear idea that Jesus might be "from God" or even be the Messiah. John often divides the opinions of the crowd in two. One opinion is wrong or literal-minded; the other is partially correct (12,27-29). Unlike the Jewish crowds, who sometimes accept Jesus, John also uses the expression "the Jews" to represent religious authorities hostile to Jesus. They reject all testimony to the truth that Jesus comes from God, and they are the ones responsible for his death.

### Signs and Faith in the Fourth Gospel

The symbolic perspective influences John's account of miracles (see *New American Bible* Introduction). Taken literally, they cannot lead a person to faith (2,23-25). Seen as "signs" pointing to Jesus' identity with God, his "glory" (2,11), they may serve as the begining point for faith. John embeds four of the miracles in discourses which interpret their symbolic meaning. The symbols of life, light, and bread point to Jesus as the source of eternal life for all who believe.

Today, people continue to wonder whether they should "believe in miracles." There is no doubt that Jesus was well known for his ability to heal. The gospels insist that Jesus used his healing power to bring people closer to God. He never used miracles to enrich himself or to gain popularity. Even though miracles can be a sign that God is working through Jesus, they can also be a trap. Sometimes people think they can bargain with God. If God will just heal them of disease or help them out of a jam, then they will really become faithful Christians. John reminds us that our faith is not based on miracles. Our relationship with God is based on what Jesus has shown us about God's love for the world. It is not wrong to seek healing through prayer. Sometimes God will express love by a miraculous healing, but we should not think that miracles are anything more than a small sign of God's greatness.

### Dualism in the Fourth Gospel

The Gospel uses a number of dualistic expressions, such as light/dark, life/death, from above (heavenly)/from below (earthly), not judged/condemned. They illuminate a process of division that occurs within the story. Persons confronted with Jesus' word either believe and become children of God who will inherit eternal life, or they reject Jesus and are condemned by God. This dualism gives John a certain harshness. There is no middle ground between belief and unbelief (12,44-50). Believers are united with Jesus and the Father. They may even experience the larger world as hostile (15,1-27). Dualistic imagery and a negative picture of the nonbelieving world often appears in sectarian groups. The notes in the *New American Bible* point out

significant parallels between Johannine symbols and those used by the sectarian Jewish community at Qumran.

### Belief and Eternal Life

Christians usually think of salvation or eternal life as a reward that comes in the future when they join Jesus in heaven (14,2f; 17,24) or when Jesus returns to judge the world (5,27-29). John retains this traditional language but introduces a new perspective on salvation. Belief brings persons into unity with Jesus. Therefore they can be spoken of as already having passed through death to life (5,24-26; 3,16-21). Those who reject Jesus are already condemned. Judgment really occurs when Jesus, who has come into the world as light, is accepted or rejected. Though various witnesses provide testimony—the Baptist, Scripture, and the deeds which Jesus does—the believer must accept Jesus' word about God. Only Jesus comes from heaven to reveal God (3,31-36).

### Jesus as God in the Fourth Gospel

The Gospel presents Jesus "from above" by identifying him with the Word which is always present to God and through which God created the world (1,1-5). John defends the claim that Jesus is equal to God in functional terms: (1) Jesus makes God known; (2) Jesus exercises functions attributed to God, giving life and judging; (3) humans ought to respond to Jesus with the honor appropriate to God. John also emphasizes the special Father/Son relationship between Jesus and God. Jesus is obedient to the mission the Father has given him. Jesus' death will be a sign of God's love for humanity. The disputes between Jesus and "the Jews" in Chapters 5–12 turn on the issue of Jesus' relationship to God. This section ends with the ironic fact that Jesus' opponents seek to kill the source of life.

## An Outline of John

The plot of the Fourth Gospel follows a pattern of descent and ascent. Jesus comes into the world from the Father seeking "his own," those who will believe. Then, Jesus confronts the world. His ministry divides believers from unbelievers. The hostility of unbelief leads to the "hour" of his crucifixion, which John treats as an exaltation. Jesus returns to the glory that he had enjoyed with the Father from the beginning. The Gospel is clearly divided into two parts: first, the account of Jesus' confrontation with the world, which many scholars refer to as the "book of signs" (Chaps. 1–12); and second, the account of Jesus' return to the Father when the destined hour arrives, referred to as the "book of glory" (Chaps. 13–20).

*Prologue* (1,1-18). A hymnic section introduces us to Jesus as God's word, which has come into the world.

*The Book of Signs* (1,19—12,50). Jesus' confrontation with the world represents God's judgment against unbelief. This section falls into two parts:

- *Gathering Witnesses to Jesus* (1,19—4,54). Jesus demonstrates his glory to disciples and others who will believe in him before the confrontation with unbelief begins.
- *Confrontation with the World* (5,1—12,50). The light has come into the world for judgment. Jesus confronts those who refuse to believe with testimony to his divine origin.

*The Book of Glory* (13,1—20,31). Jesus' whole life has been moving toward the hour of his glorification and return to the Father. This section falls into two parts:

*Preparing the Disciples for the Hour* (13,1—17,26). At the Last Supper, Jesus delivers lengthy discourses about his return to the Father and the meaning of that exaltation for his disciples.

*Jesus' Arrest, Crucifixion, and Resurrection* (18,1—20,31). John understands the crucifixion as the moment of Jesus' life-giving exaltation and return to the Father.

*Epilogue: Resurrection Appearance in Galilee* (21,1-25). Second conclusion reports further appearances of Jesus and points toward the destiny of two leading disciples, Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

Now it is time to read through the Gospel. You will find it easy to pick out the symbols and the sharp divisions between characters in the story. Remember that John wrote to encourage faith in Jesus as Son of God, because that faith is the source of eternal life. What happens to faith in each episode? Why do some characters move toward a more complete faith in Jesus while others pull away and become hostile?

## The Prologue (1,1-18)

### A Hymn to the Divine Word

The introduction to John is different from all of the other gospels. It begins even before creation. John might even be following the opening words of Genesis 1 in which God creates the world out of formless chaos by speaking. Because of Jesus, John has a new insight about the divine Word. The Word is not simply speech or some abstract power that God can use to create. The Word actually became known to us in a person, Jesus. We speak of the Incarnation, of God becoming human. This idea of God is the special revelation of Christianity. It differs from the absolute monothesim, that is, emphasis on one God, of Judaism and Islam. We will see that the Christian claim that Jesus can be spoken of as God is at stake in many of the controversies in the Fourth Gospel. John makes it clear right at the beginning that we can speak about God under two distinct aspects, God as the ultimate source of all things (that is, the Father) and the Word, through whom God creates and sustains the world and guides humans (that is, the Son). Later in the Gospel we will also learn that the Spirit comes from God to those who believe. Christians believe that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three distinct persons which make up the one God.

You will notice that many of the verses in this section have a poetic quality made up of short parallel lines that employ the symbols of life, light, darkness, and glory. You will also notice that other verses speak of the role of John the Baptist as witness to the light (1,6-8.15). Still other verses speak in the first person plural of what "we" have received from the coming of the light (verses 12, 14b, 16). "We" clearly means the Christian community which believes in Jesus. They have received the power to become children of God thanks to Jesus (verse 12). Many scholars think that the poetic verses belonged to an early hymn which John has used for the introduction. The *New American Bible* prints these verses in a poetic form so that you can distinguish them from the prose comments which the author inserted to create the introduction.

### Salvation, a Gift from the Word

This section makes it clear that only those people who receive Jesus as the incarnate Word can attain salvation. The Word actually existed before anything was created, but people may still fail to receive the Word when it comes to them. The Prologue contains several hints about the fate

of the light when it comes into our world. People who should have received him, do not. But those who do, receive the grace of becoming children of God and coming to know God as revealed by Jesus. The contrast between the Law that came through Moses and the "grace and truth," probably a rendering of the Old Testament expression for God's love and fidelity to the covenant (see note to 1,14), anticipates the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Jesus will establish a new covenant between God and those people who come to believe in him.

## The Book of Signs (1,19—12,50)

We have seen that John uses the expression "signs" to emphasize the symbolic role of Jesus' miracles in pointing to Jesus' true, divine origins. In order to understand the truth revealed by the signs, a person must think of their symbolic reality, not of the literal words or events. The "Jews" will be portrayed as persons who are unable to see the truth of Jesus' words.

### Gathering Witnesses to Jesus (1,19—4,54)

The Prologue told us that the Baptist was sent to testify to Jesus. He opens this section by giving such testimony (1,19-34). Although there are hints of hostility to come, the first four chapters are generally positive. Jesus gathers persons who come to believe in his divine mission. These stories make it clear to us how people were expected to respond to Jesus.

**JOHN TESTIFIES TO JESUS** (1,19-34)

The Baptist testifies on different occasions to two different groups of officials that he is not the Messiah. He is simply preparing the way for the one who is coming (1,19-28). The synoptic gospels contain a scene in which Jesus is baptized and hears God announce that he is God's beloved Son (see Mk 1,9-11). Jesus has no need of such a revelation in the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist transforms the traditional scene into another example of testimony. The Baptist sees the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and remain on Jesus. God has revealed to him that such a person will be the anticipated Messiah, who will baptize the people with the Spirit and will take away the sin of the world (1,29-34).

**JESUS GATHERS DISCIPLES** (1,35-51)

A series of brief scenes shows us how Jesus gathered the rest of his disciples. They all have a fixed pattern. Persons who come to Jesus through the testimony of others have their own experience with Jesus which makes them true disciples. The Baptist sends Jesus the first disciples (verses 35-37). As you read through these short verses, you will notice that the chapter is collecting all of the titles that early Christians used to speak of Jesus: Lamb of God (verse 36); Messiah (verse 41); the one predicted by Moses and the prophets (verse 45); Son of God (verse 49); King of Israel (verse 49), and Son of Man (verse 51). The final verse is very enigmatic. John hints at the story of the ladder which Jacob saw in a dream vision (Gn 28,12). But Jesus as the heavenly figure, the Son of Man, has replaced the ladder. According to John, no one sees God except through Jesus (see 1,18).

**CANA MIRACLE MANIFESTS HIS GLORY** (2,1-12)

Now that he has gathered the disciples, Jesus' first miracle reveals his divine glory to them. The real revelation of Jesus' glory, however, cannot come until the crucifixion. Therefore, Jesus first appears to reject his mother's request (verses 4f). A wedding feast was often used as a symbol for the time of rejoicing that would follow God's judgment. Jesus has provided the wine for such

a feast. We will see that John also has Jesus replace some of the most important Jewish feasts. It will no longer be necessary to worship God as the Jews had done. Here, Jesus replaces the water which might have been used for ritual washings.

**CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE** (2,13-25)
Unlike the synoptic gospels, which have only one visit to Jerusalem, John refers to three Passovers, as well as visits to other feasts. In the other gospels, the cleansing of the Temple comes on the visit which led to Jesus' death. John reports that episode much earlier. It enables him to tell the Christian reader that Jesus will also replace the Temple. John notes that even Jesus' own disciples could not have understood what Jesus meant when he predicted that he would raise up the Temple in three days. They only understood the full meaning of Jesus' words after the Resurrection (2,22). The end of the chapter warns against faith that is based simply on signs (verses 23-25). People may be attracted by Jesus' miracles who will not remain faithful.

**DIALOGUE WITH NICODEMUS** (3,1-21)
The next two dialogues, with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman, employ the technique of misunderstanding in which the person to whom Jesus speaks takes Jesus' words literally and thus provokes comment on Jesus' part. You will notice that Jesus always responds by making an even-more-difficult statement than the one that provoked the original misunderstanding. In this case, Jesus' claims appear to leave Nicodemus behind, though he will reappear as someone sympathetic to Jesus (7,50-52). Since Jewish writings of the period also speak of a cleansing of the righteous by the Holy Spirit, Nicodemus might have been expected to understand that Jesus was speaking about a rebirth "from above," that is, through the Spirit rather than "again" (see note to 3,3). John's Christian readers probably saw an allusion to baptism in the insistence that people had to be reborn to enter the Kingdom. The episode marks a clear distinction between the teacher of Israel who cannot even understand the idea of spiritual rebirth, and Jesus who is, in fact, the very source of life.

A sudden shift to the plural "we" and "you people" suggests the confrontation between Christians and their synagogue opponents in the evangelist's time (verse 11). Verses 12-15 follow a pattern similar to 1,50f. Belief on the grounds of some "earthly" sign is challenged by the heavenly reality which is to be revealed in Jesus. In both cases a saying about the "Son of Man" represents the higher truth. Drawing upon the story of Moses lifting up a bronze serpent in the wilderness (Nm 21,9), the evangelist asserts that Jesus will have to be lifted up (on the cross) to become a source of eternal life for all believers. Verses 16-21 speak to the Christian reader about the coming of Jesus. Elsewhere in the Gospel "world" is a negative symbol for those who are hostile to the Word. Here the world refers to all humans as the object of God's love. Though darkness did not overcome the light (1,5), humanity can still reject the light. The passage offers one explanation for the tragic fact that people will prefer darkness to light; they would rather hide their evil ways than "live the truth," a Semitic expression for following the will of God revealed in the Law.

We should remember this human tendency to "prefer darkness to light" when we confront issues of moral or personal reform today. When we are faced with situations in which people are addicted to drugs or alcohol, we find that the most difficult step is overcoming the denial of the problem. Both the addict and family members may participate in covering up the seriousness of the problem. We may become frustrated in our efforts to help such people because it seems that they would rather destroy their lives and those of others than accept available help. Certainly,

we should not write off people who need our help, but this passage shows us that we cannot always expect easy results.

**JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST** (3,22—4,3)
John once again testifies to Jesus as the one to come. The saying about the Bridegroom appears in the synoptic gospels as part of an exchange over fasting. John's disciples fast while Jesus' do not (see Mk 2,18-19). In John's Gospel the emphasis lies on the identity of the two men. The Baptist's role is ended once he has given witness to Jesus. Verse 27 points to the principle behind the plot of the Gospel: no one can have anything that God has not given to that person. Verses 3,31-36 seem to be the evangelist's summary of the entire chapter. The Son is the one who has been given "all things" by the Father (verse 35). His mission is to give the Spirit or eternal life to those who believe (verses 33f.36). The contrast, however, between the "one from heaven," who testifies to the truth and speaks the words of God, and those who belong to earth, who reject the Son, once again demonstrates that the coming of the Son also brings judgment (verse 36b).

**THE SAMARITAN WOMAN** (4,4-42)
John has divided this story into a series of scenes which progressively reveal the truth about Jesus and his mission. Jesus comes to be known as greater than the patriarch Jacob, who met his future wife at a well. Legend also had it that the water of Jacob's well would bubble to the top so that people did not have to draw water out. Jesus is more than a messiah figure who would vindicate the Jews by exalting Jerusalem. Jesus is more than the prophet like Moses whom the Samaritans expect to establish their version of the Law and place of worship against the claims of their Jewish enemies. We know that when Jesus speaks of a gift of living (that is, flowing) water, he speaks symbolically of the gift of the Spirit. The woman persists in treating Jesus' words literally until the enigmatic reference to her marital status persuades her that Jesus is a prophet. We, the readers, know that when Jesus responds to her challenge to settle the old dispute between Jews and Samaritans over where to worship God by speaking of worship in "spirit and truth," Jesus is alluding to himself as the replacement of the Temple (see 2,13-22). The woman finally accepts Jesus as Messiah. Like the disciples in Chapter 1, she puts that insight into action by bringing others to Jesus (verse 29).

Jesus' dialogue with his disciples about mission and harvest (4,31-38) indicates that, like the woman, they too are sent to preach to others. Along with the previous episode, in which Jesus was said to be baptizing more people that the Baptist, this story makes it clear that Jesus was able to convert people with his preaching. The hostile controversies of the next section might otherwise give the impression that Jesus' mission was largely a failure. The large numbers of Samaritans who come to Jesus indicate the truth of Jesus' words to the disciples about the rich harvest. The story concludes with the ringing affirmation that Jesus is "Savior of the world."

**HEALING THE ROYAL OFFICIAL'S SON** (4,43-54)
The section on gathering followers concludes with a second miracle in Cana. Jesus' word spoken at a distance is enough to heal the official's son (4,53). Now that Jesus' identity as the Son sent from God to save the world has been established, we are ready for the confrontation between Jesus and those who do not believe.

## Confrontation with the World (5,1—12,50)

The sharp confrontation with unbelief that makes up this section of the Gospel does not represent failure, since it leads to the hour of Jesus' exaltation and return to the Father. Jesus succeeds in gathering as children of God those persons who accept his word as that of God despite all the obstacles that others put in their way.

### HEALING THE CRIPPLE: JESUS GIVES LIFE AND JUDGES (5,1-47)

The tradition that Jesus provoked hostility among Jewish leaders by healing a cripple on the Sabbath and associating that healing with the forgiveness of sins is well established in the Gospels (see Mk 2,1-12). John uses the discourse which follows the miracle story to draw out what the real issue is: Jesus' claim to equality with God (5,16-18). Jewish teachers could appeal to the Law of Moses to argue that no human being can claim to do things which are God's alone, to give life to the dead and to judge (see notes to 5,21.22). We have already seen that in John's view the decisive encounter with Jesus is the moment of judgment (see verses 24-26). Jesus defends his claim to do just these things by appealing to the special relationship he enjoys with God. As "Son," Jesus does what the Father has given him to do. He does not act on his own authority (verse 30). Furthermore, those who question his behavior should look to the witnesses he can bring forward: the Baptist (verses 31-35), the deeds which God has given Jesus to do (verse 36), and the witness which God has given through Scripture (verses 37-39). Jesus accuses his opponents of failing to recognize that he has come from God because they are not really concerned with the glory that belongs to God. They are only interested in the human glory they receive from other people. He warns them that their confidence in Moses is misplaced. Moses witnesses to Jesus and will condemn anyone who rejects that testimony (verses 40-47).

### JESUS IS THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN (6,1-71)

Chapter 6 is based upon a traditional cycle of material which included the feeding of the multitude, calming the storm at sea, a demand that Jesus give people a sign, a challenge to Jesus based on his human origins, and Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah. John reshapes this material by including a lengthy discourse on Jesus as the bread of life, which has come down from heaven (verses 22-59). Those who fail to see the symbolism of the feeding miracle or who focus on earthly facts about Jesus will not receive Jesus as the bread of life. Just as Jesus had promised the Samaritan woman a gift of water that would lead to eternal life, he promises bread which will give life to the believer. But the "Jews" are going to copy the behavior of their ancestors, who murmured against Moses. John explains that those who do come to believe in Jesus have been brought to him by God (verses 37-39.44f). The comment that Jesus will not "cast out" those who come to him (verse 37) probably refers to the members of John's church who had been cast out of the synagogue by Jewish officials. That experience is prefigured in the story of the blind man (9,22).

Jesus' words are the source of eternal life in the first part of the discourse. Christian tradition associates the manna and the "bread of life" with the Eucharist. This tradition appears in 6,51-59. It is necessary to eat the life-giving bread and wine, the flesh and blood of Jesus. This meal establishes a special relationship between Jesus and the believer: they "abide in" one another. Just as the Father is the source of Jesus' life, so Jesus becomes the source of life for the Christian. In this episode we learn that receiving eternal life is not the result simply of thinking that Jesus is God's Son. It really involves an entirely new relationship with God that is possible

in Jesus. John 6,51-58 places the Eucharist at the center of that relationship. If Jesus' words about eating his flesh and blood were taken literally, they would be a blasphemous participation in a human sacrifice. Even if Jesus' audience understood that Jesus was speaking symbolically, they might be horrified at the idea that Jesus could identify himself with God so closely.

The chapter concludes with a reaction among Jesus' followers which shows that these words were too difficult for many to accept. Faced with the possibility of abandoning Jesus, Peter confesses that there is no one else to whom they could turn. Only Jesus has the words of eternal life.

**CONFLICT AND DIVISION AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES** (7,1—8,59)

The episodes in this section occur at the Feast of Tabernacles and at an unnamed feast that follows it. The symbolism of light and water were part of the Tabernacles ritual so Jesus uses them to express his identity (7,37-39; 8,12). Throughout the section we are reminded that officials are seeking Jesus' death even when they deny that fact (7,1.19f.25; 8,39f). Jesus is accused of "leading the people astray." He is also accused of being possessed by a demon. Since it is not yet Jesus' hour, however, attempts to arrest (7,32.44), legally condemn (7,45-52), and stone (8,59) Jesus fail. Several scenes picture the divided opinion among the crowd. These scenes may also provide answers to Jewish objections against Jesus: (a) Jesus did not keep the Law in healing on the Sabbath, but the Law permits activities like circumcision on the Sabbath (7,19-24); (b) Jesus' origins make it impossible for him to be the Messiah, yet Jesus' real origins are "from heaven" and the signs he has done testify to that fact (7,25-31.40-44); (c) Jesus is not an established teacher of the Law, yet Jesus has received his words and teaching from God so that he does not seek personal glory as human teachers do (7,15-18).

Jesus begins to prepare the reader for his departure. He speaks of it in a symbolic way which the crowd cannot fully understand. Jesus will go to a place where they cannot follow him (7,32-36). The crowd thinks that Jesus will go to the Jewish communities outside Palestine. There is a symbolic truth in that statement: Christianity will spread in those communities. Or, perhaps, Jesus intends to commit the blasphemous act of killing himself (8,21f). The ironic truth of that statement is that Jesus will give up his life on behalf of others. He predicts that when his enemies have executed him, they will find that Jesus is the one who comes from the Father. Jesus even bears the divine name "I AM" (8,28). The bitter conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in Chapter 8 repeats this definition of Jesus with God's "I AM" in a dispute over descent from Abraham. Those who seek to kill Jesus cannot be descendents of Abraham, since what Abraham saw and rejoiced in was Jesus. Therefore, they are branded children of Satan (8,39-59). The story acknowledges the difficulty of Jesus' words. He is asking us to identify a human being with the God revealed to Abraham and to Moses.

**THE BLIND MAN BELIEVES IN JESUS** (9,1-41)

This story shows that it was possible for the blind man to move from the miracle by which Jesus restored his sight to true faith in Jesus. He does so as the Jewish officials attempt to force him to condemn Jesus. He comes to recognize more and more clearly that Jesus cannot be a sinner, and therefore Jesus must have come from God. The fear that "Jews" will drive them out of the synagogue keeps the man's parents from testifying (9,22f). This story may represent the experience of members of the Johannine community. Jesus returns at the end of the story to show the man his identity and condemn the blindness of the Jewish leaders (verses 39-41).

**TRUE SHEPHERD GIVES HIS LIFE** (10,1-42)
We already know that Jesus' death is an expression of God's love for the world (3,16). Jesus has been accused of deserving death for leading people astray. Here the parable of the shepherd and the sheep demonstrate that Jesus is the true leader of the people, at least those whom God has enabled to respond to his voice (10,1-30). Jesus will even give his life for the sheep, something that none of the "hired hands" who claim to lead the people will do. Offended by his claim to identity with the Father (verses 30-39), the people again try to stone Jesus. We are reminded that Jesus' death is a free offering on his part, not the success of the plots against him (verses 17f).

**RAISING LAZARUS: GIFT OF LIFE MEANS DEATH** (11,1-57)
John has used the raising of Lazarus to bring out the irony of what the Jewish leaders are seeking to do. Jesus is the source of life (verses 24-26), yet they think that they can silence Jesus by killing him. The Lazarus episode also serves to remind Christians that if they truly believe that Jesus is resurrection and life, then they should not mourn physical death as others do. Jesus often seems remote from others, but here Jesus displays his love for Lazarus and his sisters. Ironically, the following that Jesus gained from his greatest sign led to the formal decision of the Jewish Council to arrange his death (11,45-57). Although the high priest does not know the truth of his words, it will turn out to be a good thing that one person dies for the people, and, as the evangelist points out, for all the peoples of the world (verses 50-52).

**THE LIGHT IS DEPARTING** (12,1-50)
John locates the traditional story of Jesus' anointing in the home of Lazarus. Mary's act recognizes the approach of Jesus' death. Ironically, the traitor, Judas, is the one who protests (verses 1-8). Hints of the future mission are evident in the Pharisees' response to the entry, "the whole world has gone after him," (verse 19) and the coming of some Greeks to seek Jesus. Their arrival marks the hour of Jesus' death. He prophesies that when he is lifted up on the cross, he will draw all people to himself (verses 20-32). The section concludes the "Book of Signs" with a tragic reflection on disbelief.

## The Book of Glory (13,1—20,31)

We already know that Jesus offers his life out of love; that Jesus' crucifixion is the moment of his exaltation and return to the Father; that this death is the source of eternal life for all who believe, and the manifestation of a new relationship between believers and God. The truth about Jesus' death lies in the revelation which occurs on the cross, not in the plots of Jesus' enemies.

### The Supper Discourses (13,1—17,26)

Jesus prepares the disciples for the events to come, as well as their future life as a community of believers. The footwashing not only reflects the "service" Jesus is about to perform in his death, it also sets a pattern for relationships among disciples. They are going to be the ones sent to represent Jesus and must follow the model given by their teacher (13,1-20). John has never let us forget that one of Jesus' disciples, Judas, does not really belong to Jesus. He is the agent of God's purpose even though he is in the grip of Satan (6,70f; 12,4-6; 13,2.11.21-30; 17,12). Throughout this section, the evangelist reminds us that the disciples only understood the

significance of what Jesus said and did after he had been glorified (13,7; 14,29; 16,4.25). As Judas is about to depart, a new character, the Beloved Disciple, appears in the narrative. He is closer to Jesus than any other disciple (13,23) and will show special insight into events of the passion and resurrection. The Johannine community revered the Beloved Disciple as the source of its tradition.

The discourses in 13,31—17,26 may have been composed as independent units. John 13,36—14,31 treats the disciples' grief, Jesus' departure and return, and the coming of the Advocate. Jesus also returns to the disciples as an indwelling presence along with the Father. John 16,4b-33 also deals with the disciples' grief, Jesus' departure and return, and the coming of the Advocate. It lacks the development of the return theme, however, as the mutual indwelling of Father and Son. John 15,1—16,4a encourages the disciples to remain united with Jesus, the true vine, and to love one another. This unity may be severely tested, since the disciples must also expect hatred, persecution, and even death from the world (15,18—16,4a). Finally, John 17,1-26 contains a prayer in which Jesus speaks to the Father about the disciples he is leaving behind. They are the evidence that Jesus has accomplished the task he was sent into the world to accomplish (17,6-11a). Left in the world, the disciples are no more "of the world" than Jesus, but without Jesus they require God's protection (17,13-19). As the Father sent him, so Jesus is sending the disciples into the world. The prayer looks beyond the immediate community of disciples to the community which will be the result of their preaching. Jesus expresses a vision of Christian community that runs throughout these discourses. The community is to express the love and unity that has its source in the love and unity that exists between the Father and the Son (17,20-26).

Mutual love and unity grounded in their vision of God are the focal points of the discourses. You may have noticed that the only explicit commandment given in the Fourth Gospel is the command to love one another (13,34f). This love expresses the love of God (14,21.23f;17,23) and of Jesus for "his own," which is about to be demonstrated on the cross (13,1; 14,21b; 15,11-15). These discourses also suggest that mutual love and unity will be severely tested. The disciples do not yet fully understand what Jesus has revealed to them. The Advocate, who comes from God, must continue the process of bringing understanding to the community (14,25f; 16,13-15). Hatred and persecution from outsiders may also take their toll, as the synagogue exclusion apparently did. The Advocate will help the disciples who have to stand trial (15,26f) and convict the world of its unrighteousness and sin (16,8-11). The community may not remain in the "name of God" which Jesus has revealed (17,11). If you read 1 John, you will see that the Johannine churches suffered serious internal divisions. These discourses remind us that Jesus' revelation of God's love is the foundation of Christian unity. Christians who follow this ideal face a hostile world in which their faithfulness to it only survives if they remember its source and persist in praying for the guidance of the Spirit necessary to achieve mutual love and unity.

## Jesus' Arrest, Crucifixion, and Resurrection (18,1—20,31)

Throughout the "hour," Jesus remains in complete control of his destiny. Jesus lays down his life; others do not take it from him. When Jesus identifies himself with the divine "I AM" all those who came to seize him fall to the ground (8,1-14). Jesus confronts his Jewish accusers with the evidence of his public teaching. He demands that they bring evidence against him, which they are unable to do (18,19-24). Jewish officials try to hand Jesus over to Pilate without

a formal charge (18,28-32). Consequently, the inquiry which Pilate conducts picks up the theme of kingship. We are hardly surprised by the dialogue that follows. Jesus both denies any earthly kingship and assents to the title "King of the Jews" (18,33-38). Nor are we surprised to find the soldiers' mockery turn Jesus into a king symbolically and to see Pilate present the "king" to the Jewish people (19,1-5).

When Jesus is presented as "king," the trial scene breaks into vicious hostility. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent but can only speak to the Jews and to Jesus with bitterness and sarcasm. He knows nothing about truth (18,38). Jesus does not accept Pilate's claim to authority (19,10f), but Pilate will bow to the threat of being denounced to Caesar and execute an innocent man. At the same time, he gains revenge on the Jews by insisting that the charge read "King of the Jews." The chief priests demonstrate how far away from God they are by proclaiming that they have no king but Caesar (19,12-22). The violent cruelty and bitterness of this scene show us what brute force and political power are like when those in power have no conscience of their responsibilities toward God. Pilate is only interested in asserting Roman power over the conquered Jews. The death of an obscure Galilean is of no concern to him. When we meditate on this passage, we should recognize that we have a responsibility to protest such abuses of power in our own world. We cannot stand by and permit innocent people to be brutalized and even killed to support tyrannical power.

Details of the crucifixion, which fulfill passages of Scripture, demonstrate that everything is happening according to God's plan (19,23f.28.33-37). Jesus provides for those faithful to him by entrusting his mother to the Beloved Disciple as "son" (19,25-27). Unlike the others crucified, whose legs were broken to hasten their death (19,31-33), Jesus departs to the Father as soon as his mission is accomplished (19,30).

Jesus' crucifixion and death are witnessed by friends and enemies alike. When Pilate releases the body to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus for burial, we know that Jesus has really died and been buried according to accepted customs (19,38-42). Consequently, Mary's reaction to discovering the tomb open is to conclude that "they" (possibly hostile Jewish authorities) have taken the body (20,1f). Though the Beloved Disciple arrives at the tomb first and is said to believe, all he and Peter discover is the grave wrappings in one pile and the face cloth rolled up in another place. John comments that they could not understand what had happened because they did not know the Scripture about Jesus' Resurrection (20,9).

Mary Magelene's encounter with the Risen Lord combines the old tradition of an angelic appearance to the women at the tomb, announcing the Resurrection, with the tradition that Jesus himself appeared to the women in the vicinity of the tomb (20,11-18; see Mt 28,1-10). As in the other tomb stories, Mary receives a message for the disciples. She is not to cling to the Lord but to announce Jesus' return to God. John's account puts the occurrence of all the events—Resurrection, ascent to the Father and bestowing the Spirit on the disciples—on Easter. When Jesus appears among the disciples, the marks on his body prove that the Risen Lord is the one who had been crucified. The disciples are now officially "sent" to the world as Jesus had been, and they receive the promised gift of the Spirit, a sign that Jesus' mission has been completed (7,39; 3,34). Forgiveness of sins as an activity of the Spirit within the Christian community (21,23) appears only here in the Gospel but is familiar from the synoptics (see Lk 24,47; Mt 18,18). 1 John presupposes some form of "forgiveness" available within the community (see 1 Jn 1,8—2,2; 5,16f).

John creates a second episode from the tradition of Thomas' doubt. The demand for

physical evidence is a sign of unbelief. Christians who have not seen and yet believed are the ones who are really blessed (20,28f).

## **Epilogue** (21,1-25).

This chapter seems to have been added to the Gospel by another hand sometime after its completion (see *New American Bible* Introduction). It elaborates on a tradition of Resurrection appearances in Galilee. The miraculous catch of fish has a parallel in the miracle associated with the calling of Peter in Luke 5,1-11. This chapter focuses upon the two heroes from the apostolic age: Peter, who inherited Jesus' role as shepherd, and the Beloved Disciple, who established the Johannine tradition. Peter had died a martyr's death. The Beloved Disciple lived a long time but has also died. Johannine Christians can look back upon that generation of disciples as faithful witnesses to Jesus.

## Things We have Learned from John

John has presented us with a unique story of Jesus. Instead of collecting sayings and parables in which Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God, the evangelist focuses our attention on the special relationship between Jesus and God. We need to remember this special relationship between Jesus and God, because we often slip into thinking of Jesus as though he were just another human religious leader. If we think that way, then Jesus becomes something of a "hero," who could just as easily be replaced by another person whose life and message seemed more inspiring at another time in our lives. We need to remember that Jesus is more than a great human being. Jesus is our revelation of God.

### Jesus Is the Unique Son of God

No one can come away from the Fourth Gospel without recognizing that Jesus is identified with God. The Prologue described that relationship as the "Word" which is always with God and through which God acts in the world. In the narrative, Jesus appears as the unique Son of the Father. The Son is the only one who can reveal the Father. Father and Son are united by a common love and the Son's obedience to everything the Father requires.

### Salvation Comes through Belief in the Son

Salvation, which John usually describes as eternal life, requires belief in Jesus as God's Son. It cannot be delivered by human institutions such as those the Jewish leaders think will provide security. Salvation consists in a new relationship to God through Jesus. This relationship is open to anyone to whom God has given the grace to believe in Jesus. Sometimes we meet evangelical Christians who tell us that unless we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and savior, we cannot be saved. They try to suggest that there is something wrong with the belief in Jesus that we have unless we go through the type of conversion experience typical of members of that church. Reading the Gospel of John makes it clear that anyone who believes that his or her salvation has come through the revelation that Jesus brought already has accepted Jesus as "lord and savior." That special relationship is what we mean when we talk about faith.

### Jesus' Death Expresses God's Love for Humanity

Jesus is not the victim of human injustice even though those who killed him were evil people. Jesus chose to offer his life for others so that they could see God's love revealed on the cross. When we see God's love on the cross, we are reminded that God identifies with the lowly, suffering people of the world by joining with them. God does not approve of the injustice that creates such suffering. Jesus reminded Pilate that his own death was an "offering," not the triumph of Pilate's power. Christians must look for ways of identifying with and helping the suffering, rather than expecting God to act through the powers of the world.

### Mutual Love and Unity in the Church Express the Love of God

The love shown by Christians is not simply an expression of a moral virtue. Christians always have the example of Jesus' love to follow. They also have the experience of the Father and Son dwelling in the community to inspire their efforts to achieve unity. P.P.

## Further Reading

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# ACTS □ READING GUIDE

[*See pages 184–227 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Acts continues the work that began with Luke's Gospel. The story that began with Jesus' life is not finished on Easter. God's plan requires another act: the gospel must spread beyond Jerusalem to all the peoples of the earth (Lk 24,47; Acts 1,8). People sometimes think that Luke was writing as a historian of early Christianity. You will see that he is not trying to chronicle all the events that happened. After Paul's mission to the Gentiles is established as part of God's plan, Luke no longer tells us anything about Peter. Take a peek at the closing verses of Acts (28,17-31). Paul is under house arrest in Rome where he is busy preaching to visitors. We never learn that Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome under Nero. We never even learn whether Paul received the trial for which he had come to Rome. Clearly, Acts is not intended to be a history of everything that happened in the church during a certain time period.

### A Story of God's Salvation

Acts has a somewhat unusual ending. One of the heroes is under arrest in Rome, and we never find out what happens to him. As soon as you read Paul's letter to the Romans, you find out that he was not the first missionary to reach Rome. There was an established Christian community

before he arrived (1,8-15). Paul mentions a number of people associated with that church at the end of the letter (16,1-16).

When you read Acts 18,2, you will find that Luke did know about these people. He mentions the fact that two famous missionaries, Aquila and Priscilla (see Rom 16,3f), had had to leave Italy when the Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome. Roman sources tell us that riots over the name of "Chrestus" had led to the emperor's action. This event may have taken place as early as 40 A.D. (see note to Acts 18,2). This example proves that Luke did not include in his story all of the events that occurred during the earliest years of the church.

Since Acts continues the story of the Gospel, the *New American Bible* Introduction speaks of it as "biblical history." It points out that biblical history is a special kind of narrative. The author wants to show us how God's plan of salvation worked out through special people and events. Most books that you might read on Acts will use the expression "salvation history" for this type of writing.

## Understanding Salvation History

How do we even know what God's plan is? You will see as you read the stories in Acts that even the disciples did not know what God intended. They had certain guideposts. The most important was what they knew about Jesus. Jesus had also told them in very general terms that a new stage in God's plan was about to unfold and that they would be an essential part of carrying it out. They also knew passages from the Old Testament that had helped them to understand how Jesus' life and death fitted into God's plan. Luke makes it very clear, however, that even with these resources the disciples would not have been able to figure out God's plan in advance. God intervenes through the Holy Spirit at the critical turning points in the story.

Though God's intervention is crucial to salvation history, human beings are not manipulated like puppets. You will notice that the disciples in the story have to figure out the significance of the unusual experiences that happen to them during their mission. They ask for further assistance from God in prayer. They also discuss the events which have occurred as they prepare to take new steps in preaching the gospel. Their ability to look back on past examples of God's action helps them understand what God is doing in the present. Sometimes they might even have taken the wrong step if God had not intervened. Acts 16,6-10 reports that the Spirit of Jesus actually caused Paul to change his travel plans in Asia Minor and then to go over to Greece. It was time for Paul to spread the word further to the west.

## The Plan of Salvation History in Acts

Perhaps you have figured out a way of understanding the end of Acts from this passage. The book shows a geographical plan for the spread of the gospel. We begin where the ministry of Jesus had ended, in Jerusalem. We move west until we come to the center of the empire that embraced the whole circle of the Mediterranean, Rome. By the end of the book, you will see that Christianity is no longer confined to the band of followers in Jerusalem. Christian churches dot the empire. Take a look at the map of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts. (See Map 14.) You will notice that Paul touches the major cities along the roads and sea routes of his time.

As you read through Acts, you will also notice another feature of the early mission. The disciples preach first to Jews and then to Gentiles. Apollos is active in the synagogues (Acts 18,26-28). Some of Luke's summaries refer to converts from both Jews and "Greeks," an

expression used for non-Jews, or Gentiles, rather than for persons of Greek descent (see Acts 18,10). But often the mission to non-Jews only begins when the Jewish audience in the synagogue turns against the missionaries (see Acts 13,44-52). Israel has first place in the plan of salvation. She receives another chance after the rejection of Jesus when the disciples begin to preach the gospel (see 3,11-26). The pattern of rejection by the Jews, followed by a more successful mission to the Gentiles, makes us aware that Acts represents a turning point in the story of salvation. The story of salvation had been the story of God's dealings with Israel. From now on, the story of salvation would involve God's dealings with all the peoples of the world. Luke's pattern of Jews first, then Gentiles, also reminds us that Christianity is indebted to Judaism. That link is not some cultural accident but part of the divine plan of salvation. The Catholic church has called upon Christians to acknowledge this common heritage by rejecting all forms of anti-Semitism. Through ecumenical discussions with Jewish believers, Catholics can come to appreciate the significant contribution that Jewish traditions have made to their own faith in God.

## Reading through Acts

Before you sit down to study Acts, read through the whole story. You will notice that there are some types of story that occur again and again. The apostles are put in jail. They must make speeches before various courts and officials. Sometimes God rescues them from jail or some other hostile action. Besides the legal speeches, Luke adds the drama of speeches that announce the gospel. The apostles frequently gain attention through miracles which they are able to work in Jesus' name. In other stories, the apostles challenge the religious beliefs, superstitions, and magical practices of the Gentiles. As the gospel moves out from Jerusalem, these dramatic episodes are fitted into a pattern of journeys.

### Acts as Entertainment

We have already seen that Acts tells the story of the early mission to make a religious point about God's plan of salvation. As Luke tells the story, he provides the reader with a number of entertaining incidents. The persecutions, trials, imprisonments, and journeys of the apostles all had their counterparts in novels which were popular during this period. The novels usually had a romantic theme rather than a religious one, but the comparisons remind us that Acts provides the reader with pleasure as well as instruction.

### Acts and the Early Community

You will also notice as you read through Acts that there appears to be great harmony among Christians in the early communities. We know from Paul's letters that the early churches were sometimes torn by dissent and often had to be encouraged by the apostle to demonstrate in their actions the love that Christians were to show one another.

Luke knows that the early communities were not always perfect. Acts shows us how the churches ought to live together. It even shows us how Christians should work out difficulties that they face. They are never to forget that their purpose is to thank God for the salvation they have received and to preach the same message to others. There is no place for the love of

money, for the jealousy, maliciousness, and deceitful behavior which those who persecute the apostles demonstrate.

## An Outline of Acts

***Preparation for the Christian Mission*** (1,1—2,13). This section includes all of the events between Easter and the first missionary sermon that Peter preaches on Pentecost.

*Waiting in Jerusalem* (1,1-14)
*Replacing Judas* (1,15-26)
*Coming of the Spirit* (2,1-13)

***The Mission in Jerusalem*** (2,14—8,3)

*Two Sermons by Peter* (2,14—3,26)
*Peter and John before the Sanhedrin* (4,1-31)
*Sharing Possessions in the Community* (4,31—5,16)
*Trial before the Sanhedrin* (5,17-42)
*Deacons for the Hellenists* (6,1-7)
*Trial and Death of the Deacon Stephen* (6,8—8,3)

***Mission in Judea and Samaria*** (8,4—9,43). The gospel begins to spread into areas around Jerusalem.

*Philip Preaches Outside Jerusalem* (8,4-40)
*Conversion of Paul* (9,1-30)
*The Church Continues to Grow* (9,31-43)

***Inauguration of the Gentile Mission*** (10,1—15,35). These chapters set the stage for the mission of Paul by showing that the Gentile mission began from Jerusalem itself.

*Conversion of Cornelius* (10,1—11,26)
*Continued Growth of the Church and Paul's First Missionary Journey* (11,27—14,28)
*Gentile Mission Confirmed by Leaders in Jerusalem* (15,1-35)

***Paul's Mission to the Ends of the Earth*** (15,36—28,31). Paul now fulfills the mission that God gave him by carrying the gospel throughout the Roman Empire from Jerusalem to Rome itself.

*Second Missionary Journey* (15,36—18,23)
*Third Missionary Journey* (18,24—21,14)
*Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Lengthy Imprisonment* (21,17—26,32)
*Paul's Journey to Rome* (27,1—28,31)

Now it is time to read through each section of Acts in detail. We will be looking to see how Luke describes the development of the early church. Even though the apostles do not always know where God is leading, they remain open to the Spirit. Even though the apostles experience hostility and some deaths, they never cease to tell people about Jesus. God has shown them that Jesus came to be the savior for all the nations of the world.

## The Preparation for the Christian Mission (1,1—2,13)

### Waiting in Jerusalem (1,1-14)

Acts continues the story which Luke's Gospel had ended with Easter (Lk 24,50-53). The New Testament refers to a number of different appearances by the Risen Lord (see 1 Cor 15,3-7). Jesus did not continue to appear to his disciples indefinitely. Nor did he remain with them

continuously as he had during his lifetime (see Jn 20,19-29). Luke has used the biblical number of forty to set a time frame for the appearance of the Lord (see note to Acts 1,3). He emphasizes that the risen Jesus is identical with the person who had died on the cross (verse 3a). Jesus' teaching during this period reflects what had already been taught during his ministry. The disciples must wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes on them as it had come on Jesus at the beginning of his mission (see Lk 3,22). This event will mark the transition to a new stage in salvation history, the age of the church. The Ascension scene (verses 6-12) marks a change in the idea of salvation history. Jesus is not going to heaven to receive the divine power to return to earth and reestablish the people of Israel. After receiving the Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples will become witnesses to Jesus throughout the world.

The apostles and other followers of Jesus, including his mother, Mary, and some other women, form the first community. Luke emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of the church. Gathering for prayer and celebration of the meal together is one pillar of the church. We will see that the other is charity toward the poor.

### Replacing Judas (1,15-26)

The number of apostles has to be restored to Twelve. This group did not become a permanent "office" or council in the early church. The Twelve represented the twelve tribes of Israel (see Lk 22,30). The church was to become the new Israel (see note to 1,26). By using lots to determine which of two candidates would take Judas's place, the early Christians are permitting God to have the final say in this decision. The qualifications for the candidates, that they followed Jesus from the beginning to the end of his ministry, reflect Luke's understanding of the apostles as the "witnesses" who guarantee the validity of the gospel that is being preached in the churches (see Lk 24,48; Acts 1,8). Luke also takes this occasion to repeat a legend about the death of Judas (verses 17-20). Peter uses Scripture to show that Judas's betrayal did not destroy God's plan. Judas's death reflects divine punishment for a person who has committed a blasphemous act against God. (A different legend about Judas's death appears in Mt 27,3-10.)

### Pentecost, the Coming of the Spirit (2,1-13)

Fire and strong winds are typical elements in appearances of God (see notes to 2,2f). The Greek translation of Isaiah 66,15.18 says of God's coming: "For behold the Lord will come as a fire . . . with a flame of fire . . . I am coming to gather all the nations and tongues." The new turn in salvation history represented by Acts shows us that God is gathering the "nations and tongues" into one church through the Christian mission. Luke makes Pentecost a double miracle. Not only does the Spirit inspire the disciples' speech, but persons from different nations are able to understand their message. Pentecost anticipates the goal of the missionary effort which the Spirit will inspire in the Church.

## The Mission in Jerusalem (2,14—8,3)

### Two Sermons by Peter (2,14—3,26)

The sermons Peter preaches to the Jewish people follow a similar pattern. Peter's Pentecost Sermon is the most famous (2,14-36). It begins by reminding us that Pentecost fulfills the expectations the prophets had for the end of the world. The world did not end, but God poured out the prophetic Spirit on chosen disciples. Peter uses several Old Testament quotations to

demonstrate that the risen Jesus is the Messiah whom God had promised. God has established the crucified Jesus as Lord and Christ in heaven (verse 36).

Peter's speech has a profound impact on the crowd. The universality of the Christian mission is represented by these converts from the distant corners of the earth. Baptism is the rite though which the new converts receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (2,37-41). Acts 2,42-47 describe the unity of the growing community. The fundamental elements of Christian community are presented: teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer.

Christians demonstrate their fellowship for one another by giving to the poor. We see that the early church made laws that forced people to sell all their property and live in monastic-like communities. Many Christians would continue to own property and practice their trade. In this the church was different from some other groups, like a Jewish sect called the Essenes, which did expect members to turn over property to the sect as a condition of joining. Ancient philosophers sometimes spoke of the ideal relationship between friends. In that relationship all things would be held in common. Acts shows us an early Christian community that spontaneously fulfills these ideals.

Luke frequently uses miracles to provide evidence for the faith that people should have in Jesus. The healing of a crippled man (3,1-10) provides the occasion for Peter's second speech (3,11-26). Once again the speech is a brief recitation of the salvation history which has been fulfilled in Jesus. God's promise to Abraham has been realized in Jesus (3,25f).

## Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (4,1-31)

This scene is the first of a number of "trial scenes" in Acts. A pattern is developed: (a) the miracle attracts attention; (b) the apostles teach those who have been attracted by the miracle; (c) arrest of the missionary by jealous (Jewish) officials; (d) trial of the missionary; (e) miraculous escape or vindication of the mission. At first, the trials are orderly. The judges take a moderate approach and only warn the disciples, but opposition to the Christian mission will increase until Stephen is murdered by an enraged mob. You will notice that the apostles never claim any miraculous powers for themselves. Miracles are done in the name of Jesus (verse 10). All of the miracles have some connection with the mission to spread the gospel. Acts 4,12 expresses the belief that motivates preaching the gospel throughout the world: "There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

The communal prayer that follows the apostles' release (4,23-31) shows that Christians never lost their confidence in God's power to rescue them from danger. What happened to Jesus, and will shortly happen to martyrs like Stephen, is not a defeat for Christians. God's plan for salvation can make use of such events. God responds to this prayer with a second "Pentecost": the Holy Spirit comes to all who are present.

## Sharing Possessions in the Community (4,32—5,16)

Luke elaborates on the theme of shared property. He first presents striking examples of generosity by persons who were willing to follow the sayings of Jesus that encouraged people to sell all and become disciples (see Lk 12,33; 16,9.11.13). The story of Ananias and Sapphira provides a somewhat comic illustration of what might happen to persons who attempt to pretend that they are following the example set by persons like Barnabas without genuinely desiring to help those in need. Once again, death is viewed as God's judgment against persons who have done

something blasphemous. They were not required to sell the property in order to be part of the community. The "sin" was in the attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit. Human beings can be taken in by such deceit, but God will always know what is in a person's heart. The episode should also remind us that we cannot "cheat" God. We may refuse to follow these examples of Christians helping those in need. We may even devise a scheme to appear to help the poor while keeping more for ourselves, but if we do we will have to answer to God.

## Trial before the Sanhedrin (5,17-42)

The miracles of the previous passage lead to jealousy and another imprisonment. This time we learn that no one could keep the apostles in jail if God wished them to continue preaching elsewhere. An angel takes them from prison to preach in the Temple area. This miraculous sign only enrages the opposition. Though the apostles will escape through the judicial prudence of Gamaliel, a Pharisee who demonstrates respect for God's plan (verse 39), some people are now angry enough to kill the apostles (verse 33).

## Deacons for the Hellenists (6,1-7)

This passage presents several difficulties, since it does not fit with what follows. The distinction between Hebrews and Hellenists seems to be based on an individual's "mother tongue." The "Hellenists" would be Jewish converts to Christianity who only spoke Greek. The description of the Seven as persons who would take care of the distribution of food so that the apostles could devote themselves to prayer and preaching suggests that the Seven were to be like deacons in the church at a later date. They must oversee the material arrangements and aid to the poor. Verse 6 describes the process, prayer and laying on of hands, by which persons were installed in offices in the church during Luke's time. In the next episode (verse 8) we learn that the most famous of the persons chosen engages in ministry of preaching like Peter and the other apostles.

## Trial and Death of Stephen (6,8—8,3)

This trial scene is the longest. Stephen will survey Israel's failures to respond to God's offer of salvation. His speech prepared for the mission to the Gentiles as it develops in the plot of Acts. Luke creates a link between Stephen and the hero of that mission, Paul, by picturing Paul, who tells us that he had persecuted the church out of zeal for ancestral tradition (see Gal 1,13; 1 Cor 15,9b; Phil 3,6), as a witness to Stephen's death (8,1). Paul refers to this event as an example of his initial hostility to Christianity during his first defense speech in Jerusalem (22,20). Luke also uses the Stephen episode to tie the emergence of a non-Jewish Christianity to the ministry of Jesus. The charges against Stephen (6,13f) are similar to those brought against Jesus. False witnesses testify that Stephen attacks the Temple and the Law and predicts that Jesus will destroy the Temple. The tradition that Jesus' predictions about the destruction of the Temple were brought into his Jewish trial is well established in the gospels (see Mk 14,58; Mt 26,61; Mk 15,29; Mt 27,40). Luke omits this detail from the appearance of Jesus before the Council and places it here.

Predictions that God will destroy a corrupt Temple to establish one that is a holy place appear in the prophets (see Jer 7,11; Zec 14,21; Mal 3,1; Is 56,7). The Jewish sect whose library was discovered near the Dead Sea, the Essenes, was severely critical of the corrupt priesthood and calendar used in the Temple. Unlike the Essene case, in which criticism stems

from a concern for more exact observance of the Law, the Stephen episode ties criticism of the Temple to an attack on the Law.

The same suspicions will be voiced against Paul (see 22,20f). Like Stephen, he will be seized on the grounds that he is attacking the Temple (= "this place") and the Law. Two further charges are made against Paul. He speaks against the Jewish people, and he has committed a sacrilegious act by bringing a Gentile into the area reserved for Jews (22,28). Luke makes it evident that Stephen and Paul are innocent of the charge of attacking the Law. Luke has shown that the Jerusalem Christians were constantly in the Temple praying. There is no basis for the accusations brought against either Stephen or Paul, just as there had been no basis for the charges against Jesus (see Lk 23,4f.13-15.22).

Many interpreters have suggested that Luke is using the trial scenes in Acts to defend Christianity against the suspicions of outsiders (see *New American Bible* Introduction to Acts). Political insurrection, disregard for ancestral traditions, and acts of impiety like defiling a temple were all terrible deeds, which could stir local as well as Roman officials to punish the perpetrators. The Roman authorities were particularly suspicious of groups that they thought might lead to rebellion among the peoples of the empire. At the same time, the Romans protected sacred places and traditional religious practices. Special edicts from the emperor prohibited local officials from taking advantage of their Jewish populace by seizing money collected for the Temple in Jerusalem, forcing Jews to appear in court on the Sabbath, and the like. Christians were particularly suspect, since their religious practices were not the traditions of an ancient people. Luke may be attempting to answer this objection by demonstrating that Christianity is the true heir of the Jewish tradition.

Stephen's speech (7,2-53) recites salvation history to indict Israel for failure to obey God's commands. Such a speech would not be out of place in a Jewish context. One of the rule books of the Essene sect, *The Damascus Document,* begins in a similar way. It concludes that because Israel had been unfaithful, even though she had suffered punishment for various misdeeds, God had taken the promises away from the nation as a whole. Only the small remnant of righteous Jews who made up the Essene sect will experience the blessings of salvation when the Messiah comes.

By reminding the audience of the evils which their ancestors committed in persecuting people sent by God (verses 51-53), Stephen infuriates the audience to the point where they not only kill him but initiate persecution against other Christians as well. That hostility will advance God's plan of salvation, since it scatters Christians outside Jerusalem (8,1). Stephen's vision of the risen Lord exalted in heaven recalls a saying that Mark reports Jesus had used at his Jewish trial (Mk 14,62). Such visions of the Son of Man usually carry overtones of divine judgment in the New Testament (compare Rv 1,7-18). As readers, we know that God will vindicate the faithful witness. You may have picked up another similarity between the death of Stephen and that of Jesus. Stephen dies peacefully with words of forgiveness on his lips (compare Lk 23,34.46). There is one important difference. Jesus had prayed to God, the Father. Stephen addresses his prayer to Jesus whom he has seen standing at God's right hand.

## Mission in Judea and Samaria (8,4—9,43)

### Philip Preaches outside Jerusalem (8,4-40)

The gospel begins to be spread outside Jerusalem to those who have some contact with Judaism: the Samaritans, who had their own version of the Law of Moses, and an Ethiopian, who was

already interested in the traditions of the Jewish people. Several Lucan themes appear in this section. Philip's instruction about Isaiah (8,30-35) shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of what is written in the prophets. Unlike the Jews who often respond to such arguments with deaf ears or hostility, the Ethiopian demonstrates the proper response: he becomes a disciple of Jesus by being baptized. This story also introduces a minor theme which some scholars consider part of Luke's apologetic task. Prominent people either become Christians, listen to the apostles' preaching with sympathy and often ask them to return, or provide some other form of assistance.

The conversion of the Samaritans and the conflict with Simon Magus introduce two more themes: the continuity of the new Christian mission with the Jerusalem apostolate and the superiority of Christianity to all forms of pagan superstition and religion. We have already seen that the gift of the Holy Spirit defines Christian baptism for Luke (Acts 2,38; 10,48), who contrasts Christian baptism with the water baptism of John the Baptist (Lk 3,16; Acts 1,5; 11,16; 18,25; 19,3f). Christians are baptized in the name of Jesus. Baptism involves forgiveness of the past sins of a life without God, as well as receiving the Spirit. Acts 8,16 departs from the normal pattern, since Philip has baptized in the name of the Lord, but his converts did not receive the Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem to lay hands on them (8,14-17).

This text has often been used as evidence to support the need for a second sacrament, confirmation, to confer the Spirit, or to support the Pentecostal claim that persons who have not experienced the Spirit coming over them are not yet fully Christian. Neither assertion represents the view that Luke presents in Acts. Episodes in which the Spirit is separated from water baptism reflect unusual occurrences, not the norm. In the conversion of Cornelius, the Spirit will indicate that God has accepted the new converts even before water baptism. Here, the separation between water baptism and receiving the Spirit allows Luke to show that the new mission takes place under the sponsorship of Jerusalem. Luke demonstrates that the Spirit always operates in and through the church.

The encounter with Simon Magus allows Luke to address another possible objection to Christianity. We have seen that Luke frequently uses miracle stories or references to miracle working to initiate interest in the Christian preaching. In antiquity, healings and other extraordinary events that occurred through assistance from a god or goddess might be called a miracle, but a hostile bystander might accuse the miracle worker of being nothing more than a magician. The contest between Moses and the magicians at Pharaoh's court (Ex 7,8f.12) provide a biblical pattern for evaluating magic. Though they may duplicate some of Moses' "miracles," no magician can duplicate or withstand the power which comes from the Lord. The Simon Magus incident demonstrates the power of Christianity to destroy such superstitions. Luke employs another common charge against religious charlatans, that they seek to gain money. He has already shown us that the Christian mission is not driven by desire for money. Christians sell and share possessions; they do not accumulate them (3,1-10).

## The Conversion of Paul (9,1-30)

Paul's conversion demonstrates God's power to use everything, even the hostile persecutor, to achieve the divine purpose. Paul, himself, tells us little about the call from God that transformed him from being an enemy of the Jesus movement to being its advocate (see Gal 1,11-24). Luke presents three versions of Paul's conversion (Acts 9,1-19; 22,4-16.17-21; 26,12-18), which differ from each other. Each of the four accounts serves an apologetic purpose. Paul's own in Galatians 1 belongs to an impassioned defense of his preaching to the Gentiles. He must show

that, in telling them they could be saved through belief in Jesus without also taking on obligations of the Jewish Law, he is not distorting the gospel or breaking agreements made with Jerusalem. Acts must vindicate Paul as the representative of God's offer of salvation to the Gentiles. The second two accounts of Paul's conversion occur in speeches that Paul gives while imprisoned in Jerusalem.

Luke's accounts share a core of details: (a) letters from the high priest; (b) Paul is approaching Damascus; (c) light from heaven shines around Paul [and in #3 around those with him]; (d) he [#3: we] falls to the ground; (e) hears a voice speaking to him [#3: in Hebrew]; (f) "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" [#3: "hard for you to kick against the goad"]; (f) asks identity of speaker; (g) "Jesus, whom you are persecuting." This core suggests a common story about Paul's conversion. After this point the three accounts diverge. Acts 9,12-16 expands on the theme of Paul's blindness. Ananias comes to Paul as "healer" (note the emphasis on the cure in verse 18). Acts 22,11a.12f gives a more abbreviated account, and Acts 26 omits these details altogether as it does the details about the actions of Paul's companions after the appearance, the visit of Ananias, and Paul's baptism. In Acts 9,16, the Lord tells Ananias of Paul's commission. In Acts 22,14f, Ananias gives the commission to Paul, but in 26,16b-18, Paul receives the commission directly from the Lord.

The blinding/healing sequence in Acts 9,12-19 suggests that the blinding of Paul is an act of God's displeasure similar to the temporary blindness God inflicts on the magician Elymas (Acts 13,9-11; see also the threat of divine punishment in Acts 8,22-24). Paul's own version and the later stories in Acts emphasize Paul's commission, but this plays no role in the narrative about Paul. God uses it as an argument to persuade Ananias to go to Paul. Acts 9,15 has been phrased so that it reflects the commission given the disciples in 1,8. The ensuing versions of the story will relate the commission to Paul's vision of Christ and to the details of his specific role in the Gentile mission as it has unfolded in Acts. Here, Luke uses the story of the miraculous conversion of the persecutor of Christianity to initiate the preparation for that global mission which is the subject of this section of the book.

### The Church Continues to Grow (9,31-43)

Luke concludes the section with two stories from Peter's mission. The healing of Tabitha follows the same pattern as Jesus' own healing of Talitha, Aramaic for "little girl" (see Mk 5,41; Lk 7,15). The period of peace and growth shows that the community has successfully weathered the storm of persecution that began with Stephen's martyrdom.

## Inauguration of the Gentile Mission (10,1—15,35)

### Conversion of Cornelius (10,1—11,26)

Before Paul can fulfill his role as one who carries the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, the leaders of the church must formally accept Gentiles into the Christian fellowship. The common meal was the basic expression of Christian unity. Paul reports an episode in which Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were unwilling to eat with the Gentile members of the Antioch church, presumably because they felt that such behavior would have violated the food laws that set Jews apart from other peoples. Paul says that before these people came, Peter himself was willing to share the meal with Gentile Christians, but that when the stricter Jewish Christians arrived, Peter, Barnabas, and other Jewish Christians began to celebrate a separate meal (see Gal 2,11-

14). Peter may have been attempting to preserve harmony in the church by not offending Jewish Christians who could not bring themselves to change a whole lifetime of kosher food laws. The story of how Peter came to accept Gentile converts, which Luke repeats here, bears traces of that old dispute. God must direct Peter, in a vision, to renounce his former understanding of what represented clean and unclean food.

Peter takes others with him to Cornelius's house so that he has witnesses to what has happened. His sermon acknowledges the fact that God is impartial. Anyone can receive salvation through Jesus if that person honors God and acts justly. The Spirit even demonstrates to Peter and the others that Gentiles are to be accepted into the church by granting Cornelius and his household a mini-Pentecost before they are baptized (10,44-48). Upon his return to Jerusalem, Peter gains official approval for his actions from the other leaders there. He reports everything that had happened in connection with the Cornelius episode so that those in Jerusalem agree that "God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too" (11,18).

The first church to include Jews and Gentiles in a single fellowship is founded by anonymous Christians in Antioch. Quickly, however, they obtain the services of two famous apostles, Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas is sent by the authorities in Jerusalem. He provides the link between Antioch and the foundation of the church in Jerusalem (11,19-26). Acts 11,26 also provides the note that the name "Christians" originated in Antioch. It appears that this name was first given to the followers of Jesus by outsiders. It may have implied some scorn for the leader whom Christians worshipped, as appears to be the case when Agrippa uses it in Acts 26,28.

## Paul's First Missionary Journey (11,27—14,28)

The missionary efforts of Barnabas and Paul illustrate one of the principles of Luke's account of salvation history. Jewish rejection of the gospel leads the apostles to turn to the Gentiles, who receive God's salvation with joy. Paul's letters contain a number of references to an offering from his Gentile churches which he took to Christians in Jerusalem (see Gal 2,10; 1 Cor 16,1-4; 2 Cor 8f). However, he does not deliver that collection until the final visit to Jerusalem (Rom 15,30-32). Many scholars think that Luke has confused that episode with another tradition about some form of famine relief that had been associated with the predictions of a Christian prophet (Acts 11,27-30).

The Jerusalem church suffers yet another round of persecution. We are told that James, the son of Zebedee, was martyred by the Jewish king and that Peter was imprisoned. He would have been executed if God had not intervened to rescue him from jail (Acts 12,1-19). Herod Agrippa suffers a tortured death as divine punishment for his impiety (12,20-24). A Jewish account of Herod's death has been preserved by the historian Josephus. His version agrees with Luke that Herod had accepted divine honors from his subjects and so been struck down. Josephus says, however, that the occasion was the celebration of athletic games at Caesarea. In ancient stories, being eaten by worms was a typical punishment for tyrants who despised the gods.

Paul's first missionary journey establishes the pattern of first preaching in Jewish synagogues and then turning to the Gentiles. Paul makes this principle explicit in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch (13,44-47). We have already seen that Luke wishes to show that Christianity is superior to pagan superstition. Paul overcomes a Jewish magician who had had influence with the Roman proconsul on Cyprus (13,4-12), and in keeping with Luke's interest in the conversion of prominent persons, the proconsul becomes a believer. At Lystra, Paul and Barnabas must

actually prevent the people from offering sacrifices to them as if they were pagan gods in human form (14,8-18). Throughout this journey the apostles are plagued by hostility from Jews at the same time that they receive warm receptions from the Gentiles.

### Gentile Mission Confirmed in Jerusalem (15,1-35)

All of these events prove to the leaders of the church that God does want them to accept Gentiles into the church. They must face the objections of Jewish Christians, however, who feel that to admit Gentiles without requiring them to observe the Law contradicts the whole story of God's covenant with Israel. They insisted that Jesus was the Messiah for those who sought to be faithful children of Abraham and followers of Moses. In addition to Acts, we have Paul's report of the council in Jerusalem (Gal 2,1-10). The two versions of the meeting in Jerusalem do not agree in many of their details. Some scholars think that Paul is referring to an earlier meeting. When the agreement to divide missionary efforts, with Peter going to Jews and Paul to Gentiles, failed to resolve the difficulties that arose in mixed churches like Antioch, another meeting was held. At that meeting some restrictions were laid on the Gentiles. They had to avoid idolatry, avoid meat that Jewish law would have considered impure, and marriages that Jewish law considered incestuous. The decree is mentioned again in Acts 21,25. The list of prohibitions is based on rules in Leviticus 17–18 that regulate the behavior of non-Jews who live among Jews. Adopting these rules would make it possible for Jewish and Gentile Christians to enjoy table fellowship.

Luke knew of a letter sent by James to Antioch that stated these rules. He presumed that they came from the same meeting at which Paul and Barnabas received authorization for a mission to the Gentiles that would not require the Gentiles to observe Jewish practices. Paul insists that there were no rules imposed on the Gentiles (Gal 2,6). By Luke's time, the problem of table fellowship had disappeared, as most churches were predominantly Gentile. The significance of the Jerusalem Council lies in the way in which church leaders were able to recognize and officially affirm the new direction in salvation history that would permit expansion of the gospel beyond the nation and culture in which it was born to all peoples of the earth.

## The Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth (15,36—28,31)

### Second Missionary Journey (15,36—18,23)

Paul now begins the journeys that will take the gospel throughout the rest of the empire. On this journey, he will take the decisive step of crossing from Asia Minor into Greece, where some of the most important Pauline churches would be founded. The New Testament contains Paul's own letters to churches in Thessalonica, Philippi, and Corinth. When Paul arrives in Europe, the narrative style suddenly changes from the third person to the first person "we." Sections of journey narrative in the "we style" appear throughout the rest of Acts (16,6-12 [beginning of the European mission]; 20,1-7.13-16; 21,1-9.15-17 [last journey to Jerusalem]; 27,1—28,16 [voyage to Rome]). Older scholarship attributed the "we" sections to a travel diary kept by a companion of Paul. However, there is no significant difference in content between these sections and the journeys that Luke created earlier by putting together episodes that had occurred during the Pauline mission. Scholars today recognize that a shift into the first person plural was often used by ancient authors for its literary effect. This change in style may represent Luke's way of telling us that we have now arrived at the mission for which the rest of the

narrative has prepared us. The gospel is to be taken completely beyond Judaism. In time these Gentile Christians will be the sole custodians of the tradition of salvation history, which God has been preparing since Abraham. It will be their responsibility to see to it that the gospel continues to be preached in all the nations of the earth.

A dream vision takes Paul into Macedonia (16,6-16). Dream visions were frequently cited as the source of divine guidance in the ancient world. Paul's first major foundation is at Philippi, a Roman colony that enjoyed the rights of an Italian city. Paul's letter to the Philippians indicates that he enjoyed close relationships with this church. They sent assistance to Paul when he was imprisoned or working in other areas, and both men and women from the Philippian church worked as missionaries preaching the gospel to others (see Phil 1,14; 4,2f). Acts does not contain much information about the extensive periods of time that Paul lived in communities like Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Nor does Luke refer to persons and issues mentioned in Paul's letters to those churches. There is no evidence in Acts that Luke was familiar with any of Paul's letters. If he had accompanied Paul on some part of his missionary work (see Phlm 24; Col 4,14), Luke cannot have been involved in the major events of Paul's mission in the way that Timothy, Titus, and Silvanus were.

Luke appears to have drawn upon anecdotal material for the major events in each of the cities. He then shapes that material to illustrate his understanding of the growth of the early church. The Philippi episode repeats themes that we have already encountered. Christian preaching is well received by wealthy, respectable citizens, in this case a woman, Lydia, who trades in purple cloth (16,12-15). Christianity triumphs over pagan superstition and exploitation of the supernatural for personal gain when Paul exorcises the demon from a slave girl (16,16-18). Like the demons in the gospel stories (see Lk 4,31-37), this demon recognizes the purpose for which the apostles have come.

Jealousy and lost profits once again fuel false charges against the apostles as persons who incite disorder and destroy ancestral customs. The real opponents of Roman order are the accusers, who stir up the mob with the charges, and the magistrates who violate Roman law by flogging a Roman citizen. In this case, another miraculous deliverance from prison permits a dramatic conclusion in which the apostle confronts the magistrates with the illegality of their own behavior (16,19-39). It also provides an opportunity for the gospel to be heard by the jailer and his household. We have evidence from Paul's own letters that his preaching in prison resulted in converts (see Philemon).

The episodes at Thessalonica (17,1-9) and Beroea (17,10-15) repeat the patterns of the Philippi episode. Initial success, including prominent converts, leads to jealousy and charges that the apostles are destroying public order and encouraging revolt against Rome. Luke's reader already knows that such accusations are false and that hostility will not impede the apostles' mission.

Paul tells us nothing of his stay in Athens except that he remained there alone after sending Timothy to strengthen the faith of the recent converts in Thessalonica (1 Thes 3,1f). Paul may not have succeeded in establishing a church there. Luke, however, uses the occasion to advance his case for the religious superiority of Christianity by showing it to be equal to the philosophical understanding of the divine principle governing the universe and not another form of religious cult, magic, or superstition that sought to sway the masses for the financial gain of its preachers. Its reputation was built on its philosophic schools. Luke refers to the two most popular types of philosophy among the Romans, Epicurean and Stoic (17,18-21). The speech which Paul delivers

at their request (17,22-34) touches on common themes in the philosophical account of religion, which was opposed to the superstitious beliefs about the gods found among the masses. God, the invisible, omnipresent creator and sustainer of the universe, is not swayed by rituals or partial to one group of people over another. Hellenistic Jews had also taken over the language of philosophical monotheism to advocate the superiority of their religious tradition.

Athenians were well known both for their piety and their curiosity. Following the practice of ancient rhetoric the speech opens by seeking to render the audience friendly to the speaker. Paul praises them for these traits. In composing the speech, Luke has apparently modified a common type of altar inscription, ". . . altars of the gods, named unknown, and heroes . . ." to the singular (verse 23). Paul then develops three claims about God that were philosophic commonplaces among both pagan and Jewish authors: (a) God is the creator of the entire universe and consequently has no need of human service or temples (verses 24f); (b) God has allotted certain zones of the earth for the nations of human beings, who should be grateful for God's ordering of the universe and seek to serve God, who sustains and is present to all created things (verses 26-28); (c) true worship of God will reject all superstitious practices such as identifying the creator with the products of human artistry and imagination (verse 29).

The conclusion shifts from the common ground between the Christian preacher and philosophical enlightenment to an appeal for conversion (verses 30f). It recalls the "unknown" taken from the altar inscriptions which had served as an example of Athenian piety in verse 24. Inscriptions to unknown deities are a feature of polytheism, since they point to an anxiety to honor deities who might influence events but who are not "named" in the local traditions. Now is the time for a true monotheism. God is not an abstract, creative, sustaining principle, called by many names in the different nations. God is the one who calls on Paul's listeners to repent (= abandon even their philosophical paganism) and accept the message about Jesus as the one in whom all the nations of the earth are to receive salvation. As was the case in earlier missionary speeches, the resurrection appears as God's evidence for the status of Jesus as judge of all. This departure from the common ground with philosophical theism, however, only draws skepticism or, at best, a puzzled willingness to hear more. The church-founding conversions of other missionary episodes do not occur.

Luke's account of Paul's extensive work in Corinth (18,1-17) refers to the fact that Paul worked at his trade while preaching there, as he did in all of his churches (see 1 Thes 2,9; 1 Cor 4,12; 9), and supplies the additional information that his trade was that of "tentmaker," probably someone who made leather tents and other items such as harnesses. It mentions two of Paul's close associates from that mission, Priscilla and Aquila (1 Cor 16,19; Rom 16,3). Luke also tells the story of their instruction of Apollos (18,24-28), whose apostolic work in Corinth Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 1—4. Luke's brief account of the founding follows the line he has already established: after success in attracting influential persons, hostility from the Jews forces the apostle to turn to the Gentiles. They bring Paul before the Roman proconsul, Gallio, who refuses to hear a charge involving Jewish religious law. Gallio's response (verse 14f) reflects what Luke considers to be the ideal response when Christians accused of disturbances which are internal Jewish affairs are brought before officials. His reference to Priscilla and Aquila's suffering exile from Rome (18,2) indicates that he knows that Romans often responded differently to disputes that Christian preaching generated within the Jewish community. Gallio's indifference is demonstrated in "burlesque" fashion—that is, by exaggerated and stereotyped

actions—in verse 17. He remains indifferent when they beat Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, before his tribunal.

## Third Missionary Journey (18,24—21,14)

This section of Acts builds on episodes about the Christian mission in Ephesus, which was the residence of the governor of the province of Asia and the fourth largest city in the empire. Ephesus was also the location of a famous temple of the goddess Artemis, which was one of the wonders of the hellenistic world. Silver coins from the city depict the temple with the statue of the goddess inside. Paul's confrontation with that cult occupies most of the account of his mission there (19,8-41). Later Paul delivers his farewell speech to leaders of the church in Ephesus (20,17-38). Luke's emphasis on Ephesus may have led him to locate two episodes there that would seem to have been originally independent traditions: (a) the instruction of Apollos, who had received only the baptism of John (18,24-28) and (b) the conferring of the Spirit on persons who had received only the baptism of John (19,1-7). Luke's account assumes that Priscilla and Aquila have moved to Ephesus from Corinth and that Ephesian Christians urged Apollos to go to Corinth. Luke seems to assume that Apollos and Paul had not met (19,1), though Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus or its environs and says that Apollos was unwilling to return to Corinth (1 Cor 16,8.12). Though Apollos had only received John's baptism, he is not rebaptized. Priscilla and Aquila are able to bring persons into full Christian discipleship. Yet, the disciples of 19,1-7 have not even heard of the Holy Spirit! Scholars have suggested that this episode would be more appropriate in the area of Syro-Palestine where Jewish baptismal sects would continue to exist well into the third century.

The episode is similar to one in which Peter and John confer the Spirit on Samaritan converts (8,14-25). It serves two functions in Luke's schema for the expanding mission: (a) it shows that Paul is able to win over Jewish sectarians, and (b) it demonstrates the continuity between the Pauline mission and the activity of the Jerusalem church. He brings persons into the community which the Holy Spirit has been creating through the apostles since Pentecost.

Paul's mission in Ephesus is the last example of Pauline activity that is not shadowed by the coming events at Jerusalem. Luke's summary continues the pattern of synagogue preaching followed by withdrawal to a Gentile environment. Miracles draw attention to the new movement. They also demonstrate the power of Christianity to destroy superstition and magical practices among the people (19,8-20). The success of Christian preaching, however, awakens hostility from persons who exploit the presence of the temple of Artemis. Demetrius's speech (see verse 26) to his fellow silversmiths alludes to the speech of Acts 17,24f. Christian preaching teaches people that human temples and artifacts do not represent God. As had been the case in earlier conflicts with magicians, fears for the economic loss that would result if people accepted the Christian gospel underlie the hostility. As in the Gallio case, the local town clerk refuses to become involved. The Christians have not committed any impious acts such as robbing the temple or dishonoring the goddess. Demetrius is the one who is endangering public order by inciting the crowds.

This conclusion seems to represent an ideal rather than reality. As Luke fills out the rest of the journey with brief notices of stops and miracles performed by the apostle (20,1-16), he makes it appear that Paul left Ephesus of his own volition and that he avoided returning there in order to save time needed to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (20,16). Yet the summons to the

officials of the church in Ephesus for a farewell meeting at Miletus (20,17f) suggests that in fact Paul may have been banished from Ephesus. Paul's obscure reference to conflict in Ephesus (see 1 Cor 15,32a) implies that at one time he suffered imprisonment or punishment there.

Paul's farewell to the Ephesians (20,17-35) provides the occasion for Luke to reflect on the transition from the generation of the apostles to the church of his own day. The farewell speech of the dying patriarch was an established genre in hellenistic Jewish writing. The Old Testament contains a farewell speech from Moses to Israel (Dt 29–32). In such speeches, the dying patriarch exhorts his offspring to follow the Law, anticipates their future disobedience (in most cases), and sets before them the example of his own life. Moses also provides for the future leadership of the people by appointing Joshua as his successor. You can see that Luke has incorporated many of these elements in this speech. The Spirit has been warning Paul that he faces imprisonment and hardship in Jerusalem. He holds up his own life as an exemplary model of complete devotion to bearing witness to the gospel no matter what the circumstances. Unlike the pagans, who sought to enrich themselves from the superstitions of the people, Paul has never sought money from his converts. He commends his own example of working at a trade, not only because it frees the apostle and his associates from suspicion of greed, but also because it provides the opportunity to give aid to the weak (verse 35). Thus we find Paul's final word of admonition returning to the example which the earliest Jerusalem community had set. Christians donate their property for support of the poor.

The farewell speech, however, is also the time to look from the ideal of the past into the dangers of the future. Paul warns of divisions even within the ranks of the community's leaders. He admonishes the presbyters and "overseers" (verse 28; see Phil 1,1), who have charge of the community left behind by the apostles, to watch over themselves as well as the church. They must continue proclaiming the gospel and exhorting others to faith and repentance. In Luke's narrative we have now seen the completion of the apostolic period. Officials from local churches, who are called "elders" or "overseers," must take over the community. These persons have been appointed by apostles and commissioned by imposition of hands (14,23). In that sense, they appear as successors to the apostles. But just as Joshua could not be another Moses, so they are not replacement apostles. The Spirit that has guided the church throughout the developments of the apostolic period must continue to direct her course.

Paul's dedication to his mission, even in the face of sure suffering, leads him to continue the journey despite explicit warnings from the Spirit (21,4). Even the Christian prophet Agabus, whom we know to be reliable because he predicted the famine under Claudius (see 11,28) warns Paul that in Jerusalem the Jews will bind him and hand him over to the Romans. See what Paul himself wrote to the Romans just before he left for Jerusalem (Rom 15,31). He was concerned about what he might suffer from unbelievers as well as the fact that the Jewish Christian church might reject the offering that he brings.

## Paul's Arrest and Imprisonment at Jerusalem (21,15—26,32)

As soon as Paul arrives in Jerusalem, James warns him that devout Jewish Christians suspect Paul of leading Christians who are Jewish away from their ancestral traditions. James proposes that Paul demonstrate his own piety by paying the expenses for some persons who had taken a private vow. Ironically, Paul's participation in these rites leads to his arrest. We have already seen that the charges against him for turning people against the Law and the Temple were anticipated in the story of Stephen's martyrdom. Luke uses the situation of Paul's imprisonment

in Jerusalem to provide speeches in which Paul defends and explains his mission. His first speech to the Jerusalem crowd (22,1-21) points to the extreme piety of his early life. Only the direct intervention of God could change Paul's behavior. Paul refers to his conversion as evidence for God's direction of his life and ministry. This theme is underlined by the second Christophany (coming of Christ; 22,17-21).

During his imprisonment at Philippi, Paul said nothing about his Roman citizenship until after he had been flogged (16,37). Here he stops the Roman commander as he is about to interrogate Paul under torture (22,25-29). Though Paul is able to stall the Sanhedrin by pitting the Pharisees against the Sadducees, the Romans must intervene by moving Paul to Caesarea under heavy guard (Acts 23). With the transfer to Caesarea, Paul is now in Roman hands. However sympathetically they listen to Paul's preaching, the Roman authorities take no steps to gain his release. Paul's first speech before Felix defends the Jewish character of his own personal conduct (24,10-21). He remains in prison through a change in the Roman administration of the province. The Jews hope that the new procurator will turn Paul over to them. Faced with the possibility that he might be tried in Jerusalem, Paul invokes the ultimate privilege of a Roman citizen, the right to be heard by a court in Rome itself (25,1-12). The Roman procurator repeats the details of Paul's situation to the visiting Jewish king, Herod Agrippa II. Festus clearly understands that Paul has not been charged with any crime under Roman law. At best, the squabble concerns points of Jewish law. Since Agrippa is curious about Paul, Felix arranges for a final speech by the apostle (26,1-23). Paul defends himself by repeating the circumstances of his life as a devout Jew who was converted by a divine vision which no one could ignore. In this account of Paul's conversion, Luke focuses upon the divine commission to be a missionary to the Gentiles (26,16-18). After the hearing, both Festus and Agrippa agree that Paul is innocent. Luke may be following the pattern set out in Jesus' trial. Pilate and Herod both agree that Jesus is innocent. But Paul cannot be released, since he has demanded a hearing in the imperial court (26,30-32).

## Paul's Journey to Rome (27,1—28,31)

We have already seen that the conclusion of Acts, in which Paul is preaching the gospel at Rome, though under house arrest (28,17-31), brings Luke's plot to a climax. The gospel has reached the capital of the civilized world. Luke's account of how Paul came to Rome makes use of another type of ancient adventure story, the sea voyage. Such voyages frequently included descriptions of how the hero escaped from shipwreck, pirates, and other such dangers. The story of Paul's journey is told with all the high drama of such tales. During the vicious storm that destroys the ship and has the survivors washed up on the beach at Malta, Paul demonstrates his own confidence in God and superiority to the fears of the ship's crew. Paul is even able to celebrate a meal of bread which he has blessed (27,35f). The wording reminds Christians of the Eucharist (note to 27,35). It is impossible to sail across the Mediterranean in winter so the group is forced to stay on Malta. The episode associated with that stay includes the drama of native peoples watching the shipwrecked party. When Paul is unharmed by a poisonous snake, they conclude that he must be a god (28,3-6). Paul wins more friends on the island by healing the sick so that they are provided with everything needed to continue the journey (verses 7-10). Although clearly narrated with an eye toward entertaining the reader, the Malta story also points out that God will provide whatever is necessary for the apostle to fulfill his mission. The

superstitious pagans had ignored Paul's prophetic warning that attempting to sail so close to winter would destroy both ship and cargo. The island natives thought that the snake was divine punishment for some evil Paul had committed until they saw that he escaped unharmed. In each case, the apostle comes through the threat to his life because he places all of his trust in the Lord.

## Things We have Learned from Acts

Now that we have finished reading through Acts, we should take some time to reflect on the impact of the narrative as a whole. Luke has made striking use of traditions he inherited about the apostles, a scheme of salvation history and the art of storytelling to instruct us about the development of God's plan of salvation in the apostolic age.

### Judaism is the Inherited Tradition of the Church

The church developed according to a divine plan of salvation which remains rooted in the experiences of Israel. When God led the church to turn toward the Gentiles, this heritage was not forgotten though it was no longer necessary for a person to be culturally and legally a Jew in order to experience salvation.

### God Seeks the Salvation of all the Peoples on Earth

Acts shows us that the apostles had to venture beyond their own Jewish culture in order to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Though they found this task difficult, since it often resulted in hostility from fellow Jews, all the apostles accepted this growth toward becoming a truly universal church as an expression of God's will. The task is not over. The church still must venture into other lands and cultures to fulfill the mission which is hers until the end of time: to bear witness to the gospel everywhere.

### The Church is a Spirit-guided Institution

You will notice that in Acts the Spirit works in and through the official leaders and structures of the community. Developments like the admission of Gentiles were clearly difficult adjustments, but we see that the leaders of the community in Jerusalem eventually come to express what is the will of God. Further, as the apostle Paul leaves the scene, he has established "elders" or "overseers" in his churches. It is necessary that persons be designated as leaders now that the apostolic age has passed. Though many people think that an institution can never be the vehicle for the Spirit, Acts insists that the church is such a vehicle.

### Christians Must be Willing to Suffer for the Gospel

Since the apostles overcome the sufferings and imprisonments they face, we may forget how relentless the onset of hostility is. No form of suffering causes any of the apostles to stray from the mission given by God and cease to proclaim the gospel. There is no instance in which preaching the gospel does not awaken some form of resistance.

### The Christian Fellowship Has Special Marks of its Identity

Luke has presented us with ideal pictures of what the church should be. We see the harmonious gathering of diverse peoples for prayer, preaching by the apostles, and community meals. We

also see a community in which concern for the weak and needy is one of the most important parts of its communal life.

### The Church Calls People to Religious Conversion

Because the church preaches religious conversion, it comes into conflict with all forms of pseudoreligion and superstition. Magical practices have no place in Christian life, nor do movements that use the religious sentiments of the masses to collect money from those who are taken in by the propaganda of such false cults. Christians give their resources to help those in need. They speak out against any false idea of God that would require buildings and other material goods for God or God's servants. Christians remain loyal to the basic institutions of their society even when those institutions seem to be used against them by persons who do not like the criticism of false beliefs and behavior that comes from the gospel. P.P.

## Further Reading

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# PAUL AND HIS WRITINGS

MARY ANN GETTY

Paul was born in Tarsus, a city on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, in what is now Turkey, around A.D. 10. He was a Roman citizen from birth, a status which carried certain privileges. He was, as is evident from his writings, well educated in the Greek language. He also had a good education as a Pharisee, that is, a Jew of strict observance. Luke has him say that he studied with Gamaliel, a renowned rabbi (Acts 22,3), but none of Paul's letters make this claim. Nevertheless, Paul was so zealous for the Jewish Law before his conversion that he persecuted those who, he believed, had strayed from the Law by believing that Jesus was the Christ.

After experiencing a revelation from God, however, Paul (then named Saul) himself became a Christian in about A.D. 34. To mark what he considered his totally new understanding, he changed his name to Paul. He firmly believed that his conversion included a call to preach the Christian message of salvation to all people, including the Gentiles. Paul spent the rest of his life, about thirty years, in pursuit of this mission. After spending some time in retreat and study, he undertook three missionary journeys (see Map 14). During the last of these journeys, he met with increasing opposition from some Jewish leaders and the Roman government, and was arrested and brought to Rome around A.D. 60. Between A.D. 48 and his death around A.D. 62, Paul wrote letters to communities with which he had worked, answering their questions and preaching the gospel.

## Sources

We learn about Paul's life from his own letters and from Luke's account in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Acts 9,1-30; 11,1—28,31). There are some discrepancies between what Paul says and what Luke records about certain incidents of Paul's career: for example, Luke and Paul do not agree about whether the Council of Jerusalem, around A.D. 50, stipulated that the Gentiles should keep some aspects of the Jewish Law (see Acts 15 and Galatians 2,1-10). We must remember that when Luke writes about Paul's life, his account is a secondary source: it was written more than a generation after Paul (about A.D. 85), at a time when the major issue of non-Jewish converts had long been settled. Luke minimizes the tensions involved in integrating the Gentiles into the church.

## The Epistles of Paul

There are thirteen letters or epistles ascribed to Paul. But most commentators recognize only seven of these as definitely written by the apostle; the others are attributed to disciples of Paul. The seven letters certainly written by Paul himself are Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, First Thessalonians and Philemon. The remaining six letters (that is, Ephesians, Colossians, Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, and Titus) are called "deutero-Pauline." For various reasons commentators believe that these six letters were not actually written by Paul but instead were written by later Christians familiar with his teachings. Disciples could have claimed to be writing in Paul's name in order to gain authority for their own adaptations of his teaching, an accepted practice among the ancients. In the New Testament, the Pauline writings are arranged in two groups: first, letters to communities; second, letters to individuals. Within each group they run roughly from the longest to the shortest. The letters are not arranged in the order in which they were written.

## Letters and Epistles

Paul's letters follow the fairly simple structure of a letter in Greek or Roman culture. Such letters were not placed in envelopes, so the address is given right at the start. Then follows the body of the letter; finally, the conclusion contains personal greetings and instructions. Some scholars have suggested a distinction between more formal, systematic "epistles" and informal "letters." Romans is a good example of a formal epistle, whereas Philemon or Titus would be a good example of an informal letter. Many interpreters have also noted a fundamental structure discernible in many of Paul's writings, but most clear in Romans. Paul first outlines his most basic teachings in a section sometimes called the doctrinal or "indicative" part. This is followed by an application of these teachings in Paul's exhortations to the community, a section called the "imperative" or "paraenetical" (that is, exhortatory) part of the body of the letter.

## The Apostle and His Gospel

Much of the Christian vocabulary we have become so familiar with and associate with the ministry of Jesus actually originated with Paul. For example, Paul was the first to coin a Christian meaning for the words "apostle," "gospel," and many doctrinal phrases such as "justification by faith." As the first Christian writer, Paul began to develop specifically Christian terminology, even though many of the terms he uses will have roots in Judaism, or other meanings in secular Greek.

As the *New American Bible* general introduction notes, Paul's writings predate any of our written Gospels (New Testament Letters, p. 228). Paul is the first to speak about preaching the "gospel," although he does not conceive this as a narrative story about the life and ministry of Jesus. The idea of the "gospel," which appears even in the Old Testament (see, for example, Is 61,1-2, "glad tidings") means the "good news." For Paul this is the message of salvation now accessible to all through faith in Jesus Christ. In Romans, Paul describes the gospel as the "power of God" to save all who believe (Rom 1,16). Thus, Paul does not think of the gospel as a story of the events in Jesus' life, nor even as a set of beliefs about Jesus. Rather, the gospel is the "good news" that all who believe in Jesus are already saved.

Paul rarely speaks of any actions or words of Jesus during his lifetime. Rather, Paul focuses on God's power, working through the death and resurrection of Jesus, to save Jews and Greeks (that is, all people) alike. While reading Paul it is well to remember that for him the term "gospel" means the proclamation of faith in God's forgiveness or the realization in human life of the "good news" that Jesus Christ has come to bring salvation to all people.

In his writings, Paul usually identifies himself as an "apostle" (Rom 1,1; 11,13; 1 Cor 1,1; 4,9; 9,1f.5; 15,9; 2 Cor 1,1; 11,5.13; 12,11.12; et al). The term "apostle" literally means "one sent," who represents the sender and is entrusted with his authority and message. God is the Source of Paul's apostleship.

## The Letters and the Liturgy

Paul encouraged the communities he addressed to read and reflect on his instructions when they gathered for the liturgy. The apostle's authority was in his example. It became real when the community as a whole discerned Paul's meaning and decided on the actions which they as believers should derive from Paul's words. In his letters, Paul teaches, exhorts, encourages, and corrects. The communities reverenced his instructions, reading and preserving them. They circulated these letters, sharing them with other communities. In this way the letters themselves gained the authority of Christian scriptures. And the communities were increasingly strengthened, formed, and informed by a common tradition. From Paul's writings we can get a picture of how the early church operated, how it worshipped and governed itself, and how it grew.

# ROMANS ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 228–251 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The appearance of Romans at the beginning of the New Testament letters is appropriate not only because it is the longest of Paul's letters but also because it may very well be his most important work. Romans has always held a special place among Paul's writings. Especially since the time of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the importance of the doctrine of "justification by faith," which Paul develops in Romans (and, in a more succinct version, in Galatians) has been recognized by Catholics and Protestants alike as one of the most significant teachings of Paul and, in fact, of Christianity.

### Paul and the Roman Christians

Several unique characteristics of Romans distinguish this letter from the other writings of Paul. In this letter, Paul addresses a church he has not founded. He writes because he seeks the Romans' acceptance and help. Before fulfilling his desire to come to Rome on the way to Spain (cf. Rom 15,22-33), Paul must first deliver the collection of money from the Gentile churches for the "poor saints of Jerusalem" (15,26), who have been suffering from a famine. When this is delivered, his sights will be set for Rome.

So it is that both the Jewish mission field represented by the church in Jerusalem and the open-ended Gentile mission represented by Rome and Spain are on Paul's mind as he writes this

letter. Paul is concerned about unity among Christians. Although he has not founded the Roman church he refers to the common faith he shares with believers there. He regards the Christians of Rome as "brothers." He stresses the common fund of teaching from which both he and they draw. The issues of community in faith and of reconciliation permeate all of Romans and contribute to its perennial appeal to believers of every age.

Except for Chapter 16, which may have been added later (cf. below, our commentary on this chapter and the notes of the *New American Bible*), Romans lacks the personal tone characteristic of most of Paul's letters. Some manuscripts omit the words "in Rome" in 1,7 and 15. Without this designation and the greetings of Chapter 16, Romans might be considered as a circular letter, a general development of Paul's most basic theological ideas. In Romans, Paul expounds upon universal salvation, upon the notion of justification by faith, and the relationship between Israel and the church as transformed by Christ. These are some of the most important and generally applicable aspects of all of Paul's theology. The general nature and universal applicability of the content of Romans contribute to its wide appeal as an introduction to Paul.

### Romans as "Diatribe"

More than any other Pauline writing, Romans is like a formal treatise, a summary of Paul's theology that serves both as a self-introduction to a community not yet personally acquainted with Paul and as a summary for the message Paul preaches. Even though Romans has the formal features of an epistle, it can also be understood as a philosophical diatribe, a written exposé that tries to anticipate real or supposed objections or rebuttal. The diatribe, used by some ancient philosophers in teaching and writing, often interjected traces of dialogue in order to answer questions expected of opponents. For example, Paul brings his arguments forward by interspersing throughout Romans such rhetorical questions as "What advantage is there then in being a Jew?" (3,1) or "Well, then, are we better off?" (3,9) or "What then can we say that Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh?" (4,1). Thus, in comparison to Paul's other works, Romans is structured more as a philosophical treatise. The other letters reflect more the give and take of real dialogue among people actually working and interacting together.

## Working Through Romans

In Romans' first section (Chapters 1 to 11), Paul describes his view of Christian life. He develops his teaching that justification by faith is already given in Christ and describes the life of freedom from sin, death, and the law (1–8). Paul then struggles with the issue of Israel's disbelief (9–11). In a second major section (Chapters 12,1—15,13), Paul derives some ethical conclusions of "imperatives" from these teachings. This "indicative-imperative" structure, characteristic of many of Paul's writings (see the general introduction to Paul, above), is most clearly observed in Romans.

The typical Greco-Roman letter form applied to Romans yields the following divisions: the *address,* consisting of a greeting and a thanksgiving, is contained in Rom 1,1-15; the *body* of the letter comprises 1,16—15,13. It contains the essential message of Paul, basically following the "indicative-imperative" structure noted above; the *conclusion* in 15,14—16,27 contains Paul's travelogue, his personal greetings, and a final doxology.

A working outine of Romans follows:

I The Address (Rom 1,1-15)
II The Body of the Letter (1,16—15,13)
A. The Theme (1,16f)
B. Paul's Fundamental Doctrine (1,18—11,36)
1. Justification by Faith (1,18—8,39)
a. Universal Sin and Universal Faith (1,18—4,25)
1 Both Jews and Gentiles have Sinned (1,18—3,31)
2 Abraham, Model of Faith (4,1-25)
b. Effects of the two Adams (5,1—8,39)
1 Justification Already Given in Christ (5,1-21)
2 Freedom from Sin and the Role of the Law (6,1—7,25)
3 The Gift of the Spirit (8,1-39)
2. Israel and the Justice of God (9,1—11,36)
C. Paul's Ethical Conclusions (12,1—15,13)
1. The Church and the World (12,1—13,14)
2. Divisions and Unity (14,1—15,13)
III Conclusion (15,14—16,27)

## Reading Through Romans

Our study of Romans entails tracing the major themes and characteristics of each section of the letter. This explanation is intended to supplement the text and notes of the *New American Bible* itself.

### The Address (1,1-15)

The address typically includes greetings and a thanksgiving. Romans' greeting, identifying the sender, Paul, and his addressees, is an elaboration of the standard form of Greco-Roman letters (see note 1,1-7 and general introduction, above). In no other authentic Pauline letter besides Romans does Paul write in his name alone. But even in Romans, Paul is not entirely independent. He needs the Romans' acceptance. He is grateful for their perseverance and he looks forward to being strengthened by them through their common faith (1,11). Paul says that although he is personally unknown to the Romans the gospel or Christian message he preaches is the same as that which they have received from other Christian missionaries.

Although he usually refers to his addressees as "the church in _____," Paul does not use the term "church" in Romans. But he does remind the Roman Christians of their vocation to holiness. In developing a Christian terminology in the Greek language, Paul will consistently draw upon images and phrases that appear in the Hebrew scriptures. An example is Paul's description of the believing community as holy, as saints, called and sanctified by God (for instance, 1 Cor 1,2). Israel is a "kingdom of priests, a holy nation," according to Exodus 19,6. The law sets Israel apart, making her distinct from her neighbors because she has a covenant relationship with God. Since we as Christians have adopted a theological language created for Israel, we are reminded in the reading of Romans and Paul's other letters to be particularly sensitive to our Jewish roots and our indebtedness to Judaism. Like the Gentiles of Paul's day, Christians today owe a debt to Israel whose spiritual heritage we share (see Rom 15,27).

## The Body of the Letter (1,16—15,13)

Paul's message in Romans is essentially a theological reflection on the meaning of "justification by faith" and the implications of this teaching for the daily life of the Christian community. The doctrine itself is developed in 1,18—8,39. Paul adds a separate consideration of how this doctrine affects Israel in Chapters 9–11. The ethical reflections on the effects of justification in the lives of Christians appear in 12,1—15,13.

### THE THEME (1,16f)

Romans 1,16f states the theme of Romans. Here the gospel is described as the power of God for universal salvation. This theme is developed, especially in Chapters 1–11, in both its positive and negative implications. Positively, Paul insists that faith is accessible to all through Christ. But Paul also realizes some negative implications, even of his belief that all are saved in Christ. For example, it is clear that all have sinned and are in need of salvation. The emphasis on universal sinfulness is the negative pole of the theme of Romans. There is no human means of achieving salvation for ourselves; it must be given.

Note that for Paul the starting point is not that all have sinned but rather that all have been saved. This is the conviction of faith. Paul considers sin to be an illustration of the universal need for salvation. This explains why Paul's hope, eloquently expressed especially in Chapters 5, 8, and 15, is so deep and certain. No human sin is sufficient to separate us from the love of God which saves us.

### PAUL'S FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE (1,18—11,36)

The tension between universal salvation and universal sinfulness provides the dynamic for the development of Romans 1,16—8,39. These chapters present the first part of Paul's explanation of "justification by faith." The sin of "all" is manifest in different ways: in the sin of all, both "Jews and Gentiles" (1,18—3,31), in the sin of all since Adam (5,12-21), and in the dilemma of all humanity whereby knowing what is right according to the Law does not enable us to do what is right (7,13-25). But Paul also emphasizes that all are already justified by faith, as exemplified in Abraham (4,1-25), and as fulfilled in Christ (5,1-11; 6,1-23; 8,1-39). Before going on to discuss the subdivisions of this doctrinal section of Romans, we should consider the meaning of "the justice of God" for Paul.

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The Greek words that we translate "just," "justice," "justify," and "righteousness" are all derived from the same root word. Even more important, for Paul the concepts are closely linked. Paul connects the justice of God with God's power and will to "justify" all people.

The Scriptures show that God's justice is revealed, that is, it cannot be completely attained through human effort or study. Isaiah reminds us that God's thoughts are not human thoughts and God's ways not our ways (see Is 55,7f). Yet the Scriptures also tell us that we are to be just, that we must act in imitation of God, that we are to walk blamelessly before God and be perfect (see Gn 17,1; Hos 6,6). Thus, justice is not completely foreign to us. The pious person of the Old Testament seeks to become "just," that is, to act in ways that are acceptable to God and in accord with God's covenant. These ways are also revealed through the Jewish "Torah" (meaning "instruction") or Law. The Torah was handed down from Moses and interpreted throughout the history of the Jewish people, who reverenced it as the revealed will of God. So, for example, Joseph is described in the Infancy Narrative as a "righteous man" (Mt 1,19).

The Jewish person seeking justice is enjoined to study and to follow the Torah or the instruction of God. In the covenant is the hope of being justified, that is, "made just" in God's sight. Thus, for the Old Testament as for Paul, the related terms of "justice," "just," and "justified" all originate in God, who reveals how we are to act and judges us accordingly. Although all people are sinners, Jewish theology teaches that we may expect to learn the way of justice through a faithful following of the Law in all things. This is the background for Paul's understanding of justification through Jesus Christ.

There are two main ideas that we must understand if we are to grasp the argument about justification that Paul puts forth in Romans and in some of his other writings. The first is the meaning for him of trying to attain justification or salvation by obeying the law. (This is dealt with particularly in Chapter 3 of his Letter to the Galatians. See verse 10 of that chapter, the *New American Bible* notes and introduction, and the Reading Guide to Galatians.) The second main idea pertains to Paul's explanation of how the Gentiles or those who do not have the Law are justified. Before trying to relate how Paul's views on justification can be understood today, we should briefly examine these two ideas.

First, for Paul, justification through the works of the Law is a false hope for several reasons. The reluctance to relinquish the Law as a measure of how "just" one is was expressed particularly by the Jewish-Christian segment of Christianity, such as Peter and James, leaders of the Jerusalem church, represented. And clearly the idea that the Law held the key to justification was the position of the Jews who did not become Christians. Today many Christians can be sympathetic to this view when they consider how important the ten commandments or the precepts or rules of the church are within the perspective of determining what we should do to be saved. The theological challenge Paul faces is that his experience of the risen Christ and his mission to preach that justification is available to all—both Jews who have the law and the Gentiles who do not—have convinced Paul that justification is an act of God, given freely to all who believe.

Justification through doing the works of the Law will never succeed. Paul's own experience comes into play here. Like his Jewish contemporaries, Paul himself was zealous for the Law (cf. Rom 10,1-3; Phil 3,3-7; Gal 1,11-14), but this zeal brought only blindness and ignorance, not justification. The Law could not justify because it leads only to pride based on self-righteousness, and it blinds to the grace of God.

Secondly, justification through the Law is insufficient because it excludes the Gentiles, who, as Paul has described the situation in Romans 1,18—3,31, are in the same sinful predicament as the Jews. But Abraham and Christ both show that the Gentiles, no less than the Jews, are now justified through faith. According to the Law, Jesus was condemned to death. But God overturned the Law's verdict in raising Jesus to life (see Gal 3,10-14). Thus, for Paul, the Law has been superseded by the death and resurrection of Jesus. A consequence of this is that now the Gentiles are included among the justified. By accepting Jesus' gift of justification, and consequently living in accord with God's will, Jews and Gentiles both are saved. Following the just requirements of the Law or the precepts of the church are not a *prerequisite* for but a *result* of being justified.

Paul understands justification as already having taken place through the death and resurrection of Christ. Salvation is in the future, promised to those who believe in Christ and live according to this belief. As Paul himself says it, "Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life" (Rom 5,10).

Paul's emphasis is on the collective repercussions of the death-resurrection of Jesus. That is to say, Paul stresses the effect these events have on all humanity. But Paul's argument can also be understood from a more personal perspective and we can interpret justification as very relevant to our own individual, contemporary experience.

If I am justified by my obedience to the Law, Paul argues, I may come to believe that I have saved myself by my own efforts. This is a source of sinful pride, and at the same time a cause of endless worry. The pride comes from the possibility that I may think I do not need God, or at the very least that God has no choice but must save me because I followed the rules. But, at the same time, this belief causes worry because I am completely responsible for my own condition; my salvation depends on my own efforts. And I can never be sure that I have obeyed all the rules; I therefore spend more and more energy trying to keep myself from committing any infraction, fearing that even one slip can be fatal. Paul overcomes both of these barriers, the prideful self-reliance and the overscrupulous behavior, by proclaiming the new message of salvation, not through obedience to the Law, but by means of the justifying power of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Because of our sin, justice properly belongs to God and not to human beings. God's justice is shared with human beings through God's action of "justifying." For Paul, God has taken a new step in Christ, making the justification sought through the Law, which was exclusively for the Jews, available and accessible now also to the Gentiles. The death of Jesus under the Law means that God went beyond the Law. Now justification is open to all who have faith that Jesus is the Messiah.

We must also comprehend Paul's idea of faith in order to understand the argument of Romans. It may seem that Paul is simply replacing one human action—obedience to the Law—with another human action—faith in Jesus Christ. But for Paul faith is trust: the belief that it is God's power, not our own, and our reliance on God, not on our own abilities, that saves us. Paul saw the obvious danger for sinful people: the danger that they would continue in their wrong behavior and so close themselves off from God forever. But Paul also saw the danger for those people who seemed moral and upright: the danger that they would believe God was forced to save them because they had earned their way into God's love.

For Paul, this thinking is a fatal mistake. It assumes that we can manipulate God by our actions. Paul breaks through this misunderstanding by his assertion of the necessity of faith. Faith is our acknowledgment that it is God's power that saves us, not our own efforts; that we are helpless, in that we are all sinners; and that we can trust in God.

We should note that Paul begins with the affirmation of faith in God's work of salvation to which all have access in Christ. Paul does not start with the premise of defeat nor emphasize that each person must individually become convicted of sin. Rather, Paul stresses first the goodness and power of God to save, and then tries to demonstrate the universal need for salvation to be given.

Paul came to believe that the revelation of the Law was fulfilled and superseded by the death-resurrection of Christ. In Romans, Paul will develop a dichotomy between what was "formerly" and what is "now." For Paul, God's justice is only fully revealed in Jesus. The emphasis on "now" also implies an emphasis on the accessibility of God's justice to all through

faith. The Law (or Torah) formerly divided humanity into "Jews and Gentiles," the latter not sharing in the promise represented by the Law. This division is overcome and all now have equal access to God's revelation of justice expressed in Christ.

Paul uses terms such as "redeem" and "justify" and "reconcile" in relationship to one another and sometimes almost interchangeably (see Rom 5,9-11 and discussion on that passage below). These terms originally belonged to the world of finance; for Paul they appropriately illustrate the economy of salvation. The "debit" columns of sin and guilt and punishment are converted by God into the "credit" columns of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation. Through faith we are reconciled to God and to one another. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and our sins are forgiven.

**Justification by Faith** (1,18—8,39). The doctrine of justification by faith provides the focus for Romans 1,18—8,39. This first section of the doctrinal part of Romans may be further subdivided into two: Chapters 1,18—4,25 deal with the notion of universal sin and universal access to faith and justification. A second subdivision (5,1—8,39), departing from a contrast between Adam and Christ, describes what was "formerly" and the salvation *now* given to all believers. We shall briefly discuss each of these subdivisions and comment on their relevance for us.

□ *Universal Sin and Universal Faith* (1,18—4,25) Having stated his conviction that the gospel is God's power to save all through faith (1,16f), Paul proceeds to demonstrate the need of all for salvation. Universal sin illustrates this need. Paul shows that "all," both Gentiles and Jews, have sinned and incurred the wrath of God (1,18—3,31). He then links Abraham to the promise of salvation to all through faith (4,1-25).

□ *Both Jews and Gentiles Have Sinned* (1,18—3,31). The "wrath of God" is being revealed in that the Gentiles are experiencing disastrous consequences of their own behavior (Rom 1,18-32). The "wrath of God" is an image borrowed from the Old Testament prophets (see Is 9,8-12; 10,5; Jer 50,11-17; Ez 5,13; 36,5-6). It depicts God's rejection or "abandonment" (Rom 1,24.26.28) of people to their own sin. The story of Saul's disobedience to God in 1 Samuel 15 dramatizes this dynamic: from the moment when God no longer accepts Saul's kingship, Saul's downfall is certain.

Although the Gentiles could know God through creation, the evidence of their godless lives means that they are rejected by God. Belief in God is no mere intellectual affair but involves a conversion to "the living and true God" (see 1 Thes 1,9) expressed in a virtuous life. Paul adopts the Old Testament notion of the relationship between idolatry and immorality evident among the pagans. (But see the *NAB* note on 1,18-32 that cautions that the lives of many in the Greco-Roman culture could serve as models for Christians today.) Paul speaks in generalities here, trying first to indict the Gentiles (1,18-31) and later (in 2,1—3,9) the Jews, in an effort to show the effects of universal sin and the need of all humanity for God's salvation.

Paul emphasizes that God's just judgment comes upon all people, for God shows no partiality (2,11; see also Dt 10,17; 2 Chr 19,7; Sir 35,12f; Acts 10,34; Gal 2,6; Eph 6,9; Col 3,2.5; 1 Pt 1,17). Having indicated that the Gentiles are sinners, Paul turns to concentrate throughout Rom 2,1—3,31 on the Jews. Here Paul adopts the language of the prophets, who not only charged sinfulness to the pagans but also accused the Jews of having "a stubborn and impenitent heart." Paul summarizes his arguments in 1,18—3,31: "All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (3,23).

□ *Abraham, Model of Faith* (4,1-25). For Paul, Abraham is a type of Christ; that is, Abraham follows the pattern of Christ. Adam and Moses, on the other hand, are antitypes—reverse patterns. For Jews, circumcision—the ritual removal of the foreskin of the penis of infant boys—symbolizes the individual's membership in the people of God, and therefore the individual's acceptance of God's law and teaching. Since Abraham was justified before his circumcision, he was justified independently of the Law. Therefore Abraham is the ancestor of both Jews and pagans. Abraham's example illustrates the theme of Romans: all have access now to salvation through faith. (For further discussion of the image of Abraham for Paul, see the Reading Guide to Galatians.)

□ *Effects of the Two Adams* (5,1—8,39). In Chapters 5–8 Paul contrasts Christ's saving actions (that is, his death and resurrection) with the devastating consequences of the sin of the first Adam. Paul will not concentrate long on the first Adam (see 5,12-21), but reviews only what is generally accepted about his role in introducing an unbroken chain of sin and death. More importantly, and far more powerfully, Paul insists Christ's death and resurrection have affected all of human history. Paul's argument is basically this—if the sin of Adam was so far-reaching, how much more encompassing is the gift of God in Christ for all. Paul's thinking is at the basis of Augustine's ecstatic thanksgiving, "O happy fault that has merited so great a redeemer!" The Roman liturgy recalls this prayer during the Easter Vigil each year in the recitation of the *Exultet.*

Romans 5–8 contains many expressions that state the positive aspect of the theme of Romans (1,16f), describing the gospel as God's power to save. These expressions include "Now we are at peace" (5,1); "We live in the newness of life" (6,4). "But now that you have been freed from sin," the "benefit that you have leads to sanctification" (6,22). "But now we are released from the law . . . so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit" (7,6). Romans 8 grounds Christian hope in the possession of the Spirit of God.

Salvation is a reality that Paul describes here and elsewhere (see 1 Cor 6,11; 2 Cor 5,10-15; 10,5-10), using multiple terms like reconciliation, redemption, justification, sanctification. The verb "to save" refers to God's intervening action when human beings are in need. It connotes actual, sometimes physical, rescue, as well as deliverance in spiritual distress. The Old Testament often refers to God as "Savior." Reference to God's saving action is one of the Bible's most frequent ways of referring to God, appearing literally hundreds of times. In the New Testament this term is often used in connection with Jesus. The disciples, for example, prayed "Lord, save us" (for example, Mt 8,25). Paul assumes we are familiar with the long Old Testament tradition of God's saving actions on behalf of people. But Paul, in relating God's action to the death and resurrection of Christ, gives a new emphasis in the theology of salvation or "soteriology." Many scholars point out that all of Paul's christology or thinking about Christ is really a soteriology or doctrine of how Christ saves.

Paul's argument in 5,1—8,39 may be divided into three parts. (1) In 5,1-21 Paul shows that justification is already given in Christ. (2) In 6,1—7,25 Paul shows how baptism has freed us from sin (6,1-23), and then describes the role of the law (7,1-25). (3) Romans 8 tops off Paul's reflections on the overwhelming impact of God's gift to us in Christ by describing the effect of the Spirit, who is the basis of our hope. It is important to see the flow of Paul's argument in each of these sections.

□ *Justification Already Given in Christ* (5,1-21). Romans 5,1-11 serves as kind of a transition passage between the developments of 1,18—4,25 and 5,12—8,39. In 5,1-11, Paul

emphasizes the aspect of salvation that is already present in the justification and reconciliation achieved by Christ's death and resurrection.

In 5,12-21, Paul adopts the image of Adam from Genesis which portrays human responsibility for sin. Adam represents all people under sin with its curse of death. But Adam is also a figure drawing out God's promise of redemption. The writer of Genesis portrays the situation of Adam as obviously in need of some divine action: even before the curse for sin is pronounced in Genesis 3,16-19, God promises to save the human family in the end (Gn 3,15). According to that promise, there will be enmity between evil and all humanity (that is, between the "seed" of the serpent and the "seed" of the woman). Eventually the seed of the woman or humanity will crush the head of the serpent who represents evil. Christians have always seen in this promise of ultimate redemption a symbol for the work of Christ.

The early church fathers, especially Augustine, used this passage as a basis for a description of the devastating effects of original sin, although Paul does not use this terminology. Rather, he argues that if the first sin had such widespread effects that ever since Adam all people have been under its influence, how much more effective and powerful is the gift of salvation won through Jesus Christ. That gift is called grace, which brings eternal life (5,21).

□ *Freedom from Sin and the Role of the Law* (6,1—7,25). Paul describes what life is like when it is freed from the bondage of sin. His view of humankind, that is, his theological anthropology, is evident in this chapter. Paul considers all people to be under some dominant influence, living either for God under grace or living for sin. This is a different perspective from our contemporary one that considers human freedom as an autonomous, absolute ideal. For Paul, freedom is related to life for God (6,10) in contrast with slavery to sin (6,6). By means of the opposites of death and life, Paul contrasts the former condition of sin and death to the new life of freedom won by Christ and obtained by the believer through baptism.

The term "baptism" means "immersion" and Paul uses it in this original sense rather than in the sense of a liturgical rite. Paul coins several expressions in Chapter 6, compounding verbs with the prefix *syn-* (meaning "with") that signify believers' solidarity with Christ. We have "died with" him and are "buried with" him; therefore we will be "raised with" him and now "live with" him. This incorporation into the death-resurrection of Christ by means of baptism necessarily has implications for the moral life. As a result of this incorporation, we "walk" (a term designating moral living) in the newness of life (6,4). Paul will postpone a fuller discussion of the implications of this "newness of life" until Chapters 12–15.

The major part of Chapter 7 follows the style of a diatribe (see the *NAB* notes on Chapter 7 and Introduction above). Paul anticipates the objections of real or imaginary opponents in a kind of dialogue designed to present his own ideas in an orderly fashion. The most important aspects of Paul's argument are three. First, the Christian views the Law differently now, having been freed from its service (Paul says "bondage") by participation in the death of Christ. Second, the function of the Law is to specify what is sinful. Thus the Law did not encourage grace or freedom but only identified sin. Third, anticipating an objection that the Law is therefore sin, Paul responds emphatically, "No!" Yet knowledge of what is good does not enable us to do what is good. The Law is one more factor, then, in the judgment against humanity, convicting all of sin. The Law concurs with human conscience, judging us as sinners. This is the meaning of the expression, "the good that I want to do I avoid and the evil I wish to avoid I do" (see 7,19-21).

□ *The Gift of the Spirit* (8,1-39). Romans 8 celebrates the message of salvation. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8,1). "[Nothing can] separate us from the

love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8,38f). Nowhere is Paul's understanding of the role of the Spirit more eloquently expressed than in Romans 8.

Paul begins Romans 8 with a consideration of the opposition between the flesh and the spirit. He often tries to illustrate his meaning by opposing two poles of thought. This is a way of showing the mutually exclusive categories of sin and death versus grace and life. Paul adapts the Greek notion of "the flesh" in order to express the sinful condition of humanity before grace. In the Greek philosophical tradition, "flesh," like "spirit," had several connotations. The "flesh" means, of course, that which pertains to the body. But it can also mean the inferior aspect of human existence, whatever in human life is weak or limited. For the Greeks, the "flesh" referred to what they regarded as baser desires, which for them included sensual and sexual instincts. The flesh is mortal and must be controlled by the "spirit" (that is, the mind and will), which in Greek thought is immortal. Paul adapts this notion to sometimes speak of the "flesh" as the moral equivalent of "sin." For Paul, however, sins of the "flesh" include not just bodily sins, such as gluttony, but also 'spiritual' sins, such as pride.

Drawing on the same tradition, Paul uses the term "spirit" to refer to the new life accessible to all through Christ. In stressing the life of the spirit, Paul contrasts the present salvation with the past that was characterized by sin, death, and slavery to the dictates of the "flesh."

The Holy Spirit is an advocate, coming to our aid and strengthening us. Like the Israelites in Egypt, we formerly could only groan in the suffering and weakness caused by sin. The Spirit converts our incoherent cries into a prayer that recognizes God as Father and ourselves as children of God. Thus, through the Spirit we are liberated from slavery to sin and enabled to pray as the children of God, saying "*Abba*" (8,15). From Paul's use of this prayer, we can assume that he is indirectly referring to the Gospel tradition that tells us that Jesus himself addressed God as "*Abba,* Father" (Mk 14,36).

We are confident, too, that the suffering we experience and witness is as nothing compared to the glory that is to come. All creation shared in the sin of Adam and groans with humanity in its suffering. Now all creation awaits the revelation of the children of God (8,20-25).

At the end of Chapter 8, Paul exclaims that nothing can separate us from the love of God. But he goes on to acknowledge in Romans 9–11 that the Jewish rejection of the Christian message represents a challenge to this belief. Some may say that now God has run out of patience with Israel. But if God's fidelity to the covenant and God's justice is limited by Israel's rejection of Christ, what does that mean not only for Israel but for the Christian church which is adopting the prerogatives of Israel? Has God had a change of mind? These are some of the questions Paul puzzles out in Romans 9–11 in a remarkable review of the history of salvation.

**Israel and the Justice of God** (9,1—11,36). The form of this three-chapter unit is a philosophical diatribe. Paul responds to anticipated questions or challenges in the form of an artificial "dialogue." In the course of developing his views, he made abundant use of the Old Testament. Before dealing with some ethical conclusions to the doctrines in Chapters 12–15, Paul senses the necessity of taking up this personally painful question about God's fidelity to the Jews. Israel's rejection of Christ was clearly a problem not only for Paul but for the early church. Paul's consideration of this question properly belongs with the doctrinal development of Romans. Let us attempt to trace the stages of Paul's argument through Romans 9–11.

Paul's summary of the privileges of Israel in Romans 9,1-5 prompts him to redefine the term "Israel" in Chapters 9–11. Israel is not a mere ethnic or historical reality, but one that always had theological connotations. The Jewish scriptures show, Paul argued, that "not all . . . of Israel are Israel" (9,6). The element of divine choice was operating throughout Jewish history, illustrating that God is free to show mercy as God wishes. Not all are children of Abraham simply because they descended from him, as the preference for Isaac over Ishmael shows (see 9,7-9; Gal 4,22-31). God chose Jacob over Esau (Rom 9,10-13). God hardens some, as in the case of the Pharaoh; but divine mercy is shown to Moses and the Hebrews in Egypt (9,15-17). Paul also cites examples from the prophets, especially Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah to support God's freedom to choose. For Paul, God's mercy is God's justice. Paul carefully builds his arguments to show how God is now including the Gentiles among the new "Israel of God" (Gal 6,16).

Paul begins Chapter 10 with a defense of his kinspeople as he had Chapter 9. He testifies to Jewish zeal in pursuit of the Law as he himself was zealous for the Law prior to his faith in Christ (see Gal 1,14). But as "end of the law" (Rom 10,4), Christ brings justification for all who believe. Thus Christ renders the Law useless and eliminates the differences between Jew and Gentile. To support his assertion that Christ is the end of the Law, Paul develops an explanation of scripture in the style of a Jewish *midrash* or "running commentary." Paul applies the Old Testament to Christ. Thus Paul gives an example of how the "law and the prophets testify" to the righteousness given by God in Christ (cf. Rom 3,21f). Paul argued that there is only one God of Jews and Gentiles in Romans 3,21-31. Similarly, here in Romans 10, Paul says that there is only one Lord who is over all and accessible to all who call upon him. That Lord is Christ. Near the end of the chapter, in 10,14-21, Paul echoes the traditional prophetic denunciation of Israel who alone is responsible for her infidelity. But God continues to stretch out hands to a "disobedient people" (10,21).

God's fidelity, proven in the past and present (Chapters 9 and 10) will ultimately be for the salvation of "all Israel" in the future (Chapter 11). God has not finally abandoned Israel since a remnant remains faithful to God as a sign of the ultimate salvation of "all Israel" (Rom 11,26). Paul cautions the Gentiles, included by the action of Christ into "all Israel," to remember that it is only by grace that they are saved. This is a mystery revealing God's infinite mercy. The power of God is the divine compassion by which all are enfolded into the salvation of "all Israel."

**PAUL'S ETHICAL CONCLUSIONS** (12,1—15,13)

Paul's ethical conclusions are applications of his doctrine, and form the "imperative" part of the letter. This part can be subdivided into two: consideration of the church and the world (12,1—13,14) and a call for reconciliation and unity (14,1—15,13).

**The Church and the World** (12,1—13,14). In describing the Christian community, Paul adapts the image of the "body" (12,4-8), a popular image used by Stoic philosophers to illustrate the interdependence of members in a state. Contemporary Catholics may be familiar with this image for the church and probably relate it to ideas developed by Pope Pius XII in an encyclical entitled "The Mystical Body" (*Mystici Corporis*). This encyclical stressed the various ways members of the Christian community, both now and in past ages, are related to one another. It is also well to remember that Paul develops the image to stress the very real mutual dependency of Christians who "ought not to think of themselves more highly than others" (12,3) but as "one body" (12,4) having many parts. The image of the body provides the transition between the

liturgical language which describes Christians' behavior as "spiritual worship" (12,1), and the obligations of the mutual love that is to be characteristic of Christians.

Romans 13,1-7 takes up the question of the Christian community in relation to civil government. The modern reader must remember that Paul is speaking to a minority community within an alien state. At first glance his advice appears simplistic. Paul says that all authority is ordained by God and has its origin in God. Christians in Paul's time were trying simply to survive. Society expected citizens to follow the religion of the state. Paul's instructions advise Christians to show good citizenship while not being conformed to this age or to the standards of the world around them.

Having just spoken about giving society its "due," Paul considers the question of the debt believers owe one another, asserting that love is the fulfillment of the law. Apparently Paul is acquainted with the love command of Jesus (see Rom 13,8-10). Paul reviews the commandments from adultery to covetousness, repeating finally in verse 10 what he stated in verse 8: "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

**Divisions and Unity** (14,1—15,13). Paul frequently enjoins his addressees to be of one and the same mind (for example, Phil 2,1-4). Yet disputes over ethical issues threaten the unity that should characterize the Christian church. The Roman Christians disagree over dietary matters and the observance of certain feast days. In a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians, such questions could not help but arise.

Referring to the different sides of this debate, Paul speaks of those with "weak" and those with "strong" faith. But his emphasis is not so much the opinions or positions of individual believers but the common attitudes to be cultivated among believers. He refers to the faith of the community, of members' responsibility to be united with the faith of the whole body.

Paul exhorts the Christians to a fundamental harmony that is expressed in mutual respect and concern for one another. The scriptures, Paul reminds the Roman Christians, many of whom are Jewish, are written for our instruction and encouragement. The term "encouragement" is linked to the hope that abounds in the community "by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15,13). Hope, joy, and peace are linked to belief. Faith is a confession about the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection (see Rom 10,9). But it is also, according to 15,7-13, acceptance of other members of the Christian community.

## Conclusion (15,14—16,27)

Paul reminds the Romans again, as he did at the beginning of his letter, about their common faith and his confidence in them. In 15,14-33 the Apostle speaks of his need for their hospitality soon; he requests prayers as he embarks on his mission to Jerusalem to take the collection there. Although Paul is personally unacquainted with the Romans, he has written "boldly" because he is a "minister" of Jesus Christ. He describes his ministry in liturgical language, as a "priestly" (*leitourgos*) duty (15,16). Paul is of course not referring to a sacramental priesthood, but to his mission to preach the Christian message to the Gentiles.

Paul reports that his immediate plans include a visit to Rome in passing on the way to Spain, after taking the collection to Jerusalem. Paul understands the collection as a symbol linking Jews and Gentiles. In particular he has stressed the obligation of the wealthier members to care for the poor (Gal 2,10). There is yet only the unfinished matter of taking the offering from the Gentiles to the poor saints in Jerusalem. This material gift represents a "debt" owed the

Jews whose spiritual heritage is now shared by the Gentiles. The term "debt" occurred in Romans 13,8-10 where Paul described love as the only legitimate debt a believer can incur. Since spiritual blessings are much greater than material things, the Gentiles *owe* these lesser goods to the Jews as a consequence of their inheriting Israel's spiritual blessings now through Jesus Christ. Common faith makes kin of Jews and Gentiles and links both in mutual responsibility. Paul's strategy, then, is twofold—to ensure that the offering is sizable and that it is accepted as symbolic of the true faith and equal status of the Gentile Christians. If the Jewish-Christians accept the gift, they are thereby accepting the mission to the Gentiles.

It is possible that Chapter 16 was a later addition to the preceding fifteen chapters. It may have served as a cover letter when Paul's summary of his theology was sent to Ephesus with Phoebe (cf. Rom 16,1f). This chapter seems almost like an afterthought, and further examination suggests it even contains some discrepancies to material stated or implied in the first fifteen chapters. Paul commends Phoebe to the Romans, and then greets numerous people as if he is well known to them and as if he and the Romans have a number of mutual acquaintances. Until now the apostle has maintained a certain distance from the Roman Christians, insinuating that his introduction to himself and to his gospel could serve in lieu of the personal contact he usually has with communities he has founded. But if Paul knows as many Romans as this chapter indicates, the uncharacteristically general and impersonal tone of Chapters 1–15 of the letter is strange. The note on 16,1-23 draws attention to the mixture of Jewish and Gentile names, representative of the mixed background of the Roman community.

The placement and originality of the final doxology or blessing is debated (see note). But its appropriateness at the end of this epistle is undisputed. The doxology echoes several themes developed in the course of this epistle. Paul speaks of my gospel (see 1,16f), the mystery kept secret for long ages (11,25-32), manifested through prophetic writings (numerous allusions to the Old Testament throughout this epistle), and to the obedience of faith (see 1,5; 15,28). Paul has pronounced a blessing at various points throughout his development (7,24; 8,35-39; 11,33-36), as if carried away by the abundance of God's wisdom and mercy. This reflects the Jewish custom of celebrating the wonders of God with praise. Nowhere is the doxology more fitting than after Paul has reviewed the fundamentals of his gospel, with emphasis on the universality of redemption and the imminence of God's victory over all evil in the triumph of Jesus Christ.

## Concluding Remarks

Throughout our commentary on Romans we have tried to show the relevance of the major themes developed here: justification by faith; the emphasis on the present reality of justification contrasted with the former life of sin; the inclusion of all, Jews and Gentiles, in a new Israel of God, the church. The ethical section of Romans may be seen as a description of the church living *in* but not *of* the world. It would be hard to overestimate the influence of Romans in the development of Christian doctrine and morality throughout history. Today we can still benefit from recalling the fundamentals of the Christian message put forth in Romans. Faith is primary and the sole condition for justification which is already given. Christians long for and work for the revelation of the children of God which is the hope of all creation. All Israel, Jews and Gentiles, will be saved. And Christian faith is lived, both as individuals and in a community, by conforming our behavior to a reflection of the mercies of God. M.A.G.

# THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

## Introduction

The letters to the Corinthians give us a unique opportunity to see Paul himself up close. Here he is most personal while also demonstrating the versatility of his thinking. We note Paul's pastoral style, his sensitivity as someone who has lived and worked among the Corinthians. The Corinthian community was predominantly Gentile with a Jewish minority. Its members were also from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. They enjoyed the gifted leadership of both men and women. The Corinthians are an important community with high visibility. Paul manifests a certain anxiety about this community, probably because for him it symbolized the entire Gentile mission.

Corinth, the central city of the Province of Achaia in Greece, was a seaport and trading center. It was also a Roman colony and therefore its population was made up of various peoples. And it was a sophisticated place with great extremes of wealth and poverty. With its mixture of national and religious groups, rich and poor, Jews, pagans and Christians, and moral and immoral people, it was an exciting but difficult environment for the small Christian community.

The letters we call 1 and 2 Corinthians formed part of a larger collection that originally consisted of several letters Paul wrote to the community. Paul's relationship with the Corinthians was complex and tumultuous and it seems as if the Corinthians were a particularly challenging community. Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 5,9 of a previous letter written to the Corinthians instructing them to avoid immoral people. Such a letter no longer exists and nowhere do we have this instruction from Paul. Similarly, the reference to a letter written in "much affliction and anguish of heart" (2 Cor 2,4) hardly fits the tone of 1 Corinthians. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians is characterized by discontinuity, suggesting that it is actually a composite of several letters (see *New American Bible* Introduction to 2 Corinthians).

We learn that the Corinthians also wrote to Paul (see 1 Cor 7,1), and that the Corinthian church, difficult as it was for Paul, preserved and honored Paul's advice, undoubtedly reading his letters at liturgical gatherings as Paul had instructed them. We are left with the impression that the extant letters reflect an editing and combining of writings, compiled as the community processed and integrated the words of the apostle.

# 1 CORINTHIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 251–274 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

In writing 1 Corinthians around A.D. 56, Paul was responding to some disquieting reports he had received about the community. 1 Corinthians addressed real, not theoretical situations. Paul's knowledge of what was going on was based on verbal accounts from reliable sources, letters from members of the community, and Paul's own eighteen-month experience of living amidst this community (Acts 18,11).

1 Corinthians is a particularly fruitful source of reflection for our contemporary church. It raises the issues of divisions in the church based on ideologies or different world views. 1 Corinthians deals with the role of women in liturgical celebrations and with the significance

of the sacraments. In this letter Paul tries to convey the meaning and relevance of the Resurrection. These are issues of perennial interest to Christians, but especially today. We, like the Corinthians, are challenged to find the right role and qualifications of leadership in a pluralistic society. Like the Corinthians we need to recognize that behavior is an indicator of what we believe.

In our time, the women's movement and other civil rights gains prompt us to reassess the roles of women in the church and the relation of justice to equality. A reading of 1 Corinthians calls us to renew our faith in the Resurrection. 1 Corinthians reminds us of the relationship between participation in the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist, and our everyday lives. It is important as we read 1 Corinthians to see Paul's pastoral approach at work and to understand how he relates Christian faith to the daily life of the church he addresses. This is also our main challenge today.

In a sense, the singular "community" might misrepresent the Corinthians. We may tend to think of the community as a specific group that met at the house of a particular individual in a city. But the Corinthians were not a single large community. It is probable that in that particular city there were several Christian communities that congregated at different houses. Apparently these communities represented different competitive factions. Each community was developing divergent expressions of Christian life and worship. Some groups were homogeneous, preferring to worship with like-minded people from similar social and religious backgrounds, who followed certain diets and enjoyed certain prestigious spiritual gifts.

A variety of liturgical celebrations developed. The Corinthians disagreed about whether Christians ought to marry or, if married, should remain married after Baptism. Paul responds to these issues among the Christians at Corinth. Although our problems and divisions may be expressed somewhat differently, Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians on the importance of unity, charity, and mutual respect based on a common faith provide us with a model for approaching our own problems. 1 Corinthians discloses to us the pastor, Paul, who encourages the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (11,1).

## Working through First Corinthians

Our comments on the major themes and relevance of this epistle will follow the structure suggested in the *New American Bible* Introduction (p. 252), with some rather minor adjustments. 1 Corinthians contains the usual letter format: an *address* in 1,1-9, the *body of the letter* in 1,10—15,58, and a *conclusion* in 16,1-24.

Since this letter is a response to the concerns of the Corinthians, there is not the same kind of objective, formal structure we saw in Romans. Yet we can detect in 1 Corinthians a structural pattern that helps shed some light on the emphasis and meaning of Paul's message. Paul's general approach to issues follows an A-B-A′ pattern by which Paul introduces and begins to develop a topic (A), disrupts his reflections by bringing up a second issue (B), and then returns to the original topic (A′). Often Paul uses this pattern to emphasize the middle or B statement. One illustration is Paul's discussion of abuses in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. He describes the abuses in 1 Corinthians 11,17-22 (A) and in verses 26-34 (A′). Paul interjects into the middle of this description his account of Jesus' Last Supper the night before he died (see 11,23-25, [B]). In this way Paul tries to remedy the abuses at Corinth by recalling what Jesus did

and reminding the Corinthians that they are to act "in memory of" Jesus. Further examples of Paul's use of the A-B-A′ pattern will be discussed as they appear in this letter. For the moment simply note that the pattern has the effect of emphasizing the middle or B section as a corrective for the situations described in A and A′.

A working outline of 1 Corinthians is the following:

I Address (1,1-9)
II The Body of the Letter (1,10—15,58)
  A. Reported Divisions and Abuses (1,10—6,20)
    1. The Factions (1,10—4,21)
    2. Moral Disorders (5,1—6,20)
  B. Answers to the Corinthians' Questions (7,1—11,1)
    1. Marriage and Virginity (7,1-40)
    2. Offerings to Idols (8,1—11,1)
      a. Knowledge versus Charity (8,1-13; 10,1—11,1)
      b. The Example of Paul (9,1-27)
  C. Problems in Liturgical Assemblies (11,2—14,40)
    1. Dress and Decorum at Liturgies (11,2-16)
    2. Celebration of the Eucharist (11,17-34)
    3. The Spiritual Gifts (12,1—14,40)
  D. The Resurrection (15,1-58)
III Conclusion (16,1-24)

## Reading through First Corinthians

### The Address (1,1-9)

The address contains a greeting (1,1-3) and thanksgiving (1,4-9). In the greeting, Paul refers to himself as an "apostle of Jesus Christ" and identifies a "brother," Sosthenes, as co-author. Paul addresses the community as a "church" (*ekklesia*), which has been "sanctified in Jesus Christ" and "called to be holy." Paul thus reminds the Corinthians that they have a common vocation (*ek-klesia* literally means "called out of"). The Corinthians have a new identity, rooted in God, that distinguishes them from the world around them.

Paul's adaptation of the thanksgiving, usually found in Hellenistic letters, focuses on the blessings received by his addressees. Moreover, the thanksgiving announces themes Paul will develop in the letter. The Corinthians lack no spiritual gift whatsoever (1,7). The factions among them which so concerned Paul are rooted precisely in their envy of and competition for extraordinary gifts.

### The Body of the Letter (1,10—15,58)

The whole of 1 Corinthians addresses specific issues that caused dissension and strained the fabric of the Corinthian community. In the first section of the body or main part of the letter, Paul discusses the divisions he has heard about among the Corinthians (1,10—6,20). He then turns to address matters which the Corinthians had themselves directed to him (see 7,1—11,1). Finally, Paul will consider other issues relevant to the Corinthian community; namely appropriate ways of

celebrating the liturgy (11,2—14,40), and the meaning of the Resurrection (15,1-58). Following this general outline, we can now comment on the main message of 1 Corinthians.

**REPORTED DIVISIONS AND ABUSES** (1,10—6,20)

Reports from Chloe's people (see 1,11) identified some problems at Corinth stemming from two matters: (1) competing allegiance to different leaders (1,10—4,21) and (2) moral disorders (5,1—6,20).

**The Factions in Corinth** (1,10—4,21). The variety of backgrounds of its members caused many problems in the community of Corinth. Various members of the community turned to different leaders, and groups began to vie with one another for superiority and recognition. Paul first takes up the slogans adopted by groups who profess allegiance to the various leaders. He names group leaders, specifically Cephas (that is, Peter), Apollos, and himself. He shows the absurdity of divisions based on leadership that is superficial compared to the common Baptism by which all Christians are sanctified and saved.

Like many Christian groups even today, the Corinthians disagreed among themselves about which leaders were the most important and which group of Christians was the most prestigious. There was some rivalry among the leaders themselves. Peter and James disagreed with Paul, for example, about whether any aspects of the Jewish Law were required of Gentile Christians (Galatians 2). Peter favored at least minimal requirements, while Paul advocated complete freedom from the Jewish Law for Gentile converts. Jewish and Gentile Christians alike would have been confused by this disagreement between two of their most popular and trusted leaders. 1 Corinthians suggests that the leaders' disagreement affected the Corinthians and caused many to side with one leader against another.

Another leader was Apollos who, for very different reasons, had a following that competed for the Corinthians' loyalty. Apollos attracted many Corinthians because of his eloquence in speaking (see Acts 18,24-28). Meanwhile, some of the Corinthians cited Paul's unimpressive physical presence and speaking abilities as reason to reject him (1 Cor 2,1-5; 2 Cor 1,10). Paul chided the Corinthians for judging by human standards, not by God's as revealed in the cross of Christ. Paul reminded them that neither he nor Peter nor Apollos were crucified for them. The Corinthians were baptized in Christ's name and belonged to Christ. The formation of competitive groups within the Christian community is absurd. Paul admonishes the Corinthians to remember who they are—that by worldly standards few among them have any reason to boast (1,26-31), but that "in the Lord" they can boast that they are saved and form a "new creation" (2 Cor 5,17). They do not have wealth or nobility or education but they are rich in the blessings of the Spirit of God.

The first part of this letter (1,10—4,21) may be summarized as the gospel paradox, the teaching that God's wisdom is greater than human wisdom, that the power of the cross outweighs all human power. The Corinthians portrayed themselves as sophisticated, mature, and truly wise. Paul describes them as rather immature, of the "flesh" rather than spiritual (3,1), deceiving themselves and therefore lacking in the most fundamental knowledge. They erroneously judged according to standards that are transitory rather than eternal. The riches and wisdom of God surpass all understanding and may be perceived only through wisdom that is revealed by the Spirit (2,10).

While these words of Paul are a warning and a challenge, they can also mean encourage-

ment for us. Like the Christians of Corinth, we have been baptized. We celebrate the Eucharist and we strive for spiritual gifts. But we need to ponder the real meaning of the gospel message for our lives. The divisions among us betray our inadequate understanding of what it means to be the "Body of Christ" (see 1 Cor 12,12-31). Paul's message to the Corinthians is particularly applicable today.

**Moral Disorders** (5,1—6,20). In Chapters 5 and 6, Paul gives instances when judgments on the appropriate behavior for believers would be necessary. The Christian message of salvation has many implications—doctrinal, liturgical, ethical. Certain behavior is inconsistent with belonging to the Christian community. Chapters 5 and 6 specifically mention incest, bringing lawsuits against other members of the community, and sexual promiscuity, as liable to the community's judgment.

The Corinthians were complacent about incorporating a known sinner into their community without judging. Paul used a traditional image of "yeast" to help describe the impact of the presence of such a one in their midst. The proverb "a little yeast leavens all the dough" illustrates the extent to which the sinner's action corrupts the whole community. Jesus uses this same image to warn about the influence of the Pharisees on the disciples (Mt 16,6; Mk 8,15; Lk 12,1). Paul was concerned about the impact of the sinner on the community and the "contagion" of sinful actions. Throughout this letter, a fundamental point of Christian theology is emphasized: namely, as Christians we cannot act alone without regard for one another. Our actions affect others, for good or evil.

There is a possibility that Paul was writing close to the time of Passover (see note on 16,8). The allusion to the paschal lamb and the unleavened bread would then be especially pertinent. Otherwise, this insertion (see 1 Cor 5,6-8) between the references to incest and other forms of immorality is out of place. Further, the connection between worship and morality is one Paul frequently notes.

Paul sees conversion as a "turning from idols to worship of the one living and true God." (1 Thes 1,9). This conversion requires a readiness to change not only our hearts but also our actions so that we may live in accordance with our Baptism. The Catholic church today, in stressing the social dimension of the gospel message and its community context, has preserved this notion of true conversion. Catholic Christians have often heard it stressed that an upright, ethical way of life is really an extension and expression of the liturgy, especially participation in Baptism and the Eucharist. In the following section of this letter, Paul will take up the Corinthians' own questions about how daily life is an expression of the Christian faith.

## ANSWERS TO THE CORINTHIANS' QUESTIONS (7,1—11,1)

The Corinthians themselves identified certain issues within their community that were disturbing their unity. They wrote to Paul about these questions, which fell into two categories: questions about marriage and virginity (see 7,1-40), and questions pertaining to the eating of idol meats and participation at pagan meals (8,1—11,1).

**Marriage and Virginity** (7,1-40). In Chapter 7 Paul specifically discusses three life choices that many Christians believed were affected by Baptism—marriage (7,1-7.15f), fidelity to Judaism signified by circumcision (verses 18-20) and slavery (verses 21-24). According to 1 Corinthians 7, a specific question arose concerning whether married Christians ought to remain married. An

understanding of Baptism as initiation into the eschatological community—those awaiting the impending judgment—seemed to imply that the baptized should renounce the constraints and responsibilities of marriage.

Paul's general advice is to "remain in the state in which you were called" (see 7,17.20.24). His reasoning is very simple: the time is short (7,29.31). Paul believed that the "end is near," and that soon Christ would come to judge the world. Although Christians are "in" the world, they are not "of" it as John says (Jn 17,14-16). The particular circumstances of believers do not interfere with or lessen the effect of the new status of their identity in Christ. Apparently lifestyle questions arose very early on as a result of the Christian preaching. For example, Jesus is questioned about divorce, and his disciples, upon hearing Jesus' response, conclude, "[then] it is better not to marry." (Mt 19,10). While baptizing, John the Baptist was asked by several groups, "What should we do?" (Lk 3,10-14). Christians have always sensed the need to express the implications of their new identity as baptized persons with an appropriate way of life.

Paul agreed with a position held by some in Corinth, that "it is a good thing . . . not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7,1). Paul acknowledged his own preference for celibacy which leaves one "free of anxieties" (7,32). The gospels record Jesus' saying that "in heaven there is neither giving nor taking in marriage" (see Mk 12,25 and parallel passages). Sexuality, circumcision, even slavery do not have significance in the new age. Indeed, the hope for a new society of equals was one of the reasons Christianity was so appealing to many "minority" groups, including women, slaves, and others who lacked status in the Greco-Roman world.

Paul's response is to advocate no change in social status since it is unimportant in the Christian context. Responding to those who challenge the right of Christians to marry, Paul drew on the word of Jesus regarding the indissolubility of marriage (7,10f). Yet Paul added an exception which considerably weakens the effect of Jesus' statement. In the case of unwillingness of the unbelieving spouse to remain married to a baptized person, they may separate. Furthermore, Paul applied the exception to both men and women, giving women the same rights as men.

We should note Paul's remarkable freedom in relating Jesus' words to the pastoral situation of Corinth and the question of mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians. Similarly Paul considers himself an exception to Jesus' saying about the support of the apostles by the community (9,12-27). Even in his accounts of central doctrines such as the Institution of the Eucharist (11,23-25) and of the Resurrection (15,3-8), Paul demonstrates a surprising creativity and flexibility.

Some readers today may find it surprising to realize that Paul deals in 1 Corinthians with some of the same questions that continue to challenge the church today. Christians still struggle with whether there are more limits on the freedom allowed to women than to men. The rights and responsibilities of ministers in the church are at the heart of the renewal of the priesthood initiated by Vatican II, and continued in various important pastoral and ecclesial efforts locally and in the universal church. Issues such as the requirements for a sacramental marriage and qualifications for the ordained ministry, the possibilities for lay ministries, or the role of the sacraments (especially Baptism and the Eucharist) in Christian life were not answered by Paul, or even by Vatican II, once and for all. But the church continues to use Paul's pastoral approach to guide and to respond to the needs of its members.

**Offerings to Idols** (8,1—11,1). Paul responded in 8,1—11,1 to the Corinthians' questions about the eating of meats offered to idols and participation at public cultic meals. Paul subordinates these concrete issues to the demands of charity in the community, supporting his response with reference to Israel's history as recorded in the Scriptures (8,7-13; 10,1-13) and with the example of his own experience.

Remember that Paul addresses a mixed community of predominantly Gentile Christians, with some Jewish converts. The Corinthians' problems reflect this mixed makeup. The highly developed Greek culture valued gifts of the mind and spirit, such as knowledge and eloquent reasoning. Such gifts contributed to the status of the individuals who possessed them, sometimes to the detriment of charity. Before addressing their specific questions, Paul, in 8,1-7, contrasts the much desired "knowledge" with charity which he will later call "the most excellent gift" (13,13). Charity, Paul insists, is to be the distinguishing mark of the Christian community.

The central role of charity is particularly evident in reconciling tensions and divisions that continue to arise in the church. It is not as if all the answers for living the Christian life are already given in the Scriptures or in the traditional Catholic teaching. Paul indicates a direction that continues to be appropriate for today. We may ask ourselves the effect of making charity the principle for solving the practical issues that arise among us. Paul approaches concrete situations in the light of his experience of the gospel as including all people. As we comment on the section of 1 Corinthians 8,1—11,1, we are struck by the role of the apostle's own life in presenting an example for believers to imitate. This is at the heart of his message to the Corinthians (see especially Chapter 9 and 11,1).

□ *Knowledge versus Charity* (8,1-7 and 10,23—11,1). Paul quoted a Corinthian slogan acknowledging that "all of us have knowledge" (8,1). The Corinthians apparently assumed that such knowledge made some of them superior to others. So, for example, it was their "knowledge" that allowed them to overlook incest in one of their members (see Chapter 5). It was the attraction of and competition for the gifts considered superior that were disrupting their liturgies (14,20-33) and even the Lord's Supper (11,17f). Paul proposes charity as a remedy for the rivalry of the various kinds of "knowledge" that inflate the ego. Some of the trends in certain Greek philosophies or "wisdoms" encouraged individualism among the pagans that Paul tried to correct with an emphasis on community. Whereas knowledge divides, love unites, enabling the Corinthians' many gifts to supply various needs in the community, helping them to "build up" (see the description of the role of prophecy in 1 Cor 14,3), rather than destroy (1 Cor 11,17-34).

In discussing the factions between the "weak and the strong," Paul speaks of "conscience," a term that appears almost exclusively in Pauline writings with little impact on other New Testament authors (for instance, Rom 2,15; 9,1; 13,5; 1 Cor 8,7.10.12; 10,25.27.28.29; 2 Cor 1,12; 1 Tm 1,5; 2 Tm 1,3; Ti 1,15; see also Acts 23,1; Heb 9,9.14; 1 Pt 2,19; 3,16.21). In some instances (for example, Rom 2,15; 9,1), "conscience" simply means that inner judgment which confirms an individual's behavior or words as right or wrong, true or false. This was the meaning current in the Greek. But in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, Paul gives a communal meaning to conscience and places it in a new Christian context. In this context, the individual consciences of both the "weak" and the "strong" are subordinate to the obligations of mutual charity. The weak must not judge the strong and the strong not scandalize the weak. For Paul,

conscience is not autonomous. It cannot be the last court of appeal among Christians. It is subject to charity and concern for one "for whom Christ has died" (8,11).

In 1 Corinthians 10,23—11,1, Paul summarizes his discussion of knowledge of the specific issues regarding pagan meals and customs, and of imitation of his own example. Quoting another Corinthian slogan (as he did in 8,1 where he said "all of us have knowledge"), Paul agrees that "Everything is lawful" (10,23). Yet, he continues, not everything is beneficial. The merit of an action is related to its effects on the community. Concrete questions about whether to eat or not should be resolved in view of their effect on the other members of the community. For Paul, the morality of a decision depends upon its impact on the conscience of other brothers and sisters. Paul's attempt to win others over rather than to alienate them keeps their salvation in view. Thus he concludes that Corinthian Christians ought to imitate him as he does Christ (11,1).

□ *The Example of Paul* (9,1-27). Abruptly Paul interjects his own example in Chapter 9 into the discussion of eating idol meats in Chapters 8 and 10. (Chapter 9 represents B in the A-B-A′ pattern discussed in the Introduction above.) The Corinthians valued freedom. But Paul shows that the constraints of community life limit freedom. Paul shows that he himself is both free and an apostle. He is an apostle because he has "seen the Lord" (9,1; 15,7f), and the Corinthians themselves are his work in the Lord (9,2; 2 Cor 3,2). Some Corinthians suggested that Paul's forfeiting of community support was an implicit admission that Paul is not a true apostle like Peter and others. Paul's response is an *apologia* or self-defense of his apostleship, of his freedom and his rights as an apostle.

In many of his letters Paul refers to the fact that he works with his hands and thus gives an example for his addressees to follow (1 Thes 2,9; 2 Thes 3,7-10). Paul freely forfeited the apostolic privilege of support in order "not to place an obstacle to the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor 9,12). Paul served all—Jews, Gentiles, the "strong and the weak"—so that through this service the gospel message would be available to them. No one should be denied the gospel message because of inability to pay. This forfeiting of privilege makes Paul more free to serve. Yet, as Paul will argue in 2 Corinthians 8,1—9,15, after receiving the gospel message Christians have a responsibility to contribute to the support of other Christians in need.

Paul ends his defense of his own ministry with an athletic image. He undergoes the "exercises" and disciplines his body because he is running a race for an imperishable crown. Paul thus adds another defense of his manual labor: he preached tirelessly and worked with his hands so that he would not be distracted from the goal. Paul's work could be seen as a form of self-abasement done in imitation of Christ who "emptied himself" and gave his life for all (Phil 2,7). Paul performed the manual labor as yet another means of making the gospel accessible to all.

Asceticism has played an important role in Christian spirituality throughout the history of the church. Paul legitimizes asceticism or self-denial for apostolic reasons. Today we live in a world which encourages individual freedom without constraints, and the pursuit of happiness almost to any length. Such a mentality is not so distant from the sophisticated world of the Corinthians. Paul's corrective view suggests another approach altogether. The community's pursuit of charity should be the focus of the individual's energies and form the individual's conscience. Freedom is for the service of the gospel message. An individual's rights are subject to God's call to preach the gospel. The charity of God compels us, training us in the school of self-denial and the pursuit of God's will in our lives.

**PROBLEMS IN LITURGICAL ASSEMBLIES** (11,2—14,40)
Paul now turns to a number of issues affecting the ways in which the Corinthians are worshiping together. These issues fall into three categories: dress and decorum at liturgies (11,2-16), the celebration of the Lord's Supper (11,17-34), and the unity and variety of spiritual gifts (12,1—14,40). We can discuss each of these only briefly.

**Dress and Decorum at Liturgies** (11,2-16). Women were subordinated to men in both Greco-Roman and Jewish society. The role of women therefore became an issue in the Christian communities as they sought to create a new society distinct from the world around them, based on different values. The freedoms allowed women by their baptism were causing dissension in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul allowed certain privileges to women. In Galatians 3,28f Paul quoted a baptismal formula that says that in Christ there is no distinction between "male and female," but all are one. Yet in 1 Corinthians 11,2-16, Paul struggles with the issue raised in Corinth about the proper attire for women at liturgies, because it was an issue in that community.

In sum, Paul says that when women prophesy they should be veiled. Although he gives several reasons to support this, the most important reason is that the customs of the time should prevail. This is so that the prophecies of women are not a source of scandal for the superficial reason of dress. It is to be noted that Paul supports the women's right and gift of prophecy. According to Paul, what is essential is the steady progress of the community in the ways of Christian living, in charity and peace. For Paul, individual freedoms are subordinate to that fundamental, common goal.

**The Celebration of the Eucharist** (11,17-34). There were divisions among the Corinthians on social and economic grounds. Wealthy Christians apparently boasted great meals at which the poor were either not welcomed or treated badly. Some became drunk while others went away hungry (11,20-22.33f). Paul says that this is not the Lord's Supper and that the Corinthians are eating and drinking their own condemnation (see 11,27-29). Within the context of the discussion of abuses in the community's liturgical celebrations, Paul inserts his account of the institution of the Last Supper.

Paul's is the earliest written account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament (see the note on 11,23-25). Paul introduces at least three significant changes to emphasize the centrality of the Eucharist within the context of the Corinthian community (see 11,17-34). These changes are in the additions of the words "for you," the command "Do this in remembrance of me" (verse 24), and the qualifier "new" before "covenant" in 11,25 (see also Mk 14,22-25; Mt 26,26-29; Lk 22,14-20).

By emphasizing that Jesus' body was given "for you" Paul reminds the Corinthians of Jesus' self-giving act in which they participate by receiving the bread and the cup. They are then warned that an "unworthy" reception would not bring salvation but rather condemnation. The command to do this in memory of Jesus calls the Christians to offer a fitting memorial, including calling to mind Jesus' self-offering and imitating him in this. The insertion of "new" before "covenant" reminds the Corinthians that the Old Testament prophecy of a "new covenant" is fulfilled in Christ (see Jer 31,31; 2 Cor 3,3.6). This is an inclusive covenant, one that is extended to all, one that provides the basis for a new society and a new relationship with God.

The celebration of the Eucharist has always had pride of place in the Catholic sacramental and liturgical life. The institution of the Eucharist provides more than a mere memory of Jesus' last meal with his friends. It is given "for us." The Eucharist signifies unity and challenges us to

be reconciled with all members of the whole church. As we participate in the celebration of Jesus' gift of himself to us in the Eucharist, we need to remember Jesus' words about making peace with one another before offering the gift at the altar (Mt 5,23-25). It is in that spirit that Paul gives his instructions to the Corinthians. Likewise, the church's long social teaching applies above all within the church where all members are welcomed and where all participate fully in the life of the Spirit.

**The Spiritual Gifts** (12,1—14,40). The divisions among the Corinthians based on competition for the higher gifts continue to occupy Paul. Paul reminds the Corinthians that when they were pagans they were "attracted and led away" by idols (12,2). Idolatry attributes the honor and devotion that belongs to God to false gods. Paul advises the Corinthians that in true conversion to Jesus Christ there is unity with others who also worship the same God.

The hymn of love in 1 Corinthians 13, inserted within the context of Chapters 12 and 14 on the variety of gifts, serves to illustrate the unity that should characterize the Corinthians. In Chapter 11, Paul alluded to the problem of the divisions between the wealthy and the poor. In Chapters 12 and 14 it is not so much the social distinctions but spiritual gifts that threaten the Corinthians' unity. As remedy, Paul offers reflections on the community as the body of Christ (12,12-27). It is possible that the hymn on love in Chapter 13 is borrowed from Stoic sources and simply inserted here by Paul (see note on 13,1-13). But the new context Paul provides emphasizes that love is the highest spiritual gift, one which all believers must aspire to achieve (13,13).

Love remains more important than all the other gifts in the church—even than faith and hope. This is not to diminish faith and hope and the other spiritual gifts such as prophecy, teaching, administration. But this love is an expression of God's own love, enabling us to act mercifully and kindly toward one another. We as Christians must avoid retaliation and other forms of violence. Christians can never exhaust the implications of these extraordinarily rich and relevant passages of 1 Corinthians 12,1—14,40. Christian couples, for example, in embarking on a new life-style, frequently choose to meditate on this hymn, reading this passage in wedding ceremonies. It is a popular choice for many other liturgical celebrations as well. Love in action, at the service of others, is the essential message of the gospel.

**THE RESURRECTION** (15,1-58)

For Paul, the death, burial, and Resurrection of Christ are fundamental to all Christian teaching and ethics. Paul received the doctrine of the Resurrection directly through an appearance of the Risen Christ. This doctrine was an integral part of the tradition that he has passed on to the Corinthians. Paul implies that if the Corinthians really grasped and accepted the Resurrection and its implications, many of the problems he has addressed throughout this letter would have been resolved. In the first part of this chapter (15,1-11), Paul states the fundamental teaching on the Resurrection. He stresses the appearances of the Risen Christ that were the foundation of the church, beginning with Peter's and ending with his own.

A second section (see verses 12-28) states emphatically that "if Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain" (15,14.17). The Resurrection forms the basis of faith and causes believers to reassess all of life and death. By his resurrection Christ is revealed as the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15,20). Christ is our hope, our assurance that we will experience the Resurrection. Without the Resurrection, perseverance in faith, including the sacrifices involved in suffering persecution, is pointless.

The slogan quoted by Paul, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (15,32) is the wisdom of those without hope in the Resurrection. This is the slogan of those who are consumed only with selfish things, and do not have hope in the life to come. In a third section (verses 29-34), Paul is trying to shame the Corinthians by showing them the absurdities of some Christian practices and beliefs without faith in the Resurrection.

The early Christians, and especially the sophisticated Corinthians, struggled to conceive the manner of the Resurrection. Paul denounces this effort as foolishness. He compares dissimilar creatures such as birds and fish, the sun and the moon, to show the qualitative difference between our bodies before and after the Resurrection. Paul speaks of the first Adam as corruptible, earthly, the one whose image we now bear. But after our resurrection we will be like the second Adam, Christ: incorruptible and eternal.

The last section of 1 Corinthians 15 (verses 51-58) incorporates a hymnic celebration of God's victory through Christ over sin and death. Conquered by Christ, sin and death have lost their sting. By the Resurrection God has shown us that sin and death are not the last word, but only lead to life. Therefore Paul sings God's praises for the hope which the Resurrection gives. He reminds the Corinthians that their "labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15,58).

### Conclusion (16,1-24)

Finally, Paul speaks of the collection and how it is to be taken to alleviate the suffering of the saints (16,1-4). Paul then reports his travel plans, sends greetings to his friends, and concludes with a blessing. Comparison of the persons named with those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1 and Acts 18 renders an interesting profile of the Corinthian community with its mixture of notable men and women, rich and poor, powerful and ordinary citizens. Paul greets representatives of all categories, personally demonstrating the acceptance and unity he has been advocating.

## Concluding Remarks

The Corinthians were a church like ours—real people with real problems. They struggled for charity in the midst of disagreements, for respect for leaders without exaggerating these leaders' roles. Paul stressed the role of ministers as servants of God and Jesus Christ. Paul recognizes the authority of the church to discipline its members including the immoral, those in dispute, the strong as well as the weak. Paul tried to help remedy their problems by advising them to seek spiritual gifts, especially charity. Paul advocated a healthy respect for the body without failing to see the value of asceticism. Paul recognized roles for both women and men in the liturgy. He gave some concrete examples of practical implications of living the gospel message as a community of equals. Paul protests discrimination against the poor or those considered inferior because they possess lesser gifts. Further, Paul stresses already in 1 Corinthians, and more so in 2 Corinthians, the necessity of aiding the less fortunate. The first epistle to the Corinthians is truly an interpretation of the gospel message that continues to challenge us with its many implications. M.A.G.

# 2 CORINTHIANS ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 275–292 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

One of the most remarkable characteristics of 2 Corinthians is its apparent lack of orderly sequence. The tone is emotional and defensive; the flow of Paul's thought choppy. There are indications that this "letter" is actually a composite of several communications the apostle sent to the Corinthians. Of all the communities Paul addresses, his most difficult yet consistent relationship was with the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians exhibits traces of an ongoing conversation. Yet the lack of cohesion in Paul's thought may be only apparent and should not be exaggerated. The order to the material can be seen as an example of Paul's typical A-B-A′ pattern which influenced so heavily the development of 1 Corinthians (see above, p. RG 486). So, for example, Paul begins and ends 2 Corinthians with personal testimony about the painful difficulties both he and the Corinthians have experienced in the course of their relationship (see 1,12—7,16 as A, and Chapters 10,1—13,10 as A′). Within this frame, the two chapters, 8 and 9, dealing with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (=B) illustrate that for Paul, the generosity of the Corinthians symbolizes the success of the Gentile mission.

We need to work through 2 Corinthians in its final form, even if it also represents originally separate letters or letter fragments. It is important to observe that as believers we approach 2 Corinthians as part of the New Testament canon, a letter preserved by the early church and read at liturgical gatherings in spite of its criticisms of the Corinthians and the many challenges it raised for the church there. In other words, despite his own doubts, the Corinthians respected Paul's authority, at least in so far as they circulated and reflected on and preserved his words. Perhaps we as Christians are tempted to think that ours is the only church suffering crises in mutual trust between authorities and congregations. Sometimes we may think of the early Christian community as enjoying a more idyllic and ideal experience than we know. The Corinthian letters will serve as a corrective to such mistaken idealism.

## Working through 2 Corinthians

Some initial observations might help us read 2 Corinthians with a better understanding. As already indicated, 2 Corinthians follows a rather disrupted and choppy sequence. For example, the alert reader will note that some fragments (for example, 6,14—7,1) appear completely out of context. Further, Chapters 8 and 9 seem to have been originally two separate letters, each dealing with the collection, but neither assuming the other, nor conditioned by the whole context of Chapters 1–7 and 10–13. Finally, Chapters 10–13 could stand alone as an "apologia," an explanation in defense of Paul's own spiritual experience, his vocation, and apostolic credentials.

Following the usual Greco-Roman letter structure, 2 Corinthians has the three main parts of the *address* in 1,1-11, the *body* of the letter in 1,12—13,10, and the *conclusion* in 13,11-13. Our comments will consider each of these parts. A working outline of 2 Corinthians is as follows (see *New American Bible,* p. 276):

I The Address (1,1-11)
II The Body of the Letter (1,12—13,10)
A. Crisis Between Paul and the Corinthians (1,12—7,16)
1. Past Relationships (1,12—2,13)
2. Paul's Ministry (2,14—7,4)
3. Resolution of the Crisis (7,5-16)
B. The Collection for Jerusalem (8,1—9,15)
C. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (10,1—13,10)
III Conclusion (13,11-13)

## Reading through 2 Corinthians

### The Address (1,1-11)

In the *address* Paul names Timothy as co-author. Timothy and Titus (2,13; 7,6; 8,16.23; see also Gal 2,1) were apparently more trusted by the Corinthians than Paul himself. Timothy is not named again in 2 Corinthians although some suppose he is the unnamed "brother" who accompanies Titus with the collection. Luke tells us that Timothy was a faithful companion of Paul, especially on the second and third missionary journeys (See discussion below on The Pastoral Letters).

The greeting includes a doxology or prayer glorifying and praising God whose "encouragement" is strength in affliction (see 2 Cor 1,3f). This addition gives us a hint as to the overriding mood of 2 Corinthians. Paul and the Corinthians experience much suffering, but also great consolation. Transcending all the pain is the certainty of God's presence with them and Paul's confidence that God is at work in their lives.

### The Body of the Letter (1,12—13,10)

The message of 2 Corinthians is developed in three main parts. (A) In the first (1,12—7,16), Paul reviews his past relationship with the Corinthians. (B) Chapters 8 and 9 form a second part in which Paul develops a theology of giving, speaking of the collection among the Gentiles and specifically of the generosity of the Corinthians as a symbol of the fruitfulness of the Gentile mission. (C) In the third part, Chapters 10,1—13,10, Paul returns to the theme of his credentials as an apostle, accenting his own weakness and the call of God. It is here that Paul develops a theology of suffering, speaking candidly and with great feeling about his own experience of the grace of God. Many in the history of Christianity have seen in these chapters a spiritual reality by which they are helped to interpret their own personal experience of God: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (12,9). We can read through these three parts of the body of 2 Corinthians, commenting on the relevance of this composite letter for our own experience as Christians.

**THE CRISIS BETWEEN PAUL AND THE CORINTHIANS** (1,12—7,16)

The whole relationship between Paul and the Corinthians seems to have been marked by crisis. This is evident from both 1 and 2 Corinthians. We shall focus now on the problems Paul mentions in the first part of 2 Corinthians. The apostle first reviews his past relationship with the Corinthians and then his ministry with them. Paul mentions several instances of mistrust and tension between himself and the Corinthians in his review of their past relationship.

**Paul's Review of Their Past Relationship** (1,12—2,13). Paul's review focuses on several areas—a change of plans, his confrontation with an offending member of the community and the punishment of this person, and Paul's anxiety about the lack of information about the Corinthians from Titus. Paul appears frustrated at the apparent lack of communication, sympathy, and confidence. A change in Paul's promise to visit the Corinthians, for example, had caused many to suspect his sincerity. The factions that were mentioned in 1 Corinthians could have made a simple change of mind such as this a source of strife. Paul's detractors accused him of being unreliable.

Paul appeals to God's own fidelity as part of his response (see 1,18). Paul's word is sincere and his care constant. Yet he decided to change his plans in view of the recent painful letter (2,4) which he had found it necessary to write to the Corinthians. He postponed a promised visit only to give time for healing (2,1-4). With sufficient reflection Paul is confident that the Corinthians would realize the abundant love he has for them (2,4).

The discussion of the community's forgiving one who offended Paul (2,5-11) is clear enough even if the nature of the offense remains obscure. As in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul advocates a judgment not by outsiders but within the church. The action by the majority was acceptable and judged sufficient by Paul. In the case of the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians, Paul recommended expulsion from the church (see 1 Cor 5,2.4f). But in 2 Corinthians 2,5-11 Paul says that the time has come for forgiveness and reintegration lest Satan be granted a victory in the offender. Like many other biblical writers Paul sees the world as an arena where the conflict between good and evil forces is ongoing, each vying for human allegiance. The church is entrusted with the "ministry of reconciliation" as Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 5,11-16. The forgiveness of the one who offended Paul is a specific example of that ministry in practice.

In 2,12f Paul mentions the anguish he felt at his inability to find Titus and receive news about the Corinthians. This anxiety is a further indication of Paul's sincere affection for the Corinthians. The first section of the letter (1,12—2,13), including Paul's justification of his change of plans and insistence on his anxious concern for the Corinthians, was apparently written before Paul received the happy news from Titus described in 7,5-16.

**Paul's Ministry** (2,14—7,4). Paul interrupts his review of the events that troubled his relationship to the Corinthians in order to describe in more general theological terms his apostolic ministry. Within the overall A-B-A′ structure of 2 Corinthians we see subsections like 1,12—7,16 also exhibiting this same pattern. In this instance, 2,14—7,4 (or B), describing Paul's ministry, grounds theologically the practical experience of Paul's relationship with the community described in 1,12—2,13 (A) and 7,5-16 (A′).

Paul's description of his ministry develops several important themes:

*the Old and the New Covenant* (3,1-18)
*the paradox of the ministry* (4,7-18)
*the ministry of reconciliation* (5,11-21)

This description begins (2,14-17) and ends (7,2-4) with expressions of confidence in God and in the Corinthians. We will briefly discuss each of the three Pauline themes.

□ *The Old and New Covenant* (3,1-18). Paul's reasoning in 3,1-18, based on the Old Testament passages and a contrast between the spirit and the flesh, is not hard to follow. Jeremiah (31,31-34) promised the giving of a "new covenant." Ezekiel's prophecy is used to

supplement this promise; Ezekiel expressed God's promise to replace human hearts of stone with hearts of flesh and to give a covenant in the Spirit (Ez 36,26-36). Exodus 34 described the relationship between God and Moses as so glorious that Moses had to come down from Mount Sinai with a veil covering his head lest the Israelites die at the sight of his glowing face.

These passages from the prophets and the Law provide the scriptural basis for Paul's description of his ministry as superior to Moses'. Paraphrased, Paul argues that if Moses' covenant was so spectacular yet was still written on stone and in hearts of flesh, how much greater is Christ's covenant which is the fulfillment of the prophetic promise of the Spirit!

Paul contrasted the Mosaic covenant written "in ink" or "on stone" with the "new covenant" written by the "spirit" on "hearts of flesh." In the process Paul used the phrase "old covenant," (2 Cor 3,14), the only instance of this phrase in the Scriptures. This "old" Mosaic covenant was transitory. The "new covenant" in Christ, administered by Paul, lasts forever. The difference between the covenants illustrates the contrast between Moses and Christ, and indicates the superiority of the covenant in Christ. Paul and the Corinthians are ministers of the new covenant which brings life and the Spirit. Paul concludes that the preceding covenant represented by Moses is inferior and did not lead to life. Rather, it is symbolized by the flesh, a fleeting glory, and a concealing veil (3,13f).

Paul uses several Scripture passages to develop the contrast between the Old and New Testaments. Readers today should remember that the early church was adopting Israel's religious language. We are indebted to our Jewish brothers and sisters for the spiritual heritage they preserved and which we share with them. The Old Testament Scriptures continue to provide a fertile field for mutual reflection and understanding among Christians and Jews.

□ *The Paradox of the Ministry* (4,7-18). Paul continually expresses his appreciation of the paradox of God's mysterious ways. Having described the unsurpassed glory of the new covenant of which he is a minister, Paul reflects on an even more awesome aspect of this mystery: "We hold this treasure in earthen vessels" (4,7). Paul recalls his own and the Corinthians' experience: "We are afflicted in every way . . . perplexed . . . persecuted . . . constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus" (4,8-11). Remember that in 1 Corinthians Paul mentioned that not many Corinthians were high-born, not many wise or rich, well-educated or powerful (1 Cor 1,26-28). By all odds, the forces hostile to Christianity, both spiritual (Satan) and political (the Romans), would have been likely to overcome the fledgling church. But Paul continuously alludes to God as the source of his own hope, confidence, and power.

"Grace [is] bestowed in abundance on more and more people [so that] thanksgiving overflows for the glory of God," Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4,15. Hostile forces afflict only the "outer self" while the "inner self" grows strong. Affliction is "light" whereas glory is "eternal weight" beyond comparison (compare Rom 8,18). The apparent superiority of the powers opposing Christianity is transitory; the unseen power of God lasts forever.

□ *The Ministry of Reconciliation* (5,11-21). Throughout 2 Corinthians 2,14—7,4 Paul wrestled with the redemptive aspects of suffering for the sake of the Christian message. This aspect has several implications: First, the negative is not overwhelming; rather, there is always some experience of rescue or salvation. Second, the experience of suffering ends not with the apostle but redounds to the good of the community and, beyond the community, relates to the will of God. Third, for Paul, redemption effects a radical change in believers, taking them out of a particular sinful mode of existence and introducing them into another mode of reality which is in Christ. Fourth, and finally, Paul considers the challenge involved in the incompleteness of the

work of Christ's justification; this challenge extends to all ministers of the gospel. Paul and the Corinthians are involved in the ministry of reconciliation of the whole world to God.

Earthly existence is fraught with difficulties. In Paul's words, we "groan and are weighed down" (5,4). We are longing to be covered not with a "tent" but with a heavenly dwelling not made with human hands. We walk by faith (5,7), trying to please the Lord by whom, in the end, we will be judged on our deeds. Catholics have interpreted 2 Corinthians 5,1-11 as a basis for the doctrine of a particular or individual judgment after death.

Yet Catholic interpretation has not missed the complementary emphasis in Paul not only on the judgment based on an individual's deeds, but the effect of those deeds on others' actions. Catholic interpretation has always emphasized the communal responsibility or the obligations believers have toward others. Paul goes on to explain in the remainder of Chapter 5 (verses 11-21) that ours is a ministry of reconciliation. Christ's work is not finished once and for all. Through Christ we have been given the work of reconciling the world to God (5,17-20).

In describing the effects of the Resurrection, Paul had referred in 1 Corinthians 15 to Christ's mission as one of restoring the whole world to God the Father (1 Cor 15,24.8). Similarly in 2 Corinthians 10,3-6 Paul describes the Christian life as a spiritual battle engaged in order to destroy every "spirit" opposing God. Christians are committed to "take every thought captive in obedience to Christ" (2 Cor 10,5). In order to convey the significance of this struggle against evil, Paul once again resorts to the flesh-spirit dichotomy well known to his Gentile audience. This contrast illustrates the superior force of the spiritual weapons accessible to those who are equipped by the Spirit of God. In this context, external appearances, judging by human standards, even weaknesses and sin itself are all reduced to insignificance and overcome by the power of God. This power is bestowed on believers who together are struggling to restore all things to God in Christ.

**Resolution of the Crisis** (7,5-16). Paul returns to the concrete situation in Corinth, alluding to his anguished wait until he encountered Titus. Paul's representative, Titus, had now furnished good news about the Corinthians' reception of Paul's message. The conflict between Paul and the Corinthians had been resolved. Paul's exuberant gratitude overshadows all of the former sadness and anxiety. It appears as though all is completely restored and there is no more reason for concern about the Corinthians.

If we have been reading along with Paul, we have noted that some of the problems that afflict our church were present in the experience of the earliest Christians. Paul was an itinerant preacher who normally traveled from community to community preaching the gospel. He usually left to others the task of living among the Christian communities and providing oversight for them.

But his experience with the Corinthians was different. Paul lived among them longer than he stayed with any other community (eighteen months according to Acts 18,11). Paul keeps returning to this community as if he could not be indifferent to their problems and questions and mistakes. This is a problematic relationship but neither Paul nor the Corinthians are ready to abandon each other. The realization integrated the apparently conflicting data of 2 Corinthians 1,12—7,16—the lofty statements about the ministry to the new covenant as well as the insinuations of distrust, discouragement, and anxiety between apostle and community. Paul describes the Christian ministry as a ministry of reconciliation, but he also reminds us that we

hold a treasure in earthen vessels. All the hardships are apparently forgotten in Paul's exuberant conclusion: "I rejoice, because I have confidence in you in every respect" (7,16).

**THE COLLECTION FOR JERUSALEM** (8,1—9,15)
Chapters 8 and 9 appear originally to have been two independent fragments on the importance of a generous and substantial offering to the church suffering a famine in Jerusalem. They are self-explanatory and contain no particular problems that might need further elaboration. The importance of the collection according to Paul is that it represents the full participation of the Gentile-Christians in the community of the new Israel, the church. On the one hand Paul encourages the Corinthians to give generously, seeing this request as a "test [of] the genuineness of your love by your concern for others" (8,8). On the other hand Paul will see the acceptance of the Gentiles' offering as evidence of the Jewish-Christians', and specifically of the Jerusalem church's, willingness to accept the Gentile mission (Rom 15,22-33).

Paul interjected a rather humorous note of competition. He encouraged the Corinthians to give as generously as the Macedonians, who were prodigal even when they themselves were "tested by affliction" and out of their "profound poverty" (8,2) In 9,2 Paul claimed that he boasts of the Corinthians' generosity to the Macedonians. In Romans he said that both the Achaians (the Corinthians) and the Macedonians were only too happy to contribute because they understood it as their obligation (Rom 15,27). The Gentiles were "indebted" to the Jerusalem church and the other Jewish-Christian churches whose spiritual heritage they shared.

Paul begins 2 Corinthians 9 as if he has not written Chapter 8. Although he has just encouraged generosity in the collection, he says in 9,1 "It is superfluous for me to write to you" about the collection. There are many other ideas repeated in Chapter 9 that were raised in Chapter 8. These repetitions and the apparent independence of these chapters not only from each other but from the context of the rest of the letter prompt many interpreters to consider them as originally separate letters or letter fragments. For us, however, they represent a crucial example of the importance of Paul's role as apostle to the Corinthians. This is the role he reviewed in Chapters 1–7 and ardently defends in Chapters 10–13, to which we now turn.

**PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY** (10,1—13,10)
In the course of defending his ministry again, Paul can be seen following the A-B-A′ pattern, by which he introduced arguments in 10,1-18 (A) which he will continue in a concluding section in 12,19—13,10(A′). Between these he interjected (11,1—12,18[B]) his own experience with the Corinthians and his sufferings as an apostle. Thus Paul's development includes responses to accusations that continue among the Corinthians: he is weak (10,1f), and not an eloquent speaker (10,10); he is not supported by the community (11,7-10). Paul reminded the Corinthians at the beginning (10,2.11) and end (12,20—13,2.10) that he intended to visit them soon and deal with such issues directly in person. In the midst of his responses to charges, Paul developed in a famous and memorable passage (11,1—12,18), his own lived theology of the cross.

**Paul's Response to Charges** (10,1-18; 12,19—13,10). We may need to review the nature of the Corinthians' challenges to Paul's authority. Some of them have already been addressed in 1 Corinthians. Paul's impatient tone in Chapters 10–13 suggests that they ought to have been laid to rest. The Corinthians appear to be elitists, perceiving themselves to be superior in

knowledge and gravitating toward those they supposed possessed superior gifts. These include eloquence; speaking in tongues; a forceful, persuasive presence; or maybe a "charismatic personality." Some of the Corinthians apparently favored Apollos's eloquence over the "contemptible speech" of Paul (cf. 1 Cor 3,4f; 4,6f). They noted Peter's freedom, his authority, the fact that he accepts support from the community (see 1 Cor 9,6), and challenged Paul's reasons for refusing community support. Apparently the Corinthians continue to see Paul's forfeiture of this "apostolic right" to support as an admission that Paul is not of the same stature as Peter.

The Corinthians complained that Paul was weak. He writes with authority but he hides behind the written word and his presence was disappointing. They appear to have accused Paul of failing to visit them because his appearance was so unimpressive. In response, Paul spoke of the gentleness and clemency of Christ (10,1f). Paul then warned that he was empowered by Christ to "act boldly." He would use spiritual weapons to subdue in the end every enemy and disobedient thought in all to make all things subject to Christ (10,2-6). Paul warned the Corinthians against false pride and conceits and jealousies. He had earlier told the Corinthians to decide whether he came peacefully or "with a rod" (1 Cor 4,21). Now he promises to visit again soon and warns that he shall not be lenient with them (13,1-10). The Corinthians should examine themselves and see whether Christ is in them. For his part Paul is confident that Christ is with him.

**Paul Boasts of His Labors and His Weakness** (11,1—12,18). Since the Corinthians are attracted by knowledge, Paul proposes to speak of "foolishness," and asks their indulgence. Remember that in 1 Corinthians 1–3 Paul described the wisdom of God as folly for humans and added that God confounds the wise with the wisdom of the cross. In this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about the role of the cross in his own life.

Again, it is Paul's opponents who draw out this vehement testimony about the source of his authority. There are those Paul sarcastically calls the "superapostles" (11,5); these may be the same as the "false apostles" (11,13; see the "false brothers" of Gal 2,4); or these may represent different groups. In any case, others are leading the Corinthians astray; Paul fears that the Corinthians are like Eve (11,3), deceived by the serpent's cunning. This little aside indicated Paul's acceptance of the prevailing male wisdom of his time that Eve represented the more easily seduced segment of humankind. The comparison with Eve, so regarded, would be insulting to the lofty Corinthians, a strategy Paul uses to bring them back to humility.

Continuing his paradoxical development of knowledge and foolishness, Paul describes the wisdom he has learned through suffering. His beautiful testimony can hardly be adequately paraphrased. It must be read and reflected upon. The experiences which the Corinthians construe as "failures"—the beatings, humiliations, imprisonments, dangers—are Paul's apostolic credentials. He has experienced visions and revelations and ecstasies. He might have been tempted to pride in these (as he suggests the Corinthians would be). But Paul also experienced a "thorn in the flesh . . . an angel of Satan to beat me" (2 Cor 12,7). The wisdom Paul learned from this suffering is that God's power is made perfect in weakness. In the end we can understand why Paul says, "I boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me" (12,9).

Once again the reader may have the impression that, by following Paul's apparently circuitous arguments, we are enriched far beyond the effort of understanding the specific situation Paul addressed in Corinth centuries ago. An outcome of studying 2 Corinthians 1–7 is

the realization that all the suffering involved in creating the church among limited human beings bears fruit in fidelity and hope. From 2 Corinthians we are brought to a whole new appreciation of the role of the cross in the Christian vocation to holiness. M.A.G.

# GALATIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 293–302 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Paul's tone in Galatians is defensive and emotional. The problem affecting the Galatians' communities is such that Paul perceives it as a great threat not only to his own reputation and mission but to the gospel itself. "Judaizers," or other Christian missionaries who claimed that Gentiles must follow some aspects of the Mosaic law, including circumcision, in order to be fully Christian, were undermining Paul's authority and the sufficiency of faith in Christ that Paul preached.

The issues of freedom, divisions in the community even among leaders, the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and the emphasis on faith are as important to us today as they were to Paul's addressees in Galatia. Yet today's reader of Galatians must sort through the combative tone of this letter, the particular circumstances of its writing; and the historical context in which Paul first developed his dichotomy between faith and works. These tasks are well worth the effort if we are to understand this important epistle of Paul.

### Jews and Gentiles in the Pauline Churches

We cannot adequately comprehend Galatians without recognition of an important historical issue that was at the basis of Paul's missionary perspective. That issue involves the relationship between Judaism and the infant church that struggled to integrate the non-Jews or Gentiles into a new "Israel of God" (Gal 6,16). Although this may seem like a remote issue unrelated to the problems the church faces today, it is actually quite relevant for us with our ecumenical concerns. The question of "Who shall belong?" had to be resolved differently than it was in Judaism, where circumcision was the sign of initiation and obedience to the Mosaic Law signified membership.

We must understand that some of the early Christians saw the message of Jesus largely within the context of Judaism. Indeed, Christianity might have remained as a sect within Judaism had it revolved only around belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Early Christianity, however, was almost immediately open to the conversion of the Gentiles (sometimes called the "nations" or the "pagans" in translations). We must also remember that before his conversion to Christ, Paul the Pharisee was so zealous for the observance of the Law that he persecuted the church (Gal 1,13). According to Acts, Paul obtained authorization to hunt down and bring to trial in Jerusalem those fellow Jews who had become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 9,1f). As a strict Jew then, Paul perceived that the message of Christ was a threat to Jewish views. After his conversion, Paul abandoned his concern for maintenance of the Jewish Law and concentrated on the mission to the Gentiles. In other words, Paul reassessed, as a result of his vocation, the role of the Jewish Law to which he had always been devoted.

In light of his God-given vocation to preach the message of Christ to non-Jews, Paul began

to see the Law as superseded. According to the Law, the Gentiles had been excluded from salvation. Through Christ, Paul taught, they are included. As a result of a revelation from God, Paul identified himself as an apostle to the Gentiles. Consequently Paul felt as committed to the Gentile mission as he ever had felt formerly with regard to the Jewish Law.

The Gentile mission, however, did not begin with Paul. Stephen (see Acts 6) and others, including Peter (Acts 10), had preached to the Gentiles and baptized them before Paul. Nevertheless, not all of the leaders of the early Christian community felt the same degree of freedom from the Jewish Law as Paul did. Nor did everyone agree that Gentiles who were becoming part of the church should neglect the prescriptions of the Jewish Law. Peter and James, for example, who were recognized Christian leaders, both felt that some observance of Jewish Law should be required of the Gentiles. James was a very significant figure in the Jerusalem "mother church." Peter, of course, was one of the Twelve and a leader of the Jerusalem community as well as a known authority in the predominantly Jewish-Christian community at Antioch. Representatives from James apparently were preaching at least a minimal observance of Jewish law and gaining a significant hearing among the Gentile converts (see Acts 11,1-26; Gal 2,1-10).

The matter was confusing for several reasons. Christianity incorporated the monotheism and the high ethical principles of Judaism. The appeal of these basics of Judaism made more reasonable the position of those who "Judaized" (a verb Paul uses only in Gal 2,14, where it is translated "live like Jews"). The "Judaizers" claimed that Gentiles should fulfill some basic requirements of the Jewish law, particularly circumcision and some dietary restrictions, in order to demonstrate that they had actually converted from pagan ways. But from the beginning of the Christian preaching, faith in Jesus and especially in the Resurrection had been the only requirement for baptism. Even Peter testified that the Gentiles, like the Jews, were saved through faith and that "God shows no partiality" (Acts 15,9; Gal 2,6). Paul vehemently opposed the innovation of any additional requirements for the Gentiles. He believed that these additions would, in fact, constitute deviation from the firm conviction that salvation is a work of God accomplished through grace accepted by faith in Jesus as the Christ.

## Working through Galatians

Galatians represents Paul's effort to correct some misrepresentations about the message he preaches. Galatians exhibits the three main parts of a letter: the *address* (1,1-5), the *body* (1,6—6,10) which contains teaching (1,6–4,31) and ethical applications (5,1—6,10), and a *conclusion* (6,11-18). We will comment on these main divisions of Galatians; a more detailed outline is given in the *New American Bible:*

I Address (1,1-5)
II The Body of the Letter (1,6—6,10)
  A. Paul's Teaching (1,6—4,31)
    1. Defense of Paul's Gospel and Authority (1,6—2,21)
      a. Paul's Vocation (1,6-24)
      b. There is Only One Gospel (2,1-10)
      c. Paul's Conflict with Peter and James (2,11-21)
    2. Faith, Freedom, and the Scriptures (3,1—4,31)
      a. The Experience of the Galatians (3,1-5; 4,1-20)
      b. The Scriptures are Fulfilled in Christ (3,6-29; 4,21-31)

B. Exhortations for Christian Life (5,1—6,10)
III Conclusion (6,11-18)

## Reading through Galatians

### The Address (Gal 1,1-5)

This address, in which Paul greets the recipients, is abbreviated, lacking a thanksgiving characteristic of the usual opening of a Pauline letter. Galatians is the only Pauline letter without a thanksgiving. Perhaps Paul's eagerness to get to the heart of his message explains this omission. Paul expresses amazement that the Galatians have so quickly deserted the one who called them (1,6). Their abandonment of the gospel is the opposite of Paul's own fidelity (1,1). Paul insists that he himself stands faithfully rooted in Jesus Christ. Paul is an apostle not by the will of human beings but because of a call from God.

### The Body of the Letter (1,6—6,10)

The message of Galatians is developed in two major parts: the first is basically doctrinal, where Paul summarizes his teaching (1,6—4,31); the second or ethical part contains applications of this teaching for the life of the community (5,1—6,10).

**PAUL'S TEACHING** (1,6—4,31)

Paul's doctrine in the first part of Galatians can be further subdivided as developments of two related themes: a defense of Paul's gospel and authority (1,6–2,21) and faith, freedom, and the Scriptures (3,1—4,31).

**Defense of Paul's Preaching and Authority** (Gal 1,6—2,21). In Galatians we see Paul on the defensive, strongly insisting on his loyalty to the gospel. This defense is occasioned by accusations that he seeks only to please other human beings. Paul developed several themes as part of his defense of the message he preached and that his authority came from God. Key themes in this defense are Paul's vocation, the oneness of the Christian message, and a review of Paul's conflict with Peter and James.

□ *Paul's Vocation* (1,6-24). Although we often speak about his conversion, Paul himself described what happened as a "vocation." This was not merely a personal call as we might think of "vocation" today. Paul's call from God involved also a mission specifically to the Gentiles. First and foremost Paul insisted that this call came from God. Paul underlined the divine origin of his call by contrasting it with the role played by human beings, including his own initial unwillingness to accept Christ. It is precisely because he was in conflict with many others, including leaders of the church, that Paul began Galatians by emphasizing that his call is from God. Paul has received an "apocalypse" or "revelation." He did not even go to Jerusalem nor meet any other apostle until three years after his call (which most scholars date around A.D. 34–35).

Paul used language from the great prophets to describe his call. He claims that he was called from his "mother's womb," echoing the description of Jeremiah's call (Jer 1,4; see also Is 49,1). Paul reviews his own efforts to destroy his church, insisting that it was zeal for the Jewish Law that caused him to seek the authority to bring to trial in Jerusalem his fellow Jews who believed in Christ. Paul insists that he did not consult nor compromise with "flesh and blood," referring to the church authorities such as Peter, whom he did not even meet until later.

□ *There is Only One Gospel* (2,1-10). Apparently there were those who accused Paul of lying. They claimed that Paul neglected to inform the Gentiles that their baptism involved following prescriptions of the Jewish Law. According to these opponents, Paul did not fully explain the gospel to his converts. But Paul countered that it was the opponents, rather than he, who were perverting the message of Christ. There cannot be two versions of the true gospel message. Paul understood the challenge to his authority as also a threat to the message he preached.

Paul's appeal to the divine origin of his call serves to emphasize that there can only be one true gospel. Even if he himself or any other church leader or an "angel from heaven" (1,8) would teach otherwise, the one true gospel is the one the Galatians heard from Paul. It does not need to be augmented with certain prescriptions from the Jewish Law. According to the authentic gospel preaching, faith in Jesus as the Christ is sufficient for salvation, without any other obligations to the Jewish Law.

The single gospel message, Paul argues in Galations 2,1-10, was confirmed by a meeting in Jerusalem with all the leaders of the church. Scholars place this meeting around A.D. 50 (see Acts 11 and 15). The only stipulation the leaders expressed was that Paul and the Gentiles be mindful of the poor. Paul insists that he was eager to do this. Nevertheless, the Gentiles probably needed to learn that concern for the poor was a priority of Christian life (see 2 Cor 8,1—9,15). The Gentiles would not have benefitted from the long Jewish ethical tradition that mandated taking care of the poor. Although this just concern was part of Jewish Law, the Law is not the reason Paul gives for accepting this stipulation. Rather he insists that there was neither discussion nor agreement about the Gentiles following any prescriptions of the Law.

□ *Paul's Conflict with Peter and James* (2,11-21). The issue of imposing at least a minimal observance of the Jewish Law, including circumcision, on the Gentiles was introduced, Paul asserts, by "representatives from James," only after the Jerusalem Conference. Paul accuses them of bad faith, saying that they had come to "spy on our freedom in Christ Jesus" (2,4). The notion of Christian freedom will be more developed in Galatians 5. Here it is introduced as characteristic of Christians in the Pauline churches.

Paul confronted Peter later in Antioch because Paul caved in to the pressure of the "Judaizing" delegation from James in Jerusalem. The picture Paul paints is of a change of mind on the part of James and Peter after the Jerusalem agreement, which had the impact of undermining Paul's authority in Galatia and elsewhere. The "Judaizers" were influencing the Gentiles to "live like Jews" in the observance of some basics of the Law, including circumcision. Peter, who had also baptized Gentiles (Acts 10), was beginning to compromise the Gentiles' freedom after the Jerusalem meeting.

Luke's account in Acts attributes to the Jerusalem meeting itself some minimal restrictions on the Gentiles; for example, the observance of Jewish marital and sexual customs and basic dietary laws (Acts 15,28f). Paul insists that no restrictions were part of the accord but were only added *after* the Jerusalem meeting and only because of pressure from the Jerusalem church headed by James. Peter is therefore a coward and a liar. In Galatians 5,3 Paul will remind the Galatians that those who are circumcized must observe the whole Law, not just selected precepts.

This historical conflict provides the context for Paul's important concept of "justification by faith." Within the framework of his conflict with Peter and James, Paul reminds Peter as a fellow Jew that "we who are Jews . . . know that a person is not justified by works of the [Jewish] law

but through faith in Jesus Christ" (2,15f). Paul appeals to the faith he has in common with Peter and with other Jewish Christians. All Christians of Jewish descent share the belief that Jesus is the Christ. It is Jesus rather than the Jewish Law that justifies all.

Generations later in the church, when the preponderance of believers were of Gentile rather than Jewish origin, the historical context of this dispute was forgotten. Since then, Christians have sometimes mistakenly interpreted Paul's message as somehow considering faith as opposed to works. Furthermore, the word "alone" was added to the formula "justification by faith," and the phrase was understood in an absolute sense. So, for example, the Protestant Reformation portrayed the "gospel" as "law-free." The Reformers used Paul's doctrine of justification by faith to oppose any notion of salvation as dependent on good works such as they alleged the Catholic doctrine of salvation taught. They distorted the Catholic teaching of works as a response to faith. For their part, Catholics have sometimes exaggerated the role of meritorious deeds to gain grace. Both Protestants and Catholics have based their arguments in this debate on Paul, especially on Galatians and Romans. As a result, some Christians read into Paul's message a dichotomy between faith and works which does not accurately interpret Paul's original meaning.

We see in all of Paul's letters, for example, that his doctrine is consistently followed by ethical applications. Thus Paul teaches that faith is expressed in the moral life. Good works are a response to faith. Even in passages where Paul speaks of freedom (for example, in Galatians 5) he advocates at the same time the practice of good works. Paul's understanding of Christianity includes a highly developed ethic or life-style. Paul would see no opposition between faith and freedom on one side and good works and obedience on the other, as he will show in the next major section of Galatians.

**Faith, Freedom, and the Scriptures** (Gal 3,1—4,31). In a second section of his doctrinal explanation, Paul appeals alternately to the experience of the Galatians and to the scriptures that reinforce his teaching on the sufficiency of faith in Christ. Our comments will focus on these two aspects of Paul's message in Galatians 3 and 4.

□ *The Experience of the Galatians* (3,1-5; 4,1-20). Paul insists that his converts in Galatia have heard the true and complete gospel message from him and that, as a result of their conversion to Christ, they have received the Spirit of God. In order to emphasize the importance of continuing to live the life of faith, Paul employs a contrast between the "flesh" and the "spirit" designed to show that these are mutually exclusive. Today's reader will find such a contrast problematic unless we remember the Greek philosophical mindset of Paul's audience.

Today we tend to affirm the "body" or the "flesh" as a positive and even essential expression of self-fulfillment and human happiness. But the Greeks stressed the tension between the flesh and the spirit which presupposed the superiority of the spirit and the inferiority of the flesh. For them, the spirit represented the immortal, life-giving aspect of human experience whereas the body or flesh signified the weaker, sensual, mortal aspect that had to be subordinated to the spirit in order to find happiness. To further complicate our task of interpreting Paul's meaning, we note that Paul sometimes refers to the Spirit of God or Holy Spirit (at times simply called the "Spirit") and at other times he designates the human spirit. Often it is hard for the reader to distinguish the two, although in English translations God's Spirit is usually capitalized.

Paul asserts that the Spirit of God was conferred upon the Galatians by faith, not by "works

of the flesh" such as circumcision. Paul therefore concludes that it would be an absurd regression to "end in the flesh" what had begun in the spirit. Faith transferred the Galatians and all believers from the domain of the flesh to that of the spirit. The Spirit of God enables us to share fully in the inheritance of the promise made to Abraham and fulfilled already now in Christ. Thus Paul moves from a review of the Galatian experience of the gospel to an illustration of the validity of that experience taken from the Scriptures.

☐ *The Scriptures Are Fulfilled in Christ* (3,6-29; 4,21-31). Paul reinforces his teaching on justification by faith by giving examples from the Scriptures showing that faith in Christ is sufficient for salvation. Paul relates the experience of Abraham and his sons to the experience of the Galatians. Through faith the Galatians (a predominantly Gentile community) became the "children of Abraham" (3,7). "Abraham 'believed God,' and it was credited to him as righteousness" (3,6). God gave a promise to Abraham because of his faith. This promise included the "nations" or Gentiles who are blessed through Abraham. Now, Paul says, the Gentiles have received the blessing of Abraham. The promise has been fulfilled in Christ.

Paul goes on to illustrate this teaching with yet another scriptural example; namely that of Abraham's two sons by two women. The first, Ishmael, is the son of a slave woman, Hagar. Isaac is Sarah's son, and free. Ishmael and his mother were expelled from Abraham's sight and did not inherit the promise. Paul develops his commentary as an allegory, understanding Ishmael and Hagar to represent slavery to the covenant on Mt. Sinai. Isaac represents the promise fulfilled in the freedom of faith without the restrictions of the Law. The words originally spoken to Sarah who had been barren are fulfilled in the believers who inherit the promise (4,27). Paul says of the Galatians: "Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of the promise"—that is, the promise of grace and with it, freedom from the Law. Thus Paul's reading of the Scriptures reinforces his insistence that the Galatians are justified without the Law and freed from the Law. Therefore to return to the Law's restrictions would be a great foolishness (see 3,1).

**EXHORTATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING** (Gal 5,1—6,10)

In this section Paul draws implications for Christian living from his teaching. Even as Paul insists on Christian freedom, he shows how faith has its consequences in Christian life. Chapters 5 and 6 exhort believers to exercise their faith in their relationships with one another. These exhortations focus on the responsibilities Christians share for developing the community. We are struck by Paul's emphasis on social responsibility, an emphasis which has always received attention in Catholic interpretation. Note that Paul does not dwell on a believer's personal, interior life so much as on the relationships that should characterize the Christian community which is living the blessings of the Spirit of God (see 5,21-23).

The term "freedom" recurs here (5,1.13). For Paul freedom is not lawlessnes but the liberty to live for God (see Rom 6,4) and to serve one another through love (Gal 5,13). The choice between slavery and freedom is the choice between the works of the Law and the works of the Spirit. For Paul, all humans are under some power—either of "sin" and the "flesh," or the Spirit of God and faith.

In 5,2-12 Paul refers again to the specific problem that occasioned this urgent letter. The Judaizers are agitating the Galatians, trying to convince them to be circumcized and follow some of the elements of the Jewish Law. Paul reminds the Galatians of a principle certainly upheld by Jews; namely that circumcision of itself is nothing if not a sign of commitment to

follow the whole Law (5,3). The problem Paul confronts is the imposition of circumcision on the Gentiles. Galatians 5,11 implies that Paul, even as a Christian, did "preach circumcision" for Jews. Paul does not dispute the role of the Law in Jewish life. Although some accused Paul of undermining the Law for Jews, Paul is innocent of that charge (see Rom 9,1-5; 1 Cor 9,20; Acts 21,20-26).

In Galatians 6,1-10 Paul continues to reflect on community life, advocating the virtues of charity, service, and humility. Christians are obliged to "bear one another's burdens." Although they are also called to "do good to all," even those outside the church, special priority is given to those in the family of faith (6,10).

### Conclusion (6,11-18)

Paul adds a final note for emphasis and concludes with a short prayer. The letter was probably dictated by Paul to a scribe. Paul's closing remarks add a new dimension to the arguments against the agitators; they are insincere, since they themselves do not follow the Law. They are only trying to escape persecution by the Romans (see note on 6,12-15). Paul contrasts their cowardice and insincerity with his own boldness and consistency, referring to the "marks of Jesus" on his body. All that matters, Paul says, is that we are created anew (6,15). He concludes with a prayer for peace and mercy, calling down a blessing on his brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Concluding Remarks

The letter to the Galatians may be one of the most difficult for us to approach without prior knowledge of the historical circumstances in which it was written. Paul's message here is nevertheless especially appropriate today. Despite painful differences with other leaders, Paul focuses on a single gospel message which all authentic Christian missionaries preach. This message emphasizes the role of faith and the significance of community. Paul's use of Scripture illustrates that this is the same message that has been repeated and refined throughout the Old Testament. Faith is the expression of the bond between us and God, a bond lived out in relationships with others. Paul's exhortation to Christians is to "Be free" and therefore responsible for one another. There is no conflict between faith and works, according to Paul. Faith is necessarily expressed in the everyday life of believers. Paul does, however, stress that the works of faith are a result of the gift of the Spirit and a response to it, not a requirement for receiving the Spirit or for meriting salvation. M.A.G.

# EPHESIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 302–310 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Ephesians displays a well-developed theology of the church. The four major epistles of Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians) are all addressed to specific congregations in various important locations in the Greco-Roman world. Ephesians envisions not a single congregation but the universal church seen as a spiritual reality entrusted with the worldwide mission of Christ.

There are significant parallels between Ephesians and Colossians. The advanced christology and ecclesiology, the apparent absence of Jewish-Gentile tensions, and, finally, the unusual vocabulary unique to these two epistles among the Pauline letters prompt many interpreters to assert that Ephesians and Colossians were written in an era after the death of Paul. If that is the case, the disciple who wrote these letters was familiar with Pauline theology and style and adapted Paul's message to new times and circumstances.

In our comments we will follow the usual practice of referring to the author of Ephesians and the other "deutero-Pauline" writings (see Introduction to Paul and his writings, above, pp.RG 470–RG 472) as "Paul." So, for example, in the liturgy, whenever the deutero-Pauline letters such as Ephesians or Colossians are read, the formula of introduction is "A reading from the letter of Paul to the _____."

## Working through Ephesians

Ephesians follows the pattern of a Pauline letter, beginning with an *address* (1,1-14) and ending with a *conclusion* (6,21-24) adapted to a liturgical assembly. These stylized elements enclose the *body* of the letter (1,15—6,20), which presents a teaching or doctrine on the church and then applies this teaching to the daily life of believers. We will follow the *New American Bible* outline (p.293) emphasizing the major themes developed in Ephesians. This outline is as follows:

I The Address (1,1-14)
II The Body of the Letter (1,15—6,20)
  A. The Teaching on the Church (1,15—4,24)
    1. Unity of the Church (1,15—2,22)
    2. World Mission of the Church (3,1—4,24)
  B. Ethical Applications (4,25—6,20)
III Conclusion (6,21-24)

## Reading through Ephesians

### The Address (1,1-14)

Ephesians identifies the sender as "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." The absence from some manuscripts of the designation "in Ephesus" (1,1) is one reason why Ephesians is considered by some to be a circular letter intended for a wider audience rather than for the specific community at Ephesus alone. No particularities regarding the Ephesian community are mentioned as is customary when Paul writes to a community he knows as well as he knows the Ephesians. The lack of a personalized greeting further supports the view that this is a letter to all the churches written by a Pauline disciple.

A doxology or blessing of God replaces the personal thanksgiving characteristic of Paul's letters (Eph 1,3-6). As if conscious of the great mystery of the church he is about to describe, the author begins by proclaiming the blessedness of God. The recurrence of the term "blessed" and the many liturgical references suggest that this prayer of praise is inspired by the Jewish liturgies in which believers, mindful of the wondrous works of God, cannot but bless the Creator. The focus is on God's blessing in Christ in whom the divine plan for the salvation of all people is

achieved. The Holy Spirit is described as the "first installment" (1,14) of our inheritance toward redemption.

## The Body of the Letter (1,15—6,20)

The message of Ephesians has two parts. The first or doctrinal section (1,15—4,24) unfolds the church as the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation, inaugurated in Christ. A second section (4,25—6,20) contains ethical "imperatives" concerning the daily conduct of believers, providing practical applications of Paul's teaching.

### THE TEACHING ON THE CHURCH (1,15—4,24)

Ephesians develops the New Testament teaching about the unity of the church and the church's worldwide mission. Integral to this mission is the significant role of the apostle in its promotion. We shall briefly consider each of these teachings as developed in Ephesians.

**Unity of the Church** (1,15—2,22). The ecclesiology, or theology of the church, in Ephesians is integrally linked to its christology. That is to say that its view of the church follows from its view of Christ and Christ's saving work. Therefore, to understand the emphasis on the unity of the church that occurs in Ephesians, we need see the perspective on Christ developed there. The christology and ecclesiology in Ephesians and Colossians is developed beyond that in Paul's major letters to the Corinthians and the Romans. Yet this development has its roots in Paul, for whom the image of the church as the body of Christ helps to express the unity of Christians and the salvific work of Christ's death and Resurrection.

The description of the church as the Body of Christ appears first in 1 Corinthians 12,12-27 and Romans 12,4-8. Paul urged the Christians in Corinth and Rome to express their unity in mutual love as members of the same body, Christ. Only in Ephesians and Colossians, however, is Christ referred to as the "head of the body, the church" (Eph 1,22f; Col 1,18). Christ's headship stresses his authority. Christ is portrayed as above every principality, authority, dominion (cf. Eph 1,21f). The hymn of Colossians 1,15-20 further represents Christ as already in existence before the world began, aiding in the creation of the universe.

By his Resurrection, Paul asserts, Jesus became "Lord" of all, Jews and Gentiles and every creature. This is so because in Christ's Resurrection God has conquered sin and death. Christ's Resurrection is the beginning of a new era. Paul's writings speak of the humiliation (death) and exaltation (Resurrection) of Christ by which God vindicated Jesus because of his obedience. Jesus now sits at God's right hand. At Jesus' name, every knee bends and every tongue proclaims that Jesus is Lord (Phil 2,6-11).

One of the oldest christological proclamations Paul uses is "Jesus is Lord" (Rom 10,9). Jesus' Lordship is an expression of his sovereignty over all created things and his word reconciling the whole of creation to God. Yet even now the universal recognition of Jesus' Lordship has not been completed. The mission of preaching Christ's Lordship and bringing all creation under God's reign is entrusted to the church.

Some time after A.D. 50, when Paul was writing Galatians and Romans, it is clear that one of the major problems facing the church was the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles under one God and one Lord. Distinctions between Jews and Gentiles were symbolized by such practices as circumcision, dietary laws, and restrictions regarding table fellowship, intermarriage, and other forms of social interaction. These, Paul insisted, were obliterated by Christ's death. Yet the apostle himself had to struggle to resolve the tensions between Israel and the Gentiles (see, for

example, Romans 9–11). The church teaching in Ephesians reflects a resolution of these tensions. The Gentiles are portrayed as those who were once "far off . . . strangers to the covenants of promise." Now they have "become near by the blood of Christ" (2,13). The images of the church as the body of Christ and Christ as the head of the church serve to illustrate the intrinsic unity of the church of Jews and Gentiles, that is, of all people in Christ.

**World Mission of the Church** (3,1—4,24). The author of Ephesians identifies himself as "Paul, a prisoner of Christ [Jesus] for you Gentiles" (3,1). He then abruptly interrupts this self-introduction to elaborate on his role in the mystery of God's plan for the salvation of the world. The apostle is presented as intercessor. Now imprisoned, Paul continues the work of intercession. Through prayer Paul brings the Gentiles to God. The church, the body of Christ and the family of God, is entrusted with the work of salvation which is to fulfill all "with the fullness of God" (3,19). Paul understands his work to be essential in God's plan and yet he is unperturbed either by his own imprisonment or by the failure of some to accept the message of Christ. Salvation as well as creation is in God's hands and God's plan is being fulfilled in inscrutable mystery.

Again the language reflects that introduced by Paul in his earlier writings. But the conception of the divine plan of salvation is more developed. The church, under the impetus of the Spirit, is bringing all to the "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (4,6). Paul's prayer is that "you may be filled with the fullness of God" (3,19). The mystery of God who ordained that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11,26) now prescribes that we "no longer live as the Gentiles do" (Eph 4,17), but "put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth" (4,24). Having described this mystery, Paul goes on to exhort the Ephesians to express their common call to holiness and unity in their daily life.

## ETHICAL APPLICATIONS (4,25—6,20)

Ephesians 5 illustrates how its teaching on the church has practical consequences in the daily lives of believers. Ephesians 5,1 says, "So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love." This could be the summary of the whole of Christian life. The author of Ephesians draws out some implications of imitating God by living in love.

Christian converts relate to one another in ways already established and governed at least to some extent by outward society. So, for example, wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters all follow norms of the Greco-Roman society which give some direction about the rights and duties of people who are in these kinds of relationships vis-a-vis one another.

Paul adapts the Stoic method of describing the moral life by developing "household rules." For Paul these rules or principles are practical applications of faith for members of the "household of God" (2,19), giving directives for various segments of society in their relationships to one another. Paul does not offer a radical critique of certain social contracts, such as slavery. Yet for Paul, relationships among Christians must reflect a new perspective. Christians are motivated to a new way of thinking, determined by their common Baptism. Christians share the conviction that all are one in Christ and saved by Christ.

In ordinary Greco-Roman society the lines of authority and of subservience were clearly drawn. Husbands, parents, and masters all have great power over wives, children, and slaves. There was no need to specify rules for behavior since laws promoted by the general society govern and sanction. But the Ephesians are urged to "live in a manner worthy of the call you

have received . . . bearing with one another through love" (Eph 4,1f). They are exhorted to "be subordinate to one another" (5,21), to "nourish and cherish" one another, because they are members of one body (5,29f).

Reading Ephesians today inspires us to reassess the ordinary way of approaching one another as colleagues, family, clients, etc. We, like the Ephesians, are urged to remember our real identity and to respect others by relating to everyone in a way worthy of members of the "household of God." The ordinary hierarchical system that obtains in the world is superseded by a new way of relating to one another in Christ.

Paul finally urges the Ephesians to "pray at every opportunity in the Spirit" (6,18). He again asks for prayers for himself, that he may speak "the mystery of the gospel" with boldness and courage even though he is in chains (6,19f).

### Conclusion (6,21-24)

Ephesians does not exhibit the usual personal tone and greetings of Paul's authentic letters. In the conclusion, however, the author indicates that he sends the letter with Tychicus (6,21), the name of Paul's messenger of Colossians as well (Col 4,7). The final prayers are for peace and love and grace.

## Concluding Remarks

Ephesians strikes a balance between reflection on the church as a universal, spiritual reality and application in the daily lives of Christians of their new identity as members of this spiritual creation. Ephesians also emphasizes the congruence between Christians' personal spirituality and their responsibilities in relationships with one another. Through Baptism we are renewed. We have put off the "old humanity," symbolized by Adam; we have been transformed into a "new humanity," in Christ. We are called to be imitators of God and to reflect God's love and compassion in our daily lives.

As part of our Christian Scriptures, Ephesians stands as a continual challenge calling us beyond the present to a deeper reality where all things are in the care of God. The present with its trials, temptations, failures, and limitations can discourage us. The problems of resolving tensions and enduring suffering are temporary. Ephesians is a letter from prison, addressing a church afflicted with oppression from the outside, confusion and dissension from within. Ephesians testifies to the author's faith, nourished by the Christian liturgy and by the hope of God's plan for the salvation of all the world—a plan that will be fulfilled despite and even by means of apparent obstacles. When we are confronted by the limitations of our present circumstances, or hampered by fear, Ephesians provides encouragement. For us as Christians, the liturgy celebrates a communion with God. Faith is conviction of things unseen especially about the triumph of God in Christ.

It was in Ephesus that Paul himself experienced some of his darkest days. Yet the language of the letter to the Ephesians is one of the most hope-filled and confident of all the letters. It may lack the usual personal tone expected of communities Paul knew well. But Ephesians expresses fundamental Christian beliefs that continue to characterize the church today. For example, despite suffering and failures, the church celebrates the reality of salvation already experienced in the daily life of Christians. In our world, where many families are in crisis, we read Paul's advice to members of God's household and take courage in the admonition to serve one another

in love. Like the writer of Ephesians, the modern church at Vatican Council II complemented reflection on the nature of the church with the role of the church in the modern world. The church as Christ's body, no matter what its limitations, is called and empowered to reconcile the whole world to God. Each of us, as members of the church, has a role in this mission. M.A.G.

# PHILIPPIANS ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 310–317 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Philippians is one of the most popular and beautiful of Paul's letters. Along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, Philippians is traditionally called a "Captivity Letter," since in all four the author refers to his imprisonment. No one denies that Paul himself wrote Philippians and Philemon although there is disagreement regarding the authorship of Ephesians and Colossians.

The unity of Philippians poses some challenges. The choppy nature of this letter has led many interpreters to suggest that Philippians was originally at least three letters. A later editor (according to this theory), adapting the initial and final greeting, combined the originally separate messages into one "letter." It is the end result, the "canonical letter," that provides the rich spiritual legacy called Philippians so beloved in the Christian tradition.

Important Pauline themes are developed in Philippians. A vehement outburst against those who advocate a return to the Jewish Law occasions Paul's need to speak again, as he does in Romans and Galatians, about "justification by faith." We see in Philippians the deep love Paul feels for this community. Disregarding the dangers facing him, Paul focuses on the sufferings of the community caused by external persecution and internal divisions. We hear of Paul's gratitude for the material support he has received from the community. We witness his fears about the problems within the community and the pressure from outside while subordinating those concerns to expressions of joy for the strength of the Philippians' church.

## Working through Philippians

We can discuss the main themes of Philippians in three parts (see the *New American Bible* outline, p. 312): A Letter from Prison (1,1—3,1; 4,21-23); Warnings and Instructions (3,2-21; 4,2-9); A Thank-you Note (4,10-20)

### A Letter from Prison (Phil 1,1—3,1; 4,21-23)

This is the basic letter into which fragments from other written communications are inserted. The basic letter contains the usual *address* (1,1-11), *body* (1,12—3,1) and *conclusion* (4,21-23). A working outline of this basic letter is the following:

I Address (1,1-11)
II Body of the Letter (1,12—2,18)
  A. Progress of the Gospel (1,12-26)
  B. Exhortations for the Community (1,27—2,18)
III Conclusion (2,19—3,1; 4,21-23)

## Reading through Philippians

### The Address (1,1-11)

In addressing this letter Paul names Timothy, although Paul himself is really the author. Timothy is mentioned in the third person in 2,19-24. The mention of Timothy is especially appropriate in a letter stressing the importance of community. Paul addresses leaders of the community, specifically "bishops and deacons." This early reference to officials is significant since these offices developed and endured within the structure of the church until today. Obviously, around A.D. 58 when Philippians was written, the role of the bishops and deacons was very fluid and rather poorly defined compared to today. Yet Paul's mention here suggests the importance of leadership as well as its role in preserving and handing on the tradition he is teaching.

A thanksgiving (1,3-8) and a prayer (1,9-11) complete the address. The thanksgiving introduces the themes of joy and community, themes that recur throughout Philippians. The paradox expressed in this letter is that the intense suffering experienced by Paul and the Philippians pales in comparison to the confident joy they share. Although separated because of Paul's imprisonment, and threatened on all sides, Paul and the Philippians are "partners," participating together in the spread of the gospel message. Paul draws strength from the Philippians' affection and display of concern for him. He prays (1,9-11) that they will be strengthened and that their love will grow even amid hardships. Together they all await the "day of Christ" which Paul longs for and strains forward to obtain.

### The Body of the Letter (1,12—2,18)

The body of the basic letter from prison can be subdivided into a description of the progress of the gospel (1,12-26) and exhortations for community living (1,27—2,18). We can briefly summarize the message of this first letter.

**PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL** (1,12-26)

Paul links faith in suffering and the spread of the gospel. Nowhere is this link more eloquently expressed than in Philippians 1,12-26 where Paul refers to the effect his own imprisonment has had on the progress of the gospel message. Paul rejoices that even his enemies are using the opportunity represented by his present circumstances to energetically pursue the spread of the Christian message. For him, the priority is that "in every way . . . Christ is being proclaimed" (1,18). Paul speaks of joy even though he is in prison and faces very real dangers, including the threat of imminent death. As a committed and passionate apostle, Paul worked tirelessly to promote acceptance of the gospel message by Gentiles everywhere. Now in prison Paul is equally peaceful, knowing that even should he die the preaching will be continued.

If 1 Corinthians, especially Chapters 1 and 2, represents a theoretical development of Paul's theology of the cross, Philippians is the faith of Paul living this theology. The wisdom of the cross is that God's power is made perfect in weakness. By this transforming power of the cross, Paul's brothers and sisters take encouragement from his imprisonment and preach the gospel all the more fearlessly. By the wisdom of the cross Paul considers death to be "gain" and what he formerly considered "gain" to be "rubbish" (see 3,7f). Imprisoned, Paul draws strength from the community. He speaks with confidence and joy, expressing hope that is firmly rooted in God.

**EXHORTATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY** (1,27—2,18)

As he does in several other letters, Paul expresses concern that the opposition experienced by the Philippians will threaten their faith. He knows of some internal divisions among these Christians. In appealing to them to "have a common mind and heart," Paul alludes first to his own suffering and imprisonment and then to the example of Christ.

The beautiful hymn to Christ of 2,6-11 probably existed before Paul's letter; the Philippians are already familiar with it. It recalls their source of encouragement, and is a cherished expression of faith in the redemptive aspects of Christ's death. The example of Christ's death must, above all else, influence the believing community in its own practical acceptance of and obedience to God's will. Thus Christ is an example for the Philippians. He "emptied himself" as they must and in so dying gave all a model to follow. Further, Christ by his death became "Lord" so that all who profess his Lordship are subject to him. In homage they recognize that they are brothers and sisters, members with one another of one believing community. So Christ is the example and the empowerment of selfless, mutual service in the church.

Following the hymn, Paul draws out some implications: the Philippians are to remain blameless and innocent in the midst of adversity and wickedness, waiting for the Day of Christ (2,16). Conceiving of the Christian life as a liturgical sacrifice, Paul says that even though he is "poured out as a libation," (wine that is offered in sacrifice) he rejoices. He asks only that the Philippians share his joy.

## Conclusion (2,19—3,1)

A travelogue (2,19-30), an admonition (3,1) and a final farewell (4,21-23) conclude the letter from prison that forms the basis of our canonical letter to the Philippians. The travelogue and other indications that there are relatively free and frequent exchanges between the prisoner, Paul, and the Philippians suggest an imprisonment closer to Philippi than to Rome. Most interpreters suggest Ephesus, which has shown significant support for Paul and which would mean that Paul wrote Philippians in the mid-50's A.D. when he was imprisoned in Ephesus. The exchanges and Paul's stated intention of visiting the Philippians reveal the mutual affection between apostle and community.

The news about Epaphroditus's illness and recovery seems to indicate different visits. This is another illustration that Philippians is a composite of originally separate messages. The trust between Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus stands in contrast to the squabbling between Euodia and Syntyche and other members of the Philippian community (4,2f). In his relationships with other leaders of the community, Paul gives Christians an example to follow. Thus he can forthrightly say in his prayer for the Philippians, "Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you" (4,9).

## Warnings and Instructions (3,2-21; 4,1-9)

The abrupt change of tone and content between the first two chapters of Philippians and the strong warning in 3,2-4 suggests that these were originally separate communications. We can briefly summarize the message of 3,2—4,9 which deals with external and internal problems at Philippi.

Other letters of Paul indicate that he is bold in condemning threats to the community, especially Judaizers who agitate for the Gentiles to be circumcized, or leaders who are in

conflict with one another, disturbing the peace and giving a bad example to the community. The Galatian and Corinthian correspondence deals at length with such problems.

As in Galatia, the Pauline mission to Philippi was apparently plagued with pressures from some Jewish-Christian missionaries who were undermining Paul's gospel to the Gentiles, suggesting that the only true Christians were those who followed the basics of the Jewish Law, including circumcision. Paul's most developed and vehement denunciation of this threat to his preaching appears in Galatians. It is in reference to the circumcision of Gentiles that Paul refers to circumcision as "mutilation." In strong language he denounces those who put their confidence in the "flesh," failing to accept the wisdom of the cross.

Using athletic imagery, Paul encourages the Philippians to strain toward the goal of a "perfect maturity." He urges them not to regress into the past, seeking glory in shame (possible allusions to circumcision) or in other practices of the "flesh" such as observances of certain dietary rules. These, Paul says, are earthly things. Paul himself used to glory in his religious accomplishments; but since his conversion he no longer regards these as significant. Indeed, his former system of valuing is "rubbish" compared with his new way of seeing things in Christ. This is the wisdom of the cross. Those who do not accept this wisdom are "enemies of the cross" (3,18).

We noted the sudden change of tone between 3,1 and 3,2. After challenging the agitators of the Philippians, Paul turns to an internal crisis that is just as destructive and threatening to the community. He begins Chapter 4 by urging the Philippians to live in harmony, a theme he had already developed in Chapters 1 and 2. But now he notes that there is a conflict between some leading women of the community, Euodia and Syntyche. Paul addresses a comrade and enlists the help of an otherwise unknown man named "Clement" to aid in the reconciliation of these women, for the betterment of the whole community.

### A Thank-you Note (4,10-20)

Paul expressed thanks for the help received from the Philippians and sent with Epaphroditus. Paul adds, however, that his gratitude is not so much that he was personally aided as that the Philippians' generosity is "profit that accrues to your account" (4,17). Paul eagerly testifies to his own self-sufficiency and ability to do without. Yet he humbly accepted aid not only to alleviate his own need but as a symbol of the affection that links him to the Philippians. Paul speaks of this aid in liturgical terms, referring to it as "a fragrant aroma, . . . a sacrifice, pleasing to God" (4,18f; see also 2 Cor 2,14-16). This is the ancient language of liturgical offering and sacrifice. The idea of an offering of mutual love and aid by Christians to one another as a "liturgy" appears also in Romans 12,1f, and 15,17-20.

## Concluding Remarks

Since the writing of Philippians, the Christian community has been inspired not only by the words of the apostle, but by the example of the imprisoned leader who speaks with such affection, hope, and faith. Perhaps one of the most beautiful and well-known of Paul's letters, Philippians represents a reflection on the meaning of fidelity in the midst of trial. Paul's confidence that in all things "Christ is . . . proclaimed" (1,18) transcends the threat of others' jealousy and rivalry. The christological hymn of Philippians 2 not only inspired the Philippians to greater unity but continues to invite believers of every age to imitate Christ. Paul's prayer for his

fellow Christians is that they always be happy (Phil 4,4-9). This serves as a model for our prayers for one another. Paul puts his own life before the Philippians, encouraging them to follow him in everything that he does and says. This is a tremendous challenge for today's ministers to live lives of open imitation of Christ so consistently and with such integrity that they need only encourage others to imitate their example. Paul then promises that the "God of peace will be with you" (4,9). Such should be our prayer in attracting others to live the Christian life.

Suffering is the great refining furnace of virtue. Both Paul and the community he addressed have known immense suffering. The Philippians are persecuted by others. They experience tensions within the community and discouragement within themselves. Imprisoned and threatened with death, Paul was not preoccupied with his own situation. Rather he fulfills his own description of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14,3; a prophet speaks to others, "for their building up, encouragement, and solace." We are indebted to both Paul and the Philippians for preserving this masterpiece of reflection in Christian suffering and hope. M.A.G.

# COLOSSIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 318–324 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Paul himself did not establish the church at Colossae. Epaphras, a disciple of Paul, was the founding missionary there. Epaphras had apparently reported to Paul the dangers of the false teachings and appealed to the apostle to use his authority to help repudiate their errors. Simply put, the erroneous teachers implied that Christ's work of redemption was incomplete—that certain other religious practices were required to supplement Christ's saving death and Resurrection. These suggested practices were drawn from Jewish as well as non-Jewish or pagan religions. They amounted to ascetical and superstitious additions to the message Paul and Epaphras had taught. As in Galatians, but less emotionally, Paul adamantly insists in Colossians that adding to the gospel message is really subtracting from grace. Only as a member of Christ's body and under his headship can we fill up "what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" (1,24).

At issue in the discussion at Colossae is the primary role of Christ in the salvation of the world. The power and authority of Christ and his relation to the rest of creation are challenged. False teachings at Colossae suggested that other spiritual beings were rivals to Christ's role and that certain ascetical practices were a means of becoming more spiritual while also helping to appease these spiritual beings. Using categories and labels present in these false teachings, Paul insists on the primacy of Christ and the sufficiency of his saving action on our behalf. Ethical imperatives follow from this fundamental faith rather than from the necessity of placating angelic spirits or following some ascetical ideals.

It is customary to refer to the author of Colossians as "Paul" even though many interpreters question whether Paul himself wrote this brief letter. Yet there are many indicators that Paul actually did write Colossians. The lively style and personal greetings are typical of Paul. The strange speculative expressions could have been introduced by the false teachers and problems at Colossae which Paul wrote to counteract. Paul himself found them strange and unacceptable, but he typically uses the language of his opponents in order to correct them.

## Working through Colossians

The *address* (1,1-14) and *conclusion* (4,7-18) enclose the *body* of this letter in 1,15—4,6. The body of Colossians follows the basic indicative-imperative pattern we have seen is characteristic of Paul. The structure of Colossians then is the following:

I The Address (1,1-14)
II The Body of the Letter (1,15—4,6)
  A. The Pauline Teaching (1,15—2,23)
    1. Christological Hymn and Implications (1,15-23)
    2. Paul's Ministry and Example (1,24—2,3)
    3. Warnings against False Teachings (2,4-23)
  B. Ethics Characterizing the True Christian (3,1—4,6)
III The Conclusion (4,7-18)

## Reading through Colossians

### The Address (1,1-14)

The *address* includes not only the usual greeting (1,1f) and thanksgiving (1,3-8) but also a prayer for the continued progress of the Colossians (1,9-14). Both the *address* and *conclusion* (4,7-18) contain greetings and personal references that are also typical of Paul.

### The Body of the Letter

Colossians' main message contains correct teaching and warnings against false teachings (1,15—2,23). This is followed by exhortations to exercise fundamental beliefs in daily Christian living (3,1—4,6).

**PAUL'S TEACHING AND WARNINGS** (1,15—2,23)
Paul is confident that the preaching of Epaphras has given the community a solid foundation. He is also grateful for the reputed success of the message Epaphras preached. Paul reminds the Colossians that by Christ's saving death, "[God] delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (1,13). It is in Christ that "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (1,14). This transference from the realm of sin and error into that of grace and truth is effected in Baptism and must be lived out in the daily lives of Christians.

Paul received reports that heresy or false teaching was influencing the Colossians. Paul draws on liturgical hymns and offers his own experience of suffering as an alternative to the heretics. The doctrinal presentation of the first major part of Colossians falls into three sections: the christological hymn and its implications (1,15-23), Paul's own ministry and example (1,24—2,3) and warnings against false teachers and their teaching (2,4-23). We can briefly summarize each of these.

**The Christological Hymn** (1,15-23). In combating the Colossians' errors, Paul quoted a liturgical hymn apparently familiar to the Colossians (1,15-20; see also Phil 2,6-11). Many interpreters believe that this hymn predates Paul and was already in use by the early Christian communities. Perhaps it was taught to the Colossians by Epaphras. It was part of the common tradition known at least to the Pauline churches. The poetic rhythm and language suggest that it was a hymn and

that it was at home in the liturgy. Since Paul generally writes in prose, the insertion of a hymn here is easily discerned in the Greek.

The heretics challenged the preeminence or sufficiency of Christ's salvation. Today's readers would do well to take to heart Paul's emphasis and approach here. In this hymn Christians profess and celebrate the authority of Christ in whom all "fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him." Paul stresses the redemption and peace won for us through Christ. Paul does not badger or scold the Colossians for their errors, but presents Christ's role of reconciling the world to God as the basis of common faith among all believers. Christ is our hope of being presented "holy" and "irreproachable" to God (see 1,22). Thus Paul begins with what we all know and share in common.

Perhaps as we read Colossians we can think of some "speculation" or "philosophies" that today's Christians are tempted to put in place of the sovereignty of Christ alone. All pious practices should support rather than compete with faith in Christ. Christians, especially Catholics perhaps, are alerted to avoid substituting certain devotions or crediting certain ascetic practices for the real basis of faith which is Christ. Paul's appeal to a liturgical hymn might serve as a guide for us, too, as we remember to reflect on our creeds, and on the Scriptures to develop and strengthen our faith.

**Paul's Ministry and Example** (1,24—2,3). Emphasis on his own example is a remarkable trait of Paul's letters. We can trace this emphasis throughout Paul's writings (for instance, 1 Thes 1,6; 2 Cor 11–12). It is also significant that upon reviewing Christ's work of redemption, Paul attaches immediately his own example as a model for the Colossians to emulate. At first this advice may strike us as surprising and almost shocking. How can Paul claim to be a model for all to imitate (see 1 Cor 11,1; Phil 4,8)? Upon further reflection, however, we must acknowledge the apostle's humility and transparent confidence. Paul is so firmly rooted in God that he dares to advise his addressees to follow his example. By studying Paul's life, others may know the power of God and be converted. Paul always reveals the source of his confidence, which is not self-reliance but hope in God. This hope is best expressed in Christ's gift of salvation evidenced in the life of the apostle. The apostle glories in his vocation and fidelity while also accentuating his sufferings in the service of the gospel.

In describing his own ministry, Paul adapts categories important to the Colossians and to the false teachers who are disturbing them. They are emphasizing "wisdom" and "perfection," so Paul speaks about the "knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2,2f). Paul identifies the goal of his mission to "present everyone perfect in Christ" (1,28). For this he labors and struggles in accord with "God's power working within me" (1,29).

**Warnings against False Teachings** (2,4-23). Paul encourages the Colossians in their faith, reminding them of their identity in Christ. He observes the "good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ." He celebrates this fidelity and encourages the Colossians to be grateful, with a thanksgiving rooted in faith. Finally, he warns against the seduction of false teaching that is according to mere human tradition and not grounded in Christ.

The false teaching was probably a combination of Jewish and pagan philosophies and pagan ideals. Paul denounces the "circumcision administered by human hands" and the ascetical practices regarding "food and drink" alleged to be required at certain times and days (2,16). Some teachers flaunted their visions and self-abasement, and worship angelic beings. Paul

labeled all these as transitory fads, "shadows of things to come" and "things destined to perish." By contrast, in Christ dwells the fullness of God. All are members of Christ, who is the head of the body, the church. Christians are united in one church under one Lord who is Christ. Their common task is the reconciliation of the world to God under Christ. These are the main elements of Paul's teaching and any alternatives or false teaching must be avoided.

**ETHICS CHARACTERIZING THE TRUE CHRISTIANS** (3,1—4,6)
It is to be noted that Paul does not really present a new, uniquely Christian ethical system. Rather Paul's special teachings are adaptations from several existing systems. Often, as in Colossians, Paul lists vices or virtues similar to lists found in Stoic or other Greek philosophers. The "household rules" found in Colossians (see Eph 5,21—6,9; Ti 2,1—3,8; 1 Pt 2,11—3,7; see also 1 Cor 7,1-40) have parallels in pagan literature known to non-Christians in the Greek-speaking world.

A fundamental difference for Paul is the motivation and the empowerment to fulfill these ethical principles. Believers form a "new reality" or "new creation" (2 Cor 5,17) in Christ. The church as the body of Christ distinguishes itself from the outside world in that the love command operates to create a new way for Christians to relate to one another. Paul says that the Colossians once conducted themselves as pagans who practiced immorality, greed, passion . . . (see 3,5-7). Now they have "put on the new self, which is being renewed . . . in the image of its creator" (3,10). In Christ the usual sexual, social, and ethnic distinctions do not exist, "but Christ is all and in all" (3,11).

### Conclusion (4,7-18)

Tychicus is the messenger entrusted with the letter to the Colossians. Many think that he was accompanied by Onesimus, the former runaway slave who returned to Colossae with the letter from Paul to Philemon (see Reading Guide to Philemon). The other companions mentioned at the end of Colossians are well-known Christians named in other Pauline letters. This list of personal references reminds us about the common fund of Christian teaching upon which Paul depends and to which he urges the Colossians to hold firm.

## Concluding Remarks

Today no less than in the times of the Colossians, Christians are pulled in various directions and people are still searching for spiritual guides and nourishment. The exotic, speculative language in Colossians does not seem so strange to us when we consider the attraction of certain superstitions, the popularity of astrology, the following of television evangelists who promise reprieves from effort in the spiritual life and shortcuts to wholeness and holiness. Our own culture has offered many substitutes for true spiritual growth. Many expressions of a pseudo-Christianity still achieve a certain level of acceptability in our world. Even in mainstream religious traditions, people sometimes express a compulsive adherence to certain pious practices, rather than pursuing faith courageously.

Is there any asceticism in our world which so much exaggerates the evil of certain things to the neglect of greater spiritual values? To sacrifice the rights of some people—for example, the homeless or the third-world—because of the alleged need to continue our military buildup is a distorted sense of values. The epistle to the Colossians stresses the reconciliation of all things in Christ as the fundamental faith assertion with enormous ethical repercussions. As the firstborn

of all creation, Christ is a symbol of the value of all creation and a promise of the ultimate salvation of all. That truth translates into the church's responsibility for stewardship in the world, assuming that in preaching reconciliation the rights of all are respected. In carrying out its mission, the church must be a symbol of peace, since Christ is the head of the church and he made peace by the blood of the cross. M.A.G.

# THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

## Introduction

The Christians at Thessalonica were among the very first communities Paul established and, although Paul's tone is affectionate in these letters, the apostle experienced a great deal of persecution from both Jews and Gentiles as a result of his preaching there. In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul addresses real problems that arose in the community, such as mutual charity, the need to work, and the issue of the death of Christians. The specific nature of these problems does not in any way detract from the enduring value of these letters as models for the Christian pastor and community. Before turning to the letters themselves, let us briefly describe some of the main elements of Paul's apocalyptic perspective that is so important in the Thessalonian correspondence as well as in Paul's other writings. (For more about apocalyptic literature, see the Reading Guides to Daniel, pp. RG 342–351, and Revelation, pp. RG 571–RG 577.)

### Paul's Apocalyptic Perspective

Apocalyptic literature was born of hard times. It was intended to encourage the faithful in the midst of the suffering, oppression, and disappointment that threatened their perseverance in faith. The apocalyptic writer was concerned with why the world was not as it ought to be. We can only outline here some of the ways that the apocalyptic perspective influenced Paul.

There are four elements of Jewish apocalyptic thought that had significant impact on Paul and other New Testament writers. These are 1) *a universal scope of God's reign.* The Jewish apocalyptic writers interpreted all of history, the good and the bad, as evolving according to a divine plan for the ultimate salvation of Israel. Paul's call to the Gentiles taught him that the Jew's exclusive claim to salvation was no longer valid. Throughout his writings Paul emphasizes that salvation is accessible to all now that Christ has come. God shows no partiality (see Rom 1,16; 3,22.29; 10,12; Eph 2,14; Acts 10,34; 15,9-11). Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . neither slave nor free person . . . not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3,28). The Gentiles have turned "from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thes 1,9). Justification by faith is accessible to all the descendants of Abraham, Jews and Gentiles (Romans 4; Galatians 3). The new Israel of God is inclusive of the Gentiles (Rom 9,6; Gal 6,15). Christ eliminated the barrier between Jew and Gentile, establishing peace through the blood of the cross (Col 1,20; see Eph 2,15f).

2) Paul, like other apocalyptic writers, envisioned the *ultimate salvation of the faithful and punishment of the wicked.* Paul speaks of those who are "saved" and those who are "perishing" (see 1 Cor 1,18; 2 Thes 2,10). He pictures the judgment seat of Christ before whom we all must appear, "so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5,10). The faithful are delivered from the wrath of God

(1 Thes 1,10), but it will not be withheld forever from the "enemies of the cross" (Phil 3,18; see 1 Thes 2,16). The unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6,9-11; 15,50; Gal 5,21). The basis for judgment is acceptance or rejection of the gospel.

3) Apocalyptic thinking is characterized by a *dualism* that explains the tensions and even hostility between the present and the age to come. The Lordship of Christ is a cosmic domain; Christ is in the process of returning all things to God (1 Cor 15,28). But dangers threaten the Christian community in many forms: for example, factions within the community (1 Cor 1,10-25; Gal 5,13-15; Phil 2,1-4), idleness (1 Thes 4,11f; 5,14; 2 Thes 3,6-15), persecution from outside (Phil 1,28-30). All creation, including spiritual beings, are involved in the ongoing conflict between good and evil, awaiting the fullness of the coming of God's reign (Rom 8,20-25; Phil 3,21).

4) Paul expected that the *end was imminent,* another characteristic of apocalyptic literature which he borrows. For instance, this influences his views on the insignificance of one's marital or social status (for example, 1 Cor 7), his warnings to prayerful vigilance (1 Thes 5,1-11), and his encouragement to endure suffering or oppression while striving to build up the community (Phil 2,12-18). The just vigilantly await the savior (see Phil 3,20), believing that he is coming to transform their mortal bodies into incorruptibility (Phil 3,21).

Paul adapts these elements, avoiding the extremes of some apocalyptic thinkers. He introduces significant modifications based on his own experience as apostle of the Gentiles, and his conviction that the end-times have already begun in Christ. M.A.G.

# 1 THESSALONIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 324–328 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The communities at Thessalonica and Philippi were among Paul's first converts in Greece. Despite his having been called to preach the gospel to the pagans directly by God, responding to this call has entailed intense suffering for Paul. He was persecuted by Jews and Greeks alike.

The beginning of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was characterized by Paul's suffering and humiliation. He was "insolently treated at Philippi" (see 2,2; see also Acts 20,34; 1 Cor 4,12; 9,3-18; 2 Thes 3,7-9). Persecution, illness, misunderstanding, and other forms of suffering plague Paul's ministry. Yet he constantly has hope of being found worthy by God to be entrusted with the preaching of the gospel (2,4).

## Working through 1 Thessalonians

Following the usual letter format, 1 Thessalonians has an *address* (1,1-10) and *conclusion* (5,26-28) which envelop the *body* of Paul's message (2,1—5,25). This message falls into two parts: the indicative (2,1—3,13) followed by the ethical exhortations (4,1—5,25).

The structure of 1 Thessalonians can be outlined as follows:

I The Address (1,1-10)
II The Body of the Letter (2,1—5,25)
  A. Paul's Teaching (2,1—3,13)

1. Thanksgiving (2,13-16; 3,9-13; 5,23f; 1,2-10)
2. Defense of Paul's Ministry (2,1-12.17—3,13)

B. Specific Exhortations (4,1—5,22)
1. Sexual Conduct (4,3-8)
2. Death and the Need for Vigilance (4,13—5,11)
3. Church Order (5,12-22)

III Final Greeting (5,23-28)

## Reading through 1 Thessalonians

### The Address (1,1-10)

The address contains a short greeting (1,1) and an extended thanksgiving (1,2-10). A distinctive feature of Paul's letters is that the thanksgiving focuses on what God has done for Paul's addressees. In other correspondence of the time, the thanksgiving normally centers on the health and benefits enjoyed by the sender.

Paul's co-authors are Silvanus and Timothy. Following his custom, Paul writes not only in his own name but as a member of a team of Christian missionaries. In this first extant letter from Paul, there is a greeting that will become Paul's trademark: "grace and peace to you, the church of _____ in (or from) God the Father and the Lord Jesus." This greeting is seen in its simplest form here; in later letters Paul will elaborate on this basic form.

### The Body of the Letter (2,1—5,25)

The body contains Paul's main message in two parts; Paul's teachings (2,1—3,13) followed by implications of these teachings for behavior (4,1—5,25).

**PAUL'S TEACHING** (2,1—3,13)

Paul's "teaching" or doctrinal message to the Thessalonians is really a summary of his previous relations with them. He stresses his gratitude to God for the success of this community and presents a defense of his ministry among the Thessalonians (2,1—3,13).

**Thanksgiving** (1,2-10; 2,13-16; 3,9-13; 5,23f). A function of the thanksgiving in the address is often to anticipate the themes of a letter. In the case of 1 Thessalonians, thanksgiving itself is a major theme. Paul is grateful for the reception of the word of God by the Thessalonians and for the impact that their faith has had on other communities. Paul claims that he himself does not even have to testify to the fruitfulness of the Thessalonian mission—word of it has spread throughout the Greek world.

Besides the initial thanksgiving of 1,2-10 that properly belongs to the address, three other thanksgivings appear in 2,13-16; 3,9-13 and 5,23f (as part of the conclusion). In all four places, Paul speaks of the relationship between faith and charity and of the expectation of the *Parousia* or second coming of Jesus Christ. These are the major themes of 1 Thessalonians.

Thanksgiving, then, is a persistent thread that runs throughout 1 Thessalonians. Yet Paul is not a naive optimist. He is aware that this community is experiencing several problems. Although he will return to the theme of gratitude, he launches into a defense of his own ministry with the Thessalonians, thereby implying that some have questioned his authority or actions. Throughout Paul's ministry career, he insists that he is an apostle, called by God to preach the Gospel message. Paul's defense of himself and his authority are linked to the call he

has from God. He is under a divine compulsion to preach the Gospel and his confidence derives from this vocation. Paul's defense of his ministry is also prompted by some of the dangers represented by false teachers agitating the Thessalonians in Paul's absence. Although this is a painful and threatening problem, Paul interrupts this defense with thanksgivings, as if to say that he is confident in the Thessalonians' perseverance despite the interference of the agitators.

**Defense of Paul's Ministry** (2,1-12; 2,17—3,8). One of the most difficult yet persistent problems that faced the early church was that of false prophets or false teachers. In the ancient world, where travel was difficult and communications took time, often philosophers or religious teachers joined others who traveled for business or personal reasons. News was gathered and disseminated by such traveling groups; new converts were often made along the way.

First Thessalonians reflects this kind of mobility where Paul speaks about his own past visits with the Thessalonians as well as his thwarted plans to return. He promises to visit again soon. He warns the Thessalonians about other types of ministers—those who are greedy or who flatter (2,5) or who rely on the community for support (2,9). Paul's own example stands out in contrast to these. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to be wary, to "test everything" (5,21). Among Paul's own credentials of apostleship, he recalls, is his suffering (2,2) for the sake of the gospel.

Despite his grateful recognition of the sturdy faith of the Thessalonians, Paul found it necessary to remind them of the sacrifices and dedication they saw in him and his companions. Among his characteristic practices, Paul repeatedly notes that he is self-supporting. He "toiled day and night" among them and in so doing, he gave them an example which they ought to imitate. This practice of working with his hands and supporting himself was unusual. It was misinterpreted by the Corinthians. The Thessalonians needed to be reminded of it. They were apt to discontinue working because they awaited the imminent end of the world. Paul warns them against idleness and idlers. All members must contribute to the upbuilding of the community. Modern readers may be struck by how adamant Paul is on this point. He links working and self-support with charity. They are obligations of believers who are not simply waiting for the Second Coming of Christ but actively engaged in the world.

**SPECIFIC EXHORTATIONS** (4,1—5,22)

Concrete ethical applications or "imperatives" follow from Paul's grateful description of the Christian community at Thessalonica. This parenetic or exhortatory section may be considered a specific example of Paul's concern that faith be exercised in practical living, particularly as expressed in charity. The specific exhortations (4,1—5,25) include Paul's reflections on the relationship between chastity and charity (4,3-12; 5,12-22), the death of Christians and the need for vigilance (4,13—5,11) and some reflections on church order (5,12-22).

**Sexual conduct** (4,3-8). As the note suggests, there is some dispute about whether all of 4,3-8 refers to sexual morality or to a variety of ethical concerns including sexual conduct and business ethics. In any case, the issue of sexual conduct was one that concerned the early church, which was trying to integrate the Gentile as well as Jewish converts into its midst. Greek culture had achieved a high degree of moral development and the "pagans" could not be accurately characterized as universally promiscuous.

For their part, the Jews considered the obligations of marriage and the family to be linked to the covenant relationship with God. This link was an important one Paul wished to adopt for the

Gentile Christians. Paul therefore stresses the obligation of believers to develop relationships worthy of them, reflecting respect for one another and for their call to holiness. Charity among believers, in turn, has an effect even on those outside the community who will be impressed with the example of high moral conduct of the Christians.

**Death and the Need for Vigilance** (4,13—5,11). Paul and other early Christians believed that the *Parousia* or return of Jesus was very near. The death of Christians before the second coming seemed to prove a problem for their faith that Jesus would truly return. They wondered how the dead would participate in the triumphant day of Christ 's return. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to persevere in faith and joins to this a warning about continued vigilance. Enthusiastic faith can often wane at the onslaught of opposition, suffering, and frustrated expectations. Paul fears that the death of fellow Christians will so shake the Thessalonians' faith that their grief will give way to doubt, discouragement, and even apostasy.

Paul's view of the second coming is influenced by his apocalyptic perspective. God is perceived as living in heaven, which is "above," beyond the clouds. An archangel and trumpets are standard apocalyptic images accompanying the end of the world and a call to judgment. The second coming of Christ, unlike the first, will be a show of power. It will be cosmic in effect, changing the entire order of creation, not only human existence.

Paul promises that the Christian dead have not been lost or forgotten. They, like us, will be gathered by Christ and judged. The righteous will be restored to God. Paul's emphasis is on the certainty of this event, not on times or manner. The exact manner of the resurrection and of judgment, Paul finally admits in 1 Corinthians 15, is unknown to us (see 1 Thes 5,1; 1 Cor 15,35-57).

The death of loved ones may pose painful faith questions for believers in any age. The death of beloved members of the community seems to have challenged the faith of the Christians at Thessalonica. Because the death of fellow Christians was so threatening, Paul repeated the admonition: "console one another with these words" (4,18; 5,11). He reinforced his warning to persevere by speaking again about the certainty of Christ's coming. The images of the pregnant woman and of the thief in the night are ones that appear in Jesus' own preaching, according to the Gospel accounts (see Mt 24,43; Lk 21,23). They stress at once the need for preparedness and vigilance, the certainty of the occurrence, and the threatening aspect of suffering. Continuing his use of stock apocalyptic imagery, Paul envisions a cosmic struggle that differentiates between those who are the children of light and those who remain in darkness.

**Church Order** (5,12-22). Paul enjoins respect for those who minister among the faithful. As in the first part of this letter, Paul defends the Christian missionaries and manifests a concern that the community care for them.

It is striking that in referring to the members of the community Paul uses the language of the family. Believers are to exercise mutual love. They do not return evil for evil but consistently seek the good of all. Joy, prayer, and gratitude characterize their lives.

## Conclusion (5,23-28)

The concluding prayer (5,23-25) and greetings (5,26-28) suggest that this letter was intended for reading in a liturgical setting. Paul says that the Thessalonians will be kept holy and spotless as they wait for the Lord's return. He requests their prayers and urges that they greet one another with a "holy kiss."

## Concluding Remarks

Actions are an expression of faith. Behavior is a key to the way people think and what they believe. Therefore, if there is carelessness about others, or promiscuity or indifference to one's role in creating a livable society and universe, we have to examine the underlying faith presuppositions to these actions or omissions. Charity, chastity, and an honest, humble bearing in this life are signs for Paul of conversion to the "living and true God." Paul exhorts Christians to live according to the gospel he preaches. It is not hard to see how the message of 1 Thessalonians is appropriate for today.

M.A.G.

# 2 THESSALONIANS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 328–332 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The apocalyptic perspective of 2 Thessalonians (see Introduction to the Thessalonian Letters, above) is more pronounced here than in any other Pauline letter. Before turning to the text of 2 Thessalonians we might add a word of our own concerning Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians is probably a pseudepigraph, or a writing in Paul's name by someone other than Paul, probably a disciple or admirer. There is a studied attempt on the part of this Pauline disciple to copy Paul's style. For example, the greeting differs only slightly from the greeting of 1 Thessalonians and the final greeting insists that the letter is based on Paul's authority. Writing in Paul's name assured that a letter would be taken seriously. This practice of Paul's disciples was also an attempt to give continuity to the apostle's message, explicitly interpreting the Pauline traditions in a new context. Despite the reservations of interpreters about Pauline authorship, it is customary to refer to the writer of 2 Thessalonians as "Paul."

There is good reason to believe that 2 Thessalonians was written a decade or more after Paul's death. It is addressed to the same community as 1 Thessalonians but a community that is troubled by the mistaken preaching that the Day of the Lord had now arrived. The preoccupation of early Christians with the times and circumstances accompanying the return of Christ is a problem addressed by many of the New Testament writers, including the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the Book of Revelation. The "apocalyptic" message of 2 Thessalonians is not a frightening one that heightens with fear the anticipation of Christ's return, but a message of consolation and hope for the Christians suffering persecution and confusion. The term "apocalyptic" has come into vogue again in our own times as we, like the early Christians, face an uncertain future. We need to understand biblical apocalyptic as emphasizing hope for all those who persevere.

## Working through 2 Thessalonians

Second Thessalonians exhibits the usual letter characteristics of an *address* (1,1-12) and *conclusion* (3,17f) enclosing the message or *body* of the letter in 2,1—3,16. The message contains Paul's teaching (2,1-17), followed by ethical instructions (3,1-16). The structure of 2 Thessalonians is the following:

I The Address (1,1-12)
II The Body of the Letter (2,1—3,16)
A. Paul's Teaching (2,1-17)
1. Warning About the Parousia (2,1-12)
2. Thanksgiving and Prayer (2,13-17; see 1,3-12; 3,16)
B. Ethical Exhortation (3,1-16)
III Conclusion (3,17f)

Let us briefly comment on the main themes and relevance of each of these parts.

## Reading Through 2 Thessalonians

### The Address (1,1-12)

The address includes a greeting (1,1f), a thanksgiving (1,3-10), and a prayer (1,11f). The greeting is an almost slavish imitation of the greeting of 1 Thessalonians. Paul joins himself with Silvanus and Timothy, fellow missionaries to the Thessalonians (see 1 Thes 1,1). Also similar to 1 Thessalonians is the fact that thanksgiving is not only a part of the initial address as a formal characteristic of a letter, but gratitude is also a central theme in the development of Paul's teaching. We will comment on the theme of thanksgiving below in the doctrinal section of the body of the letter.

### The Body of the Letter (2,1—3,16)

Paul's message to the Thessalonians can be subdivided into his teaching (2,1-17) and his exhortations for the daily life of the Christians at Thessalonica (3,1-16).

#### PAUL'S TEACHING

The doctrinal part of this letter focuses on two themes: the events that must precede the return of Christ, or the *Parousia* (2,1-12), and thanksgiving and a prayer (2,13-17; see 1,3-12; 3,16).

**Warning Against Deception about the Parousia** (2,1-12) . The early Christians' expectation of an imminent return of Christ needed to be adjusted and corrected as the community developed. Unforeseen crises arose and answers had to be sought in the basics of the Christian preaching. Time passed and the danger was that Christians would become disenchanted and would lose faith, especially in the midst of adversity. First Thessalonians had warned the community about maintaining faith, hope, and love even amid trials such as the death of fellow-Christians. There Paul focused on the Day of the Lord which, he assured them, was coming soon. This reminder served as a warning that behavior would be judged, and the faithful would be rewarded whereas the unfaithful would be punished.

By the time of the writing of 2 Thessalonians, new circumstances necessitated new warnings. As time passed, the early Christians were wondering about the accuracy of their hope that Christ would return soon. They became alarmed by prophecies and by a letter that they thought came from Paul. The major difference in the warnings about the *Parousia* (the return of Christ) in 2 Thessalonians is the veiled reference to events which must come to pass beforehand. This change in 2 Thessalonians 2,1-10 from the expectation of the near return of Christ seen in 1 Thessalonians is one of the main reasons interpreters suspect that 2 Thessalonians is from a later, second generation Pauline Christian. The early Christians had experienced persecu-

tion. History had already shown that any expectation that Christ would speedily return with power, to punish the oppressors of the Christians, was wrong.

The message underlying the apocalyptic references in 2 Thessalonians is "do not be alarmed." Agitators claiming to have a spirit or message from Paul were upsetting the Thessalonians about the end-time. The writer reminds them that before the end, some events must yet come to pass. But the writer is avoiding any kind of futile speculation concerning times and circumstances of the *Parousia.* He uses standard apocalyptic images portraying the conflict between good and evil, and the ultimate victory of God over evil. Yet he studiously avoids any specific description. It is sufficient that his readers focus on the hope of God's victory and that they remain vigilant against deception or alarm.

**Thanksgiving and Prayer** (1,3-12; see 2,13-17; 3,16). In both letters to the Thessalonians an extended thanksgiving comprises a significant section of the main message of the letters. These letters stress the intrinsic relationship between faith and love. The author was concerned that adversity may undermine or threaten faith. While expressing thanks that the community has remained strong and has persevered in faith, the author warns that faith must manifest itself in love over an extended time. The time of waiting may be longer than had been expected. The need to express faith in building up the community, especially in adverse circumstances, is the subject of both Paul's gratitude and his prayer for the Thessalonians.

**ETHICAL EXHORTATIONS** (3,1-15)
As Paul himself often does, the writer of 2 Thessalonians requests prayers not only for himself but for the success of his mission. He advocates work and the avoidance of idleness. He warns that idlers only disrupt the peace of the community. Thus he connects idleness and a lack of charity. The apostle is presented as a model to be imitated. His work with his hands is apparently a topic of discussion among his converts. Perhaps, like the Corinthians, the Thessalonians despise labor and prefer the leisure that is considered more conducive to the development of the mind and spirit. Paul gives both social and theological reasons showing that he was not constrained to work but does so freely. Part of the legacy he left with the community was his example of working. This may have been a form of self-abasement Paul practiced in order to "be all things to all people" (see 1 Cor 9,21f). Paul stresses that his aim is to make the gospel accessible to all.

### Conclusion (3,17f)

The author adds a greeting "in his own hand," apparently to insure authenticity. Yet it is such characteristics that make Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians suspect. There are no personal greetings and no originality to the abrupt closing of this letter. The author seems to be copying Paul's style rather than adding a more personalized signature as Paul would have done.

## Concluding Remarks

Christians today after two thousand years can understand the need for restraint on the belief that the return of Christ was imminent. Perhaps more than ever before, Christians living today can appreciate the important balance introduced by 2 Thessalonians between faith that indeed the return of Christ would come and emphasis on the need to work diligently to create a better

society. Today's mentality is sometimes too "apocalyptic" without the faith dimension. This is something we have in common with the Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians offers us a message of hope and encouragement. Second Thessalonians speaks, for example, to correct the mentality of those who would "foreshorten the days" by exaggerating the need for military buildup while neglecting the demands of charity toward the poor and needy. The events that must come to pass before the end of the world are opportunities inviting us to a change of heart, expressed in careful stewardship of our lives, of the church, and of the world. M.A.G.

# THE PASTORAL LETTERS

## Introduction

The two letters to Timothy and the single letter to Titus have been called the "Pastoral Letters" since they deal with issues regarding the ongoing care of Pauline communities. We are indebted to these communities for preserving this distinctive correspondence which describes the initial development of church offices and organization.

The Pastoral Letters are especially pertinent for us who, since Vatican II, have witnessed a renewal of Christian ministry at all levels. Over the centuries the church has developed models of ministry based on the forms of discipleship expressed in the New Testament—for example, apostles, disciples, presbyters, bishops, deacons and widows, teachers and prophets. The Pastorals might be read as reflections on Christian ministry. They were probably written by disciples of Paul for leaders of communities in a post-Pauline era. In keeping with the tradition of authorship by Paul we will refer to the writer as "Paul," although most interpreters would agree that these letters are written at least a generation after Paul's death.

Paul himself traveled far and wide preaching the message of Christ, founding churches, and writing letters back to communities he had established. Throughout his missionary career, Paul was joined by others and worked with others. He depended upon others. He kept in touch with local leadership. His letters request prayers and sometimes aid for himself and for his mission. In writing letters, Paul often names co-workers as co-authors. He sends emissaries to communities, sometimes for diplomatic reasons and sometimes because he himself is prohibited from coming at the time and needs to send a messenger. Among his most trusted and reliable partners in the spread of Christianity were Timothy and Titus.

We have references to the work and reputation of these companions of Paul in the authentic Pauline letters. Galations 2,2f mentioned that Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem and the fact that, although he was a Gentile, the Jerusalem authorities did not insist that Titus be circumcised. Luke mentions Timothy as a companion of Paul on the second (Acts 16,1-4) and third (Acts 19,22) missionary journeys. Titus is not mentioned by Luke, but he was a trusted messenger of Paul who eased the apostle's difficult communications, especially with the Corinthians (see 2 Cor 2,12f; 7,7; 8,16-24).

Timothy and Titus served Christian congregations in ancient Greece. Both were struggling with the challenge of those who offered alternatives to the teachings of Paul. Paul writes to reinforce the faith of these pastors and to encourage them, reminding them of their own Christian vocation. M.A.G.

# 1 TIMOTHY □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 332–339 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

Timothy administers the church of Ephesus (see 1 Tm 1,3). The two letters addressed to Timothy both struggle with the nagging threat of false teaching. This is a problem that afflicted the church from the beginning.

## Working Through 1 Timothy

The content matter of this letter is diverse and any particular outline seems arbitrary and artificial. Our discussion of 1 Timothy is based on the following structure:

I The Address (1,1f.12-17)
II Paul's Message to Timothy (1,3-11; 1,18—6,19)
  A. The Teaching (1,3-11; 1,18—4,16)
    1. A Warning Against False Teaching (1,3-11.18-20)
    2. The Various Ministries (2,1—4,16)
  B. Duties Towards Others (5,1—6,19)
III Final Recommendation and Warning (6,20f)

## Reading Through 1 Timothy

### The Address (1,1f.12-17)

The address consists of a greeting (1,1f) with the thanksgiving delayed until 1,12-17. A warning against false doctrines (1,3-11) appears between these two parts of the address. This insertion manifests the gravity of the author's concern.

### The Body of the Letter (1,3-11; 1,18—6,19)

The message of 1 Timothy is primarily a warning against the dangers of false teaching. The writer reminds Timothy about the qualities he should look for in assistants who are true ministers of the gospel. In the ethical section of this letter the author will consider the Christians' duties toward others.

**PAUL'S TEACHING** (1,3-11;1,18—4,16)
We will discuss the doctrinal section of this letter under the rubrics of true versus false teaching, and the various ministries of the church.

**The Warning Against False Teaching** (1,3-11.18-20). The teaching attacked in 1 Timothy is a form of *gnosis* (knowledge) that involved "myths and . . . genealogies [and] . . . speculations" (1,4). All three Pastorals, but especially 1 Timothy, are aimed at the very practical aspects of Christianity. These are reflections on the genuine applications of a teaching or knowledge that Timothy knows well.

The threat Paul combats in 1 Timothy is the pursuit of *gnosis* without any ethical or practical applications for living (1 Tm 1,4; see 2 Tm 2,14; 3,7; Ti 3,9). Indeed, the author of 1 Timothy stresses the practical to such an extent that he almost omits altogether any reference to the content of truly Christian teaching. Thus there is little theology in the sense of doctrine or

theory of salvation in any of the Pastorals, especially 1 Timothy. This letter attacks those who would reduce Christianity to a mere doctrine or intellectual exercise, to the neglect of the ethical implications. The letter presumes a common fund of knowledge and emphasizes that authentic Christianity should work itself out in everyday life.

**The Various Ministries** (2,1—4,16). The primary example of authentic Christian living is the minister of the gospel message. First Timothy can be considered the basis for a theology of vocation in the church. Timothy has a great responsibility entrusted to him by God and verified in the church (1,3.18-20; 4,6-16; 6,11-16.20f). The writer impresses on Timothy the importance of his role as example for the church. But first the experience of Paul is reviewed as a prime example of God's mercy acting in the minister's life.

Paul's former blasphemy and persecution of the church serves as evidence that his call was unmerited and unsolicited (1,12-17). Paul's example is "foremost," a primary instance of the transforming power of grace. Because he sinned grievously (though in ignorance), the grace bestowed upon Paul had to be abundant. Notice that the author does not dwell on guilt or remorse. His allusion to Paul's sinful past only serves to illustrate the gratuity of God's mercy. These reflections prompt him to praise God in a short doxology or blessing (1,17).

The advice to Timothy in this letter proceeds from the admonition to draw strength from the "prophetic words once spoken about you" (1,18) and the suggestion to "attend to yourself and to your teaching" (4,16). Timothy should concentrate on "righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness" (6,11). He should ignore the seduction of "profane babbling and the absurdities of so-called knowledge" (6,20). Constancy and perseverance in the faith are required in order to attract and encourage other believers. Timothy is urged to demonstrate to all his reliance on God.

## DUTIES TOWARDS OTHERS (5,1—6,19)

First Timothy may be read as a list of rules for people in various offices and positions within the community. But there is a common theme in all of Paul's advice. Members of the Christian community should distinguish themselves by their love and service of one another. Even the dress and decorum of men and women at the liturgy, for example, should contribute to the building up of the community (2,8-10).

The particular advice to women, which presents difficulty for many modern interpreters, should be understood in the context of charity and the importance of good example. False teachers advocating asceticism, especially in the form of renunciation of marriage or restrictions on certain foods (4,1-3), were particularly successful with women whom the author of 1 Timothy perceives as especially susceptible. The prevailing male wisdom taught that women were gullible and subject to error, as symbolized in the story of Eve who was seduced by the serpent. Contrary to the false teachers, Paul supports marriage and sees the family as conducive to holiness. He therefore advocates the "submission" of women, which can be understood as the participation of women in marriage and the family. This, he insists, is not a lifestyle unworthy of Christian women but a way in which women may, like Timothy, "persevere in faith and love and holiness" (2,15; see also 6,11).

Similarly, Paul describes the vital role of widows as teachers and role models in the encouragement of younger women as wives and mothers. Women who had been successful in living out the commitment of marriage are in the best position to teach the younger women this

responsibility. Paul advocates the asceticism of a life well lived, focused on God's mercy, persevering in faith and love.

The concrete advice regarding bishops and deacons and other ministers to the community likewise stresses the power of example. This is especially important in those offices which have visibility in the community and represent a community trust. Many interpreters assume that the offices mentioned suggest a late composition of 1 Timothy. They argue that it would have taken some years for the church to develop such a variety of roles and recognize ministries. But this is not necessarily so. These ministries pertained to basic needs that arose as the church struggled to respond to its mission in the world. The office of bishop or overseer developed out of the custom of holding all things in common so that the surplus of the rich would supply for the needs of the poor in the Christian community (see 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). The ministry of deacons reflected the priority of preaching the word while not neglecting the physical and material needs of the church's members (Acts 6,1-6). The earliest writings of Paul, and in fact all of the New Testament, stress the social dimension of the Christian message. Therefore the stewardships that would assure this dimension were created as soon as the priority was recognized.

### Final Recommendation and Warning (6,20f)

The conclusion (6,20f) is in the form of a final recommendation and warning. First Timothy ends by restating the main message of the letter: "Guard the trust" (see 1,3-10; 4,7; 6,3-5). Authority is stewardship. "Avoid profane babbling . . . By professing [knowledge, many] have deviated from the faith." Timothy is urged to hold firm to what he knows and to live it quietly. The simple concluding formula suggests that the letter was meant for "all" Timothy's associates.

## Concluding Remarks

First Timothy represents several challenges for the modern interpreter. The author's view that women are more susceptible to error than men, for example, betrays the bias of a male-dominated culture. Changing attitudes throughout history facilitated the education of women. Consequently the underlying premise of their greater gullibility has been proven false. First Timothy stresses the responsibility of leaders to interpret the essentials of the Christian message and to ensure charity as distinctive of the Christian community. Interpreters today distinguish between the culturally based bias against women and the essential message that included all in the life of charity to be lived by the community. This is a life in which all may grow and mature, women as well as men. The responsibility of leaders and pastors is to nurture that life, providing in their own lives a model of charity for other Christians to emulate. M.A.G.

# 2 TIMOTHY □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 339–343 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The same preoccupations as in 1 Timothy appear here: warnings about false teachings and Paul's exhortation to Timothy as a minister of the gospel like himself. Second Timothy is more

personal than 1 Timothy and therefore its lack of formal structure is understandable. Paul seems to be giving the younger man the benefit of his experience. He begins and ends the letter with references to his own experiences and the vocation of Timothy, linking the two. Their ties of affection and of common vocation are deep and very significant for Paul. The elder apostle speaks of his own life, his loneliness, his lack of confidence in other human beings. Yet he is not discouraged. God is the source of strength for both Paul and Timothy.

## Working Through 2 Timothy

The address (1,1-5) and conclusion (4,9-22) envelop the body of the letter in 1,6—4,8. The main themes of 2 Timothy are the minister's experience of God and warnings against false teaching. The simple outline suggested in the *New American Bible* introduction (p. 340) is the one we shall follow:

I The Address (1,1-5)
II The Body of the Letter (1,6—4,8)
  A. Exhortations to Timothy (1,6—2,13)
  B. Instructions Concerning False Teaching (22,14—4,8)
III Conclusion (4,9-22)

## Reading Through 2 Timothy

### The Address (1,1-5)

The address (1,1-5) consists of a greeting (1,1f) and a thanksgiving (1,3-5), following the authentic Pauline style.

### The Body of the Letter (1,6—4,8)

In commenting on Paul's letters we have noted that he generally follows a basic pattern of first presenting his fundamental doctrine or teaching and then drawing ethical conclusions from this teaching. Second Timothy does not demonstrate such a pattern, primarily because it is more of a personal communication that combines reminders about doctrine with advice in an informal way. The informal structure of this letter focuses on two main themes which are developed here: the minister's experience of God and warnings against false teaching.

**EXHORTATIONS TO TIMOTHY** (1,6-13; 3,10—4,8)

Ministers in the church have been chosen by God. Paul reminds Timothy that Timothy's ministry was also confirmed in the church through ordination by Paul (1 Tm 4,14). Paul's own letters contrast timidity or "shame" with boldness or courage (see Rom 1,16; 2 Cor 10–13). Courage is a Christian virtue that will help overcome Timothy's natural tendency to timidity (cf. 1 Cor 16,10f).

Paul's own example is often used, even by the apostle himself, as a source of inspiration and motivation. Paul lives with such integrity that he urges Christians to imitate him in everything (see Phil 4,8f). Timothy is reminded that those who follow Christ will suffer persecution. This echoes Jesus' warning to his disciples (Mt 24,9-14; Mk 13,9-13; Lk 21,12-19; Jn 15,11-27). Paul describes his life and impending death as a liturgical sacrifice; he is being poured out like a libation, an offering of wine (4,6). He has run and finished the course (4,7). He

awaits with longing the reward of God (4,6-8). Such confidence is based in God and meant to serve as encouragement to Timothy who still runs the course.

Like other biblical heroes (including Moses and Jesus), Paul is represented in 2 Timothy as giving a kind of farewell address near the end of his life (4,6-8). In this speech the hero warns his followers about impending dangers and threats to fidelity. They are commissioned with authority and reminded about the source of their confidence. They are promised that God will remain with them and that they will endure. Paul reminds Timothy to hold to the essentials of sound doctrine—Scripture, the example of Christ and of other Christians. He reminds Timothy that those who live the gospel message will be persecuted. Paul urges Timothy to be faithful in waiting for the appearance of Jesus Christ.

**FALSE TEACHING** (2,14—3,9)

Like the other Pastorals, 2 Timothy is aimed at false teachings that promote a certain *gnosis* or knowledge and a consequent asceticism or strict discipline. The false teachings Paul attacks attach superior value to those who are "enlightened" with such knowledge and practice stringent customs regarding sexuality and diet. These practices set them apart from others, contributing to their sense of superiority. In all three letters, Paul was assuming that his addressees held the right beliefs, so that it was not necessary to review the correct teaching or doctrine that the writer and recipient hold in common. Therefore Paul spoke in vague and abstract terms about the false teaching, concentrating instead on the appropriate ethical applications that follow from true gospel preaching.

Paul urges Timothy not to become embroiled in debates: "Charge [people] . . . to stop disputing about words . . . avoid profane [and] idle talk" (2,14.16). One of the false teachings actually identified is that baptized Christians are already risen with Christ and that there is no future bodily resurrection (see note on 2,14-19). Paul understands the Christians as living in the last days when there are many dangers and threats to faith.

### Personal Requests and Final Greetings (4,9-22)

The personal tone and greetings of 2 Timothy mark this as the closest Pastoral Letter to Paul's own style. Paul often experienced failure in his relationships with others. The author of 2 Timothy experiences similar problems. Like Paul, he says that such difficulties are the occasion for more converts to the gospel message. The letter ends with a prayer for God's spirit to be with Timothy (singular). The plural in the last line may indicate the letter's being read and reflected upon in the liturgy.

## Concluding Remarks

The church is not a perfect society nor are its ministers without human faults and failings. Conflicts over a variety of issues have plagued believers from the beginning, making it sometimes difficult to discern right from false teaching and practice. The church has experienced crises of leadership and problems with authority and obedience. Relationships among Christians have often been strained. Paul and other New Testament authors are not strangers to such tensions and problems. The author of 2 Timothy manifests a remarkable vulnerability to the strains in his own relationships with others. But this does not in any way detract from his visions

or hopes for the church. In fact, with amazing confidence and humility, the author of 2 Timothy shows that even his failures are opportunities for the spread of the Christian message. M.A.G.

# TITUS ☐ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 344–346 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The third "Pastoral Letter" is addressed to Titus, who is charged with the administration of the church in the large area of Crete. The letter to Titus has many parallels with 1 Timothy and manifests the same concerns for the maintenance duties of those entrusted with the care of the local communities. They are to give particular care to the appointment of reliable assistants and to the presentation of sound church teaching, protecting it from the many threats and dangers of false teaching.

## Working Through Titus

The address in 1,1-4 is followed by the *body* in 1,5—3,11. This message presents the pastoral charge or responsibilities, especially that of working with others in the preaching of the Christian message. The entire letter may be seen as an exhortation of encouragement from one pastor to another. A short conclusion (3,12-15), giving personal information, brings the letter to a close. The simple structure proposed by the *New American Bible* will be followed here:

I Address (1,1-4)
II The Body of the Letter (1,5—3,11)
  A. Pastoral Charge (1,5-16)
  B. Teaching the Christian Life (2,1—3,11)
III Conclusion (3,12-15)

## Reading Through Titus

### The Address (1,1-4)

The address follows the usual Pauline pattern, consisting of a greeting and a thanksgiving. The greeting is more elaborate than Paul's usual greetings, but exhibits many of the features of Paul's thinking. As in the other Pastorals, the author emphasized the apostle's role in the spread of the worldwide mission of Christ. This mission is now entrusted to Paul's "child," Titus, a fellow worker encouraged through this letter to ensure the continuing line of good pastors and to preserve the faithful teaching of Christian life. The great danger that faces Titus and the church of Crete is the false teachers and those who would corrupt the Christian message.

### The Body of the Letter (1,5—3,11)

**PASTORAL CHARGE** (1,5-16)

Verses 5-9 are parallel to the instruction of 1 Timothy 3,1-7. Paul is an itinerant preacher who, nevertheless, is keenly aware of the need for stabilized leadership, especially to protect the

church against heretical or false teaching. Therefore the instructions given to Titus concerning the administration of the church at Crete are related first to the appointment of trustworthy and reliable pastors for the various duties required for the growth and development of the church there.

One of the important offices was that of *presbyter* ( = elder), a term that in meaning is quite close in this letter to *episcopos* ( = bishop). The main function of the bishop was apparently the overseeing of the financial or material matters in the church. The bishop is God's "steward," entrusted with the distribution of goods and accountable to the members of the community. Therefore his own life ought to be exemplary. He must not only avoid excesses but represent a model Christian life in his own family.

This kind of discipline will help the elders and bishops to offer an alternative example to that of the false teachers who preach for personal gain, living off the support of the community and seeking personal recognition and recompense. Paul has never accepted support from the community and as such is above criticism. The conduct of the presbyters and bishops should likewise be above reproach. Primary among the false teachers are the Judaizers who continue to plague the Gentile Christians by advocating a return to some aspects of the Jewish Law. The writer also contends that the national tendencies of the Cretans themselves lead them to deceit, dishonesty, and laziness, thus making them all the more susceptible to falsehoods.

**TEACHING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE** (2,1—3,11)

Titus is encouraged to hold on to sound faith in teaching, while resisting pressures from all sides. Since believers are creating a new society, they are advised about ways to interact with each other in view of their already established relationships and lifestyles. Paul lists some of the groups that Titus must work with. These include older men, younger men and women, slaves, and those in authority. Christians must not act in accordance with the world around them. Yet they must survive in an alien world. Paul's instructions focus on how to survive while offering an alternative lifestyle and developing integrity as Christians.

Women, for example, are urged not to flee or reject marriage but to live upright lives within the institution of marriage. Apparently the freedoms given to women in view of their Baptism provided a temptation to them to reject the constraints of marriage. The author of Titus reminds them of their duties to be examples within the marital context. Likewise slaves were directed not to rebel against the control of their masters (2,9). The author of Titus urges them to fidelity and kindness within the context of slavery. Citizens were also inclined to see Christianity as an alternative to obedience to a corrupt state. The author of Titus advocates exemplary citizenship based on the status of Christians as already justified and relying on the mercy of God.

Paul summarizes his advice to Titus, reminding him to avoid controversies and to maintain his integrity in the true faith. The false teachers disturb the community and its ministers. Paul exhorts vigilance and constancy.

## Conclusion (3,12-15)

Titus will soon be rejoining Paul when others come to take his place. Paul closes with personal greetings. The final greeting "grace be with you all" is the simplest of closing forms. Some manuscripts add "of the Lord" or "of God" and "Amen," which are closer to the usual elaborations of Paul himself.

## Concluding Remarks

Christians continue to wrestle with questions relating practice or behavior to belief. Christianity, like Judaism, has always emphasized the importance of morality rather than mere knowledge or doctrine alone. Similarly there is a consistent stress on the importance of ministers of the gospel to preserve teaching while also presenting exemplary lives. The letter to Titus reminds us of the difficulties, yet the importance, of working with others for the advance of the gospel message.

The challenge of the Pastoral Letters for today's church can hardly be overestimated. Catholic Christians in particular have inherited a long tradition stressing the communal dimensions of Christian teaching. The church is made up of many members and we have a primary responsibility to the other members of the church. We do not receive the Christian message individually nor can we live it in isolation from each other. We interact with others, learning from them and encouraging them with our example. This emphasis on communal responsibility is part of the legacy of the Pastoral Letters. M.A.G.

# PHILEMON □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 347–348 of the New Testament*]

## Before Beginning . . .

The story of Paul and Philemon and Onesimus, behind this letter, can be reconstructed from reading the biblical text supplemented by the *New American Bible* Introduction and Notes. As the *NAB* Introduction points out, Onesimus, a slave, had run away from his master, Philemon, and had come to Paul for protection. Paul had converted Onesimus to Christianity, and now sent him back to Philemon, carrying this letter. It is important, too, to consider some of the implications of the inclusion of this letter in the New Testament canon, and the light it may throw on the role of the liturgy in determining the appropriate morality of the Christian community.

No one seriously challenges Philemon as an authentic Pauline letter and an integral part of the New Testament. As contrasted with an "epistle" that embodies more stereotypic, stylized forms and features (for instance, Romans), Philemon appears to be a letter between individuals, dealing with a very concrete matter rather than with generalized, abstract theological principles. Neither Paul nor the early Christian community intended to attack slavery directly (see *NAB* Introduction). So we may well wonder why this letter was preserved at all and why it might be significant for us. Some reflections may help to justify Philemon's place among the New Testament writings.

## Working Through Philemon

Philemon has the usual features of a Pauline letter: an *address* (1-6), *body* (7-22) and *conclusion* (23-25). The informal conversational tone, however, does not detract from the letter's impressive significance within the Christian context. Each part of this letter underscores its ecclesial or community context and gives us a glimpse into the structure and mode of operating of the early Christian church. Philemon follows a simple outline:

I Address (1-6)
II Body of the Letter (7-22)
III Conclusion (23-25)

## Reading Through Philemon

### The Address (1-6)

It is not Philemon alone who is addressed, but his wife, Apphia, other members of his household, and the whole "church [that meets] at your house." (1-2). The thanksgiving (4-6) notes the renowned love and faith Philemon has always shown the "holy ones," a reference to his fellow Christians. Paul also names Philemon a "partner" in faith, emphasizing the common life in Christ they share, which is the basis for the new society Paul is about to suggest.

### The Body of the Letter (7-22)

The varied expressions of Paul's complex relationship with Philemon serve as a model for the new relationships Philemon now has with Onesimus. Their common Baptism provides a basis for Philemon and Onesimus (as well as for the whole church) to create an entirely new way of relating to one another and to resolve the tensions between them. In no other Pauline letter is the relationship between the "indicative" or statement of Christian reality (signified by a common Baptism) so integrally bound up with the implications or exhortations that flow from this reality. From a structural viewpoint, it is impossible to separate the "indicative" from the "imperative" in this letter as we have done in others.

Compared to Paul's comments on slavery in 1 Corinthians 7, Philemon represents a certain development in the apostle's thought. Although it is far from clear that Paul appeals to Philemon for the release of Onesimus from slavery, what is evident is that normal retaliatory measures against an errant slave (who ran away and stole from his master) are prohibited by Paul. Master and slave are fellow Christians. The community context should help them work out a new way of relating to one another as "brothers."

Paul describes himself as a prisoner (9), as the brother of Philemon (7.20) and father of Onesimus (10). Paul says he is an old man (9), a guest of Philemon (22) and one to whom Philemon is indebted (19). These descriptions illustrate the various ways in which Christians express their interdependence and ultimately their equality in Christ. They are a way of redefining Paul's relationship to Philemon and to the church in Colossae. They also serve as a model for Philemon to develop a new relationship between himself and Onesimus. Paul does not mandate any specific set of actions. He rather appeals to Philemon and to the whole community to read and reflect on this letter and to discern a course of action toward Onesimus that will reflect the Christian faith they share.

### Conclusion (23-25)

The final greetings mention names of Paul's co-workers also found in Colossians (1,7; 2,1; 4,12f) and 2 Timothy (4,9-13). Together with the liturgical blessing (Phlm 25), these greetings underscore once again the communal context in which this letter was written and in which it ought to be reflected upon and acted upon. Paul does not command Philemon, but challenges the whole church to discern together the social implications of Baptism in Christ by which all are one. Philemon draws out some implications of the baptismal formula quoted in Galations

3,28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (see also Col 3,11).

## Concluding Remarks

The letter to Philemon demonstrates some obvious connections between liturgy and life. Apparently Onesimus himself is bearer of this letter from Paul to his former master. The letter is to be read at the liturgy when the Christian community will help Philemon reintegrate Onesimus back into his household as a fellow Christian. The very fact that the community preserved this letter and that it comes down to us included in the canon of the New Testament testifies to the spirit of openness, humility, and generosity of Philemon and his congregation that must have successfully resolved this matter. Today the church as a whole and local churches are faced with perplexing social problems. We can take hope that what was written long ago was written for our instruction. We can well afford to contemplate the role of such a pastoral letter and of the community's reflection on its contents. The United States bishops' pastorals on peace, the economy, and the role of women as partners in the work of redemption are but three very recent examples of letters that ought to be treated as Philemon was in Paul's church. M.A.G.

## Further Reading

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Hooker, Morna D. *A Preface to Paul.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
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# THE GENERAL LETTERS AND REVELATION

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

## HEBREWS □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 348–367 of the New Testament*]

### Toward Understanding Hebrews

Since Hebrews is not a real letter but a sermon (see Introduction, NT, pp. 349–350), it is best approached by being read out loud from end to end. Subtle points of Greek rhetoric—such as the alliteration in the opening verses—will still escape the contemporary reader. But oral recitation helps us catch the sermonic rhythms of Hebrews, its use of "we" and "you" (so natural to the sermon), and its alternating pattern of exposition and exhortation, as when the opening argument of 1,5-14 leads naturally to the "therefore, let us attend all the more" in 2,1-5. Reading from end to end also pulls us into the powerful argument which is the outstanding characteristic of this early Christian writing.

More than recitation is required for Hebrews' riches to be grasped, however, for this writing does not yield its wealth easily. Its reflection on Melchizedek (Chap. 7) has influenced Catholic liturgy. Nowhere else in the New Testament is its interpretation of Jesus as Priest paralleled. Hebrews contributed significantly to doctrinal development concerning Jesus' identity as God's Son. For all that, Hebrews resists easy assimilation. The first reason is that Hebrews is a sustained argument from beginning to end. The second reason is that its symbols are hard to understand. Confronting each difficulty directly can clear the way to more intelligent reading.

### The Argument

Some parts of the New Testament, like the Gospel parables, can be lifted from their context and still make sense. But in Hebrews, each part of the sermon plays a role in a complicated interplay of argument and explanation concerning Jesus and Christian life. Hebrews resists being excerpted. It uses a form of argument found both in Greek philosophy and rabbinic Judaism, called "from the lesser to the greater." It says, "If something is true in a smaller matter, it is even more true in an analogous greater matter." In Hebrews, the contrast is between the partial revelation

of God in the past through angels, law, and priesthood, and the perfect revelation through God's Son, Jesus; between that former "lesser" salvation and the present "greater" salvation.

Essential to the argument in Hebrews, however, is its practical application. There is also a contrast between the response to God's word by the people of the past, and the response demanded of the people today. Greater blessing and hope require a greater degree of obedience and loyalty. There is also a greater penalty for disobedience. The stakes are higher all around.

## The Symbols

The symbols of Hebrews are sufficiently strange to shake any assumption that the New Testament world was "just like ours." Hebrews demands of its readers, for example, a far more sophisticated grasp of Scripture than that possessed by most Christians today. Much of its argument, in fact, is based on complex modes of scriptural interpretation that, while strange to us, were common in the first century. This study edition gives some assistance by providing complete Scripture references. Citations in the text are flagged with small letters; passages are identified at the bottom of each page. To fully appreciate Hebrews' virtuosity, study the citations in their original context, as well as how Hebrews can turn them to fit its argument (as in 10,5-7).

Hebrews' view of the world is strikingly different from that of present-day Christians in an even more fundamental sense. Hebrews works within a philosophical tradition called Platonism, which saw a great gulf between the spiritual realm and the material world. Spiritual things are eternal, unchanging; material things are transitory. As a result, spiritual things are both more real and better than the material. For platonic Jews and Christians, the "spiritual" and "material" realms were understood in terms of "heaven" and "earth."

This is the framework for grasping Hebrews' point about the superiority of Jesus' priesthood. By his resurrection, Jesus entered heaven, where he is a "priest forever" (5,6), in contrast to the Jewish priesthood which was temporary. Likewise the "heavenly sanctuary" is superior to the physical tent of worship described in Scripture (Chaps. 8–9). The symbolism becomes dense and requires patience to disentangle. But the basic point is clear. The human Messiah Jesus now shares God's life in heaven. His priesthood is therefore both the ultimate and eternal "cause of salvation" to others (5,9).

## The Readers

The ancient audience for this sermon had experienced the loss of property and friends (10,32-34). They were tempted to lose hope and seek a more stable framework than that offered by a crucified messiah. Hebrews addresses their longing for stability by offering the hope for "a better homeland, a heavenly one" (11,16). The first reader's experience can be translated into that of every age: all of us experience loss, desperation, alienation, despair. Hebrews' message to us is as sharp as it was to them: "Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (4,7). We also are called to go on pilgrimage through our troubled circumstances, looking to Jesus, who is still and always the "leader and perfecter of faith" (12,1).

## **The Prologue** (1,1-4)

The opening sentence is elegantly constructed and introduces Hebrews' central themes. First is the contrast between God's partial revelation in the past and the perfect revelation through his Son, which establishes the basic thesis: Jesus is superior to the old dispensation, or Covenant

(see 8,13). Second, Jesus' divine status is clearly if metaphorically expressed as his being the "image of God." The exalted identity attributed to the Son is similar to that in John and Paul (see, for example, Jn 1,1-4 and 1 Cor 8,6). Hebrews' understanding of Jesus' Sonship had a real influence on later doctrinal development. Third, the prologue states that the way God "spoke" in Jesus was through his death for others (the purification of sins), and his resurrection.

Note the image of enthronement: Jesus "takes his place at the right hand." This alludes to Psalms 110,1, the favorite resurrection psalm of early Christians: "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (see also 1,13). Hebrews exploits another part of this psalm thematically in Chapter 7. The image of enthronement runs throughout the sermon. Jesus is both priest and king; is in fact one by being the other. Finally, we notice that Jesus "inherits" a name better than that of the angels. Jesus is here portrayed as a forerunner. If they follow him, Christians also will enter into an inheritance (1,14; 6,12). The mention of angels, in turn, provides a transition to Hebrews' argument.

## The Son is Higher than the Angels (1,5—2,18)

A series of Scripture citations proves that the Son is superior to angels. The notes in New Testament pp. 350–1 discuss details of the citations. A more pertinent question for us may be, why do angels require putting in place, anyway? Our contemporary view of the world has small room for angels! But in the world of the New Testament, especially in the writings of Judaism, angels were regarded as the most powerful intermediaries between God and humans. The tendency to exalt their role is attested in Galatians 4,9; Colossians 2,18. The reason for concern here? Jesus in his humanity did not appear so impressive as these "spiritual" beings. He was not only human; he suffered and died. Hebrews must overcome the scandal of a "lowly" Messiah.

Citations from Scripture themselves do not carry the point. As in other New Testament writings (for example, Gal 3,1-5), Hebrews argues "the greater" from the fact of the readers' own *experience.* The work of God's Spirit among them is itself powerful "witness" to the salvation accomplished through Jesus (2,3f). And never content with the speculative, Hebrews drives home the exhortation. This "greater salvation" demands of the readers a greater response of alertness (2,1f).

From the perspective of the power of the Risen Lord, Hebrews takes up the issue of Jesus' "lowliness." On the basis of Psalm 8, the author asserts that Jesus was "lower than the angels" only temporarily. And the reason was so that he could "taste death for everyone," that is, act as priest. On the basis of a messianic reading of Isaiah 8,18f, Hebrews next affirms God's (and the Messiah's) solidarity with humanity. Then, Hebrews turns the tables, and makes Jesus' humanity a positive criterion for authentic priesthood. Because Jesus is one with those he represents before God—how they are "tested", how they "fear death"—he can be a compassionate and merciful priest. Notice first that Hebrews defines priesthood in terms of personal identity rather than in terms of religious ceremony; and, second, Hebrews anticipates an important principle of later doctrine: "what is not assumed [by God] cannot be saved." Precisely *because* he is human, Jesus can save humanity.

## Jesus, Faithful and Compassionate High Priest (3,1—5,10)

Moses was a natural contrasting figure for Christian claims about Jesus (see, for example, Jn 1,17), and Hebrews' next contrast is between Moses "the servant of the House," and Jesus,

"Son over the house" (3,4f). The real contrast in this section, however, is between the people led by Moses and the Christian community addressed by the author, and a contrast between disobedience and obedient faith (3,7-13). Hebrews agrees with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10,1-13, that what happened to Israel in the desert is a warning for the present.

Again we encounter a complex argument which uses ancient rules for interpreting Scripture. Much is made, for example, of the occurrence of specific words, such as "rest" and "today," without regard for their original contexts. The premise for such a procedure is that Scripture speaks to every age in each of its words, and that every part of Scripture interprets every other part.

On the basis of that understanding, Hebrews can assert that the "rest" to which Moses led the people (the land) was not the "rest of God"—namely, God's own life. Also, the people of old failed even to enter *that* earthly rest because of their disobedience. Now, Christians have hope for the real rest won by Jesus' resurrection. The point? They are to obey the call of God and not fall away (4,6). The message of Hebrews is not a trivial one. The readers are not engaged in the conquest of territory; they are called to a share in God's life, an awesome prospect (4,12f).

Hebrews has identified obedient faith as the fundamental response demanded by God. The comparison to the wandering Israelites also establishes Hebrews' basic image of the church as the people of God on *pilgrimage.* This image was explicitly appropriated by the Second Vatican Council. The image suggests that the Church is not simply an institution like other institutions. It is never fully "at home" in the world. The Church exists with reference to a higher goal—the "heavenly city"—towards which it must steadily move like a pilgrim, although this side of death the goal is never reached.

Pilgrims need the sort of attentiveness, patience, obedience, and endurance demanded by Hebrews. Above all, they need *hope* (see 6,19). They can move lightly through the world only if convinced that their destination is truly "greater" than their present abode.

The image of pilgrimage has also been used by mystics to describe the personal journey of the soul toward union with God in prayer. Both individual and collective applications of the image are appropriate for people who consider their homeland elsewhere.

Hebrews points the reader again to the leader of the pilgrimage, the "apostle and high priest of our confession" (3,1). In the description of Jesus as priest (4,14—5,9), Hebrews combines what has come to be called both "high" and "low" christologies (understandings of Jesus). Jesus is definitely "from above"; he is God's Son in the fullest sense. But he is also fully human, "from below". It is his *human* existence that defines the path "all the children" are to follow. As priest, he is exemplar. Jesus is not only "faithful" (3,1f) as all are called to be; he "learned obedience from what he suffered" (5,8). The full implications of this statement become clear only later (see 12,1-11). We already understand that Jesus' suffering deepened his faith, and his obedience was itself a form of suffering. Jesus progressively *became,* in his humanity, perfect Son of God, and therefore the "leader" of all who follow him.

## Jesus' Eternal Priesthood and Sacrifice (5,11—10,39)

The long middle section of the sermon argues for the superiority of Jesus' priesthood. It begins with an extended exhortation (5,11—6,20), then focuses on the priestly identity and activity of Jesus (Chaps. 7–10).

Hebrews presupposes the readers' grasp of the "basic teaching about Christ" (6,1), but, in

a rebuke as much as an exhortation, urges them beyond the milk fit for babes to the meat meant for the mature (compare Paul's use of this imagery in 1 Cor 3,1-3). This "mature teaching" is not a matter of abandoning Jesus. Such apostasy from Christ Hebrews calls "recrucifying the Son of God" (6,5). Indeed, God's promise based on Jesus' resurrection is utterly reliable; Jesus is the "anchor of the soul" (6,19), to whose priesthood God has bound himself by oath (6,13). The nature and implications of Jesus' priesthood, however, are precisely what require explication. By it is the Christian hope made secure. By it are Christians enabled to become "imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises" (6,12).

The consideration of Jesus as priest is the climax of the "lesser to the greater" argument. But because the procedures and symbols of Jewish cult are foreign to us today, this section makes for some of the hardest reading in the New Testament. It is important to remember from the start that Hebrews' premise is the Christian experience of the Spirit and conviction that Jesus is Risen Lord, entered into the life of God (2,3-4). Only this premise makes Hebrews' reinterpretation of Scripture reasonable. In the following paragraphs, the major turning points of the exposition are noted.

## Jesus and Melchizedek (7,1-28)

Why is so much attention paid to a figure who appears only twice in Scripture? Because both appearances point forward to Christ. In Genesis 14,17-20, Melchizedek is named a priest of God (although he was a Gentile!), whom even Abraham acknowledged. Logically, then, a priest descended from him would be superior to one descended from Abraham! And Melchizedek's second scriptural appearance is in verse 4 of that very Psalm 110 which Christians regarded as a literal prophecy of Jesus' resurrection. Melchizedek's being "without beginning or end" (because Scripture records neither his birth nor his death) is therefore an anticipation of the Son of God whose priesthood is eternally valid; conversely, Jesus is a priest "according to the order (rank) of Melchizedek" (Ps 110,4). In his resurrection, Jesus became priest "by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed" (7,16). He "remains forever" (7,24). His sacrifice is "once for all" (7,27). He "lives forever to make intercession" (7,25). The Jewish priesthood descended from Abraham cannot compete.

## The Old and New Covenant (8,1-13)

God's revelation in Jesus does not merely continue the former story, it raises it to a new plane. Jesus' death and resurrection mark an absolute beginning. Hebrews' Platonism is evident in 8,1-6: Moses' desert sanctuary is "the copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" (8,5). Heaven is greater than earth. More dramatically, Hebrews turns this Platonism into an interpretation of history: the old covenant is likewise a "shadow" of the new, pointing to but replaced by the work of God in Jesus. Hebrews exploits Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant "in the heart" to affirm that the old order is in fact obsolescent.

## The Priestly Act of Jesus (9,1—10,18)

The comparison of covenants becomes a specific contrast between ancient cult and Jesus' death and resurrection. The complexity of the imagery here is daunting. Some help is provided by the notes in New Testament pp. 359–362. Even more helpful would be reading through Exodus 25–27 (which describes the Tent of the Wilderness) and Leviticus 16 (which describes the ritual for the Day of Atonement). Hebrews hammers at two basic points. First, because Jewish

sacrifices had to be repeated, it is obvious they were not effective (9,6.25; 10,1-3.11). In contrast, Jesus entered "real" life, so his sacrifice is eternally valid (9,12.24-28; 10,10-12). Second, the old cult sacrificed animals. Jesus gave his own life for others in obedience to God (8,12-14; 10,5-10.19). As both priest and victim, he showed a personal example that others could follow. All believers have "confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way he opened for us" (10,19f).

### Exhortation to Fidelity (10,19-39)

In the light of this "greater salvation," Hebrews warns again of the consequences of apostasy (10,26-31). Despite their losses and trials, Christians are called to a still deeper loyalty (10,32-39). By mentioning endurance and faith as requisites for receiving the promises (10,36-38), Hebrews prepares for its final stirring exhortation.

## Examples, Discipline, Disobedience (11,1—12,29)

The sermon's long argument reaches its climax in this exhortation to faith, understood as loyalty, endurance, and hope. The recital of heroes and heroines of the past has a specific function. They are *examples* for the readers to imitate. Why? Just as the readers had lost property and had been persecuted, so also had the believers who preceded them. Yet they persevered in the search for a better homeland (11,14). The repetition of the phrase "by faith" rhetorically summons the readers to join ranks with those on pilgrimage to God's presence. Unlike the desert generation that fell by the way because of disobedience, these exemplars continued faithful, even though they themselves did not receive the full promise (11,29)! It was left to Jesus, the "leader and perfecter of faith" (12,2) to provide complete access to God through his death and resurrection. Because Christians can now look to him (12,2), there is solid reason to hope while still on the journey.

By summoning such a "cloud of witnesses" (12,1) to support the commitment of the readers, Hebrews states a conviction that eventually became an article of the Christian creed, "the communion of saints." Those struggling for God on earth are not alone. They are joined in a larger fellowship of faith with those who have died and who now support them with their prayers. The people of faith are joined in a solidarity of hope.

This is not blind optimism: the alienation, suffering, and persecution experienced by the ancients is not trivialized. And Jesus, before he could sit on the throne, had to "endure the cross, despising its shame" (12,2). Jesus' human response to God is the perfect example for the faith of Christians. Faith is always "evidence of things not seen" (11,1), which means that it is always a risk taken in the face of a pain more palpably present than the promise. Thus also the pilgrimage to God in prayer has as an essential component the "dark night" of the soul, the experience of the absence of God.

The connection between Sonship and suffering continues in 12,5-13. The remarks about fathers disciplining their children at first seem banal if not regressive. But when we remember that Jesus, "although Son, learned obedience from what he suffered" (5,8), we come to appreciate the profound correspondence between christology and Christian existence. What we suffer in our lives, if we can perceive and accept such suffering in faith, enables God to shape Jesus' own "sonship" in us. Ancient Greeks had the maxim *mathein pathein,* "to learn it is

necessary to suffer." Following Jesus on pilgrimage means being purified painfully, for the goal is the holy God (12,10).

Hebrews reminds readers that this is not a pleasant stroll they have set themselves to, but a terrible path toward "the city of the living God" (12,22), a pilgrimage whose completion means life eternal but whose abandonment means "not seeing the Lord" (12,14). Nowhere in the New Testament is there a sterner reminder of life's tragic depths and terrifying heights than in this simple conclusion, "for our God is a consuming fire" (12, 29).

## Final Exhortation, Blessing, Greetings (13,1-25)

Although the final chapter is made up mainly of practical instructions, it is intimately joined to the theological argument of Chapters 1–12. Notice, for example, the plea to "imitate the faith" of leaders, and the motivation of that faith being the eternal priesthood of Jesus who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (13,7f).

The mix of advice about hospitality and marriage and possessions (13,1-4) with the command to "go to Jesus outside the camp . . . for we have here no lasting city but seek the one that is to come" (13,13) is altogether typical of this sermon (see also 10,25) and of the early Christian understanding of existence generally. Christians live in the world like other people and participate in its structures. But they are not defined by this world or its values, even its religious values (13,9-11). No institutional cult or sacrificial priesthood is legitimated by this severe writing; everything necessary has been accomplished already by Jesus. Christians are defined not by their liturgy but by their following the one who suffered "outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood" (13,12). Christians are never entirely at ease in the world or even in the church. They are pilgrims, struggling toward the "God of peace" into whose care the final blessing (13,20f) entrusts the readers of this profound and powerful sermon.

L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

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Montefiore, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Harper New Testament Commentary; New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

# JAMES □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 368–374 of the New Testament*]

## James as Moral Exhortation

In the ancient world, letter writing was so popular that the epistolary form became a package capable of holding many materials. In the case of James (as noted in the *Introduction,* New Testament pp. 368–369), the letter format is the frame for a moral exhortation intended for a general readership.

Before turning to an anaylsis of the text, it is helpful to consider some of its literary features

and major themes. James is not terribly difficult to understand; his style is lucid, his message straightfoward. Our task here is simply the deeper appreciation of a clear witness.

## The Writing

Greek moral exhortation (called *paraenesis)* was concerned with traditional values rather than with theory. It could take the form of short maxims or of essays. James's first chapter has such maxims, less connected to each other than to other sections of the composition. The maxims state themes that are developed in the essays of Chapters 2–5. Notice, for example, how "control of the tongue" in 1,26 is extended by 3,1-12. *Paraenesis* also attached its moral maxims to the imitation of models. In James, the figures of Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah provide examples from Scripture of the practical virtue James encourages.

Like other New Testament writings, James is more than a moral treatise. It is a religious writing using the symbols of Scripture. In form, James resembles most the *Wisdom* tradition, and "the wisdom from above" is thematic (3,13-18). James uses the *prophetic* tradition, when he excoriates rich oppressors in 5,1-6. James also appropriates the *Law* aspect of Scripture. The decalogue and the Law of Love alike are binding for Christians. They are to be understood, however, in the light of the teachings of Jesus. James has many allusions to the words of Jesus (see, for example, 1,12; 2,5; 3,12; 5,12).

## The Message

James advocates living faith and practical love. His concern is behavior. Like other moralists of his age, he is impatient with fine words that have no action (see, for example, 1,22-25). Above all, faith without appropriate practice in love is a charade.

James's target is the Christian who is "double-minded" (*New American Bible:* "of two minds"; 1,8; 4,8). This person wants to live by two standards at once: that of God and that of the world. James demands a choice. Not only speech, but also the use of possessions and the practice of fairness within the community lie within the range of his concern. He especially attacks envy, which perfectly illustrates the morals of "the world" opposed to God (see, for example, esp. 3,13—4,10).

Readers may be surprised to find Jesus mentioned only twice (1,1; 2,1), with no reference at all to the messianic message of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection. But James does not lack theology. He bases his exhortations on the one God who creates and judges all humanity. James centers attention on *God* rather than on Christ.

This study guide divides the text differently than the *New American Bible.* No major issue is involved, only a judgment concerning what goes better with what. The paragraph headings in the *New American Bible* are helpful, as also are the notes.

## **The Two Measures** (1,1-27)

In chapter one, the *New American Bible* paragraph divisions make it appear as though a coherent argument was being developed. In fact, Chapter 1 is made up of separate aphorisms with only the loosest internal connection. The first verses have some word-linkages, but the literary arrangement most resembles the Book of Proverbs. There is less a connection between verses than a connection between each verse and life-experience. Although the same Greek

word (*peirasmos*) is used in both verses, for example, the meaning of "trial" in 1,2 is not the same as "temptation" in 1,13.

On the other hand, the aphorisms are not simply an arbitrary collection of wise sayings. The maxims in Chapter one provide something of an index to the contents of Chapters 2–5. The theme of enduring trials (1,2-4.12-15) is developed in 5,7-11; the opposition between rich and poor (1,9-11) recurs in 4,13—5,6. Control of the tongue (1,19-21) is expanded in 3,1-12. Carrying out words in speech (1,22-26) is enlarged by 2,14-26. The theme of true wisdom (1,5-8.16-18) is argued by 3,13—4,10. The prayer of faith (1,6f) is amplified by 5,12-18.

The aphorisms also introduce the basic pattern that structures the whole of James: the contrast between the measure of the world and the measure of God. The measure of the world is expressed by envy: "desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death" (1,15). The values of the world are self-deceptive (1,16. 27), are expressed in wrathful behavior (1,19), and every sort of excess (1,21) especially the pursuit of illusory wealth (1,11). These values are based on the perception of life as a closed system; God has no part. Therefore all humans are in competition: one person's gain is another's loss.

The measure of faith is the opposite. All creation—life itself—is a gift: "all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (1,17). Because God has created humans by "the word of truth" (1,18), humans are able to receive the implanted word from him (1,21) and live in the way God does, giving "generously and ungrudgingly" (1,5). In the Greek, these words suggest the opposite of envy, which always grasps for more. Life by God's measure is expressed by "care for orphans and widows in their affliction" (1,27). One is thereby "unstained by the world" by living according to a different value system (1,27).

The greeting "to the twelve tribes in the dispersion" can therefore be understood as referring to the condition of Christians "in the world but not of the world." As in 1 Peter and Hebrews, Christians are regarded as pilgrims and sojourners. They are not hostile to the world but neither are they defined by it. James's whole effort is to persuade those "of two minds" (1,8) to live by God's measure which is the perfect "wisdom from above" (see 3,15).

## Discrimination and the Law of Love (2,1-13)

The first essay reveals a voice like that of Paul in Galatians. James uses the same oral, dialogical style known as the diatribe. Vivid and lively, it is filled with rhetorical questions, exclamations, and abrupt transitions. The effect is a direct challenge to the reader—today as well as then. The challenge is even more clearly heard when the text is read aloud.

Christians, he says, must live consistently with their convictions. "Faith in our . . . Lord Jesus Christ" (2,1) is incompatible with any form of discrimination within the community. James sketches a lively scene that probably reflects a general situation rather than a local incident. The context is judgment within the community, like that carried out in the diaspora synagogue to settle community disputes. In the background is the injunction of Leviticus 19,15 that forbids partiality in judgment.

That James intends an allusion to Leviticus 19,15 is shown by his citation of Leviticus 19,18 immediately following in 2,8. This "Law of Love" was already stated by Jesus as the summation of Scripture. James calls it the "royal" law. He means the standard regulating relations in the community. It is the "law of the kingdom." James spells out this commandment

by alluding to the Ten Commandments (2,11), and also to the specific commandments found in the original context of Leviticus 19 that accompany the original exhortation, "love your neighbor as yourself" (see Jas 4,11; 5,4.9.12.20). James says that breaking any commandment means breaking the whole law, because sin is not against a law but a lawgiver. Faith in the one God excludes picking and choosing between commandments, just as it excludes picking and choosing between fellow Christians!

## Active Faith (2,14-26)

The following section is often misunderstood. Because James speaks of "faith" and "works," it is supposed he responds to Paul's teaching. In fact, his perspective is entirely different. James speaks not of the commandments of the law, but of active faith. He is a moralist and is concerned with the way speech gets converted to action. Like all moralists, his concern is efficacy: "of what use is it?" The examples of Abraham and Rahab illustrate James's point. Their faith expressed itself in effective action. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son. Rahab showed hospitality to God's scouts. Far from being an abstract comment on grace and Torah, James's exhortation is intensely practical and arises from the situation pictured in 2,14-16: pious talk does not feed or clothe the needy. Such faith is as "dead" as a corpse; such religion is fraudulent (see 1,26f).

We discover two related aspects of James which give his exhortation its peculiar pertinence. First, this teaching is not based on what is specifically *Christian,* but on faith in the one God. The "faith of Christ" and teachings of Jesus do not oppose but refine Torah. Second, James, for that reason, contains the possibility of a genuine *social ethics.* This moral teaching is not peculiar to the Christian community; it can extend itself to the world. If there is no partiality in the community, based in the law of God, then forms of discrimination in the wider world can be combatted on the same basis. If sister and brother in the community are to be fed, then the community as a whole must also feed the needy of the world in every changing circumstance.

James also warns us that this can cut both ways. If the Christian community does not live up to its own calling, and is unjust, then it bears no witness to the world and is itself subject to condemnation (2,5-7).

## The Power of the Tongue (3,1-12)

James's concern for the proper use of speech (see 1,19.26) now becomes thematic. Preoccupation with speech is typical of ancient moralists. That taciturnity was a sign of wisdom was proverbial (see, for example, Prv 10,19; 11,12). That such "control of the tongue" was almost insurmountably difficult to achieve was also well known. James therefore considers control of speech to be a mark of perfection (3,2).

James makes two related points with the conventional imagery of Greek philosophy. The first concerns the disproportionate power of the tongue. By comparing the tongue to a horse's bit or a ship's rudder, James shows not only how a small organ can direct a large body, but also how much that organ itself needs to be controlled by someone with a sense of direction! James's second point concerns the potential for *harm* in uncontrolled speech. It is like a flame "setting the entire course of our lives on fire" (3,6).

The capacity of speech to do evil is more impressive than its power for good: "no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (3,8). Sadly, the story of

human discourse from the Garden of Eden to the latest garden party only confirms James's harsh judgment. No wonder the ancients valued taciturnity: better no speech than destructive speech. The dangers inherent in speech have also helped undergird the value given to silence in the monastic/contemplative tradition both of the East and of the West. Silence is the necessary precondition to "welcome the word that . . . is able to save your souls" (1,21).

The theological implications of speech are central of James's exhortation. In 3,9-12, he contrasts the speech that "blesses God" with that which "curses human beings" who are made in God's image! Once again, James combats the "two-minded" person, who thinks that it is possible to have a relationship with God that disregards human obligations. As in 2,14-17, James insists that religious language and practical human care must go together. No more than the same source can yield two kinds of water should a Christian speak with two tongues. As action should follow conviction, so should speech conform to faith.

The warning is directed most of all at those who desire to be teachers in the faith community (3,1). If care is required for all speech, it is even more necessary for those who shape the minds of others according to the measure of God and not of the world.

## Friendship with God or World (3,13—4,10)

Although the paragraph division of modern translations hides what is clearer in Greek, 3,13—4,10 is a self-contained essay which contains the central theological framework for understanding James as a whole.

Formally, it is a call of conversion. In 3,13—4,6, James presents an indictment. In 4,7-10, he exhorts his readers to repentance. A powerful spatial metaphor governs both parts, a contrast between what comes "from above" (true wisdom, God's Gift), and that which originates "from below" (false wisdom, human arrogance). Correspondingly, the readers are told to "humble" themselves, so that God can "exalt" them (4,10). The spatial metaphor points to differing measures of reality. That "from below" James calls "the world." It treats life as though God had no claim; human success is measured by human accomplishment and acquisition. But God's measure says that everything comes as a gift from "the Father of lights" (1,17), and that arrogance is empty pretence. James as always has as his main target the "two-minded" person (4,8) who wants to live by both measures at once.

Within this call to conversion, James develops the theme of envy as exemplifying the measure of the world. Notice the occurrence of "jealousy" in 3,14.16;4,2 and climactically in 4,5. This last verse is notoriously difficult to translate, not least because we have no verse of Scripture saying what James suggests. The best solution is to render 4,5 as two rhetorical questions (a technique common in this essay): "Do you think the scripture speaks in vain? Is the spirit God has made to dwell in us for envy?" The word for "envy" here is never used of God (whereas "jealous" sometimes is), and never occurs in Greek with a positive connotation. The point clearly is that God's spirit has nothing to do with envy. Envy comes from the "wisdom from below". James associates with envy all the vices commonly attributed to it in Greek moral discourse, especially social unrest, murder, and war.

Why is envy so singled out? Because its underlying assumption is that your gain is my loss. This is the opposite of the Spirit of community, where all gain by anyone's growth and all rejoice in anyone's good fortune. Envy causes me to sorrow when another has something that I lack. And when life is measured simply in terms of what I possess—"I am what I have"—then for

another to have and me to lack is intolerable. Envy drives the acquisitive instinct: "you covet" (4,2). The step is a short one to conflict, war, and murder, not only between individuals but also between nations. Like other Greek moralists, James assigns the cause of war to envy (4,1-3). It is remarkable that this passage, which alone in the New Testament analyzes the causes of human conflict, should play so little role in moral discussions of war and peace.

At the climax of the indictment (4,4), James accuses his readers of being "adulterers," because they have broken covenant both with God and with their fellow humans. The covenant is about loyalty and love. There is no connection between those attitudes and the self-seeking of envy. James also uses the language of Greek philosophy concerning "friendship." He contrasts "friendship with the world" and "friendship with God" as opposing ways of life. James is not condemning the world as the place of human activity or God's creation. Rather, "the world" is a system of values that excludes consideration of God. To want to be "friends with the world" therefore means to live by a measure that leaves God's claim aside.

To this closed system James opposes the measure of faith: God is the source of "every good and perfect gift" (1,17). God "gives more grace" to the humble, even as God resists the arrogant (4,6). God is not envious of humans but gives to all generously and without grudging (see 1,5). Humans who submit to God are therefore also lifted up by God (4,10). Their tears of repentance will rapidly turn to joy, because—a remarkable statement—when humans draw near to God, God also draws near to them (4,8).

## Against Arrogance (4,11—5,6)

James now turns to three forms of arrogance which exemplify life according to the measure of the world. The first is the practice of slander against a neighbor (4,11f). Such critical speech naturally involves both a condemnation of the other and an implied assertion of one's own superiority: "I am in a position to judge." James insists that such judgment breaks the law of love (see Lv 19,16), and reminds his readers that the lawgiver is also the judge. God alone is capable of both saving and destroying life (see 1,21).

A second form of arrogance is demonstrated by those who make great business plans without ever considering the fragile nature of their own existence (4,13-17). Once more, their speech gives them away; they assume control over the present and the future. James comments: "You are boasting in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (4,16). The speech of one living by God's measure is also revealing: "If the Lord wills . . ." This is more than pious talk; it refers all of life and all of life's projects to the one who gives and can alone sustain life.

Finally, with a prophetic rage like that of Amos, James attacks the insolence of the rich who withhold wages from their laborers. The security gained by such fraud is illusory; the rich fatten themselves for the day of judgment (5,5). They sin because they "know the right thing to do but do not do it" (4,17). How do they know? Because the scriptural context for the law of love in Leviticus 19,18 states plainly, "you shall not withhold overnight the wages of your day laborer" (Lv 19,13).

## Patience, Plain Speech, Prayer (5,7-20)

Having called the double-minded to conversion and excoriated the arrogant, James turns to the community's inner life. Speech is again the underlying theme, this time with reference to the proper uses of speech in the church.

The attack on oppressors (5,1-6) leads naturally to the condition of those who suffer persecution from without. James recommends patience and extends the example of Job (5,11). Patience is possible for them as it is for a farmer, because the fruitful outcome of their loyalty is certain: "the coming of the Lord is at hand." In the meantime, nothing would be more natural than for the afflicted to turn on each other in resentment and hurt. James again uses Leviticus 19 when he tells them, "Do not complain about one another that you may not be judged" (see Lv 19,17f).

The Christian community should be one of plain speech. In 5,12 James repeats the commandment of Jesus (see Mt 5,33-37) that speech should be unadorned and straightforward, without need of oaths. And in his last exhortation, James encourages the sort of mutual correction that can build up the identity of the church (5,20).

Because the Church is constituted by the word of truth (1,18), it should above all express that truth in its communal life of prayer. James enumerates the sorts of prayer that are appropriate to the community's diverse circumstances (5,13f) and then elaborates the prayer with anointing for a sick member. This ritual is the basis for the sacrament of anointing for the sick and has roots in the healing ministry of Jesus (see 5,15). James's last example from Torah is the prophet Elijah, whose prayer demonstrates the power of faith for those who live by God's measure (5,17f; cf. 1,6-8).

These final exhortations, down to earth and humane, summarize beautifully the character of James, who from beginning to end finds wisdom in practical faith and active love. L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Johnson, L.T. "Friendship with the World/Friendship with God: A Study of Discipleship in James," in *Discipleship in the New Testament,* ed. F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) 166–183.

Laws, S. *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Harper New Testament Commentary; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

# 1 PETER □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 375–381 of the New Testament*]

## A Letter to Gentile Christians

First Peter bears all the marks of a real letter. It was written to Christians scattered throughout the provinces of Asia Minor. Although composed in a clear and even elegant Greek, and although containing an exhortation and witness (5,12) at once simple and profound, 1 Peter is given far less attention than it deserves. Partially this is due to the opinion of many contemporary scholars that the letter is pseudonymous and a product of second generation rather than primitive Christianity (see, for example, Introduction, New Testament, pp. 375–376). There are, however, excellent reasons for considering Peter the disciple to have been the author of 1 Peter. In any case, the authority of New Testament writings does not derive from their authorship but from their inclusion in the canon. Attention is therefore better paid to the

situation of Peter's first readers, and how the message shaped for them retains enduring value for readers in every age.

### The Situation of the Readers

Since the letter is addressed to Christians spread over a large geographical area (1,1), we do not expect the detailed treatment of local problems. By reading between the lines, however, we are able to learn something about the shared characteristics of Peter's first readers.

They seem to have been recently converted. Not only does Peter remind them repeatedly of their former life of vice, but also their initiation into the messianic community through baptism. Their conversion, furthermore, appears to have been directly from paganism rather than from Judaism. They were themselves Gentiles and continued to live among the symbols and social structures of the Empire. They inevitably felt pulled between allegiance to their new calling and attraction to the dominant ethos of their world. They were, finally, converts who were experiencing suffering. On the basis of 4,12, some have considered this to be a state-sponsored persecution such as was later the lot of Christians. But Peter's positive view of the state (2,12-17) does not fit that reconstruction. It is more likely that Peter's readers were experiencing the sort of verbal abuse and social ostracism that Christians experienced from the beginning. The suffering was no less serious. Martyrdom is painful but swift. The corrosion of confidence is slower but terribly effective.

### Christian Apologetic

First Peter can best be understood as a form of apologetic literature. This form of writing originated among Diaspora Jews and was taken over by Christians. Ostensibly it explains one's distinctive beliefs to the wider world in terms outsiders can understand. Indirectly, it supports community identity. First Peter has many of the characteristics of this genre. It is positive and open to the dominant culture. Christians are not to flee the world or its structures. They are to be good citizens within those social structures. And they are to be ready to demonstrate by their behavior and their speech that they pose no threat to others.

At the same time, Peter works to build up the identity of the community. He reminds his readers that they are called to holiness which demands of them a standard of behavior higher than that of their neighbors. He reminds them of the fundamental transformation they had undergone in their baptism. He assures them that although they are "strangers" in the world, they are part of the "household of God." In so doing, Peter appropriates for these new Gentile believers all the scriptural titles and symbols used of Israel, to give them a sense of continuity with God's people, even though once they were "no people." In 1 Peter we observe a thoroughly Gentile Christianity regarding itself as the "New Israel," taking up a place in the Diaspora not against the world but as a witness to the world.

## **The Greeting** (1,1-2)

The greeting of this circular letter establishes more than the simple identification of author and addressees. No need to elaborate the simple designation, "Peter, Apostle of Jesus Christ," for Peter's authority is unquestioned (see, in contrast, 2 Peter). But the "diaspora" of Asia Minor has religious as well as geographical connotations. We see here a theme found also in James and

Hebrews and in the Christian literature of the second century: Christians are in exile from their true homeland in heaven so long as they are on earth. They are, in fact, "sojourners" precisely because they have been "chosen" by God and have an identity distinct from that of their neighbors. The attitudes appropriate to exiles and pilgrims is thematic in this letter (see, for example, 2,11). The Greeting also reminds the readers of the rich complexity of their experience of God: The Father has chosen them; the Son saved them, by his obedient sacrifice; and the Spirit has sanctified them.

## The Gift and Call of God (1,3-21)

The opening prayer (1,3-9) is based on the blessing formula of Jewish worship: God is blessed for his gifts to humans. In this case, Peter gives thanks for the new life his readers have been granted through the resurrection of Jesus. Their new life is real, yet not complete. Their inheritance is one that is kept for them in heaven (1,4f). They, of course, still remain on earth. This tension establishes them as pilgrims and sojourners. As their salvation "waits for them," so also must they "wait for it." In the meantime, they must experience the trials and sufferings inherent to the life of faith (1,6f). Peter places his readers between the "already" of God's grace, and the "not yet" of salvation fully achieved (1,9), in a manner typical of New Testament writings. But what they hope for is secure, a "living hope" (1,3) because it is based not simply in human longing but in the "power of God" at work among them (1,4).

Despite the fact that his readers have converted from paganism, Peter inserts them into the story of Israel. In speaking of an "inheritance in heaven," Peter implies a contrast to the "inheritance of the land" which was the hope of Israel. Likewise, 1,10-12 develops a contrast between stages in the story. Peter asserts that the prophets of old did not speak of their own times (1,12) but spoke of the "sufferings destined for Christ and the glories to follow them" (1,11). Three aspects of this striking statement deserve notice. First, the superiority of the Christians' present experience is clearly asserted; as in Hebrews, the claims of the earlier covenant are made secondary. What the Christians have received in the Gospel transcends even what angels can know! (1,12). Second, Scripture is taken over completely as messianic prophecy. Everything in Scripture points to Jesus. Third, as in Luke–Acts, the pattern of the Messiah is spelled out in terms of "suffering, then glory". That his readers must follow after this same pattern becomes explicit later in the letter.

Having asserted the reality of God's gift, Peter now sketches the demands it places on those who receive it (1,13-21). Their lives are to be directed by the new form of existence they have been given. This means a radical obedience to the giver of the gift, an obedience that is spelled out in terms of holiness (1,15f). As their lives have changed, so must their behavior. They must not act as they formerly did, but are to become "different". They are to shape themselves in a manner consonant with the one who called them with the gift of the "precious blood of Christ" (1,19). Peter again calls his readers "sojourners" (1,17). As Jews of the Diaspora were to be different from pagans, so are these Christians to be "different" (holy) in the world as they wait for the fulfillment of their salvation (see 1,9). They are not to be defined by the norms of others (1,14.18), but by their allegiance to God, so that "your faith and hope are in God" (1,21).

## A Gospel People (1,22—2,10)

To strengthen their grasp on their special identity Peter reminds his readers of the basis of their new life in "the living and abiding word of God" (1,23), by which he means, explicitly, the Gospel (1,25). This is the message of a crucified Messiah who was raised to new life. By the obedient acceptance of that strange proclamation, they were given "new birth" (1,23). Immediately, however, Peter asserts the need for them to grow. The "spiritual milk" they now imbibe is appropriate to new converts who have just "tasted and seen that the Lord is good" (see also 1 Cor 3,1-3; Heb 6,13), but they are to mature "in Christ" by patterning their life according to a new standard of moral behavior. They must leave aside deceit in favor of truth, envy for love.

Peter is concerned with more than the transformation of individuals. The identity of the community as a whole is his concern. In 2,4-10, therefore, he reminds them of their communal identity as God's house and people. This section interweaves scriptural passages and allusions. The Scripture references at the bottom of New Testament pages 377–378 provide valuable assistance. The choice of passages is strikingly similar to that in Romans 9,25-33. It is less likely that Peter used Romans than that both Paul and Peter used community traditions of scriptural interpretation developed from the first days of the church.

The first set of passages (2,6-8) portrays the paradox of Christian faith. The stone which God intended to be the basis for his people Israel was rejected by them; yet the rejected one became the basis of a new people, a "spiritual house" made up of living persons (2,4). The reference here is clearly to the crucified Jesus who was a scandal (a stone of stumbling) to his fellow Jews expecting a glorious messiah (see 1 Cor 1,18-23).

For the messanic community, however, the rejected Messiah is the basis for a new life and shared identity. In the second set of texts, Peter strings together the most precious epithets applied to Israel as God's people in Torah. Now, they apply to these Gentiles, "once no people, but now God's people." In the messianic community, these aliens have a home (see also Eph 2, 19-22).

Where is the historical Jewish people? First Peter does not have them in view. He appropriates the symbols of Torah for the exclusive use of Gentile believers. Readers today cannot expect to find in this text an answer to the many questions concerning the relations of Christians to Jews, for 1 Peter does not address them.

## Life within the World's Structures (2,11—3,7)

Christians are to maintain distance from the values of this world as "aliens and sojourners" (2,11). At the same time, they must live within the social structures of the world. Peter is convinced that if they are good citizens, they will turn away slander and persecution. The practice of "good works" is the community's basic witness (2,12).

Peter uses the traditional form of "Household Ethics" to sketch the Christians' social obligations. Greek philosophy had elaborated the mutual duties of people who lived in a stratified social order. Over the empire as a whole, the emperor was considered head of the household. In individual families, husbands ruled wives, parents ruled children, masters ruled slaves. This was simply the conventional arrangement of that time. Neither Paul (see Col 3,18—4,1) nor Peter thought that the Christian message demanded the dismantling of society's structures.

In 2,13-17, Peter portrays the empire and its agents in positive terms. Submission to

legitimate authority is both right and expedient, since the state punishes only the wicked: such an outlook is inconceivable if Christians were in fact being harassed by the state as such. Yet, even here, the relationship with God is primary. Social obligations, if they conflict with that relationship, must give way to it: "Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God" (2,16). Obedience to God comes before all; and before God, all are slaves.

We would expect in the next section exhortations to both masters and slaves. Perhaps the absence of masters says something about the Christians' social status. But since Peter thinks of all Christians as slaves (2,16), this exhortation to servants becomes a general teaching to the community at large. The most striking aspect of this teaching is the invocation of Jesus as an explicit example to be imitated, for all who suffer unjustly (2,21-23). Jesus not only won salvation for others by his death on the cross. In his very manner of suffering, he provided the model for how Christians were to act. Not only *what* Jesus did but also *how* he did it becomes a source of life to the community.

The exhortation to wives (3,1-6) is much more extensive than that to husbands (3,7). Traditional Jewish and Greek motifs, which stress the value of internal virtue over external adornment, are used to support the command to be submissive. Women are to be subordinate, we notice, not to all men, but to their husbands (3,1.5). In return, men are to regard women as fully equal in their relationship before the Lord. They are "joint heirs of the gift of life" (3,7).

In these instructions, we do not find a divinely inspired blueprint for the ideal social order or Christian family structure. What we find is the best available moral teaching applied to the real world of that age. Just as the social structures of the past cannot be transferred without more ado to the present, neither can the relationships appropriate to those structures be directly imitated. Yet for families both ancient and modern, for societies then and now, good order, mutual respect, obedience, and authority are very much required. The style of those structures, happily, is left to human creativity.

## Witness in a Hostile World (3,8—4,6)

The Christians of Asia Minor were not suffering persecution, torture, and death. Their suffering was no less significant, however, for social ostracism works a slow and insidious poison into a community's sense of identity. They were being "insulted" (3,9), maligned and defamed (3,16), and "vilified" (4,4). Why? Mainly because they no longer followed the ways of their neighbors (4,3f). They have become different (holy), and this causes resentment.

Peter's response to this suffering is remarkable. He does not advocate withdrawal from society or hostility toward outsiders. Instead, Christians are to remain in the world's structures (see 2,13—3,7) and are to engage outsiders in dialogue. They are to be ready to "give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (3,15). The expectation that such explanation would be helpful pays a high compliment to the basic reasonableness and goodwill of outsiders. Christians are also to follow the exhortation of Jesus to return a blessing for a curse (see Mt 5,44).

In order to act in this way toward outsiders, they must cultivate the same qualities of sympathy and love toward each other in the community (3,8). Within their own hearts, furthermore, they are to "sanctify Christ as Lord" (3,15), which, Peter asserts, will free them from fear of outsiders (3,14). How will it do this?

They are to remember how Jesus not only "suffered for sins once" (3,18) but also how he

was raised from the dead in power. Using traditions found in apocalyptic literature (such as 1 Enoch), Peter symbolically expresses the conviction that the resurrection was not simply an event concerning the person Jesus but had cosmic extension. "In the Spirit" Jesus went to the spirits in prison to preach the Good News (3,19-22). This dramatic statement is the basis for the article of the creed that says Jesus "descended into hell." It means that God's power to save reaches everywhere, even to the farthest reaches of human sin and alienation.

Peter's immediate point, of course, is that by baptism (3,21), the Christians of Asia Minor have been given the same power. They need not fear human slander, for the power of God is at work among them. They are like those to whom Jesus preached after his resurrection, ". . . though condemned in the flesh in human estimation. . . alive in the spirit in the estimation of God" (4,6).

## Community Attitudes (4,7—5,14)

First Peter does not portray the Christians' moral situation in stark black-and-white tones, but like most New Testament writings it has a keen sense that the time to make a decision is now. The final set of exhortations is colored by the conviction that "the end of all things is at hand" (4,7). The time of judgment is soon (4,17). Therefore, Christian life demands "resisting the devil" who through affliction such as they are experiencing "seeks to devour them" (5,8f).

Such circumstances call for a "serious, sober" attitude, and one that is "vigilant" (4,7; 5,8). Those who experience affliction are to regard their sufferings as a share in Christ's own (5,13f), knowing also that they will share in his glory (4,13; 5,10). Within the community, attitudes of mutual service are to prevail (4,9-11), demonstrated by good order and humility (5,1-16).

When exhorting the community's leaders, Peter forbids lording it over the flock. Leaders are rather to provide a positive example (5,3). The image of the shepherd recalls the portrayal of Jesus as the "shepherd and guardian of your souls" (in 2,25). The connection is made explicit in 5,4: with characteristic optimism, Peter promises such good leaders that, "when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

The New Testament contains no writing more positive in its evaluation of the world yet more compelling in its call to holiness than 1 Peter. As Martin Luther correctly noted, it is one of the New Testament writings which truly "show thee Christ." L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Kelly, J.N.D. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Harper New Testament Commentary; New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

Selwyn, E.G. *The First Epistle of Saint Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1958).

Senior, D. *I and II Peter* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1980).

# 2 PETER □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 382–387 of the New Testament*]

## A Defense of God's Judgment

An appreciative understanding of 2 Peter demands more than the normal effort. Hard work is necessary to uncover the situation addressed by the letter. Perhaps even more difficult is the

hurdle presented by the letter's sustained argumentative tone. Such effort finds its rewards, however, in the surprising discovery that a writing which at first appears as the New Testament's most irrelevant can emerge as having perennial pertinence.

The circumstances of 2 Peter's composition are obscure (see Introduction, New Testament, pp. 382–383). The same author did not write both 1 and 2 Peter. The style, outlook, and concerns of the two letters are too disparate for a common authorship. The main thing they have in common is the mention of Noah and the flood. Second Peter has far more in common with Jude (with which it shares the polemical material of Chapter 2) than with 1 Peter.

In all likelihood, 2 Peter is a pseudonymous composition. Despite the self-presentation of Chapter 1, it is not "Symeon Peter" who writes, but someone who invokes his authority as a support for shared traditions being threatened by deviance. This sermon in letter form may have been addressed to a single church, but it may also have been intended for a larger audience, all "those who have received a faith of equal value to ours" (1,1). It is thus considered a "general" epistle. The title "Catholic Epistles" was applied to 1 and 2 Peter, James, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude, because they were written for a broader audience than a local church (in Greek, "Catholic" = "pertaining to the whole"). Some readers also consider 2 Peter "catholic" in another sense: its concern for tradition anticipates the emergence of the Catholic church in the second century.

At first reading, 2 Peter seems to be a loose collection of observations within which talk about Jesus' second coming plays a particularly significant part. Some scholars have therefore thought that the "delay of the *parousia*" was the crisis that stimulated composition. Closer analysis, however, shows that a deeper and more persistent problem is being debated by "Peter" and his opponents, namely, the power of God to judge the world. Underlying that issue, in turn, is a still more fundamental one concerning the reality of God and God's relationship to the world. The debate, in short, is between living faith and practical atheism. It is a debate still in progress. The contribution of 2 Peter is worth hearing.

Far from a random collection of statements, the letter as a whole presents a coherent argument. Chapter 1 establishes the authority of the writer and of the Scripture which will be used as the source of proof. Chapter 2 attacks the opponents' "destructive teachings" on the basis of Scripture. Chapter 3 presents the proper understanding of the tradition concerning God's judgment.

## The Common Tradition (1,1-21)

The first section of the letter establishes the authority of the writer and of the shared tradition (1,1) which he represents. Extraordinary emphasis is put on the person of Peter and on the fact that he will soon die (1,13f). These touches recall the literary genre popular in early Christianity called the "Farewell Discourse," in which before his death a figure from the past predicts catastrophes to come and enjoins fidelity on his followers. We notice in this case, however, an equally strong emphasis on *memory* (1,9.12.13.15). The opponents "forget" the proper knowledge, and Peter seeks to "remind" his readers of it. The emphasis on memory makes the letter resemble as well the form of moral exhortation called *paraenesis.*

The connection to *paraenesis* is more obvious in 2 Peter 1,5-8. *Paraenesis* spelled out the moral obligations in terms of maxims. Here, Peter lists the sort of qualities that should follow upon the readers' faith. More important even than the specific items is the overall point made by the list: more than knowledge or faith is involved in being Christian. A whole way of life is

demanded. Those who have "forgotten" this lead lives that are "idle and unfruitful" (1,8f). There is a sharp polemical edge to this comment. In Chapter 2, Peter will show that the opponents' "destructive heresies" bring about destructive behavior which in turn brings down God's judgment.

Peter next makes a complex statement that provides the basis for his overall argument and a transition to his attack on opponents (1,16-21). In a passage that clearly corresponds to the Synoptic Gospels' story of Jesus' transfiguration (see Mt 17,1-8), he asserts the reality of the Christian experience of God. The tradition out of which Peter writes is not based in speculation ("cleverly devised myths", 1,16), but in a power experienced personally by him and others; "we" saw and heard on the mountain (1,16-18)! The point is simply that the community's tradition is based not in fancy but in *fact.*

The experience, moreover, was of "the power and coming" of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we will learn, the promise concerning Jesus' return is the bone of contention in Chapter 3. Peter claims that the expectation of his return is based on the *reality* of his already having come.

The disciples' experience of Jesus also grounds the "prophetic message" about Jesus' return for judgment. Peter places this prophecy of Jesus (see Mt 24,29-31) among the prophecies of Scripture. As with Scriptural prophecies, interpretation is not to be personal or idiosyncratic but a decision of the community which is guided by the same Spirit that gave utterance in the first place. With this alignment, Peter has provided the basis for arguing the whole issue of God's judgment (and therefore of Jesus' return) on the truthfulness of Scripture as properly interpreted by the tradition.

## Condemnation of False Teachers (2,1-22)

The claim to a true "prophetic message" in 1,19 provides a transition to the attack on "false teachers" (2,1) who are placed in the line of "false prophets."

As we learn more fully in Chapter 3, the opponents are denying the power of God to judge, that is, to intervene in the affairs of the world (3,4). Peter says that by denying God's ability to judge, they bring judgment on themselves! Their "destructive heresies" bring on them "destruction" (2,1). But their teaching has proven successful, convincing many (2,2); Peter's response must therefore be vigorous and pointed.

We saw already in 1,5-8 that Peter was concerned with the *moral* consequences of faith. The ancient world knew what our world sometimes ignores, that people act on their ideas, and that bad ideas can lead to bad behavior. A real misconception of what life is about leads to a distorted existence. In ancient polemical literature like this, showing that teachings led to immoral behavior already proved that the ideas were false. Peter therefore pays particular attention to the *way of life* generated by these doctrines. He attacks the "licentious ways" of the opponents (2,2), their "greed" and "lies" (2,3). They are people of "depraved desires" (2,10), are "irrational" (2,12) and "adulterous" (2,14). The catalogue of vices reaches a rhetorical climax in 2,17f, then takes a sharp turn: "They promise them freedom, though they themselves are slaves of corruption, for a person is a slave of whatever overcomes him" (2,19).

What sort of "freedom" did the opponents promise? Apparently, it was freedom from the fear of punishment. If God does not intervene in human affairs to punish the wicked and reward the good, then (they said) it makes sense to live immorally, looking out only for oneself, indulging in misanthropic behavior.

Peter's first rebuttal is based on the nature of vice. They are slaves of whatever appetite dominates them and controls their behavior. They are not sophisticated or liberated. They are as compulsive as dogs returning to their vomit, these Christians who once knew righteousness but have now turned back to a novel version of an old atheism: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' " (Ps 14,1).

The second part of Peter's rebuttal is based on the conviction that the Bible stories relate the facts of history. When Scripture says therefore that God *did* punish and reward, that is proof of God's ability to still do so. Peter therefore relates the cases of the wicked angels (2,4), of Noah (2,5), of Sodom and Gomorrah (2,6-10) and of Balaam (2,15f) as evidence of God's intervention. In contrast to the Letter of Jude (with which much of this material is shared), Peter not only emphasizes punishment. God also rewards those who are faithful. Here, the issue is whether God acts in human history at all. Peter's recitation from Scripture asserts that in fact God does.

## The Coming of the Lord (3,1-18)

The specific nature of the debate emerges for the first time in this final section. Not simply a question of fact but a matter of principle is at stake.

The question of fact is not really in dispute. Jesus clearly had not yet returned to judge the world as all Christians had been expecting. But quite different conclusions were being drawn from that undisputed fact. The "scoffers" challenge the very *promise* of his coming (3,4).

They base their denial on the immutability of the world "from the beginning." They hold the position of ancient skeptics such as the Epicureans and (among the Jews) Sadducees, who denied divine providence. If there was a god, he did not meddle with the world, which was, therefore, a closed system of natural forces and human desires. God was not a factor to be considered, never had been, never would be. The failure of Jesus to return, therefore, was only one more piece of evidence proving that all such prophecies were empty.

Here is a complex threat to the whole structure of faith. They challenge not only the reality of the *parousia* but the very reality of a living God! Is God, then, merely a figment of the imagination, a projection of human longing, a societal superego? The whole concept of revelation is obviously challenged as well. There can be no real "promise" if there is no living God to speak, or to act.

In this argument, both sides base their position on a claim of *experience* which then interprets reality as a whole. The skeptics say that experience shows no evidence for God's activity: "nothing has changed." Peter argues that Scripture (which is after all the record of human history) proves that God *does* intervene (see all of Chapter 2). God created by a word and can destroy by a word (3,5f). Furthermore—and this is the significance of 1,16-19—Peter and his companions themselves *experienced* such an intervention in the transfiguration of Jesus! Thus, their tradition is based on the prophets, on the Lord Jesus, and on the apostles (3,2).

If God does intervene, how is his apparent absence to be interpreted? Peter invokes the arguments used by other defenders of divine providence. God's time cannot be measured by human time: there is an infinite distance between God and humans (3,7). God's apparent delay is to bring people to repentence (3,8f).

Ultimately, those whose experience is different are not likely to be convinced. Peter appeals not to the opponents but to those attracted to their position. He reasserts the conviction

that Jesus *will* come "like a thief in the night" (see Mt 24,43; 1 Thes 5,2; Rv 3,3), and that his coming will inaugurate "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (3,13; see Rv 21,1). His concern throughout this letter, however, has been most of all with the behavior of his readers, and he reasserts "what sort of persons they are to be" during this time of waiting (3,11). After all debate is over, only the truth of human existence validates doctrine.

The letter concludes with a reference to Paul's letters that the opponents are distorting (3,15f). The fact that the author refers to "all" of Paul's letters, that he makes them equivalent to "Scripture," and that there is already a history of interpreting (or misinterpreting) them, are strong indications that this "Peter" is a writer of the second generation who defends a tradition common to the historical Peter and Paul against the threat of doctrinal and behavioral deviance.

L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Bauckham, R.J. *Jude, 2 Peter* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983).

Neyrey, J.H. "The Form and Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 140–199.

# 1 JOHN □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 387–392 of the New Testament*]

## Exhortation to a Divided Church

Three letters are attributed to John in the New Testament canon. It is not easy to determine how these letters are connected to the Gospel according to John and the Book of Revelation. Scholars agree that all came from a community of "Johannine Christianity" in the late first century, but neither their precise authorship nor sequence has been established. We are not even sure of the location of this "Johannine Christianity," although Asia Minor seems most likely. In such a state of ignorance, hypotheses abound. The Introductions to each of these letters in the *New American Bible* give some sense of the options (cf. New Testament pp. 387–388, 393, 394–395).

What we can learn of "Johannine Christianity" derives from the writings themselves. Apart from the connection to John, what common characteristics marked this version of messianism? First, the figure of Jesus played a central role in the identity of the community. Second, these churches had experienced tragic division. In the Gospel and Revelation, there is conflict between these messianists and the Jews. In the Letters and Revelation, there is also evidence of divisions within the churches. Third, this experience of division sharpened the community's symbols into a stark dualism: light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, flesh and spirit.

### The Three Letters

In the three letters, the conflict is within the churches and involves the proper understanding of Jesus. The letters provide a window on this early Christian conflict, revealing at once its multiple dimensions and its seriousness. It is impossible to say at this distance exactly how the letters relate to each other or to the situation. Second and 3 John are real letters and claim to come from "the Elder." First John is anonymous and no letter at all, but a sermonic exhortation.

Some have thought the three letters show three stages of the community's conflict. A better hypothesis holds that the three documents were written at the same time by the same author and sent to a single church aligned with "The Elder." Each letter fulfills a specific function: 3 John recommends the mailman, Demetrius, to the church leader, Gaius. Second John is a cover letter to be read publicly to the church. First John is the centerpiece, an exhortation to a community divided by conflict. The Study Guides for 2 and 3 John will describe how they fulfill their functions. Let us concentrate first on 1 John.

## The Character of 1 John

Because it is not so closely tied to the particulars of practical action, 1 John lends itself more readily to every time and place. For a document generated by bitter conflict, it is amazingly positive and loving in tone. For Christians through the ages it has transcended its hard circumstances of origin to be considered one of the great spiritual witnesses of the New Testament.

The structure of this writing is not obvious. Certainly it is not a genuine letter. Even as a sermon, it tends to wander a bit, repeating the same points. First John at times has the appearance of an argument but none of the substance. Readers are sometimes shocked at the lack of consistency. What is stated positively is sometimes denied only a short time later. The reason for this alternation of ideal and real lies in the circumstances being addressed.

The Johannine Christians saw their lives defined by a choice. Their first and basic choice was to follow Jesus. They considered that truth, life, and light characterized them; while falsehood, darkness, and death characterized those who did not follow Jesus. They were the community of true prophecy. But now, the community itself is divided into two hostile camps. And the cause of division is precisely what should have been the centerpiece of this unity: the proper understanding of the nature and role of Jesus.

First John's apparent indecisiveness reflects the chastened perspective caused by the trauma of division. The symbols need reshaping. The author urges his readers away from a smug sense of their own perfection, to an awareness of their need to repent. Not only "those who went out from us" have sinned. All have sinned and need the expiation offered by Jesus.

## **Opening Exhortation** (1,1—2,17)

First John opens with a poetic prologue (1,1-4) which resembles the prologue to the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1,1-8): the deliberate allusion to Genesis 1,1, "in the beginning"; the centrality of the "word of life." In the epistle's prologue, however, the stress is placed on the community's *experience* of the Word in Jesus. The writer testifies to what he has "seen and heard and touched" (compare Jn 19,35). The experience, furthermore, is one shared by the readers. The language of *fellowship* dominates 1,3f. The believers have fellowship with God the Father through Jesus. They are also, by that same agency, to have fellowship among themselves. The textual variant in 1,4 illustrates the dense interweaving. We are not sure whether the Greek text should read "your" joy, or "our" joy. For this writer, both meanings coincide.

The section closes with another deliberately rhetorical statement of purpose: "I am writing to you because" (2,12-14). Different groups in the community are addressed, but the message is basically one message, and is more clearly spelled out by 2,15-17: the church is to live by the "will of God" and not by the standards of the "world." John's talk about "love of the world" here is very close to that of James about "a lover of the world" (Jas 4,4) and means much the

same thing. The writer does not forbid love for humanity; he denounces the "worldliness" that denies God's claim on his creation and bases existence on "sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life" (2,16).

Within the framework provided by the prologue and the statement of purpose, the rest of the opening section of this sermon serves to remind the readers of the need to live by the "message we have heard from him and proclaim to you" (1,5).

The community has of course already heard that "God is light and there is no darkness in him at all" (1,5). But now, because of the division in this community, a new sense of reality is required. Behavior must match their ideals. They can no longer simply assume that "we are the light" without hesitation. In fact, sin does occur among them, and they need to repent of it. They cannot claim to be "in the light" while their behavior shows that they "walk in darkness" (1,6). That is a lie. Likewise, the claim to "know God" while not keeping God's commandments is a lie (2,4).

With a different vocabulary than James, but with a quite similar concern, John seeks to make his readers' actions conform to their convictions. And the great commandment of God that is to govern the life of the community is also—as in James—the law of love for neighbor, the test whether one is "in the light" or "in the darkness." For 1 John, it is not simply doctrinal correctness that spells true fellowship in the community, but ethical consistency.

First John places special emphasis on the role of Jesus as expiation for sin (1,7; 2,2) and advocate for believers (2,1). The community's failure, demonstrated in its division into hostile parties, makes the need for intercession clear. They cannot do it alone. It also makes clear that "love" is not simply a state of mind, but something to be performed. In an atmosphere of hurt and separation, such performance is difficult.

## The Divided Community (2,18—3,24)

The severity of the community's crisis is indicated by the fact that the writer thinks the end of all things is at hand. The author calls those who have left the community "antichrists," and in the apocalytic scenario, the presence of antichrist is a sign of the final tribulation (see Mt 24,24). The theme of Jesus' return occurs again in 2,28 and 3,2. Typical of apocalyptic also is the exhortation to stand fast ("remain in him," 2,24.27.28;3,6) and to avoid being deceived (2,26).

The threat to the community is all the greater because it is caused by former members: "they went out from us." It is impossible for this writer to acknowledge fully that they had ever been of one spirit with the community: "they were not really of our number." What proof does he have? "If they had been, they would have remained" (2,19). This is desperate logic. It indicates the shock given to a church devoted to unity and opposition to a world "out there" when it experiences conflict and division from within. The very identity of the community is called into question.

We cannot be sure exactly what the bone of contention was between those who left and those who stayed, only that it involved the proper understanding of Jesus. The author uses the language of "denial" and "confession" (2,22f), and it seems clear that a formal *doctrinal* issue is at stake (see also 2 Jn 7). The briefest description of the deviance is that they deny "Jesus is the Christ." This obvously qualifies them to be "anti-Christs" in the narrow sense, but it is hard to imagine how such people could ever have been part of the messianic community. Such a denial

is more appropriate to nonbelieving Jews. To complicate matters, the author adds other features in 3,23; 4,2f; 5,1 and 10. These make it appear that outsiders deny either the full divine origin of Jesus (that he is "God's son") or his full humanity (that he "came in the flesh"). In short, John is convinced his party has the full understanding of Jesus and his opponents do not; beyond that general statement we cannot advance.

Characteristic of this writing, however, is its ability to combine a claim to possession of "the truth" (2,21), with a demand at the same time for transformation. The community is not yet perfect. They are indeed, to use one of their favorite expressions, "children of God" (see Jn 1,12), but they still need to mature. Only when he appears will they become "like him, for we shall see him as he is" (3,2). Having the truth means living the truth, which demands strict ethical norms. In 3,4-18, John develops the strongest possible contrast between the way of the world governed by the devil (4,8; 5,19) and the way revealed by God through the Messiah Jesus. The way of the world is driven by envy which leads to murder (the example of Cain, 3,12; compare Jas 4,1-5). The way revealed by Jesus is exactly the opposite. Life is not taken away but given, and in the giving of life is revealed love: "the way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us." The moral correlative follows at once: "so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (3,16). The New Testament contains no more direct connection between the work of the Messiah and the pattern of Christian existence. And lest anyone think the giving of life can be accomplished in attitude only or once for all, John spells it out in terms of the sharing of material possessions with the needy, and concludes in a manner familiar to any Greek moralist, "let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth."

Finally, the claim to be in possession of the truth is relativized by the deeper statement of humility in 3,19-21. It is because they are in the hands of the one who is "greater than our hearts and knows everything" that they know they belong to the truth. It is not their accomplishment but his gift; their adequate response is to act as he did, in love (3,23f).

## The Remnant Community (4,1—5,21)

Because the community is divided, shared symbols are now being interpreted by opposing parties to the dispute. More careful judgment is therefore required. John reminds his readers of the need to "test the spirits to see whether they belong to God" (4,1). As earlier he had spoken of the opponents as "antichrists," now he applies to them the epithet "false prophets," another favorite designation in apocalyptic (see Mt 24,11). In this case, the proper confession of Jesus is the criterion for true and false prophecy, certifying whether the speaker belongs to God or to "the world" (4,2-4; 13-16).

Within the remnant community itself, discernment is also required. How can the church be sure that it lives by the Spirit of God? That it has the right confession of Jesus is taken for granted. But John adds the ethical dimension; keeping the commandment of God shows their love for God (5,2f). What is that commandment? That they love each other. John indissolubly joins love of God and neighbor; doing one is doing the other: "If anyone says 'I love God' but hates his brother, he is a liar" (4,20). As earlier in 3,15f, John grounds such love in the way God has revealed himself to be for humans in the sending of his son and Jesus' expiatory death: "In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins" (4,10). Since humans do not have direct access to God (4,12; see Jn 1,18), their relationship to God is mediated by their relationships with each other (4,12.20f).

The last section of this sermon is filled with a mixture of confidence and caution. The community living by God's love and faith is sure of victory "over the world" (5,4f), even though "the whole world is under the power of the evil one" (5,19). This is because the community's testimony is not isolated. It is supported by the testimony of Father, Son, and Spirit, each working in and through the church (5,6-9). The community is confident of its gift of "eternal life" (2,25; 5,11.13). But the victory over sin and death (see 3,7-14) is not yet complete. Idolatry is a temptation that needs to be avoided (5,21); perfect love has not yet driven out fear (4,18); mutual correction is required (5,16f). For this divided community, nothing can any longer be taken for granted; division has given new urgency to discernment (5,20). L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Brown, R.E. *The Epistles of John* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1982).
Houlden, J.L. *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (Harper New Testament Commentary; New York, Harper & Row, 1973).

# 2 JOHN □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 393–394 of the New Testament*]

## A Cover Letter to the Church

Unless 2 and 3 John are connected to the same moment of crisis that generated 1 John, it is hard to explain their preservation by a local church, their exchange between churches, and their eventual inclusion in the New Testament canon. In the Reading Guide to 1 John (p. RG 562), the suggestion is made that all three letters were sent in a single packet by the emmissary Demetrius to the local leader Gaius (see 3 Jn) who was still loyal to "the Elder" in the dispute dividing Johannine Christianity into hostile factions.

Whereas 1 John lacks all epistolary character but appears as a sermon to be delivered aloud to an assembly (or even a number of assemblies), 2 John bears the marks of a genuine letter. It has the formal elements of greeting (1-3), body (4-12) and farewell (13). It mentions the desire of the writer to visit the addressees (12).

Unlike 3 John, which is addressed to an individual, however, 2 John is written to the "chosen Lady" and her children (1). The designation is almost certainly an honorary title for the church itself. The argument that it refers to a specific woman leader is doubtful, if the rest of the reconstruction here being suggested makes sense. The "children," of course, are the ones really being addressed; the second-person verbs are predominantly in the plural.

The symbols of Johannine Christianity are very much in evidence. Notice the emphasis on "truth" (1; 2; 3) and on "walking in the truth" (4); on "keeping the commandment" which is not new but from the beginning (5); on love for one another as the fulfillment of that commandment (6); on the creation of mutual joy as the mark of fellowship (12). Surely, such a cluster of distinctive themes makes best sense when read together with 1 John.

What distinguishes 2 John is its function. In 3 John 9, the Elder says that he "is writing" (or

"wrote") something to the church. In all likelihood, this refers to 1 John, the exhortation to a remnant community. Second John, then, is undoubtedly a letter of introduction to the community as such, to be read before the sermon is delivered, to identify its author, to emphasize its main teaching, and to suggest some practical actions to be taken by the community. These may or may not be fully in accord with the spirit of 1 John, but they are certainly recognizable as a response to the crisis signaled by 3 John.

## Strategies for Survival

Again we meet the split between those who "walk in truth" and the "many deceivers who have gone out into the world" (7). As in 1 John, these are designated antichrists because they "do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh." In the Reading Guide to 1 John, we suggest how difficult it is to determine precisely what this denial implies. For the Elder, however, the opponents appear as "progressives" who have gone too far in their interpretation and no longer "remain in the teaching of the Christ" (or "about" the Christ). The Elder's community is therefore portrayed as defending the traditional understanding of Jesus. The importance of right doctrine is underscored by the equation: having Christ is having God (see 1 Jn 4,3). For Johannine Christianity, the unique mediation of salvation by Jesus is axiomatic. He alone is the "way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14,6). The lesson is clear: misconstruing the mediator means missing the good news entirely. If the Elder's readers don't hold to the proper understanding, they will "lose what they worked for."

The community crisis is so severe that the Elder calls for the extraordinary practice of excommunication. They are neither to offer heretics hospitality nor even to greet them as brothers (10). Notice the connection, everywhere assumed in the New Testament, between message and messenger. Physical fellowship implies spiritual unanimity. Thus, "whoever greets him shares in his evil works" (11). Only those who deliver the proper doctrine (10) are to be welcomed. Here the Elder advocates the same practice of shunning and exclusion of which he accuses Diotrephes in 3 John. The battle is a bitter one.

It is difficult to know what positive instruction one should draw from these ancient fragments of hostile conflicts. Perhaps it is important for the church to remember in every age that it has never been easy to establish or to secure its identity; deviance and dispute are part of community life. Perhaps also, however, it is important for the church in every age to reflect whether proper doctrine is more important than the fellowship of love. Even in an age of ecumenism that issue remains unresolved. L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

See the bibliography for 1 John, and:

Brown, R.E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

# 3 JOHN □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 394–395 of the New Testament*]

## A Letter of Recommendation

The New Testament contains two letters written explicitly to individuals, Paul's letter to Philemon, and the Elder's letter to Gaius, the letter known as 3 John. Both letters take up matters of community concern, while having the same specific function, that of recommending the bearer of the letter to the addressee. In the case of Philemon, Paul seeks to return a slave who had run away and to assure his welcome. In the case of 3 John, the Elder recommends to the local church leader his emmissary Demetrius. He has a good reputation from all, and "we give our testimonial as well, and you know our testimony is true" (12).

The ancient world had conventions for letters such as these. They were widely used in early Christianity, as we learn elsewhere in Paul's correspondence (see 2 Cor 3,1; Rom 16). It was natural for a missionary movement to certify its agents (apostles) with such letters, in order to ensure them a safe reception and the hospitality due such "co-workers in the truth" (8). Receiving such messengers, as we see also in 2 John, meant accepting their message as well, an understanding widespread in Judaism and reflected as well in the sayings of Jesus: "Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me" (Lk 10,16). This principle obviously became problematic when the movement itself divided into hostile parties. Paul complained of the Corinthians' preference for apostles other than himself (2 Cor 10,12; 11,4). 3 John points us directly to such a situation.

Third John is so tied to particular practical problems and so devoid of any real theology that it is doubtful that either it or 2 John would have been preserved or made part of the canon were it not associated with a writing that did transcend those circumstances by its religious message. This Reading Guide has proposed that the three letters of John were all part of the same packet delivered to Gaius from the Elder through Demetrius, and that the two smaller letters owe their preservation to the theological weightiness of 1 John.

But if its survival was accidental and its theology minimal, 3 John is all the more precious to readers today. It provides the key to the historical circumstances presupposed by 2 and 1 John. Without it, their religious emphasis would be less intelligible. And without 3 John, an appreciation for the travails of early Christianity would be appreciably diminished.

## The Politics of Ecclesial Power

Third John reveals clearly that the struggle for the soul of Johannine Christianity involved structure as much as symbol, power as much as piety. Indeed, the two levels of conflict were intimately connected. On one side we see the Elder writing to his loyal colleague Gaius. On the other side is Diotrephes, who "loves to dominate." Diotrephes not only asserts authority over Gaius at the local level, but refuses to acknowledge the authority of the Elder over the regional church. The author says that when he comes, he will "draw attention to what he is doing" (10), but this is a small threat to a rebellious local chieftain. The position of the Elder is a defensive one. He needs the personal loyalty of Gaius, and his financial assistance as well.

We are thereby brought to the political maneuvering at the heart of this battle. Diotrephes is not content to "spread evil nonsense" about the Elder. He takes positive action to suppress the

Elder's authority. He refuses himself to receive the Elder's delegates, and, even more, Diotrephes expels from the church those who want to receive them (10). We can understand why the Elder appreciates Gaius's reception of Demetrius, and can grasp the significance of verses 5-8. The Elder needs to provide an alternative source of hospitality and missionary outfitting, since Diotrephes has taken up a position among those who "went out from us" (1 Jn 2,19) and no longer supports the Elder's teaching.

Gaius is being asked to receive Demetrius (and his companions) as well as equip them for their next stage of travel. Perhaps by implication the Elder's future emmissaries are also included in the request. Since the Johannine missionaries accept nothing from the "pagans" ("the world"), the need for a network of hospitality and financial support is obvious (7). As in 2 John, financial sharing is tantamount to spiritual fellowship. Helping such missionaries is being "co-workers in the truth" (8). It clear as well that both parties to the dispute are using the same tactics. Here, Diotrephes is shunning and excommunicating. But in 2 John we find the Elder advocating the same actions among his followers.

The internecine struggles of early Christianity are not terribly edifying but they are instructive. Christians who long for a golden age of harmony should be reminded that there never was one. Among history's benefits is liberation from myth. And edifying or not, these letters testify to another truth. The struggle for identity is never simply a matter of ideas or even symbols. It involves inevitably the messy realities of money and political power. L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

See the bibliographies for 1 and 2 John, and:

Malherbe, A.J. "Hospitality and Inhospitality in the Church," in *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* 2nd ed., enl. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) pp. 92–112.

# JUDE □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 396–398 of the New Testament*]

## The Obscurity of Jude

Although Jude is among the shortest writings in the New Testament, it bristles with difficulties. Some of these have to do with placing the composition in the historical development of early Christianity. Others involve grasping its sometimes obscure allusions. The two sorts of problems are related. Our ignorance of the author and his circumstances prevents us from having a secure context for the intelligent reading of the letter. But because Jude so obviously was responding to some kind of specific crisis, every attempt must be made to construct such a context if the letter is to yield much sense at all.

The *New American Bible* Introduction (New Testament, p. 396) states the majority scholarly opinion on most of the questions concerning authorship and occasion. Jude is considered a general epistle of relatively late date. It is an attack on false teachers, probably representing some form of gnosticism (an early deviant form of Christianity stressing "self-fulfillment"). Another reading of the evidence suggests that Jude could have been written at virtually any

period from the start of Christianity, and was concerned less with false teaching than with bad behavior. This minority view will be developed in the paragraphs to follow. The main point, of course, is to make as good sense as possible out of the letter.

## Literary Connections

Far more puzzling than the identity of "Jude" is the placement of his letter among other early Christian literature. The author mentions an earlier draft he had begun, when the crisis among his readers demanded his turning attention to the polemic now being read by them (3). What was that earlier version? A not entirely unrelated issue is the relation of Jude to 2 Peter. Everyone recognizes that the argumentative material of 2 Peter is matched by that in Jude 5-13. Less clear is whether one author depended on the other, or both relied on a shared earlier tradition. Neither should the resemblance be overstated. Jude is not simply a source for 2 Peter. Each writing sharpens the material to a different polemical point.

Further literary puzzles are provided by Jude's literary allusions. He cites examples of sinners being punished. Some are readily apparent from the Bible, although a few (like Balaam) show signs of traditional Jewish biblical interpretation. Jude also cites as though it were Scripture the apocryphal writing known as *1 Enoch* (14). And his version of the dispute between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses appears to derive from another apocryphal writing, *the Assumption of Moses* (9). His reference to the "words spoken by the apostles" (17) are no more clear, since the statement is more an amalgam of early Christian statements on the end-time (cf., for example, Mk 13,22; 1 Tim 4,1-3) than a specific citation.

That an author could assume familiarity with such sources among his readers seems to presuppose either a Jewish-Christian readership, or a Gentile one familiar with Jewish apocrypha. What the ancient readers presumably understood, we do not, and the lack of literary context continues to make this letter obscure to present-day readers.

## Historical Setting

Writings like 2 Peter and Jude remind us how little we know about early Christianity apart from the chronology provided by Acts and Paul's letters. We cannot fit them into any development we know about, and must rely on guesswork. Every hypothesis, furthermore, is based solely on the text itself. Precision concerning what the text does and does not say is obviously critical to the value of any reconstruction.

Jude is obviously a polemic against opponents and an exhortation to its readers to remain steadfast. Contrary to the usual opinion, however, the text contains no clear indication that Jude was opposing "false teachers" or that they were purveying any "heresy." Their "scorning of Lordship" (4.8) was practical rather than theoretical. Jude attacks immoral behavior rather than false teaching. So thorough is his disparagement, indeed, that it is hard to know even what they were doing. He specifically accuses them of disrupting the community love feasts. The term is usually taken to mean eucharistic meals. They are also accused of carousing, and of looking after only themselves (literally: "shepherding themselves," 12). He also calls their behavior "divisive" (19). Otherwise, Jude uses all the standardized charges common to the polemic of the ancient world: they are sexually immoral (7), greedy (11.16), slanderous (15), and living for their own desires (16). In short, they "live on the natural plane, devoid of the Spirit" (19). They "pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness" (4).

## Living by God's Grace

Letters of Paul such as 1 Corinthians attest how difficult it was for the early Christians to translate the gift of God (grace) into consistent patterns of moral behavior. Legitimate disagreement could exist on matters of diet, work, use of possessions, and the like. It was not immediately obvious in all cases what "Life in the Spirit" meant behaviorally. In the case of Jude, however, it appears that disagreement has overstepped the boundary into true moral deviance; hence the outrage of the author. The opponents are "perverting the gift."

Jude's first line of defense is an attack on the immoral people. He tries to demonstrate from Scripture how there have always been such troublemakers and they have always been punished; so will these. In contrast to 2 Peter 2, in which the emphasis is on the power of God to judge the righteous and unrighteous, in Jude the stress is entirely on the punishment of the rebellious.

The polemic is not random, but carefully argued, with rhetorical effect. Notice the repetition of "these people" in 8, 10, 12, 16 and 19, which brings the examples of old to bear on the present circumstances. Jude also plays on the Greek words for "Keep" in 1, 6, 13, 21 and 24. His opponents fail to "keep their place," but Jude's readers are to "keep themselves in the love of God" who is, in turn able to "keep them from stumbling."

Jude's second line of defense is to edify ("build up") his readers in their "most holy faith" (20). He reminds them that God dealt with troubles like these from of old, and in fact the apostles of Jesus had foretold the emergence of such rebellious "scoffers" (17f). He reassures them that they are being "kept safe for Jesus Christ" despite these turmoils (1). Jude does not suggest that it is the believers' role to punish the reprobate. He exhorts them to avoid such immoral behavior (23) and to build up their own faith. If the opponents are "devoid of spirit," the believers are to "pray in the Spirit" (20). But their love for God is to be demonstrated in an attitude of mercy and care for those who waver and even for those who appear to be lost (22f).

Jude's witness is a limited one. But the use of moral outrage is not entirely exhausted by the circumstances of the first century. The tendency to turn grace into libertinism is a perennial one. Combining justifiable outrage at license with mercy for the licentious is a delicate and difficult art. Few writings have carried it off as well as Jude. L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Bauckham, R.J. *2 Peter, Jude* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983).

Kelly, J.N.D. *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Harper New Testament Commentary; New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

# REVELATION □ READING GUIDE

[*see pages 398–424 of the New Testament*]

## A Book of Christian Prophecy

The Book of Revelation makes for difficult reading, and in fact has a long history of misinterpretation. The fundamental mistake for many had been to take it as a literal set of predictions delivered in the past concerning current events. Reading Revelation that way has been popular

for a long time, but has become an obsession for many contemporaries. Such readings have successively been disconfirmed by facts; the "end-time" has been awaited many times without occurring. Such readings have caused the distortion of lives; many have been the individuals and groups who left livelihood and loved ones to meet the New Jerusalem only to have their dreams destroyed. Such readings have also missed the real religious message of Revelation. They reduce its value to that of an astrological chart.

Although the text itself virtually calls out for such an interpretation, with its promise to reveal "what must happen soon" (22,18-19), it is critical to recognize that just such statements are standard features of a specific literary genre of the ancient world, called *apocalyptic.* Two convictions should guide the faithful study of Revelation. First, as with all the biblical writings, the Word of God was addressed first to the people of the age when it was written; a text's "fuller" meaning for successive ages is secondary and never to be divorced from that first, historical, meaning. Second, as in all literature, religious or otherwise, literary genre dictates meaning. Newspapers and poetry do not communicate their respective "truths" in identical ways. Knowing the conventions of a literary form is necessary to intelligent reading.

## Revelation as Apocalyptic

Beginning at least with the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, the apocalyptic style became prevalent in Judaism during the New Testament period. Generated by persecution from without and the threat of apostasy from within, this "literature of the oppressed" quickly gained certain standard features: revelations about the future are experienced in dreams or visions, and the insights are communicated through a complex symbolism involving numbers, animals, and cosmic phenomena. The element of prediction is actually a fiction. The seer interprets events of his own age, using a figure of the past (such as Enoch) or an angelic being as a spokesperson.

The literary features express an interpretation of history. Apocalyptic defends God's justice. Events appear to be under the control of evil people or even satanic powers, since those devoted to God are being persecuted. Such is the "present age." But apocalyptic transposes God's blessing to a future time, "the age to come." Just when things become humanly impossible on earth, God will intervene (as through a Messiah) to save his own, and inaugurate the "kingdom of God." Apocalyptic reconciles the conviction that God controls history with the experience that suggests God does not.

The religious message of apocalyptic is simple. To the faithful, it says, "hold on;" to the wavering, it declares, "stand fast." It offers the hope of eventual vindication to those now oppressed but remaining loyal to the one God.

## Revelation as Prophecy

Revelation fits the apocalyptic genre well. It has visions, animals, numbers, cosmic catastrophes. It has a two-age interpretation of history. And its basic religious message is a call for the "endurance of the holy ones" (13,10; 14,12).

In other ways, however, Revelation transcends apocalyptic. The author is not a fictional sage from the past but a leader well known to his readers. The voice of prophecy is directed explicitly (and not in coded fashion) to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Chapters 2–3. Most importantly, the turn of the ages has already begun. The victory of God over evil has in principle been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus; even more impressively, the faithful who have been killed already share in that victory in heaven.

The self-understanding of the church in this writing is prophetic. Those who follow Jesus are "servants and prophets and saints" (11,18). Their witness is the "spirit of prophecy" (19,10). Jesus is the first and "faithful witness" (1,5) whose mission they continue. The nature of their prophecy? To witness to the reality of God in the world. In the letters, this is expressed as fidelity in face of corruption or apostasy. In the visions it is expressed as loyalty in face of the idolatrous claims of the state and even of possible death.

## The Opening Vision (1,1-20)

The prologue (1,1-3) and the epilogue (22,6-21) provide an explicit prophetic framework for the entire work, and reveal a self-conscious literary awareness as well (cf. 1,3; 22,18). The understanding of prophecy as *witness,* which becomes the major theme of the book, is sounded at once (1,2).

The popularity of letter writing in early Christianity is shown by the fact that this apocalyptic writing contains letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Chaps. 2–3), and even has an epistolary greeting to introduce the work (1,4-8). The author identifies himself as one known to his readers, and recounts the vision that provides the basis for the rest of the book. The phrasing of 1,9 suggests that John is on the Greek island of Patmos as a punishment for his witness to Jesus. The vision that now comforts him becomes an exhortation to all who are likewise oppressed.

The Risen Jesus is encountered as the Son of Man (the central figure in much apocalyptic), described in the most transcendent terms available. The reader is now in the realm of visions, which means the realm of symbols. The terms are obviously not meant literally, any more than the later phantasmagorical descriptions of heaven. The terms used here and elsewhere are not fresh-minted, but are the coinage of biblical symbolism. Of all apocalyptic writings, Revelation most artfully weaves together the themes of classical prophecy, especially of the prophet Ezekiel. The footnotes and cross-references in the *New American Bible* will repay the effort required. One should quickly realize that Revelation is a self-conscious and complex literary construction.

The Son of Man appears with the stars in his hands and standing amid seven lampstands. Revelation makes clear from the start that it is the risen and powerful Lord (in cosmic control) who reveals, and that he is present to the churches (1, 20), the concerns of which are taken up in the letters that follow.

## Letters to the Seven Churches (2,1—3,22)

In what are literally "spirit letters" (see 2,7) from the Risen Jesus, seven churches of well-known cities in Asia Minor are issued individualized prophecies. We see at once what Revelation understands "prophecy" to be: these letters are exhortations to remain faithful to the integrity of their calling. The trials and lapses of the Johannine Christians are here put on remarkable display. We also hear fragments of sayings (such as in 2,3) which occur elsewhere in the New Testament literature (see 1 Thes 5,2 and Mk 13,33).

The letters follow the same format. There is a greeting, followed by an elaborate designation of Jesus. The Risen Lord analyzes each community's spiritual condition and concludes with words of warning or of promise. The description of the church's struggles show how they faced opposition from without (as from the Jews), but even more, division within (as with the Nicolaitans). And corruption appears as a vivid possibility. Typical for Johannine literature, the

opposition is pictured in terms of false prophecy (2,20). The focus of praise and of persuasion in these letters is endurance.

The imagery of the letters is lush. Who can resist the almost fairy-tale quality of this statement: "I shall also give a white amulet upon which is inscribed a new name, which no one knows except the one who receives it" (2,17)? Beneath the poetry, however, lies grim reality. The difficulty in these letters of maintaining loyalty in the face of social exclusion and human laxity is raised, in the visions which follow, to the level of a cosmic conflict between the Lord and the forces of evil.

## God and the Lamb in Heaven (4,1—5,14)

John is "caught up in Spirit" (4,2), and the rest of Revelation consists in the visions he experienced in his ecstatic state. The vision is a staple of apocalyptic. It is found with equal frequency in early Jewish mysticism, called *Merkabah,* or "throne-chariot" mysticism. In prayer, the adept ascended through the heavens to the throne of God's presence. Much of the celestial furniture here resembles that of the *Merkabah:* the jewel-encrusted throne room (4,3f); the sea of glass (4,6); the angelic creatures (4,6-9), and the numinous hymns sung in praise of God (5,9-13).

A dramatic departure from standard symbolism is the appearance of "the lamb that seemed to have been slain" (5,6). Jesus is also called "Lamb of God" in John's Gospel (1,29; see also Jn 19, 36, a reference to the Passover lamb). What a bold stroke, to picture Jesus in animal terms, especially one so paradoxical. The salient aspect of the lamb is its sacrificial function: Jesus was slain. But this lamb is also "the lion of the tribe of Judah" who has triumphed over death (5,5). In a powerful assertion of Jesus' status after his resurrection, the lamb is at "the right hand of the one who sat on the throne" (5,7; see Ps 110,1). Both figures receive the praise of the heavenly creatures (5,9-11) and indeed of all creation (5,13f).

The special character of the visions of Revelation is shown by the problem of "the scroll" (5,1). It contains the secrets to be revealed, and because of its use in Ezekiel it is immediately recognizable as a symbol for prophecy (10,8-11, and Ez 2,9—3,4). Because of his resurrection, Jesus is empowered to open the scroll (5,5). What follows, therefore, is both a revelation *of* and *from* Jesus Christ (see 1,1). The visions will show "what must happen afterwards" (4,1), but the reader is not frightened, knowing from this first vision that the fundamental victory has already been accomplished.

## Visions of Cosmic Conflict (6,1—16,21)

The next section of Revelation is the most difficult to make sense of, and, not surprisingly, the most worked over for signs of the end. The candidates to fit the Beast with the number 666 (13,18) have ranged from Nero to Hitler.

The visions are so structured as to give the illusion of temporal sequence, linked together as they are by the phrase "and then I saw. . ." It is indeed tempting to translate a series of *visions* into a sequence of historical events. So readers have tried to compute the overlapping series of sevens: seals (6,1-17; 8,1), trumpets (8,1—9,21; 11,15), plagues (15,1-8), and bowls (16,1-20). But neither the events of the front pages nor elaborate literary analyses have ever satisfactorily unlocked this dense poetry. It is in fact more likely that all the visions repeat the

same basic message. The saints on earth are locked in conflict with hostile forces. Their earthly combat finds a cosmic counterpart in the struggle between God and Satan.

Thus, on one side we see all the "beasts" who oppose the faithful: the dragon (12,1-8), the first beast (13,1-10), and the second beast (13,11-17). These are not separate enemies, but successive masks of the one force of evil. As in modern horror films, the destruction of one gives rise to another more horrifying still. Beneath the different manifestations, one visible enemy is most prevalent: the idolatrous state that persecutes the saints, enslaves them, and seeks to kill them (13,7-18).

On the other side are those loyal to God, the "servants, prophets and saints" (11,18; 19, 9f). They continue Jesus' own faithful witness to God by witnessing to Jesus. By so doing, they reject the idolatrous claims of the state on their obeisance. They suffer the consequences, some of them by shedding blood. Revelation establishes the connection between "witness" and "martyr" by the disciples' imitation of Jesus' death.

The prophetic self-consciousness of this church is most clearly stated in the account of the two witnesses (11,1-13). This earthly interlude shows two people who both "witness" and "testify" (the terms are interchangeable). They are killed in imitation of Jesus (11,7). They are also called into heaven (11,12). The vignette describes the conviction of Revelation that those who share Jesus' death also share his triumph in heaven. Thus, alternating with scenes of suffering on earth below are serene descriptions of the saints in heaven celebrating the anticipated and certain victory of the Lamb (5,9f; 6,9-11; 7,4-7; 14,1-5; 15,2-4). Apocalyptic demands that history move in a downward curve to ever more dismal circumstances, until God finally intervenes. In Revelation, however, the final outcome is not in doubt. Not just Jesus, but also those "defeated" with him by evil *already* share in the resurrection triumph. The earthly conquest is just tidying up.

It is useless to tease such poetry into a train schedule. The vision here is not one of history unfolding like clockwork; it is a religious vision of God's ultimate conquest despite current appearances. Once the reader lets go of the obsessive "need to know" that twists beauty into biorhythm charts, it is possible to wonder at the powerful poetic and religious imagination at work in these glorious images. On the side of evil, what genius to make the second beast, who is a "false prophet," mimic the features but betray the nature of the true prophet: "it had two horns like a lamb's but spoke like a dragon" (13,11). On the side of good, what beauty in the prayer which speaks to the suffering of all humankind, that hopes "the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (7,17).

## Punishment of Babylon (17,1—20,15)

The masks fall away, revealing as the real enemy of God's people the Roman Empire, "the great harlot who lives near the many waters" (17,1). Rome is called Babylon (17,5) because in the biblical tradition it was Babylon above all that symbolized the desecration of the Temple and the exile of the people. In typical apocalyptic fashion, the sequence of events is laid out: God has given temporary rule to this evil empire, to accomplish his ends. It does battle against the lamb and the people.

The persecution and suffering were undoubtedly real. These Christians were faced with the choices of all who suffer oppression. Were they to resist violently and seek the overthrow of

Rome? That was futile as well as contrary to their ethos. Were they simply to cooperate? That would be to lose their identity. They chose the path of passive resistance. They did not fight the beast, but neither would they do its bidding. The path of martyrdom, however slow or fast, is not easy. For those who survive, the psychic toll is considerable. Anger at the enemy can easily turn inward; patient endurance is hard labor.

They were convinced that "the lamb will conquer" (17,14), but in their earthly condition they had not yet seen it happen. The description of Rome's fall is therefore deliciously detailed. The pent-up fury of the oppressed is released in glee over the degradation of the oppressor. Much of this is obviously and literally wish fulfillment, the stuff of fantasy. The anger of a downtrodden people is deflected to a punishing God.

The stages of the end-time reveal how "the words of God are accomplished" (17,17). The "Word of God" himself (19,13) leads the climactic battle, and inaugurates the messianic age, when the saints "will reign with Christ for a thousand years" (20,4-6). But this is not yet the end. There is another outbreak of demonic destruction (20,7-10) and the tossing of the Devil into the fire, then the resurrection of the dead for final judgment (20,11-15). These final stages lack poetry, but this deficiency is overcome by the final vision.

## The New Creation (21,1—22,21)

The conclusion to Revelation is a fitting conclusion to the Bible as a whole. The vision of a new creation (21,1) is central to the New Testament (see, for example, 2 Cor 5,17). The Christian experience of Christ was an absolute beginning, rooted in the ever-new life of God himself. God can say, "Behold, I make all things new" (21,5) because God is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" of all things (21,6; 22,13). As Genesis began with the creation by a word, so the vision of the end-time recapitulates that beginning: creation is renewed.

The hope expressed by Revelation is not simply that souls be saved after death, or that evil be conquered, or even that saints reign for a thousand years over a burnt-out terrain. The hope is that creation itself be transformed. So the sight of a "New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" is the vision of a civilized order, one that is intrinsically *holy* in the proper sense. Human society is based on the recognition of God's power and presence. No place for those, now, who refuse the "dwelling place of God with the human race" (21,3.7f).

In this city, there is not even need for "religion" as a separate compartment of life. The temple of the city is "the Lord God almighty and the Lamb" (21,22). And all the city's people will be priests of [the Lord] God (20,6), showing at last that the fundamental human vocation is praise of God (22,9). There need be no division between peoples. Nothing is here accursed (22,3). The nations will walk by the light of the Lamb (21,24), and the trees of the city "serve as medicine for the nations" (22,2). And what medicine! There will be "no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away" (21,4).

Great harm has come to those millenarians who have tried by force to make this vision a reality, and establish a thousand-year reign of the saints on earth. Great despair has come to the utopians who have tried on the basis of goodwill to construct a society like the New Jerusalem.

The vision has its value precisely as challenge, as ever-receding prophecy to all human effort for renewal. This does not come about by human cunning but by God's gift. The transformation is not technical but organic.

But so compelling is the vision that no one who hears it can help joining in the plaintive cry of the epilogue, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"

The epilogue also reminds us that we are still in the in-between time when the world is not recreated. There is still need for the witness of prophecy and for endurance of the saints, for "the wicked still act wickedly, and the filthy still be filthy. The righteous must still do right, and the holy still be holy" (22,11). Here is a call to the saints. L.T.J.

## Resources for Study

Caird, G.B. *A Commentary of the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Harper New Testament Commentary; New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

Minear, P. *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Vision of The Apocalypse* (Washington DC: Corpus Publications, 1968).

# PREFACE TO THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE
## THE OLD TESTAMENT

On September 30, 1943, His Holiness Pope Pius XII issued his now famous encyclical on scripture studies, *Divino afflante Spiritu.* He wrote: "We ought to explain the original text which was written by the inspired author himself and has more authority and greater weight than any, even the very best, translation whether ancient or modern. This can be done all the more easily and fruitfully if to the knowledge of languages be joined a real skill in literary criticism of the same text."

Early in 1944, in conformity with the spirit of the encyclical, and with the encouragement of Archbishop Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, the Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine requested members of The Catholic Biblical Association of America to translate the sacred scriptures from the original languages or from the oldest extant form of the text, and to present the sense of the biblical text in as correct a form as possible.

The first English Catholic version of the Bible, the Douay-Rheims (1582–1609/10), and its revision by Bishop Challoner (1750) were based on the Latin Vulgate. In view of the relative certainties more recently attained by textual and higher criticism, it has become increasingly desirable that contemporary translations of the sacred books into English be prepared in which due reverence for the text and strict observance of the rules of criticism would be combined.

*The New American Bible* has accomplished this in response to the need of the church in America today. It is the achievement of some fifty biblical scholars, the greater number of whom, though not all, are Catholics. In particular, the editors-in-chief have devoted twenty-five years to this work. The collaboration of scholars who are not Catholic fulfills the directive of the Second Vatican Council, not only that "correct translations be made into different languages especially from the original texts of the sacred books," but that, "with the approval of the church authority, these translations be produced in cooperation with separated brothers" so that "all Christians may be able to use them."

The text of the books contained in *The New American Bible* is a completely new translation throughout. From the original and the oldest available texts of the sacred books, it aims to convey as directly as possible the thought and individual style of the inspired writers. The better understanding of Hebrew and Greek, and the steady development of the science of textual criticism, the fruit of patient study since the time of St. Jerome, have allowed the translators and editors in their use of all available materials to approach more closely than ever before the sense of what the sacred authors actually wrote.

Where the translation supposes the received text—Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, as the case may be—ordinarily contained in the best-known editions, as the original or the oldest extant form, no additional remarks are necessary. But for those who are happily able to study the original text of the scriptures at firsthand, a supplementary series of textual notes pertaining to the Old Testament was added originally in an appendix to the typical edition. (It is now obtainable in a separate booklet from The Catholic Biblical Association of America, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064.) These notes furnish a guide in those cases in which the editorial board judges that the manuscripts in the original languages, or the evidence of the ancient versions, or some similar source, furnish the correct reading of a passage, or at least a reading more true to the original than that customarily printed in the available editions.

The Massoretic text of 1 and 2 Samuel has in numerous instances been corrected by the more ancient manuscripts Samuel a, b, and c from Cave 4 of Qumran, with the aid of important evidence from the Septuagint in both its oldest from and its Lucianic recension. Fragments of the lost Book of Tobit in Aramaic and in Hebrew, recovered from Cave 4 of Qumran, are in substantial agreement with the Sinaiticus Greek recension used for the translation of this book. The lost original Hebrew text of 1 Maccabees is replaced by its oldest extant form in Greek. Judith, 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther are also translated from the Greek.

The basic text for the Psalms is not the Massoretic but one which the editors considered closer to the original inspired form, namely the Hebrew text underlying the new Latin Psalter of the Church, the *Liber Psalmorum* (1944[1], 1945[2]). Nevertheless they retained full liberty to establish the reading of the original text on sound critical principles.

The translation of Sirach, based on the original Hebrew as far as it is preserved and corrected from the ancient versions, is often interpreted in the light of the traditional Greek text. In the Book of Baruch the basic text is the Greek of the Septuagint, with some readings derived from an underlying Hebrew form no longer extant. In the deuterocanonical sections of Daniel (3, 24–90; 13, 1—14, 42), the basic text is the Greek text of Theodotion, occasionally revised according to the Greek text of the Septuagint.

In some instances in the Book of Job, in Proverbs, Sirach, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zechariah there is good reason to believe that the original order of lines was accidentally disturbed in the transmission of the text. The verse numbers given in such cases are always those of the current Hebrew text, though the arrangement differs. In these instances the textual notes advise the reader of the difficulty. Cases of exceptional dislocation are called to the reader's attention by footnotes.

The Books of *Genesis to Ruth* were first published in 1952; the Wisdom Books, *Job to Sirach,* in 1955; the Prophetic Books, *Isaiah to Malachi,* in 1961; and the Historical Books, *Samuel to Maccabees,* in 1969. In the present edition of *Genesis to Ruth* there are certain new features: a general introduction to the Pentateuch, a retranslation of the text of Genesis with an introduction, cross-references, and revised textual notes, besides new and expanded exegetical notes which take into consideration the various sources or literary traditions.

The revision of *Job to Sirach* includes changes in strophe division in Job and Proverbs and in titles of principal parts and sections of Wisdom and Ecclesiastes. Corrections in the text of Sirach are made in 39, 27—44, 17 on the basis of the Masada text, and in 51, 13–30 on the basis of the occurrence of this canticle in the Psalms scroll from Qumran Cave 11. In this typical edition, new corrections are reflected in the textual notes of Job, Proverbs, Wisdom, and Sirach. In the Psalms, the enumeration found in the Hebrew text is followed instead of the double enumeration, according to both the Hebrew and the Latin Vulgate texts, contained in the previous edition of this book.

In the Prophetic Books *Isaiah to Malachi,* only minor revisions have been made in the structure and wording of the texts, and in the textual notes.

The spelling of proper names in *The New American Bible* follows the customary forms found in most English Bibles since the Authorized Version.

The work of translating the Bible has been characterized as "the sacred and apostolic work of interpreting the word of God and of presenting it to the laity in translations as clear as the difficulty of the matter and the limitations of human knowledge permit" (A. G. Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate, in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly,* 6, [1944], 389–90). In the appraisal of

the present work, it is hoped that the words of the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* will serve as a guide: "Let all the sons of the church bear in mind that the efforts of these resolute laborers in the vineyard of the Lord should be judged not only with equity and justice but also with the greatest charity; all moreover should abhor that intemperate zeal which imagines that whatever is new should for that very reason be opposed or suspected."

Conscious of their personal limitations for the task thus defined, those who have prepared this text cannot expect that it will be considered perfect; but they can hope that it may deepen in its readers "the right understanding of the divinely given Scriptures," and awaken in them "that piety by which it behooves us to be grateful to the God of all providence, who from the throne of his majesty has sent these books as so many personal letters to his own children" (*Divino afflante Spiritu*).

# THE PENTATEUCH

Pentateuch
See RG
36–55

The Pentateuch, which consists of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), enjoys particular prestige among the Jews as the "Law," or "Torah," the concrete expression of God's will in their regard. It is more than a body of legal doctrine, even though such material occupies many chapters, for it contains the story of the formation of the People of God: Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and the oppressed Hebrews in Egypt, the birth of Israel in the Sinai covenant, the journey to the threshold of the Promised Land, and the "discourses" of Moses.

The grandeur of this historic sweep is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historical traditions, or sources. These are primarily four: the so-called Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomic strands that run through the Pentateuch. (They are conveniently abbreviated as J, E, P and D.) Each brings to the Torah its own characteristics, its own theological viewpoint—a rich variety of interpretation that the sensitive reader will take pains to appreciate. A superficial difference between two of these sources is responsible for their names: the Yahwist prefers the name *Yahweh* (represented in translation as *Lord*) by which God revealed himself to Israel; the Elohist prefers the generic name for God, *Elohim*. The Yahwist is concrete, imaginative, using many anthropomorphisms in its theological approach, as seen, e.g., in the narrative of creation in Gn 2, compared with the Priestly version in Gn 1. The Elohist is more sober, moralistic. The Priestly strand, which emphasizes genealogies, is more severely theological in tone. The Deuteronomic approach is characterized by the intense hortatory style of Dt 5—11, and by certain principles from which it works, such as the centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple.

However, even this analysis of the Pentateuch is an over-simplification, for it is not always possible to distinguish with certainty among the various sources. The fact is that each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material. The Yahwist was himself a collector and adapter. His narrative is made up of many disparate stories that have been reoriented, and given a meaning within the context in which they now stand; e.g., the story of Abraham and Isaac in Gn 22. Within the J and P traditions one has to reckon with many individual units; these had their own history and life-setting before they were brought together into the present more or less connected narrative.

This is not to deny the role of Moses in the development of the Pentateuch. It is true we do not conceive of him as the author of the books in the modern sense. But there is no reason to doubt that, in the events described in these traditions, he had a uniquely important role, especially as lawgiver. Even the later laws which have been added in P and D are presented as a Mosaic heritage. Moses is the lawgiver *par excellence,* and all later legislation is conceived in his spirit, and therefore attributed to him. Hence, the reader is not held to undeviating literalness in interpreting the words, "the LORD said to Moses." One must keep in mind that the Pentateuch is the crystallization of Israel's age-old relationship with God.

In presenting the story of the birth of the People of God, the Pentateuch looks back to the promises made to the patriarchs, and forward to the continuing fulfillment of these promises in later books of the Bible. The promises find their classic expression in Gn 12, 1ff. The "God of the Fathers" challenges Abraham to believe: the patriarch is to receive a people, a land, and through him the nations will somehow be blessed.

The mysterious and tortuous way in which this people is brought into being is described: Despite Sarah's sterility, Isaac is finally born—to be offered in sacrifice! The promises are renewed to him eventually, and also to the devious Jacob, as if to show that the divine design will be effected, with or without human cunning. The magnificent story of Joseph is highlighted by the theme of Providence; the promise of a people is taking shape.

Israel is not formed in a vacuum, but amid the age-old civilization of Mesopotamia and the Nile. Oppression in Egypt provokes a striking intervention of God.

Yahweh reveals himself to Moses as a savior, and the epic story of deliverance is told in Exodus. This book also tells of the Sinai covenant, which is rightfully regarded as the key to the Old Testament. Through the covenant Israel becomes Yahweh's people, and Yahweh becomes Israel's God. This act of grace marks the fulfillment of the first promise; that Abraham will be the father of a great nation, God's special possession. The laws in Exodus and Leviticus (P tradition) are both early and late. They spell out the proper relationship of the federation of the Twelve tribes with the LORD. He is a jealous God, demanding exclusive allegiance; he cannot be imaged; he takes vengeance upon the wicked, and shows mercy to the good. Slowly the LORD reveals himself to his people; with remarkable honesty, Israel records the unsteady response—the murmurings and rebellions and infidelities through the desert wanderings up to the plain of Moab.

This sacred history was formed within the bosom of early Israel, guided by the spirit of God. It was sung beside the desert campfires; it was commemorated in the liturgical feasts, such as Passover; it was transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation—until all was brought together in writing, about the sixth century B.C., when the literary formation of the Pentateuch came to an end.

The Book of Deuteronomy has a history quite peculiar to itself. Its old traditions and law code (12—26) are put forth in the form of "discourses" of Moses before his death. The extraordinarily intense and hortatory tone fits the mood of a discourse. The book contains possibly the preaching of the Levites in the northern kingdom of Israel before its fall in 721 B.C. If this book is situated in its proper historical perspective, its true impact is more vividly appreciated. It is the blueprint of the great "Deuteronomic" reform under King Josiah (640–609 B.C.). This was an attempt to galvanize the people into a wholehearted commitment to the covenant ideals, into an obedience motivated by the great commandment of love (Dt 6, 4ff). Israel has yet another chance, if it obeys. The people are poised between life and death; and they are exhorted to choose life—today (26, 16-19; 30, 15-20).

# THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis
See RG
56–73

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, opens with the Hebrew word bereshit, which means "in the beginning." The title "Genesis" was given to the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the book, because of its concern with the origin of the world (Gn 1, 1; 2, 4), of the human race, and, in particular, of the Hebrew people.

Eleven structural units (toledoth), of unequal length and importance, present the unity and purpose of the book in terms of God's universal sovereignty, his dealings with men, and his choice and formation of a special people to be the instrument of his plan of salvation.

The tracing of the direct descendance from Adam to Jacob constitutes the major part of the book, while the genealogical tables of lateral branches are not so developed nor of such interest as those that pertain to the story of the Israelite people. In fact, these lateral branches gradually disappear from the narrative. And with the introduction of Abraham and his covenant with God, the history of humanity as such becomes contracted to the story of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob—the chosen people.

Despite its unity of plan and purpose, the book is a complex work, not to be attributed to a single original author. Several sources, or literary traditions, that the final redactor used in his composition are discernible. These are the Yahwist (J), Elohist (E) and Priestly (P) sources, which in turn reflect older oral traditions (see Introduction to the Pentateuch).

In Genesis, the Yahwist source is the most important by reason of its teaching, its antiquity, and the continuity it gives the book. It constitutes a sacred history, continually drawing attention to the working out of God's design through his interventions in the affairs of men. The Elohist source, less well preserved, is found in fragmentary form only, depicting God's manifestations through visions and dreams rather than theophanies. Angels are God's intermediaries with men. Moreover, there is a solicitude for the divine transcendence and greater sensitivity toward the moral order. The Priestly source contains those elements—chronological data, lists, genealogies—that construct the framework of Genesis and bind its contents together. To the J and E sources it adds such legal institutions as the sabbath rest, circumcision and the alliances between God and Noah and God and Abraham.

The interpreter of Genesis will recognize at once the distinct object that sets chapters 1—11 apart: the recounting of the origin of the world and of man (primeval history). To make the truths contained in these chapters intelligible to the Israelite people destined to preserve them, they needed to be expressed through elements prevailing among that people at that time. For this reason, the truths themselves must therefore be clearly distinguished from their literary garb.

With the story of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gn 11, 27—50, 26), the character of the narrative changes. While we do not view the account of the patriarchs as history in the strict sense, nevertheless certain of the matters recounted from the time of Abraham onward can be placed in the actual historical and social framework of the Near East in the early part of the second millennium B.C. (2000–1500), and documented by non-biblical sources.

Genesis contains many religious teachings of basic importance: the preexistence and transcendence of God, his wisdom and goodness, his power through which all things are made and on which they all depend; the special creation of man in God's image and likeness, and of woman from the substance of man; the institution of marriage as the union of one man with one woman; man's original state of innocence; man's sin of pride and disobedience, its consequences for the protoparents and their posterity. Despite the severity of their punishment, hope of reconciliation is offered by God through the first as well as the subsequent promises of salvation and blessing. Abraham is blessed for his faith and obedience, and he is to be a blessing for all nations through his offspring, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons (Gn 12, 3; 18, 18; 22, 18), of whom the Messiah, mankind's greatest blessing, will eventually be born (Gal 3, 8).

Frequent references to Genesis are found in the New Testament. Christ becomes the antithesis of Adam: sin and death come to mankind through Adam, justification and life through Jesus Christ (Rom 5, 12. 17ff). Noah's ark becomes the symbol of the church, by which men are saved from destruction through the waters of baptism (1 Pt 3, 20ff); Abraham's faith is the model for all believers; the sacrifice of his son Isaac typifies the sacrifice of Christ, Son of the Father. The liturgy, too, relates the persons of Abel, Abraham and Melchizedek to Christ in his act of sacrifice.

The Book of Genesis is divided as follows:

I. The Primeval History (1, 1—11, 26).
II. The Patriarch Abraham (11, 27—25, 18).
III. The Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob (25, 19—36, 43).
IV. Joseph and His Brothers (37, 1—50, 26).

## I: The Primeval History

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–11
See RG
58–65

**First Story of Creation*** [1]In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,[a] [2]the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss,* while a mighty wind swept over the waters.[b]

[3]Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.[c] [4]God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. [5]God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day.*

[6]Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." And so it happened: [7]God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it.[d] [8]God called the dome "the sky." Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

[9]Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear." And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared.[e] [10]God called the dry land "the earth," and the basin of the water he called "the sea." God saw how good it was. [11]*f*Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it." And so it happened: [12]the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw how good it was. [13]Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

[14]Then God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years,[g] [15]and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth." And so it happened: [16]God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars.[h] [17]God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, [18]to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the dark-

**1, 1—2, 4a:** This section introduces the whole Pentateuch. It shows how God brought an orderly universe out of primordial chaos.

**1, 2:** The abyss: the primordial ocean according to the ancient Semitic cosmogony. After God's creative activity, part of this vast body forms the salt-water seas (vv 9f); part of it is the fresh water under the earth (Ps 33, 7; Ez 31, 4), which wells forth on the earth as springs and fountains (Gn 7, 11; 8, 2; Prv 3, 20). Part of it, "the upper water" (Ps 148, 4; Dn 3, 60), is held up by the dome of the sky (Gn 1, 6f) from which rain descends on the earth (Gn 7, 11; 2 Kgs 7, 2. 19; Ps 104, 13). A mighty wind: Literally, "a wind of God," or "a spirit of God"; cf Gn 8 1.

**1, 5:** In ancient Israel a day was considered to begin at sunset. According to the highly artificial literary structure of Gn 1, 1—2, 4a, God's creative activity is divided into six days to teach the sacredness of the sabbath rest on the seventh day in the Israelite religion (Gn 2, 2f).

a Gn 2, 1.4: Pss 8, 4; 38—39; 90, 2; Wis 11, 17; Sir 16, 24; Jer 10, 12; 2 Mc 7, 28; Acts 14, 15; Col 1, 16f; Heb 1, 2f; 3, 4; 11, 3; Rv 4, 11. b Jer 4, 23. c 2 Cor 4, 6. d Prv 8, 27f; 2 Pt 3, 5. e Jb 38, 8; Ps 33, 7; Jer 5, 22. f Ps 104, 14. g Jb 26, 10; Ps 19, 1f; Bar 3, 33. h Dt 4, 19; Ps 136, 7ff; Wis 13, 2ff; Jer 31, 35.

ness. God saw how good it was. 19Evening
came, and morning followed—the fourth day.
20 [i]Then God said, "Let the water teem with
an abundance of living creatures, and on the
earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky."
And so it happened: 21God created the great sea
monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures
with which the water teems, and all kinds of
winged birds. God saw how good it was, 22and
God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile, multiply,
and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds
multiply on the earth."[j] 23Evening came, and
morning followed—the fifth day.
24 [k]Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth
all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping
things, and wild animals of all kinds." And so it
happened: 25God made all kinds of wild animals,
all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping
things of the earth. God saw how good it was.
26 [l]Then God said: "Let us make man in our
image, after our likeness. Let them have domin-
ion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,
and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and
all the creatures that crawl on the ground."*

27 God created man in his image;
in the divine image he created him;
male and female he created them.

28God blessed them, saying to them: "Be fertile
and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have
dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the
air, and all the living things that move on the
earth." [m] 29 [n]God also said: "See, I give you every
seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every
tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your
food; 30and to all the animals of the land, all the
birds of the air, and all the living creatures that
crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants
for food." And so it happened. 31God looked at
everything he had made, and he found it very
good. Evening came, and morning followed—
the sixth day. [o]

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
61

1Thus the heavens and the earth and all their
array were completed. [p] 2Since on the seventh
day God was finished with the work he had
been doing, he rested on the seventh day from
all the work he had undertaken. [q] 3So God
blessed the seventh day and made it holy,
because on it he rested from all the work he had
done in creation. [r]
4Such is the story of the heavens and the earth
at their creation.

**Second Story of Creation*** At the time when
the LORD God made the earth and the
heavens— 5while as yet there was no field shrub
on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted,
for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the
earth and there was no man to till the soil, 6but a
stream was welling up out of the earth and was
watering all the surface of the ground— 7the
LORD God formed man out of the clay of the
ground* and blew into his nostrils the breath of
life, and so man became a living being. [s]
8Then the LORD God planted a garden in
Eden,* in the east, and he placed there the man
whom he had formed. [t] 9Out of the ground the
LORD God made various trees grow that were
delightful to look at and good for food, with the
tree of life in the middle of the garden and the
tree of the knowledge of good and bad. [u]
10A river rises* in Eden to water the garden;

1, 26: Man is here presented as the climax of God's creative activity; he resembles God primarily because of the dominion God gives him over the rest of creation.

2, 4b-25: This section is chiefly concerned with the creation of man. It is much older than the narrative of Gn 1, 1—2, 4a. Here God is depicted as creating man before the rest of his creatures, which are made for man's sake.

2, 7: God is portrayed as a potter molding man's body out of clay. There is a play on words in Hebrew between adam ("man") and adama ("ground"). Being: literally, "soul."

2, 8: Eden: used here as the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia; the term is derived from the Sumerian word eden, "fertile plain." A similar-sounding Hebrew word means "delight"; the garden in Eden could therefore be understood as the "garden of delight," so that, through the Greek version, it is now known also as "paradise," literally, a "pleasure park."

2, 10–14: Rises: in flood to overflow its banks. Beyond there: as one travels upstream. Branches: literally, "heads," i.e., upper courses. Eden is near the head of the Persian Gulf, where the

i Jb 12, 7–10. j Gn 8, 17. k Sir 16, 27f; Bar 3, 32. l 26f: Gn 5, 1. 3; 9, 6; Ps 8, 5f; Wis 2, 23; 10, 2; Sir 17, 1. 3f; Jas 3, 7; 1 Cor 11, 7; Eph 4, 24; Col 3, 10; 2Mt 19, 4; Mk 10, 6. m Gn 8, 17; 9, 1; Pss 8, 6–9; 115, 16; Wis 9, 2. n 29f: Gn 9, 3; Ps 104, 14f. o 1 Tm 4, 4. p Is 45, 12; Jn 1, 3. q Ex 20, 9ff; 31, 17; Heb 4, 4. 10. r Ex 20, 11; Dt 5, 14; Neh 9, 14. s Gn 3, 19; 18, 27; Tb 8, 6; Jb 34, 15; Pss 103, 14; 104, 29; Eccl 3, 20; 12, 7; Wis 7, 1; Sir 33, 10; 1 Cor 15, 245. t Is 51, 3; Ez 31, 9. u Gn 3, 22; Prv 3, 18; Rv 2, 7; 22, 2. 14.

beyond there it divides and becomes four
branches. [11]The name of the first is the Pishon;
it is the one that winds through the whole land
of Havilah, where there is gold. [12]The gold of
that land is excellent; bdellium and lapis lazuli
are also there. [13]The name of the second river is
the Gihon; it is the one that winds all through
the land of Cush.[v] [14]The name of the third river
is the Tigris; it is the one that flows east of
Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

Ch 3
See RG
61-62

[15]The Lord God then took the man and
settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate
and care for it.[w] [16]The Lord God gave man this
order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees
of the garden[x] [17]except the tree of knowledge of
good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat;
the moment you eat from it you are surely
doomed to die."[y]

[18]The Lord God said: "It is not good for the
man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner
for him."[z] [19]So the Lord God formed out of the
ground various wild animals and various birds of
the air, and he brought them to the man to see
what he would call them; whatever the man
called each of them would be its name. [20]The
man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of
the air, and all the wild animals; but none
proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

[21]So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the
man, and while he was asleep, he took out one
of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.[a]
[22]The Lord God then built up into a woman the
rib that he had taken from the man. When he
brought her to the man, [23]the man said:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called 'woman,'
for out of 'her man' this one has been
taken."*

[24][b]That is why a man leaves his father and
mother and clings to his wife, and the two of
them become one body.*

[25]The man and his wife were both naked, yet
they felt no shame.

## CHAPTER 3

**The Fall of Man** [1]Now the serpent was the
most cunning of all the animals that the Lord
God had made. The serpent asked the woman,
"Did God really tell you not to eat from any of
the trees in the garden?" [2]The woman answered
the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees
in the garden; [3][c]it is only about the fruit of the
tree in the middle of the garden that God said,
'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you
die.' " [4]But the serpent said to the woman: "You
certainly will not die![d] [5]No, God knows well
that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be
opened and you will be like gods who know*
what is good and what is bad." [6]The woman saw
that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the
eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she
took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also
gave some to her husband, who was with her,
and he ate it.[e] [7]Then the eyes of both of them
were opened, and they realized that they were
naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and
made loincloths for themselves.

[8]When they heard the sound of the Lord God
moving about in the garden at the breezy time of
the day,* the man and his wife hid themselves
from the Lord God among the trees of the
garden.[f] [9]The Lord God then called to the man
and asked him, "Where are you?" [10]He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was
afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."
[11]Then he asked, "Who told you that you were
naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of

Tigris and the Euphrates join with two other streams to form a single river. The land of Cush here and in Gn 10, 8, is not Ethiopia (Nubia) as elsewhere, but the region of the Kassites east of Mesopotamia.

**2, 23:** There is a play on the similar-sounding Hebrew words ishsha ("woman") and ishah ("her man, her husband").

**2, 24:** One body: literally "one flesh"; classical Hebrew has no specific word for "body." The sacred writer stresses the fact that conjugal union is willed by God.

**3, 5:** Like gods who know: or "like God who knows."

**3, 8:** The breezy time of the day: literally "the wind of the day." On most days in Palestine a cooling breeze blows from the sea shortly before sunset.

v Sir 24, 25. w Sir 7, 15. x Ps 104, 14. y Gn 3, 2f; Rom 6, 23. z Tb 8, 6; Sir 36, 24; 1 Cor 11, 9; 1 Tm 2, 13. a Sir 17, 1; 1 Cor 11, 8f; 1 Tm 2, 13. b Mt 19, 5; Mk 10, 7; 1 Cor 7, 10f; Eph 5, 31. c Gn 2, 17; Rom 6, 23. d 4f: Wis 2, 24; Sir 25, 14; Is 14, 14; Jn 8, 44; 2 Cor 11, 3. e Gn 3, 22; 1 Tm 2, 14. f Jer 23, 24.

which I had forbidden you to eat!" [12]The man
replied, "The woman whom you put here with
me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I
ate it." [13]The LORD God then asked the woman,
"Why did you do such a thing?" The woman
answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I
ate it."[g]
[14]Then the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this, you shall be
banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;
On your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.[h]
[15]I will put enmity between you and the
woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
He will strike at your head,
while you strike at his heel."*[i]
[16]To the woman he said:
"I will intensify the pangs of your
childbearing;
in pain shall you bring forth children.
Yet your urge shall be for your husband,
and he shall be your master."[j]

[17]To the man he said: "Because you listened
to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had
forbidden you to eat,

"Cursed be the ground because of you!
In toil shall you eat its yield
all the days of your life.[k]
[18]Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you,
as you eat of the plants of the field.
[19]By the sweat of your face
shall you get bread to eat,
Until you return to the ground,
from which you were taken;
For you are dirt,
and to dirt you shall return."[l]

[20]The man called his wife Eve, because she
became the mother of all the living.*
[21]For the man and his wife the LORD God
made leather garments, with which he clothed
them. [22]Then the LORD God said: "See! The
man has become like one of us, knowing what is
good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be
allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the
tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live
forever."[m] [23]The LORD God therefore banished
him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground
from which he had been taken. [24]When he
expelled the man, he settled him east of the
garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim
and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way
to the tree of life.*

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
62–63

**Cain and Abel** [1]The man had relations with
his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain,
saying, "I have produced a man with the help of
the LORD."* [2]Next she bore his brother Abel.
Abel became a keeper of flocks, and Cain a tiller
of the soil. [3]In the course of time Cain brought
an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil,
[4]while Abel, for his part, brought one of the best
firstlings of his flock.[n] The LORD looked with
favor on Abel and his offering, [5]but on Cain and
his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this
and was crestfallen. [6]So the LORD said to Cain:
"Why are you so resentful and crestfallen? [7]If

**3, 15:** He will strike . . . at his heel: since the antecedent for he and his is the collective noun offspring, i.e., all the descendants of the woman, a more exact rendering of the sacred writer's words would be, "They will strike . . . at their heels." However, later theology saw in this passage more than unending hostility between snakes and men. The serpent was regarded as the devil (Wis 2, 24; Jn 8, 44; Rv 12, 9; 20, 2), whose eventual defeat seems implied in the contrast between head and heel. Because "the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3, 8), the passage can be understood as the first promise of a Redeemer for fallen mankind. The woman's offspring then is primarily Jesus Christ.

**3, 20:** This verse seems to be out of place; it would fit better after v 24. The Hebrew name hawwa ("Eve") is related to the Hebrew word hay ("living").

**3, 24:** The above rendering is based on the ancient Greek version; that of the current Hebrew is, When he expelled the man, he settled east of the garden of Eden, the cherubim.

**4, 1:** The Hebrew name qayin ("Cain") and the term qaniti ("I have produced") present another play on words.

g 2 Cor 11, 3. h Is 65, 25; Mi 7, 17; Rv 12, 9. i Is 7, 14; 9, 5; Rom 16, 20; 1 Jn 3, 8; Rv 12, 17. j 1 Cor 11, 3; Eph 5, 22f; 1 Tm 2, 12. k Gn 5, 29; Rom 5, 12; 8, 20; Heb 6, 8. l Gn 2, 7; Jb 10, 9; 34, 15; Pss 90, 3; 103, 14; Eccl 3, 20; 12, 7; Wis 15, 8; Sir 10, 9; 17, 2; Rom 5, 12; 1 Cor 15, 21; Heb 9, 27. m Gn 2, 9; Rv 22, 2. 14. n Ex 34, 19; Heb 11, 4.

you do well, you can hold up your head; but if
not, sin is a demon lurking* at the door: his urge
is toward you, yet you can be his master." [o]
[8]Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out
in the field." When they were in the field, Cain
attacked his brother Abel and killed him. [p] [9]Then
the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother
Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my
brother's keeper?" [10]The LORD then said: "What
have you done! Listen: Your brother's blood
cries out to me from the soil! [11]Therefore you
shall be banned from the soil that opened its
mouth to receive your brother's blood from your
hand. [q] [12]If you till the soil, it shall no longer give
you its produce. You shall become a restless
wanderer on the earth." [13]Cain said to the
LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear.
[14]Since you have now banished me from the
soil, and I must avoid your presence and become
a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill
me at sight." [15]"Not so!" the LORD said to him.
"If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged
sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark* on Cain,
lest anyone should kill him at sight. [16]Cain then
left the LORD's presence and settled in the land
of Nod,* east of Eden.

Ch 5
See RG
63

**Descendants of Cain and Seth** [17]*Cain had
relations with his wife, and she conceived and
bore Enoch. Cain also became the founder of a
city, which he named after his son Enoch. [18]To
Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father
of Mehujael; Mehujael became the father of
Methusael, and Methusael became the father of
Lamech. [19]Lamech took two wives; the name of
the first was Adah, and the name of the second
Zillah. [20]Adah gave birth to Jabal, the ancestor of
all who dwell in tents and keep cattle. [21]His
brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of
all who play the lyre and the pipe. [22]Zillah, on
her part, gave birth to Tubalcain, the ancestor of
all who forge instruments of bronze and iron.
The sister of Tubalcain was Naamah. [23]Lamech
said to his wives:

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
wives of Lamech, listen to my utterance:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a boy for bruising me.
[24]If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

[25]Adam again had relations with his wife, and
she gave birth to a son whom she called Seth.
"God has granted* me more offspring in place of
Abel," she said, "because Cain slew him." [26]To
Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him
Enosh.

At that time men began to invoke the LORD by
name. [r]

## CHAPTER 5

**Generations: Adam to Noah*** [1] [s]This is the
record of the descendants of Adam. When God
created man, he made him in the likeness of
God; [2]he created them male and female. When
they were created, he blessed them and named
them "man."

[3] [t]Adam was one hundred and thirty years old
when he begot a son in his likeness, after his

4, 7: Demon lurking: in Hebrew, robes, literally "croucher," is used here, like the similar Akkadian term rabisu, to designate a certain kind of evil spirit.

4, 15: A mark: probably a tattoo. The use of tattooing for tribal marks has always been common among the nomads of the Near Eastern deserts.

4, 16: The land of Nod: not a definite geographic region. The term merely means "the land of nomads."

4, 17–22: In vv 12–16 Cain was presented as the archetype of nomadic peoples. The sacred author in this section follows another ancient tradition that makes Cain the prototype of sedentary peoples with higher material culture.

4, 25f: Has granted: Hebrew shat, a wordplay on the name shet ("Seth"). Enosh: in Hebrew, a synonym of adam ("man"). At the time . . . name: men began to call God by his personal name, Yahweh, rendered as "the Lord" in this version of the Bible. The ancient, so-called Yahwist source used here employs the name Yahweh long before the time of Moses. Another ancient source, the Elohist (from its use of the term Elohim, "God," instead of Yahweh, "Lord," for the pre-Mosaic period), makes Moses the first to use Yahweh as the proper name of Israel's God, previously known by other names as well; cf Ex 3, 13ff.

5, 1–32: Although this chapter, with its highly schematic form, belongs to the relatively late "Priestly document," it is based on very ancient traditions. Together with Gn 11, 10–26, its primary purpose is to bridge the genealogical gap between Adam and Abraham. Adam's line is traced through Seth, but several names in the series are the same as, or similar to, certain names in Cain's line (Gn 4, 17ff). The long lifespans attributed to these ten antediluvian patriarchs have a symbolic rather than a historical value. Babylonian tradition also recorded ten kings with fantastically high ages who reigned successively before the flood.

o Sir 7, 1; Jude 11. p Wis 10, 3; Mt 23, 35; Lk 11, 51; 1 Jn 3, 12; Jude 11. q Dt 27, 24. r 1 Chr 1, 1; Lk 3, 38. s Gn 1, 27; Wis 2, 23; Sir 17, 1; 1 Cor 11, 7; Jas 3, 9. t Gn 4, 25.

image; and he named him Seth.[u] [4]Adam lived
eight hundred years after the birth of Seth, and
he had other sons and daughters. [5]The whole
lifetime of Adam was nine hundred and thirty
years; then he died.

[6]When Seth was one hundred and five years
old, he became the father of Enosh. [7]Seth lived
eight hundred and seven years after the birth of
Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters.
[8]The whole lifetime of Seth was nine hundred
and twelve years; then he died.

[9]When Enosh was ninety years old, he be-
came the father of Kenan. [10]Enosh lived eight
hundred and fifteen years after the birth of
Kenan, and he had other sons and daughters.
[11]The whole lifetime of Enosh was nine hundred
and five years; then he died.

[12]When Kenan was seventy years old, he
became the father of Mahalalel. [13]Kenan lived
eight hundred and forty years after the birth of
Mahalalel, and he had other sons and daughters.
[14]The whole lifetime of Kenan was nine hun-
dred and ten years; then he died.

[15]When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he
became the father of Jared. [16]Mahalalel lived
eight hundred and thirty years after the birth of
Jared, and he had other sons and daughters.
[17]The whole lifetime of Mahalalel was eight
hundred and ninety-five years; then he died.

[18]When Jared was one hundred and sixty-two
years old, he became the father of Enoch. [19]Jared
lived eight hundred years after the birth of
Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters.
[20]The whole lifetime of Jared was nine hundred
and sixty-two years; then he died.

[21]When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he
became the father of Methuselah. [22]Enoch lived
three hundred years after the birth of Methuse-
lah, and he had other sons and daughters. [23]The
whole lifetime of Enoch was three hundred and
sixty-five years. [24]Then Enoch walked with
God,* and he was no longer here, for God took
him.[v]

[25]When Methuselah was one hundred and
eighty-seven years old, he became the father of
Lamech. [26]Methuselah lived seven hundred and
eighty-two years after the birth of Lamech, and
he had other sons and daughters. [27]The whole
lifetime of Methuselah was nine hundred and
sixty-nine years; then he died.

[28]When Lamech was one hundred and eighty-
two years old, he begot a son [29][w]and named him
Noah, saying, "Out of the very ground that the
LORD has put under a curse, this one shall bring
us relief from our work and the toil of our
hands."* [30]Lamech lived five hundred and
ninety-five years after the birth of Noah, and he
had other sons and daughters. [31]The whole
lifetime of Lamech was seven hundred and
seventy-seven years; then he died.

[32]When Noah was five hundred years old, he
became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.[x]

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6–9
See RG
63

**Origin of the Nephilim*** [1]When men began
to multiply on earth and daughters were born to
them, [2]the sons of heaven* saw how beautiful
the daughters of man were, and so they took for
their wives as many of them as they chose.[y]
[3]Then the LORD said: "My spirit* shall not
remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. His
days shall comprise one hundred and twenty
years."

[4]At that time the Nephilim appeared on earth
(as well as later*), after the sons of heaven had

**5, 24**: In place of the usual formula, Then he died, the change to Enoch walked with God clearly implies that he did not die, but like Elijah (2 Kgs 2, 11f) was taken alive to God's abode.

**5, 29**: There is a similarity in sound between the Hebrew word noah, "Noah," and the verbal phrase yenahamenu, "he will bring us relief"; this latter refers both to the curse put on the soil because of the fall of man (Gn 3, 17ff) and to Noah's success in agriculture, especially in raising grapes for wine (Gn 9, 20f).

**6, 1–4**: This is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology. The sacred author incorporates it here, not only in order to account for the prehistoric giants of Palestine, whom the Israelites called the Nephilim, but also to introduce the story of the flood with a moral orientation—the constantly increasing wickedness of mankind.

**6, 2**: The sons of heaven: literally "the sons of the gods" or "the sons of God," i.e., the celestial beings of mythology.

**6, 3**: My spirit: the breath of life referred to in Gn 2, 7. His days . . . years: probably the time God would still let men live on earth before destroying them with the flood, rather than the maximum span of life God would allot to individual men in the future.

**6, 4**: As well as later: According to Nm 13, 33, when the

u 3–32: 1 Chr 1, 1–4; Lk 3, 36ff. v Wis 4, 10f; Sir 44, 16; 49, 14; Heb 11, 5. w Gn 3, 17ff. x Gn 6, 10; 10, 1. y Mt 24, 38; Lk 17, 26f.

intercourse with the daughters of man, who
bore them sons. They were the heroes of old, the
men of renown.[z]

**Warning of the Flood** 5*When the LORD saw
how great was man's wickedness on earth, and
how no desire that his heart conceived was ever
anything but evil,[a] 6he regretted that he had
made man on the earth, and his heart was
grieved.

7So the LORD said: "I will wipe out from the
earth the men whom I have created, and not
only the men, but also the beasts and the
creeping things and the birds of the air, for I am
sorry that I made them." 8But Noah found favor
with the LORD.

9These are the descendants of Noah. Noah, a
good man and blameless in that age,[b] 10for he
walked with God, begot three sons: Shem, Ham
and Japheth.

11In the eyes of God the earth was corrupt
and full of lawlessness.[c] 12When God saw how
corrupt the earth had become, since all mortals
led depraved lives on earth,[d] 13he said to Noah:
"I have decided to put an end to all mortals on
earth; the earth is full of lawlessness because of
them. So I will destroy them and all life on
earth.[e]

Ch 6–9
See RG
63

**Preparation for the Flood** 14"Make yourself
an ark of gopherwood,* put various compart-
ments in it, and cover it inside and out with
pitch. 15This is how you shall build it: the length
of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its
width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.*
16Make an opening for daylight* in the ark, and
finish the ark a cubit above it. Put an entrance in
the side of the ark, which you shall make with
bottom, second and third decks. 17I, on my part,
am about to bring the flood [waters] on the earth,
to destroy everywhere all creatures in which
there is the breath of life; everything on earth
shall perish.[f] 18But with you I will establish my
covenant; you and your sons, your wife and your
sons' wives, shall go into the ark.[g] 19Of all other
living creatures you shall bring two into the ark,
one male and one female, that you may keep
them alive with you. 20Of all kinds of birds, of all
kinds of beasts, and of all kinds of creeping
things, two of each shall come into the ark with
you, to stay alive. 21Moreover, you are to
provide yourself with all the food that is to be
eaten, and store it away, that it may serve as
provisions for you and for them." 22This Noah
did; he carried out all the commands that God
gave him.

## CHAPTER 7

1Then the LORD said to Noah: "Go into the
ark, you and all your household, for you alone in
this age have I found to be truly just.[h] 2Of every
clean animal, take with you seven pairs, a male
and its mate; and of the unclean animals, one
pair, a male and its mate; 3likewise, of every
clean bird of the air, seven pairs, a male and a
female, and of all the unclean birds, one pair, a
male and a female. Thus you will keep their
issue alive over all the earth. 4Seven days from

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Israelites invaded Palestine and found there the tall aboriginal Anakim, they likened them to the Nephilim; cf Dt 2, 10f. Perhaps the huge megalithic structures in Palestine were thought to have been built by a race of giants, whose superhuman strength was attributed to semi-divine origin. The heroes of old: the legendary worthies of ancient mythology.

**6, 5—8, 22:** The story of the great flood here recorded is a composite narrative based on two separate sources interwoven into an intricate patchwork. To the Yahwist source, with some later editorial additions, are usually assigned 6, 5–8; 7, 1–5. 7–10. 12. 16b. 17b. 22–23; 8, 2b-3a. 6–12. 13b. 20–22. The other sections come from the "Priestly document." The combination of the two sources produced certain duplications (e.g., 6, 13–22 of the Yahwist source, beside 7, 1–5 of the Priestly source); also certain inconsistencies, such as the number of the various animals taken into the ark (6, 19f; 7, 14f of the Priestly source, beside 7, 2f of the Yahwist source), and the timetable of the flood (8, 3–5. 13f of the Priestly source, beside 7, 4. 10. 12. 17b; 8, 6. 10. 12 of the Yahwist source). Both biblical sources go back ultimately to an ancient Mesopotamian story of a great flood, preserved in the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic. The latter account, in some respects remarkably similar to the biblical account, is in others very different from it.

**6, 14:** Gopherwood: an unidentified wood not mentioned elsewhere; gopher is merely the Hebrew word for it.

**6, 15:** The dimensions of Noah's ark were approximately 440 × 73 × 44 feet, a foot and a half to the cubit. The ark of the Babylonian flood story was an exact cube, 120 cubits in length, width, and height.

**6, 16:** Opening for daylight: a conjectural rendering of the Hebrew word sohar, occurring only here. The reference is probably to an open space on all sides near the top of the ark to admit light and air. The ark also had a window or hatch, which could be opened and closed (Gn 8. 6).

z Wis 14, 6; Bar 3, 26. a Ps 14, 2f. b Wis 10, 4; Sir 44, 17. c Jb 22, 15ff. d Ps 14, 2. e Sir 40, 9f; 44, 17; Mt 24, 37ff. f Gn 7, 4. 21; 2 Pt 2, 5. g Gn 9, 9; Wis 14, 6; Heb 11, 7; 1 Pt 3, 20. h Wis 10, 4; Sir 44, 17; 2 Pt 2, 5.

now I will bring rain down on the earth for forty
days and forty nights, and so I will wipe out from
the surface of the earth every moving creature
that I have made."[i] [5]Noah did just as the LORD
had commanded him.

**The Great Flood** [6]Noah was six hundred years
old when the flood waters came upon the earth.
[7]Together with his sons, his wife, and his sons'
wives, Noah went into the ark because of the
waters of the flood.[j] [8]Of the clean animals and
the unclean, of the birds, and of everything that
creeps on the ground, [9][two by two] male and
female entered the ark with Noah, just as the
LORD had commanded him.[k] [10]As soon as the
seven days were over, the waters of the flood
came upon the earth.

[11]In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in
the second month, on the seventeenth day of the
month: it was on that day that

All the fountains of the great abyss* burst
forth,
and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

[12]For forty days and forty nights heavy rain
poured down on the earth.

[13]On the precise day named, Noah and his
sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife,
and the three wives of Noah's sons had entered
the ark, [14]together with every kind of wild
beast, every kind of domestic animal, every kind
of creeping thing of the earth, and every kind of
bird. [15]Pairs of all creatures in which there was
the breath of life entered the ark with Noah.
[16]Those that entered were male and female, and
of all species they came, as God had commanded
Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

[17]The flood continued upon the earth for forty
days. As the waters increased, they lifted the ark,
so that it rose above the earth. [18]The swelling
waters increased greatly, but the ark floated on
the surface of the waters. [19]Higher and higher
above the earth rose the waters, until all the
highest mountains everywhere were submerged,
[20]the crest rising fifteen cubits higher than the
submerged mountains. [21]All creatures that
stirred on earth perished: birds, cattle, wild
animals, and all that swarmed on the earth, as
well as all mankind.[l] [22]Everything on dry land
with the faintest breath of life in its nostrils died
out. [23]The LORD wiped out every living thing on
earth: man and cattle, the creeping things and
the birds of the air; all were wiped out from the
earth. Only Noah and those with him in the ark
were left.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 6–9
See RG
63

[24]*The waters maintained their crest over the
earth for one hundred and fifty days, [1]and then
God remembered Noah and all the animals, wild
and tame, that were with him in the ark. So God
made a wind sweep over the earth, and the
waters began to subside. [2]The fountains of the
abyss and the floodgates of the sky were closed,
and the downpour from the sky was held back.
[3]Gradually the waters receded from the earth.
At the end of one hundred and fifty days, the
waters had so diminished [4]that, in the seventh
month, on the seventeenth day of the month,
the ark came to rest on the mountains of
Ararat.* [5]The waters continued to diminish
until the tenth month, and on the first day of the
tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared.

[6]At the end of forty days Noah opened the
hatch he had made in the ark,* [7]and he sent out
a raven, to see if the waters had lessened on the
earth. It flew back and forth until the waters
dried off from the earth. [8]Then he sent out a
dove, to see if the waters had lessened on the
earth. [9]But the dove could find no place to alight
and perch, and it returned to him in the ark, for
there was water all over the earth. Putting out
his hand, he caught the dove and drew it back to
him inside the ark. [10]He waited seven days more

**7, 11:** Abyss: the subterranean ocean; see note on Gn 1, 2.
**7, 24:** This verse belongs to chapter 7 but its contents properly introduce chapter 8.
**8, 4:** Ararat: ancient Urartu, north of the Mesopotamian plain, part of modern Armenia.
**8, 6:** In the original Yahwist source, from which this verse is taken, the forty days refer to the full period of the flood itself (cf Gn 7, 4. 17); in the present context, however, they seem to refer to a period following the date just given in v 5 from the Priestly source.

i Gn 6, 17; 2 Pt 2, 5. j Wis 14, 6; 1 Pt 3, 20; 2 Pt 2, 5.
k Gn 6, 19. l 21ff; Jb 22, 16; Mt 24, 39; Lk 17, 27; 2 Pt 3, 6.

and again sent the dove out from the ark. [11]In
the evening the dove came back to him, and
there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! So
Ch 6–9 See RG 63 Noah knew that the waters had lessened on the
earth. [12]He waited still another seven days and
then released the dove once more; and this time
it did not come back.

[13]In the six hundred and first year of Noah's
life, in the first month, on the first day of the
month, the water began to dry up on the earth.
Noah then removed the covering of the ark and
saw that the surface of the ground was drying
up. [14]In the second month, on the twenty-
seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

[15]Then God said to Noah: [16]"Go out of the
ark, together with your wife and your sons and
your sons' wives. [17]Bring out with you every
living thing that is with you—all bodily crea-
tures, be they birds or animals or creeping things
of the earth—and let them abound on the earth,
breeding and multiplying on it."[m] [18]So Noah
came out, together with his wife and his sons
and his sons' wives; [19]and all the animals, wild
and tame, all the birds, and all the creeping
creatures of the earth left the ark, one kind after
another.

[20]Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and
choosing from every clean animal and every
clean bird, he offered holocausts on the altar.
[21]When the LORD smelled the sweet odor, he
said to himself: "Never again will I doom the
earth because of man, since the desires of man's
heart are evil from the start;* nor will I ever
again strike down all living beings, as I have
done.[n]

[22]As long as the earth lasts,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
Summer and winter,
and day and night
shall not cease."[o]

## CHAPTER 9

**Covenant with Noah** [1]God blessed Noah and
his sons and said to them: "Be fertile and
multiply and fill the earth.[p] [2]Dread fear of you
shall come upon all the animals of the earth and
all the birds of the air, upon all the creatures that
move about on the ground and all the fishes of
the sea; into your power they are delivered.
[3][q]Every creature that is alive shall be yours to
eat; I give them all to you as I did the green
plants.* [4][r]Only flesh with its lifeblood still in it
you shall not eat.* [5]For your own lifeblood, too,
I will demand an accounting: from every animal
I will demand it, and from man in regard to his
fellow man I will demand an accounting for
human life.[s]

[6]If anyone sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed;
For in the image of God
has man been made.[t]

[7]Be fertile, then, and multiply; abound on earth
and subdue it."[u]

[8]God said to Noah and to his sons with him:
[9]"See, I am now establishing my covenant with
you and your descendants after you[v] [10]and with
every living creature that was with you: all the
birds, and the various tame and wild animals
that were with you and came out of the ark. [11]I
will establish my covenant with you, that never
again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by
the waters of a flood; there shall not be another
flood to devastate the earth."[w] [12]God added:
"This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to
come, of the covenant between me and you and
every living creature with you: [13][x]I set my bow
in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant

**8, 21:** From the start: literally "from his youth." It is uncertain whether this means from the beginning of the human race or from the early years of the individual.

**9, 3:** Antediluvian creatures, including man, are depicted as vegetarians (Gn 1, 29f), becoming carnivorous only after the flood.

**9, 4:** Because a living being dies when it loses most of its blood, the ancients regarded blood as the seat of life, and therefore as sacred. Although in itself the prohibition against eating meat with blood in it is comparable to the ritual laws of the Mosaic code, the Jews considered it binding on all men, because it was given by God to Noah, the new ancestor of all mankind; therefore the early Christian Church retained it for a time (Acts 15, 20. 29).

m Gn 1, 22. 28. n Sir 44, 18; Is 54, 9; Rom 7, 18. o Jer 33, 20. 25. p Gn 1, 22, 28; 8, 17; Jas 3, 7. q Gn 1, 29f; Dt 12, 15. r Lv 7, 26f; 17, 4; Dt 12, 16. 23; 1 Sm 14, 33; Acts 15, 20. s Gn 4, 10f; Ex 21, 12. t Gn 1, 26f; Lv 24, 17; Nm 35, 33; Jas 3, 9. u Gn 1, 28; 8, 17; 9, 2. v Gn 6, 18. w Sir 44, 18; Is 54, 9. x Sir 43, 12.

between me and the earth. [14]When I bring
clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in
the clouds, [15]I will recall the covenant I have
made between me and you and all living beings,
so that the waters shall never again become a
flood to destroy all mortal beings.[y] [16]As the bow
appears in the clouds, I will see it and recall the
everlasting covenant that I have established
between God and all living beings—all mortal
creatures that are on earth." [17]God told Noah:
"This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all mortal creatures that
are on earth."

**Noah and His Sons** [18]*The sons of Noah who
came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and
Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)[z]
[19]These three were the sons of Noah, and from
them the whole earth was peopled.

[20]Now Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to
plant a vineyard. [21]When he drank some of the
wine, he became drunk and lay naked inside his
tent.[a] [22]Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his
father's nakedness, and he told his two brothers
outside about it. [23]Shem and Japheth, however,
took a robe, and holding it on their backs, they
walked backward and covered their father's
nakedness; since their faces were turned the
other way, they did not see their father's nakedness. [24]When Noah woke up from his drunkenness and learned what his youngest son had
done to him, [25]he said:

"Cursed be Canaan!
The lowest of slaves
shall he be to his brothers."[b]

[26]He also said:

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!*
Let Canaan be his slave.
[27]May God expand Japheth,*
so that he dwells among the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave."

[28]Noah lived three hundred and fifty years
after the flood. [29]The whole lifetime of Noah
was nine hundred and fifty years; then he died.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10
See RG
63–64

**Table of the Nations*** [1]These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth,
to whom sons were born after the flood.

[2] [c]The descendants of Japheth:
Gomer,* Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal,
Meshech and Tiras.[d]
[3]The descendants of Gomer:
Ashkenaz,* Riphath and Togarmah.
[4]The descendants of Javan:
Elishah,* Tarshish, the Kittim and the
Rodanim.

[5]These are the descendants of Japheth, and
from them sprang the maritime nations, in their
respective lands—each with its own language—
by their clans within their nations.

[6]The descendants of Ham:
Cush,* Mizraim, Put and Canaan.

**9, 18–27:** This story seems to be a composite of two earlier accounts; in the one, Ham was guilty, whereas in the other, it was Canaan. One purpose of the story is to justify the Israelites' enslavement of the Canaanites because of certain indecent sexual practices in the Canaanite religion. Obviously the story offers no justification for enslaving African Negroes, even though Canaan is presented as a "son" of Ham because the land of Canaan belonged to Hamitic Egypt at the time of the Israelite invasion.

**9, 26:** Blessed . . . Shem: perhaps the text read originally, "Blessed of the Lord be Shem," which would be expected in the context.

**9, 27:** In the Hebrew text there is a play on the words yapt ("expand") and yepet ("Japheth").

**10, 1–32:** This chapter presents a remarkably good classification of the various peoples known to the ancient Israelites; it is theologically important as stressing the basic family unity of all men on earth. The relationship between the various peoples is based partly on linguistic, partly on geographic, and partly on political grounds according to their . . . languages, . . . lands and nations: (v 31). In general, the descendants of Japheth (vv 2–5) are the peoples of the Indo-European languages to the north and west of Mesopotamia and Syria; the descendants of Ham (vv 6–20) are the Hamitic-speaking peoples of northern Africa; and the descendants of Shem (vv 21–31) are the Semitic-speaking peoples of Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabia. But there are many exceptions to this rule; the Semitic-speaking peoples of Canaan, for instance, are considered descendants of Ham, because at the time they were subject to Hamitic Egypt (vv 6. 15–19). This chapter is a composite from the Yahwist source (vv 8–19. 21. 24–30) of about the ninth century B.C., and the Priestly source (vv 1–7. 20. 22f. 31f) of a few centuries later. That is why certain tribes of Arabia are listed under both Ham (v 7) and Shem (vv 26ff).

**10, 2:** Gomer: the Cimmerians; Madai: the Medes; Javan: the Greeks.

**10, 3:** Ashkenaz: the Scythians.

**10, 4:** Elishah: Cyprus; the Kittim: certain inhabitants of Cyprus; the Rodanim: the inhabitants of Rhodes.

**10, 6:** Cush: Biblical Ethiopia, modern Nubia. Mizraim: Egypt; Put: either Punt in East Africa or Libya.

y Is 54, 9. z Gn 5, 32; 10, 1. a Lam 4, 21; Heb 2, 15. b Dt 27, 16; Wis 12, 11. c 2–8: 1 Chr 1, 5–10. d Ez 38, 2.

7 The descendants of Cush:
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca.
The descendants of Raamah:
Sheba and Dedan.

8 Cush* became the father of Nimrod, who was the first potentate on earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter by the grace of the LORD; hence the saying, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter by the grace of the LORD." 10 The chief cities of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar.* 11 From that land he went forth to Asshur,* where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, 12 as well as Resen, between Nineveh and Calah,* the latter being the principal city.

13 [e] Mizraim became the father of the Ludim, the Anamim, the Lehabim, the Naphtuhim, 14 the Pathrusim,* the Casluhim, and the Caphtorim from whom the Philistines sprang.

15 Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and of Heth;* 16 also of the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 18 the Arvadites, the Zemarites and the Hamathites. Afterward, the clans of the Canaanites spread out, 19 so that the Canaanite borders extended from Sidon all the way to Gerar, near Gaza, and all the way to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, near Lasha.*

Ch 11 See RG 64

20 These are the descendants of Ham, according to their clans and languages, by their lands and nations.

21 To Shem also, Japheth's oldest brother and the ancestor of all the children of Eber, sons were born.

22 [f] The descendants of Shem:
Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram.
23 The descendants of Aram:
Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash.

24 Arpachshad became the father of Shelah, and Shelah became the father of Eber. 25 To Eber two sons were born: the name of the first was Peleg, for in his time the world was divided;* and the name of his brother was Joktan.

26 Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba 29 Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. 30 Their settlements extended all the way to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

31 These are the descendants of Shem, according to their clans and languages, by their lands and nations.

32 These are the groupings of Noah's sons, according to their origins and by their nations. From these the other nations of the earth branched out after the flood.

## CHAPTER 11

**The Tower of Babel*** 1 The whole world spoke the same language, using the same words. 2 While men were migrating in the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar* and settled there. 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us mold bricks and harden them with fire." They used bricks for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky,* and so make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered all over the earth."

**10, 8:** Cush: here, the Kassites; see note on Gn 2, 10–14. Nimrod: probably Tukulti-Ninurta I (thirteenth century B.C.), the first Assyrian conqueror of Babylonia and a famous city-builder at home.

**10, 10:** Shinar: ancient Sumer in southern Mesopotamia, mentioned also in Gn 11, 2; 14, 1.

**10, 11:** Asshur: Assyria. Rehoboth-Ir: literally "wide-streets city," was probably not the name of another city, but an epithet of Nineveh; cf Jon 3, 3.

**10, 12:** Calah: Assyrian Kalhu, the capital of Assyria in the ninth century B.C.

**10, 14:** The Pathrusim: the people of upper (southern) Egypt; cf Is 11, 11; Jer 44, 1; Ez 29, 14; 30, 14. Caphtorim: Crete; for Caphtor as the place of origin of the Philistines, cf Dt 2, 23; Am 9, 7; Jer 47, 4.

**10, 15:** Heth: the biblical Hittites; see note on Gn 23, 3.

**10, 19:** Lasha: the reading of this name is uncertain; perhaps it should be "Bela"; cf Gn 14, 2.

**10, 25:** In the Hebrew text there is a play on the name Peleg and the word niplega, "was divided."

**11, 1–9:** This story, based on traditions about the temple towers or ziggurats of Babylonia, is used by the sacred writer primarily to illustrate man's increasing wickedness, shown here in his presumptuous effort to create an urban culture apart from God. The secondary motive in the story is to present an imaginative origin of the diversity of the languages among the various peoples inhabiting the earth, as well as an artificial explanation of the name "Babylon."

**11, 2:** Shinar: see note on Gn 10, 10.

**11, 4:** Tower with its top in the sky: a direct reference to the chief ziggurat of Babylon, the E-sag-ila, signifying "the house that raises high its head." Babylonian ziggurats were the earliest skyscrapers.

e 13–18: 1 Chr 1, 11–16. f 22–29: 1 Chr 1, 17–23.

5The LORD came down to see the city and the
tower that the men had built. 6Then the LORD
said: "If now, while they are one people, all
speaking the same language, they have started to
do this, nothing will later stop them from doing
whatever they presume to do. 7Let us then go
down and there confuse their language, so that
one will not understand what another says."
8Thus the LORD scattered them from there all
over the earth, and they stopped building the
city. 9That is why it was called Babel,* because
there the LORD confused the speech of all the
world. It was from that place that he scattered
them all over the earth.

**The Line from Shem to Abraham*** 10[g]This is
the record of the descendants of Shem. When
Shem was one hundred years old, he became the
father of Arpachshad, two years after the flood.
11Shem lived five hundred years after the birth
of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and
daughters.

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

14When Shelah was thirty years old, he be-
came the father of Eber. 15Shelah lived four
hundred and three years after the birth of Eber,
and he had other sons and daughters.

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

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

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

22When Serug was thirty years old, he be-
came the father of Nahor. 23Serug lived two
hundred years after the birth of Nahor, and he
had other sons and daughters.

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

26When Terah was seventy years old, he
became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.[h]

## II: The Patriarch Abraham

**Terah** 27This is the record of the descendants of
Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor
and Haran, and Haran became the father of Lot.
28Haran died before his father Terah, in his
native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.* 29Abram
and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's
wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife
was Milcah, daughter of Haran, the father of
Milcah and Iscah.[i] 30Sarai was barren; she had
no child.

31Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot,
son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the
wife of his son Abram, and brought them out of
Ur of the Chaldeans, to go to the land of
Canaan.* But when they reached Haran, they
settled there.[j] 32The lifetime of Terah was two

**11, 9:** Babel: the Hebrew form of the name "Babylon"; the native name, Bab-ili, means "gate of the gods." The Hebrew word balil, "he confused," has a similar sound. Apparently the name referred originally only to a certain part of the city, the district near the gate that led to the temple area.

**11, 10–26:** This section is a continuation of the genealogical record given in Gn 5, 1–32; see note there. Although the ages of the patriarchs in this list are much lower than those of the antediluvian patriarchs, they are still artificial and devoid of historical value. The ages given here are from the current Hebrew text; the Samaritan and Greek texts have divergent sets of numbers in most cases.

**11, 12:** The Greek text has a certain Kenan (cf Gn 5, 9f) between Arpachshad and Shelah. The text is followed in Lk 3, 36.

**11, 16:** Eber: the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, "descendants of Eber" (Gn 10, 21. 24–30); see note on Gn 14, 13.

**11, 28:** Ur of the Chaldeans: Ur was an extremely ancient city of the Sumerians (later, of the Babylonians) in southern Mesopotamia. The Greek text has "the land of the Chaldeans." In either case, the term Chaldeans is an anachronism, because the Chaldeans were not known to history until approximately a thousand years after Abraham's time.

**11, 31:** The Samaritan and Greek texts include Nahor and his wife in Terah's migration to Haran. Although this is probably due to scribal harmonization, Nahor's family actually did migrate to Haran; cf Gn 24, 10; 27, 43.

g 10–26: 1 Chr 1, 24–27; Lk 3, 34ff. h Jos 24, 2; 1 Chr 1, 27. i Gn 17, 15; 20, 12. j Jos 24, 3; Neh 9, 7; Jdt 5, 6–9; Acts 7, 4.

hundred and five years; then Terah died in Haran.*

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 12–25
See RG
68–69

**Abram's Call and Migration** [1]The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.[k]

[2]"I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.[l]
[3][m]I will bless those who bless you
and curse those who curse you.
All the communities of the earth
shall find blessing in you."*

[4][n]Abram went as the LORD directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. [5]Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother's son Lot, all the possessions that they had accumulated, and the persons* they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, [6]Abram passed through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, by the terebinth of Moreh. (The Canaanites were then in the land.)

[7]The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So Abram built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.[o] [8]From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel, pitching his tent with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. He built an altar there to the LORD and invoked the LORD by name. [9]Then Abram journeyed on by stages to the Negeb.*

**Abram and Sarai in Egypt** [10]There was famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, since the famine in the land was severe.[p] [11]When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai: "I know well how beautiful a woman you are. [12]When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'She is his wife'; then they will kill me, but let you live. [13]Please say, therefore, that you are my sister,* so that it may go well with me on your account and my life may be spared for your sake."[q] [14]When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw how beautiful the woman was; [15]and when Pharaoh's courtiers saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. So she was taken into Pharaoh's palace. [16]On her account it went very well with Abram, and he received flocks and herds, male and female slaves, male and female asses, and camels.*

[17]But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife Sarai.[r] [18]Then Pharaoh summoned Abram and said to him: "How could you do this to me! Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? [19]Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Here, then, is your wife. Take her and be gone!"

[20]Then Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

**11, 32:** Since Terah was seventy years old when his son Abraham was born (v 26), and Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran (Gn 12, 4), Terah lived in Haran for sixty years after Abraham's departure. According to the tradition in the Samaritan text, Terah died when he was one hundred and forty-five years old, therefore, in the same year in which Abraham left Haran. This is the tradition followed in St. Stephen's speech: Abraham left Haran "after his father's death" (Acts 7, 4).

**12, 3:** Shall find blessing in you: the sense of the Hebrew expression is probably reflexive, "shall bless themselves through you" (i.e., in giving a blessing they shall say, "May you be as blessed as Abraham"), rather than passive, "shall be blessed in you." Since the term is understood in a passive sense in the New Testament (Acts 3, 25; Gal 3, 8), it is rendered here by a neutral expression that admits of both meanings. So also in the blessings given by God to Isaac (Gn 26, 4) and Jacob (Gn 28, 14).

**12, 5:** Persons: slaves and retainers that formed the social aggregate under the leadership of Abraham; cf Gn 14, 14.

**12, 9:** The Negeb: the semidesert land of southern Palestine.

**12, 13:** You are my sister: although Abraham's deceit may not be fully defensible, his statement was at least a half-truth; Sarah was indeed his relative, called "a sister" in Hebrew; cf Gn 20, 12. Moreover, the ancient traditions on which this story and the parallel ones in Gn 20, 1–18 and 26, 6–11 are based, probably come from the Hurrian custom of wife-sister marriage. Among the Hurrians, with whom Abraham's clan lived in close contact at Haran, a man could adopt his wife as his sister and thus give her higher status.

**12, 16:** Camels: domesticated camels probably did not come into common use in the ancient Near East until the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. Thus the mention of camels at the time of the patriarchs (Gn 24, 11–64; 30, 43; 31, 17. 34; 32, 8. 16; 37, 25) is seemingly an anachronism.

k Acts 7, 3; Heb 11, 8. l Gn 17, 6; Sir 44, 20; Rom 4, 17–22. m Gn 18, 18; 22, 18; Acts 3, 25; Gal 3, 8. n 4f: Gn 11, 31; Jos 24, 3; Acts 7, 4. o Ex 33, 1; Dt 34, 4; Acts 7, 5. p Gn 26, 1. q Gn 20, 12f; 26, 7. r Ps 105, 14.

## CHAPTER 13

**Abram and Lot Part** [1]From Egypt Abram went up to the Negeb with his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot accompanied him.[s] [2]Now Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and gold.[t] [3]From the Negeb he traveled by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly stood, [4]the site where he had first built the altar; and there he invoked the LORD by name.[u]

[5]Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, [6]so that the land could not support them if they stayed together; their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. [7]There were quarrels between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and those of Lot's. (At this time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were occupying the land.)

[8]So Abram said to Lot: "Let there be no strife between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are kinsmen. [9]Is not the whole land at your disposal? Please separate from me. If you prefer the left, I will go to the right; if you prefer the right, I will go to the left." [10]Lot looked about and saw how well watered the whole Jordan Plain was as far as Zoar, like the LORD's own garden, or like Egypt. (This was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) [11]Lot, therefore, chose for himself the whole Jordan Plain and set out eastward. Thus they separated from each other; [12]Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the Plain, pitching his tents near Sodom. [13]Now the inhabitants of Sodom were very wicked in the sins they committed against the LORD.[v]

[14]After Lot had left, the LORD said to Abram: "Look about you, and from where you are, gaze to the north and south, east and west;[w] [15]all the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants forever.[x] [16]I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth; if anyone could count the dust of the earth, your descendants too might be counted.[y] [17]Set forth and walk about in the land, through its length and breadth, for to you I will give it." [18]Abram moved his tents and went on to settle near the terebinth of Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.[z]

Ch 12–25 See RG 68–69

## CHAPTER 14

**The Four Kings** [1]In the days of . . . ,* Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim [2]made war on Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). [3]All the latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea*). [4]For twelve years they had been subject to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. [5]*In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, [6]and the Horites in the hill country of Seir, as far as El-paran, close by the wilderness.[a] [7]They then turned back and came to Enmishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they subdued the whole country both of the Amalekites and of the Amorites who dwelt in Hazazon-tamar. [8]Thereupon the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out, and in the Valley of Siddim they went into battle against them: [9]against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. [10]Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into these, while the rest fled to the mountains. [11]The victors seized all the possessions and food supplies of Sodom and Gomorrah and then went their way, [12]taking with them Abram's nephew Lot, who had

Ch 12–25 See RG 68–69

14, 1: In the days of . . . : the personal name by which the event is dated has not been preserved.

14, 3: The Salt Sea: now known as the Dead Sea.

14, 5f: The five kings came from north to south through the land east of the Jordan.

s Gn 12, 9. t Ps 112, 1ff; Prv 10, 22. u Gn 12, 8. v Gn 18, 20; Ez 16, 49; 2 Pt 2, 6ff; Jude 1, 7. w Gn 28, 14. x Gn 12, 7; Mt 5, 4; Lk 1, 55; Acts 7, 5; Gal 3, 16. y Gn 22, 17; Nm 23, 10. z Gn 14, 13. a Dt 2, 12.

been living in Sodom, as well as his possessions.[b]

13 A fugitive came and brought the news to
Abram the Hebrew,* who was camping at the
terebinth of Mamre the Amorite, a kinsman of
Eshcol and Aner; these were in league with
Abram. 14 When Abram heard that his nephew
had been captured, he mustered three hundred
and eighteen of his retainers, born in his house,
and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He and his
party deployed against them at night, defeated
them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which
is north of Damascus. 16 He recovered all the
possessions, besides bringing back his kinsman
Lot and his possessions, along with the women
and the other captives.

Ch 12–25
See RG
68–69

17 When Abram returned from his victory over
Chedorlaomer and the kings who were allied
with him, the king of Sodom went out to greet
him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's
Valley).

18 Melchizedek, king of Salem,* brought out
bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most
High,* he blessed Abram with these words:[c]

19 "Blessed be Abram by God Most High,*
the creator of heaven and earth;
20 And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your foes into your hand."

Then Abram gave him* a tenth of everything.

21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me
the people; the goods you may keep." 22 But
Abram replied to the king of Sodom: "I have
sworn to the LORD, God Most High,* the creator
of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take so
much as a thread or a sandal strap from anything
that is yours, lest you should say, 'I made Abram
rich.' 24 Nothing for me except what my servants
have used up and the share that is due to the
men who joined me—Aner, Eshcol and Mamre;
let them take their share."

## CHAPTER 15

**The Covenant with Abram** 1 Some time after
these events, this word of the LORD came to
Abram in a vision:

"Fear not, Abram!
I am your shield;
I will make your reward very great."

2 But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what good will
your gifts be, if I keep on being childless and
have as my heir the steward of my house,
Eliezer?" 3 Abram continued, "See, you have
given me no offspring, and so one of my servants
will be my heir." 4 Then the word of the LORD
came to him: "No, that one shall not be your
heir; your own issue shall be your heir."[d] 5 He
took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky
and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he
added, "shall your descendants be."[e] 6 [f] Abram
put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him
as an act of righteousness.*

7 He then said to him, "I am the LORD who
brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give
you this land as a possession."[g] 8 "O Lord GOD,"
he asked, "how am I to know that I shall possess
it?" 9 He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-
old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-

**14, 13:** Abram the Hebrew: elsewhere in the Old Testament, until the last pre-Christian centuries, the term "Hebrew" is used only by non-Israelites, or by Israelites in speaking to foreigners, since it evidently had a disparaging connotation—something like "immigrant." The account in this chapter may, therefore, have been taken originally from a non-Israelite source, in which Abraham, a warlike sheik of Palestine, appears as a truly historical figure of profane history.

**14, 18:** Salem: traditionally identified with Jerusalem (Ps 76, 3), but the Hebrew text is not certain; instead of the present melek shalem ("king of Salem") the original may have been melek shelomo ("a king allied to him"). In Heb 7, 2, "king of Salem" is interpreted as "king of peace" (shalom).

**14, 19:** God most High: in Hebrew, el-elyon. In Canaanite texts, each element may occur separately as the name of a specific deity, or they may be applied together to a single deity, as is done here by the Canaanite priest Melchizedek. For the Israelites, el became a poetic synonym for elohim ("God"); elyon ("Most High") became one of the titles of their God Yahweh.

**14, 20:** Abram gave him: literally "he gave him"; but Abram is to be understood as the subject of the sentence, for the tithes were the tenth part assigned to priests; cf Heb 7, 4–10.

**14, 22:** Abraham uses the name of the Canaanite god el-elyon ("God, the Most High") in apposition to the name of his God, yahweh ("the Lord").

**15, 6:** Abraham's faith in God's promises was regarded as an act of righteousness, i.e., as expressing the "right" attitude of man toward God. In turn, God credited this to Abraham, i.e., gave him title to the fulfillment of God's promises. St. Paul (Rom 4, 1–25; Gal 3, 6–9) makes Abraham's faith a model for that of Christians.

b Gn 13, 10ff. c Ps 110, 4; Heb 5, 6. 10; 7, 1. d Gn 17, 16. e Gn 22, 17; 28, 14; Ex 32, 13; Dt 1, 10; Sir 44, 21; Rom 4, 18; Heb 11, 12. f 1 Mc 2, 52; Rom 4, 3. 9. 22; Gal 3, 6f; Jas 2, 23. g Gn 11, 31; 12, 1; Ex 32, 13; Neh 9, 7f; Acts 7, 2f.

old* ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."[h]
[10]He brought him all these, split them in two,
and placed each half opposite the other; but the
birds he did not cut up. [11]Birds of prey swooped
down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with
them. [12]As the sun was about to set, a trance fell
upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness
enveloped him.

[13]Then the LORD said to Abram: "Know for
certain that your descendants shall be aliens in a
land not their own, where they shall be enslaved
and oppressed for four hundred years.[i] [14]But I
will bring judgment on the nation they must
serve, and in the end they will depart with great
wealth.[j] [15]You, however, shall join your forefa-
thers in peace; you shall be buried at a contented
old age. [16]In the fourth time-span* the others
shall come back here; the wickedness of the
Amorites will not have reached its full measure
until then."[k]

[17]When the sun had set and it was dark, there
appeared a smoking brazier* and a flaming
torch, which passed between those pieces. [18]It
was on that occasion that the LORD made a
covenant* with Abram, saying: "To your descen-
dants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to
the Great River [the Euphrates],[l] [19][m]the land of
the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,
[20]the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, [21]the
Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and
the Jebusites."

## CHAPTER 16

**Birth of Ishmael** [1]*Abram's wife Sarai had
borne him no children. She had, however, an
Egyptian maidservant named Hagar.[n] [2]Sarai said
to Abram: "The LORD has kept me from bearing
children. Have intercourse, then, with my maid;
perhaps I shall have sons through her." Abram
heeded Sarai's request.[o] [3]Thus, after Abram had
lived ten years in the land of Canaan, his wife
Sarai took her maid, Hagar the Egyptian, and
gave her to her husband Abram to be his
concubine. [4]He had intercourse with her, and
she became pregnant. When she became aware
of her pregnancy, she looked on her mistress
with disdain.[p] [5][q]So Sarai said to Abram: "You
are responsible for this outrage against me. I
myself gave my maid to your embrace; but ever
since she became aware of her pregnancy, she
has been looking on me with disdain. May the
LORD decide between you and me!" [6]Abram told
Sarai: "Your maid is in your power. Do to her
whatever you please." Sarai then abused her so
much that Hagar ran away from her.

[7]The LORD's messenger* found her by a
spring in the wilderness, the spring on the road
to Shur,[r] [8]and he asked, "Hagar, maid of Sarai,
where have you come from and where are you
going?" She answered, "I am running away from
my mistress, Sarai." [9]But the LORD's messenger
told her: "Go back to your mistress and submit
to her abusive treatment. [10]I will make your
descendants so numerous," added the LORD's
messenger, "that they will be too many to
count.[s] [11]Besides," the LORD's messenger said
to her:

"You are now pregnant and shall bear a son;
you shall name him Ishmael,*
For the LORD has heard you,
God has answered you.

[12]He shall be a wild ass of a man,
his hand against everyone,
and everyone's hand against him;
In opposition to all his kin
shall he encamp."[t]

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**15, 9:** Three-year-old: ritually mature.

**15, 16:** Time-span: the Hebrew term dor is commonly rendered as "generation," but it may signify a period of varying length. Neither this passage nor the statement about the four hundred years has any value for determining how long the Israelites were in Egypt.

**15, 17:** Brazier: literally "oven"; a portable one is meant here. The smoke and fire represent God's presence. Although the text does not mention it, Abraham no doubt also walked between the split carcasses. For the meaning of this strange ceremony, see note on Jer 34, 18ff.

**15, 18:** Made a covenant: literally "cut a covenant"; the expression derives from the ceremony of cutting the animals in two.

**16, 1–6:** Sarah's actions are all in keeping with the laws of the time, as known from ancient extra-biblical sources.

**16, 7:** The Lord's messenger: a manifestation of God in human form; therefore in v 13 the messenger is identified with the Lord himself.

**16, 11:** Ishmael: in Hebrew the name means "God has heard."

h Lv 1, 14. i Ex 12, 40; Nm 20, 15; Jdt 5, 9f; Is 52, 4; Acts 13, 20; Gal 3, 17. j Ex 3, 8. 21f. k 1 Kgs 21, 26. l Ex 32, 13; Neh 9, 8; Ps 105, 11; Sir 44, 21. m 19f: Dt 7, 1. n Gn 11, 30. o Gn 21, 8f; Gal 4, 22. p 1 Sm 1, 6; Prv 30, 23. q 5–16: Gn 21, 10–19. r Ex 15, 22. s Gn 17, 20; 21, 13. 18; 25, 12–18. t Gn 21, 20; 25, 18.

[13]To the LORD who spoke to her she gave a
name, saying, "You are the God of Vision";* she
meant, "Have I really seen God and remained
alive after my vision?"[u] [14]That is why the well is
called Beer-lahai-roi.* It is between Kadesh and
Bered.

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

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**Covenant of Circumcision** [1]When Abram
was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to
him and said: "I am God the Almighty.* Walk in
my presence and be blameless.[w] [2]Between you
and me I will establish my covenant, and I will
multiply you exceedingly."[x]

[3]When Abram prostrated himself, God continued to speak to him: [4]"My covenant with you is
this: you are to become the father of a host of
nations.[y] [5]No longer shall you be called Abram;
your name shall be Abraham,* for I am making
you the father of a host of nations.[z] [6]I will
render you exceedingly fertile; I will make
nations of you; kings shall stem from you. [7]I will
maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an
everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of
your descendants after you.[a] [8]I will give to you
and to your descendants after you the land in
which you are now staying, the whole land of
Canaan, as a permanent possession; and I will be
their God."[b]

[9]God also said to Abraham: "On your part,
you and your descendants after you must keep
my covenant throughout the ages. [10]This is my
covenant with you and your descendants after
you that you must keep: every male among you
shall be circumcised.[c] [11]Circumcise the flesh of
your foreskin, and that shall be the mark of the
covenant between you and me.[d] [12]Throughout
the ages, every male among you, when he is
eight days old, shall be circumcised, including
houseborn slaves and those acquired with
money from any foreigner who is not of your
blood.[e] [13]Yes, both the houseborn slaves and
those acquired with money must be circumcised. Thus my covenant shall be in your flesh as
an everlasting pact. [14]If a male is uncircumcised,
that is, if the flesh of his foreskin has not been
cut away, such a one shall be cut off from his
people; he has broken my covenant."

[15]God further said to Abraham: "As for your
wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai; her name shall
be Sarah.* [16]I will bless her, and I will give you a
son by her. Him also will I bless; he shall give
rise to nations, and rulers of peoples shall issue
from him."[f] [17]Abraham prostrated himself and
laughed* as he said to himself, "Can a child be
born to a man who is a hundred years old? Or
can Sarah give birth at ninety?"[g] [18]Then Abraham said to God, "Let but Ishmael live on by
your favor!" [19]God replied: "Nevertheless, your
wife Sarah is to bear you a son, and you shall call
him Isaac. I will maintain my covenant with him
as an everlasting pact, to be his God and the God
of his descendants after him.[h] [20]As for Ishmael, I
am heeding you: I hereby bless him. I will make
him fertile and will multiply him exceedingly. He
shall become the father of twelve chieftains, and
I will make of him a great nation.[i] [21]But my
covenant I will maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah
shall bear to you by this time next year."[j]

16, 13: The God of Vision: in Hebrew, el-roi; hence the name of the spring. Remained alive: for the ancient notion that a person died on seeing God, cf Gn 32, 31; Ex 20, 19; Dt 4, 33; Jgs 13, 22.

16, 14: Beer-lahai-roi: probably "the well of living sight," i.e., the well where one can see (God) and yet live.

17, 1: The Almighty: traditional but incorrect rendering of the divine title shaddai, of uncertain meaning.

17, 5: Abram and Abraham are merely two forms of the same name, both meaning, "the father is exalted"; another variant form is Abiram (Nm 16, 1; 1 Kgs 16, 34). The additional -ha- in the form Abraham is explained by folk etymology as coming from ab-hamon goyim, "father of a host of nations."

17, 15: Sarai and Sarah are variant forms of the same name, both meaning "princess."

17, 17: Laughed: yishaq, which is the Hebrew form of the name "Isaac"; other similar explanations of the name are given in Gn 18, 12 and 21, 6.

u Gn 24, 62. v Gn 16, 2; Gal 4, 22. w Gn 35, 11; Ex 6, 3. x Gn 12, 2: 13, 16; Ex 32, 13. y Sir 44, 21; Rom 4, 17. z Neh 9, 7. a Ps 105, 42; Lk 1, 72f; Gal 3, 16. b Ex 32, 13; Dt 1, 8; 14, 2; Lk 1, 55; Acts 7, 5. c Jn 7, 22; Acts 7, 8; Rom 4, 11. d Sir 44, 21. e Lv 12, 3; Lk 1, 59; 2, 21. f Gn 18, 10; Gal 4, 23. g Rom 4, 19; Heb 11, 11f. h Gn 11, 30; 21, 2; Ex 32, 13; Sir 44, 22. i Gn 16, 10; 21, 13. 18; 25, 12–16. j Gn 18, 14; 21, 2; 26, 2–5; Rom 9, 7.

22When he had finished speaking with him, God
departed from Abraham.
23Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all
his slaves, whether born in his house or acquired
with his money—every male among the mem-
bers of Abraham's household—and he circum-
cised the flesh of their foreskins on that same
day, as God had told him to do. 24Abraham was
ninety-nine years old when the flesh of his
foreskin was circumcised,[k] 25and his son Ish-
mael was thirteen years old when the flesh of his
foreskin was circumcised. 26Thus, on that same
day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circum-
cised; 27and all the male members of his house-
hold, including the slaves born in his house or
acquired with his money from foreigners, were
circumcised with him.

## CHAPTER 18

**Abraham's Visitors** 1The LORD appeared to
Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in
the entrance of his tent, while the day was
growing hot. 2Looking up, he saw three men
standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran
from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and
bowing to the ground,[l] 3he said: "Sir,* if I may
ask you this favor, please do not go on past your
servant. 4Let some water be brought, that you
may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves
under the tree. 5Now that you have come this
close to your servant, let me bring you a little
food, that you may refresh yourselves; and
afterward you may go on your way." "Very
well," they replied, "do as you have said."
6Abraham hastened into the tent and told
Sarah, "Quick, three seahs* of fine flour! Knead
it and make rolls." 7He ran to the herd, picked
out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a
servant, who quickly prepared it. 8Then he got
some curds* and milk, as well as the steer that
had been prepared, and set these before them;
and he waited on them under the tree while
they ate.
9"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.
"There in the tent," he replied. 10One of them*
said, "I will surely return to you about this time
next year, and Sarah will then have a son." Sarah
was listening at the entrance of the tent, just
behind him.[m] 11Now Abraham and Sarah were
old, advanced in years, and Sarah had stopped
having her womanly periods.[n] 12So Sarah
laughed* to herself and said, "Now that I am so
withered and my husband is so old, am I still to
have sexual pleasure?" 13But the LORD said to
Abraham: "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I
really bear a child, old as I am?' 14Is anything too
marvelous for the LORD to do? At the appointed
time, about this time next year, I will return to
you, and Sarah will have a son."[o] 15Because she
was afraid, Sarah dissembled, saying, "I didn't
laugh." But he said, "Yes you did."

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**Abraham Intercedes for Sodom** 16The men
set out from there and looked down toward
Sodom; Abraham was walking with them, to see
them on their way. 17The LORD reflected: "Shall
I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
18now that he is to become a great and populous
nation, and all the nations of the earth are to find
blessing in him?[p] 19Indeed, I have singled him
out that he may direct his sons and his posterity
to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is
right and just, so that the LORD may carry into
effect for Abraham the promises he made about
him." 20[q]Then the LORD said: "The outcry
against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and
their sin so grave,* 21that I must go down and

**18, 3:** Abraham addresses the leader of the group, whom he does not yet recognize as Yahweh; in the next two verses he speaks to all three men. The other two are later (Gn 19, 1) identified as messengers.

**18, 6:** Three seahs: one ephah, about half a bushel.

**18, 8:** Curds: a type of soft cheese or yoghurt.

**18, 10:** One of them: i.e., the Lord. Abraham now realizes this for the first time when he hears the prediction of a miraculous birth. About this time next year: literally "when the time becomes alive," i.e., at the time when birth is due after the period of gestation; the conception is understood as taking place soon after the prediction.

**18, 12:** Sarah laughed: see note on Gn 17, 17.

**18, 20:** Israelite tradition was unanimous in ascribing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to the wickedness of these cities, but tradition varied in regard to the nature of this wickedness. According to the present account of the Yahwist, the sin of Sodom was homosexuality (Gn 19, 4f), which is therefore also known as sodomy; but according to Isaiah (1, 9f; 3, 9), it was a lack of social justice; Ezekiel (16, 46–51) described it as a disre-

k Gn 17, 10; Rom 4, 11. l Heb 13, 1f. m Gn 17, 19; 21, 1; 2 Kgs 4, 16; Rom 9, 9. n Gn 17, 17; Rom 4, 19; Heb 11, 11f. o Mt 19, 26; Mk 10, 27; Lk 1, 37; 18, 27; Rom 4, 21. p Lk 1, 55. q Gn 19, 13; Is 3, 9; Lk 17, 28; Jude 1, 7.

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see whether or not their actions fully correspond
to the cry against them that comes to me. I mean
to find out."

22While the two men walked on farther
toward Sodom, the LORD remained standing
before Abraham. 23Then Abraham drew nearer
to him and said: "Will you sweep away the
innocent with the guilty? 24Suppose there were
fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe
out the place, rather than spare it for the sake of
the fifty innocent people within it? 25Far be it
from you to do such a thing, to make the
innocent die with the guilty, so that the innocent
and the guilty would be treated alike! Should not
the judge of all the world act with justice?" [r]
26The LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent
people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the
whole place for their sake." 27Abraham spoke up
again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my
Lord, though I am but dust and ashes! [s] 28What if
there are five less than fifty innocent people?
Will you destroy the whole city because of those
five?" "I will not destroy it," he answered, "if I
find forty-five there." 29But Abraham persisted,
saying, "What if only forty are found there?" He
replied, "I will forbear doing it for the sake of the
forty." 30Then he said, "Let not my Lord grow
impatient if I go on. What if only thirty are found
there?" He replied, "I will forbear doing it if I
can find but thirty there." 31Still he went on,
"Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord,
what if there are no more than twenty?" "I will
not destroy it," he answered, "for the sake of the
twenty." 32But he still persisted, "Please, let not
my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time.
What if there are at least ten there?" "For the
sake of those ten," he replied, "I will not destroy
it." [t]

33The LORD departed as soon as he had
finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham
returned home.

## CHAPTER 19

**Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah** 1The
two angels reached Sodom in the evening, as Lot
was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw
them, he got up to greet them; and bowing
down with his face to the ground, 2he said,
"Please, gentlemen,* come aside into your ser-
vant's house for the night, and bathe your feet;
you can get up early to continue your journey."
But they replied, "No, we shall pass the night in
the town square." [u] 3He urged them so strongly,
however, that they turned aside to his place and
entered his house. He prepared a meal for them,
baking cakes without leaven, and they dined.

4 [v]Before they went to bed, all the townsmen
of Sodom, both young and old—all the people to
the last man—closed in on the house. 5They
called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the
men who came to your house tonight? Bring
them out to us that we may have intimacies with
them." 6Lot went out to meet them at the
entrance. When he had shut the door behind
him, 7he said, "I beg you, my brothers, not to do
this wicked thing. 8I have two daughters who
have never had intercourse with men. Let me
bring them out to you, and you may do to them
as you please. But don't do anything to these
men, for you know they have come under the
shelter of my roof." 9They replied, "Stand back!
This fellow," they sneered, "came here as an
immigrant, and now he dares to give orders!
We'll treat you worse than them!" With that,
they pressed hard against Lot, moving in closer
to break down the door. [w] 10But his guests put
out their hands, pulled Lot inside with them,
and closed the door; 11at the same time they
struck the men at the entrance of the house, one
and all, with such a blinding light* that they
were utterly unable to reach the doorway.

12Then the angels said to Lot: "Who else
belongs to you here? Your sons [sons-in-law]*

gard for the poor, whereas Jeremiah (23, 14) saw it as general immorality.

19, 2: Gentlemen: Lot does not yet know that the distinguished-looking men are God's messengers; cf Gn 18, 3.

19, 11: Blinding light: a preternatural flash that temporarily dazed the wicked men and revealed to Lot the true nature of his guests.

19, 12: Since Lot apparently had no sons, a glossator interpreted the term to mean sons-in-law.

r Dt 32, 4; Jb 8, 3. 20; Wis 12, 15. s Sir 10, 9; 17, 27. t Jer 5, 1; Ez 22, 30. u Wis 10, 6; Sir 16, 8; Ez 16, 50; Heb 13, 1f. v 4–9; Jgs 19, 22–25; Jude 1, 7. w Gn 13, 12; 2 Pt 2, 7f.

and your daughters and all who belong to you in
the city—take them away from it![x] 13We are
about to destroy this place, for the outcry
reaching the LORD against those in the city is so
great that he has sent us to destroy it."[y] 14So Lot
went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had
contracted marriage with his daughters.* "Get
up and leave this place," he told them; "the
LORD is about to destroy the city." But his sons-
in-law thought he was joking.

15As dawn was breaking, the angels urged Lot
on, saying, "On your way! Take with you your
wife and your two daughters who are here, or
you will be swept away in the punishment of the
city." 16When he hesitated, the men, by the
LORD's mercy, seized his hand and the hands of
his wife and his two daughters and led them to
safety outside the city. 17As soon as they had
been brought outside, he was told: "Flee for
your life! Don't look back or stop anywhere on
the Plain. Get off to the hills at once, or you will
be swept away."[z] 18"Oh, no, my lord!" replied
Lot. 19"You have already thought enough of your
servant to do me the great kindness of interven-
ing to save my life. But I cannot flee to the hills
to keep the disaster from overtaking me, and so I
shall die. 20Look, this town ahead is near
enough to escape to. It's only a small place.* Let
me flee there—it's a small place, isn't it?—that
my life may be saved." 21"Well, then," he
replied, "I will also grant you the favor you now
ask. I will not overthrow the town you speak of.
22Hurry, escape there! I cannot do anything until
you arrive there." That is why the town is called
Zoar.[a]

23The sun was just rising over the earth as Lot
arrived in Zoar;[b] 24at the same time the LORD
rained down sulphurous fire upon Sodom and
Gomorrah [from the LORD out of heaven].[c] 25He
overthrew* those cities and the whole Plain,
together with the inhabitants of the cities and
the produce of the soil.[d] 26But Lot's wife looked
back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt.[e]

27Early the next morning Abraham went to
the place where he had stood in the LORD's
presence. 28As he looked down toward Sodom
and Gomorrah and the whole region of the
Plain,* he saw dense smoke over the land rising
like fumes from a furnace.[f]

29Thus it came to pass: when God destroyed
the Cities of the Plain, he was mindful of
Abraham by sending Lot away from the up-
heaval by which God overthrew the cities where
Lot had been living.

**Moabites and Ammonites*** 30Since Lot was
afraid to stay in Zoar, he and his two daughters
went up from Zoar and settled in the hill
country, where he lived with his two daughters
in a cave. 31The older one said to the younger:
"Our father is getting old, and there is not a man
on earth to unite with us as was the custom
everywhere. 32Come, let us ply our father with
wine and then lie with him, that we may have
offspring by our father." 33So that night they
plied their father with wine, and the older one
went in and lay with her father; but he was not
aware of her lying down or her getting up.
34Next day the older one said to the younger:
"Last night it was I who lay with my father. Let
us ply him with wine again tonight, and then
you go in and lie with him, that we may both
have offspring by our father." 35So that night,
too, they plied their father with wine, and then
the younger one went in and lay with him; but

**19, 14:** It is uncertain whether Lot's sons-in-law were fully married to his daughters or only "engaged" to them (Israelite "engagement" was the first part of the marriage ceremony), or even whether the daughters involved were the same as, or different from, the two daughters who were still in their father's house.

**19, 20:** A small place: the Hebrew word misar, literally "a little thing," has the same root consonants as the name of the town Zoar in v 22.

**19, 25:** Overthrew: the consistent use of this term, literally "turned upside down," to describe the destruction of the Cities of the Plain seems to imply that their upheaval (v 29) was caused primarily by an earthquake; this would naturally be accompanied by a disastrous fire, especially in a region containing bitumen (Gn 14, 10) and its accompanying gases.

**19, 28f:** From the height east of Hebron, Abraham could easily see the region at the southern end of the Dead Sea, where the Cities of the Plain were probably located.

**19, 30–38:** This Israelite tale about the origin of Israel's neighbors east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea was told partly to ridicule these racially related but rival nations and partly to give folk etymologies for their names.

x 2 Pt 7, 9. y Is 1, 7. 9; Zep 2, 9; Lk 17, 29. z Wis 10, 6. a Wis 10, 6. b Pss 9, 6; 11, 6; 107, 34. c Wis 10, 7; Is 1, 9; 13, 19; Lam 4, 6; 17, 29; 2 Pt 2, 6. d Dt 29, 22; Jer 50, 40; Am 4, 11. e Wis 10, 7; Lk 17, 32. f Rv 9, 2; 14, 10f.

again he was not aware of her lying down or her
getting up.
36Thus both of Lot's daughters became preg-
nant by their father. 37The older one gave birth
to a son whom she named Moab, saying, "From
my father."* He is the ancestor of the Moabites
of today.[g] 38The younger one, too, gave birth to
a son, and she named him Ammon, saying, "The
son of my kin."* He is the ancestor of the
Ammonites of today.[h]

## CHAPTER 20

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**Abraham at Gerar*** 1Abraham journeyed on
to the region of the Negeb, where he settled
between Kadesh and Shur. While he stayed in
Gerar, 2he said of his wife Sarah, "She is my
sister." So Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and
took Sarah. 3But God came to Abimelech in a
dream one night and said to him, "You are about
to die because of the woman you have taken, for
she has a husband." 4Abimelech, who had not
approached her, said: "O Lord, would you slay a
man even though he is innocent? 5He himself
told me, 'She is my sister,' and she herself also
stated, 'He is my brother.' I did it in good faith
and with clean hands." 6God answered him in
the dream: "Yes, I know you did it in good faith.
In fact, it was I who kept you from sinning
against me; that is why I did not let you touch
her. 7Therefore, return the man's wife—as a
spokesman* he will intercede for you—that
your life may be saved. If you do not return her,
you can be sure that you and all who are yours
will certainly die."

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8Early the next morning Abimelech called all
his court officials and informed them of every-
thing that had happened, and the men were
horrified. 9Then Abimelech summoned Abra-
ham and said to him: "How could you do this to
us! What wrong did I do to you that you should
have brought such monstrous guilt on me and
my kingdom? You have treated me in an intolera-
ble way. 10What were you afraid of," he asked
him, "that you should have done such a thing?"
11"I was afraid," answered Abraham, "because I
thought there would surely be no fear of God in
this place, and so they would kill me on account
of my wife. 12Besides, she is in truth my sister,
but only my father's daughter, not my mother's;
and so she became my wife.[i] 13When God sent
me wandering from my father's house, I asked
her: 'Would you do me this favor? In whatever
place we come to, say that I am your brother.' "
14Then Abimelech took flocks and herds and
male and female slaves and gave them to Abra-
ham; and after he restored his wife Sarah to him,
15he said, "Here, my land lies at your disposal;
settle wherever you please." 16To Sarah he said:
"See, I have given your brother a thousand
shekels of silver.* Let that serve you as a
vindication before all who are with you; your
honor has been preserved with everyone."
17Abraham then interceded with God, and God
restored health to Abimelech, that is, to his wife
and his maidservants, so that they could bear
children; 18for God had tightly closed every
womb in Abimelech's household on account of
Abraham's wife Sarah.

## CHAPTER 21

**Birth of Isaac** 1The Lord took note of Sarah as
he had said he would; he did for her as he had
promised.[j] 2Sarah became pregnant and bore
Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time that
God had stated.[k] 3Abraham gave the name Isaac
to this son of his whom Sarah bore him.[l] 4When
his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham
circumcised him, as God had commanded.[m]
5Abraham was a hundred years old when his son
Isaac was born to him. 6Sarah then said, "God
has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of
it will laugh with me.[n] 7Who would have told

**19, 37:** From my father: in Hebrew, meabi, similar in sound to the name "Moab."

**19, 38:** The son of my kin: in Hebrew, ben-ammi, similar in sound to the name "Ammonites."

**20, 1–18:** This story from the Elohist source (see note on Gn 4, 25) combines elements found in the two very similar but distinct stories of the Yahwist source in Gn 12, 10–20 and 26, 6–11.

**20, 7:** Spokesman: the Hebrew term nabi used here is regularly translated as "prophet," but it simply means "one who speaks on behalf of another," whether the latter is God, as in almost all cases, or another man, as in Ex 4, 16.

**20, 16:** A thousand shekels of silver: not a gift distinct from that of the animals and the slaves (v 14), but the monetary value of these.

g Dt 2, 9. h Dt 2, 19. i Gn 12, 13. j Gn 17, 19; 18, 10. k Gal 4, 23; Heb 11, 11. l Mt 1, 2; Lk 3, 34. m Gn 17, 10ff; Acts 7, 8. n Gn 17, 17.

Abraham," she added, "that Sarah would nurse children! Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." [8]Isaac grew, and on the day of the child's weaning Abraham held a great feast.

[9]*Sarah noticed the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing with her son Isaac; [10]so she demanded of Abraham: "Drive out that slave and her son! No son of that slave is going to share the inheritance with my son Isaac!"[o] [11]Abraham was greatly distressed, especially on account of his son Ishmael. [12]But God said to Abraham: "Do not be distressed about the boy or about your slave woman. Heed the demands of Sarah, no matter what she is asking of you; for it is through Isaac that descendants shall bear your name.[p] [13]As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a great nation of him also, since he too is your offspring."

[14]Early the next morning Abraham got some bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. Then, placing the child on her back,* he sent her away. As she roamed aimlessly in the wilderness of Beer-sheba, [15]the water in the skin was used up. So she put the child down under a shrub, [16]and then went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away; for she said to herself, "Let me not watch to see the child die." As she sat opposite him, he began to cry. [17]God heard the boy's cry, and God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven: "What is the matter, Hagar? Don't be afraid; God has heard the boy's cry in this plight of his.[q] [18]Arise, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand; for I will make of him a great nation." [19]Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and then let the boy drink.

[20]God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert bowman, [21]with his home in the wilderness of Paran. His mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

**The Pact at Beer-sheba** [22]About that time Abimelech, accompanied by Phicol, the commander of his army,* said to Abraham: "God is with you in everything you do. [23]Therefore, swear to me by God at this place* that you will not deal falsely with me or with my progeny and posterity, but will act as loyally toward me and the land in which you stay as I have acted toward you." [24]To this Abraham replied, "I so swear."

[25]Abraham, however, reproached Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's men had seized by force. [26]"I have no idea who did that," Abimelech replied. "In fact, you never told me about it, nor did I ever hear of it until now."

[27]Then Abraham took sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech and the two made a pact. [28]Abraham also set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock, [29]and Abimelech asked him, "What is the purpose of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" [30]Abraham answered, "The seven ewe lambs you shall accept from me that thus I may have your acknowledgment that the well was dug by me." [31]This is why the place is called Beer-sheba;* the two of them took an oath there. [32]When they had thus made the pact in Beer-sheba, Abimelech, along with Phicol, the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines.

[33]Abraham planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and there he invoked by name the LORD, God the Eternal.* [34]Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines for many years.

**21, 9–19:** This story of Hagar's expulsion, in the Elohist source, is in general a duplicate of the one from the Yahwist source in Gn 16, 5–14; but the two stories differ greatly in detail.

**21, 14:** Placing the child on her back: the phrase is translated from an emended form of the Hebrew text. In the current faulty Hebrew text, Abraham put the bread and the waterskin on Hagar's back, while her son apparently walked beside her. This reading seems to be a scribal attempt at harmonizing the present passage with the data of the Priestly source, in which Ishmael would have been at least fourteen years old when Isaac was born; compare Gn 16, 16 with 21, 5; cf 17, 25. But in the present Elohist story Ishmael is obviously a little boy, not much older than Isaac; cf vv 15, 18.

**21, 22:** Here and in v 32 the Greek text has " . . . Abimelech, accompanied by Ahuzzath, his councilor, and Phicol . . ."; but this is probably a secondary harmonization with Gn 26, 26. Abimelech took Phicol with him in order to intimidate Abraham by a show of strength.

**21, 23:** This place: Beer-sheba (v 31). Abimelech had come from Gerar (Gn 20, 2), about thirty miles west of Beer-sheba.

**21, 31:** Beer-sheba: the Hebrew name really means "the well of the seven," i.e., the place where there are seven wells, alluded to in the episode of the seven ewe lambs, vv 28ff; but it can also be interpreted to mean "the well of the oath."

**21, 33:** God the Eternal: in Hebrew, el olam, perhaps the name of the deity of the pre-Israelite sanctuary at Beer-sheba, but used by Abraham merely as a title of Yahweh; cf Is 40, 28.

o Jgs 11, 2; Gal 4, 30. p Rom 9, 7; Heb 11, 18. q Gn 16, 7.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 12–25
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**The Testing of Abraham** [1]Some time after these events, God put Abraham to the test.* He called to him, "Abraham!" "Ready!" he replied.[r] [2]Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one,* whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you."[s] [3]Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey, took with him his son Isaac, and two of his servants as well, and with the wood that he had cut for the holocaust, set out for the place of which God had told him.

[4]On the third day Abraham got sight of the place from afar. [5]Then he said to his servants: "Both of you stay here with the donkey, while the boy and I go on over yonder. We will worship and then come back to you." [6]Thereupon Abraham took the wood for the holocaust and laid it on his son Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. [7]As the two walked on together, Isaac spoke to his father Abraham: "Father!" he said. "Yes, son," he replied. Isaac continued, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the holocaust?" [8]"Son," Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust." Then the two continued going forward.

[9]When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar.[t] [10]Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.[u] [11]But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. [12]"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son."[v] [13]As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son. [14]Abraham named the site Yahweh-yireh;* hence people now say, "On the mountain the LORD will see."

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[15]Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven [16][w]and said: "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, [17]I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies,[x] [18]and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command."[y]

[19]Abraham then returned to his servants, and they set out together for Beer-sheba, where Abraham made his home.

**Nahor's Descendants*** [20]Some time afterward, the news came to Abraham: "Milcah too has borne sons, to your brother Nahor: [21]Uz, his first-born, his brother Buz, Kemuel (the father of Aram), [22]Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel." [23]Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Abraham's brother Nahor. [24]His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.

## CHAPTER 23

**Purchase of a Burial Place** [1]The span of Sarah's life was one hundred and twenty-seven years. [2]She died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham performed the customary mourning rites for her. [3]Then he left the side of his dead one and addressed the Hittites:* [4]"Although I am a resident alien*

**22, 1:** God put Abraham to the test: to prove the firmness of Abraham's faith in God's promise that through Isaac all the nations of the earth would find blessing; cf Gn 18, 10. 18; 21, 12.

**22, 2:** Only one: uniquely precious, especially loved; therefore the same term is rendered in vv 12. 17 as "beloved."

**22, 14:** Yahweh-yireh: a Hebrew expression meaning "the Lord will see"; the reference is to the words in v 8, "God himself will see to it."

**22, 20–24:** A list of Aramean tribes who lived to the east and northeast of Israel, twelve in number, like the twelve tribes of Israel (Gn 35, 23) and the twelve tribes of Ishmael (Gn 25, 12–16).

**23, 3:** The Hittites: a non-Semitic people in Canaan; their relationship to the well-known Hittites of Asia Minor is uncertain.

r Sir 44, 20. s 2 Chr 3, 1; 1 Mc 2, 52; Heb 11, 17. t Jas 2, 21. u Wis 10, 5. v Rom 8, 32; 1 Jn 4, 9. w 16f: Gn 15, 5; Ex 32, 13; Lk 1, 73; Rom 4, 13; Heb 6, 13f; 11, 12. x Gn 24, 60. y Gn 12, 3; 18, 18; 26, 4; Sir 44, 21; Acts 3, 25; Gal 3, 16.

among you, sell me from your holdings a piece of
property for a burial ground, that I may bury my
dead wife."[z] [5]The Hittites answered Abraham:
"Please, sir, [6]listen to us! You are an elect of God
among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our
burial sites. None of us would deny you his
burial ground for the burial of your dead."
[7]Abraham, however, began to bow low before
the local citizens, the Hittites, [8]while he ap-
pealed to them: "If you will allow me room for
burial of my dead, listen to me! Intercede for me
with Ephron, son of Zohar, asking him [9]to sell
me the cave of Machpelah that he owns; it is at
the edge of his field. Let him sell it to me in your
presence, at its full price, for a burial place."

[10]Now Ephron was present with the Hittites.
So Ephron the Hittite replied to Abraham in the
hearing of the Hittites who sat on his town
council:* [11]"Please, sir, listen to me! I give you
both the field and the cave in it; in the presence
of my kinsmen I make this gift. Bury your dead!"
[12]But Abraham, after bowing low before the
local citizens, addressed Ephron in the hearing of
these men: [13]"Ah, if only you would please
listen to me! I will pay you the price of the field.
Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead
there." [14]Ephron replied to Abraham, "Please,
[15]sir, listen to me! A piece of land worth four
hundred shekels* of silver—what is that be-
tween you and me, as long as you can bury your
dead?" [16][a]Abraham accepted Ephron's terms;
he weighed out to him the silver that Ephron
had stipulated in the hearing of the Hittites, four
hundred shekels of silver at the current market
value.*

[17][b]Thus Ephron's field in Machpelah, facing
Mamre, together with its cave and all the trees
anywhere within its limits, was conveyed [18]to
Abraham by purchase in the presence of all the
Hittites who sat on Ephron's town council.
[19]After this transaction, Abraham buried his wife
Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah,
facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of
Canaan. [20]Thus the field with its cave was
transferred from the Hittites to Abraham as a
burial place.

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 24–27
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**Isaac and Rebekah** [1]Abraham had now
reached a ripe old age, and the LORD had blessed
him in every way. [2][c]Abraham said to the senior
servant of his household, who had charge of all
his possessions: "Put your hand under my
thigh,* [3]and I will make you swear by the LORD,
the God of heaven and the God of earth, that
you will not procure a wife for my son from the
daughters of the Canaanites among whom I
live,[d] [4]but that you will go to my own land and
to my kindred to get a wife for my son Isaac."
[5]The servant asked him: "What if the woman is
unwilling to follow me to this land? Should I
then take your son back to the land from which
you migrated?" [6]"Never take my son back there
for any reason," Abraham told him. [7]"The LORD,
the God of heaven, who took me from my
father's house and the land of my kin, and who
confirmed by oath the promise he then made to
me, 'I will give this land to your descendants,—
he will send his messenger before you, and you
will obtain a wife for my son there.[e] [8]If the
woman is unwilling to follow you, you will be
released from this oath. But never take my son

**23, 4:** A resident alien: literally "a sojourner and a settler," i.e., a long-term resident alien. Such a one would normally not have the right to own property. The importance of Abraham's purchase of the field in Machpelah, which is worded in technical legal terms, lies in the fact that it gave his descendants their first, though small, land rights in the country that God had promised the patriarch they would one day inherit as their own. Abraham therefore insists on purchasing the field and not receiving it as a gift.

**23, 10:** Who sat on his town council: probable meaning of the literal translation, "who came in at the gate of his city"; so also in v 18.

**23, 15:** Four hundred shekels: probably an exorbitant sum; Jeremiah (32, 9) paid only seventeen shekels for his field in Anathoth, though the Babylonian invasion no doubt helped to reduce the price.

**23, 16:** The current market value: the standard weight called a shekel varied according to time and place.

**24, 2:** Put your hand under my thigh: the symbolism of this act was apparently connected with the Hebrew concept of children issuing from their father's "thigh" (Gn 46, 26; Ex 1, 5). Perhaps the man who took such an oath was thought to bring the curse of sterility on himself if he did not fulfill his sworn promise. Jacob made Joseph swear in the same way (Gn 47, 29). In both these instances, the oath was taken to carry out the last request of a man upon his death.

z Gn 33, 19; Acts 7, 16. a Acts 7, 16. b 17f: Gn 49, 29f. c 2f: Gn 47, 29. d Gn 24, 37; 28, 1f; Jgs 14, 3; Tb 4, 12. e Gn 12, 7; Ex 6, 8; Tb 5, 17; Gal 3, 16.

back there!" [9]So the servant put his hand under
the thigh of his master Abraham and swore to
him in this undertaking.

[10]The servant then took ten of his master's
camels, and bearing all kinds of gifts from his
master, he made his way to the city of Nahor* in
Aram Naharaim. [11]Near evening, at the time
when women go out to draw water, he made
the camels kneel by the well outside the city.
[12]Then he prayed: "LORD, God of my master
Abraham, let it turn out favorably for me* today
and thus deal graciously with my master Abra-
ham. [13]While I stand here at the spring and the
daughters of the townsmen are coming out to
draw water, [14]if I say to a girl, 'Please lower your
jug, that I may drink,' and she answers, 'Take a
drink, and let me give water to your camels,
too,' let her be the one whom you have decided
upon for your servant Isaac. In this way I shall
know that you have dealt graciously with my
master."

[15]*f*He had scarcely finished these words when
Rebekah (who was born to Bethuel, son of
Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor)
came out with a jug on her shoulder. [16]The girl
was very beautiful, a virgin, untouched by man.
She went down to the spring and filled her jug.
As she came up, [17]the servant ran toward her
and said, "Please give me a sip of water from
your jug." [18]"Take a drink, sir," she replied, and
quickly lowering the jug onto her hand, she gave
him a drink. [19]When she had let him drink his
fill, she said, "I will draw water for your camels,
too, until they have drunk their fill." [20]With
that, she quickly emptied her jug into the
drinking trough and ran back to the well to draw
more water, until she had drawn enough for all
the camels. [21]The man watched her the whole
time, silently waiting to learn whether or not the
LORD had made his errand successful. [22]When
the camels had finished drinking, the man took
out a gold ring weighing half a shekel, which he
fastened on her nose, and two gold bracelets
weighing ten shekels, which he put on her
wrists. [23]Then he asked her: "Whose daughter
are you? Tell me, please. And is there room in
your father's house for us to spend the night?"
[24]She answered: "I am the daughter of Bethuel
the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.
[25]There is plenty of straw and fodder at our
place," she added, "and room to spend the
night." [26]The man then bowed down in worship
to the LORD, [27]saying: "Blessed be the LORD, the
God of my master Abraham, who has not let his
constant kindness toward my master fail. As for
myself also, the LORD has led me straight to the
house of my master's brother."

[28]Then the girl ran off and told her mother's
household about it. [29]*g*Now Rebekah had a
brother named Laban. [30]As soon as he saw the
ring and the bracelets on his sister Rebekah and
heard her words about what the man had said to
her, Laban rushed outside to the man at the
spring. When he reached him, he was still
standing by the camels at the spring. [31]So he said
to him: "Come, blessed of the LORD! Why are
you staying outside when I have made the house
ready for you, as well as a place for the camels?"
[32]The man then went inside; and while the
camels were being unloaded and provided with
straw and fodder, water was brought to bathe his
feet and the feet of the men who were with him.
[33]But when the table was set for him, he said, "I
will not eat until I have told my tale." "Do so,"
they replied.

[34]"I am Abraham's servant," he began.
[35]"The LORD has blessed my master so abun-
dantly that he has become a wealthy man; he
has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold,
male and female slaves, and camels and asses.
[36]My master's wife Sarah bore a son to my
master in her old age, and he has given him
everything he owns. [37]My master put me under
oath, saying: 'You shall not procure a wife for my
son among the daughters of the Canaanites in
whose land I live; [38]instead, you shall go to my

**24, 10:** Nahor: it is uncertain whether this is to be understood as the name of Abraham's brother (Gn 11, 27), Rebekah's grandfather (Gn 24, 15), or the city of the same name (as known from the Mari documents); Aram Naharaim, situated near Haran (Gn 11, 31) in northern Mesopotamia.

**24, 12:** Let it turn out favorably for me: let me have a favorable omen; cf end of v 14.

f Gn 22, 23. g Gn 27, 43.

father's house, to my own relatives, to get a wife
for my son.' [39]When I asked my master, 'What if
the woman will not follow me?' [40]he replied:
'The LORD, in whose presence I have always
walked, will send his messenger with you and
make your errand successful, and so you will get
a wife for my son from my own kindred of my
father's house.[h] [41]Then you shall be released
from my ban. If you visit my kindred and they
refuse you, then, too, you shall be released from
my ban.'

[42]"When I came to the spring today, I prayed:
'LORD, God of my master Abraham, may it be
your will to make successful the errand I am
engaged on! [43]While I stand here at the spring, if
I say to a young woman who comes out to draw
water, Please give me a little water from your
jug, [44]and she answers, Not only may you have a
drink, but I will give water to your camels, too—
let her be the woman whom the LORD has
decided upon for my master's son.'

[45]"I had scarcely finished saying this prayer to
myself when Rebekah came out with a jug on
her shoulder. After she went down to the spring
and drew water, I said to her, 'Please let me have
a drink.' [46]She quickly lowered the jug she was
carrying and said, 'Take a drink, and let me bring
water for your camels, too.' So I drank, and she
watered the camels also. [47]When I asked her,
'Whose daughter are you?' she answered, 'The
daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, born to
Nahor by Milcah.' So I put the ring on her nose
and the bracelets on her wrists. [48]Then I bowed
down in worship to the LORD, blessing the LORD,
the God of my master Abraham, who had led me
on the right road to obtain the daughter of my
master's kinsman for his son. [49]If, therefore, you
have in mind to show true loyalty to my master,
let me know; but if not, let me know that, too. I
can then proceed accordingly."

[50][i]Laban and his household said in reply:
"This thing comes from the LORD; we can say
nothing to you either for or against it. [51]Here is
Rebekah, ready for you; take her with you, that
she may become the wife of your master's son,
as the LORD has said." [52]When Abraham's ser-
vant heard their answer, he bowed to the
ground before the LORD. [53]Then he brought out
objects of silver and gold and articles of clothing
and presented them to Rebekah; he also gave
costly presents to her brother and mother. [54]Af-
ter he and the men with him had eaten and
drunk, they spent the night there.

When they were up the next morning, he
said, "Give me leave to return to my master."[j]
[55]Her brother and mother replied, "Let the girl
stay with us a short while, say ten days; after
that she may go." [56]But he said to them, "Do not
detain me, now that the LORD has made my
errand successful; let me go back to my master."
[57]They answered, "Let us call the girl and see
what she herself has to say about it." [58]So they
called Rebekah and asked her, "Do you wish to
go with this man?" She answered, "I do." [59]At
this they allowed their sister Rebekah and her
nurse to take leave, along with Abraham's ser-
vant and his men. [60]Invoking a blessing on
Rebekah, they said:

"Sister, may you grow
into thousands of myriads;
And may your descendants gain possession
of the gates of their enemies!"[k]

[61]Then Rebekah and her maids started out; they
mounted their camels and followed the man. So
the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

[62]Meanwhile Isaac had gone from Beer-lahai-
roi and was living in the region of the Negeb.[l]
[63]One day toward evening he went out . . . * in
the field, and as he looked around, he noticed
that camels were approaching. [64]Rebekah, too,
was looking about, and when she saw him, she
alighted from her camel [65]and asked the servant,
"Who is the man out there, walking through the
fields toward us?" "That is my master," replied
the servant. Then she covered herself with her
veil.

[66]The servant recounted to Isaac all the things
he had done. [67]Then Isaac took Rebekah into his

**24, 63:** He went out: the meaning of the Hebrew term that follows this is obscure.

h Tb 5, 17; 10, 13. i 50f; Tb 7, 12. j Tb 7, 14; 8, 20. k Gn 22, 17. l Gn 16, 13f; 25, 11.

tent; he married her, and thus she became his wife. In his love for her Isaac found solace after the death of his mother Sarah.

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 24–27
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69–70

**Abraham's Sons by Keturah** 1 [m]*Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. 3Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. The descendants of Dedan were the Asshurim, the Letushim, and the Leummim.[n] 4The descendants of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All of these were descendants of Keturah.

5Abraham deeded everything that he owned to his son Isaac. 6To his sons by concubinage, however, he made grants while he was still living, as he sent them away eastward, to the land of Kedem,* away from his son Isaac.

**Death of Abraham** 7The whole span of Abraham's life was one hundred and seventy-five years. 8Then he breathed his last, dying at a ripe old age, grown old after a full life; and he was taken to his kinsmen. 9[o]His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, son of Zohar the Hittite, which faces Mamre, 10the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites; there he was buried next to his wife Sarah. 11After the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac, who made his home near Beer-lahai-roi.

**Descendants of Ishmael** 12These are the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave, bore to Abraham. 13[p]These are the names of Ismael's sons, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth (Ishmael's first-born), Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,[q] 14Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah, 16These are the sons of Ishmael, their names by their villages and encampments; twelve chieftains of as many tribal groups.[r]

17The span of Ishmael's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. After he had breathed his last and died, he was taken to his kinsmen. 18The Ishmaelites ranged from Havilah-by-Shur, which is on the border of Egypt, all the way to Asshur; and each of them pitched camp* in opposition to his various kinsmen.[s]

# III: The Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob

**Birth of Esau and Jacob** 19This is the family history of Isaac, son of Abraham; Abraham had begotten Isaac. 20Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.[t] 21Isaac entreated the LORD on behalf of his wife, since she was sterile. The LORD heard his entreaty, and Rebekah became pregnant. 22But the children in her womb jostled each other so much that she exclaimed, "If this is to be so, what good will it do me!" She went to consult the LORD, 23and he answered her:

"Two nations are in your womb,
two peoples are quarreling while still within you;
But one shall surpass the other,
and the older shall serve the younger.[u]

24When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb.[v] 25The first to emerge was reddish,* and his whole body was like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. 26His brother came out next, gripping Esau's heel;* so

**25, 1–11**: Though mentioned here, Abraham's marriage to a "concubine," or wife of secondary rank, and his death are not to be understood as happening chronologically after the events narrated in the preceding chapter.

**25, 6**: The land of Kedem: or "the country of the East," the region inhabited by the Kedemites or Easterners (Gn 29, 1; Jgs 6, 3. 33; Jb 1, 3; Is 11, 14). The names mentioned in vv 2ff, as far as they can be identified, are those of tribes in the Arabian desert.

**25, 18**: Pitched camp: literally "fell"; the same Hebrew verb is used in Jgs 7, 12 in regard to the hostile encampment of Bedouin tribes. The present passage shows the fulfillment of the prediction contained in Gn 16, 12.

**25, 25**: Reddish: in Hebrew, admoni, a reference to Edom, another name for Esau (v 30; 36, 1). Edom, however, was really the name of the country south of Moab where the descendants of Esau lived. It was called the "red" country because of its reddish sandstone. Hairy: in Hebrew, sear, a reference to Seir, another name for Edom (Gn 36, 8). One might expect the text to say, "So they named him Seir"; but Esau (esaw) also means "hairy."

**25, 26**: Esau's heel: the Hebrew is baaqeb esaw, a reference to the name Jacob; cf Gn 27, 36. Probably, however, the name Jacob has no true etymological connection with the Hebrew word for "heel" (aqeb), but is instead a shortened form of some such name as yaaqob-el ("may God protect").

m 1–4; 1 Chr 1, 32f. n Is 21, 13. o 9f: Gn 23, 3–20. p 13–16: 1 Chr 1, 29ff. q Is 60, 7. r Gn 17, 20. s Gn 16, 12. t Gn 24, 66. u Gn 27, 29; Nm 24, 18; Mal 1, 2–5; Rom 9, 11f. v Hos 12, 3.

they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old
when they were born.[w]
27 As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful
hunter, a man who lived in the open; whereas
Jacob was a simple man, who kept to his tents.[x]
28 Isaac preferred Esau, because he was fond of
game; but Rebekah preferred Jacob. 29 Once,
when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in
from the open, famished. 30 He said to Jacob,
"Let me gulp down some of that red stuff;* I'm
starving." (That is why he was called Edom.)
31 But Jacob replied, "First give me your birth-
right* in exchange for it."[y] 32 "Look," said Esau,
"I'm on the point of dying. What good will any
birthright do me?" 33 But Jacob insisted, "Swear
to me first!" So he sold Jacob his birthright under
oath.[z] 34 Jacob then gave him some bread and
the lentil stew; and Esau ate, drank, got up, and
went his way. Esau cared little for his birthright.

## CHAPTER 26

**Isaac and Abimelech** 1 [a]There was a famine in
the land (distinct from the earlier one that had
occurred in the days of Abraham), and Isaac
went down to Abimelech, king of the Philistines
in Gerar.[b] 2 The LORD appeared to him and said:
"Do not go down to Egypt, but continue to camp
wherever in this land I tell you. 3 Stay in this
land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to
you and your descendants I will give all these
lands, in fulfillment of the oath that I swore to
your father Abraham.[c] 4 I will make your descen-
dants as numerous as the stars in the sky and
give them all these lands, and in your descen-
dants all the nations of the earth shall find
blessing—[d] 5 this because Abraham obeyed me,
keeping my mandate (my commandments, my
ordinances and my instructions)."
6 *So Isaac settled in Gerar. 7 When the men of
the place asked questions about his wife, he
answered, "She is my sister." He was afraid, if he
called her his wife, the men of the place would
kill him on account of Rebekah, since she was
very beautiful. 8 But when he had been there for
a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines,
happened to look out of a window and was
surprised to see Isaac fondling his wife Rebekah.
9 He called for Isaac and said: "She must cer-
tainly be your wife! How could you have said,
'She is my sister'?" Isaac replied, "I thought I
might lose my life on her account." 10 "How
could you do this to us!" exclaimed Abimelech.
"It would have taken very little for one of the
men to lie with your wife, and you would have
thus brought guilt upon us!" 11 Abimelech there-
fore gave this warning to all his men: "Anyone
who molests this man or his wife shall forthwith
be put to death."
12 *Isaac sowed a crop in that region and
reaped a hundredfold the same year. Since the
LORD blessed him, 13 [e]he became richer and
richer all the time, until he was very wealthy
indeed. 14 He acquired such flocks and herds,
and so many work animals, that the Philistines
became envious of him. (15 [f]The Philistines had
stopped up and filled with dirt all the wells that
his father's servants had dug back in the days of
his father Abraham.) 16 So Abimelech said to
Isaac, "Go away from us; you have become far
too numerous for us." 17 Isaac left there and
made the Wadi Gerar his regular campsite.
(18 Isaac reopened the wells which his father's
servants had dug back in the days of his father
Abraham and which the Philistines had stopped
up after Abraham's death; he gave them the
same names that his father had given them.)
19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the wadi and
reached spring water in their well, 20 the shep-
herds of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's servants,
saying, "The water belongs to us!" So the well

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**25, 30:** Red stuff: in Hebrew, adom; another play on the word Edom, the "red" land.

**25, 31:** Birthright: the privilege that entitled the first-born son to a position of honor in the family and to a double share in the possessions inherited from the father.

**26, 6–11:** The Yahwist's version of the wife-sister episode at Gerar; the Elohist's version (Gn 20, 1–18) is connected with Abraham and Sarah.

**26, 12–33:** The Yahwist's version of the story about the wells at Beer-sheba; again, the Elohist's version (Gn 21, 22f) is connected with Abraham. A redactor joined the two accounts by means of the parenthetical verses 15 and 18.

w Mt 1, 2 x Gn 27, 6f. y Dt 21, 17. z Heb 12, 16. a 1–14: Gn 12, 10–20. b Gn 12, 1. c Gn 12, 7; 15, 18; Ex 32, 13; Ps 105, 9; Sir 44, 22; Heb 11, 9. d Gn 12, 3; 22, 17f; 28, 14; Ex 32, 13. e 13f: Jb 1, 3. f 15–24: Gn 21, 25–31.

was called Esek,* because they had challenged him there. 21Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one too; so it was called Sitnah.* 22When he had moved on from there, he dug still another well; but over this one they did not quarrel. It was called Rehoboth, because he said, "The LORD has now given us ample room, and we shall flourish in the land."

23From there Isaac went up to Beer-sheba. 24The same night the LORD appeared to him and said: "I am the God of your father Abraham. You have no need to fear, since I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."[g] 25So he built an altar there and invoked the LORD by name. After he had pitched his tent there, his servants began to dig a well nearby.

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26 [h]Abimelech had meanwhile come to him from Gerar, accompanied by Ahuzzath, his councilor, and Phicol, the general of his army. 27Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have driven me away from you?" 28They answered: "We are convinced that the LORD is with you, so we propose that there be a sworn agreement between our two sides—between you and us. Let us make a pact with you: 29you shall not act unkindly toward us, just as we have not molested you, but have always acted kindly toward you and have let you depart in peace. Henceforth, 'The LORD's blessing be upon you!' " 30Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. 31Early the next morning they exchanged oaths. Then Isaac bade them farewell, and they departed from him in peace.

32That same day Isaac's servants came and brought him news about the well they had been digging; they told him, "We have reached water!" 33He called it Shibah;* hence the name of the city, Beer-sheba, to this day.

34*When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hivite.[i] 35But they became a source of embitterment to Isaac and Rebekah.

## CHAPTER 27

**Jacob's Deception*** 1When Isaac was so old that his eyesight had failed him, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "Son!" "Yes, father!" he replied. 2Isaac then said, "As you can see, I am so old that I may now die at any time. 3Take your gear, therefore—your quiver and bow—and go out into the country to hunt some game for me. 4With your catch prepare an appetizing dish for me, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my special blessing* before I die."

5Rebekah had been listening while Isaac was speaking to his son Esau. So when Esau went out into the country to hunt some game for his father,[j] 6Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Listen! I overheard your father tell your brother Esau, 7'Bring me some game and with it prepare an appetizing dish for me to eat, that I may give you my blessing with the LORD's approval before I die.' 8Now, son, listen carefully to what I tell you. 9Go to the flock and get me two choice kids. With these I will prepare an appetizing dish for your father, such as he likes. 10Then bring it to your father to eat, that he may bless you before he dies." 11"But my brother Esau is a hairy man," said Jacob to his mother Rebekah,

**26, 20:** Esek: "challenge."

**26, 21:** Sitnah: "opposition"; one might expect the text to be continued by some such words as "because they were in opposition there."

**26, 33:** Shibah: "seven," for the sake of a closer assonance with Beer-sheba; but the present version of the story says nothing about there being seven wells there as implied in Gn 21, 28–31. The Greek version understood the Hebrew text more logically as shebua, "oath," in keeping with the present story.

**26, 34f:** These verses from the Priestly source, which have no logical connection with the preceding stories, serve as an introduction to the following section on Esau's loss of his birthright by suggesting a motivation for this in Isaac's and Rebekah's dislike for Esau's Canaanite wives.

**27, 1–45:** What Jacob did in deceiving his father and thereby cheating Esau out of Isaac's deathbed blessing is condemned as blameworthy, not only by Hosea (12, 4) and Jeremiah (9, 3), but also, indirectly, by the Yahwist narrator of the present story, who makes the reader sympathize with Esau as the innocent victim of a cruel plot, and shows that Jacob and his mother, the instigator of the plot, paid for it by a lifelong separation from each other. The story was told because it was part of the mystery of God's ways in salvation history—his use of weak, sinful men to achieve his own ultimate purpose.

**27, 4:** My special blessing: "the blessing of my soul." The same expression is used also in vv 19. 25. 31. In the context it must mean something like a solemn deathbed blessing, believed to be especially efficacious.

g Gn 46, 3. h 26–33: Gn 21, 22–31; Prv 16, 7. i 34f: Gn 27, 46. j Gn 25, 28.

"and I am smooth-skinned![k] 12Suppose my father feels me? He will think I am making sport of him, and I shall bring on myself a curse instead of a blessing." 13His mother, however, replied: "Let any curse against you, son, fall on me! Just do as I say. Go and get me the kids."

14So Jacob went and got them and brought them to his mother; and with them she prepared an appetizing dish, such as his father liked. 15Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau that she had in the house, and gave them to her younger son Jacob to wear; 16and with the skins of the kids she covered up his hands and the hairless parts of his neck. 17Then she handed her son Jacob the appetizing dish and the bread she had prepared.

18Bringing them to his father, Jacob said, "Father!" "Yes?" replied Isaac. "Which of my sons are you?" 19Jacob answered his father: "I am Esau, your first-born. I did as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your special blessing." 20But Isaac asked, "How did you succeed so quickly, son?" He answered, "The LORD, your God, let things turn out well with me." 21Isaac then said to Jacob, "Come closer, son, that I may feel you, to learn whether you really are my son Esau or not." 22So Jacob moved up closer to his father. When Isaac felt him, he said, "Although the voice is Jacob's, the hands are Esau's." 23(He failed to identify him because his hands were hairy, like those of his brother Esau; so in the end he gave him his blessing.) 24Again he asked him, "Are you really my son Esau?" "Certainly," he replied. 25Then Isaac said, "Serve me your game, son, that I may eat of it and then give you my blessing." Jacob served it to him, and Isaac ate; he brought him wine, and he drank. 26Finally his father Isaac said to him, "Come closer, son, and kiss me." 27As Jacob went up and kissed him, Isaac smelled the fragrance of his clothes. With that, he blessed him, saying,

"Ah, the fragrance of my son
is like the fragrance of a field
that the LORD has blessed![l]

28"May God give to you
of the dew of the heavens
And of the fertility of the earth
abundance of grain and wine.

29[m]"Let peoples serve you,
and nations pay you homage;
Be master of your brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Cursed be those who curse you,
and blessed be those who bless you."

30Jacob had scarcely left his father, just after Isaac had finished blessing him, when his brother Esau came back from his hunt. 31Then he too prepared an appetizing dish with his game, and bringing it to his father, he said, "Please, father, eat some of your son's game, that you may then give me your special blessing." 32"Who are you?" his father Isaac asked him. "I am Esau," he replied, "your first-born son." 33With that, Isaac was seized with a fit of uncontrollable trembling. "Who was it, then," he asked, "that hunted game and brought it to me? I finished eating it just before you came, and I blessed him. Now he must remain blessed!" 34On hearing his father's words, Esau burst into loud, bitter sobbing. "Father, bless me too!" he begged. 35When Isaac explained, "Your brother came here by a ruse and carried off your blessing," 36Esau exclaimed, "He has been well named Jacob! He has now supplanted me* twice! First he took away my birthright, and now he has taken away my blessing." Then he pleaded, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"[n] 37Isaac replied: "I have already appointed him your master, and I have assigned to him all his kinsmen as his slaves; besides, I have enriched him with grain and wine. What then can I do for you, son?" 38But Esau urged his father, "Have you only that one blessing, father? Bless

**27, 36:** He has now supplanted me: in Hebrew, wayyaqebeni, a wordplay on the name Jacob, yaaqob; see Jer 9, 3 and note, as well as Gn 25, 26. There is also a play between the Hebrew words bekora ("birthright") and beraka ("blessing").

k Gn 25, 25. l Gn 22, 17f; Heb 11, 20. m Gn 25, 23; 49, 8; Nm 24, 9. n Gn 25, 26. 29–34; Hos 12, 4.

me too!" Isaac, however, made no reply; and
Esau wept aloud.[o] 39Finally Isaac spoke again
and said to him:

"Ah, far from the fertile earth
shall be your dwelling;
far from the dew of the heavens above![p]
40"By your sword you shall live,
and your brother you shall serve;
But when you become restive,
you shall throw off his yoke from your
neck."[q]

41Esau bore Jacob a grudge because of the
blessing his father had given him. He said to
himself, "When the time of mourning for my
father comes, I will kill my brother Jacob."[r]
42When Rebekah got news of what her older son
Esau had in mind, she called her younger son
Jacob and said to him: "Listen! Your brother
Esau intends to settle accounts with you by
killing you. 43Therefore, son, do what I tell you:
flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, 44and
stay with him a while until your brother's fury
subsides 45[until your brother's anger against you
subsides] and he forgets what you did to him.
Then I will send for you and bring you back.
Must I lose both of you in a single day?"

**Jacob Sent to Laban** 46*Rebekah said to Isaac:
"I am disgusted with life because of the Hittite
women. If Jacob also should marry a Hittite
woman, a native of the land, like these women,
what good would life be to me?"[s]

## CHAPTER 28

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1Isaac therefore called Jacob, greeted him
with a blessing, and charged him: "You shall not
marry a Canaanite woman![t] 2Go now to
Paddan-aram, to the home of your mother's
father Bethuel, and there choose a wife for
yourself from among the daughters of your uncle
Laban.[u] 3May God Almighty bless you and make
you fertile, multiply you that you may become
an assembly of peoples. 4May he extend to you
and your descendants the blessing he gave to
Abraham, so that you may gain possession of the
land where you are staying, which he assigned
to Abraham."[v] 5Then Isaac sent Jacob on his
way; he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, son of
Bethuel, the Aramean, and brother of Rebekah,
the mother of Jacob and Esau.[w]

6Esau noted that Isaac had blessed Jacob
when he sent him to Paddan-aram to get himself
a wife there, charging him, as he gave him his
blessing, not to marry a Canaanite woman, 7and
that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and
gone to Paddan-aram. 8Esau realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father
Isaac, 9so he went to Ishmael, and in addition to
the wives he had, married Mahalath, the daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael and sister of
Nebaioth.[x]

**Jacob's Dream at Bethel** 10Jacob departed
from Beer-sheba and proceeded toward Haran.
11When he came upon a certain shrine,* as the
sun had already set, he stopped there for the
night. Taking one of the stones at the shrine, he
put it under his head and lay down to sleep at
that spot. 12Then he had a dream: a stairway*
rested on the ground, with its top reaching to
the heavens; and God's messengers were going
up and down on it.[y] 13And there was the LORD
standing beside him and saying: "I, the LORD,
am the God of your forefather Abraham and the
God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I
will give to you and your descendants.[z] 14These
shall be as plentiful as the dust of the earth, and
through them you shall spread out east and
west, north and south. In you and your descen-

**27, 46—28, 9:** This section, which is from the Priestly source and a direct sequel of Gn 26, 34f, presents a different, though not contradictory, reason for Jacob's going to Paddan-aram: namely, to preserve racial purity among the chosen people. The account of Esau's marriages is given for the purpose of explaining the racial mixture of the Edomites, who were descended in part from tribes related to Israel, in part from older peoples in Edom called Hittites, Horites or Hivites, and in part from the Ishmaelite (Arabian) tribes who later invaded the region.

**28, 11:** Shrine: literally "place," often used specifically of a sacred site. Here the place was Bethel (v 19), a sacred site as early as the time of Abraham (Gn 12, 8).

**28, 12:** Stairway: in Hebrew, sullam, traditionally but inaccurately, translated as "ladder." The corresponding verb, salal, means "to heap up" something, such as dirt for a highway or ramp. The imagery in Jacob's dream is derived from the Babylonian ziggurat or temple tower, "with its top in the sky" (Gn 11, 4), and with brick steps leading up to a small temple at the top.

o Heb 12, 17. p Heb 11, 20. q 2 Kgs 8, 20. 22; 2 Chr 21, 8. r Wis 10, 10; Ob 1, 10. s Gn 26, 34f. t Gn 24, 3f; 26, 35. u Gn 22, 22; 17, 1f. 4f. v Ex 32, 13. w Jdt 8, 26. x Gn 36, 2f. y Jn 1, 51. z Dt 1, 8; Mi 7, 28.

dants all the nations of the earth shall find
blessing.[a] 15Know that I am with you; I will
protect you wherever you go, and bring you
back to this land. I will never leave you until I
have done what I promised you."[b]

16When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he ex-
claimed, "Truly, the LORD is in this spot, al-
though I did not know it!" 17In solemn wonder
he cried out: "How awesome is this shrine!
This* is nothing else but an abode of God, and
that is the gateway to heaven!" 18Early the next
morning Jacob took the stone that he had put
under his head, set it up as a memorial stone,*
and poured oil on top if it.[c] 19He called that site
Bethel,* whereas the former name of the town
had been Luz.[d]

20Jacob then made this vow: "If God remains
with me, to protect me on this journey I am
making and to give me enough bread to eat and
clothing to wear, 21and I come back safe to my
father's house, the LORD shall be my God. 22This
stone that I have set up as a memorial stone shall
be God's abode. Of everything you give me, I
will faithfully return a tenth part to you."

## CHAPTER 29

**Arrival in Haran** 1[e]After Jacob resumed his
journey, he came to the land of the Easterners.*
2Looking about, he saw a well in the open
country, with three droves of sheep huddled
near it, for droves were watered from that well.
A large stone covered the mouth of the well.[f]
3Only when all the shepherds were assembled
there could they roll the stone away from the
mouth of the well and water the flocks. Then
they would put the stone back again over the
mouth of the well.

4Jacob said to them, "Friends, where are you
from?" "We are from Haran," they replied. 5Then
he asked them, "Do you know Laban, son of
Nahor?" "We do," they answered.[g] 6He inquired
further, "Is he well?" "He is," they answered;
"and here comes his daughter Rachel with his
flock." 7Then he said: "There is still much day-
light left; it is hardly the time to bring the animals
home. Why don't you water the flocks now, and
then continue pasturing them?" 8"We cannot,"
they replied, "until all the shepherds are here to
roll the stone away from the mouth of the well;
only then can we water the flocks."

9While he was still talking with them, Rachel
arrived with her father's sheep; she was the one
who tended them. 10As soon as Jacob saw Ra-
chel, the daughter of his uncle Laban, with the
sheep of his uncle Laban, he went up, rolled the
stone away from the mouth of the well, and wa-
tered his uncle's sheep. 11Then Jacob kissed Ra-
chel and burst into tears.* 12He told her that he
was her father's relative, Rebekah's son, and she
ran to tell her father. 13When Laban heard the
news about his sister's son Jacob, he hurried out
to meet him. After embracing and kissing him, he
brought him to his house. Jacob then recounted
to Laban all that had happened, 14and Laban said
to him, "You are indeed my flesh and blood."*

Ch 27–36
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70–72

**Marriage to Leah and Rachel** After Jacob had
stayed with him a full month, 15Laban said to
him: "Should you serve me for nothing just
because you are a relative of mine? Tell me what
your wages should be." 16Now Laban had two
daughters; the older was called Leah, the young-
er Rachel. 17Leah had lovely eyes,* but Rachel
was well formed and beautiful. 18Since Jacob
had fallen in love with Rachel, he answered
Laban, "I will serve you seven years for your
younger daughter Rachel."* 19Laban replied, "I

**28, 17:** This: the stone Jacob used as a headrest; cf v 22. That: the stairway Jacob saw in his dream.

**28, 18:** Memorial stone: in Hebrew, masseba, a stone which might vary in shape and size, set upright and usually intended for some religious purpose. Since the custom of erecting such "sacred pillars" in Palestine went back to its pre-Israelite period, their pagan associations were often retained; therefore, later Israelite religion forbade their erection (Lv 26, 1; Dt 16, 22) and ordered the destruction of those that were associated with paganism (Ex 34, 31; Dt 12, 3).

**28, 19:** Bethel: i.e., "house of God"; the reference is to the abode of God in v 17.

**29, 1:** Easterners: see note on Gn 25, 6.

**29, 11:** Burst into tears: literally "raised his voice and wept," i.e., for joy.

**29, 14:** Flesh and blood: literally "bone and flesh," i.e., a close relative; on the Hebrew idiom, see Gn 2, 23.

**29, 17:** Lovely eyes: The adjective modifying eyes is often translated as "weak," but "lovely" is the more probable word.

**29, 18:** Jacob offers to render service (Jos 15, 16f; 1 Sm 17, 25; 18, 17) in lieu of the customary bridal price (Ex 22, 16f; Dt 22, 29).

a Gn 12, 3; 13, 14f; 15, 5f; 18, 18; 22, 17f; 26, 4; Dt 19, 8; Sir 44, 21. b Gn 31, 3. c Gn 31, 13; 35, 14f. d Gn 35, 6; 48, 3; Jos 18, 13; Jgs 1, 23; Hos 12, 4. e Wis 10, 10. f Gn 24, 11f. g Tb 7, 4.

prefer to give her to you rather than to an
outsider. Stay with me." 20So Jacob served seven
years for Rachel, yet they seemed to him but a
few days because of his love for her.[h]

21Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my
wife, that I may consummate my marriage with
her, for my term is now completed." 22So Laban
invited all the local inhabitants and gave a feast.
23At the nightfall he took his daughter Leah and
brought her to Jacob, and Jacob consummated
the marriage with her. 24(Laban assigned his
slave girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her
maidservant.) 25In the morning Jacob was
amazed:* it was Leah! So he cried out to Laban:
"How could you do this to me! Was it not for
Rachel that I served you? Why did you dupe
me?" 26"It is not the custom in our country,"
Laban replied, "to marry off a younger daughter
before an older one. 27Finish the bridal week*
for this one, and then I will give you the other
too, in return for another seven years of service
with me."[i]

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28Jacob agreed. He finished the bridal week
for Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter
Rachel in marriage. 29(Laban assigned his slave
girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant.) 30Jacob then consummated his marriage
with Rachel also, and he loved her more than
Leah. Thus he remained in Laban's service
another seven years.[j]

**Jacob's Children** 31When the LORD saw that
Leah was unloved, he made her fruitful, while
Rachel remained barren. 32Leah conceived and
bore a son, and she named him Reuben;* for she
said, "It means, 'The LORD saw my misery; now
my husband will love me.' "[k] 33She conceived
again and bore a son, and said, "It means, 'The
LORD heard that I was unloved,' and therefore
he has given me this one also"; so she named
him Simeon.* 34Again she conceived and bore a
son, and she said, "Now at last my husband will
become attached to me, since I have now borne
him three sons"; that is why she named him
Levi.* 35Once more she conceived and bore a
son, and she said, "This time I will give grateful
praise to the LORD"; therefore she named him
Judah.* Then she stopped bearing children.[l]

## CHAPTER 30

1When Rachel saw that she failed to bear
children to Jacob, she became envious of her
sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children or I
shall die!"[m] 2In anger Jacob retorted, "Can I take
the place of God, who has denied you the fruit of
the womb?"[n] 3She replied, "Here is my maidservant Bilhah. Have intercourse with her, and let
her give birth on my knees,* so that I too may
have offspring, at least through her."[o] 4So she
gave him her maidservant Bilhah as a consort,*
and Jacob had intercourse with her. 5When
Bilhah conceived and bore a son, 6Rachel said,
"God has vindicated me; indeed he has heeded
my plea and given me a son." Therefore she
named him Dan.* 7Rachel's maidservant Bilhah
conceived again and bore a second son, 8and
Rachel said, "I engaged in a fateful struggle with
my sister, and I prevailed." So she named him
Naphtali.*

**29, 25:** Jacob was amazed: he had not recognized Leah because a bride was veiled when she was brought to her bridegroom; cf Gn 24, 65.

**29, 27:** The bridal week: an ancient wedding lasted for seven days of festivities; cf Jgs 14, 12.

**29, 32:** Reuben: The literal meaning of the Hebrew name is "look, a son!" But in this case, as also with the names of all the other sons of Jacob, a symbolic rather than an etymological interpretation of the name is given, because the name and the persons were regarded as closely interrelated. The symbolic interpretation of Reuben's name, according to the Yahwist source, is based on the similar-sounding, raa beonyi, "he saw my misery." In the Elohist source, the name is explained by the similar-sounding, yeehabani, "he will love me."

**29, 33:** Simeon: in popular etymology, related to shama, "he heard."

**29, 34:** Levi: related to yillaweh, "he will become attached."

**29, 35:** Judah: related to odeh, "I will give grateful praise."

**30, 3:** On my knees: in the ancient Near East, a father would take a newborn child in his lap to signify that he acknowledged it as his own; Rachel uses this ceremony in order to adopt the child and establish her legal rights to it.

**30, 4:** Consort: the Hebrew word normally means "wife," but here it refers to a wife of secondary rank, who did not have the full legal rights of an ordinary wife.

**30, 6:** Dan: explained by the term dannanni, "he has vindicated me."

**30, 8:** Naphtali: explained by the phrase "naptule elohim niptalti, literally, "in a divine wrestling match I have wrestled," perhaps implying the concept of an ordeal; hence the above rendering, I engaged in a fateful struggle.

h Hos 12, 13. i Hos 12, 13. j Dt 21, 15ff. k Gn 49, 3. l Mt 1, 2; Lk 3, 33. m Prv 30, 16. n 2 Kgs 5, 7. o Gn 16, 2ff.

[9]When Leah saw that she had ceased to bear
children, she gave her maidservant Zilpah to
Jacob as a consort. [10]So Jacob had intercourse
with Zilpah, and she conceived and bore a son.
[11]Leah then said, "What good luck!" So she
named him Gad.* [12]Then Leah's maidservant
Zilpah bore a second son to Jacob; [13]and Leah
said, "What good fortune!"—meaning, "Women
call me fortunate." So she named him Asher.*

[14]One day, during the wheat harvest, when
Reuben was out in the field, he came upon some
mandrakes* which he brought home to his
mother Leah. Rachel asked Leah, "Please let me
have some of your son's mandrakes." [15]Leah
replied, "Was it not enough for you to take away
my husband, that you must now take my son's
mandrakes too?" "Very well, then!" Rachel an-
swered. "In exchange for your son's mandrakes,
Jacob may lie with you tonight." [16]That evening,
when Jacob came home from the fields, Leah
went out to meet him. "You are now to come in
with me," she told him, "because I have paid for
you with my son's mandrakes." So that night he
slept with her, [17]and God heard her prayer; she
conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob. [18]Leah
then said, "God has given me my reward for
having let my husband have my maidservant";
so she named him Issachar.* [19]Leah conceived
again and bore a sixth son to Jacob; [20]and she
said, "God has brought me a precious gift. This
time my husband will offer me presents, now
that I have borne him six sons"; so she named
him Zebulun.* [21]Finally, she gave birth to a
daughter, and she named her Dinah.

[22]Then God remembered Rachel; he heard
her prayer and made her fruitful. [23]She con-
ceived and bore a son, and she said, "God has
removed my disgrace."[p] [24]So she named him
Joseph,* meaning, "May the LORD add another
son to this one for me!"

**Jacob Outwits Laban** [25]After Rachel gave
birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban: "Give me
leave to go to my homeland. [26]Let me have my
wives, for whom I served you, and my children,
too, that I may depart. You know very well the
service that I have rendered you." [27]Laban
answered him: "If you will please. . . .

"I have learned through divination that it is
because of you that God has blessed me. [28]So,"
he continued, "state what wages you want from
me, and I will pay them." [29]Jacob replied: "You
know what work I did for you and how well
your livestock fared under my care; [30]the little
you had before I came has grown into very
much, since the LORD's blessings came upon you
in my company. Therefore I should now do
something for my own household as well."
[31]"What should I pay you?" Laban asked. Jacob
answered: "You do not have to pay me anything
outright. I will again pasture and tend your
flock, if you do this one thing for me: [32]go
through your whole flock today and remove
from it every dark animal among the sheep and
every spotted or speckled one among the goats.*
Only such animals shall be my wages. [33]In the
future, whenever you check on these wages of
mine, let my honesty testify against me: any
animal in my possession that is not a speckled or
spotted goat, or a dark sheep, got there by
theft!" [34]"Very well," agreed Laban. "Let it be as
you say."

[35]That same day Laban removed the streaked
and spotted he-goats and all the speckled and
spotted she-goats, all those with some white on
them, as well as the fully dark-colored sheep;
these he left . . . in charge of his sons.* [36]Then

30, 11: Gad: explained by the Hebrew term begad, literally "in luck," i.e., what good luck!

30, 13: Asher: explained by the term beoshri, literally "in my good fortune," i.e., what good fortune, and by the term ishsheruni, "they call me fortunate."

30, 14: Mandrakes: an herb whose root was anciently thought to promote conception. The Hebrew word for mandrakes, dudaim, has erotic connotations, since it sounds like the words daddayim ("breasts") and dodim ("sexual pleasure").

30, 18: Issachar: explained by the terms, sekari, "my reward," and in v 16, sakor sekartika, literally "I have hired you," i.e., I have paid for you.

30, 20: Zebulun: related to the Akkadian word zubullum, "bridegroom's gift," is explained by the terms, zebadani . . . zebed tob, "he has brought me a precious gift," and yizbeleni, "he will offer me presents."

30, 24: Joseph: explained by the words yosep, "may he add," and in v 23, asap, "he has removed."

30, 32: Dark . . . sheep . . . spotted or speckled goats: In the Near East the normal color of sheep is light gray, whereas that of goats is uniform dark brown or black. Ordinarily, therefore, Jacob would have received but few animals.

30, 35: By giving the abnormally colored animals to his sons, Laban not only deprived Jacob of his first small wages, but he also

p Lk 1, 25.

he put a three days' journey between himself
and Jacob, while Jacob continued to pasture the
rest of Laban's flock.
37Jacob, however, got some fresh shoots of
poplar, almond and plane trees, and he made
white stripes in them by peeling off the bark
down to the white core of the shoots. 38The rods
that he had thus peeled he then set upright in
the watering troughs, so that they would be in
front of the animals that drank from the troughs.
When the animals were in heat as they came to
drink, 39*the goats mated by the rods, and so
they brought forth streaked, speckled and spot-
ted kids. 40The sheep, on the other hand, Jacob
kept apart, and he set these animals to face the
streaked or fully dark-colored animals of Laban.
Thus he produced special flocks of his own,
which he did not put with Laban's flock. 41More-
over, whenever the hardier animals were in
heat, Jacob would set the rods in the troughs in
full view of these animals, so that they mated by
the rods; 42but with the weaker animals he
would not put the rods there. So the feeble
animals would go to Laban, but the sturdy ones
to Jacob. 43Thus the man grew increasingly
prosperous, and he came to own not only large
flocks but also male and female servants and
camels and asses.

## CHAPTER 31

Ch 27–36
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**Flight from Laban** 1Jacob learned that Laban's
sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything
that belonged to our father, and he has accumu-
lated all this wealth of his by using our father's
property." 2Jacob perceived, too, that Laban's
attitude toward him was not what it had previ-
ously been. 3Then the LORD said to Jacob,
"Return to the land of your fathers, where you
were born, and I will be with you." [q]
4So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet
him where he was in the field with his flock.
5There he said to them: "I have noticed that
your father's attitude toward me is not as it was
in the past; but the God of my father has been
with me. 6You well know what effort I put into
serving your father; 7yet your father cheated me
and changed my wages time after time. God,
however, did not let him do me any harm.[r]
8*Whenever your father said, 'The speckled
animals shall be your wages,' the entire flock
would bear speckled young; whenever he said,
'The streaked animals shall be your wages,' the
entire flock would bear streaked young. 9Thus
God reclaimed your father's livestock and gave it
to me. 10Once, in the breeding season, I had a
dream in which I saw mating he-goats that were
streaked, speckled and mottled. 11In the dream
God's messenger called to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here!' I
replied. 12Then he said, 'Note well. All the he-
goats in the flock, as they mate, are streaked,
speckled and mottled, for I have seen all the
things that Laban has been doing to you. 13I am
the God who appeared to you in Bethel, where
you anointed a memorial stone and made a vow
to me. Up, then! Leave this land and return to
the land of your birth.' "[s]
14Rachel and Leah answered him: "Have we
still an heir's portion in our father's house? 15Are
we not regarded by him as outsiders?* He not
only sold us; he has even used up the money
that he got for us! 16All the wealth that God
reclaimed from our father really belongs to us
and our children. Therefore, do just as God has
told you."[t] 17Jacob proceeded to put his children
and wives on camels, 18and he drove off with all
his livestock and all the property he had acquired
in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the
land of Canaan.

designed to prevent in this way the future breeding of such animals in the part of his flock entrusted to Jacob.

**30, 39–42:** Jacob's stratagem was based on the widespread notion among simple people that visual stimuli can have prenatal effects on the offspring of breeding animals. Thus, the rods on which Jacob had whittled stripes or bands or chevron marks were thought to cause the female goats that looked at them to bear kids with lighter-colored marks on their dark hair, while the gray ewes were thought to bear lambs with dark marks on them simply by visual cross-breeding with the dark goats.

**31, 8–12:** This Elohist account of the miraculous increase in Jacob's flock differs somewhat from the Yahwist account given in Gn 30, 32–42.

**31, 15:** Outsiders: literally "foreign women"; they lacked the favored legal status of native women. Used up: literally "eaten, consumed"; the bridal price that a man received for giving his daughter in marriage was legally reserved as her inalienable dowry.

q Gn 26, 3; 28, 15; 32, 10. r Jdt 8, 26. s Gn 28, 18. t Wis 10, 10f.

[19]Now Laban had gone away to shear his
sheep, and Rachel had meanwhile appropriated
her father's household idols.[u] * [20]Jacob had
hoodwinked* Laban the Aramean by not telling
him of his intended flight. [21]Thus he made his
escape with all that he had. Once he was across
the Euphrates, he headed for the highlands of
Gilead.

[22]On the third day, word came to Laban that
Jacob had fled. [23]Taking his kinsmen with him,
he pursued him for seven days* until he caught
up with him in the hill country of Gilead. [24]But
that night God appeared to Laban the Aramean
in a dream and warned him, "Take care not to
threaten Jacob with any harm."[v]

**Jacob and Laban in Gilead** [25]When Laban
overtook Jacob, Jacob's tents were pitched in the
highlands; Laban also pitched his tents there, on
Mount Gilead. [26]"What do you mean," Laban
demanded of Jacob, "by hoodwinking me and
carrying off my daughters like war captives?*
[27]Why did you dupe me by stealing away
secretly? You should have told me, and I would
have sent you off with merry singing to the
sound of tambourines and harps. [28]You did not
even allow me a parting kiss to my daughters
and grandchildren! What you have now done is
a senseless thing. [29]I have it in my power to
harm all of you; but last night the God of your
father said to me, 'Take care not to threaten
Jacob with any harm!' [30]Granted that you had to
leave because you were desperately homesick
for your father's house, why did you steal my
gods?" [31]"I was frightened," Jacob replied to
Laban, "at the thought that you might take your
daughters away from me by force. [32]But as for
your gods, the one you find them with shall not
remain alive! If, with my kinsmen looking on,
you identify anything here as belonging to you,
take it." Jacob, of course, had no idea that
Rachel had stolen the idols.

[33]Laban then went in and searched Jacob's
tent and Leah's tent, as well as the tents of the
two maidservants; but he did not find the idols.
Leaving Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's.
[34]Now Rachel had taken the idols, put them
inside a camel cushion, and seated herself upon
them. When Laban had rummaged through the
rest of her tent without finding them,[w] [35]Rachel
said to her father, "Let not my lord feel offended
that I cannot rise in your presence; a woman's
period is upon me." So, despite his search, he
did not find his idols.

[36]Jacob, now enraged, upbraided Laban.
"What crime or offense have I committed," he
demanded, "that you should hound me so
fiercely? [37]Now that you have ransacked all my
things, have you found a single object taken
from your belongings? If so, produce it here
before your kinsmen and mine, and let them
decide between us two.

[38]"In the twenty years that I was under you,
no ewe or she-goat of yours ever miscarried, and
I have never feasted on a ram of your flock. [39][x]I
never brought you an animal torn by wild
beasts; I made good the loss myself. You held me
responsible for anything stolen by day or night.*
[40]How often the scorching heat ravaged me by
day, and the frost by night, while sleep fled from
my eyes! [41]Of the twenty years that I have now
spent in your household, I slaved fourteen years
for your two daughters and six years for your
flock, while you changed my wages time after
time. [42]If my ancestral God, the God of Abraham
and the Awesome One of Isaac, had not been on
my side, you would now have sent me away
empty-handed. But God saw my plight and the

**31, 19:** Household idols: in Hebrew, teraphim, figurines used in divination (Ez 21, 26; Zec 10, 2). Laban calls them his "gods" (v 30).

**31, 20:** Hoodwinked: literally "stolen the heart of," i.e., lulled the mind of. Aramean: The earliest extra-biblical references to the Arameans date from several centuries after the time of Jacob; to call Laban an Aramean and to have him speak Aramaic (v 47) would seem to be an anachronism.

**31, 23:** For seven days: literally "a way of seven days," a general term to designate a long distance; it would have taken a camel caravan many more days to travel from Haran to Gilead, the region east of the northern half of the Jordan.

**31, 26:** War captives: literally "women captured by the sword"; the women of a conquered people were treated as part of the victor's booty; cf 1 Sm 30, 2; 2 Kgs 5, 2.

**31, 39:** Laban's actions were contrary to the customs of the ancient Near East, as recorded in the Code of Hammurabi: "If in a sheepfold an act of god has occurred, or a lion has made a kill, the shepherd shall clear himself before the deity, and the owner of the fold must accept the loss" (par. 266); cf Ex 22, 12.

u Gn 19, 34; 1 Sm 19, 13. v Wis 10, 12. w Gn 31, 19. x Ex 22, 12.

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fruits of my toil, and last night he gave judgment."[y]

43*Laban replied to Jacob: "The women are mine, their children are mine, and the flocks are mine; everything you see belongs to me. But since these women are my daughters, I will now do something for them and for the children they have borne. 44Come, then, we will make a pact, you and I; the LORD shall be a witness between us."

45Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial stone.[z] 46Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather some stones." So they got some stones and made a mound; and they had a meal there at the mound. 47Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha,* but Jacob named it Galeed. 48"This mound," said Laban, "shall be a witness from now on between you and me." That is why it was named Galeed— 49and also Mizpah,* for he said: "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. 50If you mistreat my daughters, or take other wives besides my daughters, remember that even though no one else is about, God will be witness between you and me."

51Laban said further to Jacob: "Here is this mound, and here is the memorial stone that I have set up between you and me. 52This mound shall be witness, and this memorial stone shall be witness, that, with hostile intent, neither may I pass beyond this mound into your territory nor may you pass beyond it into mine. 53May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor [their ancestral deities] maintain justice between us!" Jacob took the oath by the Awesome One of Isaac. 54He then offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to share in the meal. When they had eaten, they passed the night on the mountain.

## CHAPTER 32

1Early the next morning, Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters goodbye; then he set out on his journey back home, 2while Jacob continued on his own way. Then God's messengers encountered Jacob. 3When he saw them he said, "This is God's encampment." So he named that place Mahanaim.*

**Embassy to Esau** 4Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom,[a] 5with this message: "Thus shall you say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob speaks as follows: I have been staying with Laban and have been detained there until now. 6I own cattle, asses and sheep, as well as male and female servants. I am sending my lord this information in the hope of gaining your favor.' " 7When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We reached your brother Esau. He is now coming to meet you, accompanied by four hundred men."

8Jacob was very much frightened. In his anxiety, he divided the people who were with him, as well as his flocks, herds, and camels, into two camps. 9"If Esau should attack and overwhelm one camp," he reasoned, "the remaining camp may still survive." 10Then he prayed, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac! You told me, O LORD, 'Go back to the land of your birth, and I will be good to you.'[b] 11I am unworthy of all the acts of kindness that you have loyally performed for your servant: although I crossed the Jordan here with nothing but my staff, I have now grown into two companies. 12Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau! Otherwise I fear that when he comes he will strike me down and slay the mothers and children.[c] 13You yourself said, 'I will be very good to you, and I will make your descendants like the sands of the sea, which are too numerous to count.' "

**31, 43–54:** In this account of the treaty between Laban and Jacob, the Yahwist and Elohist sources are closely interwoven. The mound or cairn of stones comes from the Yahwist source, the memorial stone or stele comes from the Elohist one.

**31, 47:** Jegar-sahadutha: an Aramaic term meaning "mound of witness." Galeed: in Hebrew, galed, with the same meaning; also offers an explanation of the regional name Gilead.

**31, 49:** Mizpah: a town in Gilead; cf Jgs 10, 17; 11, 11. 34; Hos 5, 1. The Hebrew name mispa ("lookout") is allied to yisep yhwh ("may the Lord keep watch"), and also echoes the word masseba ("memorial pillar").

**32, 3:** Mahanaim: a town in Gilead (Jos 13, 26. 30; 21, 38; 2 Sm 2, 8; etc.). The Hebrew name means "two camps." There are other allusions to the name in vv 8. 11.

y Gn 19, 24. 29. z Gn 28, 18; 35, 14. a Gn 36, 6. b Gn 31, 3. c Gn 28, 14; 48, 16; Ex 32, 13; Heb 11, 12.

[14]After passing the night there, Jacob selected
from what he had with him the following
presents for his brother Esau: [15]two hundred
she-goats and twenty he-goats; two hundred
ewes and twenty rams; [16]thirty milch camels
and their young; forty cows and ten bulls;
twenty she-asses and ten he-asses. [17]He put
these animals in charge of his servants, in
separate droves, and he told the servants, "Go
on ahead of me, but keep a space between one
drove and the next." [18]To the servant in the lead
he gave this instruction: "When my brother
Esau meets you, he may ask you, 'Whose man
are you? Where are you going? To whom do
these animals ahead of you belong?' [19]Then you
shall answer, 'They belong to your brother Jacob,
but they have been sent as a gift to my lord Esau;
and Jacob himself is right behind us.' " [20]He
gave similar instructions to the second servant
and the third and to all the others who followed
behind the droves, namely: "Thus and thus shall
you say to Esau, when you reach him; [21]and be
sure to add, 'Your servant Jacob is right behind
us.' " For Jacob reasoned, "If I first appease him
with gifts that precede me, then later, when I
face him, perhaps he will forgive me." [22]So the
gifts went on ahead of him, while he stayed that
night in the camp.

**Struggle with the Angel** [23]In the course of
that night, however, Jacob arose, took his two
wives, with the two maidservants and his eleven
children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.
[24]After he had taken them across the stream and
had brought over all his possessions, [25]Jacob was
left there alone. Then some man* wrestled with
him until the break of dawn. [26]When the man
saw that he could not prevail over him, he struck
Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the hip socket
was wrenched as they wrestled.[d] [27]The man
then said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But
Jacob said, "I will not let you go until you bless
me." [28]"What is your name?" the man asked.
He answered, "Jacob."[e] [29]Then the man said,
"You shall no longer be spoken of as Jacob, but as
Israel,* because you have contended with divine
and human beings and have prevailed." [30]Jacob
then asked him, "Do tell me your name, please."
He answered, "Why should you want to know
my name?" With that, he bade him farewell.
[31]Jacob named the place Peniel,* "Because I
have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life
has been spared."[f]

[32]At sunrise, as he left Penuel, Jacob limped
along because of his hip. [33]That is why, to this
day, the Israelites do not eat the sciatic muscle
that is on the hip socket, inasmuch as Jacob's hip
socket was struck at the sciatic muscle.

## CHAPTER 33

Ch 27–36
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70–72

**Jacob and Esau Meet** [1]Jacob looked up and
saw Esau coming, accompanied by four hundred
men. So he divided his children among Leah,
Rachel and the two maidservants, [2]putting the
maids and their children first, Leah and her
children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. [3]He
himself went on ahead of them, bowing to the
ground seven times, until he reached his
brother. [4]Esau ran to meet him, embraced him,
and flinging himself on his neck, kissed him as
he wept.

[5]When Esau looked about, he saw the
women and children. "Who are these with
you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the
children whom God has graciously bestowed on
your servant." [6]Then the maidservants and their
children came forward and bowed low; [7]next,
Leah and her children came forward and bowed
low; lastly, Rachel and her children came forward and bowed low. [8]Then Esau asked, "What
did you intend with all those droves that I
encountered?" Jacob answered, "It was to gain
my lord's favor." [9]"I have plenty," replied Esau;

**32, 25:** Some man: a messenger of the Lord in human form, as is clear from vv 29ff.

**32, 29:** Israel: the first part of the Hebrew name Yisrael is given a popular explanation in the word sarita, "you contended"; the second part is the first syllable of elohim, "divine beings." The present incident, with a similar allusion to the name Israel, is referred to in Hos 12, 5, where the mysterious wrestler is explicitly called an angel.

**32, 31:** Peniel: a variant of the word Penuel (v 32), the name of a town on the north bank of the Jabbok in Gilead (Jgs 8, 8f. 17; 1 Kgs 12, 25). The name is explained as meaning "the face of God," peni-el. Yet my life has been spared: see note on Gn 16, 13.

d Hos 12, 4. e Gn 35, 10; 1 Kgs 18, 31; 2 Kgs 17, 34. f Jgs 13, 22.

"you should keep what is yours, brother."
10"No, I beg you!" said Jacob. "If you will do me
the favor, please accept this gift from me, since
to come into your presence is for me like coming
into the presence of God, now that you have
received me so kindly. 11Do accept the present I
have brought you; God has been generous
toward me, and I have an abundance." Since he
so urged him, Esau accepted.

12Then Esau said, "Let us break camp and be
on our way; I will travel alongside you." 13But
Jacob replied: "As my lord can see, the children
are frail. Besides, I am encumbered with the
flocks and herds, which now have sucklings; if
overdriven for a single day, the whole flock will
die. 14Let my lord, then, go on ahead of me,
while I proceed more slowly at the pace of the
livestock before me and at the pace of my
children, until I join my lord in Seir." 15Esau
replied, "Let me at least put at your disposal
some of the men who are with me." But Jacob
said, "For what reason? Please indulge me in
this, my lord." 16So on the same day that Esau
began his journey back to Seir, 17Jacob journeyed
to Succoth. There he built a home for himself
and made booths for his livestock. That is why
the place was called Succoth.*

18Having thus come from Paddan-aram, Jacob
arrived safely at the city of Shechem, which is in
the land of Canaan, and he encamped in sight of
the city.[g] 19The plot of ground on which he had
pitched his tent he bought for a hundred pieces
of bullion* from the descendants of Hamor, the
founder of Shechem.[h] 20He set up a memorial
stone there and invoked "El, the God of Israel."[i]

## CHAPTER 34

Ch 27–36
See RG
70–72

**The Rape of Dinah** 1*Dinah, the daughter
whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit
some of the women of the land. 2When She-
chem, son of Hamor the Hivite,* who was chief
of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay
with her by force. 3Since he was strongly at-
tracted to Dinah, daughter of Jacob, indeed was
really in love with the girl, he endeavored to win
her affection. 4Shechem also asked his father
Hamor, "Get me this girl for a wife."

5Meanwhile, Jacob heard that Shechem had
defiled his daughter Dinah; but since his sons
were out in the fields with his livestock, he held
his peace until they came home. 6Now Hamor,
the father of Shechem, went out to discuss the
matter with Jacob, 7just as Jacob's sons were
coming in from the fields. When they heard the
news, the men were shocked and seethed with
indignation. What Shechem had done was an
outrage in Israel; such a thing could not be
tolerated.[j]

8Hamor appealed to them, saying, "My son
Shechem has his heart set on your daughter.
Please give her to him in marriage. 9Intermarry
with us; give your daughters to us, and take our
daughters for yourselves. 10Thus you can live
among us. The land is open before you; you can
settle and move about freely in it, and acquire
landed property here." 11Then Shechem, too,
appealed to Dinah's father and brothers: "Do me
this favor, and I will pay whatever you demand
of me. 12No matter how high you set the bridal
price, I will pay you whatever you ask; only give
me the maiden in marriage."

**Revenge of Jacob's Sons** 13Jacob's sons re-
plied to Shechem and his father Hamor with
guile, speaking as they did because their sister
Dinah had been defiled. 14"We could not do
such a thing," they said, "as to give our sister to
an uncircumcised man; that would be a disgrace
for us. 15We will agree with you only on this
condition, that you become like us by having

**33, 17:** Succoth: an important town near the confluence of the Jabbok and the Jordan (Jos 13, 27; Jgs 8, 5–16; 1 Kgs 7, 46). Booths: in Hebrew, sukkot, of the same sound as the name of the town.

**33, 19:** Pieces of bullion: in Hebrew, kesita, a monetary unit of which the value is now unknown. Descendants of Hamor: Hamorites, "the men of Hamor"; cf Jgs 9, 28. Hamor was regarded as the eponymous ancestor of the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Shechem.

**34, 1–31:** Behind the story of the rape of Dinah and the revenge of Jacob's sons on the men of the city of Shechem there probably lies a dimly recollected historical event connected with an armed conflict between the earliest Israelite tribes invading central Canaan and the Hurrian inhabitants of the Shechem region.

**34, 2:** Hivite: The Greek text has "Horite"; the terms were apparently used indiscriminately to designate the Hurrian or other non-Semitic elements in Palestine.

g Gn 12, 6; Jn 4, 6. h Jos 24, 32; Jn 4. 5; Acts 7, 16. i Jgs 6, 24. j 2 Sm 13, 12.

every male among you circumcised. [16]Then we
will give you our daughters and take yours in
marriage; we will settle among you and become
one kindred people with you. [17]But if you do not
comply with our terms regarding circumcision,
we will take our daughter and go away."

[18]Their proposal seemed fair to Hamor and his
son Shechem. [19]The young man lost no time in
acting in the matter, since he was deeply in love
with Jacob's daughter. Moreover, he was more
highly respected than anyone else in his clan.
[20]So Hamor and his son Shechem went to their
town council and thus presented the matter to
their fellow townsmen: [21]"These men are
friendly toward us. Let them settle in the land
and move about in it freely; there is ample room
in the country for them. We can marry their
daughters and give our daughters to them in
marriage. [22]But the men will agree to live with
us and form one kindred people with us only on
this condition, that every male among us be
circumcised as they themselves are. [23]Would not
the livestock they have acquired—all their
animals—then be ours? Let us, therefore, give in
to them, so that they may settle among us."

[24]All the able-bodied men of the town*
agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and all
the males, including every able-bodied man in
the community, were circumcised. [25]On the
third day, while they were still in pain, Dinah's
full brothers Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's
sons, took their swords, advanced against the
city without any trouble, and massacred all the
males.[k] [26]After they had put Hamor and his son
Shechem to the sword, they took Dinah from
Shechem's house and left.[l] [27]Then the other
sons of Jacob followed up the slaughter and
sacked the city in reprisal for their sister Dinah's
defilement. [28]They seized their flocks, herds and
asses, whatever was in the city and in the
country around. [29]They carried off all their
wealth, their women, and their children, and
took for loot whatever was in the houses.[m]

[30]Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: "You have
brought trouble upon me by making me loath-
some to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaan-
ites and the Perizzites. I have so few men that, if
these people unite against me and attack me, I
and my family will be wiped out." [31]But they
retorted, "Should our sister have been treated
like a harlot?"

## CHAPTER 35

Ch 27–36
See RG
70–72

**Bethel Revisited** [1]God said to Jacob: "Go up
now to Bethel. Settle there and build an altar
there to the God who appeared to you while you
were fleeing from your brother Esau."[n] [2]So
Jacob told his family and all the others who were
with him: "Get rid of the foreign gods* that you
have among you; then purify yourselves and put
on fresh clothes. [3]We are now to go up to
Bethel, and I will build an altar there to the God
who answered me in my hour of distress and
who has been with me wherever I have gone."
[4]They therefore handed over to Jacob all the
foreign gods in their possession and also the
rings* they had in their ears. [5]Then, as they set
out, a terror from God fell upon the towns round
about, so that no one pursued the sons of Jacob.

[6]Thus Jacob and all the people who were with
him arrived in Luz [that is, Bethel] in the land of
Canaan.[o] [7]There he built an altar and named the
place Bethel, for it was there that God had
revealed himself to him when he was fleeing
from his brother.[p]

[8]Death came to Rebekah's nurse Deborah;
she was buried under the oak below Bethel, and
so it was called Allon-bacuth.*

[9]On Jacob's arrival from Paddan-aram, God

**34, 24:** Every able-bodied man in the community: literally "all those who go out at the gate of the city," apparently meaning the men who go out to war. By temporarily crippling them through circumcision, Jacob's sons deprived the city of its defenders.

**35, 2:** Foreign gods: pagan images, including household idols (see note on Gn 31, 19), that Jacob's people brought with them from Paddan-aram.

**35, 4:** Rings: Earrings were often worn as amulets connected with pagan magic.

**35, 8:** This verse may have stood originally in some other context. Rebekah's nurse is spoken of without a name, in Gn 24, 59. Allon-bacuth: the Hebrew name means "oak of weeping."

k Gn 49, 6. l Jdt 9, 2. m Jdt 9, 3f. n Gn 28, 12f. o Gn 28, 19; Jos 18, 13; Jgs 1, 22f. p Gn 28, 12f.

appeared to him again and blessed him. 10God
said to him:

"You whose name is Jacob
shall no longer be called Jacob,
but Israel shall be your name." [q]

Thus he was named Israel. 11God also said to
him:

"I am God Almighty;
be fruitful and multiply.
A nation, indeed an assembly of nations,
shall stem from you,
and kings shall issue from your loins.
12The land I once gave
to Abraham and Isaac
I now give to you;
And to your descendants after you
will I give this land." [r]

13Then God departed from him. 14On the site
where God had spoken with him, Jacob set up a
memorial stone, and upon it he made a libation
and poured out oil. [s] 15Jacob named the site
Bethel, because God had spoken with him there.

Ch 27–36
See RG
70–72

**Jacob's Family** 16Then they departed from
Bethel: but while they still had some distance to
go on the way to Ephrath, Rachel began to be in
labor and to suffer great distress. 17When her
pangs were most severe, her midwife said to her,
"Have no fear! This time, too, you have a son."
18With her last breath—for she was at the point
of death—she called him Ben-oni;* his father,
however, named him Benjamin. 19 [t]Thus Rachel
died; and she was buried on the road to Ephrath
[that is, Bethlehem].* 20Jacob set up a memorial
stone on her grave, and the same monument
marks Rachel's grave to this day.

21Israel moved on and pitched his tent beyond
Migdal-eder. 22While Israel was encamped in
that region, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah,
his father's concubine. When Israel heard of it,
he was greatly offended. [u]

The sons of Jacob were now twelve. 23The
sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, Simeon,
Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; 24*the sons
of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; 25the sons of
Rachel's maid Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali; 26the
sons of Leah's maid Zilpah: Gad and Asher.
These are the sons of Jacob who were born to
him in Paddan-aram.

27Jacob went home to his father Isaac at
Mamre, in Kiriath-arba [that is, Hebron], where
Abraham and Isaac had stayed. 28The lifetime of
Isaac was one hundred and eighty years; 29then
he breathed his last. After a full life, he died as
an old man and was taken to his kinsmen. His
sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

## CHAPTER 36

**Edomite Lists** 1These are the descendants of
Esau [that is, Edom]. 2*Esau took his wives from
among the Canaanite women: Adah, daughter
of Elon the Hittite; Oholibamah, granddaughter
through Anah of Zibeon the Hivite; [v] 3and Base-
math, daughter of Ishmael and sister of Neba-
ioth. 4Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau; Basemath bore
Reuel; [w] 5and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and
Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were
born to him in the land of Cannan. [x]

6Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters,
and all the members of his household, as well as
his livestock comprising various animals and all
the property he had acquired in the land of
Canaan, and went to the land of Seir, out of the
way of his brother Jacob. [y] 7Their possessions
had become too great for them to dwell to-

**35, 18:** Ben-oni: means either "son of my vigor" or, more likely in the context, "son of affliction." Benjamin: "son of the right hand." This may be interpreted to signify a son who is his father's help and support, but more likely its original meaning was "southerner." In the Hebrew idiom, the south lies to one's right hand, and Benjamin was the southernmost of the Rachel tribes.

**35, 19:** Bethlehem: the gloss comes from a later tradition that identified the site with Bethlehem, also called Ephrath or Ephratha (Jos 15, 59; Ru 4, 11; Mi 5, 1). But Rachel's grave was actually near Ramah (Jer 31, 15), a few miles north of Jerusalem, in the territory of Benjamin (1 Sm 10, 2).

**35, 24ff:** Benjamin is here said to have been born in Paddan-aram, either because all twelve sons of Jacob are considered as a unit, or because the Priestly source, from which vv 23–29 are taken, follows a tradition different from that of the Elohistic source found in vv 16–20.

**36, 2–14:** The names of Esau's wives and of their fathers given here differ considerably from their names cited from other old sources in Gn 26, 34 and 28, 9. Zibeon the Hivite: In v 20 he is called a "Horite"; see note on Gn 34, 2.

q 1 Kgs 18, 31; 2 Kgs 17, 34. r Ex 32, 13; Heb 11, 9. s Gn 28, 18; 31, 45. t Gn 48, 7; 1 Sm 10, 2; Mi 5, 2. u Gn 49, 4; 1 Chr 5, 1. v Gn 26, 34. w 1 Chr 1, 35. x 1 Chr 1, 35. y Gn 32, 4.

gether, and the land in which they were staying
could not support them because of their live-
stock. 8So Esau settled in the highlands of Seir.
[Esau is Edom.][z] 9These are the descendants of
Esau, ancestor of the Edomites, in the highlands
of Seir.

10These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz,
son of Esau's wife Adah; and Reuel, son of
Esau's wife Basemath. 11[a]The sons of Eliphaz
were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz.
12(Esau's son Eliphaz had a concubine Timna,
and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the
descendants of Esau's wife Adah. 13The sons of
Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Miz-
zah. These are the descendants of Esau's wife
Basemath.[b] 14The descendants of Esau's wife
Oholibamah—granddaughter through Anah of
Zibeon—whom she bore to Esau were Jeush,
Jalam and Korah.[c]

15The following are the clans of Esau's descen-
dants. The descendants of Eliphaz, Esau's first-
born: the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,
16Korah, Gatam and Amalek. These are the clans
of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are de-
scended from Adah. 17The descendants of Esau's
son Reuel: the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah
and Mizzah. These are the clans of Reuel in the
land of Edom; they are descended from Esau's
wife Basemath. 18The descendants of Esau's
wife Oholibamah: the clans of Jeush, Jalam and
Korah. These are the clans of Esau's wife Oholi-
bamah, daughter of Anah. 19Such are the descen-
dants of Esau [that is, Edom] according to their
clans.

20The following are the descendants of Seir
the Horite,* the original settlers in the land:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,[d] 21Dishon, Ezer
and Dishan; they are the Horite clans descended
from Seir, in the land of Edom. 22[e]Lotan's
descendants were Hori and Hemam, and Lotan's
sister was Timna. 23Shobal's descendants were
Alvan, Mahanath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.
24Zibeon's descendants were Aiah and Anah.
(He is the Anah who found water in the desert
while he was pasturing the asses of his father
Zibeon.) 25The descendants of Anah were Di-
shon and Oholibamah, daughter of Anah. 26The
descendants of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban,
Ithran and Cheran. 27The descendants of Ezer
were Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. 28The descen-
dants of Dishan were Uz and Aran. 29These are
the Horite clans: the clans of Lotan, Shobal,
Zibeon, Anah, 30Dishon, Ezer and Dishan; they
were the clans of the Horites, clan by clan, in the
land of Seir.

31[f]The following are the kings who reigned in
the land of Edom before any king reigned over
the Israelites.* 32Bela, son of Beor, became king
in Edom; the name of his city was Dinhabah.
33When Bela died, Jobab, son of Zerah, from
Bozrah, succeeded him as king. 34When Jobab
died, Husham, from the land of the Temanites,
succeeded him as king. He defeated the Midian-
ites in the country of Moab; the name of his city
was Avith. 35When Husham died, Hadad, son of
Bedad, succeeded him as king. 36When Hadad
died, Samlah, from Masrekah, succeeded him as
king. 37When Samlah died, Shaul, from
Rehoboth-on-the-River, succeeded him as king.
38When Shaul died, Baal-hanan, son of Achbor,
succeeded him as king. 39When Baal-hanan
died, Hadar succeeded him as king; the name of
his city was Pau. (His wife's name was Meheta-
bel; she was the daughter of Matred, son of
Mezahab.)

40The following are the names of the clans of
Esau individually according to their subdivisions
and localities: the clans of Timna, Alvah, Je-
theth, 41Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, 42Kenaz, Te-
man, Mibzar, 43Magdiel and Iram. These are the
clans of the Edomites, according to their settle-
ments in their territorial holdings. [Esau was the
father of the Edomites.]

**36, 20:** Seir the Horite: According to Dt 2, 12, the highlands of Seir were inhabited by Horites before they were occupied by the Edomites.

**36, 31:** Before any king reigned over the Israelites: obviously this statement was written after the time of Saul, Israel's first king.

z Dt 2, 4f; Jos 24, 4. a 11f: 1 Chr 1, 36. b 1 Chr 1, 37. c 1 Chr 1, 35. d 20f: 1 Chr 1, 38. e 22–28: 1 Chr 1, 39–42. f 31–43: 1 Chr 1, 45–54.

# IV: Joseph and His Brothers

## CHAPTER 37

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**Joseph Sold into Egypt** [1]Jacob settled in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. [2]This is his family history. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was tending the flocks with his brothers; he was an assistant to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and he brought his father bad reports about them.

[3]Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him a long tunic. [4]When his brothers saw that their father loved him best of all his sons, they hated him so much that they would not even greet him.

[5]Once Joseph had a dream, which he told to his brothers:[g] [6]"Listen to this dream I had. [7]There we were, binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose to an upright position, and your sheaves formed a ring around my sheaf and bowed down to it." [8]"Are you really going to make yourself king over us?" his brothers asked him. "Or impose your rule on us?" So they hated him all the more because of his talk about his dreams.[h]

[9]Then he had another dream, and this one, too, he told to his brothers. "I had another dream," he said; "this time, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." [10]When he also told it to his father, his father reproved him. "What is the meaning of this dream of yours?" he asked, "Can it be that I and your mother and your brothers are to come and bow to the ground before you?" [11]So his brothers were wrought up against him but his father pondered the matter.

[12]One day, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem, [13]Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers, you know, are tending our flocks at Shechem. Get ready; I will send you to them." "I am ready," Joseph answered. [14]"Go then," he replied; "see if all is well with your brothers and the flocks, and bring back word." So he sent him off from the valley of Hebron. When Joseph reached Shechem, [15]a man met him as he was wandering about in the fields. "What are you looking for?" the man asked him. [16]"I am looking for my brothers," he answered. "Could you please tell me where they are tending the flocks?" [17]The man told him, "They have moved on from here; in fact, I heard them say, 'Let us go on to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and caught up with them in Dothan. [18]They noticed him from a distance, and before he came up to them, they plotted to kill him. [19]They said to one another: "Here comes that master dreamer! [20]Come on, let us kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns here; we could say that a wild beast devoured him. We shall then see what comes of his dreams."[i]

[21]*When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from their hands, saying, "We must not take his life. [22]Instead of shedding blood," he continued, "just throw him into that cistern there in the desert; but don't kill him outright." His purpose was to rescue him from their hands and restore him to his father.[j] [23]So when Joseph came up to them, they stripped him of the long tunic he had on; [24]then they took him and threw him into the cistern, which was empty and dry.

[25]They then sat down to their meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels laden with gum, balm and resin to be taken down to Egypt.[k] [26]Judah said to his brothers: "What is to be gained by killing our brother and concealing his blood?[l] [27]Rather, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites, instead of doing away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh." His

**37, 21–36:** The chapter thus far is from the Yahwist source, as are also vv 25–28a. But vv 21–24 and 28b-36 are from the Elohist source. In the latter, Reuben tries to rescue Joseph, who is taken in Reuben's absence by certain Midianites; in the Yahwist source, it is Judah who saves Joseph's life by having him sold to certain Ishmaelites. Although the two variant forms in which the story was handed down in early oral tradition differ in these minor points, they agree on the essential fact that Joseph was brought as a slave into Egypt because of the jealousy of his brothers.

g Gn 42, 9. h Gn 50, 17. i Gn 44, 28. j Gn 42, 22. k Gn 43, 11. l Jb 16, 18.

brothers agreed. [28]They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.*

Some Midianite traders passed by, and they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and took him to Egypt.[m] [29]When Reuben went back to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not in it, he tore his clothes, [30]and returning to his brothers, he exclaimed: "The boy is gone! And I—where can I turn?" [31]They took Joseph's tunic, and after slaughtering a goat, dipped the tunic in its blood. [32]They then sent someone to bring the long tunic to their father, with the message: "We found this. See whether it is your son's tunic or not." [33]He recognized it and exclaimed: "My son's tunic! A wild beast has devoured him! Joseph has been torn to pieces!"[n] [34]Then Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned his son many days. [35]Though his sons and daughters tried to console him, he refused all consolation, saying, "No, I will go down mourning to my son in the nether world." Thus did his father lament him.[o]

[36]The Midianites, meanwhile, sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward.[p]

## CHAPTER 38*

**Judah and Tamar** [1]About that time Judah parted from his brothers and pitched his tent near a certain Adullamite named Hirah. [2]There he met the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua, married her, and had relations with her.[q] [3]She conceived and bore a son, whom she named Er. [4]Again she conceived and bore a son, whom she named Onan. [5]Then she bore still another son, whom she named Shelah. They were in Chezib* when he was born.[r]

[6]Judah got a wife named Tamar for his first-born, Er. [7]But Er, Judah's first-born, greatly offended the LORD; so the LORD took his life.[s] [8][t]Then Judah said to Onan, "Unite with your brother's widow, in fulfillment of your duty as brother-in-law, and thus preserve your brother's line."* [9]Onan, however, knew that the descendants would not be counted as his; so whenever he had relations with his brother's widow, he wasted his seed on the ground, to avoid contributing offspring for his brother. [10]What he did greatly offended the LORD, and the LORD took his life too. [11]Thereupon Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Stay as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"—for he feared that Shelah also might die like his brothers. So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

[12]Years passed, and Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah completed the period of mourning, he went up to Timnah for the shearing of his sheep, in company with his friend Hirah the Adullamite. [13]When Tamar was told that her father-in-law was on his way up to Timnah to shear his sheep, [14]she took off her widow's garb, veiled her face by covering herself with a shawl, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah; for she was aware that, although Shelah was now grown up, she had not been given to him in marriage.[u] [15]When Judah saw her, he mistook her for a harlot, since she had covered her face. [16]So he went over to her at the roadside, and not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he said, "Come, let me have intercourse with you." She replied, "What will you pay me for letting you have intercourse with me?" [17]He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." "Very well," she said, "provided you leave a pledge until you send it." [18]Judah asked, "What pledge am I to give you?" She answered, "Your seal and

Ch 37–50 See RG 72–73

**37, 28:** They sold Joseph . . . silver: in the Hebrew text, these words occur between out of the cistern and (they) took him to Egypt at the end of the verse.

**38, 1–30:** This chapter, from the Yahwist source, has nothing to do with the Joseph story in which Judah is still living with his father and brothers. The sacred author inserted this independent account from the life of Judah at this place to mark the long lapse of time during which Joseph's family knew nothing of his life in Egypt. This is apparently a personalized history of the early days of the tribe of Judah, which interbred with several Canaanite clans, though some of these soon became extinct.

**38, 5:** Chezib: a variant form of Achzib (Jos 15, 44; Mi 1, 14), a town in the Judean Shephelah.

**38, 8:** Preserve your brother's line: literally, "raise up seed for your brother." The ancient Israelites regarded as very important their law of levirate, or "brother-in-law" marriage; see notes on Dt 25, 5; Ru 2, 20. In the present story, it is primarily Onan's violation of this law, rather than the means he used to circumvent it, that brought on him God's displeasure (vv 9f).

m Ps 105, 17; Wis 10, 13; Acts 7, 9. n Gn 44, 28. o Gn 42, 38. p Ps 105, 17. q 1 Chr 2, 3. r 1 Chr 4, 21. s 1 Chr 2, 3. t Dt 25, 5; Mt 22, 24; Mk 12, 19; Lk 20, 28. u Prv 7, 10.

cord,* and the staff you carry." So he gave them
to her and had intercourse with her, and she
conceived by him. 19When she went away, she
took off her shawl and put on her widow's garb
again.

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

20Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adul-
lamite to recover the pledge from the woman;
but he could not find her. 21So he asked the men
of the place, "Where is the temple prostitute,*
the one by the roadside in Enaim?" But they
answered, "There has never been a temple
prostitute here." 22He went back to Judah and
told him, "I could not find her; and besides, the
men of the place said there was no temple
prostitute there." 23"Let her keep the things,"
Judah replied; "otherwise we shall become a
laughingstock. After all, I did send her the kid,
even though you were unable to find her."

24About three months later, Judah was told
that his daughter-in-law Tamar had played the
harlot and was then with child from her harlotry.
"Bring her out," cried Judah; "she shall be
burned." 25But as they were bringing her out,
she sent word to her father-in-law, "It is by the
man to whom these things belong that I am with
child. Please verify," she added, "whose seal and
cord and whose staff these are." 26Judah recog-
nized them and said, "She is more in the right
than I am, since I did not give her to my son
Shelah." But he had no further relations with
her.

27When the time of her delivery came, she
was found to have twins in her womb.[v] 28While
she was giving birth, one infant put out his
hand; and the midwife, taking a crimson thread,
tied it on his hand, to note that this one came
out first. 29[w]But as he withdrew his hand, his
brother came out; and she said, "What a breach
you have made for yourself!" So he was called
Perez.* 30Afterward his brother came out; he
was called Zerah.[x] *

## CHAPTER 39

**Joseph's Temptation** [1]When Joseph was
taken down to Egypt, a certain Egyptian (Poti-
phar, a courtier of Pharoah and his chief stew-
ard* ) bought him from the Ishmaelites who had
brought him there. 2[y]But since the LORD was
with him, Joseph got on very well and was
assigned to the household of his Egyptian mas-
ter. 3When his master saw that the LORD was
with him and brought him success in whatever
he did, 4he took a liking to Joseph and made him
his personal attendant; he put him in charge of
his household and entrusted to him all his
possessions.[z] 5From the moment that he put
him in charge of his household and all his
possessions, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's
house for Joseph's sake; in fact, the LORD's
blessing was on everything he owned, both
inside the house and out. 6Having left every-
thing he owned in Joseph's charge, he gave no
thought, with Joseph there, to anything but the
food he ate.

Now Joseph was strikingly handsome in coun-
tenance and body. 7After a time, his master's
wife began to look fondly at him and said, "Lie
with me." 8But he refused. "As long as I am
here," he told her, "my master does not concern
himself with anything in the house, but has
entrusted to me all he owns. 9He wields no
more authority in this house than I do, and he
has withheld from me nothing but yourself,
since you are his wife. How, then, could I

**38, 18:** Seal and cord: the cylinder seal, through which a hole was bored lengthwise so that it could be worn from the neck by a cord, was a distinctive means of identification. Apparently a man's staff was also marked with his name (Nm 17, 16f) or other sign of identification.

**38, 21:** Temple prostitute: the Hebrew term qedesha, literally "consecrated woman," designates a woman who had ritual intercourse with men in pagan fertility rites; cf Dt 23, 18; Hos 4, 14, where the same Hebrew word is used. Hirah the Adullamite uses a word that refers to a higher social class than that designated by the term zona, common "harlot," used in vv 15. 24.

**38, 29:** He was called Perez: the Hebrew word means "breach."

**38, 30:** He was called Zerah: a name connected here by popular etymology with a Hebrew verb for the red light of dawn, alluding apparently to the crimson thread.

**39, 1:** (Potiphar . . . chief steward): These words in the text serve to harmonize ch 39 from the Yahwist source, with Gn 37, 36 and 40, 1–23, from the Elohist. In the former, the Ishmaelites who bought Joseph from his brothers (Gn 37, 28) sold him to the unnamed "Egyptian master" of ch 39. In the latter, the Midianites who kidnaped Joseph (Gn 37, 28; 40, 15) sold him to Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief steward (Gn 37, 36), whose house was used as a royal prison (Gn 40, 2f).

v 1 Chr 2, 4. w Rv 4, 12; Mt 1, 3; Lk 3, 33. x Nm 26, 20; 1 Chr 2, 4; Mt 1, 3. y 1 Sm 3, 19; 10, 7; 18, 14; 2 Sm 5, 10; 2 Kgs 18, 7; Acts 7, 9. z Dn 1, 9.

commit so great a wrong and thus stand condemned before God?" [10]Although she tried to entice him day after day, he would not agree to lie beside her, or even stay near her.[a]

[11]One such day, when Joseph came into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were then in the house, [12]she laid hold of him by his cloak, saying, "Lie with me!" But leaving the cloak in her hand, he got away from her and ran outside. [13]When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand as he fled outside, [14]she screamed for her household servants and told them, "Look! my husband has brought in a Hebrew slave to make sport of us! He came in here to lie with me, but I cried out as loud as I could. [15]When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran away outside."

[16]She kept the cloak with her until his master came home. [17]Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave whom you brought here broke in on me, to make sport of me. [18]But when I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and fled outside." [19]As soon as the master heard his wife's story about how his slave had treated her, he became enraged. [20]He seized Joseph and threw him into the jail where the royal prisoners were confined.[b]

But even while he was in prison, [21]the LORD remained with Joseph; he showed him kindness by making the chief jailer well-disposed toward him.[c] [22]The chief jailer put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the jail, and everything that had to be done there was done under his management. [23]The chief jailer did not concern himself with anything at all that was in Joseph's charge, since the LORD was with him and brought success to all he did.

## CHAPTER 40

**The Dreams Interpreted** [1]Some time afterward, the royal cupbearer and baker gave offense to their lord, the king of Egypt. [2]Pharaoh was angry with his two courtiers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, [3]and he put them in custody in the house of the chief steward (the same jail where Joseph was confined). [4]The chief steward assigned Joseph to them, and he became their attendant.

After they had been in custody for some time, [5]the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt who were confined in the jail both had dreams on the same night, each dream with its own meaning. [6]When Joseph came to them in the morning, he noticed that they looked disturbed. [7]So he asked Pharaoh's courtiers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" [8]They answered him, "We have had dreams, but there is no one to interpret them for us." Joseph said to them, "Surely, interpretations come from God. Please tell the dreams to me."[d]

[9]Then the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a vine in front of me, [10]and on the vine were three branches. It had barely budded when its blossoms came out, and its clusters ripened into grapes. [11]Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes, pressed them out into his cup, and put it in Pharaoh's hand." [12]Joseph said to him: "This is what it means. The three branches are three days; [13]within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head* and restore you to your post. You will be handing Pharaoh his cup as you formerly used to do when you were his cupbearer. [14]So if you will still remember, when all is well with you, that I was here with you, please do me the favor of mentioning me to Pharaoh, to get me out of this place. [15]The truth is that I was kidnaped from the land of the Hebrews, and here I have not done anything for which I should have been put into a dungeon."

[16]When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given this favorable interpretation, he said to him: "I too had a dream. In it I had three wicker baskets on my head; [17]in the top one were all kinds of bakery products for Pharaoh, but the birds were pecking at them out of the basket on my head." [18]Joseph said to him in reply: "This is

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

40, 13: Lift up your head: signifying "pardon you." In v 19 "to lift up the head" means "to behead"; and finally, in v 20, the same expression means "to review the case (of someone)." Joseph couches his interpretation of the dreams in equivocal terms.

a 1 Mc 2, 53. b Ps 105, 18. c Acts 7, 9f. d Gn 41, 16.

what it means. The three baskets are three days;
[19]within three days Pharaoh will lift up your
head and have you impaled on a stake, and the
birds will be pecking the flesh from your body."

[20]And in fact, on the third day, which was
Pharaoh's birthday, when he gave a banquet to
all his staff, with his courtiers around him, he
lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and
chief baker. [21]He restored the chief cupbearer to
his office, so that he again handed the cup to
Pharaoh; [22]but the chief baker he impaled—just
as Joseph had told them in his interpretation.
[23]Yet the chief cupbearer gave no thought to
Joseph; he had forgotten him.

## CHAPTER 41

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**Pharaoh's Dream** [1]After a lapse of two years,
Pharaoh had a dream. He saw himself standing
by the Nile, [2]when up out of the Nile came
seven cows, handsome and fat; they grazed in
the reed grass. [3]Behind them seven other cows,
ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile; and
standing on the bank of the Nile beside the
others, [4]the ugly, gaunt cows ate up the seven
handsome, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

[5]He fell asleep again and had another dream.
He saw seven ears of grain, fat and healthy,
growing on a single stalk. [6]Behind them
sprouted seven ears of grain, thin and blasted by
the east wind; [7]and the seven thin ears swal-
lowed up the seven fat, healthy ears. Then
Pharaoh woke up, to find it was only a dream.

[8]Next morning his spirit was agitated. So he
summoned all the magicians and sages of Egypt
and recounted his dreams to them; but no one
could interpret his dreams for him. [9]Then the
chief cupbearer spoke up and said to Pharaoh:
"On this occasion I am reminded of my negli-
gence. [10]Once, when Pharaoh was angry, he put
me and the chief baker in custody in the house
of the chief steward. [11]Later, we both had
dreams on the same night, and each of our
dreams had its own meaning. [12]There with us
was a Hebrew youth, a slave of the chief
steward; and when we told him our dreams, he
interpreted them for us and explained for each of
us the meaning of his dream.[e] [13]And it turned
out just as he had told us: I was restored to my
post, but the other man was impaled."

[14]Pharaoh therefore had Joseph summoned,
and they hurriedly brought him from the dun-
geon. After he shaved and changed his clothes,
he came into Pharaoh's presence.[f] [15]Pharaoh
then said to him: "I had certain dreams that no
one can interpret. But I hear it said of you that
the moment you are told a dream you can
interpret it." [16]"It is not I," Joseph replied to
Pharaoh, "but God who will give Pharaoh the
right answer."[g]

[17]Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "In my dream,
I was standing on the bank of the Nile, [18]when
up from the Nile came seven cows, fat and well-
formed; they grazed in the reed grass. [19]Behind
them came seven other cows, scrawny, most ill-
formed and gaunt. Never have I seen such ugly
specimens as these in all the land of Egypt! [20]The
gaunt, ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows.
[21]But when they had consumed them, no one
could tell that they had done so, because they
looked as ugly as before. Then I woke up. [22]In
another dream, I saw seven ears of grain, fat and
healthy, growing on a single stalk. [23]Behind
them sprouted seven ears of grain, shriveled and
thin and blasted by the east wind; [24]and the
seven thin ears swallowed up the seven healthy
ears. I have spoken to the magicians, but none of
them can give me an explanation."

[25]Joseph said to Pharaoh: "Both of Pharaoh's
dreams have the same meaning. God has thus
foretold to Pharaoh what he is about to do.
[26]The seven healthy cows are seven years, and
the seven healthy ears are seven years—the
same in each dream. [27]So also, the seven thin,
ugly cows that came up after them are seven
years, as are the seven thin, wind-blasted ears;
they are seven years of famine. [28]It is just as I
told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what
he is about to do. [29]Seven years of great abun-
dance are now coming throughout the land of
Egypt; [30]but these will be followed by seven
years of famine, when all the abundance in the
land of Egypt will be forgotten. When the famine

e Dn 1, 17. f Ps 105, 20. g Gn 40, 8.

has ravaged the land, [31]no trace of the abundance will be found in the land because of the famine that follows it—so utterly severe will that famine be. [32]That Pharaoh had the same dream twice means that the matter has been reaffirmed by God and that God will soon bring it about.

[33]"Therefore, let Pharaoh seek out a wise and discerning man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. [34]Pharaoh should also take action to appoint overseers, so as to regiment the land during the seven years of abundance. [35]They should husband all the food of the coming good years, collecting the grain under Pharaoh's authority, to be stored in the towns for food. [36]This food will serve as a reserve for the country against the seven years of famine that are to follow in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine."

[37]This advice pleased Pharaoh and all his officials.[h] [38]"Could we find another like him," Pharaoh asked his officials, "a man so endowed with the spirit of God?" [39]So Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Since God has made all this known to you, no one can be as wise and discerning as you are. [40]You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people shall dart at your command. Only in respect to the throne shall I outrank you.[i] [41]Herewith," Pharaoh told Joseph, "I place you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." [42]With that, Pharaoh took off his signet ring* and put it on Joseph's finger. He had him dressed in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. [43]He then had him ride in the chariot of his vizier, and they shouted "Abrek!"* before him.

Thus was Joseph installed over the whole land of Egypt. [44]"I, Pharaoh, proclaim," he told Joseph, "that without your approval no one shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." [45]Pharaoh also bestowed the name of Zaphenath-paneah* on Joseph, and he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis. [46]Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

After Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he traveled throughout the land of Egypt. [47]During the seven years of plenty, when the land produced abundant crops, [48]he husbanded all the food of these years of plenty that the land of Egypt was enjoying and stored it in the towns, placing in each town the crops of the fields around it. [49]Joseph garnered grain in quantities like the sands of the sea, so vast that at last he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

[50]Before the famine years set in, Joseph became the father of two sons, born to him by Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis.[j] [51]He named his first-born Manasseh,* meaning, "God has made me forget entirely the sufferings I endured at the hands of my family"; [52]and the second he named Ephraim,* meaning, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

[53]When the seven years of abundance enjoyed by the land of Egypt came to an end, [54]the seven years of famine set in, just as Joseph had predicted. Although there was famine in all the other countries, food was available throughout the land of Egypt.[k] [55]When hunger came to be felt throughout the land of Egypt and the people cried to Pharaoh for bread, Pharaoh directed all the Egyptians to go to Joseph and do whatever he told them. [56]When the famine had spread throughout the land, Joseph opened all the cities that had grain and rationed it to the Egyptians, since the famine had gripped the land of Egypt. [57]In fact, all the world came to Joseph to obtain

**41, 42:** Signet ring: a finger ring in which was set a stamp seal, different from the cylinder seal such as Judah wore; see note on Gn 38, 18. This is an authentic detail. By receiving Pharaoh's signet ring, Joseph was made vizier of Egypt (v 43); the vizier was known as "seal-bearer of the king of Lower Egypt." Another authentic detail is the gold chain, a symbol of high office in ancient Egypt.

**41, 43:** Abrek: apparently a cry of homage, though the word's derivation and actual meaning are uncertain.

**41, 45:** Zaphenath-paneah: a Hebrew transcription of an Egyptian name meaning "the god speaks and he (the newborn child) lives." Asenath: means "belonging to (the Egyptian goddess) Neith." Potiphera: means "he whom Ra (the Egyptian god) gave"; a shorter form of the same name was borne by Joseph's master (Gn 37, 36). Heliopolis: in Hebrew, On, a city seven miles northeast of modern Cairo, site of the chief temple of the sun god; it is mentioned also in v 50; Gn 46, 20; Ez 30, 17.

**41, 51:** Manasseh: allusion to this name is in the Hebrew expression, nishshani, "he made me forget."

**41, 52:** Ephraim: related to the Hebrew expression hiphrani, "(God) has made me fruitful."

h Acts 7, 10. i Ps 105, 21; Wis 10, 14; 1 Mc 2, 53; Acts 7, 10. j Gn 46, 20; 48, 5. k Ps 105, 16; Acts 7, 11.

rations of grain, for famine had gripped the whole world.

## CHAPTER 42

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**The Brothers' First Journey to Egypt** 1When Jacob learned that grain rations were available in Egypt, he said to his sons: "Why do you keep gaping at one another? 2I hear," he went on, "that rations of grain are available in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, that we may stay alive rather than die of hunger."[l] 3So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy an emergency supply of grain from Egypt. 4It was only Joseph's full brother Benjamin that Jacob did not send with the rest, for he thought some disaster might befall him. 5Thus, since there was famine in the land of Canaan also, the sons of Israel were among those who came to procure rations.[m]

6It was Joseph, as governor of the country, who dispensed the rations to all the people. When Joseph's brothers came and knelt down before him with their faces to the ground,[n] 7he recognized them as soon as he saw them. But he concealed his own identity from them and spoke sternly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked them. They answered, "From the land of Canaan, to procure food."

8When Joseph recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him, 9he was reminded of the dreams he had about them. He said to them: "You are spies.[o] You have come to see the nakedness of the land."* 10"No, my lord," they replied. "On the contrary, your servants have come to procure food. 11All of us are sons of the same man. We are honest men; your servants have never been spies." 12But he answered them: "Not so! You have come to see the nakedness of the land." 13"We your servants," they said, "were twelve brothers, sons of a certain man in Canaan; but the youngest one is at present with our father, and the other one is gone."[p] 14"It is just as I said," Joseph persisted; "you are spies. 15This is how you shall be tested: unless your youngest brother comes here, I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you shall not leave here. 16So send one of your number to get your brother, while the rest of you stay here under arrest. Thus shall your words be tested for their truth; if they are untrue, as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" 17With that, he locked them up in the guardhouse for three days.

18On the third day Joseph said to them: "Do this, and you shall live; for I am a God-fearing man. 19If you have been honest, only one of your brothers need be confined in this prison, while the rest of you may go and take home provisions for your starving families. 20But you must come back to me with your youngest brother. Your words will thus be verified, and you will not die." To this they agreed.[q] 21To one another, however, they said: "Alas, we are being punished because of our brother. We saw the anguish of his heart when he pleaded with us, yet we paid no heed; that is why this anguish has now come upon us."[r] 22"Didn't I tell you," broke in Reuben, "not to do wrong to the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now comes the reckoning for his blood."[s] 23They did not know, of course, that Joseph understood what they said, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. 24But turning away from them, he wept. When he was able to speak to them again, he had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. 25Then Joseph gave orders to have their containers filled with grain, their money replaced in each one's sack, and provisions given them for their journey. After this had been done for them, 26they loaded their donkeys with the rations and departed.

27*At the night encampment, when one of them opened his bag to give his donkey some fodder, he was surprised to see his money in the mouth of his bag. 28"My money has been returned!" he cried out to his brothers. "Here it is in my bag!" At that their hearts sank. Trem-

**42, 9. 12:** The nakedness of the land: the military weakness of the land, like human nakedness, should not be seen by strangers.

**42, 27–28:** These two verses are from the Yahwist source, whereas the rest of the chapter is from the Elohist source, in which the men find the money in their sacks (not "bags"—a different Hebrew word) only when they arrive home (v 35); cf Gn 43, 21.

l Acts 7, 12. m Jdt 5, 10; Acts 7, 11. n Ps 105, 21. o Gn 37, 5. p Gn 44, 20. q Gn 43, 5. r Gn 37, 18–27. s Gn 37, 22.

bling, they asked one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

29When they got back to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. 30"The man who is lord of the country," they said, "spoke to us sternly and put us in custody as if we were spying on the land. 31But we said to him: 'We are honest men; we have never been spies. 32There were twelve of us brothers, sons of the same father; but one is gone, and the youngest one is at present with our father in the land of Canaan.' 33Then the man who is lord of the country said to us: 'This is how I shall know if you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, while the rest of you go home with rations for your starving families. 34When you come back to me with your youngest brother, and I know that you are honest men and not spies, I will restore your brother to you, and you may move about freely in the land.' "

35When they were emptying their sacks, there in each one's sack was his moneybag! At the sight of their moneybags, they and their father were dismayed. 36Their father Jacob said to them: "Must you make me childless? Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone, and now you would take away Benjamin! Why must such things always happen to me!" 37Then Reuben told his father: "Put him in my care, and I will bring him back to you. You may kill my own two sons if I do not return him to you." 38But Jacob replied: "My son shall not go down with you. Now that his full brother is dead, he is the only one left. If some disaster should befall him on the journey you must make, you would send my white head down to the nether world in grief."[t]

## CHAPTER 43*

**The Second Journey to Egypt** 1Now the famine in the land grew more severe. 2So when they had used up all the rations they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and procure us a little more food." 3But Judah replied: "The man strictly warned us, 'You shall not appear in my presence unless your brother is with you.'[u] 4If you are willing to let our brother go with us, we will go down to procure food for you. 5But if you are not willing, we will not go down, because the man told us, 'You shall not appear in my presence unless your brother is with you.' "[v] 6Israel demanded, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man that you had another brother?" 7They answered: "The man kept asking about ourselves and our family: 'Is your father still living? Do you have another brother?' We had to answer his questions. How could we know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?"

8Then Judah urged his father Israel: "Let the boy go with me, that we may be off and on our way if you and we and our children are to keep from starving to death.[w] 9I myself will stand surety for him. You can hold me responsible for him. If I fail to bring him back, to set him in your presence, you can hold it against me forever.[x] 10Had we not dilly-dallied, we could have been there and back twice by now!"

11Their father Israel then told them: "If it must be so, then do this: Put some of the land's best products in your baggage and take them down to the man as gifts: some balm and honey, gum and resin, and pistachios and almonds.[y] 12Also take extra money along, for you must return the amount that was put back in the mouths of your bags; it may have been a mistake. 13Take your brother, too, and be off on your way back to the man. 14May God Almighty dispose the man to be merciful toward you, so that he may let your other brother go, as well as Benjamin. As for me, if I am to suffer bereavement, I shall suffer it."

15So the men got the gifts, took double the amount of money with them, and, accompanied by Benjamin, were off on their way down to Egypt to present themselves to Joseph. 16When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he told his head steward, "Take these men into the house, and have an animal slaughtered and prepared,

Ch 37–50
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72–73

43, 1–34: This chapter and the following one are from the Yahwist source, in which Judah, not Reuben as in the Elohist source, volunteers to go surety for Benjamin.

t Gn 37, 35. u Gn 44, 23. v Gn 42, 20. w Gn 42, 37. x Gn 44, 32. y Gn 45, 23.

for they are to dine with me at noon." [17]Doing as Joseph had ordered, the steward conducted the men to Joseph's house. [18]But on being led to his house, they became apprehensive. "It must be," they thought, "on account of the money put back in our bags the first time, that we are taken inside; they want to use it as a pretext to attack us and take our donkeys and seize us as slaves." [19]So they went up to Joseph's head steward and talked to him at the entrance of the house. [20]"If you please, sir," they said, "we came down here once before to procure food.[z] [21]But when we arrived at a night's encampment and opened our bags, there was each man's money in the mouth of his bag—our money in the full amount! We have now brought it back.[a] [22]We have brought other money to procure food with. We do not know who put the first money in our bags." [23]"Be at ease," he replied; "you have no need to fear. Your God and the God of your father must have put treasures in your bags for you. As for your money, I received it." With that, he led Simeon out to them.

Ch 37–50 See RG 72–73

[24]The steward then brought the men inside Joseph's house. He gave them water to bathe their feet, and got fodder for their donkeys. [25]Then they set out their gifts to await Joseph's arrival at noon, for they had heard that they were to dine there. [26]When Joseph came home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought inside, while they bowed down before him to the ground. [27]After inquiring how they were, he asked them, "And how is your aged father, of whom you spoke? Is he still in good health?"[b] [28]"Your servant our father is thriving and still in good health," they said, as they bowed respectfully. [29]When Joseph's eye fell on his full brother Benjamin, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you told me?" Then he said to him, "May God be gracious to you, my boy!"[c] [30]With that, Joseph had to hurry out, for he was so overcome with affection for his brother that he was on the verge of tears. He went into a private room and wept there.

[31]After washing his face, he reappeared and, now in control of himself, gave the order, "Serve the meal." [32]It was served separately to him,* to the brothers, and to the Egyptians who partook of his board. (Egyptians may not eat with Hebrews; that is abhorrent to them.) [33]When they were seated by his directions according to their age, from the oldest to the youngest, they looked at one another in amazement; [34]and as portions were brought to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as large as* anyone else's. So they drank freely and made merry with him.

## CHAPTER 44

**Final Test** [1]*Then Joseph gave his head steward these instructions: "Fill the men's bags with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his bag. [2]In the mouth of the youngest one's bag put also my silver goblet, together with the money for his rations." The steward carried out Joseph's instructions. [3]At daybreak the men and their donkeys were sent off. [4]They had not gone far out of the city when Joseph said to his head steward: "Go at once after the men! When you overtake them, say to them, 'Why did you repay good with evil? Why did you steal the silver goblet from me? [5]It is the very one from which my master drinks and which he uses for divination.* What you have done is wrong.' "

[6]When the steward overtook them and repeated these words to them, [7]they remonstrated with him: "How can my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! [8]We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money that we found in the mouths of our bags. Why, then, would we steal silver or

**43, 32:** Separately to him: that Joseph did not eat with the other Egyptians was apparently a matter of rank.

**43, 34:** Five times as large as: probably an idiomatic expression for "much larger than."

**44, 1f:** Replacement of the money in the men's bags is probably a redactional addition here, taken from the Yahwist account of the first visit. It is only the goblet in Benjamin's bag, not any replaced money, that plays a part in the rest of the chapter.

**44, 5:** Divination: seeking omens through liquids poured into a cup or bowl was a common practice in the ancient Near East; cf v 15. Even though divination was frowned on in later Israel (Lv 19, 31), it is in this place an authentic touch which the sacred author does not hesitate to ascribe to Joseph, the wisest man in Egypt.

z Gn 42, 3. a Gn 42, 27f. b Tb 7, 4. c Gn 42, 13.

gold from your master's house? [9]If any of your
servants is found to have the goblet, he shall die,
and as for the rest of us, we shall become my
lord's slaves." [10]But he replied, "Even though it
ought to be as you propose, only the one who is
found to have it shall become my slave, and the
rest of you shall be exonerated." [11]Then each of
them eagerly lowered his bag to the ground and
opened it; [12]and when a search was made,
starting with the oldest and ending with the
youngest, the goblet turned up in Benjamin's
bag. [13]At this, they tore their clothes. Then,
when each man had reloaded his donkey, they
returned to the city.

[14]As Judah and his brothers reentered Joseph's house, he was still there; so they flung
themselves on the ground before him. [15]"How
could you do such a thing?" Joseph asked them.
"You should have known that such a man as I
could discover by divination what happened."
[16]Judah replied: "What can we say to my lord?
How can we plead or how try to prove our
innocence? God has uncovered your servant's
guilt.* Here we are, then, the slaves of my
lord—the rest of us no less than the one in
whose possession the goblet was found." [17]"Far
be it from me to act thus!" said Joseph. "Only
the one in whose possession the goblet was
found shall become my slave; the rest of you
may go back safe and sound to your father."

[18]Judah then stepped up to him and said: "I
beg you, my lord, let your servant speak earnestly to my lord, and do not become angry with
your servant, for you are the equal of Pharaoh.
[19]*My lord asked your servants, 'Have you a
father, or another brother?' [20]So we said to my
lord, 'We have an aged father, and a young
brother, the child of his old age. This one's full
brother is dead, and since he is the only one by
that mother who is left, his father dotes on
him.'[d] [21]Then you told your servants, 'Bring him
down to me that my eyes may look on him.'
[22]We replied to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave
his father; his father would die if he were to
leave him.' [23]But you told your servants, 'Unless
your youngest brother comes back with you, you
shall not come into my presence again.'[e]
[24]When we returned to your servant our father,
we reported to him the words of my lord.

[25]"Later, our father told us to come back and
buy some food for the family. [26]So we reminded
him, 'We cannot go down there; only if our
youngest brother is with us can we go, for we
may not see the man if our youngest brother is
not with us.' [27]Then your servant our father said
to us, 'As you know, my wife bore me two sons.
[28]One of them, however, disappeared, and I had
to conclude that he must have been torn to
pieces by wild beasts; I have not seen him
since.[f] [29]If you now take this one away from
me, too, and some disaster befalls him, you will
send my white head down to the nether world
in grief.'

[30]"If then the boy is not with us when I go
back to your servant my father, whose very life is
bound up with his, he will die as soon as he sees
that the boy is missing; [31]and your servants will
thus send the white head of our father down to
the nether world in grief. [32]Besides, I, your
servant, got the boy from his father by going
surety for him, saying, 'If I fail to bring him back
to you, father, you can hold it against me
forever.'[g] [33]Let me, your servant, therefore,
remain in place of the boy as the slave of my
lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.
[34]How could I go back to my father if the boy
were not with me? I could not bear to see the
anguish that would overcome my father."

## CHAPTER 45

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**The Truth Revealed** [1]Joseph could no longer
control himself in the presence of all his attendants, so he cried out, "Have everyone withdraw from me!" Thus no one else was about
when he made himself known to his brothers.
[2]But his sobs were so loud that the Egyptians

44, 16: Guilt: in trying to do away with Joseph when he was young.

44, 19: My lord . . . your servants: such frequently repeated expressions in Judah's speech show the formal court style used by a subject in speaking to a high official.

d Gn 42, 13. e Gn 43, 3. f Gn 37, 20. 33. g Gn 43, 9.

heard him, and so the news reached Pharaoh's
palace. 3 [h]"I am Joseph," he said to his brothers.
"Is my father still in good health?" But his
brothers could give him no answer, so dumb-
founded were they at him.

4"Come closer to me," he told his brothers.
When they had done so, he said: "I am your
brother Joseph, whom you once sold into Egypt.
5But now do not be distressed, and do not
reproach yourselves for having sold me here. It
was really for the sake of saving lives that God
sent me here ahead of you. [i] 6For two years now
the famine has been in the land, and for five
more years tillage will yield no harvest. 7God,
therefore, sent me on ahead of you to ensure for
you a remnant on earth and to save your lives in
an extraordinary deliverance. 8So it was not
really you but God who had me come here; and
he has made of me a father to Pharaoh,* lord of
all his household, and ruler over the whole land
of Egypt.

9*"Hurry back, then, to my father and tell
him: 'Thus says your son Joseph: God has made
me lord of all Egypt; come to me without delay.[j]
10You will settle in the region of Goshen,*
where you will be near me—you and your
children and grandchildren, your flocks and
herds, and everything that you own. 11Since five
years of famine still lie ahead, I will provide for
you there, so that you and your family and all
that are yours may not suffer want.' 12Surely,
you can see for yourselves, and Benjamin can see
for himself, that it is I, Joseph, who am speaking
to you. 13Tell my father all about my high
position in Egypt and what you have seen. But
hurry and bring my father down here." 14There-
upon he flung himself on the neck of his brother
Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept in his
arms. 15Joseph then kissed all his brothers,
crying over each of them; and only then were
his brothers able to talk with him.

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

16When the news reached Pharaoh's palace
that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and
his courtiers were pleased. 17So Pharaoh told
Joseph: "Say to your brothers: 'This is what you
shall do: Load up your animals and go without
delay to the land of Canaan. 18There get your
father and your families, and then come back
here to me; I will assign you the best land in
Egypt, where you will live off the fat of the
land.'[k] 19Instruct them further: 'Do this. Take
wagons from the land of Egypt for your children
and your wives and to transport your father on
your way back here. 20Do not be concerned
about your belongings, for the best in the whole
land of Egypt shall be yours.' "

21The sons of Israel acted accordingly. Joseph
gave them the wagons, as Pharaoh had ordered,
and he supplied them with provisions for the
journey. 22He also gave to each of them fresh
clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred
shekels of silver and five sets of garments.
23Moreover, what he sent to his father was ten
jackasses loaded with the finest products of
Egypt and ten jennies loaded with grain and
bread and other provisions for his journey. 24As
he sent his brothers on their way, he told them,
"Let there be no recriminations on the way."

25So they left Egypt and made their way to
their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26When
they told him, "Joseph is still alive—in fact, it is
he who is ruler of all the land of Egypt," he was
dumbfounded; he could not believe them. 27But
when they recounted to him all that Joseph had
told them, and when he saw the wagons that
Joseph had sent for his transport, the spirit of
their father Jacob revived. 28"It is enough," said
Israel. "My son Joseph is still alive! I must go and
see him before I die."

## CHAPTER 46

**Migration to Egypt** 1Israel set out with all that
was his. When he arrived at Beer-sheba, he
offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

**45, 8:** Father to Pharaoh: a term applied to a vizier in ancient Egypt.

**45, 9–15:** In these verses, as in Gn 46, 31–47, 5a, all from the Yahwist source, Joseph in his own name invites his father and brothers to come to Egypt. Only after their arrival is Pharaoh informed of the fact. On the other hand, in 45, 16–20 from the Elohist source, it is Pharaoh himself who invites Joseph's kinsmen to migrate to his domain.

**45, 10:** The region of Goshen: modern Wadi Tumilat in the eastern part of the Nile Delta.

h 3f: Acts 7, 13. i Gn 50, 20; Sir 49, 15. j Acts 7, 14. k Acts 7, 14.

[2]There God, speaking to Israel in a vision by
night, called, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he
answered. [3]Then he said: "I am God,* the God
of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to
Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation.
[4]Not only will I go down to Egypt with you; I
will also bring you back here, after Joseph has
closed your eyes."

[5]So Jacob departed from Beer-sheba, and the
sons of Israel put their father and their wives and
children on the wagons that Pharaoh had sent
for his transport. [6]They took with them their
livestock and the possessions they had acquired
in the land of Canaan. Thus Jacob and all his
descendants migrated to Egypt.[l] [7]His sons and
his grandsons, his daughters and his
granddaughters—all his descendants—he took
with him to Egypt.

[8]These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob
and his descendants, who migrated to Egypt.

*Reuben, Jacob's first-born,[m] [9]and the sons of
Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.[n]
[10]The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Ohad,
Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, son of a Canaanite
woman.[o] [11]The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath
and Merari.[p] [12]The sons of Judah: Er, Onan,
Shelah, Perez and Zerah—but Er and Onan had
died in the land of Canaan; and the sons of Perez
were Hezron and Hamul.[q] [13]The sons of Issa-
char: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron.[r] [14]The
sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and Jahleel.[s]
[15]These were the sons whom Leah bore to Jacob
in Paddan-aram, along with his daughter
Dinah—thirty-three persons in all, male and
female.

[16]The sons of Gad: Zephon, Haggi, Shuni,
Ezbon, Eri, Arod and Areli.[t] [17]The sons of
Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah, with
their sister Serah; and the sons of Beriah: Heber
and Malchiel.[u] [18]These were the descendants of
Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his daughter
Leah; these she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons
in all.

[19]The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and
Benjamin. [20]In the land of Egypt Joseph became
the father of Manasseh and Ephraim, whom
Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopo-
lis, bore to him.[v] [21]The sons of Benjamin: Bela,
Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ahiram, Shu-
pham, Hupham and Ard.[w] [22]These were the
sons whom Rachel bore to Jacob—fourteen
persons in all.

[23]The sons of Dan: Hushim.[x] [24]The sons of
Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.[y]
[25]These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban
had given to his daughter Rachel; these she bore
to Jacob—seven persons in all.

[26]Jacob's people who migrated to Egypt—his
direct descendants, not counting the wives of
Jacob's sons—numbered sixty-six persons in
all.[z] [27]Together with Joseph's sons who were
born to him in Egypt—two persons—all the
people comprising Jacob's family who had come
to Egypt amounted to seventy persons* in all.[a]

[28]Israel had sent Judah ahead to Joseph, so
that he might meet him in Goshen. On his
arrival in the region of Goshen, [29]Joseph hitched
the horses to his chariot and rode to meet his
father Israel in Goshen. As soon as he saw him,
he flung himself on his neck and wept a long
time in his arms. [30]And Israel said to Joseph, "At
last I can die, now that I have seen for myself
that Joseph is still alive."

[31]Joseph then said to his brothers and his
father's household: "I will go and inform Pha-
raoh, telling him: 'My brothers and my father's
household, whose home is in the land of Ca-
naan, have come to me. [32]The men are shep-

**46, 3:** I am God: more precisely according to the Hebrew text, "I am El." "El" is here a divine name, not the common noun "god."

**46, 9–27:** This genealogical list has here been inserted by a redactor who based it on the clan lists (Nm 26, 5–50) at the time of Moses. Therefore it includes some of Jacob's grandchildren, who would hardly have been born when Joseph was still a relatively young man. The number fourteen (v 22) is based on a garbled version of the genealogical list.

**46, 27:** Seventy persons: either to be understood as a round number, or arrived at by including Jacob and Joseph with the preceding persons, who add up to sixty-eight.

l Ex 1, 1; Jos 24, 4; Jdt 5, 10; Acts 7, 15. m Ex 1, 2. n Ex 6, 14; Nm 26, 5; 1 Chr 5, 3. o Ex 6, 15; Nm 26, 12; 1 Chr 4, 24. p Ex 6, 16; Nm 3, 17; 26, 57; 1 Chr 6, 1. q Gn 38, 3–10. 29f; Nm 26, 19; Rv 4, 18–22; 1 Chr 2, 5. r Nm 26, 23f; 1 Chr 7, 1. s Nm 26, 26. t Nm 26, 15f. u Nm 26, 44; 1 Chr 7, 30f. v Gn 41, 50; Nm 26, 28. 35. w Nm 26, 38; 1 Chr 7, 6; 8, 1–4. x Nm 26, 42. y Nm 26, 48f; 1 Chr 7, 13. z Ex 1, 5. a Ex 1, 5; Dt 10, 22; Acts 7, 14.

herds, having long been keepers of livestock;
and they have brought with them their flocks
and herds, as well as everything else they own.'
33So when Pharaoh summons you and asks what
your occupation is, 34you must answer. 'We your
servants, like our ancestors, have been keepers
of livestock from the beginning until now,' in
order that you may stay in the region of Goshen,
since all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyp-
tians."

## CHAPTER 47

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**Settlement in Goshen** 1Joseph went and told
Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers have come
from the land of Canaan, with their flocks and
herds and everything else they own; and they
are now in the region of Goshen." 2He then
presented to Pharaoh five of his brothers whom
he had selected from their full number. 3When
Pharaoh asked them what their occupation was,
they answered, "We, your servants, like our
ancestors, are shepherds. 4We have come," they
continued, "in order to stay in this country, for
there is no pasture for your servants' flocks in
the land of Canaan, so severe has the famine
been there. Please, therefore, let your servants
settle in the region of Goshen."[b] 5Pharaoh said
to Joseph, "They may settle in the region of
Goshen; and if you know any of them to be
qualified, you may put them in charge of my
own livestock."

Thus, when Jacob and his sons came to Joseph
in Egypt, and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, heard
about it, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your
father and brothers have come to you, 6the land
of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father
and brothers in the pick of the land." 7Then
Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented
him to Pharaoh. After Jacob had paid his respects
to Pharaoh, 8Pharaoh asked him, "How many
years have you lived?" 9Jacob replied: "The
years I have lived as a wayfarer amount to a
hundred and thirty. Few and hard have been
these years of my life, and they do not compare
with the years that my ancestors lived as wayfar-
ers."* 10Then Jacob bade Pharaoh farewell and
withdrew from his presence.

11As Pharaoh had ordered, Joseph settled his
father and brothers and gave them holdings in
Egypt on the pick of the land, in the region of
Rameses.* 12And Joseph sustained his father and
brothers and his father's whole household, down
to the youngest, with food.

**Joseph's Land Policy** 13Since there was no
food in any country because of the extreme
severity of the famine, and the lands of Egypt
and Canaan were languishing from hunger,
14Joseph gathered in, as payment for the rations
that were being dispensed, all the money that
was to be found in Egypt and Canaan, and he
put it in Pharaoh's palace. 15When all the money
in Egypt and Canaan was spent, all the Egyptians
came to Joseph, pleading, "Give us food or we
shall perish under your eyes; for our money is
gone." 16"Since your money is gone," replied
Joseph, "give me your livestock, and I will sell
you bread in return for your livestock." 17So
they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he
sold them food in return for their horses, their
flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and their
donkeys. Thus he got them through that year
with bread in exchange for all their livestock.
18When that year ended, they came to him in
the following one and said: "We cannot hide
from my lord that, with our money spent and
our livestock made over to my lord, there is
nothing left to put at my lord's disposal except
our bodies and our farm land. 19Why should we
and our land perish before your very eyes? Take
us and our land in exchange for food, and we
will become Pharaoh's slaves and our land his
property; only give us seed, that we may survive
and not perish, and that our land may not turn
into a waste."

20Thus Joseph acquired all the farm land of
Egypt for Pharaoh, since with the famine too
much for them to bear, every Egyptian sold his

47, 9: Wayfarer . . . wayfarers: man is merely a sojourner on earth; cf Ps 39, 13.

47, 11: The region of Rameses: same as the region of Goshen; see note on Gn 45, 10. The name Rameses, however, is an anachronism, since this royal name did not come into use before the end of the fourteenth century B.C., long after the time of Joseph.

b Ex 23, 9; Dt 23, 8.

field; so the land passed over to Pharaoh, 21and
the people were reduced to slavery, from one
end of Egypt's territory to the other. 22Only the
priests' lands Joseph did not take over. Since the
priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and
lived off the allowance Pharaoh had granted
them, they did not have to sell their land.

23Joseph told the people: "Now that I have
acquired you and your land for Pharaoh, here is
your seed for sowing the land. 24But when the
harvest is in, you must give a fifth of it to
Pharaoh, while you keep four-fifths as seed for
your fields, and as food for yourselves and your
families [and as food for your children]." 25"You
have saved our lives!" they answered. "We are
grateful to my lord that we can be Pharaoh's
slaves." 26Thus Joseph made it a law for the land
in Egypt, which is still in force, that a fifth of its
produce should go to Pharaoh. Only the land of
the priests did not pass over to Pharaoh.

**Jacob Blesses Ephraim and Manasseh**

27Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the
region of Goshen. There they acquired property,
were fertile, and increased greatly. [c] 28Jacob lived
in the land of Egypt for seventeen years; the
span of his life came to a hundred and forty-
seven years. 29When the time approached for
Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to
him: "If you really wish to please me, put your
hand under my thigh as a sign of your constant
loyalty to me; do not let me be buried in Egypt.
30When I lie down with my ancestors, have me
taken out of Egypt and buried in their burial
place." [d] 31"I will do as you say," he replied. But
his father demanded, "Swear it to me!" So
Joseph swore to him. Then Israel bowed at the
head of the bed.*

## CHAPTER 48

1Some time afterward, Joseph was informed,
"Your father is failing." So he took along with
him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.
2When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has
come to you," he rallied his strength and sat up
in bed.

3 [e]Jacob then said to Joseph: "God Almighty
appeared to me at Luz* in the land of Canaan,
and blessing me, 4he said, 'I will make you fertile
and numerous and raise you into an assembly of
tribes, and I will give this land to your descen-
dants after you as a permanent possession.'
5Your two sons, therefore, who were born to
you in the land of Egypt before I joined you here,
shall be mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be
mine as much as Reuben and Simeon are mine.
6Progeny born to you after them shall remain
yours; but their heritage shall be recorded in the
names of their two brothers. 7[f]I do this because,
when I was returning from Paddan, your mother
Rachel died, to my sorrow, during the journey in
Canaan, while we were still a short distance
from Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way
to Ephrath [that is, Bethlehem]."*

8When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he asked,
"Who are these?" 9"They are my sons," Joseph
answered his father, "whom God has given me
here." "Bring them to me," said his father, "that
I may bless them." 10(Now Israel's eyes were
dim from age, and he could not see well.) When
Joseph brought his sons close to him, he kissed
and embraced them. 11Then Israel said to Jo-
seph, "I never expected to see your face again,
and now God has allowed me to see your
descendants as well!"

12Joseph removed them from his father's
knees and bowed down before him with his face
to the ground. 13Then Joseph took the two,
Ephraim with his right hand, to Israel's left, and
Manasseh with his left hand, to Israel's right,
and led them to him. 14But Israel, crossing his
hands, put out his right hand and laid it on the
head of Ephraim, although he was the younger,
and his left hand on the head of Manasseh,

Ch 37–50
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72–73

**47, 31:** Israel bowed at the head of the bed: meaning perhaps that he gave a nod of assent and appreciation as he lay on his bed. By reading with different vowels the Hebrew word for "bed," the Greek version translated it as "staff," and understood the phrase to mean that he bowed in worship, leaning on the top of his staff; it is thus quoted in Heb 11, 21.

**48, 3:** Luz: an older name of Bethel (Gn 28, 19).

**48, 7:** Since her early death prevented Rachel from bearing more than two sons, Jacob feels justified in treating her two grandsons as if they were her own offspring.

c Ex 1, 7. d Gn 50, 5. e 3f: Gn 28, 12–15; 35, 6. f Gn 35, 19.

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

although he was the first-born. [15]Then he blessed them with these words:

"May the God in whose ways
my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd
from my birth to this day,[g]
[16]The Angel who has delivered me from all harm,
bless these boys
That in them my name be recalled,
and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac,
And they may become teeming multitudes
upon the earth!"

[17]When Joseph saw that his father had laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, this seemed wrong to him; so he took hold of his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's, [18]saying, "That is not right, father; the other one is the first-born; lay your right hand on his head!" [19]But his father resisted. "I know it, son," he said, "I know. That one too shall become a tribe, and he too shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall surpass him, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." [20]So when he blessed them that day and said, "By you shall the people of Israel pronounce blessings; may they say, 'God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh,' " he placed Ephraim before Manasseh.[h]

[21]Then Israel said to Joseph: "I am about to die. But God will be with you and will restore you to the land of your fathers. [22][i]As for me, I give to you, as to the one above his brothers, Shechem, which I captured from the Amorites with my sword and bow."*

## CHAPTER 49

**Jacob's Testament** [1]Jacob called his sons and said: "Gather around, that I may tell you what is to happen to you in days to come.

[2]"Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob,
listen to Israel, your father.

[3]"You, Reuben, my first-born,
my strength and the first fruit of my manhood,
excelling in rank and excelling in power!
[4]Unruly as water, you shall no longer excel,
for you climbed into your father's bed
and defiled my couch to my sorrow.[j]

[5]"Simeon and Levi, brothers indeed,
weapons of violence are their knives.*
[6]Let not my soul enter their council,
or my spirit be joined with their company;
For in their fury they slew men,
in their willfulness they maimed oxen.[k]
[7]Cursed be their fury so fierce,
and their rage so cruel!
I will scatter them in Jacob,
disperse them throughout Israel.

[8]"You, Judah, shall your brothers praise
—your hand on the neck of your enemies;
the sons of your father shall bow down to you.
[9]Judah, like a lion's whelp,
you have grown up on prey, my son.
He crouches like a lion recumbent,
the king of beasts—who would dare rouse him?[l]
[10]The scepter shall never depart from Judah,
or the mace from between his legs,
While tribute is brought to him,*
and he receives the people's homage.
[11]He tethers his donkey to the vine,

**48, 22:** Both the meaning of the Hebrew and the historical reference in this verse are obscure. By taking the Hebrew word for Shechem as a common noun meaning shoulder or mountain slope, some translators render the verse, "I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I captured . . ." The reference may be to the capture of Shechem by the sons of Jacob (Gn 34, 24–29). Shechem lay near the border separating the tribal territory of Manasseh from that of Ephraim (Jos 16, 4–9; 17, 1f. 7).

**49, 5:** Knives: if this is the meaning of the obscure Hebrew word here, the reference may be to the knives used in circumcising the men of Shechem (Gn 34, 24; cf Jos 5, 2).

**49, 10:** While tribute is brought to him: this translation is based on a slight change in the Hebrew text, which, as it stands, would seem to mean, "until he comes to Shiloh." A somewhat different reading of the Hebrew text would be, "until he comes to whom it belongs." This last has been traditionally understood in a Messianic sense. In any case, the passage foretells the supremacy of the tribe of Judah, which found its fulfillment in the Davidic dynasty and ultimately in the Messianic Son of David, Jesus Christ.

g Heb 11, 21. h Heb 11, 21. i Jos 17, 14. 17f; Jn 4. 5. j Gn 35, 22; 1 Chr 5, 1f. k Gn 34, 25. l 1 Chr 5, 2.

his purebred ass to the choicest stem.
In wine he washes his garments,
his robe in the blood of grapes.*
12 His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth are whiter than milk.
13 "Zebulun shall dwell by the seashore
[This means a shore for ships],
and his flank shall be based on Sidon.

14 "Issachar is a rawboned ass,
crouching between the saddlebags.
15 When he saw how good a settled life was,
and how pleasant the country,
He bent his shoulder to the burden
and became a toiling serf.

16 "Dan shall achieve justice* for his kindred
like any other tribe of Israel.
17 Let Dan be a serpent by the roadside,
a horned viper by the path,
That bites the horse's heel,
so that the rider tumbles backward.

18 "[I long for your deliverance, O LORD!]

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

20 "Asher's produce is rich,
and he shall furnish dainties for kings.

21 "Naphtali is a hind let loose,
which brings forth lovely fawns.

22 "Joseph is a wild colt,
a wild colt by a spring,
a wild ass on a hillside.
23 Harrying and attacking,
the archers opposed him;
4 But each one's bow remained stiff,
as their arms were unsteady,
By the power of the Mighty One of Jacob,
because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
25 The God of your father, who helps you,*
God Almighty, who blesses you,
With the blessings of the heavens above,
the blessings of the abyss that crouches
below,
The blessings of breasts and womb,
26 the blessings of fresh grain and blossoms,
The blessings of the everlasting mountains,
the delights of the eternal hills.
May they rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince among his
brothers.

27 "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
mornings he devours the prey,
and evenings he distributes the spoils."

**Farewell and Death** 28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said about them, as he bade them farewell and gave to each of them an appropriate message. 29 Then he gave them this charge: "Since I am about to be taken to my kindred, bury me with my fathers in the cave that lies in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 the cave in the field of Machpelah, facing on Mamre, in the land of Canaan, the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial ground.[m] 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried, and so are Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there, too, I buried Leah— 32 the field and the cave in it that had been purchased from the Hittites."

33 When Jacob had finished giving these instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was taken to his kindred.

## CHAPTER 50

Ch 37–50
See RG
72–73

**Jacob's Funeral** 1 Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him as he kissed him. 2 Then he ordered the physicians in his service to embalm his father. When they embalmed Israel, 3 they spent forty days at it, for that is the full period of embalming; and the Egyptians mourned him for seventy days. 4 When that period of mourning was over, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh's courtiers. "Please do me this favor,"

**49, 11:** In wine . . . the blood of grapes: Judah's clothes are poetically pictured as soaked with grape juice from trampling in the wine press, the rich vintage of his land; cf Is 63, 2.

**49, 16:** In Hebrew the verb for achieve justice is from the same root as the name Dan.

**49, 19:** In Hebrew there is a certain assonance between the name Gad and the words for "raided," "raiders" and "raid."

**49, 25f:** A very similar description of the agricultural riches of the tribal land of Joseph is given in Dt 33, 13–16.

m Gn 23, 17.

he said, "and convey to Pharaoh this request of mine. [5]Since my father, at the point of death, made me promise on oath to bury him in the tomb that he had prepared for himself in the land of Canaan, may I go up there to bury my father and then come back?"[n] [6]Pharaoh replied, "Go and bury your father, as he made you promise on oath."

[7]So Joseph left to bury his father; and with him went all of Pharaoh's officials who were senior members of his court and all the other dignitaries of Egypt, [8]as well as Joseph's whole household, his brothers, and his father's household; only their children and their flocks and herds were left in the region of Goshen. [9]Chariots, too, and charioteers went up with him; it was a very large retinue.

[10]When they arrived at Goren-ha-atad,* which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and solemn memorial service; and Joseph observed seven days of mourning for his father. [11]When the Canaanites who inhabited the land saw the mourning at Goren-ha-atad, they said, "This is a solemn funeral the Egyptians are having." That is why the place was named Abel-mizraim. It is beyond the Jordan.

[12]Thus Jacob's sons did for him as he had instructed them. [13]They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, facing on Mamre, the field that Abraham had bought for a burial ground from Ephron the Hittite.[o]

[14]After Joseph had buried his father he returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all who had gone up with him for the burial of his father.

**Plea for Forgiveness** [15]Now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful and thought, "Suppose Joseph has been nursing a grudge against us and now plans to pay us back in full for all the wrong we did him!" [16]So they approached Joseph and said: "Before your father died, he gave us these instructions: [17]'You shall say to Joseph, Jacob begs you to forgive the criminal wrongdoing of your brothers, who treated you so cruelly.' Please, therefore, forgive the crime that we, the servants of your father's God, committed." When they spoke these words to him, Joseph broke into tears. [18]Then his brothers proceeded to fling themselves down before him and said, "Let us be your slaves!" [19]But Joseph replied to them: "Have no fear. Can I take the place of God? [20]Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good, to achieve his present end, the survival of many people.[p] [21]Therefore have no fear. I will provide for you and for your children." By thus speaking kindly to them, he reassured them.[q]

[22]Joseph remained in Egypt, together with his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years. [23]He saw Ephraim's children to the third generation, and the children of Manasseh's son Machir were also born on Joseph's knees.[r]

**Death of Joseph** [24]Joseph said to his brothers: "I am about to die. God will surely take care of you and lead you out of this land to the land that he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."[s] [25]Then, putting the sons of Israel under oath, he continued, "When God thus takes care of you, you must bring my bones up with you from this place."[t] [26]Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. He was embalmed and laid to rest in a coffin in Egypt.[u]

50, 10f: Goren-ha-atad: "Threshing Floor of the Brambles." Abel-mizraim: although the name really means "watercourse of the Egyptians," it is understood here, by a play on the first part of the term, to mean "mourning of the Egyptians." The site has not been identified through either reading of the name. But it is difficult to see why the mourning rites should have been held in the land beyond the Jordan when the burial was at Hebron. Perhaps an earlier form of the story placed the mourning rites beyond the Wadi of Egypt, the traditional boundary between Canaan and Egypt (Nm 34, 5; Jos 15, 4.47).

n Gn 47, 30. o Gn 23, 16; Acts 7, 15. p Gn 45, 5; Sir 49, 15. q Gn 47, 12. r Nm 32, 39; Jos 17, 1. s Ex 3, 8; Jos 24, 32; Heb 11, 22. t Ex 13, 19; Heb 11, 22. u Sir 49, 15.

# THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Exodus
See RG
74-84

The second book of the Pentateuch is called Exodus from the Greek word for "departure," because the central event narrated in it is the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. It continues the history of the chosen people from the point where the Book of Genesis leaves off. It recounts the oppression by the Egyptians of the ever-increasing descendants of Jacob and their miraculous deliverance by God through Moses, who led them across the Red Sea to Mount Sinai where they entered into a special covenant with the Lord.

These events were of prime importance to the chosen people, for they became thereby an independent nation and enjoyed a unique relationship with God. Through Moses God gave to the Israelites at Mount Sinai the "law": the moral, civil and ritual legislation by which they were to become a holy people, in whom the promise of a Savior for all mankind would be fulfilled.

The principal divisions of Exodus are:

I. The Israelites in Egypt (Ex 1, 1—12, 36).
II. The Exodus from Egypt and the Journey to Sinai (Ex 12, 37—18, 27).
III. The Covenant at Mount Sinai (Ex 19, 1—24, 18).
IV. The Dwelling and Its Furnishings (Ex 25, 1—40, 38).

## I: The Israelites In Egypt

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
76-77

**Jacob's Descendants in Egypt** 1These are the names of the sons of Israel* who, accompanied by their households, migrated with Jacob into Egypt: 2*Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. 5The total number of the direct descendants* of Jacob was seventy.[a] Joseph was already in Egypt.

6Now Joseph and all his brothers and that whole generation died.[b] 7But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific. They became so numerous and strong that the land was filled with them.

**The Oppression** 8Then a new king, who knew nothing of Joseph,* came to power in Egypt.[c] 9He said to his subjects, "Look how numerous and powerful the Israelite people are growing, more so than we ourselves! 10Come, let us deal shrewdly with them to stop their increase; otherwise, in time of war they too may join our enemies to fight against us, and so leave our country."

11Accordingly, taskmasters were set over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor.[d] Thus they had to build for Pharaoh* the supply cities of Pithom and Raamses. 12Yet the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. The Egyptians, then, dreaded the Israelites 13and reduced them to cruel slavery, 14making life bitter for them with hard work in mortar* and brick and all kinds of field work—the whole cruel fate of slaves.

**Command to the Midwives** 15The king of Egypt told the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was called Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16"When you act as midwives for the Hebrew women and see them giving birth,* if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she may live." 17The

1, 1: Sons of Israel: here literally the first-generation sons of Jacob. Cf v 5. However, beginning with Ex 1, 7 the same Hebrew phrase refers to the more remote descendants of Jacob; hence, from there on, it is ordinarily rendered as "the Israelites." Households: the family in its fullest sense, including wives, children and servants.

1, 2: The sons of Jacob are listed here according to the respective mothers. Cf Gn 29, 31; 30, 20; 35, 16–26.

1, 5: Direct descendants: literally, persons coming from the loins of Jacob; hence, wives and servants are here excluded. Cf Gn 46, 26.

1, 8: Who knew nothing of Joseph: this king ignored the services that Joseph had rendered to Egypt.

1, 11: Pharaoh: not a personal name, but a title common to all the kings of Egypt.

1, 14: Mortar: either the wet clay with which the bricks were made, as in Na 3, 14, or the cement used between the bricks in building, as in Gn 11, 3.

1, 16: And see them giving birth: the Hebrew text is uncertain.

a Gn 46, 27; Dt 10, 22; Acts 7, 14. b Gn 50, 26. c 8ff: Acts 7, 18. d Dt 26, 6.

midwives, however, feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt had ordered them, but let the boys live. [18]So the king summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you acted thus, allowing the boys to live?" [19]The midwives answered Pharaoh, "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. They are robust and give birth before the midwife arrives." [20]Therefore God dealt well with the midwives. The people, too, increased and grew strong. [21]And because the midwives feared God, he built up families for them. [22]Pharaoh then commanded all his subjects, "Throw into the river* every boy that is born to the Hebrews,[e] but you may let all the girls live."

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2–4
See RG
77–78

**Birth and Adoption of Moses** [1]Now a certain man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman,[f] [2]who conceived and bore a son. Seeing that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months.[g] [3]When she could hide him no longer, she took a papyrus basket,* daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and putting the child in it, placed it among the reeds on the river bank. [4]His sister stationed herself at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

[5]Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe, while her maids walked along the river bank. Noticing the basket among the reeds, she sent her handmaid to fetch it. [6]On opening it, she looked, and lo, there was a baby boy, crying! She was moved with pity for him and said, "It is one of the Hebrews' children." [7]Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" [8]"Yes, do so," she answered. So the maiden went and called the child's own mother. [9]Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will repay you." The woman therefore took the child and nursed it. [10]When the child grew,* she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her son[h] and called him Moses; for she said, "I drew him out of the water."

**Moses' Flight to Midian** [11]On one occasion, after Moses had grown up,* when he visited his kinsmen[i] and witnessed their forced labor, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own kinsmen. [12]Looking about and seeing no one, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. [13]The next day he went out again, and now two Hebrews were fighting! So he asked the culprit, "Why are you striking your fellow Hebrew?" [14]But he replied, "Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses became afraid and thought, "The affair must certainly be known."

[15]Pharaoh, too, heard of the affair and sought to put him to death. But Moses fled from him and stayed in the land of Midian.[j] As he was seated there by a well, [16]seven daughters of a priest of Midian came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. [17]But some shepherds came and drove them away. Then Moses got up and defended them and watered their flock. [18]When they returned to their father Reuel,* he said to them, "How is it you have returned so soon today?" [19]They answered, "An Egyptian* saved us from the interference of the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock!" [20]"Where is the man?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him there? Invite him to have something to eat." [21]Moses agreed to live with him, and the man gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. [22]She bore him a son, whom he named Ger-

1, 22: The river: the Nile, which was "the" river for the Egyptians.

2, 3: Basket: literally, "chest" or "ark"; the same Hebrew word is used in Gn 6, 14 for Noah's ark. Here, however, the chest was made of papyrus stalks.

2, 10: When the child grew: probably when he was weaned or a little later. Moses: in Hebrew, Mosheh; the Hebrew word for "draw out" is mashah. This explanation of the name is not intended as a scientific etymology but as a play on words. The name is probably derived from an Egyptian word for "has been born," referring the birth to a god thought to be its sponsor.

2, 11: After Moses had grown up: Acts 7, 23 indicates that this was after an interval of nearly forty years. Cf Ex 7, 7. Striking: probably in the sense of "flogging"; according to some, "slaying."

2, 18: Reuel: he was also called Jethro. Cf Ex 3, 1; 4, 18; 18, 1.

2, 19: An Egyptian: Moses was probably wearing Egyptian dress, or spoke Egyptian to Reuel's daughters.

2, 22: Gershom: the name is explained as if it came from the Hebrew word ger, "stranger," joined to the Hebrew word sham,

e Acts 7, 19. f Ex 6, 20; Nm 26, 59. g Acts 7, 20; Heb 11, 23. h Acts 7, 21; Heb 11, 24. i 11–14: Acts 7, 23–28. j Acts 7, 29; Heb 11, 27.

shom;* for he said, "I am a stranger in a foreign land."[k]

**The Burning Bush** 23A long time passed, during which the king of Egypt died. Still the Israelites groaned and cried out because of their slavery. As their cry for release went up to God,[l] 24he heard their groaning and was mindful of his covenant[m] with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 25He saw the Israelites and knew. . . .

## CHAPTER 3

1Meanwhile Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God.* 2There an angel of the LORD* appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush.[n] As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. 3So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned."

**The Call of Moses** 4When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." 5God said, "Come no nearer![o] Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 6[p]I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."* Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. 8Therefore I have come down* to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.[q] 9So indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Ch 2–4
See RG
77–78

11But Moses said to God, "Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12He answered, "I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain." 13"But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" 14God replied, "I am who am."* Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

15God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

"This is my name forever;[r]
this is my title for all generations.

16"Go and assemble the elders* of the Israel-

"there." Some Greek and Latin manuscripts add here a passage taken from Ex 18, 4.

**3, 1:** The mountain of God: probably given this designation because of the divine apparitions which took place there, such as on this occasion and when the Israelites were there after the departure from Egypt.

**3, 2:** An angel of the Lord: the visual form under which God appeared and spoke to men is referred to indifferently in some Old Testament texts either as God's angel or as God himself. Cf Gn 16, 7. 13; Ex 14, 19. 24f; Nm 22, 22–35; Jgs 6, 11–18.

**3, 6:** The appearance of God caused fear of death, since it was believed that no one could see God and live; cf Gn 32, 30. The God of Abraham . . . Jacob: cited by Christ in proof of the resurrection since the patriarchs, long dead, live on in God who is the God of the living. Cf Mt 22, 32; Mk 12, 26; Lk 20, 37.

**3, 8:** I have come down: a figure of speech signifying an extraordinary divine intervention in human affairs. Cf Gn 11, 5. 7. Flowing with milk and honey: an expression denoting agricultural prosperity, which seems to have been proverbial in its application to Palestine. Cf Ex 13, 5; Nm 13, 27; Jos 5, 6; Jer 11, 5; 32, 22; Ez 20, 6. 15.

**3, 11:** Who am I: besides naturally shrinking from such a tremendous undertaking, Moses realized that, as a fugitive from Pharaoh, he could hardly hope to carry out a mission to him. Perhaps he also recalled that on one occasion even his own kinsmen questioned his authority. Cf Ex 2, 14.

**3, 14:** I am who am: apparently this utterance is the source of the word Yahweh, the proper personal name of the God of Israel. It is commonly explained in reference to God as the absolute and necessary Being. It may be understood of God as the Source of all created beings. Out of reverence for this name, the term Adonai, "my Lord," was later used as a substitute. The word Lord in the present version represents this traditional usage. The word "Jehovah" arose from a false reading of this name as it is written in the current Hebrew text.

**3, 16:** Elders: the Israelite leaders, who were usually older men. They were representatives of the people.

k Ex 18, 3. l Ex 3, 7. 9; Dt 26. 7. m Ex 6, 5; Pss 105, 8f; 106, 44f. n 2–10; Acts 7, 30–35. o Jos 5, 15. p Ex 4, 5; Mt 22, 32; Mk 12, 36; Lk 20, 37. q 8f: Gn 15, 19ff. r Ps 135, 13.

ites, and tell them: The LORD, the God of your
fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
has appeared to me and said: I am concerned
about you and about the way you are being
treated in Egypt; [17]so I have decided to lead you
up out of the misery of Egypt into the land of the
Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hi-
vites and Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and
honey.

[18]"Thus they will heed your message. Then
you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of
Egypt and say to him: [s] The LORD, the God of the
Hebrews, has sent us word. Permit us, then, to
go a three-days' journey in the desert, that we
may offer sacrifice to the LORD, our God.

[19]"Yet I know that the king of Egypt will not
allow you to go unless he is forced. [20]I will
stretch out my hand, therefore, and smite Egypt
by doing all kinds of wondrous deeds there.
After that he will send you away. [21]I will even
make the Egyptians so well-disposed toward this
people that, when you leave, you will not go
empty-handed. [22] [t]Every woman shall ask her
neighbor and her house guest for silver and gold
articles* and for clothing to put on your sons and
daughters. Thus you will despoil the Egyptians."

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 2–4
See RG
77–78

**Confirmation of Moses' Mission** [1]"But," ob-
jected Moses, "suppose they will not believe me,
nor listen to my plea? For they may say, 'The
LORD did not appear to you.' " [2]The LORD
therefore asked him, "What is that in your
hand?" "A staff," he answered. [3]The LORD then
said, "Throw it on the ground." When he threw
it on the ground it was changed into a serpent, [u]
and Moses shied away from it. [4]"Now, put out
your hand," the LORD said to him, "and take
hold of its tail." So he put out his hand and laid
hold of it, and it became a staff in his hand.
[5]"This will take place so that they may believe,"
he continued, "that the LORD, the God of their
fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
the God of Jacob, did appear to you."

[6]Again the LORD said to him, "Put your hand
in your bosom." He put it in his bosom, and
when he withdrew it, to his surprise his hand
was leprous, like snow. [7]The LORD then said,
"Now, put your hand back in your bosom."
Moses put his hand back in his bosom, and
when he withdrew it, to his surprise it was again
like the rest of his body. [8]"If they will not believe
you, nor heed the message of the first sign, they
should believe the message of the second. [9]And
if they will not believe even these two signs, nor
heed your plea, take some water from the river
and pour it on the dry land. The water you take
from the river will become blood on the dry
land." [v]

**Aaron's Office as Assistant** [10]Moses, how-
ever, said to the LORD, "If you please, Lord, I
have never been eloquent, neither in the past,
nor recently, nor now that you have spoken to
your servant; but I am slow of speech and
tongue." [w] [11]The LORD said to him, "Who gives
one man speech and makes another deaf and
dumb? Or who gives sight to one and makes
another blind? Is it not I, the LORD? [12]Go, then!
It is I who will assist you in speaking and will
teach you what you are to say." [13]Yet he insisted,
"If you please, Lord, send someone else!"*
[14]Then the LORD became angry with Moses and
said, "Have you not your brother, Aaron the
Levite? I know that he is an eloquent speaker.
Besides, he is now on his way to meet you.
[15]When he sees you, his heart will be glad. You
are to speak to him, then, and put the words in
his mouth. I will assist both you and him in
speaking and will teach the two of you what you
are to do. [16]He shall speak to the people for you:
he shall be your spokesman,* and you shall be as
God to him. [x] [17]Take this staff* in your hand;
with it you are to perform the signs."

3, 22: Articles: probably jewelry. Despoil: this was permissible, that the Israelites might compensate themselves for their many years of servitude; besides, the Egyptians would give these things willingly. Cf Ex 12, 33–36.

4, 13: Send someone else: literally, "Send by means of him whom you will send," that is, "Send whom you will."

4, 16: Spokesman: literally, "mouth"; Aaron was to serve as a mouthpiece for Moses, as a prophet does for God; hence the relation between Moses and Aaron is compared to that between God and his prophet. Cf Ex 7, 1.

4, 17: This staff: probably the same as that of vv 2ff; but some understand it here of a new staff now given by God to Moses.

s Ex 5, 3. t 21f: Ex 11, 2f; 12, 35f. u Ex 7, 10. v Ex 7, 17. 19f. w Ex 6, 12. x 15f: Ex 7, 1.

**Moses' Return to Egypt** [18]After this Moses returned to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, "Let me go back, please, to my kinsmen in Egypt, to see whether they are still living." Jethro replied, "Go in peace."* [19]In Midian[y] the LORD said to Moses, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who sought your life are dead." [20]So Moses took his wife and his sons, and started back to the land of Egypt, with them riding the ass. The staff of God he carried with him. [21]The LORD said to him, "On your return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have put in your power. I will make him obstinate,* however, so that he will not let the people go. [22][z]So you shall say to Pharaoh: Thus says the LORD: Israel is my son, my first-born. [23]Hence I tell you: Let my son go, that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, I warn you, I will kill your son, your first-born."[a]

[24]*On the journey, at a place where they spent the night, the Lord came upon Moses and would have killed him. [25][b]But Zipporah took a piece of flint and cut off her son's foreskin and, touching his person, she said, "You are a spouse of blood to me." [26]Then God let Moses go. At that time she said, "A spouse of blood," in regard to the circumcision.

[27]The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he went, and when they met at the mountain of God, Aaron kissed him. [28]Moses informed him of all the LORD had said in sending him, and of the various signs he had enjoined upon him. [29]Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. [30]Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses, and he performed the signs before the people. [31]The people believed, and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their affliction, they bowed down in worship.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5–12
See RG
78–79

**Pharaoh's Obduracy** [1]After that, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may celebrate a feast to me in the desert." [2]Pharaoh answered, "Who is the LORD, that I should heed his plea to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD; even if I did, I would not let Israel go." [3]They replied, "The God of the Hebrews has sent us word. Let us go a three days' journey in the desert, that we may offer sacrifice to the LORD, our God;[c] otherwise he will punish us with pestilence or the sword."

[4]The king of Egypt answered them, "What do you mean, Moses and Aaron, by taking the people away from their work? Off to your labor! [5]Look how numerous the people of the land are already," continued Pharaoh, "and yet you would give them rest from their labor!"

[6]That very day Pharaoh gave the taskmasters and foremen* of the people this order: [7]"You shall no longer supply the people with straw for their brickmaking* as you have previously done. Let them go and gather straw themselves! [8]Yet you shall levy upon them the same quota of bricks as they have previously made. Do not reduce it. They are lazy; that is why they are crying, 'Let us go to offer sacrifice to our God.' [9]Increase the work for the men, so that they keep their mind on it and pay no attention to lying words."

[10]So the taskmasters and foremen of the people went out and told them, "Thus says Pharaoh: I will not provide you with straw. [11]Go and gather the straw yourselves, wherever you can find it. Yet there must not be the slightest reduction in your work." [12]The people, then, scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw, [13]while the taskmasters kept driving them on, saying, "Finish your work, the

**4, 18:** Moses did not tell his father-in-law his main reason for returning to Egypt, but this secondary motive which he offered was also true.

**4, 21:** Make him obstinate: literally, "harden his heart." God permitted Pharaoh to be stubborn in his opposition to the departure of the Israelites. Cf Rom 9, 17f.

**4, 24ff:** Apparently God was angry with Moses for having failed to keep the divine command given to Abraham in Gn 17, 10ff. Moses' life is spared when his wife circumcises their son.

**5, 6:** The taskmasters and foremen: the former were higher officials and probably Egyptians; the latter were lower officials, chosen from the Israelites themselves. Cf v 14.

**5, 7:** Straw was mixed with the clay to give the sun-dried bricks greater consistency.

y Ex 2, 15, 23. z Sir 36, 11. a Ex 11, 5; 12, 29. b Is 6, 2; 7, 20. c Ex 3, 18.

same daily amount as when your straw was supplied."

**Complaint of the Foremen** [14]The foremen of the Israelites, whom the taskmasters of Pharaoh had placed over them, were beaten, and were asked, "Why have you not completed your prescribed amount of bricks yesterday and today, as before?"

[15]Then the Israelite foremen came and made this appeal to Pharaoh: "Why do you treat your servants in this manner? [16]No straw is supplied to your servants, and still we are told to make bricks. Look how your servants are beaten! It is you who are at fault." [17]Pharaoh answered, "It is just because you are lazy that you keep saying, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to the LORD.' [18]Off to work, then! Straw shall not be provided for you, but you must still deliver your quota of bricks."

[19]The Israelite foremen knew they were in a sorry plight, having been told not to reduce the daily amount of bricks. [20]When, therefore, they left Pharaoh and came upon Moses and Aaron, who were waiting to meet them, [21]they said to them, "The LORD look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odor with Pharaoh and his servants and have put a sword in their hands to slay us."

**Renewal of God's Promise** [22]Moses again had recourse to the LORD and said, "Lord, why do you treat this people so badly? And why did you send me on such a mission? [23]Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has maltreated this people of yours, and you have done nothing to rescue them."

## CHAPTER 6

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[1]Then the LORD answered Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. Forced by my mighty hand, he will send them away; compelled by my outstretched arm, he will drive them from his land."

[2]God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. [3]As God the Almighty I appeared[d] to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but my name, LORD, I did not make known to them. [4]I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they were living as aliens.[e] [5]And now that I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are treating as slaves, I am mindful of my covenant.[f] [6]Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the LORD. I will free you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and will deliver you from their slavery. I will rescue you by my outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. [7]I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your God.[g] You will know that I, the LORD, am your God when I free you from the labor of the Egyptians [8]and bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will give it to you as your own possession—I, the LORD!" [9]But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to him because of their dejection and hard slavery.

[10]Then the LORD said to Moses, [11]"Go and tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let the Israelites leave his land." [12]But Moses protested to the LORD, "If the Israelites would not listen to me, how can it be that Pharaoh will listen to me, poor speaker[h] that I am!" [13]Still, the LORD, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them his orders regarding both the Israelites and Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

**Genealogy of Moses and Aaron** [14]These are the heads of the ancestral houses.* The sons of Reuben,[i] the first-born of Israel, were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. [15]The sons of Simeon[j] were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar and Shaul, who was the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. [16]The names of the sons of Levi,[k] in their genealogical order, are Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived one hundred and thirty-seven years.

[17]The sons of Gershon,[l] as heads of clans, were Libni and Shimei. [18]The sons of Kohath[m] were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath

**6, 14:** The purpose of the genealogy here is to give the line from which Moses and Aaron sprang. Reuben and Simeon are first mentioned because, as older brothers of Levi, their names occur before his in the genealogy.

d Gn 17, 1; 35, 11. e Gn 15, 18; 17, 4–8. f Ex 2, 24. g Lv 26, 12. h Ex 6, 30. i Nm 26. 5f; 1 Chr 5, 3 j Nm 26, 12; 1 Chr 4, 24. k Nm 3, 17; 1 Chr 6, 1. 16; 23, 6. l Nm 3, 21; 1 Chr 6, 17; 23, 7. m Nm 3, 27; 1 Chr 6, 2. 18.

lived one hundred and thirty-three years. [19]The
sons of Merari[n] were Mahli and Mushi. These
are the clans of Levi in their genealogical order.
[20]Amram married his aunt* Jochebed,[o] who
bore him Aaron, Moses and Miriam. Amram
lived one hundred and thirty-seven years. [21]The
sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg and Zichri.
[22]The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan
and Sithri. [23]Aaron married Amminadab's[p]
daughter, Elisheba, the sister of Nahshon; she
bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
[24]The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah and
Abiasaph. These are the clans of the Korahites.
[25]Aaron's son, Eleazar, married one of Putiel's
daughters, who bore him Phinehas. These are
the heads of the ancestral clans of the Levites.
[26]This is the Aaron and this the Moses to whom
the LORD said, "Lead the Israelites from the land
of Egypt, company by company." [27]These are the
ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to
bring the Israelites out of Egypt—the same
Moses and Aaron.

**Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh** [28]On the
day the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt [29]he said,
"I am the LORD. Repeat to Pharaoh, king of
Egypt, all that I tell you." [30]But Moses protested
to the LORD, "Since I am a poor speaker,[q] how
can it be that Pharaoh will listen to me?"

## CHAPTER 7

[1]The LORD answered him, "See! I have made
you as God to Pharaoh,[r] and Aaron your brother
shall act as your prophet.* [2]You shall tell him all
that I command you. In turn, your brother Aaron
shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave his
land. [3]Yet I will make Pharaoh so obstinate that,
despite the many signs and wonders that I will
work in the land of Egypt, [4]he will not listen to
you. Therefore I will lay my hand on Egypt and
by great acts of judgment I will bring the hosts of
my people, the Israelites, out of the land of
Egypt, [5]so that the Egyptians may learn that I am
the LORD, as I stretch out my hand against Egypt
and lead the Israelites out of their midst."
[6]Moses and Aaron did as the LORD had
commanded them. [7]Moses was eighty years old
and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to
Pharaoh.

**The Staff Turned into a Snake** [8]The LORD
told Moses and Aaron, [9]"If Pharaoh demands
that you work a sign or wonder, you shall say to
Aaron: Take your staff and throw it down before
Pharaoh, and it will be changed into a snake."[s]
[10]Then Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and
did as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw
his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants,
and it was changed into a snake. [11]Pharaoh, in
turn, summoned wise men and sorcerers, and
they also, the magicians[t] of Egypt, did likewise
by their magic arts. [12]Each one threw down his
staff, and it was changed into a snake. But
Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. [13]Pharaoh,
however, was obstinate and would not listen to
them, just as the LORD had foretold.

**First Plague: Water Turned into Blood**
[14]*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh is
obdurate in refusing to let the people go. [15]To-
morrow morning, when he sets out for the
water, go and present yourself by the river bank,
holding in your hand the staff that turned into a
serpent. [16]Say to him: The LORD, the God of the
Hebrews, sent me to you with the message: Let
my people go to worship me in the desert. But as
yet you have not listened. [17]The LORD now says:
This is how you shall know that I am the LORD. I
will strike the water of the river with the staff I
hold, and it shall be changed into blood.[u] [18]The
fish in the river shall die, and the river itself shall
become so polluted that the Egyptians will be
unable to drink its water."

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[19]The LORD then said to Moses, "Say to
Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand
over the waters of Egypt—their streams and
canals and pools, all their supplies of water—

6, 20: His aunt: more exactly, "his father's sister." Later on such a marriage was forbidden. Cf Lv 18, 12. Hence, the Greek and Latin versions render here, "his cousin."

7, 1: Just as God had his prophets to speak to men in his name, so Moses had Aaron as his "prophet" to speak to Pharaoh. Cf Ex 4, 16.

7, 14: Most of the ten plagues of Egypt seem to be similar to certain natural phenomena of that country; but they are represented as supernatural at least in their greater intensity and in their occurring exactly according to Moses' commands.

n Nm 3, 20; 1 Chr 6, 19; 23, 21. o Nm 26, 59. p Ru 4, 19f; 1 Chr 2, 10. q Ex 6, 12. r Ex 4, 15f. s Ex 4, 3. t 2 Tm 3, 8. u 17–21: Ex 4, 9; Pss 78, 44; 105, 29; Wis 11, 5–7.

that they may become blood. Throughout the land of Egypt there shall be blood, even in the wooden pails and stone jars."

[20]Moses and Aaron did as the LORD had commanded. Aaron raised his staff and struck the waters of the river in full view of Pharaoh and his servants, and all the water of the river was changed into blood. [21]The fish in the river died, and the river itself became so polluted that the Egyptians could not drink its water. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt. [22]But the Egyptian magicians did the same by their magic arts. So Pharaoh remained obstinate and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had foretold. [23]He turned away and went into his house, with no concern even for this. [24]All the Egyptians had to dig in the neighborhood of the river for drinking water, since they could not drink the river water.

**Second Plague: the Frogs** [25]Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the river. [26]*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and tell him:[v] Thus says the LORD: Let my people go to worship me. [27]If you refuse to let them go, I warn you, I will send a plague of frogs over all your territory. [28]The river will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and into your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your servants, too, and your subjects, even into your ovens and your kneading bowls. [29]The frogs will swarm all over you and your subjects and your servants."

## CHAPTER 8

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[1]The LORD then told Moses, "Say to Aaron: Stretch out your hand and your staff over the streams and canals and pools, to make frogs overrun the land of Egypt." [2]Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. [3]But the magicians did the same by their magic arts. They, too, made frogs overrun the land of Egypt.

[4]Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray the LORD to remove the frogs from me and my subjects, and I will let the people go to offer sacrifice to the LORD." [5]Moses answered Pharaoh, "Do me the favor of appointing the time when I am to pray for you and your servants and your subjects, that the frogs may be taken away from you and your houses and be left only in the river." [6]"Tomorrow," said Pharaoh. Then Moses replied, "It shall be as you have said, so that you may learn that there is none like the LORD, our God. [7]The frogs shall leave you and your houses, your servants and your subjects; only in the river shall they be left."

[8]After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh's presence, Moses implored the LORD to fulfill the promise he had made to Pharaoh about the frogs; [9]and the LORD did as Moses had asked. The frogs in the houses and courtyards* and fields died off. [10]Heaps and heaps of them were gathered up, and there was a stench in the land. [11]But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he became obdurate and would not listen to them, just as the LORD had foretold.

**Third Plague: the Gnats** [12]Thereupon the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron to stretch out his staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may be turned into gnats[w] throughout the land of Egypt."* [13]They did so. Aaron stretched out his hand, and with his staff he struck the dust of the earth, and gnats came upon man and beast. The dust of the earth was turned into gnats throughout the land of Egypt. [14]Though the magicians tried to bring forth gnats by their magic arts, they could not do so.[x] As the gnats infested man and beast, [15]the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."* Yet Pharaoh remained obstinate and would not listen to them, just as the LORD had foretold.

**Fourth Plague: the Flies** [16]Again the LORD told Moses, "Early tomorrow morning present yourself to Pharaoh when he goes forth to the water, and say to him: Thus says the LORD: Let my people go to worship me. [17]If you will not let

**7, 26—8, 28:** This is Ex 8, 1–32 in the verse enumeration of the Vulgate.

**8, 9:** Courtyards: some render "farmhouses."

**8, 12. 17:** Gnats, flies: it is uncertain what species of troublesome insects are here meant.

**8, 15:** The finger of God: understood by the magicians as the staff mentioned in Ex 8, 13. Cf Lk 11, 20.

v 26–29: Pss 78, 45; 105, 30. w 12f: Ps 105, 31. x Wis 17, 7.

my people go, I warn you, I will loose swarms of
flies upon you and your servants and your
subjects and your houses. The houses of the
Egyptians and the very ground on which they
stand shall be filled with swarms of flies. [18]But
on that day I will make an exception of the land
of Goshen: there shall be no flies where my
people dwell, that you may know that I am the
LORD in the midst of the earth. [19]I will make this
distinction between my people and your people.
This sign shall take place tomorrow." [20]This the
LORD did. Thick swarms of flies entered the
house of Pharaoh and houses of his servants;
throughout Egypt the land was infested with
flies.[y]

[21]Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron
and said to them, "Go and offer sacrifice to your
God in this land." [22]But Moses replied, "It is not
right to do so, for the sacrifices we offer to the
LORD, our God, are an abomination to the
Egyptians.* If before their very eyes we offer
sacrifices which are an abomination to them,
will not the Egyptians stone us? [23]We must go a
three days' journey in the desert to offer sacrifice
to the LORD, our God, as he commands us."
[24]"Well, then," said Pharaoh, "I will let you go
to offer sacrifice to the LORD, your God, in the
desert, provided that you do not go too far away
and that you pray for me." [25]Moses answered,
"As soon as I leave your presence I will pray to
the LORD that the flies may depart tomorrow
from Pharaoh and his servants and his subjects.
Pharaoh, however, must not play false again by
refusing to let the people go to offer sacrifice to
the LORD." [26]When Moses left Pharaoh's pres-
ence, he prayed to the LORD; [27]and the LORD did
as Moses had asked. He removed the flies from
Pharaoh and his servants and subjects. Not one
remained. [28]But once more Pharaoh became
obdurate and would not let the people go.

## CHAPTER 9

**Fifth Plague: the Pestilence** [1]Then the LORD
said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and tell him:
Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews:
Let my people go to worship me. [2]If you refuse
to let them go and persist in holding them, [3]I
warn you, the LORD will afflict all your livestock
in the field—your horses, asses, camels, herds
and flocks—with a very severe pestilence. [4]But
the LORD will distinguish between the livestock
of Israel and that of Egypt, so that none belong-
ing to the Israelites will die." [5]And setting a
definite time, the LORD added, "Tomorrow the
LORD shall do this in the land." [6]And on the next
day the LORD did so. All the livestock of the
Egyptians died,[z] but not one beast belonging to
the Israelites. [7]But though Pharaoh's messengers
informed him that not even one beast belonging
to the Israelites had died, he still remained
obdurate and would not let the people go.

**Sixth Plague: the Boils** [8]Then the LORD said
to Moses and Aaron, "Take a double handful of
soot from a furnace, and in the presence of
Pharaoh let Moses scatter it toward the sky. [9]It
will then turn into fine dust over the whole land
of Egypt and cause festering boils on man and
beast throughout the land."

[10]So they took soot from a furnace and stood
in the presence of Pharaoh. Moses scattered it
toward the sky, and it caused festering boils on
man and beast. [11]The magicians could not stand
in Moses' presence, for there were boils on the
magicians no less than on the rest of the
Egyptians. [12]But the LORD made Pharaoh obsti-
nate, and he would not listen to them, just as the
LORD had foretold to Moses.

**Seventh Plague: the Hail** [13]Then the LORD
told Moses, "Early tomorrow morning present
yourself to Pharaoh and say to him: Thus says
the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let my
people go to worship me, [14]or this time I will
hurl all my blows upon you and your servants
and your subjects, that you may know that there
is none like me anywhere on earth. [15]For by
now I would have stretched out my hand and
struck you and your subjects with such pesti-
lence as would wipe you from the earth. [16]But

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**8, 22:** The Egyptians would fiercely resent the sacrifice of any animal they considered sacred. Certain animals were worshiped in Egypt, at least as the symbols of various deities.

y Pss 78, 45; 105, 31; Wis 16, 9. z Ps 78, 48.

this is why I have spared you: to show you* my
power and to make my name resound through-
out the earth![a] 17Will you still block the way for
my people by refusing to let them go? 18I warn
you, then, tomorrow at this hour I will rain
down such fierce hail as there has never been in
Egypt from the day the nation was founded up to
the present. 19Therefore, order all your livestock
and whatever else you have in the open fields to
be brought to a place of safety. Whatever man or
beast remains in the fields and is not brought to
shelter shall die when the hail comes upon
them." 20Some of Pharaoh's servants feared the
warning of the LORD and hurried their servants
and livestock off to shelter. 21Others, however,
did not take the warning of the LORD to heart
and left their servants and livestock in the fields.

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22The LORD then said to Moses, "Stretch out
your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall
upon the entire land of Egypt, on man and beast
and every growing thing in the land of Egypt."
23When Moses stretched out his staff toward the
sky, the LORD sent forth hail[b] and peals of
thunder. Lightning flashed toward the earth, and
the LORD rained down hail upon the land of
Egypt; 24and lightning constantly flashed
through the hail, such fierce hail as had never
been seen in the land since Egypt became a
nation. 25It struck down every man and beast
that was in the open throughout the land of
Egypt; it beat down every growing thing and
splintered every tree in the fields. 26Only in the
land of Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, was
there no hail.

27Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron
and said to them, "I have sinned again! The
LORD is just; it is I and my subjects who are at
fault. 28Pray to the LORD, for we have had
enough of God's thunder and hail. Then I will let
you go; you need stay no longer." 29Moses
replied, "As soon as I leave the city I will extend
my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease,
and there will be no more hail. Thus you shall
learn that the earth is the LORD's. 30But you and
your servants, I know, do not yet fear the LORD
God."

9, 16: To show you: some ancient versions read, "to show through you." Cf Rom 9, 17.

31Now the flax and the barley were ruined,
because the barley was in ear and the flax in
bud. 32But the wheat and the spelt were not
ruined, for they grow later.

33When Moses had left Pharaoh's presence
and had gone out of the city, he extended his
hands to the LORD. Then the thunder and the
hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured down
upon the earth. 34But Pharaoh, seeing that the
rain and hail and thunder had ceased, sinned
again: he with his servants became obdurate,
35and in his obstinacy he would not let the
Israelites go, as the LORD had foretold through
Moses.

## CHAPTER 10

**Eighth Plague: the Locusts** 1Then the LORD
said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have made
him and his servants obdurate in order that I
may perform these signs of mine among them
2and that you may recount to your son and
grandson how ruthlessly I dealt with the Egyp-
tians and what signs I wrought among them, so
that you may know that I am the LORD."[c]

3So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and
told him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the
Hebrews: How long will you refuse to submit to
me? Let my people go to worship me. 4If you
refuse to let my people go, I warn you, tomor-
row I will bring locusts into your country. 5They
shall cover the ground, so that the ground itself
will not be visible. They shall eat up the remnant
you saved unhurt from the hail, as well as all the
foliage that has since sprouted in your fields.
6They shall fill your houses and the houses of
your servants and of all the Egyptians; such a
sight your fathers or grandfathers have not seen
from the day they first settled on this soil up to
the present day." With that he turned and left
Pharaoh.

7But Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How
long must he be a menace to us? Let the men go
to worship the LORD, their God. Do you not yet
realize that Egypt is being destroyed?" 8So
Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh,
who said to them, "You may go and worship the

a Rom 9, 17. b 23f: Pss 78, 47; 105, 32f. c Dt 6, 20ff.

LORD, your God. But how many of you will go?"
[9]"Young and old must go with us," Moses
answered, "our sons and daughters as well as
our flocks and herds must accompany us. That is
what a feast of the LORD means to us." [10]"The
LORD help you,"* Pharaoh replied, "if I ever let
your little ones go with you! Clearly, you have
some evil in mind. [11]No, no! Just you men can
go and worship the LORD.* After all, that is what
you want." With that they were driven from
Pharaoh's presence.

[12]The LORD then said to Moses, "Stretch out
your hand over the land of Egypt, that locusts[d]
may swarm over it and eat up all the vegetation
and whatever the hail has left." [13]So Moses
stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and
the LORD sent an east wind* blowing over the
land all that day and all that night. At dawn the
east wind brought the locusts. [14]They swarmed
over the whole land of Egypt and settled down
on every part of it. Never before had there been
such a fierce swarm of locusts, nor will there
ever be. [15]They covered the surface of the whole
land, till it was black with them. They ate up all
the vegetation in the land and the fruit of
whatever trees the hail had spared. Nothing
green was left on any tree or plant throughout
the land of Egypt.

[16]Hastily Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aar-
on and said, "I have sinned against the LORD,
your God, and against you. [17]But now, do
forgive me my sin once more, and pray the
LORD, your God, to take at least this deadly pest
from me." [18]When Moses left the presence of
Pharaoh, he prayed to the LORD, [19]and the LORD
changed the wind to a very strong west wind,
which took up the locusts and hurled them into
the Red Sea.* But though not a single locust
remained within the confines of Egypt, [20]the
LORD made Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not
let the Israelites go.

**Ninth Plague: the Darkness** [21]Then the
LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand
toward the sky, that over the land of Egypt there
may be such intense darkness* that one can feel
it." [22]So Moses stretched out his hand toward
the sky, and there was dense darkness[e] through-
out the land of Egypt for three days. [23]Men
could not see one another, nor could they move
from where they were, for three days. But all the
Israelites had light where they dwelt.

[24]Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron
and said, "Go and worship the LORD. Your little
ones, too, may go with you. But your flocks and
herds must remain." [25]Moses replied, "You must
also grant us sacrifices and holocausts to offer up
to the LORD, our God. [26]Hence, our livestock
also must go with us. Not an animal must be left
behind. Some of them we must sacrifice to the
LORD, our God, but we ourselves shall not know
which ones we must sacrifice to him until we
arrive at the place itself." [27]But the LORD made
Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not let them
go. [28]"Leave my presence," Pharaoh said to him,
"and see to it that you do not appear before me
again! The day you appear before me you shall
die!" [29]Moses replied, "Well said! I will never
appear before you again."

## CHAPTER 11

**Tenth Plague: the Death of the First-born**

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[1]Then the LORD told Moses, "One more plague
will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. After
that he will let you depart. In fact, he will not
merely let you go; he will drive you away.
[2]Instruct your people that every man is to ask his
neighbor, and every woman her neighbor, for
silver and gold articles and for clothing."[f] [3]The

10, 10: The Lord help you . . . : literally, "May the LORD be with you in the same way as I let you . . ."; a sarcastic blessing intended as a curse.

10, 11: Pharaoh realized that if the men alone went they would have to return to their families. He suspected that the Hebrews had no intention of returning.

10, 13: East wind: coming across the desert from Arabia, the strong east wind brings Egypt the burning sirocco and, at times, locusts. Cf Ex 14, 21.

10, 19: The Red Sea: according to the traditional translation, but the Hebrew is literally, "the Reed Sea"; hence the Red Sea of Exodus was probably a body of shallow water somewhat to the north of the present deep Red Sea.

10, 21: Darkness: at times a storm from the south, called the khamsin, blackens the sky of Egypt with sand from the Sahara; the dust in the air is then so thick that the darkness can, in a sense, "be felt."

d 12ff: Pss 78, 46; 105, 34f. e Ps 105, 28. f 2f: Ex 3, 21f; 12, 35f.

LORD indeed made the Egyptians well-disposed
toward the people; Moses himself was very
highly regarded by Pharaoh's servants and the
people in the land of Egypt.

[4]Moses then said, "Thus says the LORD: At
midnight I will go forth through Egypt.[g] [5]Every
first-born in this land shall die,[h] from the first-
born of Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of
the slave-girl at the handmill, as well as all the
first-born of the animals. [6]Then there shall be
loud wailing throughout the land of Egypt, such
as has never been, nor will ever be again. [7]But
among the Israelites and their animals not even a
dog shall growl, so that you may know how the
LORD distinguishes between the Egyptians and
the Israelites. [8][i]All these servants of yours shall
then come down to me, and prostrate before me,
they shall beg me, 'Leave us, you and all your
followers!' Only then will I depart." With that
he left Pharaoh's presence in hot anger.

[9]The LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh refuses to
listen to you that my wonders may be multiplied
in the land of Egypt." [10]Thus, although Moses
and Aaron performed these various wonders in
Pharaoh's presence, the LORD made Pharaoh
obstinate, and he would not let the Israelites
leave his land.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 5–12
See RG
78–79

**The Passover Ritual Prescribed** [1]The LORD
said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,
[2]"This month* shall stand at the head of your
calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of
the year.[j] [3]Tell the whole community of Israel:
On the tenth of this month every one of your
families must procure for itself a lamb, one
apiece for each household. [4]If a family is too
small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest
household in procuring one and shall share in
the lamb* in proportion to the number of
persons who partake of it. [5]The lamb must be a
year-old male and without blemish. You may
take it from either the sheep or the goats. [6]You
shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this
month, and then, with the whole assembly of
Israel present, it shall be slaughtered during the
evening twilight. [7]They shall take some of its
blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the
lintel of every house in which they partake of the
lamb. [8]That same night they shall eat its roasted
flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. [9]It
shall not be eaten raw or boiled, but roasted
whole, with its head and shanks and inner
organs. [10]None of it must be kept beyond the
next morning; whatever is left over in the
morning shall be burned up.

[11]"This is how you are to eat it: with your
loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in
hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It
is the Passover* of the LORD. [12]For on this same
night I will go through Egypt, striking down
every first-born of the land, both man and beast,
and executing judgment on all the gods of
Egypt—I, the LORD! [13]But the blood will mark
the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I
will pass over you; thus, when I strike the land
of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon
you.[k]

[14]"This day shall be a memorial feast for you,
which all your generations shall celebrate with
pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institu-
tion. [15]For seven days you must eat unleavened
bread. From the very first day you shall have
your houses clear of all leaven. Whoever eats
leavened bread from the first day to the seventh
shall be cut off from Israel. [16]On the first day you
shall hold a sacred assembly, and likewise on the
seventh. On these days you shall not do any sort
of work, except to prepare the food that every-
one needs.

[17]"Keep, then, this custom of the unleavened
bread.[l] Since it was on this very day that I
brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt, you

**12, 2:** This month: Abib, the month of "ripe grain." Cf Ex 13, 4; 23, 15; 34, 18; Dt 16, 1. It occurred near the vernal equinox, March-April. Later it was known by the Babylonian name of Nisan. Cf Neh 2, 1; Est 3, 7.

**12, 4:** Share in the lamb: probably, in the expenses of its purchase. Some explain, "reckon for the lamb the number of persons required to eat it." Cf Ex 12, 10.

**12, 11:** Passover: in Hebrew, pesach, in Aramaic, pascha. In the following verses the same root is used in the verb "to pass over." The word may be originally Egyptian, pesach, "the blow," i.e., the final plague which destroyed the Egyptian first-born.

g Ex 12, 12. h 5f: Ex 12, 29f. i Ex 12, 31ff. j 2–20: Lv 23, 5–8; Nm 9, 2–5; 28, 16ff; Dt 16, 1–8. k Heb 11, 28. l Ex 13, 3.

must celebrate this day throughout your generations as a perpetual institution. [18]From the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of this month you shall eat unleavened bread. [19]For seven days no leaven may be found in your houses. Anyone, be he a resident alien or a native, who eats leavened food shall be cut off from the community of Israel. [20]Nothing leavened may you eat; wherever you dwell you may eat only unleavened bread."

**Promulgation of the Passover** [21]Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and procure lambs for your families, and slaughter them as Passover victims. [22]Then take a bunch of hyssop,* and dipping it in the blood that is in the basin, sprinkle the lintel and the two doorposts with this blood.[m] But none of you shall go outdoors until morning. [23]For the LORD will go by, striking down the Egyptians. Seeing the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door and not let the destroyer come into your houses to strike you down.

[24]"You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendants. [25]Thus, you must also observe this rite when you have entered the land which the LORD will give you as he promised. [26]When your children ask you, 'What does this rite of yours mean?'[n] [27]you shall reply, 'This is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt; when he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses.' "

Then the people bowed down in worship, [28]and the Israelites went and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

**Death of the First-born** [29]At midnight the LORD slew every first-born in the land of Egypt,[o] from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as all the first-born of the animals. [30]Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was loud wailing throughout Egypt, for there was not a house without its dead.

**Permission To Depart** [31]During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Leave my people at once, you and the Israelites with you! Go and worship the LORD as you said. [32]Take your flocks, too, and your herds, as you demanded, and begone; and you will be doing me a favor."

[33]The Egyptians likewise urged the people on, to hasten their departure from the land; they thought that otherwise they would all die. [34]The people, therefore, took their dough before it was leavened, in their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks on their shoulders. [35]The Israelites did as Moses had commanded: they asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing.[p] [36]The LORD indeed had made the Egyptians so well-disposed toward the people that they let them have whatever they asked for. Thus did they despoil the Egyptians.

## II: The Exodus From Egypt and the Journey to Sinai

**Departure from Egypt** [37]The Israelites set out from Rameses[q] for Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, not counting the children. [38]A crowd of mixed ancestry* also went up with them, besides their livestock, very numerous flocks and herds. [39]Since the dough they had brought out of Egypt was not leavened, they baked it into unleavened loaves. They had been rushed out of Egypt and had no opportunity even to prepare food for the journey.

[40]The time the Israelites had stayed in Egypt* was four hundred and thirty years.[r] [41]At the end of four hundred and thirty years, all the hosts of the LORD left the land of Egypt on this very date. [42]This was a night of vigil for the LORD, as he led

**12, 22:** Hyssop: a plant with many woody branchlets that made a convenient sprinkler.

**12, 38:** Mixed ancestry: half-Hebrew and half-Egyptian. Cf Nm 11, 4; Lv 24, 10f.

**12, 40:** In Egypt: according to some ancient sources, "in Canaan and Egypt," thus reckoning from the time of Abraham. Cf Gal 3, 17.

m 22f: Ex 12, 7. 13. n 26f: Ex 13, 8. 14; Dt 6, 20f. o 29f: Ex 11, 4ff; Pss 78, 51; 105, 36; 136, 10; Wis 18, 10–16. p 35f: Ex 3, 21f; 11, 2f; Ps 105, 37f. q Nm 33, 3ff. r Gn 15, 13; Acts 7, 6; Gal 3, 17.

them out of the land of Egypt; so on this same night all the Israelites must keep a vigil for the LORD throughout their generations.

**Passover Regulations** 43The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover. No foreigner may partake of it. 44However, any slave who has been bought for money may partake of it, provided you have first circumcised him. 45But no transient alien or hired servant may partake of it. 46It must be eaten in one and the same house; you may not take any of its flesh outside the house.[s] You shall not break any of its bones.* 47The whole community of Israel must keep this feast. 48If any aliens[t] living among you wish to celebrate the Passover of the LORD, all the males among them must first be circumcised, and then they may join in its observance just like the natives. But no man who is uncircumcised may partake of it. 49The law shall be the same for the resident alien as for the native."

50All the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51On that same day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt company by company.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 13–15
See RG
79–80

**Consecration of First-born** 1The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 2"Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites,[u] both of man and beast, for it belongs to me."

3Moses said to the people, "Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, that place of slavery.[v] It was with a strong hand that the LORD brought you away. Nothing made with leaven must be eaten. 4This day of your departure is in the month of Abib. 5Therefore, it is in this month that you must celebrate this rite, after the LORD, your God, has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers he would give you, a land flowing with milk and honey. 6For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and the seventh day shall also be a festival to the LORD. 7Only unleavened bread may be eaten during the seven days; no leaven and nothing leavened may be found in all your territory. 8On this day you shall explain to your son, 'This is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9It shall be as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead;[w] thus the law of the LORD will ever be on your lips, because with a strong hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. 10Therefore, you shall keep this prescribed rite at its appointed time from year to year.

11"When the LORD, your God, has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, which he swore to you and your fathers he would give you, 12you shall dedicate to the LORD every son that opens the womb;[x] and all the male firstlings of your animals shall belong to the LORD. 13Every first-born of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep. If you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck. Every first-born son you must redeem. 14If your son should ask you later on, 'What does this mean?' you shall tell him, 'With a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, that place of slavery. 15When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every first-born in the land of Egypt, every first-born of man and of beast. That is why I sacrifice to the LORD everything of the male sex that opens the womb, and why I redeem every first-born of my sons.' 16Let this, then, be as a sign on your hand and as a pendant on your forehead: with a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."[y]

**Toward the Red Sea** 17Now, when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the Philistines' land,* though this was the nearest; for he thought, should the people see that they would have to fight, they might change their minds and return to Egypt. 18Instead, he rerouted them toward the Red Sea by way of the

12, 46: You shall not break any of its bones: the application of these words to our Lord on the cross shows that the Paschal lamb was a prophetic type of Christ, immolated to free men from the bondage of sin. Cf also 1 Cor 5, 7; 1 Pt 1, 19.

13, 17: By way of the Philistines' land: the most direct route from Egypt to Palestine, along the shore of the Mediterranean.

s Nm 9, 12; Jn 19, 36. t 47f: Nm 9, 14. u Ex 13, 12–15. v 3–10: Ex 12, 2–20. w Ex 13, 16; Dt 6, 8; 11, 18. x 12–15; Ex 13, 2; 22, 29f; 34, 19f: Nm 3, 12f; 8, 16; 18, 15; Dt 15, 19. y Ex 13, 9.

desert road. In battle array the Israelites marched
out of Egypt. [19]Moses also took Joseph's bones[z]
along, for Joseph had made the Israelites swear
solemnly that, when God should come to them,
they would carry his bones away with them.

[20]Setting out from Succoth, they camped at
Etham[a] near the edge of the desert.

[21]The LORD preceded them, in the daytime by
means of a column of cloud to show them the
way, and at night by means of a column of fire*
to give them light.[b] Thus they could travel both
day and night. [22]Neither the column of cloud by
day nor the column of fire by night ever left its
place in front of the people.

## CHAPTER 14

[1]Then the LORD said to Moses, [2]*"Tell the
Israelites to turn about and camp before Pi-
hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea.[c] You
shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, just opposite,
by the sea. [3]Pharaoh will then say, 'The Israelites
are wandering about aimlessly in the land. The
desert has closed in on them.' [4]Thus will I make
Pharaoh so obstinate that he will pursue them.
Then I will receive glory through Pharaoh and all
his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am
the LORD."

This the Israelites did. [5]When it was reported
to the king of Egypt that the people had fled,
Pharaoh and his servants changed their minds
about them. "What have we done!" they ex-
claimed. "Why, we have released Israel from our
service!" [6]So Pharaoh made his chariots ready
and mustered his soldiers— [7]six hundred first-
class chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt,
with warriors on them all. [8]So obstinate had the
LORD made Pharaoh that he pursued[d] the Israel-
ites even while they were marching away in
triumph. [9]The Egyptians, then, pursued them;
Pharaoh's whole army, his horses, chariots and
charioteers, caught up with them as they lay
encamped by the sea, at Pi-hahiroth, in front of
Baal-zephon.

**Crossing of the Red Sea** [10]Pharaoh was al-
ready near when the Israelites looked up and
saw that the Egyptians were on the march in
pursuit of them. In great fright they cried out to
the LORD. [11]And they complained to Moses,
"Were there no burial places in Egypt that you
had to bring us out here to die in the desert?
Why did you do this to us? Why did you bring us
out of Egypt? [12]Did we not tell you this in Egypt,
when we said, 'Leave us alone. Let us serve the
Egyptians'? Far better for us to be the slaves of
the Egyptians than to die in the desert." [13]But
Moses answered the people, "Fear not! Stand
your ground, and you will see the victory the
LORD will win for you today. These Egyptians
whom you see today you will never see again.
[14]The LORD himself will fight for you; you have
only to keep still."

Ch 13–15
See RG
79–80

[15]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you
crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to go
forward. [16]And you, lift up your staff and, with
hand outstretched over the sea, split the sea in
two, that the Israelites may pass through it on
dry land. [17]But I will make the Egyptians so
obstinate that they will go in after them. Then I
will receive glory through Pharaoh and all his
army, his chariots and charioteers. [18]The Egyp-
tians shall know that I am the LORD, when I
receive glory through Pharaoh and his chariots
and charioteers."

[19]The angel of God, who had been leading
Israel's camp, now moved and went around
behind them. The column of cloud also, leaving
the front, took up its place behind them, [20]so
that it came between the camp of the Egyptians
and that of Israel. But the cloud now became
dark,* and thus the night passed without the
rival camps coming any closer together all night

**13, 21:** A column of cloud . . . a column of fire: probably one and the same preternatural phenomenon, a central nucleus of fire surrounded by smoke; only at night was its luminous nature visible. Cf Ex 40, 38.

**14, 2:** These places have not been definitively identified. Even the relative position of Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon is not clear; perhaps the former was on the west shore of the sea, where the Israelites were, and the latter on the opposite shore.

**14, 20:** The cloud now became dark: the light which it ordinarily cast at night would now have been a help to the Egyptians; its present obscurity serves as a shield for the Israelites. However, the reading of the original text here is not quite certain.

z Gn 50, 25; Jos 24, 32. a Nm 33, 6. b 21f: Ex 40, 38; Nm 9, 15–22; Dt 1, 33; Neh 9, 19; Pss 78, 14; 105, 39; Wis 10, 17. c Nm 33, 7f. d 5–8: Wis 19, 3; 1 Mc 4, 9.

long. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over
the sea, and the LORD swept the sea with a
strong east wind throughout the night and so
turned it into dry land.[e] When the water was
thus divided, 22 the Israelites marched into the
midst of the sea on dry land, with the water like
a wall to their right and to their left.

**Destruction of the Egyptians** 23 The Egyp-
tians followed in pursuit; all Pharaoh's horses
and chariots and charioteers went after them
right into the midst of the sea. 24 In the night
watch just before dawn the LORD cast through
the column of the fiery cloud upon the Egyp-
tian force a glance that threw it into a panic;
25 and he so clogged their chariot wheels that
they could hardly drive. With that the Egyp-
tians sounded the retreat before Israel, because
the LORD was fighting for them against the
Egyptians.

26 Then the LORD told Moses, "Stretch out
your hand over the sea, that the water may flow
back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and
their charioteers." 27 So Moses stretched out his
hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea flowed
back to its normal depth. The Egyptians were
fleeing head on toward the sea, when the LORD
hurled them into its midst. 28 As the water
flowed back, it covered the chariots and the
charioteers of Pharaoh's whole army[f] which had
followed the Israelites into the sea. Not a single
one of them escaped. 29 But the Israelites had
marched on dry land through the midst of the
sea, with the water like a wall to their right and
to their left. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel on that
day from the power of the Egyptians. When
Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the
seashore 31 and beheld the great power that the
LORD had shown against the Egyptians, they
feared the LORD and believed in him[g] and in his
servant Moses.

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 13–15
See RG
79–80

1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang[h] this
song to the LORD:*

I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously
triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.
2 My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
He is my God, I praise him;
the God of my father, I extol him.[i]
3 The LORD is a warrior,
LORD is his name!
4 Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into
the sea;
the elite of his officers were submerged in
the Red Sea.

5 The flood waters covered them,
they sank into the depths like a stone.[j]

6 Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in
power,
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the
enemy.
7 In your great majesty you overthrew your
adversaries;
you loosed your wrath to consume them
like stubble.
8 At a breath of your anger the waters piled up,
the flowing waters stood like a mound,
the flood waters congealed in the midst of
the sea.

9 The enemy boasted, "I will pursue and over-
take them;
I will divide the spoils and have my fill of
them;
I will draw my sword; my hand shall
despoil them!"
10 When your wind blew, the sea covered them;
like lead they sank in the mighty waters.

11 Who is like to you among the gods, O LORD?
Who is like to you, magnificent in holiness?
O terrible in renown, worker of wonders,
12 when you stretched out your right hand,
the earth swallowed them!
13 In your mercy you led the people you
redeemed;

15, 1–21: This canticle (used in Christian liturgy) celebrates God's saving power, miraculously delivering his people from their enemies, and leading them to the victorious conquest of the Promised Land.

e 21f: Ex 15, 19; Pss 66, 6; 78, 13; 136, 13f; Wis 10, 18; 19, 7f; Is 63, 12f; Heb 11, 29. f 28f: Dt 11, 4; Ps 106, 11. g 31f: Ps 106, 12; Wis 10, 20. h Ex 15, 21. i Ps 118, 14; Is 12, 2. j Neh 9, 11.

in your strength you guided them to your
holy dwelling.
14 The nations heard and quaked:
anguish gripped the dwellers in Philistia.
15 Then were the princes of Edom dismayed;
trembling seized the chieftains of Moab;
All the dwellers in Canaan melted away;
16 terror and dread fell upon them.[k]
By the might of your arm they were frozen like
stone,
while your people, O LORD, passed over,
while the people you had made your own
passed over.

17 And you brought them in and planted them on
the mountain of your inheritance—
the place where you made your seat,
O LORD,
the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands
established.

18 The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

19 They sang thus because Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers had gone into the sea, and the LORD made the waters of the sea flow back upon them, though the Israelites had marched on dry land through the midst of the sea.[l] 20 The prophetess Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, while all the women went out after her with tambourines, dancing; 21 and she led them* in the refrain:

Sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously
triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.[m]

**At Marah and Elim** 22 [n]Then Moses led Israel forward from the Red Sea, and they marched out to the desert of Shur. After traveling for three days through the desert without finding water, 23 they arrived at Marah, where they could not drink the water, because it was too bitter. Hence this place was called Marah. 24 As the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" 25 he appealed to the LORD, who pointed out to him a certain piece of wood. When he threw this into the water, the water became fresh.[o]

It was here that the LORD, in making rules and regulations for them, put them to the test. 26 "If you really listen to the voice of the LORD, your God," he told them, "and do what is right in his eyes: if you heed his commandments and keep all his precepts, I will not afflict you with any of the diseases with which I afflicted the Egyptians;[p] for I, the LORD, am your healer."

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.[q]

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 16–18
See RG
80–81

**The Desert of Sin** 1 Having set out from Elim, the whole Israelite community came into the desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month* after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 Here in the desert the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!"

**The Quail and Manna** 4 Then the LORD said to Moses,[r] "I will now rain down bread from heaven* for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not. 5 On the sixth day, however, when they prepare what they bring in, let it be twice as much as they gather on the other days." 6 So Moses and Aaron told all the Israelites, "At

15, 21: She led them: Miriam's refrain re-echoes the first verse of this song and was probably sung as an antiphon after each verse.

16, 1: On the fifteenth day of the second month: just one full month after their departure from Egypt. Cf Ex 12, 2. 51; Nm 33, 3f. They encamped in the desert of Sin on a Friday; the murmuring (vv 2f) occurred on the sabbath, the arrival of the quail (v 13) the evening before Sunday, followed by six mornings (vv 14–27) of collecting manna before the next sabbath.

16, 4: Bread from heaven: as a gift from God, the manna is said to come down from the sky. Cf Ps 78, 25; Wis 16, 20. Perhaps it was similar to a natural substance that is still found in small quantities on the Sinai peninsula, but here it is, at least in part, clearly miraculous. Our Lord referred to the manna as a type of the Blessed Eucharist. Cf Jn 6, 32. 49–52.

k 16f: Ps 78, 53ff. l Ex 14. 21–29. m Ex 15, 1. n 22f: Nm 33, 8. o Sir 38, 5. p Dt 7, 15. q Nm 33, 9. r Pss 78, 24f; 105, 40; Jn 6, 31f; 1 Cor 10, 3.

evening you will know that it was the LORD who
brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7and in the
morning you will see the glory of the LORD, as he
heeds your grumbling against him.[s] But what
are we that you should grumble against us?
8When the LORD gives you flesh to eat in the
evening," continued Moses, "and in the morn-
ing your fill of bread, as he heeds the grumbling
you utter against him, what then are we? Your
grumbling is not against us, but against the
LORD."

9Then Moses said to Aaron, "Tell the whole
Israelite community: Present yourselves before
the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling."
10When Aaron announced this to the whole
Israelite community, they turned toward the
desert, and lo, the glory of the LORD appeared in
the cloud! 11The LORD spoke to Moses and said,
12"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites.
Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat
flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill
of bread, so that you may know that I, the LORD,
am your God."

13In the evening quail[t] came up and covered
the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the
camp, 14and when the dew evaporated, there on
the surface of the desert were fine flakes like
hoarfrost on the ground. 15On seeing it, the
Israelites asked one another, "What is this?"* for
they did not know what it was. But Moses told
them, "This is the bread which the LORD has
given you to eat.[u]

**Regulations Regarding the Manna** 16"Now,
this is what the LORD has commanded. So gather
it that everyone has enough to eat, an omer for
each person, as many of you as there are, each
man providing for those of his own tent." 17The
Israelites did so. Some gathered a large and some
a small amount. 18*But when they measured it
out by the omer, he who had gathered a large
amount did not have too much, and he who had
gathered a small amount did not have too little.[v]
They so gathered that everyone had enough to
eat. 19Moses also told them, "Let no one keep
any of it over until tomorrow morning." 20But
they would not listen to him. When some kept a
part of it over until the following morning, it
became wormy and rotten. Therefore Moses
was displeased with them.

21Morning after morning they gathered it, till
each had enough to eat; but when the sun grew
hot, the manna melted away. 22On the sixth day
they gathered twice as much food, two omers
for each person. When all the leaders of the
community came and reported this to Moses,
23he told them, "That is what the LORD pre-
scribed. Tomorrow is a day of complete rest, the
sabbath, sacred to the LORD. You may either
bake or boil the manna, as you please; but
whatever is left put away and keep for the
morrow." 24When they put it away for the
morrow, as Moses commanded, it did not be-
come rotten or wormy. 25Moses then said, "Eat
it today, for today is the sabbath of the LORD. On
this day you will not find any of it on the ground.
26On the other six days you can gather it, but on
the seventh day, the sabbath, none of it will be
there." 27Still, on the seventh day some of the
people went out to gather it, although they did
not find any. 28Then the LORD said to Moses,
"How long will you refuse to keep my command-
ments and laws? 29Take note! The LORD has
given you the sabbath. That is why on the sixth
day he gives you food for two days. On the
seventh day everyone is to stay home and no one
is to go out." 30After that the people rested on
the seventh day.

31The Israelites called this food manna.[w] It
was like coriander seed,* but white, and it
tasted like wafers made with honey.

32Moses said, "This is what the LORD has
commanded. Keep an omerful of manna for your
descendants, that they may see what food I gave
you to eat in the desert when I brought you out

**16, 15:** What is this: the original man hu is thus rendered by the ancient versions, which understood the phrase as a popular etymology of the Hebrew word man, "manna"; some render, "This is manna."

**16, 18:** St. Paul cites this passage as an example of equitable sharing. Cf 2 Cor 8, 15.

**16, 31:** Coriander seed: small, round, aromatic seeds of bright brown color; the comparison, therefore, refers merely to the size and shape, not to the taste or color of the manna.

s 6f: Ex 16, 12. t Nm 11, 31; Ps 78, 27f. u Dt 8, 3. v 2 Cor 8, 15. w Nm 11, 7.

of the land of Egypt." 33Moses then told Aaron,
"Take an urn* and put an omer of manna in it.
Then place it before the LORD in safekeeping for
your descendants."[x] 34So Aaron placed it in
front of the commandments* for safekeeping, as
the LORD had commanded Moses.

35The Israelites ate this manna for forty years,
until they came to settled land;[y] they ate manna
until they reached the borders of Canaan. 36[An
omer is one tenth of an ephah.]

## CHAPTER 17

**Water from the Rock** 1From the desert of Sin
the whole Israelite community journeyed by
stages, as the LORD directed, and encamped at
Rephidim.[z]

Here there was no water for the people to
drink. 2They quarreled, therefore, with Moses
and said, "Give us water to drink."[a] Moses
replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do
you put the LORD to a test?" 3Here, then, in their
thirst for water, the people grumbled against
Moses, saying, "Why did you ever make us leave
Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst
with our children and our livestock?" 4So Moses
cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this
people? A little more and they will stone me!"
5The LORD answered Moses, "Go over there in
front of the people, along with some of the elders
of Israel, holding in your hand, as you go, the
staff with which you struck the river. 6I will be
standing there in front of you on the rock in
Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow
from it for the people to drink."[b] This Moses
did, in the presence of the elders of Israel. 7The
place was called Massah and Meribah,* because
the Israelites quarreled there and tested the
LORD, saying, "Is the LORD in our midst or
not?"[c]

**Battle with Amalek** 8At Rephidim, Amalek*
came and waged war against Israel.[d] 9Moses,
therefore, said to Joshua, "Pick out certain men,
and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in
battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with
the staff of God in my hand." 10So Joshua did as
Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle
after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill
with Aaron and Hur. 11As long as Moses kept his
hands raised up, Israel had the better of the
fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek
had the better of the fight. 12Moses' hands,
however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place
for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur
supported his hands, one on one side and one on
the other, so that his hands remained steady till
sunset. 13And Joshua mowed down Amalek and
his people with the edge of the sword.

Ch 16–18
See RG
80–81

14Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this
down in a document as something to be remem-
bered, and recite it in the ears of Joshua.[e] I will
completely blot out the memory of Amalek from
under the heavens." 15Moses also built an altar
there, which he called Yahweh-nissi;* 16for he
said, "The LORD takes in hand his banner; the
LORD will war against Amalek through the
centuries."

## CHAPTER 18

Ch 16–18
See RG
80–81

**Meeting with Jethro** 1Now Moses' father-in-
law Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard of all that
God had done for Moses and for his people
Israel: how the LORD had brought Israel out of
Egypt. 2So his father-in-law Jethro took along
Zipporah, Moses' wife, whom Moses had sent
back to him, 3and her two sons. One of these
was called Gershom;[f] for he said, "I am a
stranger in a foreign land." 4The other was
called Eliezer; for he said, "My father's God is
my helper; he has rescued me from Pharaoh's
sword." 5Together with Moses' wife and sons,
then, his father-in-law Jethro came to him in the
desert where he was encamped near the moun-
tain of God, 6and he sent word to Moses, "I,

16, 33: Urn: according to the Greek translation, which is followed in Heb 9, 4, this was a golden vessel.

16, 34: The commandments: the two tablets of the ten commandments, which were kept in the ark. Cf Ex 25, 16. 21f.

17, 7: Massah . . . Meribah: Hebrew words meaning respectively, "the (place of the) test," and "the (place of the) quarreling."

17, 8: Amalek: the Amalekites were an aboriginal people of southern Palestine and the Sinai peninsula. Cf Nm 24, 20.

17, 15: Yahweh-nissi: meaning, "the LORD is my banner."

x Heb 9, 4. y Jos 5, 12. z Nm 33, 12ff. a 2–7: Nm 20, 2–13. b 5f: Dt 8, 15; Pss 78, 15f; 105, 41; Wis 11, 4; Is 43, 20; 48, 21. c Ps 95, 8f. d Dt 25, 17; 1 Sm 15, 2. e Nm 24, 20; 1 Sm 15, 3. 20. f Ex 2, 22.

Jethro, your father-in-law, am coming to you,
along with your wife and her two sons."
7Moses went out to meet his father-in-law,
bowed down before him, and kissed him. Hav-
ing greeted each other, they went into the tent.
8Moses then told his father-in-law of all that the
LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for
the sake of Israel, and of all the hardships they
had had to endure on their journey, and how the
LORD had come to their rescue. 9Jethro rejoiced
over all the goodness that the LORD had shown
Israel in rescuing them from the hands of the
Egyptians. 10"Blessed be the LORD," he said,
"who has rescued his people from the hands of
Pharaoh and the Egyptians. 11Now I know that
the LORD is a deity great beyond any other; for
he took occasion of their being dealt with
insolently to deliver the people from the power
of the Egyptians." 12Then Jethro, the father-in-
law of Moses, brought a holocaust and other
sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the
elders of Israel to participate with Moses' father-
in-law in the meal before God.

**Appointment of Minor Judges** 13The next
day Moses sat in judgment for the people, who
waited about him from morning until evening.
14When his father-in-law saw all that he was
doing for the people, he inquired, "What sort of
thing is this that you are doing for the people?
Why do you sit alone while all the people have
to stand about you from morning till evening?"
15Moses answered his father-in-law, "The people
come to me to consult God. 16Whenever they
have a disagreement, they come to me to have
me settle the matter between them and make
known to them God's decisions and regula-
tions."

Ch 19–24
See RG
81–82

17"You are not acting wisely," his father-in-
law replied. 18"You will surely wear yourself out,
and not only yourself but also these people with
you. The task is too heavy for you;[g] you cannot
do it alone. 19Now, listen to me, and I will give
you some advice, that God may be with you. Act
as the people's representative before God, bring-
ing to him whatever they have to say. 20En-
lighten them in regard to the decisions and
regulations, showing them how they are to live
and what they are to do. 21But you should also
look among all the people for able and God-
fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishon-
est gain, and set them as officers over groups of
thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.[h]
22Let these men render decisions for the people
in all ordinary cases. More important cases they
should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they
can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be
lightened, since they will bear it with you. 23If
you do this, when God gives you orders you will
be able to stand the strain, and all these people
will go home satisfied."
24Moses followed the advice of his father-in-
law and did all that he had suggested. 25He
picked out able men from all Israel and put them
in charge of the people as officers over groups of
thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.
26They rendered decisions for the people in all
ordinary cases. The more difficult cases they
referred to Moses, but all the lesser cases they
settled themselves. 27Then Moses bade farewell
to his father-in-law, who went off to his own
country.

## III: The Covenant at Mount Sinai

### CHAPTER 19

**Arrival at Sinai** 1[i]In the third month after their
departure from the land of Egypt, on its first day,
the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai. 2After
the journey from Rephidim to the desert of Sinai,
they pitched camp.
While Israel was encamped here in front of
the mountain, 3Moses went up the mountain to
God. Then the LORD called to him and said,
"Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; 4tell
the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves how
I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on
eagle wings and brought you here to myself.[j]
5Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep
my covenant, you shall be my special possession,
dearer to me than all other people,[k] though all

g Nm 11, 14. h 21. 25: Dt 1, 15; 16, 18. i 1f: Nm 33, 15. j Dt 32, 11. k Dt 7, 6; 14, 2; 26, 18f; 32, 8f.

the earth is mine. [6]You shall be to me a kingdom
of priests,* a holy nation.[l] That is what you
must tell the Israelites." [7]So Moses went and
summoned the elders of the people. When he set
before them all that the LORD had ordered him
to tell them, [8]the people all answered together,
"Everything the LORD has said, we will do."
Then Moses brought back to the LORD the
response of the people.

[9]The LORD also told him, "I am coming to you
in a dense cloud,[m] so that when the people hear
me speaking with you, they may always have
faith in you also." When Moses, then, had
reported to the LORD the response of the people,
[10]the LORD added, "Go to the people and have
them sanctify themselves today and tomorrow.
Make them wash their garments [11]and be ready
for the third day; for on the third day the LORD
will come down on Mount Sinai before the eyes
of all the people. [12]Set limits for the people all
around the mountain,[n] and tell them: Take care
not to go up the mountain, or even to touch its
base. If anyone touches the mountain he must
be put to death. [13]No hand shall touch him; he
must be stoned to death or killed with arrows.
Such a one, man or beast, must not be allowed
to live. Only when the ram's horn resounds may
they go up to the mountain." [14]Then Moses
came down from the mountain to the people
and had them sanctify themselves and wash
their garments. [15]He warned them, "Be ready
for the third day. Have no intercourse with any
woman."

**The Great Theophany** [16]On the morning of
the third day there were peals of thunder and
lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain,
and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the
people in the camp trembled. [17]But Moses led
the people out of the camp to meet God, and
they stationed themselves at the foot of the
mountain.[o] [18]Mount Sinai was all wrapped in
smoke, for the LORD came down upon it in fire.
The smoke rose from it as though from a
furnace, and the whole mountain trembled vio-
lently. [19]The trumpet blast grew louder and
louder, while Moses was speaking and God
answering him with thunder.

[20]When the LORD came down to the top of
Mount Sinai, he summoned Moses to the top of
the mountain, and Moses went up to him.
[21]Then the LORD told Moses, "Go down and
warn the people not to break through toward
the LORD in order to see him; otherwise many of
them will be struck down. [22]The priests, too,
who approach the LORD must sanctify them-
selves; else he will vent his anger upon them."
[23]Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot
go up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us
to set limits around the mountain to make it
sacred." [24]The LORD repeated, "Go down now!
Then come up again along with Aaron. But the
priests and the people must not break through to
come up to the LORD; else he will vent his anger
upon them." [25]So Moses went down to the
people and told them this.

## CHAPTER 20

Ch 19–24
See RG
81–82

**The Ten Commandments** [1]Then God deliv-
ered all these commandments:*

[2][p]"I, the LORD, am your God, who brought
you out of the land of Egypt,[q] that place of
slavery. [3]You shall not have other gods besides
me. [4]You shall not carve idols[r] for yourselves in
the shape of anything in the sky above or on the
earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;
[5]you shall not bow down before them or wor-
ship them.[s] For I, the LORD, your God, am a
jealous* God, inflicting punishment for their
fathers' wickedness on the children of those who
hate me, down to the third and fourth genera-

19, 6: Kingdom of priests: inasmuch as the whole Israelite nation was consecrated to God in a special way, it formed a race of royal priests who participated in the liturgical sacrifices, even though the actual offering of the sacrifices was the exclusive prerogative of the Aaronic priesthood. The same condition exists in the New Dispensation as regards the whole Christian people and the Christian priesthood in the strict sense. Cf Is 61, 6; 1 Pt 2, 5. 9.

20, 1–17: The precise division of these precepts into "ten commandments" is somewhat uncertain. Traditionally among Catholics vv 1–6 are considered as only one commandment, and v 17 as two. Cf Dt 5, 6–21.

20, 5: Jealous: demanding exclusive allegiance, such as a wife must have for her husband.

l 1 Pt 2, 9. m Ex 20, 21; 24, 15–18. n 12f: Ex 34, 3; Heb 12, 18f. o 16ff: Dt 4, 10ff. p 2–17: Dt 5, 6–21. q Lv 26, 13; Ps 81, 10; Hos 13, 4. r Ex 34, 17; Lv 26, 1; Dt 4, 15–19; 27, 15. s Ex 34, 7. 14; Nm 14, 18; Dt 4, 24; 6, 15.

tion; [6]but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation, on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[7]"You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.[t] For the LORD will not leave unpunished him who takes his name in vain.

[8]"Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. [9]Six days you may labor and do all your work, [10]but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God.[u] No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. [11]In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested.[v] That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

[12][w]"Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you.[x]

Ch 19–24 See RG 81–82

[13]"You shall not kill.[y]

[14]"You shall not commit adultery.[z]

[15]"You shall not steal.[a]

[16]"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.[b]

[17]"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."[c]

**The Fear of God** [18]When the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the mountain smoking, they all feared and trembled.[d] So they took up a position much farther away [19]and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we shall die." [20]Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come to you only to test you and put his fear upon you, lest you should sin." [21]Still the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the cloud where God was.

[22]The LORD told Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. [23]Do not make anything to rank with me; neither gods of silver nor gods of gold shall you make for yourselves.[e]

[24]"An altar of earth you shall make for me, and upon it you shall sacrifice your holocausts and peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.[f] In whatever place I choose for the remembrance of my name* I will come to you and bless you. [25]If you make an altar of stone for me,[g] do not build it of cut stone, for by putting a tool to it you desecrate it. [26]You shall not go up by steps to my altar, on which you must not be indecently uncovered.

## CHAPTER 21

**Laws Regarding Slaves** [1]"These are the rules* you shall lay before them. [2][h]When you purchase a Hebrew slave, he is to serve you for six years, but in the seventh year he shall be given his freedom without cost. [3]If he comes into service alone, he shall leave alone; if he comes with a wife, his wife shall leave with him. [4]But if his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall remain the master's property and the man shall leave alone. [5]If, however, the slave declares, 'I am devoted to my master and my wife and children; I will not go free,' [6]his master shall bring him to God* and there, at the door or doorpost, he shall pierce his ear with an awl, thus keeping him as his slave forever.

[7]"When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go free as male slaves do. [8]But if her master, who had destined her* for himself,

**20, 24:** I choose for the remembrance of my name: literally, "where I make my name to be remembered": at the sacred site where God wishes to be worshiped and his name revered.

**21, 1:** Rules: judicial precedents to be used in settling questions of law and custom. This introductory phrase serves as the title of the following collection of civil and religious laws (chapters 21–23) which is called in Ex 24, 7, the book of the covenant.

**21, 6:** To God: to the sanctuary; or perhaps the phrase is to be rendered, "to the gods," in the sense of "to the judges." Cf Ps 82, 1. Since the expression "to have an open ear" meant to "obey," a pierced ear lobe was an ancient symbol of obedience. Cf Ps 40, 7.

**21, 8:** Destined her: intended her as a wife of second rank.

t Lv 19, 12; 24, 16. u 8ff: Ex 23, 12; 31, 13–16; 34, 21; 35, 2; Lv 23, 3. v Ex 31, 17; Gn 2, 2f. w 12–16: Mt 19, 18f; Mk 10, 19; Lk 18, 20; Rom 13, 9. x Mt 15, 4; Mk 7, 10; Eph 6, 2f. y Mt 5, 21. z Lv 18, 20; 20, 10; Dt 22, 22; Mt 5, 27. a Lv 19, 11. b Ex 23, 1; Dt 19, 16ff; Prv 19, 5. 9; 24, 28. c Rom 7, 7. d 18–21: Dt 4, 11; 5, 22–27; 18, 16; Heb 12, 18f. e Ex 20, 3f. f Dt 12, 5. 11; 14, 23; 16, 6. g Dt 27, 5; Jos 8, 31. h 2–6: Lv 25, 39ff; Dt 15, 12–18; Jer 34, 14.

dislikes her, he shall let her be redeemed. He has
no right to sell her to a foreigner, since he has
broken faith with her. [9]If he destines her for his
son, he shall treat her like a daughter. [10]If he
takes another wife, he shall not withhold her
food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. [11]If he
does not grant her these three things, she shall
be given her freedom absolutely, without cost to
her.

**Personal Injury** [12]"Whoever strikes a man a
mortal blow must be put to death.[i] [13]He,
however, who did not hunt a man down, but
caused his death by an act of God, may flee to a
place which I will set apart for this purpose.
[14]But when a man kills another after maliciously
scheming to do so, you must take him even from
my altar and put him to death. [15]Whoever
strikes his father or mother shall be put to death.

[16]"A kidnaper, whether he sells his victim or
still has him when caught, shall be put to death.[j]

[17]"Whoever curses his father or mother shall
be put to death.[k]

[18]"When men quarrel and one strikes the
other with a stone or with his fist, not mortally,
but enough to put him in bed, [19]the one who
struck the blow shall be acquitted, provided the
other can get up and walk around with the help
of his staff. Still, he must compensate him for his
enforced idleness and provide for his complete
cure.

[20]"When a man strikes his male or female
slave with a rod so hard that the slave dies under
his hand, he shall be punished. [21]If, however,
the slave survives for a day or two, he is not to
be punished, since the slave is his own property.

[22]"When men have a fight and hurt a preg-
nant woman, so that she suffers a miscarriage,
but no further injury, the guilty one shall be
fined as much as the woman's husband demands
of him, and he shall pay in the presence of the
judges.[l] [23]*But if injury ensues, you shall give
life for life, [24]eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand
for hand, foot for foot, [25]burn for burn, wound
for wound, stripe for stripe.

[26]"When a man strikes his male or female
slave in the eye and destroys the use of the eye,
he shall let the slave go free in compensation for
the eye. [27]If he knocks out a tooth of his male or
female slave, he shall let the slave go free in
compensation for the tooth.

[28]"When an ox gores a man or a woman to
death, the ox must be stoned; its flesh may not
be eaten. The owner of the ox, however, shall go
unpunished. [29]But if an ox was previously in the
habit of goring people and its owner, though
warned, would not keep it in; should it then kill
a man or a woman, not only must the ox be
stoned, but its owner also must be put to death.
[30]If, however, a fine is imposed on him, he must
pay in ransom for his life whatever amount is
imposed on him. [31]This law applies if it is a boy
or a girl that the ox gores. [32]But if it is a male or
a female slave that it gores, he must pay the
owner of the slave thirty shekels of silver, and
the ox must be stoned.

**Property Damage** [33]"When a man uncovers
or digs a cistern and does not cover it over again,
should an ox or an ass fall into it, [34]the owner of
the cistern must make good by restoring the
value of the animal to its owner; the dead
animal, however, he may keep.

[35]"When one man's ox hurts another's ox so
badly that it dies, they shall sell the live ox and
divide this money as well as the dead animal
equally between them. [36]But if it was known
that the ox was previously in the habit of goring
and its owner would not keep it in, he must
make full restitution, an ox for an ox; but the
dead animal he may keep.

[37]*"When a man steals an ox or a sheep and
slaughters or sells it, he shall restore five oxen
for the one ox, and four sheep for the one
sheep.[m]

**21, 23ff:** This section is known as the lex talionis, the law of tit for tat. The purpose of this law was not merely the enforcement of rigorous justice, but also the prevention of greater penalties than would be just. Christ refers to this passage when he exhorts Christians to cede their lawful rights for the sake of charity. Cf Mt 5, 38ff.

**21, 37—22, 30:** In the Vulgate, 22, 1–31.

i 12ff: Lv 24, 17; Nm 35, 15–29; Dt 4, 41f; 19, 2–5. j Dt 24, 7. k Lv 20, 9; Prv 20, 20; Mt 15, 4; Mk 7, 10. l 22–25: Lv 24, 18–21; Dt 19, 21; Mt 5, 38. m 2 Sm 12, 6.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 19–24
See RG
81–82

1 "[If a thief is caught* in the act of housebreaking and beaten to death, there is no bloodguilt
2 involved. But if after sunrise he is thus beaten, there is bloodguilt.] He must make full restitution. If he has nothing, he shall be sold to pay for
3 his theft. If what he stole is found alive in his possession, be it an ox, an ass or a sheep, he shall restore two animals for each one stolen.

4 *"When a man is burning over a field or a vineyard, if he lets the fire spread so that it burns in another's field, he must make restitution with
5 the best produce of his own field or vineyard. If the fire spreads further, and catches on to thorn bushes, so that shocked grain or standing grain or the field itself is burned up, the one who started the fire must make full restitution.

**Trusts and Loans** 6 "When a man gives money or any article to another for safekeeping and it is stolen from the latter's house, the thief, if caught, must make twofold restitution. 7 If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought to God,* to swear that he himself did not lay hands on his neighbor's property. 8 In every question of dishonest appropriation, whether it be about an ox, or an ass, or a sheep, or a garment, or anything else that has disappeared, where another claims that the thing is his, both parties shall present their case before God; the one whom God convicts must make two-fold restitution to the other.

9 "When a man gives an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any other animal to another for safekeeping, if it dies, or is maimed or snatched away, without anyone witnessing the fact, 10 the custodian shall swear by the LORD that he did not lay hands on his neighbor's property; the owner must accept the oath, and no restitution is to be made. 11 But if the custodian is really guilty of theft, he must make restitution to the owner. 12 If it has been killed by a wild beast, let him bring it as evidence, and he need not make restitution for the mangled animal. [n]

13 "When a man borrows an animal from his neighbor, if it is maimed or dies while the owner is not present, the man must make restitution. 14 But if the owner is present, he need not make restitution. If it was hired, this was covered by the price of its hire.

**Social Laws** 15 "When a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall pay her marriage price and marry her. [o] 16 If her father refuses to give her to him, he must still pay him the customary marriage price for virgins.*

17 "You shall not let a sorceress live. [p]

18 "Anyone who lies with an animal shall be put to death. [q]

19 "Whoever sacrifices to any god, except to the LORD alone, shall be doomed. [r]

20 "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. [s] 21 You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. 22 If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. 23 My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.

24 [t] "If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. 25 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; 26 for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate.

**22, 1f:** If a thief is caught: this seems to be a fragment of what was once a longer law on housebreaking, which has been inserted here into the middle of a law on stealing animals. At night the householder would be justified in killing a burglar outright, but not so in the daytime, when the burglar could more easily be caught alive. He must make full restitution: this stood originally immediately after 21, 37.

**22, 4:** The Greek and Latin versions understood this verse as a prohibition against allowing one's cattle to graze in the field of another.

**22, 7:** Brought to God: see note on Ex 21, 6. Cf also Ex 22, 10.

**22, 16:** The customary marriage price for virgins: fifty shekels according to Dt 22, 29.

n Gn 31, 39. o 15f: Dt 22, 28f. p Lv 19, 26. 31; 20. 6. 27; Dt 18, 10f. q Lv 18, 23; Dt 27, 21. r Dt 13; 17, 2–7. s 20–23: Ex 23, 9; Lv 19, 33f; Dt 10, 18f; 24, 17f; 27, 19; Zec 7, 10. t 24–26: Lv 25, 35–38; Dt 23, 19f; 24, 10–13; Ez 18, 7f. 17f.

27"You shall not revile God,* nor curse a
prince of your people.[u]
28"You shall not delay the offering of your
harvest and your press. You shall give me the
first-born of your sons. 29You must do the same
with your oxen and your sheep; for seven days
the firstling may stay with its mother, but on the
eighth day you must give it to me.[v]
30"You shall be men sacred to me. Flesh torn
to pieces in the field you shall not eat; throw it
to the dogs.[w]

## CHAPTER 23

1"You shall not repeat a false report. Do not
join the wicked in putting your hand, as an
unjust witness, upon anyone.[x] 2Neither shall
you allege the example of the many as an excuse
for doing wrong, nor shall you, when testifying
in a lawsuit, side with the many in perverting
justice. 3You shall not favor a poor man in his
lawsuit.[y]
4"When you come upon your enemy's ox or
ass going astray, see to it that it is returned to
him.[z] 5When you notice the ass of one who
hates you lying prostrate under its burden, by no
means desert him; help him, rather, to raise it
up.
6"You shall not deny one of your needy fellow
men his rights in his lawsuit. 7You shall keep
away from anything dishonest. The innocent
and the just you shall not put to death, nor shall
you acquit the guilty. 8Never take a bribe, for a
bribe blinds even the most clear-sighted and
twists the words even of the just.[a] 9You shall not
oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to
be an alien, since you were once aliens your-
selves in the land of Egypt.[b]

**Religious Laws** 10[c]"For six years you may sow
your land and gather in its produce. 11But the
seventh year you shall let the land lie untilled
and unharvested, that the poor among you may
eat of it and the beasts of the field may eat what
the poor leave. So also shall you do in regard to
your vineyard and your olive grove.
12"For six days you may do your work, but on
the seventh day you must rest,[d] that your ox
and your ass may also have rest, and that the son
of your maidservant and the alien may be
refreshed. 13Give heed to all that I have told you.
"Never mention the name of any other god; it
shall not be heard from your lips.
14[e]"Three times a year you shall celebrate a
pilgrim feast to me.* 15You shall keep the feast of
Unleavened Bread. As I have commanded you,
you must eat unleavened bread for seven days at
the prescribed time in the month of Abib, for it
was then that you came out of Egypt. No one
shall appear before me* empty-handed. 16You
shall also keep the feast of the grain harvest with
the first of the crop that you have sown in the
field; and finally, the feast at the fruit harvest at
the end of the year, when you gather in the
produce from the fields. 17Thrice a year shall all
your men appear before the LORD God.
18"You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice
with leavened bread;[f] nor shall the fat of my
feast be kept overnight till the next day. 19The
choicest first fruits of your soil you shall bring to
the house of the LORD, your God.
"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.*

**Reward of Fidelity** 20"See, I am sending an
angel[g] before you, to guard you on the way and
bring you to the place I have prepared. 21Be
attentive to him and heed his voice. Do not rebel
against him, for he will not forgive your sin. My
authority resides in him.* 22If you heed his voice
and carry out all I tell you, I will be an enemy to
your enemies and a foe to your foes.
23"My angel will go before you and bring you
to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites,
Hivites and Jebusites; and I will wipe them out.

Ch 19–24
See RG
81–82

**22, 27:** God: or perhaps "the gods," in the sense of "the judges," as the parallel with a prince of your people suggests.

**23, 14:** These three feasts are elsewhere called the Passover, Pentecost and Booths. Cf Ex 34, 18–26; Lv 23; Dt 16.

**23, 15:** Appear before me: the original expression was "see my face"; so also in several other places, as Ex 23, 17; 34, 23f; Dt 16, 16; 31, 11.

**23, 19:** Boil a kid in its mother's milk: this was part of a Canaanite ritual; hence it is forbidden here as a pagan ceremony.

**23, 21:** My authority resides in him: literally, "My name is within him."

u Acts 23, 5. v Ex 13, 2; 34, 19; Lv 22, 27; Dt 15, 19. w Lv 7, 24; 17, 15; 22, 8. x 1f: Dt 19, 16ff. y Lv 19, 15. z Dt 22, 1ff. a Dt 16, 19; 27, 25; Sir 20, 28. b Ex 22, 21. c 10f: Lv 25, 3–7. d Ex 20, 8. e 14–17: Ex 34, 18. 22ff; Lv 23; Dt 16, 1–17. f 18f: Ex 34, 25f. g Ex 14, 19; 32, 34; 33, 2.

24Therefore, you shall not bow down in worship
before their gods, nor shall you make anything
like them;* rather, you must demolish them and
smash their sacred pillars.[h] 25The LORD, your
God, you shall worship; then I will bless your
food and drink, and I will remove all sickness
from your midst; 26no woman in your land will
be barren or miscarry; and I will give you a full
span of life.

27"I will have the fear of me precede you, so
that I will throw into panic every nation you
reach.[i] I will make all your enemies turn from
you in flight, 28and ahead of you I will send
hornets* to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and
Hittites out of your way. 29But not in one year
will I drive them all out before you; else the land
will become so desolate that the wild beasts will
multiply against you. 30Instead, I will drive them
out little by little before you, until you have
grown numerous enough to take possession of
the land. 31[j]I will set your boundaries from the
Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines,* and from
the desert to the River; all who dwell in this land
I will hand over to you to be driven out of your
way. 32You shall not make a covenant with them
or their gods. 33They must not abide in your
land, lest they make you sin against me by
ensnaring you into worshiping their gods."[k]

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 19–24
See RG
81–82

**Ratification of the Covenant** 1Moses himself
was told, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron,
with Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of
Israel. You shall all worship at some distance,
2but Moses alone is to come close to the LORD;
the others shall not come too near, and the
people shall not come up at all with Moses."

3When Moses came to the people and related
all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they
all answered with one voice, "We will do
everything that the LORD has told us."[l] 4Moses
then wrote down all the words of the LORD and,
rising early the next day, he erected at the foot of
the mountain an altar and twelve pillars* for the
twelve tribes of Israel. 5Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD, 6Moses took half of the blood
and put it in large bowls; the other half he
splashed on the altar. 7Taking the book of the
covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who
answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will
heed and do." 8Then he took the blood and
sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the
blood of the covenant which the LORD has made
with you in accordance with all these words of
his."[m]

9Moses then went up with Aaron, Nadab,
Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, 10and they
beheld the God of Israel. Under his feet there
appeared to be sapphire tilework, as clear as the
sky itself. 11Yet he did not smite these chosen
Israelites. After gazing on God,* they could still
eat and drink.

**Moses on the Mountain** 12The LORD said to
Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and,
while you are there, I will give you the stone
tablets[n] on which I have written the commandments intended for their instruction." 13So Moses set out with Joshua, his aide, and went up to
the mountain of God. 14The elders, however,
had been told by him, "Wait here for us until we
return to you. Aaron and Hur are staying with
you. If anyone has a complaint, let him refer the
matter to them." 15After Moses had gone up, a
cloud covered the mountain. 16The glory of the
LORD settled upon Mount Sinai. The cloud
covered it for six days, and on the seventh day
he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.[o]

**23, 24:** Make anything like them: some render, "act according to their conduct." Sacred pillars: objects of religious veneration at Canaanite sanctuaries.

**23, 28:** Hornets: some understand this figuratively of various troublesome afflictions; others translate the Hebrew word as "leprosy." Cf Dt 7, 20; Jos 24, 12; Wis 12, 8.

**23, 31:** The sea of the Philistines: the Mediterranean. The River: the Euphrates. Only in the time of David and Solomon did the territory of Israel come near to reaching such distant borders.

**24, 4:** Pillars: stone shafts or slabs, erected as symbols of the fact that each of the twelve tribes had entered into this covenant with God; not idolatrous as in Ex 23, 24, although the same Hebrew word is used in both passages. See note on Gn 28, 18.

**24, 11:** After gazing on God: the ancients thought that the sight of God would bring instantaneous death. Cf Ex 33, 20; Gn 16, 13; 32, 31; Jgs 6, 22f; 13, 22. Eat and drink: partake of the sacrificial meal.

h 23f: Ex 34, 10–16; Nm 33, 51f; Dt 7, 24ff. i 27ff: Dt 2, 25; 7, 20ff. j Gn 15, 18; Dt 11, 24; Jos 1, 4. k 32f: Ex 34, 12–16; Dt 7, 2ff. l Ex 19, 8. m 5–8: Heb 9, 18ff. n Ex 31, 18; 32, 15f; Dt 5, 22. o Sir 45, 4.

17 To the Israelites the glory of the LORD was seen
as a consuming fire on the mountaintop.[p] 18 But
Moses passed into the midst of the cloud as he
went up on the mountain; and there he stayed
for forty days and forty nights.[q]

## IV: The Dwelling and Its Furnishings

### CHAPTER 25

**Collection of Materials** 1 This is what the
LORD then said to Moses:[r] 2 "Tell the Israelites to
take up a collection for me. From every man you
shall accept the contribution that his heart
prompts him to give me. 3 These are the contribu-
tions you shall accept from them: gold, silver
and bronze;[s] 4 violet, purple and scarlet yarn;
fine linen and goat hair; 5 rams' skins dyed red,
and tahash* skins; acacia wood; 6 oil for the
light; spices for the anointing oil and for the
fragrant incense; 7 onyx stones and other gems
for mounting on the ephod and the breastpiece.

8 "They shall make a sanctuary for me, that I
may dwell in their midst.[t] 9 This Dwelling and
all its furnishings you shall make exactly accord-
ing to the pattern that I will now show you.[u]

**Plan of the Ark** 10 "You shall make an ark of
acacia wood,[v] two and a half cubits long, one
and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits
high. 11 Plate it inside and outside with pure
gold, and put a molding of gold around the top of
it. 12 Cast four gold rings and fasten them on the
four supports of the ark, two rings on one side
and two on the opposite side. 13 Then make poles
of acacia wood and plate them with gold.
14 These poles you are to put through the rings
on the sides of the ark, for carrying it; 15 they
must remain in the rings of the ark and never be
withdrawn. 16 In the ark you are to put the
commandments which I will give you.

17 "You shall then make a propitiatory* of pure
gold, two cubits and a half long, and one and a
half cubits wide. 18 Make two cherubim* of
beaten gold for the two ends of the propitiatory,
19 fastening them so that one cherub springs
direct from each end. 20 The cherubim shall have
their wings spread out above, covering the
propitiatory with them; they shall be turned
toward each other, but with their faces looking
toward the propitiatory. 21 This propitiatory you
shall then place on top of the ark. In the ark itself
you are to put the commandments which I will
give you. 22 There I will meet you and there,
from above the propitiatory, between the two
cherubim on the ark of the commandments, I
will tell you all the commands that I wish you to
give the Israelites.

Ch 25–40
See RG
83–84

**The Table** 23 "You shall also make a table of
acacia[w] wood, two cubits long, a cubit wide, and
a cubit and a half high. 24 Plate it with pure gold
and make a molding of gold around it. 25 Sur-
round it with a frame,* a handbreadth high,
with a molding of gold around the frame. 26 You
shall also make four rings of gold for it and fasten
them at the four corners, one at each leg, 27 on
two opposite sides of the frame as holders for the
poles to carry the table. 28 These poles for carry-
ing the table you shall make of acacia wood and
plate with gold. 29 Of pure gold you shall make
its plates* and cups, as well as its pitchers and
bowls for pouring libations. 30 On the table you
shall always keep showbread set before me.[x]

**The Lampstand** 31 "You shall make a
lampstand of pure beaten gold[y] —its shaft and
branches—with its cups and knobs and petals

25, 5: Tahash: perhaps the name of a marine animal, such as the dugong or the porpoise. The Greek and Latin versions took it for the color hyacinth.

25, 17: Propitiatory: this traditional rendering of the Hebrew term, which may mean merely "cover," is derived from its connection with the ceremony of the Day of Atonement whereby God was rendered "propitious." Cf Lv 16, 14ff.

25, 18ff: Cherubim: probably in the form of human-headed winged lions. The cherubim over the ark formed the throne for the invisible Lord. Cf Ps 80, 2. For a more detailed description of the somewhat different cherubim in the temple of Solomon, see 1 Kgs 6, 23–28; 2 Chr 3, 10–13.

25, 25: A frame: probably placed near the bottom of the legs to keep them steady. The golden table of Herod's temple is pictured thus on the Arch of Titus.

25, 29f: The plates held the showbread, that is, the holy bread which was placed upon the table every sabbath as an offering to God, and was later eaten by the priests. The cups held the incense which was strewn upon the bread. Cf Lv 24, 5–9. The libation wine was poured from the pitchers into the bowls. All these vessels were kept on the golden table.

p Ex 19, 18; Heb 12, 18. q Ex 34, 28; Dt 9, 9. r 1–7: Ex 35, 4–9. 20–29. s Ex 35, 4–9. t 8f: Ex 26, 1–30; 36, 8–38. u Acts 7, 44. v 10–22: Ex 37, 1–9; Heb 9, 1–5. w 23–30: Ex 37, 10–16. x Lv 24, 5ff. y 31–40: Ex 37, 17–24.

springing directly from it. [32]Six branches are to
extend from the sides of the lampstand, three
branches on one side, and three on the other.
[33]*On one branch there are to be three cups,
shaped like almond blossoms, each with its knob
and petals; on the opposite branch there are to
be three cups, shaped like almond blossoms,
each with its knob and petals; and so for the six
branches that extend from the lampstand. [34]On
the shaft there are to be four cups,* shaped like
almond blossoms, with their knobs and petals,
[35]including a knob below each of the three pairs
of branches that extend from the lampstand.
[36]Their knobs and branches shall so spring from
it that the whole will form but a single piece of
pure beaten gold. [37]*You shall then make seven
lamps[z] for it and so set up the lamps that they
shed their light on the space in front of the
lampstand. [38]These, as well as the trimming
shears and trays,* must be of pure gold. [39]Use a
talent of pure gold for the lampstand and all its
appurtenances. [40]See that you make them ac-
cording to the pattern shown you on the moun-
tain.[a]

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 25-40
See RG
83-84

**The Tent Cloth** [1]"The Dwelling itself you shall
make out of sheets* woven of fine linen twined
and of violet, purple and scarlet yarn, with
cherubim embroidered on them.[b] [2]The length of
each shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width
four cubits; all the sheets shall be of the same
size. [3]Five of the sheets are to be sewed to-
gether, edge to edge; and the same for the other
five. [4]Make loops of violet yarn along the edge of
the end sheet in one set, and the same along the
edge of the end sheet in the other set. [5]There are
to be fifty loops along the edge of the end sheet
in the first set, and fifty loops along the edge of
the corresponding sheet in the second set, and
so placed that the loops are directly opposite
each other. [6]Then make fifty clasps of gold, with
which to join the two sets of sheets, so that the
Dwelling forms one whole.

[7]"Also make sheets woven of goat hair, to be
used as a tent covering* over the Dwelling.
[8]Eleven such sheets are to be made; the length
of each shall be thirty cubits, and the width four
cubits: all eleven sheets shall be of the same size.
[9]Sew five of the sheets, edge to edge, into one
set, and the other six sheets into another set.
Use the sixth sheet double at the front of the
tent.* [10]Make fifty loops along the edge of the
end sheet in one set, and fifty loops along the
edge of the end sheet in the second set. [11]Also
make fifty bronze clasps and put them into the
loops, to join the tent into one whole. [12]There
will be an extra half sheet of tent covering,
which shall be allowed to hang down over the
rear of the Dwelling. [13]Likewise, the sheets of
the tent will have an extra cubit's length to be
left hanging down on either side of the Dwelling
to protect it. [14]Over the tent itself you shall
make a covering of rams' skins dyed red, and
above that, a covering of tahash skins.

**The Wooden Walls** [15][c]"You shall make boards
of acacia wood as walls for the Dwelling. [16]The
length of each board is to be ten cubits, and its
width one and a half cubits. [17]Each board shall
have two arms* that shall serve to fasten the
boards in line. In this way all the boards of the
Dwelling are to be made. [18]Set up the boards of
the Dwelling as follows: twenty boards on the
south side, [19]with forty silver pedestals under
the twenty boards, so that there are two pedes-

**25, 33:** In keeping with the arrangement of the ornaments on the shaft, the three sets of ornaments on each branch were probably so placed that one was at the top and the other two equally spaced along the length of the branch. Knob: the cup-shaped seed capsule at the base of a flower.

**25, 34f:** Of the four ornaments on the shaft, one was at the top and one was below each of the three sets of side branches.

**25, 37:** The lamps were probably shaped like small boats, with the wick at one end; the end with the wick was turned toward the front of the lampstand.

**25, 38:** Trays: small receptacles for the burnt-out wicks.

**26, 1:** Sheets: strips of tapestry, woven of white linen, the colored threads being used for the cherubim which were embroidered on them. These sheets were stretched across the top of the Dwelling to form a roof, their free ends hanging down inside the boards which formed walls.

**26, 7:** Tent covering: the cloth made of sheets of goat hair to cover the Dwelling.

**26, 9:** Half the width of the end strip was folded back at the front of the Dwelling, thus leaving another half-strip to hang down at the rear. Cf v 12.

**26, 17:** Arms: literally, "hands." According to some, they served as "tongue and groove" to mortise the boards together; according to others, they were pegs at the bottom of the boards and fitted into sockets in the pedestals.

z Lv 24, 2ff; Nm 8, 2. a Heb 8, 5. b 1-14: Ex 36, 8-19. c 15-30: Ex 36, 20-34.

tals under each board, at its two arms; [20]twenty boards on the other side of the Dwelling, the north side, [21]with their forty silver pedestals, two under each board; [22]six boards for the rear of the Dwelling, to the west; [23]and two boards for the corners at the rear of the Dwelling. [24]These two shall be double at the bottom, and likewise double at the top, to the first ring. That is how both boards in the corners are to be made. [25]Thus, there shall be in the rear eight boards, with their sixteen silver pedestals, two pedestals under each board. [26]Also make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the Dwelling, [27]five for those on the other side, and five for those at the rear, toward the west. [28]The center bar, at the middle of the boards, shall reach across from end to end. [29]Plate the boards with gold, and make gold rings on them as holders for the bars, which are also to be plated with gold. [30]You shall erect the Dwelling according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

**The Veils** [31]"You shall have a veil woven of violet, purple and scarlet yarn, [d] and of fine linen twined, with cherubim embroidered on it. [e] [32]It is to be hung on four gold-plated columns of acacia wood, which shall have hooks* of gold and shall rest on four silver pedestals. [33]Hang the veil from clasps. The ark of the commandments you shall bring inside, behind this veil which divides the holy place from the holy of holies. [34]Set the propitiatory on the ark of the commandments in the holy of holies.

[35]"Outside the veil you shall place the table and the lampstand, the latter on the south side of the Dwelling, opposite the table, which is to be put on the north side. [36]For the entrance of the tent make a variegated* curtain of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and of fine linen twined. [37]Make five columns of acacia wood for this curtain; have them plated with gold, with their hooks of gold; and cast five bronze pedestals for them.

## CHAPTER 27

Ch 25-40
See RG
83-84

**The Altar of Holocausts** [1]"You shall make an altar[f] of acacia wood, on a square, five cubits long and five cubits wide; it shall be three cubits high. [2]At the four corners there are to be horns, so made that they spring directly from the altar. You shall then plate it with bronze. [3]Make pots for removing the ashes, as well as shovels, basins, forks and fire pans, all of which shall be of bronze. [4]Make a grating* of bronze network for it; this to have four bronze rings, one at each of its four corners. [5]Put it down around the altar, on the ground. This network is to be half as high as the altar. [6]You shall also make poles of acacia wood for the altar, and plate them with bronze. [7]These poles are to be put through the rings, so that they are on either side of the altar when it is carried. [8]Make the altar itself in the form of a hollow* box, just as it was shown you on the mountain.

**Court of the Dwelling** [9] [g]"You shall also make a court for the Dwelling. On the south side the court shall have hangings a hundred cubits long, woven of fine linen twined, [10]with twenty columns and twenty pedestals of bronze; the hooks and bands on the columns shall be of silver. [11]On the north side there shall be similar hangings, a hundred cubits long, with twenty columns and twenty pedestals of bronze; the hooks and bands on the columns shall be of silver. [12]On the west side, across the width of the court, there shall be hangings, fifty cubits long, with ten columns and ten pedestals. [13]The width of the court on the east side shall be fifty cubits. [14]On one side there shall be hangings to the extent of fifteen cubits, with three columns and three pedestals; [15]on the other side there

**26, 32:** Hooks: probably placed near the tops of the columns, to hold the rope from which the veils and curtains hung.

**26, 36:** Variegated: without definite designs such as the cherubim on the inner veil.

**27, 4:** Grating: it is not clear whether this was flush with the altar or at some small distance from it; in the latter case the space between the altar and the grating would be filled with stones and serve as a platform around the altar, which would otherwise be too high for the priest to reach conveniently.

**27, 8:** Hollow: probably filled with earth or stones when in use. Cf Ex 20, 24f.

d 2 Chr 3, 14. e 31–37: Ex 36, 35–38. f 1–8: Ex 38, 1–7. g 9–19: Ex 38, 9–20.

shall be hangings to the extent of fifteen cubits,
with three columns and three pedestals.
16"At the entrance of the court there shall be
a variegated curtain, twenty cubits long, woven
of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and of fine linen
twined. It shall have four columns and four
pedestals.
17"All the columns around the court shall
have bands and hooks of silver, and pedestals of
bronze. 18The enclosure of the court is to be one
hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and five
cubits high. Fine linen twined must be used, and
the pedestals must be of bronze. 19All the fittings
of the Dwelling, whatever be their use, as well
as all its tent pegs and all the tent pegs of the
court, must be of bronze.

**Oil for the Lamps** 20"You shall order the
Israelites to bring you clear oil of crushed olives,
to be used for the light, so that you may keep
lamps burning regularly.[h] 21From evening to
morning Aaron and his sons shall maintain them
before the LORD in the meeting tent, outside the
veil which hangs in front of the commandments.
This shall be a perpetual ordinance for the
Israelites throughout their generations.

## CHAPTER 28

Ch 25–40
See RG
83–84

**The Priestly Vestments** 1[i]"From among the
Israelites have your brother Aaron, together with
his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar,
brought to you, that they may be my priests.
2For the glorious adornment of your brother
Aaron you shall have sacred vestments made.
3Therefore, to the various expert workmen
whom I have endowed with skill, you shall give
instructions to make such vestments for Aaron
as will set him apart for his sacred service as my
priest. 4These are the vestments they shall
make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a bro-
caded tunic, a miter and a sash. In making these
sacred vestments which your brother Aaron and
his sons are to wear in serving as my priests,
5they shall use gold, violet, purple and scarlet
yarn and fine linen.

**The Ephod and Breastpiece** 6"The ephod*
they shall make of gold thread and of violet,
purple and scarlet yarn, embroidered on cloth of
fine linen twined.[j] 7It shall have a pair of
shoulder straps joined to its two upper ends.
8The embroidered belt on the ephod shall ex-
tend out from it and, like it, be made of gold
thread, of violet, purple and scarlet yarn, and of
fine linen twined.
9"Get two onyx stones and engrave on them
the names of the sons of Israel: 10six of their
names on one stone, and the other six on the
other stone, in the order of their birth. 11As a
gem-cutter engraves a seal, so shall you have the
two stones engraved with the names of the sons
of Israel and then mounted in gold filigree work.
12Set these two stones on the shoulder straps of
the ephod as memorial stones of the sons of
Israel. Thus Aaron shall bear their names on his
shoulders as a reminder before the LORD.
13Make filigree rosettes of gold,[k] 14as well as
two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords, and
fasten the cordlike chains to the filigree rosettes.
15[l]"The breastpiece* of decision you shall
also have made, embroidered like the ephod
with gold thread and violet, purple and scarlet
yarn on cloth of fine linen twined. 16It is to be
square when folded double, a span high and a
span wide. 17*On it you shall mount four rows
of precious stones: in the first row, a carnelian, a
topaz and an emerald; 18in the second row, a
garnet, a sapphire and a beryl; 19in the third
row, a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20in
the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx and a
jasper. These stones are to be mounted in gold
filigree work, 21twelve of them to match the
names of the sons of Israel, each stone engraved

**28, 6:** Ephod: this Hebrew word is retained in the translation because it is the technical term for a peculiar piece of the priestly vestments, the exact nature of which is uncertain. It seems to have been a sort of apron that hung from the shoulders of the priest by shoulder straps (v 7) and was tied around his waist by the loose ends of the attached belt (v 8).

**28, 15–30:** Breastpiece: in shape like a modern altar burse, it was a pocketlike receptacle for holding the Urim and Thummim (v 30), and formed an integral part of the ephod, to which it was attached by an elaborate system of rings and chains. Both the ephod and its breastpiece were made of brocaded linen.

**28, 17–20:** The translation of the Hebrew names of some of these gems is quite conjectural.

h 20f: Lv 24, 1–4. i 1–5: Ex 39, 1; Sir 45, 7. j 6–12: Ex 39, 2–7; Sir 45, 8–14. k 13f: Ex 28, 22. 25; 39, 15. 18. l 15–21: Ex 39, 15–21.

like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

22"When the chains of pure gold, twisted like cords, have been made for the breastpiece, 23you shall then make two rings of gold for it and fasten them to the two upper ends of the breastpiece. 24The gold cords are then to be fastened to the two rings at the upper ends of the breastpiece, 25the other two ends of the cords being fastened in front to the two filigree rosettes which are attached to the shoulder straps of the ephod. 26Make two other rings of gold and put them on the two lower ends of the breastpiece, on its edge that faces the ephod. 27Then make two more rings of gold and fasten them to the bottom of the shoulder straps next to where they join the ephod in front, just above its embroidered belt. 28Violet ribbons shall bind the rings of the breastpiece to the rings of the ephod, so that the breastpiece will stay right above the embroidered belt of the ephod and not swing loose from it.

29"Whenever Aaron enters the sanctuary, he will thus bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece of decision over his heart as a constant reminder before the LORD. 30In this breastpiece of decision[m] you shall put the Urim and Thummim,* that they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus he shall always bear the decisions for the Israelites over his heart in the LORD's presence.

**Other Vestments** 31"The robe of the ephod[n] you shall make entirely of violet material. 32It shall have an opening for the head in the center, and around this opening there shall be a selvage, woven as at the opening of a shirt, to keep it from being torn. 33All around the hem at the bottom you shall make pomegranates, woven of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen twined, with gold bells between them; 34first a gold bell, then a pomegranate, and thus alternating all around the hem of the robe. 35Aaron shall wear it when ministering, that its tinkling may be heard as he enters and leaves the LORD's presence in the sanctuary; else he will die.

36"You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, as on a seal engraving, "Sacred to the LORD." 37This plate is to be tied over the miter with a violet ribbon in such a way that it rests on the front of the miter,[o] 38over Aaron's forehead. Since Aaron bears whatever guilt the Israelites may incur in consecrating any of their sacred gifts, this plate must always be over his forehead, so that they may find favor with the LORD.

39[p]"The tunic of fine linen shall be brocaded. The miter shall be made of fine linen. The sash shall be of variegated work.

40"Likewise, for the glorious adornment of Aaron's sons you shall have tunics and sashes and turbans made. 41With these you shall clothe your brother Aaron and his sons. Anoint and ordain them,* consecrating them as my priests. 42You must also make linen drawers for them, to cover their naked flesh from their loins to their thighs.[q] 43Aaron and his sons shall wear them whenever they go into the meeting tent or approach the altar to minister in the sanctuary, lest they incur guilt and die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants.

## CHAPTER 29

**Consecration of the Priests** 1"This is the rite you shall perform in consecrating them as my priests.[r] Procure a young bull and two unblemished rams. 2With fine wheat flour make unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, 3and put them in a basket. Take the basket of them along with the bullock and the two rams. 4Aaron and his sons

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**28, 30**: Urim and Thummim: both the meaning of these Hebrew words and the exact nature of the objects so designated are uncertain. They were apparently lots of some kind which were drawn or cast by the priest to ascertain God's decision in doubtful matters. Hence, the burse in which they were kept was called "the breastpiece of decision."

**28, 41**: Ordain them: literally, "fill their hands," a technical expression used solely for the installation of priests. The phrase probably originated in the custom of placing in the priests' hands the instruments or other symbols of the sacerdotal office.

**m** Lv 8, 8; Sir 45, 11. **n** 31–35: Ex 39, 20ff; Lv 8, 9; Sir 45, 10. **o** Ex 39, 31; Lv 8, 9. **p** 39–43: Ex 39, 27ff. **q** Ez 44, 18. **r** 1–8: Lv 8, 1–9.

you shall also bring to the entrance of the
meeting tent, and there wash them with water.
5Take the vestments and clothe Aaron with the
tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself,
and the breastpiece, fastening the embroidered
belt of the ephod around him. 6Put the miter on
his head, the sacred diadem on the miter. 7Then
take the anointing oil and anoint him with it,
pouring it on his head. 8Bring forward his sons
also and clothe them with the tunics, 9gird them
with the sashes, and tie the turbans on them.[s]
Thus shall the priesthood be theirs by perpetual
law, and thus shall you ordain Aaron and his
sons.

**Ordination Sacrifices** 10[t]"Now bring forward
the bullock in front of the meeting tent. There
Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its
head. 11Then slaughter the bullock before the
LORD, at the entrance of the meeting tent.
12Take some of its blood and with your finger
put it on the horns of the altar. All the rest of the
blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar.
13All the fat that covers its inner organs, as well
as the lobe of its liver and its two kidneys,
together with the fat that is on them, you shall
take and burn on the altar. 14But the flesh and
hide and offal of the bullock you must burn up
outside the camp, since this is a sin offering.[u]

15"Then take one of the rams, and after Aaron
and his sons have laid their hands on its head,
16slaughter it. The blood you shall take and
splash on all the sides of the altar. 17Cut the ram
into pieces; its inner organs and shanks you shall
first wash, and then put them with the pieces
and with the head. 18The entire ram shall then
be burned on the altar, since it is a holocaust, a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.

19"After this take the other ram, and when
Aaron and his sons have laid their hands on its
head, 20slaughter it. Some of its blood you shall
take and put on the tip of Aaron's right ear and
on the tips of his sons' right ears and on the
thumbs of their right hands and the great toes of
their right feet. Splash the rest of the blood on all
the sides of the altar. 21Then take some of the
blood that is on the altar, together with some of
the anointing oil, and sprinkle this on Aaron and
his vestments, as well as on his sons and their
vestments, that his sons and their vestments may
be sacred.

22"Now, from this ram you shall take its fat:
its fatty tail,* the fat that covers its inner organs,
the lobe of its liver, its two kidneys with the fat
that is on them, and its right thigh, since this is
the ordination ram; 23then, out of the basket of
unleavened food that you have set before the
LORD, you shall take one of the loaves of bread,
one of the cakes made with oil, and one of the
wafers. 24All these things you shall put into the
hands of Aaron and his sons, so that they may
wave them as a wave offering* before the LORD.
25After you have received them back from their
hands, you shall burn them on top of the
holocaust on the altar as a sweet-smelling obla-
tion to the LORD. 26Finally, take the breast of
Aaron's ordination ram and wave it as a wave
offering before the LORD; this is to be your own
portion.

27*"Thus shall you set aside the breast of
whatever wave offering is waved,[v] as well as the
thigh of whatever raised offering is raised up,
whether this be the ordination ram or anything
else belonging to Aaron or to his sons. 28Such
things are due to Aaron and his sons from the
Israelites by a perpetual ordinance as a contribu-
tion. From their peace offerings, too, the Israel-
ites shall make a contribution, their contribution
to the LORD.

29"The sacred vestments[w] of Aaron shall be
passed down to his descendants, that in them
they may be anointed and ordained. 30The
descendant who succeeds him as priest and who
is to enter the meeting tent to minister in the

**29, 22:** Fatty tail: the thick layer of fat surrounding the tails of sheep and rams bred in Palestine even today. It is regarded as a choice food. Cf Lv 3, 9.

**29, 24–26:** Wave offering: the portions of a peace offering, breast and right thigh, which the officiating priest moved to and fro (waved) in the presence of the Lord. They were reserved for Aaron and his sons.

**29, 27–30:** These verses are a parenthetical interruption of the ordination ritual; v 31 belongs logically immediately after v 26.

s Lv 8, 13. t 10–26: Lv 8, 14–30. u Heb 13, 11. v 27f: Lv 7, 31–34; 10, 14f; Nm 18, 18f; Dt 18, 3. w Nm 20, 26. 28.

sanctuary shall be clothed with them for seven days.

31 [x]"You shall take the flesh of the ordination ram and boil it in a holy place. 32At the entrance of the meeting tent Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket. 33They themselves are to eat of these things by which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration; but no layman may eat of them, since they are sacred. 34If some of the flesh of the ordination sacrifice or some of the bread remains over on the next day, this remnant must be burned up; it is not to be eaten, since it is sacred. 35Carry out all these orders in regard to Aaron and his sons just as I have given them to you.[y]

"Seven days you shall spend in ordaining them, 36 [z]sacrificing a bullock each day as a sin offering, to make atonement. Thus also shall you purge the altar* in making atonement for it; you shall anoint it in order to consecrate it. 37Seven days you shall spend in making atonement for the altar and in consecrating it. Then the altar will be most sacred, and whatever touches it will become sacred.

38*"Now, this is what you shall offer on the altar: two yearling lambs[a] as the sacrifice established for each day; 39one lamb in the morning and the other lamb at the evening twilight. 40With the first lamb there shall be a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil of crushed olives and, as its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine. 41The other lamb you shall offer at the evening twilight, with the same cereal offering and libation as in the morning. You shall offer this as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 42Throughout your generations this established holocaust shall be offered before the LORD at the entrance of the meeting tent, where I will meet you and speak to you.

43"There, at the altar, I will meet the Israelites; hence, it will be made sacred by my glory.[b] 44Thus I will consecrate the meeting tent and the altar, just as I also consecrate Aaron and his sons to be my priests. 45I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites and will be their God. 46They shall know that I, the LORD, am their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, so that I, the LORD, their God, might dwell among them.

## CHAPTER 30

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**Altar of Incense** 1"For burning incense you shall make an altar of acacia wood,[c] 2with a square surface, a cubit long, a cubit wide, and two cubits high, with horns that spring directly from it. 3Its grate on top, its walls on all four sides, and its horns you shall plate with pure gold. Put a gold molding around it. 4Underneath the molding you shall put gold rings, two on one side and two on the opposite side, as holders for the poles used in carrying it. 5Make the poles, too, of acacia wood and plate them with gold. 6This altar you are to place in front of the veil that hangs before the ark of the commandments where I will meet you.[d]

7"On it Aaron shall burn fragrant incense. Morning after morning, when he prepares the lamps, 8and again in the evening twilight, when he lights the lamps, he shall burn incense. Throughout your generations this shall be the established incense offering before the LORD. 9On this altar you shall not offer up any profane incense, or any holocaust or cereal offering; nor shall you pour out a libation upon it. 10Once a year Aaron shall perform the atonement rite on its horns.[e] Throughout your generations this atonement is to be made once a year with the blood of the atoning sin offering. This altar is most sacred to the LORD."

**Census Tax** 11The LORD also said to Moses, 12"When you take a census[f] of the Israelites who are to be registered, each one, as he is enrolled, shall give the LORD a forfeit for his life, so that no plague may come upon them for being registered. 13Everyone who enters the registered group must pay a half-shekel, according to the

**29, 36f:** Purge the altar: the construction of an altar by profane hands rendered it impure. The anointing and consecration of the altar purified it and made it sacred.

**29, 38–42:** A parenthesis inserted into the rubrics for consecrating the altar; v 43 belongs directly after v 37.

x 31–34: Lv 8, 31f. y Lv 8, 36. z 36f: Lv 8, 33ff. a 38–42: Nm 28, 3–8. b Ex 25, 22. c 1–5; Ex 37, 25–28. d Ex 40, 26. e Lv 16, 18. f Nm 1, 2f; 26, 2.

standard of the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs
to the shekel. This payment of a half-shekel is a
contribution to the LORD.[g] 14Everyone of twenty
years or more who enters the registered group
must give this contribution to the LORD. 15The
rich need not give more, nor shall the poor give
less, than a half-shekel in this contribution to the
LORD to pay the forfeit for their lives. 16[h]When
you receive this forfeit money from the Israelites,
you shall donate it to the service of the meeting
tent, that there it may be the Israelites' re-
minder, before the LORD, of the forfeit paid for
their lives."

**The Laver** 17The LORD said to Moses, 18"For
ablutions you shall make a bronze laver with a
bronze base. Place it between the meeting tent
and the altar, and put water in it.[i] 19Aaron and
his sons shall use it in washing their hands and
feet.[j] 20When they are about to enter the
meeting tent, they must wash with water, lest
they die. Likewise when they approach the altar
in their ministry, to offer an oblation to the
LORD, 21they must wash their hands and feet,
lest they die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance
for him and his descendants throughout their
generations."

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**The Anointing Oil** 22The LORD said to Moses,
23"Take the finest spices: five hundred shekels of
free-flowing myrrh; half that amount, that is,
two hundred and fifty shekels, of fragrant cinna-
mon; two hundred and fifty shekels of fragrant
cane; 24five hundred shekels of cassia—all ac-
cording to the standard of the sanctuary shekel;
together with a hin of olive oil; 25and blend
them into sacred anointing oil,[k] perfumed oint-
ment expertly prepared. 26[l]With this sacred
anointing oil you shall anoint the meeting tent
and the ark of the commandments, 27the table
and all its appurtenances, the lampstand and its
appurtenances, the altar of incense 28and the
altar of holocausts with all its appurtenances,
and the laver with its base. 29When you have
consecrated them, they shall be most sacred;
whatever touches them shall be sacred. 30Aaron
and his sons you shall also anoint and consecrate
as my priests.[m] 31To the Israelites you shall say:
As sacred anointing oil this shall belong to me
throughout your generations. 32It may not be
used in any ordinary anointing of the body, nor
may you make any other oil of a like mixture. It
is sacred, and shall be treated as sacred by you.
33Whoever prepares a perfume like this, or
whoever puts any of this on a layman, shall be
cut off from his kinsmen."

**The Incense** 34[n]The LORD told Moses, "Take
these aromatic substances: storax and onycha
and galbanum, these and pure frankincense in
equal parts; 35and blend them into incense. This
fragrant powder, expertly prepared, is to be
salted and so kept pure and sacred. 36Grind
some of it into fine dust and put this before the
commandments in the meeting tent where I will
meet you. This incense shall be treated as most
sacred by you. 37You may not make incense of a
like mixture for yourselves; you must treat it as
sacred to the LORD. 38Whoever makes an in-
cense like this for his own enjoyment of its
fragrance, shall be cut off from his kinsmen."

## CHAPTER 31

**Choice of Artisans** 1[o]The LORD said to Moses,
2"See, I have chosen Bezalel, son of Uri, son of
Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3and I have filled him
with a divine spirit of skill and understanding
and knowledge in every craft: 4in the production
of embroidery, in making things of gold, silver or
bronze, 5in cutting and mounting precious
stones, in carving wood, and in every other craft.
6As his assistant I have appointed Oholiab, son of
Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. I have also
endowed all the experts with the necessary skill
to make all the things I have ordered you to
make: 7[p]the meeting tent, the ark of the com-
mandments with the propitiatory on top of it, all
the furnishings of the tent, 8the table with its
appurtenances, the pure gold lampstand with all
its appurtenances, the altar of incense, 9the altar
of holocausts with all its appurtenances, the

g Mt 17, 24–27. h Ex 38, 25. i Ex 38, 8; 40, 7. 30. j 19ff: Ex 40, 31f. k Ex 37, 29. l 26–29: Ex 40, 9ff; Lv 8, 10; Nm 7, 1. m Ex 29, 7; Lv 8, 12. n 34ff: Ex 25, 6; 37, 29. o 1–6: Ex 35, 30–35. p 7–11: Ex 35, 10–19.

laver with its base, [10]the service cloths,* the sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, the vestments for his sons in their ministry, [11]the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense for the sanctuary. All these things they shall make just as I have commanded you."

**Sabbath Laws** [12]*q*The LORD said to Moses, [13]"You must also tell the Israelites: Take care to keep my sabbaths, for that is to be the token between you and me throughout the generations, to show that it is I, the LORD, who make you holy. [14]Therefore, you must keep the sabbath as something sacred. Whoever desecrates it shall be put to death. If anyone does work on that day, he must be rooted out of his people. [15]Six days there are for doing work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of complete rest, sacred to the LORD. Anyone who does work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. [16]So shall the Israelites observe the sabbath, keeping it throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. [17]Between me and the Israelites it is to be an everlasting token; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he rested at his ease."

[18]When the LORD had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the commandments, the stone tablets inscribed by God's own finger.*r*

## CHAPTER 32

**The Golden Calf** [1]When the people became aware of Moses' delay in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will be our leader; as for the man Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him."*s* [2]Aaron replied, "Have your wives and sons and daughters take off the golden earrings they are wearing, and bring them to me." [3]So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron, [4]who accepted their offering, and fashioning this gold with a graving tool, made a molten calf. Then they cried out, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt."*t* [5]On seeing this, Aaron built an altar before the calf and proclaimed, "Tomorrow is a feast of the LORD."* [6]Early the next day the people offered holocausts and brought peace offerings. Then they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.*u*

[7]With that, the LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once to your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, for they have become depraved. [8]*v*They have soon turned aside from the way I pointed out to them, making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it, sacrificing to it and crying out, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!' [9]I see how stiff-necked this people is,"*w* continued the LORD to Moses. [10]"Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation."

[11]But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying,*x* "Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with so strong a hand? [12]Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent he brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and exterminate them from the face of the earth'? Let your blazing wrath die down; relent in punishing your people. [13]Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying,*y* 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.' " [14]So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

[15]Moses then turned and came down the mountain with the two tablets of the command-

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**31, 10:** The service cloths: so the Greek. They were perhaps the colored cloths mentioned in Nm 4, 4–15.

**32, 5:** The calf . . . a feast of the Lord: from this it is clear that the golden calf was intended as an image, not of a false god, but of the Lord himself, his strength being symbolized by the strength of a young bull. The Israelites, however, had been forbidden to represent the Lord under any visible form. Cf Ex 20, 4.

q 12–17: Ex 20, 8–11; 35, 1–3. r Ex 24, 12; 32, 15f; Dt 5, 22. s Ex 32, 23; Acts 7, 40. t Ex 32, 8; 1 Kgs 12, 28. u 1 Cor 10, 7. v 7f: Dt 9, 12. 16. w 9f: Dt 9, 13; Ps 106, 23. x 11f: Nm 14, 13ff; Dt 9, 28. y Gn 22, 16f.

ments in his hands,[z] tablets that were written on
both sides, front and back; [16]tablets that were
made by God, having inscriptions on them that
were engraved by God himself.[a] [17]Now, when
Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting,
he said to Moses, "That sounds like a battle in
the camp." [18]But Moses answered, "It does not
sound like cries of victory, nor does it sound like
cries of defeat; the sounds that I hear are cries of
revelry." [19]As he drew near the camp, he saw
the calf and the dancing. With that, Moses'
wrath flared up, so that he threw the tablets
down and broke them on the base of the
mountain.[b] [20]Taking the calf they had made, he
fused it in the fire and then ground it down to
powder, which he scattered on the water* and
made the Israelites drink.[c]

[21]Moses asked Aaron, "What did this people
ever do to you that you should lead them into so
grave a sin?" Aaron replied, "Let not my lord be
angry. [22]You know well enough how prone the
people are to evil. [23]They said to me, 'Make us a
god to be our leader; as for the man Moses who
brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not
know what has happened to him.' [24]So I told
them, 'Let anyone who has gold jewelry take it
off.' They gave it to me, and I threw it into the
fire, and this calf came out."

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[25]When Moses realized that, to the scornful
joy of their foes, Aaron had let the people run
wild, [26]he stood at the gate of the camp and
cried, "Whoever is for the LORD, let him come to
me!" All the Levites[d] then rallied to him, [27]and
he told them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of
Israel: Put your sword on your hip, every one of
you! Now go up and down the camp, from gate
to gate, and slay your own kinsmen,* your
friends and neighbors!" [28]The Levites carried
out the command of Moses, and that day there
fell about three thousand of the people. [29]Then
Moses said, "Today you have been dedicated to
the LORD,* for you were against your own sons
and kinsmen, to bring a blessing upon yourselves
this day."

**The Atonement** [30]On the next day Moses said
to the people,[e] "You have committed a grave
sin. I will go up to the LORD, then; perhaps I may
be able to make atonement for your sin." [31]So
Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Ah, this
people has indeed committed a grave sin in
making a god of gold for themselves! [32]If you
would only forgive their sin! If you will not, then
strike me out of the book that you have written."* [33]The LORD answered, "Him only who
has sinned against me will I strike out of my
book. [34]Now, go and lead the people whither I
have told you. My angel will go before you.
When it is time for me to punish, I will punish
them for their sin."

[35]Thus the LORD smote the people for having
had Aaron make the calf for them.

## CHAPTER 33

[1]The LORD told Moses, "You and the people
whom you have brought up from the land of
Egypt, are to go up from here to the land which I
swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob I would give
to their descendants.[f] [2]Driving out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and
Jebusites, I will send an angel before you[g] [3]to
the land flowing with milk and honey. But I
myself will not go up in your company, because
you are a stiff-necked people; otherwise I might
exterminate you on the way." [4]When the people
heard this bad news, they went into mourning,
and no one wore his ornaments.

[5]The LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites:
You are a stiff-necked people. Were I to go up in
your company even for a moment, I would
exterminate you. Take off your ornaments, therefore; I will then see what I am to do with you."

**32, 20:** The water: the stream that flowed down Mount Sinai. Cf Dt 9, 21.

**32, 27:** Slay your own kinsmen: those who were especially guilty of the idolatry.

**32, 29:** Dedicated to the Lord: because of their zeal for the true worship of the Lord, the Levites were chosen to be special ministers of the ritual service. However, the meaning of the Hebrew here is somewhat disputed.

**32, 32:** The book that you have written: the list of God's intimate friends. In a similar sense St. Paul wished to be anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren. Cf Rom 9, 3.

z Dt 9, 15. a Ex 31, 18. b Dt 9, 16f. c Dt 9, 21. d 26–29: Dt 33, 8f. e 30–34: Dt 9, 18ff. f Gn 12, 7. g Ex 23, 23.

[6]So, from Mount Horeb onward, the Israelites laid aside their ornaments.

**Moses' Intimacy with God** [7]The tent,[h] which was called the meeting tent,* Moses used to pitch at some distance away, outside the camp. Anyone who wished to consult the LORD would go to this meeting tent outside the camp. [8]Whenever Moses went out to the tent, the people would all rise and stand at the entrance of their own tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. [9]As Moses entered the tent, the column of cloud would come down and stand at its entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. [10]On seeing the column of cloud stand at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and worship at the entrance of their own tents. [11]The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face,[i] as one man speaks to another. Moses would then return to the camp, but his young assistant, Joshua, son of Nun, would not move out of the tent.

[12]Moses said to the LORD, "You, indeed, are telling me to lead this people on;[j] but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'You are my intimate friend,' and also, 'You have found favor with me.' [13]Now, if I have found favor with you, do let me know your ways so that, in knowing you, I may continue to find favor with you. Then, too, this nation is, after all, your own people." [14]"I myself,"* the LORD answered, "will go along, to give you rest." [15]Moses replied, "If you are not going yourself, do not make us go up from here. [16]For how can it be known that we, your people and I, have found favor with you, except by your going with us? Then we, your people and I, will be singled out from every other people on the earth." [17]The LORD said to Moses, "This request, too, which you have just made, I will carry out, because you have found favor with me and you are my intimate friend."

[18]Then Moses said, "Do let me see your glory!" [19]He answered, "I will make all my beauty pass before you, and in your presence I will pronounce my name, 'LORD'; I who show favors to whom I will, I who grant mercy to whom I will.[k] [20]But my face you cannot see,[l] for no man sees me and still lives. [21]Here," continued the LORD, "is a place near me where you shall station yourself on the rock. [22]When my glory passes I will set you in the hollow of the rock and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. [23]Then I will remove my hand, so that you may see my back;* but my face is not to be seen."

## CHAPTER 34

Ch 25–40 See RG 83–84

**Renewal of the Tablets** [1]The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two stone tablets like the former,[m] that I may write on them the commandments which were on the former tablets that you broke. [2]Get ready for tomorrow morning, when you are to go up Mount Sinai and there present yourself to me on the top of the mountain. [3]No one shall come up with you, and no one is even to be seen on any part of the mountain;[n] even the flocks and the herds are not to go grazing toward this mountain." [4]Moses then cut two stone tablets like the former, and early the next morning he went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, taking along the two stone tablets.

[5]Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with him there and proclaimed his name, "LORD." [6]Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, [7]continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin; yet not declaring the guilty guiltless, but punishing children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation for their

**33, 7–11:** The meeting tent is mentioned here by anticipation; its actual construction is described in the following chapters.

**33, 14:** I myself: literally, "my face," that is, "my presence." To give you rest: in the Promised Land; some understand, "to put your mind at rest"; others, by a slight emendation in the text, render, "to lead you."

**33, 23:** You may see my back: man can see God's glory as reflected in creation, but his "face," that is, God as he is in himself, mortal man cannot behold. Cf 1 Cor 13, 12.

h Ex 29, 42f. i Nm 12, 8; Dt 34, 10; Sir 45, 4–6. j Ex 32, 34. k Rom 9, 15. l Jn 1, 18; 1 Tm 6, 16. m Dt 10, 1f. n Ex 19, 12f. 21.

fathers' wickedness!"[o] 8Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship. 9Then he said, "If I find favor with you, O LORD, do come along in our company. This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own."

**Religious Laws** 10"Here, then," said the LORD, "is the covenant I will make. Before the eyes of all your people I will work such marvels as have never been wrought in any nation anywhere on earth, so that this people among whom you live may see how awe-inspiring are the deeds which I, the LORD, will do at your side. 11But you, on your part, must keep the commandments I am giving you today.[p]

"I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. 12[q]Take care, therefore, not to make a covenant with these inhabitants of the land that you are to enter; else they will become a snare among you. 13Tear down their altars; smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their sacred poles.* 14You shall not worship any other god, for the LORD is 'the Jealous One';* a jealous God is he. 15Do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of that land; else, when they render their wanton worship to their gods and sacrifice to them, one of them may invite you and you may partake of his sacrifice. 16Neither shall you take their daughters as wives for your sons; otherwise, when their daughters render their wanton worship to their gods, they will make your sons do the same.

17"You shall not make for yourselves molten gods.[r]

18"You shall keep the feast of Unleavened Bread.[s] For seven days at the prescribed time in the month of Abib you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you; for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.

19"To me belongs every first-born male that opens the womb among all your livestock, whether in the herd or in the flock.[t] 20The firstling of an ass you shall redeem with one of the flock; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. The first-born among your sons you shall redeem.

"No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

21"For six days you may work,[u] but on the seventh day you shall rest; on that day you must rest even during the seasons of plowing and harvesting.

22[v]"You shall keep the feast of Weeks* with the first of the wheat harvest; likewise, the feast at the fruit harvest at the close of the year. 23Three times a year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. 24Since I will drive out the nations before you to give you a large territory, there will be no one to covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD, your God.

25"You shall not offer me the blood of sacrifice with leavened bread, nor shall the sacrifice of the Passover feast be kept overnight for the next day.

26"The choicest first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the LORD, your God.

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk."[w]

**Radiance of Moses' Face** 27Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with them I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." 28So Moses stayed there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights,[x] without eating any food or drinking any water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

29As Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while he conversed

**34, 13:** Sacred poles: "Ashera" was the name of a Canaanite goddess. In her honor wooden poles (asherot) were erected, just as stone pillars (massebot) were erected in honor of the god Baal. Both were placed near the altar in a Canaanite shrine.

**34, 14:** The Lord is "the Jealous One": see note on Ex 20, 5. Some, by a slight emendation, render, "The LORD is jealous for his name." Cf Ez 39, 25.

**34, 22:** Feast of Weeks: the festival of thanksgiving for the harvest, celebrated seven weeks or fifty days after the beginning of the harvest. It was also called Pentecost (fiftieth) and coincided with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, fifty days after the offering of the first fruits; cf Lv 23 10f; Dt 16, 9.

o 6f: Ex 20, 5f; Nm 14, 18; Dt 5, 9f; Jer 32, 18. p Ex 13, 5; 33, 2. q 12–16: Ex 23, 32f; Dt 7, 1–5; 12, 2f. r Lv 19, 4; 5, 8f. s Ex 12, 15ff; 13, 3f. t 19f: Ex 13, 2. 12f; 23, 15. u Ex 20, 9f. v 22f: Ex 23, 16f; Dt 16, 10. 13. 16. w 25f: Ex 23, 18f. x Ex 24, 18; Dt 9, 9. 18; 10, 2. 4.

with the LORD. 30When Aaron, then, and the
other Israelites saw Moses and noticed how
radiant the skin of his face had become, they
were afraid to come near him. 31Only after
Moses called to them did Aaron and all the
rulers of the community come back to him.
Moses then spoke to them. 32Later on, all the
Israelites came up to him, and he enjoined on
them all that the LORD had told him on Mount
Sinai. 33When he finished speaking with them,
he put a veil over his face.* 34Whenever Moses
entered the presence of the LORD to converse
with him, he removed the veil until he came out
again.[y] On coming out, he would tell the
Israelites all that had been commanded. 35Then
the Israelites would see that the skin of Moses'
face was radiant; so he would again put the veil
over his face until he went in to converse with
the LORD.

## CHAPTER 35

**Sabbath Regulations** 1Moses assembled the
whole Israelite community and said to them,[z]
"This is what the LORD has commanded to be
done. 2On six days work may be done, but the
seventh day shall be sacred to you as the sabbath
of complete rest to the LORD. Anyone who does
work on that day shall be put to death. 3You
shall not even light a fire in any of your dwellings
on the sabbath day."

**Collection of Materials** 4Moses told the
whole Israelite community, "This is what the
LORD has commanded: 5[a]Take up among you a
collection for the LORD. Everyone, as his heart
prompts him, shall bring, as a contribution to the
LORD, gold, silver and bronze; 6violet, purple
and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; 7rams'
skins dyed red, and tahash skins; acacia wood;
8oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and
for the fragrant incense; 9onyx stones and other
gems for mounting on the ephod and on the
breastpiece.

**Call for Artisans** 10[b]"Let every expert among
you come and make all that the LORD has
commanded: 11the Dwelling, with its tent, its
covering, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its
columns and its pedestals; 12the ark, with its
poles, the propitiatory, and the curtain veil; 13the
table, with its poles and all its appurtenances,
and the showbread; 14the lampstand, with its
appurtenances, the lamps, and the oil for the
light; 15the altar of incense, with its poles; the
anointing oil, and the fragrant incense; the
entrance curtain for the entrance of the Dwelling; 16the altar of holocausts, with its bronze
grating, its poles, and all its appurtenances; the
laver, with its base; 17the hangings of the court,
with their columns and pedestals; the curtain for
the entrance of the court; 18the tent pegs for the
Dwelling and for the court, with their ropes;
19the service cloths for use in the sanctuary; the
sacred vestments for Aaron, the priest, and the
vestments worn by his sons in their ministry."

**The Contribution** 20When the whole Israelite
community left Moses' presence, 21everyone, as
his heart suggested and his spirit prompted,
brought a contribution to the LORD for the
construction of the meeting tent, for all its
services, and for the sacred vestments. 22Both
the men and the women, all as their hearts
prompted them, brought brooches, earrings,
rings, necklaces and various other gold articles.[c]
Everyone who could presented an offering of
gold to the LORD. 23Everyone who happened to
have violet, purple or scarlet yarn, fine linen or
goat hair, rams' skins dyed red or tahash skins,
brought them. 24Whoever could make a contribution of silver or bronze offered it to the LORD;
and everyone who happened to have acacia
wood for any part of the work, brought it. 25All
the women who were expert spinners brought
hand-spun violet, purple and scarlet yarn and
fine linen thread. 26All the women who possessed the skill, spun goat hair. 27The princes
brought onyx stones and other gems for mounting on the ephod and on the breastpiece; 28as
well as spices, and oil for the light, anointing oil,

Ch 25–40
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83–84

**34, 33:** He put a veil over his face: St. Paul sees in this a symbol of the failure of the Jews to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. The true spiritual meaning of the writings of Moses and the prophets is still veiled from the unbelieving Jews. Cf 2 Cor 3, 7–18.

y 33f: 2 Cor 3, 13. 16. z 1–3: Ex 31, 13–17. a 5–9: Ex 25, 2–7. b 10–19: Ex 31, 6–11. c 22–28: Ex 25, 3–7.

and fragrant incense. [29]Every Israelite man and
woman brought to the LORD such voluntary
offerings as they thought best, for the various
kinds of work which the LORD had commanded
Moses to have done.

**The Artisans** [30]Moses said to the Israelites,[d]
"See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel, son of Uri,
son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, [31]and has filled
him with a divine spirit of skill and understand-
ing and knowledge in every craft: [32]in the
production of embroidery, in making things of
gold, silver or bronze, [33]in cutting and mounting
precious stones, in carving wood, and in every
other craft. [34]He has also given both him and
Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan,
the ability to teach others. [35]He has endowed
them with skill to execute all types of work:
engraving, embroidering, the making of varie-
gated cloth of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and
fine linen thread, weaving, and all other arts and
crafts.

## CHAPTER 36

Ch 25–40
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[1]"Bezalel, therefore, will set to work with
Oholiab and with all the experts whom the LORD
has endowed with skill and understanding in
knowing how to execute all the work for the
service of the sanctuary, just as the LORD has
commanded."[e]

[2]Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and
all the other experts whom the LORD had
endowed with skill, men whose hearts moved
them to come and take part in the work. [3]They
received from Moses all the contributions which
the Israelites had brought for establishing the
service of the sanctuary. Still, morning after
morning the people continued to bring their
voluntary offerings to Moses. [4]Thereupon the
experts who were executing the various kinds of
work for the sanctuary, all left the work they
were doing, [5]and told Moses, "The people are
bringing much more than is needed to carry out
the work which the LORD has commanded us to
do." [6]Moses, therefore, ordered a proclamation
to be made throughout the camp: "Let neither
man nor woman make any more contributions
for the sanctuary." So the people stopped bring-
ing their offerings; [7]there was already enough at
hand, in fact, more than enough, to complete
the work to be done.

**The Tent Cloth and Coverings** [8]*f*The various
experts who were executing the work, made the
Dwelling with its ten sheets woven of fine linen
twined, having cherubim embroidered on them
with violet, purple and scarlet yarn. [9]The length
of each sheet was twenty-eight cubits, and the
width four cubits; all the sheets were of the
same size. [10]Five of the sheets were sewed
together, edge to edge; and the same for the
other five. [11]Loops of violet yarn were made
along the edge of the end sheet in the first set,
and the same along the edge of the end sheet in
the second set. [12]Fifty loops were thus put on
one inner sheet, and fifty loops on the inner
sheet in the other set, with the loops directly
opposite each other. [13]Then fifty clasps of gold
were made, with which the sheets were joined
so that the Dwelling formed one whole.

[14]Sheets of goat hair were also woven as a
tent over the Dwelling. Eleven such sheets were
made. [15]The length of each sheet was thirty
cubits and the width four cubits; all eleven
sheets were of the same size. [16]Five of these
sheets were sewed edge to edge into one set;
and the other six sheets into another set. [17]Fifty
loops were made along the edge of the end sheet
in one set, and fifty loops along the edge of the
corresponding sheet in the other set. [18]Fifty
bronze clasps were made with which the tent
was joined so that it formed one whole. [19]A
covering for the tent was made of rams' skins
dyed red, and above that, a covering of tahash
skins.

**The Boards** [20]*g*Boards of acacia wood were
made as walls for the Dwelling. [21]The length of
each board was ten cubits, and the width one
and a half cubits. [22]Each board had two arms,
fastening them in line. In this way all the boards
of the Dwelling were made. [23]They were set up
as follows: twenty boards on the south side,
[24]with forty silver pedestals under the twenty
boards, so that there were two pedestals under

d 30–35; Ex 31, 1–6. e 1f: Ex 31, 1. 6. f 8–19: Ex 26, 1–14. g 20–34: Ex 26, 15–29.

each board, at its two arms; [25]twenty boards on
the other side of the Dwelling, the north side,
[26]with their forty silver pedestals, two under
each board; [27]six boards at the rear of the
Dwelling, to the west; [28]and two boards at the
corners in the rear of the Dwelling. [29]These
were double at the bottom, and likewise double
at the top, to the first ring. That is how both
boards in the corners were made. [30]Thus, there
were in the rear eight boards, with their sixteen
silver pedestals, two pedestals under each board.
[31]Bars of acacia wood were also made, five for
the boards on one side of the Dwelling, [32]five for
those on the other side, and five for those at the
rear, to the west. [33]The center bar, at the middle
of the boards, was made to reach across from
end to end. [34]The boards were plated with gold,
and gold rings were made on them as holders for
the bars, which were also plated with gold.

**The Veil** [35] *h*The veil was woven of violet,
purple and scarlet yarn, and of fine linen twined,
with cherubim embroidered on it. [36]Four gold-
plated columns of acacia wood, with gold hooks,
were made for it, and four silver pedestals were
cast for them.

[37]The curtain for the entrance of the tent was
made of violet, purple and scarlet yarn, and of
fine linen twined, woven in a variegated man-
ner. [38]Its five columns, with their hooks as well
as their capitals and bands, were plated with
gold; their five pedestals were of bronze.

## CHAPTER 37

**The Ark** [1]Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood,
two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits
wide, and one and a half cubits high. [2]The inside
and outside were plated with gold, and a mold-
ing of gold was put around it. [3]Four gold rings
were cast and put on its four supports, two rings
for one side and two for the opposite side. [4]Poles
of acacia wood were made and plated with gold;
[5]these were put through the rings on the sides of
the ark, for carrying it.

[6]The propitiatory was made of pure gold, two
and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits
wide. [7]Two cherubim of beaten gold were made
for the two ends of the propitiatory, [8]one cherub
fastened at one end, the other at the other end,
springing directly from the propitiatory at its two
ends. [9]The cherubim had their wings spread out
above, covering the propitiatory with them.
They were turned toward each other, but with
their faces looking toward the propitiatory. *i*

**The Table** [10] *j*The table was made of acacia
wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one
and a half cubits high. [11]It was plated with pure
gold, and a molding of gold was put around it.
[12]A frame a handbreadth high was also put
around it, with a molding of gold around the
frame. [13]Four rings of gold were cast for it and
fastened, one at each of the four corners. [14]The
rings were alongside the frame as holders for the
poles to carry the table. [15]These poles were
made of acacia wood and plated with gold.
[16]The vessels that were set on the table, its
plates and cups, as well as its pitchers and bowls
for pouring libations, were of pure gold.

**The Lampstand** [17] *k*The lampstand was made
of pure beaten gold—its shaft and branches as
well as its cups and knobs and petals springing
directly from it. [18]Six branches extended from
its sides, three branches on one side and three
on the other. [19]On one branch there were three
cups, shaped like almond blossoms, each with its
knob and petals; on the opposite branch there
were three cups, shaped like almond blossoms,
each with its knob and petals; and so for the six
branches that extended from the lampstand.
[20]On the shaft there were four cups, shaped like
almond blossoms, with their knobs and petals,
[21]including a knob below each of the three pairs
of branches that extended from the lampstand.
[22]The knobs and branches sprang so directly
from it that the whole formed but a single piece
of pure beaten gold. [23]Its seven lamps, as well as
its trimming shears and trays, were made of pure
gold. [24]A talent of pure gold was used for the
lampstand and its various appurtenances.

**The Altar of Incense** [25] *l*The altar of incense
was made of acacia wood, on a square, a cubit
long, a cubit wide, and two cubits high, having
horns that sprang directly from it. [26]Its grate on

Ch 25-40
See RG
83-84

h 35–38: Ex 26, 31–37. i 1–9: Ex 25, 10–22. j 10–16: Ex 25, 23–30. k 17–24: Ex 25, 31–39. l 25–28: Ex 30, 1–5.

top, its walls on all four sides, and its horns were plated with pure gold; and a molding of gold was put around it. 27Underneath the molding gold rings were placed, two on one side and two on the opposite side, as holders for the poles to carry it. 28The poles, too, were made of acacia wood and plated with gold.

29The sacred anointing oil and the fragrant incense were prepared in their pure form by a perfumer.[m]

## CHAPTER 38

Ch 25–40 See RG 83–84

**The Altar of Holocausts** 1The altar of holocausts[n] was made of acacia wood, on a square, five cubits long and five cubits wide; its height was three cubits. 2At the four corners horns were made that sprang directly from the altar. The whole was plated with bronze. 3All the utensils of the altar, the pots, shovels, basins, forks and fire pans, were likewise made of bronze. 4A grating of bronze network was made for the altar and placed round it, on the ground, half as high as the altar itself. 5Four rings were cast for the four corners of the bronze grating, as holders for the poles, 6which were made of acacia wood and plated with bronze. 7The poles were put through the rings on the sides of the altar for carrying it. The altar was made in the form of a hollow box.

8The bronze laver,[o] with its bronze base, was made from the mirrors of the women who served* at the entrance of the meeting tent.

**The Court** 9[p]The court was made as follows. On the south side of the court there were hangings, woven of fine linen twined, a hundred cubits long, 10with twenty columns and twenty pedestals of bronze, the hooks and bands of the columns being of silver. 11On the north side there were similar hangings, one hundred cubits long, with twenty columns and twenty pedestals of bronze, the hooks and bands of the columns being of silver. 12On the west side there were hangings, fifty cubits long, with ten columns and ten pedestals, the hooks and bands of the columns being of silver. 13On the east side the court was fifty cubits long. 14Toward one side there were hangings to the extent of fifteen cubits, with three columns and three pedestals; 15toward the other side, beyond the entrance of the court, there were likewise hangings to the extent of fifteen cubits, with three columns and three pedestals. 16The hangings on all sides of the court were woven of fine linen twined. 17The pedestals of the columns were of bronze, while the hooks and bands of the columns were of silver; the capitals were silver-plated, and all the columns of the court were banded with silver.

18At the entrance of the court there was a variegated curtain, woven of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and of fine linen twined, twenty cubits long and five cubits wide, in keeping with the hangings of the court. 19There were four columns and four pedestals of bronze for it, while their hooks were of silver. 20All the tent pegs for the Dwelling and for the court around it were of bronze.

**Amount of Metal Used** 21The following is an account of the various amounts used on the Dwelling, the Dwelling of the commandments, drawn up at the command of Moses by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest. 22However, it was Bezalel, son of Uri,[q] son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, who made all that the Lord commanded Moses, 23and he was assisted by Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, who was an engraver, an embroiderer, and a weaver of variegated cloth of violet, purple and scarlet yarn and of fine linen.

24All the gold used in the entire construction of the sanctuary, having previously been given as an offering, amounted to twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the standard of the sanctuary shekel. 25The amount of the silver received from the community was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the standard of the sanctuary shekel;

**38, 8:** The reflecting surface of ancient mirrors was usually of polished bronze. The women who served: cf 1 Sm 2, 22.

m Ex 30, 23ff. 34ff. n 1–7: Ex 27, 1–8; 2 Chr 1, 5. o Ex 30, 18–21. p 9–20: Ex 27, 9–19. q 22f: Ex 31, 2. 6; 35, 30. 34; 36, 1.

[26]one bekah apiece, that is, a half-shekel apiece,
according to the standard of the sanctuary shek-
el, was received from every man of twenty years
or more who entered the registered group; the
number of these was six hundred and three
thousand five hundred and fifty men.[r] [27]One
hundred talents of silver were used for casting
the pedestals of the sanctuary and the pedestals
of the veil, one talent for each pedestal, or one
hundred talents for the one hundred pedestals.
[28]The remaining one thousand seven hundred
and seventy-five shekels were used for making
the hooks on the columns, for plating the
capitals, and for banding them with silver. [29]The
bronze, given as an offering, amounted to sev-
enty talents and two thousand four hundred
shekels. [30]With this were made the pedestals at
the entrance of the meeting tent, the bronze
altar with its bronze gratings and all the appurte-
nances of the altar, [31]the pedestals around the
court, the pedestals at the entrance of the court,
and all the tent pegs for the Dwelling and for the
court around it.

## CHAPTER 39

**The Vestments** [1]With violet, purple and scar-
let yarn were woven the service cloths for use in
the sanctuary, as well as the sacred vestments[s]
for Aaron, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[2] [t]The ephod was woven of gold thread and of
violet, purple and scarlet yarn and of fine linen
twined. [3]Gold was first hammered into gold leaf
and then cut up into threads, which were woven
with the violet, purple and scarlet yarn into an
embroidered pattern on the fine linen. [4]Shoulder
straps were made for it and joined to its two
upper ends. [5]The embroidered belt on the ephod
extended out from it, and like it, was made of
gold thread, of violet, purple and scarlet yarn,
and of fine linen twined, as the LORD had
commanded Moses. [6]The onyx stones were
prepared and mounted in gold filigree work;
they were engraved like seal engravings with the
names of the sons of Israel. [7]These stones were
set on the shoulder straps of the ephod as
memorial stones of the sons of Israel, just as the
LORD had commanded Moses.

[8] [u]The breastpiece was embroidered like the
ephod, with gold thread and violet, purple and
scarlet yarn on cloth of fine linen twined. [9]It was
square and folded double, a span high and a span
wide in its folded form. [10]Four rows of precious
stones were mounted on it: in the first row a
carnelian, a topaz and an emerald; [11]in the
second row, a garnet, a sapphire and a beryl;
[12]in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an
amethyst; [13]in the fourth row a chrysolite, an
onyx and a jasper. They were mounted in gold
filigree work. [14]These stones were twelve, to
match the names of the sons of Israel, and each
stone was engraved like a seal with the name of
one of the twelve tribes.

[15] [v]Chains of pure gold, twisted like cords,
were made for the breastpiece, [16]together with
two gold filigree rosettes and two gold rings. The
two rings were fastened to the two upper ends of
the breastpiece. [17]The two gold chains were
then fastened to the two rings at the ends of the
breastpiece. [18]The other two ends of the two
chains were fastened in front to the two filigree
rosettes, which were attached to the shoulder
straps of the ephod. [19]Two other gold rings were
made and put on the two lower ends of the
breastpiece, on the edge facing the ephod. [20]Two
more gold rings were made and fastened to the
bottom of the two shoulder straps next to where
they joined the ephod in front, just above its
embroidered belt. [21]Violet ribbons bound the
rings of the breastpiece to the rings of the ephod,
so that the breastpiece stayed right above the
embroidered belt of the ephod and did not swing
loose from it. All this was just as the LORD had
commanded Moses.

**The Other Vestments** [22]The robe of the
ephod was woven entirely of violet yarn, [23]with
an opening in its center like the opening of a
shirt, with selvage around the opening to keep it
from being torn. [24]At the hem of the robe
pomegranates were made of violet, purple and
scarlet yarn and of fine linen twined; [25]bells of

Ch 25–40
See RG
83–84

r Nm 1, 46. s Ex 31, 10. t 2–10: Ex 28, 6–12. u 8–14: Ex 28, 15–21. v 15–21: Ex 28, 31–35.

pure gold were also made and put between the
pomegranates all around the hem of the robe:
[26]first a bell, then a pomegranate, and thus
alternating all around the hem of the robe which
was to be worn in performing the ministry—all
this, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Ch 25–40
See RG
83–84

[27]For Aaron and his sons there were also
woven tunics of fine linen;[w] [28]the miter of fine
linen; the ornate turbans of fine linen; drawers
of linen [of fine linen twined]; [29]and sashes of
variegated work made of fine linen twined and
of violet, purple and scarlet yarn, as the LORD
had commanded Moses. [30]The plate of the
sacred diadem was made of pure gold[x] and
inscribed, as on a seal engraving: "Sacred to the
LORD." [31]It was tied over the miter with a violet
ribbon, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**Presentation of the Work to Moses** [32]Thus
the entire work of the Dwelling of the meeting
tent was completed. The Israelites did the work
just as the LORD had commanded Moses. [33]They
then brought to Moses the Dwelling, the tent
with all its appurtenances, the clasps, the boards,
the bars, the columns, the pedestals, [34]the
covering of rams' skins dyed red, the covering of
tahash skins, the curtain veil; [35]the ark of the
commandments with its poles, the propitiatory,
[36]the table with all its appurtenances and the
showbread, [37]the pure gold lampstand with its
lamps set up on it and with all its appurtenances,
the oil for the light, [38]the golden altar, the
anointing oil, the fragrant incense; the curtain
for the entrance of the tent, [39]the altar of bronze
with its bronze grating, its poles and all its
appurtenances, the laver with its base, [40]the
hangings of the court with their columns and
pedestals, the curtain for the entrance of the
court with its ropes and tent pegs, all the
equipment for the service of the Dwelling of the
meeting tent; [41]the service cloths for use in the
sanctuary, the sacred vestments for Aaron the
priest, and the vestments to be worn by his sons
in their ministry. [42]The Israelites had carried out
all the work just as the LORD had commanded
Moses. [43]So when Moses saw that all the work
was done just as the LORD had commanded, he
blessed them.

## CHAPTER 40

**Erection of the Dwelling** [1]Then the LORD said
to Moses, [2][y]"On the first day of the first month*
you shall erect the Dwelling of the meeting
tent.[z] [3]Put the ark of the commandments in it,
and screen off the ark with the veil.[a] [4]Bring in
the table and set it. Then bring in the lampstand
and set up the lamps on it. [5]Put the golden altar
of incense in front of the ark of the commandments, and hang the curtain at the entrance of
the Dwelling. [6]Put the altar of holocausts in
front of the entrance of the Dwelling of the
meeting tent. [7]Place the laver between the
meeting tent and the altar, and put water in it.
[8]Set up the court round about, and put the
curtain at the entrance of the court.

[9][b]"Take the anointing oil and anoint the
Dwelling and everything in it, consecrating it
and all its furnishings, so that it will be sacred.
[10]Anoint the altar of holocausts and all its
appurtenances, consecrating it, so that it will be
most sacred. [11]Likewise, anoint the laver with its
base, and thus consecrate it.

[12][c]"Then bring Aaron and his sons to the
entrance of the meeting tent, and there wash
them with water. [13]Clothe Aaron with the
sacred vestments and anoint him, thus consecrating him as my priest. [14]Bring forward his sons
also, and clothe them with the tunics. [15]As you
have anointed their father, anoint them also as
my priests. Thus, by being anointed, they shall
receive a perpetual priesthood throughout all
future generations."

[16]Moses did exactly as the LORD had commanded him. [17]On the first day of the first
month of the second year the Dwelling was
erected. [18]It was Moses who erected the Dwelling. He placed its pedestals, set up its boards, put
in its bars, and set up its columns. [19]He spread
the tent over the Dwelling and put the covering

40, 2: On the first day of the first month: almost a year after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Cf v 17.

w 27ff: Ex 28, 39–42. x 30f: Ex 28, 36f. y 2–8: Ex 40, 16–33. z Ex 26, 30. a 3ff: Ex 26, 33ff. b 9ff: Ex 30, 26–29. c 12–15: Ex 28, 41; 29, 4–9; Lv 8, 1–13.

on top of the tent, as the LORD had commanded
him. 20 [d]He took the commandments and put
them in the ark; he placed poles alongside the
ark and set the propitiatory upon it. 21He
brought the ark into the Dwelling and hung the
curtain veil, thus screening off the ark of the
commandments, as the LORD had commanded
him. 22He put the table in the meeting tent, on
the north side of the Dwelling, outside the veil,
23and arranged the bread on it before the LORD,
as the LORD had commanded him. [e] 24He placed
the lampstand in the meeting tent, opposite the
table, on the south side of the Dwelling, 25and
he set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD
had commanded him. 26He placed the golden
altar in the meeting tent, in front of the veil,
27and on it he burned fragrant incense, as the
LORD had commanded him. 28He hung the
curtain at the entrance of the Dwelling. 29He put
the altar of holocausts in front of the entrance of
the Dwelling of the meeting tent, and offered
holocausts and cereal offerings on it, as the LORD
had commanded him. 30[f]He placed the laver
between the meeting tent and the altar, and put
water in it for washing. 31Moses and Aaron and
his sons used to wash their hands and feet there,
32for they washed themselves whenever they
went into the meeting tent or approached the
altar, as the LORD commanded Moses. 33Finally,
he set up the court around the Dwelling and the
altar and hung the curtain at the entrance of the
court. Thus Moses finished all the work.

**God's Presence in the Dwelling** 34 [g]Then the
cloud covered the meeting tent, and the glory of
the LORD filled the Dwelling. 35Moses could not
enter the meeting tent, because the cloud settled
down upon it and the glory of the LORD filled the
Dwelling. 36Whenever the cloud rose from the
Dwelling, the Israelites would set out on their
journey. 37But if the cloud did not lift, they
would not go forward; only when it lifted did
they go forward. 38In the daytime the cloud of
the LORD was seen over the Dwelling; whereas
at night, fire was seen in the cloud by the whole
house of Israel in all the stages of their journey.

d 20ff: Ex 25, 16, 21; 26, 33ff. e Ex 25, 30. f 30ff: Ex 30, 18ff. g 34–38; Nm 9, 15–22.

# THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Leviticus
See RG
84–94

The name "Leviticus" was bestowed on the third book of the Pentateuch by the ancient Greek translators because a good part of this book consists of sacrificial and other ritual laws prescribed for the priests of the tribe of Levi.

Continuing the legislation given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, Leviticus is almost entirely legislative in character; the rare narrative portions are subordinate to the main legislative theme. Generally speaking, the laws contained in this book serve to teach the Israelites that they should always keep themselves in a state of legal purity, or external sanctity, as a sign of their intimate union with the Lord. Accordingly, the central idea of Leviticus is contained in its oft-repeated injunction: "You shall be holy, because I, the LORD, am holy."

The main divisions of Leviticus are:

I. Ritual of Sacrifices (Lv 1—7).
II. Ceremony of Ordination (Lv 8—10).
III. Laws regarding Legal Purity (Lv 11—16).
IV. Code of Legal Holiness (Lv 17—26).
V. Redemption of Offerings (Lv 27).

# I: Ritual of Sacrifices

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
88

**Holocausts** 1The LORD called Moses, and from
the meeting tent gave him this message:
2 [a]"Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When
any one of you wishes to bring an animal
offering to the LORD, such an offering must be
from the herd or from the flock.*
3"If his holocaust* offering is from the herd, it
must be a male without blemish.[b] To find favor
with the LORD, he shall bring it to the entrance
of the meeting tent 4and there lay his hand on
the head of the holocaust, so that it may be
acceptable to make atonement for him.[c] 5He
shall then slaughter the bull before the LORD, but
Aaron's sons, the priests, shall offer up its blood
by splashing it on the sides of the altar which is
at the entrance of the meeting tent.[d] 6Then he
shall skin the holocaust and cut it up into pieces.
7After Aaron's sons, the priests, have put some
burning embers on the altar and laid some wood
on them, 8they shall lay the pieces of meat,
together with the head and the suet, on top of
the wood and embers on the altar. 9The inner
organs and the shanks, however, the offerer shall
first wash with water. The priest shall then burn
the whole offering on the altar as a holocaust, a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.[e]
10"If his holocaust offering is from the flock,
that is, a sheep or a goat, he must bring a male
without blemish. 11This he shall slaughter before
the LORD at the north side of the altar. Then
Aaron's sons, the priests, shall splash its blood on
the sides of the altar. 12When the offerer has cut
it up into pieces, the priest shall lay these,
together with the head and suet, on top of the
wood and the fire on the altar. 13The inner
organs and the shanks, however, the offerer shall
first wash with water. The priest shall offer them
up and then burn the whole offering on the altar
as a holocaust, a sweet-smelling oblation to the
LORD.
14"If he offers a bird as a holocaust to the
LORD, he shall choose a turtledove or a pigeon as
his offering.[f] 15Having brought it to the altar
where it is to be burned, the priest shall snap its
head loose and squeeze out its blood against the
side of the altar.[g] 16Its crop and feathers shall be
removed and thrown on the ash heap at the east
side of the altar. 17Then, having split the bird
down the middle without separating the halves,
the priest shall burn it on the altar, over the
wood on the fire, as a holocaust, a sweet-
smelling oblation to the LORD.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
88

**Cereal Offerings** 1"When anyone wishes to
bring a cereal offering to the LORD, his offering
must consist of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it
and put frankincense over it.[h] 2When he has
brought it to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of
them shall take a handful of this fine flour and
oil, together with all the frankincense, and this
he shall burn on the altar as a token offering,* a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.[i] 3The rest
of the cereal offering belongs to Aaron and his
sons. It is a most sacred oblation to the LORD.[j]
4"When the cereal offering you present is
baked in an oven, it must be in the form of
unleavened cakes made of fine flour mixed with
oil, or of unleavened wafers spread with oil. 5If
you present a cereal offering that is fried on a
griddle, it must be of fine flour mixed with oil
and unleavened.[k] 6Such a cereal offering must
be broken into pieces, and oil must be poured
over it. 7If you present a cereal offering that is
prepared in a pot, it must be of fine flour, deep-
fried in oil. 8A cereal offering that is made in any
of these ways you shall bring to the LORD,

**1, 2:** From the herd or from the flock: the only animals which could be used as sacrificial victims were either of the bovine class (bulls, cows and calves) or the ovine class (sheep and lambs, goats and kids). Excluded, therefore, were not only all wild animals, but also such "unclean" domestic animals as the camel and the ass. See note on Lv 11, 1ff.

**1, 3:** Holocaust: from the Greek word meaning "wholly burned," this is the technical term for the special type of sacrifice in which an entire animal except its hide was consumed in the fire on the altar. The primary purpose of this complete gift was to render glory and praise to God.

**2, 2:** Token offering: literally, "reminder." Instead of burning the whole cereal offering, they burned only this part of it on the altar; it thus corresponded to the fat of the peace offering. See note on Lv 3, 1.

a Lv 22, 18. 19. b Ex 12, 5. c Lv 3, 2. 8. 13; 4, 15; 8, 14. 22; 16, 21; Ex 29, 10. 15. d Lv 3, 8. e Lv 3, 5. 16; Ex 29, 18. f Lv 5, 7; 12, 8; Lk 2, 24. g Lv 5, 8. h Nm 15, 4. i Lv 6, 15. j Lv 7, 9f; Sir 7, 31; 1 Cor 9, 13. k 1 Chr 23, 29.

offering it to the priest, who shall take it to the altar. [9]Its token offering the priest shall then lift from the cereal offering and burn on the altar as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. [10]The rest of the cereal offering belongs to Aaron and his sons. It is a most sacred oblation to the LORD.

[11]"Every cereal offering that you present to the LORD shall be unleavened, for you shall not burn any leaven or honey as an oblation to the LORD.[l] [12]Such you may indeed present to the LORD in the offering of first fruits, but they are not to be placed on the altar for a pleasing odor. [13]However, every cereal offering that you present to the LORD shall be seasoned with salt.[m] Do not let the salt of the covenant of your God* be lacking from your cereal offering. On every offering you shall offer salt.

[14]"If you present a cereal offering of first fruits to the LORD, you shall offer it in the form of fresh grits of new ears of grain, roasted by fire. [15]On this cereal offering you shall put oil and frankincense. [16]For its token offering the priest shall then burn some of the grits and oil, together with all the frankincense, as an oblation to the LORD.

## CHAPTER 3

**Peace Offerings** [1]"If someone in presenting a peace offering* makes his offering from the herd, he may offer before the LORD either a male or a female animal, but it must be without blemish.[n] [2]He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering,[o] and then slaughter it at the entrance of the meeting tent; but Aaron's sons, the priests, shall splash its blood on the sides of the altar. [3]From the peace offering he shall offer as an oblation to the LORD the fatty membrane over the inner organs, and all the fat that adheres to them,[p] [4]as well as the two kidneys, with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver,* which he shall sever above the kidneys. [5]All this Aaron's sons shall then burn on the altar with the holocaust,[q] on the wood over the fire, as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.

[6]"If the peace offering he presents to the LORD is from the flock, he may offer either a male or a female animal, but it must be without blemish. [7]If he presents a lamb as his offering, he shall bring it before the LORD, [8]and after laying his hand on the head of his offering, he shall slaughter it before the meeting tent; but Aaron's sons shall splash its blood on the sides of the altar. [9]As an oblation to the LORD he shall present the fat of the peace offering: the whole fatty tail,* which he must sever close to the spine, the fatty membrane over the inner organs, and all the fat that adheres to them,[r] [10]as well as the two kidneys, with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he must sever above the kidneys. [11]All this the priest shall burn on the altar as the food of the LORD's oblation.

[12]"If he presents a goat, he shall bring it before the LORD, [13]and after laying his hand on its head, he shall slaughter it before the meeting tent; but Aaron's sons shall splash its blood on the sides of the altar. [14]From it he shall offer as an oblation to the LORD the fatty membrane over the inner organs, and all the fat that adheres to them, [15]as well as the two kidneys, with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he must sever above the kidneys. [16]All this the priest shall burn on the altar as the food of the sweet-smelling oblation. All the fat belongs to the LORD. [17]This shall be a perpetual ordinance for your descendants wherever they may dwell. You shall not partake of any fat* or any blood."[s]

Ch 3
See RG
88

**2, 13**: The salt of the covenant of your God: the partaking in common of salt by those seated together at table was an ancient symbol of friendship and alliance. Cf Mk 9, 49 and Col 4, 6; and see note on Nm 18, 19.

**3, 1**: Peace offering: thus the ancient versions have rendered the Hebrew word, which perhaps means more exactly, "fulfillment sacrifice," offered up in fulfillment of a vow. Cf Prv 7, 14. Its characteristic feature was the sacred banquet at which the offerer and his guests partook of the meat of the sacrificed animal. Cf Lv 7, 11–21.

**3, 4**: The lobe of the liver: some render, "the fatty covering of the liver."

**3, 9**: The whole fatty tail: see note on Ex 29, 22.

**3, 17**: Any fat: only the fat mentioned in vv 9f. 14f is meant; other fat could be eaten by the Israelites.

l Lv 6, 16f; Mt 16, 12; Mk 8, 15; Lk 12, 1; 1 Cor 5, 7; Gal 5, 9. m Ez 43, 24. n Lv 22, 21. o Lv 1, 4. p Ex 29, 13. 22. q Lv 6, 12. r Lv 9, 19. s Lv 17, 10–14; Gn 9, 4; Dt 12, 16. 23; 15, 23.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4–5
See RG
88–89

**Sin Offerings: For Priests** [1]The LORD said to Moses, [2]"Tell the Israelites: When a person inadvertently commits a sin* against some command of the LORD by doing one of the forbidden things,[t] [3]if it is the anointed priest* who thus sins and thereby makes the people also become guilty, he shall present to the LORD a young, unblemished bull as a sin offering for the sin he committed.[u] [4]Bringing the bullock to the entrance of the meeting tent, before the LORD, he shall lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the LORD.[v] [5]The anointed priest shall then take some of the bullock's blood and bring it into the meeting tent, [6]where, dipping his finger in the blood, he shall sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, toward the veil of the sanctuary.[w] [7]The priest shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar[x] of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the meeting tent. The rest of the bullock's blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of holocausts which is at the entrance of the meeting tent. [8]From the sin-offering bullock he shall remove all the fat: the fatty membrane over the inner organs, and all the fat that adheres to them, [9]as well as the two kidneys, with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he must sever above the kidneys. [10]This is the same as is removed from the ox of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar of holocausts. [11]The hide of the bullock and all its flesh, with its head, legs, inner organs and offal,[y] [12]in short, the whole bullock, shall be brought outside the camp to a clean place where the ashes are deposited and there be burned up in a wood fire. At the place of the ash heap, there it must be burned.

**For the Community** [13]"If the whole community of Israel inadvertently and without even being aware of it does something that the LORD has forbidden and thus makes itself guilty,[z] [14]should it later on become known that the sin was committed, the community shall present a young bull as a sin offering. They shall bring it before the meeting tent, [15]and here, before the LORD, the elders of the community shall lay their hands on the bullock's head.[a] When the bullock has been slaughtered before the LORD, [16]the anointed priest shall bring some of its blood into the meeting tent, [17]and dipping his finger in the blood, he shall sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, toward the veil. [18]He shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the meeting tent. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of holocausts which is at the entrance of the meeting tent. [19]All of its fat he shall take from it and burn on the altar, [20]doing with this bullock just as he did with the other sin-offering bullock. Thus the priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. [21]This bullock must also be brought outside the camp and burned, just as has been prescribed for the other one. This is the sin offering for the community.

**For the Princes** [22]"Should a prince commit a sin inadvertently by doing one of the things which are forbidden by some commandment of the LORD, his God, and thus become guilty, [23]if later on he learns of the sin he committed, he shall bring as his offering an unblemished male goat. [24]Having laid his hands on its head, he shall slaughter the goat as a sin offering before the LORD, in the place where the holocausts are slaughtered. [25]The priest shall then take some of the blood of the sin offering on his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of holocausts. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of this altar. [26]All of the fat he shall burn on the altar like the fat of the peace offering.[b] Thus the priest shall make atonement for the prince's sin, and it will be forgiven.

**4, 2:** A sin: not necessarily a moral fault; included are all the cases of ritual uncleanness which people necessarily incurred in certain unavoidable circumstances.

**4, 3:** The anointed priest: his violation of the ceremonial law brought a sort of collective guilt on all the people whom he represented before God. Sin offering: more exactly, "sacrifice for remitting sin"; sin is here understood as explained above.

t Lv 5, 15. 17; Nm 15, 22–29. u Heb 7, 27. v Lv 1, 3f. w Lv 8, 11. x Lv 8, 15; 9, 9; 16, 18; Ex 29, 12. y Lv 8, 17; 9, 11; Ex 29, 14; Nm 19, 5. z Lv 5, 2–4; Nm 15, 24–26. a Lv 1, 4. b Lv 3, 3–5.

**For Private Persons** 27"If a private person
commits a sin inadvertently[c] by doing one of the
things which are forbidden by the command-
ments of the LORD, and thus becomes guilty,
28should he later on learn of the sin he commit-
ted, he shall bring an unblemished she-goat as
the offering for his sin. 29Having laid his hand on
the head of the sin offering,[d] he shall slaughter it
at the place of the holocausts. 30The priest shall
then take some of its blood on his finger and put
it on the horns of the altar of holocausts. The rest
of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the
altar. 31All the fat shall be removed, just as the
fat is removed from the peace offering, and the
priest shall burn it on the altar for an odor
pleasing to the LORD.[e] Thus the priest shall
make atonement for him, and he will be for-
given.

32"If, however, for his sin offering he presents
a lamb, he shall bring an unblemished female.
33Having laid his hand on its head, he shall
slaughter this sin offering in the place where the
holocausts are slaughtered. 34The priest shall
then take some of the blood of the sin offering on
his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of
holocausts. The rest of the blood he shall pour
out at the base of the altar. 35All the fat shall be
removed, just as the fat is removed from the
peace-offering lamb,[f] and the priest shall burn it
on the altar with the other oblations of the LORD.
Thus the priest shall make atonement for the
man's sin, and it will be forgiven.

## CHAPTER 5

**For Special Cases** 1"If any person refuses to
give the information which, as a witness of
something he has seen or learned, he has been
adjured to give, and thus commits a sin and has
guilt to bear;[g] 2or if someone, without being
aware of it, touches any unclean thing, as the
carcass of an unclean wild animal,[h] or that of an
unclean domestic animal, or that of an unclean
swarming creature, and thus becomes unclean
and guilty; 3or if someone, without being aware
of it, touches some human uncleanness, what-
ever kind of uncleanness this may be, and then
recognizes his guilt; 4or if someone, without
being aware of it, rashly utters an oath[i] to do
good or evil, such as men are accustomed to
utter rashly, and then recognizes that he is guilty
of such an oath; 5then whoever is guilty in any
of these cases shall confess the sin he has
incurred,[j] 6and as his sin offering for the sin he
has committed he shall bring to the LORD a
female animal from the flock, a ewe lamb or a
she-goat. The priest shall then make atonement
for his sin.

7"If, however, he cannot afford an animal of
the flock, he shall bring to the LORD as the sin
offering for his sin two turtledoves or two
pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a
holocaust.[k] 8He shall bring them to the priest,
who shall offer the one for the sin offering first.
Snapping its head loose at the neck, yet without
breaking it off completely,[l] 9he shall sprinkle
some of the blood of the sin offering against the
side of the altar.[m] The rest of the blood shall be
squeezed out against the base of the altar. Such
is the offering for sin. 10The other bird shall be
offered as a holocaust in the usual way. Thus the
priest shall make atonement for the sin the man
committed, and it will be forgiven.

11"If he is unable to afford even two turtle-
doves or two pigeons, he shall present as a sin
offering for his sin one tenth of an ephah of fine
flour. He shall not put oil or frankincense on it,
because it is a sin offering. 12When he has
brought it to the priest, the latter shall take a
handful of this flour as a token offering, and this
he shall burn as a sin offering on the altar with
the other oblations of the LORD. 13Thus the
priest shall make atonement for the sin that the
man committed in any of the above cases, and it
will be forgiven.[n] The rest of the flour, like the
cereal offerings, shall belong to the priest."

Ch 5
See RG
89

**Guilt Offerings** 14The LORD said to Moses,
15"If someone commits a sin by inadvertently

c Nm 15, 27. d Lv 1, 4. e Lv 1, 9; 3, 3–5. f Lv 3, 3. 9. g Prv 29, 24. h Lv 11, 24. 31. 39; 12; 13; 15. i Jgs 11, 30f; 1 Sm 14, 24; Mk 6, 23; Acts 23, 12. j Lv 26, 40; Nm 5, 7. k Lv 12, 8; Lk 2, 24. l Lv 1, 15. 17. m Lv 1, 15. n Lv 4, 26. 35.

cheating* in the LORD's sacred dues, he shall bring to the LORD as his guilt offering an unblemished ram from the flock, valued at two silver shekels according to the standard of the sanctuary shekel. [16]He shall also restore what he has sinfully withheld from the sanctuary, adding to it a fifth of its value.[o] This is to be given to the priest, who shall then make atonement for him with the guilt-offering ram, and he will be forgiven.

Ch 6–7 See RG 89

[17][p]"If someone, without being aware of it,* commits such a sin by doing one of the things which are forbidden by some commandment of the LORD, that he incurs guilt for which he must answer, [18]he shall bring as a guilt offering to the priest an unblemished ram of the flock of the established value. The priest shall then make atonement for the fault which was unwittingly committed, and it will be forgiven. [19]Such is the offering for guilt; the penalty of the guilt must be paid to the LORD."

[20]The LORD said to Moses, [21]"If someone commits a sin of dishonesty against the LORD by denying his neighbor a deposit or a pledge for a stolen article, or by otherwise retaining his neighbor's goods unjustly, [22]or if, having found a lost article, he denies the fact and swears falsely about it with any of the sinful oaths that men make in such cases, [23]he shall therefore, since he has incurred guilt by his sin, restore the thing that was stolen or unjustly retained by him or the deposit left with him or the lost article he found [24]or whatever else he swore falsely about; on the day of his guilt offering he shall make full restitution of the thing itself, and in addition, give the owner one fifth of its value. [25]As his guilt offering he shall bring to the LORD an unblemished ram of the flock of the established value. When he has presented this as his guilt offering to the priest, [26]the latter shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven whatever guilt he may have incurred."

## CHAPTER 6

**The Daily Holocaust** [1]The LORD said to Moses, [2]"Give Aaron and his sons the following command: This is the ritual* for holocausts. The holocaust is to remain on the hearth of the altar all night until the next morning, and the fire is to be kept burning on the altar. [3]The priest, clothed in his linen robe and wearing linen drawers on his body, shall take away the ashes to which the fire has reduced the holocaust on the altar, and lay them at the side of the altar. [4]Then, having taken off these garments and put on other garments, he shall carry the ashes to a clean place outside the camp. [5]The fire on the altar is to be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest shall put firewood on it. On this he shall lay out the holocaust and burn the fat of the peace offerings. [6]The fire is to be kept burning continuously on the altar; it must not go out.

**Daily Cereal Offering** [7]"This is the ritual of the cereal offering. One of Aaron's sons shall first present it before the LORD, in front of the altar. [8]Then he shall take from it a handful of its fine flour and oil, together with all the frankincense that is on it, and this he shall burn on the altar as its token offering, a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. [9]The rest of it Aaron and his sons may eat; but it must be eaten in the form of unleavened cakes and in a sacred place: in the court of the meeting tent they shall eat it. [10]It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it to them as their portion from the oblations of the LORD; it is most sacred, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. [11]All the male descendants of Aaron may partake of it as their rightful share in the oblations of the LORD perpetually throughout

**5, 15:** Cheating: not offering the full amount in tithes, first fruits, etc. Guilt offering: its characteristic was a certain additional penalty imposed as reparation for the injustice involved in the fault which was atoned for by this sacrifice. However, in certain passages, e.g., Lv 14, 12f; Nm 6, 12; Ezr 10, 19, the term "guilt offering" is used for more important cases of "sin offerings" where no apparent injustice is involved.

**5, 17:** Without being aware of it: the case naturally presupposes that later on the offender learns of his mistake. Cf Lv 4, 13f.

**6, 2:** Ritual: literally, "law, instruction." Here, and in the following paragraphs, are given additional prescriptions for various kinds of sacrifices which were, in part, treated of in the preceding chapters.

o Lv 22, 14. p Lv 4, 2.

your generations. Whatever touches the oblations becomes sacred."

12*The LORD said to Moses, 13"This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall present to the LORD [on the day he is anointed]: one tenth of an ephah of fine flour for the established cereal offering, half in the morning and half in the evening. 14It shall be well kneaded and fried in oil on a griddle when you bring it in. Having broken the offering into pieces, you shall present it as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 15Aaron's descendant who succeeds him as the anointed priest shall do likewise. This is a perpetual ordinance: for the Lord the whole offering shall be burned. 16Every cereal offering of a priest shall be a whole burnt offering; it may not be eaten."

**Sin Offerings** 17The LORD said to Moses, 18"Tell Aaron and his sons: This is the ritual for sin offerings. At the place where holocausts are slaughtered, there also, before the LORD, shall the sin offering be slaughtered.[q] It is most sacred. 19The priest who presents the sin offering may partake of it; but it must be eaten in a sacred place,[r] in the court of the meeting tent. 20Whatever touches its flesh shall become sacred. If any of its blood is spilled on a garment, the stained part must be washed in a sacred place. 21A clay vessel in which it has been cooked shall thereafter be broken;[s] if it is cooked in a bronze vessel, this shall be scoured afterward and rinsed with water. 22All the males of the priestly line may partake of the sin offering, since it is most sacred.[t] 23But no one may partake of any sin offering of which some blood has been brought into the meeting tent[u] to make atonement in the sanctuary; such an offering must be burned up in the fire.

## CHAPTER 7

**Guilt Offerings** 1"This is the ritual for guilt offerings, which are most sacred. 2At the place where the holocausts are slaughtered, there also shall the guilt offering be slaughtered.[v] Its blood shall be splashed on the sides of the altar. 3[w]All of its fat shall be taken from it and offered up: the fatty tail, the fatty membrane over the inner organs, 4as well as the two kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which must be severed above the kidneys. 5All this the priest shall burn on the altar as an oblation to the LORD. This is the guilt offering. 6All the males of the priestly line may partake of it; but it must be eaten in a sacred place, since it is most sacred.[x]

7"Because the sin offering and the guilt offering are alike, both having the same ritual, the guilt offering likewise belongs to the priest who makes atonement with it. 8Similarly, the priest who offers a holocaust for someone may keep for himself the hide of the holocaust that he has offered. 9[y]Also, every cereal offering that is baked in an oven or deep-fried in a pot or fried on a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers it, 10whereas all cereal offerings[z] that are offered up dry or mixed with oil shall belong to all of Aaron's sons without distinction.

**Peace Offerings** 11"This is the ritual for the peace offerings that are presented to the LORD. 12When anyone makes a peace offering in thanksgiving, together with his thanksgiving sacrifice he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and well kneaded. 13His offering shall also include loaves of leavened bread* along with the victim of his peace offering for thanksgiving. 14From each of his offerings he shall present one portion as a contribution to the LORD; this shall belong to the priest who splashes the blood of the peace offering.

15[a]"The flesh of the thanksgiving sacrifice shall be eaten on the day it is offered; none of it

Ch 6–7 See RG 89

6, 12–16: This is another law about the daily or "established" cereal offering. It differs in some respects from the preceding law (vv 7–11) and also from the law in Ex 29, 38–42. Hence, the words on the day he is anointed were probably added by some later scribe in order to avoid the difficulty of harmonizing this law with the other two laws on the same matter.

7, 13: Leavened bread: these loaves were not burned on the altar (cf Lv 2, 11), but were eaten at the "communion" meal which followed the sacrifice. See note on Lv 3, 1.

q Lv 7, 2. r Lv 10, 17. s Lv 11, 33; 15, 12. t Lv 7, 6; Nm 18, 10. u Lv 4, 5; Heb 13, 11. v Lv 6, 18. w 3–5: Lv 3, 4. 9f. 14–16; 4, 8f. x Lv 6, 22. y Lv 2, 3–10; Nm 18, 9; Ez 44, 29. z Lv 2, 14f. a 15–18: Lv 19, 6f.

may be kept till the next day. [16]However, if the sacrifice is a votive or a free-will offering, it should indeed be eaten on the day the sacrifice is offered, but what is left over may be eaten on the next day. [17]Should any flesh from the sacrifice be left over on the third day, it must be burned up in the fire. [18]If, therefore, any of the flesh of the peace offering is eaten on the third day, it shall not win favor for him nor shall it be reckoned to his credit; rather, it shall be considered as refuse, and anyone who eats of it shall have his guilt to bear. [19]Should the flesh touch anything unclean, it may not be eaten, but shall be burned up in the fire.

"All who are clean may partake of this flesh. [20]If, however, someone while in a state of uncleanness eats any of the flesh of a peace offering belonging to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people. [21]Likewise, if someone touches anything unclean, whether the uncleanness be of human or of animal origin or from some loathsome crawling creature, and then eats of a peace offering belonging to the LORD, that person, too, shall be cut off from his people."

**Prohibition against Blood and Fat** [22]The LORD said to Moses, [23]"Tell the Israelites: You shall not eat the fat* of any ox or sheep or goat.[b] [24]Although the fat of an animal that has died a natural death or has been killed by wild beasts may be put to any other use, you may not eat it.[c] [25]If anyone eats the fat of an animal from which an oblation is made to the LORD, such a one shall be cut off from his people. [26]Wherever you dwell, you shall not partake of any blood, be it of bird or of animal. [27]Every person who partakes of any blood shall be cut off from his people."[d]

Ch 8–10 See RG 89–91

**The Portions for Priests** [28]The LORD said to Moses, [29]"Tell the Israelites: He who presents a peace offering to the LORD shall bring a part of it as his special offering to him, [30]carrying in with his own hands the oblations to the LORD. The fat is to be brought in, together with the breast, which is to be waved as a wave offering* before the LORD. [31]The priest shall burn the fat on the altar,[e] but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. [32]Moreover, from your peace offering you shall give to the priest the right leg as a raised offering. [33]The descendant of Aaron who offers up the blood and fat of the peace offering shall have the right leg as his portion, [34]for from the peace offerings of the Israelites I have taken the breast that is waved and the leg that is raised up, and I have given them to Aaron, the priest, and to his sons by a perpetual ordinance as a contribution from the Israelites."[f]

[35]This is the priestly share* from the oblations of the LORD, allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day he called them to be the priests of the LORD; [36]on the day he anointed them the LORD ordered the Israelites to give them this share by a perpetual ordinance throughout their generations.

[37]This is the ritual for holocausts, cereal offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, [ordination offerings] and peace offerings, [38]which the LORD enjoined on Moses at Mount Sinai at the time when he commanded the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai to bring their offerings to the LORD.

## II: Ceremony of Ordination

### CHAPTER 8

**Ordination of Aaron and His Sons** [1]The LORD[g] said to Moses,* [2]"Take Aaron and his sons, together with the vestments,* the anointing oil, the bullock for a sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened food. [3]Then assemble the whole community at the entrance of the meeting tent." [4]And Moses did as the LORD had commanded. When the community had assembled at the entrance of the meeting tent, [5]Moses told them what the LORD had ordered to be done. [6]Bringing forward Aaron

**7, 23:** The fat: only the particular portions specified in Lv 3, 9f. 14f are meant. Ox or sheep or goat: such animals as could be sacrificed; the fat of other clean animals could be eaten.

**7, 30–34:** A wave offering . . . a raised offering: these ceremonies are described in Ex 29, 24–28. The Hebrew word for "raised offering" is also rendered, in certain contexts, as "contribution."

**7, 35:** The priestly share: literally, "the anointed part."

**8, 1—9, 21:** Though presented in the form of a narrative, this description of Aaron's ordination was intended to serve as a guide for all future ordinations.

**8, 2:** The vestments, etc.: already described in Ex 28–29.

b Lv 3, 17. c Lv 22, 8. d Lv 17, 10. e Lv 3, 11, 16. f Ex 29, 27f. g 1–36: cf Ex 29.

and his sons, he first washed them with water.[h]
[7]Then he put the tunic on Aaron,[i] girded him
with the sash, clothed him with the robe, placed
the ephod on him, and girded him with the
embroidered belt of the ephod, fastening it
around him. [8][j]He then set the breastpiece on
him, with the Urim and Thummim* in it, [9][k]and
put the miter on his head, attaching the gold
plate, the sacred diadem, over the front of the
miter, at his forehead, as the LORD had com-
manded him to do.

[10]Taking the anointing oil, Moses anointed
and consecrated the Dwelling, with all that was
in it.[l] [11]Then he sprinkled some of this oil seven
times on the altar, and anointed the altar, with
all its appurtenances, and the laver, with its base,
thus consecrating them. [12]He also poured some
of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, thus
consecrating him.[m] [13]Moses likewise brought
forward Aaron's sons, clothed them with tunics,
girded them with sashes, and put turbans on
them, as the LORD had commanded him to do.

**Ordination Sacrifices** [14]When he had brought
forward the bullock for a sin offering, Aaron and
his sons laid their hands on its head. [15]Then
Moses slaughtered it, and taking some of its
blood, with his finger he put it on the horns
around the altar, thus purifying the altar. He also
made atonement for the altar by pouring out the
blood at its base when he consecrated it.[n]
[16]Taking all the fat that was over the inner
organs, as well as the lobe of the liver and the
two kidneys with their fat,[o] Moses burned them
on the altar. [17]The bullock, however, with its
hide and flesh and offal he burned in the fire
outside the camp, as the LORD had commanded
him to do.

[18]He next brought forward the holocaust ram,
and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its
head. [19]When he had slaughtered it, Moses
splashed its blood on all sides of the altar. [20]After
cutting up the ram into pieces, he burned the
head, the cut-up pieces and the suet; [21]then,
having washed the inner organs and the shanks
with water, he also burned these remaining parts
of the ram on the altar as a holocaust, a sweet-
smelling oblation to the LORD, as the LORD had
commanded him to do.

[22]Then he brought forward the second ram,
the ordination ram, and Aaron and his sons laid
their hands on its head. [23]When he had slaugh-
tered it, Moses took some of its blood and put it
on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of
his right hand, and on the big toe of his right
foot.[p] [24]Moses had the sons of Aaron also come
forward, and he put some of the blood on the
tips of their right ears, on the thumbs of their
right hands, and on the big toes of their right
feet. The rest of the blood he splashed on the
sides of the altar. [25]He then took the fat: the
fatty tail and all the fat over the inner organs, the
lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with their
fat, and likewise the right leg; [26]from the basket
of unleavened food that was set before the LORD
he took one unleavened cake, one loaf of bread
made with oil, and one wafer; these he placed
on top of the portions of fat and the right leg.
[27]He then put all these things into the hands of
Aaron and his sons, whom he had wave them as
a wave offering before the LORD. [28]When he had
received them back, Moses burned them with
the holocaust on the altar as the ordination
offering, a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.
[29]He then took the breast and waved it as a
wave offering before the LORD; this was Moses'
own portion of the ordination ram. All this was
in keeping with the LORD's command to Moses.
[30]Taking some of the anointing oil and some of
the blood that was on the altar, Moses sprinkled
with it Aaron and his vestments, as well as his
sons and their vestments, thus consecrating both
Aaron and his vestments and his sons and their
vestments.

[31]Finally, Moses said to Aaron and his sons,
"Boil the flesh at the entrance of the meeting
tent, and there eat it with the bread that is in the
basket of the ordination offering, in keeping with
the command I have received: 'Aaron and his

**8, 8:** The Urim and Thummim: see note on Ex 28, 30.

h 6f: Ex 40, 12f. i 7ff: Sir 45, 8–13. j Ex 28, 30. k Ex 28, 36. l Ex 30, 26. m Sir 45, 15. n Lv 4, 7; Heb 9, 22. o 16f: Lv 3, 4; 4, 8–11. p Lv 14, 14.

sons shall eat of it.' 32What is left over of the
flesh and the bread you shall burn up in the fire.
33Moreover, you are not to depart from the
entrance of the meeting tent for seven days, until
the days of your ordination are completed; for
your ordination is to last for seven days. 34*The
LORD has commanded that what has been done
today be done to make atonement for you.
35Hence you must remain at the entrance of the
meeting tent day and night for seven days,
carrying out the prescriptions of the LORD;
otherwise you shall die; for this is the command
I have received." 36So Aaron and his sons did all
that the LORD had commanded through Moses.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 8–10
See RG
89–91

**Octave of the Ordination** 1On the eighth day
Moses summoned Aaron and his sons, together
with the elders of Israel, 2and said to Aaron,
"Take a calf for a sin offering and a ram for a
holocaust, both without blemish, and offer them
before the LORD. 3Tell the elders of Israel, too:
Take a he-goat for a sin offering, a calf and a
lamb, both unblemished yearlings, for a holo-
caust, 4and an ox and a ram for a peace offering,
to sacrifice them before the LORD, along with a
cereal offering mixed with oil; for today the
LORD will reveal himself to you." 5So they
brought what Moses had ordered. When the
whole community had come forward and stood
before the LORD, 6Moses said, "This is what the
LORD orders you to do, that the glory of the
LORD may be revealed to you. 7Come up to the
altar," Moses then told Aaron, "and offer your
sin offering and your holocaust in atonement for
yourself and for your family; then present the
offering of the people in atonement for them, as
the LORD has commanded."

8Going up to the altar, Aaron first slaughtered
the calf that was his own sin offering. 9When his
sons presented the blood to him, he dipped his
finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the
altar. The rest of the blood he poured out at the
base of the altar. 10He then burned on the altar
the fat, the kidneys and the lobe of the liver that
were taken from the sin offering, as the LORD
had commanded Moses; 11but the flesh and the
hide he burned up in the fire outside the camp.
12Then Aaron slaughtered his holocaust. When
his sons brought him the blood, he splashed it on
all sides of the altar. 13They then brought him
the pieces and the head of the holocaust, and he
burned them on the altar. 14Having washed the
inner organs and the shanks, he burned these
also with the holocaust on the altar.

15Thereupon he had the people's offering
brought up. Taking the goat that was for the
people's sin offering, he slaughtered it and
offered it up for sin as before. 16Then he brought
forward the holocaust, other than the morning
holocaust, and offered it in the usual manner.
17He then presented the cereal offering; taking a
handful of it, he burned it on the altar. 18Finally
he slaughtered the ox and the ram, the peace
offering of the people. When his sons brought
him the blood, Aaron splashed it on all sides of
the altar. 19The portions of fat from the ox and
from the ram, the fatty tail, the fatty membrane
over the inner organs, the two kidneys, with the
fat that is on them, and the lobe of the liver,[q]
20he placed on top of the breasts and burned
them on the altar, 21[r]having first waved the
breasts and the right legs as a wave offering
before the LORD, in keeping with the LORD's
command to Moses.

**Revelation of the Lord's Glory** 22Aaron then
raised his hands over the people and blessed
them. When he came down from offering the sin
offering and holocaust and peace offering, 23Mo-
ses and Aaron went into the meeting tent.[s] On
coming out they again blessed the people. Then
the glory of the LORD was revealed to all the
people. 24Fire came forth from the LORD's pres-
ence[t] and consumed the holocaust and the
remnants of the fat on the altar. Seeing this, all
the people cried out and fell prostrate.

**8, 34:** The sense is not quite clear. Either the verse gives merely the reason why God ordered this ceremony, or it contains God's command that the same ceremony be used in all future ordinations, or it decrees a repetition of the entire ceremony on each of the seven days. At least a sin offering for atonement was made on each of these days. Cf Ex 29, 29–36.

q 19f: Lv 3, 3ff. r Lv 7, 31f. s Nm 6, 23–26. t 1 Kgs 18, 38; 2 Chr 7, 1.

## CHAPTER 10

**Nadab and Abihu** [1]During this time Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu* took their censers and, strewing incense on the fire they had put in them,[u] they offered up before the LORD profane fire, such as he had not authorized. [2]Fire* therefore came forth from the LORD's presence and consumed them,[v] so that they died in his presence. [3]Moses then said to Aaron, "This is as the LORD said:

> Through those who approach me I will manifest my sacredness;*
> In the sight of all the people I will reveal my glory."[w]

But Aaron said nothing. [4]Then Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, with the order, "Come, remove your kinsmen from the sanctuary and carry them to a place outside the camp." [5]So they went in and took them, in their tunics,* outside the camp, as Moses had commanded.

**Conduct of the Priests** [6]Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not bare your heads* or tear your garments,[x] lest you bring not only death on yourselves but God's wrath also on the whole community. Your kinsmen, the rest of the house of Israel, shall mourn for those whom the LORD's fire has smitten; [7]but do not you go beyond the entry of the meeting tent, else you shall die; for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." So they did as Moses told them.

[8]The LORD said to Aaron, [9]"When you are to go to the meeting tent, you and your sons are forbidden under pain of death, by a perpetual ordinance throughout your generations, to drink any wine or strong drink.[y] [10]You must be able to distinguish between what is sacred and what is profane, between what is clean and what is unclean;[z] [11]you must teach the Israelites all the laws that the LORD has given them through Moses."[a]

Ch 8–10
See RG
89–91

**The Eating of the Priestly Portions** [12]Moses said to Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the cereal offering left over from the oblations of the LORD, and eat it beside the altar in the form of unleavened cakes.[b] Since it is most sacred, [13]you must eat it in a sacred place. This is your due from the oblations of the LORD, and that of your sons; such is the command I have received. [14][c]With your sons and daughters you shall also eat the breast of the wave offering and the leg of the raised offering, in a clean place; for these have been assigned to you and your children as your due from the peace offerings of the Israelites. [15]The leg of the raised offering and the breast of the wave offering shall first be brought in with the oblations, the fatty portions, that are to be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. Then they shall belong to you and your children by a perpetual ordinance, as the LORD has commanded."

[16]*When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering, he discovered that it had all been burned. So he was angry with the surviving sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, and said, [17][d]"Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred place, since it is most sacred? It has been given to you that you might bear the guilt of the community and make atonement for them before the LORD. [18]If its blood was not brought into the inmost part of the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten the offering in the sanctu-

10, 1: Nadab and Abihu: the older sons of Aaron. Cf Ex 6, 23f.

10, 2: Fire: perhaps after the manner of lightning.

10, 3: I will manifest my sacredness: the presence of God is so sacred that it strikes dead those who approach him without the proper holiness. Cf Nm 20, 13; Ez 28, 22.

10, 5: In their tunics: they were buried just as they were, with no shroud or funeral solemnities.

10, 6: Bare your heads: go without the customary head covering, as a sign of mourning. Some interpreters, however, understand it as the cutting off of one's hair, which ordinarily all the Israelites, men as well as women, let grow long. Cf Is 15, 2; Jer 7, 29. Still others understand the verb to mean "to let one's hair hang loose and wild." Cf Lv 13, 45; 21, 10, where the same phrase is used.

10, 16–19: Eleazar and Ithamar burned the entire goat of the sin offering (Lv 9, 15) instead of eating it in a sacred place (Lv 6, 19) to bear the guilt of the community. Aaron defends this action of his sons against Moses' displeasure by implying that they did not have sufficient sanctity to eat the flesh of the victim and thus perform the expiation of the people. They themselves still labored under the blow of the divine anger which struck their brothers Nadab and Abihu.

u Lv 16, 1; Nm 3, 4; 26, 61; 1 Chr 24, 2. v Nm 16, 35. w Lv 21, 17. 21. x Lv 21, 10. y Ez 44, 21. z Lv 11, 47; 20, 25; Ez 22, 26; 44, 23. a Sir 45, 16. b Lv 6, 16. c 14f: Lv 7, 34. d Lv 6, 18f.

ary, in keeping with the command I had received." [19]Aaron answered Moses, "Even though they presented their sin offering and holocaust before the LORD today, yet this misfortune has befallen me. Had I then eaten of the sin offering today, would it have been pleasing to the LORD?" [20]On hearing this, Moses was satisfied.

## III: Laws Regarding Legal Purity

### CHAPTER 11

Ch 11-15
See RG
91-92

**Clean and Unclean Food** [1]The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,* [2]"Speak to the Israelites and tell them: Of all land animals these are the ones you may eat: [3]any animal that has hoofs you may eat, provided it is cloven-footed and chews the cud. [4]But you shall not eat any of the following that only chew the cud or only have hoofs: the camel, which indeed chews the cud, but does not have hoofs and is therefore unclean for you; [5]the rock badger,* which indeed chews the cud, but does not have hoofs and is therefore unclean for you; [6]the hare, which indeed chews the cud, but does not have hoofs and is therefore unclean for you; and the pig, [7]which does indeed have hoofs and is cloven-footed, but does not chew the cud and is therefore unclean for you. [8]Their flesh you shall not eat, and their dead bodies you shall not touch; they are unclean for you.

[9]"Of the various creatures that live in the water, you may eat the following: whatever in the seas or in river waters has both fins and scales you may eat. [10]But of the various creatures that crawl or swim in the water, whether in the sea or in the rivers, all those that lack either fins or scales are loathsome for you, [11]and you shall treat them as loathsome. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their dead bodies you shall loathe. [12]Every water creature that lacks fins or scales is loathsome for you.

[13]"Of the birds, these you shall loathe and, as loathsome, they shall not be eaten:* the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, [14]the kite, the various species of falcons, [15]the various species of crows, [16]the ostrich, the nightjar, the gull, the various species of hawks, [17]the owl, the cormorant, the screech owl, [18]the barn owl, the desert owl, the buzzard, [19]the stork, the various species of herons, the hoopoe, and the bat.*

[20]"The various winged insects that walk on all fours are loathsome for you. [21]But of the various winged insects that walk on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs for leaping on the ground; [22]hence of these you may eat the following: the various kinds of locusts,* the various kinds of grasshoppers, the various kinds of katydids, and the various kinds of crickets. [23]All other winged insects that have four legs are loathsome for you.

[24]*"Such is the uncleanness that you contract, that everyone who touches their dead bodies shall be unclean until evening, [25]and everyone who picks up any part of their dead bodies shall wash his garments and be unclean until evening. [26]All hoofed animals that are not cloven-footed* or do not chew the cud are unclean for you; everyone who touches them becomes unclean. [27]Of the various quadrupeds, all those that walk on paws* are unclean for you; everyone who touches their dead bodies shall be unclean until evening, [28]and everyone who picks up their dead bodies shall wash his garments and be unclean until evening. Such is their uncleanness for you.

[29]"Of the creatures that swarm on the ground, the following are unclean for you: the

**11, 1ff:** These distinctions between edible and inedible meats were probably based on traditional ideas of hygiene, but they are here given a moral, religious basis: the inedible varieties are classified as "unclean" to remind the Israelites that they are to be a pure and holy people, dedicated to the Lord.

**11, 5f:** According to modern zoology, the rock badger (hyrax Syriacus) is classified as an ungulate, and the hare as a rodent; neither is a ruminant. They appear to chew their food as the true ruminants do, and it is upon this appearance that the classification in the text is based.

**11, 13–19. 30:** The identification of the various Hebrew names for these birds and reptiles is in many cases uncertain.

**11, 19:** The bat: actually a mammal, but listed here with the birds because of its wings.

**11, 22:** The Hebrew distinguishes four classes of edible locust-like insects, but the difference between them is quite uncertain. Cf Mt 3, 4.

**11, 24–28:** This paragraph sharpens the prohibition against unclean animals: not only is their meat unfit for food, but contact with their dead bodies makes a person ritually unclean.

**11, 26:** All hoofed animals that are not cloven-footed: such as the horse and the ass.

**11, 27:** All those that walk on paws: such as dogs and cats.

rat, the mouse, the various kinds of lizards, [30]the
gecko, the chameleon, the agama, the skink, and
the mole. [31]Among the various swarming crea-
tures, these are unclean for you. Everyone who
touches them when they are dead shall be
unclean until evening. [32]Everything on which
one of them falls when dead becomes unclean.
Any such article that men use, whether it be an
article of wood, cloth, leather or goat hair, must
be put in water and remain unclean until eve-
ning, when it again becomes clean. [33]Should any
of these creatures fall into a clay vessel, every-
thing in it becomes unclean, and the vessel itself
you must break. [34]Any solid food that was in
contact with water, and any liquid that men
drink, in any such vessel become unclean. [35]Any
object on which one of their dead bodies falls,
becomes unclean; if it is an oven or a jar-stand,
this must be broken to pieces; they are unclean
and shall be treated as unclean by you. [36]How-
ever, a spring or a cistern for collecting water
remains clean; but whoever touches the dead
body* becomes unclean. [37]Any sort of cultivated
grain remains clean even though one of their
dead bodies falls on it; [38]but if the grain has
become moistened, it becomes unclean when
one of these falls on it.

[39]"When one of the animals that you could
otherwise eat, dies of itself, anyone who touches
its dead body shall be unclean until evening;
[40]and anyone who eats of its dead body shall
wash his garments and be unclean until eve-
ning;[e] so also, anyone who removes its dead
body shall wash his garments and be unclean
until evening.

[41]"All the creatures that swarm on the ground
are loathsome and shall not be eaten. [42]Whether
it crawls on its belly, goes on all fours, or has
many legs, you shall eat no swarming creature:
they are loathsome. [43]Do not make yourselves
loathsome or unclean with any swarming crea-
ture through being contaminated by them.[f]
[44]For I, the LORD, am your God; and you shall
make and keep yourselves holy, because I am
holy.[g] You shall not make yourselves unclean,
then, by any swarming creature that crawls on
the ground. [45]Since I, the LORD, brought you up
from the land of Egypt that I might be your God,
you shall be holy, because I am holy.

[46]"This is the law for animals and birds and
for all the creatures that move about in the water
or swarm on the ground, [47]that you may distin-
guish between the clean and the unclean, be-
tween creatures that may be eaten and those
that may not be eaten."[h]

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 11–15
See RG
91–92

**Uncleanness of Childbirth** [1]The LORD said to
Moses, [2]"Tell the Israelites: When a woman has
conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be
unclean* for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period.[i] [3]On the eighth
day, the flesh of the boy's foreskin shall be
circumcised,[j] [4]and then she shall spend thirty-
three days more in becoming purified of her
blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor
enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. [5]If she gives birth to a girl, for
fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her
menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-
six days in becoming purified of her blood.

[6]"When the days of her purification for a son
or for a daughter are fulfilled,[k] she shall bring to
the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a
yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a
turtledove for a sin offering. [7]The priest shall
offer them up before the LORD to make atonement for her, and thus she will be clean again
after her flow of blood. Such is the law for the
woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl child.
[8]*If, however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may
take two turtledoves or two pigeons,[l] the one

**11, 36:** Whoever touches the dead body: to remove the dead insect from the water supply.

**12, 2f:** The uncleanness of the woman was more serious during the first period, the seven days after the birth of a boy or the fourteen days after the birth of a girl; only during this period would the rules given in Lv 15, 19–24 apply.

**12, 8:** Forty days after the birth of Jesus, his Virgin Mother made this offering of the poor (Lk 2, 22. 24); since the holocaust was offered in thanksgiving for the birth of the child, this was most fittingly offered by Mary. However, because of her miraculous delivery, she was not really obliged to make the sin offering of purification.

e Lv 17, 15; 22, 8. f 43f: Lv 20, 25f. g Lv 19, 2; 20, 7. 26; Mt 5, 48; 1 Pt 1, 16. h Lv 10, 10. i Lv 15, 19. j Gn 17, 12; Jn 7, 22. k Lk 2, 22. l Lv 1, 14; Lk 2, 24.

for a holocaust and the other for a sin offering.
The priest shall make atonement for her, and
thus she will again be clean."

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 11-15
See RG
91-92

**Leprosy** [1]The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,
[2] m"If someone has on his skin* a scab or pustule
or blotch which appears to be the sore of leprosy,
he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to
one of the priests among his descendants, [3]who
shall examine the sore on his skin. If the hair on
the sore has turned white and the sore itself
shows that it has penetrated below the skin, it is
indeed the sore of leprosy; the priest, on seeing
this, shall declare the man unclean. [4]If, how-
ever, the blotch on the skin is white, but does
not seem to have penetrated below the skin, nor
has the hair turned white, the priest shall
quarantine the stricken man for seven days. [5]On
the seventh day the priest shall again examine
him. If he judges that the sore has remained
unchanged and has not spread on the skin, the
priest shall quarantine him for another seven
days, [6]and once more examine him on the
seventh day. If the sore is now dying out and has
not spread on the skin, the priest shall declare
the man clean; it was merely eczema. The man
shall wash his garments and so become clean.
[7]But if, after he has shown himself to the priest
to be declared clean, the eczema spreads at all
on his skin, he shall once more show himself to
the priest. [8]Should the priest, on examining it,
find that the eczema has indeed spread on the
skin, he shall declare the man unclean; it is
leprosy.

[9]"When someone is stricken with leprosy, he
shall be brought to the priest. [10]Should the
priest, on examining him, find that there is a
white scab on the skin which has turned the hair
white and that there is raw flesh in it, [11]it is skin
leprosy that has long developed. The priest shall
declare the man unclean without first quarantin-
ing him, since he is certainly unclean. [12]If
leprosy breaks out on the skin* and, as far as the
priest can see, covers all the skin of the stricken
man from head to foot, [13]should the priest then,
on examining him, find that the leprosy does
cover his whole body, he shall declare the
stricken man clean; since it has all turned white,
the man is clean. [14]But as soon as raw flesh
appears on him, he is unclean; [15]on observing
the raw flesh, the priest shall declare him
unclean, because raw flesh is unclean; it is
leprosy. [16]If, however, the raw flesh again turns
white, he shall return to the priest; [17]should the
latter, on examining him, find that the sore has
indeed turned white, he shall declare the
stricken man clean, and thus he will be clean.

[18]"If a man who had a boil on his skin which
later healed, [19]should now in the place of the
boil have a white scab or a pink blotch, he shall
show himself to the priest. [20]If the latter, on
examination, sees that it is deeper than the skin
and that the hair has turned white, he shall
declare the man unclean: it is the sore of leprosy
that has broken out in the boil. [21]But if the
priest, on examining him, finds that there is no
white hair in it and that it is not deeper than the
skin and is already dying out, the priest shall
quarantine him for seven days. [22]If it has then
spread on the skin, the priest shall declare him
unclean; the man is stricken. [23]But if the blotch
remains in its place without spreading, it is
merely the scar of the boil; the priest shall
therefore declare him clean.

[24]"If a man had a burn on his skin, and the
proud flesh of the burn now becomes a pink or a
white blotch, [25]the priest shall examine it. If the
hair has turned white on the blotch and this
seems to have penetrated below the skin, it is
leprosy that has broken out in the burn; the
priest shall therefore declare him unclean and
stricken with leprosy. [26]But if the priest, on
examining it, finds that there is no white hair on
the blotch and that this is not deeper than the
skin and is already dying out, the priest shall
quarantine him for seven days. [27]Should the

**13, 2ff:** Various kinds of skin blemishes are treated here which were not contagious but simply disqualified their subjects from association with others, especially in public worship, until they were declared ritually clean. The Hebrew term used does not refer to Hansen's disease, currently called leprosy.

**13, 12ff:** If leprosy breaks out on the skin: the symptoms described here point to a form of skin disease which is merely on the surface and therefore easily cured.

m Dt 24, 8.

priest, when examining it on the seventh day,
find that it has spread at all on the skin, he shall
declare the man unclean and stricken with
leprosy. [28]But if the blotch remains in its place
without spreading on the skin and is already
dying out, it is merely the scab of the burn; the
priest shall therefore declare the man clean,
since it is only the scar of the burn.

[29]"When a man or a woman has a sore on the
head or cheek, [30]should the priest, on examin-
ing it, find that the sore has penetrated below
the skin and that there is fine yellow hair on it,
the priest shall declare the person unclean, for
this is scall,* a leprous disease of the head or
cheek. [31]But if the priest, on examining the scall
sore, finds that it has not penetrated below the
skin, though the hair on it may not be black, the
priest shall quarantine the person with scall sore
for seven days, [32]and on the seventh day again
examine the sore. If the scall has not spread and
has no yellow hair on it and does not seem to
have penetrated below the skin, [33]the man shall
shave himself, but not on the diseased spot.
Then the priest shall quarantine him for another
seven days. [34]If the priest, when examining the
scall on the seventh day, finds that it has not
spread on the skin and that it has not penetrated
below the skin, he shall declare the man clean;
the latter shall wash his garments, and thus he
will be clean. [35]But if the scall spreads at all on
his skin after he has been declared clean, [36]the
priest shall again examine it. If the scall has
indeed spread on the skin, he need not look for
yellow hair; the man is surely unclean. [37]If,
however, he judges that the scall has remained
in its place and that black hair has grown on it,
the disease has been healed; the man is clean,
and the priest shall declare him clean.

[38]"When the skin of a man or a woman is
spotted with white blotches, [39]the priest shall
make an examination. If the blotches on the skin
are white and already dying out, it is only tetter*
that has broken out on the skin, and the person
therefore is clean.

[40]"When a man loses the hair of his head, he
is not unclean merely because of his bald crown.
[41]So too, if he loses the hair on the front of his
head, he is not unclean merely because of his
bald forehead. [42]But when there is a pink sore
on his bald crown or bald forehead, it is leprosy
that is breaking out there. [43]The priest shall
examine him; and if the scab on the sore of the
bald spot has the same pink appearance as that of
skin leprosy of the fleshy part of the body, [44]the
man is leprous and unclean, and the priest shall
declare him unclean by reason of the sore on his
head.

[45]"The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall
keep his garments rent and his head bare, and
shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, 'Unclean,
unclean!' [46]As long as the sore is on him he shall
declare himself unclean, since he is in fact
unclean.[n] He shall dwell apart, making his
abode outside the camp.

**Leprosy of Clothes** [47]"When a leprous infec-
tion* is on a garment of wool or of linen, [48]or on
woven or knitted material of linen or wool, or on
a hide or anything made of leather, [49]if the
infection on the garment or hide, or on the
woven or knitted material, or on any leather
article is greenish or reddish, the thing is indeed
infected with leprosy and must be shown to the
priest. [50]Having examined the infection, the
priest shall quarantine the infected article for
seven days.

[51]"On the seventh day the priest shall again
examine the infection. If it has spread on the
garment, or on the woven or knitted material, or
on the leather, whatever be its use, the infection
is malignant leprosy, and the article is unclean.
[52]He shall therefore burn up the garment, or the
woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or
the leather article, whatever it may be, which is
infected; since it has malignant leprosy, it must
be destroyed by fire. [53]But if the priest, on
examining the infection, finds that it has not
spread on the garment, or on the woven or
knitted material, or on the leather article, [54]he

**13, 30:** Scall: a scabby or scaly eruption of the scalp. According to some, "ringworm."
**13, 39:** Tetter: vitiligo, a harmless form of skin disease.

**13, 47:** A leprous infection: some mold or fungus growth resembling human leprosy.

n Nm 5, 2; 12, 14f; 2 Kgs 15, 5; Lk 17, 12.

shall give orders to have the infected article washed and then quarantined for another seven days.

55"Then the priest shall again examine the infected article after it has been washed. If the infection has not changed its appearance, even though it may not have spread, the article is unclean and shall be destroyed by fire. 56But if the priest, on examining the infection, finds that it is dying out after the washing, he shall tear the infected part out of the garment, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material. 57If, however, the infection again appears on the garment, or on the woven or knitted material, or on the leather article, it is still virulent and the thing infected shall be destroyed by fire. 58But if, after the washing, the infection has left the garment, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, the thing shall be washed a second time, and thus it will be clean. 59This is the law for leprous infection[o] on a garment of wool or linen, or on woven or knitted material, or on any leather article, to determine whether it is clean or unclean."

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 11-15 See RG 91-92

**Purification after Leprosy** 1The LORD said to Moses, 2[p]"This is the law for the victim of leprosy at the time of his purification. He shall be brought to the priest, 3who is to go outside the camp to examine him. If the priest finds that the sore of leprosy has healed in the leper, 4he shall order the man who is to be purified, to get two live, clean birds, as well as some cedar wood, scarlet yarn,* and hyssop. 5The priest shall then order him to slay one of the birds over an earthen vessel with spring water* in it. 6Taking the living bird with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, the priest shall dip them all in the blood of the bird that was slain over the spring water, 7and then sprinkle seven times the man to be purified from his leprosy. When he has thus purified him, he shall let the living bird fly away over the countryside. 8The man being purified shall then wash his garments and shave off all his hair and bathe in water; only when he is thus made clean may he come inside the camp; but he shall still remain outside his tent for seven days. 9On the seventh day he shall again shave off all the hair of his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and any other hair he may have, and also wash his garments and bathe his body in water; and so he will be clean.

**Purification Sacrifices** 10"On the eighth day he shall take two unblemished male lambs, one unblemished yearling ewe lamb, three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal offering, and one log of oil. 11The priest who performs the purification ceremony shall place the man who is being purified, as well as all these offerings, before the LORD at the entrance of the meeting tent. 12Taking one of the male lambs, the priest shall present it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, waving them as a wave offering before the LORD. 13(This lamb he shall slaughter in the sacred place where the sin offering and the holocaust are slaughtered; because, like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest and is most sacred.) 14Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the tip of the man's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot.[q] 15The priest shall also take the log of oil and pour some of it into the palm of his own left hand; 16then, dipping his right forefinger in it, he shall sprinkle it seven times before the LORD. 17Of the oil left in his hand the priest shall put some on the tip of the man's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot, over the blood of the guilt offering. 18The rest of the oil in his hand the priest shall put on the head of the man being purified. Thus shall the priest make atonement for him before the LORD. 19Only after he has offered the sin offering in atonement for the man's uncleanness shall the priest slaughter the holocaust 20and offer it, together with the cereal offering, on the altar before the LORD. When the

14, 4: Scarlet yarn: probably used for tying the hyssop sprig to the cedar branchlet.

14, 5: Spring water: literally, "living water," taken from some source of running water, not from a cistern.

o Lv 14, 54. p Mt 8, 4; Mk 1, 44; Lk 5, 14. q Lv 8, 23f.

priest has thus made atonement for him, the
man will be clean.

**Poor Leper's Sacrifice** [21]"If a man is poor and
cannot afford so much, he shall take one male
lamb for a guilt offering, to be used as a wave
offering in atonement for himself, one tenth of
an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal
offering, a log of oil, [22]and two turtledoves* or
pigeons, which he can more easily afford, the
one as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust.
[23]On the eighth day of his purification he shall
bring them to the priest, at the entrance of the
meeting tent before the LORD. [24]Taking the guilt-
offering lamb, along with the log of oil, the priest
shall wave them as a wave offering before the
LORD. [25]When he has slaughtered the guilt-
offering lamb, he shall take some of its blood,
and put it on the tip of the right ear of the man
being purified, on the thumb of his right hand,
and on the big toe of his right foot. [26]The priest
shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of
his own left hand [27]and with his right forefinger
sprinkle it seven times before the LORD. [28]Some
of the oil in his hand the priest shall also put on
the tip of the man's right ear, the thumb of his
right hand, and the big toe of his right foot, over
the blood of the guilt offering. [29]The rest of the
oil in his hand the priest shall put on the man's
head. Thus shall he make atonement for him
before the LORD. [30]Then, of the turtledoves or
pigeons, such as the man can afford, [31]the priest
shall offer up one as a sin offering and the other
as a holocaust, along with the cereal offering.
Thus shall the priest make atonement before the
LORD for the man who is to be purified. [32]This is
the law for one afflicted with leprosy who has
insufficient means for his purification."

**Leprosy of Houses** [33]The LORD said to Moses
and Aaron, [34]"When you come into the land of
Canaan, which I am giving you to possess, if I
put a leprous infection on any house of the land
you occupy, [35]the owner of the house shall come
and report to the priest, 'It looks to me as if my
house were infected.' [36]The priest shall then
order the house to be cleared out before he goes
in to examine the infection, lest everything in
the house become unclean. Only after this is he
to go in to examine the house. [37]If the priest, on
examining it, finds that the infection on the
walls of the house consists of greenish or reddish
depressions which seem to go deeper than the
surface of the wall, [38]he shall close the door of
the house behind him and quarantine the house
for seven days. [39]On the seventh day the priest
shall return to examine the house again. If he
finds that the infection has spread on the walls,
[40]he shall order the infected stones to be pulled
out and cast in an unclean place outside the city.
[41]The whole inside of the house shall then be
scraped, and the mortar that has been scraped
off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside
the city. [42]Then new stones shall be brought and
put in the place of the old stones, and new
mortar shall be made and plastered on the
house.

[43]"If the infection breaks out once more after
the stones have been pulled out and the house
has been scraped and replastered, [44]the priest
shall come again; and if he finds that the
infection has spread in the house, it is corrosive
leprosy, and the house is unclean. [45]It shall be
pulled down, and all its stones, beams and
mortar shall be hauled away to an unclean place
outside the city. [46]Whoever enters a house while
it is quarantined shall be unclean until evening.
[47]Whoever sleeps or eats in such a house shall
also wash his garments. [48]If the priest finds,
when he comes to examine the house, that the
infection has in fact not spread after the plaster-
ing, he shall declare the house clean, since the
infection has been healed. [49]To purify the house,
he shall take two birds, as well as cedar wood,
scarlet yarn, and hyssop. [50]One of the birds he
shall slay over an earthen vessel with spring
water in it. [51]Then, taking the cedar wood, the
hyssop and the scarlet yarn, together with the
living bird, he shall dip them all in the blood of
the slain bird and the spring water, and sprinkle
the house seven times. [52]Thus shall he purify the
house with the bird's blood and the spring

**14, 22:** Two turtledoves: substitutes for the two additional lambs, similar to the offering of a poor woman after childbirth. Cf Lv 12, 8.

water, along with the living bird, the cedar
wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet yarn. 53He
shall then let the living bird fly away over the
countryside outside the city. When he has thus
made atonement for it, the house will be clean.
54"This is the law for every kind of human
leprosy and scall, 55 [r]for leprosy of garments and
houses, 56as well as for scabs, pustules and
blotches, 57so that it may be manifest when
there is a state of uncleanness and when a state
of cleanness. This is the law for leprosy."

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 11–15
See RG
91–92

**Personal Uncleanness** 1The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 2"Speak to the Israelites and tell them: Every man who is afflicted with a chronic flow from his private parts is thereby unclean.[s] 3Such is his uncleanness from this flow that it makes no difference whether the flow drains off or is blocked up; his uncleanness remains. 4Any bed on which the man afflicted with the flow lies, is unclean, and any piece of furniture on which he sits, is unclean. 5Anyone who touches his bed shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 6Whoever sits on a piece of furniture on which the afflicted man was sitting, shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 7Whoever touches the body of the afflicted man shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 8If the afflicted man spits on a clean man, the latter shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 9Any saddle on which the afflicted man rides, is unclean. 10Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until evening; whoever lifts up any such thing shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 11Anyone whom the afflicted man touches with unrinsed hands shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 12Earthenware touched by the afflicted man shall be broken; and every wooden article shall be rinsed with water.

13"When a man who has been afflicted with a flow becomes free of his affliction, he shall wait seven days for his purification. Then he shall wash his garments and bathe his body in fresh water, and so he will be clean. 14On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, and going before the Lord, to the entrance of the meeting tent, he shall give them to the priest, 15who shall offer them up, the one as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust. Thus shall the priest make atonement before the Lord for the man's flow.

16"When a man has an emission of seed, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until evening. 17Any piece of cloth or leather with seed on it shall be washed with water and be unclean until evening.

18"If a man lies carnally with a woman, they shall both bathe in water and be unclean until evening.

19"When a woman has her menstrual flow, she shall be in a state of impurity for seven days.[t] Anyone who touches her shall be unclean until evening. 20Anything on which she lies or sits during her impurity shall be unclean. 21Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 22Whoever touches any article of furniture on which she was sitting, shall wash his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. 23*But if she is on the bed or on the seat when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. 24If a man dares to lie with her, he contracts her impurity and shall be unclean for seven days;[u] every bed on which he then lies also becomes unclean.

25"When a woman is afflicted with a flow of blood for several days outside her menstrual period, or when her flow continues beyond the ordinary period,[v] as long as she suffers this unclean flow she shall be unclean, just as during her menstrual period. 26Any bed on which she lies during such a flow becomes unclean, as it would during her menstruation, and any article of furniture on which she sits becomes unclean just as during her menstruation. 27Anyone who touches them becomes unclean; he shall wash

15, 23: What is added to the legislation by this verse is uncertain in both the Hebrew and the Greek.

r Lv 13, 47–58. s Nm 5, 2. t Lv 12, 2. 5. u Lv 18, 19. v Mt 9, 20; Mk 5, 25; Lk 8, 43.

his garments, bathe in water, and be unclean
until evening.
28"If she becomes freed from her affliction,
she shall wait seven days, and only then is she to
be purified. 29On the eighth day she shall take
two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them
to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent.
30The priest shall offer up one of them as a sin
offering and the other as a holocaust. Thus shall
the priest make atonement before the LORD for
her unclean flow.
31"You shall warn the Israelites of their un-
cleanness, lest by defiling my Dwelling, which is
in their midst, their uncleanness be the cause of
their death.
32"This is the law for the man who is afflicted
with a chronic flow, or who has an emission of
seed, and thereby becomes unclean; 33as well as
for the woman who has her menstrual period, or
who is afflicted with a chronic flow; the law for
male and female; and also for the man who lies
with an unclean woman."

## CHAPTER 16

**The Day of Atonement** 1After the death of
Aaron's two sons, who died when they ap-
proached the LORD's presence, the LORD spoke
to Moses 2and said to him,[w] "Tell your brother
Aaron that he is not to come whenever he
pleases into the sanctuary, inside the veil,* in
front of the propitiatory on the ark; otherwise,
when I reveal myself in a cloud above the
propitiatory, he will die. 3Only in this way may
Aaron enter the sanctuary. He shall bring a
young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a
holocaust. 4He shall wear the sacred linen tunic,
with the linen drawers next his flesh, gird
himself with the linen sash and put on the linen
miter. But since these vestments are sacred, he
shall not put them on until he has first bathed his
body in water. 5From the Israelite community he
shall receive two male goats for a sin offering
and one ram for a holocaust.[x]
6"Aaron shall bring in the bullock, his sin
offering to atone for himself and for his house-
hold. 7Taking the two male goats, and setting
them before the LORD at the entrance of the
meeting tent, 8he shall cast lots to determine
which one is for the LORD and which for
Azazel.* 9The goat that is determined by lot for
the LORD, Aaron shall bring in and offer up as a
sin offering. 10But the goat determined by lot for
Azazel he shall set alive before the LORD, so that
with it he may make atonement by sending it off
to Azazel in the desert.
11"Thus shall Aaron offer up the bullock, his
sin offering, to atone for himself and for his
family. When he has slaughtered it, 12he shall
take a censer full of glowing embers from the
altar before the LORD, as well as a double
handful of finely ground fragrant incense, and
bringing them inside the veil, 13there before the
LORD he shall put incense on the fire, so that a
cloud of incense may cover the propitiatory over
the commandments; else he will die.* 14Taking
some of the bullock's blood, he shall sprinkle it
with his finger on the fore part of the propitiatory
and likewise sprinkle some of the blood with his
finger seven times in front of the propitiatory.[y]
15"Then he shall slaughter the people's sin-
offering goat, and bringing its blood inside the
veil, he shall do with it as he did with the
bullock's blood, sprinkling it on the propitiatory
and before it.[z] 16Thus he shall make atonement
for the sanctuary because of all the sinful defile-
ments and faults of the Israelites. He shall do the
same for the meeting tent, which is set up
among them in the midst of their uncleanness.
17No one else may be in the meeting tent from
the time he enters the sanctuary to make atone-
ment until he departs. When he has made
atonement for himself and his household, as well

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**16, 2:** The sanctuary, inside the veil: the innermost part of the sanctuary, known also as "the holy of holies." Cf Ex 26, 33f. Here the high priest was allowed to enter only once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In Heb 9, 3–12 this ceremony is applied to Christ's single act of Redemption, whereby he won for us an everlasting atonement. Propitiatory: see note on Ex 25, 17.

**16, 8:** Azazel: perhaps a name of Satan, used only in this chapter. The ancient versions translated this word as "the escaping goat," whence the English word "scapegoat."

**16, 13:** Else he will die: the smoke is to conceal the resplendent majesty of God, the sight of which would strike any man dead.

w Heb 9, 6–12. x Nm 29, 11. y Heb 9, 13. 25. z Heb 5, 1; 6, 19.

as for the whole Israelite community, [18]he shall
come out to the altar before the LORD and make
atonement for it also. Taking some of the bull-
ock's and the goat's blood, he shall put it on the
horns around the altar,[a] [19]and with his finger
sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times.
Thus he shall render it clean and holy, purged of
the defilements of the Israelites.

**The Scapegoat** [20]"When he has completed the
atonement rite for the sanctuary, the meeting
tent and the altar, Aaron shall bring forward the
live goat. [21]Laying both hands on its head, he
shall confess over it all the sinful faults and
transgressions of the Israelites, and so put them
on the goat's head.[b] He shall then have it led
into the desert by an attendant. [22]Since the goat
is to carry off their iniquities to an isolated
region, it must be sent away into the desert.[c]

[23]*"After Aaron has again gone into the
meeting tent, he shall strip off and leave in the
sanctuary the linen vestments he had put on
when he entered there. [24]After bathing his body
with water in a sacred place, he shall put on his
vestments, and then come out and offer his own
and the people's holocaust, in atonement for
himself and for the people, [25]and also burn the
fat of the sin offering on the altar.

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[26]"The man who has led away the goat for
Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his
body in water; only then may he enter the camp.
[27]The sin-offering bullock and goat whose blood
was brought into the sanctuary to make atone-
ment, shall be taken outside the camp,[d] where
their hides and flesh and offal shall be burned up
in the fire. [28]The one who burns them shall
wash his garments and bathe his body in water;
only then may he enter the camp.

**The Fast** [29][e]"This shall be an everlasting ordi-
nance for you: on the tenth day of the seventh
month every one of you, whether a native or a
resident alien, shall mortify himself* and shall do
no work. [30]Since on this day atonement is made
for you to make you clean, so that you may be
cleansed of all your sins before the LORD, [31]by
everlasting ordinance it shall be a most solemn
sabbath for you, on which you must mortify
yourselves.

[32]"This atonement is to be made by the priest
who has been anointed and ordained to the
priesthood in succession to his father. He shall
wear the linen garments, the sacred vestments,
[33]and make atonement for the sacred sanctuary,
the meeting tent and the altar, as well as for the
priests and all the people of the community.
[34]This, then, shall be an everlasting ordinance
for you: once a year atonement shall be made for
all the sins of the Israelites."[f]

Thus was it done, as the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

## IV: Code of Legal Holiness

### CHAPTER 17

**Sacredness of Blood** [1]The LORD said to Mo-
ses, [2]"Speak to Aaron and his sons, as well as to
all the Israelites, and tell them: This is what the
LORD has commanded. [3]*Any Israelite who
slaughters an ox or a sheep or a goat, whether in
the camp or outside of it, [4]without first bringing
it to the entrance of the meeting tent to present
it as an offering to the LORD in front of his
Dwelling, shall be judged guilty of bloodshed;
and for this, such a man shall be cut off from
among his people. [5]Therefore, such sacrifices as
they used to offer up in the open field the
Israelites shall henceforth offer to the LORD,
bringing them to the priest at the entrance of the
meeting tent and sacrificing them there as peace
offerings to the LORD. [6]The priest shall splash the
blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of
the meeting tent and there burn the fat for an

16, 23: This verse is best read after v 25. According to later Jewish practice the high priest again went into the holy of holies to remove the censer.

16, 29: Mortify himself: literally, "afflict his soul"; traditionally understood by the Jews as signifying abstinence from all food. This is the only fast day prescribed in the Mosaic law.

17, 3ff: The ancients considered blood the seat and sign of life, and therefore something sacred, even in animals. Cf Gn 9, 4f. Hence, even the ordinary butchering of an animal for meat was looked upon as having a sacrificial character, so that it should be performed at the sanctuary. This law, however, could not be carried out without great difficulty when the Israelites were scattered throughout Palestine, and so was modified in Dt 12, 20ff.

a Ex 30, 12. b Is 53, 6; 2 Cor 5, 21. c Is 53, 11. 12; Jn 1, 29; 1 Pt 2, 24. d Heb 13, 11. e Lv 23, 27. 32; Nm 29, 7. f Heb 9, 7. 25.

odor pleasing to the LORD. [7]No longer shall they
offer their sacrifices to the satyrs to whom they
used to render their wanton worship.[g] This shall
be an everlasting ordinance for them and their
descendants.

[8]"Tell them, therefore: Anyone, whether of
the house of Israel or of the aliens residing
among them, who offers a holocaust or sacrifice
[9]without bringing it to the entrance of the
meeting tent to offer it to the LORD, shall be cut
off from his kinsmen. [10]And if anyone, whether
of the house of Israel or of the aliens residing
among them, partakes of any blood, I will set
myself against that one who partakes of blood
and will cut him off from among his people.[h]
[11][i]Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I
have made you put it on the altar, so that
atonement may thereby be made for your own
lives,* because it is the blood, as the seat of life,
that makes atonement. [12]That is why I have told
the Israelites: No one among you, not even a
resident alien, may partake of blood.

[13]"Anyone hunting, whether of the Israelites
or of the aliens residing among them, who
catches an animal or a bird that may be eaten,
shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.
[14]Since the life of every living body is its blood, I
have told the Israelites: You shall not partake of
the blood of any meat.[j] Since the life of every
living body is its blood, anyone who partakes of
it shall be cut off.

[15][k]Everyone, whether a native or an alien,
who eats of an animal that died of itself or was
killed by a wild beast, shall wash his garments,
bathe in water, and be unclean until evening,
and then he will be clean. [16]If he does not wash
or does not bathe his body, he shall have the
guilt to bear."

## CHAPTER 18

Ch 17–25
See RG
92–94

**The Sanctity of Sex** [1]The LORD said to Moses,
[2]"Speak to the Israelites and tell them: I, the
LORD, am your God. [3]You shall not do as they do
in the land of Egypt, where you once lived, nor
shall you do as they do in the land of Canaan,
where I am bringing you; do not conform to
their customs. [4]My decrees you shall carry out,
and my statutes you shall take care to follow. I,
the LORD, am your God. [5]Keep, then, my
statutes and decrees, for the man who carries
them out will find life through them. I am the
LORD.[l]

[6]*"None of you shall approach a close relative
to have sexual intercourse with her. I am the
LORD. [7][m]You shall not disgrace your father by
having intercourse with your mother. Besides,
since she is your own mother, you shall not have
intercourse with her. [8]You shall not have inter-
course with your father's wife,[n] for that would
be a disgrace to your father. [9]You shall not have
intercourse with your sister, your father's daugh-
ter or your mother's daughter, whether she was
born in your own household or born elsewhere.
[10]You shall not have intercourse with your son's
daughter or with your daughter's daughter, for
that would be a disgrace to your own family.
[11]You shall not have intercourse with the daugh-
ter whom your father's wife bore to him, since
she, too, is your sister. [12][o]You shall not have
intercourse with your father's sister, since she is
your father's relative. [13]You shall not have inter-
course with your mother's sister, since she is
your mother's relative. [14]You shall not disgrace
your father's brother by being intimate with his
wife,[p] since she, too, is your aunt. [15]You shall
not have intercourse with your daughter-in-law;
she is your son's wife, and therefore you shall
not disgrace her. [16]You shall not have inter-
course with your brother's wife,* for that would

**17, 11:** That atonement may thereby be made for your own lives: hence, the sacrifice of an animal was a symbolic act which substituted the victim's life for the life of the offerer, who thus acknowledged that he deserved God's punishments for his sins. This idea of sacrifice is applied in Heb 9–10 to the death of Christ, inasmuch as "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9, 22).

**18, 6–18:** These laws are formulated as directed to the male Israelites only, but naturally the same norms of consanguinity and affinity would apply to the women as well. Marriage, as well as casual intercourse, is here forbidden between men and women of the specified degrees of relationship.

**18, 16:** With your brother's wife: it was the violation of this law which aroused the wrath of John the Baptist against Herod Antipas. Cf Mk 6, 18. An exception to this law is made in Dt 25, 5.

g Ex 34, 15; Dt 32, 17; 2 Chr 11, 15; 1 Cor 10, 20. h Lv 3, 17. i Gn 9, 4. j Lv 7, 26f. k Lv 11, 39f; 22, 8. l Gal 3, 12. m 7–16: Lv 20, 11–21. n Dt 23, 1; 27, 20; 1 Cor 5, 1. o 12f: Lv 20, 19. p Lv 20, 20.

be a disgrace to your brother.[q] [17]You shall not
have intercourse with a woman and also with
her daughter, nor shall you marry and have
intercourse with her son's daughter or her
daughter's daughter; this would be shameful,
because they are related to her. [18]While your
wife is still living you shall not marry her sister as
her rival; for thus you would disgrace your first
wife.

[19]"You shall not approach a woman to have
intercourse with her while she is unclean from
menstruation. [20]You shall not have carnal rela-
tions with your neighbor's wife, defiling yourself
with her. [21][r]You shall not offer any of your
offspring to be immolated to Molech,* thus
profaning the name of your God. I am the LORD.
[22]You shall not lie with a male as with a woman;
such a thing is an abomination.[s] [23]You shall not
have carnal relations with an animal, defiling
yourself with it; nor shall a woman set herself in
front of an animal to mate with it; such things
are abhorrent.[t]

[24]"Do not defile yourselves by any of these
things by which the nations whom I am driving
out of your way have defiled themselves. [25]Be-
cause their land has become defiled, I am
punishing it for its wickedness, by making it
vomit out its inhabitants. [26]You, however,
whether natives or resident aliens, must keep
my statutes and decrees forbidding all such
abominations [27]by which the previous inhabit-
ants defiled the land; [28]otherwise the land will
vomit you out also for having defiled it, just as it
vomited out the nations before you. [29]Everyone
who does any of these abominations shall be cut
off from among his people. [30]Heed my charge,
then, not to defile yourselves by observing the
abominable customs that have been observed
before you.[u] I, the LORD, am your God."

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 17–25
See RG
92–94

**Various Rules of Conduct** [1]The LORD said to
Moses, [2]"Speak to the whole Israelite commu-
nity and tell them: Be holy, for I, the LORD, your
God, am holy.[v] [3]Revere your mother and fa-
ther,[w] and keep my sabbaths. I, the LORD, am
your God.

[4]"Do not turn aside to idols, nor make molten
gods for yourselves.[x] I, the LORD, am your God.

[5]"When you sacrifice your peace offering to
the LORD, if you wish it to be acceptable, [6]it
must be eaten on the very day of your sacrifice
or on the following day. Whatever is left over
until the third day shall be burned up in the fire.
[7]If any of it is eaten on the third day, the sacrifice
will be unacceptable as refuse;[y] [8]whoever eats
of it then shall pay the penalty for having
profaned what is sacred to the LORD. Such a one
shall be cut off from his people.

[9]"When you reap the harvest of your land,
you shall not be so thorough that you reap the
field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the
stray ears of grain.[z] [10]Likewise, you shall not
pick your vineyard bare, nor gather up the
grapes that have fallen. These things you shall
leave for the poor and the alien. I, the LORD, am
your God.

[11]"You shall not steal. You shall not lie or
speak falsely to one another.[a] [12]You shall not
swear falsely by my name, thus profaning the
name of your God.[b] I am the LORD.

[13]"You shall not defraud or rob your neighbor.
You shall not withhold overnight the wages of
your day laborer.[c] [14]You shall not curse the deaf,
or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but
you shall fear your God. I am the LORD.

[15]"You shall not act dishonestly in rendering
judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak
nor deference to the mighty, but judge your
fellow men justly.[d] [16]You shall not go about
spreading slander among your kinsmen; nor
shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life
is at stake. I am the LORD.

[17]"You shall not bear hatred for your brother
in your heart.[e] Though you may have to reprove

**18, 21**: Immolated to Molech: the reference is to the Canaanite custom of sacrificing children to the god Molech. The little victims were first slain and then cremated. Cf Ez 16, 20ff; 20, 26. 31; 23, 37.

q Lv 20, 21; Mt 14, 3f; Mk 6, 18. r Lv 20, 2–5; Dt 18, 10; 2 Kgs 16, 3; 21, 6. s Lv 20, 13; Rom 1, 27; 1 Cor 6, 9f. t Lv 20, 15f; Ex 22, 18. u Lv 20, 23; Dt 18, 9. v Lv 11, 44; Mt 5, 48; 1 Pt 1, 16. w Ex 20, 12. x Lv 26, 1; Ex 20, 3–5; 34, 17; Dt 27, 15. y Lv 7, 18. z Lv 23, 22; Dt 24, 19ff. a Ex 20, 15f. b Ex 20, 7; Mt 5, 33. c Dt 24, 14f. d Ex 23, 2f; Dt 1, 17; 16, 19; Ps 82, 2; Prv 24, 23. e Mt 18, 15; Lk 17, 3; Gal 6, 1; 1 Jn 3, 14.

your fellow man, do not incur sin because of
him. [18]Take no revenge and cherish no grudge
against your fellow countrymen. You shall love
your neighbor as yourself.* I am the LORD.[f]

[19]"Keep my statutes: do not breed any of your
domestic animals with others of a different
species; do not sow a field of yours with two
different kinds of seed; and do not put on a
garment woven with two different kinds of
thread.

[20]*"If a man has carnal relations with a
female slave who has already been living with
another man but has not yet been redeemed or
given her freedom, they shall be punished but
not put to death, because she is not free. [21]The
man, moreover, shall bring to the entrance of the
meeting tent a ram as his guilt offering to the
LORD. [22]With this ram the priest shall make
atonement before the LORD for the sin he has
committed, and it will be forgiven him.

[23]"When you come into the land and plant
any fruit tree there, first look upon its fruit as if it
were uncircumcised. For three years, while its
fruit remains uncircumcised,* it may not be
eaten. [24]In the fourth year, however, all of its
fruit shall be sacred to the LORD as a thanksgiving feast to him. [25]Not until the fifth year may
you eat its fruit. Thus it will continue its yield for
you. I, the LORD, am your God.

[26]"Do not eat meat with the blood still in it.[g]
Do not practice divination or soothsaying. [27]*Do
not clip your hair at the temples, nor trim the
edges of your beard.[h] [28]Do not lacerate your
bodies for the dead, and do not tattoo yourselves. I am the LORD.

[29]"You shall not degrade your daughter by
making a prostitute of her; else the land will
become corrupt and full of lewdness. [30]Keep my
sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary.[i] I am the
LORD.

[31]"Do not go to mediums or consult fortune-
tellers, for you will be defiled by them.[j] I, the
LORD, am your God.

[32]"Stand up in the presence of the aged, and
show respect for the old: thus shall you fear your
God. I am the LORD.

[33]"When an alien resides with you in your
land, do not molest him.[k] [34]You shall treat the
alien who resides with you no differently than
the natives born among you; have the same love
for him as for yourself; for you too were once
aliens in the land of Egypt.[l] I, the LORD, am your
God.

[35]"Do not act dishonestly in using measures of
length or weight or capacity. [36]You shall have a
true scale and true weights, an honest ephah and
an honest hin.[m] I, the LORD, am your God, who
brought you out of the land of Egypt. [37]Be
careful, then, to observe all my statutes and
decrees. I am the LORD."

## CHAPTER 20

Ch 17–25
See RG
92–94

**Penalties for Various Sins** [1]The LORD said to
Moses, [2]"Tell the Israelites: Anyone, whether an
Israelite or an alien residing in Israel, who gives
any of his offspring to Molech shall be put to
death.[n] Let his fellow citizens stone him. [3][o]I
myself will turn against such a man and cut him
off from the body of his people; for in giving his
offspring to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary
and profaned my holy name. [4]Even if his fellow
citizens connive at such a man's crime of giving
his offspring to Molech, and fail to put him to
death, [5]I myself will set my face against that man
and his family and will cut off from their people
both him and all who join him in his wanton

**19, 18:** You shall love your neighbor as yourself: cited by our Lord as the second of the two most important commandments of God. Cf Mt 22, 39; Mk 12, 31. Although in the present context the word "neighbor" is restricted to "fellow countrymen," in Lk 10, 29–37 Christ extends its meaning to embrace all men, even enemies. Cf also Mt 5. 43ff.

**19, 20ff:** This law seems out of its proper context here; perhaps it stood originally after Lv 20, 12. Female slave . . . given her freedom: reference is to the case treated of in Ex 21, 7–11.

**19, 23ff:** Uncircumcised: by analogy with a newborn boy, the newly planted tree was considered impure until "circumcised" by offering to the Lord all the fruit it bore in the fourth year.

**19, 27:** See note on Lv 21, 5.

f Mt 5, 43; 19, 19; 22, 39; Mk 12, 31; Rom 13, 9; Gal 5, 14; Jas 2, 8. g Lv 3, 17; Dt 18, 10; 2 Kgs 17, 17; 21, 6; 2 Chr 33, 6. h Lv 21, 5. i Lv 26, 2; Ex 20, 8. j Lv 20, 6. 27; Dt 18, 11; Is 8, 19. k Ex 22, 20; 23, 9; Jer 22, 3; Mal 3, 5. l Dt 10, 19. m Dt 25, 13. 15; Prv 11, 1; 16, 11; 20, 10; Ez 45, 10. n Lv 18, 21. o Ez 23, 39.

worship of Molech. 6Should anyone turn to
mediums and fortune-tellers and follow their
wanton ways,[p] I will turn against such a one and
cut him off from his people. 7Sanctify yourselves,
then, and be holy; for I, the LORD, your God, am
holy.[q] 8Be careful, therefore, to observe what I,
the LORD, who make you holy, have prescribed.

9"Anyone who curses his father or mother
shall be put to death;[r] since he has cursed his
father or mother, he has forfeited his life. 10If a
man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife,
both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put
to death.[s] 11If a man disgraces his father[t] by
lying with his father's wife, both the man and his
stepmother shall be put to death; they have
forfeited their lives. 12If a man lies with his
daughter-in-law,[u] both of them shall be put to
death; since they have committed an abhorrent
deed, they have forfeited their lives. 13If a man
lies with a male as with a woman,[v] both of them
shall be put to death for their abominable deed;
they have forfeited their lives. 14If a man marries
a woman and her mother also,[w] the man and the
two women as well shall be burned to death for
their shameful conduct, so that such shamefulness may not be found among you. 15If a man
has carnal relations with an animal, the man
shall be put to death,[x] and the animal shall be
slain. 16If a woman goes up to any animal to
mate with it,[y] the woman and the animal shall
be slain; let them both be put to death; their
lives are forfeit. 17If a man consummates marriage with his sister or his half-sister,[z] they shall
be publicly cut off from their people for this
shameful deed; the man shall pay the penalty of
having had intercourse with his own sister. 18If a
man lies in sexual intercourse with a woman
during her menstrual period,[a] both of them shall
be cut off from their people, because they have
laid bare the flowing fountain of her blood.
19You shall not have intercourse with your
mother's sister or your father's sister;[b] whoever
does so shall pay the penalty of incest. 20If a man
disgraces his uncle by having intercourse with
his uncle's wife, the man and his aunt shall pay
the penalty by dying childless. 21If a man marries
his brother's wife and thus disgraces his brother,
they shall be childless because of this incest.

22"Be careful to observe all my statutes and all
my decrees; otherwise the land where I am
bringing you to dwell will vomit you out. 23Do
not conform, therefore, to the customs of the
nations[c] whom I am driving out of your way,
because all these things that they have done
have filled me with disgust for them. 24But to
you I have said:[d] Their land shall be your
possession, a land flowing with milk and honey. I
am giving it to you as your own, I, the LORD,
your God, who have set you apart from the other
nations. 25[e]You, too, must set apart, then, the
clean animals from the unclean, and the clean
birds from the unclean, so that you may not be
contaminated with the uncleanness of any beast
or bird or of any swarming creature in the land
that I have set apart for you. 26To me, therefore,
you shall be sacred; for I, the LORD, am sacred,[f]
I, who have set you apart from the other nations
to be my own.

27*"A man or a woman who acts as a medium
or fortune-teller[g] shall be put to death by stoning; they have no one but themselves to blame
for their death."

## CHAPTER 21

Ch 17–25
See RG
92–94

**Sanctity of the Priesthood** 1The LORD said to
Moses, "Speak to Aaron's sons, the priests, and
tell them: None of you shall make himself
unclean for any dead person* among his people,[h] 2except for his nearest relatives, his mother
or father, his son or daughter, his brother 3or his
maiden sister, who is of his own family while she
remains unmarried; for these he may make
himself unclean. 4But for a sister who has

**20, 27**: This verse is best read immediately after v 6.
**21, 1**: Unclean for any dead person: by preparing the corpse for burial. Cf Nm 6, 6; 19, 11–19.

p Lv 19, 31. q Lv 11, 44; 19, 2; 1 Pt 1, 16. r Ex 21, 17; Prv 20, 20; Mt 15, 4; Mk 7, 10. s Lv 18, 20; Dt 22, 22; Jn 8, 5. t Lv 18, 7f. u Lv 18, 15. v Lv 18, 22. w Lv 18, 17; Dt 27, 23. x Ex 22, 18; Dt 27, 21. y Lv 18, 23. z Lv 18, 9; Dt 27, 22. a Lv 18, 19. b Lv 18, 12f. c Lv 18, 30. d Ex 3, 8. 17; 6, 8. e Lv 11, 2–47; Dt 14, 4–20. f Lv 11, 44; Ex 19, 6; 1 Pt 1, 16. g Lv 19, 31; Ex 22, 17; Dt 18, 11. h Ez 44, 25.

married out of his family he shall not make
himself unclean; this would be a profanation.
5*"The priests shall not make bare the crown
of the head, nor shave the edges of the beard,[i]
nor lacerate the body. 6To their God they shall be
sacred,* and not profane his name; since they
offer up the oblations of the LORD, the food of
their God, they must be holy.
7"A priest shall not marry a woman who has
been a prostitute or has lost her honor, nor a
woman who has been divorced by her husband;
for the priest is sacred to his God.[j] 8Honor him
as sacred who offers up the food of your God;
treat him as sacred, because I, the LORD, who
have consecrated him, am sacred.
9"A priest's daughter who loses her honor by
committing fornication and thereby dishonors
her father also, shall be burned to death.
10"The most exalted of the priests, upon
whose head the anointing oil has been poured
and who has been ordained to wear the special
vestments, shall not bare his head* or rend his
garments, 11nor shall he go near any dead
person. Not even for his father or mother may he
thus become unclean 12or leave the sanctuary;[k]
otherwise he will profane the sanctuary of his
God, for with the anointing oil upon him, he is
dedicated to his God, to me, the LORD.
13"The priest shall marry a virgin. 14Not a
widow or a woman who has been divorced or a
woman who has lost her honor as a prostitute,
but a virgin, taken from his own people, shall he
marry;[l] 15otherwise he will have base offspring
among his people. I, the LORD, have made him
sacred."

**Irregularities** 16The LORD said to Moses,
17"Speak to Aaron and tell him: None of your
descendants, of whatever generation, who has
any defect shall come forward to offer up the
food of his God. 18Therefore, he who has any of
the following defects may not come forward: he
who is blind, or lame, or who has any disfigure-
ment or malformation, 19or a crippled foot or
hand, 20or who is humpbacked or weakly or
walleyed, or who is afflicted with eczema,
ringworm or hernia. 21No descendant of Aaron
the priest who has any such defect may draw
near to offer up the oblations of the LORD; on
account of his defect he may not draw near to
offer up the food of his God. 22He may, however,
partake of the food of his God: of what is most
sacred as well as of what is sacred. 23Only, he
may not approach the veil nor go up to the altar
on account of his defect; he shall not profane
these things that are sacred to me, for it is I, the
LORD, who make them sacred."
24Moses, therefore, told this to Aaron and his
sons and to all the Israelites.

## CHAPTER 22

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**Sacrificial Banquets** 1The LORD said to Moses,
2"Tell Aaron and his sons to respect the sacred
offerings which the Israelites consecrate to me;
else they will profane my holy name. I am the
LORD.
3"Tell them: If any one of you, or of your
descendants in any future generation, dares,
while he is in a state of uncleanness, to draw
near the sacred offerings which the Israelites
consecrate to the LORD, such a one shall be cut
off from my presence. I am the LORD.
4"No descendant of Aaron who is stricken
with leprosy, or who suffers from a flow, may eat
of these sacred offerings, unless he again be-
comes clean.[m] Moreover, if anyone touches a
person who has become unclean by contact with
a corpse, or if anyone has had an emission of
seed, 5or if anyone touches[n] any swarming
creature or any man whose uncleanness, of
whatever kind it may be, is contagious, 6the one
who touches such as these shall be unclean until
evening and may not eat of the sacred portions
until he has first bathed his body in water;[o]
7then, when the sun sets, he again becomes

21, 5: Such mourning customs of the Canaanites were forbidden to all the Israelites, but especially to the priests. Cf Lv 19, 27f.

21, 6: Sacred: the same Hebrew word has both the active meaning of "holy," that is, keeping oneself free from profane impurities, and the passive meaning of "sacred," that is, set apart from what is profane and therefore treated with religious reverence.

21, 10: Bare his head: see note on Lv 10, 6.

i Ez 44, 20. j Ez 44, 22. k Lv 10, 7. l Ez 44, 22. m Lv 7, 20; 15, 16. n Lv 11, 24. 43. o Heb 10, 22.

clean. Only then may he eat of the sacred
offerings, which are his food. 8He shall not make
himself unclean by eating of any animal that has
died of itself or has been killed by wild beasts.[p] I
am the LORD.

9"They shall keep my charge and not do
wrong in this matter; else they will die for their
profanation. I am the LORD who have consecrated them.

10"Neither a lay person nor a priest's tenant or
hired servant may eat of any sacred offering.[q]
11But a slave whom a priest acquires by purchase or who is born in his house may eat of his
food. 12A priest's daughter who is married to a
layman may not eat of the sacred contributions.
13But if a priest's daughter is widowed or
divorced and, having no children, returns to her
father's house, she may then eat of her father's
food as in her youth. No layman, however, may
eat of it. 14[r]If such a one eats of a sacred offering
through inadvertence, he shall make restitution
to the priest for the sacred offering, with an
increment of one fifth of the amount. 15The
sacred offerings which the Israelites contribute
to the LORD the priests shall not allow to be
profaned[s] 16nor in the eating of the sacred
offering shall they bring down guilt that must be
punished; it is I, the LORD, who make them
sacred."

**Unacceptable Victims** 17The LORD said to
Moses, 18"Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all
the Israelites, and tell them: When anyone of the
house of Israel, or any alien residing in Israel,
who wishes to offer a sacrifice, brings a holocaust as a votive offering or as a free-will offering
to the LORD, 19if it is to be acceptable, the ox or
sheep or goat that he offers must be an unblemished male.[t] 20You shall not offer one that has
any defect, for such a one would not be acceptable for you.[u] 21When anyone presents a peace
offering[v] to the LORD from the herd or the flock
in fulfillment of a vow, or as a free-will offering,
if it is to find acceptance, it must be unblemished; it shall not have any defect. 22One that is
blind or crippled or maimed, or one that has a
running sore or mange or ringworm, you shall
not offer to the LORD; do not put such an animal
on the altar as an oblation to the LORD. 23An ox
or a sheep that is in any way ill-proportioned or
stunted you may indeed present as a free-will
offering, but it will not be acceptable as a votive
offering. 24One that has its testicles bruised or
crushed or torn out or cut off you shall not offer
to the LORD. You shall neither do this in your
own land 25nor receive from a foreigner any
such animals to offer up as the food of your God;
since they are deformed or defective,[w] they will
not be acceptable for you."

26The LORD said to Moses, 27"When an ox or
a lamb or a goat is born, it shall remain with its
mother for seven days; only from the eighth day
onward will it be acceptable, to be offered as an
oblation to the LORD.[x] 28You shall not slaughter
an ox or a sheep on one and the same day with
its young. 29Whenever you offer a thanksgiving
sacrifice to the LORD, so offer it that it may be
acceptable for you; 30it must, therefore, be eaten
on the same day; none of it shall be left over
until the next day.[y] I am the LORD.

31"Be careful to observe the commandments
which I, the LORD, give you, 32and do not
profane my holy name; in the midst of the
Israelites I, the LORD, must be held as sacred. It
is I who made you sacred 33and led you out of
the land of Egypt, that I, the LORD, might be
your God."

## CHAPTER 23

**Holy Days** 1The LORD said to Moses, 2"Speak
to the Israelites and tell them: The following are
the festivals of the LORD, my feast days, which
you shall celebrate with a sacred assembly.

3"For six days work may be done; but the
seventh day is the sabbath rest, a day for sacred
assembly, on which you shall do no work. The
sabbath shall belong to the LORD wherever you
dwell.[z]

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p Lv 17, 15; Dt 14, 21; Ez 44, 31. q 1 Sm 21, 6; Mt 12, 4. r Lv 5, 16; 27, 13. 15. 19. s Lv 19, 8; Nm 18, 32. t Lv 1, 3. 10. u Dt 15, 21; 17, 1; Mal 1, 8. 14. v Lv 3, 1. 6. w Mal 1, 14. x Ex 22, 29. y Lv 7, 15. z Ex 20, 8–11; 23, 12; 31, 14f; 34, 21; Dt 5, 12–15; Lk 13, 14.

**Passover** 4"These, then, are the festivals of the LORD which you shall celebrate at their proper
time with a sacred assembly.[a] 5The Passover of
the LORD falls on the fourteenth day of the first
month, at the evening twilight.[b] 6The fifteenth
day of this month is the LORD's feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you shall eat
unleavened bread.[c] 7On the first of these days
you shall hold a sacred assembly and do no sort
of work.[d] 8On each of the seven days you shall
offer an oblation to the LORD. Then on the
seventh day you shall again hold a sacred assembly and do no sort of work."

9The LORD said to Moses, 10"Speak to the
Israelites and tell them: When you come into the
land which I am giving you, and reap your
harvest, you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits
of your harvest to the priest, 11who shall wave
the sheaf before the LORD that it may be
acceptable for you. On the day after the sabbath* the priest shall do this. 12On this day,
when your sheaf is waved, you shall offer to the
LORD for a holocaust an unblemished yearling
lamb. 13Its cereal offering shall be two tenths of
an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD; and its libation
shall be a fourth of a hin of wine. 14Until this
day, when you bring your God this offering, you
shall not eat any bread* or roasted grain or fresh
kernels. This shall be a perpetual statute for you
and your descendants wherever you dwell.

**Pentecost** 15"Beginning with the day after the
sabbath, the day on which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks,[e]
16and then on the day after the seventh week,
the fiftieth* day,[f] you shall present the new
cereal offering to the LORD. 17For the wave
offering of your first fruits to the LORD, you shall
bring with you from wherever you live two
loaves of bread made of two tenths of an ephah
of fine flour and baked with leaven. 18Besides
the bread, you shall offer to the LORD a holocaust
of seven unblemished yearling lambs, one young
bull, and two rams, along with their cereal
offering and libations, as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 19One male goat shall be
sacrificed as a sin offering, and two yearling
lambs as a peace offering.[g] 20The priest shall
wave the bread of the first fruits and the two
lambs as a wave offering before the LORD; these
shall be sacred to the LORD and belong to the
priest. 21On this same day you shall by proclamation have a sacred assembly, and no sort of work
may be done. This shall be a perpetual statute for
you and your descendants wherever you dwell.

22"When you reap the harvest of your land,
you shall not be so thorough that you reap the
field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the
stray ears of your grain. These things you shall
leave for the poor and the alien. I, the LORD, am
your God."

**New Year's Day** 23The LORD said to Moses,
24"Tell the Israelites: On the first day of the
seventh month you shall keep a sabbath rest,
with a sacred assembly and with the trumpet
blasts as a reminder; 25you shall then do no sort
of work, and you shall offer an oblation to the
LORD."

**The Day of Atonement** 26[h]The LORD said to
Moses, 27"The tenth of this seventh month is the
Day of Atonement,[i] when you shall hold a
sacred assembly and mortify yourselves and offer
an oblation to the LORD. 28On this day you shall
not do any work, because it is the Day of
Atonement, when atonement is made for you
before the LORD, your God. 29Anyone who does
not mortify himself on this day shall be cut off
from his people; 30and if anyone does any work
on this day, I will remove him from the midst of
his people. 31This is a perpetual statute for you

**23, 11:** The sabbath: according to the Jewish tradition this was the feast day itself, the fifteenth of Nisan, which was a special day of rest. Cf v 7. However, some understand here the Saturday of the Passover week, or even the Saturday following it; cf Jn 19, 31.

**23, 14:** Any bread: made from the new grain. The harvest had first to be sanctified for man's use by this offering to God.

**23, 16:** The fiftieth: from the Greek word for this we have the name "Pentecost." Cf 2 Mc 12, 31; Acts 2, 1. It was also called "the feast of the Seven Weeks," or simply "the feast of Weeks" (Nm 28, 26; Dt 16, 10; Tb 2, 1). The new cereal offering: of flour made from the new grain. Pentecost was the thanksgiving feast at the end of the grain harvest, which began after Passover. Later tradition made it a commemoration of the giving of the law at Sinai.

a Ex 23, 14–19. b Nm 9, 2f; 28, 16. c Ex 12, 18; 13, 3. 10; 23, 15; 34, 18. d Ex 12, 15; Nm 28, 18. 25. e Ex 34, 22; Nm 28, 26; Dt 16, 9. f Acts 2, 1. g Nm 28, 30. h Lv 25, 9. i Lv 16, 29f; Nm 29, 7.

and your descendants wherever you dwell: you shall do no work, [32]but shall keep a sabbath of complete rest and mortify yourselves. Beginning on the evening of the ninth of the month, you shall keep this sabbath of yours from evening to evening."

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**The Feast of Booths** [33]The LORD said to Moses, [34]"Tell the Israelites: The fifteenth day of this seventh month[j] is the LORD's feast of Booths,* which shall continue for seven days. [35]On the first day there shall be a sacred assembly, and you shall do no sort of work. [36]For seven days you shall offer an oblation to the LORD, and on the eighth day you shall again hold a sacred assembly and offer an oblation to the LORD. On that solemn closing you shall do no sort of work.

[37]"These, therefore, are the festivals of the LORD on which you shall proclaim a sacred assembly, and offer as an oblation to the LORD holocausts and cereal offerings, sacrifices and libations, as prescribed for each day, [38]in addition to those of the LORD's sabbaths, your donations, your various votive offerings and the free-will offerings that you present to the LORD.

[39]"On the fifteenth day, then, of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land,[k] you shall celebrate a pilgrim feast of the LORD for a whole week. The first and the eighth day shall be days of complete rest. [40]On the first day you shall gather foliage* from majestic trees, branches of palms and boughs of myrtles and of valley poplars, and then for a week you shall make merry before the LORD, your God. [41]By perpetual statute for you and your descendants you shall keep this pilgrim feast of the LORD for one whole week[l] in the seventh month of the year. [42]During this week every native Israelite among you shall dwell in booths, [43]that your descendants[m] may realize that, when I led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, I made them dwell in booths. I, the LORD, am your God."

[44]Thus did Moses announce to the Israelites the festivals of the LORD.

## CHAPTER 24

**The Sanctuary Light** [1]The LORD said to Moses, [2]"Order the Israelites to bring you clear oil of crushed olives for the light, so that you may keep lamps burning regularly.[n] [3]In the meeting tent, outside the veil that hangs in front of the commandments, Aaron shall set up the lamps to burn before the LORD regularly, from evening till morning. Thus, by a perpetual statute for you and your descendants, [4]the lamps shall be set up on the pure gold lampstand,[o] to burn regularly before the LORD.

**The Showbread** [5]"You shall take fine flour and bake it[p] into twelve cakes, using two tenths of an ephah of flour for each cake. [6]These you shall place in two piles, six in each pile, on the pure gold table before the LORD. [7]On each pile put some pure frankincense, which shall serve as an oblation to the LORD, a token offering for the bread. [8]Regularly on each sabbath day this bread shall be set out afresh[q] before the LORD, offered on the part of the Israelites by an everlasting agreement. [9]It shall belong to Aaron and his sons, who must eat it in a sacred place, since, as something most sacred among the various oblations to the LORD, it is his by perpetual right."

**Punishment of Blasphemy** [10]Among the Israelites there was a man born of an Israelite mother (Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan) and an Egyptian father. [11]This man quarreled publicly with another Israelite and cursed and blasphemed the LORD's name. So the people brought him to Moses, [12]who kept him in custody till a decision from the LORD should settle the case for them. [13]The LORD then said to Moses, [14]"Take the blasphemer outside the

23, 34: Feast of Booths: the joyful observance of the vintage and fruit harvest. Cf Dt 16, 13. During the seven days of the feast the Israelites camped in booths of branches erected on the roofs of their houses or in the streets in commemoration of their wanderings in the desert, where they dwelt in booths.

23, 40: Foliage: literally, "fruit," but here probably used in the general sense of "produce, growth." These branches were used for constructing the "booths" or huts in which the people lived during the feast. Cf Neh 8, 15. However, from about the time of Christ on, the Jews have understood this of "fruit" in the strict sense; hence, branches of lemons and oranges were carried with the other branches in joyous procession.

j Nm 29, 12; Dt 16, 13; 2 Mc 1, 9. 18; Jn 7, 2. k Ex 23, 16; Dt 16, 13. l Nm 29, 12–38. m Dt 31, 10–13. n Ex 27. 20f. o Ex 25, 31. p Ex 25, 30; 1 Kgs 7, 48; 2 Chr 4, 19; 13, 11; Heb 9, 2. q 1 Chr 9, 32.

camp, and when all who heard him have laid
their hands on his head, let the whole commu-
nity stone him. 15Tell the Israelites: Anyone who
curses his God shall bear the penalty of his sin;
16whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD
shall be put to death.[r] The whole community
shall stone him; alien and native alike must be
put to death for blaspheming the LORD's name.

17"Whoever takes the life of any human being
shall be put to death;[s] 18whoever takes the life
of an animal shall make restitution of another
animal. A life for a life![t] 19Anyone who inflicts
an injury on his neighbor shall receive the same
in return. 20Limb for limb, eye for eye, tooth for
tooth! The same injury that a man gives another
shall be inflicted on him in return.[u] 21Whoever
slays an animal shall make restitution, but who-
ever slays a man shall be put to death. 22You
shall have but one rule, for alien and native
alike.[v] I, the LORD, am your God."

23When Moses told this to the Israelites, they
took the blasphemer outside the camp and
stoned him;[w] they carried out the command
that the LORD had given Moses.

## CHAPTER 25

**The Sabbatical Year** 1The LORD said to Moses
on Mount Sinai, 2"Speak to the Israelites and tell
them: When you enter the land that I am giving
you, let the land, too, keep a sabbath for the
LORD. 3For six years you may sow your field, and
for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in
their produce.[x] 4But during the seventh year the
land shall have a complete rest, a sabbath for the
LORD,[y] when you may neither sow your field
nor prune your vineyard. 5*The aftergrowth of
your harvest you shall not reap, nor shall you
pick the grapes of your untrimmed vines in this
year of sabbath rest for the land. 6While the land
has its sabbath, all its produce will be food
equally for you yourself and for your male and
female slaves, for your hired help and the
tenants who live with you, 7and likewise for
your livestock and for the wild animals on your
land.

**The Jubilee Year** 8"Seven weeks of years shall
you count—seven times seven years—so that
the seven cycles amount to forty-nine years.
9Then, on the tenth day of the seventh month
let the trumpet resound; on this, the Day of
Atonement, the trumpet blast shall re-echo
throughout your land. 10This fiftieth year* you
shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the
land for all its inhabitants.[z] It shall be a jubilee
for you, when every one of you shall return to
his own property, every one to his own family
estate. 11In this fiftieth year, your year of jubilee,
you shall not sow, nor shall you reap the
aftergrowth or pick the grapes from the un-
trimmed vines. 12Since this is the jubilee, which
shall be sacred for you, you may not eat of its
produce, except as taken directly from the field.

13"In this year of jubilee, then, every one of
you shall return to his own property. 14There-
fore, when you sell any land to your neighbor or
buy any from him, do not deal unfairly. 15On the
basis of the number of years since the last jubilee
shall you purchase the land from him;[a] and so
also, on the basis of the number of years for
crops, shall he sell it to you. 16When the years
are many, the price shall be so much the more;
when the years are few, the price shall be so
much the less. For it is really the number of
crops that he sells you. 17Do not deal unfairly,
then; but stand in fear of your god. I, the LORD,
am your God.

18"Observe my precepts and be careful to
keep my regulations, for then you will dwell
securely in the land. 19The land will yield its fruit
and you will have food in abundance, so that

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**25, 5ff:** As long as the produce of the sabbatical year remains on the field, it remains available to everyone; cf v 12. In Ex 23, 10f the poor and the wild beasts that have no other source of nourishment are alone mentioned.

**25, 10:** Fiftieth year: to arrive at this number, the preceding year of jubilee is included in the count, and therefore this is more exactly the forty-ninth year, the seventh sabbatical year. Liberty: Israelite slaves were set free (v 50) and landed property was returned to its original owner (v 13): two important laws for preserving the social and economic equilibrium. Jubilee: derived from the Hebrew word yobel, "ram's horn," which was blown on this occasion.

r 1 Kgs 21, 10. 13; Mt 26, 65f; Jn 10, 33. s Gn 9, 5f; Ex 21, 12; Nm 35, 31; Dt 19, 11f. t Ex 21, 33f. u Dt 19, 21; Mt 5, 38. v Lv 19, 34; Ex 12, 49; Nm 15, 16. w Acts 7, 57f. x Ex 23, 10f. y 1 Mc 6, 49. 53. z Nm 36, 4; Is 61, 2; Ez 46, 17; Lk 4, 19. a Lv 27, 18. 23.

you may live there without worry.[b] 20Therefore,
do not say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh
year, if we do not then sow or reap our crop?'[c]
21I will bestow such blessings on you in the sixth
year that there will then be crop enough for
three years. 22When you sow in the eighth year,
you will continue to eat from the old crop; and
even into the ninth year, when the crop comes
in, you will still have the old to eat from.[d]

**Redemption of Property** 23[e]"The land shall
not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine,
and you are but aliens who have become my
tenants. 24Therefore, in every part of the country
that you occupy, you must permit the land to be
redeemed. 25When one of your countrymen is
reduced to poverty and has to sell some of his
property, his closest relative, who has the right
to redeem it, may go and buy back what his
kinsman has sold.[f] 26If, however, the man has
no relative to redeem his land, but later on
acquires sufficient means to buy it back in his
own name, 27he shall make a deduction from
the price in proportion to the number of years
since the sale, and then pay back the balance to
the one to whom he sold it, so that he may thus
regain his own property. 28But if he does not
acquire sufficient means to buy back his land,
what he has sold shall remain in the possession
of the purchaser until the jubilee, when it must
be released and returned to its original owner.[g]

29"When someone sells a dwelling in a walled
town, he has the right to buy it back during the
time of one full year from its sale. 30But if such a
house in a walled town has not been redeemed
at the end of a full year, it shall belong in
perpetuity to the purchaser and his descendants;
nor shall it be released in the jubilee. 31However,
houses in villages that are not encircled by walls
shall be considered as belonging to the surrounding farm land; they may be redeemed at any
time, and in the jubilee they must be released.

32"In levitical cities the Levites shall always
have the right to redeem the town houses that
are their property. 33Any town house of the
Levites in their cities that had been sold and not
redeemed, shall be released in the jubilee; for
the town houses of the Levites are their hereditary property in the midst of the Israelites.
34Moreover, the pasture land belonging to their
cities shall not be sold at all;[h] it must always
remain their hereditary property.

35"When one of your fellow countrymen is
reduced to poverty and is unable to hold out
beside you, extend to him the privileges of an
alien or a tenant, so that he may continue to live
with you.[i] 36Do not exact interest from your
countryman either in money or in kind, but out
of fear of God let him live with you. 37[j]You are
to lend him neither money at interest nor food at
a profit. 38I, the LORD, am your God, who
brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you
the land of Canaan and to be your God.

39"When, then, your countryman becomes so
impoverished beside you that he sells you his
services, do not make him work as a slave.[k]
40Rather, let him be like a hired servant or like
your tenant, working with you until the jubilee
year, 41when he, together with his children,
shall be released from your service and return to
his kindred and to the property of his ancestors.
42Since those whom I brought out of the land of
Egypt are servants of mine, they shall not be sold
as slaves to any man. 43Do not lord it over them
harshly, but stand in fear of your God.

44"Slaves, male and female, you may indeed
possess, provided you buy them from among the
neighboring nations. 45You may also buy them
from among the aliens who reside with you and
from their children who are born and reared in
your land. Such slaves you may own as chattels,
46and leave to your sons as their hereditary
property, making them perpetual slaves. But you
shall not lord it harshly over any of the Israelites,
your kinsmen.[l]

47"When one of your countrymen is reduced
to such poverty that he sells himself to a wealthy
alien who has a permanent or a temporary
residence among you, or to one of the descendants of an immigrant family, 48even after he has
thus sold his services he still has the right of

b Lv 26, 5. c Mt 6, 25. 31; Lk 12, 22. 29. d Lv 26, 10. e 1 Pt 2, 11. f Ru 2, 20; 4, 4. 6; Jer 32, 7f. g Lv 27, 24. h Nm 35, 3. i Dt 15, 7. 8. j Dt 23, 19. k 1 Kgs 9, 22. l Is 14, 1f.

redemption; he may be redeemed by one of his
own brothers, [49]or by his uncle or cousin, or by
some other relative or fellow clansman; or, if he
acquires the means, he may redeem himself.
[50]With his purchaser he shall compute the years
from the sale to the jubilee, distributing the sale
price over these years as though he had been
hired as a day laborer. [51]The more such years
there are, the more of the sale price he shall pay
back as ransom; [52]the fewer years there are left
before the jubilee year, the more he has to his
credit; in proportion to his years of service shall
he pay his ransom. [53]The alien shall treat him as
a servant hired on an annual basis, and he shall
not lord it over him harshly under your very
eyes. [54]If he is not thus redeemed, he shall
nevertheless be released, together with his children, in the jubilee year.[m] [55]For to me the
Israelites belong as servants; they are servants of
mine, because I brought them out of the land of
Egypt, I, the LORD, your God.

## CHAPTER 26

**The Reward of Obedience** [1]"Do not make
false gods for yourselves. You shall not erect an
idol or a sacred pillar for yourselves, nor shall
you set up a stone figure for worship in your
land;[n] for I, the LORD, am your God. [2]Keep my
sabbaths,[o] and reverence my sanctuary. I am the
LORD.

[3]*"If you live in accordance with my precepts
and are careful to observe my commandments,
[4]I will give you rain in due season, so that the
land will bear its crops, and the trees their fruit;[p]
[5]your threshing will last till vintage time, and
your vintage till the time for sowing, and you
will have food to eat in abundance, so that you
may dwell securely in your land. [6]I will establish
peace in the land, that you may lie down to rest
without anxiety. I will rid the country of ravenous beasts, and keep the sword of war from
sweeping across your land. [7]You will rout your
enemies and lay them low with your sword.
[8]Five of you will put a hundred of your foes to
flight, and a hundred of you will chase ten
thousand of them, till they are cut down by your
sword. [9]I will look with favor upon you, and
make you fruitful and numerous, as I carry out
my covenant with you. [10]So much of the old
crops will you have stored up for food that you
will have to discard them to make room for the
new.[q] [11]*r*I will set my Dwelling among you, and
will not disdain you. [12]Ever present in your
midst, I will be your God, and you will be my
people; [13]for it is I, the LORD, your God, who
brought you out of the land of the Egyptians and
freed you from their slavery, breaking the yoke
they had laid upon you and letting you walk
erect.

**Punishment of Disobedience** [14]"But if you
do not heed me and do not keep all these
commandments, [15]if you reject my precepts and
spurn my decrees, refusing to obey all my
commandments and breaking my covenant,
[16]then I, in turn, will give you your deserts. I
will punish you with terrible woes—with wasting and fever to dim the eyes and sap the life.
You will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies
will consume the crop. [17]I will turn against you,
till you are beaten down before your enemies
and lorded over by your foes. You will take to
flight though no one pursues you.[s]

Ch 26
See RG
94

[18]"If even after this you do not obey me, I will
increase the chastisement for your sins
sevenfold, [19]to break your haughty confidence. I
will make the sky above you as hard as iron, and
your soil as hard as bronze, [20]so that your
strength will be spent in vain; your land will
bear no crops, and its trees no fruit.

[21]"If then you become defiant in your unwillingness to obey me, I will multiply my blows
another sevenfold, as your sins deserve. [22]I will
unleash the wild beasts against you, to rob you
of your children and wipe out your livestock, till
your population dwindles away and your roads
become deserted.

[23]"If, with all this, you still refuse to be

26, 3–45: Since God's covenant was with the Israelite nation as a whole, these promises and threats are made primarily to the entire community. The rewards and punishments are of a temporal nature because the community as such exists only here on earth, not in the hereafter.

m Ex 21, 2f. n Lv 19, 4; Ex 20, 4; Nm 33, 52; Dt 5, 8. o Ex 20, 8. p Ps 85, 13. q Lv 25, 22. r 11f: Ex 29, 45; Ez 39, 26ff; 2 Cor 6, 16. s Dt 28, 25.

chastened by me and continue to defy me, [24]I, too, will defy you and will smite you for your sins seven times harder than before.[t] [25]I will make the sword, the avenger of my covenant, sweep over you. Though you then huddle together in your walled cities, I will send in pestilence among you, till you are forced to surrender to the enemy. [26]And as I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will need but one oven for baking all the bread they dole out to you in rations[u] —not enough food to still your hunger.

[27]"If, despite all this, you still persist in disobeying and defying me, [28]I, also, will meet you with fiery defiance and will chastise you with sevenfold fiercer punishment for your sins, [29][v]till you begin to eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters.* [30]I will demolish your high places,[w] overthrow your incense stands, and cast your corpses on those of your idols. In my abhorrence of you, [31]I will lay waste your cities and devastate your sanctuaries, refusing to accept your sweet-smelling offerings. [32]So devastated will I leave the land that your very enemies who come to live there will stand aghast at the sight of it.[x] [33]You yourselves I will scatter among the nations[y] at the point of my drawn sword, leaving your countryside desolate and your cities deserted. [34]Then shall the land retrieve its lost sabbaths during all the time it lies waste, while you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land have rest and make up for its sabbaths[z] [35]during all the time that it lies desolate, enjoying the rest that you would not let it have on the sabbaths when you lived there.

Ch 27 See RG 94

[36]"Those of you who survive in the lands of their enemies I will make so fainthearted that, if leaves rustle behind them, they will flee headlong, as if from the sword, though no one pursues them; [37]stumbling over one another as if to escape a weapon, while no one is after them—so helpless will you be to take a stand against your foes! [38]You will be lost among the Gentiles, swallowed up in your enemies' country. [39]Those of you who survive in the lands of their enemies will waste away for their own and their fathers' guilt.[a]

[40]"Thus they will have to confess that they and their fathers were guilty of having rebelled against me and of having defied me, [41]so that I, too, had to defy them and bring them into their enemies' land. Then, when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they make amends for their guilt, [42]I will remember my covenant with Jacob, my covenant with Isaac, and my covenant with Abraham;[b] and of the land, too, I will be mindful. [43]But the land must first be rid of them, that in its desolation it may make up its lost sabbaths, and that they, too, may make good the debt of their guilt for having spurned my precepts and abhorred my statutes. [44]Yet even so, even while they are in their enemies' land, I will not reject or spurn them, lest, by wiping them out, I make void my covenant with them; for I, the LORD, am their God. [45]I will remember them because of the covenant I made with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt under the very eyes of the Gentiles,[c] that I, the LORD, might be their God."

[46]*These are the precepts, decrees and laws which the LORD had Moses promulgate on Mount Sinai in the pact between himself and the Israelites.

## V: Redemption of Offerings

### CHAPTER 27

**Redemption of Votive Offerings** [1]The LORD said to Moses, [2]"Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When anyone fulfills a vow of offering one or more persons to the LORD, who are to be ransomed at a fixed sum of money, [3]for persons between the ages of twenty and sixty, the fixed sum, in sanctuary shekels, shall be fifty silver

**26, 29:** Eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters: extreme famine in cities under siege often forced their inhabitants to such dire means of subsistence. Cf Dt 28, 53; Jer 19, 9; Ez 5, 10; 2 Kgs 6, 28f.

**26, 46:** The Book of Leviticus seems originally to have ended here; the following chapter is an appendix.

t 24f; Jer 2, 30; Ez 5, 17; 14, 17. u Is 9, 19; Ez 4, 16; 5, 16; 14, 13; Mi 6, 14. v Is 9, 18. w 2 Chr 14, 5; 34, 3. 4. 7; Ez 6, 3–6. x 1 Kgs 9, 8; Jer 9, 11; 18, 16; 19, 8; 25, 18; Ez 5, 15. y Jer 9, 16; Zec 7, 14. z Lv 25, 2; 2 Chr 36, 21. a Ez 4, 17; 24, 23; 33, 10. b Ex 6, 5; 2 Kgs 13, 23; Ps 106, 45; Ez 16, 60. c Ex 12, 51.

shekels for a man, [4]and thirty shekels for a
woman; [5]for persons between the ages of five
and twenty, the fixed sum shall be twenty
shekels for a youth, and ten for a maiden; [6]for
persons between the ages of one month and five
years, the fixed sum shall be five silver shekels
for a boy, and three for a girl; [7]for persons of
sixty or more, the fixed sum shall be fifteen
shekels for a man, and ten for a woman.
[8]However, if the one who took the vow is too
poor to meet the fixed sum, the person must be
set before the priest, who shall determine the
sum for his ransom in keeping with the means of
the one who made the vow.

[9]"If the offering vowed to the LORD is an
animal that may be sacrificed, every such ani-
mal, when vowed to the LORD, becomes sacred.
[10]The offerer shall not present a substitute for it
by exchanging either a better for a worse one or
a worse for a better one. If he attempts to offer
one animal in place of another, both the original
and its substitute shall be treated as sacred. [11]If
the animal vowed to the LORD is unclean and
therefore unfit for sacrifice, it must be set before
the priest, [12]who shall determine its value* in
keeping with its good or bad qualities, and the
value set by the priest shall stand. [13]If the offerer
wishes to redeem the animal, he shall pay one
fifth more than this valuation.[d]

[14]"When someone dedicates his house as
sacred to the LORD, the priest shall determine its
value in keeping with its good or bad points, and
the value set by the priest shall stand. [15]If the
one who dedicated his house wishes to redeem
it, he shall pay one fifth more than the price thus
established, and then it will again be his.

[16]"If the object which someone dedicates to
the LORD is a piece of his hereditary land, its
valuation shall be made according to the amount
of seed required to sow it, the acreage sown
with a homer of barley seed being valued at fifty
silver shekels. [17]If the dedication of a field is
made at the beginning of a jubilee period, the full
valuation shall hold; [18]but if it is some time after
this, the priest shall estimate its money value
according to the number of years left until the
next jubilee year, with a corresponding rebate on
the valuation.[e] [19]If the one who dedicated his
field wishes to redeem it, he shall pay one fifth
more than the price thus established, and so
reclaim it. [20]If, instead of redeeming such a field,
he sells it to someone else, it may no longer be
redeemed; [21]but at the jubilee it shall be re-
leased as sacred to the LORD; like a field that is
doomed, it shall become priestly property.

[22]"If the field that some man dedicates to the
LORD is one he had purchased and not a part of
his hereditary property, [23]the priest shall com-
pute its value in proportion to the number of
years until the next jubilee, and on the same day
the price thus established shall be given as
sacred to the LORD; [24]at the jubilee,[f] however,
the field shall revert to the hereditary owner of
this land from whom it had been purchased.

[25]"Every valuation shall be made according to
the standard of the sanctuary shekel. There are
twenty gerahs to the shekel.

**Offerings Not To Be Redeemed** [26]"Note that
a first-born animal,[g] which as such already
belongs to the LORD, may not be dedicated by
vow to him. If it is an ox or a sheep, it shall be
ceded to the LORD; [27]but if it is an unclean
animal,* it may be redeemed by paying one fifth
more than its fixed value. If it is not redeemed, it
shall be sold at its fixed value.

[28]"Note, also, that any one of his possessions
which a man vows as doomed to the LORD,
whether it is a human being or an animal or a
hereditary field, shall be neither sold nor ran-
somed; everything that is thus doomed becomes
most sacred to the LORD.[h] [29]All human beings

27, 12: Determine its value: fix the price at which the animal may be sold to someone else. Only the original owner must pay the twenty percent tax, as a penalty for buying back what he had vowed to God. So also for houses and fields that are vowed to the Lord, as treated of in the following verses. The money from the sale or from the redemption of such vowed property naturally goes to the sanctuary.

27, 27: An unclean animal: such as the first-born of an ass, which was unfit for sacrifice. According to Ex 13, 13; 34, 20, a first-born ass was to be redeemed by offering a sheep in its stead, or was to have its neck broken. The present law is probably a later modification of the earlier one.

d Lv 22, 14. e Lv 25, 15f. f Lv 25, 10. 28. 41. g Ex 13, 2. h 1 Sm 15, 21.

that are doomed* lose the right to be redeemed; they must be put to death.

30"All tithes of the land, whether in grain from the fields or in fruit from the trees, belong to the LORD, as sacred to him.[i] 31If someone wishes to buy back any of his tithes, he shall pay one fifth more than their value. 32The tithes of the herd and the flock shall be determined by ceding to the LORD as sacred every tenth animal as they are counted by the herdsman's rod. 33It shall not matter whether good ones or bad ones are thus chosen, and no exchange may be made. If any exchange is attempted, both the original animal and its substitute shall be treated as sacred, without the right of being bought back."

34These are the commandments which the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

**27, 29:** All human beings that are doomed: according to some interpreters, this signifies the idolatrous Canaanites, who were doomed to destruction by divine authority; according to others, this drastic law was enacted for the purpose of discouraging private persons from rashly vowing their slaves or other dependents as offerings to God. Cf Ex 22, 19; Dt 13, 13–19.

i Nm 18, 21. 24; 2 Chr 31, 5f. 12; Mal 3, 8. 10.

# THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Numbers
See RG
95–104

The Book of Numbers derives its name from the account of the two censuses of the Hebrew people taken, one near the beginning and the other toward the end of the journey in the desert (chapters 1 and 26). It continues the story of that journey, begun in Exodus, and describes briefly the experiences of the Israelites for a period of thirty-eight years, from the end of their encampment at Sinai to their arrival at the border of the Promised Land. Numerous legal ordinances are interspersed in the account, making the book a combination of law and history.

The various events described clearly indicate the action of God, who punishes the murmuring of the people by prolonging their stay in the desert, at the same time preparing them by this discipline to be his witnesses among the nations.

In the New Testament Christ and the Apostles derive useful lessons from such events in the Book of Numbers as the brazen serpent (Jn 3, 14f), the sedition of Korah and its consequences (1 Cor 10, 10), the prophecies of Balaam (2 Pt 2, 15f), and the water gushing from the rock (1 Cor 10, 4).

The chief divisions of the Book of Numbers are as follows:

I. Preparation for the Departure from Sinai (Nm 1, 1—10, 10).
II. From Sinai to the Plains of Moab (Nm 10, 11—22, 1).
III. On the Plains of Moab (Nm 22, 2—36, 13).

## I: Preparation for the Departure from Sinai

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–10
See RG
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**The Census** 1In the year following that of the Israelites' departure from the land of Egypt, on the first day of the second month, the LORD said to Moses in the meeting tent in the desert of Sinai: 2*"Take a census of the whole community of the Israelites,[a] by clans and ancestral houses, registering each male individually. 3You and Aaron shall enroll in companies all the men in Israel of twenty years or more who are fit for military service.

**Moses' Assistants** 4"To assist you there shall be a man from each tribe, the head of his

**1, 2:** All Israel was divided into tribes, each tribe into clans, and each clan into ancestral houses.

a 2f: Nm 14, 29; 26, 2–51.

ancestral house. 5 [b]These are the names of those
who are to assist you:

from Reuben: Elizur, son of Shedeur;
6 from Simeon: Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai;
7 from Judah: Nahshon, son of Amminadab;
8 from Issachar: Nethanel, son of Zuar;
9 from Zebulun: Eliab, son of Helon;
10 from Ephraim: Elishama, son of Ammihud,
and from Manasseh: Gamaliel, son of Pedah-
zur, for the descendants of Joseph;
11 from Benjamin: Abidan, son of Gideoni;
12 from Dan: Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai;
13 from Asher: Pagiel, son of Ochran;
14 from Gad: Eliasaph, son of Reuel;
15 from Naphtali: Ahira, son of Enan."

16 [c]These were councilors of the community,
princes of their ancestral tribes, chiefs of the
troops* of Israel. 17 So Moses and Aaron took
these men who had been designated, 18 and
assembled the whole community on the first day
of the second month. Every man of twenty years
or more then declared his name and lineage
according to clan and ancestral house, 19 as the
LORD had commanded Moses.

**Count of the Twelve Tribes** This is their
census as taken in the desert of Sinai. 20 Of the
descendants of Reuben, the first-born of Israel,
registered by lineage in clans and ancestral
houses: when all the males of twenty years or
more who were fit for military service were
polled, 21 forty-six thousand five hundred were
enrolled in the tribe of Reuben.

22 Of the descendants of Simeon, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 23 fifty-nine thou-
sand three hundred were enrolled in the tribe of
Simeon.

24 Of the descendants of Gad, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 25 forty-five thou-
sand six hundred and fifty were enrolled in the
tribe of Gad.

26 Of the descendants of Judah, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 27 seventy-four
thousand six hundred were enrolled in the tribe
of Judah.

28 Of the descendants of Issachar, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 29 fifty-four thou-
sand four hundred were enrolled in the tribe of
Issachar.

30 Of the descendants of Zebulun, registered
by lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when
all the males of twenty years or more who were
fit for military service were polled, 31 fifty-seven
thousand four hundred were enrolled in the
tribe of Zebulun.

32 Of the descendants of Joseph—

Of the descendants of Ephraim, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 33 forty thousand
five hundred were enrolled in the tribe of
Ephraim.

34 Of the descendants of Manasseh, registered
by lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when
all the males of twenty years or more who were
fit for military service were polled, 35 thirty-two
thousand two hundred were enrolled in the tribe
of Manasseh.

36 Of the descendants of Benjamin, registered
by lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when
all the males of twenty years or more who were
fit for military service were polled, 37 thirty-five
thousand four hundred were enrolled in the
tribe of Benjamin.

38 Of the descendants of Dan, registered by
lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all
the males of twenty years or more who were fit
for military service were polled, 39 sixty-two

1, 16: Troops: literally "thousands"; this division of the Israelites, with its subdivisions of "hundreds, fifties and tens," was primarily for military and judicial purposes. Cf Ex 18, 21: 2 Sm 18, 1.

b 5–15: Nm 10, 14–27. c Ex 18, 21. 25.

thousand seven hundred were enrolled in the tribe of Dan.

40Of the descendants of Asher, registered by lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all the males of twenty years or more who were fit for military service were polled, 41forty-one thousand five hundred were enrolled in the tribe of Asher.

Ch 1–10 See RG 97

42Of the descendants of Naphtali, registered by lineage in clans and ancestral houses: when all the males of twenty years or more who were fit for military service were polled, 43fifty-three thousand four hundred were enrolled in the tribe of Naphtali.

44It was these who were registered, each according to his ancestral house, in the census taken by Moses and Aaron and the twelve princes of Israel. 45The total number of the Israelites of twenty years or more who were fit for military service, registered by ancestral houses, 46was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

**Levites Omitted in the Census** 47The Levites, however, were not registered[d] by ancestral tribe with the others.* 48For the LORD had told Moses, 49"The tribe of Levi alone you shall not enroll nor include in the census along with the other Israelites. 50You are to give the Levites charge of the Dwelling of the commandments with all its equipment and all that belongs to it. It is they who shall carry the Dwelling with all its equipment and who shall be its ministers.[e] They shall therefore camp around the Dwelling. 51When the Dwelling is to move on, the Levites shall take it down; when the Dwelling is to be pitched, it is the Levites who shall set it up.[f] Any layman who comes near it shall be put to death. 52While the other Israelites shall camp by companies, each in his own division of the camp,[g] 53the Levites shall camp around the Dwelling of the commandments.[h] Otherwise God's wrath will strike the Israelite community. The Levites, then, shall have charge of the Dwelling of the commandments." 54All this the Israelites fulfilled as the LORD had commanded Moses.

## CHAPTER 2

**Arrangement of the Tribes** 1The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: 2"The Israelites shall camp, each in his own division, under the ensigns of their ancestral houses.[i] They shall camp around the meeting tent, but at some distance from it.

3*"Encamped on the east side, toward the sunrise, shall be the divisional camp of Judah, arranged in companies. [The prince of the Judahites was Nahshon, son of Amminadab, 4and his soldiers amounted in the census to seventy-four thousand six hundred.] 5With Judah shall camp the tribe of Issachar [their prince was Nethanel, son of Zuar, 6and his soldiers amounted in the census to fifty-four thousand four hundred] 7and the tribe of Zebulun. [Their prince was Eliab, son of Helon, 8and his soldiers amounted in the census to fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9The total number of those registered by companies in the camp of Judah was one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred.] These shall be first on the march.

10"On the south side shall be the divisional camp of Reuben, arranged in companies. [Their prince was Elizur, son of Shedeur, 11and his soldiers amounted in the census to forty-six thousand five hundred.] 12Beside them shall camp the tribe of Simeon [their prince was Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, 13and his soldiers amounted in the census to fifty-nine thousand three hundred] 14and next the tribe of Gad. [Their prince was Eliasaph, son of Reuel, 15and his soldiers amounted in the census to forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. 16The total number of those registered by companies in the camp of Reuben was one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty.] These shall be second on the march.

17"Then the meeting tent and the camp of the Levites shall set out in the middle of the line. As

1, 47: The Levites were not enrolled in this census, which was principally for military purposes, but a separate census was made of them. Cf Nm 3, 15f. 39.

2, 3–31: A similar arrangement of the tribes around the central sanctuary in the ideal Israelite state is given in Ez 48.

d Nm 2, 33; 3, 14–39; 26, 57–62. e Nm 3, 7f; 4, 2–49; 1 Chr 6, 48. f Nm 3, 10. 38; 18, 7; 2 Sm 6, 6f; 1 Chr 13, 10. g Nm 2, 2. 34. h Nm 3, 7f. 38; 8, 19; 18, 4f. i Nm 1. 52.

in camp, so also on the march, every man shall
be in his proper place, with his own division.
18"On the west side shall be the divisional
camp of Ephraim, arranged in companies. [Their
prince was Elishama, son of Ammihud, 19and his
soldiers amounted in the census to forty thou-
sand five hundred.] 20Beside them shall camp
the tribe of Manasseh [their prince was Gama-
liel, son of Pedahzur, 21and his soldiers
amounted in the census to thirty-two thousand
two hundred] 22and the tribe of Benjamin. [Their
prince was Abidan, son of Gideoni, 23and his
soldiers amounted in the census to thirty-five
thousand four hundred. 24The total number of
those registered by companies in the camp of
Ephraim was one hundred and eight thousand
one hundred.] These shall be third on the march.
25"On the north side shall be the divisional
camp of Dan, arranged in companies. [Their
prince was Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai, 26and
his soldiers amounted in the census to sixty-two
thousand seven hundred.] 27Beside them shall
camp the tribe of Asher [their prince was Pagiel,
son of Ochran, 28and his soldiers amounted in
the census to forty-one thousand five hundred]
29and next the tribe of Naphtali. [Their prince
was Ahira, son of Enan, 30and his soldiers
amounted in the census to fifty-three thousand
four hundred. 31The total number of those
registered by companies in the camp of Dan was
one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hun-
dred.] These shall be the last of the divisions on
the march."
32 *j*This was the census of the Israelites taken
by ancestral houses. The total number of those
registered by companies in the camps was six
hundred and three thousand five hundred and
fifty. 33The Levites, however, were not regis-
tered with the other Israelites, for so the LORD
had commanded Moses. 34The Israelites did just
as the LORD had commanded Moses; both in
camp and on the march they were in their own
divisions, every man according to his clan and
his ancestral house.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–10
See RG
97

**The Sons of Aaron** 1The following were the
descendants of Aaron and Moses at the time that
the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. 2The
sons of Aaron were Nadab his first-born, Abihu,
Eleazar, and Ithamar.*k* 3These are the names of
the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests who were
ordained to exercise the priesthood. 4But when
Nadab and Abihu offered profane fire before the
LORD in the desert of Sinai, they met death*l* in
the presence of the LORD, and left no sons.
Thereafter only Eleazar and Ithamar performed
the priestly functions under the direction of their
father Aaron.

**Levites in Place of the First-born** 5Now the
LORD said to Moses: 6"Summon the tribe of Levi
and present them to Aaron the priest, as his
assistants.*m* 7They shall discharge his obligations
and those of the whole community before the
meeting tent*n* by serving at the Dwelling. 8They
shall have custody of all the furnishings of the
meeting tent and discharge the duties of the
Israelites in the service of the Dwelling. 9You
shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons;*o*
they have been set aside from among the Israel-
ites as dedicated to me. 10But only Aaron and his
descendants shall you appoint to have charge of
the priestly functions.*p* Any layman who comes
near shall be put to death."
11The LORD said to Moses, 12"It is I who have
chosen the Levites from the Israelites in place of
every first-born that opens the womb among the
Israelites.*q* The Levites, therefore, are mine,
13because every first-born is mine. When I slew
all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I made all
the first-born in Israel sacred to me, both of man
and of beast. They belong to me; I am the
LORD."

**Census of the Levites** 14The LORD said to
Moses in the desert of Sinai, 15"Take a census of
the Levites by ancestral houses and clans, regis-
tering every male of a month or more."*r* 16Mo-
ses, therefore, took their census in accordance
with the command the LORD had given him.

j 32–33: Nm 1, 46–49. k Ex 6, 23. l Nm 26, 61; Lv 10, 1f; 1 Chr 24, 2. m Nm 18, 2. n Nm 8, 24. o Nm 8, 19. p Nm 1, 51; 18, 7. q 12f: Nm 3, 41; 8, 16f; Ex 13, 2. 12. 15. r Nm 3, 39; 26, 62.

17 [s]The sons of Levi were named Gershon,
Kohath and Merari. 18The descendants of Ger-
shon, by clans, were named Libni and Shimei.
19The descendants of Kohath, by clans, were
Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. 20The descen-
dants of Merari, by clans, were Mahli and
Mushi. These were the clans of the Levites by
ancestral houses.

**Duties of the Levitical Clans** 21To Gershon
belonged the clan of the Libnites and the clan of
the Shimeites; these were the clans of the
Gershonites. 22When all their males of a month
or more were registered, they numbered seven
thousand five hundred. 23The clans of the Ger-
shonites camped behind the Dwelling, to the
west. 24The prince of their ancestral house was
Eliasaph, son of Lael. 25 [t]At the meeting tent they
had charge of whatever pertained to the Dwell-
ing,* the tent and its covering, the curtain at the
entrance of the meeting tent, 26the hangings of
the court, the curtain at the entrance of the
court enclosing both the Dwelling and the altar,
and the ropes.

27To Kohath belonged the clans of the Amram-
ites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uz-
zielites; these were the clans of the Kohathites.
28When all their males of a month or more were
registered, they numbered eight thousand three
hundred. They had charge of the sanctuary.
29The clans of the Kohathites camped at the
south side of the Dwelling. 30The prince of their
ancestral house was Elizaphan, son of Uzziel.
31They had charge of whatever pertained to the
ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the
utensils with which the ministry of the sanctuary
was exercised, and the veil.* 32The chief prince
of the Levites, however, was Eleazar, son of
Aaron the priest; he was supervisor over those
who had charge of the sanctuary.

33To Merari belonged the clans of the
Mahlites and the Mushites; these were the clans
of Merari. 34When all their males of a month or
more were registered, they numbered six thou-
sand two hundred. 35The prince of the ancestral
house of the clans of Merari was Zuriel, son of
Abihail. They camped at the north side of the
Dwelling. 36*The Merarites were charged with
the care of whatever pertained to the boards of
the Dwelling, its bars, columns, pedestals, and
all its fittings, 37as well as the columns of the
surrounding court with their pedestals, pegs and
ropes.

38East of the Dwelling, that is, in front of the
meeting tent, toward the sunrise, were camped
Moses and Aaron and the latter's sons. They
discharged the obligations of the sanctuary for
the Israelites. Any layman who came near was to
be put to death.

39The total number of male Levites a month
old or more whom Moses had registered by
clans in keeping with the LORD's command, was
twenty-two thousand.

**Census and Ransom of First-born** 40The
LORD then said to Moses, "Take a census of all
the first-born males of the Israelites a month old
or more, and compute their total number.
41Then assign the Levites to me, the LORD, in
place of all the first-born of the Israelites, as well
as their cattle in place of all the first-born among
the cattle of the Israelites." 42So Moses took a
census of all the first-born of the Israelites, as the
LORD had commanded him. 43When all the first-
born males of a month or more were registered,
they numbered twenty-two thousand two hun-
dred and seventy-three.

44The LORD said to Moses: 45"Take the Le-
vites in place of all the first-born of the Israelites,
and the Levites' cattle in place of their cattle,
that the Levites may belong to me. I am the
LORD. 46As ransom for the two hundred and
seventy-three first-born of the Israelites who

**3, 25f**: The Gershonites had two wagons for transporting these things; cf Nm 7, 7. For a description of the Dwelling, see Ex 26, 1–6; the tent, Ex 26, 7–13; its covering, Ex 26, 14; the curtain at the entrance, Ex 26, 36; the hangings of the court, Ex 27, 9–15; the curtain at the entrance of the court, Ex 27, 16; the ropes of the Dwelling, Ex 35, 18.

**3, 31**: The Kohathites had to carry these sacred objects on their shoulders; cf Nm 7, 9. For a description of the ark, see Ex 25, 10–22; the table, Ex 25, 23–30; the lampstand, Ex 25, 31–40; the altars, Ex 27, 1–8; 30, 1–10.

**3, 36f**: The Merarites had four wagons for transporting this heavy material; cf Nm 7, 8. For a description of the boards, bars, etc., of the Dwelling, see Ex 26, 15–30; the columns, pedestals, etc., of the court, Ex 27, 9–19.

s 17–20: Nm 26, 57; Gn 46, 11; Ex 6, 16–19; 1 Chr 6, 1f. 16–19. t 25–26: Ex 26, 7. 14. 36; 36, 14.

outnumber the Levites, [47]you shall take five
shekels for each individual, according to the
standard of the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs
to the shekel.[u] [48]Give this silver to Aaron and
his sons as ransom for the extra number." [49]So
Moses took the silver as ransom from those who
were left when the rest had been redeemed by
the Levites. [50]From the first-born of the Israelites
he received in silver one thousand three hun-
dred and sixty-five shekels according to the
sanctuary standard. [51]He then gave this ransom
silver to Aaron and his sons, as the LORD had
commanded him.

## CHAPTER 4

**Duties Further Defined** [1]The LORD said to
Moses and Aaron: [2]"Among the Levites take a
total of the Kohathites, by clans and ancestral
houses, all the men of the Kohathites [3]between
thirty* and fifty years of age; these are to
undertake obligatory tasks in the meeting tent.[v]

[4]"The service of the Kohathites in the meeting
tent concerns the most sacred objects. [5]In break-
ing camp, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take
down the screening curtain* and cover the ark
of the commandments with it. [6]Over these they
shall put a cover of tahash skin, and on top of
this spread an all-violet cloth. They shall then
put the poles in place. [7]On the table of the
Presence they shall spread a violet cloth and put
on it the plates and cups, as well as the bowls
and pitchers for libations; the established bread
offering shall remain on the table. [8]Over these
they shall spread a scarlet cloth and cover all this
with tahash skin. They shall then put the poles
in place. [9]They shall use a violet cloth to cover
the lampstand with its lamps, trimming shears,
and trays, as well as the various containers of oil
from which it is supplied. [10]The lampstand with
all its utensils they shall then enclose in a
covering of tahash skin, and place on a litter.
[11]Over the golden altar* they shall spread a
violet cloth, and cover this also with a covering
of tahash skin. They shall then put the poles in
place. [12]Taking the utensils of the sanctuary
service, they shall wrap them all in violet cloth
and cover them with tahash skin. They shall
then place them on a litter. [13]After cleansing the
altar* of its ashes, they shall spread a purple
cloth over it. [14]On this they shall put all the
utensils with which it is served: the fire pans,
forks,* shovels, basins, and all the utensils of the
altar. They shall then spread a covering of tahash
skin over this, and put the poles in place.

[15]"Only after Aaron and his sons have finished
covering the sacred objects and all their utensils
on breaking camp, shall the Kohathites enter to
carry them. But they shall not touch the sacred
objects; if they do they will die.[w] These, then,
are the objects in the meeting tent that the
Kohathites shall carry.

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[16]"Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, shall be in
charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant
incense, the established cereal offering, and the
anointing oil. He shall be in charge of the whole
Dwelling with all the sacred objects and utensils
that are in it."

[17]The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: [18]"Do
not let the group of Kohathite clans perish from
the body of the Levites. [19]That they may live and
not die when they approach the most sacred
objects, this is what you shall do for them: Aaron
and his sons shall go in and assign to each of
them his task and what he must carry; [20]but the
Kohathites shall not go in to look upon the
sacred objects, even for an instant; if they do,
they will die."[x]

[21]The LORD said to Moses, [22]"Take a total
among the Gershonites also, by ancestral houses
and clans, [23]of all the men between thirty and
fifty years of age; these are to undertake obliga-
tory tasks in the meeting tent. [24]This is the task
of the clans of the Gershonites, what they must
do and what they must carry: [25]they shall carry

4, 3: Thirty: at a later period the Levites began to serve when they were twenty-five (Nm 8, 24) or even only twenty years old (1 Chr 23, 24. 27; 2 Chr 31, 17; Ezr 3, 8; but cf 1 Chr 23, 3).
4, 5: The screening curtain: the veil between the inner and the outer rooms of the sanctuary. Cf Ex 26, 31–33.
4, 11: The golden altar: the altar of incense. Cf Ex 30, 1–6.
4, 13: The altar: the bronze altar of holocausts. Cf Ex 27, 1–8.
4, 14: Forks: used in turning over the sacrificed animal on the fire of the altar. Basins: to receive the sacrificial blood; cf Zec 9, 15.

u Nm 18, 16; Ex 30, 13; Lv 27, 25; Ez 45, 12. v Nm 8, 24; 1 Chr 23, 24–27. w 2 Sm 6, 6f; 1 Chr 13, 9f. x 1 Sm 6, 19.

the sheets of the Dwelling, the meeting tent
with its covering and the outer wrapping of
tahash skin, the curtain at the entrance of the
meeting tent, 26the hangings of the court, the
curtain at the entrance of the court that encloses
both the Dwelling and the altar, together with
their ropes and all other objects necessary in
their use. Whatever is to be done with these
things shall be their task. 27The service of the
Gershonites shall be entirely under the direction
of Aaron and his sons, with regard to what they
must do and what they must carry; you shall
make each man of them responsible for what he
is to carry. 28This, then, is the task of the
Gershonites in the meeting tent; and they shall
be under the supervision of Ithamar, son of
Aaron the priest.

29"Among the Merarites, too, you shall enroll
by clans and ancestral houses 30all their men
between thirty and fifty years of age; these are to
undertake obligatory tasks in the meeting tent.
31 *y*This is what they shall be responsible for
carrying, all the years of their service in the
meeting tent: the boards of the Dwelling with its
bars, columns and pedestals, 32and the columns
of the surrounding court with their pedestals,
pegs and ropes. You shall designate for each man
of them all the objects connected with his
service, which he shall be responsible for carrying. 33This, then, is the task of the clans of the
Merarites during all their service in the meeting
tent under the supervision of Ithamar, son of
Aaron the priest."

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**Number of Adult Levites** 34So Moses and
Aaron and the princes of the community made a
registration among the Kohathites, by clans and
ancestral houses, 35of all the men between thirty
and fifty years of age. These were to undertake
obligatory tasks in the meeting tent; 36as registered by clans, they numbered two thousand
seven hundred and fifty. 37Such was the census
of all the men of the Kohathite clans who were
to serve in the meeting tent, which Moses took,
together with Aaron, as the LORD bade him.

38The registration was then made among the
Gershonites, by clans and ancestral houses, 39of
all the men between thirty and fifty years of age.
These were to undertake obligatory tasks in the
meeting tent; 40as registered by clans and ancestral houses, they numbered two thousand six
hundred and thirty. 41Such was the census of all
the men of the Gershonite clans who were to
serve in the meeting tent, which Moses took,
together with Aaron, at the LORD's bidding.

42Then the registration was made among the
Merarites, by clans and ancestral houses, 43of all
the men from thirty up to fifty years of age.
These were to undertake obligatory tasks in the
meeting tent; 44as registered by clans, they
numbered three thousand two hundred. 45Such
was the census of the men of the Merarite clans
which Moses took, together with Aaron, as the
LORD bade him.

46Therefore, when Moses and Aaron and the
Israelite princes had completed the registration
among the Levites, by clans and ancestral
houses, 47of all the men between thirty and fifty
years of age who were to undertake tasks of
service or transport of the meeting tent, 48the
total number registered was eight thousand five
hundred and eighty. 49According to the LORD's
bidding to Moses, they gave them their individual assignments for service and for transport; so
the LORD had commanded Moses.

## CHAPTER 5

**The Unclean Expelled** 1The LORD said to
Moses: 2"Order the Israelites to expel from
camp every leper, and everyone suffering from a
discharge, and everyone who has become unclean by contact with a corpse.* *z* 3Male and
female alike, you shall compel them to go out of
the camp; they are not to defile the camp in
which I dwell." *a* 4The Israelites obeyed the
command that the LORD had given Moses; they
expelled them from the camp.

**Unjust Possession** 5*The LORD said to Moses,

**5, 2**: For the laws regarding victims of leprosy, see Lv 13–14; those suffering from a discharge, Lv 15; the unclean by contact with a corpse, Nm 19, 11–22; Lv 21, 1–4.

**5, 5–10**: The basic law on unjust possession is given in Lv 5,

*y* Nm 3, 36f. *z* Nm 19, 11. 13; Lv 13, 46; 21, 1; 22, 4.
*a* Nm 35, 34.

6 [b]"Tell the Israelites: If a man (or woman)
commits a fault against his fellow man and
wrongs him, thus breaking faith with the LORD,
7he shall confess the wrong he has done, restore
his ill-gotten goods in full, and in addition give
one fifth of their value to the one he has
wronged. 8However, if the latter has no next of
kin* to whom restoration of the ill-gotten goods
can be made, the goods to be restored shall be
the LORD's and shall fall to the priest; this is
apart from the atonement ram with which the
priest makes amends for the guilty man. 9Like-
wise, every sacred contribution that the Israel-
ites are bound to make shall fall to the priest.[c]
10Each Israelite man may dispose of his own
sacred contributions; they become the property
of the priest to whom he gives them."[d]

**Ordeal for a Suspected Adulteress** 11The
LORD said to Moses, 12"Speak to the Israelites
and tell them: If a man's wife goes astray and
becomes unfaithful to him 13by having inter-
course with another man,[e] though her husband
has not sufficient evidence of the fact, so that her
impurity remains unproved for lack of a witness
who might have caught her in the act; 14or if a
man is overcome by a feeling of jealousy that
makes him suspect his wife, whether she was
actually impure or not: 15he shall bring his wife
to the priest and shall take along as an offering
for her a tenth of an ephah of barley meal.
However, he shall not pour oil on it nor put
frankincense over it, since it is a cereal offering
of jealousy, a cereal offering for an appeal in a
question of guilt.

16"The priest shall first have the woman come
forward and stand before the LORD. 17In an
earthen vessel he shall meanwhile put some holy
water,* as well as some dust that he has taken
from the floor of the Dwelling.[f] 18Then, as the
woman stands before the LORD, the priest shall
uncover her head and place in her hands the
cereal offering of her appeal,* that is, the cereal
offering of jealousy, while he himself shall hold
the bitter water that brings a curse. 19Then he
shall adjure the woman, saying to her, 'If no
other man has had intercourse with you, and
you have not gone astray by impurity while
under the authority of your husband, be immune
to the curse brought by this bitter water. 20But if
you have gone astray while under the authority
of your husband and have acted impurely by
letting a man other than your husband have
intercourse with you'— 21so shall the priest
adjure the woman with this oath of
imprecation—'may the LORD make you an exam-
ple of malediction and imprecation* among your
people by causing your thighs to waste away and
your belly to swell! 22May this water, then, that
brings a curse, enter your body to make your
belly swell and your thighs waste away!'[g] And
the woman shall say, 'Amen, amen!'* 23The
priest shall put these imprecations in writing and
shall then wash them off into the bitter water,
24which he is to have the woman drink, so that
it may go into her with all its bitter curse. 25But
first he shall take the cereal offering of jealousy
from the woman's hand, and having waved this
offering before the LORD, shall put it near the
altar, 26where he shall take a handful of the
cereal offering as its token offering and burn it on
the altar.[h] Only then shall he have the woman
drink the water. 27Once she has done so, if she
has been impure and unfaithful to her husband,
this bitter water that brings a curse will go into
her, and her belly will swell and her thighs will
waste away, so that she will become an example

14–26. The new item here concerns the case where the injured party has died and left no heirs, in which case the restitution must be made to the priest.

**5, 8:** Next of kin: literally, "redeemer," a technical term denoting the nearest relative, upon whom devolved the obligation of "redeeming" the family property, in order to keep it within the family. Cf Lv 25, 25; Ru 4, 1–6.

**5, 17:** Holy water: water from the laver that stood in the court of the Dwelling.

**5, 18:** Appeal: by which she invokes the Lord and refers her case to his decision.

**5, 21:** An example of malediction and imprecation: the woman's name would be used in curses and oaths to invoke a similar misfortune on another person or on oneself. Cf Is 65, 15; Jer 29, 22.

**5, 22:** Amen: a Hebrew word meaning, "certainly, truly," used to give assent to a statement, a curse, a blessing, a prayer, or the like; in this sense of "so be it," the Christian liturgy also uses it after prayers and blessings.

b 6ff: Lv 5, 21–25. c Dt 18, 3f; Ex 44, 29f. d Lv 10, 12–15. e Lv 18, 20; Jn 8, 4. f Nm 19, 17. g Ps 109, 18. h Lv 5, 12.

of imprecation among her people. [28]If, however,
the woman has not defiled herself, but is still
pure, she will be immune and will still be able to
bear children.

[29]"This, then, is the law for jealousy: When a
woman goes astray while under the authority of
her husband and acts impurely, [30]or when such
a feeling of jealousy comes over a man that he
becomes suspicious of his wife, he shall have her
stand before the LORD, and the priest shall apply
this law in full to her. [31]The man shall be free
from guilt,* but the woman shall bear such guilt
as she may have."

## CHAPTER 6

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**Laws Concerning Nazirites** [1]The LORD said
to Moses: [2]"Speak to the Israelites and tell
them: When a man (or a woman) solemnly takes
the nazirite* vow to dedicate himself to the
LORD, [3]he shall abstain from wine and strong
drink;[i] he may neither drink wine vinegar, other
vinegar, or any kind of grape juice, nor eat either
fresh or dried grapes. [4]As long as he is a nazirite
he shall not eat anything of the produce of the
vine; not even unripe grapes or grapeskins.
[5]While he is under the nazirite vow, no razor
shall touch his hair.[j] Until the period of his
dedication to the LORD is over, he shall be
sacred, and shall let the hair of his head grow
freely. [6]As long as he is dedicated to the LORD,
he shall not enter where a dead person is.[k] [7]Not
even for his father or mother, his sister or
brother, should they die, may he become unclean, since his head bears his dedication to God.
[8]As long as he is a nazirite he is sacred to the
LORD.

[9]"If someone dies very suddenly in his presence, so that his dedicated head becomes unclean, he shall shave his head on the day of his
purification, that is, on the seventh day. [10]On the
eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two
pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the
meeting tent. [11]The priest shall offer up the one
as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust,
thus making atonement for him for the sin he
has committed by reason of the dead person. On
the same day he shall reconsecrate his head
[12]and begin anew the period of his dedication to
the LORD as a nazirite, bringing a yearling lamb
as a guilt offering. The previous period is not
valid, because his dedicated head became unclean.

[13]"This is the ritual for the nazirite:[l] On the
day he completes the period of his dedication he
shall go to the entrance of the meeting tent,
[14]bringing as his offering to the LORD one
unblemished yearling lamb for a holocaust, one
unblemished yearling ewe lamb for a sin offering, one unblemished ram as a peace offering,
along with their cereal offerings and libations,
[15]and a basket of unleavened cakes of fine flour
mixed with oil and of unleavened wafers spread
with oil. [16]The priest shall present them before
the LORD, and shall offer up the sin offering and
the holocaust for him. [17]He shall then offer up
the ram as a peace offering to the LORD, with its
cereal offering and libation, and the basket of
unleavened cakes. [18]Then at the entrance of the
meeting tent the nazirite shall shave his dedicated head,[m] collect the hair, and put it in the
fire that is under the peace offering. [19]After the
nazirite has shaved off his dedicated hair, the
priest shall take a boiled shoulder of the ram, as
well as one unleavened cake and one unleavened wafer from the basket, and shall place
them in the hands of the nazirite. [20]The priest
shall then wave them as a wave offering before
the LORD. They become sacred and shall belong
to the priest, along with the breast of the wave
offering and the leg of the raised offering. Only
after this may the nazirite drink wine.

[21]"This, then, is the law for the nazirite; this

5, 31: Free from guilt: by fulfilling his obligation of obtaining a decision in the matter.

6, 1ff: Nazirite: from the Hebrew word nazir, meaning "set apart as sacred, dedicated, vowed." The nazirite vow could be either for a limited period or for life. Those bound by this vow had to abstain from all the products of the grapevine, from cutting or shaving their hair, and from contact with a corpse. They were regarded as men of God like the prophets; cf Am 2, 11f. Examples of lifelong nazirites were Samson (Jgs 13, 4f. 7; 16, 17), Samuel (1 Sm 1, 11), and John the Baptizer (Lk 1, 15). At the time of Christ the practice of taking the nazirite vow for a limited period seems to have been quite common, even among the early Christians; cf Acts 18, 18; 21, 23f. 26.

i 3f: Jgs 13, 7. 14. j Jgs 13, 5; 16, 17; 1 Sm 1, 11. k Nm 19, 11. 16; Lv 21, 11. l Acts 21, 24, 26. m Acts 18, 18; 21, 24.

is the offering to the LORD which is included in
his vow of dedication apart from anything else
which his means may allow. Thus shall he carry
out the law of his dedication in keeping with the
vow he has taken."

**The Priestly Blessing** 22The LORD said to
Moses: 23"Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell
them: This is how you shall bless the Israelites.
Say to them:

24The LORD bless you and keep you!
25The LORD let his face shine* upon you, and be
gracious to you!
26The LORD look upon you kindly and give you
peace!*

27So shall they invoke my name upon the
Israelites, and I will bless them."

## CHAPTER 7

**Offerings of Princes** 1Now, when Moses had
completed the erection of the Dwelling and had
anointed and consecrated it with all its equip-
ment[n] (as well as the altar with all its equip-
ment), 2an offering was made by the princes of
Israel, who were heads of ancestral houses; the
same princes of the tribes who supervised the
census. 3The offering they brought before the
LORD consisted of six baggage wagons and
twelve oxen, that is, a wagon for every two
princes, and an ox for every prince. These they
presented as their offering before the Dwelling.

4The LORD then said to Moses, 5"Accept their
offering, that these things may be put to use in
the service of the meeting tent. Assign them to
the Levites, to each group in proportion to its
duties." 6So Moses accepted the wagons and
oxen, and assigned them to the Levites. 7He
gave two wagons and four oxen to the Gershon-
ites[o] in proportion to their duties, 8and four
wagons and eight oxen to the Merarites in
proportion to their duties, under the supervision
of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest. 9He gave
none to the Kohathites, because they had to
carry on their shoulders the sacred objects which
were their charge.[p]

10For the dedication of the altar also, the
princes brought offerings before the altar on the
day it was anointed.[q] 11But the LORD said to
Moses, "Let one prince a day present his offering
for the dedication of the altar."

12*The one who presented his offering on the
first day was Nahshon, son of Amminadab,
prince of the tribe of Judah. 13His offering
consisted of one silver plate weighing a hundred
and thirty shekels according to the sanctuary
standard and one silver basin weighing seventy
shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed with oil
for a cereal offering; 14one gold cup of ten
shekels' weight filled with incense; 15one young
bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; 16one goat for a sin offering; 17and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Nahshon, son of Amminadab.

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18On the second day Nethanel, son of Zuar,
prince of Issachar, made his offering. 19He pre-
sented as his offering one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; 20one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; 21one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; 22one goat for a sin offering; 23and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Nethanel, son of Zuar.

24On the third day it was the turn of Eliab, son
of Helon, prince of the Zebulunites. 25His offer-
ing consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; 26one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; 27one

**6, 25:** Let his face shine: a Hebrew idiom for "smile."
**6, 26:** Peace: the Hebrew word includes the idea of "prosperity, happiness."
**7, 12–88:** The repetitious account of the same offerings brought by each of the twelve tribal princes and the summary of them are characteristic of an official registration.

n Ex 40, 17. o 7f: Nm 4, 24–33. p Nm 3, 31; 4, 4–15. q Nm 7, 84.

young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [28]one goat for a sin offering; [29]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Eliab, son of Helon.

[30]On the fourth day it was the turn of Elizur,
son of Shedeur, prince of the Reubenites. [31]His
offering consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [32]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [33]one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [34]one goat for a sin offering; [35]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Elizur, son of Shedeur.

[36]On the fifth day it was the turn of Shelu-
miel, son of Zurishaddai, prince of the Sim-
eonites. [37]His offering consisted of one silver
plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels
according to the sanctuary standard and one
silver basin weighing seventy shekels, both filled
with fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal
offering; [38]one gold cup of ten shekels' weight
filled with incense; [39]one young bull, one ram,
and one yearling lamb for a holocaust; [40]one
goat for a sin offering; [41]and two oxen, five
rams, five goats, and five yearling lambs for a
peace offering. This was the offering of Shelu-
miel, son of Zurishaddai.

[42]On the sixth day it was the turn of Eliasaph,
son of Reuel, prince of the Gadites. [43]His offer-
ing consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [44]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [45]one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [46]one goat for a sin offering; [47]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Eliasaph, son of Reuel.

[48]On the seventh day it was the turn of
Elishama, son of Ammihud, prince of the Ephra-
imites. [49]His offering consisted of one silver plate
weighing a hundred and thirty shekels according
to the sanctuary standard and one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, both filled with fine
flour mixed with oil for a cereal offering; [50]one
gold cup of ten shekels' weight filled with
incense; [51]one young bull, one ram, and one
yearling lamb for a holocaust; [52]one goat for a
sin offering; [53]and two oxen, five rams, five
goats, and five yearling lambs for a peace offer-
ing. This was the offering of Elishama, son of
Ammihud.

[54]On the eighth day it was the turn of
Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, prince of the Manas-
sehites. [55]His offering consisted of one silver
plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels
according to the sanctuary standard and one
silver basin weighing seventy shekels, both filled
with fine flour mixed with oil for a cereal
offering; [56]one gold cup of ten shekels' weight
filled with incense; [57]one young bull, one ram,
and one yearling lamb for a holocaust; [58]one
goat for a sin offering; [59]and two oxen, five
rams, five goats, and five yearling lambs for a
peace offering. This was the offering of Gamaliel,
son of Pedahzur.

[60]On the ninth day it was the turn of Abidan,
son of Gideoni, prince of the Benjaminites. [61]His
offering consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [62]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [63]one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [64]one goat for a sin offering; [65]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Abidan, son of Gideoni.

[66]On the tenth day it was the turn of Ahiezer,
son of Ammishaddai, prince of the Danites. [67]His
offering consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [68]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [69]one

young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [70]one goat for a sin offering; [71]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai.

[72]On the eleventh day it was the turn of
Pagiel, son of Ochran, prince of the Asherites.
[73]His offering consisted of one silver plate weigh-
ing a hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [74]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [75]one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [76]one goat for a sin offering; [77]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Pagiel, son of Ochran.

[78]On the twelfth day it was the turn of Ahira,
son of Enan, prince of the Naphtalites. [79]His
offering consisted of one silver plate weighing a
hundred and thirty shekels according to the
sanctuary standard and one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour mixed
with oil for a cereal offering; [80]one gold cup of
ten shekels' weight filled with incense; [81]one
young bull, one ram, and one yearling lamb for a
holocaust; [82]one goat for a sin offering; [83]and
two oxen, five rams, five goats, and five yearling
lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering
of Ahira, son of Enan.

[84]These were the offerings for the dedication
of the altar, given by the princes of Israel on the
occasion of its anointing: twelve silver plates,
twelve silver basins, and twelve gold cups.
[85]Each silver plate weighed a hundred and thirty
shekels, and each silver basin seventy, so that all
the silver of these vessels amounted to two
thousand four hundred shekels, according to the
sanctuary standard. [86]The twelve gold cups that
were filled with incense weighed ten shekels
apiece, according to the sanctuary standard, so
that all the gold of the cups amounted to one
hundred and twenty shekels. [87]The animals for
the holocausts were, in all, twelve young bulls,
twelve rams, and twelve yearling lambs, with
their cereal offerings; those for the sin offerings
were twelve goats. [88]The animals for the peace
offerings were, in all, twenty-four oxen, sixty
rams, sixty goats, and sixty yearling lambs.
These, then, were the offerings for the dedica-
tion of the altar after it was anointed.

**The Voice** [89]When Moses entered the meeting
tent to speak with him, he heard the voice
addressing him from above the propitiatory[r] on
the ark of the commandments, from between
the two cherubim; and it spoke to him. . . .

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 1–10
See RG
97

**The Lamps Set Up** [1]The LORD spoke to Mo-
ses, and said, [2]"Give Aaron this command:
When you set up the seven lamps,[s] have them
throw their light toward the front of the
lampstand." [3]Aaron did so, setting up the lamps
to face toward the front of the lampstand, just as
the LORD had commanded Moses. [4]The
lampstand was made of beaten gold[t] in both its
shaft and its branches, according to the pattern
which the LORD had shown Moses.

**Purification of the Levites** [5]The LORD said to
Moses: [6]"Take the Levites from among the
Israelites and purify them.* [7]This is what you
shall do to them to purify them. Sprinkle them
with the water of remission;* then have them
shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes,
and so purify themselves. [8]They shall take a
young bull, along with its cereal offering of fine
flour mixed with oil; you shall take another
young bull for a sin offering. [9]Then have the
Levites come forward in front of the meeting
tent, where you shall assemble also the whole
community of the Israelites. [10]While the Levites
are present before the LORD, the Israelites shall
lay their hands upon them. [11]Let Aaron then
offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave
offering from the Israelites, thus devoting them

8, 6: Purify them: in the language of the Pentateuch only the priests were "consecrated," that is, made sacred or set aside for the Lord, in an elaborate ceremony described in Ex 29; Lv 8. The Levites were merely "purified," that is, made ritually clean for their special work.

8, 7: Water of remission: literally, "water of sin," that is, for the remission of sin.

r Ex 25, 22. s Ex 25, 37. t Ex 25, 31. 40.

to the service of the LORD. [12]The Levites in turn shall lay their hands on the heads of the bullocks, which shall then be immolated, the one as a sin offering and the other as a holocaust to the LORD, in atonement for the Levites. [13]Thus, then, shall you have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons, to be offered as a wave offering to the LORD; [14]and thus shall you set aside the Levites from the rest of the Israelites, that they may be mine.[u]

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[15]"Only then shall the Levites enter upon their service in the meeting tent. You shall purify them and offer them as a wave offering; [16]because they, among the Israelites, are strictly dedicated to me; I have taken them for myself in place of every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites.[v] [17]Indeed, all the first-born among the Israelites, both of man and of beast, belong to me; I consecrated them to myself on the day I slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt.[w] [18]But in place of all the first-born Israelites I have taken the Levites; [19]and I have given these dedicated Israelites to Aaron and his sons[x] to discharge the duties of the Israelites in the meeting tent and to make atonement for them, so that no plague may strike among the Israelites should they come near the sanctuary."

[20]Thus, then, did Moses and Aaron and the whole community of the Israelites deal with the Levites, carrying out exactly the command which the LORD had given Moses concerning them. [21]When the Levites had cleansed themselves of sin* and washed their clothes, Aaron offered them as a wave offering before the LORD, and made atonement for them to purify them. [22]Only then did they enter upon their service in the meeting tent under the supervision of Aaron and his sons. The command which the LORD had given Moses concerning the Levites was carried out.

**Age Limits for Levitical Service** [23]The LORD said to Moses: [24]"This is the rule for the Levites. Each from his twenty-fifth year onward shall perform the required service in the meeting tent.[y] [25]When he is fifty years old, he shall retire from the required service and work no longer. [26]His service with his fellow Levites shall consist in sharing their responsibilities in the meeting tent, but he shall not do the work. This, then, is how you are to regulate the duties of the Levites."

## CHAPTER 9

**Second Passover** [1]In the first month of the year following their departure from the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses in the desert of Sinai, [2]"Tell the Israelites to celebrate the Passover at the prescribed time. [3]The evening twilight of the fourteenth day of this month[z] is the prescribed time when you shall celebrate it, observing all its rules and regulations." [4]Moses, therefore, told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover. [5]And they did so, celebrating the Passover in the desert of Sinai during the evening twilight of the fourteenth day of the first month, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[6]There were some, however, who were unclean because of a human corpse and so could not keep the Passover that day. These men came up to Moses and Aaron that same day [7]and said, "Although we are unclean because of a corpse, why should we be deprived of presenting the LORD's offering at its proper time along with the other Israelites?" [8]Moses answered them, "Wait until I learn what the LORD will command in your regard."

[9]The LORD then said to Moses: [10]"Speak to the Israelites and say: If any one of you or of your descendants is unclean because of a corpse, or if he is absent on a journey, he may still keep the LORD's Passover. [11]But he shall keep it in the second month,[a] during the evening twilight of the fourteenth day of that month, eating it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, [12]and not leaving any of it over till morning, nor breaking any of its bones,[b] but observing all the rules of the Passover. [13]However, anyone who is clean and not away on a journey, who yet fails to keep

8, 21: Cleansed themselves of sin: by having the "water of remission" sprinkled on them as prescribed in v 7.

u Nm 3, 45. v Nm 3, 12. 45. w Nm 3, 13; 13, 2; Lk 2, 23. x Nm 3, 9f. y Nm 4, 3. 23. z Ex 12, 6; Lv 23, 5. a 2 Chr 30, 2–15. b Ex 12, 46; Jn 19, 36.

the Passover, shall be cut off from his people,
because he did not present the LORD's offering at
the prescribed time. That man shall bear the
consequences of his sin.

14"If an alien* who lives among you wishes to
keep the LORD's Passover, he too shall observe
the rules and regulations for the Passover. You
shall have the same law for the resident alien as
for the native of the land."[c]

**The Fiery Cloud** 15On the day when the
Dwelling was erected, the cloud* covered the
Dwelling, the tent of the commandments; but
from evening until morning it took on the
appearance of fire over the Dwelling.[d] 16It was
always so: during the day the Dwelling was
covered by the cloud, which at night had the
appearance of fire. 17Whenever the cloud rose
from the tent, the Israelites would break camp;
wherever the cloud came to rest, they would
pitch camp.[e] 18At the bidding of the LORD the
Israelites moved on, and at his bidding they
encamped.[f] As long as the cloud stayed over the
Dwelling, they remained in camp.

19Even when the cloud tarried many days
over the Dwelling, the Israelites obeyed the
LORD and would not move on; 20yet sometimes
the cloud was over the Dwelling only for a few
days. It was at the bidding of the LORD that they
stayed in camp, and it was at his bidding that
they departed. 21Sometimes the cloud remained
there only from evening until morning; and
when it rose in the morning, they would depart.
Or if the cloud lifted during the day, or even at
night, they would then set out. 22Whether the
cloud tarried over the Dwelling for two days or
for a month or longer, the Israelites remained in
camp and did not depart; but when it lifted, they
moved on. 23Thus, it was always at the bidding
of the LORD that they encamped, and at his
bidding that they set out; ever heeding the
charge of the LORD, as he had bidden them
through Moses.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10-20
See RG
97-98,
101-102

**The Silver Trumpets** 1The LORD said to Moses: 2"Make two trumpets of beaten silver,
which you shall use in assembling the community and in breaking camp. 3When both are
blown, the whole community shall gather round
you at the entrance of the meeting tent; 4but
when one of them is blown, only the princes,
the chiefs of the troops of Israel, shall gather
round you. 5When you sound the first alarm,
those encamped on the east side shall set out;
6when you sound the second alarm, those encamped on the south side shall set out; when
you sound the third alarm, those encamped on
the west side shall set out; when you sound the
fourth alarm, those encamped on the north side
shall set out. Thus shall the alarm be sounded for
them to depart. 7But in calling forth an assembly
you are to blow an ordinary blast, without
sounding the alarm.

8"It is the sons of Aaron, the priests, who shall
blow the trumpets; and the use of them is
prescribed by perpetual statute for you and your
descendants. 9[g]When in your own land you go
to war against an enemy that is attacking you,
you shall sound the alarm on the trumpets, and
the LORD, your God, will remember you and
save you from your foes. 10On your days of
celebration,* your festivals, and your new-moon
feasts, you shall blow the trumpets over your
holocausts and your peace offerings;[h] this will
serve as a reminder of you before your God. I,
the LORD, am your God."

# II: From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

**Departure from Sinai** 11In the second year, on
the twentieth day of the second month, the
cloud rose from the Dwelling of the commandments. 12The Israelites moved on from the

9, 14: An alien: this passage presupposes that he is already circumcised as prescribed in Ex 12, 48.
9, 15: The cloud: already mentioned at the departure from Egypt; cf Ex 13, 21f.
10, 10: Days of celebration: special holidays, such as the occasion of a victory. Festivals: the great annual feasts of the Passover, Pentecost and Booths described in Lv 23; Nm 28–29.

c Ex 12, 48f. d Ex 13, 21. e Wis 18, 3. f 1 Cor 10, 1.
g 2 Chr 13, 14. h Nm 29, 1; 2 Chr 29, 26ff.

desert of Sinai by stages, until the cloud came to
rest in the desert of Paran.
13The first time that they broke camp at the
bidding of the LORD through Moses, 14 *i*the
camp of the Judahites, under its own standard
and arranged in companies, was the first to set
out. Nahshon, son of Amminadab, was over
their host, 15and Nethanel, son of Zuar, over
the host of the tribe of Issachar, 16and Eliab,
son of Helon, over the host of the tribe of
Zebulun. 17Then, after the Dwelling was dis-
mantled, the clans of Gershon and Merari set
out, carrying the Dwelling. 18The camp of the
Reubenites, under its own standard and ar-
ranged in companies, was the next to set out,
with Elizur, son of Shedeur, over their host,
19and Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, over the
host of the tribe of Simeon, 20and Eliasaph, son
of Reuel, over the host of the tribe of Gad.
21The clan of Kohath then set out, carrying the
sacred objects for the Dwelling, which was to
be erected before their arrival. 22The camp of
the Ephraimites next set out, under its own
standard and arranged in companies, with Elish-
ama, son of Ammihud, over their host, 23and
Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, over the host of the
tribe of Manasseh, 24and Abidan, son of Gide-
oni, over the host of the tribe of Benjamin.
25Finally, as rear guard for all the camps, the
camp of the Danites set out, under its own
standard and arranged in companies, with Ahie-
zer, son of Amishaddai, over their host, 26and
Pagiel, son of Ochran, over the host of the tribe
of Asher, 27and Ahira, son of Enan, over the
host of the tribe of Naphtali. 28This was the
order of departure for the Israelites, company
by company.

Ch 10–20
See RG
97–98,
101–102

**Hobab as Guide** As they were setting out,
29Moses said to his brother-in-law Hobab, son of
Reuel the Midianite, "We are setting out for the
place which the LORD has promised to give us.
Come with us, and we will be generous toward
you, for the LORD has promised prosperity to
Israel." 30*But he answered, "No, I will not
come. I am going instead to my own country and
to my own kindred." 31Moses said, "Please, do
not leave us; you know where we can camp in
the desert, and you will serve as eyes for us. 32If
you come with us, we will share with you the
prosperity the LORD will bestow on us."

**Into the Desert** 33*j*They moved on from the
mountain of the LORD,* a three days' journey,
and the ark of the covenant of the LORD which
was to seek out their resting place went the
three days' journey with them. 34And when they
set out from camp, the cloud of the LORD was
over them by day.

35Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say,

"Arise, O LORD, that your enemies may be
scattered,
and those who hate you may flee before
you."

36And when it came to rest, he would say,

"Return, O LORD, you who ride upon the
clouds,
to the troops of Israel."

## CHAPTER 11

**Discontent of the People** 1Now the people
complained in the hearing of the LORD;*k* and
when he heard it his wrath flared up so that the
fire of the LORD burned among them and con-
sumed the outskirts of the camp. 2But when the
people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the
LORD and the fire died out. 3Hence that place
was called Taberah,* because there the fire of
the LORD burned among them.

4The foreign elements among them were so
greedy for meat that even the Israelites lamented
again,*l* "Would that we had meat for food! 5We
remember the fish we used to eat without cost
in Egypt, and the cucumbers, the melons, the
leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6But now we
are famished; we see nothing before us but this
manna."*m*

10, 30ff: Hobab wished to be coaxed before granting the favor. From Jgs 1, 16 it seems probable that he did accede to Moses' request.

10, 33: The mountain of the Lord: Sinai (Horeb), elsewhere always called "the mountain of God."

11, 3: Taberah: means "the burning."

i 14ff: Nm 2, 3. 5. 7. j Dt 1, 33. k Dt 9, 22. l Ps 78, 18. m 5f: Nm 21, 5; Ex 16, 3; Acts 7, 39.

7 [n]Manna was like coriander seed* and had
the appearance of bdellium. 8When they had
gone about and gathered it up, the people would
grind it between millstones or pound it in a
mortar, then cook it in a pot and make it into
loaves, which tasted like cakes made with oil.
9At night, when the dew fell upon the camp, the
manna also fell.[o]

10When Moses heard the people, family after
family, crying at the entrance of their tents, so
that the LORD became very angry, he was
grieved. 11"Why do you treat your servant so
badly?" Moses asked the LORD. "Why are you so
displeased with me that you burden me with all
this people? 12Was it I who conceived all this
people? or was it I who gave them birth, that
you tell me to carry them at my bosom, like a
foster father carrying an infant, to the land you
have promised under oath to their fathers?
13Where can I get meat to give to all this people?
For they are crying to me, 'Give us meat for our
food.' 14I cannot carry all this people by myself,
for they are too heavy for me. 15If this is the way
you will deal with me, then please do me the
favor of killing me at once, so that I need no
longer face this distress."

**The Seventy Elders** 16Then the LORD said to
Moses, "Assemble for me seventy of the elders of
Israel, men you know for true elders and authorities among the people, and bring them to the
meeting tent. When they are in place beside
you, 17I will come down and speak with you
there. I will also take some of the spirit that is on
you and will bestow it on them, that they may
share the burden of the people with you. You
will then not have to bear it by yourself.

18"To the people, however, you shall say:
Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, when you
shall have meat to eat. For in the hearing of the
LORD you have cried, 'Would that we had meat
for food! Oh, how well off we were in Egypt!'
Therefore the LORD will give you meat for food,
19and you will eat it, not for one day, or two
days, or five, or ten, or twenty days, 20but for a
whole month—until it comes out of your very
nostrils and becomes loathsome to you. For you
have spurned the LORD who is in your midst,
and in his presence you have wailed, 'Why did
we ever leave Egypt?' "

21But Moses said, "The people around me
include six hundred thousand soldiers; yet you
say, 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole
month.' 22Can enough sheep and cattle be
slaughtered for them? If all the fish of the sea
were caught for them, would they have
enough?" 23The LORD answered Moses, "Is this
beyond the LORD's reach? You shall see now
whether or not what I have promised you takes
place."

**The Spirit on the Elders** 24So Moses went out
and told the people what the LORD had said.
Gathering seventy elders of the people, he had
them stand around the tent. 25The LORD then
came down in the cloud and spoke to him.
Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, he
bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the
spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.*

26Now two men, one named Eldad and the
other Medad, were not in the gathering but had
been left in the camp. They too had been on the
list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the
spirit came to rest on them also, and they
prophesied in the camp. 27So, when a young
man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are
prophesying in the camp," 28Joshua, son of Nun,
who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said,
"Moses, my lord, stop them." 29But Moses
answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the people of the LORD were
prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his
spirit on them all!" 30Then Moses retired to the
camp, along with the elders of Israel.

**The Quail** 31There arose a wind[p] sent by the

11, 7: Coriander seed: see note on Ex 16, 31. Bdellium: a transparent, amber-colored gum resin, which is also mentioned in Gn 2, 12.

11, 25: They prophesied: in the sense, not of foretelling the future, but of speaking in enraptured enthusiasm. Such manifestations of mystic exaltation occurred in the early days of Hebrew prophecy (1 Sm 10, 10ff; 19, 20ff) and in the first years of the Church (Acts 2, 6-11. 17; 19, 6; 1 Cor 12-14).

n 7f: Ex 16, 14f. 31; Ps 78, 24; Wis 16, 20; Jn 6, 31. o Ex 16, 14f. p Ps 78, 26ff.

LORD, that drove in quail from the sea and
brought them down over the camp site at a
height of two cubits from the ground* for the
distance of a day's journey all around the camp.
32 [q]All that day, all night, and all the next day the
people gathered in the quail. Even the one who
got the least gathered ten homers of them. Then
they spread them out* all around the camp.
33But while the meat was still between their
teeth, before it could be consumed, the LORD's
wrath flared up against the people, and he struck
them with a very great plague. 34So that place
was named Kibroth-hattaavah,* because it was
there that the greedy people were buried.
35From Kibroth-hattaavah the people set out
for Hazeroth.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 10–20
See RG
97–98,
101–102

**Jealousy of Aaron and Miriam** While they
were in Hazeroth, 1Miriam and Aaron spoke
against Moses on the pretext of the marriage he
had contracted with a Cushite woman.* 2They
complained,* "Is it through Moses alone that
the LORD speaks? Does he not speak through us
also?" And the LORD heard this. 3 [r]Now, Moses
himself was by far the meekest man on the face
of the earth. 4So at once the LORD said to Moses
and Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three,
to the meeting tent." And the three of them
went. 5Then the LORD came down in the
column of cloud, and standing at the entrance of
the tent, called Aaron and Miriam. When both
came forward, 6he said, "Now listen to the
words of the LORD:

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Should there be a prophet among you,
in visions will I reveal myself to him,
in dreams will I speak to him;
7 Not so with my servant Moses!
Throughout my house he bears my trust: [s]
8 face to face I speak to him, [t]
plainly and not in riddles.
The presence of the LORD he beholds.

Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my
servant Moses?"
**Miriam's Leprosy** 9So angry was the Lord
against them that when he departed, 10and the
cloud withdrew from the tent, there was Mir-
iam, [u] a snow-white leper!* When Aaron turned
and saw her a leper, 11"Ah, my lord!" he said to
Moses, "please do not charge us with the sin
that we have foolishly committed! 12Let her not
thus be like the stillborn babe that comes forth
from its mother's womb with its flesh half
consumed." 13Then Moses cried to the LORD,
"Please, not this! Pray, heal her!" 14But the LORD
answered Moses, "Suppose her father had spit in
her face, would she not hide in shame for seven
days? Let her be confined outside the camp for
seven days; only then may she be brought
back." 15So Miriam was confined outside the
camp for seven days, and the people did not start
out again until she was brought back.
16After that the people set out from Hazeroth
and encamped in the desert of Paran.

## CHAPTER 13

**The Twelve Scouts** 1The LORD said to Moses,
2"Send men to reconnoiter the land of Canaan,
which I am giving the Israelites. You shall send
one man from each ancestral tribe, all of them
princes." 3 [v]So Moses dispatched them from the
desert of Paran, as the LORD had ordered. All of
them were leaders among the Israelites; 4by
name they were:

Shammua, son of Zaccur, of the tribe of
Reuben;

**11, 31:** At a height of two cubits from the ground: exhausted by the storm, the quail could take but short, low flights, so that they were easily captured. To give food to the hungry people, God may have used the natural phenomenon of the annual migration of quail across the Sinai Peninsula. In the spring large flocks of these birds cross the Gulf of Aqabah flying toward the west; in the fall they fly back eastward from the Mediterranean. The sea mentioned here probably refers to the former body of water.

**11, 32:** They spread them out: to cure by drying.

**11, 34:** Kibroth-hattaavah: means "graves of greed."

**12, 1:** Cushite woman: apparently Zipporah, the Midianitess, is meant; cf Ex 2, 21. Perhaps the term is used here merely in the sense of "despised foreigner."

**12, 2:** The real reason for Miriam's quarrel with her brother Moses was her jealousy of his superior position; his Cushite wife served only as an occasion for the dispute. Aaron merely followed his sister in her rebellion; hence she alone was punished.

**12, 10:** A snow-white leper: afflicted with "white leprosy," a skin disease that generally is not serious or of long duration. Cf Lv 13, 3–6.

q 32f: 78, 26–31; 1 Cor 10, 6–7. r Sir 45, 1f. s Sir 45, 3; Heb 3, 2. 5. t Ex 33, 11; Dt 34, 10. u Dt 24, 9. v 3–33: Dt 1, 22–28.

5 Shaphat, son of Hori, of the tribe of Simeon;
6 Caleb, son of Jephunneh, of the tribe of Judah;
7 Igal [son of Joseph] of the tribe of Issachar;
10 Gaddiel, son of Sodi, of the tribe of Zebulun;
11 Gaddi, son of Susi, of the tribe of Manasseh,
for the Josephites, with
8 Hoshea, son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim;
9 Palti, son of Raphu, of the tribe of Benjamin;
12 Ammiel, son of Gemalli, of the tribe of Dan;
13 Sethur, son of Michael, of the tribe of Asher;
14 Nahbi, son of Vophsi, of the tribe of Naphtali;
15 Geuel, son of Machi, of the tribe of Gad.

16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent out to reconnoiter the land. But Hoshea, son of Nun, Moses called Joshua.*

17 In sending them to reconnoiter the land of Canaan, Moses said to them, "Go up here in the Negeb, up into the highlands, 18 and see what kind of land it is. Are the people living there strong or weak, few or many? 19 Is the country in which they live good or bad? Are the towns in which they dwell open or fortified? 20 Is the soil fertile or barren, wooded or clear? And do your best to get some of the fruit of the land." It was then the season for early grapes.

21 So they went up and reconnoitered the land from the desert of Zin* as far as where Rehob adjoins Labo of Hamath. 22 [w]Going up by way of the Negeb, they reached Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, descendants of the Anakim,* were living. [Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.] 23 They also reached the Wadi Eshcol,* where they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes on it, which two of them carried on a pole, as well as some pomegranates and figs. 24 It was because of the cluster the Israelites cut there that they called the place Wadi Eshcol.[x]

**Their Return** 25 After reconnoitering the land for forty days they returned, 26 [y]met Moses and Aaron and the whole community of the Israelites in the desert of Paran at Kadesh, made a report to them all, and showed them the fruit of the country. 27 They told Moses: "We went into the land to which you sent us. It does indeed flow with milk and honey, and here is its fruit. 28 However, the people who are living in the land are fierce, and the towns are fortified and very strong.[z] Besides, we saw descendants of the Anakim there. 29 Amalekites live in the region of the Negeb; Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites dwell in the highlands, and Canaanites along the seacoast and the banks of the Jordan."

30 Caleb, however, to quiet the people toward Moses, said, "We ought to go up and seize the land, for we can certainly do so." 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We cannot attack these people; they are too strong for us." 32 So they spread discouraging reports[a] among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, "The land that we explored is a country that consumes its inhabitants. And all the people we saw there are huge men, 33 [b]veritable giants* [the Anakim were a race of giants]; we felt like mere grasshoppers, and so we must have seemed to them."

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 10–20 See RG 97–98, 101–102

**Threats of Revolt** 1 At this, the whole community broke out with loud cries, and even in the night the people wailed. 2 [c]All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, the whole community saying to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt, or that here in the desert we were dead! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land only to have us fall by the sword? Our wives and little ones will be taken as

**13, 16:** Joshua: in Hebrew, "Jehoshua," which was later modified to "Jeshua," the Hebrew pronunciation of the name "Jesus." Hoshea and Joshua are variants of one original name meaning "the LORD saves." Cf Mt 1, 21.

**13, 21:** The desert of Zin: north of Paran and southwest of the Dead Sea. It is quite distinct from "the desert of Sin" near the border of Egypt (Ex 16, 1; 17, 1; Nm 33, 11). Labo of Hamath: a town near Riblah (Jer 39, 5f) at the southern border of Hamath, an independent kingdom in southern Syria. David's conquests extended as far as Hamath (2 Sm 8, 9ff), and Labo thus formed the northern border of the ideal extent of Israel's possessions (Nm 34, 7ff; Ez 47, 15; 48, 1). Some commentators think that this verse is a later addition to the text; cf Dt 1, 24.

**13, 22. 28:** Anakim: an aboriginal race in southern Palestine, largely absorbed by the Canaanites before the Israelite invasion. Either because of their tall stature or because of the massive stone structures left by them the Israelites regarded them as giants.

**13, 23:** Eshcol: means "cluster."

**13, 33:** Giants: in Hebrew, "nephilim." Cf Gn 6, 4.

w Jos 11, 21f. x Nm 32, 9; Dt 1, 24f. y 26f: Ex 3, 8. 17. z 28f: Dt 9, 1f. a Nm 32, 9; Jos 14, 8. b Dt 2, 10. c Ex 16, 3; Ps 106, 25.

booty. Would it not be better for us to return to
Egypt?" [4]So they said to one another, "Let us
appoint a leader and go back to Egypt."

[5]But Moses and Aaron fell prostrate before the
whole assembled community of the Israelites;
[6]while Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of
Jephunneh, who had been in the party that
scouted the land, tore their garments [7]and said
to the whole community of the Israelites, [d] "The
country which we went through and explored is
a fine, rich land. [8]If the LORD is pleased with us,
he will bring us in and give us that land, a land
flowing with milk and honey. [9] [e]But do not rebel
against the LORD! You need not be afraid of the
people of that land; they are but food for us!*
Their defense has left them, but the LORD is with
us. Therefore, do not be afraid of them." [10]In
answer, the whole community threatened to
stone them.

**The Lord's Sentence** But then the glory of the
LORD appeared at the meeting tent to all the
Israelites. [11]And the LORD said to Moses, "How
long will this people spurn me? How long will
they refuse to believe in me, despite all the signs
I have performed among them?[f] [12]I will strike
them with pestilence and wipe them out. Then I
will make of you a nation greater and mightier
than they." [g]

[13] [h]But Moses said to the LORD: "Are the
Egyptians to hear of this? For by your power you
brought out this people from among them.
[14]And are they to tell of it to the inhabitants of
this land? It has been heard that you, O LORD,
are in the midst of this people; you, LORD, who
plainly reveal yourself! Your cloud stands over
them, and you go before them by day in a
column of cloud and by night in a column of
fire. [i] [15]If now you slay this whole people, the
nations who have heard such reports of you will
say, [16]'The LORD was not able to bring this
people into the land he swore to give them; that
is why he slaughtered them in the desert.' [j]
[17]Now then, let the power of my Lord be
displayed in its greatness, even as you have said,
[18] [k]'The LORD is slow to anger and rich in
kindness, forgiving wickedness and crime; yet
not declaring the guilty guiltless, but punishing
children to the third and fourth generation for
their fathers' wickedness.' [19]Pardon, then, the
wickedness of this people in keeping with your
great kindness, even as you have forgiven them
from Egypt until now." [l]

[20]The LORD answered: "I pardon them as you
have asked. [21]Yet, by my life and the LORD's
glory that fills the whole earth, [22]of all the men
who have seen my glory and the signs I worked
in Egypt and in the desert, [m] and who nevertheless have put me to the test ten times already
and have failed to heed my voice, [23]not one shall
see the land which I promised on oath to their
fathers. None of these who have spurned me
shall see it. [24]But because my servant Caleb has
a different spirit and follows me unreservedly, [n] I
will bring him into the land where he has just
been, and his descendants shall possess it. [25]But
now, since the Amalekites and Canaanites are
living in the valleys,* turn away tomorrow and
set out in the desert on the Red Sea road."

[26]The LORD also said to Moses and Aaron:
[27]"How long will this wicked community grumble against me? [o] I have heard the grumblings of
the Israelites against me. [28]Tell them:* By my
life, says the LORD, I will do to you just what I
have heard you say. [29]Here in the desert [p] shall
your dead bodies fall. Of all your men of twenty
years or more, registered in the census, who
grumbled against me, [30]not one shall enter the
land where I solemnly swore to settle you,
except Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, son
of Nun. [31]Your little ones, however, who you
said would be taken as booty, I will bring in, and
they shall appreciate the land you spurned. [q]

14, 9: They are but food for us: that is, "we can easily consume and destroy them." This is the answer to the pessimistic report that this land "consumes its inhabitants" (Nm 13, 32).

14, 25: The valleys: the low-lying plains in the Negeb and along the seacoast and in the Jordan depression, as well as the higher valleys in the mountains farther north; cf Nm 14, 45.

14, 28f: God punished the malcontents by giving them their wish; cf v 2. Their lack of faith and of confidence in God is cited in 1 Cor 10, 10, and Heb 3, 12–18, as a warning for Christians.

d 7f: Dt 1, 25. e Dt 7, 18. f Ps 78, 22. 32. g Ex 32, 10. h 13–16: Ex 32, 12; Dt 9, 26ff; Ps 106, 23. i Ex 13, 21; Jos 2, 9f. j Ex 32, 12; Dt 9, 28. k Ex 20, 5; 34, 6f; Pss 103, 8; 145, 8. l Ps 78, 38. m 22f: Dt 1, 35. n Jos 14, 8f. o Ex 16, 7. 12. p Dt 1, 35; Heb 3, 17. q Dt 1, 39.

32 But as for you, your bodies shall fall here in the
desert, 33 here where your children must wander
for forty years, suffering for your faithlessness, till
the last of you lies dead in the desert.[r] 34 Forty
days you spent in scouting the land; forty years
shall you suffer for your crimes: one year for
each day. Thus you will realize what it means to
oppose me. 35 I, the LORD, have sworn to do this
to all this wicked community that conspired
against me: here in the desert they shall die to
the last man."

36 And so it happened to the men whom
Moses had sent to reconnoiter the land[s] and
who on returning had set the whole community
grumbling against him by spreading discouraging
reports about the land; 37 these men who had
given out the bad report about the land were
struck down by the LORD and died. 38 Of all the
men who had gone to reconnoiter the land, only
Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, survived.[t]

**Unsuccessful Invasion** 39 When Moses repeated these words to all the Israelites, the
people felt great remorse. 40 Early the next morning they started up into the foothills, saying,
"Here we are, ready to go up to the place that
the LORD spoke of:[u] for we were indeed doing
wrong." 41 But Moses said, "Why are you again
disobeying the LORD's orders? This cannot succeed. 42 Do not go up, because the LORD is not in
your midst; if you go, you will be beaten down
before your enemies.[v] 43 For there the Amalekites and Canaanites face you, and you will fall by
the sword. You have turned back from following
the LORD; therefore the LORD will not be with
you."

44 Yet they dared to go up into the foothills,[w]
even though neither the ark of the covenant of
the LORD nor Moses left the camp. 45 And the
Amalekites and Canaanites who dwelt in that
hill country came down and defeated them,
beating them back as far as Hormah.*

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 10–20
See RG
97–98,
101–102

**Secondary Offerings** 1 The LORD said to Moses, 2* "Give the Israelites these instructions:
When you have entered the land that I will give
you for your homesteads, 3 if you make to the
LORD a sweet-smelling oblation from the herd or
from the flock, in holocaust, in fulfillment of a
vow, or as a freewill offering, or for one of your
festivals, 4 whoever does so shall also present to
the LORD a cereal offering consisting of a tenth of
an ephah of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a
hin of oil, 5 as well as a libation of a fourth of a
hin of wine, with each lamb sacrificed in holocaust or otherwise. 6 With each sacrifice of a ram
you shall present a cereal offering of two tenths
of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a third of a
hin of oil, 7 and a libation of a third of a hin of
wine, thus making a sweet-smelling offering to
the LORD. 8 When you sacrifice an ox as a
holocaust, or in fulfillment of a vow, or as a
peace offering to the LORD, 9 with it you shall
present a cereal offering of three tenths of an
ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil,
10 and a libation of half a hin of wine, as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 11 The same is to
be done for each ox, ram, lamb or goat. 12 Whatever the number you offer, do the same for each
of them.

13 "All the native-born shall make these offerings in the same way, whenever they present a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 14 Likewise,
in any future generation, any alien residing with
you permanently or for a time, who presents a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD, shall do as
you do. 15 There is but one rule for you and for
the resident alien, a perpetual rule for all your
descendants. Before the LORD you and the alien
are alike, 16 with the same law and the same
application of it for the alien residing among you
as for yourselves."

17 The LORD said to Moses, 18 "Speak to the
Israelites and tell them: When you enter the

14, 45: Hormah: one of the Canaanite royal cities in southern Judea (Jos 12, 14), known at this time as "Zephath"; the origin of the later name is told in Nm 21, 3; Jgs 1, 17.

15, 2–16: These laws on sacrifice are complementary to those of Lv 1–3. Since the food of the Israelites consisted not only of meat but also of bread, oil and wine, so, besides the animal oblations, they offered flour, wine and oil in sacrifice to the Lord.

r 33f: Nm 13, 26; 32, 13; Ps 95, 10; Ez 4, 6. s 36f: Nm 13, 17. 32f; 1 Cor 10, 10. t Nm 26, 65. u Nm 13, 18; Dt 1, 42. v Dt 1, 42. w Dt 1, 43.

land into which I will bring you [19]and begin to
eat of the food of that land, you shall offer the
LORD a contribution [20]consisting of a cake of
your first batch of dough.* You shall offer it just
as you offer a contribution from the threshing
floor.[x] [21]Throughout your generations you shall
give a contribution to the LORD from your first
batch of dough.

**Sin Offerings** [22]*"When through inadvertence
you fail to carry out any of these commandments
which the LORD gives to Moses,[y] [23]and through
Moses to you, from the time the LORD first issues
the commandment down through your genera-
tions: [24]if the community itself unwittingly be-
comes guilty of the fault of inadvertence, the
whole community shall offer the holocaust of
one young bull as a sweet-smelling oblation
pleasing to the LORD, along with its prescribed
cereal offering and libation, as well as one he-
goat as a sin offering. [25][z]Then the priest shall
make atonement for the whole Israelite commu-
nity; thus they will be forgiven the inadvertence
for which they have brought their holocaust as
an oblation to the LORD. [26]Not only the whole
Israelite community, but also the aliens residing
among you, shall be forgiven, since the fault of
inadvertence affects all the people.

[27]"However, if it is an individual who sins
inadvertently,[a] he shall bring a yearling she-goat
as a sin offering, [28]and the priest shall make
atonement before the LORD for him who sinned
inadvertently; when atonement has been made
for him, he will be forgiven. [29]You shall have but
one law for him who sins inadvertently, whether
he be a native Israelite or an alien residing with
you.

Ch 10–20
See RG
97–98,
101–102

[30]"But anyone who sins defiantly,[b] whether
he be a native or an alien, insults the LORD, and
shall be cut off from among his people. [31][c]Since
he has despised the word of the LORD and has
broken his commandment, he must be cut off.
He has only himself to blame."

**The Sabbath-breaker** [32]While the Israelites
were in the desert, a man was discovered
gathering wood on the sabbath day. [33]Those
who caught him at it brought him to Moses and
Aaron and the whole assembly. [34]But they kept
him in custody, for there was no clear decision*
as to what should be done with him.[d] [35]Then
the LORD said to Moses, "This man shall be put
to death; let the whole community stone him
outside the camp." [36]So the whole community
led him outside the camp and stoned him to
death, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**Tassels on the Cloak** [37]The LORD said to
Moses, [38]"Speak to the Israelites and tell them
that they and their descendants must put tas-
sels* on the corners of their garments, fastening
each corner tassel with a violet cord.[e] [39]When
you use these tassels, let the sight of them
remind you to keep all the commandments of
the LORD, without going wantonly astray after
the desires of your hearts and eyes. [40]Thus you
will remember to keep all my commandments
and be holy to your God. [41]I, the LORD, am your
God who, as God, brought you out of Egypt that
I, the LORD, may be your God."[f]

## CHAPTER 16

**Rebellion of Korah** [1]Korah, son of Izhar, son
of Kohath, son of Levi,* [and Dathan and Abi-
ram, sons of Eliab, son of Pallu, son of Reuben]

**15, 20:** Dough: some render, "barley grits." This word is used elsewhere only in Ez 44, 30 and Neh 10, 33; a related Hebrew word is used in Lv 2, 14.

**15, 22ff:** Although no moral guilt is incurred by an inadvertent violation of God's commandments, the sanctity of the law can require some reparation even for such violations.

**15, 34:** No clear decision: they already knew that a willful violation of the sabbath was a capital offense, but they did not yet know how the death penalty was to be inflicted.

**15, 38:** Tassels: at the time of Christ these tassels were worn by all pious Jews, including our Lord (Mt 9, 20f; Mk 6, 56); the Pharisees wore very large ones in ostentation of their zeal for the law (Mt 23, 5).

**16, 1ff:** The evidence seems to show that there were two distinct rebellions: one of Korah and his band (Nm 27, 3) and the other of Dathan and Abiram (Dt 11, 6); cf Ps 106. The present account combines both events into one narrative; but even here it is rather easy to separate the two, once certain proper names (vv 1. 6. 24. 32. 35) have been identified as glosses. The rebellion of the Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, was of a political nature, against Moses alone as the civil leader; these rebels were punished by being swallowed alive in an earthquake. The rebellion of Korah was of a religious nature, against the religious leadership of both Moses and Aaron; about two hundred and fifty malcontents joined Korah's band; they were punished by fire. The parts of the present section which refer to the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram are vv 12–15 and vv 25–34 of chapter 16; the rest of chapter 16 and all of chapter 17 concern the rebellion of Korah.

x 19–20: Ez 44, 30. y 22f: Lv 4, 13f. z Lv 4, 20. a 27f: Lv 4, 27f. b Dt 17, 12. c Prv 13, 13. d Lv 24, 12. e Dt 22, 12. f Lv 22, 32f.

took [2]two hundred and fifty Israelites who were
leaders in the community, members of the
council and men of note. They stood before
Moses, [3]and held an assembly against Moses and
Aaron, to whom they said,[g] "Enough from you!
The whole community, all of them, are holy; the
LORD is in their midst. Why then should you set
yourselves over the LORD's congregation?"
[4]When Moses heard this, he fell prostrate.
[5]Then he said to Korah and to all his band, "May
the LORD make known tomorrow morning who
belongs to him and who is the holy one and
whom he will have draw near to him! Whom he
chooses, he will have draw near him. [6]Do this:
take your censers [Korah and all his band] [7]and
put fire in them and place incense in them
before the LORD tomorrow. He whom the LORD
then chooses is the holy one. Enough from you
Levites!"
[8]Moses also said to Korah, "Listen to me, you
Levites! [9][h]Is it too little for you that the God of
Israel has singled you out from the community of
Israel, to have you draw near him for the service
of the LORD's Dwelling and to stand before the
community to minister for them? [10]He has
allowed you and your kinsmen, the descendants
of Levi, to approach him, and yet you now seek
the priesthood too. [11]It is therefore against the
LORD that you and all your band are conspiring.
For what has Aaron done that you should
grumble against him?"

**Rebellion of Dathan and Abiram** [12]Moses
summoned Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab,
but they answered, "We will not go.* [13]Are you
not satisfied with having led us here away from a
land flowing with milk and honey, to make us
perish in the desert, that you must now lord it
over us? [14]Far from bringing us to a land flowing
with milk and honey, or giving us fields and
vineyards for our inheritance, will you also
gouge out our eyes?* No, we will not go."
[15]Then Moses became very angry and said to
the LORD, "Pay no heed to their offering. I have
never taken a single ass from them, nor have I
wronged any one of them."[i]

**Korah** [16]Moses said to Korah, "You and all your
band shall appear before the LORD tomorrow—
you and they and Aaron too. [17]Then each of
your two hundred and fifty followers shall take
his own censer, put incense in it, and offer it to
the LORD; and you and Aaron, each with his
own censer, shall do the same." [18]So they all
took their censers, and laying incense on the fire
they had put in them, they took their stand by
the entrance of the meeting tent along with
Moses and Aaron. [19]Then, when Korah had
assembled all his band against them at the
entrance of the meeting tent, the glory of the
LORD appeared to the entire community, [20]and
the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, [21]"Stand
apart from this band, that I may consume them
at once." [22]But they fell prostrate and cried out,
"O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will
one man's sin make you angry with the whole
community?" [23]The LORD answered Moses,
[24]"Speak to the community and tell them:
Withdraw from the space around the Dwelling"
[of Korah, Dathan and Abiram].

**Punishment of Dathan and Abiram**
[25]Moses, followed by the elders of Israel, arose
and went to Dathan and Abiram.* [26]Then he
warned the community, "Keep away from the
tents of these wicked men and do not touch
anything that is theirs: otherwise you too will be
swept away because of all their sins." [27]When
Dathan and Abiram had come out and were
standing at the entrances of their tents with their
wives and sons and little ones, [28]Moses said,
"This is how you shall know that it was the
LORD who sent me to do all I have done, and
that it was not I who planned it: [29]if these men
die an ordinary death, merely suffering the fate
common to all mankind, then it was not the
LORD who sent me. [30]But if the LORD does
something entirely new, and the ground opens
its mouth and swallows them alive down into

**16, 12**: We will not go: to appear before Moses' tribunal.
**16, 14**: Gouge out our eyes: blind us to the real state of affairs.
**16, 25**: Since Dathan and Abiram had refused to go to Moses (vv 12ff), he, with the elders as witnesses, was obliged to go to their tent.

g Ps 106, 16ff; Sir 45, 19; 1 Cor 10, 10. h Dt 10, 8. i 1 Sm 12, 3.

the nether world, with all belonging to them,
then you will know that these men have defied
the LORD." [31] /No sooner had he finished saying
all this than the ground beneath them split open,
[32]and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed
them and their families [and all of Korah's men]
and all their possessions. [33]They went down
alive to the nether world with all belonging to
them; the earth closed over them, and they
perished from the community. [34]But all the
Israelites near them fled at their shrieks, saying,
"The earth might swallow us too!"

**Punishment of Korah** [35]So they withdrew
from the space around the Dwelling [of Korah,*
Dathan and Abiram]. And fire from the LORD
came forth which consumed the two hundred
and fifty men who were offering the incense.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 10–20
See RG
97–98,
101–102

[1]The LORD said to Moses, [2]"Tell Eleazar, son
of Aaron the priest, to remove the censers from
the embers; and scatter the fire some distance
away, [3]*for these sinners have consecrated the
censers at the cost of their lives. Have them
hammered into plates to cover the altar, because
in being presented before the LORD they have
become sacred. In this way they shall serve as a
sign to the Israelites." [4]So Eleazar the priest had
the bronze censers of those burned during the
offering hammered into a covering for the altar,
[5]in keeping with the orders which the LORD had
given him through Moses. This cover was to be a
reminder to the Israelites that no layman, no one
who was not a descendant of Aaron, should
approach the altar to offer incense before the
LORD, lest he meet the fate of Korah and his
band.

[6]The next day the whole Israelite community
grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "It is
you who have slain the LORD's people." [7]But
while the community was deliberating against
them, Moses and Aaron turned toward the
meeting tent, and the cloud now covered it and
the glory of the LORD appeared. [8]Then Moses
and Aaron came to the front of the meeting tent,
[9]and the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, [10]"De-
part from this community, that I may consume
them at once." But they fell prostrate.

[11]Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take your
censer, put fire from the altar in it, lay incense
on it, and bring it quickly to the community to
make atonement for them; for wrath has come
forth from the LORD and the blow is falling."[k]
[12]Obeying the orders of Moses, Aaron took his
censer and ran in among the community, where
the blow was already falling on the people.
Then, as he offered the incense and made
atonement for the people, [13]standing there be-
tween the living and the dead, the scourge was
checked. [14]Yet fourteen thousand seven hun-
dred died from the scourge, in addition to those
who died because of Korah. [15]When the scourge
had been checked, Aaron returned to Moses at
the entrance of the meeting tent.

**Aaron's Staff** [16]The LORD now said to Moses,
[17]"Speak to the Israelites and get one staff* from
them for each ancestral house, twelve staffs in
all, one from each of their tribal princes. Mark
each man's name on his staff; [18]and mark
Aaron's name on Levi's staff,* for the head of
Levi's ancestral house shall also have a staff.
[19]Then lay them down in the meeting tent, in
front of the commandments, where I meet you.
[20]There the staff of the man of my choice shall
sprout. Thus will I suppress from my presence
the Israelites' grumbling against you."

[21]So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their
princes gave him staffs, twelve in all, one from
each tribal prince; and Aaron's staff was with

**16, 35:** This verse continues v 24; the first sentence is transposed from v 27.

**17, 3:** Whatever was brought into intimate contact with something sacred shared in its sacredness. See note on Nm 19, 20.

**17, 17:** The staff was not merely an article of practical use, but also a symbol of authority; cf Gn 49, 10; Nm 24, 17; Jer 48, 17. Hence, the staff of a leader of a tribe was considered the emblem of his tribe; in fact, certain Hebrew words for "staff" also means "tribe." Perhaps for this reason, to avoid confusion, the author here uses the term "ancestral house" instead of the ordinary word for "tribe."

**17, 18:** Levi's staff: it is not clear whether this is considered as one of the twelve mentioned in the preceding verse, or as a thirteenth staff. Sometimes Levi is reckoned as one of the twelve tribes (e.g., Dt 27, 12f), but more often the number twelve is arrived at by counting the two sub-tribes of Joseph, i.e., Ephraim and Manasseh, as distinct tribes. In this passage also it seems probable that the tribe of Levi is considered apart from the other twelve.

j 31ff: Nm 26, 10; Lv 10, 2; Dt 11, 6; Ps 106, 7f. k Wis 18, 20f.

them. [22]Then Moses laid the staffs down before
the LORD in the tent of the commandments.
[23]The next day, when Moses entered the tent,
Aaron's staff, representing the house of Levi, had
sprouted and put forth not only shoots, but
blossoms as well, and even bore ripe almonds!
[24]Moses thereupon brought out all the staffs
from the LORD's presence to the Israelites. After
each prince identified his own staff and took it,
[25]the LORD said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's
staff in front of the commandments, to be kept
there as a warning to the rebellious, so that their
grumbling may cease before me; if it does not,
they will die." [26]And Moses did as the LORD had
commanded him.

**Charge of the Sacred Things** [27]*Then the
Israelites cried out to Moses, "We are perishing;
we are lost, we are all lost! [28]Every time anyone
approaches the Dwelling of the LORD, he dies!
Are we to perish to the last man?"

## CHAPTER 18

[1]The LORD said to Aaron,* "You and your
sons as well as the other members of your
ancestral house shall be responsible for the
sanctuary; but the responsibility of the priest-
hood shall rest on you and your sons alone.
[2]Bring with you also your other kinsmen of the
tribe of Levi, your ancestral tribe, as your associ-
ates* and assistants, while you and your sons are
in front of the tent of the commandments. [3]They
shall look after your persons and the whole tent;
however, they shall not come near the sacred
vessels or the altar, lest both they and you die.
[4]As your associates they shall have charge of all
the work connected with the meeting tent. But
no layman* shall come near you. [5]You shall have
charge of the sanctuary and of the altar, that
wrath may not fall again upon the Israelites.

[6]"Remember, it is I who have taken your
kinsmen, the Levites, from the body of the
Israelites; they are a gift to you,[l] dedicated to
the LORD for the service of the meeting tent.
[7][m]But only you and your sons are to have charge
of performing the priestly functions in whatever
concerns the altar and the room within the
veil.* I give you the priesthood as a gift. Any
layman who draws near shall be put to death."

**The Priests' Share of the Sacrifices** [8]The
LORD said to Aaron,* "I myself have given you
charge of the contributions made to me in the
various sacred offerings of the Israelites;[n] by
perpetual ordinance I have assigned them to you
and to your sons as your priestly share. [9]You
shall have the right to share in the oblations that
are most sacred, in whatever they offer me as
cereal offerings or sin offerings or guilt offerings;
these shares shall accrue to you and to your
sons. [10]In eating them you shall treat them as
most sacred; every male among you may partake
of them. As sacred, they belong to you.

[11]"You shall also have what is removed from
the gift in every wave offering* of the Israelites;
by perpetual ordinance I have assigned it to you
and to your sons and daughters.[o] All in your
family who are clean may partake of it. [12]I have
also assigned to you all the best[p] of the new oil
and of the new wine and grain that they give to
the LORD as their first fruits; [13]and likewise, of
whatever grows on their land, the first products
that they bring in to the LORD shall be yours; all
of your family who are clean may partake of
them. [14]Whatever is doomed* in Israel shall be
yours. [15]Every living thing that opens the womb,
whether of man or of beast, such as are to be
offered to the LORD, shall be yours;[q] but you
must let the first-born of man, as well as of
unclean animals, be redeemed. [16]The ransom for

Ch 10-20
See RG
97-98,
101-102

**17, 27f:** Logically these two verses belong immediately after Nm 16, 35.

**18, 1ff:** This law, which kept unqualified persons from contact with sacred things, is the answer to the Israelites' cry in Nm 17, 28. It is followed by other laws concerning priests and Levites.

**18, 2:** Associates: in Hebrew this word alludes to the popular etymology of the name "Levi." Cf Gn 29, 34.

**18, 4:** Layman: here, "one who is not a Levite"; in v 7, "one who is not a priest."

**18, 7:** Veil: the outer veil, or "curtain," is probably meant.

**18, 8ff:** Two classes of offerings are here distinguished: the most sacred offering, which only the male members of the priestly families could eat (vv 8ff), and the other offerings, which even the women of the priestly families could eat (vv 11–19).

**18, 11:** Wave offering: this included the breast and right leg (v 18), the shoulder of the peace offering (Lv 7, 30–34), and portions of the nazirite sacrifice (Nm 6, 19f).

**18, 14:** Doomed: in Hebrew, herem, which means here "set aside from profane use and made sacred to the Lord." Cf Lv 27, 21. 28.

l Nm 3, 9; 8, 19. m Nm 3, 10. n Nm 5, 9. o Ex 29, 27f; Lv 7, 34; 10, 14. p 12f: Dt 18, 4; 26, 2. q Ex 13, 2.

a boy is to be paid when he is a month old; it is fixed at five silver shekels according to the sanctuary standard, twenty gerahs to the shekel. [17]But the first-born of cattle, sheep or goats shall not be redeemed; they are sacred. Their blood you must splash on the altar and their fat you must burn as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. [18] [r]Their meat, however, shall be yours, just as the breast and the right leg of the wave offering belong to you. [19]By perpetual ordinance I have assigned to you and to your sons and daughters all the contributions from the sacred gifts which the Israelites make to the LORD; this is an inviolable covenant* to last forever before the LORD, for you and for your descendants." [20] [s]Then the LORD said to Aaron,* "You shall not have any heritage in the land of the Israelites nor hold any portion among them; I will be your portion and your heritage among them.

**Tithes Due the Levites** [21]"To the Levites, however, I hereby assign all tithes in Israel as their heritage in recompense for the service they perform in the meeting tent.[t] [22]The Israelites may no longer approach the meeting tent; else they will incur guilt deserving death. [23]Only the Levites are to perform the service of the meeting tent, and they alone shall be held responsible; this is a perpetual ordinance for all your generations. The Levites, therefore, shall not have any heritage among the Israelites, [24]for I have assigned to them as their heritage the tithes which the Israelites give as a contribution to the LORD. That is why I have ordered that they are not to have any heritage among the Israelites."

Ch 10–20 See RG 97–98, 101–102

**Tithes Paid by the Levites** [25]The LORD said to Moses, [26]"Give the Levites these instructions: When you receive from the Israelites the tithes I have assigned you from them as your heritage, you are to make a contribution from them to the LORD, a tithe of the tithes; [27]and your contribution will be credited to you as if it were grain from the threshing floor or new wine from the press. [28]Thus you too shall make a contribution from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites, handing over to Aaron the priest the part to be contributed to the LORD. [29]From all the gifts that you receive, and from the best parts, you are to consecrate to the LORD your own full contribution.

[30]"Tell them also: Once you have made your contribution from the best part, the rest of the tithes will be credited to you Levites as if it were produce of the threshing floor or of the wine press. [31]Your families, as well as you, may eat them anywhere, since they are your recompense for service at the meeting tent. [32]You will incur no guilt so long as you make a contribution of the best part. Do not profane the sacred gifts of the Israelites and so bring death on yourselves."

## CHAPTER 19

**Ashes of the Red Heifer** [1]The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: [2]"This is the regulation which the law of the LORD prescribes. Tell the Israelites to procure for you a red heifer that is free from every blemish and defect and on which no yoke has ever been laid. [3]This is to be given to Eleazar the priest, to be led outside the camp* and slaughtered in his presence. [4]Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the meeting tent.* [5]Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight, with its hide and flesh, its blood and offal; [6]and the priest shall take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet yarn and throw them into the fire in which the heifer is being burned. [7]The priest shall then wash his garments and bathe his body in water. He remains unclean

**18, 19:** An inviolable covenant: literally, "a covenant of salt." Cf 2 Chr 13, 5. The reference may perhaps be to the preservative power of salt (cf Mt 5, 13); but more likely the phrase refers to the custom of partaking of the same salt in common to render a contract unbreakable. See note on Lv 2, 13.

**18, 20:** The priests and Levites were forbidden to own hereditary land such as the other Israelites possessed; therefore in the allotment of the land they were not to receive any portion of it. Certain cities, however, were assigned to them for their residence; cf Nm 35, 1–8.

**19, 3:** Outside the camp: several Fathers of the Church saw in this a prefiguring of the sacrificial death of Christ outside the walls of Jerusalem; cf Jn 19, 20; Heb 13, 12; in the purifying water, into which the ashes of the red heifer were put, they saw a type of the water of Baptism.

**19, 4:** Toward the front of the meeting tent: since the tabernacle faced the east (Ex 26, 15–30), the killing of the heifer took place east of the camp; in later times it was done on the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple.

r Lv 7, 31–34. s Dt 10, 9; 18, 1f; Jos 13, 33; Ez 44, 28. t Heb 7, 5.

until the evening, and only afterward may he
return to the camp. [8]Likewise, he who burned
the heifer shall wash his garments, bathe his
body in water, and be unclean until evening.
[9]Finally, a man who is clean shall gather up the
ashes of the heifer and deposit them in a clean
place outside the camp. There they are to be
kept for preparing lustral water for the Israelite
community. The heifer is a sin offering. [10]He
who has gathered up the ashes of the heifer shall
also wash his garments and be unclean until
evening. This is a perpetual ordinance, both for
the Israelites and for the aliens residing among
them.

**Use of the Ashes** [11]"Whoever touches the
dead body of any human being shall be unclean
for seven days; [12]he shall purify himself with the
water on the third and on the seventh day, and
then he will be clean again. But if he fails to purify
himself on the third and on the seventh day, he
will not become clean. [13] [u]Everyone who fails to
purify himself after touching the body of any de-
ceased person, defiles the Dwelling of the LORD
and shall be cut off from Israel. Since the lustral
water has not been splashed over him, he remains
unclean: his uncleanness still clings to him.

[14]"This is the law: When a man dies in a tent,
everyone who enters the tent, as well as every-
one already in it, shall be unclean for seven days;
[15]likewise, every vessel that is open, or with its
lid unfastened, shall be unclean. [16]Moreover,
everyone who in the open country touches a
dead person, whether he was slain by the sword
or died naturally, or who touches a human bone
or a grave, shall be unclean for seven days.
[17]*For anyone who is thus unclean, ashes from
the sin offering shall be put in a vessel, and
spring water shall be poured on them. [18]Then a
man who is clean shall take some hyssop, dip it
in this water, and sprinkle it on the tent and on
all the vessels and persons that were in it, or on
him who touched a bone, a slain person or other
dead body, or a grave. [19]The clean man shall
sprinkle the unclean on the third and on the
seventh day; thus purified on the seventh day,
he shall wash his garments and bathe his body in
water, and in the evening he will be clean again.
[20]*Any unclean man who fails to have himself
purified shall be cut off from the community,
because he defiles the sanctuary of the LORD. As
long as the lustral water has not been splashed
over him, he remains unclean. [21]This shall be a
perpetual ordinance for you.

"One who sprinkles the lustral water shall
wash his garments, and anyone who comes in
contact with this water shall be unclean until
evening. [22]Moreover, whatever the unclean per-
son touches becomes unclean itself, and anyone
who touches it becomes unclean until evening."

## CHAPTER 20

Ch 20–36
See RG
98–99

**Death of Miriam** [1]The whole Israelite commu-
nity arrived in the desert of Zin in the first
month,* and the people settled at Kadesh. It was
here that Miriam died, and here that she was
buried.

**Water Famine at Kadesh** [2]As the community
had no water, they held a council against Moses
and Aaron. [3]The people contended with Moses,
exclaiming, "Would that we too had perished
with our kinsmen in the LORD's presence! [4]Why
have you brought the LORD's community into
this desert where we and our livestock are
dying? [5]Why did you lead us out of Egypt, only
to bring us to this wretched place which has
neither grain nor figs nor vines nor pomegran-
ates? Here there is not even water to drink!"
[6]But Moses and Aaron went away from the
assembly to the entrance of the meeting tent,
where they fell prostrate.

**Sin of Moses and Aaron** Then the glory of the
LORD appeared to them, [7]and the LORD said to

**19, 17ff:** "If . . . the sprinkled ashes of a heifer sanctify the unclean unto the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works?" (Heb 9, 13f).

**19, 20:** Ritual uncleanness is, as it were, contagious; so also sacredness; see note on Nm 17, 3.

**20, 1:** The first month: we would expect the mention also of the day and of the year (after the exodus) when this took place; cf similar dates in Nm 1, 1; 10, 11; 33, 38; Dt 1, 3. Here the full date seems to have been lost. Probably the Israelites arrived in Kadesh in the third year after the exodus. Cf Dt 1, 46. The desert of Zin: a barren region with a few good oases, southwest of the Dead Sea. See note on Nm 13, 21.

u Lv 15, 31.

Moses, 8"Take the staff and assemble the community, you and your brother Aaron, and in their presence order the rock to yield its waters. From the rock you shall bring forth water for the community and their livestock to drink." 9So Moses took the staff from its place before the LORD, as he was ordered. 10He and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock, where he said to them,[v] "Listen to me, you rebels! Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?" 11[w]Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice* with his staff, and water gushed out in abundance for the community and their livestock to drink. 12*But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you were not faithful to me in showing forth my sanctity before the Israelites, you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them."

13These are the waters of Meribah,[x] where the Israelites contended against the LORD, and where he revealed his sanctity among them.

**Edom's Refusal** 14From Kadesh Moses sent men to the king of Edom with the message: "Your brother Israel* has this to say: You know of all the hardships that have befallen us, 15how our fathers went down to Egypt, where we stayed a long time, how the Egyptians maltreated us and our fathers, 16and how, when we cried to the LORD,[y] he heard our cry and sent an angel who led us out of Egypt. Now here we are at the town of Kadesh at the edge of your territory. 17Kindly let us pass through your country. We will not cross any fields or vineyards, nor drink any well water, but we will go straight along the royal road* without turning to the right or to the left, until we have passed through your territory."

Ch 20-36 See RG 98-99

18But Edom answered him, "You shall not pass through here; if you do, I will advance against you with the sword." 19The Israelites insisted, "We want only to go up along the highway. If we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. Surely there is no harm in merely letting us march through." 20But Edom still said, "No, you shall not pass through,"[z] and advanced against them with a large and heavily armed force. 21Therefore, since Edom refused to let them pass through their territory, Israel detoured around them.

**Death of Aaron** 22[a]Setting out from Kadesh, the whole Israelite community came to Mount Hor.* 23There at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 24"Aaron is about to be taken to his people; he shall not enter the land I am giving to the Israelites, because you both rebelled against my commandment at the waters of Meribah. 25Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up on Mount Hor.[b] 26Then strip Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar; for there Aaron shall be taken in death."

27Moses did as the LORD commanded. When they had climbed Mount Hor in view of the whole community, 28Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar. Then Aaron died there on top of the mountain.[c] When Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, 29all the community understood that Aaron had passed away; and for thirty days the whole house of Israel mourned him.

## CHAPTER 21

**Victory over Arad** 1When the Canaanite king of Arad,* who lived in the Negeb,[d] heard that

**20, 11:** Twice: perhaps because he had not sufficient faith to work the miracle with the first blow. Cf v 12.

**20, 12f:** The sin of Moses and Aaron consisted in doubting God's mercy toward the ever-rebellious people. In showing forth my sanctity: God's sacred power and glory: an allusion to the name of the place, Kadesh, which means "sanctified, sacred." Meribah means "contention." Cf Ex 17, 7.

**20, 14:** Your brother Israel: the Edomites were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob. Their country, to the southeast of the Dead Sea, was also known as Seir; cf Gn 25, 24ff; 36, 1. 8f.

**20, 17:** The royal road: an important highway, running north and south along the plateau east of the Dead Sea. In ancient times it was much used by caravans and armies; later it was improved by the Romans, and large stretches of it are still clearly recognizable.

**20, 22:** Mount Hor: not definitively identified, but probably to be sought in the vicinity of Kadesh. According to Dt 10, 6, Aaron died at Moserah (cf "Moseroth" in Nm 33, 30f), which is apparently the name of the region in which Mount Hor is situated.

**21, 1-3:** The account of this episode seems to be a later insertion here, for Nm 21, 4, belongs logically immediately after Nm 20, 29. Perhaps this is the same event as that mentioned in Jgs 1, 16f.

v Ex 17, 5f. w Ps 78, 15f; Wis 11, 4; 1 Cor 10, 4. x Nm 27, 14: Ex 17, 7. y Ex 2, 23. z Jgs 11, 17. a 21f: Nm 33, 37. b 25f: Dt 32, 50. c Nm 33, 38. d Nm 33, 40.

the Israelites were coming along the way of
Atharim, he engaged them in battle and took
some of them captive. [2]Israel then made this
vow to the LORD: "If you deliver this people into
my hand, I will doom their cities."[e] [3]Later,
when the LORD heeded Israel's prayer and
delivered up the Canaanites,[f] they doomed
them and their cities. Hence that place was
named Hormah.*

**The Bronze Serpent** [4]From Mount Hor they
set out on the Red Sea road, to bypass the land of
Edom. But with their patience worn out by the
journey, [5]the people complained[g] against God
and Moses, "Why have you brought us up from
Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no
food or water? We are disgusted with this
wretched food!"*

[6]In punishment the LORD sent among the
people saraph* serpents, which bit[h] the people
so that many of them died. [7]Then the people
came to Moses and said, "We have sinned in
complaining against the LORD and you. Pray
the LORD to take the serpents from us." So
Moses prayed for the people, [8]and the LORD
said to Moses, "Make a saraph and mount it on
a pole, and if anyone who has been bitten
looks at it, he will recover."* [9]Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent* and mounted it
on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been
bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he recovered.[i]

**Journey around Moab** [10]The Israelites moved
on and encamped in Oboth.[j] [11]Setting out from
Oboth, they encamped in Iye-abarim* in the
desert fronting Moab on the east. [12]Setting out
from there, they encamped in the Wadi Zered.
[13]Setting out from there, they encamped on the
other side of the Arnon, in the desert that
extends from the territory of the Amorites; for
the Arnon forms Moab's boundary with the
Amorites. [14]Hence it is said in the "Book of the
Wars of the LORD"* :

"Waheb in Suphah and the wadies,
[15] Arnon and the wadi gorges
That reach back toward the site of Ar
and slant to the border of Moab."

[16]From there they went to Beer,* where there
was the well of which the LORD said to Moses,
"Bring the people together, and I will give them
water." [17]Then it was that Israel sang this song:

"Spring up, O well!—so sing to it—
[18]The well that the princes sank,
that the nobles of the people dug,
with their scepters and their staffs."

From Beer they went to Mattanah, [19]from
Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth,
[20]from Bamoth to the cleft in the plateau of
Moab at the headland of Pisgah that overlooks
Jeshimon.*

**Victory over Sihon** [21]Now Israel sent men to
Sihon, king of the Amorites, with the message,
[22]"Let us pass through your country. We will not
turn aside into any field or vineyard, nor will we
drink any well water, but we will go straight
along the royal road until we have passed
through your territory." [23]Sihon,[k] however,
would not let Israel pass through his territory,
but mustered all his forces and advanced into the
desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he
engaged Israel in battle. [24]But Israel defeated

**21, 3:** Hormah: related to the Hebrew word herem, meaning "doomed." See notes on Nm 14, 45; 18, 14.

**21, 5:** This wretched food: apparently the manna is meant.

**21, 6:** Saraph: the Hebrew name for a certain species of venomous snakes; the word probably signifies "the fiery one," these snakes being so called from the burning effect of their poisonous bite.

**21, 8:** If anyone who has been bitten looks at it, he will recover: "and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (Jn 3, 14f).

**21, 9:** King Hezekiah, in his efforts to abolish idolatry, "smashed the bronze serpent which Moses had made" (2 Kgs 18, 4).

**21, 11:** Iye-abarim: probably means "the ruins in the Abarim (Mountains)." See note on Nm 27, 12.

**21, 14:** The "Book of the Wars of the Lord": an ancient collection of Israelite songs, now lost. Waheb in Suphah: since neither place is mentioned elsewhere, it is quite uncertain whether these dubious Hebrew words are even to be considered as place names; some Hebrew words apparently lost must have preceded this phrase.

**21, 16:** Beer: means a well.

**21, 20:** Jeshimon: "the wasteland"; in 1 Sm 23, 19. 24, and 26, 1. 3, this is the desert of Judah, on the western side of the Dead Sea, but here and in Nm 23, 28, it seems to refer to the southern end of the Jordan valley where Beth-jeshimoth was situated.

e Jos 6, 17; Jgs 1, 17. f Nm 14, 45. g Nm 11, 6; Ex 16, 3. h Dt 8, 15; Wis 16, 5; 1 Cor 10, 9. i Wis 16, 6f. 10; Jn 3, 14f. j Nm 33, 43f. k Dt 2, 32; Jgs 11, 20.

Ch 22–24
See RG
102–103

him at the point of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and as far as the country of the Ammonites, whose boundary was at Jazer. 25 [l]Israel seized all the towns here and settled in these towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon and all its dependencies. 26 Now Heshbon was the capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had seized all his land from Jazer to the Arnon. 27 That is why the poets say:

"Come to Heshbon, let it be rebuilt,
let Sihon's capital be firmly constructed.
28 For fire went forth from Heshbon
and a blaze from the city of Sihon;
It consumed the cities of Moab
and swallowed up the high places of the Arnon.
29 Woe to you, O Moab!
You are ruined, O people of Chemosh!*
He let his sons become fugitives
and his daughters be taken captive
by the Amorite king Sihon.
30 Their plowland is ruined from Heshbon to Dibon;
Ar is laid waste; fires blaze as far as Medeba."

31 When Israel had settled in the land of the Amorites, 32 Moses sent spies to Jazer; Israel then captured it with its dependencies and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

**Victory over Og** 33 [m]Then they turned and went up along the road to Bashan. But Og, king of Bashan, advanced against them with all his people to give battle at Edrei. 34 The LORD, however, said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him; for into your hand I will deliver him with all his people and his land. Do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon." [n] 35 So they struck him down with his sons and all his people, until not a survivor was left to him, and they took possession of his land.

## CHAPTER 22

1 Then the Israelites moved on and encamped in the plains of Moab* on the other side of the Jericho stretch of the Jordan.

## III: On the Plains of Moab

**Balaam Summoned** 2 Now Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel did to the Amorites. 3 Indeed, Moab feared the Israelites greatly because of their numbers, and detested them. 4 So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Soon this horde will devour all the country around us as an ox devours the grass of the field." And Balak, Zippor's son, who was king of Moab at that time, 5 sent messengers to Balaam, son of Beor, at Pethor on the Euphrates, in the land of the Amawites, summoning him with these words, "A people has come here from Egypt who now cover the face of the earth and are settling down opposite us! 6 Please come and curse this people for us;* they are stronger than we are. We may then be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed and whoever you curse is cursed." 7 Then the elders of Moab and of Midian left with the divination fee in hand and went to Balaam. When they had given him Balak's message, 8 he said to them in reply, "Stay here overnight, and I will give you whatever answer the LORD gives me." So the princes of Moab lodged with Balaam.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men visiting you?" 10 Balaam answered God, "Balak, son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me the message: 11 'This people that came here from Egypt now cover the face of the earth. Please come and lay a curse on them for us; we may then be able to give them battle and drive them out.' " 12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them and do not curse this people, for they are blessed." 13 The next morning Balaam

**21, 29:** Chemosh: the chief god of the Moabites, and mentioned as such in the famous inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, who was the contemporary of the dynasty of Omri in Israel. Cf 1 Kgs 11, 7. 33; 2 Kgs 23, 13; Jer 48, 7. 13.

**22, 1:** The plains of Moab: the lowlands to the northeast of the Dead Sea, between the Jordan and the foothills below Mount Nebo. Here the Israelites remained until they crossed the Jordan, as told in Jos 1–4. Jericho lay to the west of the Jordan.

**22, 6:** Curse this people for us: Balak believed that if Balaam forecast an evil omen for Israel, this evil would come to pass, as if by magic. Balaam was a soothsayer or foreteller; cf Jos 13, 22.

l 25f: Jos 21, 39; Jgs 11, 26. m Dt 3, 1ff. n Ps 136, 17ff.

arose and told the princes of Balak, "Go back to
your own country, for the LORD has refused to
let me go with you." [14]So the princes of Moab
went back to Balak with the report, "Balaam
refused to come with us."

**Second Appeal to Balaam** [15]Balak again sent
princes, who were more numerous and more
distinguished than the others. [16]On coming to
Balaam they told him, "This is what Balak, son
of Zippor, has to say: Please do not refuse to
come to me. [17]I will reward you very hand-
somely and will do anything you ask of me.
Please come and lay a curse on this people for
me." [18] *o*But Balaam replied to Balak's officials,
"Even if Balak gave me his house full of silver
and gold, I could not do anything, small or great,
contrary to the command of the LORD, my God.
[19]But, you too shall stay here overnight, till I
learn what else the LORD may tell me."

[20]That night God came to Balaam and said to
him, "If these men have come to summon you,
you may go with them; yet only on the condi-
tion that you do exactly as I tell you." [21]So the
next morning when Balaam arose, he saddled
his ass, and went off with the princes of Moab.

**The Talking Ass** [22]But now the anger of God
flared up* at him for going, and the angel of the
LORD stationed himself on the road to hinder
him as he was riding along on his ass, accompa-
nied by two of his servants. [23]When the ass saw
the angel of the LORD standing on the road with
sword drawn, she turned off the road and went
into the field, and Balaam had to beat her to
bring her back on the road. [24]Then the angel of
the LORD took his stand in a narrow lane
between vineyards with a stone wall on each
side. [25]When the ass saw the angel of the LORD
there, she shrank against the wall; and since she
squeezed Balaam's leg against it, he beat her
again. [26]The angel of the LORD then went ahead,
and stopped next in a passage so narrow that
there was no room to move either to the right or
to the left. [27]When the ass saw the angel of the
LORD there, she cowered under Balaam. So, in
anger, he again beat the ass with his stick.

[28] *p*But now the LORD opened the mouth of
the ass, and she asked Balaam, "What have I
done to you that you should beat me these three
times?" [29]"You have acted so willfully against
me," said Balaam to the ass, "that if I but had a
sword at hand, I would kill you here and now."
[30]But the ass said to Balaam, "Am I not your
own beast, and have you not always ridden
upon me until now? Have I been in the habit of
treating you this way before?" "No," replied
Balaam.

[31]Then the LORD removed the veil from
Balaam's eyes, so that he too saw the angel of
the LORD standing on the road with sword
drawn; and he fell on his knees and bowed to
the ground. [32]But the angel of the LORD said to
him, "Why have you beaten your ass these three
times? It is I who have come armed to hinder
you because this rash journey of yours is directly
opposed to me. [33]When the ass saw me, she
turned away from me these three times. If she
had not turned away from me, I would have
killed you; her I would have spared." [34]Then
Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have
sinned. Yet I did not know that you stood against
me to oppose my journey. Since it has displeased
you, I will go back home." [35]But the angel of the
LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but you
may say only what I tell you." So Balaam went
on with the princes of Balak.

[36]When Balak heard that Balaam was coming,
he went out to meet him at the boundary city Ir-
Moab on the Arnon at the end of the Moabite
territory. [37]And he said to Balaam, "I sent an
urgent summons to you! Why did you not come
to me? Did you think I could not reward you?"
[38]Balaam answered him, "Well, I have come to
you after all. But what power have I to say
anything? I can speak only what God puts in my
mouth." [39]Then Balaam went with Balak, and
they came to Kiriath-huzoth. [40]Here Balak

**22, 22:** The anger of God flared up: not merely because Balaam was going to Balak, for he had God's permission for the journey (v 20), but perhaps because he was tempted by avarice to curse Israel against God's command. "They have followed the way of Balaam, son of Bosor, who loved the wages of wrongdoing" (2 Pt 2, 15); "and have rushed on thoughtlessly into the error of Balaam for the sake of gain" (Jude 11). Cf v 32 and compare Ex 4, 18–26.

o Nm 24, 13. p 2 Pt 2, 16.

slaughtered oxen and sheep, and sent portions to
Balaam and to the princes who were with him.
**The First Oracle** 41The next morning Balak
took Balaam up on Bamoth-baal, and from there
he saw some of the clans.

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 22-24
See RG
102-103

1Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven
altars, and prepare seven bullocks and seven
rams for me here." 2So he did as Balaam had
ordered, offering a bullock and a ram on each
altar. And Balak said to him, "I have erected the
seven altars, and have offered a bullock and a
ram on each." 3Balaam then said to him, "Stand
here by your holocaust while I go over there.
Perhaps the LORD will meet me, and then I will
tell you whatever he lets me see." He went out
on the barren height, 4and God met him. 5When
he had put an utterance in Balaam's mouth, the
LORD said to him, "Go back to Balak, and speak
accordingly." 6So he went back to Balak, who
was still standing by his holocaust together with
all the princes of Moab. 7Then Balaam gave
voice to his oracle:

From Aram* has Balak brought me here,
Moab's king, from the Eastern Mountains: q
"Come and lay a curse for me on Jacob,
come and denounce Israel."
8 How can I curse whom God has not cursed?
How denounce whom the LORD has not
denounced?
9 For from the top of the crags I see him,
from the heights I behold him.
Here is a people that lives apart*
and does not reckon itself among the
nations.
10 Who has ever counted the dust of Jacob,
or numbered Israel's wind-borne particles?*
May I die the death of the just,
may my descendants be as many as theirs!

11"What have you done to me?" cried Balak
to Balaam. "It was to curse my foes that I
brought you here; instead, you have even
blessed them." 12Balaam replied, "Is it not what
the LORD puts in my mouth that I must repeat
with care?"
**The Second Oracle** 13Then Balak said to him,
"Please come with me to another place* from
which you can see only some and not all of
them, and from there curse them for me." 14So
he brought him to the lookout field on the top of
Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered a
bullock and a ram on each of them. 15Balaam
then said to Balak, "Stand here by your holo-
caust, while I seek a meeting over there."
16Then the LORD met Balaam, and having put an
utterance in his mouth, he said to him, "Go back
to Balak, and speak accordingly." 17So he went
back to Balak, who was still standing by his
holocaust together with the princes of Moab.
When Balak asked him, "What did the LORD
say?" 18Balaam gave voice to his oracle:

Be aroused, O Balak, and hearken;
give ear to my testimony, O son of Zippor!
19 God is not man that he should speak falsely,
nor human, that he should change his
mind.
Is he one to speak and not act,
to decree and not fulfill?
20 It is a blessing I have been given to pronounce;
a blessing which I cannot restrain.
21 Misfortune is not observed in Jacob,
nor misery* seen in Israel.
The LORD, his God, is with him;
with him is the triumph of his King.
22 It is God who brought him out of Egypt, r

**23, 7:** Aram: the ancient name of the region later known as Syria. The Eastern Mountains: the low ranges in the Syrian desert near the Euphrates and Balaam's town of Pethor; cf Nm 22, 5.
**23, 9:** A people that lives apart: Israel, as the chosen people of God, occupied a unique place among the nations, from which they kept themselves aloof.
**23, 10:** The dust of Jacob . . . Israel's wind-borne particles: the Israelites will be as numerous as dust in a desert sandstorm. May I . . . as many as theirs: a formula by which Balaam swears he is speaking the truth; he sees the reward of virtue in having numerous descendants.

**23, 13:** To another place: Balak thought that if Balaam would view Israel from a different site, he could forecast a different kind of omen.
**23, 21:** Misfortune . . . misery: Balaam admits that he is unable to predict any evils for Israel.
**23, 22:** A wild bull of towering might: the reference is to Israel, rather than to God.

q Nm 22, 6. r Nm 24, 8.

a wild bull of towering might.*
23 No, there is no sorcery against Jacob,
nor omen against Israel.
It shall yet be said of Jacob,
and of Israel, "Behold what God has
wrought!"
24 Here is a people that springs up like a lioness,
and stalks forth like a lion;
It rests not till it has devoured its prey
and has drunk the blood of the slain.[s]

25 "Even though you cannot curse them," said Balak to Balaam, "at least do not bless them." 26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not warn you that I must do all that the LORD tells me?"

**The Third Oracle** 27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come, let me bring you to another place; perhaps God will approve of your cursing them for me from there." 28 So he took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks Jeshimon. 29 Balaam then said to him, "Here build me seven altars; and here prepare for me seven bullocks and seven rams." 30 And Balak did as Balaam had ordered, offering a bullock and a ram on each altar.

## CHAPTER 24

1 Balaam, however, perceiving that the LORD was pleased to bless Israel, did not go aside as before to seek omens, but turned his gaze toward the desert. 2 When he raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped, tribe by tribe, the spirit of God came upon him, 3 and he gave voice to his oracle:

The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor,
the utterance of the man whose eye is true,
4 The utterance of one who hears what God
says,
and knows what the Most High knows,
Of one who sees what the Almighty sees,
enraptured, and with eyes unveiled:
5 How goodly are your tents, O Jacob;
your encampments, O Israel!
6 They are like gardens beside a stream,
like the cedars planted by the LORD.
7 His wells shall yield free-flowing waters,
he shall have the sea within reach;
His king shall rise higher than . . . .
and his royalty shall be exalted.
8 It is God who brought him out of Egypt,
a wild bull of towering might.
He shall devour the nations like grass,
their bones he shall strip bare.[t]
9 He lies crouching like a lion,
or like a lioness; who shall arouse him?
Blessed is he who blesses you,
and cursed is he who curses you![u]

10 Balak beat his palms* together in a blaze of anger at Balaam and said to him, "It was to curse my foes that I summoned you here; yet three times now you have even blessed them instead![v] 11 Be off at once, then, to your home. I promised to reward you richly, but the LORD has withheld the reward from you!" 12 Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not warn the very messengers whom you sent to me, 13 'Even if Balak gave me his house full of silver and gold, I could not of my own accord do anything, good or evil, contrary to the command of the LORD'? Whatever the LORD says I must repeat.[w]

Ch 22–24
See RG
102–103

**The Fourth Oracle** 14 "But now that I am about to go to my own people, let me first warn you what this people will do to your people in the days to come." 15 Then Balaam gave voice to his oracle:

The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor,
the utterance of the man whose eye is true,
16 The utterance of one who hears what God
says,
and knows what the Most High knows,
Of one who sees what the Almighty sees,
enraptured and with eyes unveiled.
17 I see him, though not now;
I behold him, though not near:
A star shall advance from Jacob,

**24, 10:** Balak beat his palms: a sign of disclaiming any responsibility for paying the promised reward.

s Nm 24, 9; Gn 49, 9. t Nm 23, 22. u Nm 23, 24; Gn 12, 3; 27, 29; 49, 9. v Nm 23, 11. w Nm 22, 18.

and a staff* shall rise from Israel,
That shall smite the brows of Moab,[x]
and the skulls of all the Shuthites,
18 Till Edom is dispossessed,
and no fugitive is left in Seir.
Israel shall do valiantly,
19 and Jacob shall overcome his foes.

20 Upon seeing Amalek, Balaam gave voice to his oracle:

First* of the peoples was Amalek,
but his end is to perish forever.[y]

21 Upon seeing the Kenites,* he gave voice to his oracle:

Your abode is enduring, O smith,
and your nest is set on a cliff;
22 Yet destined for burning—
even as I watch—are your inhabitants.

23 Upon seeing . . . he gave voice to his oracle:

*Alas, who shall survive of Ishmael,
24 to deliver his people from the hands of the Kittim?
When they have conquered Asshur and conquered Eber,
He too shall perish forever.

25 Then Balaam set out on his journey home; and Balak also went his way.

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 20–36 See RG 98–99

**Worship of Baal of Peor** 1 While Israel was living at Shittim,* the people degraded themselves by having illicit relations with the Moabite women.[z] 2 These then invited the people to the sacrifices of their god, and the people ate of the sacrifices[a] and worshiped their god. 3 When Israel thus submitted to the rites of Baal of Peor,[b] the LORD's anger flared up against Israel, 4 [c]and he said to Moses, "Gather all the leaders of the people, and hold a public execution* of the guilty ones before the LORD, that his blazing wrath may be turned away from Israel." 5 So Moses told the Israelite judges, "Each of you shall kill those of his men who have submitted to the rites of Baal of Peor."

**Zeal of Phinehas** 6 Yet a certain Israelite came and brought in a Midianite woman* to his clansmen in the view of Moses and of the whole Israelite community, while they were weeping at the entrance of the meeting tent. 7 [d]When Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, and taking a lance in hand, 8 followed the Israelite into his retreat where he pierced the pair of them, the Israelite and the woman. Thus the slaughter of Israelites was checked; 9 but only after twenty-four thousand had died.

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, 11 "Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger from the Israelites by his zeal for my honor* among them; that is why I did not put an end to the Israelites for the offense to my honor. 12 [e]Announce, therefore, that I hereby give him my pledge of friendship, 13 which shall be for him and for his descendants after him the pledge of an everlasting priesthood, because he

**24, 17:** A star . . . a staff: many of the Fathers have understood this as a Messianic prophecy, although it is not referred to anywhere in the New Testament; in this sense the star is Christ himself, just as he is the staff from Israel; cf Is 11, 1. But it is doubtful whether this passage is to be connected with the "star of the Magi" in Mt 2, 1–12. The Shuthites: mentioned in other documents of this period as nomads on the border of Palestine.

**24, 20:** First: literally "the beginning." Amalek was an aboriginal people in Palestine and therefore considered as of great antiquity. There is a deliberate contrast here between the words first and end.

**24, 21:** The Kenites lived in high strongholds in the mountains of southern Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula, and were skilled in working the various metals found in their territory. Their name is connected, at least by popular etymology, with the Hebrew word for "smith"; of similar sound is the Hebrew word for "nest"—hence the play on words in the present passage.

**24, 23f:** The translation of this short oracle is based on a reconstructed text and is rather uncertain. Ishmael: the survival of Ishmael is indicated in Gn 17, 20; 21, 13. 18.

**25, 1:** Shittim: the full name was Abel-shittim, a locality at the foot of the mountains in the northeastern corner of the plains of Moab (Nm 33, 49). Illicit relations: perhaps as part of the licentious worship of Baal of Peor.

**25, 4:** Hold a public execution: the same phrase occurs in 2 Sm 21, 6–14, where the context shows that at least a part of the penalty consisted in being denied honorable burial. In both passages, dismemberment as a punishment for the breaking of covenant pledges is a current understanding of the phrase.

**25, 6:** Midianite woman: at this time the Midianites were leagued with the Moabites in opposing Israel; cf Nm 22, 4. 7. Balaam had induced both the Midianites (Nm 31, 16) and the Moabites (Rv 2, 14) to lure the Israelites to the obscene rites of Baal of Peor. They were weeping: on account of the plague that had struck them; cf v 8.

**25, 11:** For my honor: by taking vengeance on those who had made Baal of Peor a rival of the Lord.

x 2 Sm 8, 2. y Ex 17, 14; 1 Sm 15, 3. z Nm 31, 16. a Ex 34, 15f. b Ps 106, 28; Hos 9, 10. c Dt 4, 3. d Ps 106, 30. e 12f: Sir 45, 23f; Ps 106, 31; 1 Mc 2, 26. 54.

was zealous on behalf of his God and thus made amends for the Israelites."

[14]*The Israelite slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu, prince of an ancestral house of the Simeonites. [15]The slain Midianite woman was Cozbi, daughter of Zur, who was head of a clan, an ancestral house, in Midian.

**Vengeance on the Midianites** [16]*The LORD then said to Moses, [17]*f*"Treat the Midianites as enemies and crush them, [18]for they have been your enemies by their wily dealings with you as regards Peor and as regards their kinswoman Cozbi, the daughter of the Midianite prince, who was killed at the time of the slaughter because of Peor."

## CHAPTER 26

**The Second Census** [19]After the slaughter* [1]the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, [2]"Take a census, by ancestral houses, throughout the community of the Israelites of all those of twenty years or more who are fit for military service in Israel."*g* [3]So on the plains of Moab along the Jericho stretch of the Jordan, Moses and the priest Eleazar registered [4]those of twenty years or more, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt were as follows:

[5]*h*Of Reuben, the first-born of Israel, the Reubenites by clans were: through Hanoch the clan of the Hanochites, through Pallu the clan of the Palluites, [6]through Hezron the clan of the Hezronites, through Carmi the clan of the Carmites. [7]These were the clans of the Reubenites, of whom forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty men were registered.

[8]From Pallu descended Eliab, [9]and the descendants of Eliab were Dathan and Abiram*i* —the same Dathan and Abiram, councilors of the community, who revolted against Moses and Aaron [like Korah's band when it rebelled against the LORD]. [10]The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them as a warning [Korah too and the band that died when the fire consumed two hundred and fifty men. [11]The descendants of Korah, however, did not die out].

[12]The Simeonites by clans were: through Nemuel* the clan of the Nemuelites, through Jamin the clan of the Jaminites, through Jachin the clan of the Jachinites, [13]through Sohar the clan of the Soharites, through Shaul the clan of the Shaulites. [14]These were the clans of the Simeonites, of whom twenty-two thousand two hundred men were registered.

[15]The Gadites by clans were: through Zephon the clan of the Zephonites, through Haggi the clan of the Haggites, through Shuni the clan of the Shunites, [16]through Ozni the clan of the Oznites, through Eri the clan of the Erites, [17]through Arod the clan of the Arodites, through Areli the clan of the Arelites. [18]These were the clans of the Gadites, of whom forty thousand five hundred men were registered.

Ch 20–36
See RG
98–99

[19]The sons of Judah who died in the land of Canaan were Er and Onan.*j* [20]The Judahites by clans were: through Shelah the clan of the Shelahites, through Perez the clan of the Perezites, through Zerah the clan of the Zerahites. [21]The Perezites were: through Hezron the clan of the Hezronites, through Hamul the clan of the Hamulites. [22]These were the clans of Judah, of whom seventy-six thousand five hundred men were registered.

[23]The Issacharites by clans were: through Tola the clan of the Tolaites, through Puvah the clan of the Puvahites, [24]through Jashub the clan of the Jashubites, through Shimron the clan of the Shimronites. [25]These were the clans of Issachar, of whom sixty-four thousand three hundred men were registered.

[26]The Zebulunites by clans were: through Sered the clan of the Seredites, through Elon the

**25, 14f:** The nobility of the slain couple is mentioned in order to stress the courage of Phinehas in punishing them. The zeal of Phinehas became proverbial; cf Ps 106, 30; Sir 45, 23; 1 Mc 2, 26. 54.

**25, 16ff:** The account of the execution of this command is given in Nm 31, 1–18.

**26, 19:** This is the last verse of Ch 25.

**26, 12:** Nemuel: so also in Gn 46, 10; 1 Chr 4, 24. In Ex 6, 15, the same man is called "Jemuel"; it is uncertain which form is correct.

f 17f: Nm 31, 2–12. g Nm 1, 2f. h 5f: 1 Chr 5, 3. i 9f: Nm 16, 1. 32. j Gn 38, 7. 10; 46, 12; 1 Chr 2, 3.

clan of the Elonites, through Jahleel the clan of
the Jahleelites. [27]These were the clans of the
Zebulunites, of whom sixty thousand five hun-
dred men were registered.

[28]The sons of Joseph were Manasseh, and
Ephraim. [29]The Manassehites by clans were:
through Machir the clan of the Machirites,
through Gilead, a descendant of Machir, the clan
of the Gileadites. [30]The Gileadites were:
through Abiezer the clan of the Abiezrites,
through Helek the clan of the Helekites,
[31]through Asriel the clan of the Asrielites,
through Shechem the clan of the Shechemites,
[32]through Shemida the clan of the Shemidaites,
through Hepher the clan of the Hepherites.
[33] [k]Zelophehad, son of Hepher, had no sons, but
only daughters, whose names were Mahlah,
Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. [34]These were
the clans of Manasseh, of whom fifty-two thou-
sand seven hundred men were registered.

[35]The Ephraimites by clans were: through
Shuthelah the clan of the Shuthelahites, through
Becher the clan of the Bechrites, through Tahan
the clan of the Tahanites. [36]The Shuthelahites
were: through Eran the clan of the Eranites.
[37]These were the clans of the Ephraimites, of
whom thirty-two thousand five hundred men
were registered.

These were the descendants of Joseph by
clans.

[38]The Benjaminites by clans were: through
Bela the clan of the Belaites, through Ashbel the
clan of the Ashbelites, through Ahiram the clan
of the Ahiramites, [39]through Shupham the clan
of the Shuphamites, through Hupham the clan of
the Huphamites. [40]The descendants of Bela
were Arad and Naaman: through Arad the clan
of the Aradites, through Naaman the clan of the
Naamanites. [41]These were the Benjaminites by
clans, of whom forty-five thousand six hundred
men were registered.

[42]The Danites by clans were: through Shu-
ham the clan of the Shuhamites. These were the
clans of Dan, [43]of whom sixty-four thousand
four hundred men were registered.

[44]The Asherites by clans were: through Im-
nah the clan of the Imnites, through Ishvi the
clan of the Ishvites, through Beriah the clan of
the Beriites, [45]through Heber the clan of the
Heberites, through Malchiel the clan of the
Malchielites. [46]The name of Asher's daughter
was Serah. [47]These were the clans of Asher, of
whom fifty-three thousand four hundred men
were registered.

[48]The Naphtalites by clans were: through
Jahzeel the clan of the Jahzeelites, through Guni
the clan of the Gunites, [49]through Jezer the clan
of the Jezerites, through Shillem the clan of the
Shillemites. [50]These were the clans of Naphtali,
of whom forty-five thousand four hundred men
were registered.

[51]These six hundred and one thousand seven
hundred and thirty were the Israelites who were
registered.

**Allotment of the Land** [52]*The LORD said to
Moses, [53] [l]"Among these groups the land shall
be divided as their heritage in keeping with the
number of individuals in each group. [54] [m]To a
large group you shall assign a large heritage, to a
small group a small heritage, each group receiv-
ing its heritage in proportion to the number of
men registered in it. [55]But the land shall be
divided by lot, as the heritage of the various
ancestral tribes. [56]As the lot falls shall each
group, large or small, be assigned its heritage."

**Census of the Levites** [57]The Levites regis-
tered by clans were: through Gershon the clan
of the Gershonites, through Kohath the clan of
the Kohathites, through Merari the clan of the
Merarites. [58]These also were clans of Levi: the
clan of the Libnites, the clan of the Hebronites,
the clan of the Mahlites, the clan of the Mu-
shites, the clan of the Korahites.

Among the descendants of Kohath was Am-

**26, 52–56**: The division of Canaan among the various tribes and clans and families was determined partly by the size of each group and partly by lot. Perhaps the lots determined the respective locality of each tribal land and the section reserved for each clan, while the relative size of the allotted locality and section depended on the numerical strength of each group. The Hebrews considered the outcome of the drawing of lots as an expression of God's will; cf Acts 1, 23–26.

k Nm 27, 1; 36, 11; Jos 17, 3. l Jos 11, 23. m Nm 33, 54; 35, 8.

ram, [59]whose wife was named Jochebed. She
also was of the tribe of Levi, born to the tribe in
Egypt. To Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and
their sister Miriam. [60]To Aaron were born Nadab
and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. [61]But Nadab
and Abihu died when they offered profane fire
before the LORD.

[62]The total number of male Levites one
month or more of age, who were registered, was
twenty-three thousand.[n] They were not regis-
tered with the other Israelites, however, for no
heritage was given them among the Israelites.

[63]These, then, were the men registered by
Moses and the priest Eleazar in the census of the
Israelites taken on the plains of Moab along the
Jericho stretch of the Jordan. [64]Among them
there was not a man of those who had been
registered by Moses and the priest Aaron in the
census of the Israelites taken in the desert of
Sinai. [65][o]For the LORD had told them that they
would surely die in the desert, and not one of
them was left except Caleb, son of Jephunneh,
and Joshua, son of Nun.

## CHAPTER 27

**Zelophehad's Daughters** [1]Zelophehad, son of
Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of
Manasseh, son of Joseph, had daughters named
Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.[p]
They came forward, [2]and standing in the pres-
ence of Moses, the priest Eleazar, the princes,
and the whole community at the entrance of the
meeting tent, said: [3]"Our father died in the
desert. Although he did not join those who
banded together against the LORD* [in Korah's
band], he died for his own sin without leaving
any sons. [4]But why should our father's name be
withdrawn from his clan merely because he had
no son? Let us, therefore, have property among
our father's kinsmen."

**Laws Concerning Heiresses** [5]*When Moses
laid their case before the LORD, [6]the LORD said to
him, [7]"The plea of Zelophehad's daughters is
just; you shall give them hereditary property
among their father's kinsmen, letting their fa-
ther's heritage pass on to them. [8]Therefore, tell
the Israelites: If a man dies without leaving a
son, you shall let his heritage pass on to his
daughter; [9]if he has no daughter, you shall give
his heritage to his brothers; [10]if he has no
brothers, you shall give his heritage to his
father's brothers; [11]if his father had no brothers,
you shall give his heritage to his nearest relative
in his clan, who shall then take possession of it."
This is the legal norm for the Israelites, as the
LORD commanded Moses.[q]

**Joshua To Succeed Moses** [12]The LORD said to
Moses, "Go up here into the Abarim Moun-
tains* and view the land that I am giving to the
Israelites.[r] [13]When you have viewed it, you too
shall be taken to your people, as was your
brother Aaron,[s] [14]because in the rebellion of the
community in the desert of Zin you both re-
belled against my order to manifest my sanctity
to them by means of the water."[t] [This is the
water of Meribah of Kadesh in the desert of Zin.]

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[15]Then Moses said to the LORD, [16]"May the
LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind,* set
over the community a man [17]who shall act as
their leader in all things, to guide them in all
their actions; that the LORD's community may
not be like sheep without a shepherd." [18]And
the LORD replied to Moses, "Take Joshua, son of
Nun,[u] a man of spirit,* and lay your hand upon
him. [19]Have him stand in the presence of the
priest Eleazar and of the whole community, and

**27, 3:** He did not join . . . against the Lord: had he done so, he and his heirs could have rightly been deprived of the privilege of receiving a portion in the Promised Land.

**27, 5–11:** The purpose of this law, as also that of the related laws in Nm 36, 2–10 (heiresses to marry within the same tribe), Dt 25, 5–10 (levirate marriage), and Lv 25, 10 (return of property in the jubilee year), was to keep the landed property within the proper domain of each tribe.

**27, 12:** The Abarim Mountains: the range on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.

**27, 16:** The God of the spirits of all mankind: the sense is either that God knows the character and abilities of all men and therefore knows best whom to appoint (cf Acts 1, 24), or, more probably, that God is Master of life and death and therefore can call Moses from this world whenever he wishes; cf the same phrase in Nm 16, 22, where "spirit" evidently means "the life principle."

**27, 18:** A man of spirit: literally, "a man in whom there is spirit": one who has the qualities of a good leader—courage, prudence, and strength of will. Cf Gn 41, 38; Dt 34, 9.

n Nm 3, 39. o Nm 14, 22ff. 29. p Nm 26, 33; Jos 17, 3. q Jer 32, 6–9. r Dt 3, 27; 32, 49; 34, 1. s 13f: Nm 20, 12. 24. t Dt 32, 51. u Dt 34, 9.

commission him before their eyes. [20]Invest him
with some of your own dignity, that the whole
Israelite community may obey him. [21]He shall
present himself to the priest Eleazar, to have him
seek out for him the decisions of the Urim* in
the LORD's presence; and as he directs, Joshua,
all the Israelites with him, and the community as
a whole shall perform all their actions."
[22]Moses did as the LORD had commanded
him. Taking Joshua and having him stand in the
presence of the priest Eleazar and of the whole
community, [23]he laid his hands on him and gave
him his commission, as the LORD had directed
through Moses.

## CHAPTER 28

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**General Sacrifices** [1]The LORD said to Moses,
[2]"Give the Israelites this commandment: At the
times I have appointed, you shall be careful to
present to me the food offerings that are offered
to me as sweet-smelling oblations.

**Each Morning and Evening** [3] [v]"You shall tell
them therefore: This is the oblation which you
shall offer to the LORD: two unblemished year-
ling lambs each day as the established holo-
caust,* [4]offering one lamb in the morning and
the other during the evening twilight, [5]each
with a cereal offering of one tenth of an ephah of
fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil of
crushed olives.* [6]This is the established holo-
caust that was offered at Mount Sinai as a sweet-
smelling oblation to the LORD. [7]And as the
libation for the first lamb, you shall pour out to
the LORD in the sanctuary* a fourth of a hin of
wine. [8]The other lamb, to be offered during the
evening twilight, you shall offer with the same
cereal offering and the same libation as in the
morning, as a sweet-smelling oblation to the
LORD.

**On the Sabbath** [9]"On the sabbath day you
shall offer two unblemished yearling lambs, with
their cereal offering, two tenths of an ephah of
fine flour mixed with oil, and with their liba-
tions. [10]Each sabbath there shall be the sabbath
holocaust in addition to the established holo-
caust and its libation.

**At the New Moon Feast** [11]"On the first of
each month* you shall offer as a holocaust to the
LORD two bullocks, one ram, and seven unblem-
ished yearling lambs, [12]with three tenths of an
ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as the cereal
offering for each bullock, two tenths of an ephah
of fine flour mixed with oil as the cereal offering
for the ram, [13]and one tenth of an ephah of fine
flour mixed with oil as the cereal offering for
each lamb, that the holocaust may be a sweet-
smelling oblation to the LORD. [14]Their libations
shall be half a hin of wine for each bullock, a
third of a hin for the ram, and a fourth of a hin
for each lamb. This is the new moon holocaust
for every new moon of the year. [15]Moreover,
one goat shall be sacrificed as a sin offering to the
LORD. These are to be offered in addition to the
established holocaust and its libation.

**At the Passover** [16]"On the fourteenth day* of
the first month falls the Passover of the LORD,[w]
[17]and the fifteenth day of this month is the
pilgrimage feast. For seven days unleavened
bread is to be eaten. [18]On the first of these days
you shall hold a sacred assembly, and do no sort
of work.[x] [19]As an oblation you shall offer a
holocaust to the LORD, which shall consist of
two bullocks, one ram, and seven yearling lambs
that you are sure are unblemished, [20]with their
cereal offerings of fine flour mixed with oil,
offering three tenths of an ephah for each
bullock, two tenths for the ram, [21]and one tenth
for each of the seven lambs; [22]and offer one goat

**27, 21:** The Urim: certain sacred objects which the Hebrew priests employed to ascertain the divine will, probably by obtaining a positive or negative answer to a given question. The full expression was "the Urim and Thummim"; cf Ex 28, 30; Lv 8, 8; Dt 33, 8; Ezr 2, 63; Neh 7, 65. Joshua was ordinarily not to receive direct revelations from God as Moses had received them.

**28, 3:** The established holocaust: "the tamid holocaust," the technical term for the daily sacrifice.

**28, 5:** Oil of crushed olives: this oil, made in a mortar, was purer and more expensive than oil extracted in the olive press.

**28, 7:** In the sanctuary: according to Sir 50, 15, it was at the base of the altar.

**28, 11:** On the first of each month: literally, "at the new moons"; beginning on the evening when the crescent of the new moon first appeared.

**28, 16:** On the fourteenth day: toward evening at the end of this day; cf Ex 12, 6. 18.

v 3–8: Ex 29, 38–42. w Ex 12, 18; Lv 23, 5; Dt 16, 1. x Ex 12, 16; Lv 23, 7.

as a sin offering in atonement for yourselves.
[23]These offerings you shall make in addition to
the established morning holocaust: [24]you shall
make exactly the same offerings each day for
seven days as food offerings, in addition to the
established holocaust with its libation, for a
sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. [25]On the
seventh day you shall hold a sacred assembly,
and do no sort of work.[y]

**At Pentecost** [26]"On the day of first fruits,* on
your feast of Weeks,[z] when you present to the
LORD the new cereal offering, you shall hold a
sacred assembly, and do no sort of work. [27]You
shall offer as a sweet-smelling holocaust to the
LORD two bullocks, one ram, and seven yearling
lambs that you are sure are unblemished, [28]with
their cereal offerings of fine flour mixed with oil;
offering three tenths of an ephah for each
bullock, two tenths for the ram, [29]and one tenth
for each of the seven lambs. [30]Moreover, one
goat shall be offered as a sin offering in atonement for yourselves. [31]You shall make these
offerings, together with their libations, in addition to the established holocaust with its cereal
offering.

## CHAPTER 29

**On New Year's Day** [1]"On the first day of the
seventh month* you shall hold a sacred assembly, and do no sort of work; it shall be a day on
which you sound the trumpet.[a] [2]You shall offer
as a sweet-smelling holocaust to the LORD one
bullock, one ram, and seven unblemished yearling lambs, [3]with their cereal offerings of fine
flour mixed with oil; offering three tenths of an
ephah for the bullock, two tenths for the ram,
[4]and one tenth for each of the seven lambs.
[5]Moreover, one goat shall be offered as a sin
offering in atonement for yourselves. [6]These are
to be offered in addition to the ordinary new
moon holocaust with its cereal offering, and in
addition to the established holocaust with its
cereal offering, together with the libations prescribed for them, as a sweet-smelling oblation to
the LORD.

**On the Day of Atonement** [7]"On the tenth
day of this seventh month* you shall hold a
sacred assembly, and mortify yourselves, and do
no sort of work.[b] [8]You shall offer as a sweet-smelling holocaust to the LORD one bullock, one
ram, and seven yearling lambs that you are sure
are unblemished, [9]with their cereal offerings of
fine flour mixed with oil; offering three tenths of
an ephah for the bullock, two tenths for the ram,
[10]and one tenth for each of the seven lambs.
[11]Moreover, one goat shall be sacrificed as a sin
offering. These are to be offered in addition to
the atonement sin offering,* the established
holocaust with its cereal offering, and their
libations.

**On the Feast of Booths*** [12]"On the fifteenth
day of the seventh month you shall hold a sacred
assembly,[c] and do no sort of work; then, for
seven days following, you shall celebrate a
pilgrimage feast to the LORD. [13]You shall offer as
a sweet-smelling holocaust to the LORD thirteen
bullocks,* two rams, and fourteen yearling
lambs that are unblemished, [14]with their cereal
offerings of fine flour mixed with oil; offering
three tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen
bullocks, two tenths for each of the two rams,
[15]and one tenth for each of the fourteen lambs.
[16]Moreover, one goat shall be sacrificed as a sin
offering. These are to be offered in addition to
the established holocaust with its cereal offering
and libation.

[17]"On the second day you shall offer twelve
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished

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**28, 26:** The day of first fruits: a unique term for this feast, which is usually called "the feast of Weeks"; it was celebrated as a thanksgiving for the wheat harvest seven weeks after the barley harvest (Passover). In the time of Christ it was commonly known by the Greek word "Pentecost," that is, "fiftieth" (day after the Passover); see note on Lv 23, 16.

**29, 1:** The first day of the seventh month: (about September-October) is now the Jewish New Year's Day. In the older calendar the year began with the first of Nisan (March-April); cf Ex 12, 2.

**29, 7:** The tenth day of this seventh month: the Day of Atonement. Mortify yourselves: literally, "afflict your souls," that is, with fasting.

**29, 11:** The atonement sin offering: the bullock prescribed in Lv 16, 11f.

**29, 12:** This feast of Booths celebrating the vintage harvest was the most popular of all and therefore had the most elaborate ritual. See note on Lv 23, 34.

**29, 13:** Thirteen bullocks: the number of bullocks sacrificed before the octave day was seventy, arranged on a descending scale so that the number on the seventh day was the sacred number seven.

y Ex 12, 16; 13, 6; Lv 23, 8. z Ex 34, 22. a Nm 10, 10; Lv 23, 24. b Lv 16, 29; 23, 27f. 32. c Lv 23, 34f.

yearling lambs, [18]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [19]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

[20]"On the third day you shall offer eleven
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished
yearling lambs, [21]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [22]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

[23]"On the fourth day you shall offer ten
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished
yearling lambs, [24]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [25]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

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[26]"On the fifth day you shall offer nine
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished
yearling lambs, [27] [d]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [28]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

[29]"On the sixth day you shall offer eight
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished
yearling lambs, [30]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [31]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

[32]"On the seventh day you shall offer seven
bullocks, two rams, and fourteen unblemished
yearling lambs, [33]with their cereal offerings and
libations as prescribed for the bullocks, rams and
lambs in proportion to their number, [34]as well as
one goat for a sin offering, besides the estab-
lished holocaust with its cereal offering and
libation.

[35]"On the eighth day [e] you shall hold a solemn
meeting,* and do no sort of work. [36]You shall
offer up in holocaust as a sweet-smelling oblation
to the LORD one bullock, one ram, and seven
unblemished yearling lambs, [37]with their cereal
offerings and libations as prescribed for the
bullocks, rams and lambs in proportion to their
number, [38]as well as one goat for a sin offering,
besides the established holocaust with its cereal
offering and libation.

[39]"These are the offerings you shall make to
the LORD on your festivals, besides whatever
holocausts, cereal offerings, libations, and peace
offerings you present as your votive or free-will
offerings."

## CHAPTER 30

[1]Moses then gave the Israelites these instruc-
tions, just as the LORD had ordered him.

**Validity and Annulment of Vows** [2]Moses
said to the heads of the Israelite tribes, "This is
what the LORD has commanded: [3]When a man
makes a vow to the LORD or binds himself under
oath to a pledge* of abstinence, he shall not
violate his word, but must fulfill exactly the
promise he has uttered.[f]

[4]"When a woman, while still a maiden in her
father's house, makes a vow to the LORD, or
binds herself to a pledge, [5]if her father learns of
her vow or the pledge to which she bound
herself and says nothing to her about it, then any
vow or any pledge she has made remains valid.
[6]But if on the day he learns of it her father
expresses to her his disapproval, then any vow
or any pledge she has made becomes null and
void; and the LORD releases her from it, since
her father has expressed to her his disapproval.

[7]"If she marries while under a vow or under a

**29, 35:** A solemn meeting: the Hebrew word is the technical term for the closing celebration of the three major feasts of the Passover, Pentecost and Booths, or of other special feasts that lasted for a week. Cf Lv 23, 36; Dt 16, 8; 2 Chr 7, 9; Neh 8, 18.

**30, 3:** A vow . . . a pledge: here the former signifies the doing of some positive good deed, in particular the offering of some sacrifice; the latter signifies the abstaining from some otherwise licit action or pleasure; cf v 14.

d Nm 29, 30. 37. e Lv 23, 36; Jn 7, 37. f Dt 23, 22; Eccl 5, 3f.

rash pledge to which she bound herself, [8]and her
husband learns of it, yet says nothing to her that
day about it, then the vow or pledge she had
made remains valid. [9]But if on the day he learns
of it her husband expresses to her his disap-
proval, he thereby annuls the vow she had made
or the rash pledge to which she had bound
herself, and the LORD releases her from it. [10]The
vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, or any
pledge to which such a woman binds herself, is
valid.

[11]"If it is in her husband's house* that she
makes a vow or binds herself under oath to a
pledge, [12]and her husband learns of it yet says
nothing to express to her his disapproval, then
any vow or any pledge she has made remains
valid. [13]But if on the day he learns of them her
husband annuls them, then whatever she has
expressly promised in her vow or in her pledge
becomes null and void; since her husband has
annulled them, the LORD releases her from
them.

[14]"Any vow or any pledge that she makes
under oath to mortify herself, her husband can
either allow to remain valid or render null and
void. [15]But if her husband, day after day, says
nothing at all to her about them, he thereby
allows as valid any vow or any pledge she has
made; he has allowed them to remain valid,
because on the day he learned of them he said
nothing to her about them. [16]If, however, he
countermands them* some time after he first
learned of them, he is responsible for her guilt."

[17]These are the statutes which the LORD
prescribed through Moses concerning the rela-
tionship between a husband and his wife, as well
as between a father and his daughter while she is
still a maiden in her father's house.

## CHAPTER 31

**Extermination of the Midianites** [1]The LORD
said to Moses,* [2]"Avenge the Israelites on the
Midianites, and then you shall be taken to your
people." [3]So Moses told the people, "Select men
from your midst and arm them for war, to attack
the Midianites and execute the LORD's ven-
geance on them. [4]From each of the tribes of
Israel you shall send a band of one thousand
men to war." [5]From the clans of Israel, there-
fore, a thousand men of each tribe were levied,
so that there were twelve thousand men armed
for war. [6]Moses sent them out on the campaign,
a thousand from each tribe, with Phinehas, son
of Eleazar, the priest for the campaign, who had
with him the sacred vessels and the trumpets for
sounding the alarm. [7]They waged war against
the Midianites, as the LORD had commanded
Moses, and killed every male among them.
[8]Besides those slain in battle, they killed the five
Midianite kings:* Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and
Reba; and they also executed Balaam, son of
Beor, with the sword. [9]But the Israelites kept the
women of the Midianites with their little ones as
captives, and all their herds and flocks and
wealth as spoil, [10]while they set on fire all the
towns where they had settled and all their
encampments. [11]Then they took all the booty,
with the people and beasts they had captured,
and brought the captives, together with the
spoils and booty, [12]to Moses and the priest
Eleazar and to the Israelite community at their
camp on the plains of Moab, along the Jericho
stretch of the Jordan.

**Treatment of the Captives** [13]When Moses
and the priest Eleazar, with all the princes of the
community, went outside the camp to meet
them, [14]Moses became angry with the officers of
the army, the clan and company commanders,
who were returning from combat. [15]"So you
have spared all the women!" he exclaimed.
[16]"Why, they are the very ones who on Balaam's
advice prompted the unfaithfulness of the Israel-
ites toward the LORD in the Peor affair,[g] which
began the slaughter of the LORD's community.

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**30, 11:** In her husband's house: after her marriage. This contrasts with the case given in vv 7ff.

**30, 16:** He countermands them: he prevents their fulfillment. Since he has first allowed the vows to remain valid, he can no longer annul them.

**31, 1ff:** The narrative of Israel's relations with Midian, which was interrupted after Nm 25, 18, is now resumed.

**31, 8:** The five Midianite kings: they are called "Midianite princes, Sihon's vassals" in Jos 13, 21.

g 2 Pt 2, 15; Rv 2, 14.

17 *Slay, therefore, every male child and every
woman who has had intercourse with a man.
18 But you may spare and keep for yourselves all
girls who had no intercourse with a man.

**Purification after Combat** 19 "Moreover, you
shall stay outside the camp for seven days, and
those of you who have slain anyone or touched
anyone slain in battle shall purify yourselves on
the third and on the seventh day. This applies
both to you and to your captives. 20 You shall also
purify every article of cloth, leather, goats' hair,
or wood."

21 Eleazar the priest told the soldiers who had
returned from combat: "This is what the law, as
prescribed by the LORD to Moses, ordains:
22 Whatever can stand fire, such as gold, silver,
bronze, iron, tin and lead, 23 you shall put into
the fire, that it may become clean; however, it
must also be purified with lustral water.* But
whatever cannot stand fire you shall put into the
water. 24 On the seventh day you shall wash your
clothes, and then you will again be clean. After
that you may enter the camp."

**Division of the Booty** 25 The LORD said to
Moses: 26 "With the help of the priest Eleazar
and of the heads of the ancestral houses, count
up all the human captives and the beasts that
have been taken; 27 then divide them evenly,*
giving half to those who took active part in the
war by going out to combat, and half to the rest
of the community. 28 You shall levy a tax for the
LORD on the warriors who went out to combat:
one out of every five hundred persons, oxen,
asses and sheep 29 in their half of the spoil you
shall turn over to the priest Eleazar as a contribu-
tion to the LORD. 30 From the Israelites' half you
shall take one out of every fifty persons, and the
same from the different beasts, oxen, asses and
sheep, and give them to the Levites, who have
charge of the LORD's Dwelling." 31 So Moses and
the priest Eleazar did this, as the LORD had
commanded Moses.

**Amount of Booty** 32 This booty, what was left
of the loot which the soldiers had taken,
amounted to six hundred and seventy-five thou-
sand sheep, 33 seventy-two thousand oxen,
34 sixty-one thousand asses, 35 and thirty-two
thousand girls who were still virgins.

36 The half that fell to those who had gone out
to combat was: three hundred and thirty-seven
thousand five hundred sheep, 37 of which six
hundred and seventy-five fell as tax to the LORD;
38 thirty-six thousand oxen, of which seventy-
two fell as tax to the LORD; 39 thirty thousand
five hundred asses, of which sixty-one fell as tax
to the LORD; 40 and sixteen thousand persons, of
whom thirty-two fell as tax to the LORD. 41 The
taxes contributed to the LORD, Moses gave to
the priest Eleazar, as the LORD had commanded
him.

42 The half for the other Israelites, which fell
to the community when Moses had taken it
from the soldiers, was: 43 three hundred and
thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep,
44 thirty-six thousand oxen, 45 thirty thousand
five hundred asses, 46 and sixteen thousand per-
sons. 47 From this, the Israelites' share, Moses, as
the LORD had ordered, took one out of every
fifty, both of persons and of beasts, and gave
them to the Levites, who had charge of the
LORD's Dwelling.

**Gifts of the Officers** 48 Then the officers who
had been clan and company commanders of the
army came up to Moses 49 and said to him, "Your
servants have counted up the soldiers under our
command, and not one is missing. 50 *So, to
make atonement for ourselves before the LORD,
each of us will bring as an offering to the LORD
some gold article he has picked up, such as an
anklet, a bracelet, a ring, an earring, or a
necklace." 51 Moses and the priest Eleazar ac-
cepted this gold from them, all of it in well-
wrought articles. 52 The gold that they gave as a
contribution to the LORD amounted in all to

**31, 17:** There are later references to Midian in Jgs 6–8; 1 Kgs 11, 18; Is 60, 6. The present raid was only against those Midianites who were dwelling at this time near the encampment of the Israelites.

**31, 23:** Lustral water: water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer as prescribed in Nm 19, 9.

**31, 27:** Divide them evenly: for a similar division of the booty into two equal parts, between those who engaged in the fray and those who stayed with the baggage, cf 1 Sm 30, 24. But note that here the tax on the booty of the non-combatants is ten times as much as that on the soldier's booty.

**31, 50:** The precise nature and use of some of these articles of gold is not certain.

sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. This was from the clan and company commanders; [53]what the common soldiers had looted each one kept for himself. [54]Moses, then, and the priest Eleazar accepted the gold from the clan and company commanders, and put it in the meeting tent as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

## CHAPTER 32

**Request of Gad and Reuben** [1]Now the Reubenites and Gadites had a very large number of livestock. Noticing that the land of Jazer and of Gilead* was grazing country, [2]they came to Moses and the priest Eleazar and to the princes of the community and said, [3]*"The region of Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Baal-meon, [4]which the LORD has laid low before the community of Israel, is grazing country. Now, since your servants have livestock," [5]they continued, "if we find favor with you, let this land be given to your servants as their property. Do not make us cross the Jordan."

**Moses' Rebuke** [6]But Moses answered the Gadites and Reubenites: "Are your kinsmen, then, to engage in war, while you remain here? [7]Why do you wish to discourage the Israelites from crossing to the land the LORD has given them? [8]That is just what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to reconnoiter the land.[h] [9]They went up to the Wadi Eshcol and reconnoitered the land, then so discouraged the Israelites that they would not enter the land the LORD had given them. [10][i]At that time the wrath of the LORD flared up, and he swore, [11]'Because they have not followed me unreservedly, none of these men of twenty years or more who have come up from Egypt shall ever see this country I promised under oath to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, [12][j]except the Kenizzite* Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, son of Nun, who have followed the LORD unreservedly.' [13]So in his anger with the Israelites the LORD made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD had died out. [14]And now here you are, a brood of sinners, rising up in your fathers' place to add still more to the LORD's blazing wrath against the Israelites. [15]If you turn away from following him, he will make them stay still longer in the desert, and so you will bring about the ruin of this whole nation."

Ch 20–36 See RG 98–99

**Counter Proposal** [16]But they were insistent with him: "We wish only to build sheepfolds here for our flocks, and towns for our families; [17]but we ourselves will march as troops in the van of the Israelites,[k] until we have led them to their destination. Meanwhile our families can remain here in the fortified towns, safe from attack by the natives. [18]We will not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites has taken possession of his heritage, [19][l]and will not claim any heritage with them once we cross the Jordan, so long as we receive a heritage for ourselves on this eastern side of the Jordan."

**Agreement Reached** [20]*Moses said to them in reply: "If you keep your word to march as troops in the LORD's vanguard [21]and to cross the Jordan in full force before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out of his way [22]and the land is subdued before him, then you may return here, quit of every obligation to the LORD and to Israel, and this region shall be your possession before the LORD.[m] [23]But if you do not do this, you will sin against the LORD, and you can be sure that you will not escape the consequences of your sin. [24]Build the towns, then, for your families, and the folds for your flocks, but also fulfill your express promise."

**32, 1:** Gilead: the name of the western part of the plateau east of the Jordan, sometimes signifying the whole region from the Yarmuk to the Jordan, sometimes only the northern part of this region, and sometimes, as here, only its southern part. Jazer lay to the east of southern Gilead.

**32, 3:** The places named in this verse, as well as the additional ones given in vv 34–38, were all in the former kingdom of Sihon, that is, in the region between the Jabbok and the Arnon. Cf Nm 21, 23f; Jos 13, 19–21. 24–27.

**32, 12:** Kenizzite: a member of the clan of Kenaz, which, according to Gn 36, 11. 15. 42, was Edomitic; hence, although Caleb belonged to the tribe of Judah (Nm 13, 6; 34, 19), he must have had Edomite blood in his veins; cf also Jos 14, 6. 14.

**32, 20ff:** Since the ark of the Lord was borne into battle with the Israelite army, the vanguard was said to march before the Lord.

h 8f: Nm 13, 31ff; Dt 1, 22. i 10f: Dt 1, 34f. j Nm 14, 24; Dt 1, 36. k Jos 4, 12f. l Jos 13, 8. m Jos 1, 15.

25The Gadites and Reubenites answered Moses, "Your servants will do as you command, my
lord. 26 [n]While our wives and children, our herds
and other livestock remain in the towns of
Gilead, 27all your servants will go across as
armed troops to battle before the LORD, just as
your lordship says."

28Moses, therefore, gave this order in their
regard to the priest Eleazar, to Joshua, son of
Nun, and to the heads of the ancestral tribes of
the Israelites: 29"If all the Gadites and Reuben-
ites cross the Jordan with you as combat troops
before the LORD, you shall give them Gilead as
their property when the land has been subdued
before you. 30But if they will not go across with
you as combat troops before the LORD, you shall
bring their wives and children and livestock
across before you into Canaan, and they shall
have their property with you in the land of
Canaan."

Ch 20–36
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31To this the Gadites and Reubenites replied,
"We will do what the LORD has commanded us,
your servants. 32We ourselves will go across into
the land of Canaan as troops before the LORD,
but we will retain our hereditary property on this
side of the Jordan." 33So Moses gave them [* the
Gadites and Reubenites, as well as half the tribe
of Manasseh, son of Joseph, the kingdom of
Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of
Og, king of Bashan,] the land with its towns and
the districts that surrounded them. [o]

34The Gadites rebuilt the fortified towns of
Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35Atroth-shophan, Jazer,
Jogbehah, 36Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran, and
they built sheepfolds. 37The Reubenites rebuilt
Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, 38Nebo, Baal-
meon [names to be changed!],* and Sibmah.
These towns, which they rebuilt, they called by
their old names.

**Other Conquests** 39The descendants of Ma-
chir, son of Manasseh, invaded Gilead and
captured it, driving out the Amorites who were
there. 40[Moses gave Gilead to Machir, [p] son of
Manasseh, and he settled there.] 41Jair, [q] a Manas-
sehite clan, campaigned against the tent villages,
captured them and called them Havvoth-jair.
42Nobah also campaigned against Kenath, cap-
tured it with its dependencies and called it
Nobah after his own name.

## CHAPTER 33

**Stages on the Journey** 1The following are the
stages by which the Israelites journeyed up by
companies from the land of Egypt under the
guidance of Moses and Aaron.* 2By the LORD's
command Moses recorded the starting places of
the various stages. The starting places of the
successive stages were:

3 *They set out from Rameses in the first
month,
on the fifteenth day of the first month.
On the Passover morrow the Israelites went
forth
in triumph, in view of all Egypt,
4While the Egyptians buried their first-born
all of whom the LORD had struck down;
on their gods, too, the LORD executed
judgments. [r]

**From Egypt to Sinai** 5Setting out from Rame-
ses, the Israelites camped at Succoth. 6Setting
out from Succoth, they camped at Etham near
the edge of the desert. 7Setting out from Etham,
they turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is oppo-
site Baal-zephon, and they camped opposite

**32, 33:** The preceding is concerned solely with the two tribes of Gad and Reuben and with the land of the former kingdom of Sihon; hence it seems probable that the sudden reference here to the half-tribe of Manasseh and to their territory in Bashan, the former kingdom of Og, is a later addition to the text.

**32, 38:** The phrase in brackets is a gloss, warning the reader either to change the order of the preceding names, or, more probably, to read some other word, such as bosheth, "shame," for Baal. They called by their old names: literally, "they called by their names" (see Textual Notes); however, some understand the current Hebrew text to mean, "they called by new names."

**33, 1ff:** This list of camping sites was drawn up by Moses, as v 2 expressly states. However, in its present form it probably includes some glosses. Moreover, a comparison with the more detailed accounts of the journey as given elsewhere shows that this is not complete. It records just forty camping sites, not counting the starting place, Rameses, and the terminus, the plains of Moab. This number, which corresponds exactly to the forty years of wandering in the desert, is probably a schematic device. Besides, it seems that in its present form the order of some of these names has been disturbed. Several names listed here are not recorded elsewhere.

**33, 3f:** These two verses were probably borrowed from some ancient song celebrating the exodus from Egypt.

n Jos 1, 14. o Dt 3, 12; 29, 7; Jos 12, 6; 13, 8. p Dt 3, 15. q Dt 3, 14. r 4f: Ex 12, 12. 29. 37.

Migdol.[s] 8Setting out from Pi-hahiroth, they
crossed over through the sea into the desert,[t]
and after a three days' journey in the desert of
Etham, they camped at Marah. 9Setting out from
Marah, they came to Elim, where there were
twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees,
and they camped there.[u] 10Setting out from
Elim, they camped beside the Red Sea. 11Setting
out from the Red Sea, they camped in the desert
of Sin. 12Setting out from the desert of Sin, they
camped at Dophkah. 13Setting out from Doph-
kah, they camped at Alush. 14Setting out from
Alush, they camped at Rephidim, where there
was no water for the people to drink.[v] 15Setting
out from Rephidim, they camped in the desert of
Sinai.[w]

**From Sinai to Kadesh** 16Setting out from the
desert of Sinai, they camped at Kibroth-
hattaavah. 17Setting out from Kibroth-hattaavah,
they camped at Hazeroth.[x] 18Setting out from
Hazeroth, they camped at Rithmah. 19Setting
out from Rithmah, they camped at Rimmon-
perez. 20Setting out from Rimmon-perez, they
camped at Libnah. 21Setting out from Libnah,
they camped at Rissah. 22Setting out from Ris-
sah, they camped at Kehelathah. 23Setting out
from Kehelathah, they camped at Mount She-
pher. 24Setting out from Mount Shepher, they
camped at Haradah. 25Setting out from Haradah,
they camped at Makheloth. 26Setting out from
Makheloth, they camped at Tahath. 27Setting
out from Tahath, they camped at Terah. 28Set-
ting out from Terah, they camped at Mithkah.
29Setting out from Mithkah, they camped at
Hashmonah. 30*Setting out from Hashmonah,—

**From Mount Hor to Ezion-geber** They
camped at Moseroth. 31Setting out from Mose-
roth, they camped at Bene-jaakan. 32Setting out
from Bene-jaakan, they camped at Mount
Gidgad. 33Setting out from Mount Gidgad, they
camped at Jotbathah. 34Setting out from Jotba-
thah, they camped at Abronah. 35Setting out
from Abronah, they camped at Ezion-geber.
36Setting out from Ezion-geber,—

**From Kadesh to Mount Hor** They camped in
the desert of Zin, at Kadesh.[y] 37Setting out from
Kadesh, they camped at Mount Hor on the
border of the land of Edom. 38[Aaron the priest
ascended Mount Hor[z] at the LORD's command,
and there he died in the fortieth year from the
departure of the Israelites from the land of
Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.
39Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years
old when he died on Mount Hor. 40*Now, when
the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the
Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard that the
Israelites were coming. . . .] 41Setting out from
Mount Hor,—

**From Ezion-geber to the Plains of Moab**
*They camped at Zalmonah. 42Setting out from
Zalmonah, they camped at Punon. 43Setting out
from Punon, they camped at Oboth. 44Setting
out from Oboth, they camped at Iye-abarim on
the border of Moab. 45Setting out from Iye-
abarim, they camped at Dibon-gad. 46Setting out
from Dibon-gad, they camped at Almon-
diblathaim. 47Setting out from Almon-
diblathaim, they camped in the Abarim Moun-
tains opposite Nebo. 48Setting out from the
Abarim Mountains, they camped on the plains of
Moab along the Jericho stretch of the Jordan.
49Their camp along the Jordan on the plains of
Moab extended from Beth-jeshimoth to Abel-
shittim.

**Conquest and Division of Canaan** 50The
LORD spoke to Moses on the plains of Moab
beside the Jericho stretch of the Jordan and said
to him: 51"Tell the Israelites: When you go
across the Jordan into the land of Canaan,
52drive out all the inhabitants of the land before
you; destroy all their stone figures and molten
images, and demolish all their high places.[a]

**33, 30–36:** Moseroth is mentioned in Dt 10, 6 (in the form of "Moserah"), as the place where Aaron died. It must therefore have been close to Mount Hor; cf Nm 20, 22ff. It seems very probable that the section vv 36b-41a stood originally immediately after v 30a.

**33, 40:** The verse begins the same account of the victory over Arad as is given in Nm 21, 1ff, where it also follows the account of Aaron's death.

**33, 41b-49:** It seems that this section stood originally immediately after v 36a.

s Ex 14, 2. t Ex 15, 22. u Ex 15, 27. v Ex 17, 1. w Ex 19, 2. x 17f: Nm 11, 34f. y 36f: Nm 20, 1. 22. z Nm 20, 25; Dt 32, 50. a Ex 23, 31; 34, 13; Dt 7, 5; 12, 3.

53"You shall take possession of the land and
settle in it, for I have given you the land as your
property. 54You shall apportion the land among
yourselves by lot, clan by clan, assigning a large
heritage to a large group and a small heritage to a
small group.[b] Wherever anyone's lot falls, there
shall his property be within the heritage of his
ancestral tribe.
55"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants
of the land before you, those whom you allow to
remain will become as barbs in your eyes and
thorns in your sides, and they will harass you in
the country where you live,[c] 56and I will treat
you as I had intended to treat them."

## CHAPTER 34

Ch 20–36
See RG
98–99

**The Boundaries** 1The LORD said to Moses,
2"Give the Israelites this order: When you enter
the land of Canaan, this is the territory that shall
fall to you as your heritage—the land of Canaan
with its boundaries:
3"Your southern boundary shall be at the
desert of Zin along the border of Edom;[d] on the
east it shall begin at the end of the Salt Sea, 4and
turning south of the Akrabbim Pass, it shall cross
Zin, and extend south of Kadesh-barnea to
Hazar-addar; thence it shall cross to Azmon,[e]
5and turning from Azmon to the Wadi of Egypt,
shall terminate at the Sea.[f]
6"For your western boundary you shall have
the Great Sea* with its coast; this shall be your
western boundary.
7"The following shall be your boundary on
the north: from the Great Sea you shall draw a
line to Mount Hor,* 8and shall continue it from
Mount Hor to Labo in the land of Hamath, with
the boundary extending through Zedad.
9Thence the boundary shall reach to Ziphron
and terminate at Hazar-enan. This shall be your
northern boundary.
10"For your eastern boundary you shall draw
a line from Hazar-enan to Shepham. 11From
Shepham the boundary shall go down to Ar-Baal,
east of Ain, and descending further, shall strike
the ridge on the east side of the Sea of Chinnereth; 12thence the boundary shall continue along
the Jordan and terminate with the Salt Sea.
"This is the land that shall be yours, with the
boundaries that surround it."
13Moses also gave this order to the Israelites:
"This is the land, to be apportioned among you
by lot, which the LORD has commanded to be
given to the nine and one half tribes. 14For all
the ancestral houses of the tribe of Reuben, and
the ancestral houses of the tribe of Gad, as well
as half of the tribe of Manasseh, have already
received their heritage; 15these two and one half
tribes have received their heritage on the eastern
side of the Jericho stretch of the Jordan, toward
the sunrise."
**Supervisors of the Allotment** 16The LORD
said to Moses, 17"These are the names of the
men who shall apportion the land among you:
Eleazar the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun,
18[g]and one prince from each of the tribes whom
you shall designate for this task. 19These shall be
as follows:

from the tribe of Judah: Caleb, son of
Jephunneh;
20 from the tribe of Simeon: Samuel, son of
Ammihud;
21 from the tribe of Benjamin: Elidad, son of
Chislon;
22 from the tribe of Dan: Bukki, son of Jogli;
23 from the tribe of Manasseh: Hanniel, son of
Ephod; and
24 from the tribe of Ephraim: Kemuel, son of
Shiphtan, for the descendants of Joseph;
25 from the tribe of Zebulun: Elizaphan, son of
Parnach;
26 from the tribe of Issachar: Paltiel, son of
Azzan;
27 from the tribe of Asher: Ahihud, son of
Shelomi;
28 from the tribe of Naphtali: Pedahel, son of
Ammihud."

29These are they whom the LORD com-

**34, 6:** The Great Sea: the Mediterranean.
**34, 7f:** Mount Hor: different from the one where Aaron died; cf Nm 20, 22; 33, 37f.

b Nm 26, 53ff. c Jos 23, 13; Jgs 2, 3. d Jos 15, 1f. e Jos 15, 3. f Jos 15, 4. g Nm 1, 4.

manded to assign the Israelites their heritage in the land of Canaan.

## CHAPTER 35

**Cities for the Levites** [1]The LORD gave these instructions to Moses on the plains of Moab beside the Jericho stretch of the Jordan: [2] [h]"Tell the Israelites that out of their hereditary property they shall give the Levites cities for homes, as well as pasture lands around the cities. [3]The cities shall serve them to dwell in, and the pasture lands shall serve their herds and flocks and other animals. [4]The pasture lands of the cities to be assigned the Levites shall extend a thousand cubits from the city walls in each direction. [5]Thus you shall measure out two thousand cubits outside the city along each side—east, south, west and north—with the city lying in the center. This shall serve them as the pasture lands of their cities.

[6] [i]"Now these are the cities you shall give to the Levites: the six cities of asylum which you must establish as places where a homicide can take refuge, and in addition forty-two other cities— [7]a total of forty-eight cities with their pasture lands to be assigned the Levites. [8]*In assigning the cities from the property of the Israelites, take more from a larger group and fewer from a smaller one, so that each group will cede cities to the Levites in proportion to its own heritage."

**Cities of Asylum** [9]The LORD said to Moses, [10]"Tell the Israelites: When you go across the Jordan into the land of Canaan, [11]select for yourselves cities[j] to serve as cities of asylum, where a homicide who has killed someone unintentionally may take refuge. [12]These cities shall serve you as places of asylum from the avenger of blood,* so that a homicide shall not be put to death unless he is first tried before the community. [13]Six cities of asylum shall you assign: [14]three beyond the Jordan, and three in the land of Canaan. [15]These six cities of asylum shall serve not only the Israelites but all the resident or transient aliens among them, so that anyone who has killed another unintentionally may take refuge there.

Ch 20–36
See RG
98–99

**Murder and Manslaughter** [16]*"If a man strikes another with an iron instrument and causes his death, he is a murderer and shall be put to death.[k] [17]If a man strikes another with a death-dealing stone in his hand and causes his death, he is a murderer and shall be put to death. [18]If a man strikes another with a death-dealing club in his hand and causes his death, he is a murderer and shall be put to death. [19]The avenger of blood may execute the murderer, putting him to death on sight.

[20]"If a man pushes another out of hatred, or after lying in wait for him throws something at him, and causes his death,[l] [21]or if he strikes another out of enmity and causes his death, he shall be put to death as a murderer. The avenger of blood may execute the murderer on sight.

[22] [m]"However, if a man pushes another accidentally and not out of enmity, or if without lying in wait for him he throws some object at him, [23]or without seeing him throws a death-dealing stone which strikes him and causes his death, although he was not his enemy nor seeking to harm him: [24]then the community, deciding the case between the slayer and the avenger of blood in accordance with these norms, [25]shall free the homicide from the avenger of blood and shall remand him to the city of asylum where he took refuge;[n] and he shall stay there until the death of the high priest who has been anointed with sacred oil. [26]If the homicide of his own accord leaves the bounds of the city of asylum where he has taken refuge, [27]and the avenger of blood finds him beyond these bounds and kills him, the avenger incurs no blood-guilt; [28]the homicide was bound to stay in his city of asylum until the death of the high priest. Only

**35, 8:** This provision was hardly observed in the actual assignment of the levitical cities as narrated in Jos 21.

**35, 12:** The avenger of blood: one of the close relatives of the slain (2 Sm 14, 7) who, as executor of public justice, had the right and duty to take the life of the murderer; cf Dt 19, 6. 12; Jos 20, 3. 5. 9.

**35, 16–25:** Here, as also in Dt 19, 1–13, there is a casuistic development of the original law as stated in Ex 21, 12ff.

h Jos 14, 3f; 21, 2. i Dt 4, 41f; Jos 20, 2. j 10ff: Dt 19, 2; Jos 20, 2ff. k Ex 21, 12; Lv 24, 17. l Ex 21, 14; Dt 19, 11. m Jos 20, 3. n Jos 20, 6.

after the death of the high priest may the homicide return to his own district.

29"These shall be norms for you and all your descendants, wherever you live, for rendering judgment.

**Witnesses** 30"Whenever someone kills another, the evidence of witnesses is required for the execution of the murderer.[o] The evidence of a single witness is not sufficient for putting a person to death.

**No Indemnity** 31"You shall not accept indemnity in place of the life of a murderer who deserves the death penalty; he must be put to death. 32Nor shall you accept indemnity to allow a refugee to leave his city of asylum and again dwell elsewhere in the land before the death of the high priest. 33You shall not desecrate the land where you live. Since bloodshed desecrates the land, the land can have no atonement for the blood shed on it except through the blood of him who shed it. 34Do not defile the land in which you live and in the midst of which I dwell;[p] for I am the LORD who dwells in the midst of the Israelites."

## CHAPTER 36

Ch 20–36
See RG
98–99

**Property of Heiresses** 1The heads of the ancestral houses in the clan of descendants of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh—one of the Josephite clans—came up and laid this plea before Moses and the priest Eleazar and before the princes who were the heads of the ancestral houses of the other Israelites. 2They said: "The LORD commanded you, my lord, to apportion the land by lot among the Israelites;[q] and you, my lord, were also commanded by the LORD to give the heritage of our kinsman Zelophehad to his daughters. 3But if they marry into one of the other Israelite tribes, their heritage will be withdrawn from our ancestral heritage and will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry; thus the heritage that fell to us by lot will be diminished. 4When the Israelites celebrate the jubilee year,* the heritage of these women will be permanently added to that of the tribe into which they marry and will be withdrawn from that of our ancestral tribe."

5*So Moses gave this regulation to the Israelites according to the instructions of the LORD: "The tribe of the Josephites are right in what they say. 6This is what the LORD commands with regard to the daughters of Zelophehad: They may marry anyone they please, provided they marry into a clan of their ancestral tribe, 7so that no heritage of the Israelites will pass from one tribe to another, but all the Israelites will retain their own ancestral heritage. 8Therefore, every daughter who inherits property in any of the Israelite tribes shall marry someone belonging to a clan of her own ancestral tribe, in order that all the Israelites may remain in possession of their own ancestral heritage. 9Thus, no heritage can pass from one tribe to another, but all the Israelite tribes will retain their own ancestral heritage."

10The daughters of Zelophehad obeyed the command which the LORD had given to Moses. 11Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, Zelophehad's daughters, married relatives on their father's side 12within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh, son of Joseph; hence their heritage remained in the tribe of their father's clan.

**Conclusion** 13These are the commandments and decisions which the LORD prescribed for the Israelites through Moses, on the plains of Moab beside the Jericho stretch of the Jordan.

36, 4: Before the jubilee year various circumstances, such as divorce, could make such property revert to its original tribal owners; but in the jubilee year it became irrevocably attached to its new owners.

36, 5–9: This is a supplement to the law given in Nm 27, 5–11.

o Dt 17, 6; 19, 15; Jn 8, 17; 2 Cor 13, 1; 1 Tm 5, 19. p Ex 29, 45. q Nm 26, 55; 27, 6; Jos 17, 3f.

# THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy
See RG 105–114

The fifth and last book of the Pentateuch is called Deuteronomy, meaning "second law." In reality, what it contains is not a new law but a partial repetition, completion and explanation of the law proclaimed on Mount Sinai. The historical portions of the book are also a résumé of what is related elsewhere in the Pentateuch. The chief characteristic of this book is its vigorous oratorical style. In a series of eloquent discourses Moses presents the theme of covenant renewal in a vital religious framework. He exhorts, corrects and threatens his people, appealing to their past glory, their historic mission and the promise of future triumph. His aim is to enforce among the Israelites the Lord's claim to their obedience, loyalty and love. The events contained in the Book of Deuteronomy took place in the plains of Moab (Dt 1, 5) between the end of the wanderings in the desert (Dt 1, 3) and the crossing of the Jordan River (Jos 4, 19), a period of no more than forty days. The Book of Deuteronomy, written after the Israelites had for centuries been resident in the Land of Promise, takes the form of a testament of Moses, the great leader and legislator, to his people on the eve of his death. At the time of our Lord's coming, it shared with the Psalms a preeminent religious influence among the Old Testament books. The Savior quoted passages of Deuteronomy in overcoming the threefold temptation of Satan in the desert (Mt 4; Dt 6, 13. 16; 8, 3; 10, 20), and in explaining to the lawyer the first and greatest commandment (Mt 22, 35-39; Dt 6, 4).

The book is divided as follows:

I. Historical Review and Exhortation (Dt 1, 1—4, 43).
II. God and His Covenant (Dt 4, 44—11, 32).
III. Exposition of the Law (Dt 12, 1—26, 19).
IV. Final Words of Moses (Dt 27, 1—34, 12).

## I: Historical Review and Exhortation

### CHAPTER 1

**Introduction** [1]These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan [* in the desert, in the Arabah, opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab; [2]it is a journey of eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by way of the highlands of Seir].

[3]In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites all the commands that the LORD had given him in their regard. [4]After he had defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon,[a] and Og, king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, [5]Moses began to explain the law in the land of Moab beyond the Jordan, as follows:

**Departure from Horeb** [6]"The LORD, our God, said to us at Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. [7]*Leave here and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the surrounding regions,[b] the land of the Canaanites in the Arabah, the mountains, the foothills, the Negeb and the seacoast; to Lebanon, and as far as the Great River [the Euphrates]. [8]I have given that land over to you.[c] Go now and occupy the land I swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I would give to them and to their descendants.'

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**Appointment of Elders** [9]"At that time I said to you, 'Alone, I am unable to carry you.* [10]The

1, 1: The local setting of all these discourses is in the land of Moab beyond the Jordan (cf v 5), also known as the plains of Moab (Nm 36, 13).

1, 7: The Amorites and the Canaanites formed the principal part of the pre-Israelite population of Palestine. The foothills: the hills on the western slope of the Judean mountain range. The Arabah: the valley of the Jordan and the depression south of the Dead Sea. The Negeb: the arid land in southern Palestine.

1, 9: Carry you; cf v 31.

a Dt 3, 2; Nm 21, 21–35. b Nm 13, 29. c Gn 12, 7; 15, 18; 17, 7f; 28, 13f.

LORD, your God, has so multiplied you that you
are now as numerous as the stars in the sky.[d]
[11]May the LORD, the God of your fathers,
increase you a thousand times over, and bless
you as he promised! [12]But how can I alone bear
the crushing burden that you are, along with
your bickering? [13][e]Choose wise, intelligent and
experienced men from each of your tribes, that I
may appoint them as your leaders.' [14]You an-
swered me, 'We agree to do as you have
proposed.' [15]So I took outstanding men of your
tribes, wise and experienced, and made them
your leaders as officials over thousands, over
hundreds, over fifties and over tens, and other
tribal officers. [16]I charged your judges at that
time, 'Listen to complaints among your kinsmen,
and administer true justice to both parties even if
one of them is an alien.[f] [17]In rendering judg-
ment, do not consider who a person is; give ear
to the lowly and to the great alike, fearing no
man, for judgment is God's. Refer to me any case
that is too hard for you and I will hear it.'
[18]Thereupon I gave you all the commands you
were to fulfill.

**The Twelve Scouts** [19]"Then, in obedience to
the command of the LORD, our God, we set out
from Horeb and journeyed through the whole
desert, vast and fearful as you have seen,[g] in the
direction of the hill country of the Amorites. We
had reached Kadesh-barnea [20]when I said to
you, 'You have come to the hill country of the
Amorites, which the LORD, our God, is giving us.
[21]The LORD, your God, has given this land over
to you. Go up and occupy it, as the LORD, the
God of your fathers, commands you. Do not fear
or lose heart.' [22][h]Then all of you came up to me
and said, 'Let us send men ahead to reconnoiter
the land for us and report to us on the road we
must follow and the cities we must take.'
[23]Agreeing with the proposal, I chose twelve
men from your number, one from each tribe.
[24]They set out into the hill country as far as the
Wadi Eshcol, and explored it. [25]Then, taking
along some of the fruit of the land, they brought
it down to us and reported, 'The land which the
LORD, our God, gives us is good.'

**Threats of Revolt** [26]"But you refused to go
up,[i] and after defying the command of the LORD,
your God, [27]you set to murmuring in your
tents,* 'Out of hatred for us the LORD has
brought us up out of the land of Egypt,[j] to
deliver us into the hands of the Amorites and
destroy us. [28]What shall we meet with up there?
Our kinsmen have made us fainthearted by
reporting that the people are stronger and taller
than we, and their cities are large and fortified to
the sky; besides, they saw the Anakim there.'[k]

[29]"But I said to you, 'Have no dread or fear of
them. [30]The LORD, your God, who goes before
you, will himself fight for you, just as he took
your part before your very eyes in Egypt, [31]as
well as in the desert, where you saw how the
LORD, your God, carried you, as a man carries
his child, all along your journey until you ar-
rived at this place.' [32]Despite this, you would
not trust the LORD, your God, [33]who journeys
before you to find you a resting place—by day
in the cloud, and by night in the fire, to show
the way you must go.[l] [34]When the LORD heard
your words, he was angry; [35]and he swore,
'Not one man of this evil generation shall look
upon the good land I swore to give to your
fathers,[m] [36]except Caleb,* son of Jephunneh;
he shall see it. For to him and to his sons I will
give the land he trod upon, because he has
followed the LORD unreservedly.'

[37]"The LORD was angered against me also on
your account, and said, 'Not even you shall enter
there,[n] [38]but your aide Joshua,[o] son of Nun,
shall enter. Encourage him, for he is to give
Israel its heritage. [39]Your little ones, who you
said would become booty, and your children,
who as yet do not know good from bad—they
shall enter; to them I will give it, and they shall

1, 27: In your tents: among yourselves.
1, 36: Except Caleb: Joshua also was allowed to enter, but he is not referred to here because special mention is made of him in v 38 as the successor of Moses.

d Dt 10, 22; Gn 15, 5. e 13ff: Ex 18, 21–25. f 16f: Ex 18, 26; 2 Chr 19, 6f; Prv 24, 23; Jn 7, 24; Jas 2, 9. g Dt 8, 15; 32, 10. h 22–28: Nm 13, 2–34. i Dt 9, 23. j Dt 9, 28; Nm 14, 1–4; Ps 106, 25. k Dt 9, 1f. l Ex 13, 21; Nm 10, 33f; 14, 14. m 34ff: Nm 14, 22f. 28–38; Jos 14, 9. n Dt 4, 21; 34, 4; Nm 20, 12. o Dt 31, 3. 7; Nm 27, 18ff; 34, 17.

occupy it.[p] 40But as for yourselves: turn about
and proceed into the desert on the Red Sea
road.'

**Unsuccessful Invasion** 41[q]"In reply you said
to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD. We
will go up ourselves and fight, just as the LORD,
our God, commanded us.' And each of you
girded on his weapons, making light of going up
into the hill country. 42But the LORD said to me,
'Warn them: Do not go up and fight, lest you be
beaten down before your enemies, for I will not
be in your midst.' 43I gave you this warning but
you would not listen. In defiance of the LORD's
command you arrogantly marched off into the
hill country. 44Then the Amorites living there
came out against you and, like bees, chased you,
cutting you down in Seir as far as Hormah. 45On
your return you wept before the LORD, but he
did not listen to your cry or give ear to you.
46That is why you had to stay as long as you did
at Kadesh.

## CHAPTER 2

**Northward along Edom** 1"When we did turn
and proceed into the desert on the Red Sea
road,[r] as the LORD had commanded me, we
circled around the highlands of Seir for a long
time. 2Finally the LORD said to me, 3'You have
wandered round these highlands long enough;
turn and go north. 4Give this order to the
people: You are now about to pass through the
territory of your kinsmen, the descendants of
Esau, who live in Seir. Though they are afraid of
you, be very careful 5not to come in conflict
with them, for I will not give you so much as a
foot of their land, since I have already given Esau
possession of the highlands of Seir. 6You shall
purchase from them with silver the food you eat
and the well water you drink. 7The LORD, your
God, has blessed you in all your undertakings;
he has been concerned about your journey
through this vast desert. It is now forty years that
he has been with you, and you have never been
in want.'[s]

**Along Moab** 8"Then we left behind us the
Arabah route, Elath, Ezion-geber, and Seir,
where our kinsmen, the descendants of Esau,
live; and we went on toward the desert of
Moab.[t] 9And the LORD said to me, 'Do not show
hostility to the Moabites or engage them in
battle, for I will not give you possession of any of
their land, since I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as their own.[u] 10[Formerly the
Emim lived there, a people strong and numerous
and tall like the Anakim;[v] 11like them they were
considered Rephaim. It was the Moabites who
called them Emim. 12In Seir, however, the
former inhabitants were the Horites;[w] the descendants of Esau dispossessed them, clearing
them out of the way and taking their place, just
as the Israelites have done in the land of their
heritage which the LORD has given them.] 13Get
ready, then, to cross the Wadi Zered.'[x] So we
crossed it. 14Thirty-eight years had elapsed between our departure from Kadesh-barnea and
that crossing; in the meantime the whole generation of soldiers had perished from the camp, as
the LORD had sworn they should.[y] 15For it was
the LORD's hand that was against them, till he
wiped them out of the camp completely.

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105–114

**Along Ammon** 16"When at length death had
put an end to all the soldiers among the people,
17the LORD said to me, 18'You are now about to
leave Ar and the territory of Moab behind. 19As
you come opposite the Ammonites,[z] do not
show hostility or come in conflict with them, for
I will not give you possession of any land of the
Ammonites, since I have given it to the descendants of Lot as their own. 20[This also was
considered a country of the Rephaim from its
former inhabitants, whom the Ammonites called
Zamzummim, 21a people strong and numerous
and tall like the Anakim. But these, too, the
LORD cleared out of the way for the Ammonites,
who ousted them and took their place. 22He had
done the same for the descendants of Esau, who
dwell in Seir, by clearing the Horites out of their
way, so that the descendants of Esau have taken

p 39f: Nm 14, 31. q 41–45: Nm 14, 40. 42–45. r Dt 1, 40; Nm 14, 25; 21, 4. s Dt 8, 2ff. t Jgs 11, 18. u Gn 19, 36f. v Dt 1, 28. w Gn 36, 20f. x Nm 21, 12. y Nm 14, 29. 33. 35. z Gn 19, 38.

their place down to the present. 23So also the Caphtorim,* migrating from Caphtor, cleared away the Avvim, who once dwelt in villages as far as Gaza, and took their place.]

**Defeat of Sihon** 24" 'Advance now across the Wadi Arnon.[a] I now deliver into your hands Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin the occupation; engage him in battle. 25This day I will begin to put a fear and dread of you into every nation under the heavens, so that at the mention of your name they will quake and tremble before you.'

Ch 1-34
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105-114

26"So I sent messengers from the desert of Kedemoth to Sihon, king of Heshbon, with this offer of peace: 27'Let me pass through your country by the highway; I will go along it without turning aside to the right or to the left. 28For the food I eat which you will supply, and for the water you give me to drink, you shall be paid in silver. Only let me march through, 29as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir[b] and the Moabites who dwell in Ar have done, until I cross the Jordan into the land which the LORD, our God, is about to give us.' 30But Sihon, king of Heshbon, refused to let us pass through his land, because the LORD, your God, made him stubborn in mind and obstinate in heart that he might deliver him up to you, as indeed he has now done.

31"Then the LORD said to me, 'Now that I have already begun to hand over to you Sihon and his land, begin the actual occupation.' 32So Sihon and all his people advanced against us to join battle at Jahaz; 33but since the LORD, our God, had delivered him to us, we defeated him and his sons and all his people.[c] 34At that time we seized all his cities and doomed* them all, with their men, women and children; we left no survivor.[d] 35Our only booty was the livestock and the loot of the captured cities. 36From Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon and from the city in the wadi itself, as far as Gilead,[e] no city was too well fortified for us to whom the LORD had delivered them up. 37However, in obedience to the command of the LORD, our God, you did not encroach upon any of the Ammonite land, neither the region bordering on the Wadi Jabbok, nor the cities of the highlands.[f]

## CHAPTER 3

**Defeat of Og** 1"Then we turned and proceeded toward Bashan. But Og, king of Bashan,[g] advanced against us with all his people to give battle at Edrei. 2The LORD, however, said to me,[h] 'Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hand with all his people and his land. Do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon.' 3And thus the LORD, our God, delivered into our hands Og, king of Bashan, with all his people. We defeated him so completely that we left him no survivor. 4At that time we captured all his cities, none of them eluding our grasp, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan: sixty cities in all, 5to say nothing of the great number of unwalled towns. All the cities were fortified with high walls and gates and bars. 6[i]As we had done to Sihon, king of Heshbon, so also here we doomed all the cities, with their men, women and children; 7but all the livestock and the loot of each city we took as booty for ourselves.

8"And so at that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan the territory from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon 9[which is called Sirion by the Sidonians and Senir by the Amorites], 10comprising all the cities of the plateau and all Gilead and all the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan including Salecah and Edrei. 11[Og, king of Bashan, was the last remaining survivor of the Rephaim. He had a bed of iron,* nine regular cubits long and four wide, which is still preserved in Rabbah of the Ammonites.]

2, 23: The Caphtorim: members of one of the groups of sea peoples who invaded the coast of Egypt and the southern part of Palestine about 1200 B.C. Caphtor: the ancient name of the island of Crete. Cf Am 9, 7.

2, 34: Doomed: see notes on Nm 18, 14; 21, 3.

3, 11: Bed of iron: some translate, "a sarcophagus of basalt."

a Nm 21, 13; Jgs 11, 19–22. b Dt 2, 5. 8f; Jgs 11, 17. c Dt 29, 7; Nm 21, 23–32. d Dt 3, 6; 29, 7f. e Dt 3, 12; Jos 13, 9. 16; Jgs 11, 26. f Nm 21, 24; Jos 12, 2. g Dt 29, 6; Nm 21, 33. h 2f: Nm 21, 34f. i Ps 135, 10ff.

**Allotment of the Conquered Lands**
12 [j]"When we occupied the land at that time, I
gave Reuben and Gad the territory from Aroer,
on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, halfway up into
the highlands of Gilead, with the cities therein.
13 The rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, the
kingdom of Og, the whole Argob region, I gave
to the half-tribe of Manasseh. [All this region of
Bashan was once called a land of the Rephaim.
14 Jair, a Manassehite clan, [k] took all the region of
Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and
Maacathites, and called it after his own name
Bashan Havvoth-jair, the name it bears today.]
15 To Machir I gave Gilead, 16 and to Reuben and
Gad the territory from Gilead to the Wadi
Arnon—including the wadi bed and its banks—
and to the Wadi Jabbok, which is the border of
the Ammonites, 17 as well as the Arabah with the
Jordan and its eastern banks from Chinnereth to
the Salt Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of
Pisgah. [l]

18 "At that time I charged them* as follows:
'The LORD, your God, has given you this land as
your own. But all you troops equipped for battle
must cross over in the vanguard of your brother
Israelites. [m] 19 Only your wives and children, as
well as your livestock, of which I know you have
a large number, shall remain behind in the
towns I have given you, [n] 20 until the LORD has
settled your kinsmen as well, and they too
possess the land which the LORD, your God, will
give them on the other side of the Jordan. [o] Then
you may all return to the possessions I have
given you.'

21 "It was then that I instructed Joshua, 'Your
eyes have seen all that the LORD, your God, has
done to both these kings; so, too, will the LORD
do to all the kingdoms which you will encounter
over there. 22 Fear them not, for the LORD, your
God, will fight for you.'

**Refusal to Moses** 23 "And it was then that I
besought the LORD, 24 'O Lord GOD, you have
begun to show to your servant your greatness
and might. For what god in heaven or on earth
can perform deeds as mighty as yours? 25 Ah, let
me cross over and see this good land beyond the
Jordan, this fine hill country, and the Lebanon!'
26 But the LORD was angry with me on your
account and would not hear me. [p] 'Enough!' the
LORD said to me. 'Speak to me no more of this.
27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look out to the
west, and to the north, and to the south, and to
the east. Look well, for you shall not cross this
Jordan. [q] 28 Commission Joshua, [r] and encourage
and strengthen him, for he shall cross at the
head of this people and shall put them in
possession of the land you are to see.' 29 This was
while we were in the ravine opposite Beth-peor.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**Advantages of Fidelity** 1 "Now, Israel, hear
the statutes and decrees which I am teaching
you to observe, that you may live, and may enter
in and take possession of the land which the
LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 2 In
your observance of the commandments of the
LORD, your God, [s] which I enjoin upon you, you
shall not add to what I command you nor
subtract from it. 3 You have seen with your own
eyes what the LORD did at Baal-peor: [t] the LORD,
your God, destroyed from your midst everyone
that followed the Baal of Peor; 4 but you, who
clung to the LORD, your God, are all alive today.
5 Therefore, I teach you the statutes and decrees
as the LORD, my God, has commanded me, that
you may observe them in the land you are
entering to occupy. 6 Observe them carefully, for
thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and
intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all
these statutes and say, 'This great nation is truly
a wise and intelligent people.' 7 [u] For what great
nation is there that has gods so close to it as the
LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon
him? 8 Or what great nation has statutes and
decrees that are as just as this whole law which I
am setting before you today?

**Revelation at Horeb** 9 "However, take care
and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the

3, 18: I charged them: the words which follow were spoken to the men of Reuben and Gad (cf Nm 32).

j 12f: Nm 32, 29. 32f; Jos 13, 8. 29. k Nm 32, 41; Jos 13, 11. 13. l Dt 4, 49; Jos 12, 3. m Jos 1, 14; 4, 12. n Nm 32, 1. 4; Jos 1, 14. o Jos 22, 4. p Dt 4, 21. q Dt 34, 4; Nm 27, 12f. r Dt 1, 38; 31, 7; Nm 27, 22f. s Dt 13, 1. t Nm 25, 3–9. u 2 Sm 7, 23.

things which your own eyes have seen, nor let
them slip from your memory as long as you live,
but teach them to your children[v] and to your
children's children: [10]*There was the day on
which you stood before the LORD, your God, at
Horeb, and he said to me,[w] 'Assemble the
people for me; I will have them hear my words,
that they may learn to fear me as long as they
live in the land and may so teach their children.'
[11]You came near and stood at the foot of the
mountain,[x] which blazed to the very sky with
fire and was enveloped in a dense black cloud.
[12]Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of
the fire.[y] You heard the sound of the words, but
saw no form; there was only a voice. [13]He
proclaimed to you his covenant, which he com-
manded you to keep: the ten commandments,
which he wrote on two tablets of stone. [14]The
LORD charged me at that time to teach you the
statutes and decrees which you are to observe
over in the land you will occupy.

**Danger of Idolatry** [15]"You saw no form at all
on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from
the midst of the fire.[z] Be strictly on your guard,
therefore, [16]not to degrade yourselves by fashion-
ing an idol to represent any figure, whether it be
the form of a man or of a woman,[a] [17]of any
animal on the earth or of any bird that flies in the
sky, [18]of anything that crawls on the ground or
of any fish in the waters under the earth. [19]And
when you look up to the heavens and behold the
sun or the moon or any star among the heavenly
hosts, do not be led astray into adoring them and
serving them.[b] These the LORD, your God, has
let fall to the lot of all other nations under the
heavens; [20]but you he has taken and led out of
that iron foundry,* Egypt, that you might be his
very own people, as you are today.[c] [21]Since the
LORD was angered against me on your account[d]
and swore that I should not cross the Jordan nor
enter the good land which he is giving you as a
heritage, [22]I myself shall die in this country
without crossing the Jordan; but you will cross
over and take possession of that good land.[e]
[23]Take heed, therefore, lest, forgetting the cove-
nant which the LORD, your God, has made with
you, you fashion for yourselves against his com-
mand an idol in any form whatsoever.[f] [24]For the
LORD, your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous
God.

**God's Fidelity** [25]"When you have children
and grandchildren, and have grown old* in the
land, should you then degrade yourselves by
fashioning an idol in any form and by this evil
done in his sight provoke the LORD, your God,
[26]I call heaven and earth this day to witness
against you, that you shall all quickly perish from
the land which you will occupy when you cross
the Jordan. You shall not live in it for any length
of time but shall be promptly wiped out. [27]The
LORD will scatter you among the nations, and
there shall remain but a handful of you among
the nations to which the LORD will lead you.[g]
[28]There you shall serve gods fashioned by the
hands of man out of wood and stone, gods
which can neither see nor hear, neither eat nor
smell.[h] [29]Yet there too you shall seek the LORD,
your God; and you shall indeed find him when
you search after him with your whole heart and
your whole soul.[i] [30]In your distress, when all
these things shall have come upon you, you shall
finally return to the LORD, your God, and heed
his voice. [31]Since the LORD, your God, is a
merciful God, he will not abandon and destroy
you, nor forget the covenant which under oath
he made with your fathers.[j]

**Proofs of God's Love** [32]"Ask now of the days
of old, before your time, ever since God created
man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky
to the other: Did anything so great ever happen
before? Was it ever heard of? [33]Did a people ever
hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of

**4, 10:** Beginning here and continuing on for several verses (at least to the end of v 14) is the "reminiscence," the account of the things that the Israelites should recall and teach their children.

**4, 20:** Egypt is called an iron foundry, or furnace for smelting iron, because God allowed the Israelites to be afflicted there for the sake of their spiritual purification; the same expression for Egypt occurs also in 1 Kgs 8, 51; Jer 11, 4; compare the expression, "the furnace of affliction," in Is 48, 10.

**4, 25:** Grown old: Israel will lose the freshness of its youthful fervor.

v Dt 11, 19; Ps 78, 3–6. w Heb 12, 18f. x Ex 19, 17f. y Dt 4, 33. 36; 5, 4. z Ex 24, 12; 31, 18; 34, 28. a Dt 5, 8; Ex 20, 4. b Dt 17, 3; Jb 31, 26ff. c 1 Kgs 8, 51; Jer 11, 4. d Dt 1, 37; 3, 26. e Dt 3, 27. f Dt 4, 16. g 27f: Dt 28, 36. 62. 64. h Ps 135, 15ff; Is 44, 9. i Jer 29, 13. j Dt 31, 8.

fire, as you did, and live?[k] 34Or did any god
venture to go and take a nation for himself from
the midst of another nation, by testings,* by
signs and wonders,[l] by war, with his strong
hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors,
all of which the LORD, your God, did for you in
Egypt before your very eyes? 35All this you were
allowed to see that you might know the LORD is
God and there is no other. 36Out of the heavens
he let you hear his voice to discipline you; on
earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard
him speaking out of the fire. 37For love of your
fathers he chose their descendants and person-
ally led you out of Egypt by his great power,
38driving out of your way nations greater and
mightier than you, so as to bring you in and to
make their land your heritage, as it is today.
39This is why you must now know, and fix in
your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens
above and on earth below, and that there is no
other.[m] 40You must keep his statutes and com-
mandments which I enjoin on you today, that
you and your children after you may prosper,
and that you may have long life on the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you for-
ever."[n]

**Cities of Refuge** 41[o]Then Moses set apart
three cities in the region east of the Jordan,
42that a homicide might take refuge there if he
unwittingly killed his neighbor to whom he had
previously borne no malice, and that he might
save his life by fleeing to one of these cities:
43Bezer in the desert, in the region of the
plateau, for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead
for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan for the
Manassehites.

## II: God and His Covenant

**Introduction** 44This is the law which Moses
set before the Israelites. 45These are the ordi-
nances, statutes and decrees which he pro-
claimed to them when they had come out of
Egypt 46and were beyond the Jordan in the
ravine opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon,
king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon and
whom Moses and the Israelites defeated after
coming out of Egypt. 47They occupied his land
and the land of Og, king of Bashan, as well—the
land of these two kings of the Amorites in the
region east of the Jordan: 48from Aroer on the
edge of the Wadi Arnon to Mount Sion* (that is,
Hermon) 49and all the Arabah east of the Jordan,
as far as the Arabah Sea under the slopes of
Pisgah.[p]

### CHAPTER 5

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**The Covenant at Horeb** 1Moses summoned
all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the
statutes and decrees which I proclaim in your
hearing this day, that you may learn them and
take care to observe them. 2The LORD, our God,
made a covenant with us at Horeb;[q] 3not with
our fathers did he make this covenant, but with
us, all of us who are alive here this day. 4The
LORD spoke with you face to face on the
mountain from the midst of the fire. 5[r]Since you
were afraid of the fire and would not go up the
mountain, I stood between the LORD and you at
that time, to announce to you these words of the
LORD:

**The Decalogue** 6[s]"I, the LORD, am your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,[t] that
place of slavery. 7[u]You shall not have other
gods besides me. 8You shall not carve idols for
yourselves[v] in the shape of anything in the sky
above or on the earth below or in the waters
beneath the earth; 9*you shall not bow down
before them or worship them. For I, the LORD,
your God, am a jealous God,[w] inflicting punish-
ments for their fathers' wickedness on the chil-
dren of those who hate me, down to the third

4, 34: Testings: the demonstrations of God's power as in the ten great plagues of Egypt; cf Dt 7, 19; 29, 2.

4, 48: Sion: another name for Mount Hermon, besides those mentioned in Dt 3, 9.

5, 9f: God does not punish us for another's sins, but because of the solidarity of human society, the good or evil deeds of one generation may make their effects felt even in later generations. Yet note how God's mercy allows the good effects of virtue to last much longer than the bad effects of vice: a thousand generations compared to three or four.

k Dt 4, 36; 5, 24. 26; Ex 20, 19. l Dt 7, 19; 26, 8; 29, 2; Ex 7, 3; 15, 3–10; Jer 32, 21. m Dt 4, 35. n Dt 6, 2f; 12, 28. o 41ff: Dt 19, 2–13; Nm 35, 6–29; Jos 20, 8; 21, 27. 36f; 1 Chr 6, 71. 80. p Dt 3, 17. q Dt 28, 69. r Ex 24, 2. s 6–21: Ex 20, 2–17. t Ps 81, 11. u Ps 81, 10. v Dt 27, 15; Lv 26, 1; Ps 97, 7. w Ex 34, 14.

and fourth generation [10]but bestowing mercy,
down to the thousandth generation,[x] on the
children of those who love me and keep my
commandments.

[11]'You shall not take the name of the LORD,
your God, in vain.[y] For the LORD will not leave
unpunished him who takes his name in vain.

[12]'Take care to keep holy the sabbath day as
the LORD, your God, commanded you. [13]Six
days you may labor and do all your work; [14]but
the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your
God.[z] No work may be done then, whether by
you, or your son or daughter, or your male or
female slave, or your ox or ass or any of your
beasts, or the alien who lives with you. Your
male and female slave should rest as you do.
[15]For remember that you too were once slaves in
Egypt,[a] and the LORD, your God, brought you
from there with his strong hand and out-
stretched arm. That is why the LORD, your God,
has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

[16] [b]'Honor your father and your mother, as the
LORD, your God, has commanded you, that you
may have a long life and prosperity in the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you.

[17] [c]'You shall not kill.

[18]'You shall not commit adultery.

[19]'You shall not steal.

[20]'You shall not bear dishonest witness against
your neighbor.

[21]'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

'You shall not desire your neighbor's house or
field, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or
ass, nor anything that belongs to him.'

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105–114

**Moses as Mediator** [22]"These words, and noth-
ing more, the LORD spoke with a loud voice to
your entire assembly on the mountain from the
midst of the fire and the dense cloud. He wrote
them upon two tablets of stone and gave them to
me. [23]But when you heard the voice from the
midst of the darkness, while the mountain was
ablaze with fire, you came to me in the person of
all your tribal heads and elders, [24]and said, 'The
LORD, our God, has indeed let us see his glory
and his majesty! We have heard his voice from
the midst of the fire[d] and have found out today
that a man can still live after God has spoken
with him. [25]But why should we die now? Surely
this great fire will consume us. If we hear the
voice of the LORD, our God, any more, we shall
die.[e] [26]For what mortal has heard, as we have,
the voice of the living God speaking from the
midst of fire, and survived? [27]Go closer, you, and
hear all that the LORD, our God, will say, and
then tell us what the LORD, our God, tells you;
we will listen and obey.'[f]

[28]"The LORD heard your words as you were
speaking to me and said to me, 'I have heard the
words these people have spoken to you, which
are all well said.[g] [29]Would that they might
always be of such a mind, to fear me and to keep
all my commandments! Then they and their
descendants would prosper forever. [30]Go, tell
them to return to their tents. [31]Then you wait
here near me and I will give you all the
commandments, the statutes and decrees you
must teach them, that they may observe them in
the land which I am giving them to possess.'

[32]"Be careful, therefore, to do as the LORD,
your God, has commanded you, not turning
aside to the right or to the left, [33]but following
exactly the way prescribed for you by the LORD,
your God, that you may live and prosper, and
may have long life in the land which you are to
occupy.[h]

## CHAPTER 6

[1]"These then are the commandments, the
statutes and decrees[i] which the LORD, your
God, has ordered that you be taught to observe
in the land into which you are crossing for
conquest, [2]so that you and your son and your
grandson may fear the LORD, your God, and
keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his
statutes and commandments[j] which I enjoin on
you, and thus have long life. [3]Hear then, Israel,
and be careful to observe them, that you may
grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the

x Dt 7, 9; Ex 20, 6. y Mt 5, 33. z Gn 2, 2; Ex 20, 8; 23, 12; Heb 4, 4. a Dt 15, 15; 16, 12; 24, 18. 22. b Sir 3, 2–16; Mt 15, 4; Mk 7, 10; Lk 18, 20; Eph 6, 2. c 17–20: Mt 5, 21. 27; Lk 18, 20; Jas 2, 11. d Dt 4, 33. e Dt 18, 16. f Ex 20, 19. g Dt 18, 17. h Dt 4, 40. i Dt 4, 1; 5, 31; 12, 1. j Dt 4, 40; 5, 29; 10, 12f.

promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers, to
give you a land flowing with milk and honey.
**The Great Commandment** 4*"Hear, O Israel!
The LORD is our God, the LORD alone![k] 5Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all
your heart, and with all your soul, and with all
your strength.[l] 6Take to heart these words
which I enjoin on you today. 7Drill them into
your children.[m] Speak of them at home and
abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. 8Bind
them at your wrist as a sign* and let them be as
a pendant on your forehead.[n] 9Write them on
the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.[o]
**Fidelity in Prosperity** 10"When the LORD,
your God, brings you into the land which he
swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
that he would give you, a land with fine, large
cities that you did not build,[p] 11with houses full
of goods of all sorts that you did not garner, with
cisterns that you did not dig, with vineyards and
olive groves that you did not plant; and when,
therefore, you eat your fill, 12[q]take care not to
forget the LORD, who brought you out of the
land of Egypt, that place of slavery. 13[r]The LORD,
your God, shall you fear; him shall you serve,*
and by his name shall you swear. 14You shall not
follow other gods, such as those of the surrounding nations, 15lest the wrath of the LORD, your
God, flare up against you and he destroy you
from the face of the land;[s] for the LORD, your
God, who is in your midst, is a jealous God.
16[t]"You shall not put the LORD, your God, to
the test, as you did at Massah. 17But keep the
commandments of the LORD, your God, and the
ordinances and statutes he has enjoined on you.
18Do what is right and good in the sight of the
LORD, that you may, according to his word,
prosper, and may enter in and possess the good
land which the LORD promised on oath to your
fathers, 19thrusting all your enemies out of your
way.[u]
**Instruction to Children** 20"Later on, when
your son asks you what these ordinances, statutes and decrees mean[v] which the LORD, our
God, has enjoined on you, 21you shall say to
your son, 'We were once slaves of Pharaoh in
Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt
with his strong hand[w] 22and wrought before our
eyes signs and wonders, great and dire, against
Egypt and against Pharaoh and his whole house.
23He brought us from there to lead us into the
land he promised on oath to our fathers, and to
give it to us. 24Therefore, the LORD commanded
us to observe all these statutes in fear of the
LORD, our God, that we may always have as
prosperous and happy a life as we have today;
25and our justice before the LORD, our God, is to
consist in carefully observing all these commandments he has enjoined on us.'

## CHAPTER 7

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**Destruction of Pagans** 1"When the LORD,
your God, brings you into the land which you
are to enter and occupy, and dislodges great
nations before you—the Hittites, Girgashites,
Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and
Jebusites:[x] seven nations more numerous and
powerful than you— 2and when the LORD, your
God, delivers them up to you and you defeat
them, you shall doom them. Make no covenant
with them[y] and show them no mercy. 3You shall
not intermarry with them, neither giving your
daughters to their sons nor taking their daughters for your sons.[z] 4For they would turn your
sons from following me to serving other gods,
and then the wrath of the LORD would flare up
against you and quickly destroy you.

6, 4f: This passage contains the basic principle of the whole Mosaic law, the keynote of the Book of Deuteronomy: since the Lord alone is God, we must love him with an undivided heart. Christ cited these words as "the greatest and the first commandment," embracing in itself the whole law of God (Mt 22, 37f and parallels).

6, 8: Bind them . . . as a sign: these injunctions were probably meant merely in a figurative sense; cf Ex 13, 9. 16. However, the later Jews understood them literally, and tied on their wrists and foreheads "phylacteries," boxes containing strips of parchment on which the words were inscribed; cf Mt 23, 5.

6, 13: Him shall you serve: here, to "serve" God means especially to "worship" him; in this sense it is quoted by our Lord (Mt 4, 10) as an argument against worshiping the devil.

k Mk 12, 29. l Dt 10, 12; 11, 13; Mt 22, 37; Mk 12, 30; Lk 10, 27. m 6f: Dt 4, 9; 11, 18; 32, 46. n Dt 11, 18; Ex 13, 9. 16; Mt 23, 5. o Dt 11, 20. p 10f: Jos 24, 13. q Dt 5, 6. r Dt 10, 20; Mt 4, 10; Lk 4, 8. s 14f: Dt 8, 19; 11, 16. 28. t Nm 20, 1–13. u Ex 23, 27; 34, 11. v Ex 12, 26; 13, 14. w Ex 20, 2. x Ex 23, 23; 33, 2. y Ex 34, 12. z 3f: Ex 34, 16; 1 Kgs 11, 1f.

5"But this is how you must deal with them:[a]
Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars,
chop down their sacred poles,* and destroy their
idols by fire. 6For you are a people sacred to the
LORD, your God; he has chosen you from all the
nations on the face of the earth to be a people
peculiarly his own.[b] 7It was not because you are
the largest of all nations that the LORD set his
heart on you and chose you, for you are really
the smallest of all nations. 8It was because the
LORD loved you and because of his fidelity to the
oath he had sworn to your fathers, that he
brought you out with his strong hand from the
place of slavery, and ransomed you from the
hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. 9[c]Understand,
then, that the LORD, your God, is God indeed,
the faithful God who keeps his merciful cove-
nant down to the thousandth generation toward
those who love him and keep his command-
ments, 10but who repays with destruction the
person who hates him; he does not dally with
such a one, but makes him personally pay for it.
11You shall therefore carefully observe the com-
mandments, the statutes and the decrees which
I enjoin on you today.

**Blessings of Obedience** 12[d]"As your reward
for heeding these decrees and observing them
carefully, the LORD, your God, will keep with
you the merciful covenant which he promised
on oath to your fathers. 13He will love and bless
and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your
womb and the produce of your soil, your grain
and wine and oil, the issue of your herds and the
young of your flocks, in the land which he swore
to your fathers he would give you.[e] 14You will
be blessed above all peoples; no man or woman
among you shall be childless nor shall your
livestock be barren. 15The LORD will remove all
sickness from you; he will not afflict you with
any of the malignant diseases that you know
from Egypt, but will leave them with all your
enemies.

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105–114

16"You shall consume all the nations which
the LORD, your God, will deliver up to you. You
are not to look on them with pity, lest you be
ensnared into serving their gods. 17Perhaps you
will say to yourselves,[f] 'These nations are
greater than we. How can we dispossess them?'
18But do not be afraid of them. Rather, call to
mind what the LORD, your God, did to Pharaoh
and to all Egypt: 19the great testings which your
own eyes have seen, the signs and wonders, his
strong hand and outstretched arm with which
the LORD, your God, brought you out.[g] The
same also will he do to all the nations of whom
you are now afraid. 20Moreover, the LORD, your
God, will send hornets among them, until the
survivors who have hidden from you are de-
stroyed.[h] 21Therefore, do not be terrified by
them, for the LORD, your God, who is in your
midst, is a great and awesome God. 22He will
dislodge these nations before you little by little.
You cannot exterminate them all at once, lest
the wild beasts become too numerous for you.[i]
23The LORD, your God, will deliver them up to
you and will rout them utterly until they are
annihilated.[j] 24He will deliver their kings into
your hand, that you may make their names
perish from under the heavens. No man will be
able to stand up against you,[k] till you have put
an end to them. 25The images of their gods you
shall destroy by fire. Do not covet the silver or
gold on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you
be ensnared by it; for it is an abomination to the
LORD, your God. 26You shall not bring any
abominable thing into your house, lest you be
doomed with it; loathe and abhor it utterly as a
thing that is doomed.

## CHAPTER 8

**God's Care** 1"Be careful to observe all the
commandments[l] I enjoin on you today, that you
may live and increase, and may enter in and
possess the land which the LORD promised on
oath to your fathers. 2Remember how for forty
years now the LORD, your God, has directed all
your journeying in the desert,[m] so as to test you
by affliction and find out whether or not it was

7, 5: Sacred pillars . . . poles: see note on Ex 34, 13.

a Dt 12, 3; Ex 34, 13. b Dt 14, 2; 26, 18; Ex 19, 6. c 9f: Dt 5, 9f. d 12–16: Dt 28, 1–14; Ex 23, 22–26; Lv 26, 3–13. e Dt 30, 9. f 17f: Dt 1, 28ff. g Dt 4, 34. h Ex 23, 28ff. i Ex 23, 29f. j Dt 7, 2. k Dt 11, 25. l Dt 4, 1; 6, 1. m Dt 2, 7; 29, 4; Am 2, 10.

your intention to keep his commandments. [3]He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna,[n] a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone* does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD. [4]The clothing did not fall from you in tatters, nor did your feet swell these forty years.[o] [5]So you must realize that the LORD, your God, disciplines you even as a man disciplines his son.

**Danger of Prosperity** [6]"Therefore, keep the commandments of the LORD, your God, by walking in his ways and fearing him. [7]For the LORD, your God, is bringing you into a good country,[p] a land with streams of water, with springs and fountains welling up in the hills and valleys, [8]a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, of olive trees and of honey, [9]a land where you can eat bread without stint and where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones contain iron and in whose hills you can mine copper. [10]But when you have eaten your fill, you must bless the LORD, your God, for the good country he has given you. [11]Be careful not to forget the LORD, your God, by neglecting his commandments and decrees and statutes which I enjoin on you today: [12]lest, when you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses and lived in them, [13]and have increased your herds and flocks, your silver and gold, and all your property, [14]you then become haughty of heart and unmindful of the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery; [15]who guided you through the vast and terrible desert with its saraph serpents and scorpions, its parched and waterless ground; who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock[q] [16]and fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers, that he might afflict you and test you, but also make you prosperous in the end. [17]Otherwise, you might say to yourselves,[r] 'It is my own power and the strength of my own hand that has obtained for me this wealth.' [18]Remember then, it is the LORD, your God, who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as he has now done, the covenant which he swore to your fathers. [19]But if you forget the LORD, your God, and follow other gods, serving and worshiping them,[s] I forewarn you this day that you will perish utterly. [20]Like the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so shall you too perish for not heeding the voice of the LORD, your God.

## CHAPTER 9

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105–114

**Unmerited Success** [1]"Hear, O Israel! You are now about to cross the Jordan to enter in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than yourselves, having large cities fortified to the sky,[t] [2]the Anakim, a people great and tall.[u] You know of them and have heard it said of them, 'Who can stand up against the Anakim?' [3]Understand, then, today that it is the LORD, your God, who will cross over before you as a consuming fire; he it is who will reduce them to nothing and subdue them before you, so that you can drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD promised you.[v] [4]After the LORD, your God, has thrust them out of your way, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because of my merits that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land';[w] for it is really because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. [5]No, it is not because of your merits or the integrity of your heart that you are going in to take possession of their land; but the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out before you on account of their wickedness and in order to keep the promise which he made on oath to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [6]Understand this, therefore: it is not because of your merits that the LORD, your God, is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

**The Golden Calf** [7]"Bear in mind and do not forget how you angered the LORD, your God, in the desert. From the day you left the land of Egypt until you arrived in this place, you have

8, 3: Not by bread alone, etc.: quoted by our Lord in Mt 4, 4. The sense is: God takes care of those who love him even when natural means seem to fail them.

n Ex 16, 12–15. 35; Nm 11, 6–9; Mt 4, 4; Lk 4, 4. o Dt 29, 4; Neh 9, 21. p Dt 11, 10ff. q Wis 11, 4. r Dt 9, 4. s Dt 4, 25f; 30, 18. t Dt 1, 28; 4, 38. u Nm 13, 33. v Dt 31, 3; Ex 23, 27. w Dt 8, 17.

been rebellious toward the LORD.[x] 8At Horeb
you so provoked the LORD that he was angry
enough to destroy you,[y] 9when I had gone up
the mountain to receive the stone tablets of the
covenant which the LORD made with you.[z]
Meanwhile I stayed on the mountain forty days
and forty nights without eating or drinking, 10till
the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone
inscribed, by God's own finger,[a] with a copy of
all the words that the LORD spoke to you on the
mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of
the assembly. 11Then, at the end of the forty days
and forty nights, when the LORD had given me
the two stone tablets of the covenant, 12he said
to me,[b] 'Go down from here now, quickly, for
your people whom you have brought out of
Egypt have become depraved; they have already
turned aside from the way I pointed out to them
and have made for themselves a molten idol. 13I
have seen now how stiff-necked this people is,'
the LORD said to me. 14'Let me be, that I may
destroy them and blot out their name from
under the heavens. I will then make of you a
nation mightier and greater than they.'

15"When I had come down again from the
blazing, fiery mountain, with the two tablets of
the covenant in both my hands,[c] 16I saw how
you had sinned against the LORD, your God: you
had already turned aside from the way which
the LORD had pointed out to you by making for
yourselves a molten calf! 17Raising the two
tablets with both hands I threw them from me
and broke them before your eyes.[d] 18Then, as
before, I lay prostrate before the LORD for forty
days and forty nights without eating or drinking,
because of all the sin you had committed in the
sight of the LORD and the evil you had done to
provoke him.[e] 19For I dreaded the fierce anger
of the LORD against you: his wrath would
destroy you.[f] Yet once again the LORD listened
to me. 20With Aaron, too, the LORD was deeply
angry, and would have killed him had I not
prayed for him also at that time. 21Then, taking
the calf, the sinful object you had made, and
fusing it with fire, I ground it down to powder as
fine as dust, which I threw into the wadi that
went down the mountainside.[g]

22"At Taberah, at Massah, and at Kibroth-
hattaavah likewise, you provoked the LORD to
anger.[h] 23And when he sent you up from
Kadesh-barnea to take possession of the land he
was giving you, you rebelled against this com-
mand of the LORD, your God, and would not
trust or obey him.[i] 24Ever since I have known
you, you have been rebels against the LORD.

25"Those forty days, then, and forty nights, I
lay prostrate before the LORD, because he had
threatened to destroy you. 26This was my prayer
to him: O Lord GOD, destroy not your people,
the heritage which your majesty has ransomed
and brought out of Egypt with your strong hand.
27Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob. Look not upon the stubbornness of this
people nor upon their wickedness and sin, 28lest
the people from whose land you have brought us
say, 'The LORD was not able to bring them into
the land he promised them'; or 'Out of hatred
for them, he brought them out to slay them in
the desert.'[j] 29They are, after all, your people
and your heritage, whom you have brought out
by your great power and with your outstretched
arm.[k]

## CHAPTER 10

1"At that time the LORD said to me, 'Cut two
tablets of stone like the former;[l] then come up
the mountain to me. Also make an ark of wood.
2I will write upon the tablets the command-
ments that were on the former tablets that you
broke, and you shall place them in the ark.' 3So I
made an ark of acacia wood, and cut two tablets
of stone like the former, and went up the
mountain carrying the two tablets.[m] 4[n]The LORD
then wrote on them, as he had written before,
the ten commandments which he spoke to you
on the mountain from the midst of the fire on
the day of the assembly. After the LORD had
given them to me, 5I turned and came down the

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x Dt 31, 27; Ex 14, 11; Nm 14, 11. y Ex 32, 4; Ps 106, 19. z Ex 24, 12. 18; 34, 28. a Ex 31, 18. b 12ff: Ex 32, 7–10. c Ex 32, 15. d 16f: Ex 32, 19. e Ex 32, 31; 34, 28. f Dt 10, 10; Ex 32, 10. g Ex 32, 20. h Ex 17, 7; Nm 11, 1ff. 34. i Nm 14, 1–4; Ps 106, 24f. j Nm 14, 14ff. k Dt 4, 20; Ex 6, 6f. l Ex 34, 1. m Ex 34, 4. n Ex 20, 1–17; 34, 28.

mountain, and placed the tablets in the ark I had made.[o] There they have remained, in keeping with the command the LORD gave me.

[6][The Israelites set out from Beeroth Benejaakan[p] for Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried, his son Eleazar succeeding him in the priestly office. [7]From there they set out for Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah for Jotbathah,[q] a region where there is water in the wadies.]

[8]"At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD,[r] to be in attendance before the LORD and minister to him, and to give blessings in his name, as they have done to this day. [9]For this reason, Levi has no share in the heritage with his brothers;[s] the LORD himself is his heritage, as the LORD, your God, has told him.

[10]"After I had spent these other forty days and forty nights on the mountain, and the LORD had once again heard me and decided not to destroy you, [11]he said to me, 'Go now and set out at the head of your people,[t] that they may enter in and occupy the land which I swore to their fathers I would give them.'

**The Lord's Majesty** [12]"And now, Israel, what does the LORD, your God, ask of you but to fear the LORD, your God, and follow his ways exactly, to love and serve the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soul,[u] [13]to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD which I enjoin on you today for your own good? [14]Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens,* belong to the LORD, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it.[v] [15]Yet in his love for your fathers the LORD was so attached to them as to choose you, their descendants, in preference to all other peoples, as indeed he has now done.[w] [16]Circumcise your hearts,* therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked. [17]For the LORD, your God, is the God of gods, the LORD of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes;[x] [18]who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him. [19]So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.[y] [20]The LORD, your God, shall you fear, and him shall you serve; hold fast to him and swear by his name.[z] [21]He is your glory, he, your God, who has done for you those great and terrible things which your own eyes have seen. [22]Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy strong,[a] and now the LORD, your God, has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky.

## CHAPTER 11

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**The Wonders of the Lord** [1]"Love the LORD, your God, therefore, and always heed his charge: his statutes, decrees and commandments. [2]It is not your children, who have not known it from experience, but you yourselves who must now understand the discipline of the LORD, your God; his majesty, his strong hand and outstretched arm; [3]the signs and deeds he wrought among the Egyptians, on Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and on all his land;[b] [4]what he did to the Egyptian army and to their horses and chariots, engulfing them in the water of the Red Sea as they pursued you,[c] and bringing ruin upon them even to this day; [5]what he did for you in the desert until you arrived in this place; [6]and what he did to the Reubenites Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, when the ground opened its mouth and swallowed them up out of the midst of Israel, with their families and tents and every living thing that belonged to them.[d] [7]With your own eyes you have seen all these great deeds that the LORD has done. [8]Keep all the commandments, then, which I enjoin on you today, that you may be strong enough to enter in and take possession of the land into which you are crossing, [9]and that you may have long life on

10, 14: Even the highest heavens: literally, "and the heavens of the heavens"; compare the phrase, "the third heaven," in 2 Cor 12, 2.

10, 16: Circumcise your hearts: cf Dt 30, 6; Jer 4, 4; Rom 2, 29. The "uncircumcised heart" (Lv 26, 41; Jer 9, 25; Ez 44, 7. 9) is closed and unreceptive to divine grace and guidance, just as "uncircumcised ears" (Jer 6, 10) are closed to sound, and "uncircumcised lips" (Ex 6, 12. 30) do not open well in speech.

o Ex 40, 20; 1 Kgs 8, 9. p Nm 33, 31. q Nm 33, 32f. r Nm 3, 6; 6, 23–27; 16, 9. s Nm 18, 20. t Ex 32, 34; 33, 1. u Dt 6, 2. 5. v Neh 9, 6. w Dt 7, 6ff. x 2 Chr 19, 7; Jb 34, 19; Wis 6, 7; Acts 10, 34; Rom 2, 11; Gal 2, 6. y Ex 22, 21; 23, 9; Lv 19, 33f. z Dt 6, 13; Mt 4, 10; Lk 4, 8. a Gn 46, 27; Ex 1, 5; Acts 7, 14. b Dt 6, 22; Ps 78, 42–51. c Ex 14, 26ff; 15, 9; Pss 78, 53; 106, 11. d Nm 16, 31ff.

the land which the LORD swore to your fathers
he would give to them and their descendants, a
land flowing with milk and honey.

**The Gift of Rain** 10"For the land which you are
to enter and occupy is not like the land of Egypt
from which you have come, where you would
sow your seed and then water it by hand, as in a
vegetable garden. 11 [e]No, the land into which
you are crossing for conquest is a land of hills
and valleys that drinks in rain from the heavens,
12a land which the LORD, your God, looks after;
his eyes are upon it continually from the begin-
ning of the year to the end. 13*If, then, you truly
heed my commandments which I enjoin on you
today, loving and serving the LORD, your God,
with all your heart and all your soul,[f] 14I will
give the seasonal rain to your land, the early
rain* and the late rain, that you may have your
grain, wine and oil to gather in; 15and I will
bring forth grass in your fields for your animals.[g]
Thus you may eat your fill. 16But be careful lest
your heart be so lured away that you serve other
gods and worship them.[h] 17For then the wrath
of the LORD will flare up against you and he will
close up the heavens, so that no rain will fall,
and the soil will not yield its crops, and you will
soon perish from the good land he is giving you.

**Reward of Fidelity** 18 [i]"Therefore, take these
words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind
them at your wrist as a sign, and let them be a
pendant on your forehead. 19Teach them to your
children, speaking of them at home and abroad,
whether you are busy or at rest. 20And write
them on the doorposts of your houses and on
your gates, 21so that, as long as the heavens are
above the earth, you and your children may live
on in the land which the LORD swore to your
fathers he would give them.

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22"For if you are careful to observe all these
commandments I enjoin on you, loving the
LORD, your God, and following his ways exactly,
and holding fast to him, 23the LORD will drive all
these nations out of your way,[j] and you will
dispossess nations greater and mightier than
yourselves. 24 [k]Every place where you set foot
shall be yours: from the desert and from Leba-
non, from the Euphrates River to the Western
Sea,* shall be your territory. 25None shall stand
up against you; the LORD, your God, will spread
the fear and dread of you through any land
where you set foot, as he promised you.[l]

**A Blessing and a Curse** 26 [m]"I set before you
here, this day, a blessing and a curse: 27a blessing
for obeying the commandments of the LORD,
your God, which I enjoin on you today; 28a
curse if you do not obey the commandments of
the LORD, your God, but turn aside from the way
I ordain for you today, to follow other gods,
whom you have not known. 29When the LORD,
your God, brings you into the land which you
are to enter and occupy, then you shall pro-
nounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim,[n] the
curse* on Mount Ebal. 30[Are they not beyond
the Jordan, on the other side of the western road
in the country of the Canaanites who live in the
Arabah, opposite the Gilgal beside the terebinth
of Moreh?] 31For you are about to cross the
Jordan to enter and occupy the land which the
LORD, your God, is giving you. When therefore,
you take possession of it and settle there, 32be
careful to observe all the statutes and decrees
that I set before you today.

## III: Exposition of the Law

### CHAPTER 12

**One Sanctuary** 1"These are the statutes and
decrees which you must be careful to observe in
the land which the LORD, the God of your
fathers, has given you to occupy, as long as you
live on its soil. 2Destroy without fail every place
on the high mountains, on the hills, and under

**11, 13ff:** As often in the Prophets, the discourse passes into the words of God himself. Cf Dt 7, 4; 17, 3; 28, 20; 29, 4f.

**11, 14:** The early rain: the rains which begin in October or November and continue intermittently throughout the winter. The late rain: the heavy showers of March and April. In Palestine the crops are sown in the autumn and reaped in the spring.

**11, 24:** The Western Sea: the Mediterranean.

**11, 29:** You shall pronounce the blessing . . . the curse: for the full ceremony, see chapters 27 and 28. Gerizim . . . Ebal: adjacent mountains in Samaria with a deep ravine between them. Their summits command an excellent view of the entire country.

e 11f: Dt 8, 7. f 13f: Dt 10, 12; Lv 26, 4. g Ps 104, 14. h 16f: Dt 4, 25f; 6, 14. i 18–21: Dt 6, 6–9. j Dt 7, 1; 9, 1. k Ex 23, 31. l Dt 2, 25; 7, 24; Ex 23, 27. m 26ff: Dt 28, 2–45; 30, 1. 15. 19. n Dt 27, 12f.

every leafy tree where the nations you are to
dispossess worship their gods.[o] 3Tear down their
altars, smash their sacred pillars, destroy by fire
their sacred poles, and shatter the idols of their
gods, that you may stamp out the remembrance
of them in any such place.

4"That is not how you are to worship the
LORD, your God. 5Instead,[p] you shall resort to
the place which the LORD, your God, chooses
out of all your tribes and designates as his
dwelling 6and there you shall bring your holo-
causts and sacrifices, your tithes and personal
contributions, your votive and freewill offerings,
and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.
7There, too, before the LORD, your God, you and
your families shall eat and make merry over all
your undertakings, because the LORD, your God,
has blessed you. 8You shall not do as we are now
doing; here, everyone does what seems right to
himself, 9since you have not yet reached your
resting place, the heritage which the LORD, your
God, will give you. 10But after you have crossed
the Jordan and dwell in the land which the
LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage,
when he has given you rest from all your
enemies round about and you live there in
security, 11then to the place which the LORD,
your God, chooses as the dwelling place for his
name you shall bring all the offerings I command
you: your holocausts and sacrifices, your tithes
and personal contributions, and every special
offering you have vowed to the LORD. 12You
shall make merry before the LORD, your God,
with your sons and daughters, your male and
female slaves, as well as with the Levite who
belongs to your community but has no share of
his own in your heritage. 13Take care not to offer
up your holocausts in any place you fancy, 14but
offer them up in the place which the LORD
chooses from among your tribes; there you shall
make whatever offerings I enjoin upon you.

**Profane and Sacred Meals** 15"However, in
any of your communities you may slaughter and
eat to your heart's desire as much meat as the
LORD, your God, has blessed you with; and the
unclean as well as the clean may eat it, as they
do the gazelle or the deer. 16Only, you shall not
partake of the blood, but must pour it out on the
ground like water.[q] 17Moreover, you shall not,
in your own communities, partake of your tithe
of grain or wine or oil, of the first-born of your
herd or flock, of any offering you have vowed, of
your freewill offerings, or of your personal contri-
butions. 18These you must eat before the LORD,
your God, in the place he chooses, along with
your son and daughter, your male and female
slave, and the Levite who belongs to your
community; and there, before the LORD, you
shall make merry over all your undertakings.
19Take care, also, that you do not neglect the
Levite as long as you live in the land.[r]

20"After the LORD, your God, has enlarged
your territory, as he promised you,[s] when you
wish meat for food,* you may eat it at will, to
your heart's desire; 21and if the place which the
LORD, your God, chooses for the abode of his
name is too far, you may slaughter in the manner
I have told you any of your herd or flock that the
LORD has given you, and eat it to your heart's
desire in your own community. 22You may eat it
as you would the gazelle or the deer: the
unclean and the clean eating it alike. 23But make
sure that you do not partake of the blood; for
blood is life, and you shall not consume this seat
of life with the flesh. 24Do not partake of the
blood, therefore, but pour it out on the ground
like water. 25Abstain from it, that you and your
children after you may prosper for doing what is
right in the sight of the LORD. 26However, any
sacred gifts or votive offerings that you may
have, you shall bring with you to the place
which the LORD chooses, 27and there you must
offer both the flesh and the blood of your
holocausts on the altar of the LORD, your God; of
your other sacrifices the blood indeed must be
poured out against the altar of the LORD, your
God,[t] but their flesh may be eaten. 28Be careful
to heed all these commandments I enjoin on

12, 20: Meat for food: as on special feasts. Meat was not eaten every day in Israel, even by the wealthy.

o 2f: Dt 7, 5; Ex 23, 24; 34, 13. p 5–7. 11f: Dt 14, 22–26; 15, 19f; 16, 2. 10f. 14f; 26, 2. q Dt 15, 23; Gn 9, 4; Lv 3, 17. r Dt 14, 27. s Dt 19, 8; Gn 28, 14; Ex 34, 24. t Lv 17, 11.

you, that you and your descendants may always prosper for doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD, your God.

**Pagan Rites** 29"When the LORD, your God, removes the nations from your way as you advance to dispossess them, be on your guard! Otherwise, once they have been wiped out before you and you have replaced them and are settled in their land, 30you will be lured into following them. Do not inquire regarding their gods, 'How did these nations worship their gods? I, too, would do the same.' 31You shall not thus worship the LORD, your God, because they offered to their gods every abomination that the LORD detests, even burning their sons and daughters to their gods. [u]

## CHAPTER 13

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**Penalties for Idolatry** 1"Every command that I enjoin on you, you shall be careful to observe, neither adding to it nor subtracting from it.

2"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer* who promises you a sign or wonder, 3urging you to follow other gods, whom you have not known, and to serve them: even though the sign or wonder he has foretold you comes to pass, 4pay no attention to the words of that prophet or that dreamer; for the LORD, your God, is testing you to learn whether you really love him with all your heart and with all your soul. 5The LORD, your God, shall you follow, and him shall you fear; his commandment shall you observe, and his voice shall you heed, serving him and holding fast to him alone. 6 [v]But that prophet or that dreamer shall be put to death, because, in order to lead you astray from the way which the LORD, your God, has directed you to take, he has preached apostasy from the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and ransomed you from that place of slavery. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst.

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7"If your own full brother, or your son or daughter, or your beloved wife, or your intimate friend, entices you secretly to serve other gods, whom you and your fathers have not known, 8gods of any other nation, near at hand or far away, from one end of the earth to the other: 9do not yield to him or listen to him, nor look with pity upon him, to spare or shield him, 10but kill him. Your hand shall be the first raised to slay him; the rest of the people shall join in with you. 11You shall stone him to death, because he sought to lead you astray from the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. 12And all Israel, hearing of it, shall fear and never again do such evil as this in your midst.

13"If, in any of the cities which the LORD, your God, gives you to dwell in, you hear it said 14that certain scoundrels have sprung up among you and have led astray the inhabitants of their city to serve other gods whom you have not known, 15you must inquire carefully into the matter and investigate it thoroughly. If you find that it is true and an established fact that this abomination has been committed in your midst, 16 [w]you shall put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, dooming the city and all life that is in it, even its cattle, to the sword. 17Having heaped up all its spoils in the middle of its square, you shall burn the city with all its spoils as a whole burnt offering to the LORD, your God. Let it be a heap of ruins forever, never to be rebuilt. 18You shall not retain anything that is doomed, that the blazing wrath of the LORD may die down and he may show you mercy and in his mercy for you may multiply you as he promised your fathers on oath; 19because you have heeded the voice of the LORD, your God, keeping all his commandments which I enjoin on you today, doing what is right in his sight.

## CHAPTER 14

**Pagan Mourning Rites** 1"You are children of the LORD, your God. You shall not gash yourselves nor shave the hair above your foreheads for the dead. [x] 2For you are a people sacred to

13, 2. 4. 6: Dreamer: a false prophet who pretended to have received revelations from God in his dreams; cf Jer 23, 25–32; Zec 10, 2. But dreams could also be a channel of true prophecy (Nm 12, 6; Jl 3, 1) and of genuine revelations (Gn 20, 3. 6; 31, 10. 24; 37, 5. 9; Mt 1, 20; 2, 12f. 19; etc.).

u Lv 18, 21: Jer 7, 31. v 6–10. 14: Dt 6, 14; 17, 2–7. w 16f: Jos 6, 18. 24; 7, 26; 8, 28. x Lv 19, 28.

the LORD, your God, who has chosen you from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly his own.[y]

**Clean and Unclean Animals** 3"You shall not eat any abominable thing.[z] 4[a]These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5the red deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the ibex, the addax, the oryx,* and the mountain sheep. 6Any animal that has hoofs you may eat, provided it is cloven-footed and chews the cud. 7But you shall not eat any of the following that only chew the cud or only have cloven hoofs: the camel, the hare and the rock badger, which indeed chew the cud, but do not have hoofs and are therefore unclean for you; 8and the pig, which indeed has hoofs and is cloven-footed, but does not chew the cud and is therefore unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their dead bodies you shall not touch.[b]

9"Of the various creatures that live in the water, whatever has both fins and scales you may eat, 10but all those that lack either fins or scales you shall not eat; they are unclean for you.

11"You may eat all clean birds. 12But you shall not eat any of the following: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 13the various kites and falcons, 14all the various species of crows, 15the ostrich, the nightjar, the gull, the various species of hawks, 16the owl, the screech owl, the ibis, 17the desert owl, the buzzard, the cormorant, 18the stork, the various species of herons, the hoopoe, and the bat. 19*All winged insects, too, are unclean for you and shall not be eaten. 20But you may eat any clean winged creatures.

21"You must not eat any animal that has died of itself, for you are a people sacred to the LORD, your God.[c] But you may give it to an alien who belongs to your community, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner.

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.*

**Tithes** 22"Each year you shall tithe all the produce that grows in the field you have sown;[d] 23then in the place which the LORD, your God, chooses as the dwelling place of his name[e] you shall eat in his presence your tithe of the grain, wine and oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, that you may learn always to fear the LORD, your God. 24If, however, the journey is too much for you and you are not able to bring your tithe, because the place which the LORD, your God, chooses for the abode of his name is too far for you, considering how the LORD has blessed you,* 25you may exchange the tithe for money and, with the purse of money in hand, go to the place which the LORD, your God, chooses. 26You may then exchange the money for whatever you desire, oxen or sheep, wine or strong drink, or anything else you would enjoy, and there before the LORD, your God, you shall partake of it and make merry with your family. 27But do not neglect the Levite who belongs to your community, for he has no share in the heritage with you.[f]

28"At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithes of your produce for that year and deposit them in community stores, 29that the Levite who has no share in the heritage with you, and also the alien, the orphan and the widow who belong to your community, may come and eat their fill;[g] so that the LORD, your God, may bless you in all that you undertake.

## CHAPTER 15

**Debts and the Poor** 1"At the end of every seven-year period* you shall have a relaxation of debts,[h] 2which shall be observed as follows. Every creditor shall relax his claim on what he has loaned his neighbor; he must not press his

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**14, 5:** The gazelle, the addax, the oryx: species of antelopes. The ibex: a species of wild goat.

**14, 19f:** The apparent contradiction is to be resolved in the light of Lv 11, 20–23; the unclean winged insects are those that walk on the ground; the clean winged creatures are those that leap on the ground, such as certain species of locusts.

**14, 21:** Boil a kid in its mother's milk: see note on Ex 23, 19.

**14, 24:** Considering how the Lord has blessed you: should the Israelite farmer be blessed with an abundant harvest, a tenth of this would be too much to transport for a great distance.

**15, 1:** At the end of every seven-year period: in every seventh, or sabbatical, year. Cf Dt 15, 9; 31, 10; and compare Jer 34, 14 with Dt 15, 12. A relaxation of debts: it is uncertain whether a full cancellation of debts is meant, or merely a suspension of payment on them or on their interest among the Israelites. Cf Ex 23, 11 where the same Hebrew root is used of a field that is "let lie fallow" in the sabbatical year.

y Dt 7, 6. z Ez 4, 14; Acts 10, 14. a 4–20; Lv 11, 2–23. b Lv 11, 26. c Ex 22, 30; 23, 19; 34, 26. d Lv 27, 30. e 23f: Dt 12, 5ff. f Dt 12, 12. 19. g 28f: Dt 26, 12. h Neh 10, 31.

neighbor, his kinsman, because a relaxation in
honor of the LORD has been proclaimed. [3]You
may press a foreigner, but you shall relax the
claim on your kinsman for what is yours.[i] [4]Nay,
more! since the LORD, your God, will bless you
abundantly in the land he will give you to
occupy as your heritage, there should be no one
of you in need. [5]If you but heed the voice of the
LORD, your God, and carefully observe all these
commandments which I enjoin on you today,
[6]you will lend to many nations, and borrow from
none;[j] you will rule over many nations, and
none will rule over you, since the LORD, your
God, will bless you as he promised. [7]If one of
your kinsmen in any community is in need in
the land which the LORD, your God, is giving
you, you shall not harden your heart nor close
your hand to him in his need. [8]Instead, you shall
open your hand to him and freely lend him
enough to meet his need.[k] [9]Be on your guard
lest, entertaining the mean thought that the
seventh year, the year of relaxation, is near, you
grudge help to your needy kinsman and give him
nothing; else he will cry to the LORD against you
and you will be held guilty. [10]When you give to
him, give freely and not with ill will; for the
LORD, your God, will bless you for this in all your
works and undertakings. [11]The needy will never
be lacking* in the land; that is why I command
you to open your hand to your poor and needy
kinsman in your country.[l]

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**Hebrew Slaves** [12]"If your kinsman, a Hebrew
man or woman, sells himself to you, he is to
serve you for six years, but in the seventh year
you shall dismiss him from your service, a free
man.[m] [13]When you do so, you shall not send
him away empty-handed, [14]but shall weight him
down with gifts from your flock and threshing
floor and wine press, in proportion to the bless-
ing the LORD, your God, has bestowed on you.
[15]For remember that you too were once slaves in
the land of Egypt, and the LORD, your God,
ransomed you. That is why I am giving you this
command today.[n] [16]If, however, he tells you
that he does not wish to leave you, because he is
devoted to you and your household, since he
fares well with you, [17]you shall take an awl and
thrust it through his ear* into the door, and he
shall then be your slave forever.[o] Your female
slave, also, you shall treat in the same way.
[18]You must not be reluctant to let your slave go
free, since the service he has given you for six
years was worth twice a hired man's salary; then
also the LORD, your God, will bless you in
everything you do.

**Firstlings** [19][p]"You shall consecrate to the
LORD, your God, all the male firstlings of your
herd and of your flock. You shall not work the
firstlings of your cattle, nor shear the firstlings of
your flock. [20]Year after year you and your family
shall eat them before the LORD, your God, in the
place he chooses.[q] [21]If, however, a firstling is
lame or blind or has any other serious defect,
you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD, your God,
[22]but in your own communities you may eat it,
the unclean and the clean eating it alike, as you
would a gazelle or a deer. [23]Only, you shall not
partake of its blood, which must be poured out
on the ground like water.[r]

## CHAPTER 16

**Feast of the Passover** [1]"Observe the month of
Abib* by keeping the Passover of the LORD, your
God,[s] since it was in the month of Abib that he
brought you by night out of Egypt. [2]You shall
offer the Passover sacrifice from your flock or
your herd to the LORD, your God, in the place
which he chooses as the dwelling place of his
name. [3][t]You shall not eat leavened bread with
it. For seven days you shall eat with it only
unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, that
you may remember as long as you live the day of
your departure from the land of Egypt; for in
frightened haste you left the land of Egypt.

15, 11: The needy will never be lacking: compare the words of Christ, "The poor you have always with you" (Mt 26, 11).
15, 17: His ear: cf Ex 21, 6 and the note there.
16, 1: Abib: "ear of grain, ripe grain," the name of the month in which the barley harvest fell, corresponding to our March and April; at a later period this month received the Babylonian name of "Nisan."

i Dt 23, 20. j Dt 28, 12f. k Lv 25, 35; Sir 29, 1f; Mt 5, 42. l Dt 15, 8; Sir 29, 12. m Ex 21, 2; Jer 34, 14. n Dt 5, 15. o 16f: Ex 21, 5f. p Ex 13, 11. q Dt 14, 23. r 21ff: Dt 12, 15f; Lv 22, 20. s 1–8: Ex 12, 2–20; 23, 15; Nm 28, 16ff. 24f. t 3f: Ex 13, 6f; 34, 18.

[4]Nothing leavened may be found in all your
territory for seven days, and none of the meat
which you sacrificed on the evening of the first
day shall be kept overnight for the next day.

[5]"You may not sacrifice the Passover in any of
the communities which the LORD, your God,
gives you; [6]only at the place which he chooses
as the dwelling place of his name, and in the
evening at sunset, on the anniversary of your
departure from Egypt, shall you sacrifice the
Passover. [7]You shall cook and eat it at the place
the LORD, your God, chooses; then in the
morning you may return to your tents. [8]For six
days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the
seventh there shall be a solemn meeting in
honor of the LORD, your God; on that day you
shall not do any sort of work.

**Feast of Weeks** [9] [u]"You shall count off seven
weeks, computing them from the day when the
sickle is first put to the standing grain. [10]You
shall then keep the feast of Weeks* in honor of
the LORD, your God, and the measure of your
own freewill offering shall be in proportion to
the blessing the LORD, your God, has bestowed
on you. [11]In the place which the LORD, your
God, chooses as the dwelling place of his name,[v]
you shall make merry in his presence together
with your son and daughter, your male and
female slave, and the Levite who belongs to your
community, as well as the alien, the orphan and
the widow among you. [12]Remember that you
too were once slaves in Egypt, and carry out
these statutes carefully.

**Feast of Booths** [13] [w]"You shall celebrate the
feast of Booths for seven days, when you have
gathered in the produce from your threshing
floor and wine press.* [14]You shall make merry at
your feast,[x] together with your son and daugh-
ter, your male and female slave, and also the
Levite, the alien, the orphan and the widow who
belong to your community. [15]For seven days you
shall celebrate this pilgrim feast in honor of the
LORD, your God, in the place which he chooses;
since the LORD, your God, has blessed you in all
your crops and in all your undertakings, you
shall do naught but make merry.

[16]"Three times a year,[y] then, every male
among you shall appear before the LORD, your
God, in the place which he chooses: at the feast
of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks, and
at the feast of Booths. No one shall appear before
the LORD empty-handed, [17]but each of you with
as much as he can give, in proportion to the
blessings which the LORD, your God, has be-
stowed on you.

**Judges** [18]"You shall appoint judges and officials
throughout your tribes to administer true justice
for the people in all the communities which the
LORD, your God, is giving you. [19]You shall not
distort justice; you must be impartial.[z] You shall
not take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes even
of the wise and twists the words even of the just.
[20]Justice and justice alone shall be your aim, that
you may have life and may possess the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you.

**Pagan Worship** [21]*"You shall not plant a sa-
cred pole of any kind of wood beside the altar of
the LORD, your God, which you will build;[a]
[22]nor shall you erect a sacred pillar,* such as the
LORD, your God, detests.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

[1]"You shall not sacrifice to the LORD, your
God, from the herd or from the flock an animal
with any serious defect;[b] that would be an
abomination to the LORD, your God.

[2] [c]"If there is found among you, in any one of
the communities which the LORD, your God,
gives you, a man or a woman who does evil in
the sight of the LORD, your God, and trans-
gresses his covenant, [3]by serving other gods, or
by worshiping the sun or the moon or any of the
host of the sky, against my command;[d] [4]and if,
on being informed of it, you find by careful

16, 10: Feast of Weeks: later known more commonly as "Pentecost."

16, 13: See note on Lv 23, 34.

16, 21—17, 7: This section seems to be out of its proper place, since it interrupts the natural sequence of the laws for the judges (Dt 16, 18–20 and 17, 8–13). It probably belongs to the similar section, Dt 12, 29—14, 2.

16, 21f: Sacred pole . . . sacred pillar: see note on Ex 34, 13.

u 9–12: Lv 23, 15–21. v Dt 12, 5. 7. 12. 18. w 13–15: Ex 23, 16; Lv 23, 34–43; Nm 29, 12–38. x Dt 16, 11. y Ex 23, 14f. 17; 34, 23; 2 Chr 8, 13. z Dt 1, 17; Ex 23, 8. a 1 Kgs 14, 15; 2 Chr 33, 3. b Lv 22, 20. c 2–7: Dt 13, 6–15. d Dt 4, 19.

investigation that it is true and an established
fact that this abomination has been committed in
Israel: [5]you shall bring the man (or woman) who
has done the evil deed out to your city gates*
and stone him to death. [6]The testimony of two
or three witnesses is required for putting a
person to death;[e] no one shall be put to death on
the testimony of only one witness. [7]At the
execution, the witnesses are to be the first to
raise their hands against him; afterward all the
people are to join in.[f] Thus shall you purge the
evil from your midst.

**Judges** [8]"If in your own community there is a
case at issue which proves too complicated for
you to decide, in a matter of bloodshed or of civil
rights or of personal injury, you shall then go up
to the place which the LORD, your God, chooses,
[9]to the levitical priests or to the judge who is in
office at that time. They shall study the case and
then hand down to you their decision.[g] [10]According to this decision that they give you in the
place which the LORD chooses, you shall act,
being careful to do exactly as they direct. [11]You
shall carry out the directions they give you and
the verdict they pronounce for you, without
turning aside to the right or to the left from the
decision they hand down to you. [12]Any man
who has the insolence to refuse to listen to the
priest* who officiates there in the ministry of the
LORD, your God, or to the judge, shall die. Thus
shall you purge the evil from your midst. [13]And
all the people, on hearing of it, shall fear, and
never again be so insolent.

Ch 1–34
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105–114

**The King** [14]"When you have come into the
land which the LORD, your God, is giving you,
and have occupied it and settled in it, should
you then decide to have a king over you like all
the surrounding nations,[h] [15]you shall set that
man over you as your king whom the LORD,
your God, chooses.[i] He whom you set over you
as king must be your kinsman; a foreigner, who
is no kin of yours, you may not set over you.
[16]But he shall not have a great number of
horses;* nor shall he make his people go back
again to Egypt to acquire them, against the
LORD's warning that you must never go back
that way again.[j] [17]Neither shall he have a great
number of wives, lest his heart be estranged,[k]
nor shall he accumulate a vast amount of silver
and gold. [18]When he is enthroned in his king-
dom, he shall have a copy of this law made from
the scroll that is in the custody of the levitical
priests.[l] [19]He shall keep it with him and read it
all the days of his life that he may learn to fear
the LORD, his God, and to heed and fulfill all the
words of this law and these statutes. [20]Let him
not become estranged from his countrymen
through pride, nor turn aside to the right or to
the left from these commandments. Then he and
his descendants will enjoy a long reign in Israel.

## CHAPTER 18

**Priests** [1]"The whole priestly tribe of Levi shall
have no share in the heritage with Israel; they
shall live on the oblations of the LORD and the
portions due to him.[m] [2]Levi shall have no
heritage among his brothers; the LORD himself is
his heritage, as he has told him. [3]The priests
shall have a right to the following things from
the people: from those who are offering a
sacrifice, whether the victim is from the herd or
from the flock, the priest shall receive the
shoulder, the jowls and the stomach. [4]You shall
also give him the first fruits of your grain and
wine and oil,[n] as well as the first fruits of the
shearing of your flock; [5]for the LORD, your God,
has chosen him and his sons out of all your tribes
to be always in attendance to minister in the
name of the LORD.

[6]"When a Levite goes from one of your

**17, 5:** Out to your city gates: outside the gates in an unclean place; cf Lv 24, 14; Nm 15, 36; Acts 7, 58; Heb 13, 12.

**17, 12:** The priest: the high priest; the judge: a layman. The former presided over the court in cases which directly concerned religion, the latter in cases of a more secular nature; cf 2 Chr 19, 8–11.

**17, 16:** Horses: chariotry for war. The Lord's warning: the same warning is also referred to in Dt 28, 68, although it is not mentioned explicitly elsewhere in the Pentateuch. We know from other sources that Egypt used to export war horses to Palestine. The danger envisioned here is that some king might make Israel a vassal of Egypt for the sake of such military aid.

e Dt 19, 15; Nm 35, 30; Mt 18, 16; Jn 8, 17; 2 Cor 13, 1. f Dt 13, 10. g Dt 21, 5; 2 Chr 19, 8. h 1 Sm 8, 5. 19f. i 1 Sm 9, 16; 10, 24; 16, 12. j Dt 28, 68; 1 Kgs 4, 26; 10, 26. k 1 Kgs 11; 3f; Neh 13, 26. l Dt 31, 9. 26. m Nm 18, 8f. 20–24; 1 Cor 9, 13. n Nm 18, 12; 2 Chr 31, 5.

communities anywhere in Israel in which he
ordinarily resides, to visit, as his heart may
desire, the place which the LORD chooses, 7he
may minister there in the name of the LORD, his
God, like all his fellow Levites who are in
attendance there before the LORD. 8He shall
then receive the same portions to eat as the rest,
along with his monetary offerings and heirlooms.
**Prophets** 9"When you come into the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you, you
shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the
peoples there.[o] 10Let there not be found among
you anyone who immolates his son or daughter[p]
in the fire,* nor a fortune-teller, soothsayer,
charmer, diviner, 11or caster of spells, nor one
who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles
from the dead. 12Anyone who does such things
is an abomination to the LORD, and because of
such abominations the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out of your way.[q] 13You,
however, must be altogether sincere toward the
LORD, your God. 14Though these nations whom
you are to dispossess listen to their soothsayers
and fortune-tellers, the LORD, your God, will not
permit you to do so.

15"A prophet like me* will the LORD, your
God, raise up for you from among your own
kinsmen; to him you shall listen.[r] 16This is
exactly what you requested of the LORD, your
God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when
you said, 'Let us not again hear the voice of the
LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more,
lest we die.'[s] 17And the LORD said to me, 'This
was well said. 18I will raise up for them a
prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and
will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell
them all that I command him. 19If any man will
not listen to my words which he speaks in my
name, I myself will make him answer for it.[t]
20But if a prophet presumes to speak in my
name[u] an oracle that I have not commanded
him to speak, or speaks in the name of other
gods, he shall die.'

21"If you say to yourselves, 'How can we
recognize an oracle which the LORD has
spoken?', 22know that, even though a prophet
speaks in the name of the LORD, if his oracle is
not fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the
LORD did not speak. The prophet has spoken it
presumptuously, and you shall have no fear of
him.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 1–34
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105–114

**Cities of Refuge** 1"When the LORD, your God,
removes the nations whose land he is giving you,
and you have taken their place and are settled in
their cities and houses, 2[v]you shall set apart
three cities* in the land which the LORD, your
God, is giving you to occupy. 3You shall thereby
divide into three regions the land which the
LORD, your God, will give you as a heritage, and
so arrange the routes that every homicide will be
able to find a refuge.

4"It is in the following case that a homicide
may take refuge in such a place to save his life:
when someone unwittingly kills his neighbor to
whom he had previously borne no malice.[w] 5For
example, if he goes with his neighbor to a forest
to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a
tree, its head flies off the handle and hits his
neighbor a mortal blow, he may take refuge in
one of these cities to save his life. 6Should the
distance be too great, the avenger of blood* may
in the heat of his anger pursue the homicide and

**18, 10f:** Immolates his son or daughter in the fire: to Molech. See note on Lv 18, 21. Such human sacrifices are classed here with other pagan superstitions because they were believed to possess magical powers for averting a calamity; cf 2 Kgs 3, 27. Three other forms of superstition are listed here: augury (by a fortune-teller, a soothsayer or a diviner); black magic (by a charmer . . . or caster of spells); and necromancy (by one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead).

**18, 15:** A prophet like me: from the context (opposition to the pagan soothsayers) it seems that Moses is referring in general to all the true prophets who were to succeed him. But since Christ is the Great Prophet in whom the prophetic office finds its fulfillment and completion, this passage was understood in a special Messianic sense both by the Jews (Jn 6, 14; 7, 40) and by the Apostles (Acts 3, 22; 7, 37).

**19, 2:** Set apart three cities: the Israelites were to have at least six cities of refuge, three in the land east of the Jordan and three in the land of Canaan west of the Jordan (Nm 35, 9–34); but since the three cities east of the Jordan had now been appointed (Dt 4, 41–43), reference is made here only to the three west of the Jordan. The execution of this command is narrated in Jos 20.

**19, 6:** The avenger of blood: see note on Nm 35, 12.

o Dt 12, 29ff; Lv 18, 26–30. p 10f: Lv 18, 21; 19, 31; 20, 27; 1 Sm 28, 7; 2 Kgs 17, 17; 21, 6. q Dt 9, 4. r Jn 1, 45; 6, 14; Acts 3, 22; 7, 37. s Ex 20, 19. t Acts 3, 23. u 20. 22: Dt 13, 2ff. v Dt 4, 41ff; Ex 21, 13; Nm 35, 10–15; Jos 20, 2. 8. w Dt 4, 42; Nm 35, 15; Jos 20, 3. 5.

overtake him and strike him dead, even though
he does not merit death since he had previously
borne the slain man no malice. 7That is why I
order you to set apart three cities.

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8 x"But if the LORD, your God, enlarges your
territory, as he swore to your fathers, and gives
you all the land he promised your fathers he
would give 9in the event that you carefully
observe all these commandments which I enjoin
on you today, loving the LORD, your God, and
ever walking in his ways: then add three cities to
these three. 10Thus, in the land which the LORD,
your God, is giving you as a heritage, innocent
blood will not be shed and you will not become
guilty of bloodshed.

11 y"However, if someone lies in wait for his
neighbor out of hatred for him, and rising up
against him, strikes him mortally, and then takes
refuge in one of these cities, 12the elders of his
own city shall send for him and have him taken
from there, and shall hand him over to be slain
by the avenger of blood. 13Do not look on him
with pity, but purge from Israel the stain of
shedding innocent blood, that you may prosper.

**Removal of Landmarks** 14"You shall not
move your neighbor's landmarks erected by your
forefathers in the heritage you receive in the
land which the LORD, your God, is giving you to
occupy.[z]

**False Witnesses** 15"One witness alone shall
not take the stand against a man in regard to any
crime or any offense of which he may be guilty;
a judicial fact shall be established only on the
testimony of two or three witnesses.[a]

16"If an unjust witness takes the stand against
a man to accuse him of a defection from the law,
17the two parties in the dispute shall appear
before the LORD in the presence of the priests or
judges in office at that time;[b] 18and if after a
thorough investigation the judges find that the
witness is a false witness and has accused his
kinsman falsely, 19you shall do to him as he
planned to do to his kinsman.[c] Thus shall you
purge the evil from your midst. 20The rest, on
hearing of it, shall fear, and never again do a
thing so evil among you. 21Do not look on such a
man with pity. Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for
tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot![d]

## CHAPTER 20

**Courage in War** 1"When you go out to war
against your enemies and you see horses and
chariots and an army greater than your own, do
not be afraid of them, for the LORD, your God,
who brought you up from the land of Egypt, will
be with you.

2"When you are about to go into battle, the
priest shall come forward and say to the soldiers:
3'Hear, O Israel! Today you are going into battle
against your enemies. Be not weakhearted or
afraid; be neither alarmed nor frightened by
them. 4For it is the LORD, your God, who goes
with you to fight for you against your enemies
and give you victory.'[e]

5"Then the officials shall say to the soldiers,[f]
'Is there anyone who has built a new house and
not yet had the housewarming? Let him return
home, lest he die in battle and another dedicate
it. 6Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard
and never yet enjoyed its fruits? Let him return
home, lest he die in battle and another enjoy its
fruits in his stead. 7Is there anyone who has
betrothed a woman and not yet taken her as his
wife? Let him return home, lest he die in battle
and another take her to wife.'[g] 8In fine, the
officials shall say to the soldiers, 'Is there anyone
who is afraid and weakhearted?[h] Let him return
home, lest he make his fellows as fainthearted as
himself.'

9"When the officials have finished speaking to
the soldiers, military officers shall be appointed
over the army.

**Cities of the Enemy** 10"When you march up
to attack a city, first offer it terms of peace. 11If it
agrees to your terms of peace and opens its gates
to you, all the people to be found in it shall serve
you in forced labor. 12But if it refuses to make
peace with you and instead offers you battle, lay

x Gn 15, 18–21; 28, 14; Ex 23, 31; 34, 24. y 11ff: Ex 21, 12. 14; Nm 35, 20f. z Dt 27, 17; Prv 23, 10; Hos 5, 10. a Dt 17, 6; Nm 35, 30; Mt 18, 16; Jn 8, 17; 2 Cor 13, 1. b Dt 17, 8f. c 18f: Dn 13, 61f. d Ex 21, 23f; Lv 24, 20; Mt 5, 38. e Dt 1, 30; 3, 22; Jos 23, 10. f 5ff: 1 Mc 3, 56. g Dt 24, 5. h Jgs 7, 3.

siege to it, [13]and when the LORD, your God,
delivers it into your hand, put every male in it to
the sword; [14]but the women and children and
livestock and all else in it that is worth plunder-
ing you may take as your booty, and you may use
this plunder of your enemies which the LORD,
your God, has given you.[i]

[15]"That is how you shall deal with any city at
a considerable distance from you, which does
not belong to the peoples of this land. [16]But in
the cities of those nations which the LORD, your
God, is giving you as your heritage, you shall not
leave a single soul alive. [17]You must doom them
all—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Peri-
zzites, Hivites and Jebusites[j] —as the LORD, your
God, has commanded you, [18]lest they teach you
to make any such abominable offerings as they
make to their gods, and you thus sin against the
LORD, your God.

**Trees of a Besieged City** [19]"When you are at
war with a city and have to lay siege to it for a
long time before you capture it, you shall not
destroy its trees by putting an ax to them. You
may eat their fruit, but you must not cut down
the trees. After all, are the trees of the field men,
that they should be included in your siege?
[20]However, those trees which you know are not
fruit trees you may destroy, cutting them down
to build siegeworks with which to reduce the
city that is resisting you.

## CHAPTER 21

**Expiation of Untraced Murder** [1]"If the
corpse of a slain man* is found lying in the open
on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving
you to occupy, and it is not known who killed
him, [2]your elders and judges shall go out and
measure the distances to the cities that are in the
neighborhood of the corpse. [3]When it is estab-
lished which city is nearest the corpse, the elders
of that city shall take a heifer that has never been
put to work as a draft animal under a yoke, [4]and
bringing it down to a wadi with an ever-flowing
stream at a place that has not been plowed or
sown, they shall cut the heifer's throat there in
the wadi.* [5]The priests, the descendants of Levi,
shall also be present, for the LORD, your God,
has chosen them to minister to him and to give
blessings in his name, and every case of dispute
or violence must be settled by their decision.[k]
[6]Then all the elders of that city nearest the
corpse shall wash their hands* over the heifer
whose throat was cut in the wadi, [7]and shall
declare, 'Our hands did not shed this blood,*
and our eyes did not see the deed. [8]Absolve, O
LORD, your people Israel, whom you have ran-
somed, and let not the guilt of shedding inno-
cent blood remain in the midst of your people
Israel.' Thus they shall be absolved from the guilt
of bloodshed, [9]and you shall purge from your
midst the guilt of innocent blood, that you may
prosper for doing what is right in the sight of the
LORD.

**Marriage with a Female Captive** [10]"When
you go out to war against your enemies and the
LORD, your God, delivers them into your hand,
so that you take captives, [11]if you see a comely
woman among the captives and become so
enamored of her that you wish to have her as
wife, [12]you may take her home to your house.
But before she may live there, she must shave
her head* and pare her nails [13]and lay aside her
captive's garb. After she has mourned her father
and mother for a full month, you may have
relations with her, and you shall be her husband
and she shall be your wife. [14]However, if later on
you lose your liking for her, you shall give her
her freedom, if she wishes it; but you shall not

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**21, 1–9:** This paragraph is best read immediately after Dt 19, 21. The slain man may not necessarily have been murdered; he may have been killed by a wild beast. But the blood of the slain cries out to God from the soil where it was shed; cf Gn 4, 10. Therefore a religious ceremony of propitiation is here prescribed in order to avert God's anger on the community.

**21, 4:** They shall cut the heifer's throat there in the wadi: its blood is to be carried away by the stream, signifying thereby the removal of the human blood from the soil. This is not a sacrifice but a symbolic action; the priests are present merely as official witnesses.

**21, 6:** Wash their hands: a symbolic gesture in protestation of one's own innocence when human blood is unjustly shed; cf Mt 27, 24.

**21, 7:** This blood: the blood of the slain man as symbolized by the heifer's blood.

**21, 12f:** Shave her head . . . : these symbolic actions are meant to signify the purification of the woman from her pagan defilement or perhaps the end of her period of mourning for her previous husband.

i 13f: Nm 31, 7. 9. 11; Jos 22, 8. j 16f: Dt 7, 1f; Jos 10, 40; 11, 14. k Dt 19, 17.

sell her or enslave her, since she was married to you under compulsion.

**Rights of the First-born** [15]"If a man with two wives loves one and dislikes the other; and if both bear him sons, but the first-born is of her whom he dislikes: [16]when he comes to bequeath his property to his sons he may not consider as his first-born the son of the wife he loves, in preference to his true first-born, the son of the wife whom he dislikes. [17]On the contrary, he shall recognize as his first-born the son of her whom he dislikes, giving him a double share of whatever he happens to own, since he is the first fruits of his manhood, and to him belong the rights of the first-born.

**The Incorrigible Son** [18]"If a man has a stubborn and unruly son who will not listen to his father or mother, and will not obey them even though they chastise him, [19]his father and mother shall have him apprehended and brought out to the elders at the gate* of his home city, [20]where they shall say to those city elders, 'This son of ours is a stubborn and unruly fellow who will not listen to us; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' [21]Then all his fellow citizens shall stone him to death. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel, on hearing of it, shall fear.

**Corpse of a Criminal** [22]"If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his corpse hung on a tree,* [23]it shall not remain on the tree overnight.[l] You shall bury it the same day; otherwise, since God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree,* you will defile the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as an inheritance.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 1–34
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**Care for Lost Animals** [1]"You shall not see your kinsman's ox or sheep driven astray without showing concern about it; see to it that it is returned to your kinsman.[m] [2]If this kinsman does not live near you, or you do not know who he may be, take it to your own place and keep it with you until he claims it; then give it back to him. [3]You shall do the same with his ass, or his garment, or anything else which your kinsman loses and you happen to find; you may not be unconcerned about them. [4]You shall not see your kinsman's ass or ox foundering on the road without showing concern about it; see to it that you help him lift it up.

**Various Precepts** [5]"A woman shall not wear an article proper to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's dress; for anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD, your God.

[6]"If, while walking along, you chance upon a bird's nest with young birds or eggs in it, in any tree or on the ground, and the mother bird is sitting on them, you shall not take away the mother bird along with her brood; [7]you shall let her go, although you may take her brood away. It is thus that you shall have prosperity and a long life.

[8]"When you build a new house, put a parapet around the roof; otherwise, if someone falls off, you will bring bloodguilt upon your house.

[9] [n]"You shall not sow your vineyard with two different kinds of seed; if you do, its produce shall become forfeit,* both the crop you have sown and the yield of the vineyard. [10]You shall not plow with an ox and an ass harnessed together. [11]You shall not wear cloth of two different kinds of thread, wool and linen, woven together.

[12]"You shall put twisted cords* on the four corners of the cloak that you wrap around you.[o]

**Crimes against Marriage** [13]"If a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, comes to dislike her, [14]and makes mon-

**21, 19:** The gate: in the city walls. This open space served as the forum for the administration of justice. Cf Dt 22, 15; 25, 7; Ru 4, 1f. 11; Is 29, 21; Am 5, 10. 12. 15.

**21, 22:** Hung on a tree: some understand, "impaled on a stake." In any case the hanging or impaling was not the means used to execute the criminal; he was first put to death by the ordinary means, stoning, and his corpse was then exposed on high as a salutary warning for others. Cf Jos 8, 29; 10, 26; 1 Sm 31, 10; 2 Sm 21, 9.

**21, 23:** God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree: St. Paul quotes these words in Gal 3, 13, where he applies them to the crucified Savior, who "redeemed us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for us."

**22, 9:** Become forfeit: to the sanctuary; cf Lv 19, 19; Jos 6, 19.

**22, 12:** Twisted cords: referred to as "tassels" on "violet cords" in Nm 15, 38. See note there.

l Gal 3, 13. m 1–4: Ex 23, 4f. n 9. 11: Lv 19, 19. o Nm 15, 38; Mt 23, 5.

strous charges against her and defames her by
saying, 'I married this woman, but when I first
had relations with her I did not find her a virgin,'
[15]the father and mother of the girl shall take the
evidence of her virginity* and bring it to the
elders at the city gate. [16]There the father of the
girl shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to
this man in marriage, but he has come to dislike
her, [17]and now brings monstrous charges against
her, saying: I did not find your daughter a virgin.
But here is the evidence of my daughter's
virginity!' And they shall spread out the cloth
before the elders of the city. [18]Then these city
elders shall take the man and chastise him,*
[19]besides fining him one hundred silver shekels,
which they shall give to the girl's father, because
the man defamed a virgin in Israel. Moreover,
she shall remain his wife, and he may not
divorce her as long as he lives.

[20]"But if this charge is true, and evidence of
the girl's virginity is not found, [21]they shall bring
the girl to the entrance of her father's house and
there her townsmen shall stone her to death,
because she committed a crime against Israel by
her unchasteness in her father's house. Thus
shall you purge the evil from your midst.

[22]"If a man is discovered having relations with
a woman who is married to another, both the
man and the woman with whom he has had
relations shall die.[p] Thus shall you purge the evil
from your midst.

[23]"If within the city a man comes upon a
maiden who is betrothed,* and has relations
with her, [24]you shall bring them both out to the
gate of the city and there stone them to death:
the girl because she did not cry out for help
though she was in the city, and the man because
he violated his neighbor's wife. Thus shall you
purge the evil from your midst.

[25]"If, however, it is in the open fields that a
man comes upon such a betrothed maiden,
seizes her and has relations with her, the man
alone shall die. [26]You shall do nothing to the
maiden, since she is not guilty of a capital
offense. This case is like that of a man who rises
up against his neighbor and murders him: [27]it
was in the open fields that he came upon her,
and though the betrothed maiden may have
cried out for help, there was no one to come to
her aid.

[28] [q]"If a man comes upon a maiden that is not
betrothed, takes her and has relations with her,
and their deed is discovered, [29]the man who had
relations with her shall pay the girl's father fifty
silver shekels and take her as his wife, because
he has deflowered her. Moreover, he may not
divorce her as long as he lives.

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 1–34
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[1]"A man shall not marry his father's wife,*
nor shall he dishonor his father's bed.

**Membership in the Community** [2]"No one
whose testicles have been crushed or whose
penis has been cut off, may be admitted into the
community of the LORD. [3]No child of an incestu-
ous union may be admitted into the community
of the LORD, nor any descendant of his even to
the tenth generation. [4] [r]No Ammonite or Moab-
ite may ever be admitted into the community of
the LORD, nor any descendants of theirs even to
the tenth generation, [5] [s]because they would not
succor you with food and water on your journey
after you left Egypt, and because Moab hired
Balaam, son of Beor, from Pethor in Aram
Naharaim, to curse you; [6]though the LORD, your
God, would not listen to Balaam and turned his
curse into a blessing for you, because he loves
you. [7]Never promote their peace and prosperity
as long as you live. [8] [t]But do not abhor the
Edomite, since he is your brother, nor the
Egyptian, since you were an alien in his country.
[9]Children born to them may in the third genera-
tion be admitted into the community of the
LORD.

**22, 15:** The evidence of her virginity: the bridal garment or sheet stained with a little blood from the first nuptial relations.
**22, 18:** Chastise him: flog him, as prescribed in Dt 25, 1–3.
**22, 23:** A maiden who is betrothed: a girl who is married but not yet brought to her husband's home and whose marriage is therefore still unconsummated.

**23, 1:** Father's wife: stepmother. Dishonor: cf Dt 27, 20.

p Lv 20, 10; Jn 8, 4f. q 28f: Ex 22, 16. r Neh 13, 1f. s Nm 24, 10. t Gn 25, 24ff.

**Cleanliness in Camp** 10"When you are in camp during an expedition against your enemies, you shall keep yourselves from everything offensive. 11If one of you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he shall go outside the camp, and not return until, 12toward evening, he has bathed in water; then, when the sun has set, he may come back into the camp. 13Outside the camp you shall have a place set aside to be used as a latrine. 14You shall also keep a trowel in your equipment and with it, when you go outside to ease nature, you shall first dig a hole and afterward cover up your excrement. 15Since the LORD, your God, journeys along within your camp to defend you and to put your enemies at your mercy, your camp must be holy; otherwise, if he sees anything indecent in your midst, he will leave your company.

Ch 1–34 See RG 105–114

**Various Precepts** 16"You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has taken refuge from him with you. 17Let him live with you wherever he chooses, in any one of your communities* that pleases him. Do not molest him.

18*"There shall be no temple harlot among the Israelite women, nor a temple prostitute among the Israelite men.[u] 19You shall not offer a harlot's fee or a dog's price as any kind of votive offering in the house of the LORD, your God; both these things are an abomination to the LORD, your God.

20"You shall not demand interest from your countrymen on a loan of money or of food or of anything else on which interest is usually demanded.[v] 21You may demand interest from a foreigner, but not from your countryman, so that the LORD, your God, may bless you in all your undertakings on the land you are to enter and occupy.

22"When you make a vow to the LORD, your God, you shall not delay in fulfilling it; otherwise you will be held guilty, for the LORD, your God, is strict in requiring it of you. 23Should you refrain from making a vow, you will not be held guilty. 24But you must keep your solemn word and fulfill the votive offering you have freely promised to the LORD.

25"When you go through your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat as many of his grapes as you wish, but do not put them in your basket. 26When you go through your neighbor's grainfield, you may pluck some of the ears with your hand, but do not put a sickle to your neighbor's grain.

## CHAPTER 24

**Marriage Laws** 1"When a man,* after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent,* and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house: 2if on leaving his house she goes and becomes the wife of another man, 3and the second husband, too, comes to dislike her and dismisses her from his house by handing her a written bill of divorce; 4or if this second man who has married her, dies; then her former husband, who dismissed her, may not again take her as his wife after she has become defiled. That would be an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring such guilt upon the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage.

5[w]"When a man is newly wed, he need not

**23, 17:** In any one of your communities: from this it would seem that the slave in question is a fugitive from a foreign country.

**23, 18f:** The pagans believed that they could enter into special relationship with their gods and goddesses by having sexual relations with the pagan priests and priestesses who prostituted themselves for this purpose. The money paid for this was considered a sort of votive offering made to the pagan sanctuary. Such abominations were naturally forbidden in Israel. A dog's price: the money paid the pagan priest for his indecent service.

**24, 1–4:** This law is directly concerned only with forbidding divorced couples to remarry each other, and indirectly with checking hasty divorces, by demanding sufficient cause and certain legal formalities. Divorce itself is taken for granted and tolerated as an existing custom whose evils this law seeks to lessen. Cf Dt 22, 19. 29; Mal 2, 14ff. Christ gave the authentic interpretation of this law: "Moses, by reason of the hardness of your heart, permitted you to put away your wives; but it was not so from the beginning" (Mt 19, 8f).

**24, 1:** Something indecent: a rather indefinite phrase, meaning perhaps "immodest conduct." At the time of Christ the rabbis differed in opinion concerning the sufficient grounds for divorce; cf Mt 19, 3.

u 1 Kgs 14, 24; 22, 46; 2 Kgs 23, 7. v Ex 22, 25; Lv 25, 37; Lk 6, 34f. w Dt 20, 7.

go out on a military expedition, nor shall any public duty be imposed on him. He shall be exempt for one year for the sake of his family, to bring joy to the wife he has married.

**Justice, Equity and Charity** 6*"No one shall take a hand mill or even its upper stone as a pledge for debt, for he would be taking the debtor's sustenance as a pledge.

7"If any man is caught kidnaping a fellow Israelite in order to enslave him and sell him, the kidnaper shall be put to death.[x] Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst.

8[y]"In an attack of leprosy you shall be careful to observe exactly and to carry out all the directions of the levitical priests. Take care to act in accordance with the instructions I have given them. 9[z]Remember what the LORD, your God, did to Miriam on the journey after you left Egypt.

10*"When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, you shall not enter his house to receive a pledge from him, 11but shall wait outside until the man to whom you are making the loan brings his pledge outside to you. 12If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in the mantle he gives as a pledge, 13but shall return it to him at sunset that he himself may sleep in it.[a] Then he will bless you, and it will be a good deed of yours before the LORD, your God.

14"You shall not defraud a poor and needy hired servant, whether he be one of your own countrymen or one of the aliens who live in your communities. 15You shall pay him each day's wages before sundown on the day itself, since he is poor and looks forward to them.[b] Otherwise he will cry to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty.

16"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; only for his own guilt shall a man be put to death.[c]

17"You shall not violate the rights of the alien or of the orphan, nor take the clothing of a widow as a pledge.[d] 18For, remember, you were once slaves in Egypt, and the LORD, your God, ransomed you from there; that is why I command you to observe this rule.

19[e]"When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf there, you shall not go back to get it; let it be for the alien, the orphan or the widow, that the LORD, your God, may bless you in all your undertakings. 20When you knock down the fruit of your olive trees, you shall not go over the branches a second time; let what remains be for the alien, the orphan and the widow. 21When you pick your grapes, you shall not go over the vineyard a second time; let what remains be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 22For remember that you were once slaves in Egypt; that is why I command you to observe this rule.

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

1"When men have a dispute and bring it to court, and a decision is handed down to them acquitting the innocent party and condemning the guilty party, 2if the latter deserves stripes, the judge shall have him lie down and in his presence receive the number of stripes his guilt deserves. 3Forty stripes* may be given him, but no more;[f] lest, if he were beaten with more stripes than these, your kinsman should be looked upon as disgraced because of the severity of the beating.

4*"You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out grain.[g]

**Levirate Marriage** 5"When brothers live together* and one of them dies without a son, the widow of the deceased shall not marry anyone outside the family; but her husband's brother shall go to her and perform the duty of a brother-

24, 6: Since the Israelites ground their grain into flour only in sufficient quantity for their current need, to deprive a debtor of his hand mill was virtually equivalent to condemning him to starve to death.

24, 10f: The debtor had the right to select the pledge that the creditor demanded as a guarantee for his loan.

25, 3: Forty stripes: a relatively mild punishment in ancient times. Later Jewish practice limited the number to thirty-nine; cf 2 Cor 11, 24.

25, 4: St. Paul argues from this verse that a laborer has the right to live on the fruits of his labor; cf 1 Cor 9, 9; 1 Tm 5, 18.

25, 5: When brothers live together: when relatives of the same clan, though married, hold their property in common. It was only in this case that the present law was to be observed, since one of its purposes was to keep the property of the deceased within the same clan. Such a marriage of a widow with her brother-in-law is known as a "levirate" marriage from the Latin word levir, meaning "a husband's brother."

x Ex 21, 16. y Lv 13, 1–14. z Nm 12, 10–15. a Ex 22, 26. b 14f: Lv 19, 13; Tb 4, 15; Sir 34, 25f; Jer 22, 13. c 2 Kgs 14, 6; 2 Chr 25, 4; Ez 18, 20. d Ex 22, 22; 23, 9. e 19ff: Lv 19, 9f; 23, 22. f 2 Cor 11, 24. g 1 Cor 9, 9; 1 Tm 5, 18.

in-law by marrying her.[h] 6 [i]The first-born son she bears shall continue the line of the deceased brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel. 7If, however, a man does not care to marry his brother's wife, she shall go up to the elders at the gate and declare, 'My brother-in-law does not intend to perform his duty toward me and refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel.' 8Thereupon the elders of his city shall summon him and admonish him. If he persists in saying, 'I am not willing to marry her,' 9*his sister-in-law, in the presence of the elders, shall go up to him and strip his sandal from his foot and spit in his face, saying publicly, 'This is how one should be treated who will not build up his brother's family!' 10And his lineage shall be spoken of in Israel as 'the family of the man stripped of his sandal.'

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**Various Precepts** 11"When two men are fighting and the wife of one intervenes to save her husband from the blows of his opponent, if she stretches out her hand and seizes the latter by his private parts, 12you shall chop off her hand without pity.

13"You shall not keep two differing weights in your bag, one large and the other small;[j] 14nor shall you keep two different measures in your house, one large and the other small. 15But use a true and just weight, and a true and just measure, that you may have a long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you. 16Everyone who is dishonest in any of these matters is an abomination to the LORD, your God.

17*"Bear in mind what Amalek did to you on the journey after you left Egypt,[k] 18how without fear of any god he harassed you along the way, weak and weary as you were, and cut off at the rear all those who lagged behind. 19Therefore, when the LORD, your God, gives you rest from all your enemies round about in the land which he is giving you to occupy as your heritage, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.[l] Do not forget!

## CHAPTER 26

**Thanksgiving for the Harvest** 1"When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, 2you shall take some first fruits[m] of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the LORD, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the LORD, your God, chooses for the dwelling place of his name. 3There you shall go to the priest in office at that time and say to him, 'Today I acknowledge to the LORD, my God, that I have indeed come into the land which he swore to our fathers he would give us.' 4The priest shall then receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the LORD, your God. 5Then you shall declare before the LORD, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean* who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien.[n] But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. 6[o]When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, 7we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. 8He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders;[p] 9and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey.[q] 10Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have

**25, 9f:** The penalty decreed for a man who refuses to comply with this law of family loyalty is public disgrace (the widow is to spit in his face) and the curse of poverty; sandals were proverbially a man's cheapest possession (cf Am 2, 6; 8, 6), and therefore "a man without sandals" was the poorest of the poor. Some commentators, however, connect this symbolic act with the ceremony mentioned in Ru 4, 7f.

**25, 17–19:** This attack on Israel by Amalek is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament, although it probably was connected with the battle mentioned in Ex 17, 8. A campaign against Amalek was carried out by Saul; cf 1 Sm 15.

**26, 5:** Aramean: either in reference to the origin of the patriarchs from Aram Naharaim (cf Gn 24, 10; 25, 20; 28, 5; 31, 20. 24), or merely in the sense of "nomad," in the same way as "Arab" was later used; cf Jer 3, 2.

h Mt 22, 24; Mk 12, 19; Lk 20, 28. i 6–9; Ru 4, 5–10. j 13ff: Lv 19, 35f; Prv 16, 11; Ez 45, 10; Mi 6, 11. k Ex 17, 8. l Ex 17, 14; 1 Sm 15, 2f. m Ex 23, 19; 34, 26. n Gn 46, 6f; Acts 7, 14f. o 6f: Ex 1, 8–22; 2, 23ff; 3, 9; Nm 20, 15f. p Ex 12, 51. q Ex 3, 8.

given me.' And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence. [11]Then you and your family, together with the Levite and the aliens who live among you, shall make merry over all these good things which the LORD, your God, has given you.[r]

**Prayer with the Tithes** [12]"When you have finished setting aside all the tithes of your produce in the third year,[s] the year of the tithes, and you have given them to the Levite,* the alien, the orphan and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your own community, [13]you shall declare before the LORD, your God, 'I have purged my house of the sacred portion and I have given it to the Levite,* the alien, the orphan and the widow, just as you have commanded me. In this I have not broken or forgotten any of your commandments: [14]*I have not eaten any of the tithe as a mourner; I have not brought any of it out as one unclean; I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have thus hearkened to the voice of the LORD, my God, doing just as you have commanded me. [15]Look down, then, from heaven, your holy abode, and bless your people Israel and the soil you have given us in the land flowing with milk and honey which you promised on oath to our fathers.'

**The Covenant** [16]"This day the LORD, your god, commands you to observe these statutes and decrees. Be careful, then, to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. [17]Today you are making this agreement with the LORD: he is to be your God and you are to walk in his ways and observe his statutes, commandments and decrees, and to hearken to his voice.[t] [18]And today the LORD is making this agreement with you: you are to be a people peculiarly his own,[u] as he promised you; and provided you keep all his commandments, [19]he will then raise you high in praise and renown and glory above all other nations he has made, and you will be a people sacred to the LORD, your God, as he promised."

# IV: Final Words of Moses

## CHAPTER 27

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**Ceremonies** [1]Then Moses, with the elders of Israel, gave the people this order: "Keep all these commandments which I enjoin on you today. [2]On the day you cross the Jordan into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. [3]Also write on them,[v] at the time you cross, all the words of this law, that you may thus enter into the land flowing with milk and honey, which the LORD, your God, and the God of your fathers, is giving you as he promised you. [4]When, moreover, you have crossed the Jordan, besides setting up on Mount Ebal these stones concerning which I command you today, and coating them with plaster, [5]you shall also build to the LORD, your God, an altar made of stones that no iron tool has touched.[w] [6]You shall make this altar of the LORD, your God, with undressed stones, and shall offer on it holocausts to the LORD, your God. [7]You shall also sacrifice peace offerings and eat them there, making merry before the LORD, your God. [8]On the stones* you shall inscribe all the words of this law very clearly."

[9]Moses, with the levitical priests, then said to all Israel: "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! This day you have become the people of the LORD, your God.[x] [10]You shall therefore hearken to the voice of the LORD, your God, and keep his commandments and statutes which I enjoin on you today."

[11]That same day Moses gave the people this order: [12]"When you cross the Jordan, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin shall stand on Mount Gerizim[y] to pronounce blessings over the people, [13]while Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses.

**The Twelve Curses** [14]"The Levites shall proclaim aloud to all the men of Israel: [15]'Cursed be the man who makes a carved or molten idol[z] —

**26, 12:** And you have given them to the Levite . . . : as prescribed in Dt 14, 28f.
**26, 14:** These are allusions to pagan religious practices.
**27, 8:** On the stones: cf vv 3f; not the stones of the altar.

r Dt 12, 7. 12. s Dt 14, 28f. t Ex 24, 7. u 18f: Dt 7, 6; 14, 2; 28, 1; Ex 19, 5. v Jos 8, 32. w Ex 20, 25; Jos 8, 31. x Dt 26, 17ff. y 12f: Dt 11, 29; Jos 8, 33f. z Ex 20, 4. 23; Lv 19, 4; Wis 14, 8.

an abomination to the LORD, the product of a
craftsman's hands—and sets it up in secret!' And
all the people shall answer, 'Amen!'*
16 'Cursed be he who dishonors his father or
his mother!'[a] And all the people shall answer,
'Amen!'
17 'Cursed be he who moves his neighbor's
landmarks!'[b] And all the people shall answer,
'Amen!'
18 'Cursed be he who misleads a blind man on
his way!'[c] And all the people shall answer,
'Amen!'
19 'Cursed be he who violates the rights of the
alien, the orphan or the widow!'[d] And all the
people shall answer, 'Amen!'
20 'Cursed be he who has relations with his
father's wife, for he dishonors his father's bed!'[e]
And all the people shall answer, 'Amen!'
21 'Cursed be he who has relations with any
animal!'[f] And all the people shall answer,
'Amen!'
22 'Cursed be he who has relations with his
sister or his half-sister!'[g] And all the people shall
answer, 'Amen!'
23 'Cursed be he who has relations with his
mother-in-law!'[h] And all the people shall answer, 'Amen!'
24 'Cursed be he who slays his neighbor in
secret!'[i] And all the people shall answer,
'Amen!'
25 'Cursed be he who accepts payment for
slaying an innocent man!' And all the people
shall answer, 'Amen!'
26 'Cursed be he who fails to fulfill any of the
provisions of this law!'[j] And all the people shall
answer, 'Amen!'

## CHAPTER 28*

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**Blessings for Obedience** 1 "Thus, then,[k] shall
it be:[l] if you continue to heed the voice of the
LORD, your God, and are careful to observe all
his commandments which I enjoin on you today,
the LORD, your God, will raise you high above all
the nations of the earth.[m] 2 When you hearken to
the voice of the LORD, your God, all these
blessings will come upon you and overwhelm
you:

3 "May you be blessed in the city,
and blessed in the country!
4 "Blessed be the fruit of your womb,
the produce of your soil and the offspring of
your livestock,
the issue of your herds and the young of
your flocks![n]
5 "Blessed be your grain bin and your kneading
bowl!
6 "May you be blessed in your coming in,
and blessed in your going out!*

**Victory and Prosperity** 7 "The LORD will beat
down before you the enemies that rise up against
you; though they come out against you from but
one direction, they will flee before you in
seven.* 8 The LORD will affirm his blessing upon
you, on your barns and on all your undertakings,
blessing you in the land that the LORD, your
God, gives you. 9 Provided that you keep the
commandments of the LORD, your God, and
walk in his ways, he will establish you as a
people sacred to himself, as he swore to you;[o]
10 so that, when all the nations of the earth see
you bearing the name of the LORD,* they will
stand in awe of you.[p] 11 The LORD will increase
in more than goodly measure the fruit of your
womb, the offspring of your livestock, and the
produce of your soil, in the land which he swore
to your fathers he would give you. 12 The LORD
will open up for you his rich treasure house of
the heavens, to give your land rain in due
season, blessing all your undertakings, so that

**27, 15–26:** Amen: see note on Nm 5, 22.
**28, 1–69:** This chapter would read better immediately after chapter 26.
**28, 6:** In your coming in . . . in your going out: at the beginning and end of every action, or in all actions in general.
**28, 7. 25:** From but one direction . . . in seven: in one compact mass, contrasted with many scattered groups.
**28, 10:** You bearing the name of the Lord: literally, "The LORD'S name is called over you," an expression signifying ownership and protection. Cf 2 Sm 12, 28; 1 Kgs 8, 43; Is 4, 1; 63, 19; Jer 7, 10f; 14, 9; 15, 16; 25, 29; Am 9, 12.

a Dt 21, 18–21; Ex 21, 17; Lv 20, 9. b Dt 19, 14. c Lv 19, 14. d Dt 24, 17; Ex 22, 21f. e Dt 22; 23, 1; Lv 18, 8; 20, 11. f Ex 22, 18; Lv 18, 23; 20, 15. g Lv 18, 9; 20, 17. h Lv 18, 17; 20, 14. i Ex 20, 13; 21, 12; Nm 35, 20f. j Gal 3, 10. k 1–68: Lv 26, 1–45. l 1–14: Dt 7, 12–16. m Dt 26, 19. n Dt 7, 13; 30. 9. o Dt 26, 18; Ex 19, 5f. p Dt 2, 25; 11, 25.

you will lend to many nations and borrow from
none.[q] 13The LORD will make you the head, not
the tail,* and you will always mount higher and
not decline, as long as you obey the command-
ments of the LORD, your God, which I order you
today to observe carefully; 14not turning aside to
the right or to the left from any of the command-
ments which I now give you, in order to follow
other gods and serve them.

**Curses for Disobedience** 15"But if you do not
hearken to the voice of the LORD, your God,[r]
and are not careful to observe all his command-
ments which I enjoin on you today, all these
curses shall come upon you and overwhelm you:

16"May you be cursed in the city,
and cursed in the country!

17"Cursed be your grain bin and your kneading
bowl!

18"Cursed be the fruit of your womb,
the produce of your soil and the offspring of
your livestock,
the issue of your herds and the young of
your flocks!

19"May you be cursed in your coming in,
and cursed in your going out!

**Sickness and Defeat** 20"The LORD will put a
curse on you, defeat and frustration in every
enterprise you undertake, until you are speedily
destroyed and perish for the evil you have done
in forsaking me. 21The LORD will bring a pesti-
lence upon you that will persist until he has
exterminated you from the land you are entering
to occupy. 22The LORD will strike you with
wasting and fever, with scorching, fiery drought,
with blight and searing wind, that will plague
you until you perish. 23The sky over your heads
will be like bronze and the earth under your feet
like iron.[s] 24For rain the LORD will give your
land powdery dust, which will come down upon
you from the sky until you are destroyed. 25The
LORD will let you be beaten down before your
enemies; though you advance against them from
one direction, you will flee before them in seven,
so that you will become a terrifying example to
all the kingdoms of the earth.[t] 26Your carcasses
will become food for all the birds of the air and
for the beasts of the field, with no one to frighten
them off. 27The LORD will strike you with
Egyptian boils[u] and with tumors, eczema and
the itch, until you cannot be cured. 28And the
LORD will strike you with madness, blindness
and panic, 29so that even at midday you will
grope like a blind man in the dark, unable to find
your way.

**Despoilment** "You will be oppressed and
robbed continually, with no one to come to your
aid. 30Though you betroth a wife, another man
will have her. Though you build a house, you
will not live in it. Though you plant a vineyard,
you will not enjoy its fruits. 31Your ox will be
slaughtered before your eyes, and you will not
eat of its flesh. Your ass will be stolen in your
presence, but you will not recover it. Your flocks
will be given to your enemies, with no one to
come to your aid. 32Your sons and daughters will
be given to a foreign nation while you look on
and grieve for them in constant helplessness. 33A
people whom you do not know will consume
the fruit of your soil and of all your labor, and
you will be oppressed and crushed at all times
without surcease, 34until you are driven mad by
what your eyes must look upon. 35*The LORD
will strike you with malignant boils of which you
cannot be cured, on your knees and legs, and
from the soles of your feet to the crown of your
head.

**Exile** 36[v]"The LORD will bring you, and your
king whom you have set over you, to a nation
which you and your fathers have not known,
and there you will serve strange gods of wood
and stone, 37and will call forth amazement,
reproach and barbed scorn from all the nations
to which the LORD will lead you.

**Fruitless Labors** 38"Though you spend much
seed on your field, you will harvest but little, for
the locusts will devour the crop.[w] 39Though you

**28, 13:** The head, not the tail: in the honorable position as leader. Cf Is 9, 14; 19, 15.
**28, 35:** This verse is best read with v 27.

q Dt 15, 6. r Bar 1, 20; Dn 9, 11; Mal 2, 2. s 22f: Lv 26, 19. t Lv 26, 17. 37. u Ex 9, 9ff. v 1 Kgs 9, 7ff; 2 Chr 7, 20ff; 33, 11; 36, 6. 20. w Ml 6, 15; Hg 1, 6.

plant and cultivate vineyards, you will not drink
or store up the wine, for the grubs will eat the
vines clean.[x] [40]Though you have olive trees
throughout your country, you will have no oil for
ointment, for your olives will drop off unripe.[y]
[41]Though you beget sons and daughters, they
will not remain with you, but will go into
captivity.[z] [42]Buzzing insects will infest all your
trees and the crops of your soil. [43]The alien
residing among you will rise higher and higher
above you, while you sink lower and lower.
[44]He will lend to you, not you to him. He will
become the head, you the tail.

[45]"All these curses will come upon you,
pursuing you and overwhelming you, until you
are destroyed, because you would not hearken
to the voice of the LORD, your God, nor keep the
commandments and statutes he gave you.
[46]They will light on you and your descendants as
a sign and a wonder* for all time. [47]Since you
would not serve the LORD, your God, with joy
and gratitude for abundance of every kind,
[48]therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness
and utter poverty, you will serve the enemies
whom the LORD will send against you. He will
put an iron yoke on your neck, until he destroys
you.

**Invasion and Siege** [49][a]"The LORD will raise up
against you a nation from afar, from the end of
the earth, that swoops down like an eagle, a
nation whose tongue you do not understand, [50]a
nation of stern visage, that shows neither respect
for the aged nor pity for the young. [51]They will
consume the offspring of your livestock and the
produce of your soil, until you are destroyed;
they will leave you no grain or wine or oil, no
issue of your herds or young of your flocks, until
they have brought about your ruin. [52]They will
besiege you in each of your communities, until
the great, unscalable walls you trust in come
tumbling down all over your land. They will so
besiege you in every community throughout the
land which the LORD, your God, has given you,
[53]that in the distress of the siege to which your
enemy subjects you, you will eat the fruit of your
womb, the flesh of your own sons and daughters[b] whom the LORD, your God, has given you.
[54]The most refined and fastidious man among
you will begrudge his brother and his beloved
wife and his surviving children [55]any share in
the flesh of his children that he himself is using
for food when nothing else is left him in the
straits of the siege to which your enemy will
subject you in all your communities. [56]The most
refined and delicate woman among you, so
delicate and refined that she would not venture
to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will
begrudge her beloved husband and her son and
daughter [57]the afterbirth that issues from her
womb and the infant she brings forth when she
secretly uses them for food for want of anything
else, in the straits of the siege to which your
enemy will subject you in your communities.

**Plagues** [58]"If you are not careful to observe
every word of the law which is written in this
book, and to revere the glorious and awesome
name of the LORD, your God, [59]he will smite you
and your descendants with severe and constant
blows, malignant and lasting maladies. [60]He will
again afflict you with all the diseases of Egypt*
which you dread, and they will persist among
you.[c] [61]Should there be any kind of sickness or
calamity not mentioned in this book of the law,
that too the LORD will bring upon you until you
are destroyed. [62]Of you who were numerous as
the stars in the sky,[d] only a few will be left,
because you would not hearken to the voice of
the LORD, your God.

**Exile** [63]"Just as the LORD once took delight in
making you grow and prosper,[e] so will he now
take delight in ruining and destroying you, and
you will be plucked out of the land you are now
entering to occupy. [64]The LORD will scatter you
among all the nations from one end of the earth
to the other,[f] and there you will serve strange
gods of wood and stone, such as you and your

**28, 46:** A sign and a wonder: an ominous example, attracting attention; cf Dt 29, 21–28.

**28, 60:** He will again afflict you with all the diseases of Egypt: such as the Lord had promised to remove from his people; cf Dt 7, 15.

x Zep 1, 13. y Mi 6, 15. z Lam 1, 5. a 49–52: Jer 5, 15ff; Bar 4, 15f. b Lv 26, 29; 2 Kgs 6, 28f; Jer 19, 9; Lam 4, 10; Bar 2. 3. c Dt 28, 27. d Dt 1, 10; Jer 42, 2. e Dt 30, 9. f Lv 26, 33.

fathers have not known. [65]Among these nations you will find no repose, not a foot of ground to stand upon, for there the LORD will give you an anguished heart and wasted eyes* and a dismayed spirit. [66]You will live in constant suspense and stand in dread both day and night, never sure of your existence. [67]In the morning you will say, 'Would that it were evening!' and in the evening you will say, 'Would that it were morning!' for the dread that your heart must feel and the sight that your eyes must see. [68]The LORD will send you back in galleys* to Egypt, to the region I told you that you were never to see again;[g] and there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

[69]These are the words of the covenant which the LORD ordered Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which he made with them at Horeb.

## CHAPTER 29

**Past Favors Recalled** [1]Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the LORD did in the land of Egypt before your very eyes to Pharaoh and all his servants and to all his land; [2]the great testings your own eyes have seen, and those great signs and wonders.[h] [3]But not even at the present day has the LORD yet given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.* [4]'I led you for forty years in the desert.[i] Your clothes did not fall from you in tatters nor your sandals from your feet; [5]bread was not your food, nor wine or beer your drink. Thus you should know that I, the LORD, am your God.' [6]/When we came to this place, Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, came out to engage us in battle, but we defeated them [7]and took over their land, which we then gave as a heritage to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.[k] [8]Keep the terms of this covenant, therefore, and fulfill them, that you may succeed in whatever you do.

**All Israel Bound to the Covenant** [9]"You are all now standing before the LORD, your God—your chiefs and judges, your elders and officials, and all of the men of Israel, [10]together with your wives and children and the aliens who live in your camp, down to those who hew wood and draw water for you— [11]that you may enter into the covenant of the LORD, your God, which he concluded with you today under this sanction of a curse;* [12]so that he may now establish you as his people and he may be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [13]But it is not with you alone that I am making this covenant, under this sanction of a curse; [14]it is just as much with those who are not here among us* today as it is with those of us who are now here present before the LORD, our God.

**Warning against Idolatry** [15]"You know in what surroundings we lived in the land of Egypt and what we passed by in the nations we traversed, [16]and you saw the loathsome idols of wood and stone, of gold and silver, that they possess. [17]Let there be, then, no man or woman, no clan or tribe among you, who would now turn away their hearts from the LORD, our God, to go and serve these pagan gods! Let there be no root that would bear such poison and wormwood among you! [18]If any such person, upon hearing the words of this curse, should beguile himself into thinking that he can safely persist in his stubbornness of heart, as though to sweep away both the watered soil and the parched ground,* [19]the LORD will never consent to pardon him. Instead, the LORD's wrath and jealousy will flare up against that man, and every curse mentioned in this book will alight on him. The LORD will blot out his name from under the heavens [20]and will single him out from all the

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**28, 65:** Wasted eyes: worn out and disappointed in their longing gaze.

**28, 68:** In galleys: in the ships of the Phoenician slave traders (Ez 27, 13; Jl 4, 6; Am 1, 9), who also dealt with Egypt (Is 23, 3).

**29, 3:** Eyes to see . . . ears to hear: with inner, spiritual discernment. Cf Mt 13, 43.

**29, 11:** Sanction of a curse: the present pact binds under penalty of the curses mentioned in this book. Cf v 20.

**29, 14:** Not here among us: this includes their descendants.

**29, 18:** To sweep away both the watered soil and the parched ground: apparently a proverb signifying that such an unfaithful Israelite will cause God to punish the good with the wicked, to root out the good plants growing in irrigated soil, together with the worthless plants growing in the dry ground.

g Hos 8, 13; 9, 3. h Dt 4, 34; Ex 19, 4. i Dt 8, 2. 4. j Dt 2, 24. 32; 3, 1; Nm 21, 33ff. k Dt 3, 16; Nm 32, 33.

tribes of Israel for doom, in keeping with all the curses of the covenant inscribed in this book of the law.

**Punishment for Infidelity** [21]"Future generations, your own descendants who will rise up after you, as well as the foreigners who will come here from far-off lands, when they see the calamities of this land and the ills with which the LORD has smitten it— [22]all its soil being nothing but sulphur and salt, a burnt-out waste, unsown and unfruitful, without a blade of grass, destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah,[l] Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his furious wrath— [23]they and all the nations will ask, 'Why has the LORD dealt thus with this land? Why this fierce outburst of wrath?'[m] [24]And the answer will be, 'Because they forsook the covenant which the LORD, the God of their fathers, had made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, [25]and they went and served other gods and adored them, gods whom they did not know and whom he had not let fall to their lot: [26]that is why the LORD was angry with this land and brought on it all the imprecations listed in this book; [27]in his furious wrath and tremendous anger the LORD uprooted them from their soil and cast them out into a strange land,[n] where they are today.' [28][Both what is still hidden* and what has already been revealed concern us and our descendants forever, that we may carry out all the words of this law.]

## CHAPTER 30

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**Mercy for the Repentant** [1]"When all these things which I have set before you, the blessings and the curses, are fulfilled in you,[o] and from among whatever nations the LORD, your God, may have dispersed you, you ponder them in your heart: [2]then, provided that you and your children return to the LORD, your God, and heed his voice with all your heart and all your soul,[p] just as I now command you, [3]the LORD, your God, will change your lot; and taking pity on you, he will again gather you from all the nations wherein he has scattered you. [4]Though you may have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, even from there will the LORD, your God, gather you; even from there will he bring you back. [5]The LORD, your God, will then bring you into the land which your fathers once occupied, that you too may occupy it, and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. [6]The LORD, your God, will circumcise your hearts* and the hearts of your descendants,[q] that you may love the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and so may live. [7]But all those curses the LORD, your God, will assign to your enemies and the foes who persecuted you. [8]You, however, must again heed the LORD's voice and carry out all his commandments which I now enjoin on you. [9]Then the LORD, your God, will increase in more than goodly measure the returns from all your labors, the fruit of your womb, the offspring of your livestock, and the produce of your soil;[r] for the LORD, your God, will again take delight in your prosperity, even as he took delight in your fathers', [10]if only you heed the voice of the LORD, your God, and keep his commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soil.

**God's Command Clear** [11]*"For this command which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you. [12]It is not up in the sky, that you should say, 'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' [13]Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' [14]No, it is something very near to you, already in

**29, 28:** What is still hidden: the events of the future. What has already been revealed: God's law and the punishments in store for those who break it. Leave the future to God; our business is to keep his law.

**30, 6:** Circumcise your hearts: see note on Dt 10, 16.

**30, 11–14:** God has revealed his will so clearly that ignorance of his law can be no excuse. St. Paul in Rom 10, 6–10, applies these words to the ease with which we can come to faith and salvation in Christ.

**30, 14:** In your mouths: that you may readily talk about it; cf Dt 6, 7; 11, 19. And in your hearts: that you may easily remember it; cf Dt 6, 6; 11, 18.

l Gn 14, 10f; 19, 24f. m 23f: 1 Kgs 9, 8f; Jer 22, 8f. n Dn 9, 11–14. o Dt 11, 26ff. p 2f: Neh 1, 9. q Dt 6, 5. r Dt 28, 11.

your mouths* and in your hearts; you have only
to carry it out.

**The Choice before Israel** [15]"Here, then, I
have today set before you life and prosperity,
death and doom. [16]If you obey the command-
ments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin on
you today, loving him, and walking in his ways,
and keeping his commandments, statutes and
decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and
the LORD, your God, will bless you in the land
you are entering to occupy. [17]If, however, you
turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are
led astray and adore and serve other gods, [18]I tell
you now that you will certainly perish; you will
not have a long life on the land which you are
crossing the Jordan to enter and occupy. [19]I call
heaven and earth today to witness against you:[s]
I have set before you life and death, the blessing
and the curse.[t] Choose life, then, that you and
your descendants may live, [20]by loving the
LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding
fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long
life for you to live on the land which the LORD
swore he would give to your fathers Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob."

## CHAPTER 31

**The Lord's Leadership** [1]When Moses had
finished speaking these words to all Israel, [2]he
said to them, "I am now one hundred and
twenty years old[u] and am no longer able to
move about freely; besides, the LORD has told
me that I shall not cross this Jordan. [3]It is the
LORD your God, who will cross before you; he
will destroy these nations before you, that you
may supplant them.[v] [It is Joshua who will cross
before you, as the LORD promised.] [4][w]The LORD
will deal with them just as he dealt with Sihon
and Og, the kings of the Amorites whom he
destroyed, and with their country. [5]When, there-
fore, the LORD delivers them up to you, you
must deal with them exactly as I have ordered
you.[x] [6]Be brave and steadfast; have no fear or
dread of them, for it is the LORD, your God, who
marches with you; he will never fail you or
forsake you."[y]

**Call of Joshua** [7]Then Moses summoned Joshua
and in the presence of all Israel said to him,[z] "Be
brave and steadfast, for you must bring this
people into the land which the LORD swore to
their fathers he would give them; you must put
them in possession of their heritage. [8]It is the
LORD who marches before you; he will be with
you and will never fail you or forsake you. So do
not fear or be dismayed."

**The Reading of the Law** [9]When Moses had
written down this law, he entrusted it to the
levitical priests who carry the ark of the cove-
nant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel,
[10]giving them this order: "On the feast of
Booths,[a] at the prescribed time in the year of
relaxation* which comes at the end of every
seven-year period, [11]when all Israel goes to
appear before the LORD, your God, in the place
which he chooses, you shall read this law* aloud
in the presence of all Israel. [12]Assemble the
people—men, women and children, as well as
the aliens who live in your communities—that
they may hear it and learn it, and so fear the
LORD, your God, and carefully observe all the
words of this law. [13]Their children also, who do
not know it yet, must hear it and learn it, that
they too may fear the LORD, your God, as long as
you live on the land which you will cross the
Jordan to occupy."

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**Commission of Joshua** [14]The LORD said to
Moses, "The time is now approaching for you to
die. Summon Joshua, and present yourselves at
the meeting tent that I may give him his
commission." So Moses and Joshua went and
presented themselves at the meeting tent.*
[15]And the LORD appeared at the tent in a column
of cloud, which stood still at the entrance of the
tent.

**A Command to Moses** [16]The LORD said to
Moses, "Soon you will be at rest with your
fathers, and then this people will take to render-

31, 10: The year of relaxation: cf Dt 15, 1ff and the note there.
31, 11ff: Reading the law not only instructed the people but also consoled them by the assurance of the divine goodness.
31, 14f. 23: V 23 is best read immediately after v 15; perhaps the original order was vv 7–8. 14–15. 23.

s Dt 4, 26. t Dt 11, 26ff; 28, 2. 15. u Dt 34, 7; Nm 20, 12. v Dt 9, 3. w Nm 21, 21–35. x Dt 7, 2. y Dt 20, 3f. z 7f: Jos 1, 6f. 9. a 10f: Dt 16, 13ff.

ing wanton worship to the strange gods among whom they will live in the land they are about to enter.[b] They will forsake me and break the covenant which I have made with them. [17]At that time my anger will flare up against them; I will forsake them and hide my face from them, so that they will become a prey to be devoured, and many evils and troubles will befall them. At that time they will indeed say, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have befallen us?' [18]Yet I will be hiding my face from them at that time only because of all the evil they have done in turning to other gods. [19]Write out this song,[c] then, for yourselves. Teach it to the Israelites and have them recite it, so that this song may be a witness for me against the Israelites. [20]For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey which I promised on oath to their fathers, and they have eaten their fill and grown fat, if they turn to other gods and serve them, despising me and breaking my covenant; [21]then, when many evils and troubles befall them, this song, which their descendants will not have forgotten to recite, will bear witness against them. For I know what they are inclined to do even at the present time, before I have brought them into the land which I promised on oath to their fathers." [22]So Moses wrote this song that same day, and he taught it to the Israelites.

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**Commission of Joshua** [23]Then the LORD commissioned Joshua, son of Nun, and said to him, "Be brave and steadfast, for it is you who must bring the Israelites into the land which I promised them on oath.[d] I myself will be with you."

**The Law Placed in the Ark** [24]When Moses had finished writing out on a scroll the words of the law in their entirety, [25]he gave the Levites[e] who carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD this order: [26]"Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD, your God, that there it may be a witness against you. [27]For I already know how rebellious and stiff-necked you will be. Why, even now, while I am alive among you, you have been rebels against the LORD! How much more, then, after I am dead! [28]*f*Therefore, assemble all your tribal elders and your officials before me, that I may speak these words for them to hear, and so may call heaven and earth to witness against them. [29]*g*For I know that after my death you are sure to become corrupt and to turn aside from the way along which I directed you, so that evil will befall you in some future age because you have done evil in the LORD's sight, and provoked him by your deeds."

**The Song of Moses** [30]Then Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end, for the whole assembly of Israel to hear:

## CHAPTER 32

### A

[1]Give ear, O heavens, while I speak;*
let the earth hearken to the words of my mouth!
[2]May my instruction soak in like the rain,
and my discourse permeate like the dew,
Like a downpour upon the grass,
like a shower upon the crops:
[3]For I will sing the LORD's renown.
Oh, proclaim the greatness of our God!
[4]The Rock—how faultless are his deeds,
how right all his ways!
A faithful God, without deceit,
how just and upright he is![h]

[5]Yet basely has he been treated by his degenerate children,
a perverse and crooked race![i]
[6]Is the LORD to be thus repaid by you,
O stupid and foolish people?
Is he not your father who created you?
Has he not made you and established you?[j]

[7]Think back on the days of old,

**32, 1–43:** In the style of the great prophets, the speaker is often God himself. The whole song is a poetic sermon, having for its theme God's benefits to Israel (vv 1–14) and Israel's ingratitude and idolatry in turning to the gods of the pagans, which sins will be punished by the pagans themselves (vv 15–29); in turn, the foolish pride of the pagans will be punished, and the Lord's honor will be vindicated (vv 30–43).

b Jgs 2, 12. 17. c Dt 31, 21; 32, 1–43. d Dt 31, 7f; Jos 1, 5ff. e 24f: Dt 31, 9. f Dt 32, 1–43. g Jgs 2, 19. h Ps 92, 15; Rv 15, 3. i Dt 31, 29; Ps 78, 8; Lk 9, 41. j Ex 4, 22; Is 63, 16; 64, 8; Jer 31, 9.

reflect on the years of age upon age.
Ask your father and he will inform you,
ask your elders and they will tell you: [k]
8 When the Most High assigned the nations
their heritage,
when he parceled out the descendants of
Adam, [l]
He set up the boundaries of the peoples
after the number of the sons of God;*
9 While the LORD's own portion was Jacob,
his hereditary share was Israel. [m]

10 He found them in a wilderness,
a wasteland of howling desert.
He shielded them and cared for them,
guarding them as the apple of his eye. [n]

11 As an eagle incites its nestlings forth
by hovering over its brood,
So he spread his wings to receive them
and bore them up on his pinions. [o]
12 The LORD alone was their leader,
no strange god was with him.
13 He had them ride triumphant over the
summits of the land*
and live off the products of its fields,
Giving them honey to suck from its rocks
and olive oil from its hard, stony ground;

14 Butter from its cows and milk from its sheep,
with the fat of its lambs and rams;
Its Bashan* bulls and its goats,
with the cream of its finest wheat;
and the foaming blood of its grapes you
drank.

B

15 [So Jacob ate his fill,]
the darling* grew fat and frisky;
you became fat and gross and gorged.
They spurned the God who made them
and scorned their saving Rock. [p]

16 They provoked him with strange gods
and angered him with abominable idols. [q]

17 They offered sacrifice to demons, to
"no-gods,"
to gods whom they had not known before,
To newcomers just arrived,
of whom their fathers had never stood in
awe.
18 You were unmindful of the Rock that begot
you,
You forgot the God who gave you birth. [r]
19 When the LORD saw this, he was filled with
loathing
and anger toward his sons and daughters.
20 "I will hide my face from them," he said,
"and see what will then become of them.
What a fickle race they are,
sons with no loyalty in them! [s]
21 "Since they have provoked me with their
'no-god'
and angered me with their vain idols,
I will provoke them with a 'no-people';
with a foolish nation I will anger them. [t]

22 "For by my wrath a fire is enkindled
that shall rage to the depths of the
netherworld,
Consuming the earth with its yield,
and licking with flames the roots of the
mountains. [u]
23 I will spend on them woe upon woe
and exhaust all my arrows against them:

24 "Emaciating hunger and consuming fever
and bitter pestilence,
And the teeth of wild beasts I will send among
them,
with the venom of reptiles gliding in the
dust.

25 "Snatched away by the sword in the street
and by sheer terror at home

**32, 8:** The sons of God: the angels; cf Jb 1, 6; 2, 1; 38, 7; Ps 89, 7f. Here the various nations are portrayed as having their respective guardian angels. Cf Dn 10, 20f; 12, 1.
**32, 13:** The land: Canaan.
**32, 14:** Bashan: a fertile grazing land east of the Jordan, famous for its strong cattle. Cf Ps 22, 13; Ez 39, 18; Am 4, 1.
**32, 15:** The darling: a probable meaning of the Hebrew word yeshurun, a term of endearment for "Israel." Cf Dt 33, 5. 26; Is 44, 2.

k Dt 4, 32; Ps 44, 2. l Gn 10, 1–32; Acts 17, 26. m Ex 19, 5; Ps 33, 12. n Dt 8, 15; Jer 2, 6; Zec 2, 8. o Ex 19, 4. p Dt 31, 20. q Nm 25, 2f; Ps 78, 58. r Jer 2, 32. s Dt 31, 17. t Rom 10, 19. u Lam 4, 11.

Shall be the youth and the maiden alike,
the nursing babe as well as the hoary old man.[v]

26 "I would have said, 'I will make an end of them
and blot out their name from men's memories,'
27 Had I not feared the insolence of their enemies,
feared that these foes would mistakenly boast,
'Our own hand won the victory;
the LORD had nothing to do with it.' "

28 For they are a people devoid of reason,*
having no understanding.
29 If they had insight they would realize what happened,
they would understand their future and say,

C

30 "How could one man rout a thousand,
or two men put ten thousand to flight,
Unless it was because their Rock sold them
and the LORD delivered them up?"
31 Indeed, their "rock" is not like our Rock,
and our foes are under condemnation.

32 They are a branch of Sodom's vine-stock,
from the vineyards of Gomorrah.
Poisonous are their grapes
and bitter their clusters.
33 Their wine is the venom of dragons
and the cruel poison of cobras.

34 "Is not this preserved in my treasury,
sealed up in my storehouse,
35 Against the day of vengeance and requital,
against the time they lose their footing?"
Close at hand is the day of their disaster,
and their doom is rushing upon them!

36 Surely, the LORD shall do justice for his people;
on his servants he shall have pity.
When he sees their strength failing,
and their protected and unprotected* alike disappearing,[w]

37 He will say, "Where are their gods[x]
whom they relied on as their 'rock'?
38 Let those who ate the fat of your sacrifices
and drank the wine of your libations
Rise up now and help you!
Let them be your protection!

39 "Learn then that I, I alone, am God,
and there is no god besides me.
It is I who bring both death and life,
I who inflict wounds and heal them,
and from my hand there is no rescue.[y]

40 "To the heavens I raise my hand and swear:
As surely as I live forever,

41 I will sharpen my flashing sword,
and my hand shall lay hold of my quiver.

"With vengeance I will repay my foes
and requite those who hate me.
42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall gorge itself with flesh—
With the blood of the slain and the captured,
Flesh from the heads of the enemy leaders."

43 Exult with him, you heavens,
glorify him, all you angels of God;
For he avenges the blood of his servants
and purges his people's land.

44 So Moses, together with Joshua, son of Nun, went and recited all the words of this song for the people to hear.

**Final Appeal** 45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 46 he said,[z] "Take to heart all the warning which I have now given you and which you must impress on your children, that you may carry out carefully every word of this law. 47 For this is no trivial matter for you; rather, it means your very life, since it is by this means that you are to enjoy a long life on the land which you will cross the Jordan to occupy."

**32, 28–35**: The reference is to the pagan nations, not to Israel.
**32, 36**: Their protected and unprotected: the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; according to some, the idea is "slaves and freemen."

v Lv 26, 25. w 2 Mc 7, 6. x 37f: Jgs 10, 14; Jer 2, 28. y Dt 4, 35; Tb 13, 2; Wis 16, 13. z Dt 4, 9.

**Moses to View Canaan** [48]On that very day
the LORD said to Moses, [49]"Go up on Mount
Nebo, here in the Abarim Mountains [it is in the
land of Moab facing Jericho], and view the land
of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites as
their possession.[a] [50]Then you shall die on the
mountain you have climbed, and shall be taken
to your people, just as your brother Aaron died
on Mount Hor and there was taken to his
people;[b] [51]because both of you broke faith with
me among the Israelites at the waters of
Meribath-kadesh in the desert of Zin by failing to
manifest my sanctity among the Israelites.[c]
[52]You may indeed view the land at a distance,
but you shall not enter that land which I am
giving to the Israelites."[d]

## CHAPTER 33

**Blessing upon the Tribes** [1]This is the blessing
which Moses, the man of God, pronounced
upon the Israelites before he died. [2]He said:

"The LORD came from Sinai*
and dawned on his people from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran
and advanced from Meribath-kadesh,
While at his right hand a fire blazed forth
and his wrath devastated the nations.[e]
[3]But all his holy ones were in his hand;*
they followed at his feet
and he bore them up on his pinions.
[4]A law he gave to us;
he made the community of Jacob his
domain,[f]
[5] and he became king of his darling,*
When the chiefs of the people assembled
and the tribes of Israel came together.
[6]"May Reuben live and not die out,[g]
but let his men be few."*

[7]The following is for Judah. He said:
"The LORD hears the cry of Judah;
you will bring him to his people.*
His own hands defend his cause
and you will be his help against his foes."[h]

[8]Of Levi he said:
"To Levi belong your Thummim,
to the man of your favor your Urim;*
For you put him to the test at Massah
and you contended with him at the waters
of Meribah.[i]
[9]He said of his father, 'I regard him not';
his brothers he would not acknowledge,
and his own children he refused to
recognize.
Thus the Levites keep your words,
and your covenant they uphold.*
[10]They promulgate your decisions to Jacob
and your law to Israel.
They bring the smoke of sacrifice to your
nostrils,
and burnt offerings to your altar.[j]
[11]Bless, O LORD, his possessions
and accept the ministry of his hands.
Break the backs of his adversaries
and of his foes, that they may not rise."

[12]Of Benjamin he said:
"Benjamin is the beloved of the LORD,
who shelters him all the day,
while he abides securely at his breast."[k]

[13]Of Joseph he said:[l]
"Blessed by the LORD is his land
with the best of the skies above
and of the abyss crouching beneath;
[14]With the best of the produce of the year,
and the choicest sheaves of the months;

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

**33, 2–5. 26–29:** These verses seem to form an independent hymn describing, in the form of a theophany, the conquest of Canaan. The first section of this hymn (vv 2–5) serves here as an introduction to the various "blessings"; the second section (vv 26–29), as their conclusion.

**33, 3:** His holy ones were in his hand: the Israelites were protected by the Lord.

**33, 5. 26:** The darling: see note on Dt 32, 15.

**33, 6:** In keeping with the other blessings, probably this verse was once introduced by the phrase, "Of Reuben he said." It is to be noted that there is no blessing here for Simeon.

**33, 7:** Bring him to his people: this probably refers to the isolated position of the tribe of Judah during the conquest of the Promised Land (cf Jgs 1, 17–19); according to some commentators the reference is to the divided kingdom.

**33, 8:** Thummim . . . Urim: see note on Ex 28, 30.

**33, 9:** The reference is probably to the Levites' slaughter of their brethren after the affair of the golden calf in the desert; cf Ex 32, 27–29.

a Nm 27, 12; 33, 47f. b Nm 20, 24ff. 28; 27, 13; 33, 38. c Nm 20, 12; 27, 14. d Dt 3, 27; 34, 4. e Ex 19, 18. 20; Jgs 5, 4f. f Jn 1, 17; 7, 19. g Gn 49, 3f. h Gn 49, 8–12. i Gn 49, 5; Ex 17, 7; 28, 30; Nm 20, 13. j Ex 30, 7f. k Gn 49, 27. l 13–17: Gn 49, 22–26.

15 With the finest gifts of the age-old mountains
and the best from the timeless hills;
16 With the best of the earth and its fullness,
and the favor of him who dwells in the bush.*
These shall come upon the head of Joseph
and upon the brow of the prince among his brothers,
17 The majestic bull, his father's first-born,
whose horns are those of the wild ox
With which to gore the nations,
even those at the ends of the earth."
[These are the myriads of Ephraim,
and these the thousands of Manasseh.]

18 Of Zebulun he said: [m]
"Rejoice, O Zebulun, in your pursuits,
and you, Issachar, in your tents!
19 You who invite the tribes to the mountains
where feasts are duly held,
Because you suck up the abundance of the seas*
and the hidden treasures of the sand."

20 Of Gad he said: [n]
"Blessed be he who has made Gad so vast!
He lies there like a lion
that has seized the arm and head of the prey.
21 He saw that the best should be his
when the princely portion* was assigned,
while the heads of the people were gathered.
He carried out the justice of the LORD
and his decrees respecting Israel." [o]

Ch 1–34
See RG
105–114

22 Of Dan he said:
"Dan is a lion's whelp, [p]
that springs forth from Bashan!"*

23 Of Naphtali he said:
"Naphtali is enriched with favors
and filled with the blessings of the LORD;
The lake* and south of it are his possession!" [q]

24 Of Asher he said: [r]
"More blessed than the other sons be Asher!
May he be the favorite among his brothers,
as the oil of his olive trees runs over his feet!*
25 May your bolts be of iron and bronze;
may your strength endure through all your days!"

26 "There is no god like the God of the darling,
who rides the heavens in his power,
and rides the skies in his majesty;
27 He spread out the primeval tent;
he extended the ancient canopy.
He drove the enemy out of your way
and the Amorite he destroyed.
28 Israel has dwelt securely,
and the fountain of Jacob has been undisturbed.
In a land of grain and wine,
where the heavens drip with dew. [s]
29 How fortunate you are, O Israel!
Where else is a nation victorious in the LORD?
The LORD is your saving shield,
and his sword is your glory.
Your enemies fawn upon you,
as you stride upon their heights." [t]

## CHAPTER 34

**Death and Burial of Moses** 1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, [u] the headland of Pisgah which faces Jericho, and the LORD showed him all the land—Gilead, and as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah

**33, 16:** Him who dwells in the bush: a title given to the Lord because of his appearance to Moses in the burning bush; cf Ex 3.

**33, 19:** The abundance of the seas: perhaps the wealth that comes from sea-borne trade or from fishing. The hidden treasures of the sand: possibly an allusion to the valuable purple dye extracted from certain marine shells found on the coast of northern Palestine.

**33, 21:** The princely portion: Moses gave the tribe of Gad their land on the east of the Jordan only on condition that they would help the other tribes conquer the land west of the river; cf Nm 32; Jos 22.

**33, 22:** The sense is, "May he leap up like a lion of Bashan"; the heavily wooded hills of Bashan were notorious for their lions, but the tribe of Dan was not settled in this region.

**33, 23:** The lake: the Lake of Gennesaret on which the land of this tribe bordered.

**33, 24:** The land of the tribe of Asher was covered with olive groves.

m 18f: Gn 49, 13ff. n 20f: Gn 49, 19. o Nm 32, 1. 5. 16–19. 31f; Jos 1, 12–15; 1 Chr 5, 18–22. p Gn 49, 16f. q Gn 49, 21; Jos 19, 32–39. r 24f: Gn 49, 20. s Gn 27, 28. t Dt 4, 7f. u Dt 3, 27.

as far as the Western Sea, [3]the Negeb, the circuit
of the Jordan with the lowlands at Jericho, city of
palms, and as far as Zoar. [4]The LORD then said to
him, "This is the land[v] which I swore to
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that I would give to
their descendants. I have let you feast your eyes
upon it, but you shall not cross over." [5]So there,
in the land of Moab, Moses, the servant of the
LORD, died[w] as the LORD had said; [6]and he was
buried in the ravine opposite Beth-peor in the
land of Moab, but to this day no one knows the
place of his burial. [7]Moses was one hundred and
twenty years old[x] when he died, yet his eyes
were undimmed and his vigor unabated. [8]For
thirty days the Israelites wept for Moses in the
plains of Moab, till they had completed the
period of grief and mourning for Moses.

[9]Now Joshua, son of Nun,[y] was filled with the
spirit of wisdom, since Moses had laid his hands
upon him; and so the Israelites gave him their
obedience, thus carrying out the LORD's com-
mand to Moses.

[10] [z]Since then no prophet has arisen in Israel
like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.
[11] [a]He had no equal in all the signs and wonders
the LORD sent him to perform in the land of
Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and
against all his land, [12]and for the might and the
terrifying power that Moses exhibited in the
sight of all Israel.

v Dt 3, 27; 32, 52; Gn 12, 7; 15, 18. w Dt 32, 50. x Dt 31, 2. y Nm 27, 18. 23; Jos 1, 17. z Ex 33, 11. a Dt 4, 34.

# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

Joshua
See RG
119–129

The Book of Joshua derives its name from the successor of Moses, with whose deeds it is principally concerned. The purpose of the book is to demonstrate God's fidelity in giving to the Israelites the land he had promised them for an inheritance (Gn 15, 18ff; Jos 1, 2ff; 21, 41ff; 23, 14ff).

Their occupation of the country is begun with the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of Jericho (ch 1—6), in both of which the Lord intervenes on their behalf. This is followed by a first foothold on the Palestinian mountain range, at Ai, Bethel and Gibeon (ch 7—9), and two sweeping campaigns against the city-states in the south of the country (ch 10) and in the north (ch 11), with a summary in ch 12. The broad claim to total sovereignty thus established is spelled out by a combined list of tribal boundaries and of the towns contained within each area or administrative district (ch 13—19), including cities of asylum and cities for the Levites (ch 20, 21). The book closes with a narrative about the tribes east of the Jordan (ch 22), a warning speech by Joshua (ch 23), and a renewal at Shechem (ch 24) of the covenant with the Lord, already affirmed there near the beginning (8, 30-35) of the conquest.

Like the books which precede it, the Book of Joshua was built up by a long and complex process of editing traditional materials. Both Jewish and Christian believers have always regarded it as inspired.

The entire history of the conquest of the Promised Land is a prophecy of the spiritual conquest of the world through the church under the leadership of Jesus the Messiah.

The Book of Joshua may be divided as follows:

I. Conquest of Canaan (Jos 1, 1—12, 24).
II. Division of the Land (Jos 13, 1—21, 45).
III. Return of the Transjordan Tribes and Joshua's Farewell (Jos 22, 1—24, 33).

# I: Conquest of Canaan

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
122–123

**Divine Promise of Assistance** [1]After Moses, the servant of the LORD, had died, the LORD said to Moses' aide Joshua, son of Nun: [2]"My servant Moses is dead. So prepare to cross the Jordan here, with all the people, into the land I will give the Israelites. [3]As I promised Moses, I will deliver to you every place where you set foot. [4]*Your domain is to be all the land of the Hittites, from the desert and from Lebanon east to the great river Euphrates and west to the Great Sea.[a] [5]No one can withstand you while you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses:[b] I will not leave you nor forsake you. [6]Be firm and steadfast, so that you may give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers I would give them. [7]Above all, be firm and steadfast, taking care to observe the entire law which my servant Moses enjoined on you. Do not swerve from it either to the right or to the left, that you may succeed wherever you go. [8]Keep this book of the law on your lips. Recite it by day and by night, that you may observe carefully all that is written in it; then you will successfully attain your goal. [9]I command you: be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go."[c]

Ch 2
See RG
123

[10]So Joshua commanded the officers of the people: [11]"Go through the camp and instruct the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for three days from now you shall cross the Jordan here, to march in and take possession of the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you.' "[d]

**The Transjordan Tribes** [12]Joshua reminded the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh: [13]"Remember what Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you when he said, 'The LORD, your God, will permit you to settle in this land.' [14]Your wives, your children, and your livestock shall remain in the land Moses gave you here beyond the Jordan.[e] But all the warriors among you must cross over armed ahead of your kinsmen and you must help them [15]until the LORD has settled your kinsmen, and they like you possess the land which the LORD, your God, is giving them. Afterward you may return and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the LORD, has given you east of the Jordan."[f] [16]"We will do all you have commanded us," they answered Joshua, "and we will go wherever you send us. We will obey you as completely as we obeyed Moses. [17]But may the LORD, your God, be with you as he was with Moses. [18]If anyone rebels against your orders and does not obey every command you give him, he shall be put to death. But be firm and steadfast."

## CHAPTER 2

**Spies Saved by Rahab** [1]Then Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent out two spies from Shittim, saying, "Go, reconnoiter the land and Jericho." When the two reached Jericho, they went into the house of a harlot* named Rahab,[g] where they lodged. [2]But a report was brought to the king of Jericho that some Israelites had come there that night to spy out the land. [3]So the king of Jericho sent Rahab the order, "Put out the visitors who have entered your house, for they have come to spy out the entire land." [4]The woman[h] had taken the two men and hidden them, so she said, "True, the men you speak of came to me, but I did not know where they came from. [5]At dark, when it was time for the gate to be shut, they left, and I do not know where they went. You will have to pursue them immediately to overtake them." [6]Now, she had led them to the roof, and hidden them among her stalks of flax spread out* there. [7]But the pursuers set out along the way to the fords of the

**1, 4:** The ideal frontiers are given: in the south the desert of Sinai, in the north the Lebanon range, in the east the Euphrates, and in the west the Great Sea, the Mediterranean.

**2, 1:** Harlot: this is the regular equivalent of the Hebrew word, but perhaps it is used here of Rahab in the broader sense of a woman who kept a public house. Joshua's spies hoped to remain undetected at such an inn.

**2, 6:** Stalks of flax spread out: to dry in the sun, after they had been soaked in water, according to the ancient process of preparing flax for linen-making. In the Near East the flax harvest occurs near the time of the feast of the Passover (Jos 4, 19; 5, 10); cf Ex 9, 31.

a 3f: Jos 14, 9; Gn 15, 18; Dt 11, 24. b Dt 31, 8; Heb 13, 5. c 7. 9: Dt 31, 7f. d Dt 11, 31. e Nm 32, 26. f Jos 22, 4; Dt 3, 20. g Mt 1, 5; Jas 2, 25. h Jos 6, 17.

Jordan, and once they had left, the gate was shut.

[8]Before the spies fell asleep, Rahab* came to them on the roof [9]and said: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that a dread of you has come upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are overcome with fear of you.[i] [10]For we have heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt,[j] and how you dealt with Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan, whom you doomed to destruction. [11]At these reports, we are disheartened; everyone is discouraged because of you, since the LORD, your God, is God in heaven above and on earth below.[k] [12]Now then, swear to me by the LORD that, since I am showing kindness to you, you in turn will show kindness to my family;[l] and give me an unmistakable token [13]that you are to spare my father and mother, brothers and sisters, and all their kin, and save us from death." [14]"We pledge our lives for yours," the men answered her. "If you do not betray this errand of ours, we will be faithful in showing kindness to you when the LORD gives us the land."

[15]Then she let them down through the window with a rope; for she lived in a house built into the city wall.* [16]"Go up into the hill country," she suggested to them, "that your pursuers may not find you. Hide there for three days, until they return; then you may proceed on your way." [17]The men answered her, "This is how we will fulfill the oath you made us take: [18]When we come into the land, tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you are letting us down; and gather your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. [19]Should any of them pass outside the doors of your house, he will be responsible for his own death, and we shall be guiltless. But we shall be responsible if anyone in the house with you is harmed. [20]If, however, you betray this errand of ours, we shall be quit of the oath you have made us take." [21]"Let it be as you say," she replied, and bade them farewell. When they were gone, she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

[22]They went up into the hills, where they stayed three days until their pursuers, who had sought them all along the road without finding them, returned. [23]Then the two came back down from the hills, crossed the Jordan to Joshua, son of Nun, and reported all that had befallen them. [24]They assured Joshua, "The LORD has delivered all this land into our power; indeed, all the inhabitants of the land are overcome with fear of us."

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
124

**Preparations for Crossing the Jordan** [1]Early the next morning, Joshua[m] moved with all the Israelites from Shittim to the Jordan, where they lodged before crossing over. [2]Three days later the officers went through the camp [3]and issued these instructions to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD, your God, which the levitical priests will carry, you must also break camp and follow it, [4]that you may know the way to take, for you have not gone over this road before. But let there be a space of two thousand cubits between you and the ark. Do not come nearer to it." [5]Joshua also said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will perform wonders among you." [6]And he directed the priests to take up the ark of the covenant and go on ahead of the people; and they did so.

[7]Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know I am with you, as I was with Moses.[n] [8]Now command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to come to a halt in the Jordan when they reach the edge of the waters."

**2, 8–11:** Rahab's faith and good works are praised in the New Testament; cf Heb 11, 31; Jas 2, 25.

**2, 15:** A house built into the city wall: such houses, which used the city wall for their own inner walls, have been found at ancient sites. The upper story of Rahab's house was evidently higher than the city wall. It was through the window of such a house that St. Paul escaped from Damascus; cf Acts 9, 25; 2 Cor 11, 33.

i Ex 15, 15f; 23, 27. j Jos 4, 23; Ex 14, 21; Nm 21, 23–26. 33ff. k Dt 4, 39. l Jos 2, 18; 6, 23. 25. m Jos 2, 1. n Jos 1, 5; 4, 14.

9So Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here
and listen to the words of the LORD, your God."
10He continued: "This is how you will know
that there is a living God in your midst, who at
your approach will dispossess the Canaanites,
Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amo-
rites and Jebusites.[o] 11The ark of the covenant of
the LORD of the whole earth will precede you
into the Jordan. 12[Now choose twelve men,[p]
one from each of the tribes of Israel.] 13When the
soles of the feet of the priests carrying the ark of
the LORD, the Lord of the whole earth, touch the
water of the Jordan, it will cease to flow; for the
water flowing down from upstream will halt in a
solid bank."

**The Crossing Begun** 14The people struck their
tents to cross the Jordan, with the priests carry-
ing the ark of the covenant ahead of them. 15No
sooner had these priestly bearers of the ark
waded into the waters at the edge of the Jordan,
which overflows all its banks during the entire
season of the harvest,* 16than the waters flow-
ing from upstream halted, backing up in a solid
mass[q] for a very great distance indeed, from
Adam, a city in the direction of Zarethan; while
those flowing downstream toward the Salt Sea of
the Arabah disappeared entirely.* Thus the peo-
ple crossed over opposite Jericho. 17While all
Israel crossed over on dry ground, the priests
carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD
remained motionless on dry ground in the bed of
the Jordan[r] until the whole nation had com-
pleted the passage.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
124

**Memorial Stones** 1After the entire nation had
crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua,
2"Choose twelve men[s] from the people, one
from each tribe, 3and instruct them to take up
twelve stones from this spot in the bed of the
Jordan where the priests have been standing
motionless.[t] Carry them over with you, and
place them where you are to stay tonight."
4Summoning the twelve men whom he had
selected from among the Israelites, one from
each tribe, 5Joshua said to them: "Go to the bed
of the Jordan in front of the ark of the LORD, your
God; lift to your shoulders one stone apiece, so
that they will equal in number the tribes of the
Israelites. 6In the future, these are to be a sign
among you. When your children ask you what
these stones mean to you, 7you shall answer
them, 'The waters of the Jordan ceased to flow
before the ark of the covenant of the LORD when
it crossed the Jordan.'[u] Thus these stones are to
serve as a perpetual memorial to the Israelites."
8The twelve Israelites did as Joshua had com-
manded: they took up as many stones from the
bed of the Jordan as there were tribes of the
Israelites, and carried them along to the camp
site, where they placed them, according to the
LORD's direction. 9Joshua also had twelve stones
set up in the bed of the Jordan on the spot where
the priests stood who were carrying the ark of
the covenant. They are there to this day.
10*The priests carrying the ark remained in
the bed of the Jordan until everything had been
done that the LORD had commanded Joshua to
tell the people. The people crossed over quickly,
11and when all had reached the other side, the
ark of the LORD, borne by the priests, also
crossed to its place in front of them. 12The
Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh,
armed, marched in the vanguard of the Israel-
ites, as Moses had ordered.[v] 13About forty
thousand troops equipped for battle passed over
before the LORD to the plains of Jericho.
14That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the
sight of all Israel,[w] and thenceforth during his

**3, 15:** Season of the harvest: toward the end of March and the beginning of April, when the grain and other crops that grew during the rainy season of winter were reaped. The crossing took place "on the tenth day of the first month" of the Hebrew year, which began with the first new moon after the spring equinox; cf Jos 4, 19. At this time of the year the Jordan would be swollen as a result of the winter rains and the melting snow of Mount Hermon.

**3, 16:** The sudden damming of the river could have been caused by a landslide, as has happened on other occasions. The miraculous character of this event would not thereby be removed because God, who foretold it (Jos 3, 13), also caused it to take place at precisely the right moment (Jos 3, 15), whether or not he used natural forces to accomplish his will.

**4, 10–18:** After the digression about the two sets of memorial stones, the author resumes the narrative by briefly repeating the story of the crossing, which he had already told in Jos 3, 14–17.

o Ex 33, 2; Dt 7, 1. p Jos 4, 2. 4. q Ps 114, 3. r Jos 4, 7. 22. s Jos 3, 12. t Jos 3, 13; 4, 8f; Dt 27, 2. u Jos 3, 13. 16. v Dt 3, 18. w Jos 3, 7.

whole life they respected him as they had respected Moses.

15Then the LORD said to Joshua, 16"Command the priests carrying the ark of the commandments to come up from the Jordan."[x] 17Joshua did so, 18and when the priests carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the bed of the Jordan, as the soles of their feet regained the dry ground, the waters of the Jordan resumed their course and as before overflowed all its banks.

19The people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and camped in Gilgal on the eastern limits of Jericho. 20At Gilgal Joshua set up the twelve stones which had been taken from the Jordan, 21saying to the Israelites, "In the future, when the children among you ask their fathers what these stones mean, 22you shall inform them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan here on dry ground.' 23For the LORD, your God, dried up the waters of the Jordan in front of you until you crossed over, just as the LORD, your God, had done at the Red Sea, which he dried up in front of us until we crossed over;[y] 24in order that all the peoples of the earth may learn that the hand of the LORD is mighty, and that you may fear the LORD, your God, forever."

## CHAPTER 5

**Rites at Gilgal** 1When all the kings of the Amorites to the west of the Jordan and all the kings of the Canaanites by the sea heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the Israelites until they crossed over, they were disheartened and lost courage at their approach.

2On this occasion the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelite nation for the second time." 3So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath-haaraloth,* 4under these circumstances: Of all the people who came out of Egypt, every man of military age had died in the desert[z] during the journey after they left Egypt. 5Though all the men who came out were circumcised, none of those born in the desert during the journey after the departure from Egypt were circumcised. 6Now the Israelites had wandered forty years in the desert, until all the warriors among the people that came forth from Egypt died off because they had not obeyed the command of the LORD.[a] For the LORD swore[b] that he would not let them see the land flowing with milk and honey which he had promised their fathers he would give us. 7[c]It was the children whom he raised up in their stead whom Joshua circumcised, for these were yet with foreskins, not having been circumcised on the journey. 8When the rite had been performed, the whole nation remained in camp where they were, until they recovered. 9Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you."[d] Therefore the place is called Gilgal* to the present day.

10[e]While the Israelites were encamped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth of the month.* 11On the day after the Passover they ate of the produce of the land in the form of unleavened cakes and parched grain. On that same day 12after the Passover on which they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. No longer was there manna for the Israelites, who that year ate of the yield of the land of Canaan.[f]

Ch 5
See RG
124–125

**Siege at Jericho** 13*While Joshua was near Jericho, he raised his eyes and saw one who stood facing him, drawn sword in hand.[g] Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you one of us or of our enemies?" 14He replied, "Neither. I am

5, 3: Gibeath-haaraloth: "Hill of the Foreskins."

5, 9: The place is called Gilgal: by popular etymology, because of the similarity of sound with the Hebrew word gallothi, "I have removed." Gilgal probably means "(the place of) the circle of standing stones." Cf Jos 4, 4–8.

5, 10: The month: the first month of the year, later called Nisan; see note on Jos 3, 15. The crossing of the Jordan occurred, therefore, about the same time of the year as did the equally miraculous crossing of the Red Sea; cf Ex 12–14.

5, 13–6, 26: The account of the siege of Jericho embraces: (1) the command of the Lord, through his angel, to Joshua (Jos 5, 13—6, 5); (2) Joshua's instructions to the Israelites, with a brief summary of how these orders were carried out (Jos 6, 6–11); (3) a description of the action on each of the first six days (Jos 6, 12–14); (4) the events on the seventh day (Jos 6, 15–26).

x Jos 3, 6. y Ex 14, 21. z Nm 14, 29; 26, 64f; Dt 2, 16; Ps 106, 26; 1 Cor 10, 5. a Nm 14, 29. b Heb 3, 11. 17. c Dt 1, 39. d Jos 4, 19. e Ex 12, 6; Lv 23, 5; Nm 9, 3–5. f Ex 16, 35. g Ex 23, 20.

the captain of the host of the LORD and I have just arrived." Then Joshua fell prostrate to the ground in worship, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" [15]The captain of the host of the LORD replied to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy."[h] And Joshua obeyed.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6 See RG 125

[1]Now Jericho was in a state of siege because of the presence of the Israelites, so that no one left or entered. [2]And to Joshua the LORD said, "I have delivered Jericho and its king into your power. [3]Have all the soldiers circle the city, marching once around it. Do this for six days, [4][i]with seven priests carrying ram's horns ahead of the ark. On the seventh day march around the city seven times, and have the priests blow the horns. [5]When they give a long blast on the ram's horns and you hear that signal, all the people shall shout aloud. The wall of the city will collapse, and they will be able to make a frontal attack."

[6]Summoning the priests, Joshua, son of Nun, then ordered them to take up the ark of the covenant with seven of the priests carrying ram's horns in front of the ark of the LORD. [7]And he ordered the people to proceed in a circle around the city, with the picked troops marching ahead of the ark of the LORD. [8]At this order they proceeded, with the seven priests who carried the ram's horns before the LORD blowing their horns, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. [9]In front of the priests with the horns marched the picked troops; the rear guard followed the ark, and the blowing of horns was kept up continually as they marched. [10]But the people had been commanded by Joshua not to shout or make any noise or outcry until he gave the word: only then were they to shout. [11]So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going once around it, after which they returned to camp for the night.

[12]Early the next morning, Joshua had the priests take up the ark of the LORD. [13]The seven priests bearing the ram's horns marched in front of the ark of the LORD, blowing their horns. Ahead of these marched the picked troops, while the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, and the blowing of horns was kept up continually. [14]On this second day they again marched around the city once before returning to camp; and for six days in all they did the same.

[15]On the seventh day, beginning at daybreak, they marched around the city seven times in the same manner; on that day only did they march around the city seven times. [16]The seventh time around, the priests blew the horns and Joshua said to the people, "Now shout, for the LORD has given you the city [17]and everything in it.[j] It is under the LORD's ban. Only the harlot Rahab and all who are in the house with her are to be spared, because she hid the messengers we sent. [18][k]But be careful not to take, in your greed, anything that is under the ban;* else you will bring upon the camp of Israel this ban and the misery of it. [19]All silver and gold, and the articles of bronze or iron, are sacred to the LORD. They shall be put in the treasury of the LORD."

**The Fall of Jericho** [20]As the horns blew, the people began to shout. When they heard the signal horn, they raised a tremendous shout. The wall collapsed,* and the people stormed the city in a frontal attack and took it.[l] [21]They observed the ban by putting to the sword all living creatures[m] in the city: men and women, young and old, as well as oxen, sheep and asses.

[22]Joshua directed the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring out the woman with all her kin, as you swore to her you would do."[n] [23]The spies entered and brought out Rahab, with her father, mother, brothers, and all her kin.[o] Her entire

**6, 18:** That is under the ban: that is doomed to destruction; see notes on Lv 27, 29; Nm 18, 14; 21, 3.

**6, 20:** The wall collapsed: by the miraculous intervention of God. The blowing of the horns and the shouting of the people were a customary feature of ancient warfare, here intended by God as a test of the people's obedience and of their faith in his promise; cf Heb 11, 30.

h Ex 3, 5; Acts 7, 33. i Nm 10, 8f. j Jos 2, 4; Dt 20, 17; Heb 11, 31. k Jos 7, 12. 25; Dt 13, 18. l 2 Mc 12, 15; Heb 11, 30. m Dt 7, 2. n Jos 2, 14. o Jos 2, 13; Heb 11, 31.

family they led forth and placed them outside
the camp of Israel. 24The city itself they burned
with all that was in it,[p] except the silver, gold,
and articles of bronze and iron, which were
placed in the treasury of the house of the LORD.
25*Because Rahab the harlot had hidden the
messengers whom Joshua had sent to reconnoi-
ter Jericho, Joshua spared her with her family
and all her kin, who continue in the midst of
Israel to this day.

26 [q]On that occasion Joshua imposed the oath:
Cursed before the LORD be the man who at-
tempts to rebuild this city, Jericho. He shall lose
his first-born when he lays its foundation, and he
shall lose his youngest son when he sets up its
gates.*

27Thus the LORD was with Joshua so that his
fame spread throughout the land.[r]

## CHAPTER 7

**Defeat at Ai** 1But the Israelites violated the
ban; Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zerah, son of
Zara of the tribe of Judah, took goods that were
under the ban,[s] and the anger of the LORD flared
up against the Israelites.

2Joshua next sent men from Jericho to Ai,
which is near Bethel on its eastern side, with
instructions to go up and reconnoiter the land.
When they had explored Ai, 3they returned to
Joshua and advised, "Do not send all the people
up; if only about two or three thousand go up,
they can overcome Ai. The enemy there are few;
you need not call for an effort from all the
people." 4About three thousand of the people
made the attack, but they were defeated by
those at Ai, 5who killed some thirty-six of them.
They pressed them back across the clearing in
front of the city gate till they broke ranks, and
defeated them finally on the descent, so that the
confidence of the people melted away like water.

6Joshua, together with the elders of Israel,
rent his garments and lay prostrate before the
ark of the LORD until evening; and they threw
dust on their heads. 7"Alas, O Lord GOD,"
Joshua prayed, "why did you ever allow this
people to pass over the Jordan, delivering us into
the power of the Amorites, that they might
destroy us? Would that we had been content to
dwell on the other side of the Jordan. 8Pray,
Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has turned
its back to its enemies? 9When the Canaanites
and the other inhabitants of the land hear of it,
they will close in around us and efface our name
from the earth. What will you do for your great
name?"

10The LORD replied to Joshua: "Stand up.
Why are you lying prostrate? 11[t]Israel has
sinned: they have violated the covenant which I
enjoined on them. They have stealthily taken
goods subject to the ban, and have deceitfully
put them in their baggage. 12If the Israelites
cannot stand up to their enemies, but must turn
their back to them, it is because they are under
the ban.[u] I will not remain with you unless you
remove from among you whoever has incurred
the ban. 13Rise, sanctify the people.[v] Tell them
to sanctify themselves before tomorrow, for the
LORD, the God of Israel, says: You are under the
ban, O Israel. You cannot stand up to your
enemies until you remove from among you
whoever has incurred the ban. 14In the morning
you must present yourselves by tribes. The tribe
which the LORD designates shall come forward
by clans; the clan which the LORD designates
shall come forward by families; the family which
the LORD designates shall come forward one by
one. 15He who is designated as having incurred
the ban shall be destroyed by fire, with all that is
his, because he has violated the covenant of the
LORD and has committed a shameful crime in
Israel."

**Achan's Guilt and Punishment** 16Early the
next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by
tribes, and the tribe of Judah was designated.*

Ch 7
See RG
125

6, 25: From Mt 1, 5, we learn that Rahab married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and thus became the great-great-grandmother of David, Christ's ancestor; cf Ru 4, 18–22.

6, 26: He shall lose his first-born . . . its gates: this curse was fulfilled when Hiel rebuilt Jericho as a fortified city during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel; cf 1 Kgs 16, 34. Till then Jericho was merely an unwalled village; cf Jos 18, 12. 21; Jgs 3, 13; 2 Sm 10, 5.

7, 16ff: Was designated: probably by means of the Urim and Thummim; cf 1 Sm 14, 38–42. See note on Ex 28, 30.

p Jos 8, 2. q 1 Kgs 16, 34. r Jos 1, 5. s Jos 6, 18; 22, 20; 1 Chr 2, 7. t Jos 6, 17–19. u Jos 6, 18. v Jos 3, 5; Lv 20, 7; 1 Sm 16, 5.

17Then he had the clans of Judah come forward,
and the clan of Zerah was designated. He had
the clan of Zerah[w] come forward by families,
and Zabdi was designated. 18Finally he had that
family come forward one by one, and Achan, son
of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah of the tribe
of Judah, was designated. 19Joshua said to
Achan, "My son, give to the LORD, the God of
Israel, glory and honor by telling me what you
have done; do not hide it from me." 20Achan
answered Joshua, "I have indeed sinned against
the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have
done: 21Among the spoils, I saw a beautiful
Babylonian mantle, two hundred shekels of
silver, and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight; in
my greed I took them. They are now hidden in
the ground inside my tent, with the silver
underneath." 22The messengers whom Joshua
sent hastened to the tent and found them hidden
there, with the silver underneath. 23They took
them from the tent, brought them to Joshua and
all the Israelites, and spread them out before the
LORD.

24Then Joshua and all Israel took Achan, son
of Zerah, with the silver, the mantle, and the bar
of gold, and with his sons and daughters, his ox,
his ass and his sheep, his tent, and all his
possessions, and led them off to the Valley of
Achor. 25Joshua said, "The LORD bring upon you
today the misery with which you have afflicted
us!"[x] And all Israel stoned him to death 26and
piled a great heap of stones over him, which
remains to the present day.[y] Then the anger of
the LORD relented. That is why the place is
called the Valley of Achor* to this day.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 8
See RG
125

**Capture of Ai** 1The LORD then said to Joshua,
"Do not be afraid or dismayed. Take all the army
with you and prepare to attack Ai.[z] I have
delivered the king of Ai into your power, with
his people, city, and land. 2Do to Ai and its king
what you did to Jericho and its king; except that
you may take its spoil and livestock as booty.[a]
Set an ambush behind the city." 3So Joshua and
all the soldiers prepared to attack Ai. Picking out
thirty thousand warriors,* Joshua sent them off
by night 4with these orders: "See that you
ambush the city from the rear, at no great
distance; then all of you be on the watch. 5The
rest of the people and I will come up to the city,
and when they make a sortie against us as they
did the last time, we will flee from them. 6They
will keep coming out after us until we have
drawn them away from the city, for they will
think we are fleeing from them as we did the last
time. When this occurs, 7rise from ambush and
take possession of the city, which the LORD, your
God, will deliver into your power. 8When you
have taken the city, set it afire in obedience to
the LORD's command. These are my orders to
you." 9Then Joshua sent them away. They went
to the place of ambush, taking up their position
to the west of Ai, toward Bethel. Joshua, how-
ever, spent that night in the plain.

10Early the next morning Joshua mustered the
army and went up to Ai at its head, with the
elders of Israel. 11When all the troops he led
were drawn up in position before the city, they
pitched camp north of Ai, on the other side of
the ravine. 12[He took about five thousand men
and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai,
west of the city.] 13Thus the people took up their
stations, with the main body north of the city
and the ambush west of it, and Joshua waited
overnight among his troops. 14The king of Ai
saw this, and he and all his army came out very
early in the morning to engage Israel in battle at
the descent toward the Arabah, not knowing
that there was an ambush behind the city.
15Joshua and the main body of the Israelites fled
in seeming defeat toward the desert, 16till the
last of the soldiers in the city had been called out
to pursue them. 17Since they were drawn away

**7, 26:** Achor: "misery, affliction." The reference is to the saying of Joshua in v 25, with an allusion also to the similar-sounding name of Achan.

**8, 3:** Thirty thousand warriors: this figure of the Hebrew text, which seems extremely high, may be due to a copyist's error; some manuscripts of the Septuagint have "three thousand," which is the number of the whole army in the first, unsuccessful attack (Jos 7, 4); the variant reading in v 12 mentions "five thousand."

w Nm 26, 20. x Jos 6, 18; 22, 20; 1 Chr 2, 7. y Jos 8, 29. z Jos 2, 24. a Jos 6, 21. 24; Dt 20, 14.

from the city, with every man engaged in this
pursuit of Joshua and the Israelites, not a soldier
remained in Ai [or Bethel], and the city was open
and unprotected.

18Then the LORD directed Joshua, "Stretch out
the javelin in your hand toward Ai, for I will
deliver it into your power." Joshua stretched out
the javelin in his hand toward the city, 19and as
soon as he did so, the men in ambush rose from
their post, rushed in, captured the city, and
immediately set it on fire. 20By the time the men
of Ai looked back, the smoke from the city was
already sky-high. Escape in any direction was
impossible, because the Israelites retreating to-
ward the desert now turned on their pursuers;
21for when Joshua and the main body of Israel-
ites saw that the city had been taken from
ambush and was going up in smoke, they struck
back at the men of Ai. 22Since those in the city
came out to intercept them, the men of Ai were
hemmed in by Israelites on either side, who cut
them down without any fugitives or survivors[b]
23except the king, whom they took alive and
brought to Joshua.

24All the inhabitants of Ai who had pursued
the Israelites into the desert were slain by the
sword there in the open, down to the last man.
Then all Israel returned and put to the sword
those inside the city. 25There fell that day a total
of twelve thousand men and women, the entire
population of Ai. 26 [c]Joshua kept the javelin in his
hand stretched out until he had fulfilled the
doom on all the inhabitants of Ai. 27However,
the Israelites took for themselves as booty the
livestock and the spoil of that city, according to
the command of the LORD issued to Joshua.
28Then Joshua destroyed the place by fire, reduc-
ing it to an everlasting mound of ruins, as it
remains today.[d] 29He had the king of Ai hanged
on a tree until evening;[e] then at sunset Joshua
ordered the body removed from the tree and cast
at the entrance of the city gate, where a great
heap of stones was piled up over it, which
remains to the present day.

**Altar on Mount Ebal** 30*Later Joshua built an
altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount
Ebal, 31of unhewn stones on which no iron tool
had been used,[f] in keeping with the command
to the Israelites of Moses, the servant of the
LORD, as recorded in the book of the law. On this
altar they offered holocausts and peace offerings
to the LORD. 32There, in the presence of the
Israelites, Joshua inscribed upon the stones a
copy of the law written by Moses.[g] 33And all
Israel, stranger and native alike, with their
elders, officers and judges, stood on either side of
the ark facing the levitical priests who were
carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD.[h]
Half of them were facing Mount Gerizim and
half Mount Ebal, thus carrying out the instruc-
tions of Moses, the servant of the LORD, for the
blessing of the people of Israel on this first
occasion. 34 [i]Then were read aloud all the words
of the law, the blessings and the curses, exactly
as written in the book of the law. 35 [j]Every single
word that Moses had commanded, Joshua read
aloud to the entire community, including the
women and children, and the strangers who had
accompanied Israel.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9
See RG
125–126

**Confederacy against Israel** 1When the news
reached the kings west of the Jordan, in the
mountain regions and in the foothills, and all
along the coast of the Great Sea as far as
Lebanon: Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Peri-
zzites, Hivites and Jebusites,[k] 2they all formed an
alliance to launch a common attack against
Joshua and Israel.

**The Gibeonite Deception** 3On learning what
Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, the inhabit-
ants of Gibeon[l] 4put into effect a device of their
own. They chose provisions for a journey, mak-
ing use of old sacks for their asses, and old
wineskins, torn and mended. 5They wore old,
patched sandals and shabby garments; and all
the bread they took was dry and crumbly. 6Thus
they journeyed to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal,

8, 30–35: These ceremonies were prescribed in Dt 11, 29, and Dt 27, 2–26. See notes on those passages.

b Dt 7, 2. c Ex 17, 11ff. d Dt 13, 16. e Jos 10, 26f; Dt 21, 22f; Jn 19, 31. f Ex 20, 24f; Dt 27, 5f. g Dt 27, 2. 8. h Jos 3, 3; Dt 11, 27; 27, 12; 31, 9. 12. i Dt 28, 2–68; 30, 19; 31, 11; Neh 8, 2f. j Dt 31, 12. k Jos 3, 10; Ex 3, 8. 17; 23, 23; Dt 1, 7. l Jos 6, 21. 24; 11, 19.

where they said to him and to the men of Israel,
"We have come from a distant land to propose
that you make an alliance with us."[m] 7But the
men of Israel replied to the Hivites,* "You may
be living in land that is ours. How, then, can we
make an alliance with you?" 8But they answered
Joshua, "We are your servants." Then Joshua
asked them, "Who are you? Where do you come
from?" 9They answered him, "Your servants
have come from a far-off land, because of the
fame of the LORD, your God. For we have heard
reports of all that he did in Egypt[n] 10and all that
he did to the two kings of the Amorites beyond
the Jordan,[o] Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og,
king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth. 11So our
elders and all the inhabitants of our country said
to us, 'Take along provisions for the journey and
go to meet them. Say to them: We are your
servants; we propose that you make an alliance
with us.' 12This bread of ours was still warm
when we brought it from home as provisions the
day we left to come to you, but now it is dry and
crumbled. 13Here are our wineskins, which
were new when we filled them, but now they
are torn. Look at our garments and sandals,
which are worn out from the very long journey."
14Then the Israelite princes partook of their
provisions, without seeking the advice of the
LORD.[p] 15So Joshua made an alliance with them
and entered into an agreement to spare them,[q]
which the princes of the community sealed with
an oath.

Ch 10
See RG
126

**Gibeonites Made Vassals** 16Three days after
the agreement was entered into, the Israelites
learned that these people were from nearby, and
would be living in Israel. 17The third day on the
road, the Israelites came to their cities of Gibeon,
Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim, 18but did
not attack them, because the princes of the
community had sworn to them by the LORD, the
God of Israel. When the entire community
grumbled against the princes, 19these all remon-
strated with the people, "We have sworn to
them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and so we
cannot harm them. 20Let us therefore spare their
lives and so deal with them that we shall not be
punished for the oath we have sworn to them."
21Thus the princes recommended that they be
let live, as hewers of wood and drawers of
water* for the entire community; and the com-
munity did as the princes advised them.

22Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said
to them, "Why did you lie to us and say that you
lived at a great distance from us, when you will
be living in our very midst? 23For this are you
accursed: every one of you shall always be a
slave [hewers of wood and drawers of water] for
the house of my God." 24They answered Joshua,
"Your servants were fully informed of how the
LORD, your God, commanded his servant Moses
that you be given the entire land and that all its
inhabitants be destroyed before you. Since, there-
fore, at your advance, we were in great fear for
our lives, we acted as we did.[r] 25And now that
we are in your power, do with us what you think
fit and right." 26*Joshua did what he had de-
cided: while he saved them from being killed by
the Israelites, 27at the same time he made them,
as they still are, hewers of wood and drawers of
water for the community and for the altar of the
LORD, in the place of the LORD's choice.[s]

## CHAPTER 10

**The Siege of Gibeon** 1Now Adonizedek, king
of Jerusalem, heard that, in the capture and
destruction of Ai, Joshua had done to that city
and its king as he had done to Jericho and its
king.[t] He heard also that the inhabitants of
Gibeon had made their peace with Israel, remain-
ing among them, 2and that there was great fear
abroad, because Gibeon was large enough for a
royal city, larger even than the city of Ai, and all

**9, 7:** The Hivites: apparently the Gibeonites belonged to this larger ethnic group (cf also Jos 11, 19), although in 2 Sm 21, 2 they are classed as Amorites; both groups are listed among the seven nations in Canaan whom the Israelites were to exterminate; cf Dt 7, 1f.

**9, 21:** Hewers of wood and drawers of water: proverbial terms for the lowest social class in the Israelite community; cf Dt 29, 10f.

**9, 26f:** Later on, Saul violated the immunity of the Gibeonites, but David vindicated it; cf 2 Sm 21, 1–9.

m Ex 23, 32; Dt 7, 2. n Jos 2, 10. o Nm 21, 25. 33. p Nm 27, 21. q Jos 11, 19; 2 Sm 21, 2. r Ex 23, 27f; Dt 7, 1f. s Dt 12, 5. t Jos 9, 15; 6, 21. 24; 8, 26–29.

its men were brave. [3]So Adonizedek, king of
Jerusalem, sent for Hoham, king of Hebron,
Piram, king of Jarmuth, Japhia, king of Lachish,
and Debir, king of Eglon, [4]to come to his aid for
an attack on Gibeon, since it had concluded
peace with Joshua and the Israelites.[u] [5]The five
Amorite kings, of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth,
Lachish and Eglon,* united all their forces and
marched against Gibeon, where they took up
siege positions. [6]Thereupon, the men of Gibeon
sent an appeal to Joshua in his camp at Gilgal:
"Do not abandon your servants. Come up here
quickly and save us. Help us, because all the
Amorite kings of the mountain country have
joined forces against us."[v]

**Joshua's Victory** [7]So Joshua marched up from
Gilgal with his picked troops and the rest of his
soldiers. [8]Meanwhile the LORD said to Joshua,
"Do not fear them, for I have delivered them
into your power. Not one of them will be able to
withstand you." [9]And when Joshua made his
surprise attack upon them after an all-night
march from Gilgal, [10]the LORD threw them into
disorder before him. The Israelites inflicted a
great slaughter on them at Gibeon and pursued
them down the Beth-horon slope, harassing
them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

[11]While they fled before Israel along the
descent from Beth-horon, the LORD hurled great
stones from the sky* above them all the way to
Azekah, killing many.[w] More died from these
hailstones than the Israelites slew with the
sword. [12]On this day, when the LORD delivered
up the Amorites to the Israelites,

Joshua prayed to the LORD,
and said in the presence of Israel:
Stand still, O sun, at Gibeon,
O moon, in the valley of Aijalon!
[13]And the sun stood still,
and the moon stayed,
while the nation took vengeance on its
foes.[x]

Is this not recorded* in the Book of Jashar? The
sun halted in the middle of the sky; not for a
whole day did it resume its swift course. [14]Never
before or since was there a day like this, when
the LORD obeyed the voice of a man; for the
LORD fought for Israel. [15][Then Joshua and all
Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal.]

**Execution of Amorite Kings** [16]Meanwhile
the five kings who had fled, hid in a cave at
Makkedah. [17]When Joshua was told that the five
kings had been discovered hiding in a cave at
Makkedah, [18]he said, "Roll large stones to the
mouth of the cave and post men over it to guard
them. [19]But do not remain there yourselves.
Pursue your enemies, and harry them in the
rear. Do not allow them to escape to their cities,
for the LORD, your God, has delivered them into
your power."

[20]Once Joshua and the Israelites had finally
inflicted the last blows in this very great slaughter, and the survivors had escaped from them
into the fortified cities, [21]all the army returned
safely to Joshua and the camp at Makkedah, no
man uttering a sound against the Israelites.
[22]Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the
cave and bring out those five kings to me."
[23]Obediently, they brought out to him from the
cave the five kings, of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. [24]When they had
done so, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel
and said to the commanders of the soldiers who
had marched with him, "Come forward and put
your feet on the necks of these kings." They
came forward and put their feet upon their
necks. [25]Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be
afraid or dismayed, be firm and steadfast. This is

**10, 5:** Hebron . . . Eglon: these four cities were to the south and southwest of Jerusalem.

**10, 11:** Great stones from the sky: the hailstones mentioned in the next sentence.

**10, 13:** Is this not recorded: the reference is to the preceding, poetic passage. Evidently the Book of Jashar, like the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Nm 21, 14), recounted in epic style the exploits of Israel's early heroes. The sun halted: though it is widely supposed that this passage describes in popular language and according to external appearances a miraculous lengthening of the day, it is equally probable that Joshua's prayer was rather for an abrupt obscuration of the sun, which would impede his enemies in their flight homeward and also prevent them from rallying their forces; this request would have been answered by the hailstorm (cf Sir 46, 5) and by a darkness relieved only twenty-four hours later, well into the next day.

u Jos 9, 15. v Jos 9, 6. w Jb 38, 22. x Sir 46, 4; Is 28, 21; Heb 3, 11.

what the LORD will do to all the enemies against whom you fight." [26] [y]Thereupon Joshua struck and killed them, and hanged them on five trees, where they remained hanging until evening. [27]At sunset they were removed from the trees at the command of Joshua and cast into the cave where they had hidden; over the mouth of the cave large stones were placed, which remain until this very day.

**Conquest of Southern Canaan** [28] [z]Makkedah, too, Joshua captured and put to the sword at that time. He fulfilled the doom on the city, on its king, and on every person in it, leaving no survivors. Thus he did to the king of Makkedah what he had done to the king of Jericho. [29]Joshua then passed on with all Israel from Makkedah to Libnah, which he attacked. [30]Libnah also, with its king, the LORD delivered into the power of Israel. He put it to the sword with every person there, leaving no survivors. Thus he did to its king what he had done to the king of Jericho. [31]Joshua next passed on with all Israel from Libnah to Lachish, where they set up a camp during the attack. [32]The LORD delivered Lachish into the power of Israel, so that on the second day Joshua captured it and put it to the sword with every person in it, just as he had done to Libnah. [33]At that time Horam, king of Gezer, came up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his people, leaving him no survivors. [34]From Lachish, Joshua passed on with all Israel to Eglon; encamping near it, they attacked it [35]and captured it the same day, putting it to the sword. He fulfilled the doom that day on every person in it, just as he had done at Lachish. [36]From Eglon, Joshua went up with all Israel to Hebron, which they attacked [37]and captured. They put it to the sword with its king, all its towns, and every person there, leaving no survivors, just as Joshua had done to Eglon. He fulfilled the doom on it and on every person there. [38]Then Joshua and all Israel turned back to Debir and attacked it, [39]capturing it with its king and all its towns. They put them to the sword and fulfilled the doom on every person there, leaving no survivors. Thus was done to Debir and its king what had been done to Hebron, as well as to Libnah and its king.

[40] [a]Joshua conquered the entire country; the mountain regions, the Negeb, the foothills, and the mountain slopes, with all their kings. He left no survivors, but fulfilled the doom on all who lived there, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. [41]Joshua conquered from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the land of Goshen* to Gibeon. [42]All these kings and their lands Joshua captured in a single campaign, for the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. [43]Thereupon Joshua with all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal.

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 11
See RG
126

**Northern Confederacy** [1]When Jabin, king of Hazor,* learned of this, he sent a message to Jobab, king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, [2]and to the northern kings in the mountain regions and in the Arabah near Chinneroth, in the foothills, and in Naphath-dor to the west.[b] [3]These were Canaanites to the east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the mountain regions, and Hivites at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpah. [4]They came out with all their troops, an army numerous as the sands on the seashore, and with a multitude of horses and chariots. [5]All these kings joined forces and marched to the waters of Merom,* where they encamped together to fight against Israel.

[6]The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for by this time tomorrow I will stretch them slain before Israel. You must hamstring their horses and burn their chariots." [7]Joshua with his

10, 41: Goshen: a town and its surrounding district at the southern end of the Judean mountains (cf Jos 11, 16; 15, 51); not to be confused with the land of Goshen in northeastern Egypt (Gen 45, 10), although in the current Hebrew Bible both names are spelled the same.

11, 1ff: Hazor, Madon, Shimron, and Chinneroth: cities and their surrounding districts in eastern Galilee. Achshaph and Naphathdor: southwest of Galilee. The mountain regions: in central and northern Galilee.

11, 5: The waters of Merom: a stream in central Galilee that flows southeast to water the fertile Arabah, or plain of Chinneroth on the western shore of the lake of Gennesaret.

y 26f: Jos 8, 29; Dt 21, 22f. z Jos 6, 21. a Dt 20, 16f. b Jos 12, 3; Jgs 1, 27.

whole army came upon them at the waters of
Merom in a surprise attack. [8]The LORD delivered
them into the power of the Israelites, who
defeated them and pursued them to Greater
Sidon, to Misrephoth-maim,[c] and eastward to
the valley of Mizpeh. They struck them all
down, leaving no survivors. [9]Joshua did to them
as the LORD had commanded: he hamstrung
their horses and burned their chariots.

**Conquest of Northern Canaan** [10]At that time
Joshua, turning back, captured Hazor and slew
its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was
the chief of all those kingdoms. [11]He also
fulfilled the doom by putting every person there
to the sword, till none was left alive. Hazor itself
he burned. [12]Joshua thus captured all those
kings with their cities and put them to the
sword, fulfilling the doom on them, as Moses,
the servant of the LORD, had commanded.[d]
[13]However, Israel did not destroy by fire any of
the cities built on raised sites, except Hazor,
which Joshua burned. [14]The Israelites took all
the spoil and livestock of these cities as their
booty; but the people they put to the sword,
until they had exterminated the last of them,
leaving none alive. [15]As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua acted accordingly.[e]
He left nothing undone that the LORD had
commanded Moses should be done.

**Survey of the Conquest** [16]So Joshua captured
all this land: the mountain regions, the entire
Negeb, all the land of Goshen, the foothills, the
Arabah, as well as the mountain regions and
foothills of Israel,[f] [17]from Mount Halak that rises
toward Seir[g] as far as Baal-gad in the Lebanon
valley at the foot of Mount Hermon. All their
kings he captured and put to death. [18]Joshua
waged war against all these kings for a long time.
[19]With the exception of the Hivites who lived in
Gibeon, no city made peace with the Israelites;
all were taken in battle.[h] [20]For it was the design
of the LORD to encourage them to wage war
against Israel, that they might be doomed to
destruction and thus receive no mercy, but be
exterminated, as the LORD had commanded
Moses.[i]

[21]*At that time Joshua penetrated the mountain regions and exterminated the Anakim in
Hebron,[j] Debir, Anab, the entire mountain region of Judah, and the entire mountain region of
Israel. Joshua fulfilled the doom on them and on
their cities, [22]so that no Anakim were left in the
land of the Israelites. However, some survived in
Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. [23][k]Thus Joshua
captured the whole country, just as the LORD
had foretold to Moses. Joshua gave it to Israel as
their heritage, apportioning it among the tribes.
And the land enjoyed peace.*

## CHAPTER 12*

Ch 12
See RG
126

**Lists of Conquered Kings** [1]The kings of the
land east of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to
Mount Hermon, including all the eastern section
of the Arabah, whom the Israelites conquered
and whose lands they occupied, were: [2][l]First,
Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in
Heshbon. His domain extended from Aroer,
which is on the bank of the Wadi Arnon, to
include the wadi itself, and the land northward
through half of Gilead to the Wadi Jabbok, [3]as
well as the Arabah from the eastern side of the
Sea of Chinnereth, as far south as the eastern
side of the Salt Sea of the Arabah in the direction
of Beth-jeshimoth,[m] to a point under the slopes
of Pisgah. [4]Secondly, Og, king of Bashan, a
survivor of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth
and Edrei.[n] [5]He ruled over Mount Hermon,
Salecah, and all Bashan as far as the boundary of
the Geshurites and Maacathites, and over half of

**11, 21ff**: Most of the land assigned to the tribe of Judah was not conquered by it till the early period of the Judges. See note on Jgs 1, 1–36.

**11, 23**: The land enjoyed peace: of a limited and temporary nature. Many of the individual tribes had still to fight against the remaining Canaanites; cf Jos 15, 13–17; 17, 12f. This verse forms the conclusion to the first part of the book. Cf note on Jos 12, 1–24.

**12, 1–24**: This chapter, inserted between the two principal parts of the book (chapters 1–11 and 13–21), resembles the lists of conquered cities which are inscribed on monuments of the Egyptian and Assyrian monarchs. Perhaps it was copied here from some such public Israelite record.

c Jos 13, 6. d Dt 7, 2; 20, 16f. e Dt 7, 2. f Jos 10, 41; 12, 8. g Jos 12, 7; Dt 7, 24. h Jos 9, 3. 7. 15. i Dt 2, 30; 20, 16f. j Jos 15, 13f; Nm 13, 22; Dt 1, 28. k Jos 14, 1–19, 51; Nm 34, 2–12. l 2–5: Nm 21, 21–26. 33ff. m Jos 13, 20. n Jos 13, 11f.

Gilead as far as the territory of Sihon, king of Heshbon. [6]After Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the Israelites conquered them, he assigned their land to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, as their property.[o]

[7]This is a list of the kings whom Joshua and the Israelites conquered west of the Jordan and whose land, from Baal-gad in the Lebanon valley to Mount Halak which rises toward Seir, Joshua apportioned to the tribes of Israel. [8]It included the mountain regions and foothills, the Arabah, the slopes, the desert, and the Negeb, belonging to the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. [9]They were the kings of Jericho,[p] Ai (which is near Bethel), [10]Jerusalem, Hebron, [11]Jarmuth, Lachish,[q] [12]Eglon, Gezer,[r] [13]Debir, Geder,[s] [14]Hormah, Arad, [15]Libnah, Adullam,[t] [16]Makkedah, Bethel,[u] [17]Tappuah, Hepher,[v] [18]Aphek, Lasharon,[w] [19]Madon, Hazor,[x] [20]Shimron, Achshaph,[y] [21]Taanach, Megiddo,[z] [22]Kedesh, Jokneam (at Carmel),[a] [23]and Dor (in Naphath-dor), the foreign king at Gilgal,[b] [24]and the king of Tirzah, thirty-one kings in all.

## II: Division of the Land

### CHAPTER 13

Ch 13–21
See RG
126–128

**Division of Land Commanded** [1]When Joshua was old and advanced in years, the LORD said to him:[c] "Though now you are old and advanced in years, a very large part of the land still remains to be conquered. [2]This additional land includes all Geshur* and all the districts of the Philistines [3](from the stream adjoining Egypt to the boundary of Ekron in the north is reckoned Canaanite territory, though held by the five lords of the Philistines in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron); also where the Avvim are in the south;[d] [4]all the land of the Canaanites from Mearah of the Sidonians to Aphek, and the boundaries of the Amorites; [5]and the Gebalite territory; and all the Lebanon on the east, from Baal-gad at the foot of Mount Hermon to Labo in the land of Hamath. [6]At the advance of the Israelites I will drive out all the Sidonian inhabitants of the mountain regions between Lebanon and Misrephoth-maim;[e] at least include these areas in the division of the Israelite heritage, just as I have commanded you. [7]Now, therefore, apportion among the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh the land which is to be their heritage."

**The Eastern Tribes** [8]*f*Now the other half of the tribe of Manasseh, as well as the Reubenites and Gadites, had received their heritage which Moses, the servant of the LORD, had given them east of the Jordan: [9]from Aroer on the bank of the Wadi Arnon and the city in the wadi itself, through the tableland of Medeba and Dibon, [10]with the rest of the cities of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, to the boundary of the Ammonites; [11]also Gilead and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah, [12]the entire kingdom in Bashan of Og, a survivor of the Rephaim, who reigned at Ashtaroth and Edrei. Though Moses conquered and occupied these territories, [13]the Israelites did not dislodge the Geshurites and Maacathites, so that Geshur and Maacath survive in the midst of Israel to this day. [14]*g*However, to the tribe of Levi Moses assigned no heritage since, as the LORD had promised them, the LORD, the God of Israel, is their heritage.

**Reuben** [15]*h*What Moses gave to the Reubenite clans:[i] [16]Their territory reached from Aroer, on the bank of the Wadi Arnon, and the city in the wadi itself, through the tableland about Medeba, [17]to include Heshbon and all its towns which are on the tableland, Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon, [18]Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, [19]Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth-shahar on the knoll within the valley, [20]Beth-peor, the slopes of Pisgah, Beth-jeshimoth, [21] and the other cities of

13, 2: Geshur: not to be confused with the large Aramaean district of the same name in Bashan (vv 11–13; Dt 3, 14); here it is a region to the south of the Philistine country, since vv 2–5 list the unconquered lands along the coast from south to north; cf also 1 Sm 27, 8.

o Nm 32, 33; Dt 3, 12f. p Jos 6, 2; 8, 23. q 10f: Jos 10, 23. r Jos 10, 23. 33. s Jos 10, 38f; 15, 36. t Jos 10, 29f; 15, 35. u Jos 8, 17; 10, 28. v Jos 15, 34. w Jos 15, 53. x Jos 11, 1. 10. y Jos 11, 1. z Jos 17, 11. a Jos 19, 37. b Jos 11, 2. c Jos 23, 1. d Jgs 3, 3. e Jos 11, 8. f Jos 12, 6; Nm 32, 33. g Jos 14, 3f; Nm 18, 20–24. h 15–31; Dt 3, 12–17. i 15–23; Nm 21, 25–31; 32, 37f.

the tableland and, generally, of the kingdom of
Sihon. This Amorite king, who reigned in Hesh-
bon, Moses had killed, with his vassals, the
princes of Midian, who were settled in the land:
Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba;[j] 22and among
their slain followers the Israelites put to the
sword also the soothsayer Balaam, son of Beor.[k]
23The boundary of the Reubenites was the bank
of the Jordan. These cities and their villages were
the heritage of the clans of the Reubenites.

**Gad** 24[l]What Moses gave to the Gadite clans:
25Their territory included Jazer, all the cities of
Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far
as Aroer, toward Rabbah 26(that is, from Hesh-
bon to Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from
Mahanaim to the boundary of Lodebar); 27and in
the Jordan valley: Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Suc-
coth, Zaphon, the other part of the kingdom of
Sihon, king of Heshbon, with the bank of the
Jordan to the southeastern tip of the Sea of
Chinnereth. 28These cities and their villages
were the heritage of the clans of the Gadites.

**Manasseh** 29[m]What Moses gave to the clans of
the half-tribe of Manasseh: 30Their territory
included Mahanaim, all of Bashan, the entire
kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, and all the
villages of Jair, which are sixty cities in Bashan.[n]
31Half of Gilead, with Ashtaroth and Edrei, once
the royal cities of Og in Bashan, fell to the
descendants of Machir, son of Manasseh, for half
the clans descended from Machir.

32These are the portions which Moses gave
when he was in the plains of Moab, beyond the
Jordan east of Jericho. 33However, Moses gave
no heritage to the tribe of Levi, since the LORD
himself, the God of Israel, is their heritage, as he
promised.[o]

## CHAPTER 14

**The Western Tribes** 1Here follow the portions
which the Israelites received in the land of
Canaan.[p] Eleazar the priest, Joshua, son of Nun,
and the heads of families in the tribes of the
Israelites determined 2their heritage by lot, in
accordance with the instructions the LORD had
given through Moses concerning the remaining
nine and a half tribes.[q] 3For to two and a half
tribes Moses had already given a heritage be-
yond the Jordan; and though the Levites were
given no heritage among the tribes,[r] 4the descen-
dants of Joseph formed two tribes, Manasseh and
Ephraim. The Levites themselves received no
share of the land except cities to live in, with
their pasture lands for the cattle and flocks.[s]

5Thus, in apportioning the land, did the
Israelites carry out the instructions of the LORD
to Moses.

**Caleb's Portion** 6[t]When the Judahites came
up to Joshua in Gilgal, the Kenizzite Caleb, son
of Jephunneh, said to him: "You know what the
LORD said to the man of God, Moses, about you
and me in Kadesh-barnea. 7[u]I was forty years old
when the servant of the LORD, Moses, sent me
from Kadesh-barnea to reconnoiter the land; and
I brought back to him a conscientious report.
8[v]My fellow scouts who went up with me
discouraged the people, but I was completely
loyal to the LORD, my God. 9On that occasion
Moses swore this oath, 'The land where you
have set foot shall become your heritage and that
of your descendants forever, because you have
been completely loyal to the LORD, my God.'
10Now, as he promised, the LORD has preserved
me while Israel was journeying through the
desert, for the forty-five years since the LORD
spoke thus to Moses; and although I am now
eighty-five years old,[w] 11I am still as strong today
as I was the day Moses sent me forth, with no
less vigor whether for war or for ordinary tasks.[x]
12Give me, therefore, this mountain region
which the LORD promised me that day, as you
yourself heard. True, the Anakim are there, with
large fortified cities, but if the LORD is with me I
shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD
promised."[y] 13Joshua blessed Caleb, son of Je-
phunneh, and gave him Hebron as his heritage.[z]
14Therefore Hebron remains the heritage of the
Kenizzite Caleb, son of Jephunneh, to the pres-

Ch 13–21
See RG
126–128

j Nm 21, 24; 31, 8; Dt 3, 10. k Nm 31, 8. 124–28: Nm 32, 34ff. m 29–31: Nm 32, 39ff. n Nm 32, 41. o Jos 18, 7; Nm 18, 20. p Jos 17, 4; 21, 1; Nm 34, 17f. q Nm 26, 55; 33, 54; 34, 13. r Jos 13, 8. 14. 33. s Jos 21, 3–40; Gn 48, 5. t Nm 14, 24. 30; 32, 12; Dt 1, 36. 38. u Nm 14, 6–9. v Nm 13, 31ff; 14, 24; 32, 12; Dt 1, 36. w Nm 14, 30. x Sir 46, 1ff. y Jos 11, 21. z Jos 10, 36f; 15, 13–19; 21, 11f.

ent day, because he was completely loyal to the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 Hebron was formerly called Kiriath-arba, for Arba, the greatest among the Anakim.[a] And the land enjoyed peace.

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 13–21
See RG
126–128

**Boundaries of Judah** 1 The lot for the clans of the Judahite tribe fell in the extreme south toward the boundary of Edom, the desert of Zin in the Negeb.[b] 2 [c]The boundary there ran from the bay that forms the southern end of the Salt Sea, 3 southward below the pass of Akrabbim, across through Zin, up to a point south of Kadesh-barnea, across to Hezron, and up to Addar; from there, looping around Karka, 4 it crossed to Azmon and then joined the Wadi of Egypt before coming out at the sea. [This is your southern boundary.] 5 The eastern boundary was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

6 [d]The northern boundary climbed from the bay where the Jordan meets the sea, up to Beth-hoglah, and ran north of Beth-arabah, up to Eben-Bohan-ben-Reuben. 7 Thence it climbed to Debir, north of the vale of Achor,[e] in the direction of the Gilgal that faces the pass of Adummim, on the south side of the wadi; from there it crossed to the waters of En-shemesh and emerged at En-rogel. 8 Climbing again to the Valley of Ben-Hinnom* on the southern flank of the Jebusites [that is, Jerusalem], the boundary rose to the top of the mountain at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim,[f] which bounds the Valley of Hinnom on the west. 9 From the top of the mountain it ran to the fountain of waters of Nephtoah,[g] extended to the cities of Mount Ephron, and continued to Baalah, or Kiriath-jearim. 10 From Baalah the boundary curved westward to Mount Seir and passed north of the ridge of Mount Jearim (that is, Chesalon); thence it descended to Beth-shemesh, and ran across to Timnah. 11 It then extended along the northern flank of Ekron, continued through Shikkeron, and across to Mount Baalah, thence to include Jabneel, before it came out at the sea. 12 The western boundary was the Great Sea and its coast. This was the complete boundary of the clans of the Judahites.

**Conquest by Caleb** 13 [h]As the LORD had commanded, Joshua gave Caleb, son of Jephunneh,[i] a portion among the Judahites, namely, Kiriath-arba (Arba was the father of Anak), that is, Hebron. 14 [j]And Caleb drove out from there the three Anakim, the descendants of Anak: Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai. 15 From there he marched up against the inhabitants of Debir,[k] which was formerly called Kiriath-sepher. 16 Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage to the one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it." 17 *Othniel, son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, captured it, and so Caleb gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage. 18 On the day of her marriage to Othniel, she induced him to ask her father for some land. Then, as she alighted from the ass, Caleb asked her, "What is troubling you?" 19 She answered, "Give me an additional gift! Since you have assigned to me land in the Negeb, give me also pools of water." So he gave her the upper and the lower pools.

**Cities of Judah** 20 *This is the heritage of the clans of the tribe of Judahites: 21 The cities of the tribe of the Judahites in the extreme southern district toward Edom were: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, 22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, 23 Kedesh, Hazor and Ithnan; 24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, 25 Hazor-hadattah, and Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor); 26 Amam, Shema, Moladah, 27 Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, 28 Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba, and Biziothiah, 29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem, 30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, 31 Ziklag,[l] Madmannah, Sansannah, 32 Lebaoth, Shilhim and En-

**15, 8:** The Valley of Ben-hinnom: the southern limit of Jerusalem. Ben-hinnom means "son of Hinnom." The place was also called Valley of Hinnom, in Hebrew ge-hinnom, whence the word "Gehenna" is derived.

**15, 17–19:** The story of Othniel is told again in Jgs 1, 13–15; cf also Jgs 3, 9–11.

**15, 20–62:** This elaborate list of the cities of Judah was probably taken from a document made originally for administrative purposes; the cities are divided into four provincial districts, some of which have further subdivisions. For similar lists of the cities of Judah, cf Jos 19, 2–7; 1 Chr 4, 28–32; Neh 11, 25–30. This list has suffered in transmission, so that the totals given in vv 32 and 36 are not exact, and some of the names are probably misspelled; many of the cities cannot be identified.

a Jgs 1, 10. b Nm 34, 3. c 2–4: Nm 34, 3ff. d Jos 18, 18f. 22. e Jos 7, 26; 18, 16ff: 2 Sm 17, 17. f Jos 18, 16. g Jos 18, 15. h 13–19: Jgs 1, 10–15. i Jos 14, 13ff. j Nm 13, 22; Jgs 1, 20. k Jos 10, 38. l 1 Sm 27, 6.

rimmon; a total of twenty-nine cities with their villages.

[33]In the foothills:* Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, [34]Zanoah, Engannim, Tappuah, Enam, [35]Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, [36]Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim; fourteen cities and their villages. [37]Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad, [38]Dilean, Mizpeh, Joktheel, [39]Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, [40]Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, [41]Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah and Makkedah; sixteen cities and their villages. [42]Libnah, Ether, Ashan, [43]Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, [44]Keilah, Achzib and Mareshah; nine cities and their villages. [45]Ekron and its towns and villages; [46]from Ekron to the sea, all the towns that lie alongside Ashdod and their villages; [47]Ashdod and its towns and villages; Gaza and its towns and villages, as far as the Wadi of Egypt and the coast of the Great Sea.

[48]In the mountain regions: Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, [49]Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), [50]Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, [51]Goshen, Holon and Giloh; eleven cities and their villages. [52]Arab, Dumah, Eshan, [53]Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, [54]Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior; nine cities and their villages. [55]Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, [56]Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, [57]Kain, Gibbeah and Timnah; ten cities and their villages. [58]Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, [59]Maarath, Beth-anoth and Eltekon; six cities and their villages. Tekoa, Ephrathah (that is, Bethlehem), Peor, Etam, Kulom, Tatam, Zores, Karim, Gallim, Bether and Manoko; eleven cities and their villages. [60]Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim) and Rabbah: two cities and their villages.[m]

[61]In the desert:* Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, [62]Nibshan, Ir-hamelah and En-gedi; six cities and their villages. [63][But the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem the Judahites could not drive out; so the Jebusites dwell in Jerusalem beside the Judahites to the present day.[n]]

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 13–21
See RG
126–128

**The Joseph Tribes** [1]The lot that fell to the Josephites* extended from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho east of the desert; then the boundary went up from Jericho to the heights at Bethel.* [2]Leaving Bethel for Luz, it crossed the ridge to the border of the Archites at Ataroth, [3]and descended westward to the border of the Japhletites, to that of Lower Beth-horon, and to Gezer, ending thence at the sea.[o]

**Ephraim** [4]Within the heritage of Manasseh and Ephraim, sons of Joseph, [5]the dividing line* for the heritage of the clans of the Ephraimites ran from east of Ataroth-addar to Upper Beth-horon[p] [6]and thence to the sea. From Michmethath[q] on the north, their boundary curved eastward around Taanath-shiloh, and continued east of it to Janoah; [7]from there it descended to Ataroth and Naarah, and skirting Jericho, it ended at the Jordan. [8]From Tappuah[r] the boundary ran westward to the Wadi Kanah and ended at the sea. This was the heritage of the clans of the Ephraimites, [9]including the villages that belonged to each city set aside for the Ephraimites within the territory of the Manassehites.[s] [10]But they did not drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer,[t] who live on within Ephraim to the present day, though they have been impressed as laborers.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 13–21
See RG
126–128

**Manasseh** [1]Now as for the lot that fell to the tribe of Manasseh[u] as the first-born of Joseph: since his eldest son, Machir, the father of Gilead, was a warrior, who had already obtained Gilead and Bashan, [2][v]the allotment was now made to the other descendants of Manasseh, the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher and

15, 33: In the foothills: see note on Dt 1, 7.

15, 61: In the desert: in the Jordan rift near the Dead Sea.

16, 1—17, 18: The boundaries and cities of Judah, the most important tribe, having been given, the land of the next most important group, the two Josephite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, is now described, though it was separated from Judah by the territories of Benjamin (Jos 18, 11–20) and Dan (Jos 19, 40–48).

16, 1–3: This line formed the southern boundary of Ephraim and the northern boundaries of Benjamin and of Dan.

16, 5: The dividing line: separating Ephraim from Manasseh. Ephraim's northern border (v 5) is given in an east-to-west direction; its eastern border (v 6f) in a north-to-south direction.

m Jos 18, 14. n Jgs 1, 21; 2 Sm 5, 6. o Jos 10, 10. 33. p Jos 18, 13. q Jos 17, 7. r Jos 17, 7. s Jos 17, 9. t Jgs 1, 29. u Gn 41, 51; 46, 20; 48, 18; 50, 23; Nm 26, 29; Dt 3, 13. 15. v Nm 26, 29–32.

Shemida, the other male children of Manasseh, son of Joseph.

3Furthermore, Zelophehad, son of Hepher,[w] son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, had had no sons, but only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 4These presented themselves to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua, son of Nun, and to the princes, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us a heritage among our kinsmen." So in obedience to the command of the LORD a heritage was given to each of them among their father's kinsmen.[x] 5Thus ten shares fell to Manasseh apart from the land of Gilead and Bashan beyond the Jordan,[y] 6since these female descendants of Manasseh received each a portion among his sons. The land of Gilead fell to the rest of the Manassehites.

7Manasseh bordered on Asher.* From Michmethath, near Shechem, another boundary ran southward to include the natives of En-Tappuah, 8because the district of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, although Tappuah itself was an Ephraimite city on the border of Manasseh. 9This same boundary continued down to the Wadi Kanah.[z] The cities that belonged to Ephraim from among the cities of Manasseh were those to the south of the wadi; thus the territory of Manasseh ran north of the wadi and ended at the sea. 10The land on the south belonged to Ephraim and that on the north to Manasseh; with the sea as their common boundary, they reached Asher on the north and Issachar on the east.

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11 [a]Moreover, in Issachar and in Asher Manasseh was awarded Beth-shean[b] and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, Dor and its towns and the natives there, Endor and its towns and natives, Taanach and its towns and natives, and Megiddo and its towns and natives [the third is Naphath-dor]. 12Since the Manassehites could not conquer these cities, the Canaanites persisted in this region. 13When the Israelites grew stronger they impressed the Canaanites as laborers, but they did not drive them out.

**Protest of Joseph Tribes** 14The descendants of Joseph said to Joshua, "Why have you given us only one lot and one share as our heritage?[c] Our people are too many, because of the extent to which the LORD has blessed us." 15Joshua answered them, "If you are too many, go up to the forest and clear out a place for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and Rephaim, since the mountain regions of Ephraim are so narrow." 16For the Josephites said, "Our mountain regions are not enough for us; on the other hand, the Canaanites living in the valley region all have iron chariots, in particular those in Beth-shean and its towns, and those in the valley of Jezreel."[d] 17Joshua therefore said to Ephraim and Manasseh, the house of Joseph, "You are a numerous people and very strong. You shall have not merely one share, 18for the mountain region which is now forest shall be yours when you clear it. Its adjacent land shall also be yours if, despite their strength and iron chariots, you drive out the Canaanites."

## CHAPTER 18

1After they had subdued the land, the whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, where they set up the meeting tent.[e]

**The Seven Remaining Portions** 2Seven tribes among the Israelites had not yet received their heritage. 3Joshua therefore said to the Israelites, "How much longer will you put off taking steps to possess the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? 4Choose three men from each of your tribes; I will commission them to begin a survey of the land, which they shall describe for purposes of inheritance. When they return to me, 5you shall divide it into seven parts. Judah is to retain its territory in the south,[f] and the house of Joseph its territory in the north. 6You shall bring here to me the description of the land

17, 7: Manasseh bordered on Asher: only at the extreme northwestern section of Manasseh's territory. The boundary given in the following sentences (vv 7–10) is a more detailed description of the one already mentioned in Jos 16, 5ff, as separating Manasseh from Ephraim.

w Nm 26, 33; 27, 1; 36, 2. x Nm 27, 6f; 36, 2. y Jos 13, 30f. z Jos 16, 8f. a 1 Chr 7, 29. b 11ff: Jgs 1, 27f. c Jos 16, 4; Gn 48, 19f. 22. d Jgs 6, 33. e Jos 19, 51. f Jos 15, 1—17, 18.

in seven sections. I will then cast lots for you here
before the LORD, our God. 7For the Levites have
no share among you,[g] because the priesthood of
the LORD is their heritage; while Gad, Reuben,
and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already re-
ceived the heritage east of the Jordan which Mo-
ses, the servant of the LORD, gave them."
8When those who were to map out the land
were ready for the journey, Joshua instructed
them to survey the land, prepare a description of
it, and return to him; then he would cast lots for
them there before the LORD in Shiloh. 9So they
went through the land, listed its cities in writing
in seven sections, and returned to Joshua in the
camp at Shiloh. 10Joshua then divided up the
land for the Israelites into their separate shares,
casting lots for them before the LORD in Shiloh.

**Benjamin** 11One lot fell to the clans of the tribe
of Benjaminites. The territory allotted them lay
between the descendants of Judah and those of
Joseph. 12[h]Their northern boundary* began at
the Jordan and went over the northern flank of
Jericho, up westward into the mountains, till it
reached the desert of Beth-aven. 13From there it
crossed over to the southern flank of Luz (that is,
Bethel). Then it ran down to Ataroth-addar, on
the mountaintop south of Lower Beth-horon.[i]
14For the western border, the boundary line
swung south from the mountaintop opposite
Beth-horon till it reached Kiriath-baal (that is,
Kiriath-jearim), which city belonged to the Ju-
dahites. This was the western boundary. 15The
southern boundary began at the limits of Kiriath-
jearim and projected to the spring at Nephtoah.
16It went down to the edge of the mountain on
the north of the Valley of Rephaim, where it
faces the Valley of Ben-hinnom; and continuing
down the Valley of Hinnom along the southern
flank of the Jebusites, reached En-rogel.[j] 17Inclin-
ing to the north, it extended to En-shemesh, and
thence to Geliloth, opposite the pass of Adum-
mim. Then it dropped to Eben-Bohan-ben-
Reuben, 18across the northern flank of the Ara-
bah overlook, down into the Arabah.[k] 19From
there the boundary continued across the north-
ern flank of Beth-hoglah and extended to the
northern tip of the Salt Sea, at the southern end
of the Jordan. This was the southern boundary.
20The Jordan bounded it on the east. This was
how the heritage of the clans of the Benjaminites
was bounded on all sides.
21Now the cities belonging to the clans of the
tribe of the Benjaminites were: Jericho, Beth-
hoglah, Emek-keziz, 22Beth-arabah, Zemaraim,
Bethel, 23Avvim, Parah, Ophra, 24Chephar-
ammoni, Ophni and Geba; twelve cities and
their villages. 25Also Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,
26Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, 27Rekem, Irpeel,
Taralah, 28Zela, Haeleph, the Jebusite city (that
is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath; fourteen
cities and their villages. This was the heritage of
the clans of Benjaminites.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 13–21
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126–128

**Simeon** 1The second lot fell to Simeon. The
heritage of the clans of the tribe of Simeonites
lay within that of the Judahites. 2[l]For their
heritage they received Beer-sheba, Shema, Mola-
dah, 3Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, 4Eltolad,
Bethul, Hormah, 5Ziklag, Bethmar-caboth,
Hazar-susah, 6Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhen; thir-
teen cities and their villages. 7Also En-rimmon,
Ether and Ashan; four cities and their villages,
8besides all the villages around these cities as far
as Baalath-beer (that is, Ramoth-negeb). This was
the heritage of the clans of the tribe of the
Simeonites. 9This heritage of the Simeonites was
within the confines of the Judahites; for since
the portion of the latter was too large for them,
the Simeonites obtained their heritage within it.

**Zebulun** 10*The third lot fell to the clans of the
Zebulunites. The limit of their heritage was at

18, 12–20: Benjamin's northern boundary (vv 12f) corresponded to part of the southern boundary of Ephraim (Jos 16, 1f). Their western border (v 14) was the eastern border of Dan (cf Jos 19, 40–47). Their southern boundary (vv 15–19) corresponded to part of the northern boundary of Judah (Jos 15, 6–9).

19, 10–16: Zebulun's territory was in the central section of the Plain of Esdraelon and of southern Galilee; it was bounded on the south by Manasseh, on the southeast by Issachar, on the northeast and north by Naphtali, and on the west by Asher. The site of the later city of Nazareth was within its borders. Bethlehem of Zebulun was, of course, distinct from the city of the same name in Judah. Twelve cities: apparently seven of the names are missing from v 15, unless some of the places mentioned in vv 12–14 are to be included in the number.

g Jos 13, 8. 33. h Jos 16, 1. i Jos 16, 2f. 5; Gn 28, 19. j Jos 15, 7f. k Jos 15, 6. l 2–8: 1 Chr 4, 28–33.

Sarid. [11]Their boundary went up west . . . and
through Mareal, reaching Dabbesheth and the
wadi that is near Jokneam. [12]From Sarid east-
ward it ran to the district of Chisloth-tabor, on to
Daberath, and up to Japhia. [13]From there it
continued eastward to Gath-hepher and to Eth-
kazin, extended to Rimmon, and turned to
Neah. [14]Skirting north of Hannathon, the bound-
ary ended at the valley of Iphtahel. [15]Thus, with
Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah and Bethle-
hem, there were twelve cities and their villages
[16]to comprise the heritage of the clans of the
Zebulunites.

**Issachar** [17]*The fourth lot fell to Issachar. The
territory of the clans of the Issacharites [18]in-
cluded Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, [19]Hapha-
raim, Shion, Anaharath, [20]Rabbith, Kishion,
Ebez, [21]Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah and
Beth-pazzez. [22]The boundary reached Tabor,
Shahazumah and Beth-shemesh, ending at the
Jordan. These sixteen cities and their villages
[23]were the heritage of the clans of the Issa-
charites.

**Asher** [24]*The fifth lot fell to the clans of the
tribe of the Asherites. [25]Their territory include
Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, [26]Allammelech,
Amad and Mishal, and reached Carmel on the
west, and Shihor-libnath. [27]In the other direc-
tion, it ran eastward of Beth-dagon, reached
Zebulun and the valley of Iphtahel; then north of
Beth-emek and Neiel, it extended to Cabul,
[28]Mishal, Abdon, Rehob, [m] Hammon and Kanah,
near Greater Sidon. [29]Then the boundary turned
back to Ramah and to the fortress city of Tyre;
thence it cut back to Hosah and ended at the
sea. Thus, with Mahalab, Achzib, [30]Ummah,
Acco, Aphek and Rehob, there were twenty-two
cities and their villages [31]to comprise the heri-
tage of the clans of the tribe of the Asherites.

**Naphtali** [32]*The sixth lot fell to the Naph-
talites. The boundary of the clans of the Naph-
talites [33]extended from Heleph, from the oak at
Zaanannim to Lakkum, including Adami-nekeb
and Jabneel, and ended at the Jordan. [34]In the
opposite direction, westerly, it ran through
Aznoth-tabor and from there extended to Huk-
kok; it touched Zebulun on the south, Asher on
the west, and the Jordan on the east. [35]The
fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rak-
kath, Chinnereth, [36]Adamah, Ramah, Hazor,
[37]Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, [38]Yiron, Migdal-el,
Horem, Beth-anath and Beth-shemesh; [n] nine-
teen cities and their villages, [39]to comprise the
heritage of the clans of the tribe of the Naph-
talites.

**Dan** [40]*The seventh lot fell to the clans of the
tribe of Danites. [41]Their heritage was the terri-
tory of Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, [42]Shaalabbin,
Aijalon, Ithlah, [o] [43]Elon, Timnah, Ekron,
[44]Eltekoh, Gibbethon, Baalath, [45]Jehud, Bene-
berak, Gath-rimmon, [46]Me-jarkon and Rakkon,
with the coast at Joppa. [47] [p]But the territory of
the Danites was too small for them; so the
Danites marched up and attacked Leshem,*
which they captured and put to the sword. Once
they had taken possession of Leshem, they
renamed the settlement after their ancestor Dan.
[48]These cities and their villages were the heri-
tage of the clans of the tribe of the Danites.

**Joshua's City** [49]When the last of them had
received the portions of the land they were to
inherit, the Israelites assigned a heritage in their
midst to Joshua, son of Nun. [50]In obedience to
the command of the LORD, they gave him the
city which he requested, Timnah-serah [q] in the
mountain region of Ephraim. He rebuilt the city
and made it his home.

[51]These are the final portions into which

**19, 17–23:** Issachar's land was on the eastern watershed of the Plain of Esdraelon, but also included the southeastern end of the Galilean mountains. It was surrounded by Manasseh on the south and east, by Naphtali on the north, and by Zebulun on the west. Jezreel (v 18) dominated the plain to which it gave its name, the later form of which was Esdraelon.

**19, 24–31:** Asher inherited the western slope of the Galilean hills as far as the sea, with Manasseh to the south, Zebulun and Naphtali to the east, and Phoenicia to the north.

**19, 32–39:** Naphtali received eastern Galilee; Asher was to the west and Zebulun and Issachar were to the south, while the upper Jordan and Mount Hermon formed the eastern border. Part of the tribe of Dan later on occupied the northern extremity of Naphtali's lands, at the sources of the Jordan (v 47).

**19, 40–46:** The original territory of Dan was a small enclave between Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and the Philistines.

**19, 47:** Leshem: called Laish in Jgs 18, where the story of the migration of the Danites is told at greater length.

m 28f: Jgs 1, 31. n Jgs 1, 33. o Jgs 1, 35. p Jgs 18, 27–29. q Jos 24, 30; Jgs 2, 9.

Eleazar the priest, Joshua, son of Nun, and the heads of families in the tribes of the Israelites divided the land by lot in the presence of the LORD, at the door of the meeting tent in Shiloh.

## CHAPTER 20

**Cities of Asylum** [1]The LORD said to Joshua:* [2]"Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of which I spoke to them through Moses,[r] [3]to which one guilty of accidental and unintended homicide may flee for asylum from the avenger of blood. [4]To one of these cities the killer shall flee, and standing at the entrance of the city gate, he shall plead his case before the elders, who must receive him and assign him a place in which to live among them. [5]Though the avenger of blood pursues him, they are not to deliver up the homicide who slew his fellow man unintentionally and not out of previous hatred. [6]Once he has stood judgment before the community, he shall live on in that city till the death of the high priest who is in office at the time. Then the killer may go back home to his own city from which he fled."[s]

**List of Cities** [7]So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the mountain region of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountain region of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the mountain region of Judah.[t] [8]And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho they designated Bezer on the open tableland in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead in the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the tribe of Manasseh.[u] [9]These were the designated cities[v] to which any Israelite or stranger living among them who had killed a person accidentally might flee to escape death at the hand of the avenger of blood, until he could appear before the community.

## CHAPTER 21

**Levitical Cities** [1]The heads of the Levite families* came up to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua, son of Nun, and to the heads of families of the other tribes of the Israelites[w] [2]at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, and said to them, "The LORD commanded, through Moses, that cities be given us to dwell in, with pasture lands for our livestock."[x] [3]Out of their own heritage, in obedience to this command of the LORD, the Israelites gave the Levites the following cities with their pasture lands.

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[4]When the first lot among the Levites fell to the clans of the Kohathites, the descendants of Aaron the priest obtained thirteen cities by lot from the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin. [5]The rest of the Kohathites obtained ten cities by lot from the clans of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh. [6]The Gershonites obtained thirteen cities by lot from the clans of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh. [7]The clans of the Merarites obtained twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. [8]These cities with their pasture lands the Israelites allotted to the Levites in obedience to the LORD's command through Moses.[y]

**Cities of the Priests** [9][z]From the tribes of the Judahites and Simeonites they designated the following cities, [10]and assigned them to the descendants of Aaron in the Kohathite clan of the Levites, since the first lot fell to them: [11]first, Kiriath-arba (Arba was the father of Anak), that is, Hebron, in the mountain region of Judah, with the adjacent pasture lands, [12]although the open country and villages belonging to the city had been given to Caleb, son of Jephunneh, as his property.[a] [13]Thus to the descendants of Aaron the priest were given the city of asylum for homicides at Hebron, with its pasture lands; also, Libnah with its pasture lands, [14]Jattir with its pasture lands, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, [15]Holon with its pasture lands, Debir with

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**20, 1–9:** The laws concerning the cities of refuge are given in Nm 35, 9–28; Dt 19, 1–13; see notes on Nm 35, 16–25; Dt 19, 2.

**21, 1:** The order to establish special cities for the Levites is given in Nm 35, 1–8. The forty-eight cities listed here were hardly the exclusive possession of the Levites; at least the more important of them, such as Hebron, Shechem and Ramoth in Gilead, were certainly peopled for the most part by the tribe in whose territory they were situated. But in all these cities the Levites had special property rights which they did not possess in other cities; cf Lv 25, 32ff.

r Ex 21, 13; Nm 35, 10–14; Dt 4, 41–43; 19, 2–9. s Nm 35, 12. 24f. t Jos 15, 13; 19, 37; 21, 21. u Jos 21, 27. 36f. v Nm 35, 15. w Ex 6, 16–19; Nm 3, 17–20. x Nm 35, 2. y Nm 35, 2. z 9–19: 1 Chr 6, 54–60. a Jos 14, 14; 15, 13.

its pasture lands, 16Ashan with its pasture lands,
Juttah with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh
with its pasture lands: nine cities from the two
tribes mentioned. 17From the tribe of Benjamin
they obtained the four cities of Gibeon with its
pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands,
18Anathoth[b] with its pasture lands, and Almon
with its pasture lands. 19These cities which with
their pasture lands belonged to the priestly
descendants of Aaron, were thirteen in all.

**Cities of the Other Kohathites** 20[c]The rest of
the Kohathite clans among the Levites obtained
by lot, from the tribe of Ephraim, four cities.
21They were assigned, with its pasture lands, the
city of asylum for homicides at Shechem in the
mountain region of Ephraim; also Gezer with its
pasture lands, 22Kibzaim with its pasture lands,
and Beth-horon with its pasture lands. 23From
the tribe of Dan they obtained the four cities of
Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its
pasture lands, 24Aijalon with its pasture lands,
and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; 25and
from the half-tribe of Manasseh the two cities of
Taanach with its pasture lands and Ibleam with
its pasture lands. 26These cities which with their
pasture lands belonged to the rest of the Kohath-
ite clans were ten in all.

**Cities of the Gershonites** 27[d]The Gershonite
clan of the Levites received from the half-tribe of
Manasseh two cities: the city of asylum for
homicides at Golan with its pasture lands; and
also Beth-Astharoth with its pasture lands.
28From the tribe of Issachar they obtained the
four cities of Kishion with its pasture lands,
Daberath with its pasture lands, 29Jarmuth with
its pasture lands, and En-gannim with its pasture
lands; 30from the tribe of Asher, the four cities of
Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its
pasture lands, 31Helkath with its pasture lands,
and Rehob with its pasture lands; 32and from the
tribe of Naphtali, three cities: the city of asylum
for homicides at Kedesh in Galilee, with its
pasture lands; also Hammath with its pasture
lands, and Rakkath with its pasture lands.
33These cities which with their pasture lands
belonged to the Gershonite clans were thirteen
in all.

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**Cities of the Merarites** 34[e]The Merarite clans,
the last of the Levites, received from the tribe of
Zebulun the four cities of Jokneam with its
pasture lands, Kartah with its pasture lands,
35Rimmon with its pasture lands, and Nahalal
with its pasture lands; 36also, across the Jordan,
from the tribe of Reuben, four cities: the city of
asylum for homicides at Bezer with its pasture
lands, Jahaz with its pasture lands, 37Kedemoth
with its pasture lands, and Mephaath with its
pasture lands; 38and from the tribe of Gad a total
of four cities: the city of asylum for homicides at
Ramoth in Gilead with its pasture lands, also
Mahanaim with its pasture lands, 39Heshbon
with its pasture lands, and Jazer with its pasture
lands. 40The cities which were allotted to the
Merarite clans, the last of the Levites, were
therefore twelve in all.

41Thus the total number of cities[f] within the
territory of the Israelites which, with their pas-
ture lands, belonged to the Levites, was forty-
eight. 42With each and every one of these cities
went the pasture lands round about it.

43And so the LORD gave Israel all the land he
had sworn to their fathers he would give them.[g]
Once they had conquered and occupied it, 44the
LORD gave them peace on every side, just as he
had promised their fathers. Not one of their
enemies could withstand them; the LORD
brought all their enemies under their power.
45Not a single promise[h] that the LORD made to
the house of Israel was broken; every one was
fulfilled.

## III: Return of the Transjordan Tribes and Joshua's Farewell

### CHAPTER 22

**The Eastern Tribes Dismissed** 1At that time
Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites,
and the half-tribe of Manasseh 2and said to
them:[i] "You have done all that Moses, the
servant of the LORD, commanded you, and have

b Jer 1, 1. c 20–26: 1 Chr 6, 66–70. d 27–33: 1 Chr 6, 71–76. e 34–38: 1 Chr 6. 77–81. f Nm 35, 7. g Gn 12, 7; 13, 15; 15, 18; 26, 3; 28, 4. 13. h Jos 23, 14f. i Jos 1, 16f; Nm 32, 20ff; Dt 3, 18ff.

obeyed every command I gave you. [3]For many
years now you have not once abandoned your
kinsmen, but have faithfully carried out the
commands of the LORD, your God. [4]Since,
therefore, the LORD, your God, has settled your
kinsmen as he promised them, you may now
return to your tents beyond the Jordan; to your
own land, which Moses, the servant of the
LORD, gave you.[j] [5]But be very careful to observe
the precept and law which Moses, the servant of
the LORD, enjoined upon you: love the LORD,
your God;[k] follow him faithfully; keep his com-
mandments; remain loyal to him; and serve him
with your whole heart and soul." [6]Joshua then
blessed them and sent them away to their own
tents.

[7](For, to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had
assigned land in Bashan;[l] and to the other half
Joshua had given a portion along with their
kinsmen west of the Jordan.) What Joshua said
to them when he sent them off to their tents
with his blessing was, [8]"Now that you are
returning to your own tents with great wealth,
with very numerous livestock, with silver, gold,
bronze and iron, and with a very large supply of
clothing, divide these spoils of your enemies
with your kinsmen there."[m] [9]So the Reubenites,
the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left
the other Israelites at Shiloh in the land of
Canaan and returned to the land of Gilead, their
own property, which they had received accord-
ing to the LORD's command through Moses.[n]

**The Altar beside the Jordan** [10]When the
Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of
Manasseh came to the region of the Jordan in
the land of Canaan, they built there at the Jordan
a conspicuously large altar. [11]The other Israelites
heard the report[o] that the Reubenites, the Gad-
ites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an
altar in the region of the Jordan facing the land of
Canaan,* across from them, [12]and therefore
they assembled their whole community at Shiloh
to declare war on them.*

**Accusation of the Western Tribes** [13]First,
however, they sent to the Reubenites, the Gad-
ites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of
Gilead an embassy consisting of Phinehas, son of
Eleazar the priest,[p] [14]and ten princes, one from
every tribe of Israel, each one being both prince
and military leader of his ancestral house.
[15]When these came to the Reubenites, the
Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the
land of Gilead, they said to them: [16][q]"The
whole community of the LORD sends this mes-
sage: What act of treachery is this you have
committed against the God of Israel? You have
seceded from the LORD this day, and rebelled
against him by building an altar of your own!
[17]For the sin of Peor, a plague came upon the
community of the LORD.[r] [18]We are still not free
of that; must you now add to it? You are
rebelling against the LORD today and by tomor-
row he will be angry with the whole community
of Israel! [19]If you consider the land you now
possess unclean,* cross over to the land the
LORD possesses, where the Dwelling of the LORD
stands,[s] and share that with us. But do not rebel
against the LORD, nor involve us in rebellion, by
building an altar of your own in addition to the
altar of the LORD, our God. [20]When Achan, son
of Zerah,[t] violated the ban, did not wrath fall
upon the entire community of Israel? Though he
was but a single man, he did not perish alone*
for his guilt!"

**Reply of the Eastern Tribes** [21]The Reuben-
ites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh
replied to the military leaders of the Israelites:
"The LORD is the God of gods. [22]The LORD, the

**22, 11:** In the region of the Jordan facing the land of Canaan: on the eastern side of the Jordan valley. The river itself formed the boundary between these eastern tribes and the rest of the tribes who lived in what was formerly Canaan—though the term Canaan could also be used of both sides of the Jordan valley (cf v 10). The Transjordan tribes naturally built their altar in their own territory.

**22, 12:** To declare war on them: the western Israelites considered this altar, which seemed to violate the customary unity of the sanctuary (cf Lv 17, 1–9; Dt 12, 4–14), as a sign of secession and dangerous to national unity. The motives for the war were political as well as religious.

**22, 19:** Unclean: not sanctified by the Dwelling of the Lord.

**22, 20:** Achan . . . did not perish alone: his guilt caused the failure of the first attack on Ai (Jos 7, 4–23); this fact is adduced as an argument for the solidarity and mutual responsibility of all the Israelites.

j Jos 1, 13; 13, 8; Nm 32, 33. k Dt 6, 5f. 17; 10, 12; 11, 1. 13. 22. l Jos 17, 5. m Nm 31, 27. n Jos 18, 1; Nm 32, 1. 26. 29. o Dt 13, 13ff. p Ex 6, 25; Sir 45, 28. q Lv 17, 8f. r Nm 25, 3f; Dt 4, 3. s Jos 18, 1. t Jos 7, 1. 5.

God of gods,* knows and Israel shall know. If
now we have acted out of rebellion or treachery
against the LORD, our God, 23and if we have
built an altar of our own to secede from the
LORD, or to offer holocausts, grain offerings or
peace offerings upon it, the LORD himself will
exact the penalty. 24We did it rather out of our
anxious concern lest in the future your children
should say to our children: 'What have you to do
with the LORD, the God of Israel? 25For the LORD
has placed the Jordan as a boundary between
you and us. You descendants of Reuben and Gad
have no share in the LORD.' Thus your children
would prevent ours from revering the LORD.
26So we decided to guard our interests by
building this altar of our own: not for holocausts
or for sacrifices, 27 [u]but as evidence for you on
behalf of ourselves and our descendants, that we
have the right to worship the LORD in his
presence with our holocausts, sacrifices, and
peace offerings. Now in the future your children
cannot say to our children, 'You have no share in
the LORD.' 28Our thought was, that if in the
future they should speak thus to us or to our
descendants, we could answer: 'Look at the
model of the altar of the LORD which our fathers
made, not for holocausts or for sacrifices, but to
witness* between you and us.' 29Far be it from
us to rebel against the LORD or to secede now
from the LORD by building an altar for holocaust,
grain offering, or sacrifice in addition to the altar
of the LORD, our God, which stands before his
Dwelling."

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30When Phinehas the priest and the princes of
the community, the military leaders of the Israel-
ites, heard what the Reubenites, the Gadites and
the Manassehites had to say, they were satisfied.
31Phinehas, son of Eleazar the priest, said to the
Reubenites, the Gadites and the Manassehites,
"Now we know that the LORD is with us. Since
you have not committed this act of treachery
against the LORD, you have kept the Israelites
free from punishment by the LORD."
32Phinehas, son of Eleazar the priest, and the
princes returned from the Reubenites and the
Gadites in the land of Gilead to the Israelites in
the land of Canaan, and reported the matter to
them. 33The report satisfied the Israelites, who
blessed God and decided against declaring war
on the Reubenites and Gadites or ravaging the
land they occupied.
34The Reubenites and the Gadites gave the
altar its name* as a witness among them that the
LORD is God.

## CHAPTER 23

**Joshua's Final Plea** 1Many years later, after
the LORD had given the Israelites rest from all
their enemies round about them, and when
Joshua was old and advanced in years,[v] 2he
summoned all Israel (including their elders,
leaders, judges and officers) and said to them: "I
am old and advanced in years. 3You have seen all
that the LORD, your God, has done for you
against all these nations; for it has been the
LORD, your God, himself who fought for you.
4 [w]Bear in mind that I have apportioned among
your tribes as their heritage the nations that
survive [as well as those I destroyed] between
the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west. 5The
LORD, your God, will drive them out and dis-
lodge them at your approach, so that you will
take possession of their land as the LORD, your
God, promised you. 6Therefore strive hard to
observe and carry out all that is written in the
book of the law of Moses, not straying from it in
any way,[x] 7or mingling with these nations while
they survive among you. You must not invoke
their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or
worship them,[y] 8but you must remain loyal to
the LORD, your God, as you have been to this
day. 9At your approach the LORD has driven out

**22, 22:** The Lord, the God of gods: the Hebrew, which cannot be adequately rendered in English here, adds to the divine name Yahweh ("the LORD") two synonymous words for "God," el and elohim. The repetition of these three sacred words adds force to the protestations of fidelity and innocence.

**22, 28:** To witness: far from being destined to form a rival sanctuary, the model of the altar was intended by the eastern tribes solely as a means of teaching their children to be faithful to the one true sanctuary beyond the Jordan.

**22, 34:** The name of this altar was the Hebrew word for "witness," [c] ed.

u Dt 12, 5f. 17f. v Jos 13, 1. w Jos 13, 2–7; 14, 2; 18, 10; Ps 78, 55. x Jos 1, 7. y Dt 7, 2ff.

large and strong nations, and to this day no one
has withstood you. [10]One of you puts to flight a
thousand, because it is the LORD, your God,
himself who fights for you,[z] as he promised you.
[11]Take great care, however, to love the LORD,
your God. [12]For if you ever abandon him and
ally yourselves with the remnant of these nations
while they survive among you, by intermarrying
and intermingling with them,[a] [13]know for cer-
tain that the LORD, your God, will no longer
drive these nations out of your way. Instead they
will be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge for
your sides and thorns for your eyes, until you
perish from this good land which the LORD, your
God, has given you.

[14]"Today, as you see, I am going the way of all
men.* So now acknowledge with your whole
heart and soul that not one of all the promises
the LORD, your God, made to you has remained
unfulfilled. Every promise has been fulfilled for
you, with not one single exception. [15][b]But just
as every promise the LORD, your God, made to
you has been fulfilled for you, so will he fulfill
every threat,* even so far as to exterminate you
from this good land which the LORD, your God,
has given you. [16]If you transgress the covenant
of the LORD, your God, which he enjoined on
you, serve other gods and worship them, the
anger of the LORD will flare up against you and
you will quickly perish from the good land
which he has given you."

## CHAPTER 24

**Reminder of the Divine Goodness** [1]Joshua
gathered together all the tribes of Israel at
Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders,
their judges and their officers. When they stood
in ranks before God, [2]Joshua addressed all the
people: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:
In times past your fathers, down to Terah,[c]
father of Abraham and Nahor, dwelt beyond the
River* and served other gods. [3]But I brought
your father Abraham from the region beyond the
River and led him through the entire land of
Canaan.[d] I made his descendants numerous,
and gave him Isaac. [4]To Isaac I gave Jacob and
Esau.[e] To Esau I assigned the mountain region of
Seir in which to settle, while Jacob and his
children went down to Egypt.

[5]"Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and smote
Egypt with the prodigies which I wrought in her
midst.[f] [6]Afterward I led you out of Egypt, and
when you reached the sea, the Egyptians pur-
sued your fathers to the Red Sea with chariots
and horsemen.[g] [7]Because they cried out to the
LORD,[h] he put darkness between your people
and the Egyptians, upon whom he brought the
sea so that it engulfed them. After you witnessed
what I did to Egypt, and dwelt a long time in the
desert, [8][i]I brought you into the land of the
Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They
fought against you, but I delivered them into
your power. You took possesion of their land,
and I destroyed them [the two kings of the
Amorites] before you. [9][j]Then Balak, son of
Zippor, king of Moab, prepared to war against
Israel. He summoned Balaam, son of Beor, to
curse you; [10][k]but I would not listen to Balaam.
On the contrary, he had to bless you, and I saved
you from him. [11]Once you crossed the Jordan[l]
and came to Jericho, the men of Jericho fought
against you, but I delivered them also into your
power. [12]And I sent the hornets* ahead of you
which drove them [the Amorites, Perizzites,
Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and
Jebusites] out of your way; it was not your sword
or your bow.[m]

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[13]"I gave you a land which you had not tilled
and cities which you had not built, to dwell in;
you have eaten of vineyards and olive groves
which you did not plant.[n]

[14][o]"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve
him completely and sincerely. Cast out the gods
your fathers served beyond the River and in

**23, 14:** Going the way of all men: drawing near to death, the inevitable goal of all; cf 1 Kgs 2, 1f.

**23, 15:** Every threat: mentioned especially in Dt 28, 15–68.

**24, 2:** Beyond the River: east of the Euphrates; cf Gn 11, 28–31.

**24, 12:** The hornets: see note on Ex 23, 28.

z Ex 14, 14; Lv 26, 8; Dt 3, 22. a Ex 34, 16; Dt 7, 3. b Lv 26, 14–39; Dt 28, 15–68. c Gn 11, 26. 31; 31, 53. d Gn 12, 1; Acts 7, 2–4. e Gn 25, 24ff; 36, 8; 46, 1. 6; Acts 7, 15. f Ex 3, 10; 7, 14–12, 30. g Ex 12, 37. 51; 14, 9. h Ex 14, 10. 20. 27f. i Nm 21, 21–35. j Nm 22, 2–5. k Nm 23, 1–24, 25. l Jos 3, 14; 6, 1. m Jos 11, 20; Ex 23, 28; Dt 7, 20. n Dt 6, 10f. o Dt 10, 12; 1 Sm 7, 3; 12, 24; Tb 14, 9.

Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 [p]If it does not
please you to serve the LORD, decide today
whom you will serve, the gods your fathers
served* beyond the River or the gods of the
Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As
for me and my household, we will serve the
LORD."

**Renewal of the Covenant** 16But the people
answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD
for the service of other gods. 17For it was the
LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers
up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of
slavery. He performed those great miracles be-
fore our very eyes and protected us along our
entire journey and among all the peoples
through whom we passed. 18At our approach
the LORD drove out [all the peoples, including]
the Amorites who dwelt in the land. Therefore
we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

19Joshua in turn said to the people, "You may
not be able* to serve the LORD, for he is a holy
God; he is a jealous God[q] who will not forgive
your transgressions or your sins. 20If, after the
good he has done for you, you forsake the LORD
and serve strange gods, he will do evil to you
and destroy you."

21But the people answered Joshua, "We will
still serve the LORD." 22Joshua therefore said to
the people, "You are your own witnesses that
you have chosen to serve the LORD." They
replied, "We are, indeed!" 23"Now, therefore,
put away the strange gods that are among you
and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of
Israel." 24Then the people promised Joshua, "We
will serve the LORD, our God, and obey his
voice."

25So Joshua made a covenant with the people
that day and made statutes and ordinances for
them at Shechem, 26which he recorded in the
book of the law of God. Then he took a large
stone and set it up there under the oak that was
in the sanctuary of the LORD.[r] 27And Joshua said
to all the people, "This stone shall be our
witness,[s] for it has heard all the words which
the LORD spoke to us. It shall be a witness
against you, should you wish to deny your God."
28Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his
own heritage.[t]

**Death of Joshua** 29 [u]After these events, Joshua,
son of Nun, servant of the LORD, died at the age
of a hundred and ten. 30He was buried within
the limits of his heritage at Timnath-serah[v] in
the mountain region of Ephraim north of Mount
Gaash. 31Israel served the LORD during the
entire lifetime of Joshua and that of the elders
who outlived Joshua and knew all that the LORD
had done for Israel. 32 [w]The bones of Joseph,*
which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt,
were buried in Shechem in the plot of ground
Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor, father
of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of money. This
was a heritage of the descendants of Joseph.
33When Eleazar, son of Aaron, also died, he was
buried on the hill which had been given to his
son Phinehas[x] in the mountain region of Ephra-
im.

**24, 15:** The gods your fathers served: Abraham's ancestors were polytheists.

**24, 19:** You may not be able: fidelity to God's service is not easy, and therefore those who take such solemn obligations on themselves must be ever vigilant against human weakness.

**24, 32:** The bones of Joseph: the mummified body of Joseph (Gn 50, 25f), which the Israelites took with them as they left Egypt (Ex 13, 19), was fittingly buried at the ancient city of Shechem, near the border between the two Josephite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

p Dt 30, 15–19. q Ex 20, 5; 23, 21; 34, 14; Lv 19, 2. r Gn 28, 18; 31, 45; Jgs 9, 6. s Gn 31, 48. 52; Dt 31, 19. 21. 26. t Jgs 2, 6. u 29ff: Jgs 2, 7ff. v Jos 19, 50: Jgs 2, 9. w Gn 33, 19; 50, 24; Ex 13, 19. x Jos 22, 13.

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Judges
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The Book of Judges derives its title from the twelve heroes of Israel whose deeds it records. They were not magistrates, but military leaders sent by God to aid and to relieve his people in time of external danger. They exercised their activities in the interval of time between the death of Joshua and the institution of the monarchy in Israel. Six of them—Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson—are treated in some detail and have accordingly been styled the Major Judges. The other six, of whose activities this book preserves but a summary record, are called the Minor Judges. There were two other judges, whose judgeships are described in 1 Samuel—Eli and Samuel, who seem to have ruled the entire nation of Israel just before the institution of the monarchy. The twelve judges of the present book, however, very probably exercised their authority, sometimes simultaneously, over one or another tribe of Israel, never over the entire nation.

The purpose of the book is to show that the fortunes of Israel depended upon the obedience or disobedience of the people to God's law. Whenever they rebelled against him, they were oppressed by pagan nations; when they repented, he raised up judges to deliver them (cf Jgs 2, 10-23).

The accounts of various events, whether written shortly after their occurrence or orally transmitted, were later skillfully unified according to the moral purpose of the redactor sometime during the Israelite monarchy.

The book is divided as follows:

I. Palestine after the Death of Joshua (Jgs 1, 1—3, 6).
II. Stories of the Judges (Jgs 3, 7—16, 31).
III. The Tribes of Dan and Benjamin in the Days of the Judges (Jgs 17, 1—21, 25).

## I: Palestine After the Death of Joshua

### CHAPTER 1

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**Pagan Survivors in Palestine** [1]After the death of Joshua* the Israelites consulted the LORD, asking, "Who shall be first among us to attack the Canaanites and to do battle with them?"[a] [2]The LORD answered, "Judah shall attack: I have delivered the land into his power." [3]Judah then said to his brother Simeon, "Come up with me into the territory allotted to me, and let us engage the Canaanites in battle. I will likewise accompany you into the territory allotted to you." So Simeon went with him.

[4]When the forces of Judah attacked, the LORD delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their power, and they slew ten thousand of them in Bezek. [5]It was in Bezek that they came upon Adonibezek and fought against him. When they defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites, [6]Adonibezek fled. They set out in pursuit, and when they caught him, cut off his thumbs and his big toes. [7]At this Adonibezek said, "Seventy kings, with their thumbs and big toes cut off, used to pick up scraps under my table. As I have done, so has God repaid me." He was brought to Jerusalem, and there he died. [8][The Judahites fought against Jerusalem and captured it, putting it to the sword; then they destroyed the city by fire.]

[9][b]Afterward the Judahites went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the mountain region, in the Negeb, and in the foothills,

1, 1–36: This chapter summarizes events most of which occurred shortly after the death of Joshua. Perhaps because they were planned and inaugurated by him, they are also attributed to him in the last half of the preceding book (Jos 14—22).

a Jgs 20, 18: Nm 27, 21. b Jos 10, 40; 11, 16; 12, 8.

10 [c]Judah also marched against the Canaanites
who dwelt in Hebron, which was formerly
called Kiriath-arba, and defeated Sheshai, Ahi-
man and Talmai.[d] 11 From there they marched
against the inhabitants of Debir, which was
formerly called Kiriath-sepher. 12 And Caleb said,
"I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage to
the one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures
it." 13 [e]Othniel, son of Caleb's younger brother
Kenaz, captured it; so Caleb gave him his
daughter Achsah in marriage. 14 On the day of
her marriage to Othniel she induced him to ask
her father for some land. Then, as she alighted
from the ass, Caleb asked her, "What is troubling
you?" 15 "Give me an additional gift," she an-
swered. "Since you have assigned land in the
Negeb to me, give me also pools of water." So
Caleb gave her the upper and the lower pool.
16 The descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-
in-law,* came up with the Judahites from the
city of palms to the desert at Arad [which is in
the Negeb]. But they later left and settled among
the Amalekites.[f]

17 [g]Judah then went with his brother Simeon,
and they defeated the Canaanites who dwelt in
Zephath. After having doomed the city to de-
struction, they renamed it Hormah. 18 [h]Judah,
however, did not occupy Gaza with its territory,
Ashkelon with its territory, or Ekron with its
territory. 19 [i]Since the LORD was with Judah, he
gained possession of the mountain region. Yet he
could not dislodge those who lived on the plain,
because they had iron chariots. 20 As Moses had
commanded, Hebron was given to Caleb, who
then drove from it the three sons of Anak.[j]

21 *The Benjaminites did not dislodge the
Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem, with the result
that the Jebusites live in Jerusalem beside the
Benjaminites to the present day.[k]

22 The house of Joseph, too, marched up
against Bethel, and the LORD was with them.
23 The house of Joseph had a reconnaissance
made of Bethel, which formerly was called Luz.[l]
24 The scouts saw a man coming out of the city
and said to him, "Show us a way into the city,
and we will spare you." 25 He showed them a
way into the city, which they then put to the
sword; but they let the man and his whole clan
go free. 26 He then went to the land of the
Hittites, where he built a city and called it Luz,
as it is still called.

27 Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-
shean with its towns or of Taanach with its
towns. Neither did he dislodge the inhabitants of
Dor and its towns, those of Ibleam and its towns,
or those of Megiddo and its towns.[m] The Canaan-
ites kept their hold in this district. 28 When the
Israelites grew stronger, they impressed the
Canaanites as laborers, but did not drive them
out. 29 Similarly, the Ephraimites did not drive
out the Canaanites living in Gezer, and so the
Canaanites live in Gezer in their midst.[n]

30 Zebulun did not dislodge the inhabitants of
Kitron or those of Nahalol; the Canaanites live
among them, but have become forced laborers.

31 [o]Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of
Acco or those of Sidon, or take possession of
Mahaleb, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik or Rehob.
32 The Asherites live among the Canaanite na-
tives of the land, whom they have not dislodged.

33 [p]Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants
of Beth-shemesh or those of Beth-anath, and so
they live among the Canaanite natives of the
land. However, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh
and Beth-anath have become forced laborers for
them.

34 The Amorites hemmed in the Danites in the
mountain region, not permitting them to go
down into the plain.[q] 35 The Amorites had a firm
hold in Harheres, Aijalon and Shaalbim, but as
the house of Joseph gained the upper hand, they
were impressed as laborers.

36 The territory of the Amorites extended from
the Akrabbim pass to Sela and beyond.

1, 16: Moses' father-in-law: Reuel; cf Nm 10, 29–32 and note. City of palms: Jericho (cf Dt 34, 3), or a town in the Negeb.

1, 21: According to Jos 18, 16, Jerusalem was assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. But it was not actually taken from the Jebusites until David captured it (2 Sm 5, 6–9) and made it his capital, outside the tribal organization.

c Jos 15, 13–19. d Nm 13, 22; Jos 14, 15. e Jgs 3, 9. f Jgs 4, 11; Nm 10, 29–32. g Nm 21, 3. h Jos 11, 22. i Jos 17, 16ff. j Jos 14, 9. 13; 15, 14. k Jos 15, 63. l Gn 28, 19; 35, 6; 48, 3; Jos 18, 13. m 27f: Jos 17, 11ff. n Jos 16, 10. o 31f: Jos 19, 24–31. p Jos 19, 32–39. q Jos 19, 47f.

## CHAPTER 2

**Infidelities of the Israelites** 1 [r]An angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim and said,
"It was I who brought you up from Egypt and
led you into the land which I promised on oath
to your fathers. I said that I would never break
my covenant with you, 2but that you were not
to make a pact with the inhabitants of this land,
and you were to pull down their altars. Yet you
have not obeyed me.[s] What did you mean by
this? 3For now I tell you, I will not clear them
out of your way; they shall oppose you and their
gods shall become a snare for you."[t]

4When the angel of the LORD had made these
threats to all the Israelites, the people wept
aloud; 5and so that place came to be called
Bochim.* They offered sacrifice there to the
LORD.

6 [u]When Joshua dismissed the people, each
Israelite went to take possession of his own
hereditary land. 7The people served the LORD
during the entire lifetime of Joshua, and of those
elders who outlived Joshua and who had seen all
the great work which the LORD had done for
Israel. 8Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of the
LORD, was a hundred and ten years old when he
died; 9and they buried him within the borders of
his heritage at Timnath-heres in the mountain
region of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash.[v]

10But once the rest of that generation were
gathered to their fathers, and a later generation
arose that did not know the LORD, or what he
had done for Israel, 11the Israelites offended the
LORD by serving the Baals.*[w] 12Abandoning the
LORD, the God of their fathers, who had led
them out of the land of Egypt, they followed the
other gods of the various nations around them,
and by their worship of these gods provoked the
LORD.

13Because they had thus abandoned him and
served Baal and the Ashtaroth,* 14the anger of
the LORD flared up against Israel, and he deliv-
ered them over to plunderers who despoiled
them. He allowed them to fall into the power of
their enemies round about whom they were no
longer able to withstand. 15Whatever they under-
took, the LORD turned into disaster for them, as
in his warning he had sworn he would do, till
they were in great distress.[x] 16Even when the
LORD raised up judges to deliver them from the
power of their despoilers, 17they did not listen to
their judges, but abandoned themselves to the
worship of other gods. They were quick to stray
from the way their fathers had taken, and did
not follow their example of obedience to the
commandments of the LORD. 18Whenever the
LORD raised up judges for them, he would be
with the judge and save them from the power of
their enemies as long as the judge lived; it was
thus the LORD took pity on their distressful cries
of affliction under their oppressors. 19But when
the judge died, they would relapse and do worse
than their fathers, following other gods in service
and worship, relinquishing none of their evil
practices or stubborn conduct.[y]

20 [z]In his anger toward Israel the LORD said,
"Inasmuch as this nation has violated my cove-
nant which I enjoined on their fathers, and has
disobeyed me, 21I for my part will not clear away
for them any more of the nations which Joshua
left when he died." 22Through these nations the
Israelites were to be made to prove whether or
not they would keep to the way of the LORD and
continue in it as their fathers had done; 23there-
fore the LORD allowed them to remain instead of
expelling them immediately, or delivering them
into the power of Israel.

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## CHAPTER 3

1The following are the nations which the
LORD allowed to remain, so that through them
he might try all those Israelites who had no

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2, 5: Bochim: the Hebrew word for "weepers."

2, 11: Baals: the chief god of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians was called "Baal," a word meaning "lord." He was honored by various titles, hence the plural form here, equivalent to "the pagan gods."

2, 13: Ashtaroth: the Canaanite Phoenician goddess of love and fertility was Astarte. The plural form used here refers to her various titles and images and is equivalent to "goddesses."

r 1ff: Jgs 6, 8ff. s Ex 34, 12f. 15; Dt 7, 2. 5; 21, 2f. t Nm 33, 55; Jos 23, 13. u 6–9: Jos 24, 28–31. v Jos 19, 50. w 11. 14; Jgs 3, 7f; 4, 1f; 6, 1; 10, 6f; 13, 1. x Dt 28, 15–68. y Jgs 3, 12; 4, 1; 6, 1; 8, 33. z 20f: Jos 23, 16.

experience of the battles with Canaan [2]just to instruct, by training them in battle, those generations only of the Israelites who would not have had that previous experience]: [3] [a]the five lords of the Philistines;* and all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwell in the mountain region of Lebanon between Baal-hermon and the entrance to Hamath. [4]These served to put Israel to the test, to determine whether they would obey the commandments the LORD had enjoined on their fathers through Moses. [5]Besides, the Israelites were living among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. [6]In fact, they took their daughters in marriage, and gave their own daughters to their sons in marriage, and served their gods.

## II: Stories of the Judges

**Othniel** [7] [b]Because the Israelites had offended the LORD by forgetting the LORD, their God, and serving the Baals and the Asherahs,* [8]the anger of the LORD flared up against them, and he allowed them to fall into the power of Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram Naharaim, whom they served for eight years. [9]But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a savior, Othniel, son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz, who rescued them. [10]The spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel.[c] When he went out to war, the LORD delivered Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram, into his power, so that he made him subject. [11]The land then was at rest for forty years,[d] until Othniel, son of Kenaz, died.

**Ehud** [12]Again the Israelites offended the LORD, who because of this offense strengthened Eglon, king of Moab, against Israel. [13]In alliance with the Ammonites and Amalekites, he attacked and defeated Israel, taking possession of the city of palms. [14]The Israelites then served Eglon, king of Moab, for eighteen years.

[15]But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a savior, the Benjaminite Ehud, son of Gera, who was left-handed. It was by him that the Israelites sent their tribute to Eglon, king of Moab. [16]Ehud made himself a two-edged dagger a foot long, and wore it under his clothes over his right thigh. [17]He presented the tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, who was very fat, [18]and after the presentation went off with the tribute bearers. [19]He returned, however, from where the idols are, near Gilgal, and said, "I have a private message for you, O king." And the king said, "Silence!" Then when all his attendants had left his presence, [20]and Ehud went in to him where he sat alone in his cool upper room, Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." So the king rose from his chair, [21]and then Ehud with his left hand drew the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly. [22]The hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade because he did not withdraw the dagger from his body.

[23]Then Ehud went out into the hall, shutting the doors of the upper room on him and locking them. [24]When Ehud had left and the servants came, they saw that the doors of the upper room were locked, and thought, "He must be easing himself in the cool chamber." [25]They waited until they finally grew suspicious. Since he did not open the doors of the upper room, they took the key and opened them. There on the floor, dead, lay their lord!

[26]During their delay Ehud made good his escape and, passing the idols, took refuge in Seirah. [27]On his arrival he sounded the horn in the mountain region of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down from the mountains with him as their leader. [28]"Follow me," he said to them, "for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your power." So they followed him down and seized the fords of the Jordan

3, 3: The Philistines: non-Semitic invaders, who gave their name to all Palestine, although they occupied only its southwestern plains. Their confederation embraced the five leading cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron.

3, 7: Asherahs: elsewhere rendered "sacred poles." See note on Ex 34, 13 and on Dt 7, 5. Here the word seems to mean "goddesses."

a Jos 13, 2–6. b Jgs 2, 11ff. c Jgs 6, 34; 11, 29; 13, 25; 14, 6. 19; 15, 14. d Jgs 5, 31; 8, 28.

leading to Moab, permitting no one to cross.[e]
29On that occasion they slew about ten thousand
Moabites, all of them strong and valiant men.
Not a man escaped. 30Thus was Moab brought
under the power of Israel at that time; and the
land had rest for eighty years.

**Shamgar** 31After him there was Shamgar, son
of Anath, who slew six hundred Philistines with
an oxgoad. He, too, rescued Israel.

## CHAPTER 4

**Deborah and Barak** 1After Ehud's death, how-
ever, the Israelites again offended the LORD. 2So
the LORD allowed them to fall into the power of
the Canaanite king, Jabin, who reigned in Ha-
zor.[f] The general of his army was Sisera, who
dwelt in Harosheth-ha-goiim. 3But the Israelites
cried out to the LORD; for with his nine hundred
iron chariots he sorely oppressed the Israelites
for twenty years.

4At this time the prophetess Deborah, wife of
Lappidoth, was judging Israel. 5She used to sit
under Deborah's palm tree, situated between
Ramah and Bethel in the mountain region of
Ephraim, and there the Israelites came up to her
for judgment. 6She sent and summoned Barak,
son of Abinoam,[g] from Kedesh of Naphtali.
"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel,
commands," she said to him; "go, march on
Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand
Naphtalites and Zebulunites. 7I will lead Sisera,
the general of Jabin's army, out to you at the
Wadi Kishon,[h] together with his chariots and
troops, and will deliver them into your power."
8But Barak answered her, "If you come with me,
I will go; if you do not come with me, I will not
go." 9"I will certainly go with you," she replied,
"but you shall not gain the glory in the expedi-
tion on which you are setting out, for the LORD
will have Sisera fall into the power of a woman."
So Deborah joined Barak and journeyed with
him to Kedesh.

10Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to
Kedesh, and ten thousand men followed him.
Deborah also went up with him.[i] 11*Now the
Kenite Heber had detached himself from his own
people, the descendants of Hobab, Moses'
brother-in-law,[j] and had pitched his tent by the
terebinth of Zaanannim, which was near Kedesh.

12It was reported to Sisera that Barak, son of
Abinoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13So
Sisera assembled from Harosheth-ha-goiim at the
Wadi Kishon all nine hundred of his iron chariots
and all his forces. 14Deborah then said to Barak,
"Be off, for this is the day on which the LORD has
delivered Sisera into your power. The LORD
marches before you." So Barak went down
Mount Tabor, followed by his ten thousand men.
15And the LORD put Sisera[k] and all his chariots
and all his forces to rout before Barak. Sisera
himself dismounted from his chariot and fled on
foot. 16Barak, however, pursued the chariots
and the army as far as Harosheth-ha-goiim. The
entire army of Sisera fell beneath the sword, not
even one man surviving.

17*Sisera, in the meantime, had fled on foot to
the tent of Jael, wife of the Kenite Heber, since
Jabin, king of Hazor, and the family of the Kenite
Heber were at peace with one another. 18Jael
went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come
in, my lord, come in with me; do not be afraid."
So he went into her tent, and she covered him
with a rug. 19He said to her, "Please give me a
little water to drink. I am thirsty." But she
opened a jug of milk for him to drink, and then
covered him over.[l] 20"Stand at the entrance of
the tent," he said to her. "If anyone comes and
asks, 'Is there someone here?' say, 'No!' " 21In-
stead Jael, wife of Heber, got a tent peg and took
a mallet in her hand. While Sisera was sound
asleep, she stealthily approached him and drove
the peg through his temple down into the
ground, so that he perished in death.[m] 22Then
when Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went
out to meet him and said to him, "Come, I will

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4, 11: Most of the Kenites occupied a district in the southern part of Judah (Jgs 1, 16). A group of them, however, had detached themselves and settled in lower Galilee.

4, 17–22: It is to be noted that the sacred author merely records the fact of the murder of Sisera. We must not construe this as approval of Jael's action.

e Jgs 4, 7. 14; 7, 9. 15. f Jos 11, 1. 10; Ps 83, 10; 1 Sm 12, 9. g Heb 11, 32. h Jgs 5, 21; Ps 83, 10. i Jgs 5, 18. j Nm 10, 29. k Ps 83, 10. l Jgs 5, 25. m Jgs 5, 26.

show you the man you seek." So he went in
with her, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent
peg through his temple.
23 Thus on that day God humbled the Canaan
ite king, Jabin, before the Israelites; 24 their
power weighed ever heavier upon him, till at
length they destroyed the Canaanite king, Jabin.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5
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**Canticle of Deborah** 1 On that day Deborah
[and Barak, son of Abinoam] sang this song:

2 Of chiefs who took the lead in Israel,*
of noble deeds by the people who bless the
LORD,
3 Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!
I to the LORD will sing my song,
my hymn to the LORD, the God of Israel.

4 O LORD, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the land of Edom,
The earth quaked and the heavens were
shaken,
while the clouds sent down showers.
5 Mountains trembled
in the presence of the LORD, the One of
Sinai, [n]
in the presence of the LORD, the God of
Israel. [o]

6 In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, [p]
in the days of slavery caravans ceased;
Those who traveled the roads
went by roundabout paths.
7 Gone was freedom beyond the walls,
gone indeed from Israel.

When I, Deborah, rose,
when I rose, a mother in Israel,
8 New gods* were their choice;
then the war was at their gates.
Not a shield could be seen, nor a lance,
among forty thousand in Israel!

9 My heart is with the leaders of Israel,
nobles of the people who bless the LORD;
10 They who ride on white asses,
seated on saddlecloths as they go their way;
11 Sing of them to the strains of the harpers at the
wells,
where men recount the just deeds of the
LORD,
his just deeds that brought freedom to
Israel.

12 Awake, awake, Deborah!
awake, awake, strike up a song.
Strength! arise, Barak,
make despoilers your spoil, son of Abinoam.
13 Then down came the fugitives with the
mighty,
the people of the LORD came down for me
as warriors.

14 From Ephraim, princes were in the valley;*
behind you was Benjamin, among your
troops.
From Machir came down commanders,
from Zebulun wielders of the marshal's
staff.

15 With Deborah were the princes of Issachar;
Barak, too, was in the valley, his course
unchecked.

Among the clans of Reuben
great were the searchings of heart. [q]
16 Why do you stay beside your hearths
listening to the lowing of the herds?
Among the clans of Reuben
great were the searchings of heart!

17 Gilead, beyond the Jordan, rests;
why does Dan spend his time in ships?
Asher, who dwells along the shore,
is resting in his coves.
18 Zebulun is the people defying death;

**5, 2–31:** This canticle is an excellent example of early Hebrew poetry, even though some of its verses are now obscure.

**5, 8:** New gods: pagan deities; cf Dt 32, 16–18. God punished the idolatry of the Israelites by leaving them relatively unarmed before the attacks of their enemies, who had better weapons, made of iron; cf 1 Sm 13, 19–22.

**5, 14–22:** Praise for the tribes which formed the Israelite league against Sisera: Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh (represented by Machir), Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali (led by Barak). The tribes of Reuben, Gad (Gilead), Dan, and Asher are chided for their lack of co-operation. The more distant tribes of Judah and Simeon are not mentioned.

n Dt 33, 2; 2 Sm 22, 8; Pss 18, 8; 68, 9. o Ex 19, 16; Dt 4, 11; Ps 97, 5. p Jgs 3, 31. q Jgs 4, 14.

Naphtali, too, on the open heights! [r]

[19] The kings came and fought;
then they fought, those kings of Canaan,
At Taanach by the waters of Megiddo;
no silver booty did they take. [s]
[20] From the heavens the stars, too, fought;*
from their courses they fought against
Sisera. [t]

[21] The Wadi Kishon swept them away;
a wadi . . . , the Kishon. [u]
[22] Then the hoofs of the horses pounded,
with the dashing, dashing of his steeds.

[23] "Curse Meroz,"* says the LORD,
"hurl a curse at its inhabitants!
For they came not to my help,
as warriors to the help of the LORD."

[24] Blessed among women be Jael,
blessed among tent-dwelling women. [v]
[25] He asked for water, she gave him milk; [w]
in a princely bowl she offered curds.
[26] With her left hand she reached for the peg,
with her right, for the workman's mallet.

She hammered Sisera, crushed his head;
she smashed, stove in his temple.
[27] At her feet he sank down, fell, lay still;
down at her feet he sank and fell;
where he sank down, there he fell, slain.

[28] From the window peered down and wailed
the mother of Sisera, from the lattice:
"Why is his chariot so long in coming?
why are the hoofbeats of his chariots
delayed?"
[29] The wisest of her princesses answers her,
and she, too, keeps answering herself:
[30] "They must be dividing the spoil they took:
there must be a damsel or two for each
man,
Spoils of dyed cloth as Sisera's spoil,
an ornate shawl or two for me in the spoil."

[31] May all your enemies perish thus, O LORD! [x]
but your friends be as the sun rising in its
might!

And the land was at rest for forty years.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6–8
See RG
134–136

**The Call of Gideon** [1] The Israelites offended the LORD, who therefore delivered them into the power of Midian for seven years, [2] so that Midian held Israel subject. For fear of Midian the Israelites established the fire signals on the mountains, the caves for refuge, and the strongholds. [3] And it used to be that when the Israelites had completed their sowing, Midian, Amalek and the Kedemites would come up, [y] [4] encamp opposite them, and destroy the produce of the land as far as the outskirts of Gaza, leaving no sustenance in Israel, nor sheep, oxen or asses. [5] For they would come up with their livestock, and their tents would become as numerous as locusts; and neither they nor their camels could be numbered, when they came into the land to lay it waste. [6] Thus was Israel reduced to misery by Midian, and so the Israelites cried out to the LORD.

[7] When Israel cried out to the LORD because of Midian, [8] [z] he sent a prophet to the Israelites who said to them, "The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I led you up from Egypt; I brought you out of the place of slavery. [9] I rescued you from the power of Egypt and of all your other oppressors. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. [10] And I said to you: I, the LORD, am your God; you shall not venerate the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are dwelling. But you did not obey me."

[11] Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. While his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press to save it from the Midianites, [12] the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "The LORD is with

**5, 20f:** It would seem that nature aided the Hebrews in some way. Perhaps the torrential rains swelled the waters of Kishon, which then overwhelmed the Canaanites.

**5, 23:** Meroz: an unknown locality in which Hebrews probably resided, since its inhabitants are cursed for their failure to proffer aid.

r Jgs 4, 10. s Jgs 1, 27; Jos 17, 11. t Jgs 4, 15; Jos 10, 14. u Jgs 4, 7. 13. v Jgs 4, 17; Jdt 13, 17; Lk 1, 28. 42. w 25f: Jgs 4, 19. 21. x Ps 83, 10–19. y 3f: Jgs 7, 12; Dt 28, 30ff. z 8ff: Jgs 2, 1f; 10, 11–14.

you, O champion!" [13]"My LORD," Gideon said
to him, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this
happened to us? Where are his wondrous deeds
of which our fathers told us when they said, 'Did
not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' For now
the LORD has abandoned us and has delivered us
into the power of Midian." [14]The LORD turned
to him and said, "Go with the strength you have
and save Israel from the power of Midian. It is I
who send you." [15]But he answered him,
"Please, my lord, how can I save Israel? My
family is the meanest in Manasseh, and I am the
most insignificant in my father's house." [16]"I
shall be with you," the LORD said to him, "and
you will cut down Midian to the last man." [17]He
answered him, "If I find favor with you, give me
a sign that you are speaking with me. [18]Do not
depart from here, I pray you, until I come back
to you and bring out my offering and set it before
you." He answered, "I will await your return."

[19]So Gideon went off and prepared a kid and
an ephah of flour in the form of unleavened
cakes. Putting the meat in a basket and the broth
in a pot, he brought them out to him under the
terebinth and presented them. [20]The angel of
God said to him, "Take the meat and unleavened
cakes and lay them on this rock; then pour out
the broth."[a] When he had done so, [21]the angel
of the LORD stretched out the tip of the staff he
held, and touched the meat and unleavened
cakes. Thereupon a fire came up from the rock
which consumed the meat and unleavened
cakes, and the angel of the LORD disappeared
from sight. [22][b]Gideon, now aware that it had
been the angel of the LORD, said, "Alas, Lord
GOD, that I have seen the angel of the LORD face
to face!" [23]The LORD answered him, "Be calm,
do not fear. You shall not die." [24]So Gideon built
there an altar to the LORD and called it Yahweh-
shalom.* To this day it is still in Ophrah of the
Abiezrites.

[25]That same night the LORD said to him,
"Take the seven-year-old spare bullock and de-
stroy your father's altar to Baal and cut down the
sacred pole* that is by it. [26]You shall build,
instead, the proper kind of altar to the LORD,
your God, on top of this stronghold. Then take
the spare bullock and offer it as a holocaust on
the wood from the sacred pole you have cut
down." [27]So Gideon took ten of his servants and
did as the LORD had commanded him. But
through fear of his family and of the townspeo-
ple, he would not do it by day, but did it at night.
[28]Early the next morning the townspeople found
that the altar of Baal had been destroyed, the
sacred pole near it cut down, and the spare
bullock offered on the altar that was built.
[29]They asked one another, "Who did this?"
Their inquiry led them to the conclusion that
Gideon, son of Joash, had done it. [30]So the
townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son
that he may die, for he has destroyed the altar of
Baal and has cut down the sacred pole that was
near it." [31]But Joash replied to all who were
standing around him, "Do you intend to act in
Baal's stead, or be his champion? If anyone acts
for him, he shall be put to death by morning. If
he whose altar has been destroyed is a god, let
him act for himself!" [32]So on that day Gideon
was called Jerubbaal,* because of the words,
"Let Baal take action against him, since he
destroyed his altar."[c]

[33]Then all Midian and Amalek and the
Kedemites mustered and crossed over into the
valley of Jezreel, where they encamped. [34]The
spirit of the LORD enveloped Gideon; he blew
the horn that summoned Abiezer to follow him.
[35]He sent messengers, too, throughout Manas-
seh, which also obeyed his summons; through
Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, likewise, he sent
messengers and these tribes advanced to meet
the others. [36]Gideon said to God, "If indeed you
are going to save Israel through me, as you
promised, [37]I am putting this woolen fleece on
the threshing floor. If dew comes on the fleece
alone, while all the ground is dry, I shall know
that you will save Israel through me, as you
promised." [38]That is what took place. Early the

**6, 24:** Yahweh-shalom: Hebrew for "the LORD is peace," a reference to the Lord's words, "Be calm," literally, "Peace be to you!"

**6, 25:** The sacred pole: see note on Ex 34, 13.

**6, 32:** Jerubbaal: similar in sound to the Hebrew words meaning, "Let Baal take action."

a Jgs 13, 19. b 22f: Gn 32, 31; Dt 5, 24ff. c 1 Sm 12, 11.

next morning he wrung the dew from the fleece,
squeezing out of it a bowlful of water. 39Gideon
then said to God, "Do not be angry with me if I
speak once more. Let me make just one more
test with the fleece. Let the fleece alone be dry,
but let there be dew on all the ground." 40That
night God did so; the fleece alone was dry, but
there was dew on all the ground.

## CHAPTER 7

**Defeat of Midian** 1Early the next morning
Jerubbaal[d] (that is, Gideon) encamped by En-
harod with all his soldiers. The camp of Midian
was in the valley north of Gibeath-hammoreh.
2The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many
soldiers with you for me to deliver Midian into
their power, lest Israel vaunt itself against me
and say, 'My own power brought me the vic-
tory.' 3Now proclaim to all the soldiers, 'If
anyone is afraid or fearful, let him leave.' "[e]
When Gideon put them to this test on the
mountain, twenty-two thousand of the soldiers
left, but ten thousand remained. 4The LORD said
to Gideon, "There are still too many soldiers.
Lead them down to the water and I will test
them for you there. If I tell you that a certain
man is to go with you, he must go with you. But
no one is to go if I tell you he must not."
5*When Gideon led the soldiers down to the
water, the LORD said to him, "You shall set to
one side everyone who laps up the water as a
dog does with its tongue; to the other, everyone
who kneels down to drink." 6Those who lapped
up the water raised to their mouths by hand
numbered three hundred, but all the rest of the
soldiers knelt down to drink the water. 7The
LORD said to Gideon, "By means of the three
hundred who lapped up the water I will save
you and will deliver Midian into your power. So
let all the other soldiers go home." 8Their horns,
and such supplies as the soldiers had with them,
were taken up, and Gideon ordered the rest of
the Israelites to their tents, but kept the three
hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was
beneath him in the valley.

9That night the LORD said to Gideon, "Go,
descend on the camp, for I have delivered it up
to you. 10If you are afraid to attack, go down to
the camp with your aide Purah. 11When you
hear what they are saying, you will have the
courage to descend on the camp." So he went
down with his aide Purah to the outposts of the
camp. 12The Midianites, Amalekites, and all the
Kedemites lay in the valley, as numerous as
locusts. Nor could their camels be counted, for
these were as many as the sands on the sea-
shore. 13*When Gideon arrived, one man was
telling another about a dream. "I had a dream,"
he said, "that a round loaf of barley bread was
rolling into the camp of Midian. It came to our
tent and struck it, and as it fell it turned the tent
upside down." 14"This can only be the sword of
the Israelite Gideon, son of Joash," the other
replied. "God has delivered Midian and all the
camp into his power." 15When Gideon heard the
description and explanation of the dream, he
prostrated himself. Then returning to the camp
of Israel, he said, "Arise, for the LORD has
delivered the camp of Midian into your power."

16He divided the three hundred men into
three companies, and provided them all with
horns and with empty jars and torches inside the
jars. 17"Watch me and follow my lead," he told
them. "I shall go to the edge of the camp, and as
I do, you must do also. 18When I and those with
me blow horns, you too must blow horns all
around the camp and cry out, 'For the LORD and
for Gideon!' " 19So Gideon and the hundred
men who were with him came to the edge of the
camp at the beginning of the middle watch,* just
after the posting of the guards. They blew the
horns and broke the jars they were holding. 20All
three companies blew horns and broke their jars.

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**7, 5:** The Lord desired not numerous but reliable soldiers. Those who drank from their hands were alert, standing ready to resist attack, whereas the others were careless and undependable. The cowardly soldiers had already been dismissed (v 3); cf Dt 20, 8.

**7, 13:** The barley loaf represents the agricultural Hebrews while the tent refers to the nomadic Midianites. The overthrow of the tent indicates the victory of the Hebrews over their Midianite oppressors.

**7, 19:** At the beginning of the middle watch: about two hours before midnight. The ancient Hebrews divided the night into three watches of about four hours each. At the beginning of a watch the sentinels were changed.

d Jgs 6, 32. e Dt 20, 8.

They held the torches in their left hands, and in
their right the horns they were blowing, and
cried out, "A sword for the LORD and Gideon!"
21 They all remained standing in place around the
camp, while the whole camp fell to running and
shouting and fleeing. 22 But the three hundred
men kept blowing the horns, and throughout the
camp the LORD set the sword of one against
another.[f] The army fled as far as Beth-shittah in
the direction of Zarethan, near the border of
Abel-meholah at Tabbath.

23 The Israelites were called to arms from
Naphtali, from Asher, and from all Manasseh,
and they pursued Midian. 24 Gideon also sent
messengers throughout the mountain region of
Ephraim to say, "Go down to confront Midian,
and seize the water courses against them as far
as Beth-barah, as well as the Jordan." So all the
Ephraimites were called to arms, and they seized
the water courses as far as Beth-barah, and the
Jordan as well. 25 [g]They captured the two princes
of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, killing Oreb at the
rock of Oreb and Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb.
Then they pursued Midian and carried the heads
of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 6–8
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1 But the Ephraimites said to him, "What have
you done to us, not calling us when you went to
fight against Midian?" And they quarrelled bit-
terly with him. 2 "What have I accomplished
now in comparison with you?" he answered
them. "Is not the gleaning of Ephraim better
than the vintage of Abiezer?[h] 3 Into your power
God delivered the princes of Midian, Oreb and
Zeeb. What have I been able to do in comparison
with you?" When he said this, their anger
against him subsided.

4 When Gideon reached the Jordan and
crossed it with his three hundred men, they
were exhausted and famished. 5 So he said to the
men of Succoth, "Will you give my followers
some loaves of bread? They are exhausted, and I
am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of
Midian." 6 But the princes of Succoth replied,
"Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already
in your possession, that we should give food to
your army?"* 7 Gideon said, "Very well; when
the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna
into my power, I will grind your flesh in with the
thorns and briers of the desert." 8 He went up
from there to Penuel and made the same request
of them, but the men of Penuel answered him as
had the men of Succoth. 9 So to the men of
Penuel, too, he said, "When I return in triumph,
I will demolish this tower."

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor
with their force of about fifteen thousand men;
these were all who were left of the whole
Kedemite army, a hundred and twenty thousand
swordsmen having fallen. 11 Gideon went up by
the route of the nomads east of Nobah and
Jogbehah, and attacked the camp when it felt
secure. 12 Zebah and Zalmunna fled. He pursued
them and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah
and Zalmunna, captive, throwing the entire
army into panic.

13 Then Gideon, son of Joash, returned from
battle by the pass of Heres. 14 He captured a
young man of Succoth, who upon being ques-
tioned listed for him the seventy-seven princes
and elders of Succoth. 15 So he went to the men
of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and
Zalmunna, with whom you taunted me, 'Are the
hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your
possession, that we should give food to your
weary followers?' " 16 He took the elders of the
city, and thorns and briers of the desert, and
ground these men of Succoth into them. 17 He
also demolished the tower of Penuel and slew
the men of the city.

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna,
"Where now are the men you killed at Tabor?"
"They all resembled you," they replied. "They
appeared to be princes." 19 "They were my
brothers, my mother's sons," he said. "As the
LORD lives, if you had spared their lives, I should
not kill you." 20 Then he said to his first-born,

8, 6: Are the hands . . . in your possession . . . ?: i.e., can you already boast of victory? The hands as well as the heads of slain enemies were cut off and counted as trophies; cf 2 Sm 4, 8; 2 Kgs 10, 7f; and the Ugaritic Anath Epic, V AB, II 10ff.

f 22f: Ps 83, 10; Is 9, 4. g Jgs 8, 3; Ps 83, 12; Is 10, 26. h Jg 6, 34.

Jether, "Go, kill them." Since Jether was still a boy, he was afraid and did not draw his sword. [21]Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Come, kill us yourself, for a man's strength is like the man." So Gideon stepped forward and killed Zebah and Zalmunna. He also took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

[22]The Israelites then said to Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son, and your son's son—for you rescued us from the power of Midian." [23]But Gideon answered them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you. The LORD must rule over you."

[24]Gideon went on to say, "I should like to make a request of you. Will each of you give me a ring from his booty?" (For being Ishmaelites,* the enemy had gold rings.) [25]"We will gladly give them," they replied, and spread out a cloak into which everyone threw a ring from his booty. [26]The gold rings that he requested weighed seventeen hundred gold shekels, in addition to the crescents and pendants, the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and the trappings that were on the necks of their camels. [27]Gideon made an ephod out of the gold and placed it in his city Ophrah. However, all Israel paid idolatrous homage to it there, and caused the ruin of Gideon and his family.

[28]Thus was Midian brought into subjection by the Israelites; no longer did they hold their heads high. And the land had rest for forty years, during the lifetime of Gideon.

**Gideon's Son Abimelech** [29]Then Jerubbaal, son of Joash, went back home to stay. [30]*i*Now Gideon had seventy sons, his direct descendants, for he had many wives. [31]His concubine* who lived in Shechem also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech. [32]At a good old age Gideon, son of Joash, died and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. [33]But after Gideon was dead, the Israelites again abandoned themselves to the Baals, making Baal of Berith* their god [34]and forgetting the LORD, their God, who had delivered them from the power of their enemies all around them. [35]Nor were they grateful to the family of Jerubbaal [Gideon] for all the good he had done for Israel.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9
See RG
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[1]Abimelech, son of Jerubbaal, went to his mother's kinsmen in Shechem,*j* and said to them and to the whole clan to which his mother's family belonged, [2]"Put this question to all the citizens of Shechem: 'Which is better for you: that seventy men, or all Jerubbaal's sons, rule over you, or that one man rule over you?' You must remember that I am your own flesh and bone." [3]When his mother's kin repeated these words to them on his behalf, all the citizens of Shechem sympathized with Abimelech, thinking, "He is our kinsman." [4]They also gave him seventy silver shekels from the temple of Baal of Berith, with which Abimelech hired shiftless men and ruffians as his followers. [5]He then went to his ancestral house in Ophrah, and slew his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. Only the youngest son of Jerubbaal, Jotham, escaped, for he was hidden. [6]Then all the citizens of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together and proceeded to make Abimelech king by the terebinth at the memorial pillar in Shechem.

[7]When this was reported to him, Jotham went to the top of Mount Gerizim, and standing there, cried out to them in a loud voice: "Hear me, citizens of Shechem, that God may then hear you! [8]Once the trees went to anoint a king over themselves. So they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.'*k* [9]But the olive tree answered them, 'Must I give up my rich oil, whereby men and gods are honored,* and go to wave over the trees?' [10]Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come; you reign over us!' [11]But the fig tree answered them, 'Must I give up my sweetness

**8, 24:** Ishmaelites: here as in Gn 37, 25–28, the designation is not ethnic; it refers rather to their status as nomads.

**8, 31:** Concubine: cf Gn 25, 1–11 and note.

**8, 33:** Baal of Berith: one of the titles of Baal as worshiped by the Canaanites of Shechem, meaning "the lord of the covenant."

**9, 9:** Whereby men and gods are honored: oil was used in the worship both of the true God and of false gods; it was prescribed in the worship of Yahweh (Lv 2, 1. 6. 15; 24, 2). It was also used to consecrate prophets, priests and kings (Ex 30, 25. 30; 1 Sm 10, 1; 16, 13).

i Jgs 9, 2. 5. j Jgs 8, 31. k Jgs 8, 22f.

and my good fruit, and go to wave over the
trees?' [12]Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come
you, and reign over us.' [13]But the vine answered
them, 'Must I give up my wine that cheers gods*
and men, and go to wave over the trees?' [14]Then
all the trees said to the buckthorn, 'Come; you
reign over us!' [15]But the buckthorn replied to
the trees, 'If you wish to anoint me king over
you in good faith, come and take refuge in my
shadow. Otherwise, let fire come from the
buckthorn and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

[16]*"Now then, if you have acted in good faith
and honorably in appointing Abimelech your
king, if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and
with his family, and if you have treated him as he
deserved— [17]for my father fought for you at the
risk of his life when he saved you from the
power of Midian; [18]but you have risen against
his family this day and have killed his seventy
sons upon one stone, and have made Abimelech,
the son of his handmaid,[l] king over the citizens
of Shechem, because he is your kinsman— [19]if,
then, you have acted in good faith and with
honor toward Jerubbaal and his family this day,
rejoice in Abimelech and may he in turn rejoice
in you. [20]But if not, let fire come forth from
Abimelech to devour the citizens of Shechem
and Beth-millo, and let fire come forth from the
citizens and from Beth-millo to devour Abime-
lech." [21]Then Jotham went in flight to Beer,
where he remained for fear of his brother
Abimelech.

[22]When Abimelech had ruled Israel for three
years, [23]God put bad feelings between Abime-
lech and the citizens of Shechem, who rebelled
against Abimelech. [24]This was to repay the
violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal
and to avenge their blood upon their brother
Abimelech, who killed them, and upon the
citizens of Shechem, who encouraged him to kill
his brothers. [25]The citizens of Shechem then set
men in ambush for him on the mountaintops,
and these robbed all who passed them on the
road. But it was reported to Abimelech.

[26]Now Gaal, son of Ebed, came over to
Shechem with his kinsmen. The citizens of
Shechem put their trust in him, [27]and went out
into the fields, harvested their grapes and trod
them out. Then they held a festival and went to
the temple of their god, where they ate and
drank and cursed Abimelech. [28]Gaal, son of
Ebed, said, "Who is Abimelech? And why
should we of Shechem serve him? Were not the
son of Jerubbaal and his lieutenant Zebul once
subject to the men of Hamor, father of She-
chem?[m] Why should we serve him? [29]Would
that this people were entrusted to my command!
I would depose Abimelech. I would say to
Abimelech, 'Get a larger army and come out!' "

[30]At the news of what Gaal, son of Ebed, had
said, Zebul, the ruler of the city, was angry [31]and
sent messengers to Abimelech in Arumah with
the information: "Gaal, son of Ebed, and his
kinsmen have come to Shechem and are stirring
up the city against you. [32]Now rouse yourself;
set an ambush tonight in the fields, you and the
men who are with you. [33]Promptly at sunrise
tomorrow morning, make a raid on the city.
When he and his followers come out against
you, deal with him as best you can."

[34]During the night Abimelech advanced with
all his soldiers and set up an ambush for She-
chem in four companies. [35]Gaal, son of Ebed,
went out and stood at the entrance of the city
gate. When Abimelech and his soldiers rose from
their place of ambush, [36]Gaal saw them and said
to Zebul, "There are men coming down from the
hilltops!" But Zebul answered him, "You see the
shadow of the hills as men." [37]But Gaal went on
to say, "Men are coming down from the region
of Tabbur-Haares, and one company is coming
by way of Elon-Meonenim." [38]Zebul said to him,
"Where now is the boast you uttered, 'Who is
Abimelech that we should serve him?' Are these
not the men for whom you expressed contempt?
Go out now and fight with them." [39]So Gaal
went out at the head of the citizens of Shechem
and fought against Abimelech. [40]But Abimelech

**9, 13:** Cheers gods: wine was used in the libations both of the Temple of Jerusalem and of pagan temples.

**9, 16:** Just as the noble trees refused the honor of royalty and were made subject to a mean plant, so did Abimelech of less noble birth than the seventy sons of Gideon now tyrannize over the people.

l Jgs 8, 31. m Gn 34, 2. 6.

routed him, and he fled before him; and many
fell slain right up to the entrance of the gate.
41 Abimelech returned to Arumah, but Zebul
drove Gaal and his kinsmen from Shechem,
which they had occupied.

42 The next day, when the people were taking
the field, it was reported to Abimelech, 43 who
divided the men he had into three companies,
and set up an ambush in the fields. He watched
till he saw the people leave the city, and then
rose against them for the attack. 44 Abimelech
and the company with him dashed in and stood
by the entrance of the city gate, while the other
two companies rushed upon all who were in the
field and attacked them. 45 That entire day
Abimelech fought against the city, and captured
it. He then killed its inhabitants and demolished
the city, sowing the site with salt.*

46 When they heard of this, all the citizens of
Migdal-shechem went into the crypt of the
temple of El-berith. 47 It was reported to Abime-
lech that all the citizens of Migdal-shechem were
gathered together. 48 So he went up Mount
Zalmon with all his soldiers, took his ax in his
hand, and cut down some brushwood. This he
lifted to his shoulder, then said to the men with
him, "Hurry! Do just as you have seen me do."
49 So all the men likewise cut down brushwood,
and following Abimelech, placed it against the
crypt. Then they set the crypt on fire over their
heads, so that every one of the citizens of
Migdal-shechem, about a thousand men and
women, perished.

50 Abimelech proceeded to Thebez, which he
invested and captured. 51 Now there was a strong
tower in the middle of the city, and all the men
and women, in a word all the citizens of the city,
fled there, shutting themselves in and going up
to the roof of the tower. 52 Abimelech came up to
the tower and fought against it, advancing to the
very entrance of the tower to set it on fire. 53 But
a certain woman cast the upper part of a
millstone down on Abimelech's head, and it
fractured his skull.[n] 54 He immediately called his
armor-bearer and said to him, "Draw your sword
and dispatch me, lest they say of me that a
woman killed me."[o] So his attendant ran him
through and he died. 55 When the Israelites saw
that Abimelech was dead, they all left for their
homes.

56 Thus did God requite the evil Abimelech
had done to his father in killing his seventy
brothers. 57 God also brought all their wicked-
ness home to the Shechemites, for the curse of
Jotham, son of Jerubbaal, overtook them.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10–12
See RG
137

**Tola** 1 After Abimelech there rose to save Israel
the Issacharite Tola, son of Puah, son of Dodo, a
resident of Shamir in the mountain region of
Ephraim. 2 When he had judged Israel twenty-
three years, he died and was buried in Shamir.

**Jair** 3 Jair the Gileadite came after him and
judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 He had thirty
sons who rode on thirty saddle-asses* and pos-
sessed thirty cities in the land of Gilead; these
are called Havvoth-jair to the present day.[p] 5 Jair
died and was buried in Kamon.

**Oppression by the Ammonites** 6 The Israel-
ites again offended the LORD, serving the Baals
and Ashtaroths, the gods of Aram, the gods of
Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the
Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.
Since they had abandoned the LORD and would
not serve him, 7 the LORD became angry with
Israel and allowed them to fall into the power of
[the Philistines and] the Ammonites. 8 For eigh-
teen years they afflicted and oppressed the
Israelites in Bashan, and all the Israelites in the
Amorite land beyond the Jordan in Gilead. 9 The
Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight
against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephra-
im, so that Israel was in great distress.

10 Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD,
"We have sinned against you; we have forsaken
our God and have served the Baals." 11 [q] The

**9, 45**: Sowing the site with salt: a severe measure, which was a symbol of desolation, and even more, since it actually rendered the ground barren and useless.

**10, 4**: Saddle-asses: a sign of rank and wealth; cf Jgs 5, 10; 12, 14.

n 2 Sm 11, 21. o 1 Sm 31, 4; 1 Chr 10, 4. p Dt 3, 14. q 11–14: Jgs 2, 1ff; 6, 8ff.

LORD answered the Israelites: "Did not the
Egyptians, the Amorites,[r] the Ammonites, the
Philistines, [12]the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and
the Midianites oppress you?[s] Yet when you cried
out to me, and I saved you from their grasp,
[13]you still forsook me and worshiped other gods.
Therefore I will save you no more. [14]Go and cry
out to the gods you have chosen; let them save
you now that you are in distress." [15]But the
Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do
to us whatever you please. Only save us this
day." [16]And they cast out the foreign gods from
their midst and served the LORD, so that he
grieved over the misery of Israel.

[17]The Ammonites had gathered for war and
encamped in Gilead, while the Israelites assem-
bled and encamped in Mizpah.[t] [18]And among
the people the princes of Gilead said to one
another, "The one who begins the war against
the Ammonites shall be leader of all the inhabit-
ants of Gilead."[u]

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 10–12
See RG
137

**Jephthah** [1]There was a chieftain, the Gileadite
Jephthah, born to Gilead of a harlot. [2]Gilead's
wife had also borne him sons, and on growing
up the sons of the wife had driven Jephthah
away, saying to him, "You shall inherit nothing
in our family, for you are the son of another
woman." [3]So Jephthah had fled from his broth-
ers and had taken up residence in the land of
Tob. A rabble had joined company with him, and
went out with him on raids.

[4]Some time later, the Ammonites warred on
Israel. [5]When this occurred the elders of Gilead
went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob.
[6]"Come," they said to Jephthah, "be our com-
mander that we may be able to fight the
Ammonites." [7]"Are you not the ones who hated
me and drove me from my father's house?"
Jephthah replied to the elders of Gilead. "Why
do you come to me now, when you are in
distress?" [8]The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah,
"In any case, we have now come back to you; if
you go with us to fight against the Ammonites,
you shall be the leader of all of us who dwell in
Gilead." [9]Jephthah answered the elders of Gil-
ead, "If you bring me back to fight against the
Ammonites and the LORD delivers them up to
me, I shall be your leader." [10]The elders of
Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD is witness
between us that we will do as you say."

[11]So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead,
and the people made him their leader and
commander.[v] In Mizpah, Jephthah settled all his
affairs before the LORD. [12]Then he sent messen-
gers to the king of the Ammonites to say, "What
have you against me that you come to fight with
me in my land?" [13]He answered the messengers
of Jephthah, "Israel took away my land from the
Arnon to the Jabbok and the Jordan when they
came up from Egypt.[w] Now restore the same
peaceably."

[14]Again Jephthah sent messengers to the king
of the Ammonites, [15]saying to him, "This is what
Jephthah says: Israel did not take the land of
Moab or the land of the Ammonites.[x] [16]For
when they came up from Egypt, Israel went
through the desert to the Red Sea and came to
Kadesh. [17]Israel then sent messengers to the
king of Edom saying, 'Let me pass through your
land.' But the king of Edom did not give
consent. They also sent to the king of Moab, but
he too was unwilling. So Israel remained in
Kadesh.[y] [18]Then they went through the desert,
and by-passing the land of Edom and the land of
Moab, went east of the land of Moab and
encamped across the Arnon.[z] Thus they did not
go through the territory of Moab, for the Arnon
is the boundary of Moab. [19][a]Then Israel sent
messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, king
of Heshbon. Israel said to him, 'Let me pass
through your land to my own place.' [20]But Sihon
refused to let Israel pass through his territory. On
the contrary, he gathered all his soldiers, who
encamped at Jahaz and fought Israel. [21]But the
LORD, the God of Israel, delivered Sihon and all
his men into the power of Israel, who defeated
them and occupied all the land of the Amorites
dwelling in that region, [22]the whole territory
from the Arnon to the Jabbok, from the desert to

r Nm 21, 21–32. s Jgs 6, 3. t Jgs 11, 29. u Jgs 11, 5–11. v Jgs 10, 18. w Nm 21, 13. 24ff. x Dt 2, 9. 19. y Nm 20, 1. 14. 18–21; Dt 1, 46. z Nm 21, 4. 11. 13; 22, 36; Dt 2, 8. a 19–22: Nm 21, 21–26; Dt 2, 26–36.

the Jordan. [23]If now the LORD, the God of Israel,
has cleared the Amorites out of the way of his
people, are you to dislodge Israel? [24]Should you
not possess that which your god Chemosh* gave
you to possess, and should we not possess all
that the LORD, our God, has cleared out for us?[b]
[25]Again, are you any better than Balak, son of
Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever quarrel with
Israel, or did he war against them[c] [26]when Israel
occupied Heshbon and its villages, Aroer and its
villages, and all the cities on the banks of the
Arnon?[d] Three hundred years have passed; why
did you not recover them during that time? [27]I
have not sinned against you, but you wrong me
by warring against me. Let the LORD, who is
judge, decide this day between the Israelites and
the Ammonites!" [28]But the king of the Ammon-
ites paid no heed to the message Jephthah sent
him.

**Jephthah's Vow** [29]The spirit of the LORD came
upon Jephthah. He passed through Gilead and
Manasseh, and through Mizpah-Gilead as well,
and from there he went on to the Ammonites.
[30]*Jephthah made a vow to the LORD. "If you
deliver the Ammonites into my power," he said,
[31]"whoever comes out of the doors of my house
to meet me when I return in triumph from the
Ammonites shall belong to the LORD. I shall offer
him up as a holocaust."

[32]Jephthah then went on to the Ammonites to
fight against them, and the LORD delivered them
into his power, [33]so that he inflicted a severe
defeat on them, from Aroer to the approach of
Minnith (twenty cities in all) and as far as Abel-
keramim. Thus were the Ammonites brought
into subjection by the Israelites. [34]When Jeph-
thah returned to his house in Mizpah, it was his
daughter who came forth, playing the tambou-
rines and dancing. She was an only child: he had
neither son nor daughter besides her. [35]When he
saw her, he rent his garments and said, "Alas,
daughter, you have struck me down and brought
calamity upon me. For I have made a vow to the
LORD and I cannot retract."[e] [36]"Father," she
replied, "you have made a vow to the LORD. Do
with me as you have vowed, because the LORD
has wrought vengeance for you on your enemies
the Ammonites." [37]Then she said to her father,
"Let me have this favor. Spare me for two
months, that I may go off down the mountains
to mourn my virginity* with my companions."
[38]"Go," he replied, and sent her away for two
months. So she departed with her companions
and mourned her virginity on the mountains.
[39]At the end of the two months she returned to
her father, who did to her as he had vowed. She
had not been intimate with man. It then became
a custom in Israel [40]for Israelite women to go
yearly to mourn the daughter of Jephthah the
Gileadite for four days of the year.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 10-12
See RG
137

**The Shibboleth Incident** [1]The men of Ephra-
im gathered together and crossed over to Za-
phon. They said to Jephthah, "Why do you go on
to fight with the Ammonites without calling us
to go with you? We will burn your house over
you."[f] [2]Jephthah answered them, "My soldiers
and I were engaged in a critical contest with the
Ammonites. I summoned you, but you did not
rescue me from their power. [3]When I saw that
you would not effect a rescue, I took my life in
my own hand and went on to the Ammonites,
and the LORD delivered them into my power.
Why, then, do you come up against me this day
to fight with me?"

[4]Then Jephthah called together all the men of
Gilead and fought against Ephraim, whom they
defeated; for the Ephraimites had said, "You of
Gilead are Ephraimite fugitives in territory be-

11, 24: Chemosh: the chief god of the Moabites—not of the Ammonites, whose leading deity was called Molech or Milcom; cf Nm 21, 29; 1 Kgs 11, 7; 2 Kgs 23, 13. The error is probably due to an ancient copyist. Jephthah argues from the viewpoint of his adversaries, the Ammonites, that they were entitled to all the land they had conquered with the aid of their god. It does not necessarily follow that Jephthah himself believed in the actual existence of this pagan god.

11, 30–40: The text clearly implies that Jephthah vowed a human sacrifice, according to the custom of his pagan neighbors; cf 2 Kgs 3, 27. The inspired author merely records the fact; he does not approve of the action.

11, 37: Mourn my virginity: to bear children was woman's greatest pride; to be childless was regarded as a great misfortune. Hence Jephthah's daughter asks permission to mourn the fact that she will be put to death before she can bear children.

b Nm 21, 29; 1 Kgs 11, 7. c Nm 22, 2; Jos 24, 9; Mi 6, 5. d Nm 21, 25; Dt 2, 36. e Nm 30, 3. f Jgs 8, 1.

longing to Ephraim and Manasseh." [5]The Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan toward Ephraim. When any of the fleeing Ephraimites said, "Let me pass," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he answered, "No!" [6]they would ask him to say "Shibboleth."* If he said "Sibboleth," not being able to give the proper pronunciation, they would seize him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell at that time.

[7]After having judged Israel for six years, Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in his city in Gilead.

**Ibzan** [8]After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. [9]He had thirty sons. He also had thirty daughters married outside the family, and he brought in as wives for his sons thirty young women from outside the family. After having judged Israel for seven years, [10]Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

**Elon** [11]After him the Zebulunite Elon judged Israel. When he had judged Israel for ten years, [12]the Zebulunite Elon died and was buried in Elon in the land of Zebulun.

**Abdon** [13]After him the Pirathonite Abdon, son of Hillel, judged Israel. [14]He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy saddle-asses. After having judged Israel for eight years, [15]the Pirathonite Abdon, son of Hillel, died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim on the mountain of the Amalekites.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 13–16 See RG 137–139

**The Birth of Samson** [1]The Israelites again offended the LORD, who therefore delivered them into the power of the Philistines for forty years.[g]

[2]There was a certain man from Zorah, of the clan of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren and had borne no children. [3]An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Though you are barren and have had no children, yet you will conceive and bear a son.[h] [4]Now, then, be careful to take no wine or strong drink and to eat nothing unclean. [5]As for the son you will conceive and bear, no razor shall touch his head,[i] for this boy is to be consecrated* to God from the womb. It is he who will begin the deliverance of Israel from the power of the Philistines."

[6]The woman went and told her husband, "A man of God came to me; he had the appearance of an angel of God, terrible indeed. I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name. [7]But he said to me, 'You will be with child and will bear a son. So take neither wine nor strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb, until the day of his death.' " [8]Manoah then prayed to the LORD. "O LORD, I beseech you," he said, "may the man of God whom you sent, return to us to teach us what to do for the boy who will be born."

[9]God heard the prayer of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field. Since her husband Manoah was not with her, [10]the woman ran in haste and told her husband. "The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me," she said to him; [11]so Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he reached the man, he said to him, "Are you the one who spoke to my wife?" "Yes," he answered. [12]Then Manoah asked, "Now, when that which you say comes true, what are we expected to do for the boy?" [13]The angel of the LORD answered Manoah, "Your wife is to abstain from all the things of which I spoke to her. [14]She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor take wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean. Let her observe all that I have commanded her." [15]Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Can we persuade you to stay, while we prepare a kid for you?" [16]But the angel of the LORD answered Manoah, "Although you press me, I will not partake of your food. But if you will, you

12, 6: Shibboleth: "an ear of grain." But this Hebrew word can also mean "flood water" as in Ps 69, 3. 16. Apparently the Gileadites engaged the Ephraimites in conversation about the "flood water" of the Jordan. Differences in enunciating the initial sibilant of the Hebrew word betrayed different tribal affinities.

13, 5: Consecrated: In Hebrew, nazir. Samson therefore was for life to be under the nazirite vow, which obliged him to abstain from drinking wine or having his hair cut; cf Nm 6, 2–8.

g Jgs 10, 6. h 3f: 1 Sm 1, 20; Lk 1, 31. i Nm 6, 5.

may offer a holocaust to the LORD." Not knowing that it was the angel of the LORD, [17]Manoah said to him, "What is your name, that we may honor you when your words come true?" [18]The angel of the LORD answered him,[j] "Why do you ask my name, which is mysterious?"* [19][k]Then Manoah took the kid with a cereal offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, whose works are mysteries. While Manoah and his wife were looking on, [20]as the flame rose to the sky from the altar, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell prostrate to the ground; [21]but the angel of the LORD was seen no more by Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah, realizing that it was the angel of the LORD, [22]said to his wife, "We will certainly die, for we have seen God."[l] [23]But his wife pointed out to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a holocaust and cereal offering from our hands! Nor would he have let us see all this just now, or hear what we have heard."

[24]The woman bore a son and named him Samson.[m] The boy grew up and the LORD blessed him; [25]the spirit of the LORD first stirred him in Mahaneh-dan, which is between Zorah and Eshtaol.

## CHAPTER 14

**Marriage of Samson** [1]Samson went down to Timnah and saw there one of the Philistine women.* [2]On his return he told his father and mother, "There is a Philistine woman I saw in Timnah whom I wish you to get as a wife for me." [3]His father and mother said to him, "Can you find no wife among your kinsfolk or among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson answered his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me." [4][n]Now his father and mother did not know that this had been brought about by the LORD, who was providing an opportunity against the Philistines; for at that time they had dominion over Israel.

[5]*So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother. When they had come to the vineyards of Timnah, a young lion came roaring to meet him. [6]But the spirit of the LORD came upon Samson, and although he had no weapons, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a kid. [7]However, on the journey to speak for the woman, he did not mention to his father or mother what he had done. [8]Later, when he returned to marry the woman who pleased him, he stepped aside to look at the remains of the lion and found a swarm of bees and honey in the lion's carcass. [9]So he scooped the honey out into his palms and ate it as he went along. When he came to his father and mother, he gave them some to eat, without telling them that he had scooped the honey from the lion's carcass.

[10]His father also went down to the woman, and Samson gave a banquet there, since it was customary for the young men to do this. [11]When they met him, they brought thirty men to be his companions.* [12]Samson said to them, "Let me propose a riddle to you. If within the seven days of the feast you solve it for me successfully, I will give you thirty linen tunics and thirty sets of garments. [13]But if you cannot answer it for me, you must give me thirty tunics and thirty sets of garments." "Propose your riddle," they responded; "we will listen to it." [14]So he said to them,

Ch 13–16
See RG
137–139

"Out of the eater came forth food,
and out of the strong came forth
sweetness."

After three days' failure to answer the riddle,

13, 18: Mysterious: incomprehensible, above human understanding. Hence, the angel speaks in the name of the Lord himself, to whom Manoah at once offers a sacrifice.

14, 1–3: Marriages were arranged by the parents of the bridegroom as well as of the bride; cf Gn 24, 2–8; 34, 3–6. The Mosaic law specified only seven pagan nations, not including the Philistines, in the prohibition against mixed marriages; cf Dt 7, 1–4. But national and religious sentiment was against any marriage with a non-Israelite; cf Gn 28, 1f; 1 Kgs 11, 1–10.

14, 5ff: Although Samson was accompanied by his parents on the journey to Timnah, v 7 implies that he was not near them when he tore the lion in pieces.

14, 11: Companions: known at a later period as "the friends of the bridegroom" (1 Mc 9, 39; Mk 2, 19), the best man and his fellows. Here they are Philistines (v 16), appointed by the family of the bride, who would also have several bridesmaids; cf Mt 25, 1–13.

j Gn 32, 29. k 19f: Jgs 6, 19ff. l 21f: Jgs 6, 22f. m Heb 11, 32. n Jgs 15, 11.

[15]they said on the fourth day to Samson's wife.
"Coax your husband to answer the riddle for us,
or we will burn you and your family. Did you
invite us here to reduce us to poverty?" [16]At
Samson's side, his wife wept and said, "You
must hate me; you do not love me, for you have
proposed a riddle to my countrymen, but have
not told me the answer." He said to her, "If I
have not told it even to my father or my mother,
must I tell it to you?" [17]But she wept beside him
during the seven days the feast lasted. On the
seventh day, since she importuned him, he told
her the answer, and she explained the riddle to
her countrymen.

[18]On the seventh day, before the sun set, the
men of the city said to him,

"What is sweeter than honey,
and what is stronger than a lion?"

He replied to them,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have solved my riddle."

[19]The spirit of the LORD came upon him, and
he went down to Ashkelon, where he killed
thirty of their men and despoiled them; he gave
their garments to those who had answered the
riddle. Then he went off to his own family in
anger, [20]and Samson's wife was married to the
one who had been best man at his wedding.[o]

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 13–16
See RG
137–139

**Samson Defeats the Philistines** [1]After some
time, in the season of the wheat harvest, Samson
visited his wife, bringing a kid. But when he
said, "Let me be with my wife in private," her
father would not let him enter, [2]saying, "I
thought it certain you wished to repudiate her;
so I gave her to your best man. Her younger
sister is more beautiful than she; you may have
her instead." [3]Samson said to them, "This time
the Philistines cannot blame me if I harm them."
[4]So Samson left and caught three hundred foxes.
Turning them tail to tail, he tied between each
pair of tails one of the torches he had at hand.
[5]He then kindled the torches and set the foxes
loose in the standing grain of the Philistines, thus
burning both the shocks and the standing grain,
and the vineyards and olive orchards as well.

[6][p]When the Philistines asked who had done
this, they were told, "Samson, the son-in-law of
the Timnite, because his wife was taken and
given to his best man." So the Philistines went
up and destroyed her and her family by fire.
[7]Samson said to them, "If this is how you act, I
will not stop until I have taken revenge on you."
[8]And with repeated blows, he inflicted a great
slaughter on them. Then he went down and
remained in a cavern of the cliff of Etam.

[9]The Philistines went up and, from a camp in
Judah, deployed against Lehi. [10]When the men
of Judah asked, "Why have you come up against
us?" they answered, "To take Samson prisoner;
to do to him as he has done to us." [11]Three
thousand men of Judah went down to the cavern
in the cliff of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you
not know that the Philistines are our rulers?
Why, then, have you done this to us?" He
answered them, "As they have done to me, so
have I done to them." [12]They said to him, "We
have come to take you prisoner, to deliver you
over to the Philistines." Samson said to them,
"Swear to me that you will not kill me your-
selves." [13]"No," they replied, "we will certainly
not kill you but will only bind you and deliver
you over to them."[q] So they bound him with
two new ropes and brought him up from the
cliff. [14]When he reached Lehi, and the Philis-
tines came shouting to meet him, the spirit of
the LORD came upon him: the ropes around his
arms became as flax that is consumed by fire and
his bonds melted away from his hands. [15]Near
him was the fresh jawbone of an ass; he reached
out, grasped it, and with it killed a thousand
men. [16]Then Samson said,

"With the jawbone of an ass
I have piled them in a heap;
With the jawbone of an ass
I have slain a thousand men."

[17]As he finished speaking he threw the jaw-
bone from him; and so that place was named

**15, 17**: Ramath-lehi: "heights of the jawbone."

o Jgs 15, 2. 6. p Jgs 14, 20. q Jgs 16, 11f.

Ramath-lehi.* [18]Being very thirsty, he cried to the LORD and said, "You have granted this great victory by the hand of your servant. Must I now die of thirst or fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" [19]Then God split the cavity in Lehi, and water issued from it, which Samson drank till his spirit returned and he revived. Hence that spring in Lehi is called En-hakkore* to this day.

[20]Samson judged Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.[r]

## CHAPTER 16

[1]Once Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a harlot and visited her. [2]Informed that Samson had come there, the men of Gaza surrounded him with an ambush at the city gate all night long. And all the night they waited, saying, "Tomorrow morning we will kill him." [3]Samson rested there until midnight. Then he rose, seized the doors of the city gate and the two gateposts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He hoisted them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the ridge opposite Hebron.

**Samson and Delilah** [4]After that he fell in love with a woman in the Wadi Sorek whose name was Delilah. [5]The lords of the Philistines came to her and said, "Beguile him and find out the secret of his great strength, and how we may overcome and bind him so as to keep him helpless. We will each give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

[6]So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you may be bound so as to be kept helpless." [7]"If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings which have not dried," Samson answered her, "I shall be as weak as any other man." [8]So the lords of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings which had not dried, and she bound him with them. [9]She had men lying in wait in the chamber and so she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the strings as a thread of tow is severed by a whiff of flame;[s] and the secret of his strength remained unknown.

[10]Delilah said to Samson, "You have mocked me and told me lies. Now tell me how you may be bound." [11]"If they bind me tight with new ropes, with which no work has been done," he answered her, "I shall be as weak as any other man."[t] [12]So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them. Then she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" For there were men lying in wait in the chamber. But he snapped them off his arms like thread.

[13]Delilah said to Samson again, "Up to now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you may be bound." He said to her, "If you weave my seven locks of hair into the web and fasten them with the pin, I shall be as weak as any other man." [14]So while he slept, Delilah wove his seven locks of hair into the web, and fastened them in with the pin. Then she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" Awakening from his sleep, he pulled out both the weaver's pin and the web.

Ch 13–16
See RG
137–139

[15]Then she said to him, "How can you say that you love me when you do not confide in me? Three times already you have mocked me, and not told me the secret of your great strength!" [16]She importuned him continually and vexed him with her complaints till he was deathly weary of them. [17]So he took her completely into his confidence and told her, "No razor has touched my head,[u] for I have been consecrated to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I shall be as weak as any other man!" [18]When Delilah saw that he had taken her completely into his confidence, she summoned the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up this time, for he has opened his heart to me." So the lords of the Philistines came and brought up the money with them. [19]She had him sleep on her lap, and called for a man who shaved off his seven locks of hair. Then she began to mistreat him, for his strength had left him. [20]When she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!", and he woke from his sleep, he thought he could make good his escape as he had done time and again, for he did not realize that the LORD had left him. [21]But the Philistines seized him and gouged out his

15, 19: En-hakkore: "the spring of him who cries out," an allusion to Samson's cry in v 18.

r Jgs 16, 31. s Jgs 15, 14. t Jgs 15, 13. u Jgs 13, 5.

eyes. Then they brought him down to Gaza and
bound him with bronze fetters, and he was put
to grinding in the prison. 22But the hair of his
head began to grow as soon as it was shaved off.

Ch 17–18
See RG
139

**The Death of Samson** 23 [v]The lords of the
Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to
their god Dagon* and to make merry. They said,

"Our god has delivered into our power
Samson our enemy."

25When their spirits were high, they said, "Call
Samson that he may amuse us." So they called
Samson from the prison, and he played the
buffoon before them. 24When the people saw
him, they praised their god. For they said,

"Our god has delivered into our power
our enemy, the ravager of our land,
the one who has multiplied our slain."

Then they stationed him between the columns. 26Samson said to the attendant who was holding his hand, "Put me where I may touch the columns that support the temple and may rest against them." 27The temple was full of men and women: all the lords of the Philistines were there, and from the roof about three thousand men and women looked on as Samson provided amusement. 28Samson cried out to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, remember me! Strengthen me, O God, this last time that for my two eyes I may avenge myself once and for all on the Philistines." 29Samson grasped the two middle columns on which the temple rested and braced himself against them, one at his right hand, the other at his left. 30And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed hard, and the temple fell upon the lords and all the people who were in it. Those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his lifetime.

31All his family and kinsmen went down and bore him up for burial in the grave of his father Manoah between Zorah and Eshtaol. He had judged Israel for twenty years. [w]

## III: The Tribes of Dan and Benjamin in the Days of the Judges

### CHAPTER 17

**Micah and the Levite** 1There was a man in the mountain region of Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver over which you pronounced a curse in my hearing when they were taken from you, are in my possession. It was I who took them; so now I will restore them to you." 3When he restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she took two hundred of them and gave them to the silversmith, who made of them a carved idol* overlaid with silver. [x] 4Then his mother said, "May the LORD bless my son! I have consecrated the silver to the LORD as my gift in favor of my son, by making a carved idol overlaid with silver." It remained in the house of Micah. 5Thus the layman Micah had a sanctuary. He also made an ephod and household idols, [y] and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what he thought best. [z]

7There was a young Levite who had resided within the tribe of Judah at Bethlehem of Judah. 8From that city he set out to find another place of residence. On his journey he came to the house of Micah in the mountain region of Ephraim. 9Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" He answered him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and am on my way to find some other place of residence." 10"Stay with me," Micah said to him. "Be father and priest to me, [a] and I will give you ten silver shekels a year, a set of garments, and your food." 11So the young Levite decided to stay with the man, to whom he became as one of his own sons. 12*Micah consecrated the young Levite, who became his priest, remaining in his house. 13Therefore Micah said, "Now I know that the

**16, 23**: Dagon was originally a Mesopotamian deity, whom the Philistines came to worship as their own god of grain.

**17, 3**: Idol: an image, not of a pagan god, but of the Lord. The Mosaic law forbade the making of an image even of the true God.

**17, 12f**: According to Nm 18, 1–7 only those Levites who were descended from Aaron could be consecrated as priests.

v 1 Sm 5, 2–5. w Jgs 15, 20. x Ex 20, 4; Lv 19, 4. y Jgs 18, 14. 17. z Jgs 18, 1; 21, 25. a Jgs 18, 19.

LORD will prosper me, since the Levite has become my priest."

## CHAPTER 18

**Migration of the Danites** [1]At that time there was no king in Israel.[b] Moreover the tribe of Danites were in search of a district to dwell in, for up to that time they had received no heritage among the tribes of Israel.*

[2]So the Danites sent from their clan a detail of five valiant men of Zorah and Eshtaol, to reconnoiter the land and scout it. With their instructions to go and scout the land, they traveled as far as the house of Micah in the mountain region of Ephraim, where they passed the night. [3]Near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice* of the young Levite[c] and turned in that direction. "Who brought you here and what are you doing here?" they asked him. "What is your interest here?" [4]"This is how Micah treats me," he replied to them. "He pays me a salary and I am his priest."[d] [5]They said to him, "Consult God, that we may know whether the undertaking we are engaged in will succeed." [6]The priest said to them, "Go and prosper: the LORD is favorable to the undertaking you are engaged in."

[7]So the five men went on and came to Laish. They saw that the people dwelling there lived securely after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and trusting, with no lack of any natural resources. They were distant from the Sidonians and had no contact with other people. [8]When the five returned to their kinsmen in Zorah and Eshtaol and were asked for a report, [9]they replied, "Come, let us attack them, for we have seen the land and it is very good. Are you going to hesitate? Do not be slothful about beginning your expedition to possess the land. [10]Those against whom you go are a trusting people, and the land is ample. God has indeed given it into your power: a place where no natural resource is lacking."

[11]So six hundred men of the clan of the Danites, fully armed with weapons of war, set out from where they were in Zorah and Eshtaol, [12]and camped in Judah, up near Kiriath-jearim; hence to this day the place, which lies west of Kiriath-jearim, is called Mahaneh-dan.[e]

Ch 17–18 See RG 139

[13]From there they went on to the mountain region of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. [14]The five men who had gone to reconnoiter the land of Laish said to their kinsmen, "Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household idols, and a carved idol overlaid with silver?[f] Now decide what you must do!" [15]So turning in that direction, they went to the house of the young Levite at the home of Micah and greeted him. [16]The six hundred men girt with weapons of war, who were Danites, stood by the entrance of the gate, and the priest stood there also. [17]Meanwhile, the five men who had gone to reconnoiter the land went up and entered the house of Micah. [18]When they had gone in and taken the ephod, the household idols, and the carved idol overlaid with silver, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" [19]They said to him, "Be still: put your hand over your mouth. Come with us and be our father and priest.[g] Is it better for you to be priest for the family of one man or to be priest for a tribe and a clan in Israel?" [20]The priest, agreeing, took the ephod, household idols, and carved idol and went off in the midst of the band. [21]As they turned to depart, they placed their little ones, their livestock, and their goods at the head of the column.

[22]The Danites had already gone some distance, when those in the houses near that of Micah took up arms and overtook them. [23]They called to the Danites, who turned about and said to Micah, "What do you want, that you have taken up arms?" [24]"You have taken my god, which I made, and have gone off with my priest as well," he answered. "What is left for me? How, then, can you ask me what I want?" [25]The Danites said to him, "Let us hear no further

18, 1: The tribe of Dan had been assigned a territory with definite limits in central Palestine. However they were unable to gain possession of the better portion of their land (Jgs 1, 34). So they now seek territory elsewhere in Palestine.

18, 3: Recognized the voice: perhaps they noticed the peculiar pronunciation of his south Hebrew dialect.

b Jos 19, 40–48. c Jgs 17, 7. d Jgs 17, 10. e Jgs 13, 25. f Jgs 17, 4f. g Jgs 17, 10.

sound from you, lest fierce men fall upon you
and you and your family lose your lives." 26The
Danites then went on their way, and Micah,
seeing that they were stronger than he, returned
home.

27Having taken what Micah had made, and
the priest he had had, they attacked Laish, a
quiet and trusting people; they put them to the
sword and destroyed their city by fire. 28No one
came to their aid, since the city was far from
Sidon and they had no contact with other
people. The Danites then rebuilt the city, which
was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob, and
lived there. 29They named it Dan after their
ancestor Dan, son of Israel. However, the name
of the city was formerly Laish. 30The Danites set
up the carved idol for themselves, and Jonathan,
son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his descen-
dants were priests for the tribe of the Danites
until the time of the captivity of the land.*
31They maintained the carved idol Micah had
made as long as the house of God was in Shiloh.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 19–21
See RG
139–140

**The Levite from Ephraim** 1At that time,
when there was no king in Israel,[h] there was a
Levite residing in remote parts of the mountain
region of Ephraim who had taken for himself a
concubine from Bethlehem of Judah. 2His concu-
bine was unfaithful to him and left him for her
father's house in Bethlehem of Judah, where she
stayed for some four months. 3Her husband then
set out with his servant and a pair of asses, and
went after her to forgive her and take her back.
She brought him into her father's house, and on
seeing him, the girl's father joyfully made him
welcome. 4He was detained by the girl's father,
and so he spent three days with this father-in-law
of his, eating and drinking and passing the night
there. 5*On the fourth day they rose early in the
morning and he prepared to go. But the girl's
father said to his son-in-law, "Fortify yourself
with a little food; you can go later on." 6So they
stayed and the two men ate and drank together.
Then the girl's father said to the husband, "Why
not decide to spend the night here and enjoy
yourself?" 7The man still made a move to go, but
when his father-in-law pressed him he went
back and spent the night there.

8On the fifth morning he rose early to depart,
but the girl's father said, "Fortify yourself and
tarry until the afternoon." When he and his
father-in-law had eaten, 9and the husband was
ready to go with his concubine and servant, the
girl's father said to him, "It is already growing
dusk. Stay for the night. See, the day is coming
to an end. Spend the night here and enjoy
yourself. Early tomorrow you can start your
journey home." 10The man, however, refused to
stay another night; he and his concubine set out
with a pair of saddled asses, and traveled till they
came opposite Jebus, which is Jerusalem. 11Since
they were near Jebus with the day far gone, the
servant said to his master, "Come, let us turn off
to this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in
it." 12But his master said to him, "We will not
turn off to a city of foreigners, who are not
Israelites, but will go on to Gibeah.[i] 13Come,"
he said to his servant, "let us make for some
other place, either Gibeah or Ramah, to spend
the night."[j] 14So they continued on their way till
the sun set on them when they were abreast of
Gibeah of Benjamin.

15*There they turned off to enter Gibeah for
the night.[k] The man waited in the public square
of the city he had entered, but no one offered
them the shelter of his home for the night. 16In
the evening, however, an old man came from his
work in the field; he was from the mountain
region of Ephraim, though he lived among the
Benjaminite townspeople of Gibeah. 17When he
noticed the traveler in the public square of the
city, the old man asked where he was going, and
whence he had come. 18He said to him, "We are
traveling from Bethlehem of Judah far up into
the mountain region of Ephraim, where I be-
long. I have been to Bethlehem of Judah and am
now going back home; but no one has offered us

**18, 30:** Until . . . land: about the year 734 B.C., when the Assyrian emperor Tiglath-pileser III subjected northern Palestine.

**19, 5–9:** Such importuning of guests to prolong their stay at the home of their host is characteristic of Oriental hospitality.

**19, 15:** Private hospitality was the customary means of providing comfort to travelers where public facilities were so rare.

h Jgs 17, 6. i Jgs 1, 21. j Jos 18, 25. k Jgs 20, 4.

the shelter of his house. [19]We have straw and
fodder for our asses, and bread and wine for the
woman and myself and for our servant; there is
nothing else we need." [20]"You are welcome,"
the old man said to him, "but let me provide for
all your needs, and do not spend the night in the
public square." [21]So he led them to his house
and provided fodder for the asses. Then they
washed their feet, and ate and drank.[l]

**The Outrage at Gibeah** [22][m]While they were
enjoying themselves, the men of the city, who
were corrupt,* surrounded the house and beat
on the door. They said to the old man whose
house it was, "Bring out your guest, that we may
abuse him." [23]The owner of the house went out
to them and said, "No, my brothers; do not be so
wicked. Since this man is my guest, do not
commit this crime. [24]Rather let me bring out my
maiden daughter or his concubine. Ravish them,
or do whatever you want with them; but against
the man you must not commit this wanton
crime." [25]When the men would not listen to his
host, the husband seized his concubine and
thrust her outside to them. They had relations
with her and abused her all night until the
following dawn, when they let her go. [26]Then at
daybreak the woman came and collapsed at the
entrance of the house in which her husband was
a guest, where she lay until the morning.
[27]When her husband rose that day and opened
the door of the house to start out again on his
journey, there lay the woman, his concubine, at
the entrance of the house with her hands on the
threshold. [28]He said to her, "Come, let us go";
but there was no answer. So the man placed her
on an ass and started out again for home.

[29]*On reaching home, he took a knife to the
body of his concubine, cut her into twelve
pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of
Israel. [30][n]Everyone who saw this said, "Nothing
like this has been done or seen from the day the
Israelites came up from the land of Egypt to this
day. Take note of it, and state what you propose
to do."

## CHAPTER 20

Ch 19–21
See RG
139–140

**Assembly of Israelites** [1]So all the Israelites
came out as one man: from Dan to Beer-sheba,*
and from the land of Gilead, the community was
gathered to the LORD at Mizpah. [2]The leaders of
all the people and all the tribesmen of Israel, four
hundred thousand foot soldiers who were
swordsmen, presented themselves in the assem-
bly of the people of God. [3]Meanwhile, the
Benjaminites heard that the Israelites had gone
up to Mizpah. The Israelites asked to be told
how the crime had taken place, [4]and the Levite,
the husband of the murdered woman, testified:
"My concubine and I went into Gibeah of
Benjamin[o] for the night. [5][p]But the citizens of
Gibeah rose up against me by night and sur-
rounded the house in which I was. Me they
attempted to kill, and my concubine they abused
so that she died. [6][q]So I took my concubine and
cut her up and sent her through every part of the
territory of Israel, because of the monstrous
crime they had committed in Israel. [7]*Now that
you are all here, O Israelites, state what you
propose to do."[r] [8]All the people rose as one man
to say, "None of us is to leave for his tent or
return to his home. [9]Now as for Gibeah, this is
what we will do: We will proceed against it by
lot, [10]taking from all the tribes of Israel ten men
for every hundred, a hundred for every thou-
sand, a thousand for every ten thousand, and
procuring supplies for the soldiers who will go to
deal fully and suitably with Gibeah of Benjamin
for the crime it committed in Israel."

[11]When, therefore, all the men of Israel with-
out exception were leagued together against the
city, [12]*the tribes of Israel sent men throughout

19, 22: Who were corrupt: literally "sons of Belial," indicating extreme perversion; cf Gn 19, 4–8. This crime and its punishment made the name Gibeah proverbial as a place of shameful wickedness; cf Hos 9, 9; 10, 9.

19, 29: A drastic means for arousing the tribes to avenge the unheard of crime of the Benjaminites.

20, 1: From Dan to Beer-sheba: from north to south. The land of Gilead: all the territory east of the Jordan.

20, 7: The Israelites were asked to decide at once what action to take concerning this crime; cf 2 Sm 16, 20. The Levite undoubtedly addressed the tribal heads who would speak in behalf of the multitude.

20, 12: Before the crime at Gibeah was punished, the Benjamin-

l Gn 18, 4; 24, 32; 43, 24. m 22–25: Gn 19, 4–9. n Hos 9, 9; 10, 9. o Jgs 19, 14f. p Jgs 19, 22–27. q Jgs 19, 29. r Jgs 19, 30.

the tribe of Benjamin to say, "What is this evil
which has occurred among you? 13Now give up
these corrupt men of Gibeah, that we may put
them to death and thus purge the evil from
Israel." But the Benjaminites refused to accede
to the demand of their brothers, the Israelites.
14Instead, the Benjaminites assembled from their
other cities to Gibeah, to do battle with the
Israelites. 15The number of the Benjaminite
swordsmen from the other cities on that occa-
sion was twenty-six thousand, in addition to the
inhabitants of Gibeah. 16Included in this total
were seven hundred picked men who were left-
handed, every one of them able to sling a stone
at a hair without missing. 17Meanwhile, the
other Israelites who, without Benjamin, mus-
tered four hundred thousand swordsmen ready
for battle, 18moved on to Bethel and consulted
God. When the Israelites asked who should go
first in the attack on the Benjaminites,[s] the LORD
said, "Judah shall go first."* 19The next day the
Israelites advanced on Gibeah with their forces.

**War with Benjamin** 20On the day the Israel-
ites drew up in battle array at Gibeah for the
combat with Benjamin, 21the Benjaminites came
out of the city and felled twenty-two thousand
men of Israel. 23Then the Israelites went up and
wept before the LORD until evening. "Shall I
again engage my brother Benjamin in battle?"
they asked the LORD; and the LORD answered
that they should. 22But though the Israelite
soldiers took courage and again drew up for
combat in the same place as on the previous day,
24when they met the Benjaminites for the sec-
ond time, 25once again the Benjaminites who
came out of Gibeah against them felled eighteen
thousand Israelites, all of them swordsmen. 26So
the entire Israelite army went up to Bethel,
where they wept and remained fasting before
the LORD until evening of that day, besides
offering holocausts and peace offerings before
the LORD. 27[t]When the Israelites consulted the
LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was
there in those days, 28and Phinehas, son of
Eleazar, son of Aaron, was ministering to him in
those days), and asked, "Shall I go out again to
battle with Benjamin, my brother, or shall I
desist?" the LORD said, "Attack! for tomorrow I
will deliver him into your power." 29[u]So Israel
set men in ambush around Gibeah.*

30The Israelites went up against the Benjamin-
ites for the third time and formed their line of
battle at Gibeah as on other occasions. 31The
Benjaminites went out to meet them, and in the
beginning they killed off about thirty of the
Israelite soldiers in the open field, just as on the
other occasions. 32Therefore the Benjaminites
thought, "We are defeating them as before"; not
realizing that disaster was about to overtake
them. The Israelites, however, had planned the
flight so as to draw them away from the city onto
the highways. They were drawn away from the
city onto the highways, of which the one led to
Bethel, the other to Gibeon. 33And then all the
men of Israel rose from their places. They re-
formed their ranks at Baal-tamar, and the Israel-
ites in ambush rushed from their place west of
Gibeah, 34ten thousand picked men from all
Israel, and advanced against the city itself. In a
fierce battle, 35the LORD defeated Benjamin
before Israel; and on that day the Israelites killed
twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benja-
min, all of them swordsmen.

36To the Benjaminites it had looked as though
the enemy were defeated, for the men of Israel
gave ground to Benjamin, trusting in the ambush
they had set at Gibeah. 37But then the men in
ambush made a sudden dash into Gibeah, over-
ran it, and put the whole city to the sword.
38Now, the other Israelites had agreed with the
men in ambush on a smoke signal they were to
send up from the city. 39And though the men of

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ites were invited to join their brethren, the Israelites, in punishing the crime. Since they failed to respond, special messengers were sent asking them to deliver up the guilty ones. They replied by gathering their forces for combat.

**20, 18:** Judah shall go first: the same response as in Jgs 1, 1f. but without the assurance of immediate success. Only after the Israelites were punished at the hands of the Benjaminites for their own grossness, and had performed penance, did they succeed in punishing the latter for their part in the crime of rape and murder, by gaining the victory over them.

**20, 29–46:** This stratagem proved more useful to the Israelites than force, as in the siege of Ai (Jos 8, 3–21). In the parallel accounts the first (vv 29–35) is a summary of the second (vv 36–46).

s Jgs 1, 1f. t 1 Sm 4, 3f. u 29–46: Jos 8, 4–24.

Benjamin had begun by killing off some thirty of
the men of Israel, under the impression that they
were defeating them as surely as in the earlier
fighting, the Israelites wheeled about to resist
40as the smoke of the signal column began to rise
up from the city. It was when Benjamin looked
back and saw the whole city in flames against
the sky 41that the men of Israel wheeled about.
Therefore the men of Benjamin were thrown
into confusion, for they realized the disaster that
had overtaken them. 42They retreated before the
men of Israel in the direction of the desert, with
the fight being pressed against them. In their
very midst, meanwhile, those who had been in
the city were spreading destruction. 43The men
of Benjamin had been surrounded, and were
now pursued to a point east of Gibeah, 44while
eighteen thousand of them fell, warriors to a
man. 45The rest turned and fled through the
desert to the rock Rimmon.[v] But on the high-
ways the Israelites picked off five thousand men
among them, and chasing them up to Gidom,
killed another two thousand of them there.
46Those of Benjamin who fell on that day were
in all twenty-five thousand swordsmen, warriors
to a man. 47But six hundred others who turned
and fled through the desert reached the rock
Rimmon, where they remained for four months.

48The men of Israel withdrew through the
territory of the Benjaminites, putting to the
sword the inhabitants of the cities, the livestock,
and all they chanced upon. Moreover they
destroyed by fire all the cities they came upon.

## CHAPTER 21

**Wives for the Survivors** 1Now the men of
Israel* had sworn at Mizpah that none of them
would give his daughter in marriage to anyone
from Benjamin. 2So the people went to Bethel
and remained there before God until evening,
raising their voices in bitter lament.[w] 3They said,
"LORD, God of Israel, why has it come to pass in
Israel that today one tribe of Israel should be
lacking?" 4Early the next day the people built an
altar there and offered holocausts and peace
offerings. 5Then the Israelites asked, "Are there
any among all the tribes of Israel who did not
come up to the LORD for the assembly?" For they
had taken a solemn oath that anyone who did
not go up to the LORD at Mizpah should be put
to death without fail.[x]

6*The Israelites were disconsolate over their
brother Benjamin and said, "Today one of the
tribes of Israel has been cut off. 7What can we do
about wives for the survivors, since we have
sworn by the LORD not to give them any of our
daughters in marriage?" 8And when they asked
whether anyone among the tribes of Israel had
not come up to the LORD in Mizpah, they found
that none of the men of Jabesh-gilead had come
to the encampment for the assembly. 9A roll call
of the army established that none of the inhabit-
ants of that city were present. 10The community,
therefore, sent twelve thousand warriors with
orders to go to Jabesh-gilead and put those who
lived there to the sword, including the women
and children. 11They were told to include under
the ban* all males and every woman who was
not still a virgin.[y] 12Finding among the inhabit-
ants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins,
who had had no relations with men, they
brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land
of Canaan. 13[z]Then the whole community sent a
message to the Benjaminites at the rock Rim-
mon, offering them peace. 14When Benjamin
returned at that time, they gave them as wives
the women of Jabesh-gilead whom they had
spared; but these proved to be not enough for
them.

15The people were still disconsolate over
Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach*
among the tribes of Israel. 16And the elders of
the community said, "What shall we do for
wives for the survivors? For every woman in

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139–140

**21, 1–3:** The anger of the Israelites led them to destroy their brethren, the Benjaminites. Having realized their goal, however, they were soon filled with dismay, and sought to restore the tribe they had all but exterminated.

**21, 6–9:** This account is summarized in the parallel passage in vv 2–5.

**21, 11:** Under the ban: see note on Nm 21, 3.

**21, 15:** Had made a breach: what is here attributed to God was in reality the free and deliberate act of the Israelites and happened only by the permissive will of God. The ancients attributed to the first primary cause what is more directly due to secondary causes.

v Jgs 21, 13. w Jgs 20, 26. x Jgs 20, 8ff. y Nm 31, 17. z Jgs 20, 47.

Benjamin has been put to death." [17]They said,
"Those of Benjamin who survive must have
heirs, else one of the Israelite tribes will be
wiped out. [18]*Yet we cannot give them any of
our daughters in marriage, because the Israelites
have sworn, 'Cursed be he who gives a woman
to Benjamin!' " [19]Then they thought of the
yearly feast of the LORD at Shiloh, north of
Bethel, east of the highway that goes up from
Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.
[20]And they instructed the Benjaminites, "Go and
lie in wait in the vineyards. [21]When you see the
girls of Shiloh come out to do their dancing,
leave the vineyards and each of you seize one of
the girls of Shiloh for a wife, and go to the land
of Benjamin. [22]When their fathers or their broth-
ers come to complain to us, we shall say to
them, 'Release them to us as a kindness, since
we did not take a woman apiece in the war. Had
you yourselves given them these wives, you
would now be guilty.' "

[23]The Benjaminites did this; they carried off a
wife for each of them from their raid on the
dancers, and went back to their own territory,
where they rebuilt and occupied the cities.
[24]Also at that time the Israelites dispersed; each
of them left for his own heritage in his own clan
and tribe.

[25]*In those days there was no king in Israel;
everyone did what he thought best.[a]

**21, 18:** Regardless of the serious consequences of their vow, the Israelites considered themselves obliged to fulfill it; cf Jgs 11, 31. 35f. 39.

**21, 25:** Cf Jgs 17, 6; 18, 1; 19, 1. The verse gives the reason why the lawlessness of the period of judges, and the events described herein, were possible.

a Jgs 17, 6; 18, 1; 19, 1.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

Ruth
See RG
141-146

The Book of Ruth is named after the Moabite woman who was joined to the Israelite people by her marriage with the influential Boaz of Bethlehem.

The book contains a beautiful example of filial piety, pleasing to the Hebrews especially because of its connection with King David, and useful both to Hebrews and to Gentiles. Its aim is to demonstrate the divine reward for such piety even when practiced by a stranger. Ruth's piety (Ru 2, 11), her spirit of self-sacrifice, and her moral integrity were favored by God with the gift of faith and an illustrious marriage whereby she became the ancestress of David and of Christ. In this, the universality of the messianic salvation is foreshadowed.

In the Greek and Latin canons the Book of Ruth is placed just after Judges, to which it is closely related because of the time of its action, and just before Samuel, for which it is an excellent introduction, since it traces the ancestry of the Davidic dynasty. One might characterize the literary form of this book as dramatic, since about two-thirds of it is in dialogue. Yet there is every indication that, as tradition has always held, it contains true history.

There is no certainty about the author of the book. It was written long after the events had passed (Ru 4, 7), which took place "in the time of the judges" (Ru 1, 1).

## CHAPTER 1

**Naomi in Moab** [1]Once in the time of the judges* there was a famine in the land; so a man from Bethlehem of Judah departed with his wife and two sons to reside on the plateau of Moab. [2]The man was named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his sons Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah. Some time after their arrival on the Moabite plateau, [3]Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons, [4]who married Moabite women, one named Orpah, the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, [5]both Mahlon and Chilion died also, and the woman was left with neither her two sons nor her husband. [6]She then made ready to go back from the plateau of Moab because word reached her there that the LORD had visited his people and given them food.

[7]She and her two daughters-in-law left the place where they had been living. Then as they were on the road back to the land of Judah, [8]Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's house!* May the LORD be kind to you as you were to the departed and to me! [9]May the LORD grant each of you a husband and a home in which you will find rest." She kissed them good-by, but they wept with loud sobs, [10]and told her they would return with her to her people. [11]"Go back, my daughters!" said Naomi. "Why should you come with me? Have I other sons in my womb who may become your husbands?* [12]Go back, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to marry again. And even if I could offer any hopes, or if tonight I had a husband or had borne sons, [13]would you then wait and deprive yourselves of husbands until those sons grew up? No, my daughters! my lot is too bitter for you, because the LORD has extended his hand against me." [14]Again they sobbed aloud and wept; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth stayed with her.

Ch 1 See RG 143–144

[15]"See now!" she said, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god. Go back after your sister-in-law!" [16]*But Ruth said, "Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! for wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God. [17]Wherever you die I will die, and there be buried. May the LORD do so and so to me, and more besides, if aught but death separates me from you!" [18]Naomi then ceased to urge her, for she saw she was determined to go with her.

**The Return to Bethlehem** [19]So they went on together till they reached Bethlehem. On their arrival there, the whole city was astir over them, and the women asked, "Can this be Naomi?" [20]a But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi.* Call me Mara, for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me. [21]I went away with an abundance, but the LORD has brought me back destitute. Why should you call me Naomi, since the LORD has pronounced against me and the Almighty has brought evil upon me?" [22]Thus it was that Naomi returned with the Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, who accompanied her back from the plateau of Moab. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.*

## CHAPTER 2

**The Meeting** [1]Naomi had a prominent kinsman named Boaz,b of the clan of her husband Elimelech. [2]Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi,

Ch 2 See RG 144

1, 1f: In the time of the judges: three generations before the end of the period of Judges; cf Ru 4, 21f. Bethlehem of Judah: to distinguish it from the town of the same name in the tribe of Zebulun (Jos 19, 15). Ephrathites from Bethlehem: belonging to a Judean clan which settled in Bethlehem; cf 1 Sm 17, 12; 1 Chr 2, 50f; 4, 4.

1, 8: Mother's house: the women's part of the dwelling; cf Jgs 4, 17; Song 3, 4.

1, 11: Have I other sons . . . husbands?: Naomi insisted that her daughters-in-law remain in their own country only for the sake of posterity. If she had had other sons, the levirate law would have obliged them to marry the widows of her deceased sons to perpetuate the names of the deceased; cf Gn 38, 8; Dt 25, 5f.

1, 16f: An example of heroic fidelity and piety. Ruth's decision, confirmed with an oath, to adhere to her mother-in-law impelled her to abandon her country and its pagan worship.

1, 20f: Naomi: means "amiable" or "pleasant," suggesting God's favor toward her. The Almighty has brought evil upon me: the ancients regarded adversity as a punishment from God for personal sin, as if good and evil were always repaid in a temporal and material manner.

1, 22: Barley harvest: early April. This circumstance favored the events of the narrative that follow.

a Ex 15, 23. b Ru 3, 2. 12; 4, 21; Mt 1, 5.

"Let me go and glean ears of grain* in the field
of anyone who will allow me that favor."[c]
Naomi said to her, "Go, my daughter," [3]and she
went. The field she entered to glean after the
harvesters happened to be the section belonging
to Boaz of the clan of Elimelech. [4]Boaz himself
came from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters,
"The LORD be with you!"* and they replied,
"The LORD bless you!" [5]Boaz asked the overseer
of his harvesters, "Whose girl is this?" [6]The
overseer of the harvesters answered, "She is the
Moabite girl who returned from the plateau of
Moab with Naomi.[d] [7]She asked leave to gather
the gleanings into sheaves after the harvesters;
and ever since she came this morning she has
remained here until now, with scarcely a mo-
ment's rest."

[8]Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter! Do
not go to glean in anyone else's field; you are not
to leave here. Stay here with my women ser-
vants. [9]Watch to see which field is to be
harvested, and follow them; I have commanded
the young men to do you no harm. When you
are thirsty, you may go and drink from the
vessels the young men have filled." [10]Casting
herself prostrate upon the ground, she said to
him, "Why should I, a foreigner, be favored with
your notice?" [11][e]Boaz answered her: "I have
had a complete account of what you have done
for your mother-in-law after your husband's
death; you have left your father and your mother
and the land of your birth, and have come to a
people whom you did not know previously.
[12]May the LORD reward what you have done!
May you receive a full reward from the LORD,
the God of Israel, under whose wings you have
come for refuge." [13]She said, "May I prove
worthy of your kindness, my lord: you have
comforted me, your servant, with your consoling
words; would indeed that I were a servant of
yours!" [14]At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come
here and have some food; dip your bread in the
sauce." Then as she sat near the reapers, he
handed her some roasted grain and she ate her
fill and had some left over. [15]She rose to glean,
and Boaz instructed his servants to let her glean
among the sheaves themselves without scolding
her, [16]and even to let drop some handfuls and
leave them for her to glean without being
rebuked.

[17]She gleaned in the field until evening, and
when she beat out what she had gleaned it came
to about an ephah of barley, [18]which she took
into the city and showed to her mother-in-law.
Next she brought out and gave her what she had
left over from lunch. [19]So her mother-in-law said
to her, "Where did you glean today? Where did
you go to work? May he who took notice of you
be blessed!" Then she told her mother-in-law
with whom she had worked. "The man at
whose place I worked today is named Boaz," she
said. [20][f]"May he be blessed by the LORD, who is
ever merciful to the living and to the dead,"
Naomi exclaimed to her daughter-in-law; and
she continued, "He is a relative of ours, one of
our next of kin."* [21]"He even told me," added
Ruth the Moabite, "that I should stay with his
servants until they complete his entire harvest."
[22]"You would do well, my dear," Naomi re-
joined, "to go out with his servants; for in
someone else's field you might be insulted." [23]So
she stayed gleaning with the servants of Boaz
until the end of the barley and wheat harvests.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
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**Ruth Again Presents Herself** When she was
back with her mother-in-law, [1]Naomi said to her,
"My daughter, I must seek a home for you that
will please you. [2][g]Now is not Boaz, with whose
servants you were, a relative of ours? This
evening he will be winnowing barley at the
threshing floor. [3]So bathe and anoint yourself;
then put on your best attire and go down to the
threshing floor. Do not make yourself known to

**2, 2:** Let me go and glean . . . grain: even the poor, the widow, the stranger, and the orphan had a right to glean at harvest time; cf Lv 19, 9f; 23, 22; Dt 24, 19–22.

**2, 4:** The Lord be with you: courtesy and religious feeling characterize the salutations of the Hebrews. This greeting is used in the Christian liturgy.

**2, 20:** One of our next of kin: literally "our redeemer," a near relative of the same clan who had the right and duty to restore the land which an impoverished kinsman had alienated (Lv 25, 25–28), and to marry the widow of a relative who had died without male offspring so as to raise up posterity to his name (Dt 25, 5–10).

c Dt 24, 19. d Ru 1, 22. e Ru 1, 14–17. f Ru 3, 9. g Ru 1.

the man before he has finished eating and drinking. [4]But when he lies down, take note of the place where he does so. Then go, uncover a place at his feet,* and lie down. He will tell you what to do." [5]"I will do whatever you advise," Ruth replied. [6]So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her.

[7]Boaz ate and drank to his heart's content. Then when he went and lay down at the edge of the sheaves, she stole up, uncovered a place at his feet, and lay down. [8]In the middle of the night, however, the man gave a start and turned around to find a woman lying at his feet. [9]He asked, "Who are you?" And she replied, "I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your cloak over me,* for you are my next of kin." [10]He said, "May the LORD bless you, my daughter! You have been even more loyal now than before in not going after the young men, whether poor or rich.[h] [11]So be assured, daughter, I will do for you whatever you say; all my townspeople know you for a worthy woman. [12][i]Now, though indeed I am closely related to you, you have another relative still closer.* [13]Stay as you are for tonight, and tomorrow, if he wishes to claim you, good! let him do so. But if he does not wish to claim you, as the LORD lives, I will claim you myself. Lie there until morning."[j] [14]So she lay at his feet until morning, but rose before men could recognize one another. Boaz said, "Let it not be known that this woman came to the threshing floor." [15]Then he said to her, "Take off your cloak and hold it out." When she did so, he poured out six measures of barley, helped her lift the bundle,[k] and left for the city.

[16]Ruth went home to her mother-in-law, who asked, "How have you fared, my daughter?" So she told her all the man had done for her, [17]and concluded, "He gave me these six measures of barley because he did not wish me to come back to my mother-in-law empty-handed!" [18]Naomi then said, "Wait here, my daughter, until you learn what happens, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
145–146

**Boaz Marries Ruth** [1]Boaz went and took a seat at the gate;* and when he saw the closer relative[l] of whom he had spoken come along, he called to him by name, "Come and sit beside me!" And he did so. [2]Then Boaz picked out ten of the elders* of the city and asked them to sit nearby. When they had done this, [3]he said to the near relative: "Naomi, who has come back from the Moabite plateau, is putting up for sale the piece of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. [4]*So I thought I would inform you, bidding you before those here present, including the elders of my people, to put in your claim for it if you wish to acquire it as next of kin.[m] But if you do not wish to claim it, tell me so, that I may be guided accordingly, for no one has a prior claim to yours, and mine is next." He answered, "I will put in my claim."

[5]*Boaz continued, "Once you acquire the field from Naomi, you must take also Ruth the Moabite,[n] the widow of the late heir, and raise up a family for the departed on his estate." [6]The near relative replied, "I cannot exercise my claim lest I depreciate my own estate. Put in a claim yourself in my stead, for I cannot exercise my claim." [7]Now it used to be the custom in

**3, 4:** Uncover a place at his feet . . . : confident of the virtue of Ruth and Boaz, Naomi advises this unusual expedient to her daughter-in-law for the purpose of introducing her claim.

**3, 9:** Spread the corner of your cloak over me: be my protector by marrying me according to the duty of a near kinsman; cf Dt 25, 5; Ez 16, 8.

**3, 12:** Relative still closer: who had a prior right and duty to marry Ruth.

**4, 1:** Took a seat at the gate: i.e., of the city, where business affairs were settled.

**4, 2:** Ten of the elders: to serve as judges in legal matters as well as witnesses of the settlement of business affairs; cf Dt 25, 7–9.

**4, 4:** Poverty had obliged Naomi to sell the land of her deceased husband. The law permitted the nearest kinsman to redeem the land and thus preserve the family patrimony; cf Lv 25, 25.

**4, 5f:** The heir of Elimelech's field had died without children (Ru 1, 5). The nearest of kin could now redeem the land but he must also take Ruth, the widow of the late heir, to wife to perpetuate the family of the deceased; cf Dt 25, 5f. The first male child of such a marriage would be the legal son of Mahlon and grandson of Elimelech.

h Dt 25, 5. i Ru 4, 1. j Ru 4, 5; Dt 25, 5. k Ru 2, 17. l Ru 3, 12. m Lv 25, 25. n Ru 3, 13; Dt 25, 5.

Israel that, to make binding a contract of redemption or exchange, one party would take off his sandal* and give it to the other. This was the form of attestation in Israel. [8]So the near relative, in saying to Boaz, "Acquire it for yourself," drew off his sandal. [9]Boaz then said to the elders and to all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have acquired from Naomi all the holdings of Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon. [10]I also take Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, as my wife, in order to raise up a family for her late husband on his estate, so that the name of the departed may not perish among his kinsmen and fellow citizens. Do you witness this today?" [11] [o]All those at the gate, including the elders, said, "We do so. May the LORD make this wife come into your house like Rachel and Leah, who between them built up the house of Israel. May you do well in Ephrathah and win fame in Bethlehem. [12] [p]With the offspring the LORD will give you from this girl, may your house become like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."*

[13]Boaz took Ruth. When they came together as man and wife, the LORD enabled her to conceive and she bore a son. [14]Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not failed to provide you today with an heir! May he become famous in Israel! [15]He will be your comfort and the support of your old age, for his mother is the daughter-in-law who loves you. She is worth more to you than seven sons!" [16]Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap,* and became his nurse. [17]And the neighbor women gave him his name,[q] at the news that a grandson had been born to Naomi. They called him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

[18] [r]These are the descendants of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,[s] [19]Hezron was the father of Ram, Ram was the father of Amminadab, [20] [t]Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, Nahshon was the father of Salmon, [21]Salmon was the father of Boaz, Boaz was the father of Obed, [22] [u]Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David.

**4, 7:** Take off his sandal . . . : by this act the near relative renounced his legal right, both to the field of Elimelech and to the marriage with Ruth. The custom mentioned in Dt 25, 6 is somewhat different.

**4, 12:** Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah: the right which Judah unwittingly satisfied for his daughter-in-law Tamar (Gn 38), Boaz willingly rendered to Ruth.

**4, 16:** Placed him on her lap: took him as her own; cf Gn 30, 3; 48, 12; Nm 11, 12.

**4, 17:** The father of Jesse, the father of David: indicating the place of Obed, Jesse and David in the line of Judah and the ancestry of Christ, the Messiah; cf Mt 1, 5f.

o Gn 29, 31–30, 24; 35, 19. p Gn 38, 29. q Lk 1, 58. r 18–22: 1 Chr 2, 4–15; Mt 1, 3–6. s Gn 46, 12; 1 Chr 4, 1. t Ex 6, 23; Nm 1, 7. u 1 Sm 16, 10–13.

# THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

Historical Books See RG 115–119

The historical books include 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Maccabees. To these are added the special literary group of Tobit, Judith and Esther.

The books of Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2 Maccabees, as well as parts of Esther, are called deuterocanonical: they are not contained in the Hebrew canon but have been accepted by the Catholic Church as canonical and inspired.

By means of a series of episodes involving the persons of Samuel, Saul, and David, a century of history unfolds in 1 and 2 Samuel from the close of the period of Judges to the rise and establishment of the monarchy in Israel. Most important is God's promise to David of a lasting dynasty (2 Sm 7), from which royal messianism in the Bible developed.

In 1 and 2 Kings the religious history of Israel extends another four centuries, from the last days of David to the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.). The various sources for these books are woven into a uniform pattern based on the principle of fidelity to Yahweh for rulers and people alike. The sequence of regnal chronicles in both books is interrupted by a cycle of traditions surrounding the prophets Elijah (1 Kgs) and Elisha (2 Kgs).

Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah form a historical work, uniform in style and basic ideas. Chronicles records the long period from the reign of Saul to the return from exile, not so much with exactitude of detail as with concern for the meaning of the facts which demonstrate God's intervention in history. The Ezra-Nehemiah chronicle constitutes the most important source for the formation of the Jewish religious community after the Babylonian exile; the two persons most responsible for the reorganization of Jewish life were Ezra and Nehemiah.

1 and 2 Maccabees contain independent accounts of partially identical events which accompanied the attempted suppression of Judaism in Palestine in the second century B.C. Vigorous reaction to this attempt established for a time the religious and political independence of the Jews. 1 Maccabees portrays God as the eternal benefactor of the Jews and their unfailing source of help. The people are required to be devoted to his exclusive worship and to observe exactly the law he has given them. 2 Maccabees, besides supplementing the former volume, gives a theological interpretation of the history of the period and contains teaching on the resurrection from the dead, intercession of the saints, and suffrages for the dead.

Tobit, Judith, and Esther are examples of free composition—the religious novel used for purposes of edification and instruction. Interest in whatever historical data these books may contain is merely intensified by the addition of vivid details. Judith is a lesson in Providence: a pious reflection on the annual Passover observance to convey the reassurance that God is still the master of history who saves Israel from her enemies. Esther's purpose is the glorification of the Jewish people and the explanation of the origin, significance, and date of the feast of Purim. It is a literary development of the principle of reversal of fortune through punishment of the prosperous rich and reward for the virtuous who are oppressed.

Samuel to Maccabees demonstrates that before as well as during the millennium of history with which it is concerned, Israel was a covenanted people, bound to Yahweh, Lord of the universe, by the ties of faith and obedience. This required observance of the law and worship in his temple, the consequent rewards of which were divine favor and protection. In this way these books anticipate and prepare for the coming of him who would bring type and prophecy to

fulfillment, history to term, and holiness to perfection: Christ, the Son of David and the promised Messiah.

# THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

Originally but one book, the scroll of Samuel was early divided into two. The Greek translators called these the first and second Books of Kingdoms, a title St. Jerome later modified to "Kings." The Hebrew title, "Samuel," alludes to the leading figure in the first book, who was responsible for the enthronement of David. It is David's history that the second book recounts.

This sacred work thus comprises the history of about a century, describing the close of the age of the Judges and the beginnings of monarchy in Israel under Saul and David. It is not a complete and continuous history, nor a systematic account of the period, but rather a series of episodes centered around the persons of Samuel, Saul and David, the principal figures leading up to the establishment of the royal dynasty of David.

The final editor is unknown, nor are we certain of the time at which the various strands of the narrative were put together, though one may think of the period, perhaps late in the seventh century B.C., when the other volumes of the "Former Prophets," from Joshua through Kings, were built into a more or less continuous historical corpus. The Samuel-Saul-David narratives clearly depend on several written sources: a Samuel cycle, two sets of stories about Saul and David, and a family history of David. This last (2 Sm 9—20; 1 Kgs 1—2), one of the most vivid historical narratives surviving from ancient times, probably originated early in the reign of Solomon.

One of the most significant theological contributions of the Old Testament is found in 2 Samuel 7, the oracle of Nathan. David is here promised an eternal dynasty, and this becomes the basis for the development of royal messianism throughout the Bible. With this promise to David one should compare 2 Chr 17; Pss 89, 20-38 and 132, 11ff; Acts 2, 30; and Heb 1, 5.

The contents of this work may be divided as follows:

I. History of the Last Judges, Eli and Samuel (1 Sm 1, 1—7, 17).
II. Establishment of the Monarchy in Israel (1 Sm 8, 1—12, 25).
III. Saul and David (1 Sm 13, 1—2 Sm 2, 7).
IV. The Reign of David (2 Sm 2, 8—20, 26).
V. Appendixes (2 Sm 21, 1—24, 25).

# THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel
See RG
148–157

## I: History of the Last Judges, Eli and Samuel

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
150

**Elkanah and His Family at Shiloh** [1]There was a certain man from Ramathaim, Elkanah by name, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.[a] [2]He had two wives, one named Hannah, the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. [3]This man regularly went on pilgrimage from his city to worship the LORD of hosts and to sacrifice to him at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were ministering as priests of the LORD.[b] [4]When the day came for Elkanah to offer sacrifice, he used to give a portion each to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters, [5]but a double portion to Hannah because he loved her, though the LORD had made her barren.[c] [6]Her rival, to upset her, turned it into a constant reproach to her that the LORD had left her barren.[d] [7]This went on year after year; each time they made their pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the LORD, Peninnah would approach her, and Hannah would weep and refuse to eat. [8]Her husband Elkanah used to ask her: "Hannah, why do you weep, and why do you refuse to eat? Why do you grieve? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"[e]

**Hannah's Prayer** [9]Hannah rose after one such meal at Shiloh, and presented herself before the LORD; at the time, Eli the priest was sitting on a chair near the doorpost of the LORD's temple. [10]In her bitterness she prayed to the LORD, weeping copiously, [11]and she made a vow, promising: "O LORD of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD* for as long as he lives; neither wine nor liquor shall he drink, and no razor shall ever touch his head."[f] [12]As she remained long at prayer before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth, [13]for Hannah was praying silently; though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli, thinking her drunk, [14]said to her, "How long will you make a drunken show of yourself? Sober up from your wine!" [15]"It isn't that, my lord," Hannah answered. "I am an unhappy woman. I have had neither wine nor liquor; I was only pouring out my troubles to the LORD. [16]Do not think your handmaid a ne'er-do-well; my prayer has been prompted by my deep sorrow and misery." [17]Eli said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." [18]She replied, "Think kindly of your maidservant," and left. She went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and no longer appeared downcast. [19]Early the next morning they worshiped before the LORD, and then returned to their home in Ramah.

**Hannah Bears a Son** When Elkanah had relations with his wife Hannah, the LORD remembered her. [20]She conceived, and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel, since she had asked* the LORD for him. [21]The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, [22]Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, "Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before the LORD and to remain there forever; I will offer him as a perpetual nazirite." [23]Her husband Elkanah answered her: "Do what you think best; wait until you have weaned him. Only, may the LORD bring your resolve to fulfillment!" And so she remained at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

1, 11: Give him to the Lord: some ancient texts call Samuel a nazir in this context; see note on Nm 6, 1ff.

1, 20: Since she had asked: this explanation would be more directly appropriate for the name Saul, which means "asked"; Samuel means "name of God."

a 1 Chr 6, 19f. b Ex 23, 14–17; 34, 23; Dt 16, 16; Jgs 21, 19. c Dt 21, 15ff. d Gn 16, 4f. e Ru 4, 15. f Nm 6, 1–5; Jgs 13, 2–5; 16, 17; Lk 1, 15.

**Samuel Is Offered to God** [24]Once he was weaned, she brought him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah* of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the temple of the LORD in Shiloh. [25]After the boy's father had sacrificed the young bull, Hannah, his mother, approached Eli [26]and said: "Pardon, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to the LORD. [27]I prayed for this child, and the LORD granted my request. [28]Now I, in turn, give him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the LORD." She left him there;[1]*and as she worshiped the LORD, she said:

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
150–151

"My heart exults in the LORD,*
my horn* is exalted in my God.
I have swallowed up my enemies;
I rejoice in my victory.[g]
[2]There is no Holy One like the LORD;
there is no Rock like our God.[h]

[3]"Speak boastfully no longer,
nor let arrogance issue from your mouths.*
For an all-knowing God is the LORD,
a God who judges deeds.[i]
[4]The bows of the mighty are broken,
while the tottering gird on strength.[j]
[5]The well-fed hire themselves out for bread,
while the hungry batten on spoil.
The barren wife bears seven sons,
while the mother of many languishes.
[6]"The LORD puts to death and gives life;
he casts down to the nether world;
he raises up again.[k]
[7]The LORD makes poor and makes rich,
he humbles, he also exalts.
[8]He raises the needy from the dust;
from the ash heap he lifts up the poor,
To seat them with nobles
and make a glorious throne their heritage.[l]
He gives to the vower his vow,
and blesses the sleep of the just.

"For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and he has set the world upon them.
[9]He will guard the footsteps of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall perish in the darkness.
For not by strength does man prevail;
[10] the LORD's foes shall be shattered.
The Most High in heaven thunders;
the LORD judges the ends of the earth.
Now may he give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed!"[m]

[11]When Elkanah returned home to Ramah, the child remained in the service of the LORD under the priest Eli.

**Wickedness of Eli's Sons** [12]Now the sons of Eli were wicked; they had respect neither for the LORD [13]nor for the priests' duties toward the people. When someone offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork, while the meat was still boiling,[n] [14]and would thrust it into the basin, kettle, caldron, or pot. Whatever the fork brought up, the priest would keep. That is how all the Israelites were treated who came to the sanctuary at Shiloh. [15]In fact, even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man offering the sacrifice, "Give me some meat to roast for the priest. He will not accept boiled meat from you, only raw meat." [16]And if the man protested to him, "Let the fat be burned first as is the custom, then take whatever you wish," he would reply, "No, give it to me now, or else I will take it by force."[o] [17]Thus the young men sinned grievously in the presence of the LORD; they treated the offerings to the LORD with disdain.

**1, 24:** An ephah: a little more than a bushel.
**1, 1:** And . . . said: this belongs to ch 2.
**2, 1–10:** A hymn attributed to Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as her thanksgiving to God because she has borne a son despite her previous sterility. She praises God as the helper of the weak (1ff), who casts down the mighty and raises up the lowly (3ff), and who alone is the source of true strength (8ff); the hymn ends with a prayer for the king (v 10). This canticle has several points of resemblance with our Lady's Magnificat.

**2, 1:** Horn: the symbol of strength; cf Pss 18, 3; 75, 5; 89, 18; 112, 9.
**2, 3:** Speak . . . mouths: addressed to the enemies mentioned in v 1.

g Dt 33, 17; 2 Sm 22, 3; Ps 18, 2; Is 61, 10; Lk 1, 47. 69
h 2 Sm 22, 3; Ps 18, 2. i Ps 75, 4. j Is 40, 29. k Dt 32, 39; Tb 4, 19; Jb 5, 11; Ps 30, 4; Wis 16, 13; Lk 1, 52. l Jb 9, 6; 38, 6; Ps 104, 5; 121, 3. m Ps 98, 9. n 13–15: Ex 29, 27f; Lv 7, 29–36; Dt 18, 3. o Lv 3, 3ff.

**The Lord Rewards Hannah** [18]Meanwhile, the boy Samuel, girt with a linen apron,* was serving in the presence of the LORD. [19]His mother used to make a little garment for him, which she would bring him each time she went up with her husband to offer the customary sacrifice. [20]And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, as they were leaving for home. He would say, "May the LORD repay you with children from this woman for the gift she has made to the LORD!" [21]The LORD favored Hannah so that she conceived and gave birth to three more sons and two daughters, while young Samuel grew up in the service of the LORD.[p]

**Eli's Futile Rebuke** [22]When Eli was very old, he heard repeatedly how his sons were treating all Israel [and that they were having relations with the women serving at the entry of the meeting tent.]* [23]So he said to them: "Why are you doing such things? [24]No, my sons, you must not do these things! It is not a good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading about you. [25]If a man sins against another man, one can intercede for him with the LORD; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they disregarded their father's warning, since the LORD had decided on their death. [26]Meanwhile, young Samuel was growing in stature and in worth in the estimation of the LORD and of men.[q]

**Doom of Eli's House*** [27]A man of God came to Eli and said to him: "This is what the LORD says: 'I went so far as to reveal myself to your father's family when they were in Egypt as slaves to the house of Pharaoh. [28]I chose them out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priests, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear the ephod* before me; and I assigned all the oblations of the Israelites to your father's family.[r] [29]Why do you keep a greedy eye on my sacrifices and on the offerings which I have prescribed? And why do you honor your sons in preference to me, fattening yourselves with the choicest part of every offering of my people Israel?' [30][s]This, therefore, is the oracle of the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I said in the past that your family and your father's family should minister in my presence forever. But now,' the LORD declares, 'away with this! for I will honor those who honor me, but those who spurn me shall be accursed. [31]Yes, the time is coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's family, so that no man in your family shall reach old age. [32]You shall witness as a disappointed rival all the benefits enjoyed by Israel, but there shall never be an old man in your family. [33]I will permit some of your family to remain at my altar, to wear out their eyes in consuming greed; but the rest of the men of your family shall die by the sword. [34]You shall have a sign in what will happen to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: both shall die on the same day.[t] [35]I will choose a faithful priest who shall do what I have in heart and mind. I will establish a lasting house for him which shall function in the presence of my anointed forever. [36]Then whoever is left of your family will come to grovel before him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and will say: Appoint me, I beg you, to a priestly function, that I may have a morsel of bread to eat.' "[u]

## CHAPTER 3

**Revelation to Samuel** [1]During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, a revelation of the LORD was uncommon* and vision infrequent. [2]One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak

Ch 3
See RG
151

**2, 18:** Linen apron: called in Hebrew "ephod," but not the same as the high priest's ephod (Ex 28, 6–14) or the ephod used in divination (v 28). Samuel wore a simple apron such as was worn by the priests (1 Sm 22, 18), and on one occasion also by David (2 Sm 6, 14).

**2, 22:** The bracketed words, which recall Ex 38, 8, are a gloss in the received text; they are lacking in the oldest Greek translation, and in a Hebrew manuscript from Qumran.

**2, 27–36:** These verses propose the punishment of Eli from a point of view contemporary with the reform of Josiah (2 Kgs 23, 9; cf v 36); they hint at the events recorded in 1 Sm 22, 18–23 and 1 Kgs 2, 27. The older story of this divine warning is that in 1 Sm 3, 11–14.

**2, 28:** Ephod: a portable container, presumably of cloth, for the lots used in ritual consultation of God during the days of the Judges (Jgs 17, 5; 18, 14–15) and down into the time of David (1 Sm 14, 3ff; 23, 6ff; 30, 7f). The ephod of the high priest described in Ex 28, 6ff becomes a garment upon which a breastpiece of decision symbolizes, but no longer serves for, such consultation. The Exodus text codifies a later form of the tradition.

**3, 1:** Uncommon: prophetic communications from God were almost unknown.

p 1 Sm 3, 19. q Lk 2, 52. r 1 Sm 23, 9; 30, 7f; Jgs 17, 5. s 30f: 2 Sm 22, 26; 1 Kgs 2, 27; Ps 18, 25. t 1 Sm 4, 11. u 2 Kgs 23, 9.

that he could not see. 3The lamp of God was not
yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in
the temple of the LORD where the ark of God
was.[v] 4The LORD called to Samuel, who an-
swered, "Here I am." 5He ran to Eli and said,
"Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you,"
Eli said. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to
sleep. 6Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose
and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You
called me." But he answered, "I did not call you,
my son. Go back to sleep."

Ch 4–7
See RG
151

7At that time Samuel was not familiar with
the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed
anything to him as yet. 8The LORD called Samuel
again, for the third time. Getting up and going to
Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then
Eli understood that the LORD was calling the
youth. 9So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and
if you are called, reply, 'Speak, LORD, for your
servant is listening.' " When Samuel went to
sleep in his place, 10the LORD came and revealed
his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel,
Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your
servant is listening." 11The LORD said to Samuel:
"I am about to do something in Israel that will
cause the ears of everyone who hears it to ring.
12On that day I will carry out in full against Eli
everything I threatened against his family. 13I
announce to him that I am condemning his
family once and for all, because of this crime:
though he knew his sons were blaspheming
God, he did not reprove them.[w] 14Therefore, I
swear to the family of Eli that no sacrifice or
offering will ever expiate its crime." 15Samuel
then slept until morning, when he got up early
and opened the doors of the temple of the LORD.
He feared to tell Eli the vision, 16but Eli called to
him, "Samuel, my son!" He replied, "Here I
am." 17Then Eli asked, "What did he say to you?
Hide nothing from me! May God do thus and so
to you* if you hide a single thing he told you."
18So Samuel told him everything, and held
nothing back. Eli answered, "He is the LORD. He
will do what he judges best."

**Samuel Acknowledged as Prophet** 19Samuel
grew up, and the LORD was with him, not permit-
ting any word of his to be without effect.[x] 20[y]Thus
all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba came to know
that Samuel was an accredited prophet of the
LORD. 21The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh;
he manifested himself to Samuel at Shiloh through
his word, 1*and Samuel spoke to all Israel.

## CHAPTER 4

**Defeat of the Israelites** At that time, the
Philistines gathered for an attack on Israel. Israel
went out to engage them in battle and camped at
Ebenezer, while the Philistines camped at
Aphek. 2The Philistines then drew up in battle
formation against Israel. After a fierce struggle
Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who slew
about four thousand men on the battlefield.
3When the troops retired to the camp, the elders
of Israel said, "Why has the LORD permitted us
to be defeated today by the Philistines? Let us
fetch the ark of the LORD from Shiloh that it may
go into battle among us and save us from the
grasp of our enemies."

**Loss of the Ark** 4So the people sent to Shiloh
and brought from there the ark of the LORD of
hosts, who is enthroned upon the cherubim.*
The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were
with the ark of God.[z] 5When the ark of the
LORD arrived in the camp, all Israel shouted so
loudly that the earth resounded. 6The Philis-
tines, hearing the noise of shouting, asked,
"What can this loud shouting in the camp of the
Hebrews mean?" On learning that the ark of the
LORD had come into the camp, 7the Philistines
were frightened. They said, "Gods have come to
their camp." They said also, "Woe to us! This has
never happened before. 8Woe to us! Who can
deliver us from the power of these mighty
gods?* These are the gods that struck the

3, 17: May God do thus and so to you: the Biblical writers avoid repeating for us the specific terms of a curse as the speaker would have uttered it.

3, 1: And . . . Israel: this belongs to ch 4.

4, 4: Enthroned upon the cherubim: this title of the Lord seems to have originated in the sanctuary at Shiloh; it represents the divine Majesty as seated upon a throne on which he can be borne through the heavens by winged creatures somewhat as in the visions of Ez 1 and 10.

4, 8: These mighty gods: the Philistines, who were polytheists, are represented as supposing the Israelites honored several gods.

v Ex 25, 22; 27, 20f; Lv 24, 2. 4; 2 Chr 13, 11. w 1 Sm 2, 27–36. x 1 Sm 2, 21. y Jgs 20, 1. z Ex 25, 22.

Egyptians with various plagues and with pestilence. [9]Take courage and be manly, Philistines;
otherwise you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they were your slaves. So fight manfully!" [10]The Philistines fought and Israel was
defeated; every man fled to his own tent. It was
a disastrous defeat, in which Israel lost thirty
thousand foot soldiers.[a] [11]The ark of God was
captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were among the dead.[b]

**Death of Eli** [12]A Benjaminite fled from the
battlefield and reached Shiloh that same day,
with his clothes torn and his head covered with
dirt.[c] [13]When he arrived, Eli was sitting in his
chair beside the gate, watching the road, for he
was troubled at heart about the ark of God. The
man, however, went into the city to divulge his
news, which put the whole city in an uproar.
[14]Hearing the outcry of the men standing near
him, Eli inquired, "What does this commotion
mean?" [15](Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his
eyes would not focus, so that he could not see.)
[16]The man quickly came up to Eli and said, "It is
I who have come from the battlefield; I fled from
there today." He asked, "What happened, my
son?" [17]And the messenger answered: "Israel
fled from the Philistines; in fact, the troops
suffered heavy losses. Your two sons, Hophni
and Phinehas, are among the dead, and the ark
of God has been captured." [18]At this mention of
the ark of God, Eli fell backward from his chair
into the gateway; since he was an old man and
heavy, he died of a broken neck. He had judged
Israel for forty years.

[19]His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas,
was with child and at the point of giving birth.
When she heard the news concerning the capture of the ark and the deaths of her father-in-
law and her husband, she was seized with the
pangs of labor, and gave birth. [20]She was about
to die when the women standing around her
said to her, "Never fear! You have given birth to
a son." Yet she neither answered nor paid any
attention.[d] [21][She named the child Ichabod,
saying, "Gone is the glory from Israel," with
reference to the capture of the ark of God and to
her father-in-law and her husband.] [22]She said,
"Gone is the glory from Israel," because the ark
of God had been captured.[e]

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 4–7
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**The Ark in the Temple of Dagon** [1]*f*The
Philistines, having captured the ark of God,
transferred it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. [2]They
then took the ark of God and brought it into the
temple of Dagon, placing it beside Dagon.
[3]When the people of Ashdod rose early the next
morning, Dagon was lying prone on the ground
before the ark of the LORD. So they picked
Dagon up and replaced him. [4]But the next
morning early, when they arose, Dagon lay
prone on the ground before the ark of the LORD,
his head and hands broken off and lying on the
threshold, his trunk alone intact. [5]For this reason, neither the priests of Dagon nor any others
who enter the temple of Dagon tread on the
threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this very day;
they always step over it.

**The Ark Is Carried About** [6]Now the LORD
dealt severely with the people of Ashdod. He
ravaged and afflicted the city and its vicinity
with hemorrhoids; he brought upon the city a
great and deadly plague of mice* that swarmed
in their ships and overran their fields.[g] [7]On
seeing how matters stood, the men of Ashdod
decided, "The ark of the God of Israel must not
remain with us, for he is handling us and our god
Dagon severely." [8]So they summoned all the
Philistine lords and inquired of them, "What
shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"
The men of Gath replied, "Let them move the
ark of the God of Israel on to us." [9]So they
moved the ark of the God of Israel to Gath! But
after it had been brought there, the LORD threw
the city into utter turmoil: he afflicted its inhabitants, young and old, and hemorrhoids broke out
on them. [10]The ark of God was next sent to
Ekron; but as it entered that city, the people

5, 6: Hemorrhoids . . . mice: a double calamity fell upon them—a plague of mice or rats, and a severe epidemic of pestilential tumors, probably the bubonic plague.

a Ps 78, 61. b 1 Sm 2, 34. c Jos 7, 6; 2 Sm 1, 2; Jer 7, 12. d 1 Sm 14, 3; Gn 35, 16ff. e Ps 78, 61. f 1–5: Jgs 16, 23–30; Is 45, 5f. 20f. g Ps 78, 66.

there cried out, "Why have they brought the ark of the God of Israel here to kill us and our kindred?" [11]Then they, too, sent a summons to all the Philistine lords and pleaded: "Send away the ark of the God of Israel. Let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our kindred." A deadly panic had seized the whole city, since the hand of God had been very heavy upon it. [12]Those who escaped death were afflicted with hemorrhoids, and the outcry from the city went up to the heavens.

## CHAPTER 6

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**The Ark To Be Returned** [1]The ark of the LORD had been in the land of the Philistines seven months [2]when they summoned priests and fortune-tellers to ask, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us what we should send back with it." [3]They replied: "If you intend to send away the ark of the God of Israel, you must not send it alone, but must, by all means, make amends to him through a guilt offering.* Then you will be healed, and will learn why he continues to afflict you." [4]When asked further, "What guilt offering should be our amends to him?", they replied:

"Five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice to correspond to the number of Philistine lords, since the same plague has struck all of you and your lords. [5]Therefore, make images of the hemorrhoids and of the mice that are infesting your land and give them as a tribute to the God of Israel. Perhaps then he will cease to afflict you, your gods, and your land. [6]Why should you become stubborn, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh were stubborn? Was it not after he had dealt ruthlessly with them that the Israelites were released and departed?[h] [7]So now set to work and make a new cart. Then take two milch cows that have not borne the yoke; hitch them to the cart, but drive their calves indoors away from them.[i] [8]You shall next take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, putting in a box beside it the golden articles that you are offering, as amends for your guilt. Start it on its way, and let it go. [9]Then watch! If it goes up to Beth-shemesh along the route to his own territory, he has brought this great calamity upon us; if not, we will know it was not he who struck us, but that an accident happened to us."

**The Ark in Beth-shemesh** [10]They acted upon this advice. Taking two milch cows, they hitched them to the cart but shut up their calves indoors. [11]Then they placed the ark of the LORD on the cart, along with the box containing the golden mice and the images of the hemorrhoids. [12]The cows went straight for the route to Beth-shemesh and continued along this road, mooing as they went, without turning right or left. The Philistine lords followed them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. [13]The people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting the wheat in the valley. When they looked up and spied the ark, they greeted it with rejoicing. [14]The cart came to the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stopped there. At a large stone in the field, the wood of the cart was split up and the cows were offered as a holocaust to the LORD.[j] [15]The Levites, meanwhile, had taken down the ark of God and the box beside it, in which the golden articles were, and had placed them on the great stone. The men of Beth-shemesh also offered other holocausts and sacrifices to the LORD that day. [16]After witnessing this, the five Philistine lords returned to Ekron the same day.

**Guilt Offering** [17]The golden hemorrhoids the Philistines sent back as a guilt offering to the LORD were as follows: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, and one for Ekron. [18]The golden mice, however, corresponded to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, including fortified cities and open villages. The large stone on which the ark of the LORD was placed is still in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite at the present time.

**Penalty for Irreverence** [19]The descendants of Jeconiah did not join in the celebration with the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh when they greeted

6, 3: A guilt offering: a propitiatory offering customary after unwitting transgression of the ordinances of God regarding holy things or property rights; cf Lv 6, 1ff.

h Ex 7, 14; 8, 15; 9, 34. i Nm 19, 2; Dt 21, 3; 2 Sm 6, 3. j 2 Sm 24, 21ff.

the ark of the LORD, and seventy of them were struck down. The people went into mourning at this great calamity with which the LORD had afflicted them. [20]The men of Beth-shemesh asked, "Who can stand in the presence of this Holy One? To whom shall he go from us?" [21]They then sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD; come down and get it."

## CHAPTER 7

[1]So the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim came for the ark of the LORD and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, appointing his son Eleazar as guardian of the ark of the LORD.

**Religious Reform** [2]From the day the ark came to rest in Kiriath-jearim a long time, twenty years, elapsed, and the whole Israelite population turned to the LORD. [3]Samuel said to them: "If you wish with your whole heart to return to the LORD, put away your foreign gods and your Ashtaroth, devote yourselves to the LORD, and worship him alone. Then he will deliver you from the power of the Philistines."[k] [4]So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtaroth, and worshiped the LORD alone. [5]Samuel then gave orders, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, that I may pray to the LORD for you."[l] [6]When they were gathered at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out on the ground* before the LORD, and they fasted that day, confessing, "We have sinned against the LORD." It was at Mizpah that Samuel began to judge the Israelites.[m]

**Rout of the Philistines** [7]When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, their lords went up against Israel. Hearing this, the Israelites became afraid of the Philistines [8]and said to Samuel, "Implore the LORD our God unceasingly for us, to save us from the clutches of the Philistines."[n] [9]Samuel therefore took an unweaned lamb and offered it entire as a holocaust to the LORD.[o] He implored the LORD for Israel, and the LORD heard him. [10]While Samuel was offering the holocaust, the Philistines advanced to join battle with Israel. That day, however, the LORD thundered loudly against the Philistines, and threw them into such confusion that they were defeated by Israel. [11]Thereupon the Israelites sallied forth from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, harrying them down beyond Beth-car. [12]Samuel then took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Jeshanah; he named it Ebenezer,* explaining, "To this point has the LORD helped us." [13]Thus were the Philistines subdued, never again to enter the territory of Israel, for the LORD was severe with them as long as Samuel lived.[p] [14]The cities from Ekron to Gath which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to them. Israel also freed the territory of these cities from the dominion of the Philistines. Moreover there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

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[15]Samuel judged Israel as long as he lived. [16]He made a yearly journey, passing through Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah and judging Israel at each of these sanctuaries. [17]Then he used to return to Ramah, for that was his home. There, too, he judged Israel and built an altar to the LORD.[q]

# II: Establishment of the Monarchy in Israel

## CHAPTER 8*

**Request for a King** [1]In his old age Samuel appointed his sons judges over Israel. [2]His firstborn was named Joel, his second son, Abijah; they judged at Beer-sheba. [3]His sons did not follow his example but sought illicit gain and accepted bribes, perverting justice.[r] [4]Therefore all the elders of Israel came in a body to Samuel

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7, 6: Poured it out on the ground: for the symbolism, cf 2 Sm 14, 14.

7, 12: Ebenezer: or eben ha-ezer, means "stone of help."

8, 1: From this chapter on, the First Book of Samuel gives us two and sometimes three viewpoints on most of the events with which it is concerned, such as the appointment of Saul as king, the reasons for his downfall, his relationship with David, even the circumstances of Saul's death (1 Sm 31; 2 Sm 1). The choice of Saul as king is seen, in ch 8, followed by 10, 17–24 and ch 12, as motivated by the people's defection from the proper service of God; this later editorial approach incorporates not only narratives with which it is consistent, but also early traditions (9, 1–10. 16; ch 11) which portray the events and their motivation quite differently.

k 1 Sm 12, 10. 20. 24; Jos 24, 23; Jgs 6, 6–10; 10, 10–16. l 1 Sm 10, 17; Jgs 20, 1. m Jgs 20, 26; Ps 22, 14; Lam 2, 19. n Ex 17, 9–13. o 9f: 2 Sm 22, 14f; Sir 46, 16ff. p Jgs 3, 30; 8, 28; 11, 33. q 1 Sm 9, 12; 14, 35. r Ex 23, 8; Dt 16, 19; Prv 17, 23.

at Ramah [5]and said to him, "Now that you are
old, and your sons do not follow your example,
appoint a king over us, as other nations have, to
judge us."[s]

**God Grants the Request** [6]Samuel was dis-
pleased when they asked for a king to judge
them. He prayed to the LORD, however, [7]who
said in answer: "Grant the people's every re-
quest. It is not you they reject, they are rejecting
me as their king.[t] [8]As they have treated me
constantly from the day I brought them up from
Egypt to this day, deserting me and worshiping
strange gods, so do they treat you too. [9]Now
grant their request; but at the same time, warn
them solemnly and inform them of the rights of
the king who will rule them."

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**The Rights of a King** [10]Samuel delivered the
message of the LORD in full to those who were
asking him for a king. [11]He told them: "The
rights of the king who will rule you will be as
follows: He will take your sons and assign them
to his chariots and horses, and they will run
before his chariot.[u] [12]He will also appoint from
among them his commanders of groups of a
thousand and of a hundred soldiers. He will set
them to do his plowing and his harvesting, and
to make his implements of war and the equip-
ment of his chariots.[v] [13]He will use your daugh-
ters as ointment-makers, as cooks, and as bakers.
[14]He will take the best of your fields, vineyards,
and olive groves, and give them to his officials.[w]
[15]He will tithe your crops and your vineyards,
and give the revenue to his eunuchs and his
slaves. [16]He will take your male and female
servants, as well as your best oxen and your
asses, and use them to do his work. [17]He will
tithe your flocks and you yourselves will become
his slaves.[x] [18]When this takes place, you will
complain against the king whom you have
chosen, but on that day the LORD will not
answer you."

**Persistent Demand** [19]The people, however,
refused to listen to Samuel's warning and said,
"Not so! There must be a king over us.[y] [20]We
too must be like other nations, with a king to
rule us and to lead us in warfare and fight our
battles." [21]When Samuel had listened to all the
people had to say, he repeated it to the LORD,
[22]*who then said to him, "Grant their request
and appoint a king to rule them." Samuel
thereupon said to the men of Israel, "Each of you
go to his own city."

## CHAPTER 9

[1]There was a stalwart man from Benjamin
named Kish, who was the son of Abiel, son of
Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benja-
minite.[z] [2]He had a son named Saul, who was a
handsome young man. There was no other
Israelite handsomer than Saul; he stood head
and shoulders above the people.[a]

**The Lost Asses** [3]Now the asses of Saul's
father, Kish, had wandered off. Kish said to his
son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and
go out and hunt for the asses." [4]Accordingly
they went through the hill country of Ephraim,
and through the land of Shalishah. Not finding
them there, they continued through the land of
Shaalim without success. They also went
through the land of Benjamin, but they failed to
find the animals. [5]When they came to the land
of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with
him, "Come, let us turn back, lest my father
forget about the asses and become anxious about
us." [6]The servant replied, "Listen! There is a
man of God in this city, a man held in high
esteem; all that he says is sure to come true. Let
us go there now! Perhaps he can tell us how to
accomplish our errand." [7][b]But Saul said to his
servant, "If we go, what can we offer the man?
There is no bread in our bags, and we have no
present to give the man of God. What have we?"
[8]Again the servant answered Saul, "I have a
quarter of a silver shekel.* If I give that to the
man of God, he will tell us our way." [10]Saul then
said to his servant, "Well said! Come on, let us

9, 8: A quarter of a silver shekel: about a tenth of an ounce of silver.

s 5f: Dt 17, 14f; Hos 13, 10; Acts 13, 21. t 7f: 1 Sm 12, 1. 12f; Jgs 8, 22f; 10, 13; 1 Kgs 9, 9. u 1 Sm 10, 25; Dt 17, 14–20; 1 Kgs 12. v 2 Sm 15, 1; 1 Kgs 1, 5. w 1 Sm 22, 7; 1 Kgs 21, 1–24; Ez 46, 18. x 1 Kgs 12, 4. y 1 Sm 10, 19. z 1 Sm 14, 51; 1 Chr 8, 33. a 1 Sm 10, 23. b 7f: Nm 22, 7; 1 Kgs 14, 3; 2 Kgs 4, 42; 5, 15; 8, 8f.

go!" And they went to the city where the man of God lived.

**Quest for Samuel's Aid** 11 [c]As they were going up the ascent to the city, they met some girls coming out to draw water and inquired of them, "Is the seer in town?" 9 [d](In former times in Israel, anyone who sent to consult God used to say, "Come, let us go to the seer." For he who is now called prophet was formerly called seer.)* 12 [e]The girls answered, "Yes, there—straight ahead. Hurry now; just today he came to the city, because the people have a sacrifice today on the high place.* 13When you enter the city, you may reach him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not eat until he arrives; only after he blesses the sacrifice will the invited guests eat. Go up immediately, for you should find him right now."

**Samuel's Revelation about Saul** 14So they went up to the city. As they entered it, Samuel was coming toward them on his way to the high place. 15The day before Saul's arrival, the LORD had given Samuel the revelation:[f] 16"At this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin whom you are to anoint as commander of my people Israel. He shall save my people from the clutches of the Philistines, for I have witnessed their misery and accepted their cry for help."[g] 17When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD assured him, "This is the man of whom I told you; he is to govern my people." 18Saul met Samuel in the gateway and said, "Please tell me where the seer lives." 19Samuel answered Saul: "I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the high place and eat with me today. In the morning, before dismissing you, I will tell you whatever you wish. 20As for the asses you lost three days ago, do not worry about them, for they have been found. Whom does Israel desire ardently if not you and your father's family?" 21Saul replied: "Am I not a Benjaminite, of one of the smallest tribes of Israel, and is not my clan the least among the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why say such things to me?"[h]

22Samuel then took Saul and his servant and brought them to the room, where he placed them at the head of the guests, of whom there were about thirty. 23He said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you and told you to put aside." 24So the cook took up the leg and what went with it,* and placed it before Saul. Samuel said: "This is a reserved portion that has been set before you. Eat, for it was kept for you until your arrival; I explained that I was inviting some guests." Thus Saul dined with Samuel that day. 25When they came down from the high place into the city, a mattress was spread for Saul on the roof, 26and he slept there.

**Saul's Anointing** At daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get up, and I will start you on your journey." Saul rose, and he and Samuel went outside the city together. 27As they were approaching the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us, but stay here yourself for the moment, that I may give you a message from God."

## CHAPTER 10

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1Then, from a flask he had with him, Samuel poured oil on Saul's head; he also kissed him, saying: "The LORD anoints you commander over his heritage. You are to govern the LORD's people Israel, and to save them from the grasp of their enemies roundabout.[i]

"This will be the sign for you that the LORD has anointed you commander over his heritage: 2When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb* at Zelzah in the

**9, 9:** This verse is a later explanation of the term seer, first used in the text in 1 Sm 9, 11.

**9, 12:** On the high place: the local sanctuary on the top of a hill, where the sacrifice was offered and the sacrificial meal eaten.

**9, 24:** And what went with it: a slight change would give "and the fatty tail" as perhaps the original reading. Sheep in the Near East are exceptionally fat-tailed, and such a portion would be thought a special delicacy by the Hebrews. However, the ritual legislation as we know it (Lv 3, 9) would require that the fat tail be burned on the altar. If this general rule was later than the time of Samuel, the present text may have been retouched so as not to seem to contravene it. A Qumran text has "the festive (leg)" here.

**10, 2:** Here, as in Jer 31, 15, Rachel's tomb is placed north of Jerusalem. Later tradition understood Gn 35, 19f in the sense given by Mt 2, 16ff, and placed the tomb at Bethlehem, farther south.

c Gn 24, 11ff; Ex 2, 16. d Sir 46, 15. e 1 Sm 7, 17; 16, 2. 5; 20, 6. 29; Dt 12, 13; 1 Kgs 3, 2. 4. f Acts 13, 21. g 1 Sm 10, 1. h 1 Sm 15, 17. i 1 Sm 9, 16f; 24, 7; Jgs 9, 9; 1 Kgs 1, 39; Acts 13, 21.

territory of Benjamin, who will say to you, 'The
asses you went to look for have been found. Your
father is no longer worried about the asses, but is
anxious about you and says, What shall I do
about my son?'[j] 3Farther on, when you arrive at
the terebinth of Tabor, you will be met by three
men going up to God at Bethel; one will be
bringing three kids, another three loaves of
bread, and the third a skin of wine. 4They will
greet you and offer you two wave offerings of
bread, which you will take from them. 5[k]After
that you will come to Gibeath-elohim, where
there is a garrison of the Philistines.* As you
enter that city, you will meet a band of prophets,
in a prophetic state, coming down from the high
place preceded by lyres, tambourines, flutes and
harps. 6The spirit of the LORD will rush upon
you, and you will join them in their prophetic
state and will be changed into another man.[l]
7When you see these signs fulfilled, do whatever
you judge feasible, because God is with you.
8[m]Now go down ahead of me to Gilgal, for I
shall come down to you, to offer holocausts and
to sacrifice peace offerings. Wait seven days until
I come to you; I shall then tell you what you
must do."*

**Fulfillment of the Signs** 9As Saul turned to
leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. That
very day all these signs came to pass . . . .
10*When they were going from there to Gibeah,
a band of prophets met him, and the spirit of
God rushed upon him, so that he joined them in
their prophetic state.[n] 11When all who had
known him previously saw him in a prophetic
state among the prophets, they said to one
another, "What has happened to the son of Kish?
Is Saul also among the prophets?"[o] 12And some-
one from that district added, "And who is their
father?" Thus the proverb arose, "Is Saul also
among the prophets?" 13When he came out of
the prophetic state, he went home.

**Silence about the Kingship** 14Saul's uncle
inquired of him and his servant, "Where have
you been?" Saul replied, "To look for the asses.
When we could not find them, we went to
Samuel." 15Then Saul's uncle said, "Tell me,
then, what Samuel said to you." 16Saul said to
his uncle, "He assured us that the asses had been
found." But he mentioned nothing to him of
what Samuel had said about the kingship.

**Saul Chosen King by Lot** 17Samuel called the
people together to the LORD at Mizpah[p] 18and
addressed the Israelites: "Thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought Israel up
from Egypt and delivered you from the power of
the Egyptians and from the power of all the
kingdoms that oppressed you.'[q] 19But today you
have rejected your God, who delivers you from
all your evils and calamities, by saying to him,
'Not so, but you must appoint a king over us.'
Now, therefore, take your stand before the LORD
according to tribes and families."[r] 20So Samuel
had all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the
tribe of Benjamin was chosen. 21Next he had the
tribe of Benjamin come forward in clans, and the
clan of Matri was chosen, and finally Saul, son of
Kish, was chosen. But they looked for him in
vain. 22[s]Again they consulted the LORD, "Has he
come here?" The LORD answered, "He is hiding
among the baggage." 23They ran to bring him
from there; and when he stood among the
people, he was head and shoulders above all the
crowd.[t] 24Samuel said to all the people, "Do you
see the man whom the LORD has chosen? There
is none like him among all the people!" Then all
the people shouted, "Long live the king!"[u]

25Samuel next explained to the people the
law of royalty* and wrote it in a book, which he

10, 5: A garrison of the Philistines: the Hebrew word for "garrison" has been explained alternatively to mean a pillar erected to mark the Philistine occupation, or an inspector or officer for the collection of taxes. In a prophetic state: in an ecstatic condition due to strong feelings of religious enthusiasm induced by a communal observance, possibly accompanied by music and dancing.

10, 8: By inserting this verse, with its seven days, an editor has prepared for one narrative of the rejection of Saul (1 Sm 13, 8–15) in the very context of Saul's anointing.

10, 10: The story has here been abridged by omitting the fulfillment of the first two signs given by Samuel (1 Sm 10, 2ff).

10, 25: The law of royalty: the charter defining the rights of the king.

j Jer 31, 15; Mk 14, 13. k 5f: 1 Sm 13, 3; 16, 13; 19, 20f. l 1 Sm 11, 6; 16, 13; Jgs 14, 6. 19; 15, 14; 2 Kgs 3, 15. m 1 Sm 13, 8; Lv 3, 1. n 1 Sm 19, 20–24; Nm 11, 25. o 1 Sm 19, 24. p 1 Sm 7, 5. q Ex 20, 2; Lv 11, 45; 25, 38; Nm 15, 41; Dt 5, 6; Jgs 6, 8f. r 1 Sm 8, 19. s 1 Sm 30, 24. t 1 Sm 9, 2; 16, 7. u 2 Sm 16, 16; 1 Kgs 1, 25; 2 Kgs 11, 12.

placed in the presence of the LORD. This done,
Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own
place.[v] [26]Saul also went home to Gibeah, accom-
panied by warriors whose hearts the LORD had
touched. [27]But certain worthless men said,
"How can this fellow save us?" They despised
him and brought him no present.[w]

## CHAPTER 11

**Defeat of the Ammonites** [1]About a month
later,* Nahash the Ammonite went up and laid
siege to Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh
begged Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we
will be your subjects."[x] [2]But Nahash the Am-
monite replied, "This is my condition for a treaty
with you: I must gouge out every man's right
eye, that I may thus bring ignominy on all
Israel." [3]The elders of Jabesh said to him: "Give
us seven days to send messengers throughout
the territory of Israel. If no one rescues us, we
will surrender to you." [4]When the messengers
arrived at Gibeah of Saul, they related the news
to the people, all of whom wept aloud. [5]Just
then Saul came in from the field, behind his
oxen. "Why are the people weeping?" he asked.
The message of the inhabitants of Jabesh was
repeated to him. [6]As he listened to this report,
the spirit of God rushed upon him and he
became very angry.[y] [7]Taking a yoke of oxen, he
cut them into pieces, which he sent throughout
the territory of Israel by couriers with the
message, "If anyone does not come out to follow
Saul [and Samuel], the same as this will be done
to his oxen!" In dread of the LORD, the people
turned out to a man.[z] [8]When he reviewed them
in Bezek, there were three hundred thousand
Israelites and seventy thousand Judahites.

[9]To the messengers who had come he said,
"Tell the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead that tomor-
row, while the sun is hot, they will be rescued."
The messengers came and reported this to the
inhabitants of Jabesh, who were jubilant, [10]and
said to Nahash, "Tomorrow we will surrender to
you, and you may do whatever you please with
us." [11]On the appointed day, Saul arranged his
troops in three companies and invaded the camp
during the dawn watch. They slaughtered Am-
monites until the heat of the day; by then the
survivors were so scattered that no two were left
together.

**Saul Accepted as King** [12]*The people then
said to Samuel: "Who questioned whether Saul
should rule over us? Hand over the men and we
will put them to death."[a] [13]But Saul broke in to
say, "No man is to be put to death this day, for
today the LORD has saved Israel."[b] [14]Samuel said
to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal to
inaugurate the kingdom there." [15]So all the
people went to Gilgal, where, in the presence of
the LORD, they made Saul king. They also
sacrificed peace offerings there before the LORD,
and Saul and all the Israelites celebrated the
occasion with great joy.

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## CHAPTER 12

**Samuel's Integrity** [1]Samuel addressed all Is-
rael: "I have granted your request in every
respect," he said. "I have set a king over you[c]
[2]and now the king is your leader. As for me, I am
old and gray, and have sons among you. I have
lived with you from my youth to the present day.
[3]Here I stand! Answer me in the presence of the
LORD and of his anointed. Whose ox have I
taken? Whose ass have I taken? Whom have I
cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whom
have I accepted a bribe and overlooked his guilt?
I will make restitution to you."[d] [4]They replied,
"You have neither cheated us, nor oppressed us,
nor accepted anything from anyone." [5]So he said
to them, "The LORD is witness against you this
day, and his anointed as well, that you have
found nothing in my possession." "He is wit-
ness," they agreed.

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11, 1: About a month later: there is ancient evidence for a longer introduction to this campaign. The time indication here may refer to its earlier stages rather than to the events of ch 10.

11, 12–14: With these verses, an editor has harmonized the account of the acknowledgment of Saul as king at Mizpah (1 Sm 10, 17–24) with the public acclamation at Gilgal (1 Sm 11, 15) after the defeat of the Ammonites (1 Sm 11, 1–11). The Greek text of 1 Sm 11, 15 reads "and Samuel anointed Saul as king," instead of they made Saul king.

v 1 Sm 8, 11; Dt 17, 14–20. w 1 Sm 11, 12. x 1 Sm 12, 12; 31, 11. y 1 Sm 16, 13; Jgs 14, 6. 19. z 1 Kgs 11, 30; 2 Kgs 13, 18. a 1 Sm 10, 27. b 2 Sm 19, 23. c 1 Sm 8, 7. 9. 22. d Ex 20, 17; 23, 8; Nm 16, 15; Dt 16, 19; Sir 46, 19.

**Samuel Upbraids the People** 6Continuing, Samuel said to the people: "The LORD is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.[e] 7Now, therefore, take your stand, and I shall arraign you before the LORD, and shall recount for you all the acts of mercy the LORD has done for you and your fathers. 8When Jacob and his sons went to Egypt and the Egyptians oppressed them, your fathers appealed to the LORD, who sent Moses and Aaron to bring them out of Egypt, and he gave them this place to live in.[f] 9But they forgot the LORD their God; and he allowed them to fall into the clutches of Sisera, the captain of the army of Jabin, king of Hazor, into the grasp of the Philistines, and into the grip of the king of Moab, who made war against them.[g] 10Each time they appealed to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned in forsaking the LORD and worshiping Baals and Ashtaroth; but deliver us now from the power of our enemies, and we will worship you.'[h] 11Accordingly, the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samson; he delivered you from the power of your enemies on every side, so that you were able to live in security.[i] 12Yet, when you saw Nahash, king of the Ammonites, advancing against you, you said to me, 'Not so, but a king must rule us,' even though the LORD your God is your king.[j]

**Warnings for People and King** 13"Now you have the king you want, a king the LORD has given you.[k] 14If you fear the LORD and worship him, if you are obedient to him and do not rebel against the LORD's command, if both you and the king who rules you follow the LORD your God—well and good. 15But if you do not obey the LORD and if you rebel against his command, the LORD will deal severely with you and your king, and destroy you. 16Now then, stand ready to witness the great marvel the LORD is about to accomplish before your eyes. 17Are we not in the harvest time for wheat? Yet I shall call to the LORD, and he will send thunder and rain. Thus you will see and understand how greatly the LORD is displeased that you have asked for a king."[l] 18Samuel then called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day.

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**Assistance Promised** As a result, all the people dreaded the LORD and Samuel. 19They said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for us, your servants, that we may not die for having added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king." 20"Do not fear," Samuel answered them. "It is true you have committed all this evil; still, you must not turn from the LORD, but must worship him with your whole heart. 21Do not turn to meaningless idols which can neither profit nor save; they are nothing.[m] 22For the sake of his own great name the LORD will not abandon his people, since the LORD himself chose to make you his people.[n] 23As for me, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you and to teach you the good and right way.[o] 24But you must fear the LORD and worship him faithfully with your whole heart; keep in mind the great things he has done among you. 25If instead you continue to do evil, both you and your king shall perish."

## III: Saul and David

### CHAPTER 13

1[Saul was . . . years old when he became king and he reigned . . . (two) years over Israel.]*

**Saul Offers Sacrifice** 2Saul chose three thousand men of Israel, of whom two thousand remained with him in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. He sent the rest of the people back to their tents. 3Now Jonathan overcame the Philistine garrison* which was in Gibeah, and the Philistines got word of it. Then

13, 1: A formula like that of 2 Sm 5, 4 was introduced here at some time; but the age of Saul when he became king remains a blank, and the two years assigned for his reign in the received text cannot be correct. Tradition (Acts 13, 21) offers the round number, "forty years."

13, 3–4: The Philistine garrison: see note on 1 Sm 10, 5. Let the Hebrews hear: a different reading of these verses, based on the Greek, would yield: "And the Philistines heard that the Hebrews (or: the slaves) had revolted. Saul in the meantime sounded the trumpet throughout all the land (v 4), and all Israel heard that Saul. . . ."

e Mi 6, 4. f Gn 46, 5; Ex 1, 11; 2, 23ff. g Jgs 3, 12ff; 4, 2f; 10, 7; 13, 1. h 1 Sm 7, 3f. i Jgs 6, 14. 32; 11, 1. j 1 Sm 8, 6f. 19; 11, 1f; Jgs 8, 23. k 1 Sm 8, 7. l Ex 9, 23. 28ff; 1 Kgs 18, 1. m Dt 32, 37ff. n Jer 14, 21; Ex 20, 9; Dn 3, 34. o Ex 32, 11.

Saul sounded the horn throughout the land,
with a proclamation, "Let the Hebrews hear!"[p]
4Thus all Israel learned that Saul had overcome
the garrison of the Philistines and that Israel had
brought disgrace upon the Philistines; and the
soldiers were called up to Saul in Gilgal. 5The
Philistines also assembled for battle, with three
thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and
foot soldiers as numerous as the sands of the
seashore. Moving up against Israel, they en-
camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. 6Some
Israelites, aware of the danger and of the difficult
situation, hid themselves in caves, in thickets,
among rocks, in caverns, and in cisterns,[q] 7and
other Hebrews passed over the Jordan into the
land of Gad and Gilead. Saul, however, held out
at Gilgal, although all his followers were seized
with fear.* 8He waited seven days—the time
Samuel had determined. When Samuel did not
arrive at Gilgal, the men began to slip away from
Saul.[r] 9He then said, "Bring me the holocaust
and peace offerings," and he offered up the
holocaust.

**King Saul Reproved** 10He had just finished
this offering when Samuel arrived. Saul went out
to greet him, 11and Samuel asked him, "What
have you done?" Saul replied: "When I saw that
the men were slipping away from me, since you
had not come by the specified time, and with the
Philistines assembled at Michmash, 12I said to
myself, 'Now the Philistines will come down
against me at Gilgal, and I have not yet sought
the LORD's blessing.' So in my anxiety I offered
up the holocaust." 13Samuel's response was:
"You have been foolish! Had you kept the
command the LORD your God gave you, the
LORD would now establish your kingship in
Israel as lasting; 14but as things are, your king-
dom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out
a man after his own heart and has appointed him
commander of his people, because you broke the
LORD's command."[s]

**Philistine Invasion** 15Then Samuel set out
from Gilgal and went his own way; but the rest
of the people went up after Saul to meet the
soldiers, going from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benja-
min. Saul then numbered the soldiers he had
with him, who were about six hundred.[t] 16Saul,
his son Jonathan, and the soldiers they had with
them were now occupying Geba of Benjamin,
and the Philistines were encamped at Mich-
mash. 17Meanwhile, raiders left the camp of the
Philistines in three bands.[u] One band took the
Ophrah road toward the district of Shual; 18an-
other turned in the direction of Beth-horon; and
the third took the road for Geba that overlooks
the Valley of the Hyenas toward the desert.

**Disarmament of Israel** 19Not a single smith
was to be found in the whole land of Israel, for
the Philistines had said, "Otherwise the He-
brews will make swords or spears."[v] 20All Israel,
therefore, had to go down to the Philistines to
sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, and
sickles. 21The price for the plowshares and
mattocks was two-thirds of a shekel, and a third
of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for
setting the ox-goads. 22And so on the day of
battle neither sword nor spear could be found in
the possession of any of the soldiers with Saul or
Jonathan. Only Saul and his son Jonathan had
them.

**Jonathan's Exploit** 23An outpost of the Philis-
tines had pushed forward to the pass of Mich-
mash.[w]

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 14
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1One day Jonathan, son of Saul, said to his
armor-bearer, "Come, let us go over to the
Philistine outpost on the other side." But he did
not inform his father.[x] 2(Saul's command post
was under the pomegranate tree near the thresh-
ing floor on the outskirts of Geba; those with
him numbered about six hundred men. 3Ahijah,
son of Ahitub, brother of Ichabod, who was the
son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD
at Shiloh, was wearing the ephod.) Nor did the
soldiers know that Jonathan had gone.[y] 4Flank-
ing the ravine through which Jonathan intended

13, 7–15: These verses, like 1 Sm 10, 8, anticipate the rejection of Saul; a different occasion and motivation for this are given in ch 15, resumed in 1 Sm 28, 17f.

p 1 Sm 14, 1–15; Jgs 3, 27; 6, 34; 2 Sm 20, 1f. q 1 Sm 14, 22. r 1 Sm 10, 8. s 1 Sm 25, 30; 2 Sm 7, 15f; Ps 78, 70; Acts 13, 22. t 1 Sm 14, 2. u 1 Sm 14, 15. v Jgs 5, 8. w 1 Sm 14, 15. x 1 Sm 13, 3. y 1 Sm 2, 28; 4, 21; 14, 18; 23, 9; 30, 7.

to get over to the Philistine outpost there was a
rocky crag on each side, one called Bozez, the
other Seneh. 5One crag was to the north, toward
Michmash, the other to the south, toward Geba.
6Jonathan said to his armor-bearer: "Come, let
us go over to that outpost of the uncircumcised.
Perhaps the LORD will help us, because it is no
more difficult for the LORD to grant victory
through a few than through many." [z] 7His armor-
bearer replied, "Do whatever you are inclined to
do; I will match your resolve." 8Jonathan contin-
ued: "We shall go over to those men and show
ourselves to them. 9If they say to us, 'Stay there
until we can come to you,' we shall stop where
we are; we shall not go up to them. 10But if they
say, 'Come up to us,' we shall go up, because the
LORD has delivered them into our grasp. That
will be our sign." 11Accordingly, the two of them
appeared before the outpost of the Philistines,
who said, "Look, some Hebrews are coming out
of the holes where they have been hiding."
12The men of the outpost called to Jonathan and
his armor-bearer. "Come up here," they said,
"and we will teach you a lesson." So Jonathan
said to his armor-bearer, "Climb up after me, for
the LORD has delivered them into the grasp of
Israel." 13Jonathan clambered up with his armor-
bearer behind him; as the Philistines turned to
flee him, he cut them down, and his armor-
bearer followed him and finished them off. 14In
this first exploit Jonathan and his armor-bearer
slew about twenty men within half a furlong.
15Then panic spread to the army and to the
countryside, and all the soldiers, including the
outpost and the raiding parties, were terror-
stricken. The earth also shook, so that the panic
was beyond human endurance.

**Rout of the Philistines** 16The lookouts of Saul
in Geba of Benjamin saw that the enemy camp
had scattered and were running about in all
directions. 17Saul said to those around him,
"Count the troops and find out if any of us are
missing." When they had investigated, they
found Jonathan and his armor-bearer missing.
18Saul then said to Ahijah, "Bring the ephod*
here." (Ahijah was wearing the ephod in front of
the Israelites at that time.) 19While Saul was
speaking to the priest, the tumult in the Philis-
tine camp kept increasing. So he said to the
priest, "Withdraw your hand." 20And Saul and
all his men shouted and rushed into the fight,
where the Philistines, wholly confused, were
thrusting swords at one another. [a] 21In addition,
the Hebrews who had previously sided with the
Philistines and had gone up with them to the
camp, turned to join the Israelites under Saul
and Jonathan. [b] 22Likewise, all the Israelites who
were hiding in the hill country of Ephraim, on
hearing that the Philistines were fleeing, pursued
them in the rout. [c] 23Thus the LORD saved Israel
that day.

**Saul's Oath** The battle continued past Beth-
horon;* 24the whole people, about ten thousand
combatants, were with Saul, and there was
scattered fighting in every town in the hill
country of Ephraim. And Saul swore a very rash
oath that day, putting the people under this ban:
"Cursed be the man who takes food before
evening, before I am able to avenge myself on
my enemies." So none of the people tasted food.
25Indeed, there was a honeycomb lying on the
ground, 26and when the soldiers came to the
comb the swarm had left it; yet no one would
raise a hand to his mouth from it, because the
people feared the oath.

**Violation of the Oath** 27Jonathan, who had
not heard that his father had put the people
under oath, thrust out the end of the staff he was
holding and dipped it into the honey. Then he
raised it to his mouth and his eyes lit up. 28At
this one of the soldiers spoke up: "Your father
put the people under a strict oath, saying,
'Cursed be the man who takes food this day!' As
a result the people are weak." 29Jonathan re-
plied: "My father brings trouble to the land.
Look how bright my eyes are from this small

**14, 18**: Ephod: to be used in consulting God; see note on v 41, and that on 1 Sm 2, 28 above.

**14, 23**: Past Beth-horon: this is a textual correction influenced by 1 Sm 13, 18; the received Hebrew text refers to Bethel (Beth-aven), but the effect of the victory would seem to have been that the main ridge of mountains in the territories of Benjamin and Ephraim was cleared of Philistines.

z 1 Sm 17, 26. 36. 47; Sir 39, 18; 1 Mc 3, 19. a Jgs 7, 22. b 1 Sm 29, 4. c 1 Sm 13, 6.

taste of honey I have had. 30What is more, if the
people had eaten freely today of their enemy's
booty when they came across it, would not the
slaughter of the Philistines by now have been the
greater for it?"

**Use of Flesh with Blood Forbidden** 31After
the Philistines were routed that day from Mich-
mash to Aijalon, the people were completely
exhausted. 32So they pounced upon the spoil
and took sheep, oxen and calves, slaughtering
them on the ground and eating the flesh with
blood.[d] 33Informed that the people were sinning
against the LORD by eating the flesh with blood,
Saul said: "You have broken faith. Roll a large
stone here for me." 34He continued: "Mingle
with the people and tell each of them to bring
his ox or his sheep to me. Slaughter it here and
then eat, but you must not sin against the LORD
by eating the flesh with blood." So everyone
brought to the LORD whatever ox he had seized,
and they slaughtered them there; 35and Saul
built an altar to the LORD—this was the first time
he built an altar to the LORD.[e]

**Jonathan in Danger of Death** 36Then Saul
said, "Let us go down in pursuit of the Philistines
by night, to plunder among them until daybreak
and to kill them all off." They replied, "Do what
you think best." But the priest said, "Let us
consult God." 37So Saul inquired of God: "Shall I
go down in pursuit of the Philistines? Will you
deliver them into the power of Israel?" But he
received no answer on this occasion.[f] 38Saul
then said, "Come here, all officers of the army.
We must investigate and find out how this sin
was committed today. 39As the LORD lives who
has given victory to Israel, even if my son
Jonathan has committed it, he shall surely die!"
But none of the people answered him. 40So he
said to all Israel, "Stand on one side, and I and
my son Jonathan will stand on the other." The
people responded, "Do what you think best."[g]
41And Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel:
"Why did you not answer your servant this
time? If the blame for this resides in me or my
son Jonathan, LORD, God of Israel, respond with
Urim; but if this guilt is in your people Israel,
respond with Thummim."* Jonathan and Saul
were designated, and the people went free.[h]
42Saul then said, "Cast lots between me and my
son Jonathan." And Jonathan was designated.
43Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have
done." Jonathan replied, "I only tasted a little
honey from the end of the staff I was holding.
Am I to die for this?" 44Saul said, "May God do
thus and so to me if you do not indeed die,
Jonathan!"[i]

**Rescue of Jonathan** 45But the army said to
Saul: "Is Jonathan to die, though it was he who
brought Israel this great victory? This must not
be! As the LORD lives, not a single hair of his
head shall fall to the ground, for God was with
him in what he did today!" Thus the soldiers
were able to rescue* Jonathan from death.[j]
46After that Saul gave up the pursuit of the
Philistines, who returned to their own territory.

**Wars and Victories** 47After taking over the
kingship of Israel, Saul waged war on all their
surrounding enemies—Moab, the Ammonites,
Aram, Beth-rehob, the king of Zobah, and the
Philistines. Wherever he turned, he was success-
ful[k] 48and fought bravely. He defeated Amalek
and delivered Israel from the hands of those who
were plundering them.

**Saul's Family** 49The sons of Saul were Jona-
than, Ishvi,* and Malchishua; his two daughters
were named, the elder, Merob, and the younger,
Michal.[l] 50Saul's wife, who was named Ahin-
oam, was the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of
his general was Abner, son of Saul's uncle, Ner;
51Kish, Saul's father, and Ner, Abner's father,
were sons of Abiel.[m]
52An unremitting war was waged against the

14, 41: The Urim and Thummim, or sacred lots, were a device for ascertaining the will of God; they ceased to be used after the time of David. The material and the shape of these objects, and the manner in which they were used, are unknown. They gave a "yes" or "no" answer to specific questions.

14, 45: Rescue: the Hebrew word used is that for the "redemption" of the first-born (Ex 13, 13ff).

14, 49: Ishvi: known also as Ishbaal, in 2 Sm 2, 8 and elsewhere. The name may once have read "Ishyo" here.

d 1 Sm 15, 19. 21; Lv 3, 17; 7, 26f; 17, 10–14; Acts 15, 20. 29. e 1 Sm 7, 17; Jgs 6, 24. f 1 Sm 28, 6. 15. g Jos 7, 13ff. h 1 Sm 28, 6; Ex 28, 30; Dt 33, 8. i 1 Sm 3, 17; Ru 1, 17. j 2 Sm 14, 11; 1 Kgs 1, 52. k 2 Sm 1, 22; 8, 2–5. l 1 Sm 18, 20. 25; 31, 2; 1 Chr 8, 33; 9, 39; 10, 2. m 1 Sm 9, 1.

Philistines during Saul's lifetime. When Saul saw any strong or brave man, he took him into his service.

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 15 See RG 154

1Samuel said to Saul: "It was I the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now, therefore, listen to the message of the LORD. 2This is what the LORD of hosts has to say: 'I will punish what Amalek did to Israel when he barred his way as he was coming up from Egypt.[n] 3Go, now, attack Amalek, and deal with him and all that he has under the ban.* Do not spare him, but kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and asses.' "[o]

**Disobedience of Saul** 4Saul alerted the soldiers, and at Telaim reviewed two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.* 5Saul went to the city of Amalek, and after setting an ambush in the wadi, 6[p]warned the Kenites: "Come! Leave Amalek and withdraw, that I may not have to destroy you with them, for you were kind to the Israelites when they came up from Egypt." After the Kenites left, 7Saul routed Amalek from Havilah to the approaches of Shur, on the frontier of Egypt.[q] 8He took Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but on the rest of the people he put into effect the ban of destruction by the sword. 9He and his troops spared Agag and the best of the fat sheep and oxen, and the lambs. They refused to carry out the doom on anything that was worthwhile, dooming only what was worthless and of no account.

**Saul Is Reproved** 10Then the LORD spoke to Samuel: 11"I regret* having made Saul king, for he has turned from me and has not kept my command." At this Samuel grew angry and cried out to the LORD all night. 12Early in the morning he went to meet Saul, but was informed that Saul had gone to Carmel, where he erected a trophy in his own honor, and that on his return he had passed on and gone down to Gilgal. 13When Samuel came to him, Saul greeted him: "The LORD bless you! I have kept the command of the LORD." 14But Samuel asked, "What, then, is the meaning of this bleating of sheep that comes to my ears, and the lowing of oxen that I hear?" 15Saul replied: "They were brought from Amalek. The men spared the best sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD, your God; but we have carried out the ban on the rest." 16Samuel said to Saul: "Stop! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Speak!" he replied. 17Samuel then said: "Though little in your own esteem, are you not leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king of Israel[r] 18and sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction. Fight against them until you have exterminated them.'[s] 19Why then have you disobeyed the LORD? You have pounced on the spoil, thus displeasing the LORD."[t] 20Saul answered Samuel: "I did indeed obey the LORD and fulfill the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought back Agag, and I have destroyed Amalek under the ban. 21But from the spoil the men took sheep and oxen, the best of what had been banned, to sacrifice to the LORD their God in Gilgal."[u] 22[v]But Samuel said:

"Does the LORD so delight in holocausts and sacrifices
as in obedience to the command of the LORD?
Obedience is better than sacrifice,
and submission than the fat of rams.*
23 For a sin like divination is rebellion,
and presumption is the crime of idolatry.

**15, 3:** Under the ban: in such wars of extermination, all things (men, cities, beasts, etc.) were to be blotted out; nothing could be reserved for private use. The interpretation of God's will here attributed to Samuel is in keeping with the abhorrent practices of blood revenge prevalent among pastoral, seminomadic peoples such as the Hebrews had recently been. The slaughter of the innocent has never been in conformity with the will of God.

**15, 4:** The numbers here are not realistic; compare 1 Sm 14, 24 above.

**15, 11:** I regret: God manifests "regret" when, offended by men, he takes away his benefits, graces and favors. It is not God, but men, who change, to their own detriment.

**15, 22:** Samuel is disapproving, not of sacrifices in general, but of merely external sacrifices offered in defiance of God's commandment and without heartfelt obedience.

n Ex 17, 8–10. 16; Dt 25, 17ff. o 1 Sm 27, 8; 30, 17; Ex 17, 16; Nm 24, 20. p Nm 24, 21. q 1 Sm 27, 8. r 1 Sm 9, 21. s 1 Sm 28, 18. t 1 Sm 14, 32. u Lv 27, 28. v Prv 21, 3; Hos 6, 6; Am 5, 21–25; Zec 10, 2; Mt 9, 13; 12, 7; Heb 10, 9.

Because you have rejected the command of
the LORD,
he, too, has rejected you as ruler."

**Saul Asks Forgiveness** 24Saul replied to Samuel: "I have sinned, for I have disobeyed the command of the LORD and your instructions. In my fear of the people, I did what they said.[w] 25Now forgive my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." 26But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, because you rejected the command of the LORD and the LORD rejects you as king of Israel."[x] 27As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized a loose end of his mantle, and it tore off.[y] 28So Samuel said to him: "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.[z] 29The Glory of Israel neither retracts nor repents, for he is not man that he should repent."[a] 30But he answered: "I have sinned, yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel. Return with me that I may worship the LORD your God." 31And so Samuel returned with him, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

**Agag Is Cut Down** 32Afterward Samuel commanded, "Bring Agag, king of Amalek, to me." Agag came to him struggling and saying, "So it is bitter death!" 33And Samuel said,

"As your sword has made women childless,
so shall your mother be childless among
women."

Then he cut Agag down before the LORD in Gilgal.[b]

34Samuel departed for Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. 35Never again, as long as he lived, did Samuel see Saul. Yet he grieved over Saul, because the LORD regretted having made him king of Israel.[c]

## CHAPTER 16

**Samuel Sent to Bethlehem** 1[d]The LORD said to Samuel: "How long will you grieve for Saul, whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons."* 2But Samuel replied: "How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me." To this the LORD answered: "Take a heifer along and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I myself will tell you what to do; you are to anoint for me the one I point out to you."

4Samuel did as the LORD had commanded him. When he entered Bethlehem, the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and inquired, "Is your visit peaceful, O seer?" 5He replied: "Yes! I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. So cleanse yourselves and join me today for the banquet." He also had Jesse and his sons cleanse themselves and invited them to the sacrifice.[e] 6As they came, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is here before him." 7But the LORD said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."[f] 8[g]Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him before Samuel, who said, "The LORD has not chosen him." 9Next Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 10In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any one of these." 11Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here."[h] 12Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The LORD said, "There—anoint him, for this is he!"[i] 13Then Samuel, with the horn of oil

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16, 1: The anointing here prepared for is unknown to David's brother Eliab in the next chapter (1 Sm 17, 28), and David is twice anointed after Saul's death (2 Sm 2, 4; 5, 3).

w 1 Sm 26, 21. x 1 Kgs 11, 11. 30f. y 1 Sm 24, 6. z 1 Sm 28, 17; 2 Sm 7, 15f. a Nm 23, 19. b Ex 21, 23. c Gn 6, 6. d 1 Kgs 1, 39; Ru 4, 17–22; 1 Chr 11, 3; Is 11, 1; Lk 2, 4. e 1 Sm 9, 12f; 20, 26; Ex 19, 10; Jb 1, 5. f 1 Sm 10, 23f; 1 Chr 28, 9; Prv 15, 11; Jer 17, 10; 20, 12; Lk 16, 15; Acts 1, 24. g 8ff: 1 Sm 17, 12f; 1 Chr 2, 13ff. h 1 Sm 17, 15. 28. 34; 2 Sm 7, 8. i 1 Sm 9, 2.

in hand, anointed him in the midst of his
brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the
LORD rushed upon David. When Samuel took his
leave, he went to Ramah.[j]

**Saul's Spirit of Melancholy** 14 [k]The spirit of
the LORD had departed from Saul, and he was
tormented by an evil spirit sent by the LORD.*
15So the servants of Saul said to him: "Please! An
evil spirit from God is tormenting you. 16If your
lordship will order it, we, your servants here in
attendance on you, will look for a man skilled in
playing the harp. When the evil spirit from God
comes over you, he will play and you will feel
better." 17Saul then told his servants, "Find me a
skillful harpist and bring him to me." 18 [l]A
servant spoke up to say: "I have observed that
one of the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem is a skillful
harpist. He is also a stalwart soldier, besides
being an able speaker, and handsome. Moreover,
the LORD is with him."*

**David Made Armor-Bearer** 19Accordingly,
Saul dispatched messengers to ask Jesse to send
him his son David, who was with the flock.
20Then Jesse took five loaves of bread, a skin of
wine, and a kid, and sent them to Saul by his son
David.[m] 21Thus David came to Saul and entered
his service. Saul became very fond of him, made
him his armor-bearer,[n] 22and sent Jesse the
message, "Allow David to remain in my service,
for he meets with my approval." 23Whenever
the spirit from God seized Saul, David would
take the harp and play, and Saul would be
relieved and feel better, for the evil spirit would
leave him.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 17
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**The Challenge of Goliath** 1The Philistines
rallied their forces for battle at Socoh in Judah
and camped between Socoh and Azekah at
Ephes-dammim. 2Saul and the Israelites also
gathered and camped in the Vale of the Tere-
binth, drawing up their battle line to meet the
Philistines. 3The Philistines were stationed on
one hill and the Israelites on an opposite hill,
with a valley between them.

4A champion named Goliath of Gath came
out from the Philistine camp; he was six and a
half feet tall. 5He had a bronze helmet on his
head and wore a bronze corselet of scale armor
weighing five thousand shekels, 6and bronze
greaves, and had a bronze scimitar* slung from a
baldric. 7The shaft of his javelin was like a
weaver's heddle-bar, and its iron head weighed
six hundred shekels.* His shield-bearer went
before him.[o] 8He stood and shouted to the ranks
of Israel: "Why come out in battle formation? I
am a Philistine, and you are Saul's servants.
Choose one of your men, and have him come
down to me. 9If he beats me in combat and kills
me, we will be your vassals; but if I beat him and
kill him, you shall be our vassals and serve us."
10The Philistine continued: "I defy the ranks of
Israel today. Give me a man and let us fight
together." 11Saul and all the men of Israel, when
they heard this challenge of the Philistine, were
dismayed and terror-stricken.

**David Comes to the Camp*** 12[David was the
son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from
Bethlehem in Judah. He had eight sons, and in
the days of Saul was old and well on in years.[p]
13The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed
Saul to war; these three sons who had gone off
to war were named, the first-born Eliab, the
second son Abinadab, and the third Shammah.
14David was the youngest. While the three
oldest had joined Saul, 15David would go and
come from Saul to tend his father's sheep at
Bethlehem.[q]

**16, 14:** An evil spirit sent by the Lord: the Lord permitted Saul to be tormented with violent fits of rage.

**16, 18:** Of the two traditions which describe the coming of David into Saul's service, the oldest Greek translation retains only the one comprised in 1 Sm 16, 14–23; 17, 1–11. 32–54. This effort at consistency is not in accord with the character of the rest of the book; see note on 1 Sm 8, 1. Though square brackets are used in this edition to indicate the passages lacking in the oldest translation, this is meant only to help the reader follow one account at a time. Both are equally a part of the inspired text, as are also the various amplifications and retouchings of the narrative given within brackets in chs 18 and 19.

**17, 6:** Scimitar: the Hebrew word for this is rather rare, and the nature of the weapon was in doubt until recent years. It is not the same as the sword of v 45.

**17, 7:** Six hundred shekels: over 15 pounds.

**17, 12–31:** An alternative account of how David came to undertake the combat with the Philistine is here inserted; it is continued in 1 Sm 17, 55—18, 6. See note on 1 Sm 16, 18.

j 1 Sm 10, 6; 11, 6; Jgs 3, 10; 9, 9; Sir 46, 13. k 1 Sm 18, 10f. l 2 Sm 17, 8. m 1 Sm 9, 7f; 10, 4. 27; 16, 1; 17, 27ff. n 1 Sm 18, 2. o 2 Sm 21, 19; 1 Chr 11, 23; 20, 5. p 1 Sm 16, 1. 10; Ru 1, 2. q 1 Sm 18, 2; 2 Sm 7, 8.

16[Meanwhile the Philistine came forward
and took his stand morning and evening for forty
days.
17[Now Jesse said to his son David: "Take this
ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves for
your brothers, and bring them quickly to your
brothers in the camp. 18Also take these ten
cheeses for the field officer. Greet your brothers
and bring home some token from them. 19Saul,
and they, and all Israel are fighting against the
Philistines in the Vale of the Terebinth." 20Early
the next morning, having left the flock with a
shepherd, David set out on his errand, as Jesse
had commanded him. He reached the barricade
of the camp just as the army, on their way to the
battleground, were shouting their battle cry.[r]
21The Israelites and the Philistines drew up
opposite each other in battle array. 22David
entrusted what he had brought to the keeper of
the baggage and hastened to the battle line
where he greeted his brothers.[s] 23While he was
talking with them, the Philistine champion, by
name Goliath of Gath, came up from the ranks
of the Philistines and spoke as before, and David
listened. 24When the Israelites saw the man,
they all retreated before him, very much afraid.
25The Israelites had been saying: "Do you see
this man coming up? He comes up to insult
Israel. If anyone should kill him, the king would
give him great wealth, and his daughter as well,
and would grant exemption to his father's family
in Israel."[t] 26David now said to the men stand-
ing by: "What will be done for the man who kills
this Philistine and frees Israel of the disgrace?
Who is this uncircumcised Philistine in any case,
that he should insult the armies of the living
God?"[u] 27They repeated the same words to him
and said, "That is how the man who kills him
will be rewarded." 28When Eliab, his oldest
brother, heard him speaking with the men, he
grew angry with David and said: "Why did you
come down? With whom have you left those
sheep in the desert meanwhile? I know your
arrogance and your evil intent. You came down
to enjoy the battle!" 29David replied, "What
have I done now?—I was only talking." 30Yet he
turned from him to another and asked the same
question; and everyone gave him the same
answer as before. 31The words that David had
spoken were overheard and reported to Saul,
who sent for him.]

**David Fights Goliath** 32Then David spoke to
Saul: "Let your majesty not lose courage. I am at
your service to go and fight this Philistine."
33But Saul answered David, "You cannot go up
against this Philistine and fight with him, for you
are only a youth, while he has been a warrior
from his youth." 34[v]Then David told Saul: "Your
servant used to tend his father's sheep, and
whenever a lion or bear came to carry off a
sheep from the flock, 35I would go after it and
attack it and rescue the prey from its mouth. If it
attacked me, I would seize it by the jaw, strike it,
and kill it. 36Your servant has killed both a lion
and a bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will
be as one of them, because he has insulted the
armies of the living God."
37David continued: "The LORD, who deliv-
ered me from the claws of the lion and the bear,
will also keep me safe from the clutches of this
Philistine." Saul answered David, "Go! the LORD
will be with you."[w]

**Preparation for the Encounter** 38Then Saul
clothed David in his own tunic, putting a bronze
helmet on his head and arming him with a coat
of mail. 39David also girded himself with Saul's
sword over the tunic. He walked with difficulty,
however, since he had never tried armor before.
He said to Saul, "I cannot go in these, because I
have never tried them before." So he took them
off. 40Then, staff in hand, David selected five
smooth stones from the wadi and put them in
the pocket of his shepherd's bag. With his sling
also ready to hand, he approached the Philistine.

**David's Victory** 41With his shield-bearer
marching before him, the Philistine also ad-
vanced closer and closer to David. 42When he
had sized David up, and seen that he was
youthful, and ruddy, and handsome in appear-
ance, he held him in contempt. 43The Philistine

r 1 Sm 26, 5. s 1 Sm 25, 13. t 1 Sm 18, 17; Jos 15, 16. u 1 Sm 18, 25; Jgs 15, 18; 2 Kgs 19, 4; Is 37, 4. v 34f: Jgs 14, 6; Sir 47, 3. w Prv 28, 1.

said to David, "Am I a dog that you come against
me with a staff?" Then the Philistine cursed
David by his gods 44and said to him, "Come here
to me, and I will leave your flesh for the birds of
the air and the beasts of the field."[x] 45David
answered him: "You come against me with
sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against
you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of
the armies of Israel that you have insulted.
46Today the LORD shall deliver you into my
hand; I will strike you down and cut off your
head. This very day I will leave your corpse and
the corpses of the Philistine army for the birds of
the air and the beasts of the field; thus the whole
land shall learn that Israel has a God. 47All this
multitude, too, shall learn that it is not by sword
or spear that the LORD saves. For the battle is the
LORD'S, and he shall deliver you into our
hands."[y]

Ch 18
See RG
155–156

48The Philistine then moved to meet David at
close quarters, while David ran quickly toward
the battle line in the direction of the Philistine.
49David put his hand into the bag and took out a
stone, hurled it with the sling, and struck the
Philistine on the forehead. The stone embedded
itself in his brow, and he fell prostrate on the
ground. 50[Thus David overcame the Philistine
with sling and stone; he struck the Philistine
mortally, and did it without a sword.][z] 51Then
David ran and stood over him; with the Philis-
tine's own sword [which he drew from its
sheath] he dispatched him and cut off his head.[a]

**Flight of the Philistines** When they saw that
their hero was dead, the Philistines took to
flight. 52Then the men of Israel and Judah, with
loud shouts, went in pursuit of the Philistines to
the approaches of Gath and to the gates of
Ekron, and Philistines fell wounded along the
road from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.
53On their return from the pursuit of the Philis-
tines, the Israelites looted their camp. 54[b]David
took the head of the Philistine and brought it to
Jerusalem; but he kept Goliath's armor in his
own tent.*

**David Presented to Saul** 55[When Saul saw
David go out to meet the Philistine, he asked his
general Abner, "Abner, whose son is that
youth?" Abner replied, "As truly as your majesty
is alive, I have no idea." 56And the king said,
"Find out whose son the lad is." 57So when
David returned from slaying the Philistine, Ab-
ner took him and presented him to Saul. David
was still holding the Philistine's head. 58Saul
then asked him, "Whose son are you, young
man?" David replied, "I am the son of your
servant Jesse of Bethlehem."

## CHAPTER 18

**David and Jonathan** 1[By the time David fin-
ished speaking with Saul, Jonathan had become
as fond of David as if his life depended on him;
he loved him as he loved himself.[c] 2Saul laid
claim to David that day and did not allow him to
return to his father's house.[d] 3And Jonathan
entered into a bond with David, because he
loved him as himself. 4Jonathan divested himself
of the mantle he was wearing and gave it to
David, along with his military dress, and his
sword, his bow and his belt.[e] 5David then
carried out successfully every mission on which
Saul sent him. So Saul put him in charge of his
soldiers, and this was agreeable to the whole
army, even to Saul's own officers.]

**Saul's Jealousy** 6At the approach of Saul and
David (on David's return after slaying the Philis-
tine), women came out from each of the cities of
Israel to meet King Saul, singing and dancing,
with tambourines, joyful songs, and sistrums.[f]
7The women played and sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands."[g]

8Saul was very angry and resentful of the song,
for he thought: "They give David ten thousands,

17, 54: At the time supposed by this narrative, Jerusalem was still Jebusite, and David had no military tent of his own; the verse is a later gloss.

x Dt 28, 26; Is 18, 6; Jer 15, 3. y 1 Sm 14, 6; Ps 33, 16. z Sir 47, 4; 1 Mc 4, 30. a 1 Sm 21, 10. b 1 Sm 31, 9. c 1 Sm 19, 1–7; 20, 17; 23, 16; 2 Sm 1, 26; 9, 1. d 1 Sm 16, 21; 17, 15. e 2 Sm 1, 22. f Ex 15, 20f; Jgs 11, 34; Jdt 15, 12. g 1 Sm 21, 12; 29, 5; Sir 47, 6f.

but only thousands to me. All that remains for
him is the kingship." [9][And from that day on,
Saul was jealous of David.

[10][[h] The next day an evil spirit from God
came over Saul, and he raged in his house.
David was in attendance, playing the harp as at
other times, while Saul was holding his spear.
[11]Saul poised the spear, thinking to nail David to
the wall, but twice David escaped him.] [12]Saul
then began to fear David, [because the LORD was
with him, but had departed from Saul himself.]
[13]Accordingly, Saul removed him from his presence by appointing him a field officer. So David
led the people on their military expeditions,
[14]and prospered in all his enterprises, for the
LORD was with him. [15]Seeing how successful he
was, Saul conceived a fear of David; [16]on the
other hand, all Israel and Judah loved him, since
he led them on their expeditions.[i]

[17][Saul said to David, "There is my older
daughter, Merob, whom I will give you in
marriage if you become my champion and fight
the battles of the LORD." Saul had in mind, "I
shall not touch him; let the Philistines strike
him."[j] [18]But David answered Saul: "Who am I?
And who are my kin or my father's clan in Israel
that I should become the king's son-in-law?"
[19]However, when it was time for Saul's daughter
Merob to be given to David, she was given in
marriage to Adriel the Meholathite instead.][k]

[20]Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David,
and it was reported to Saul, who was pleased at
this,[l] [21]for he thought, "I will offer her to him to
become a snare for him, so that the Philistines
may strike him." [Thus for the second time Saul
said to David, "You shall become my son-in-law
today." ] [22]Saul then ordered his servants to
speak to David privately and to say: "The king is
fond of you, and all his officers love you. You
should become the king's son-in-law." [23]But
when Saul's servants mentioned this to David,
he said: "Do you think it easy to become the
king's son-in-law? I am poor and insignificant."
[24]When his servants reported to him the nature
of David's answer, [25]Saul commanded them to
say this to David: "The king desires no other
price for the bride than the foreskins of one
hundred Philistines, that he may thus take
vengeance on his enemies." Saul intended in this
way to bring about David's death through the
Philistines.[m] [26]When the servants reported this
offer to David, he was pleased with the prospect
of becoming the king's son-in-law. [Before the
year was up,] [27]David made preparations and
sallied forth with his men and slew two hundred
Philistines. He brought back their foreskins and
counted them out before the king, that he might
thus become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave
him his daughter Michal in marriage. [28]Saul thus
came to recognize that the LORD was with
David; besides, his own daughter Michal loved
David. [29]Therefore Saul feared David all the
more [and was his enemy ever after].

[30][The Philistine chiefs continued to make
forays, but each time they took the field, David
was more successful against them than any other
of Saul's officers, and as a result acquired great
fame.]

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 19–28
See RG
156–157

**Persecution of David** [1]Saul discussed his intention of killing David with his son Jonathan
and with all his servants. But Saul's son Jonathan, who was very fond of David,[n] [2]told him:
"My father Saul is trying to kill you. Therefore,
please be on your guard tomorrow morning; get
out of sight and remain in hiding. [3]I, however,
will go out and stand beside my father in the
countryside where you are, and will speak to
him about you. If I learn anything, I will let you
know."

[4]Jonathan then spoke well of David to his
father Saul, saying to him: "Let not your majesty
sin against his servant David, for he has committed no offense against you, but has helped you
very much by his deeds. [5]When he took his life
in his hands and slew the Philistine, and the
LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel
through him, you were glad to see it. Why, then,
should you become guilty of shedding innocent

h 10f: 1 Sm 16, 14; 19, 9f; 20, 33; 22, 6; 26, 8. i 2 Sm 5, 2. j 1 Sm 14, 49; 17, 25. k 1 Sm 21, 8; 24, 16. l 1 Sm 14, 49; 25, 44; 26, 23; 2 Sm 3, 13. m 1 Sm 17, 26; Gn 34, 12. n 1 Sm 18, 1; 20, 1ff.

blood by killing David without cause?"[o] 6Saul heeded Jonathan's plea and swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed." 7So Jonathan summoned David and repeated the whole conversation to him. Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and David served him as before.

8When war broke out again, David went out to fight against the Philistines and inflicted a great defeat upon them, putting them to flight. 9[p]Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he was sitting in his house with spear in hand and David was playing the harp nearby. 10Saul tried to nail David to the wall with the spear, but David eluded Saul, so that the spear struck only the wall, and David got away safe.

11The same night, Saul sent messengers to David's house to guard it, that he might kill him in the morning. David's wife Michal informed him, "Unless you save yourself tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."* 12Then Michal let David down through a window, and he made his escape in safety.[q] 13Michal took the household idol and laid it in the bed, putting a net of goat's hair at its head and covering it with a spread.[r] 14When Saul sent messengers to arrest David, she said, "He is sick." 15Saul, however, sent the messengers back to see David and commanded them, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." 16But when the messengers entered, they found the household idol in the bed, with the net of goat's hair at its head. 17Saul therefore asked Michal: "Why did you play this trick on me? You have helped my enemy to get away!" Michal answered Saul: "He threatened me, 'Let me go or I will kill you.' "

Ch 19–28 See RG 156–157

**David and Samuel in Ramah** 18Thus David got safely away; he went to Samuel in Ramah, informing him of all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to stay in the sheds. 19When Saul was told that David was in the sheds near Ramah, 20he sent messengers to arrest David. But when they saw the band of prophets, presided over by Samuel, in a prophetic frenzy, they too fell into the prophetic state.[s] 21Informed of this, Saul sent other messengers, who also fell into the prophetic state. For the third time Saul sent messengers, but they too fell into the prophetic state.

**Saul among the Prophets** 22Saul then went to Ramah himself. Arriving at the cistern of the threshing floor on the bare hilltop, he inquired, "Where are Samuel and David?", and was told, "At the sheds near Ramah." 23As he set out from the hilltop toward the sheds, the spirit of God came upon him also, and he continued on in a prophetic condition until he reached the spot. At the sheds near Ramah 24he, too, stripped himself of his garments and he, too, remained in the prophetic state in the presence of Samuel; all that day and night he lay naked. That is why they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"[t]

## CHAPTER 20

**David Consults with Jonathan** 1David fled from the sheds near Ramah, and went to Jonathan. "What have I done?" he asked him. "What crime or what offense does your father hold against me that he seeks my life?"[u] 2Jonathan answered him: "Heaven forbid that you should die! My father does nothing, great or small, without disclosing it to me. Why, then, should my father conceal this from me? This cannot be so!" 3But David replied: "Your father is well aware that I am favored with your friendship, so he has decided, 'Jonathan must not know of this lest he be grieved.' Nevertheless, as the LORD lives and as you live, there is but a step between me and death." 4Jonathan then said to David, "I will do whatever you wish." 5David answered: "Tomorrow is the new moon, when I should in fact dine with the king. Let me go and hide in the open country until evening.[v] 6If it turns out that your father misses me, say, 'David urged me to let him go on short notice to his city Bethlehem, because his whole clan is holding its seasonal sacrifice there.' 7If he says, 'Very well,' your servant is safe. But if he becomes quite angry, you can be sure he has planned some

19, 11: This story in all probability originally followed 1 Sm 18, 29, placing the episode of David's escape on the night of his marriage with Michal.

o Dt 19, 10; Ps 119, 109. p 9f: 1 Sm 16, 14; 18, 10f. q Jos 2, 15; Acts 9, 25; 2 Cor 11, 33. r Gn 31, 19; Jos 17, 5; 18, 14, 18. 20. s 1 Sm 10, 5f. 10; Nm 11, 25. t 1 Sm 10, 10ff. u 1 Sm 19, 1–7, 11–17 v Nm 10, 10; 28, 11–15.

harm. 8 [w]Do this kindness for your servant because of the LORD's bond between us, into which you brought me: if I am guilty, kill me yourself! Why should you give me up to your father?" 9But Jonathan answered: "Not I! If ever I find out that my father is determined to inflict injury upon you, I will certainly let you know." 10David then asked Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father gives you a harsh answer?"

**Mutual Agreement** 11[Jonathan replied to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." When they were out in the open country together, 12Jonathan said to David: "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, I will sound out my father about this time tomorrow. Whether he is well disposed toward David or not, I will send you the information. 13[x]Should it please my father to bring any injury upon you, may the LORD do thus and so to Jonathan if I do not apprise you of it and send you on your way in peace. May the LORD be with you even as he was with my father. 14Only this: if I am still alive, may you show me the kindness of the LORD. But if I die, 15never withdraw your kindness from my house. And when the LORD exterminates all the enemies of David from the surface of the earth, 16the name of Jonathan must never be allowed by the family of David to die out from among you, or the LORD will make you answer for it." 17And in his love for David, Jonathan renewed his oath to him, because he loved him as his very self.]

18Jonathan then said to him: "Tomorrow is the new moon; and you will be missed, since your place will be vacant. 19On the following day you will be missed all the more. Go to the spot where you hid on the other occasion and wait near the mound there.[y] 20On the third day of the month I will shoot arrows, as though aiming at a target. 21I will then send my attendant to go and recover the arrows. If in fact I say to him, 'Look, the arrow is this side of you; pick it up,' come, for you are safe. As the LORD lives, there will be nothing to fear. 22But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrow is beyond you,' go, for the LORD sends you away. 23However, in the matter which you and I have discussed, the LORD shall be between you and me forever." 24So David hid in the open country.

On the day of the new moon, when the king sat at table to dine, 25taking his usual place against the wall, Jonathan sat facing him, while Abner sat at the king's side, and David's place was vacant. 26[z]Saul, however, said nothing that day, for he thought, "He must have become unclean by accident, and not yet have been cleansed."* 27On the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was vacant. Saul inquired of his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to table yesterday or today?" 28Jonathan answered Saul: "David urgently asked me to let him go to his city, Bethlehem. 29'Please let me go,' he begged, 'for we are to have a clan sacrifice in our city, and my brothers insist on my presence. Now, therefore, if you think well of me, give me leave to visit my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table." 30But Saul was extremely angry with Jonathan and said to him: "Son of a rebellious woman, do I not know that, to your own shame and to the disclosure of your mother's shame, you are the companion of Jesse's son? 31Why, as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, you cannot make good your claim to the kingship! So send for him, and bring him to me, for he is doomed."[a] 32But Jonathan asked his father Saul: "Why should he die? What has he done?" 33At this Saul brandished his spear to strike him, and thus Jonathan learned that his father was resolved to kill David.[b] 34Jonathan sprang up from the table in great anger and took no food that second day of the month, for he was grieved on David's account, since his father had railed against him.

**Jonathan's Farewell** 35The next morning Jonathan went out into the field with a little boy for his appointment with David. 36There he said to the boy, "Run and fetch the arrow." And

**20, 26:** The meal on the first day of the month would have religious overtones, and a ritual impurity (Lv 15, 16; Dt 23, 10ff) would bar David from sharing in it.

w 8f: 1 Sm 23, 17f. x 13–16: 1 Sm 24, 22f; 2 Sm 9, 1–13; 21, 7. y 1 Sm 19, 1–7. z 1 Sm 16, 5; Lv 7, 20f; 15, 1ff. a 2 Sm 12, 5. b 1 Sm 18, 11.

as the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him in
the direction of the city. 37When the boy made
for the spot where Jonathan had shot the arrow,
Jonathan called after him, "The arrow is farther
on!" 38Again he called to his lad, "Hurry, be
quick, don't delay!" Jonathan's boy picked up
the arrow and brought it to his master. 39The
boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David
knew what was meant. 40Then Jonathan gave
his weapons to this boy of his and said to him,
"Go, take them to the city." 41When the boy
had left, David rose from beside the mound and
prostrated himself on the ground three times
before Jonathan in homage. They kissed each
other and wept aloud together. 42 [c]At length
Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, in keep-
ing with what we two have sworn by the name
of the LORD: 'The LORD shall be between you
and me, and between your posterity and mine
forever.' "

## CHAPTER 21

Ch 19–28
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1Then David departed on his way, while Jona-
than went back into the city.

**The Holy Bread** 2David went to Ahimelech,
the priest of Nob, who came trembling to meet
him and asked, "Why are you alone? Is there no
one with you?" [d] 3David answered the priest:
"The king gave me a commission and told me to
let no one know anything about the business on
which he sent me or the commission he gave
me. For that reason I have arranged a meeting
place with my men. 4 [e]Now what have you on
hand? Give me five loaves, or whatever you can
find." 5But the priest replied to David, "I have
no ordinary bread on hand, only holy bread; if
the men have abstained from women, you may
eat some of that."* 6David answered the priest:
"We have indeed been segregated from women
as on previous occasions. Whenever I go on a
journey, all the young men are consecrated—
even for a secular journey. All the more so today,
when they are consecrated at arms!" 7So the
priest gave him holy bread, for no other bread

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was on hand except the showbread which had
been removed from the LORD's presence and
replaced by fresh bread when it was taken
away.[f] 8One of Saul's servants was there that
day, detained before the LORD; his name was
Doeg the Edomite, and he was Saul's chief
henchman.

**The Sword of Goliath** 9David then asked
Ahimelech: "Do you have a spear or a sword on
hand? I brought along neither my sword nor my
weapons, because the king's business was ur-
gent." 10The priest replied: "The sword of
Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the
Vale of the Terebinth, is here [wrapped in a
mantle] behind an ephod. If you wish to take
that, take it; there is no sword here except that
one." David said: "There is none to match it.
Give it to me!" [g]

**David a Fugitive** 11That same day David took
to flight from Saul, going to Achish, king of
Gath. [h] 12But the servants of Achish said, "Is this
not David, the king of the land? During their
dances do they not sing,

'Saul has slain his thousands,
but David his ten thousands'?" [i]

13David took note of these remarks and became
very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath. 14So,
as they watched, he feigned insanity and acted
like a madman in their hands, drumming on the
doors of the gate and drooling onto his beard.
15Finally Achish said to his servants: "You see
the man is mad. Why did you bring him to me?
16Do I not have enough madmen, that you bring
in this one to carry on in my presence? Should
this fellow come into my house?"

## CHAPTER 22

1David left Gath and escaped to the cave of
Adullam. When his brothers and the rest of his
family heard about it, they came down to him
there.[j] 2He was joined by all those who were in
difficulties or in debt, or who were embittered,

21, 5f: From women: the high priest, willing to distribute the holy bread to David and his men, requires that they be free from ritual uncleanness, associated in Old Testament times (Lv 15, 18) with the marriage act. David's answer supposes the discipline of a military campaign under the conditions of "holy war" (Dt 23, 10).

c 2 Sm 9, 1; 21, 7. d Is 10, 32; Mk 2, 26. e Lv 24, 5. 9. f 1 Sm 22, 9; Lv 24, 5–9; Mt 12, 3f; Mk 2, 26; Lk 6, 3ff. g 1 Sm 17, 51, 54. h 1 Sm 27, 2; 29, 5. i 1 Sm 18, 7; 29, 5. j 2 Sm 23, 13; Ps 63; Mi 1, 15.

and he became their leader. About four hundred
men were with him.
3From there David went to Mizpeh of Moab
and said to the king of Moab, "Let my father and
mother stay with you, until I learn what God
will do for me." 4He left them with the king of
Moab, and they stayed with him as long as
David remained in the refuge.*
5But the prophet Gad said to David: "Do not
remain in the refuge. Leave, and go to the land
of Judah." And so David left and went to the
forest of Hereth.
**Doeg Betrays Ahimelech** 6Now Saul heard
that David and his men had been located. At the
time he was sitting in Gibeah under a tamarisk
tree on the high place, holding his spear, while
all his servants were standing by.[k] 7So he said to
them: "Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of
Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he
make each of you an officer over a thousand or a
hundred men,[l] 8that you have all conspired
against me and no one tells me that my son has
made an agreement with the son of Jesse? None
of you shows sympathy for me or discloses to me
that my son has stirred up my servant to be an
enemy against me, as is the case today." 9[m]Then
Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with the
officers of Saul, spoke up: "I saw the son of Jesse
come to Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, in Nob. 10He
consulted the LORD for him and gave him
supplies, and the sword of Goliath the Philistine
as well."
**Slaughter of the Priests** 11At this the king sent
a summons to Ahimelech the priest, son of
Ahitub, and to all his family who were priests in
Nob; and they all came to the king. 12Then Saul
said, "Listen, son of Ahitub!" He replied, "Yes,
my lord." 13Saul asked him, "Why did you
conspire against me with the son of Jesse by
giving him food and a sword and by consulting
God for him, that he might rebel against me and
become my enemy, as is the case today?"
14Ahimelech answered the king: "And who
among all your servants is as loyal as David, the
king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and
honored in your own house? 15Is this the first
time I have consulted God for him? No indeed!
Let not the king accuse his servant or anyone in
my family of such a thing. Your servant knows
nothing at all, great or small, about the whole
matter." 16But the king said, "You shall die,
Ahimelech, with all your family." 17The king
then commanded his henchmen standing by:
"Make the rounds and kill the priests of the
LORD, for they assisted David. They knew he
was a fugitive and yet failed to inform me." But
the king's servants refused to lift a hand to strike
the priests of the LORD.[n]
18The king therefore commanded Doeg, "You
make the rounds and kill the priests!" So Doeg
the Edomite went from one to the next and
killed the priests himself, slaying on that day
eighty-five who wore the linen ephod. 19Saul
also put the priestly city of Nob to the sword,
including men and women, children and infants,
and oxen, asses and sheep.
**Abiathar Escapes** 20One son of Ahimelech,
son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled
to David.[o] 21When Abiathar told David that Saul
had slain the priests of the LORD, 22David said to
him: "I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite
was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am
responsible for the death of all your family.
23Stay with me. Fear nothing; he that seeks your
life must seek my life also. You are under my
protection."

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 19–28
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**Keilah Liberated** 1David received information
that the Philistines were attacking Keilah and
plundering the threshing floors.[p] 2So he con-
sulted the LORD, inquiring, "Shall I go and defeat
these Philistines?" The LORD answered, "Go, for
you will defeat the Philistines and rescue Kei-
lah."[q] 3But David's men said to him: "We are
afraid here in Judah. How much more so if we
go to Keilah against the forces of the Philistines!"
4Again David consulted the LORD, who an-

22, 4–5: Refuge: seemingly connected with the cave complex spoken of in v 1.

k Ps 52. l 1 Sm 8, 14. m 9f: 1 Sm 21, 2–10. n 1 Sm 2, 31. 33; 21, 7. o 1 Sm 23, 6; 30, 7; 1 Kgs 2, 28f. p Jos 15, 44. q 1 Sm 28, 6.

swered, "Go down to Keilah, for I will deliver
the Philistines into your power." [5]David then
went with his men to Keilah and fought with the
Philistines. He drove off their cattle and inflicted
a severe defeat on them, and thus rescued the
inhabitants of Keilah.

[6]Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, who had fled to
David, went down with David to Keilah, taking
the ephod with him.[r]

**Flight from Keilah** [7]When Saul was told that
David had entered Keilah, he said: "God has put
him in my grip. Now he has shut himself in, for
he has entered a city with gates and bars." [8]Saul
then called all the people to war, in order to go
down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.
[9]When David found out that Saul was planning
to harm him, he said to the priest Abiathar,
"Bring forward the ephod."[s] [10]David then said:
"O LORD God of Israel, your servant has heard a
report that Saul plans to come to Keilah, to
destroy the city on my account. [11]Will they hand
me over? And now: will Saul come down as
your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel,
tell your servant." The LORD answered, "He will
come down." [12]David then asked, "Will the
citizens of Keilah deliver me and my men into
the grasp of Saul?" And the LORD answered,
"Yes." [13]So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and wandered from
place to place. When Saul was informed that
David had escaped from Keilah, he abandoned
the expedition.

**David and Jonathan in Horesh** [14]David now
lived in the refuges in the desert, or in the barren
hill country near Ziph. Though Saul sought him
continually, the LORD did not deliver David into
his grasp. [15]David was apprehensive because
Saul had come out to seek his life; but while he
was at Horesh in the barrens near Ziph, [16]Saul's
son, Jonathan, came down there to David and
strengthened his resolve in the LORD.[t] [17]He said
to him: "Have no fear, my father Saul shall not
lay a hand to you. You shall be king of Israel and
I shall be second to you. Even my father Saul
knows this." [18]They made a joint agreement
before the LORD in Horesh, where David remained, while Jonathan returned to his home.[u]

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**Treachery of the Ziphites** [19]Some of the Ziphites went up to Saul in Gibeah and said, "David
is hiding among us, now in the refuges, and
again at Horesh, or on the hill of Hachilah, south
of the wasteland.[v] [20]Therefore, whenever the
king wishes to come down, let him do so. It will
be our task to deliver him into the king's grasp."
[21]Saul replied: "The LORD bless you for your
sympathy toward me.[w] [22]Go now and make
sure once more! Take note of the place where he
sets foot" (for he thought, perhaps they are
playing some trick on me). [23]"Look around and
learn in which of all the various hiding places he
is holding out. Then come back to me with sure
information, and I will go with you. If he is in
the region, I will search him out among all the
families of Judah." [24]So they went off to Ziph
ahead of Saul. At this time David and his men
were in the desert below Maon, in the Arabah
south of the wasteland.[x]

**Escape from Saul** [25]When Saul and his men
came looking for him, David got word of it and
went down to the gorge in the desert below
Maon. Saul heard of this and pursued David into
the desert below Maon. [26]As Saul moved along
one rim of the gorge, David and his men took to
the other. David was in anxious flight to escape
Saul, and Saul and his men were attempting to
outflank David and his men in order to capture
them, [27]when a messenger came to Saul, saying,
"Come quickly, because the Philistines have
invaded the land." [28]Saul interrupted his pursuit
of David and went to meet the Philistines. This is
how that place came to be called the Gorge of
Divisions.

## CHAPTER 24

**David Spares Saul** [1]David then went up from
there and stayed in the refuges behind Engedi.
[2]And when Saul returned from the pursuit of the
Philistines, he was told that David was in the
desert near Engedi. [3]So Saul took three thousand
picked men from all Israel and went in search of

r 1 Sm 22, 20; 30, 7. s 1 Sm 2, 28. t 1 Sm 18, 1. u 1 Sm 18, 3; 20, 8. v 1 Sm 26, 1–3; Ps 54. w 2 Sm 2, 5. x 1 Sm 25, 2.

David and his men in the direction of the wild
goat crags. [4]When he came to the sheepfolds
along the way, he found a cave, which he
entered to ease nature. David and his men were
occupying the inmost recesses of the cave.[y]
[5]David's servants said to him, "This is the day
of which the LORD said to you, 'I will deliver
your enemy into your grasp; do with him as you
see fit.' " So David moved up and stealthily cut
off an end of Saul's mantle. [6]Afterward, how-
ever, David regretted that he had cut off an end
of Saul's mantle.[z] [7]He said to his men, "The
LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my
master, the LORD's anointed, as to lay a hand on
him, for he is the LORD's anointed."[a] [8]With
these words David restrained his men and would
not permit them to attack Saul. Saul then left the
cave and went on his way. [9]David also stepped
out of the cave, calling to Saul, "My lord the
king!" When Saul looked back, David bowed to
the ground in homage [10]and asked Saul: "Why
do you listen to those who say, 'David is trying to
harm you'? [11]You see for yourself today that the
LORD just now delivered you into my grasp in
the cave. I had some thought of killing you, but I
took pity on you instead. I decided, 'I will not
raise a hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's
anointed and a father to me.' [12]Look here at this
end of your mantle which I hold. Since I cut off
an end of your mantle and did not kill you, see
and be convinced that I plan no harm and no
rebellion. I have done you no wrong, though you
are hunting me down to take my life.[b] [13]The
LORD will judge between me and you, and the
LORD will exact justice from you in my case. I
shall not touch you. [14]The old proverb says,
'From the wicked comes forth wickedness.' So I
will take no action against you. [15]Against whom
are you on campaign, O king of Israel? Whom
are you pursuing? A dead dog, or a single flea!
[16]The LORD will be the judge; he will decide
between me and you. May he see this, and take
my part, and grant me justice beyond your
reach!"[c]

**Saul's Remorse** [17]When David finished saying
these things to Saul, Saul answered, "Is that your
voice, my son David?" And he wept aloud.
[18]Saul then said to David: "You are in the right
rather than I; you have treated me generously,
while I have done you harm. [19]Great is the
generosity you showed me today, when the
LORD delivered me into your grasp and you did
not kill me. [20]For if a man meets his enemy, does
he send him away unharmed? May the LORD
reward you generously for what you have done
this day. [21]And now, since I know that you shall
surely be king and that sovereignty over Israel
shall come into your possession,[d] [22]swear to me
by the LORD that you will not destroy my
descendants and that you will not blot out my
name and family."[e] [23]David gave Saul his oath
and Saul returned home, while David and his
men went up to the refuge.

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 19–28
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**Death of Samuel** [1]Samuel died, and all Israel
gathered to mourn him; they buried him at his
home in Ramah.[f]

**Nabal and Abigail** [2]Then David went down to
the desert of Maon. There was a man of Maon
who had property in Carmel; he was very
wealthy, owning three thousand sheep and a
thousand goats. At this time he was present for
the shearing of his flock in Carmel.[g] [3]The man
was named Nabal, his wife, Abigail. The woman
was intelligent and attractive, but Nabal himself,
a Calebite, was harsh and ungenerous in his
behavior.[h] [4]When David heard in the desert that
Nabal was shearing his flock, [5]he sent ten young
men, instructing them: "Go up to Carmel. Pay
Nabal a visit and greet him in my name. [6]Say to
him, 'Peace be with you, my brother, and with
your family, and with all who belong to you. [7]I
have just heard that shearers are with you. Now,
when your shepherds were with us, we did
them no injury, neither did they miss anything
all the while they were in Carmel. [8]Ask your
servants and they will tell you so. Look kindly on

y Ps 57. z 1 Sm 15, 27. a 1 Sm 10, 1; 31, 4; 2 Sm 1, 14.
b Rom 12, 19. c 1 Sm 18, 19. 31; 26, 19; Pss 35, 1ff; 43, 1.
d 1 Sm 26, 25. e 2 Sm 9, 1ff. f 1 Sm 28, 3; Sir 46, 13–20.
g 1 Sm 23, 24; Jos 15, 55. h 1 Sm 27, 3; Jos 14, 6; 1 Chr 2,
42. 45.

these young men, since we come at a festival
time. Please give your servants and your son
David whatever you can manage.' "
[9]When David's young men arrived, they deliv-
ered this message fully to Nabal in David's name,
and then waited. [10]But Nabal answered the
servants of David: "Who is David? Who is the
son of Jesse? Nowadays there are many servants
who run away from their masters. [11]Must I take
my bread, my wine, my meat that I have
slaughtered for my own shearers, and give them
to men who come from I know not where?"
[12]So David's young men retraced their steps and
on their return reported to him all that had been
said. [13]Thereupon David said to his men, "Let
everyone gird on his sword." And so everyone,
David included, girded on his sword. About four
hundred men went up after David, while two
hundred remained with the baggage.
[14]But Nabal's wife Abigail was informed of
this by one of the servants, who said: "David
sent messengers from the desert to greet our
master, but he flew at them screaming. [15]Yet
these men were very good to us. We were done
no injury, neither did we miss anything all the
while we were living among them during our
stay in the open country. [16]For us they were like
a rampart night and day the whole time we were
pasturing the sheep near them. [17]Now, see what
you can do, for you must realize that otherwise
evil is in store for our master and for his whole
family. He is so mean that no one can talk to
him." [18]Abigail quickly got together two hun-
dred loaves, two skins of wine, five dressed
sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred
cakes of pressed raisins, and two hundred cakes
of pressed figs, and loaded them on asses. [19]She
then said to her servants, "Go on ahead; I will
follow you." But she did not tell her husband
Nabal.
[20]As she came down through a mountain
defile riding on an ass, David and his men were
also coming down from the opposite direction.
When she met them, [21]David had just been
saying: "Indeed, it was in vain that I guarded all
this man's possessions in the desert, so that he
missed nothing. He has repaid good with evil.
[22]May God do thus and so to David, if by
morning I leave a single male alive among all
those who belong to him."[i] [23]As soon as Abigail
saw David, she dismounted quickly from the ass
and, falling prostrate on the ground before
David, did him homage. [24]As she fell at his feet
she said:
"My lord, let the blame be mine. Please let
your handmaid speak to you, and listen to the
words of your handmaid. [25]Let not my lord pay
attention to that worthless man Nabal, for he is
just like his name. Fool is his name,* and he acts
the fool. I, your handmaid, did not see the young
men whom my lord sent. [26]Now, therefore, my
lord, as the LORD lives, and as you live, it is the
LORD who has kept you from shedding blood
and from avenging yourself personally. May your
enemies and those who seek to harm my lord
become as Nabal!* [27]Accept this present, then,
which your maidservant has brought for my
lord, and let it be given to the young men who
follow my lord. [28]Please forgive the transgres-
sion of your handmaid, for the LORD shall
certainly establish a lasting dynasty for my lord,
because your lordship is fighting the battles of
the LORD, and there is no evil to be found in you
your whole life long. [29]If anyone rises to pursue
you and to seek your life, may the life of my lord
be bound in the bundle of the living* in the care
of the LORD your God; but may he hurl out the
lives of your enemies as from the hollow of a
sling.[j] [30]And when the LORD carries out for my
lord the promise of success he has made concern-
ing you, and appoints you as commander over
Israel,[k] [31]you shall not have this as a qualm or
burden on your conscience, my lord, for having
shed innocent blood or for having avenged

**25, 25:** Fool is his name: Nabal in Hebrew means "a fool."
**25, 26:** Abigail anticipates that some misfortune will shortly overtake Nabal, as in fact it does (vv 37–38).
**25, 29:** The bundle of the living: the figure is perhaps taken from the practice of tying up valuables in a kerchief or bag for safekeeping. Abigail desires that David enjoy permanent peace and security, but that his enemies be subject to constant agitation and humiliation like a stone whirled about, cast out of the sling, and thereafter disregarded.

i 1 Kgs 16, 11; 21, 21; 2 Kgs 9, 8. j Ps 69, 28. k 1 Sm 13, 14; 2 Sm 3, 10.

yourself personally. When the LORD confers this
benefit on your lordship, remember your hand-
maid." 32David said to Abigail: "Blessed be the
LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet
me today. 33Blessed be your good judgment and
blessed be you yourself, who this day have
prevented me from shedding blood and from
avenging myself personally. 34Otherwise, as the
LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has re-
strained me from harming you, if you had not
come so promptly to meet me, by dawn Nabal
would not have had a single man or boy left
alive." 35David then took from her what she had
brought him and said to her: "Go up to your
home in peace! See, I have granted your request
as a personal favor."

**Nabal's Death** 36When Abigail came to Nabal,
there was a drinking party in his house like that
of a king, and Nabal was merry because he was
very drunk. So she told him nothing at all before
daybreak the next morning. 37But then, when
Nabal had become sober, his wife told him what
had happened. At this his courage died within
him, and he became like a stone. 38About ten
days later the LORD struck him and he died.
39On hearing that Nabal was dead, David said:
"Blessed be the LORD, who has requited the
insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and who
restrained his servant from doing evil, but has
punished Nabal for his own evil deeds."

**David Marries Abigail and Ahinoam** David
then sent a proposal of marriage to Abigail.
40When David's servants came to Abigail in
Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to
you that he may take you as his wife." 41Rising
and bowing to the ground, she answered, "Your
handmaid would become a slave to wash the
feet of my lord's servants." 42She got up immedi-
ately, mounted an ass, and followed David's
messengers, with her five maids following in
attendance upon her. She became his wife,
43 *l*and David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel.
Thus both of them were his wives; but Saul gave
David's wife Michal, Saul's own daughter, to
Palti, son of Laish, who was from Gallim. *m*

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 19–28
See RG
156–157

**Saul's Life Again Spared** 1 *n*Men from Ziph
came to Saul in Gibeah, reporting that David
was hiding on the hill of Hachilah at the edge of
the wasteland. 2So Saul went off down to the
desert of Ziph with three thousand picked men
of Israel, to search for David in the desert of
Ziph. 3Saul camped beside the road on the hill of
Hachilah, at the edge of the wasteland. David,
who was living in the desert, saw that Saul had
come into the desert after him 4and sent out
scouts, who confirmed Saul's arrival. 5David
himself then went to the place where Saul was
encamped and examined the spot where Saul
and Abner, son of Ner, the general, had their
sleeping quarters. Saul's were within the barri-
cade, and all his soldiers were camped around
him. *o* 6David asked Ahimelech the Hittite, and
Abishai, son of Zeruiah and brother of Joab,
"Who will go down into the camp with me to
Saul?" Abishai replied, "I will." *p* 7So David and
Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night and
found Saul lying asleep within the barricade,
with his spear thrust into the ground at his head
and Abner and his men sleeping around him.

8Abishai whispered to David: "God has deliv-
ered your enemy into your grasp this day. Let me
nail him to the ground with one thrust of the
spear; I will not need a second thrust!" *q* 9But
David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him, for
who can lay hands on the LORD's anointed and
remain unpunished? 10As the LORD lives," David
continued, "it must be the LORD himself who
will strike him, whether the time comes for him
to die, or he goes out and perishes in battle.
11But the LORD forbid that I touch his anointed!
Now take the spear which is at his head and the
water jug, and let us be on our way." 12So David
took the spear and the water jug from their place
at Saul's head, and they got away without
anyone's seeing or knowing or awakening. All
remained asleep, because the LORD had put
them into a deep slumber.

**David Taunts Abner** 13Going across to an
opposite slope, David stood on a remote hilltop

1 1 Sm 27, 3. m 1 Sm 18, 20; 27, 3; 30, 5; 2 Sm 3, 2. 13ff; 1 Chr 3, 1. n 1f: 1 Sm 23, 19f; Ps 54. o 1 Sm 17, 20. p 1 Chr 2, 16. q 1 Sm 18, 11; 19, 10.

at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and
the troops. [14]He then shouted, "Will you not
answer, Abner?" And Abner answered, "Who is
it that calls me?" [15]David said to Abner: "Are
you not a man whose like does not exist in
Israel? Why, then, have you not guarded your
lord the king when one of his subjects went to
kill the king, your lord? [16]This is no creditable
service you have performed. As the LORD lives,
you people deserve death because you have not
guarded your lord, the LORD's anointed. Go,
look: where are the king's spear and the water
jug that was at his head?"

Ch 19–28
See RG
156–157

**Saul Admits His Guilt** [17]Saul recognized David's voice and asked, "Is that your voice, my son David?" David answered, "Yes, my lord the king." [18]He continued: "Why does my lord pursue his servant? What have I done? What evil do I plan? [19]Please, now, let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has incited you against me, let an offering appease him; but if men, may they be cursed before the LORD, because they have exiled me so that this day I have no share in the LORD's inheritance,* but am told: 'Go, serve other gods!'[r] [20]Do not let my blood flow to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea as if he were hunting partridge in the mountains." [21]Then Saul said: "I have done wrong. Come back, my son David, I will not harm you again, because you have held my life precious today. Indeed, I have been a fool and have made a serious mistake." [22]But David answered: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. [23]The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness. Today, though the LORD delivered you into my grasp, I would not harm the LORD's anointed.[s] [24]As I valued your life highly today, so may the LORD value my life highly and deliver me from all difficulties." [25]Then Saul said to David: "Blessed are you, my son David! You shall certainly succeed in whatever you undertake." David went his way, and Saul returned to his home.[t]

## CHAPTER 27

**Refuge among Philistines** [1]But David said to himself: "I shall perish some day at the hand of Saul. I have no choice but to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will give up his continuous search for me throughout the land of Israel, and I shall be out of his reach." [2]Accordingly, David departed with his six hundred men and went over to Achish, son of Maoch, king of Gath.[u] [3]David and his men lived in Gath with Achish; each one had his family, and David had his two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel.[v] [4]When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

**In Ziklag** [5]David said to Achish: "If I meet with your approval, let me have a place to live in one of the country towns. Why should your servant live with you in the royal city?" [6]That same day Achish gave him Ziklag, which has, therefore, belonged to the kings of Judah* up to the present time.[w] [7]In all, David lived a year and four months in the country of the Philistines.[x]

**Raids on Israel's Foes** [8]David and his men went up and made raids on the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites—peoples living in the land between Telam, on the approach to Shur, and the land of Egypt.[y] [9]In attacking the land David would not leave a man or woman alive, but would carry off sheep, oxen, asses, camels, and clothes. On his return he brought these to Achish, [10]who asked, "Whom did you raid this time?" And David answered, "The Negeb of Judah," or "The Negeb of Jarahmeel," or "The Negeb of the Kenites."[z] [11]But David would not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, fearing that they would betray him by saying, "This is what David did." This was his

26, 19: The Lord's inheritance: the land of Israel (Dt 32, 8f), under the Lord's special protection, where he could be freely worshiped.

27, 6: Has . . . belonged to the kings of Judah: as a personal holding, outside the system of tribal lands; Jerusalem, when taken by David, had a similar status (2 Sm 5, 7–9).

r 1 Sm 24, 16. s 1 Sm 18, 20. t 1 Sm 24, 21. u 1 Sm 21, 11–16. v 1 Sm 25, 3. 44; 30, 3ff; 2 Sm 2, 3. w 1 Sm 30, 1. x 1 Sm 29, 3. y 1 Sm 15, 3, 7. z 1 Sm 30, 14, 29; 1 Chr 2, 9. 25. 42.

custom as long as he lived in the country of the Philistines. [12]And Achish trusted David, thinking, "He must certainly be detested by his people Israel. I shall have him as my vassal forever."

## CHAPTER 28

[1]In those days the Philistines mustered their military forces to fight against Israel. So Achish said to David, "You realize, of course, that you and your men must go out on campaign with me to Jezreel." [2]David answered Achish, "Good! Now you shall learn what your servant can do." Then Achish said to David, "I shall appoint you my permanent bodyguard."

[3]Now Samuel had died and, after being mourned by all Israel, was buried in his city, Ramah. Meanwhile Saul had driven mediums and fortune-tellers out of the land.[a]

**Saul in Dismay** [4]The Philistine levies advanced to Shunem and encamped. Saul, too, mustered all Israel; they camped on Gilboa. [5]When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was dismayed and lost heart completely. [6]He therefore consulted the LORD; but the LORD gave no answer, whether in dreams or by the Urim or through prophets.[b] [7]Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, to whom I can go to seek counsel through her." His servants answered him, "There is a woman in Endor who is a medium."[c]

**The Witch of Endor** [8]So he disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and set out with two companions. They came to the woman by night, and Saul said to her, "Tell my fortune through a ghost; conjure up for me the one I ask you to."[d] [9]But the woman answered him, "You are surely aware of what Saul has done, in driving the mediums and fortune-tellers out of the land. Why, then, are you laying snares for my life, to have me killed?" [10]But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, you shall incur no blame for this." [11]Then the woman asked him, "Whom do you want me to conjure up?" and he answered, "Samuel."

**Samuel Appears** [12]When the woman saw Samuel, she shrieked at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"* [13]But the king said to her, "Have no fear. What do you see?" The woman answered Saul, "I see a preternatural being rising from the earth." [14]"What does he look like?" asked Saul. And she replied, "It is an old man who is rising, clothed in a mantle." Saul knew that it was Samuel, and so he bowed face to the ground in homage.

Ch 19–28
See RG
156–157

**Saul's Doom** [15]Samuel then said to Saul, "Why do you disturb me by conjuring me up?" Saul replied: "I am in great straits, for the Philistines are waging war against me and God has abandoned me. Since he no longer answers me through prophets or in dreams, I have called you to tell me what I should do."[e] [16]To this Samuel said: "But why do you ask me, if the LORD has abandoned you and is with your neighbor?[f] [17]The LORD has done to you what he foretold through me: he has torn the kingdom from your grasp and has given it to your neighbor David.

[18]"Because you disobeyed the LORD's directive and would not carry out his fierce anger against Amalek, the LORD has done this to you today.[g] [19]Moreover, the LORD will deliver Israel, and you as well, into the clutches of the Philistines. By tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the LORD will have delivered the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."[h]

**Saul's Despair** [20]Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, for he was badly shaken by Samuel's message. Moreover, he had no bodily strength left, since he had eaten nothing all that day and night. [21]Then the woman came to Saul, and seeing that he was quite terror-stricken, said to him: "Remember, your maidservant obeyed you: I took my life in my hands and fulfilled the request you made of me. [22]Now

**28, 12:** Human beings cannot communicate at will with the souls of the dead. God may, however, permit a departed soul to appear to the living and even to disclose things unknown to them. Saul's own prohibition of necromancy and divination (v 3) was in keeping with the consistent teaching of the Old Testament. If we are to credit the reality of the apparition to Saul, it was due, not to the summons of the witch, but to God's will; the woman merely furnished the occasion.

a 1 Sm 25, 1; Sir 46, 20. b 1 Sm 14, 37. 41; Ex 28, 30; Lv 8, 8. c Lv 19, 31; 20, 27; Dt 18, 10ff; 1 Chr 10, 13f; Acts 16, 16. d 1 Kgs 14, 2. e Sir 46, 20. f 1 Sm 15, 27f. g 1 Sm 15, 18f. 26. h 1 Sm 31, 2–6; Sir 46, 20.

you, in turn, please listen to your maidservant.
Let me set something before you to eat, so that
you may have strength when you go on your
way." 23But he refused, saying, "I will not eat."
However, when his servants joined the woman
in urging him, he listened to their entreaties, got
up from the ground, and sat on a couch. 24The
woman had a stall-fed calf in the house, which
she now quickly slaughtered. Then taking flour,
she kneaded it and baked unleavened bread.
25She set the meal before Saul and his servants,
and they ate. Then they stood up and left the
same night.

## CHAPTER 29

Ch 29
See RG
157

**David's Aid Rejected** 1Now the Philistines
had mustered all their forces in Aphek, and the
Israelites were encamped at the spring of Harod
near Jezreel.[i] 2As the Philistine lords were
marching their groups of a hundred and a
thousand, David and his men were marching in
the rear guard with Achish. 3The Philistine
chiefs asked, "What are those Hebrews doing
here?" And Achish answered them: "Why, that
is David, the officer of Saul, king of Israel. He has
been with me now for a year or two, and I have
no fault to find with him from the day he came
over to me until the present."[j] 4But the Philis-
tine chiefs were angered at this and said to him:
"Send that man back! Let him return to the
place you picked out for him. He must not go
down into battle with us, lest during the battle
he become our enemy. For how else can he win
back his master's favor, if not with the heads of
these men of ours?[k] 5Is this not the David of
whom they sing during their dances,

'Saul has slain his thousands,
but David his ten thousands'?"[l]

6So Achish summoned David and said to him:
"As the LORD lives, you are honest, and I should
be pleased to have you active with me in the
camp, for I have found nothing wrong with you
from the day of your arrival to this day. But you
are not welcome to the lords. 7Withdraw peace-
ably, now, and do nothing that might displease
the Philistine lords." 8But David said to Achish:
"What have I done? Or what have you against
your servant from the first day I have been with
you to this day, that I cannot go to fight against
the enemies of my lord the king?" 9"You know,"
Achish answered David, "that you are accept-
able to me. But the Philistine chiefs have deter-
mined you are not to go up with us to battle.
10So the first thing tomorrow, you and your lord's
servants who came with you, go to the place I
picked out for you. Do not decide to take
umbrage at this; you are as acceptable to me as
an angel of God. But make an early morning
start, as soon as it grows light, and be on your
way." 11So David and his men left early in the
morning to return to the land of the Philistines.
The Philistines, however, went on up to Jezreel.

## CHAPTER 30

Ch 30
See RG
157

**Ziklag in Ruins** 1Before David and his men
reached Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites
had raided the Negeb and Ziklag, had stormed
the city, and had set it on fire.[m] 2They had taken
captive the women and all who were in the city,
young and old, killing no one; they had carried
them off when they left. 3David and his men
arrived at the city to find it burned to the ground
and their wives, sons and daughters taken cap-
tive. 4Then David and those who were with him
wept aloud until they could weep no more.
5David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and
Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel, had
also been carried off with the rest.[n] 6Now David
found himself in great difficulty, for the men
spoke of stoning him, so bitter were they over
the fate of their sons and daughters. But with
renewed trust in the LORD his God, 7[o]David said
to Abiathar, the priest, son of Ahimelech, "Bring
me the ephod!" When Abiathar brought him the
ephod, 8David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I
pursue these raiders? Can I overtake them?" The
LORD answered him, "Go in pursuit, for you
shall surely overtake them and effect a rescue."

**Raid of the Amalekites** 9So David went off
with his six hundred men and came as far as the
Wadi Besor, where those who were to remain

i 1 Sm 4, 1. j 1 Sm 27, 7. k 1 Chr 12, 19f. l 1 Sm 18, 6f; 21, 11. m 1 Sm 27, 6. 10; 1 Chr 12, 21. n 1 Sm 25, 42; 27, 3; 30, 5. o 7f: 1 Sm 2, 28; 23, 6; Ex 28, 30.

behind halted. [10]David continued the pursuit
with four hundred men, but two hundred were
too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor and
remained behind. [11]An Egyptian was found in
the open country and brought to David. He was
provided with food, which he ate, and given
water to drink; [12]a cake of pressed figs and two
cakes of pressed raisins were also offered to him.
When he had eaten, he revived; he had not
taken food nor drunk water for three days and
three nights. [13]Then David asked him, "To
whom do you belong, and where do you come
from?" He replied: "I am an Egyptian, the slave
of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me
because I fell sick three days ago today. [14]We
raided the Negeb of the Cherethites, the territory
of Judah, and the Negeb of Caleb; and we set
Ziklag on fire."[p] [15]David then asked him, "Will
you lead me down to this raiding party?" He
answered, "Swear to me by God that you will
not kill me or deliver me to my master, and I will
lead you to the raiding party." [16]He did lead
them, and there were the Amalekites scattered
all over the ground, eating, drinking, and in a
festive mood because of all the rich booty they
had taken from the land of the Philistines and
from the land of Judah.

**The Booty Recovered** [17]From dawn to sun-
down David attacked them, putting them under
the ban so that none escaped except four hun-
dred young men, who mounted their camels and
fled.[q] [18]David recovered everything the Amalek-
ites had taken, and rescued his two wives.
[19]Nothing was missing, small or great, booty or
sons or daughters, of all that the Amalekites had
taken. David brought back everything. [20]More-
over, David took all the sheep and oxen, and as
they drove them before him, they shouted, "This
is David's spoil."

**Division of the Spoils** [21]When David came to
the two hundred men who had been too ex-
hausted to follow him, and whom he had left
behind at the Wadi Besor, they came out to meet
David and the men with him. On nearing them
David greeted them. [22]But all the stingy and
worthless men among those who had accompa-
nied David spoke up to say, "Since they did not
accompany us, we will not give them anything
from the booty, except to each man his wife and
children. Let them take those along and be on
their way." [23]But David said: "You must not do
this, my brothers, after what the LORD has given
us. He has protected us and delivered into our
grip the band that came against us. [24]Who could
agree with this proposal of yours? Rather, the
share of the one who goes down to battle and
that of the one who remains with the baggage
shall be the same; they shall share alike."[r] [25]And
from that day forward he made it a law and a
custom in Israel, as it still is today.[s]

**David's Gifts to Judah** [26]When David came to
Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to the elders of
Judah, city by city, saying, "This is a gift to you
from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD": [27]to
those in Bethel, to those in Ramoth-negeb, to
those in Jattir, [28]to those in Aroer, to those in
Siphmoth, to those in Eshtemoa, [29]to those in
Racal, to those in the Jerahmeelite cities, to those
in the Kenite cities,[t] [30]to those in Hormah, to
those in Borashan, to those in Athach, [31]to those
in Hebron, and to all the places frequented by
David and his men.

## CHAPTER 31

Ch 31
See RG
157

**Death of Saul and His Sons** [1][u]As they pressed
their attack on Israel, with the Israelites fleeing
before them and falling mortally wounded on
Mount Gilboa, [2]the Philistines pursued Saul and
his sons closely, and slew Jonathan, Abinadab,
and Malchishua, sons of Saul.[v] [3]The battle raged
around Saul, and the archers hit him; he was
pierced through the abdomen. [4]Then Saul said
to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run
me through, lest these uncircumcised come and
make sport of me." But his armor-bearer, badly
frightened, refused to do it. So Saul took his own
sword and fell upon it.[w] [5][x]When the armor-
bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell upon
his sword and died with him.* [6]Thus Saul, his

31, 5: This report of the suicidal act of Saul is presented as a part of his downfall, to be judged accordingly.

p 1 Sm 27, 10; Ez 25, 16. q 1 Sm 15, 3; Jos 6, 17; Jgs 7, 12. r 1 Sm 17, 22; 25, 13. s Nm 31, 27. t 1 Sm 27, 10. u 1–13: 1 Chr 10, 1–12; 2 Sm 1, 1–16; 4, 4. v 1 Sm 14, 49; 28, 19; 1 Chr 10, 2f. w 1 Sm 24, 7; Jgs 9, 54; 1 Chr 10, 4. x 1 Sm 10, 1; 26, 9; 2 Mc 14, 42.

three sons, and his armor-bearer died together
on that same day.
7When the Israelites on the slope of the valley
and those along the Jordan saw that the men of
Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were
dead, they too abandoned their cities and fled.
Then the Philistines came and lived in those
cities.
8The day after the battle the Philistines came
to strip the slain, and found Saul and his three
sons lying on Mount Gilboa. 9They cut off Saul's
head and stripped him of his armor, and then
sent the good news throughout the land of the
Philistines to their idols and to the people.[y]
10They put his armor in the temple of Astarte,
but impaled his body on the wall of Beth-shan.
**Burial of Saul** 11[z]When the inhabitants of
Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had
done to Saul, 12all their warriors set out, and
after marching throughout the night, removed
the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of
Beth-shan, and brought them to Jabesh, where
they cremated them.* 13Then they took their
bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree
in Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.

31, 12: Cremated them: cremation was not normally practiced in Israel, though it was known in the country from pre-Israelite times.

y 1 Sm 17, 54; 2 Sm 1, 20; 2 Mc 15, 35. z 11ff: 1 Sm 11, 1–11; 2 Sm 2, 4–7.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

2 Samuel
See RG
157–165

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
157

**Report of Saul's Death** 1After the death of
Saul, David returned from his defeat of the
Amalekites and spent two days in Ziklag.[a] 2On
the third day a man came from Saul's camp,
with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. Going
to David, he fell to the ground in homage.
3David asked him, "Where do you come from?"
He replied, "I have escaped from the Israelite
camp." 4"Tell me what happened," David bade
him. He answered that the soldiers had fled the
battle and that many of them had fallen and
were dead, among them Saul and his son Jona-
than. 5Then David said to the youth who was
reporting to him, "How do you know that Saul
and his son Jonathan are dead?" 6[b]The youthful
informant replied: "It was by chance that I found
myself on Mount Gilboa and saw Saul leaning on
his spear, with chariots and horsemen closing in
on him. 7He turned around and, seeing me,
called me to him. When I said, 'Here I am,' 8he
asked me, 'Who are you?' and I replied, 'An
Amalekite.' 9Then he said to me, 'Stand up to
me, please, and finish me off, for I am in great
suffering, yet fully alive.' 10So I stood up to him
and dispatched him, for I knew that he could not
survive his wound. I removed the crown from
his head and the armlet from his arm and
brought them here to my lord."
11David seized his garments and rent them,
and all the men who were with him did like-
wise.[c] 12They mourned and wept and fasted
until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and
for the soldiers of the LORD of the clans of Israel,
because they had fallen by the sword.[d] 13Then
David said to the young man who had brought
him the information, "Where are you from?" He
replied, "I am the son of an Amalekite immi-
grant." 14David said to him, "How is it that you
were not afraid to put forth your hand to
desecrate the LORD's anointed?"[e] 15David then
called one of the attendants and said to him,
"Come, strike him down"; and the youth struck
him a mortal blow. 16Meanwhile David said to
him, "You are responsible for your own death,
for you testified against yourself when you said,
'I dispatched the LORD's anointed.' "
**Elegy for Saul and Jonathan** 17Then David
chanted this elegy for Saul and his son Jonathan,

a 1 Sm 30, 17–20; 31, 1–13. b 6–10: 2 Sm 4, 10; 1 Sm 31, 1–4; 1 Chr 10, 1–4. c 2 Sm 13, 31. d 1 Sm 31, 13. e 1 Sm 10, 1; 24, 7; Ps. 105, 15.

[18]which is recorded in the Book of Jashar to be
taught to the Judahites. He sang:[f]

[19] "Alas! the glory of Israel, Saul,
slain upon your heights;
how can the warriors have fallen!

[20] "Tell it not in Gath,
herald it not in the streets of Ashkelon,
Lest the Philistine maidens rejoice,
lest the daughters of the strangers exult![g]
[21] Mountains of Gilboa,
may there be neither dew nor rain upon you,
nor upsurgings of the deeps!*
Upon you lie begrimed the warriors' shields,
the shield of Saul, no longer anointed with oil.[h]

[22] "From the blood of the slain,
from the bodies of the valiant,
The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
or the sword of Saul return unstained.[i]
[23] Saul and Jonathan, beloved and cherished,
separated neither in life nor in death,
swifter than eagles, stronger than lions!
[24] Women of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you in scarlet and in finery,
who decked your attire with ornaments of gold.

[25] "How can the warriors have fallen—
in the thick of the battle,
slain upon your heights!
[26] "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother!
most dear have you been to me;
More precious have I held love for you
than love for women.[j]

[27] "How can the warriors have fallen,
the weapons of war have perished!"

## CHAPTER 2

**David Anointed King** [1]After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?" The LORD replied to him, "Yes." Then David asked, "Where shall I go?" He replied, "To Hebron." [2]So David went up there accompanied by his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.[k] [3]David also brought up his men with their families, and they dwelt in the cities near Hebron. [4]Then the men of Judah came there and anointed David king of the Judahites.[l]

A report reached David that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul. [5]So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them: "May you be blessed by the LORD for having done this kindness to your lord Saul in burying him. [6]And now may the LORD be kind and faithful to you. I, too, will be generous to you for having done this. [7]Take courage, therefore, and prove yourselves valiant men, for though your lord Saul is dead, the Judahites have anointed me their king."

## IV: The Reign of David

**Ishbaal King of Israel** [8]Abner, son of Ner, Saul's general, took Ishbaal, son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim,[m] [9]where he made him king over Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and the rest of Israel. [10]Ishbaal, son of Saul, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned for two years. The Judahites alone followed David. [11]In all, David spent seven years and six months in Hebron as king of the Judahites.[n]

**Combat near Gibeon** [12]Now Abner, son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbaal, Saul's son, left Mahanaim for Gibeon. [13]Joab, son of Zeruiah, and David's servants also set out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. And they sat down, one group on one side of the pool and the other on the opposite side. [14]Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men rise and perform for us." Joab replied, "All right!" [15]So they rose and were counted off: twelve of the Benjaminites of Ishbaal, son of Saul, and twelve of David's

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1, 21: Upsurgings of the deeps: this reading attempts to recover from an unintelligible Hebrew phrase the poetic parallel to dew and rain. The sense would be a wish that the mountain should have neither moisture from above nor water from springs or wells.

f Jos 10, 13. g Jgs 16, 23; 1 Sm 31, 9; Mi 1, 10. h Gn 27, 28. i 1 Sm 14, 47. j 1 Sm 18, 1; 1 Mc 9, 21. k 1 Sm 25, 42f. l 1 Sm 31, 11ff. m 1 Sm 14, 50. n 2 Sm 5, 5; 1 Kgs 2, 11.

servants. [16]Then each one grasped his opponent's head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side, and all fell down together.* And so that place, which is in Gibeon, was named the Field of the Sides.

**Death of Asahel** [17]After a very fierce battle that day, Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's servants. [18]The three sons of Zeruiah were there—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel, who was as fleet of foot as a gazelle in the open field,[o] [19]set out after Abner, turning neither right nor left in his pursuit.[p] [20]Abner turned around and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" He replied, "Yes." [21]Abner said to him, "Turn right or left; seize one of the young men and take what you can strip from him." But Asahel would not desist from his pursuit. [22]Once more Abner said to Asahel: "Stop pursuing me! Why must I strike you to the ground? How could I face your brother Joab?"[q] [23]Still he refused to stop. So Abner struck him in the abdomen with the heel of his javelin, and the weapon protruded from his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, came to a halt. [24]Joab and Abishai, however, continued the pursuit of Abner. The sun had gone down when they came to the hill of Ammah which lies east of the valley toward the desert near Geba.

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**Truce between Joab and Abner** [25]Here the Benjaminites rallied around Abner, forming a single group, and made a stand on the hilltop. [26]Then Abner called to Joab and said: "Must the sword destroy to the utmost? Do you not know that afterward there will be bitterness? How much longer will you refrain from ordering the people to stop the pursuit of their brothers?" [27]Joab replied, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, the soldiers would not have been withdrawn from the pursuit of their brothers until morning." [28]Joab then sounded the horn, and all the soldiers came to a halt, pursuing Israel no farther and fighting no more. [29]Abner and his men marched all night long through the Arabah, crossed the Jordan, marched all through the morning, and came to Mahanaim. [30]Joab, after interrupting the pursuit of Abner, assembled all the men. Besides Asahel, nineteen other servants of David were missing. [31]But David's servants had fatally wounded three hundred and sixty men of Benjamin, followers of Abner. [32]They took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Joab and his men made an all-night march, and dawn found them in Hebron.

## CHAPTER 3

[1]There followed a long war between the house of Saul and that of David, in which David grew stronger, but the house of Saul weaker.

**Sons Born in Hebron** [2]*r*Sons were born to David in Hebron: his first-born, Amnon, of Ahinoam from Jezreel; [3]the second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom, son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur;[s] [4]the fourth, Adonijah, son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah, son of Abital;[t] [5]and the sixth, Ithream, of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

**Ishbaal and Abner Quarrel** [6]During the war between the house of Saul and of David, Abner was gaining power in the house of Saul. [7]Now Saul had had a concubine, Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ishbaal, son of Saul, said to Abner, "Why have you been intimate with my father's concubine?"[u] [8]Enraged at the words of Ishbaal, Abner said, "Am I a dog's head in Judah? At present I am doing a kindness to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers and his friends, by keeping you out of David's clutches; yet this day you charge me with a crime involving a woman! [9]May God do thus and so to Abner if I do not carry out for David what the LORD swore to him[v] — [10]that is, take away the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan to Beer-sheba."[w] [11]In his fear of Abner, Ishbaal was no longer able to say a word to him.

2, 16: The nature of this gruesome game is not clear, and the place name is variously given in the older texts.

o 2 Sm 23, 24: 1 Chr 2, 16. p 1 Chr 27, 7. q 2 Sm 3, 27f. 30. r 2–5: 1 Chr 3, 14. s 2 Sm 13, 37; 15, 8. t 1 Kgs 1, 5. u 2 Sm 21, 8ff. v Ru 1, 17. w 2 Sm 5, 2; 1 Sm 25, 30.

**Abner and David Reconciled** [12]Then Abner sent messengers to David in Telam, where he was at the moment, to say, "Make an agreement with me, and I will aid you by bringing all Israel over to you." [13]He replied, "Very well, I will make an agreement with you. But one thing I require of you. You must not appear before me unless you bring back Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to present yourself to me."[x] [14]At the same time David sent messengers to Ishbaal, son of Saul, to say, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I espoused by paying a hundred Philistine foreskins." [15]Ishbaal sent for her and took her away from her husband Paltiel, son of Laish,[y] [16]who followed her weeping as far as Bahurim. But Abner said to him, "Go back!" And he turned back.

[17]Abner then said in discussion with the elders of Israel: "For a long time you have been seeking David as your king. [18]Now take action, for the LORD has said of David, 'By my servant David I will save my people Israel from the grasp of the Philistines and from the grasp of all their enemies.' " [19]Abner also spoke personally to Benjamin, and then went to make his own report to David in Hebron concerning all that would be agreeable to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin. [20]When Abner, accompanied by twenty men, came to David in Hebron, David prepared a feast for Abner and for the men who were with him. [21]Then Abner said to David, "I will now go to assemble all Israel for my lord the king, that they may make an agreement with you; you will then be king over all whom you wish to rule." So David bade Abner farewell, and he went away in peace.

**Death of Abner** [22]Just then David's servants and Joab were coming in from an expedition, bringing much plunder with them. Abner, having been dismissed by David, was no longer with him in Hebron but had gone his way in peace. [23]When Joab and the whole force he had with him arrived, he was informed, "Abner, son of Ner, came to David; he has been sent on his way in peace." [24]So Joab went to the king and said: "What have you done? Abner came to you. Why did you let him go peacefully on his way? [25]Are you not aware that Abner came to deceive you and to learn the ins and outs of all that you are doing?" [26]Joab then left David, and without David's knowledge sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. [27]When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside within the city gate as though to speak with him privately. There he stabbed him in the abdomen, and he died in revenge for the killing of Joab's brother Asahel.[z] [28]Later David heard of it and said: "Before the LORD, I and my kingdom are forever innocent.[a] [29]May the full responsibility for the death of Abner, son of Ner, be laid to Joab and to all his family. May the men of Joab's family never be without one suffering from a discharge, or a leper, or one unmanly, one falling by the sword, or one in need of bread!" [30][Joab and his brother Abishai had lain in wait for Abner because he killed their brother Asahel in battle at Gibeon.]

**David Mourns Abner** [31]Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Rend your garments, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn over Abner." King David himself followed the bier.[b] [32]When they had buried Abner in Hebron, the king wept aloud at the grave of Abner, and the people also wept. [33]And the king sang this elegy over Abner:

"Would Abner have died like a fool?
[34]Your hands were not bound with chains,
nor your feet placed in fetters;
As men fall before the wicked, you fell."

And all the people continued to weep for him. [35]Then they went to console David with food while it was still day. But David swore, "May God do thus and so to me if I eat bread or anything else before sunset."[c] [36]All the people noted this with approval, just as they were pleased with everything that the king did. [37]So on that day all the people and all Israel came to know that the king had no part in the killing of Abner, son of Ner. [38]The king then said to his servants: "You must recognize that a great

x 1 Sm 18, 20–27. y 1 Sm 25, 44. z 1 Kgs 2, 5. 32. a 28. 30: 2 Sm 2, 22f. b 2 Sm 21, 10. c Ru 1, 17.

general has fallen today in Israel. 39Although I
am the anointed king, I am weak this day, and
these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too ruthless
for me. May the LORD requite the evildoer in
accordance with his evil deed."[d]

## CHAPTER 4

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**Death of Ishbaal** 1When Ishbaal, son of Saul,
heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he ceased
to resist and all Israel was alarmed. 2Ishbaal, son
of Saul, had two company leaders named Baanah
and Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of

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the tribe of Benjamin. [Beeroth, too, was as-
cribed to Benjamin:[e] 3the Beerothites fled to
Gittaim, where they have been resident aliens to
this day.[f] 4Jonathan, son of Saul, had a son
named Meribbaal* with crippled feet. He was
five years old when the news about Saul and
Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took
him up and fled. But in their hasty flight, he fell
and became lame.][g] 5The sons of Rimmon the
Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, came into the
house of Ishbaal during the heat of the day,
while he was taking his siesta. 6The portress of
the house had dozed off while sifting wheat, and
was asleep. So Rechab and his brother Baanah
slipped past 7and entered the house while
Ishbaal was lying asleep in his bedroom. They
struck and killed him, and cut off his head.
Then, taking the head, they traveled on the
Arabah road all night long.

**The Murder Avenged** 8They brought the
head of Ishbaal to David in Hebron and said to
the king: "This is the head of Ishbaal, son of your
enemy Saul, who sought your life. Thus has the
LORD this day avenged my lord the king on Saul
and his posterity." 9But David replied to Rechab
and his brother Baanah, sons of Rimmon the
Beerothite: "As the LORD lives, who rescued me
from all difficulty, 10in Ziklag I seized and put to
death the man who informed me of Saul's death,
thinking himself the bearer of good news for
which I ought to give him a reward.[h] 11How
much more now, when wicked men have slain
an innocent man in bed at home, must I hold
you responsible for his death and destroy you
from the earth!" 12So at a command from David,
the young men killed them and cut off their
hands and feet, hanging them up near the pool
in Hebron. But he took the head of Ishbaal and
buried it in Abner's grave in Hebron.[i]

## CHAPTER 5

**David King of Israel** 1[j]All the tribes of Israel
came to David in Hebron and said: "Here we
are, your bone and your flesh. 2In days past,
when Saul was our king, it was you who led the
Israelites out and brought them back. And the
LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people
Israel and shall be commander of Israel.' "[k]
3When all the elders of Israel came to David in
Hebron, King David made an agreement with
them there before the LORD, and they anointed
him king of Israel. 4David was thirty years old
when he became king, and he reigned for forty
years: 5seven years and six months in Hebron
over Judah, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem
over all Israel and Judah.[l]

**Capture of Zion*** 6[m]Then the king and his
men set out for Jerusalem against the Jebusites
who inhabited the region. David was told, "You
cannot enter here: the blind and the lame will
drive you away!" which was their way of saying,
"David cannot enter here."[n] 7But David did take
the stronghold of Zion, which is the City of
David. 8On that day David said: "All who wish
to attack the Jebusites must strike at them
through the water shaft. The lame and the blind
shall be the personal enemies of David." That is
why it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not
enter the palace."[o] 9David then dwelt in the
stronghold, which was called the City of David;

4, 4: Saul's grandson Meribbaal is the subject of ch 9 below. The text of this verse may owe its present place to the fact that pre-Christian copies of the Books of Samuel tended to confuse his name with that of his uncle Ishbaal, Saul's son and successor, a principal figure in chapters 2–4.

5, 6–12: David's most important military exploit, the taking of Jerusalem, is here presented before his battles with the Philistines, vv 17–25, which were earlier in time. The sense of vv 6 and 8 is in doubt.

d Ps 28, 4; Is 3, 11. e 2 Sm 9, 3; Jos 9, 17f. f Jos 18, 25. g 2 Sm 9, 3; 19, 25. h 2 Sm 1, 6–10. 14. 16. i Dt 21, 22f; 1 Sm 31, 10. j 1ff: 1 Chr 11, 1ff. k 2 Sm 3, 10; Dt 17, 15; 1 Sm 18, 16. l 2 Sm 2, 11; 1 Kgs 2, 11; 1 Chr 3, 4. m 6–10: 1 Chr 11, 4–9. n Jos 15, 63; Jgs 1, 19. 21; Is 29, 3. o Lv 21, 18; Mt 21, 14f.

he built up the area from Millo to the palace.[p]
[10]David grew steadily more powerful, for the
LORD of hosts was with him.[q] [11][r]Hiram, king of
Tyre, sent ambassadors to David; he furnished
cedar wood, as well as carpenters and masons,
who built a palace for David.[s] [12]And David
knew that the LORD had established him as king
of Israel and had exalted his rule for the sake of
his people Israel.

**David's Family in Jerusalem** [13][t]David took
more concubines and wives in Jerusalem after he
had come from Hebron, and more sons and
daughters were born to him in Jerusalem.
[14]These are the names of those who were born
to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan,
Solomon, [15]Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,
[16]Elishama, Baaliada, and Eliphelet.

**Rout of the Philistines** [17]When the Philistines
heard that David had been anointed king of
Israel, they all took the field in search of him. On
hearing this, David went down to the refuge.*
[18]The Philistines came and overran the valley of
Rephaim.* [19]David inquired of the LORD, "Shall
I attack the Philistines—will you deliver them
into my grip?" The LORD replied to David,
"Attack, for I will surely deliver the Philistines
into your grip." [20]David then went to Baal-
perazim,* where he defeated them. He said,
"The LORD has scattered my enemies before me
like waters that have broken free." That is why
the place is called Baal-perazim. [21]They aban-
doned their gods there, and David and his men
carried them away. [22]But the Philistines came up
again and overran the valley of Rephaim. [23]So
David inquired of the LORD, who replied: "You
must not attack frontally, but circle their rear
and meet them before the mastic trees. [24]When
you hear a sound of marching* in the tops of the
mastic trees, act decisively, for the LORD will
have gone forth before you to attack the camp of
the Philistines." [25]David obeyed the LORD's
command and routed the Philistines from Gib-
eon as far as Gezer.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6
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**The Ark Brought to Jerusalem** [1][u]David again
assembled all the picked men of Israel, thirty
thousand in number. [2]Then David and all the
people who were with him set out for Baala of
Judah to bring up from there the ark of God,
which bears the name of the LORD of hosts
enthroned above the cherubim.[v] [3]The ark of
God was placed on a new cart and taken away
from the house of Abinadab on the hill. Uzzah
and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, guided the cart,[w]
[4]with Ahio walking before it, [5]while David and
all the Israelites made merry before the LORD
with all their strength, with singing and with
citharas, harps, tambourines, sistrums and cym-
bals.[x] [6]When they came to the threshing floor of
Nodan, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of
God and steadied it, for the oxen were making it
tip. [7]But the LORD was angry with Uzzah; God
struck him on that spot, and he died there before
God. [8]David was disturbed because the LORD
had vented his anger on Uzzah. (The place has
been called Perez-uzzah down to the present
day.)[y] [9]David feared the LORD that day and said,
"How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"
[10]So David would not have the ark of the LORD
brought to him in the City of David, but diverted
it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

[11]The ark of the LORD remained in the house
of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months, and
the LORD blessed Obed-edom and his whole
house.[z] [12][a]When it was reported to King David
that the LORD had blessed the family of Obed-
edom and all that belonged to him, David went
to bring up the ark of God from the house of
Obed-edom into the City of David amid festivi-

**5, 17**: Refuge: probably near Adullam (1 Sm 22, 1–5).

**5, 18–25**: The successive defeats of the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem had the effect of blocking their access to the mountain ridge near Gibeon, and confining them to their holdings on the coast and in the foothills beyond Gezer to the west and south.

**5, 20**: Baal-perazim: means approximately "the lord of scatterings."

**5, 24**: Sound of marching: the wind in the treetops suggestive of the Lord's footsteps.

p 1 Kgs 3, 1; 11, 27. q Pss 78, 70ff. 89; 132, 13. r 11–25: 1 Chr 14, 1–16. s 11f: 1 Kgs 5, 15; 1 Chr 14, 1f. t 13–16: 1 Chr 3, 5–8; 14, 3–7. u 1–11: 1 Chr 13, 1–14. v Ex 25, 10; Jos 15, 9; Ps 132, 8ff; 1 Chr 1, 4. w 1 Sm 4, 3f; 6, 7f; 7, 1; Dn 3, 55. x Pss 68, 25f; 150, 3. 5. y 1 Kgs 8, 1. z 1 Chr 26. 4. a 12–23: 1 Chr 15, 1–29; Ps 24, 7–10.

Ch 7
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159–160

ties. [13]As soon as the bearers of the ark of the
LORD had advanced six steps, he sacrificed an ox
and a fatling. [14]Then David, girt with a linen
apron, came dancing before the LORD with
abandon,[b] [15]as he and all the Israelites were
bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts of
joy and to the sound of the horn. [16]As the ark of
the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul's
daughter Michal looked down through the window and saw King David leaping and dancing
before the LORD, and she despised him in her
heart. [17][c]The ark of the LORD was brought in
and set in its place within the tent David had
pitched for it. Then David offered holocausts and
peace offerings before the LORD. [18]When he
finished making these offerings, he blessed the
people in the name of the LORD of hosts. [19]He
then distributed among all the people, to each
man and each woman in the entire multitude of
Israel, a loaf of bread, a cut of roast meat, and a
raisin cake. With this, all the people left for their
homes.

[20]When David returned to bless his own
family, Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet
him and said, "How the king of Israel has
honored himself today, exposing himself to the
view of the slave girls of his followers, as a
commoner might do!"[d] [21]But David replied to
Michal: "I was dancing before the LORD. As the
LORD lives, who preferred me to your father and
his whole family when he appointed me commander of the LORD's people, Israel, not only
will I make merry before the LORD,[e] [22]but I will
demean myself even more. I will be lowly in
your esteem, but in the esteem of the slave girls
you spoke of I will be honored." [23]And so Saul's
daughter Michal was childless to the day of her
death.

## CHAPTER 7

**David's Concern for the Ark** [1][f]When King
David was settled in his palace, and the LORD
had given him rest from his enemies on every
side,[g] [2]he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I
am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of
God dwells in a tent!"[h] [3]Nathan answered the
king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for
the LORD is with you."[i] [4]But that night the LORD
spoke to Nathan and said: [5]"Go, tell my servant
David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build
me a house to dwell in?[j] [6]I have not dwelt in a
house from the day on which I led the Israelites
out of Egypt to the present, but I have been
going about in a tent under cloth. [7]In all my
wanderings everywhere among the Israelites,
did I ever utter a word to any one of the judges
whom I charged to tend my people Israel, to ask:
Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'

**The Lord's Promises** [8]"Now then, speak thus
to my servant David, 'The LORD of hosts has this
to say:* It was I who took you from the pasture
and from the care of the flock to be commander
of my people Israel.[k] [9]I have been with you
wherever you went, and I have destroyed all
your enemies before you. And I will make you
famous like the great ones of the earth.[l] [10]I will
fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them
so that they may dwell in their place without
further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked
continue to afflict them as they did of old,
[11]since the time I first appointed judges over my
people Israel. I will give you rest from all your
enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he
will establish a house for you.[m] [12][n]And when
your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung
from your loins, and I will make his kingdom
firm. [13]It is he who shall build a house for my
name. And I will make his royal throne firm

**7, 8–16:** The prophecy to David contained in these verses is cited again, in poetic form, in Ps 89, 20–38, and alluded to in Ps 132. The promise regarding the people of Israel, vv 10–11, is a part of the promise to David at least as old as the composition of this chapter of Samuel, where it is anticipated in vv 6–7, and alluded to in David's thanksgiving, vv 23–24; it applies to the people an expression used of David in Ps 89, 23. The prophecy to David is the basis for Jewish expectation of a messiah, son of David, which Jesus Christ fulfilled in a transcendent way; cf Acts 2, 30; Heb 1, 5.

b 1 Sm 2, 18. c 17ff: Lv 1, 1–17; 3, 1–17; 1 Chr 16, 1ff. d 1 Chr 16, 43. e 1 Sm 13, 14; 15, 28. f 1–29: 1 Chr 17, 1–27. g 1 Kgs 5, 4. h Dt 12, 10; 25, 19. i Ps 132, 1–5. j 1 Kgs 5, 17; 8, 16. 27; 1 Chr 22, 8; 28, 3; Is 66, 1; Acts 7, 48. k 1 Sm 16, 13; 17, 15–20; Ps 78, 70f; Am 7, 14. l Ps 89, 27. m 2 Sm 23, 5; 1 Kgs 2, 4–24. n 12ff: 1 Kgs 5, 19, 8, 19; 1 Chr 22, 10; 2 Chr 7, 18; Ps 89, 5, 27f. 30. 37f; Lk 1, 32; Heb 1, 5.

forever. [14]I will be a father to him, and he shall
be a son to me. And if he does wrong, I will
correct him with the rod of men and with
human chastisements; [15]but I will not withdraw
my favor from him as I withdrew it from your
predecessor Saul, whom I removed from my
presence.[o] [16]Your house and your kingdom shall
endure forever before me; your throne shall
stand firm forever.' "[p] [17]Nathan reported all
these words and this entire vision to David.

**King David's Prayer** [18]Then King David went
in and sat before the LORD and said, "Who am I,
Lord GOD, and who are the members of my
house, that you have brought me to this point?[q]
[19]Yet even this you see as too little, Lord GOD;
you have also spoken of the house of your
servant for a long time to come: this too you
have shown to man,* Lord GOD! [20]What more
can David say to you? You know your servant,
Lord GOD! [21]For your servant's sake and as you
have had at heart, you have brought about this
entire magnificent disclosure to your servant.
[22]And so—

"Great are you, Lord GOD! There is none like
you and there is no God but you, just as we have
heard it told.[r] [23]What other nation on earth is
there like your people Israel, which God has led,
redeeming it as his people; so that you have
made yourself renowned by doing this magnifi-
cent deed, and by doing awe-inspiring things as
you have cleared nations and their gods out of
the way of your people, which you redeemed for
yourself from Egypt?[s] [24][t]You have established
for yourself your people Israel as yours forever,
and you, LORD, have become their God. [25]And
now, LORD God, confirm for all time the proph-
ecy you have made concerning your servant and
his house, and do as you have promised. [26]Your
name will be forever great, when men say, 'The
LORD of hosts is God of Israel,' and the house of
your servant David stands firm before you. [27]It is
you, LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who said in a
revelation to your servant, 'I will build a house
for you.' Therefore your servant now finds the
courage to make this prayer to you. [28]And now,
Lord GOD, you are God and your words are
truth; you have made this generous promise to
your servant.[u] [29]Do, then, bless the house of
your servant that it may be before you forever;
for you, Lord GOD, have promised, and by your
blessing the house of your servant shall be
blessed forever."

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 8
See RG
160

**Summary of David's Wars** [1][v]After this David
attacked the Philistines and conquered them,
wresting . . . * from the Philistines. [2]He also
defeated Moab and then measured them with a
line, making them lie down on the ground. He
told off two lengths of line for execution, and a
full length* to be spared. Thus the Moabites
became tributary to David. [3][w]Next David de-
feated Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah,
when he went to reestablish his dominion at the
Euphrates River.[x] [4]David captured from him one
thousand seven hundred horsemen and twenty
thousand foot soldiers. And he hamstrung all the
chariot horses, preserving only enough for a
hundred chariots.[y] [5]When the Arameans of
Damascus came to the aid of Hadadezer, king of
Zobah, David slew twenty-two thousand of
them. [6]David then placed garrisons in Aram of
Damascus, and the Arameans became subjects,
tributary to David. The LORD brought David
victory in all his undertakings. [7]David also took
away the golden shields used by Hadadezer's
servants and brought them to Jerusalem. [These
Shishak, king of Egypt, took away when he
came to Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam, son
of Solomon.] [8]From Tebah and Berothai, towns

**7, 19:** This too you have shown to man: the text as transmitted has, rather, "and this is instruction for (or: the law of) mankind." The author of Chronicles (1 Chr 17, 17) saw approximately the same phrase, which he endeavored to fit into the context in a quite different sense. The above is conjectural; cf Dt 5, 24.

**8, 1:** Wresting . . . : the Hebrew text here gives "the bridle of the cubit"; 1 Chr 18, 1 understood "Gath and its dependent villages"; others implausibly read "dominion of the capital city."

**8, 2:** Two lengths . . . a full length: usually taken to mean that two-thirds of them were executed; but it could mean that two-thirds were spared, if the line was used full length in their case but doubled on itself to make "two lines" for those to be put to death.

o 2 Sm 23, 5; 1 Sm 13, 14; 15, 26. 28; 2 Kgs 19, 34; 1 Chr 17, 11–14; Ps 89, 34. p 2 Sm 23, 5; Dn 2, 45; 1 Mc 2, 57; Mk 11, 10; Lk 1, 32f; Heb 1, 8. q 1 Chr 17, 16. r Ex 15, 11; Is 45, 5. s Dt 4, 7. 34. t 24f: Ex 6, 7; Dt 7, 6; 26, 17; 29, 12. u Nm 23, 19; Jn 17, 17. v 1–18: 1 Chr 18, 1–17. w 3–8: 2 Sm 10, 15–19. x 2 Sm 10, 6; 1 Kgs 11, 23. y Jos 11, 6. 9.

of Hadadezer, King David removed a very large
quantity of bronze. 9When Toi, king of Hamath,
heard that David had defeated all the forces of
Hadadezer, 10he sent his son Hadoram to King
David to greet him and to congratulate him for
his victory over Hadadezer in battle, because Toi
had been in many battles with Hadadezer.
Hadoram also brought with him articles of silver,
gold, and bronze. 11These, too, King David
consecrated to the LORD, together with the silver
and gold he had taken from every nation he had
conquered: 12from Edom and Moab, from the
Ammonites, from the Philistines, from the Ama-
lekites, and from the plunder of Hadadezer, son
of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13On his return,* David became famous for
having slain eighteen thousand Edomites in the
Salt Valley;[z] 14after which he placed garrisons in
Edom. Thus all the Edomites became David's
subjects, and the LORD brought David victory in
all his undertakings.

**David's Officials** 15[a]David reigned over all
Israel, judging and administering justice to all his
people. 16Joab, son of Zeruiah, was in command
of the army. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was
chancellor. 17Zadok, son of Ahitub, and Ahime-
lech, son of Abiathar, were priests. Shawsha was
scribe. 18Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, was in com-
mand of the Cherethites and Pelethites. And
David's sons were priests.[b]

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9
See RG
160

**David and Meribbaal** 1David asked, "Is there
any survivor of Saul's house to whom I may
show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?"[c] 2Now
there was a servant of the family of Saul named
Ziba. He was summoned to David, and the king
asked him, "Are you Ziba?" He replied, "Your
servant."[d] 3Then the king inquired, "Is there
any survivor of Saul's house to whom I may
show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king,
"There is still Jonathan's son, whose feet are
crippled."[e] 4The king said to him, "Where is
he?" and Ziba answered, "He is in the house of
Machir, son of Ammiel, in Lodebar."[f] 5So King
David sent for him and had him brought from
the house of Machir, son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.
6When Meribbaal, son of Jonathan, son of Saul,
came to David, he fell prostrate in homage.
David said, "Meribbaal," and he answered,
"Your servant." 7"Fear not," David said to him,
"I will surely be kind to you for the sake of your
father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the lands
of your grandfather Saul, and you shall always
eat at my table." 8Bowing low, he answered,
"What is your servant that you should pay
attention to a dead dog like me?"[g] 9The king
then called Ziba, Saul's attendant, and said to
him: "I am giving your lord's son all that
belonged to Saul and to all his family. 10You and
your sons and servants must till the land for him.
You shall bring in the produce, which shall be
food for your lord's family to eat. But Meribbaal,
your lord's son, shall always eat at my table."
Ziba, who had fifteen sons and twenty servants,
11said to the king, "Your servant shall do just as
my lord the king has commanded him." And so
Meribbaal ate at David's table like one of the
king's sons.[h] 12Meribbaal had a young son
whose name was Mica; and all the tenants of
Ziba's family worked for Meribbaal.[i] 13But Mer-
ibbaal lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate
at the king's table. He was lame in both feet.[j]

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10
See RG
160

**Insult of the Ammonites** 1[k]Some time later*
the king of the Ammonites died, and his son
Hanun succeeded him as king. 2David thought,
"I will be kind to Hanun, son of Nahash, as his
father was kind to me." So David sent his
servants with condolences to Hanun for the loss
of his father. But when David's servants entered
the country of the Ammonites, 3the Ammonite
princes said to their lord Hanun: "Do you think

8, 13: On his return: possibly to Jerusalem, after the revolt of Absalom, a circumstance which this catalogue of victories would avoid mentioning. 1 Chr 18, 13 attributes the defeat of the Edomites to Abishai.

10, 1: Some time later: early in the reign of David, since Hanun's father had been ruling in Ammon at the beginning of Saul's reign (1 Sm 11) and Solomon was as yet unborn (2 Sm 11, 1; 12, 24).

z 2 Kgs 14, 7. a 15–18: 2 Sm 20, 23–26; 1 Kgs 4, 1–6; 1 Chr 18, 14–17. b 2 Sm 15, 18; 20, 7. 23; 23, 20. c 2 Sm 21, 7; 1 Sm 18, 1–4; 20, 8ff. 15f. 42. d 2 Sm 16, 1–4; 19, 27. e 2 Sm 4, 4. f 2 Sm 17, 27. g 1 Sm 24, 15. h 2 Sm 19, 29. i 1 Chr 8, 34. j 2 Sm 21, 7. k 1–19: 1 Chr 19, 1–19.

that David is honoring your father by sending
men with condolences? Is it not rather to
explore the city, to spy on it, and to overthrow
it, that David has sent his messengers to you?"
4Hanun, therefore, seized David's servants and,
after shaving off half their beards and cutting
away the lower halves of their garments at the
buttocks, sent them away.[l] 5When he was told
of it, King David sent out word to them, since
the men were quite ashamed. "Stay in Jericho
until your beards grow," he said, "and then
come back."

**Ammonites Defeated** 6*In view of the offense
they had given to David, the Ammonites sent for
and hired twenty thousand Aramean foot sol-
diers from Beth-rehob and Zobah, as well as the
king of Maacah with one thousand men, and
twelve thousand men from Tob.[m] 7On learning
this, David sent out Joab with the entire levy of
trained soldiers.[n] 8The Ammonites came out
and drew up in battle formation at the entrance
of their city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah
and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah
remained apart in the open country. 9When Joab
saw the battle lines drawn up against him, both
front and rear, he made a selection from all the
picked troops of Israel and arrayed them against
the Arameans. 10He placed the rest of the
soldiers under the command of his brother
Abishai, who arrayed them against the Ammon-
ites. 11Joab said, "If the Arameans are stronger
than I, you shall help me. But if the Ammonites
are stronger than you, I will come to help you.
12Be brave; let us prove our valor for the sake of
our people and the cities of our God; the LORD
will do what he judges best." 13When Joab and
the soldiers who were with him approached the
Arameans for battle, they fled before him. 14The
Ammonites, seeing that the Arameans had fled,
also fled from Abishai and withdrew into the
city. Joab then ceased his attack on the Ammon-
ites and returned to Jerusalem.

**Arameans Defeated** 15[o]Then the Arameans
responded to their defeat by Israel with a full
mustering of troops; 16Hadadezer sent for and
enlisted Arameans from beyond the Euphrates.
They came to Helam, with Shobach, general of
Hadadezer's army, at their head. 17On receiving
this news, David assembled all Israel, crossed
the Jordan, and went to Helam. The Arameans
drew up in formation against David and fought
with him. 18But the Arameans gave way before
Israel, and David's men killed seven hundred
charioteers and forty thousand of the Aramean
foot soldiers. Shobach, general of the army, was
struck down and died on the field. 19All of
Hadadezer's vassal kings, in view of their defeat
by Israel, then made peace with the Israelites
and became their subjects. And the Arameans
were afraid to give further aid to the Ammonites.

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 11–12
See RG
160–161

**David's Sin** 1At the turn of the year,* when
kings go out on campaign, David sent out Joab
along with his officers and the army of Israel,
and they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged
Rabbah. David, however, remained in Jerusa-
lem.[p] 2One evening David rose from his siesta
and strolled about on the roof of the palace.
From the roof he saw a woman bathing, who
was very beautiful. 3David had inquiries made
about the woman and was told, "She is Bath-
sheba, daughter of Eliam, and wife of [Joab's
armor-bearer] Uriah the Hittite."[q] 4Then David
sent messengers and took her. When she came
to him, he had relations with her, at a time when
she was just purified after her monthly period.
She then returned to her house.[r] 5But the
woman had conceived, and sent the information
to David, "I am with child."

6David therefore sent a message to Joab,
"Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah
to David. 7When he came, David questioned
him about Joab, the soldiers, and how the war

10, 6–9: A Hebrew text from Qumran (4Q Sam[a]) comes closer in these verses to what is given in 1 Chr 19, 6–9. The scene of the conflict is more likely Rabbath-Ammon, with Josephus (Ant., vii, 123), than Madeba, as in 1 Chr; compare ch 11.

11, 1: At the turn of the year: in the spring.

l Is 20, 4. m 2 Sm 8, 3; 1 Sm 14, 47. n 2 Sm 11, 1. o 15–19: 2 Sm 8, 3–8; 1 Chr 9, 16–19. p 2 Sm 10, 7; 1 Chr 20, 1. q 2 Sm 23, 39. r Lv 15, 19.

was going, and Uriah answered that all was well.
8David then said to Uriah, "Go down to your
house and bathe your feet." Uriah left the
palace, and a portion was sent out after him from
the king's table. 9But Uriah slept at the entrance
of the royal palace with the other officers of his
lord, and did not go down to his own house.
10David was told that Uriah had not gone home.
So he said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a
journey? Why, then, did you not go down to
your house?" 11Uriah answered David, "The ark
and Israel and Judah are lodged in tents, and my
lord Joab and your majesty's servants are encamped in the open field. Can I go home to eat
and to drink and to sleep with my wife? As the
LORD lives and as you live, I will do no such
thing."[s] 12Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here
today also, I shall dismiss you tomorrow." So
Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the
day following, 13David summoned him, and he
ate and drank with David, who made him
drunk. But in the evening he went out to sleep
on his bed among his lord's servants, and did not
go down to his home. 14The next morning David
wrote a letter to Joab which he sent by Uriah.
15In it he directed: "Place Uriah up front, where
the fighting is fierce. Then pull back and leave
him to be struck down dead." 16So while Joab
was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to a
place where he knew the defenders were strong.
17When the men of the city made a sortie against
Joab, some officers of David's army fell, and
among them Uriah the Hittite died.

Ch 11–12
See RG
160–161

18Then Joab sent David a report of all the
details of the battle, 19instructing the messenger,
"When you have finished giving the king all the
details of the battle, 20the king may become
angry and say to you: 'Why did you go near the
city to fight? Did you not know that they would
shoot from the wall above? 21Who killed Abimelech, son of Jerubbaal? Was it not a woman who
threw a millstone down on him from the wall
above, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you
go near the wall?' Then you in turn shall say,
'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.' "[t]
22The messenger set out, and on his arrival he
relayed to David all the details as Joab had
instructed him.* 23He told David: "The men had
us at a disadvantage and came out into the open
against us, but we pushed them back to the
entrance of the city gate. 24Then the archers
shot at your servants from the wall above, and
some of the king's servants died, among them
your servant Uriah." 25David said to the messenger: "This is what you shall convey to Joab: 'Do
not be chagrined at this, for the sword devours
now here and now there. Strengthen your attack
on the city and destroy it.' Encourage him."

26When the wife of Uriah heard that her
husband had died, she mourned her lord. 27But
once the mourning was over, David sent for her
and brought her into his house. She became his
wife and bore him a son. But the LORD was
displeased with what David had done.

## CHAPTER 12

**Nathan's Parable** 1*The LORD sent Nathan to
David, and when he came to him, he said:
"Judge this case for me! In a certain town there
were two men, one rich, the other poor.[u] 2The
rich man had flocks and herds in great numbers.
3But the poor man had nothing at all except one
little ewe lamb that he had bought. He nourished her, and she grew up with him and his
children. She shared the little food he had and
drank from his cup and slept in his bosom. She
was like a daughter to him. 4Now, the rich man
received a visitor, but he would not take from his
own flocks and herds to prepare a meal for the
wayfarer who had come to him. Instead he took
the poor man's ewe lamb and made a meal of it
for his visitor." 5David grew very angry with that
man and said to Nathan: "As the LORD lives, the
man who has done this merits death! 6He shall

**11, 22:** After this verse, the Greek text, which is here the older form, has David, angry with Joab, repeat exactly the questions Joab had foreseen in vv 20ff. In v 24 of our oldest Greek text, the messenger specifies that about eighteen men were killed.

**12, 1–4:** This utterance of Nathan is in regular lines in Hebrew, resembling English blank verse.

s 1 Sm 4, 3f. t Jgs 9, 50–54. u Sir 47, 1.

restore the ewe lamb fourfold because he has
done this and has had no pity."[v]

**David's Punishment** [7]Then Nathan said to
David: "You are the man! Thus says the LORD
God of Israel: 'I anointed you king of Israel. I
rescued you from the hand of Saul.[w] [8]I gave you
your lord's house and your lord's wives for your
own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah.
And if this were not enough, I could count up for
you still more. [9]Why have you spurned the LORD
and done evil in his sight? You have cut down
Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his
wife as your own, and him you killed with the
sword of the Ammonites. [10]Now, therefore, the
sword shall never depart from your house,
because you have despised me and have taken
the wife of Uriah to be your wife.'[x] [11]Thus says
the LORD: 'I will bring evil upon you out of your
own house. I will take your wives while you live
to see it, and will give them to your neighbor. He
shall lie with your wives in broad daylight.[y]
[12]You have done this deed in secret, but I will
bring it about in the presence of all Israel, and
with the sun looking down.' "

**David's Repentance** [13]Then David said to Na-
than, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan
answered David: "The LORD on his part has
forgiven your sin: you shall not die.[z] [14]But since
you have utterly spurned the LORD by this deed,
the child born to you must surely die." [15]Then
Nathan returned to his house.

The LORD struck the child that the wife of
Uriah had borne to David, and it became desper-
ately ill. [16]David besought God for the child. He
kept a fast, retiring for the night to lie on the
ground clothed in sackcloth. [17]The elders of his
house stood beside him urging him to rise from
the ground; but he would not, nor would he
take food with them. [18]On the seventh day, the
child died. David's servants, however, were
afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for
they said: "When the child was alive, we spoke
to him, but he would not listen to what we said.
How can we tell him the child is dead? He may
do some harm!" [19]But David noticed his ser-
vants whispering among themselves and realized
that the child was dead. He asked his servants,
"Is the child dead?" They replied, "Yes, he is."
[20]Rising from the ground, David washed and
anointed himself, and changed his clothes. Then
he went to the house of the LORD and wor-
shiped. He returned to his own house, where at
his request food was set before him, and he ate.
[21]His servants said to him: "What is this you are
doing? While the child was living, you fasted and
wept and kept vigil; now that the child is dead
you rise and take food." [22]He replied: "While
the child was living, I fasted and wept, thinking,
'Perhaps the LORD will grant me the child's life.'
[23]But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I
bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he
will not return to me."[a] [24]Then David com-
forted his wife Bathsheba. He went and slept
with her; and she conceived and bore him a son,
who was named Solomon. The LORD loved him
[25]and sent the prophet Nathan to name him
Jedidiah, on behalf of the LORD.

**Ammonite War Ends** [26][b]Joab fought against
Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured this
royal city. [27]He sent messengers to David with
the word: "I have fought against Rabbah and
have taken the water-city. [28]Therefore, assemble
the rest of the soldiers, join the siege against the
city and capture it, lest it be I that capture the
city and it be credited to me." [29]So David
assembled the rest of the soldiers and went to
Rabbah. When he had fought against it and
captured it, [30]he took the crown from Milcom's
head. It weighed a talent,* of gold and precious
stones; it was placed on David's head. He
brought out immense booty from the city, [31]and
also led away the inhabitants, whom he assigned
to work with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, or
put to work at the brickmold. This is what he did
to all the Ammonite cities. David and all the
soldiers then returned to Jerusalem.

12, 30: Weighed a talent: since this would be more than 75 pounds, some commentators picture the idol's crown as displaying a single precious stone of large size, which David took to wear; but the text does not say this.

v Ex 21, 37; Lk 19, 8. w 1 Sm 16, 13. x 2 Sm 13, 28f; 18, 14. y 2 Sm 16, 11. 22. z 1 Kgs 21, 29; Pss 32, 5; 50, 6; Sir 47, 11. a Jb 7, 9. b 26–31: 1 Chr 20, 1–3.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 13–14
See RG
161–162

**The Crime of Amnon** [1]Some time later the following incident occurred. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and David's son Amnon loved her.[c] [2]He was in such straits over his sister Tamar that he became sick; since she was a virgin, Amnon thought it impossible to carry out his designs toward her. [3]Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, son of David's brother Shimeah, who was very clever.[d] [4]He asked him, "Prince, why are you so dejected morning after morning? Why not tell me?" So Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." [5]Then Jonadab replied, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to visit you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and encourage me to take food. If she prepares something appetizing in my presence, for me to see, I will eat it from her hand.' " [6]So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. When the king came to visit him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and prepare some fried cakes before my eyes, that I may take nourishment from her hand."

[7]David then sent home a message to Tamar, "Please go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some nourishment for him." [8]Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was in bed. Taking dough and kneading it, she twisted it into cakes before his eyes and fried the cakes. [9]Then she took the pan and set out the cakes before him. But Amnon would not eat; he said, "Have everyone leave me." When they had all left him, [10]Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the nourishment into the bedroom, that I may have it from your hand." So Tamar picked up the cakes she had prepared and brought them to her brother Amnon in the bedroom. [11]But when she brought them to him to eat, he seized her and said to her, "Come! Lie with me, my sister!" [12]But she answered him, "No, my brother! Do not shame me! That is an intolerable crime in Israel. Do not commit this insensate deed.[e] [13]Where would I take my shame? And you would be a discredited man in Israel. So please, speak to the king; he will not keep me from you."[f]

[14]Not heeding her plea, he overpowered her; he shamed her and had relations with her. [15]Then Amnon conceived an intense hatred for her, which far surpassed the love he had had for her. "Get up and leave," he said to her. [16]She replied, "No, brother, because to drive me out would be far worse than the first injury you have done me." He would not listen to her, [17]but called the youth who was his attendant and said, "Put her outside, away from me, and bar the door after her." [18]Now she had on a long tunic, for that is how maiden princesses dressed in olden days. When his attendant put her out and barred the door after her, [19]Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long tunic in which she was clothed. Then, putting her hands to her head, she went away crying loudly. [20]Her brother Absalom said to her: "Has your brother Amnon been with you? Be still now, my sister; he is your brother. Do not take this affair to heart." But Tamar remained grief-stricken and forlorn in the house of her brother Absalom. [21]King David, who got word of the whole affair, became very angry. He did not, however, spark the resentment of his son Amnon, whom he favored because he was his first-born. [22]Absalom, moreover, said nothing at all to Amnon, although he hated him for having shamed his sister Tamar.

**Absalom's Plot** [23]After a period of two years Absalom had shearers in Baal-hazor near Ephraim, and he invited all the princes. [24]Absalom went to the king and said: "Your servant is having shearers. Please, your majesty, come with all your retainers to your servant." [25]But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, all of us should not go lest we be a burden to you." And though Absalom urged him, he refused to go and began to bid him goodbye. [26]Absalom then said, "If you will not come yourself, please let my brother Amnon come to us." The king asked him, "Why should he go to you?" [27]At Absalom's urging, however, he sent Amnon and all the other princes with him. Absalom prepared a

c 2 Sm 3, 2f; 1 Chr 3, 9. d 1 Sm 21, 21. e Lv 18, 9; 20, 17; Dt 27, 22. f Gn 34, 7.

banquet fit for royalty. [28] [g]But he had instructed
his servants: "Now watch! When Amnon is
merry with wine and I say to you, 'Kill Amnon,'
put him to death. Do not be afraid, for it is I who
order you to do it. Be resolute and act manfully."
**Death of Amnon** [29]When the servants did to
Amnon as Absalom had commanded, all the
other princes rose, mounted their mules, and
fled. [30]While they were still on the road, a report
reached David that Absalom had killed all the
princes and that not one of them had survived.
[31]The king stood up, rent his garments, and then
lay on the ground. All his servants standing by
him also rent their garments.[h] [32]But Jonadab,
son of David's brother Shimeah, spoke up: "Let
not my lord think that all the young princes have
been killed! Amnon alone is dead, for Absalom
was determined on this ever since Amnon
shamed his sister Tamar. [33]So let not my lord the
king put faith in the report that all the princes
are dead. Amnon alone is dead." [34]Meanwhile,
Absalom had taken flight. Then the servant on
watch looked about and saw a large group
coming down the slope from the direction of
Bahurim. He came in and reported this, telling
the king that he had seen some men coming
down the mountainside from the direction of
Bahurim. [35]So Jonadab said to the king: "There!
The princes have come. It is as your servant
said." [36]No sooner had he finished speaking than
the princes came in, weeping aloud. The king,
too, and all his servants wept very bitterly. [37]But
Absalom, who had taken flight, went to Talmai,
son of Ammihud, king of Geshur,[i] [38]and stayed
in Geshur for three years.
**Efforts for Absalom's Return** [39]The king continued during all that time to mourn over his
son; but his longing reached out for Absalom as
he became reconciled to the death of Amnon.

## CHAPTER 14

[1]When Joab, son of Zeruiah, observed how
the king felt toward Absalom, [2]he sent to Tekoa
and brought from there a gifted woman, to
whom he said: "Pretend to be in mourning. Put
on mourning apparel and do not anoint yourself
with oil, that you may appear to be a woman
who has been long in mourning for a departed
one. [3]Then go to the king and speak to him in
this manner." And Joab instructed her what to
say.

[4]So the woman of Tekoa went to the king and
fell prostrate to the ground in homage, saying,
"Help, your majesty!" [5]The king said to her,
"What do you want?" She replied: "Alas, I am a
widow; my husband is dead. [6]Your servant had
two sons, who quarreled in the field. There being
no one to part them, one of them struck his
brother and killed him. [7]Then the whole clan
confronted your servant and demanded: 'Give up
the one who killed his brother. We must put him
to death for the life of his brother whom he has
slain; we must extinguish the heir also.' Thus
they will quench my remaining hope* and leave
my husband neither name nor posterity upon the
earth."[k] [8]The king then said to the woman: "Go
home. I will issue a command on your behalf."
[9]The woman of Tekoa answered him, "Let me
and my family be to blame, my lord king; you and
your throne are innocent." [10]Then the king said,
"If anyone says a word to you, have him brought
to me, and he shall not touch you again." [11]But
she went on to say, "Please, your majesty, keep in
mind the LORD your God, that the avenger of
blood may not go too far in destruction and that
my son may not be done away with." He replied,
"As the LORD lives, not a hair of your son shall fall
to the ground."

[12]The woman continued, "Please let your
servant say still another word to my lord the
king." He replied, "Speak." [13]So the woman
said: "Why, then, do you think of this same kind
of thing against the people of God? In pronouncing as he has, the king shows himself guilty, for
not bringing back his own banished son. [14]We

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14, 7: Hope: literally, "glowing coal." The image is similar to that of the lighted lamp, e.g., Ps 89, 17, to keep alive the ancestral name.

g 28f: 2 Sm 12, 10. h 2 Sm 1, 11. i 2 Sm 3, 3; 15, 8. j 5f: 2 Kgs 6, 26f. k Nm 35, 19.

must indeed die; we are then like water that is poured out on the ground and cannot be gathered up. Yet, though God does not bring back life, he does take thought how not to banish* anyone from him.[l] [15]And now, if I have presumed to speak of this matter to your majesty, it is because the people have given me cause to fear. And so your servant thought: 'Let me speak to the king. Perhaps he will grant the petition of his maidservant. [16]For the king must surely consent to free his servant from the grasp of one who would seek to destroy me and my son as well from God's inheritance.' " [17]And the woman concluded: "Let the word of my lord the king provide a resting place;* indeed, my lord the king is like an angel of God, evaluating good and bad. The LORD your God be with you."[m]

[18]The king answered the woman, "Now do not conceal from me anything I may ask you!" The woman said, "Let my lord the king speak." [19]So the king asked, "Is Joab involved with you in all this?" And the woman answered: "As you live, my lord the king, it is just as your majesty has said, and not otherwise. It was your servant Joab who instructed me and told your servant all these things she was to say. [20]Your servant Joab did this to come at the issue in a roundabout way. But my lord is as wise as an angel of God, so that he knows all things on earth."

**Absalom's Return** [21]Then the king said to Joab: "I hereby grant this request. Go, therefore, and bring back young Absalom." [22]Falling prostrate to the ground in homage and blessing the king, Joab said, "This day I know that I am in good favor with you, my lord the king, since the king has granted the request of his servant." [23]Joab then went off to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. [24]But the king said, "Let him go to his own house; he shall not appear before me." So Absalom went off to his house and did not appear before the king.

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[25]In all Israel there was not a man who could so be praised for his beauty as Absalom, who was without blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. [26]When he shaved his head—which he used to do at the end of every year, because his hair became too heavy for him—the hair weighed two hundred shekels according to the royal standard. [27]Absalom had three sons born to him, besides a daughter named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman.[n]

**Absalom Is Pardoned** [28]Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without appearing before the king. [29]Then he summoned Joab to send him to the king, but Joab would not come to him. Although he summoned him a second time, Joab refused to come. [30]He therefore instructed his servants: "You see Joab's field that borders mine, on which he has barley. Go, set it on fire." And so Absalom's servants set the field on fire.[o] Joab's farmhands came to him with torn garments and reported to him what had been done. [31]At this, Joab went to Absalom in his house and asked him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" [32]Absalom answered Joab: "I was summoning you to come here, that I may send you to the king to say: 'Why did I come back from Geshur? I would be better off if I were still there!' Now, let me appear before the king. If I am guilty, let him put me to death." [33]Joab went to the king and reported this. The king then called Absalom, who came to him and in homage fell on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed him.

## CHAPTER 15

**Absalom's Plot** [1]After this Absalom provided himself with chariots, horses, and fifty henchmen.[p] [2]Moreover, Absalom used to rise early and stand alongside the road leading to the gate. If someone had a lawsuit to be decided by the king, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he replied, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe of Israel," [3]Absalom would say to him, "Your suit is good and just, but there is no one to hear you in the king's name." [4]And he would continue: "If only I could be appointed judge in the land! Then

14, 14: How not to banish: a possible allusion to the religious institution of cities of refuge for involuntary murderers; see Nm 35, 9–15.

14, 17: A resting place: cf Ps 95, 11; Heb 3, 7—4, 11. The reference here is to a return home for Absalom to Israel.

l Jb 7, 9; 14, 7–12; Ps 88, 5, 11ff. m 17. 20: 1 Sm 29, 9. n 2 Sm 18, 18. o Jgs 15, 4f. p 1 Sm 8, 11; 1 Kgs 1, 5.

everyone who has a lawsuit to be decided might
come to me and I would render him justice."
5Whenever a man approached him to show
homage, he would extend his hand, hold him,
and kiss him. 6By behaving in this way toward
all the Israelites who came to the king for
judgment, Absalom was stealing away the loyal-
ties of the men of Israel.

**Conspiracy in Hebron** 7After a period of four
years, Absalom said to the king: "Allow me to go
to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD.
8For while living in Geshur in Aram, your
servant made this vow: 'If the LORD ever brings
me back to Jerusalem, I will worship him in
Hebron.' "[q] 9The king wished him a safe jour-
ney, and he went off to Hebron. 10Then Absalom
sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel to say,
"When you hear the sound of the horn, declare
Absalom king in Hebron." 11Two hundred men
had accompanied Absalom from Jerusalem. They
had been invited and went in good faith, know-
ing nothing of the plan. 12Absalom also sent to
Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, an
invitation to come from his town, Giloh, for the
sacrifices he was about to offer. So the conspir-
acy gained strength, and the people with Absa-
lom increased in numbers.[r]

**David Flees Jerusalem** 13An informant came
to David with the report, "The Israelites have
transferred their loyalty to Absalom."[s] 14At this,
David said to all his servants who were with him
in Jerusalem: "Up! Let us take flight, or none of
us will escape from Absalom. Leave quickly, lest
he hurry and overtake us, then visit disaster
upon us and put the city to the sword." 15The
king's officers answered him, "Your servants are
ready, whatever our lord the king chooses to
do." 16Then the king set out, accompanied by
his entire household, except for ten concubines
whom he left behind to take care of the palace.[t]
17As the king left the city, with all his officers
accompanying him, they halted opposite the
ascent of the Mount of Olives, at a distance,
18while the whole army marched past him.[u]

**David and Ittai** As all the Cherethites and
Pelethites, and the six hundred men of Gath
who had accompanied him from that city, were
passing in review before the king, 19he said to
Ittai the Gittite: "Why should you also go with
us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a
foreigner and you, too, are an exile from your
own country. 20You came only yesterday, and
shall I have you wander about with us today,
wherever I have to go? Return and take your
brothers with you, and may the LORD be kind
and faithful to you." 21But Ittai answered the
king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king
lives, your servant shall be wherever my lord the
king may be, whether for death or for life."[v] 22So
the king said to Ittai, "Go, then, march on." And
Ittai the Gittite, with all his men and all the
dependents that were with him, marched on.
23Everyone in the countryside wept aloud as the
last of the soldiers went by, and the king crossed
the Kidron Valley with all the soldiers moving on
ahead of him by way of the Mount of Olives,
toward the desert.

**David and the Priests** 24Zadok, too [with all
the Levite bearers of the ark of the covenant of
God], and Abiathar brought the ark of God to a
halt until the soldiers had marched out of the
city. 25Then the king said to Zadok: "Take the
ark of God back to the city. If I find favor with
the LORD, he will bring me back and permit me
to see it and its lodging. 26But if he should say, 'I
am not pleased with you,' I am ready; let him do
to me as he sees fit."[w] 27The king also said to the
priest Zadok: "See to it that you and Abiathar
return to the city in peace, and both your sons
with you, your own son Ahimaaz, and Abia-
thar's son Jonathan. 28Remember, I shall be
waiting at the fords near the desert until I
receive information from you." 29So Zadok and
Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem
and remained there.

30As David went up the Mount of Olives, he
wept without ceasing. His head was covered,
and he was walking barefoot. All those who
were with him also had their heads covered and

q 2 Sm 3, 3; 13, 37. r 2 Sm 16, 23. s Ps 3. t 2 Sm 16, 21f; 20, 3. u 2 Sm 8, 18. v Ru 1, 16. w 2 Sm 16, 10.

were weeping as they went.[x] 31When David
was informed that Ahithophel was among the
conspirators with Absalom, he said, "O LORD,
turn the counsel of Ahithophel to folly!"[y]

**David and Hushai** 32When David reached the
top, where men used to worship God, Hushai
the Archite was there to meet him, with rent
garments and dirt upon his head.[z] 33David said
to him: "If you come with me, you will be a
burden to me. 34But if you return to the city and
say to Absalom, 'Let me be your servant, O king;
I was formerly your father's servant, but now I
will be yours,' you will undo for me the counsel
of Ahithophel.[a] 35You will have the priests
Zadok and Abiathar there with you. If you hear
anything from the royal palace, you shall report
it to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, 36who have
there with them both Zadok's son Ahimaaz and
Abiathar's son Jonathan. Through them you shall
send on to me whatever you hear." 37So David's
friend Hushai went into the city of Jerusalem as
Absalom was about to enter it.

## CHAPTER 16

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**David and Ziba** 1David had gone a little be-
yond the top when Ziba, the servant of Merib-
baal, met him with saddled asses laden with two
hundred loaves of bread, an ephah of cakes of
pressed raisins, an ephah of summer fruits, and a
skin of wine.[b] 2The king said to Ziba, "What do
you plan to do with these?" Ziba replied: "The
asses are for the king's household to ride on. The
bread and summer fruits are for your servants to
eat, and the wine for those to drink who are
weary in the desert." 3Then the king said, "And
where is your lord's son?" Ziba answered the
king, "He is staying in Jerusalem, for he said,
'Now the Israelites will restore to me my father's
kingdom.' "[c] 4The king therefore said to Ziba,
"So! Everything Meribbaal had is yours." Then
Ziba said: "I pay you homage, my lord the king.
May I find favor with you!"[d]

**David and Shimei** 5As David was approaching
Bahurim, a man named Shimei, the son of Gera
of the same clan as Saul's family, was coming out
of the place, cursing as he came.[e] 6He threw
stones at David and at all the king's officers,
even though all the soldiers, including the royal
guard, were on David's right and on his left.
7Shimei was saying as he cursed: "Away, away,
you murderous and wicked man! 8The LORD has
requited you for all the bloodshed in the family
of Saul,* in whose stead you became king, and
the LORD has given over the kingdom to your
son Absalom. And now you suffer ruin because
you are a murderer." 9Abishai, son of Zeruiah,
said to the king: "Why should this dead dog
curse my lord the king? Let me go over, please,
and lop off his head."[f] 10But the king replied:
"What business is it of mine or of yours, sons of
Zeruiah, that he curses? Suppose the LORD has
told him to curse David; who then will dare to
say, 'Why are you doing this?' "[g] 11Then the
king said to Abishai and to all his servants: "If
my own son, who came forth from my loins, is
seeking my life, how much more might this
Benjaminite do so? Let him alone and let him
curse, for the LORD has told him to.[h] 12Perhaps
the LORD will look upon my affliction and make
it up to me with benefits for the curses he is
uttering this day." 13David and his men contin-
ued on the road, while Shimei kept abreast of
them on the hillside, all the while cursing and
throwing stones and dirt as he went.[i] 14The king
and all the soldiers with him arrived at the
Jordan tired out, and stopped there for a rest.

**Absalom's Counselors** 15In the meantime Ab-
salom, accompanied by Ahithophel, entered Jeru-
salem with all the Israelites. 16When David's
friend Hushai the Archite came to Absalom, he
said to him: "Long live the king! Long live the
king!"[j] 17But Absalom asked Hushai: "Is this
your devotion to your friend? Why did you not
go with your friend?" 18Hushai replied to Absa-
lom: "On the contrary, I am his whom the LORD
and all this people and all Israel have chosen,
and with him I will stay. 19Furthermore, as I was
in attendance upon your father, so will I be

16, 8: Bloodshed . . . Saul: refers to the episode recounted in 2 Sm 21, 1–14.

x 2 Sm 19, 5; Mi 1, 8. y 2 Sm 16, 23; 17, 14. 23. z 2 Sm 16, 16. a 2 Sm 16, 19. b 2 Sm 4, 4; 9, 1–13; 19, 18. 25. c 2 Sm 19, 26f. d 2 Sm 19, 30. e 2 Sm 3, 16; 19, 17. 22f; 1 Kgs 2, 8. f 2 Sm 19, 23. 29; 1 Sm 24, 15; 26, 6. g 2 Sm 15, 25f; 19, 23. h 2 Sm 12, 11. i 2 Sm 19, 19–24. j 2 Sm 15, 32–37.

before you. Whom should I serve, if not his
son?"[k] [20]Then Absalom said to Ahithophel,
"Offer your counsel on what we should do."
[21]Ahithophel replied to Absalom: "Have rela-
tions with your father's concubines, whom he
left behind to take care of the palace. When all
Israel hears how odious you have made yourself
to your father, all your partisans will take cour-
age."[l] [22]So a tent was pitched on the roof for
Absalom, and he visited his father's concubines
in view of all Israel.[m]

**Counsel of Ahithophel** [23]Now the counsel
given by Ahithophel at that time was as though
one had sought divine revelation. Such was all
his counsel both to David and to Absalom.[n]

## CHAPTER 17

[1]Ahithophel went on to say to Absalom: "Please
let me choose twelve thousand men, and be off
in pursuit of David tonight. [2]If I come upon him
when he is weary and discouraged, I shall cause
him to panic. When all the people with him flee,
I shall strike down the king alone. [3]Then I can
bring back the rest of the people to you, as a
bride returns to her husband. It is the death of
only one man you are seeking; then all the
people will be at peace." [4]This plan was agree-
able to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

**Counsel of Hushai** [5]Then Absalom said,
"Now call Hushai the Archite also; let us hear
what he too has to say." [6]When Hushai came to
Absalom, Absalom said to him: "This is what
Ahithophel proposed. Shall we follow his pro-
posal? If not, speak up." [7]Hushai replied to
Absalom, "This time Ahithophel has not given
good counsel." [8]And he went on to say: "You
know that your father and his men are warriors,
and that they are as fierce as a bear in the wild
robbed of her cubs. Moreover, since your father
is skilled in warfare, he will not spend the night
with the people.[o] [9]Even now he lies hidden in
one of the caves or in some other place. And if
some of our soldiers should fall at the first attack,
whoever hears of it will say, 'Absalom's follow-
ers have been slaughtered.' [10]Then even the
brave man with the heart of a lion will lose
courage. For all Israel knows that your father is a
warrior and that those who are with him are
brave.

[11]"This is what I counsel: Let all Israel from
Dan to Beer-sheba, who are as numerous as the
sands by the sea, be called up for combat; and go
with them yourself. [12]We can then attack him
wherever we find him, settling down upon him
as dew alights on the ground. None shall
survive—neither he nor any of his followers.
[13]And if he retires into a city, all Israel shall bring
ropes to that city and we can drag it into the
gorge, so that not even a pebble of it can be
found." [14]Then Absalom and all the Israelites
pronounced the counsel of Hushai the Archite
better than that of Ahithophel. For the LORD had
decided to undo Ahithophel's good counsel, in
order thus to bring Absalom to ruin.[p]

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**David Told of the Plan** [15]Then Hushai said to
the priests Zadok and Abiathar: "This is the
counsel Ahithophel gave Absalom and the elders
of Israel, and this is what I counseled. [16]So send
a warning to David immediately, not to spend
the night at the fords near the desert, but to
cross over without fail. Otherwise the king and
all the people with him will be destroyed."
[17]Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at
En-rogel, since they could not risk being seen
entering the city. A maidservant was to come
with information for them, and they in turn
were to go and report to King David. [18]But an
attendant saw them and informed Absalom.
They sped on their way and reached the house
of a man in Bahurim who had a cistern in his
courtyard. They let themselves down into this,
[19]and the housewife took the cover and spread it
over the cistern, strewing ground grain on the
cover so that nothing could be noticed. [20]When
Absalom's servants came to the woman at the
house, they asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and
Jonathan?" The woman replied, "They went by
a short while ago toward the water." They
searched, but found no one, and so returned to
Jerusalem. [21]As soon as they left, Ahimaaz and
Jonathan came up out of the cistern and went on
to inform King David. They said to him: "Leave!

k 2 Sm 15, 34. l 2 Sm 15, 16; 20, 3. m 2 Sm 12, 11f.

n 2 Sm 15, 12. 31; 17, 23. o Hos 13, 8. p 2 Sm 15, 31.

Cross the water at once, for Ahithophel has given the following counsel in regard to you."
22So David and all his people moved on and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, there was no one left who had not crossed.

23When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not acted upon, he saddled his ass and departed, going to his home in his own city. Then, having left orders concerning his family, he hanged himself. And so he died and was buried in his father's tomb.[q]

24Now David had gone to Mahanaim when Absalom crossed the Jordan accompanied by all the Israelites. 25Absalom had put Amasa in command of the army in Joab's place. Amasa was the son of an Ishmaelite named Ithra, who had married Abigail, daughter of Jesse and sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah.[r] 26Israel and Absalom encamped in the territory of Gilead.

27When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi, son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, Machir, son of Ammiel from Lodebar, and Barzillai, the Gileadite from Rogelim,[s] 28brought couches, coverlets, basins and earthenware, as well as wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils,[t] 29honey, butter and cheese from the flocks and herds, for David and those who were with him to eat; for they said, "The people have been hungry and tired and thirsty in the desert."

## CHAPTER 18

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**Preparation for Battle** 1After mustering the troops he had with him, David placed officers in command of groups of a thousand and groups of a hundred. 2David then put a third part of the soldiers under Joab's command, a third under command of Abishai, son of Zeruiah and brother of Joab, and a third under command of Ittai the Gittite. The king then said to the soldiers, "I intend to go out with you myself." 3But they replied: "You must not come out with us. For if we should flee, we shall not count; even if half of us should die, we shall not count. You are equal to ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that we have you to help us from the city." 4So the king said to them, "I will do what you think best"; and he stood by the gate as all the soldiers marched out in units of a hundred and of a thousand. 5But the king gave this command to Joab, Abishai and Ittai: "Be gentle with young Absalom for my sake." All the soldiers heard the king instruct the various leaders with regard to Absalom.

**Defeat of Absalom** 6David's army then took the field against Israel, and a battle was fought in the forest near Mahanaim. 7The forces of Israel were defeated by David's servants, and the casualties there that day were heavy—twenty thousand men. 8The battle spread out over that entire region, and the thickets consumed more combatants that day than did the sword.

**Death of Absalom** 9Absalom unexpectedly came up against David's servants. He was mounted on a mule, and, as the mule passed under the branches of a large terebinth, his hair caught fast in the tree. He hung between heaven and earth while the mule he had been riding ran off. 10Someone saw this and reported to Joab that he had seen Absalom hanging from a terebinth. 11Joab said to his informant: "If you saw him, why did you not strike him to the ground on the spot? Then it would have been my duty to give you fifty pieces of silver and a belt." 12But the man replied to Joab: "Even if I already held a thousand pieces of silver in my two hands, I would not harm the king's son, for the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai in our hearing to protect the youth Absalom for his sake. 13Had I been disloyal and killed him, the whole matter would have come to the attention of the king, and you would stand aloof." 14Joab replied, "I will not waste time with you in this way." And taking three pikes in hand, he thrust for the heart of Absalom, still hanging from the tree alive.[u] 15Next, ten of Joab's young armor-bearers closed in on Absalom, and killed him with further blows. 16Joab then sounded the horn, and the soldiers turned back from the pursuit of the Israelites, because Joab called on them to halt.[v] 17Absalom was taken up and cast into a deep pit in the forest, and a very large

q 2 Sm 15, 31; 16, 23. r 2 Sm 19, 14; 20, 4–13. s 2 Sm 9, 4; 19, 32; 1 Kgs 2, 7. t 2 Sm 19, 32; Ezr 2, 61. u 2 Sm 12, 10; 13, 28f. v 2 Sm 20, 23–26.

mound of stones was erected over him. And all the Israelites fled to their own tents.[w]

[18]During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it for himself in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to perpetuate my name." The pillar which he named for himself is called Yad-abshalom to the present day.[x]

**David Told of Absalom's Death** [19]Then Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, said, "Let me run to take the good news to the king that the LORD has set him free from the grasp of his enemies." [20]But Joab said to him: "You are not the man to bring the news today. On some other day you may take the good news, but today you would not be bringing good news, for in fact the king's son is dead." [21]Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed to Joab and sped away. [22]But Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, said to Joab again, "Come what may, permit me also to run after the Cushite." Joab replied: "Why do you want to run, my son? You will receive no reward." [23]But he insisted, "Come what may, I want to run." Joab said to him, "Very well." Ahimaaz sped off by way of the Jordan plain and outran the Cushite.

[24]Now David was sitting between the two gates, and a lookout mounted to the roof of the gate above the city wall, where he looked about and saw a man running all alone. [25]The lookout shouted to inform the king, who said, "If he is alone, he has good news to report." As he kept coming nearer, [26]the lookout spied another runner. From his place atop the gate he cried out, "There is another man running by himself." And the king responded, "He, too, is bringing good news." [27]Then the lookout said, "I notice that the first one runs like Ahimaaz, son of Zadok." The king replied, "He is a good man; he comes with good news."[y] [28]Then Ahimaaz called out and greeted the king. With face to the ground he paid homage to the king and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who rebelled against my lord the king." [29]But the king asked, "Is the youth Absalom safe?" And Ahimaaz replied, "I saw a great disturbance when the king's servant Joab sent your servant on, but I do not know what it was." [30]The king said, "Step aside and remain in attendance here." So he stepped aside and remained there. [31]When the Cushite came in, he said, "Let my lord the king receive the good news that this day the LORD has taken your part, freeing you from the grasp of all who rebelled against you." [32]But the king asked the Cushite, "Is young Absalom safe?" The Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rebel against you with evil intent be as that young man!"

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 15–19 See RG 162

[1]The king was shaken, and went up to the room over the city gate to weep. He said as he wept, "My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!"

**Joab Reproves David** [2]Joab was told that the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom; [3]and that day's victory was turned into mourning for the whole army when they heard that the king was grieving for his son. [4]The soldiers stole into the city that day like men shamed by flight in battle. [5]Meanwhile the king covered his face and cried out in a loud voice, "My son Absalom! Absalom! My son, my son!"[z] [6]Then Joab went to his residence and said: "Though they saved your life and your sons' and daughters' lives, also the lives of your wives and those of your concubines, you have put all your servants to shame today [7]by loving those who hate you and hating those who love you. For you have shown today that officers and servants mean nothing to you. Indeed I am now certain that if Absalom were alive today and all of us dead, you would think that more suitable. [8]Now then, get up! Go out and speak kindly to your servants. I swear by the LORD that if you do not go out, not a single man will remain with you overnight, and this will be a far greater disaster for you than any that has afflicted you from your youth until now." [9]So the king stepped out and sat at the gate. When all the people were informed that the king

w Jos 7, 26; 8, 29; 10, 27. x 2 Sm 14, 27. y 2 Kgs 9, 20. z 2 Sm 15, 30.

was sitting at the gate, they came into his presence.

**The Reconciliation** Now the Israelites had fled to their separate tents, [10]but throughout the tribes of Israel all the people were arguing among themselves, saying to one another: "The king delivered us from the clutches of our enemies, and it was he who rescued us from the grip of the Philistines. But now he has fled from the country before Absalom, [11]and Absalom, whom we anointed over us, died in battle. Why, then, should you remain silent about restoring the king to his palace?" When the talk of all Israel reached the king, [12]David sent word to the priests Zadok and Abiathar: "Say to the elders of Judah: 'Why should you be last to restore the king to his palace? [13]You are my brothers, you are my bone and flesh. Why should you be last to restore the king?' [14]Also say to Amasa: 'Are you not my bone and flesh? May God do thus and so to me, if you do not become my general permanently in place of Joab.' "[a] [15]He won over all the Judahites as one man, and so they summoned the king to return, with all his servants.

**David and Shimei** [16]When the king, on his return, reached the Jordan, Judah had come to Gilgal to meet him and to escort him across the Jordan. [17]Shimei, son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, hurried down with the Judahites to meet King David,[b] [18]accompanied by a thousand men from Benjamin. Ziba, too, the servant of the house of Saul, accompanied by his fifteen sons and twenty servants, hastened to the Jordan before the king.[c] [19][d]They crossed over the ford to bring the king's household over and to do whatever he wished. When Shimei, son of Gera, crossed the Jordan, he fell down before the king [20]and said to him: "May my lord not hold me guilty, and may he not remember and take to heart the wrong that your servant did the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. [21]For your servant knows that he has done wrong. Yet realize that I have been the first of the whole house of Joseph to come down today to meet my lord the king." [22]But Abishai, son of Zeruiah, countered: "Shimei must be put to death for this. He cursed the LORD's anointed." [23]David replied: "What has come between you and me, sons of Zeruiah, that you would create enmity for me this day? Should anyone die today in Israel? Am I not aware that today I am king of Israel?"[e] [24]Then the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath.

**David and Meribbaal** [25]Meribbaal, son of Saul, also went down to meet the king. He had not washed his feet nor trimmed his mustache nor washed his clothes from the day the king left until he returned safely. [26]When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Why did you not go with me, Meribbaal?"[f] [27]He replied: "My lord the king, my servant betrayed me. For your servant, who is lame, said to him, 'Saddle the ass for me, that I may ride on it and go with the king.'[g] [28]But he slandered your servant before my lord the king. But my lord the king is like an angel of God. Do what you judge best. [29]For though my father's entire house deserved only death from my lord the king, yet you placed your servant among the guests at your table. What right do I still have to make further appeal to the king?"[h] [30]But the king said to him: "Why do you go on talking? I say, 'You and Ziba shall divide the property.' "[i] [31]Meribbaal answered the king, "Indeed let him have it all, now that my lord the king has returned safely to his palace."

**David and Barzillai** [32]Barzillai the Gileadite also came down from Rogelim and escorted the king to the Jordan for his crossing, taking leave of him there.[j] [33]It was Barzillai, a very old man of eighty and very wealthy besides, who had provisioned the king during his stay in Mahanaim. [34]The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me, and I will provide for your old age as my guest in Jerusalem." [35]But Barzillai answered the king: "How much longer have I to live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? [36]I am

a 2 Sm 17, 25; 20, 4. b 2 Sm 16, 5–13. c 2 Sm 16, 1–4; 19, 25–31. d 19ff: 2 Sm 16, 13; Ex 22, 27; 1 Kgs 2, 8. e 2 Sm 16, 9f; 1 Sm 11, 13; 1 Kgs 2, 8. 38. 46. f 2 Sm 16, 3. g 2 Sm 9, 2–13; Dt 21, 12f. h 2 Sm 9, 9ff. i 2 Sm 16, 4. j 2 Sm 17, 27ff; 1 Kgs 2, 7; Ezr 2, 61.

now eighty years old. Can I distinguish between
good and bad? Can your servant taste what he
eats and drinks, or still appreciate the voices of
singers and songstresses? Why should your ser-
vant be any further burden to my lord the king?
37In escorting the king across the Jordan, your
servant is doing little enough! Why should the
king give me this reward? 38Please let your
servant go back to die in his own city by the
tomb of his father and mother. Here is your
servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my
lord the king. Do for him whatever you will."
39Then the king said to him, "Chimham shall
come over with me, and I will do for him as you
would wish. And anything else you would like
me to do for you, I will do." 40Then all the
people crossed over the Jordan, but the king
remained; he kissed Barzillai and bade him
Godspeed as he returned to his own district.
41Finally the king crossed over to Gilgal, accom-
panied by Chimham.

**Israel and Judah Quarrel** All the people of
Judah and half of the people of Israel had
escorted the king across. 42But all these Israelites
began coming to the king and saying, "Why did
our brothers the Judahites steal you away and
escort the king and his household across the
Jordan, along with all David's men?" 43All the
Judahites replied to the men of Israel: "Because
the king is our relative. Why are you angry over
this affair? Have we had anything to eat at the
king's expense? Or have portions from his table
been given to us?" 44The Israelites answered the
Judahites: "We have ten shares in the king. Also,
we are the first-born rather than you. Why do
you slight us? Were we not first to speak of
restoring the king?" Then the Judahites in turn
spoke even more fiercely than the Israelites.[k]

## CHAPTER 20

**Sheba's Rebellion** 1Now a rebellious individ-
ual from Benjamin named Sheba, the son of
Bichri, happened to be there. He sounded the
horn and cried out,

"We have no portion in David,
nor any share in the son of Jesse.
Every man to his tent, O Israel!"[l]

2So all the Israelites left David for Sheba, son of
Bichri. But from the Jordan to Jerusalem the
Judahites remained loyal to their king. 3When
King David came to his palace in Jerusalem, he
took the ten concubines whom he had left
behind to take care of the palace and placed
them in confinement. He provided for them, but
had no further relations with them. And so they
remained in confinement to the day of their
death, lifelong widows.[m]

**Amasa's Death** 4Then the king said to Amasa:
"Summon the Judahites for me within three
days. Then present yourself here."[n] 5Accord-
ingly Amasa set out to summon Judah, but
delayed beyond the time set for him by David.
6Then David said to Abishai: "Sheba, son of
Bichri, may now do us more harm than Absalom
did. Take your lord's servants and pursue him,
lest he find fortified cities and take shelter while
we look on." 7So Joab and the Cherethites and
Pelethites and all the warriors marched out
behind Abishai from Jerusalem to campaign in
pursuit of Sheba, son of Bichri.[o] 8*They were at
the great stone in Gibeon when Amasa met
them. Now Joab had a belt over his tunic, from
which was slung, in its sheath near his thigh, a
sword that could be drawn with a downward
movement.[p] 9And Joab asked Amasa, "How are
you, my brother?" With his right hand Joab held
Amasa's beard as if to kiss him. 10And since
Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in
Joab's other hand, Joab stabbed him in the
abdomen with it, so that his entrails burst forth
to the ground, and he died without receiving a
second thrust. Then Joab and his brother Abishai
pursued Sheba, son of Bichri.[q] 11One of Joab's
attendants stood by Amasa and said, "Let him
who favors Joab and is for David follow Joab."
12Amasa lay covered with blood in the middle of
the highroad, and the man noticed that all the

Ch 20
See RG
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**20, 8:** The text of this verse is quite uncertain.

k 1 Kgs 11, 31. l 1 Kgs 12, 16. m 2 Sm 15, 16; 16, 20ff. n 2 Sm 17, 25; 19, 14. o 2 Sm 8, 18. p 2 Sm 2, 13. q 1 Kgs 2, 5.

soldiers were stopping. So he removed Amasa
from the road to the field and placed a garment
over him, because all who came up to him were
stopping. 13When he had been removed from
the road, everyone went on after Joab in pursuit
of Sheba, son of Bichri.

**Joab Pursues Sheba** 14Sheba passed through
all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth-maacah. Then
all the Bichrites assembled and they too entered
the city after him. 15So David's servants came
and besieged him in Abel Beth-maacah. They
threw up a mound against the city, and all the
soldiers who were with Joab began battering the
wall to throw it down. 16Then a wise woman
from the city stood on the outworks and called
out, "Listen, listen! Tell Joab to come here, that I
may speak with him." 17When Joab had come
near her, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" And
he replied, "Yes." She said to him, "Listen to
what your maidservant has to say." He replied,
"I am listening." 18Then she went on to say:
"There is an ancient saying,* 'Let them ask if
they will in Abel[r] 19or in Dan whether loyalty is
finished or ended in Israel.' You are seeking to
beat down a city that is a mother in Israel. Why
do you wish to destroy the inheritance of the
LORD?" 20Joab answered, "Not at all, not at all! I
do not wish to destroy or to ruin anything.
21That is not the case at all. A man named
Sheba, son of Bichri, from the hill country of
Ephraim has rebelled against King David. Surren-
der him alone, and I will withdraw from the
city." Then the woman said to Joab, "His head
shall be thrown to you across the wall." 22She
went to all the people with her advice, and they
cut off the head of Sheba, son of Bichri, and
threw it out to Joab. He then sounded the horn,
and they scattered from the city to their own
tents, while Joab returned to Jerusalem to the
king.

Ch 21
See RG
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**David's Officials** 23Joab was in command of
the whole army of Israel. Banaiah, son of Jehoi-
ada, was in command of the Cherethites and
Pelethites.[s] 24Adoram was in charge of the
forced labor. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was the
chancellor. 25Shawsha was the scribe. Zadok and
Abiathar were priests.[t] 26Ira the Jairite was also
David's priest.

# V: APPENDIXES

## CHAPTER 21

**Gibeonite Vengeance** 1During David's reign
there was a famine for three successive years.
David had recourse to the LORD, who said,
"There is bloodguilt on Saul and his family
because he put the Gibeonites to death."[u] 2So
the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to
them. (Now the Gibeonites were not Israelites,
but survivors of the Amorites; and although the
Israelites had given them their oath, Saul had
attempted to kill them off in his zeal for the men
of Israel and Judah.)[v] 3David said to the Gibeon-
ites, "What must I do for you and how must I
make atonement, that you may bless the inheri-
tance of the LORD?" 4The Gibeonites answered
him, "We have no claim against Saul and his
house for silver or gold, nor is it our place to put
any man to death in Israel." Then he said, "I will
do for you whatever you propose." 5They said to
the king, "As for the man who was exterminat-
ing us and who intended to destroy us that we
might have no place in all the territory of Israel,
6let seven men from among his descendants be
given to us, that we may dismember them before
the LORD in Gibeon, on the LORD's mountain."
The king replied, "I will give them up." 7The
king, however, spared Meribbaal, son of Jona-
than, son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath
that formed a bond between David and Saul's
son Jonathan.[w] 8But the king took Armoni and
Meribbaal, the two sons that Aiah's daughter
Rizpah had borne to Saul, and the five sons of
Saul's daughter Merob that she had borne to
Adriel, son of Barzillai the Meholathite,[x] 9and
surrendered them to the Gibeonites. They then
dismembered them on the mountain before the
LORD. The seven fell at the one time; they were

20, 18f: The proverbial expression here has been poorly transmitted, and its sense is doubtful.

r Gn 49, 16. s 2 Sm 8, 16ff; 23, 20. t 2 Sm 8, 17f. u 2 Sm 24, 13. v Jos 9, 3–27. w 2 Sm 9, 13; 1 Sm 18, 3; 20, 8ff. 15f. 42. x 2 Sm 3, 7.

put to death during the first days of the harvest—that is, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

10Then Rizpah, Aiah's daughter, took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on the rock from the beginning of the harvest until rain came down on them from the sky, fending off the birds of the sky from settling on them by day, and the wild animals by night.[y] 11When David was informed of what Rizpah, Aiah's daughter, the concubine of Saul, had done, 12he went and obtained the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh-gilead, who had carried them off secretly from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them at the time they killed Saul on Gilboa.[z] 13When he had brought up from there the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan, the bones of those who had been dismembered were also gathered up. 14Then the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan were buried in the tomb of his father Kish at Zela in the territory of Benjamin. After all that the king commanded had been carried out, God granted relief to the land.[a]

**Exploits in Philistine Wars** 15There was another battle between the Philistines and Israel. David went down with his servants and fought the Philistines, but David grew tired. 16Dadu, one of the Rephaim, whose bronze spear weighed three hundred shekels, was about to take him captive. Dadu was girt with a new sword and planned to kill David, 17but Abishai, son of Zeruiah, came to his assistance and struck and killed the Philistine. Then David's men swore to him, "You must not go out to battle with us again, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."[b]

18[c]After this there was another battle with the Philistines in Gob. On that occasion Sibbecai, from Husha, killed Saph, one of the Rephaim.[d] 19[e]There was another battle with the Philistines in Gob, in which Elhanan, son of Jair from Bethlehem, killed Goliath of Gath, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's heddle-bar. 20There was another battle at Gath in which there was a man of large stature with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four in all. He too was one of the Rephaim. 21And when he insulted Israel, Jonathan, son of David's brother Shimei, killed him.[f] 22These four were Rephaim in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his servants.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 22
See RG
163

**Song of Thanksgiving*** 1David sang the words of this song to the LORD when the LORD had rescued him from the grasp of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.[g] 2This is what he sang:[h]

### A

I

"O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,
3 my God, my rock of refuge!
My shield, the horn of my salvation,*
my stronghold, my refuge,
my savior, from violence you keep me safe.[i]
4 'Praised be the LORD,' I exclaim,
and I am safe from my enemies.

II

5 "The breakers of death surged round about me,*
the floods of perdition overwhelmed me;
6 The cords of the nether world enmeshed me,
the snares of death overtook me.
7 In my distress I called upon the LORD
and cried out to my God;

**22, 1–51:** This song of thanksgiving is also given, with a few small variants, in Ps 18. In both places it is attributed to David. Two main sections can be distinguished. In the first part, after an introductory stanza of praise to God (2–4), David describes the peril he was in (5–7), and then poetically depicts, under the form of a theophany, God's intervention in his behalf (8–20), concluding with an acknowledgment of God's justice (21–31). In the second part, God is praised for having prepared the psalmist for war (32–35), given him victory over his enemies (36–39), whom he put to flight (40–43), and bestowed on him dominion over many peoples (44–46). The entire song ends with paean of grateful praise (47–51).

**22, 3:** The horn of my salvation: my strong savior. The horn, the dreadful weapon of an enraged bull, was a symbol of strength; cf Lk 1, 69.

**22, 5f:** These verses are to be understood figuratively.

y 2 Sm 3, 31; 12, 16. z 1 Sm 31, 10–13. a 2 Sm 24, 25. b 1 Kgs 11, 36; 15, 4; 2 Kgs 8, 19. c 18–22: 1 Chr 20, 4–8. d 2 Sm 23, 27. e 19f: 1 Sm 17, 4. 7. f 2 Sm 13, 3. g Ps 18, 1. h 2–51: Ps 18, 3–51. i 1 Sm 2, 1f.

From his temple* he heard my voice,
and my cry reached his ears.

III

8 "The earth swayed and quaked;*
the foundations of the heavens trembled
and shook when his wrath flared up.
9 Smoke rose from his nostrils,
and a devouring fire from his mouth;
he kindled coals into flame.
10 He inclined the heavens and came down,
with dark clouds under his feet.[j]

11 He mounted a cherub* and flew,
borne on the wings of the wind.[k]
12 He made darkness the shelter about him,
with spattering rain and thickening clouds.
13 From the brightness of his presence
coals were kindled to flame.

14 "The LORD thundered from heaven;
the Most High gave forth his voice.
15 He sent forth arrows to put them to flight;
he flashed lightning and routed them.[l]
16 Then the wellsprings of the sea appeared,
the foundations of the earth were laid bare,
At the rebuke of the LORD,
at the blast of the wind of his wrath.

17 "He reached out from on high and grasped me;
he drew me out of the deep waters.[m]
18 He rescued me from my mighty enemy,
from my foes, who were too powerful for me.
19 They attacked me on my day of calamity,
but the LORD came to my support.
20 He set me free in the open,
and rescued me, because he loves me.

IV

21 "The LORD rewarded me according to my justice;
according to the cleanness of my hands he requited me.
22 For I kept the ways of the LORD
and was not disloyal to my God.
23 For his ordinances were all present to me,
and his statutes I put not from me;
24 But I was wholehearted toward him,
and I was on my guard against guilt.
25 And the LORD requited me according to my justice,
according to my innocence in his sight.

26 [n] "Toward the faithful you are faithful;*
toward the wholehearted you are wholehearted;
27 Toward the sincere you are sincere;
but toward the crooked you are astute.
28 You save lowly people,
though on the lofty your eyes look down.
29 You are my lamp,* O LORD!
O my God, you brighten the darkness about me.
30 For with your aid I run against an armed band,
and by the help of my God I leap over a wall.
31 God's way is unerring;
the promise of the LORD is fire-tried;
he is a shield to all who take refuge in him."[o]

B

I

32 "For who is God except the LORD?
Who is a rock save our God?
33 The God who girded me with strength
and kept my way unerring;
34 Who made my feet swift as those of hinds

**22, 7:** His temple: his heavenly abode.

**22, 8ff:** God's intervention is graphically portrayed under the figures of an earthquake (vv 8. 16) and a thunderstorm (vv 9–15); cf Jgs 5, 4f; Pss 29; 97, 2–6; Hb 3.

**22, 11:** He mounted a cherub: since God makes the winds his messengers, or "angels" (Ps 104, 4), he is spoken of poetically as riding on the clouds, or on the angelic creatures called "cherubim." His earthly throne above the ark of the covenant was likewise associated with two winged cherubim; cf Ex 37, 7ff. In both senses the Lord is enthroned upon the cherubim; cf Pss 79, 2; 99, 1.

**22, 26f:** Men are treated by God in the same way they treat him and their fellow men.

**22, 29:** My lamp: a figure of life and happiness; cf 1 Kgs 11, 36.

j Ps 144, 5. k Ex 25, 18. l Ps 144, 6. m Ps 144, 7. n 26f: 1 Sm 2, 30. o Prv 30, 5.

and set me on the heights;*
35 Who trained my hands for war
till my arms could bend a bow of brass.

II

36 "You have given me your saving shield,
and your help has made me great.
37 You made room for my steps;
unwavering was my stride.
38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
nor did I turn again till I made an end of them.
39 I smote them and they did not rise;
they fell beneath my feet.

III

40 "You girded me with strength for war;
you subdued my adversaries beneath me.
41 My enemies you put to flight before me
and those who hated me I destroyed.
42 They cried for help—but no one saved them;
to the LORD—but he answered them not.
43 I ground them fine as the dust of the earth;
like the mud in the streets I trampled them down.

IV

44 "You rescued me from the strife of my people;
you made me head over nations.
A people I had not known became my slaves;
45 as soon as they heard me, they obeyed.
46 The foreigners fawned and cringed before me;
they staggered forth from their fortresses."

C

47 "The LORD live! And blessed be my Rock!
Extolled be my God, Rock of my salvation.
48 O God, who granted me vengeance,
who made peoples subject to me
49 and helped me escape from my enemies,
Above my adversaries you exalt me
and from the violent man you rescue me.
50 Therefore will I proclaim you, O LORD, among the nations,
and I will sing praise to your name,[p]
51 You who gave great victories to your king
and showed kindness to your anointed,
to David and his posterity forever."

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 23
See RG
163–164

### The Last Words of David*

1 These are the last words of David:
"The utterance of David, son of Jesse;
the utterance of the man God raised up,
Anointed of the God of Jacob,
favorite of the Mighty One of Israel.[q]
2 The spirit of the LORD spoke through me;
his word was on my tongue.[r]
3 The God of Israel spoke;
of me the Rock of Israel said,
'He that rules over men in justice,
that rules in the fear of God,[s]
4 Is like the morning light at sunrise
on a cloudless morning,
making the greensward sparkle after rain.'[t]
5 Is not my house firm before God?
He has made an eternal covenant with me,
set forth in detail and secured.[u]
Will he not bring to fruition
all my salvation and my every desire?
6 But the wicked are all like thorns to be cast away;
they cannot be taken up by hand.[v]
7 He who wishes to touch them
must arm himself with iron and the shaft of a spear,
and they must be consumed by fire."

**David's Warriors** 8 These are the names of David's warriors.* Ishbaal, son of Hachamoni, was the first of the Three. It was he who brandished his battle-ax over eight hundred slain in a single encounter.[w] 9 Next to him, among the Three

**22, 34:** The heights: a natural stronghold safe from attack; cf Ps 62, 3; Hb 3, 19.

**23, 1–7:** The text of this short composition in the spirit of the wisdom writers (Prv 30, 1–6) is difficult in places; it views David's career in retrospect.

**23, 8ff:** There are thirty-seven warriors in all mentioned in this list. First there are the Three warriors most noted for singlehanded exploits (vv 8–12). Then comes the story of a daring adventure by three unnamed members of the larger group (vv 13–17). Next come the commanders of the king's bodyguard, Abishai (vv 18–19) and Benaiah (vv 20–23), with whom must be counted Asahel (v 24) and Joab (vv 18. 24. 37), and finally the group of the Thirty (vv 24–39).

p Ps 22, 23; Rom 15, 9. q 1 Kgs 2, 3–9; Sir 47, 8. r Is 59, 21; Jer 1, 9. s Ps 72, 1–4. t Jgs 5, 31; Ps 72, 6. u 2 Sm 7, 11. 15f; Ps 89, 30; Is 55, 3. v Dt 13, 14. w 8–39: 1 Chr 11, 41; 27, 1–15.

warriors, was Eleazar, son of Dodo the Ahohite.
He was with David at Ephesdammim when the
Philistines assembled there for battle. The Israel-
ites had retreated,[x] 10but he stood his ground
and fought the Philistines until his hand grew
tired and became cramped, holding fast to the
sword. The LORD brought about a great victory
on that day; the soldiers turned back after Elea-
zar, but only to strip the slain. 11Next to him was
Shammah, son of Agee the Hararite. The Philis-
tines had assembled at Lehi, where there was a
plot of land full of lentils. When the soldiers fled
from the Philistines,[y] 12he took his stand in the
middle of the plot and defended it. He slew the
Philistines, and the LORD brought about a great
victory. Such were the deeds of the Three war-
riors.

13During the harvest three of the Thirty went
down to David in the cave of Adullam, while a
Philistine clan was encamped in the Vale of
Rephaim.[z] 14At that time David was in the
refuge, and there was a garrison of Philistines in
Bethlehem. 15Now David had a strong craving
and said, "Oh, that someone would give me a
drink of water from the cistern that is by the gate
of Bethlehem!" 16So the Three warriors broke
through the Philistine camp and drew water
from the cistern that is by the gate of Bethlehem.
But when they brought it to David he refused to
drink it, and instead poured it out to the LORD,
17saying: "The LORD forbid that I do this! Can I
drink the blood of these men who went at the
risk of their lives?" So he refused to drink it.

Ch 24
See RG
164

18Abishai, brother of Joab, son of Zeruiah, was
at the head of the Thirty. It was he who bran-
dished his spear over three hundred slain. He was
listed among the Thirty 19and commanded
greater respect than the Thirty, becoming their
leader. However, he did not attain to the Three.

20Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, a stalwart from
Kabzeel, was a man of great achievements. It
was he who slew the two lions in Moab. He also
went down and killed the lion in the cistern at
the time of the snow.[a] 21It was he, too, who
slew an Egyptian of large stature. Although the
Egyptian was armed with a spear, he went
against him with a club and wrested the spear
from the Egyptian's hand, then killed him with
his own spear. 22Such were the deeds performed
by Benaiah, son of Jehoiada. He was listed
among the Thirty warriors 23and commanded
greater respect than the Thirty. However, he did
not attain to the Three. David put him in
command of his bodyguard.[b] 24Asahel,* brother
of Joab . . . .[c]

Among the Thirty were: Elhanan, son of Dodo,
from Bethlehem; 25Shammah from En-harod;
Elika from En-harod; 26Helez from Beth-pelet;
Ira, son of Ikkesh, from Tekoa; 27Abiezer from
Anathoth; Sibbekai from Hushah;[d] 28Zalmon
from Ahoh; Maharai from Netophah; 29Heled,
son of Baanath, from Netophah; Ittai, son of Ribai,
from Gibeah of the Benjaminites; 30Benaiah from
Pirathon; Hiddai from Nahale-gaash; 31Abibaal
from Beth-arabah; Azmaveth from Bahurim;
32Eliahba from Shaalbon; Jashen the Gunite; Jona-
than, 33son of Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam, son
of Sharar the Hararite; 34Eliphelet, son of Ahas-
bai, from Beth-maacah; Eliam, son of Ahithophel,
from Gilo; 35Hezrai from Carmel; Paarai the Ar-
bite; 36Igal, son of Nathan, from Zobah; Bani the
Gadite; 37Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai from Bee-
roth, armor-bearer of Joab, son of Zeruiah; 38Ira
from Jattir; Gareb from Jattir; 39Uriah the
Hittite—thirty-seven in all.[e]

## CHAPTER 24

**Census of the People** 1*The LORD's anger
against Israel flared again,[f] and he incited David
against the Israelites by prompting him to num-
ber Israel and Judah. 2Accordingly the king said
to Joab and the leaders of the army who were
with him, "Tour all the tribes in Israel from Dan
to Beer-sheba and register the people, that I may
know their number." 3But Joab said to the king:
"May the LORD your God increase the number of

**23, 24:** A more complete notice about Asahel, who died early in his career (2 Sm 2, 16–23), is to be presumed lost at this point. Elhanan is the first of the Thirty.

**24, 1ff:** This story was probably joined at one time to 2 Sm 21, 1–14.

x 1 Sm 17, 1. y Jgs 15, 9. z 1 Sm 22, 1; Mi 1, 15. a 2 Sm 8, 18; 20, 23; Jgs 14, 6; 1 Kgs 2, 29f. b 1 Sm 22, 14. c 2 Sm 2, 18–23. d 2 Sm 21, 18. e 2 Sm 11, 3f. f 1–25: 1 Chr 21, 1–27.

people a hundredfold for your royal majesty to
see it with his own eyes. But why does it please
my lord the king to order a thing of this kind?"
[4]The king, however, overruled Joab and the lead-
ers of the army, so they left the king's presence
in order to register the people of Israel. [5]Crossing
the Jordan, they began near Aroer, south of the
city in the wadi, and went in the direction of
Gad, toward Jazer. [6]They continued on to Gilead
and to the district below Mount Hermon. Then
they proceeded to Dan; from there they turned
toward Sidon, [7]going to the fortress of Tyre and
to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites,
and ending up at Beer-sheba in the Negeb of
Judah. [8]Thus they toured the whole country,
reaching Jerusalem again after nine months and
twenty days. [9]Joab then reported to the king the
number of people registered: in Israel, eight hun-
dred thousand men fit for military service; in
Judah, five hundred thousand.

**The Pestilence** [10]Afterward, however, David
regretted having numbered the people, and said
to the LORD: "I have sinned grievously in what I
have done.[g] But now, LORD, forgive the guilt of
your servant, for I have been very foolish."*
[11]When David rose in the morning, the LORD had
spoken to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying:
[12]"Go and say to David, 'This is what the LORD
says: I offer you three alternatives; choose one of
them, and I will inflict it on you.' " [13]Gad then
went to David to inform him. He asked: "Do you
want a three years' famine to come upon your
land, or to flee from your enemy three months
while he pursues you, or to have a three days'
pestilence in your land? Now consider and decide
what I must reply to him who sent me."[h] [14]David
answered Gad: "I am in very serious difficulty.
Let us fall by the hand of God, for he is most
merciful; but let me not fall by the hand of man."
[15]Thus David chose the pestilence. Now it was
the time of the wheat harvest when the plague
broke out among the people. [The LORD then sent
a pestilence over Israel from morning until the
time appointed, and seventy thousand of the peo-
ple from Dan to Beer-sheba died.] [16]But when the
angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem
to destroy it, the LORD regretted the calamity and
said to the angel causing the destruction among
the people, "Enough now! Stay your hand." The
angel of the LORD was then standing at the thresh-
ing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.[i] [17]When David
saw the angel who was striking the people, he
said to the LORD: "It is I who have sinned; it is I,
the shepherd, who have done wrong. But these
are sheep; what have they done? Punish me and
my kindred."*

**Sacrifice of Atonement** [18]On the same day
Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and
build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor
of Araunah the Jebusite." [19]Following Gad's
bidding, David went up as the LORD had com-
manded. [20]Now Araunah looked down and
noticed the king and his servants coming toward
him while he was threshing wheat. So he went
out and paid homage to the king, with face to
the ground. [21]Then Araunah asked, "Why does
my lord the king come to his servant?" David
replied, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to
build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may
be checked among the people." [22][j]But Araunah
said to David: "Let my lord the king take and
offer up whatever he may wish. Here are oxen
for holocausts, and threshing sledges and the
yokes of the oxen for wood. [23]All this does
Araunah give to the king." Araunah then said to
the king, "May the LORD your God accept your
offering." [24]The king, however, replied to Arau-
nah, "No, I must pay you for it, for I cannot offer
to the LORD my God holocausts that cost noth-
ing." So David bought the threshing floor and
the oxen for fifty silver shekels. [25]Then David
built an altar there to the LORD, and offered
holocausts and peace offerings. The LORD
granted relief to the country, and the plague was
checked in Israel.

**24, 10:** The narrative supposes that since the people belonged to the Lord rather than to the king, only the Lord should know their exact number.

**24, 17:** Before this verse a Qumran manuscript (4Q Sam[a]) gives the fuller text of 1 Chr 21, 16, an alternative to the words "When David saw the angel who was striking the people."

g 1 Sm 24, 6; 1 Chr 21, 7. h 2 Sm 21, 1. i Ex 12, 23; 2 Kgs 19, 35. j 22f: 1 Sm 6, 14; 1 Kgs 19, 21.

# THE BOOKS OF KINGS

The two Books of Kings were originally, like 1 and 2 Samuel, a single historical work. In conjunction with the Books of Samuel, they extend the consecutive history of Israel from the birth of Samuel to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. This combined work is designed as a religious history; hence in Kings the temple, which is the chosen site for the worship of Yahweh, occupies the center of attention.

The Books of Kings show clearly the theological bent of a Deuteronomic editor. In them, as already in Judges, material from various sources, such as the "book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kgs 11, 41) and the "book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (1 Kgs 14, 19), is forged into structural unity by an editor whose principal interest is in the fidelity to Yahweh of rulers and people. The reigns of individual kings are adapted to an editorial framework consisting of a presentation and an obituary notice for each, in stereotyped formulas. In between, the achievements of the king are reported—above all, his fidelity or lack of fidelity to Yahweh. The faithful prosper; the unfaithful pay for their defections. Since this is basically a narrative of sin and retribution, it would not be inappropriate to entitle the Books of Kings "The Rise and Fall of the Israelite Monarchy."

Without minimizing the complexity of the process by which this material was transmitted for many centuries, one may speak of two editions of the Books: the first at some time between 621 B.C. and 597 B.C. and the second, final edition during the Exile; probably shortly after Jehoiachin was released from his Babylonian prison (561 B.C.).

1 Kings carries the history of Israel from the last days and death of David to the accession in Samaria of Ahaziah, son of Ahab, near the end of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Judgment is passed on Ahaziah's reign but the details are given only later, in 2 Kings. We should note the two large cycles of traditions which grew up around the great prophetic figures of Elijah and Elisha, the former in 1 Kings and the latter chiefly in 2 Kings. These cycles, which interrupt the sequence of regnal chronicles, were very probably preserved and transmitted by the prophetic communities to which there are references in the same traditions. The Elijah cycle is the more important since it dramatically underscores Israel's critical struggle with the religion of Canaan.

The principal divisions of the Books of Kings are:

I. The Reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1, 1—11, 43).
II. Judah and Israel to the Time of Ahab (1 Kgs 12, 1—16, 34).
III. Stories of the Prophets (1 Kgs 17, 1—22, 54).
IV. The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah (2 Kgs 1, 1—17, 41).
V. The Kingdom of Judah after 721 B.C. (2 Kgs 18, 1—25, 30).

# THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

1 Kings
See RG
165–178

## I: The Reign of Solomon

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–2
See RG
169–170

1When King David was old and advanced in
years, though they spread covers over him he
could not keep warm. 2His servants therefore
said to him, "Let a young virgin be sought to
attend you, lord king, and to nurse you. If she
sleeps with your royal majesty, you will be kept
warm." 3So they sought for a beautiful girl
throughout the territory of Israel, and found
Abishag the Shunamite, whom they brought to
the king. 4The maiden, who was very beautiful,
nursed the king and cared for him, but the king
did not have relations with her.

**Ambition of Adonijah** 5Adonijah, son of Hag-
gith, began to display his ambition to be king. He
acquired chariots, drivers, and fifty henchmen.
6Yet his father never rebuked him or asked why
he was doing this. Adonijah was also very
handsome, and next in age to Absalom by the
same mother. 7He conferred with Joab, son of
Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest, and they
supported him. 8However, Zadok the priest,
Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet,
and Shimei and his companions, the pick of
David's army, did not side with Adonijah.
9When he slaughtered sheep, oxen, and fatlings
at the stone Zoheleth, near En-rogel,* Adonijah
invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all
the royal officials of Judah. 10But he did not
invite the prophet Nathan, or Benaiah, or the
pick of the army, or his brother Solomon.

**Solomon Proclaimed King** 11Then Nathan
said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother: "Have
you not heard that Adonijah, son of Haggith, has
become king without the knowledge of our lord
David? 12Come now, let me advise you so that
you may save your life and that of your son
Solomon. 13Go, visit King David, and say to him,
'Did you not, lord king, swear to your hand-
maid: Your son Solomon shall be king after me
and shall sit upon my throne? Why, then, has
Adonijah become king?' 14And while you are
still there speaking to the king, I will come in
after you and confirm what you have said."
15So Bathsheba visited the king in his room,
while Abishag the Shunamite was attending him
because of his advanced age. 16Bathsheba bowed
in homage to the king, who said to her, "What
do you wish?" 17She answered him: "My lord,
you swore to me your handmaid by the LORD,
your God, that my son Solomon should reign
after you and sit upon your throne. 18But now
Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord
king, do not know it. 19He has slaughtered oxen,
fatlings, and sheep in great numbers; he has
invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest,
and Joab, the general of the army, but not your
servant Solomon. 20Now, my lord king, all Israel
is waiting for you to make known to them who
is to sit on the throne after your royal majesty.*
21If this is not done, when my lord the king
sleeps with his fathers, I and my son Solomon
will be considered criminals."
22While she was still speaking to the king, the
prophet Nathan came in. 23When he had been
announced, the prophet entered the king's pres-
ence and, bowing to the floor, did him homage.
24Then Nathan said: "Have you decided, my lord
king, that Adonijah is to reign after you and sit on
your throne? 25He went down today and slaugh-
tered oxen, fatlings, and sheep in great numbers;
he invited all the king's sons, the commanders of
the army, and Abiathar the priest, and they are
eating and drinking in his company and saying,
'Long live King Adonijah!' 26But me, your ser-
vant, he did not invite; nor Zadok the priest, nor
Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solo-
mon. 27Was this done by my royal master's order
without my being told who was to succeed to
your majesty's kingly throne?"
28King David answered, "Call Bathsheba
here." When she re-entered the king's presence

1, 9: En-rogel: the modern Job's Well southeast of Jerusalem. It marked the ancient boundary between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah (Jos 15, 7; 18, 16). Here David's men sought information about Absalom's revolt (2 Sm 17, 17).

1, 20: At this time, neither law nor the right of primogeniture, but the will of the ruling monarch, determined succession to the throne.

and stood before him, [29]the king swore, "As the
LORD lives, who has delivered me from all
distress, [30]this very day I will fulfill the oath I
swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, that
your son Solomon should reign after me and
should sit upon my throne in my place." [31]Bow-
ing to the floor in homage to the king, Bathsheba
said, "May my lord, King David, live forever!"
[32]Then King David summoned Zadok the priest,
Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, son of Jehoi-
ada. When they had entered the king's presence,
[33]he said to them: "Take with you the royal
attendants. Mount my son Solomon upon my
own mule and escort him down to Gihon.
[34]There Zadok the priest and Nathan the
prophet are to anoint him king of Israel, and you
shall blow the horn and cry, 'Long live King
Solomon!' [35]When you come back in his train,
he is to go in and sit upon my throne and reign
in my place. I designate him ruler of Israel and of
Judah." [36]In answer to the king, Benaiah, son of
Jehoiada, said: "So be it! May the LORD, the God
of my lord the king, so decree! [37]As the LORD
has been with your royal majesty, so may he be
with Solomon, and exalt his throne even more
than that of my lord, King David!"

[38]So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Be-
naiah, son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and
Pelethites* went down, and mounting Solomon
on King David's mule, escorted him to Gihon.
[39]Then Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from
the tent and anointed Solomon. They blew the
horn and all the people shouted, "Long live King
Solomon!" [40]Then all the people went up after
him, playing flutes and rejoicing so much as to
split open the earth with their shouting.

Ch 1–2
See RG
169–170

[41]Adonijah and all the guests who were with
him heard it, just as they ended their banquet.
When Joab heard the sound of the horn, he
asked, "What does this uproar in the city
mean?" [42]As he was speaking, Jonathan, son of
Abiathar the priest, arrived. "Come," said Adoni-
jah, "you are a man of worth and must bring
good news." [43]"On the contrary!" Jonathan an-
swered him. "Our lord, King David, has made
Solomon king. [44]The king sent with him Zadok
the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, son of
Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and Pelethites,
and they mounted him upon the king's own
mule. [45]Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet
anointed him king at Gihon, and they went up
from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an
uproar. That is the noise you heard. [46]Besides,
Solomon took his seat on the royal throne, [47]and
the king's servants went in and paid their re-
spects to our lord, King David, saying, 'May God
make Solomon more famous than you and exalt
his throne more than your own!' And the king in
his bed worshiped God, [48]and this is what he
said: 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who has this day seated one of my sons upon my
throne, so that I see it with my own eyes.' "

[49]All the guests of Adonijah left in terror, each
going his own way. [50]Adonijah, in fear of Solo-
mon, also left; he went and seized the horns of
the altar.* [51]It was reported to Solomon that
Adonijah, in his fear of King Solomon, had seized
the horns of the altar and said, "Let King
Solomon first swear that he will not kill me, his
servant, with the sword." [52]Solomon answered,
"If he proves himself worthy, not a hair shall fall
from his head. But if he is found guilty of crime,
he shall die." [53]King Solomon sent to have him
brought down from the altar, and he came and
paid homage to the king. Solomon then said to
him, "Go to your home."

## CHAPTER 2

**David's Last Instructions and Death** [1]When
the time of David's death drew near,* he gave
these instructions to his son Solomon: [2]"I am
going the way of all mankind. Take courage and

**1, 38:** Cherethites and Pelethites: mercenaries in David's bodyguard. They became part of his retinue after he defeated the Philistines and established himself in Jerusalem; cf 2 Sm 8, 18; 15, 18; 20, 23.

**1, 50:** Horns of the altar: the protuberances on each of the four corners of the altar were surrounded with a special degree of holiness (Ex 27, 2; 29, 12), and constituted a place of asylum for transgressors of the law (Ex 21, 13f; 1 Kgs 2, 28).

**2, 1–6. 8–9:** Solomon is expected to remove from his father's family the imputation of blood guilt brought upon it by Joab in the unwarranted killings of Abner (2 Sm 3, 27–29) and Amasa (2 Sm 19, 9–10); and likewise to punish Shimei for his curse, the effects of which David had pledged himself not to avenge in person (2 Sm 19, 21–23). The standards of morality presumed in these verses are far from the Christian ones.

be a man. [3]Keep the mandate of the LORD, your
God, following his ways and observing his stat-
utes, commands, ordinances, and decrees as
they are written in the law of Moses, that you
may succeed in whatever you do, wherever you
turn,[a] [4]and the LORD may fulfill the promise he
made on my behalf when he said, 'If your sons
so conduct themselves that they remain faithful
to me with their whole heart and with their
whole soul, you shall always have someone of
your line on the throne of Israel.'[b] [5]You yourself
know what Joab, son of Zeruiah, did to me when
he slew the two generals of Israel's armies,
Abner, son of Ner, and Amasa, son of Jether. He
took revenge for the blood of war in a time of
peace, and put blood shed without provocation
on the belt about my waist and on the sandal on
my foot.[c] [6]Act with the wisdom you possess;
you must not allow him to go down to the grave
in peaceful old age.

[7]"But be kind to the sons of Barzillai the
Gileadite, and have them eat at your table. For
they received me kindly when I was fleeing your
brother Absalom.[d]

[8]"You also have with you Shimei, son of Gera,
the Benjaminite of Bahurim, who cursed me
balefully when I was going to Mahanaim. Be-
cause he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I
swore to him by the LORD that I would not put
him to the sword.[e] [9]But you must not let him go
unpunished. You are a prudent man and will
know how to deal with him to send down his
hoary head in blood to the grave."

[10]David rested with his ancestors and was
buried in the City of David.[f] [11]The length of
David's reign over Israel was forty years: he
reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three
years in Jerusalem.[g]

**The Kingdom Made Secure** [12]When Solo-
mon was seated on the throne of his father
David, with his sovereignty firmly established,
[13]Adonijah, son of Haggith, went to Bathsheba,
the mother of Solomon. "Do you come as a
friend?" she asked. "Yes," he answered, [14]and
added, "I have something to say to you." She
replied, "Say it." [15]So he said: "You know that
the kingdom was mine, and all Israel expected
me to be king. But the kingdom escaped me and
became my brother's, for the LORD gave it to
him. [16]But now there is one favor I would ask of
you. Do not refuse me." And she said, "Speak
on." [17]He said, "Please ask King Solomon, who
will not refuse you, to give me Abishag the
Shunamite for my wife."* [18]"Very well," replied
Bathsheba, "I will speak to the king for you."

[19]Then Bathsheba went to King Solomon to
speak to him for Adonijah, and the king stood up
to meet her and paid her homage. Then he sat
down upon his throne, and a throne was pro-
vided for the king's mother, who sat at his right.
[20]"There is one small favor I would ask of you,"
she said. "Do not refuse me." "Ask it, my
mother," the king said to her, "for I will not
refuse you." [21]So she said, "Let Abishag the
Shunamite be given to your brother Adonijah for
his wife." [22]"And why do you ask Abishag the
Shunamite for Adonijah?" King Solomon an-
swered his mother. "Ask the kingdom for him as
well, for he is my elder brother and has with him
Abiathar the priest and Joab, son of Zeruiah."
[23]And King Solomon swore by the LORD: "May
God do thus and so to me, and more besides, if
Adonijah has not proposed this at the cost of his
life. [24]And now, as the LORD lives, who has
seated me firmly on the throne of my father
David and made of me a dynasty as he promised,
this day shall Adonijah be put to death." [25]Then
King Solomon sent Benaiah, son of Jehoiada,
who struck him dead.

[26]The king said to Abiathar the priest: "Go to
your land in Anathoth. Though you deserve to
die, I will not put you to death this time, because
you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my
father David and shared in all the hardships my

**2, 17. 22–25:** Abishag had been the concubine of King David (1 Kgs 1, 4). His successor, Solomon, inherited his father's harem. When Adonijah requested Abishag as his wife, he was subtly undermining the security of Solomon's throne and exposing himself to the suspicion of insurrection that would cost him his life; cf 2 Sm 3, 6–11; 16, 22.

a Dt 17, 19. b 2 Sm 7, 11–16; Ps 132, 11f. c 2 Sm 3, 27; 20, 10. d 2 Sm 19, 33ff. e 2 Sm 16, 5; 19, 19. f Acts 2, 29. g 1 Chr 29, 27.

father endured." [27]So Solomon deposed Abiathar from his office of priest of the LORD, thus fulfilling the prophecy which the LORD had made in Shiloh about the house of Eli.[h]

[28]When the news came to Joab, who had sided with Adonijah, though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and seized the horns of the altar. [29]King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was at the altar. He sent Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, with the order, "Go, strike him down." [30]Benaiah went to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "The king says, 'Come out.' " But he answered, "No! I will die here." Benaiah reported to the king, "This is what Joab said to me in reply." [31]The king answered him: "Do as he has said. Strike him down and bury him, and you will remove from me and from my family the blood which Joab shed without provocation. [32]The LORD will hold him responsible for his own blood, because he struck down two men better and more just than himself, and slew them with the sword without my father David's knowledge: Abner, son of Ner, general of Israel's army, and Amasa, son of Jether, general of Judah's army.[i] [33]Joab and his descendants shall be responsible forever for their blood. But there shall be the peace of the LORD forever for David, and his descendants, and his house, and his throne." [34]Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, went back, struck him down and killed him; he was buried in his house in the desert. [35]The king appointed Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, over the army in his place, and put Zadok the priest in place of Abiathar.

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170–171

[36]Then the king summoned Shimei and said to him: "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there. Do not go anywhere else. [37]For if you leave, and cross the Kidron Valley, be certain you shall die without fail. You shall be responsible for your own blood." [38]Shimei answered the king: "I accept. Your servant will do just as the king's majesty has said." So Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time. [39]But three years later, two of Shimei's servants ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath, and Shimei was informed that his servants were in Gath. [40]So Shimei rose, saddled his ass, and went to Achish in Gath in search of his servants, whom he brought back. [41]When Solomon was informed that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had returned, [42]the king summoned Shimei and said to him: "Did I not have you swear by the LORD to your clear understanding of my warning that, if you left and went anywhere else, you should die without fail? And you answered, 'I accept and obey.' [43]Why, then, have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the command that I gave you?" [44]And the king said to Shimei: "You know in your heart the evil that you did to my father David. Now the LORD requites you for your own wickedness. [45]But King Solomon shall be blessed, and David's throne shall endure before the LORD forever." [46]The king then gave the order to Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who struck him dead as he left.

## CHAPTER 3

**Wisdom of Solomon** [1]With the royal power firmly in his grasp, Solomon allied himself by marriage with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The daughter of Pharaoh, whom he married, he brought to the City of David, until he should finish building his palace, and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem.[j]

[2]However, the people were sacrificing on the high places, for up to that time no temple had been built to the name of the LORD. [3]Solomon loved the LORD, and obeyed the statutes of his father David; yet he offered sacrifice and burned incense on the high places.

[4]The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, because that was the most renowned high place. Upon its altar Solomon offered a thousand holocausts. [5]In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." [6]Solomon answered: "You have shown great favor to your servant, my father David, because he behaved faithfully toward you, with justice and an upright heart; and you have continued this great favor toward him, even today, seating a son of his on his throne. [7]O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to suc-

h 1 Sm 2, 31. i 2 Sm 3, 27; 20, 10. j 1 Kgs 7, 8; 2 Chr 1, 1.

ceed my father David; but I am a mere youth,
not knowing at all how to act. [8]I serve you in the
midst of the people whom you have chosen, a
people so vast that it cannot be numbered or
counted. [9]Give your servant, therefore, an under-
standing heart to judge your people and to
distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to
govern this vast people of yours?" [k]

[10]The LORD was pleased that Solomon made
this request. [11]So God said to him: "Because you
have asked for this—not for a long life for your-
self, nor for riches, nor for the life of your ene-
mies, but for understanding so that you may
know what is right— [12]I do as you requested. I
give you a heart so wise and understanding that
there has never been anyone like you up to now,
and after you there will come no one to equal you.
[13]In addition, I give you what you have not asked
for, such riches and glory that among kings there
is not your like. [l] [14]And if you follow me by keep-
ing my statutes and commandments, as your fa-
ther David did, I will give you a long life."

[15]When Solomon awoke from his dream, he
went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the
covenant of the LORD, offered holocausts and
peace offerings, and gave a banquet for all his
servants.

**Solomon's Judgment** [16]Later, two harlots
came to the king and stood before him. [17]One
woman said: "By your leave, my lord, this
woman and I live in the same house, and I gave
birth in the house while she was present. [18]On
the third day after I gave birth, this woman also
gave birth. We were alone in the house; there
was no one there but us two. [19]This woman's
son died during the night; she smothered him by
lying on him. [20]Later that night she got up and
took my son from my side, as I, your handmaid,
was sleeping. Then she laid him in her bosom,
after she had laid her dead child in my bosom.
[21]I rose in the morning to nurse my child, and I
found him dead. But when I examined him in
the morning light, I saw it was not the son
whom I had borne."

[22]The other woman answered, "It is not so!
The living one is my son, the dead one is yours."
But the first kept saying, "No, the dead one is
your child, the living one is mine!" Thus they
argued before the king.

[23]Then the king said: "One woman claims,
'This, the living one, is my child, and the dead
one is yours.' The other answers, 'No! The dead
one is your child; the living one is mine.' "
[24]The king continued, "Get me a sword." When
they brought the sword before him, [25]he said,
"Cut the living child in two, and give half to one
woman and half to the other." [26]The woman
whose son it was, in the anguish she felt for it,
said to the king, "Please, my lord, give her the
living child—please do not kill it!" The other,
however, said, "It shall be neither mine nor
yours. Divide it!" [27]The king then answered,
"Give the first one the living child! By no means
kill it, for she is the mother."

[28]When all Israel heard the judgment the king
had given, they were in awe of him, because
they saw that the king had in him the wisdom of
God for giving judgment.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
171

**Chief Officers of the Kingdom** [1]Solomon
was king over all Israel, [2]and these were the
officials he had in his service:

Azariah, son of Zadok, priest;
[3]Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha, scribes;
Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, chancellor;
[4][Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, commander of the
army;
Zadok and Abiathar, priests;]
[5]Azariah, son of Nathan, chief of the commis-
saries;
Zabud, son of Nathan, companion to the king;
[6]Ahishar, major-domo of the palace; and
Adoniram, son of Abda, superintendent of the
forced labor.

**Solomon's Royal State** [7]*Solomon had twelve
commissaries for all Israel who supplied food for
the king and his household, each having to

4, 7–19: The administration of the kingdom thus initiated by Solomon continued in its main features for the duration of the monarchy in Israel and Judah.

k 2 Chr 1, 10. l Wis 7, 11; Mt 6, 29.

provide for one month in the year. [8]Their names were:

the son of Hur in the hill country of Ephraim;
[9]the son of Deker in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, Elon and Beth-hanan;
[10]the son of Hesed in Arubboth, as well as in Socoh and the whole region of Hepher;
[11]the son of Abinadab, who was married to Solomon's daughter Taphath, in all the Naphath-dor;
[12]Baana, son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and beyond Jokmeam, and in all Beth-shean, and in the country around Zarethan below Jezreel from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah;
[13]the son of Geber in Ramoth-Gilead, having charge of the villages of Jair, son of Manasseh, in Gilead; and of the district of Argob in Bashan—sixty large walled cities with gates barred with bronze;
[14]Ahinadab, son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;
[15]Ahimaaz, who was married to Basemath, another daughter of Solomon, in Naphtali;
[16]Baana, son of Hushai, in Asher and along the rocky coast;
[17]Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah, in Issachar;
[18]Shimei, son of Ela, in Benjamin;
[19]Geber, son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the land of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and of Og, king of Bashan.

There was one prefect besides, in the king's own land.*

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5 See RG 171

[7]These commissaries, one for each month, provided food for King Solomon and for all the guests at the royal table. They left nothing unprovided. [8]For the chariot horses and draft animals also, each brought his quota of barley and straw to the required place.

[20]* Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sands by the sea; they ate and drank and made merry. [1]Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, down to the border of Egypt; they paid Solomon tribute and were his vassals as long as he lived.[m]

[2]Solomon's supplies for each day were thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, [3]ten fatted oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, and a hundred sheep, not counting harts, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.

[4]He ruled over all the land west of the Euphrates, from Tiphsah to Gaza, and over all its kings, and he had peace on all his borders round about. [5]Thus Judah and Israel lived in security, every man under his vine or under his fig tree from Dan to Beer-sheba, as long as Solomon lived.

[6]Solomon had four thousand stalls for his twelve thousand chariot horses.[n]

[9][o]Moreover, God gave Solomon wisdom and exceptional understanding and knowledge, as vast as the sand on the seashore. [10]Solomon surpassed all the Cedemites and all the Egyptians in wisdom. [11]He was wiser than all other men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, or Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the musicians—and his fame spread throughout the neighboring nations. [12]Solomon also uttered three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five.[p] [13]He discussed plants, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop growing out of the wall, and he spoke about beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes. [14]Men came to hear Solomon's wisdom from all nations, sent by all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

**Preparations for the Temple** [15]When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that Solomon had been anointed king in place of his father, he sent an embassy to him; for Hiram had always been David's friend. [16]Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: [17]"You know that my father David, because of the enemies surrounding him on all sides, could not build a temple in honor of the LORD, his God, until such a time as the LORD should put these enemies under the soles of his feet. [18]But now the LORD, my God, has

4, 19: One prefect . . . in the king's own land: the royal territory of Judah had its own peculiar administration different from that of the twelve districts which had to supply the king and his household with a month's provisions of food each year (v 7).

5, 20: This verse belongs to ch 4.

m Sir 47, 15f; 2 Chr 9, 26. n 2 Chr 9, 25f. o 9–14; Sir 47, 16f. p 1 Kgs 3, 12.

given me peace on all sides. There is no enemy
or threat of danger. [19]So I propose to build a
temple in honor of the LORD, my God, as the
LORD predicted to my father David when he
said: 'It is your son whom I will put upon your
throne in your place who shall build the temple
in my honor.'[q] [20]Give orders, then, to have
cedars from the Lebanon cut down for me. My
servants shall accompany yours, since you
know that there is no one among us who is
skilled in cutting timber like the Sidonians, and
I will pay you whatever you say for your ser-
vants' salary."

[21]When he had heard the words of Solomon,
Hiram was pleased and said, "Blessed be the
LORD this day, who has given David a wise son
to rule this numerous people." [22]Hiram then
sent word to Solomon, "I agree to the proposal
you sent me, and I will provide all the cedars and
fir trees you wish. [23]My servants shall bring
them down from the Lebanon to the sea, and I
will arrange them into rafts in the sea and bring
them wherever you say. There I will break up
the rafts, and you shall take the lumber. You, for
your part, shall furnish the provisions I desire for
my household."

[24]So Hiram continued to provide Solomon
with all the cedars and fir trees he wished;
[25]while Solomon every year gave Hiram twenty
thousand kors of wheat to provide for his house-
hold, and twenty thousand measures of pure oil.
[26]The LORD, moreover, gave Solomon wisdom
as he promised him, and there was peace
between Hiram and Solomon, since they were
parties to a treaty.

[27]King Solomon conscripted thirty thousand
workmen from all Israel. [28]He sent them to the
Lebanon each month in relays of ten thousand,
so that they spent one month in the Lebanon
and two months at home. Adoniram was in
charge of the draft. [29]Solomon had seventy
thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecut-
ters in the mountain, [30]in addition to three
thousand three hundred overseers, answerable
to Solomon's prefects for the work, directing the
people engaged in the work. [31]By order of the
king, fine, large blocks were quarried to give the
temple a foundation of hewn stone. [32]Solomon's
and Hiram's builders, along with the Gebalites,
hewed them out, and prepared the wood and
stones for building the temple.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6
See RG
171

**Building of the Temple** [1]In the four hundred
and eightieth year from the departure of the
Israelites from the land of Egypt, in the fourth
year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month
of Ziv, which is the second month, the construc-
tion of the temple of the LORD* was begun.[r]

[2]The temple which King Solomon built for the
LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty wide, and
twenty-five high. [3]The porch in front of the
temple was twenty cubits from side to side,
along the width of the nave, and ten cubits deep
in front of the temple. [4]Splayed windows with
trellises were made for the temple, [5]and adjoin-
ing the wall of the temple, which enclosed the
nave and the sanctuary, an annex of several
stories was built. [6]Its lowest story was five cubits
wide, the middle one six cubits wide, the third
seven cubits wide, because there were offsets
along the outside of the temple so that the beams
would not be fastened into the walls of the
temple. [7](The temple was built of stone dressed
at the quarry, so that no hammer, axe, or iron
tool was to be heard in the temple during its
construction.) [8]The entrance to the lowest floor
of the annex was at the right side of the temple,
and stairs with intermediate landings led up to
the middle story and from the middle story to
the third. [9]When the temple was built to its full
height, it was roofed in with rafters and boards
of cedar. [10]The annex, with its lowest story five
cubits high, was built all along the outside of the
temple, to which it was joined by cedar beams.

[11]This word of the LORD* came to Solomon:

6, 1: Construction of the temple of the Lord is here paralleled in importance with the founding of the nation after the departure from Egypt. In both, God is the central figure who chose Israel as his people, and now chooses the place where his temple should be built (Dt 12, 4–18. 26). The year is given in a round number, 480, which corresponds to twelve generations. The fourth year of Solomon's reign: c. 968 B.C.

6, 11ff: The word of the Lord . . . my people Israel: the oracle,

q 2 Sm 7, 13; 1 Chr 22, 10. r 2 Chr 3, 1.

12"As to this temple you are building—if you
observe my statutes, carry out my ordinances,
keep and obey all my commands, I will fulfill
toward you the promise I made to your father
David.[s] 13[t]I will dwell in the midst of the
Israelites and will not forsake my people Israel."

14When Solomon finished building the temple, 15its walls were lined from floor to ceiling beams with cedar paneling, and its floor was laid with fir planking. 16At the rear of the temple a space of twenty cubits was set off by cedar partitions from the floor to the rafters, enclosing the sanctuary, the holy of holies. 17The nave, or part of the temple in front of the sanctuary, was forty cubits long. 18The cedar in the interior of the temple was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers; all was of cedar, and no stone was to be seen.

19In the innermost part of the temple* was located the sanctuary to house the ark of the LORD's covenant, 20twenty cubits long, twenty wide, and twenty high.* 21Solomon overlaid the interior of the temple with pure gold. He made in front of the sanctuary a cedar altar, overlaid it with gold, and looped it with golden chains. 22The entire temple was overlaid with gold so that it was completely covered with it; the whole altar before the sanctuary was also overlaid with gold. 23In the sanctuary were two cherubim, each ten cubits high, made of olive wood. 24Each wing of a cherub measured five cubits so that the space from wing tip to wing tip of each was ten cubits. 25The cherubim were identical in size and shape, 26and each was exactly ten cubits high. 27The cherubim were placed in the inmost part of the temple, with their wings spread wide, so that one wing of each cherub touched a side wall while the other wing, pointing toward the middle of the room, touched the corresponding wing of the second cherub. 28The cherubim, too, were overlaid with gold.

Ch 7
See RG
171

29The walls on all sides of both the inner and the outer rooms had carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. 30The floor of both the inner and the outer rooms was overlaid with gold. 31At the entrance of the sanctuary, doors of olive wood were made; the doorframes had beveled posts. 32The two doors were of olive wood, with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. The doors were overlaid with gold, which was also molded to the cherubim and the palm trees. 33The same was done at the entrance to the nave, where the doorposts of olive wood were rectangular. 34The two doors were of fir wood; each door was banded by a metal strap, front and back, 35and had carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, over which gold was evenly applied.

36The inner court was walled off by means of three courses of hewn stones and one course of cedar beams.

37The foundations of the LORD's temple were laid in the month of Ziv 38in the fourth year, and it was completed in all particulars, exactly according to plan, in the month of Bul, the eighth month, in the eleventh year. Thus it took Solomon seven years to build it.

## CHAPTER 7

**Building of the Palace** 1His own palace Solomon completed after thirteen years of construction.[u] 2He built the hall called the Forest of Lebanon one hundred cubits long, fifty wide, and thirty high; it was supported by four rows of cedar columns, with cedar capitals upon the columns. 3Moreover, it had a ceiling of cedar above the beams resting on the columns; these beams numbered forty-five, fifteen to a row. 4There were three window frames at either end,

which came as a climax at the completion of the work, was an expression of God's acceptance and approval. Nevertheless the fulfillment of God's promises to David and his royal descendants will depend on their observance of his ordinances and commands.

**6, 19:** The innermost part of the temple: the sanctuary or holy of holies reserved exclusively for the Lord. Here through his presence he dwelt as on a throne between the cherubim above the ark of the covenant (2 Kgs 6, 23–28; 2 Chr 3, 10–13). See note on Ex 25, 18ff.

**6, 20:** Twenty (cubits) high: it is usually supposed that the holy of holies was of this height because it had a raised floor, five cubits above the floor level of the nave, rather than a dropped ceiling. The building was twenty-five cubits high (v 2) according to the reading here followed.

s 2 Sm 7, 13. t 1 Chr 22, 9f. u 1 Kgs 9, 10.

with windows in strict alignment. [5]The posts of
all the doorways were rectangular, and the
doorways faced each other, three at either end.
[6]The porch of the columned hall he made fifty
cubits long and thirty wide. The porch extended
the width of the columned hall, and there was a
canopy in front. [7]He also built the vestibule of
the throne where he gave judgment—that is, the
tribunal; it was paneled with cedar from floor to
ceiling beams. [8]His living quarters were in
another court, set in deeper than the tribunal
and of the same construction. A palace like this
tribunal was built for Pharaoh's daughter, whom
Solomon had married.[v]

[9]All these buildings were of fine stones, hewn
to size and trimmed front and back with a saw,
from the foundation to the bonding course.
[10](The foundation was made of fine, large
blocks, some ten cubits and some eight cubits.
[11]Above were fine stones hewn to size, and
cedar wood.) [12]The great court was enclosed by
three courses of hewn stones and a bonding
course of cedar beams. So also were the inner
court of the temple of the LORD and the temple
porch.

**Furnishing of the Temple** [13]King Solomon
had Hiram brought from Tyre. [14]He was a
bronze worker, the son of a widow from the
tribe of Naphtali; his father had been from Tyre.
He was endowed with skill, understanding, and
knowledge of how to produce any work in
bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his
metal work.

[15]Two hollow bronze columns* were cast,
each eighteen cubits high and twelve cubits in
circumference; their metal was of four fingers'
thickness.[w] [16]There were also two capitals cast
in bronze, to place on top of the columns, each
of them five cubits high. [17]Two pieces of net-
work with a chainlike mesh were made to cover
the (nodes of the) capitals on top of the columns,
one for each capital. [18]Four hundred pomegran-
ates were also cast; two hundred of them in a
double row encircled the piece of network on
each of the two capitals. [19]The capitals on top of
the columns were finished wholly in a lotus
pattern [20]above the level of the nodes and their
enveloping network. [21]The columns were then
erected adjacent to the porch of the temple, one
to the right, called Jachin, and the other to the
left, called Boaz. [22]Thus the work on the col-
umns was completed.

[23]*The sea was then cast; it was made with a
circular rim, and measured ten cubits across, five
in height, and thirty in circumference.[x] [24]Under
the brim, gourds encircled it, ten to the cubit all
the way around; the gourds were in two rows
and were cast in one mold with the sea. [25]This
rested on twelve oxen,* three facing north,
three facing west, three facing south, and three
facing east, with their haunches all toward the
center, where the sea was set upon them. [26]It
was a handbreadth thick, and its brim resembled
that of a cup, being lily-shaped. Its capacity was
two thousand measures.

[27]Ten stands were also made of bronze, each
four cubits long, four wide, and three high.
[28]When these stands were constructed, panels
were set within the framework. [29]On the panels
between the frames there were lions, oxen, and
cherubim; and on the frames likewise, above
and below the lions and oxen, there were
wreaths in relief.

[30]Each stand had four bronze wheels and
bronze axles. [32]The four wheels were below the
paneling, and the axletrees of the wheels and the
stand were of one piece. Each wheel was a cubit
and a half high. [33]The wheels were constructed
like chariot wheels; their axles, fellies, spokes,
and hubs were all cast.

The four legs of each stand had cast braces,
which were under the basin; they had wreaths
on each side. [34]These four braces, extending to
the corners of each stand, were of one piece
with the stand.

[35]On top of the stand there was a raised collar
half a cubit high, with supports and panels
which were of one piece with the top of the

**7, 15–21:** The two hollow bronze columns, Jachin and Boaz (2 Chr 3, 17), stood free to the right and left of the temple porch. The names are related to God's power (Boaz) founding (Jachin) the temple and his people.

**7, 23–26:** The sea . . . rested on twelve oxen: this was a large circular tank containing about twelve thousand gallons of water.

v 1 Kgs 3, 1. w Jer 52, 21. x 2 Chr 4, 2.

stand. [31]This was surmounted by a crown one cubit high within which was a rounded opening to provide a receptacle a cubit and a half in depth. There was carved work at the opening, on panels that were angular, not curved. [36]On the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, wherever there was a clear space, cherubim, lions, and palm trees were carved, as well as wreaths all around. [37]This was how the ten stands were made, all of the same casting, the same size, the same shape. [38]Ten bronze basins were then made, each four cubits in diameter with a capacity of forty measures, one basin for the top of each of the ten stands. [39]The stands were placed, five on the south side of the temple and five on the north. The sea was placed off to the southeast from the south side of the temple.

Ch 8
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171–172

[40]When Hiram made the pots, shovels, and bowls, he therewith completed all his work for King Solomon in the temple of the LORD: [41]two columns, two nodes for the capitals on top of the columns, two pieces of network covering the nodes for the capitals on top of the columns, [42]four hundred pomegranates in double rows on both pieces of network that covered the two nodes of the capitals where they met the columns, [43]ten stands, ten basins on the stands, [44]one sea, twelve oxen supporting the sea, [45]pots, shovels, and bowls. All these articles which Hiram made for King Solomon in the temple of the LORD were of burnished bronze. [46]The king had them cast in the neighborhood of the Jordan, in the clayey ground between Succoth and Zarethan. [47]Solomon did not weigh all the articles because they were so numerous; the weight of the bronze, therefore, was not determined.

[48]Solomon had all the articles made for the interior of the temple of the LORD: the golden altar; the golden table on which the showbread lay; [49]the lampstands of pure gold, five to the right and five to the left before the sanctuary, with their flowers, lamps, and tongs of gold; [50]basins, snuffers, bowls, cups, and fire pans of pure gold; and hinges of gold for the doors of the inner room, or holy of holies, and for the doors of the outer room, the nave.

[51]When all the work undertaken by King Solomon in the temple of the LORD was completed, he brought in the dedicated offerings of his father David, putting the silver, gold, and other articles in the treasuries of the temple of the LORD.[y]

## CHAPTER 8

**Dedication of the Temple** [1]At the order of Solomon, the elders of Israel and all the leaders of the tribes, the princes in the ancestral houses of the Israelites, came to King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from the City of David [which is Zion].[z] [2]All the men of Israel assembled before King Solomon during the festival in the month of Ethanim (the seventh month). [3]When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark; [4]they carried the ark of the LORD and the meeting tent with all the sacred vessels that were in the tent. (The priests and Levites carried them.)

[5]King Solomon and the entire community of Israel present for the occasion sacrificed before the ark sheep and oxen too many to number or count. [6]*The priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place beneath the wings of the cherubim in the sanctuary, the holy of holies of the temple. [7]The cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the ark, sheltering the ark and its poles from above. [8]The poles were so long that their ends could be seen from that part of the holy place adjoining the sanctuary; however, they could not be seen beyond. (They have remained there to this day.) [9]There was nothing in the ark but the two stone tablets which Moses had put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the

**8, 6–9:** The transfer of the ark of the covenant into the newly constructed temple building, and the oracle of God's acceptance (1 Kgs 9, 3–9), and his act of possession (1 Kgs 8, 10–13), constituted the temple's solemn dedication, and made of it the abiding dwelling of God among his people for which David had hoped (2 Sm 6, 12–15; 7, 1–3). The concurrence of the feast of Booths marks an appropriate transition of God's dwelling among nomadic tribes to his permanent abode among a settled people.

y 2 Chr 5, 1. z 2 Chr 5, 2.

Israelites at their departure from the land of
Egypt.[a]
[10]When the priests left the holy place, the
cloud filled the temple of the LORD [11]so that the
priests could no longer minister because of the
cloud, since the LORD's glory had filled the
temple of the LORD. [12]Then Solomon said, "The
LORD intends to dwell in the dark cloud;[b] [13]I
have truly built you a princely house, a dwelling
where you may abide forever."
[14]The king turned and greeted the whole
community of Israel as they stood. [15]He said to
them: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who with his own mouth made a promise to my
father David and by his hand has brought it to
fulfillment. It was he who said, [16]'Since the day I
brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not
chosen a city out of any tribe of Israel for the
building of a temple to my honor; but I choose
David to rule my people Israel.' [17]When my
father David wished to build a temple to the
honor of the LORD, the God of Israel,[c] [18]the Lord
said to him, 'In wishing to build a temple to my
honor, you do well. [19]It will not be you, how-
ever, who will build the temple; but the son
who will spring from you, he shall build the
temple to my honor.' [20]And now the LORD has
fulfilled the promise that he made: I have
succeeded my father David and sit on the throne
of Israel, as the LORD foretold, and I have built
this temple to honor the LORD, the God of Israel.
[21]I have provided in it a place for the ark in
which is the covenant of the LORD, which he
made with our fathers when he brought them
out of the land of Egypt."

**Solomon's Prayer** [22]Solomon stood before the
altar of the LORD in the presence of the whole
community of Israel, and stretching forth his
hands toward heaven, [23]he said, "LORD, God of
Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above
or on earth below; you keep your covenant of
kindness with your servants who are faithful to
you with their whole heart. [24]You have kept the
promise you made to my father David, your
servant. You who spoke that promise, have this
day, by your own power, brought it to fulfill-
ment. [25]Now, therefore, LORD, God of Israel,
keep the further promise you made to my father
David, your servant, saying, 'You shall always
have someone from your line to sit before me on
the throne of Israel, provided only that your
descendants look to their conduct so that they
live in my presence, as you have lived in my
presence.'[d] [26]Now, LORD, God of Israel, may
this promise which you made to my father
David, your servant, be confirmed.
[27]"Can it indeed be that God dwells among
men on earth? If the heavens and the highest
heavens cannot contain you, how much less this
temple which I have built! [28]Look kindly on the
prayer and petition of your servant, O LORD, my
God, and listen to the cry of supplication which
I, your servant, utter before you this day. [29]May
your eyes watch night and day over this temple,
the place where you have decreed you shall be
honored; may you heed the prayer which I, your
servant, offer in this place. [30]Listen to the
petitions of your servant and of your people
Israel which they offer in this place. Listen from
your heavenly dwelling and grant pardon.
[31]"If a man sins against his neighbor and is
required to take an oath sanctioned by a curse,
when he comes and takes the oath before your
altar in this temple, [32]listen in heaven; take
action and pass judgment on your servants.
Condemn the wicked and punish him for his
conduct, but acquit the just and establish his
innocence.
[33]*"If your people Israel sin against you and
are defeated by an enemy, and if then they
return to you, praise your name, pray to you,
and entreat you in this temple, [34]listen in heaven
and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and
bring them back to the land you gave their
fathers.
[35]"If the sky is closed, so that there is no rain,
because they have sinned against you and you
afflict them, and if then they repent of their sin,

**8, 33–34. 46–53:** These references to deportation of Israelites to a hostile land are an expansion of Solomon's prayer dating from the Babylonian exile four centuries later.

a Ex 34, 27; Heb 9, 4. b 2 Chr 6, 1. c 2 Sm 7, 5. d 2 Sm 7, 12.

and pray, and praise your name in this place,
36listen in heaven and forgive the sin of your
servant and of your people Israel, teaching them
the right way to live and sending rain upon this
land of yours which you have given to your
people as their heritage.

37"If there is famine in the land or pestilence;
or if blight comes, or mildew, or a locust swarm,
or devouring insects; if an enemy of your people
besieges them in one of their cities; whatever
plague or sickness there may be, 38if then any
one [of your entire people Israel] has remorse of
conscience and offers some prayer or petition,
stretching out his hands toward this temple,
39listen from your heavenly dwelling place and
forgive. You who alone know the hearts of all
men, render to each one of them according to
his conduct; knowing their hearts, so treat them
40that they may fear you as long as they live on
the land you gave our fathers.

41"To the foreigner, likewise, who is not of
your people Israel, but comes from a distant land
to honor you 42(since men will learn of your
great name and your mighty hand and your
outstretched arm), when he comes and prays
toward this temple, 43listen from your heavenly
dwelling. Do all that the foreigner asks of you,
that all the peoples of the earth may know your
name, may fear you as do your people Israel, and
may acknowledge that this temple which I have
built is dedicated to your honor.

44"Whatever the direction in which you may
send your people forth to war against their
enemies, if they pray to you, O LORD, toward the
city you have chosen and the temple I have built
in your honor, 45listen in heaven to their prayer
and petition, and defend their cause.

46"When they sin against you (for there is no
man who does not sin), and in your anger
against them you deliver them to the enemy, so
that their captors deport them to a hostile land,
far or near,[e] 47may they repent in the land of
their captivity and be converted. If then they
entreat you in the land of their captors and say,
'We have sinned and done wrong; we have been
wicked'; 48if with their whole heart and soul
they turn back to you in the land of the enemies
who took them captive, pray to you toward the
land you gave their fathers, the city you have
chosen, and the temple I have built in your
honor, 49listen from your heavenly dwelling.
50Forgive your people their sins and all the
offenses they have committed against you, and
grant them mercy before their captors, so that
these will be merciful to them. 51For they are
your people and your inheritance, whom you
brought out of Egypt, from the midst of an iron
furnace.

52"Thus may your eyes be open to the petition
of your servant and to the petition of your people
Israel. Hear them whenever they call upon you,
53because you have set them apart among all the
peoples of the earth for your inheritance, as you
declared through your servant Moses when you
brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

54When Solomon finished offering this entire
prayer of petition to the LORD, he rose from
before the altar of the LORD, where he had been
kneeling with his hands outstretched toward
heaven. 55He stood and blessed the whole
community of Israel, saying in a loud voice:
56"Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his
people Israel, just as he promised. Not a single
word has gone unfulfilled of the entire generous
promise he made through his servant Moses.
57May the LORD, our God, be with us as he was
with our fathers and may he not forsake us nor
cast us off. 58May he draw our hearts to himself,
that we may follow him in everything and keep
the commands, statutes, and ordinances which
he enjoined on our fathers. 59May this prayer I
have offered to the LORD, our God, be present to
him day and night, that he may uphold the cause
of his servant and of his people Israel as each day
requires, 60that all the peoples of the earth may
know the LORD is God and there is no other.
61You must be wholly devoted to the LORD, our
God, observing his statutes and keeping his
commandments, as on this day."

62The king and all Israel with him offered
sacrifices before the LORD. 63Solomon offered as
peace offerings to the LORD twenty-two thou-

e 2 Chr 6, 36; Eccl 7, 20; 1 Jn 1, 8.

sand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. Thus the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the LORD. [64]On that day the king consecrated the middle of the court facing the temple of the LORD; he offered there the holocausts, the cereal offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar before the LORD was too small to hold these offerings.

[65]On this occasion Solomon and all the Israelites, who had assembled in large numbers from Labo of Hamath to the wadi of Egypt, celebrated the festival before the LORD, our God, for seven days. [66]On the eighth day he dismissed the people, who bade the king farewell and went to their homes, rejoicing and happy over all the blessings the LORD had given to his servant David and to his people Israel.

## CHAPTER 9

**Promise and Warning to Solomon** [1]After Solomon finished building the temple of the LORD, the royal palace, and everything else that he had planned, [2]the LORD appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him in Gibeon.[f] [3]The LORD said to him: "I have heard the prayer of petition which you offered in my presence. I have consecrated this temple which you have built; I confer my name upon it forever, and my eyes and my heart shall be there always. [4]As for you, if you live in my presence as your father David lived, sincerely and uprightly, doing just as I have commanded you, keeping my statutes and decrees, [5]I will establish your throne of sovereignty over Israel forever, as I promised your father David when I said, 'You shall always have someone from your line on the throne of Israel.'[g] [6]But if you and your descendants ever withdraw from me, fail to keep the commandments and statutes which I set before you, and proceed to venerate and worship strange gods, [7]I will cut off Israel from the land I gave them and repudiate the temple I have consecrated to my honor. Israel shall become a proverb and a byword among all nations, [8]and this temple shall become a heap of ruins. Every passerby shall catch his breath in amazement, and ask, 'Why has the LORD done this to the land and to this temple?'[h] [9]Men will answer: 'They forsook the LORD, their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt; they adopted strange gods which they worshiped and served. That is why the LORD has brought down upon them all this evil.' "

**Other Acts of the King** [10]After the twenty years during which Solomon built the two houses, the temple of the LORD and the palace of the king— [11]Hiram, king of Tyre, supplying Solomon with all the cedar wood, fir wood, and gold he wished—King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. [12]Hiram left Tyre to see the cities Solomon had given him, but was not satisfied with them. [13]So he said, "What are these cities you have given me, my brother?" And he called them the land of Cabul, as they are called to this day. [14]Hiram, however, had sent King Solomon one hundred and twenty talents of gold.*

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[15]This is an account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied in order to build the temple of the LORD, his palace, Millo,* the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer [16](Pharaoh king of Egypt, had come up and taken Gezer and, after destroying it by fire and slaying all the Canaanites living in the city, had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; [17]Solomon then rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, [18]Baalath, Tamar in the desert of Judah, [19]all his cities for supplies, cities for chariots and for horses, and whatever else Solomon decided should be built in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in the entire land under his dominion. [20]All the non-Israelite people who remained in the land, descendants of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites [21]whose doom the Israelites had been unable to accomplish, Solomon conscripted as forced laborers, as they are

**9, 14:** One hundred and twenty talents of gold: approximately three million six hundred thousand dollars.

**9, 15:** Millo: probably means a filling, and may refer to an artificial earthwork or platform of stamped ground south of the temple area. It was begun by David (2 Sm 5, 9); cf 1 Kgs 9, 24; 11, 27.

f 1 Kgs 3, 5; 11, 9; 2 Chr 7, 12. g 2 Sm 7, 12–16. h Dt 29, 23; Jer 22, 8.

to this day. [22]But Solomon enslaved none of the
Israelites, for they were his fighting force, his
ministers, commanders, adjutants, chariot offi-
cers, and charioteers. [23]The supervisors of Solo-
mon's works who policed the people engaged
in the work numbered five hundred and fifty.

[24]As soon as Pharaoh's daughter went up
from the City of David to her palace, which he
had built for her, Solomon built Millo.

[25]Three times a year Solomon used to offer
holocausts and peace offerings on the altar
which he had built to the LORD, and to burn
incense before the LORD; and he kept the temple
in repair.

[26]King Solomon also built a fleet at Ezion-
geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the
Red Sea in the land of Edom.* [27]In this fleet
Hiram placed his own expert seamen with the
servants of Solomon. [28]They went to Ophir, and
brought back four hundred and twenty talents of
gold to King Solomon.

## CHAPTER 10

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**Visit of the Queen of Sheba** [1]The queen of
Sheba,* having heard of Solomon's fame, came
to test him with subtle questions.[i] [2]She arrived
in Jerusalem with a very numerous retinue, and
with camels bearing spices, a large amount of
gold, and precious stones. She came to Solomon
and questioned him on every subject in which
she was interested. [3]King Solomon explained
everything she asked about, and there remained
nothing hidden from him that he could not
explain to her.

[4]When the queen of Sheba witnessed Solo-
mon's great wisdom, the palace he had built,
[5]the food at his table, the seating of his minis-
ters, the attendance and garb of his waiters, his
banquet service, and the holocausts he offered in
the temple of the LORD, she was breathless.
[6]"The report I heard in my country about your
deeds and your wisdom is true," she told the
king. [7]"Though I did not believe the report until
I came and saw with my own eyes, I have
discovered that they were not telling me the
half. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the
report I heard. [8]Happy are your men, happy
these servants of yours, who stand before you
always and listen to your wisdom. [9]Blessed be
the LORD, your God, whom it has pleased to
place you on the throne of Israel. In his enduring
love for Israel, the LORD has made you king to
carry out judgment and justice." [10]Then she
gave the king one hundred and twenty gold
talents, a very large quantity of spices, and
precious stones. Never again did anyone bring
such an abundance of spices as the queen of
Sheba gave to King Solomon.

[11]Hiram's fleet, which used to bring gold from
Ophir, also brought from there a large quantity
of cabinet* wood and precious stones. [12]With
the wood the king made supports for the tem-
ple of the LORD and for the palace of the king,
and harps and lyres for the chanters. No more
such wood was brought or seen to the present
day.

[13]King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba
everything she desired and asked for, besides
such presents as were given her from Solomon's
royal bounty. Then she returned with her ser-
vants to her own country.

**Solomon's Wealth** [14]The gold that Solomon
received every year weighed six hundred and
sixty-six gold talents, [15]in addition to what
came from the Tarshish fleet, from the traffic of
merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and
the governors of the country. [16]Moreover, King
Solomon made two hundred shields of beaten
gold (six hundred gold shekels went into each
shield)[j] [17]and three hundred bucklers of beaten
gold (three minas of gold went into each buck-
ler); and he put them in the hall of the Forest
of Lebanon. [18]The king also had a large ivory
throne made, and overlaid it with refined gold.
[19]The throne had six steps, a back with a
round top, and an arm on each side of the seat.

9, 26: Ezion-geber . . . Edom: the first mention of maritime commerce in the Israelite kingdom (to which the land of Edom was subject after its conquest by King David; cf 2 Sm 8, 14).

10, 1: Queen of Sheba: women rulers among the Arabs are recorded in eighth-century-B.C. Assyrian inscriptions. Sheba was for centuries the leading principality in what is now the Yemen.

10, 11f: Cabinet: an unknown wood, probably fragrant.

i 2 Chr 9, 1; Mt 12, 42; Lk 11, 31. j 1 Kgs 14, 26.

Next to each arm stood a lion; [20]and twelve
other lions stood on the steps, two to a step,
one on either side of each step. Nothing like
this was produced in any other kingdom. [21]In
addition, all King Solomon's drinking vessels
were of gold, and all the utensils in the hall of
the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. There
was no silver, for in Solomon's time it was
considered worthless. [22]The king had a fleet of
Tarshish ships* at sea with Hiram's fleet. Once
every three years the fleet of Tarshish ships
would come with a cargo of gold, silver, ivory,
apes, and monkeys. [23]Thus King Solomon sur-
passed in riches and wisdom all the kings of
the earth. [24]And the whole world sought audi-
ence with Solomon, to hear from him the wis-
dom which God had put in his heart. [25]Each
one brought his yearly tribute: silver or gold
articles, garments, weapons, spices, horses and
mules.

[26]Solomon collected chariots and drivers; he
had one thousand four hundred chariots and
twelve thousand drivers; these he allocated
among the chariot cities and to the king's service
in Jerusalem.[k] [27]The king made silver as com-
mon in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as
numerous as the sycamores of the foothills.
[28]Solomon's horses were imported from Cilicia,
where the king's agents purchased them. [29]A
chariot imported from Egypt cost six hundred
shekels, a horse one hundred and fifty shekels;
they were exported at these rates to all the
Hittite and Aramean kings.

## CHAPTER 11

**The Sins of Solomon** [1]*King Solomon loved
many foreign women besides the daughter of
Pharaoh (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sido-
nians, and Hittites),[l] [2]from nations with which
the LORD had forbidden the Israelites to inter-
marry, "because," he said, "they will turn your
hearts to their gods."[m] [3]But Solomon fell in love
with them. He had seven hundred wives of
princely rank and three hundred concubines,
and his wives turned his heart.

[4]When Solomon was old his wives had turned
his heart to strange gods, and his heart was not
entirely with the LORD, his God, as the heart of
his father David had been. [5]By adoring Astarte,
the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the
idol of the Ammonites, [6]Solomon did evil in the
sight of the LORD; he did not follow him
unreservedly as his father David had done.
[7]Solomon then built a high place to Chemosh,
the idol of Moab, and to Molech, the idol of the
Ammonites, on the hill opposite Jerusalem. [8]He
did the same for all his foreign wives who
burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. [9]The
LORD, therefore, became angry with Solomon,
because his heart was turned away from the
LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to
him twice[n] [10](for though the LORD had forbid-
den him this very act of following strange gods,
Solomon had not obeyed him).

[11]So the LORD said to Solomon: "Since this is
what you want, and you have not kept my
covenant and my statutes which I enjoined on
you, I will deprive you of the kingdom and give
it to your servant. [12]I will not do this during your
lifetime, however, for the sake of your father
David; it is your son whom I will deprive.[o]
[13]Nor will I take away the whole kingdom. I will
leave your son one tribe for the sake of my
servant David and of Jerusalem, which I have
chosen."

[14]The LORD then raised up an adversary to
Solomon: Hadad the Edomite, who was of the
royal line in Edom. [15]Earlier, when David had

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10, 22: Tarshish ships: large, strong vessels for long voyages. Tarshish was the ancient Tartessus, a Phoenician colony in southern Spain, the name of which denotes a center for smelting metallic ore.

11, 1–3. 7: The glorious rise of Solomon, his piety and wisdom, administrative skill and wealth, the extension of his kingdom, his prestige among neighboring rulers, his reign of peace, above all his friendship with God—these are now eclipsed by his sins of intermarriage with great numbers of pagan wives and the consequent forbidden worship of their gods (Ex 34, 11–16; Dt 7, 1–5). His construction of temples in their honor merited the punishment of loss of a united kingdom to his posterity, and the opposition of adversaries to himself (vv 14. 23–27). Hadad the Edomite rebelled against Solomon at the beginning of his reign (v 25). Rezon of Syria established a new kingdom in Dàmascus; Jeroboam of Israel constituted the greatest threat because of his revolt from within. This threefold threat culminated in the breakup of Solomon's kingdom.

k 2 Chr 1, 14. l Dt 17, 17; Sir 47, 19f. m Ex 34, 16. n 1 Kgs 9, 2. o 1 Kgs 12, 15.

conquered Edom, Joab, the general of the army,
while going to bury the slain, put to death every
male in Edom.[p] [16]Joab and all Israel remained
there six months until they had killed off every
male in Edom. [17]Meanwhile, Hadad, who was
only a boy, fled toward Egypt with some Edom-
ite servants of his father. [18]They left Midian and
passing through Paran, where they picked up
additional men, they went into Egypt to Pha-
raoh, king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house,
appointed him rations, and assigned him land.

[19]Hadad won great favor with Pharaoh, so
that he gave him in marriage the sister of Queen
Tahpenes, his own wife. [20]Tahpenes' sister bore
Hadad a son, Genubath. After his weaning, the
queen kept him in Pharaoh's palace, where he
then lived with Pharaoh's own sons. [21]When
Hadad in Egypt heard that David rested with his
ancestors and that Joab, the general of the army,
was dead, he said to Pharaoh, "Give me leave to
return to my own country." [22]Pharaoh said to
him, "What do you lack with me, that you are
seeking to return to your own country?" "Noth-
ing," he said, "but please let me go!"

[23]God raised up against Solomon another
adversary, in Rezon, the son of Eliada, who had
fled from his lord, Hadadezer, king of Zobah,
[24]when David defeated them with slaughter.
Rezon gathered men about him and became
leader of a band, went to Damascus, settled
there, and became king in Damascus. [25]He was
an enemy of Israel as long as Solomon lived; this
added to the harm done by Hadad, who made a
rift in Israel by becoming king over Edom.

[26]Solomon's servant Jeroboam, son of Nebat,
an Ephraimite from Zeredah with a widowed
mother, Zeruah, also rebelled against the king.[q]
[27]This is why he rebelled. King Solomon was
building Millo, closing up the breach of his
father's City of David. [28]Jeroboam was a man of
means, and when Solomon saw that he was also
an industrious young man, he put him in charge
of the entire labor force of the house of Joseph.
[29]At that time Jeroboam left Jerusalem, and the
prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the
road. The two were alone in the area, and the
prophet was wearing a new cloak.[r] [30]Ahijah
took off his new cloak, tore it into twelve pieces,
[31]and said to Jeroboam:

"Take ten pieces for yourself; the LORD, the
God of Israel, says: 'I will tear away the kingdom
from Solomon's grasp and will give you ten of
the tribes.[s] [32]One tribe shall remain to him for
the sake of David my servant, and of Jerusalem,
the city I have chosen out of all the tribes of
Israel. [33]The ten I will give you because he has
forsaken me and has worshiped Astarte, goddess
of the Sidonians, Chemosh, god of Moab, and
Milcom, god of the Ammonites; he has not
followed my ways or done what is pleasing to
me according to my statutes and my decrees, as
his father David did. [34]Yet I will not take any of
the kingdom from Solomon himself, but will
keep him a prince as long as he lives for the sake
of my servant David, whom I chose, who kept
my commandments and statutes. [35]But I will
take the kingdom from his son and will give it to
you—that is, the ten tribes. [36]I will give his son
one tribe, that my servant David may always
have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city in
which I choose to be honored. [37]I will take you;
you shall reign over all that you desire and shall
become king of Israel. [38]If, then, you heed all
that I command you, follow my ways, and please
me by keeping my statutes and my command-
ments like my servant David, I will be with you.
I will establish for you, as I did for David, a
lasting dynasty; I will give Israel to you. [39]I will
punish David's line for this, but not forever.' "

[40]When Solomon tried to have Jeroboam
killed for his rebellion, he escaped to King
Shishak, in Egypt, where he remained until
Solomon's death.

[41]The rest of the acts of Solomon, with all his
deeds and his wisdom, are recorded in the book
of the chronicles of Solomon. [42]The time that
Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was
forty years. [43]Solomon rested with his ancestors;
he was buried in his father's City of David, and
his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

p 2 Sm 8, 14. q 2 Chr 13, 6. r 1 Kgs 14, 2; 2 Chr 10, 15 s 1 Kgs 12, 15.

## II: Judah and Israel to the Time of Ahab

### CHAPTER 12

**Secession of Israel** 1Rehoboam went to Shechem,* where all Israel had come to proclaim him king.[t] 3They said to Rehoboam: 4"Your father put on us a heavy yoke. If you now lighten the harsh service and the heavy yoke your father imposed on us, we will serve you." 5"Come back to me in three days," he answered them. When the people had departed, 6King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had been in his father's service while he was alive, and asked, "What answer do you advise me to give this people?" 7They replied, "If today you will be the servant of this people and submit to them, giving them a favorable answer, they will be your servants forever." 8But he ignored the advice the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were in his service. 9He said to them, "What answer do you advise me to give this people, who have asked me to lighten the yoke my father imposed on them?" 10The young men who had grown up with him replied, "This is what you must say to this people who have asked you to lighten the yoke your father put on them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's body. 11Whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will make it heavier. My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions.' "

12On the third day all Israel came back to King Rehoboam, as he had instructed them to do. 13Ignoring the advice the elders had given him, the king gave the people a harsh answer. 14He said to them, as the young men had advised: "My father put on you a heavy yoke, but I will make it heavier. My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions." 15The king did not listen to the people, for the LORD brought this about to fulfill the prophecy he had uttered to Jeroboam, son of Nebat, through Ahijah the Shilonite.[u]

16When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king:

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"What share have we in David?*
We have no heritage in the son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!
Now look to your own house, David."

So Israel went off to their tents, 17but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah. 18King Rehoboam then sent out Adoram, superintendent of the forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. Rehoboam managed to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem, 19and Israel went into rebellion against David's house to this day. 2Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon, returned from Egypt as soon as he learned this. 20When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they summoned him to an assembly and made him king over all Israel. None remained loyal to David's house except the tribe of Judah alone.

21On his arrival in Jerusalem, Rehoboam gathered together all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin—one hundred eighty thousand seasoned warriors—to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam, son of Solomon. 22[v]However, the LORD spoke to Shemaiah, a man of God: 23"Say to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to the house of Judah and to Benjamin, and to the rest of the people: 24'Thus says the LORD: You must not march out to fight against your brother Israelites. Let every man return home, for I have brought this about.' " They accepted this message of the LORD and gave up the expedition accordingly.

25Jeroboam built up Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. Then he left it and built up Penuel.

12, 1: Shechem: chief city of the northern tribes, where a covenant of fidelity had previously been made between the Lord and his people and a stone of witness had been erected in memory of the event (Jos 24, 25ff).

12, 16: What share have we in David: even in David's time the northern tribes seemed ready to withdraw from Judah (2 Sm 20, 1). The unreasonable attitude of Rehoboam toward them intensified the discontent caused by the oppression of Solomon (v 4) and thus precipitated the establishment of a rival monarchy (v 20).

t 2 Chr 10, 1. u 1 Kgs 11, 12. 31. v 22–24; 2 Chr 11, 2ff.

**Religious Rebellion*** [26]Jeroboam thought to himself: "The kingdom will return to David's house. [27]If now this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, the hearts of this people will return to their master, Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me." [28]After taking counsel, the king made two calves of gold and said to the people: "You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."[w] [29]And he put one in Bethel, the other in Dan.* [30]This led to sin, because the people frequented these calves in Bethel and in Dan. [31]He also built temples on the high places and made priests from among the people who were not Levites.[x] [32]Jeroboam established a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month to duplicate in Bethel the pilgrimage feast of Judah, with sacrifices to the calves he had made; and he stationed in Bethel priests of the high places he had built.

**Message of the Prophet from Judah** [33]Jeroboam ascended the altar he built in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the month in which he arbitrarily chose to establish a feast for the Israelites; he was going to offer sacrifice.

## CHAPTER 13

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[1]A man of God came from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing at the altar to offer sacrifice. [2]He cried out against the altar the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar, the LORD says, 'A child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, who shall slaughter upon you the priests of the high places who offer sacrifice upon you, and he shall burn human bones upon you.' "[y] [3]He gave a sign that same day and said: "This is the sign that the LORD has spoken: The altar shall break up and the ashes on it shall be strewn about."

[4]When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God was crying out against the altar, he stretched forth his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched forth against him withered, so that he could not draw it back. [5]Moreover, the altar broke up and the ashes from it were strewn about—the sign the man of God had given as the word of the LORD. [6]Then the king appealed to the man of God. "Entreat the LORD, your God," he said, "and intercede for me that I may be able to withdraw my hand." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king recovered the normal use of his hand. [7]"Come home with me for some refreshment," the king invited the man of God, "and I will give you a present." [8]"If you gave me half your kingdom," the man of God said to the king, "I would not go with you, nor eat bread or drink water in this place. [9]For I was instructed by the word of the LORD not to eat bread or drink water and not to return by the way I came." [10]So he departed by another road and did not go back the way he had come to Bethel.

[11]There was an old prophet living in the city, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. When they repeated to their father the words he had spoken to the king, [12]the father asked them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons pointed out to him the road taken by the man of God who had come from Judah. [13]Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the ass for me." When they had saddled it, he mounted [14]and followed the man of God, whom he found seated under a terebinth. When he asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" he answered, "Yes." [15]Then he said, "Come home with me and have some bread." [16]"I cannot go back with you, and I cannot eat bread or drink water with you in this place," he answered, [17]"for I was told by the

**12, 26–32:** Jeroboam feared reunification of the divided kingdom through worship in the single temple in Jerusalem. To prevent this he encouraged shrines on the high places, and appointed false priests to supplement those of levitical descent. The golden bullocks he installed in two of his sanctuaries, though probably intended as bearers of the invisible Divine Majesty, quickly became occasions for idolatry. Thus Jeroboam caused Israel to sin, and sealed his doom and that of his royal house (1 Kgs 13, 34; 14, 7–14).

**12, 29:** Bethel and Dan: at the southern and northern boundaries of the separate kingdom of Israel, where sanctuaries had existed in the past (Gn 12, 8; 13, 3; 18, 10–22; 25, 1–16; Jgs 18, 1–31).

w Tb 1, 5; Ex 32, 8. x 2 Chr 11, 15. y 2 Kgs 23, 16.

word of the LORD neither to eat bread nor drink
water here, and not to go back the way I came."
18But he said to him, "I, too, am a prophet like
you, and an angel told me in the word of the
LORD to bring you back with me to my house
and to have you eat bread and drink water." He
was lying to him, however.
19So he went back with him, and ate bread
and drank water in his house. 20But while they
were sitting at table, the LORD spoke to the
prophet who had brought him back, 21and he
cried out to the man of God who had come from
Judah: "The LORD says, 'Because you rebelled
against the command of the LORD and did not
keep the command which the LORD, your God,
gave you, 22but returned and ate bread and
drank water in the place where he told you to do
neither, your corpse shall not be brought to the
grave of your ancestors.' "
23After he had eaten bread and drunk water,
the ass was saddled for him, and he again 24set
out. But a lion met him on the road, and killed
him. His corpse lay sprawled on the road, and
the ass remained standing by it, and so did the
lion. 25Some passers-by saw the body lying in the
road, with the lion standing beside it, and
carried the news to the city where the old
prophet lived. 26On hearing it, the prophet who
had brought him back from his journey said: "It
is the man of God who rebelled against the
command of the LORD. He has delivered him to
a lion, which mangled and killed him, as the
LORD predicted to him." 27Then he said to his
sons, "Saddle the ass for me." When they had
saddled it, 28he went off and found the body
lying in the road with the ass and the lion
standing beside it. The lion had not eaten the
body nor had it harmed the ass. 29The prophet
lifted up the body of the man of God and put it
on the ass, and brought it back to the city to
mourn over it and to bury it. 30He laid the man's
body in his own grave, and they mourned over
it: "Alas, my brother!" 31After he had buried
him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in
the grave where the man of God is buried. Lay
my remains beside his. 32For the word of the
LORD which he proclaimed against the altar in
Bethel and against all the shrines on the high
places in the cities of Samaria shall certainly
come to pass."
33Jeroboam did not give up his evil ways after
this event, but again made priests for the high
places from among the common people. Whoever desired it was consecrated and became a
priest of the high places. 34This was a sin on the
part of the house of Jeroboam for which it was to
be cut off and destroyed from the earth.

## CHAPTER 14

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**Death of Abijah** 1At that time Abijah, son of
Jeroboam, took sick. 2So Jeroboam said to his
wife, "Get ready and disguise yourself so that
none will recognize you as Jeroboam's wife.
Then go to Shiloh, where you will find the
prophet Ahijah. It is he who predicted my reign
over this people.[z] 3Take along ten loaves, some
cakes, and a jar of preserves, and go to him. He
will tell you what will happen to the child."
4The wife of Jeroboam obeyed. She made the
journey to Shiloh and entered the house of
Ahijah who could not see because age had
dimmed his sight.
5The LORD had said to Ahijah: "Jeroboam's
wife is coming to consult you about her son, for
he is sick. This is what you must tell her. When
she comes, she will be in disguise." 6So Ahijah,
hearing the sound of her footsteps as she entered
the door, said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why
are you in disguise? I have been commissioned
to give you bitter news. 7Go, tell Jeroboam, 'This
is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I
exalted you from among the people and made
you ruler of my people Israel. 8I deprived the
house of David of the kingdom and gave it to
you. Yet you have not been like my servant
David, who kept my commandments and followed me with his whole heart, doing only what
pleased me. 9You have done worse than all who
preceded you: you have gone and made for
yourself strange gods and molten images to
provoke me; but me you have cast behind your
back. 10Therefore, I am bringing evil upon the

z 1 Kgs 11, 29.

house of Jeroboam: I will cut off every male in
Jeroboam's line, whether slave or freeman in
Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam
completely, as though dung were being burned.[a]
11When one of Jeroboam's line dies in the city,
dogs will devour him; when one of them dies in
the field, he will be devoured by the birds of the
sky. For the LORD has spoken!'[b] 12So leave; go
home! As you step inside the city, the child will
die, 13and all Israel will mourn him and bury
him, for he alone of Jeroboam's line will be laid
in the grave, since in him alone of Jeroboam's
house has something pleasing to the LORD, the
God of Israel, been found. 14Today, at this very
moment, the LORD will raise up for himself a
king of Israel who will destroy the house of
Jeroboam. 15The LORD will strike Israel like a
reed tossed about in the water and will pluck out
Israel from this good land which he gave their
fathers, scattering them beyond the River, be-
cause they made sacred poles for themselves and
thus provoked the LORD. 16He will give up Israel
because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and
caused Israel to commit."

17So Jeroboam's wife started back; when she
reached Tirzah and crossed the threshold of her
house, the child died. 18He was buried with all
Israel mourning him, as the LORD had prophe-
sied through his servant the prophet Ahijah.

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19The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, with his
warfare and his reign, are recorded in the book
of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 20The
length of Jeroboam's reign was twenty-two
years. He rested with his ancestors, and his son
Nadab succeeded him as king.

**Reign of Rehoboam** 21Rehoboam, son of Solo-
mon, reigned in Judah. He was forty-one years
old when he became king, and he reigned
seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city in which,
out of all the tribes of Israel, the LORD chose to
be honored. His mother was the Ammonite
named Naamah.[c]

22Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and
by their sins angered him even more than their
fathers had done. 23They, too, built for them-
selves high places, pillars, and sacred poles, upon
every high hill and under every green tree.
24There were also cult prostitutes in the land.
Judah imitated all the abominable practices of
the nations whom the LORD had cleared out of
the Israelites' way.

25In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak,
king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem.* 26He took
everything, including the treasures of the temple
of the LORD and those of the royal palace, as well
as all the gold shields made under Solomon.[d]
27To replace them, King Rehoboam had bronze
shields made, which he entrusted to the officers
of the guard on duty at the entrance of the royal
palace. 28Whenever the king visited the temple
of the LORD, those on duty would carry the
shields, and then return them to the guardroom.

29The rest of the acts of Rehoboam, with all
that he did, are recorded in the book of the
chronicles of the kings of Judah. 30There was
constant warfare between Rehoboam and Jero-
boam. 31Rehoboam rested with his ancestors; he
was buried with them in the City of David. His
mother was the Ammonite named Naamah. His
son Abijam succeeded him as king.

## CHAPTER 15

**Reign of Abijam** 1In the eighteenth year of
King Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Abijam became
king of Judah;[e] 2he reigned three years in
Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah,
daughter of Abishalom. 3He imitated all the sins
his father had committed before him, and his
heart was not entirely with the LORD, his God,
like the heart of his grandfather David. 4Yet for
David's sake the LORD, his God, gave him a lamp
in Jerusalem, raising up his son after him and
permitting Jerusalem to endure; 5because David
had pleased the LORD and did not disobey any of

**14, 25:** In the fifth year . . . Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem: c. 926 B.C. According to 2 Chr 12, 1–12, the repentance of King Rehoboam and of the princes of Israel after the warning of the prophet Shemaiah diverted the actual attack on Jerusalem. Shishak, however, carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and of the king's palace (2 Chr 12, 9). A bas-relief of this Pharaoh in the temple of Aman at Karnak commemorates his conquest of some hundred and fifty Palestinian and Trans-Jordanian cities and towns.

a 1 Kgs 15, 29. b 1 Kgs 16, 4. c 2 Chr 12, 13. d 1 Kgs 10, 16. e 2 Chr 13, 1f.

his commands as long as he lived, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.[f]

[7]The rest of Abijam's acts, with all that he did, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.[g] [6]There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. [8]Abijam rested with his ancestors; he was buried in the City of David, and his son Asa succeeded him as king.

**Reign of Asa** [9]In the twentieth year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Asa, king of Judah, began to reign; [10]he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother's name was Maacah, daughter of Abishalom. [11]Asa pleased the LORD like his forefather David, [12]banishing the temple prostitutes from the land and removing all the idols his father had made. [13]He also deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made an outrageous object for Asherah. Asa cut down this object and burned it in the Kidron Valley. [14]The high places did not disappear; yet Asa's heart was entirely with the LORD as long as he lived. [15]He brought into the temple of the LORD his father's and his own votive offerings of silver, gold, and various utensils.

[16]There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, as long as they both reigned. [17]Baasha, king of Israel, attacked Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent communication with Asa, king of Judah.[h] [18]Asa then took all the silver and gold remaining in the treasuries of the temple of the LORD and of the royal palace. Entrusting them to his ministers, King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Aram,* resident in Damascus. He said: [19]"There is a treaty between you and me, as there was between your father and my father. I am sending you a present of silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." [20]Ben-hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the leaders of his troops against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinnereth, besides all the land of Naphtali. [21]When Baasha heard of it, he left off fortifying Ramah, and stayed in Tirzah. [22]Then King Asa summoned all Judah without exception, and they carried away the stones and beams with which Baasha was fortifying Ramah. With them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpeh.

[23]The rest of the acts of Asa, with all his valor and accomplishments, and the cities he built, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. In his old age, Asa had an infirmity in his feet. [24]He rested with his ancestors; he was buried in his forefather's City of David, and his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him as king.[i]

**Reign of Nadab** [25]In the second year of Asa, king of Judah, Nadab, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel; he reigned over Israel two years. [26]He did evil in the LORD's sight, imitating his father's conduct and the sin which he had caused Israel to commit. [27]Baasha, son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, plotted against him and struck him down at Gibbethon of the Philistines, which Nadab and all Israel were besieging. [28]Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. [29]Once he was king, he killed off the entire house of Jeroboam, not leaving a single soul to Jeroboam but destroying him utterly, according to the warning which the LORD had pronounced through his servant, Ahijah the Shilonite,[j] [30]because of the sins Jeroboam committed and caused Israel to commit, by which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger.

[31]The rest of the acts of Nadab, with all that he did, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. [32][There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, as long as they lived.]

**Reign of Baasha** [33]In the third year of Asa, king of Judah, Baasha, son of Ahijah, began his twenty-four-year reign over Israel in Tirzah. [34]He did evil in the LORD's sight, imitating the conduct of Jeroboam and the sin he had caused Israel to commit.

15, 18: Ben-hadad . . . king of Aram: Ben-hadad I, third successor of Rezon, who had thrown off the yoke of the Israelites during the reign of Solomon and become king of Aram (11, 23f).

f 2 Sm 11, 4. g 2 Chr 13, 2. h 2 Chr 16, 1. i 2 Chr 17, 1. j 1 Kgs 14, 10; 21, 22.

## CHAPTER 16

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1The LORD spoke against Baasha to Jehu, son
of Hanani, and said: 2"Inasmuch as I lifted you
up from the dust and made you ruler of my
people Israel, but you have imitated the conduct
of Jeroboam and have caused my people Israel to
sin, provoking me to anger by their sins, 3I will
destroy you, Baasha, and your house;[k] 4I will
make your house like that of Jeroboam, son of
Nebat. If anyone of Baasha's line dies in the city,
dogs shall devour him; if he dies in the field, he
shall be devoured by the birds of the sky."[l]

5The rest of the acts of Baasha, with all his
valor and accomplishments, are written in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.[m]
6Baasha rested with his ancestors; he was buried
in Tirzah, and his son Elah succeeded him as
king. 7[Through the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani,
the LORD had threatened Baasha and his house,
because of all the evil Baasha did in the sight of
the LORD, provoking him to anger by his evil
deeds, so that he became like the house of
Jeroboam; and because he killed Nadab.]

**Reign of Elah** 8In the twenty-sixth year of Asa,
king of Judah, Elah, son of Baasha, began his
two-year reign over Israel in Tirzah. 9His servant
Zimri, commander of half his chariots, plotted
against him. As he was in Tirzah, drinking to
excess in the house of Arza, superintendent of
his palace in Tirzah, 10Zimri entered; he struck
and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa,
king of Judah, and reigned in his place.[n] 11Once
he was seated on the royal throne, he killed off
the whole house of Baasha, not sparing a single
male relative or friend of his. 12Zimri destroyed
the entire house of Baasha, as the LORD had
prophesied to Baasha through the prophet Jehu,
13because of all the sins which Baasha and his
son Elah committed and caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to
anger by their idols.

14The rest of the acts of Elah, with all that he
did, are written in the book of the chronicles of
the kings of Israel.

**Reign of Zimri** 15In the twenty-seventh year of
Asa, king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in
Tirzah. The army was besieging Gibbethon of
the Philistines 16when they heard that Zimri had
formed a conspiracy and had killed the king. So
that day in the camp all Israel proclaimed Omri,
general of the army, king of Israel. 17Omri
marched up from Gibbethon, accompanied by all
Israel, and laid siege to Tirzah. 18When Zimri
saw the city was captured, he entered the citadel
of the royal palace and burned down the palace
over him. He died 19because of the sins he had
committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD by
imitating the sinful conduct of Jeroboam, thus
causing Israel to sin.

20The rest of the acts of Zimri, with the
conspiracy he carried out, are written in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

21At that time the people of Israel were
divided, half following Tibni, son of Ginath, to
make him king, and half for Omri. 22The partisans of Omri prevailed over those of Tibni, son of
Ginath. Tibni died and Omri became king.

**Reign of Omri** 23In the thirty-first year of Asa,
king of Judah, Omri became king; he reigned
over Israel twelve years, the first six of them in
Tirzah. 24He then bought the hill of Samaria
from Shemer for two silver talents and built
upon the hill, naming the city he built Samaria
after Shemer, the former owner. 25But Omri did
evil in the LORD's sight beyond any of his
predecessors. 26He closely imitated the sinful
conduct of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, causing
Israel to sin and to provoke the LORD, the God of
Israel, to anger by their idols.

27The rest of the acts of Omri, with all his
valor and accomplishments, are written in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.
28Omri rested with his ancestors; he was buried
in Samaria, and his son Ahab succeeded him as
king.

**Reign of Ahab** 29In the thirty-eighth year of
Asa, king of Judah, Ahab, son of Omri, became
king of Israel; he reigned over Israel in Samaria
for twenty-two years. 30Ahab, son of Omri, did
evil in the sight of the LORD more than any of his
predecessors. 31It was not enough for him to
imitate the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. He

k 1 Kgs 21, 22. l 1 Kgs 14, 11. m 2 Chr 16, 1. n 2 Kgs 9, 31.

even married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king
of the Sidonians, and went over to the venera-
tion and worship of Baal. 32Ahab erected an altar
to Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in
Samaria, 33and also made a sacred pole. He did
more to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, than
any of the kings of Israel before him.

34 [o]During his reign, Hiel from Bethel rebuilt
Jericho. He lost his first-born son, Abiram, when
he laid the foundation, and his youngest son,
Segub, when he set up the gates, as the LORD
had foretold through Joshua, son of Nun.

## III: Stories of the Prophets

### CHAPTER 17

**Drought Predicted by Elijah** 1Elijah the Tish-
bite,* from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab: "As
the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve,
during these years there shall be no dew or rain
except at my word."[p] 2The LORD then said to
Elijah: 3"Leave here, go east and hide in the
Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan. 4You shall
drink of the stream, and I have commanded
ravens to feed you there." 5So he left and did as
the LORD had commanded. He went and re-
mained by the Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan.
6Ravens brought him bread and meat in the
morning, and bread and meat in the evening,
and he drank from the stream.

**Elijah and the Widow** 7After some time, how-
ever, the brook ran dry, because no rain had
fallen in the land. 8So the LORD said to him:
9"Move on to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there.
I have designated a widow there to provide for
you." 10He left and went to Zarephath. As he
arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was
gathering sticks there; he called out to her,
"Please bring me a small cupful of water to
drink."[q] 11She left to get it, and he called out
after her, "Please bring along a bit of bread."
12"As the LORD, your God, lives," she answered,
"I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of
flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now
I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and
prepare something for myself and my son; when
we have eaten it, we shall die." 13"Do not be
afraid," Elijah said to her. "Go and do as you
propose. But first make me a little cake and bring
it to me. Then you can prepare something for
yourself and your son. 14For the LORD, the God
of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go
empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day
when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.' "
15She left and did as Elijah had said. She was
able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well;
16the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of
oil run dry, as the LORD had foretold through
Elijah.

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17Some time later the son of the mistress of
the house fell sick, and his sickness grew more
severe until he stopped breathing. 18So she said
to Elijah, "Why have you done this to me, O
man of God? Have you come to me to call
attention to my guilt and to kill my son?"
19"Give me your son," Elijah said to her. Taking
him from her lap, he carried him to the upper
room where he was staying, and laid him on his
own bed. 20He called out to the LORD: "O LORD,
my God, will you afflict even the widow with
whom I am staying by killing her son?" 21Then
he stretched himself out upon the child three
times and called out to the LORD: "O LORD, my
God, let the life breath return to the body of this
child." 22The LORD heard the prayer of Elijah;
the life breath returned to the child's body and
he revived. 23Taking the child, Elijah brought
him down into the house from the upper room
and gave him to his mother. "See!" Elijah said to
her, "your son is alive." 24"Now indeed I know
that you are a man of God," the woman replied
to Elijah. "The word of the LORD comes truly
from your mouth."

17, 1: Elijah the Tishbite: one of the most important figures in Old Testament history. As his name indicates ("Yahweh is my God"), Elijah was the successful leader in the struggle to preserve the knowledge and worship of Yahweh against the encroaching worship of Baal introduced into Israel by Jezebel, the Tyrian wife of Ahab. The Elijah cycle of narratives includes, besides the above struggle, miracle stories, denunciations of kings, and a preparation for the prophet's role as eschatological forerunner of the "great day of the Lord"; cf Mal 3, 23–24; Mt 17, 10–13; Lk 1, 17.

o Jos 6, 26. p Sir 48, 3; Jas 5, 17. q Lk 4, 26.

## CHAPTER 18

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**Elijah and the Prophets of Baal** [1]Long afterward, in the third year, the LORD spoke to Elijah. "Go, present yourself to Ahab," he said, "that I may send rain upon the earth." [2]So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

[3]Now the famine in Samaria was bitter, [4]and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his vizier, who was a zealous follower of the LORD. When Jezebel was murdering the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them away fifty each in two caves, and supplied them with food and drink. [5]Ahab said to Obadiah, "Come, let us go through the land to all sources of water and to all the streams. We may find grass and save the horses and mules, so that we shall not have to slaughter any of the beasts." [6]Dividing the land to explore between them, Ahab went one way by himself, Obadiah another way by himself.

[7]As Obadiah was on his way, Elijah met him. Recognizing him, Obadiah fell prostrate and asked, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?" [8]"Yes," he answered. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here!' " [9]But Obadiah said, "What sin have I committed, that you are handing me over to Ahab to have me killed? [10]As the LORD, your God, lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent in search of you. When they replied, 'He is not here,' he made each kingdom and nation swear they could not find you. [11]And now you say, 'Go tell your master: Elijah is here!' [12]After I leave you, the spirit of the LORD will carry you to some place I do not know, and when I go to inform Ahab and he does not find you, he will kill me. Your servant has revered the LORD from his youth. [13]Have you not been told, my lord, what I did when Jezebel was murdering the prophets of the LORD—that I hid a hundred of the prophets of the LORD, fifty each in two caves, and supplied them with food and drink? [14]And now you say, 'Go tell your master: Elijah is here!' He will kill me!" [15]Elijah answered, "As the LORD of hosts lives, whom I serve, I will present myself to him today."

[16]So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and informed him. Ahab came to meet Elijah, [17]and when he saw Elijah, said to him, "Is it you, you disturber of Israel?" [18]"It is not I who disturb Israel," he answered, "but you and your family, by forsaking the commands of the LORD and following the Baals. [19]Now summon all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, as well as the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table." [20]So Ahab sent to all the Israelites and had the prophets assemble on Mount Carmel.

[21]Elijah appealed to all the people and said, "How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him." The people, however, did not answer him. [22]So Elijah said to the people, "I am the only surviving prophet of the LORD, and there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. [23]Give us two young bulls. Let them choose one, cut it into pieces, and place it on the wood, but start no fire. I shall prepare the other and place it on the wood, but shall start no fire. [24]You shall call on your gods, and I will call on the LORD. The God who answers with fire is God." All the people answered, "Agreed!"

[25]Elijah then said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one young bull and prepare it first, for there are more of you. Call upon your gods, but do not start the fire." [26]Taking the young bull that was turned over to them, they prepared it and called on Baal from morning to noon, saying, "Answer us, Baal!" But there was no sound, and no one answering. And they hopped around the altar they had prepared. [27]When it was noon, Elijah taunted them: "Call louder, for he is a god and may be meditating, or may have retired, or may be on a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." [28]They called out louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until blood gushed over them. [29]Noon passed and they remained in a prophetic state until the time for offering sacrifice. But there was not a sound; no one answered, and no one was listening.

[30]Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." When they had done so, he

repaired the altar of the LORD which had been destroyed. 31He took twelve stones, for the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the LORD had said, "Your name shall be Israel." 32He built an altar in honor of the LORD with the stones, and made a trench around the altar large enough for two seahs of grain. 33When he had arranged the wood, he cut up the young bull and laid it on the wood. 34"Fill four jars with water," he said, "and pour it over the holocaust and over the wood." "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time. 35The water flowed around the altar, and the trench was filled with the water.

36At the time for offering sacrifice, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, "LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things by your command. 37Answer me, LORD! Answer me, that this people may know that you, LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to their senses." 38The LORD's fire came down and consumed the holocaust, wood, stones, and dust, and it lapped up the water in the trench. 39Seeing this, all the people fell prostrate and said, "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!" 40Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Let none of them escape!" They were seized, and Elijah had them brought down to the brook Kishon and there he slit their throats.

41Elijah then said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." 42So Ahab went up to eat and drink, while Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, crouched down to the earth, and put his head between his knees. 43"Climb up and look out to sea," he directed his servant, who went up and looked, but reported, "There is nothing." Seven times he said, "Go, look again!" 44And the seventh time the youth reported, "There is a cloud as small as a man's hand rising from the sea." Elijah said, "Go and say to Ahab, 'Harness up and leave the mountain before the rain stops you.' " 45In a trice, the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and a heavy rain fell. Ahab mounted his chariot and made for Jezreel. 46But the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, who girded up his clothing and ran before Ahab as far as the approaches to Jezreel.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 19
See RG
176–177

**Flight to Horeb** 1Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done—that he had put all the prophets to the sword. 2Jezebel then sent a messenger to Elijah and said, "May the gods do thus and so to me if by this time tomorrow I have not done with your life what was done to each of them." 3Elijah was afraid and fled for his life, going to Beer-sheba of Judah. He left his servant there 4and went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death: "This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." 5He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. 6He looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, 7but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!" 8He got up, ate and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

9There he came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the LORD came to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" 10He answered: "I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." 11*Then the LORD said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain

19, 11ff: Compare these divine manifestations to Elijah with those to Moses (Ex 19, 1–23; 33, 21ff; 34, 5) on the same Mount Horeb (Sinai) (Dt 4, 10–15). Though various phenomena, such as wind, storms, earthquakes, fire (Ex 19, 18f), herald the divine presence, they do not constitute the presence itself which, like the tiny whispering sound, is imperceptible and bespeaks the spirituality of God. It was fitting that Elijah, whose mission it was to reestablish the covenant and restore the pure faith, should have returned to Horeb where the covenant was revealed to Moses and through him to the Israelite people (Ex 3, 1–4. 17; 33, 18—34, 9). Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the time of his transfiguration (Mt 17, 1–9; Mk 9, 1–7; Lk 9, 28–36).

Ch 20
See RG
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before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by."
A strong and heavy wind was rending the
mountains and crushing rocks before the
LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind.
After the wind there was an earthquake—but
the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12After
the earthquake there was fire—but the LORD
was not in the fire. After the fire there was a
tiny whispering sound. 13When he heard this,
Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and
stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said
to him, "Elijah, why are you here?" 14He re-
plied, "I have been most zealous for the LORD,
the God of hosts. But the Israelites have for-
saken your covenant, torn down your altars,
and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am
left, and they seek to take my life."[r] 15*"Go,
take the road back to the desert near Damas-
cus," the LORD said to him. "When you arrive,
you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram.
16Then you shall anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as
king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat of
Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you.[s] 17If
anyone escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will
kill him. If he escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha
will kill him. 18Yet I will leave seven thousand
men in Israel—all those who have not knelt to
Baal or kissed him."[t]

**Call of Elisha*** 19Elijah set out, and came
upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing
with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following
the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw
his cloak over him. 20Elisha left the oxen, ran
after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my
father and mother goodbye, and I will follow
you." "Go back!" Elijah answered. "Have I
done anything to you?" 21Elisha left him and,
taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he
used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil
their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat.
Then he left and followed Elijah as his
attendant.

## CHAPTER 20

**Ahab's Victories over Ben-hadad** 1Ben-
hadad, king of Aram, gathered all his forces, and
accompanied by thirty-two kings with horses
and chariotry, proceeded to invest and attack
Samaria. 2He sent couriers to Ahab, king of
Israel, within the city, 3and said to him, "This is
Ben-hadad's message: 'Your silver and gold are
mine, and your wives and your promising sons
are mine.' " 4The king of Israel answered, "As
you say, my lord king, I and all I have are yours."
5But the couriers came again and said, "This is
Ben-hadad's message: 'I sent you word to give
me your silver and gold, your wives and your
sons. 6Now, however, at this time tomorrow I
will send my servants to you, and they shall
ransack your house and the houses of your
servants. They shall seize and take away what-
ever they consider valuable.' "

7The king of Israel then summoned all the
elders of the land and said: "Understand clearly
that this man wants to ruin us. When he sent to
me for my wives and sons, my silver and my
gold, I did not refuse him." 8All the elders and all
the people said to him, "Do not listen. Do not
give in." 9Accordingly he directed the couriers of
Ben-hadad, "Say to my lord the king, 'I will do
all that you demanded of your servant the first
time. But this I cannot do.' " The couriers left
and reported this. 10Ben-hadad then sent him
the message, "May the gods do thus and so to
me if there is enough dust in Samaria to make
handfuls for all my followers." 11The king of
Israel replied, "Tell him, 'It is not for the man
who is buckling his armor to boast as though he
were taking it off.' " 12Ben-hadad was drinking
in the pavilions with the kings when he heard
this reply. "Prepare the assault," he commanded
his servants; and they made ready to storm the
city.

13Then a prophet came up to Ahab, king of
Israel, and said: "The LORD says, 'Do you see all

19, 15–17: Elijah himself carried out only the third of the commissions entrusted to him (vv 19–21); Elisha was deputed to perform the first in person (2 Kgs 8, 7–19), and the second through one of his followers (2 Kgs 9, 1–10).

19, 19–21: Elijah's act of throwing his mantle over the shoulders of Elisha expressed the divine call to share the prophetic mission. Elisha's prompt response through destruction of his plow and oxen is an example of total obedience and detachment from his former manner of living in order to promote the glory of God.

r Rom 11, 3. s 2 Kgs 9, 2. t Rom 11, 4.

this huge army? When I deliver it up to you
today, you will know that I am the LORD.' "
14But Ahab asked, "Through whom will it be
delivered up?" He answered, "The LORD says,
'Through the retainers of the governors of the
provinces.' " Then Ahab asked, "Who is to
attack?" He replied, "You are." 15So Ahab called
up the retainers of the governors of the prov-
inces, two hundred thirty-two of them. Behind
them he mustered all the Israelite soldiery, who
numbered seven thousand. 16They marched out
at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking heavily
in the pavilions with the thirty-two kings who
were his allies. 17When the retainers of the
governors of the provinces marched out first,
Ben-hadad received word that some men had
marched out of Samaria. 18He answered,
"Whether they have come out for peace or for
war, in any case take them alive." 19But when
these had come out of the city—the soldiers of
the governors of the provinces with the army
following them— 20each of them struck down
his man. The Arameans fled with Israel pursuing
them, while Ben-hadad, king of Aram, escaped
on a chariot steed. 21The king of Israel went out,
took the horses and chariots, and inflicted a
severe defeat on Aram.

22Then the prophet went up to the king of
Israel and said to him: "Go, regroup your forces.
Mark well what you do, for at the beginning of
the year* the king of Aram will attack you."
23On the other hand, the servants of the king of
Aram said to him: "Their gods are gods of
mountains. That is why they defeated us. But if
we fight them on level ground, we shall be sure
to defeat them. 24This is what you must do: Take
the kings from their posts and put prefects in
their places. 25Mobilize an army as large as the
army that has deserted you, horse for horse,
chariot for chariot. Let us fight them on level
ground, and we shall surely defeat them." He
took their advice and did this.

26At the beginning of the year, Ben-hadad
mobilized Aram and went up to Aphek to fight
against Israel. 27The Israelites, too, were called
to arms and supplied with provisions; then they
went out to engage the foe. The Israelites,
encamped opposite them, seemed like a couple
of small flocks of goats, while Aram covered the
countryside. 28A man of God came up and said
to the king of Israel: "The LORD says, 'Because
Aram has said the LORD is a god of mountains,
not a god of plains, I will deliver up to you all
this large army, that you may know I am the
LORD.' " 29They were encamped opposite each
other for seven days. On the seventh day battle
was joined, and the Israelites struck down one
hundred thousand foot soldiers of Aram in one
day. 30The survivors, twenty-seven thousand of
them, fled into the city of Aphek, and there the
wall collapsed. Ben-hadad, too, fled, and took
refuge within the city, in an inside room.

31His servants said to him: "We have heard
that the kings of the land of Israel are merciful
kings. Allow us, therefore, to garb ourselves in
sackcloth, with cords around our heads, and go
out to the king of Israel. Perhaps he will spare
your life." 32So they dressed in sackcloth girded
at the waist, and wearing cords around their
heads, they went to the king of Israel. "Your
servant Ben-hadad pleads for his life," they said.
"Is he still alive?" the king asked. "He is my
brother." 33Hearing this as a good omen, the
men quickly took him at his word and said,
"Ben-hadad is your brother." He answered, "Go
and get him." When Ben-hadad came out to
him, the king had him mount his chariot. 34Ben-
hadad said to him, "I will restore the cities
which my father took from your father, and you
may make yourself bazaars in Damascus, as my
father did in Samaria." "On these terms," Ahab
replied, "I will set you free." So he made an
agreement with him and then set him free.

35One of the guild prophets was prompted by
the LORD to say to his companion, "Strike me."
But he refused to strike him. 36Then he said to
him, "Since you did not obey the voice of the
LORD, a lion will kill you when you leave me."
When they parted company, a lion came upon
him and killed him. 37The prophet met another
man and said, "Strike me." The man struck him
a blow and wounded him. 38The prophet went

**20, 22:** At the beginning of the year: in the spring.

on and waited for the king on the road, having disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. [39]As the king was passing, he called out to the king and said, "Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and suddenly someone turned and brought me a man and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, you shall have to pay for his life with your life or pay out a talent of silver.' [40]But while your servant was looking here and there, the man disappeared." The king of Israel said to him, "That is your sentence. You have decided it yourself." [41]He immediately removed the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. [42]He said to him: "The LORD says, 'Because you have set free the man I doomed to destruction, your life shall pay for his life, your people for his people.' " Disturbed and angry, the king of Israel went off homeward and entered Samaria. [u]

## CHAPTER 21

Ch 21
See RG
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**Seizure of Naboth's Vineyard** [1]Some time after this, as Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria, [2]Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard to be my vegetable garden, since it is close by, next to my house. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or, if you prefer, I will give you its value in money." [3]"The LORD forbid," Naboth answered him, "that I should give you my ancestral heritage." [4]Ahab went home disturbed and angry at the answer Naboth the Jezreelite had made to him: "I will not give you my ancestral heritage." Lying down on his bed, he turned away from food and would not eat.

[5]His wife Jezebel came to him and said to him, "Why are you so angry that you will not eat?" [6]He answered her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Sell me your vineyard, or, if you prefer, I will give you a vineyard in exchange.' But he refused to let me have his vineyard." [7]"A fine ruler over Israel you are indeed!" his wife Jezebel said to him. "Get up. Eat and be cheerful. I will obtain the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you."

[8]So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and, having sealed them with his seal, sent them to the elders and to the nobles who lived in the same city with Naboth. [9]This is what she wrote in the letters: "Proclaim a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. [10]Next, get two scoundrels to face him and accuse him of having cursed God and king. Then take him out and stone him to death." [11]His fellow citizens—the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city—did as Jezebel had ordered them in writing, through the letters she had sent them. [12]They proclaimed a fast and placed Naboth at the head of the people. [13]Two scoundrels came in and confronted him with the accusation, "Naboth has cursed God and king." And they led him out of the city and stoned him to death. [14]Then they sent the information to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned to death.

[15]When Jezebel learned that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Go on, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite which he refused to sell you, because Naboth is not alive, but dead." [16]On hearing that Naboth was dead, Ahab started off on his way down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

[17]But the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite: [18]"Start down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He will be in the vineyard of Naboth, of which he has come to take possession. [19]* [v] This is what you shall tell him, 'The LORD says: After murdering, do you also take possession? For this, the LORD says: In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs shall lick up your blood, too.' " [20]*"Have you found me out, my enemy?" Ahab

**21, 19:** The response of Ahab to this divine judgment is described in v 27, and the consequences are given in vv 28–29, and in 2 Kgs 9, 21–26.

**21, 20–26:** In these verses the Judean editor of the Books of Kings substitutes, for the message of Elijah prepared for in v 19, a sweeping and definitive judgment against the whole family of Ahab in the same terms as were used against the families of Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 14, 9–11) and Baasha (1 Kgs 16, 2–4). This judgment is the fruit of later theological reflection; it is not occasioned directly by the crime against Naboth, but by the idolatry of Ahab and Jezebel. The judgment on Jezebel herself (v 23) may have been uttered by Elijah during the Naboth episode; it finds its fulfillment in 2 Kgs 9, 36–37. Still another theological explanation for the death of Ahab is given by the north Israelite writer of 1 Kgs 20, 35–42 above.

u 1 Kgs 22, 35. v 1 Kgs 22, 38.

said to Elijah. "Yes," he answered. "Because you
have given yourself up to doing evil in the
LORD's sight, 21I am bringing evil upon you: I
will destroy you and will cut off every male in
Ahab's line, whether slave or freeman, in Is-
rael.[w] 22I will make your house like that of
Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and like that of Baasha,
son of Ahijah, because of how you have pro-
voked me by leading Israel into sin."[x] 23(Against
Jezebel, too, the LORD declared, "The dogs shall
devour Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.")[y]
24"When one of Ahab's line dies in the city, dogs
will devour him; when one of them dies in the
field, the birds of the sky will devour him."
25Indeed, no one gave himself up to the doing of
evil in the sight of the LORD as did Ahab, urged
on by his wife Jezebel. 26He became completely
abominable by following idols, just as the Amo-
rites had done, whom the LORD drove out before
the Israelites.

27When Ahab heard these words, he tore his
garments and put on sackcloth over his bare
flesh. He fasted, slept in the sackcloth, and went
about subdued. 28Then the LORD said to Elijah
the Tishbite, 29"Have you seen that Ahab has
humbled himself before me? Since he has hum-
bled himself before me, I will not bring the evil
in his time. I will bring the evil upon his house
during the reign of his son."[z]

## CHAPTER 22

**Campaign against Ramoth-gilead** 1Three
years passed without war between Aram and
Israel.[a] 2In the third year, however, King Je-
hoshaphat of Judah came down to the king of
Israel, 3who said to his servants, "Do you not
know that Ramoth-gilead is ours and we are
doing nothing to take it from the king of Aram?"
4He asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you come with me
to fight against Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat
answered the king of Israel, "You and I are as
one, and your people and my people, your
horses and my horses as well." 5Jehoshaphat also
said to the king of Israel, "Seek the word of the
LORD at once."

6The king of Israel gathered together the
prophets, about four hundred of them, and
asked, "Shall I go to attack Ramoth-gilead or
shall I refrain?" "Go up," they answered. "The
LORD will deliver it over to the king." 7But
Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of
the LORD here whom we may consult?" 8The
king of Israel answered, "There is one other
through whom we might consult the LORD,
Micaiah, son of Imlah; but I hate him because he
prophesies not good but evil about me." Jehosha-
phat said, "Let not your majesty speak of evil
against you."

9So the king of Israel called an official and said
to him, "Get Micaiah, son of Imlah, at once."
10The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of
Judah were seated, each on his throne, clothed
in their robes of state on a threshing floor at the
entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the
prophets were prophesying before them. 11Zede-
kiah, son of Chenaanah, made himself horns of
iron and said, "The LORD says, 'With these you
shall gore Aram until you have destroyed
them.' " 12The other prophets prophesied in a
similar vein, saying: "Go up to Ramoth-gilead;
you shall succeed. The LORD will deliver it over
to the king."

13The messenger who had gone to call Mica-
iah said to him, "Look now, the prophets are
unanimously predicting good for the king. Let
your word be the same as any of theirs; predict
good." 14"As the LORD lives," Micaiah an-
swered, "I shall say whatever the LORD tells
me."

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15When he came to the king, the king said to
him, "Micaiah, shall we go to fight against
Ramoth-gilead, or shall we refrain?" "Go up," he
answered, "you shall succeed! The LORD will
deliver it over to the king." 16But the king
answered him, "How many times must I adjure
you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name
of the LORD?" 17So Micaiah said:

"I see all Israel
scattered on the mountains,

w 2 Kgs 9, 8. x 1 Kgs 15, 29; 16, 3. y 2 Kgs 9, 36. z 2 Kgs 9, 26. a 2 Chr 18, 1.

like sheep without a shepherd,
and the LORD saying, 'These have no master!
Let each of them go back home in peace.' "

18The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did
I not tell you he prophesies not good but evil
about me?" 19*Micaiah continued: "Therefore
hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD
seated on his throne, with the whole host of
heaven standing by to his right and to his left.
20The LORD asked, 'Who will deceive Ahab, so
that he will go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'
And one said this, another that, 21until one of
the spirits came forth and presented himself to
the LORD, saying, 'I will deceive him.' The LORD
asked, 'How?' 22He answered, 'I will go forth
and become a lying spirit in the mouths of all his
prophets.' The LORD replied, 'You shall succeed
in deceiving him. Go forth and do this.' 23So
now, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the
mouths of all these prophets of yours, but the
LORD himself has decreed evil against you."

24Thereupon Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah,
came up and slapped Micaiah on the cheek,
saying, "Has the spirit of the LORD, then, left me
to speak with you?" 25"You shall find out,"
Micaiah replied, "on that day when you retreat
into an inside room to hide." 26The king of Israel
then said, "Seize Micaiah and take him back to
Amon, prefect of the city, and to Joash, the king's
son, 27and say, 'This is the king's order: Put this
man in prison and feed him scanty rations of
bread and water until I return in safety.' " 28But
Micaiah said, "If ever you return in safety, the
LORD has not spoken through me."*

29The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of
Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead, 30and the king
of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise
myself and go into battle, but you put on your
own clothes." So the king of Israel disguised
himself and entered the fray. 31In the meantime
the king of Aram had given his thirty-two chariot
commanders the order, "Do not fight with
anyone at all except the king of Israel." 32When
the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they
cried out, "That must be the king of Israel!" and
shifted to fight him. But Jehoshaphat shouted his
battle cry, 33and the chariot commanders, aware
that he was not the king of Israel, gave up
pursuit of him. 34Someone, however, drew his
bow at random, and hit the king of Israel
between the joints of his breastplate. He ordered
his charioteer, "Rein about and take me out of
the ranks, for I am disabled." 35The battle grew
fierce during the day, and the king, who was
propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans,
died in the evening. The blood from his wound
flowed to the bottom of the chariot.[b] 36At sunset
a cry went through the army, "Every man to his
city, every man to his land, 37for the king is
dead!" So they went to Samaria, where they
buried the king. 38When the chariot was washed
at the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked up his
blood and harlots bathed there, as the LORD had
prophesied.[c]

39The rest of the acts of Ahab, with all that he
did, including the ivory palace and all the cities
he built, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 40Ahab rested with his
ancestors, and his son Ahaziah succeeded him as
king.

**Reign of Jehoshaphat** 41Jehoshaphat, son of
Asa, began to reign over Judah in the fourth year
of Ahab, king of Israel. 42Jehoshaphat was thirty-
five years old when he began to reign, and he
reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi.
43He followed all the ways of his father Asa
unswervingly, doing what was right in the
LORD's sight. 44Nevertheless, the high places did
not disappear, and the people continued to
sacrifice and to burn incense on the high places.
45Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of
Israel. 46The rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, with
his prowess, what he did and how he fought, are

**22, 19–23:** The prophet Micaiah uses as a last resort to deter Ahab from his foolhardy design of fighting against Ramoth-gilead the literary device of describing false prophets as messengers of a lying spirit which God, after holding counsel with his angels, permits to deceive them.

**22, 28:** A note in the Hebrew text after this verse attributes to Micaiah ben Imlah the first words of the book of a different Micaiah, the minor prophet of Moreshet.

b 1 Kgs 20, 42. c 1 Kgs 21, 19.

recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.

47He removed from the land the rest of the cult prostitutes who had remained in the reign of his father Asa. 48There was no king in Edom, but an appointed regent. 49Jehoshaphat made Tarshish ships to go to Ophir for gold; but in fact the ships did not go, because they were wrecked at Ezion-geber. 50Then Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants accompany your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat would not agree. 51Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors; he was buried in his forefathers' City of David. His son Jehoram succeeded him as king.

**Reign of Ahaziah** 52Ahaziah, son of Ahab, began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year* of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; he reigned two years over Israel. 53He did evil in the sight of the LORD, behaving like his father, his mother, and Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. 54He served and worshiped Baal, thus provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.

**22, 52:** Seventeenth year: so the present Hebrew text. More consistent with 2 Kgs 1, 17 would be a date in the twenty-fourth year of Jehoshaphat for Ahab's death; see note on 2 Kgs 1, 1.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

2 Kings
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## I: The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
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**Ahaziah Consults Baalzebub** 1After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel.[a] 2Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his roof terrace at Samaria and had been injured. So he sent out messengers with the instructions: "Go and inquire of Baalzebub,* the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."

3Meanwhile, the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite: "Go, intercept the messengers of Samaria's king, and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?' 4For this, the LORD says: 'You shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead, you shall die.' " And with that, Elijah departed. 5The messengers then returned to Ahaziah, who asked them, "Why have you returned?" 6"A man came up to us," they answered, "who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him: The LORD says, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? For this you shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead, you shall die.' " 7The king asked them, "What was the man like who came up to you and said these things to you?" 8"Wearing a hairy garment,"* they replied, "with a leather girdle about his loins." "It is Elijah the Tishbite!" he exclaimed.[b]

**Death of Two Captains** 9Then the king sent a captain with his company of fifty men after Elijah. The prophet was seated on a hilltop when he found him. "Man of God," he ordered, "the king commands you to come down." 10"If I am a man of God," Elijah answered the captain, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.[c] 11Ahaziah sent another captain with his company of fifty men after Elijah. "Man of God," he called out to Elijah, "the king commands you to come down immediately." 12"If I am a man of

**1, 2:** Baalzebub: in this form, "Baal of flies." The name in the Hebrew text is a derisive alteration of Baalzebul, "Prince Baal." The best New Testament evidence supports the latter form in Mt 10, 25; Lk 11, 15. Later associations with Aramaic beeldebaba, "enemy," gave the ancient name its connotation of "devil."

**1, 8:** Hairy garment: a sign of ascetical and prophetic calling, imitated by John the Baptizer; see Mt 3, 4; Mk 1, 6.

a 2 Kgs 3, 4–27. b Zec 13, 4. c Lv 10, 2; Sir 48, 3f; Lk 9, 54f.

God," Elijah answered him, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And divine fire* came down from heaven, consuming him and his fifty men.

**Death of the King** [13]Again, for the third time, Ahaziah sent a captain with his company of fifty men. When the third captain arrived, he fell to his knees before Elijah, pleading with him. "Man of God," he implored him, "let my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants, count for something in your sight! [14]Already fire has come down from heaven, consuming two captains with their companies of fifty men. But now, let my life mean something to you!" [15]Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; you need not be afraid of him."

[16]So Elijah left and went down with him and stated to the king: "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, you shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead you shall die."[d]

[17]Ahaziah died in fulfillment of the prophecy of the LORD spoken by Elijah. Since he had no son, his brother Joram* succeeded him as king, in the second year of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. [18]The rest of the acts of Ahaziah are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Israel.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2 See RG 178

**Elijah and Elisha** [1]When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, he and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.* [2]"Stay here, please," Elijah said to Elisha. "The LORD has sent me on to Bethel." "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live," Elisha replied, "I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel, [3]where the guild prophets went out to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master from over you today?" "Yes, I know it," he replied. "Keep still."

[4]Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, Elisha, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live," Elisha replied, "I will not leave you." [5]They went on to Jericho, where the guild prophets approached Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master from over you today?" "Yes, I know it," he replied. "Keep still."

[6]Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here; the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live," Elisha replied, "I will not leave you." And so the two went on together. [7]Fifty of the guild prophets followed, and when the two stopped at the Jordan, stood facing them at a distance. [8]Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water, which divided, and both crossed over on dry ground.[e]

**Elisha Succeeds Elijah** [9]When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask for whatever I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit."* [10]"You have asked something that is not easy," he replied. "Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not."[f] [11]As they walked on conversing, a flaming chariot and flaming horses came between them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.[g] [12]When Elisha saw it happen he cried out, "My father!*

1, 12: Divine fire: literally, "fire of God," which in Hebrew sounds quite like man of God. The play on words is the basis for Elijah's alleged retort. This story was told among the people to enhance the dignity of the prophet and to reflect the power of God whom he served. The mercy which God extends even to the wicked is described in Wis 11, 17—12, 22, and the prophet Elijah was well aware of it (1 Kgs 21, 28f).

1, 17: Joram: in the Second Book of Kings the name Joram (yoram), alternately Jehoram (yehoram), appears in numerous passages to designate both the king of Judah, son and successor of Jehoshaphat (848–841 B.C.), and the contemporary king of Israel, son of Ahab (852–841 B.C.). For the convenience of the reader in distinguishing these two kings, the longer form, Jehoram, is used to designate the king of Judah and the shorter form, Joram, to designate the king of Israel. See note on 2 Kgs 3, 1.

2, 1: Gilgal: commonly identified with Jiljulieh, about seven miles north of Bethel, and different from the Gilgal in Dt 11, 30 near Shechem, and that in Jos 4 and 5, passim, near Jericho.

2, 9: Double portion of your spirit: as the first-born son inherited a double portion of his father's property (Dt 21, 17), so Elisha asks to inherit from Elijah his spirit of prophecy in the degree befitting his principal disciple. In Nm 11, 17. 25, God bestows some of the spirit of Moses on others.

2, 12: My father: a religious title accorded prophetic leaders; cf 2 Kgs 6, 21; 8, 9. Israel's chariots and drivers: Elijah was worth more than a whole army in defending Israel and the true religion. King Joash of Israel uses the same phrase of Elisha himself (2 Kgs 13, 14).

d Sir 48, 6. e Ex 14, 16. 22. f Nm 11, 17. 25. g Gn 5, 24; 1 Mc 2, 58; Acts 1, 9.

my father! Israel's chariots and drivers!" But when he could no longer see him, Elisha gripped his own garment and tore it in two.[h]

13Then he picked up Elijah's mantle which had fallen from him, and went back and stood at the bank of the Jordan.[i] 14Wielding the mantle which had fallen from Elijah, he struck the water in his turn and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" When Elisha struck the water it divided and he crossed over.

15The guild prophets in Jericho, who were on the other side, saw him and said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They went to meet him, bowing to the ground before him. 16"Among your servants are fifty brave men," they said. "Let them go in search of your master. Perhaps the spirit of the LORD has carried him away to some mountain or some valley." "Do not send them," he answered.[j] 17However, they kept urging him, until he was embarrassed and said, "Send them." So they sent the fifty men, who searched for three days without finding him. 18When they returned to Elisha in Jericho, where he was staying, he said to them, "Did I not tell you not to go?"

**Healing of the Water** 19Once the inhabitants of the city complained to Elisha, "The site of the city is fine indeed, as my lord can see, but the water is bad and the land unfruitful." 20"Bring me a new bowl," Elisha said, "and put salt into it." When they had brought it to him, 21he went out to the spring and threw salt into it, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'I have purified this water. Never again shall death or miscarriage spring from it.' " 22And the water has stayed pure even to this day, just as Elisha prophesied.

**The Prophet's Curse** 23*From there Elisha went up to Bethel. While he was on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him. "Go up, baldhead," they shouted, "go up, baldhead!" 24The prophet turned and saw them, and he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the children to pieces.

25From there he went to Mount Carmel, and thence he returned to Samaria.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
178–179

**Campaign of Joram against Moab** 1Joram, son of Ahab, became king of Israel in Samaria [in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and he reigned for twelve years].* 2He did evil in the LORD's sight, though not as much as his father and mother. He did away with the pillar of Baal, which his father had made, 3but he still clung to the sin to which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had lured Israel; this he did not give up.

4Now Mesha, king of Moab, who raised sheep, used to pay the king of Israel as tribute a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. 5But when Ahab died, the king of Moab had rebelled against the king of Israel. 6Joram as king mustered all Israel, and when he set out on a campaign from Samaria, 7he sent the king of Judah the message: "The king of Moab is in rebellion against me. Will you join me in battle against Moab?" "I will," he replied. "You and I shall be as one, your people

**2, 23f:** This story, like the one about Elijah and the captains (ch 1), is preserved for us in Scripture to convey a popular understanding of the dignity of the prophet. Told in popular vein, it becomes a caricature, in which neither Elisha nor the bears behave in character. See note on 2 Kgs 1, 12 and the contrasting narrative in ch 4.

**3, 1:** The sequence of the reigns between Ahab and Jehu of Israel may be reconstructed as follows: Jehoshaphat of Judah outlived Ahab by a short time, so that Ahaziah of Israel was his contemporary. Jehoram of Judah succeeded his father Jehoshaphat while Ahaziah of Israel was still alive. Jehoram (Joram) of Israel became king, following his brother Ahaziah, in the second year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kgs 1, 17); this is one datum on which the earliest Greek evidence and the standard Hebrew text are in agreement.

The two Jehorams were contemporary for much of their reigns; Jehoram of Judah was succeeded by Ahaziah something more than a year before Jehu did away with the rulers of both kingdoms (2 Kgs 9, 1–29).

The Moabite campaign of 2 Kgs 3, 4–27 is thus best placed under the two Kings Jehoram, before the Edomite rebellion mentioned in 2 Kgs 8, 20. In the received Hebrew text, Jehoshaphat has been made the Judahite protagonist in the campaign against Moab as a tribute to his piety; this assimilates the story of 2 Kgs 3 to that of 1 Kgs 22, but creates difficulties in the chronology which the extant data leave party unresolved. An older practice for stories of the Israelite kings was to leave them and their fellow kings without identification by name; cf 2 Kgs 6, 8—7, 20. The name of Jehoshaphat has been omitted from a number of places in 2 Kgs 3—8, in this translation; cf 1 Kgs 22, 51.

h 2 Kgs 13, 14; Sir 48, 9. 12. i 1 Kgs 19, 19. j 1 Kgs 18, 12.

and mine, and your horses and mine as well."[k]
[8]They discussed the route for their attack, and
settled upon the route through the desert of
Edom.

[9]So the king of Israel set out, accompanied by
the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After
their roundabout journey of seven days the
water gave out for the army and for the animals
with them. [10]"Alas!" exclaimed the king of
Israel. "The LORD has called together these three
kings to put them in the grasp of Moab." [11]But
the king of Judah asked, "Is there no prophet of
the LORD here through whom we may inquire of
the LORD?" One of the officers of the king of
Israel replied, "Elisha, son of Shaphat, who
poured water on the hands of Elijah, is here."[l]
[12]"He has the word of the LORD," the king of
Judah agreed. So the kings of Israel, Judah, and
Edom went down to Elisha. [13]"What do you
want with me?" Elisha asked the king of Israel.
"Go to the prophets of your father and to the
prophets of your mother." "No," the king of
Israel replied. "The LORD has called these three
kings together to put them in the grasp of
Moab." [14]Then Elisha said, "As the LORD of
hosts lives, whom I serve, were it not that I
respect the king of Judah, I should neither look
at you nor notice you at all.[m] [15]Now get me a
minstrel."

Ch 4
See RG
179

When the minstrel played, the power of the
LORD came upon Elisha [16]and he announced:
"Thus says the LORD, 'Provide many catch basins
in this wadi.' [17]For the LORD says, 'Though you
will see neither wind nor rain, yet this wadi will
be filled with water for you, your livestock, and
your pack animals to drink.' [18]And since the
LORD does not consider this enough, he will also
deliver Moab into your grasp. [19]You shall destroy
every fortified city, fell every fruit tree, stop up
all the springs, and ruin every fertile field with
stones."[n]

[20]In the morning, at the time of the sacrifice,
water came from the direction of Edom and
filled the land.[o] [21]Meanwhile, all Moab heard
that the kings had come to give them battle;
every man capable of bearing arms was called up
and stationed at the border. [22]Early that morning, when the sun shone on the water, the
Moabites saw the water at a distance as red as
blood.* [23]"This is blood!" they exclaimed. "The
kings have fought among themselves and killed
one another. Quick! To the spoils, Moabites!"
[24]But when they reached the camp of Israel, the
Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites,
who fled from them. They ranged through the
countryside striking down the Moabites, and
[25]destroying the cities; each of them cast stones
onto every fertile field till they had loaded it
down; all the springs they stopped up and every
useful tree they felled. Finally only Kir-hareseth*
was left behind its stone walls, and the slingers
had surrounded it and were attacking it.[p]
[26]When he saw that he was losing the battle, the
king of Moab took seven hundred swordsmen to
break through to the king of Aram, but he failed.
[27]So he took his first-born, his heir apparent, and
offered him as a holocaust upon the wall. The
wrath against Israel* was so great that they gave
up the siege and returned to their own land.[q]

## CHAPTER 4

**The Widow's Oil** [1][r]A certain woman, the
widow of one of the guild prophets, complained
to Elisha: "My husband, your servant, is dead.
You know that he was a God-fearing man, yet
now his creditor has come to take my two
children as his slaves."* [2]"How can I help you?"
Elisha answered her. "Tell me what you have in
the house." "This servant of yours has nothing in
the house but a jug of oil," she replied. [3]"Go
out," he said, "borrow vessels from all your
neighbors—as many empty vessels as you can.
[4]Then come back and close the door on yourself
and your children; pour the oil into all the

3, 22: Red as blood: possibly caused by the red sandstone of the Wadi Zered (Dt 2, 13), south of Moab.

3, 25: Kir-hareseth: modern Kerak, east of the Dead Sea; cf Is 16, 7. 11; Jer 48, 31. 36.

3, 27: The wrath against Israel: probably the wrath of Chemosh, the Moabite god to whom the child was offered. He was feared by the Israelites who lost heart on foreign soil.

4, 1: His creditor . . . slaves: Hebrew law permitted the selling of wife and children as chattels for debt; cf Ex 21, 7; Am 2, 6; 8, 6; Is 50.

k 1 Kgs 22, 4. l 1 Kgs 22, 7. m 1 Kgs 18, 15. n Dt 20, 19. o 1 Kgs 18, 29. p Jb 5, 23. q Jgs 11, 30f. r 1 Kgs 17, 8–16.

vessels, and as each is filled, set it aside." [5]She
went and did so, closing the door on herself and
her children. As they handed her the vessels, she
would pour in oil. [6]When all the vessels were
filled, she said to her son, "Bring me another
vessel." "There is none left," he answered her.
And then the oil stopped. [7]She went and told the
man of God, who said, "Go and sell the oil to
pay off your creditor; with what remains, you
and your children can live."

**Elisha and the Shunammite** [8]One day Elisha
came to Shunem, where there was a woman of
influence, who urged him to dine with her.
Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to
stop there to dine. [9]So she said to her husband,
"I know that he is a holy man of God. Since he
visits us often, [10]let us arrange a little room on
the roof and furnish it for him with a bed, table,
chair, and lamp, so that when he comes to us he
can stay there." [11]Some time later Elisha arrived
and stayed in the room overnight. [12]Then he
said to his servant Gehazi, "Call this Shunam-
mite woman." He did so, and when she stood
before Elisha, [13]he told Gehazi, "Say to her, 'You
have lavished all this care on us; what can we do
for you? Can we say a good word for you to the
king or to the commander of the army?' " She
replied, "I am living among my own people."
[14]Later Elisha asked, "Can something be done
for her?" "Yes!" Gehazi answered. "She has no
son, and her husband is getting on in years."
[15]"Call her," said Elisha. When she had been
called, and stood at the door, [16]Elisha promised,
"This time next year you will be fondling a baby
son." "Please, my lord," she protested, "you are
a man of God; do not deceive your servant."[s]
[17]Yet the woman conceived, and by the same
time the following year she had given birth to a
son, as Elisha promised.

[18]The day came when the child was old
enough to go out to his father among the
reapers.[t] [19]"My head hurts!" he complained to
his father. "Carry him to his mother," the father
said to a servant. [20]The servant picked him up
and carried him to his mother; he stayed with
her until noon, when he died in her lap. [21]The
mother took him upstairs and laid him on the
bed of the man of God. Closing the door on him,
she went out [22]and called to her husband, "Let
me have a servant and a donkey. I must go
quickly to the man of God, and I will be back."
[23]"Why are you going to him today?" he asked.
"It is neither the new moon nor the sabbath."
But she bade him good-bye, [24]and when the
donkey was saddled, said to her servant: "Lead
on! Do not stop my donkey unless I tell you to."
[25]She kept going till she reached the man of God
on Mount Carmel. When he spied her at a
distance, the man of God said to his servant
Gehazi: "There is the Shunammite! [26]Hurry to
meet her, and ask if all is well with her, with her
husband, and with the boy." "Greetings,"* she
replied. [27]But when she reached the man of God
on the mountain, she clasped his feet. Gehazi
came near to push her away, but the man of God
said: "Let her alone, she is in bitter anguish; the
LORD hid it from me and did not let me know."
[28]"Did I ask my lord for a son?" she cried out.
"Did I not beg you not to deceive me?" [29]"Gird
your loins," Elisha said to Gehazi, "take my staff
with you and be off; if you meet anyone, do not
greet him,* and if anyone greets you, do not
answer. Lay my staff upon the boy." [30]But the
boy's mother cried out: "As the LORD lives and
as you yourself live, I will not release you." So he
started to go back with her.

[31] [u]Meanwhile, Gehazi had gone on ahead
and had laid the staff upon the boy, but there
was no sound or sign of life. He returned to meet
Elisha and informed him that the boy had not
awakened. [32]When Elisha reached the house, he
found the boy lying dead. [33]He went in, closed
the door on them both, and prayed to the
LORD.[v] [34]Then he lay upon the child on the bed,
placing his mouth upon the child's mouth, his
eyes upon the eyes, and his hands upon the

**4, 26:** Greetings: the conventional answer to Gehazi's question, which tells him nothing.

**4, 29:** Do not greet him: the profuse exchange of compliments among Orientals meeting and greeting one another consumed time. Urgency necessitated their omission, as our Lord counseled his disciples (Lk 10, 4).

s Gn 18, 10. t 1 Kgs 17, 17–24. u 31–36; Acts 20, 10ff. v 1 Kgs 17, 21–23.

hands. As Elisha stretched himself over the
child, the body became warm. 35He arose, paced
up and down the room, and then once more lay
down upon the boy, who now sneezed seven
times and opened his eyes.[w] 36Elisha summoned
Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite." She
came at his call, and Elisha said to her, "Take
your son." 37She came in and fell at his feet in
gratitude; then she took her son and left the
room.

**The Poisoned Stew** 38When Elisha returned
to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. Once,
when the guild prophets were seated before
him, he said to his servant, "Put the large pot on,
and make some vegetable stew for the guild
prophets." 39Someone went out into the field to
gather herbs and found a wild vine, from which
he picked a clothful of wild gourds. On his
return he cut them up into the pot of vegetable
stew without anybody's knowing it. 40The stew
was poured out for the men to eat, but when
they began to eat it, they exclaimed, "Man of
God, there is poison in the pot!" And they could
not eat it. 41"Bring some meal," Elisha said. He
threw it into the pot and said, "Serve it to the
people to eat." And there was no longer anything harmful in the pot.

**Multiplication of Loaves** 42A man came from
Baal-shalishah bringing the man of God twenty
barley loaves made from the first-fruits, and fresh
grain in the ear. "Give it to the people to eat,"
Elisha said. 43But his servant objected, "How can
I set this before a hundred men?" "Give it to the
people to eat," Elisha insisted. "For thus says the
LORD, 'They shall eat and there shall be some left
over.' " 44And when they had eaten, there was
some left over, as the LORD had said.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5
See RG
179

**Cure of Naaman** 1Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, was highly esteemed and respected by his master, for through him the LORD had brought victory to Aram. But valiant as he was, the man was a leper. 2Now the Arameans had captured from the land of Israel in a raid a little girl, who became the servant of Naaman's wife. 3"If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria," she said to her mistress, "he would cure him of his leprosy." 4Naaman went and told his lord just what the slave girl from the land of Israel had said. 5"Go," said the king of Aram. "I will send along a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festal garments. 6To the king of Israel he brought the letter, which read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy."

7When he read the letter, the king of Israel tore his garments and exclaimed: "Am I a god with power over life and death, that this man should send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? Take note! You can see he is only looking for a quarrel with me!"[x] 8When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his garments, he sent word to the king: "Why have you torn your garments? Let him come to me and find out that there is a prophet in Israel."

9Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. 10The prophet sent him the message: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean."[y] 11But Naaman went away angry, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the LORD his God, and would move his hand over the spot, and thus cure the leprosy. 12Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?"* With this, he turned about in anger and left.

13But his servants came up and reasoned with him. "My father," they said, "if the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to you, 'Wash and be clean,' should you do

5, 12: Wash in them and be cleansed: typical of the ambiguity in ritual healing or cleanliness. The muddy waters of the Jordan are no match hygienically for the mountain spring waters of Damascus; ritually, it is the other way around.

w Heb 11, 35. x Gn 30, 2; 1 Sm 2, 6; Jn 5, 21. y Jn 9, 7.

as he said." [14]So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.[z]

[15]He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

[16]"As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it," Elisha replied; and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused. [17]Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth,* for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD. [18]But I trust the LORD will forgive your servant this: when my master enters the temple of Rimmon to worship there, then I, too, as his adjutant, must bow down in the temple of Rimmon. May the LORD forgive your servant this." [19]"Go in peace,"* Elisha said to him.

[20]Naaman had gone some distance when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, thought to himself: "My master was too easy with this Aramean Naaman, not accepting what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something out of him." [21]So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. Aware that someone was running after him, Naaman alighted from his chariot to wait for him. "Is everything all right?" he asked. [22]"Yes," Gehazi replied, "but my master sent me to say, 'Two young men have just come to me, guild prophets from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two festal garments.' " [23]"Please take two talents," Naaman said, and pressed them upon him. He tied up these silver talents in bags and gave them, with the two festal garments, to two of his servants, who carried them before Gehazi. [24]When they reached the hill, Gehazi took what they had, carried it into the house, and sent the men on their way.

[25]He went in and stood before Elisha his master, who asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant has not gone anywhere." [26]But Elisha said to him: "Was I not present in spirit when the man alighted from his chariot to wait for you? Is this a time to take money or to take garments, olive orchards or vineyards, sheep or cattle, male or female servants? [27]The leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And Gehazi left Elisha, a leper white as snow.[a]

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6 See RG 180

**Recovery of the Lost Ax** [1]The guild prophets once said to Elisha: "There is not enough room for us to continue to live here with you. [2]Let us go to the Jordan, where by getting one beam apiece we can build ourselves a place to live." "Go," Elisha said. [3]"Please agree to accompany your servants," one of them requested. "Yes, I will come," he replied.

[4]So he went with them, and when they arrived at the Jordan they began to fell trees. [5]While one of them was felling a tree trunk, the iron axhead slipped into the water. "O master," he cried out, "it was borrowed!" [6]"Where did it fall?" asked the man of God. When he pointed out the spot, Elisha cut off a stick, threw it into the water, and brought the iron to the surface. [7]"Pick it up," he said. And the man reached down and grasped it.

**Aramean Ambush** [8]When the king of Aram was waging war on Israel, he would make plans with his servants to attack a particular place. [9]But the man of God would send word to the king of Israel, "Be careful! Do not pass by this place, for Aram will attack there." [10]So the king of Israel would send word to the place which the man of God had indicated, and alert it; then they would be on guard. This happened several times.

[11]Greatly disturbed over this, the king of Aram called together his officers. "Will you not tell me," he asked them, "who among us is for the king of Israel?" [12]"No one, my lord king," answered one of the officers. "The Israelite

5, 17: Two mule-loads of earth: Israelite earth on which to erect in Aram an altar to the God of Israel.

5, 19: Go in peace: Elisha understands and approves the situation of Naaman who, though a proselyte as regards belief in and worship of the God of Israel, is required by his office to assist his master, the king, worshiping in the pagan temple of Rimmon.

z Lk 4, 27. a Ex 4, 6; Nm 12, 10.

prophet Elisha can tell the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." 13"Go, find out where he is," he said, "so that I may take him captive."

**Blinded Aramean Soldiers** Informed that Elisha was in Dothan, 14he sent there a strong force with horses and chariots. They arrived by night and surrounded the city. 15Early the next morning, when the attendant of the man of God arose and went out, he saw the force with its horses and chariots surrounding the city. "Alas!" he said to Elisha. "What shall we do, my lord?" 16"Do not be afraid," Elisha answered. "Our side outnumbers theirs." 17Then he prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes, that he may see." And the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, so that he saw the mountainside filled with horses and fiery chariots around Elisha.[b]

18When the Arameans came down to get him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike this people blind, I pray you." And in answer to the prophet's prayer the LORD struck them blind. 19Then Elisha said to them: "This is the wrong road, and this is the wrong city. Follow me! I will take you to the man you want." And he led them to Samaria. 20When they entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open their eyes that they may see." The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were inside Samaria. 21When the king of Israel saw them, he asked, "Shall I kill them, my father?" 22"You must not kill them," replied Elisha. "Do you slay those whom you have taken captive with your sword or bow?* Serve them bread and water. Let them eat and drink, and then go back to their master."

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23The king spread a great feast for them. When they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went back to their master. No more Aramean raiders came into the land of Israel.

**Siege of Samaria** 24After this, Ben-hadad, king of Aram, mustered his whole army and laid siege to Samaria. 25Because of the siege the famine in Samaria was so severs that an ass's head sold for eighty pieces of silver, and a fourth of a kab of wild onion for five pieces of silver.

26One day, as the king of Israel was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord king!" 27"No," he replied, "the LORD help you! Where could I find help for you: from the threshing floor or the winepress?" 28Then the king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She replied: "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son that we may eat him today; then tomorrow we will eat my son.'[c] 29So we boiled my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Now give up your son that we may eat him.' But she hid her son." 30When the king heard the woman's words, he tore his garments. And as he was walking on the wall, the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth underneath, next to his skin.[d]

31"May God do thus and so to me," the king exclaimed, "if the head of Elisha, son of Shaphat, stays on him today!" 32Meanwhile, Elisha was sitting in his house in conference with the elders. The king had sent a man ahead before he himself should come to him. Elisha had said to the elders: "Do you know that this son of a murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? When the messenger comes, see that you close the door and hold it fast against him. His master's footsteps are echoing behind him." 33While Elisha was still speaking, the king came down to him and said, "This evil is from the LORD. Why should I trust in the LORD any longer?"

## CHAPTER 7

1Elisha said: "Hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD, 'At this time tomorrow a seah of fine flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, in the market* of Samaria.' " 2But the adjutant on whose arm the king leaned, answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, how could this happen?" "You shall see it with

6, 22: With your sword or bow: since the king would not slay prisoners who had surrendered to his power, much less should he slay prisoners captured by God's power. By Oriental custom they became guests within Samaria's walls.

7, 1: Market: literally "gate," the principal place of trading in ancient walled cities in time of peace.

b 2 Kgs 7, 6; Ps 67, 18. c Dt 28, 53–57. d 1 Kgs 20, 31; 21, 27.

your own eyes," Elisha said, "but you shall not eat of it."[e]

**The Lepers at the Gate** [3]At the city gate were four lepers who were deliberating, "Why should we sit here until we die?[f] [4]If we decide to go into the city, we shall die there, for there is famine in the city. If we remain here, we shall die too. Come, let us desert to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, we die." [5]At twilight they left for the Arameans; but when they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there. [6g]The LORD had caused the army of the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses, the din of a large army, and they had reasoned among themselves, "The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the borderlands* to fight us." [7]Then in the twilight they fled, abandoning their tents, their horses, and their asses, the whole camp just as it was, and fleeing for their lives.

[8]After the lepers reached the edge of the camp, they went first into one tent, ate and drank, and took silver, gold, and clothing from it, and went out and hid them. Back they came into another tent, took things from it, and again went out and hid them. [9]Then they said to one another: "We are not doing right. This is a day of good news, and we are keeping silent. If we wait until morning breaks, we shall be blamed. Come, let us go and inform the palace."

[10]They came and summoned the city gatekeepers. "We went to the camp of the Arameans," they said, "but no one was there—not a human voice, only the horses and asses tethered, and the tents just as they were left." [11]The gatekeepers announced this and it was reported within the palace. [12]Though it was night, the king got up; he said to his servants: "Let me tell you what the Arameans have done to us. Knowing that we are in famine, they have left their camp to hide in the field, hoping to take us alive and enter our city when we leave it." [13]One of his servants, however, suggested: "Since those who are left in the city are no better off than all the throng that has perished, let some of us take five of the abandoned horses and send scouts to investigate."

**End of the Siege** [14]They took two chariots, and horses, and the king sent them to reconnoiter the Aramean army. "Go and find out," he ordered. [15]They followed the Arameans as far as the Jordan, and the whole route was strewn with garments and other objects that the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. The messengers returned and told the king.

[16]The people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans; and then a seah of fine flour sold for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel, as the LORD had said.

[17]The king put in charge of the gate the officer who was his adjutant; but the people trampled him to death at the gate, just as the man of God had predicted when the king visited him. [18]Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of the man of God to the king, "Two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel, and one seah of fine flour for a shekel at this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria." [19]The adjutant had answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, how could this happen?" And Elisha had replied, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." [20]And that is what happened to him, for the people trampled him to death at the gate.

## CHAPTER 8

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**Prediction of Famine** [1]Elisha once said to the woman whose son he had restored to life: "Get ready! Leave with your family and settle wherever you can, because the LORD has decreed a seven-year famine which is coming upon the land."[h] [2]The woman got ready and did as the man of God said, setting out with her family and settling in the land of the Philistines for seven years. [3]At the end of the seven years, the woman returned from the land of the Philistines and went out to the king to claim her house and her field. [4]The king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. "Tell me," he said,

7, 6: Kings of the borderlands: from Musur in Anatolia rather than Egypt.

e 2 Kgs 7, 17; Ps 78, 23; Is 24, 18. f Lv 13, 46. g 6f: 2 Kgs 6, 17; 19, 35f; 2 Sm 5, 24. h 2 Kgs 4, 36.

"all the great things that Elisha has done." [5]Just
as he was relating to the king how his master
had restored a dead person to life, the very
woman whose son Elisha had restored to life
came to the king to claim her house and field.
"My lord king," Gehazi said, "this is the woman,
and this is that son of hers whom Elisha restored
to life." [6]The king questioned the woman, and
she told him her story. With that the king placed
an official* at her disposal, saying, "Restore all
her property to her, with all that the field
produced from the day she left the land until
now."

**Death of Ben-hadad Foretold** [7]Elisha came to
Damascus at a time when Ben-hadad, king of
Aram, lay sick. When he was told that the man
of God had come there, [8]the king said to Hazael,
"Take a gift with you and go call on the man of
God. Have him consult the LORD as to whether I
shall recover from this sickness." [9]Hazael went
to visit him, carrying a present, and with forty
camel loads of the best goods of Damascus. On
his arrival, he stood before the prophet and said,
"Your son Ben-hadad, king of Aram, has sent me
to ask you whether he will recover from his
sickness." [10]"Go and tell him," Elisha answered,
"that he will surely recover. However, the LORD
has showed me that he will in fact die." [11]Then
he stared him down until Hazael became ill at
ease. The man of God wept, [12]and Hazael asked,
"Why are you weeping, my lord?" Elisha replied,
"Because I know the evil that you will inflict
upon the Israelites. You will burn their fortresses, you will slay their youth with the sword,
you will dash their little children to pieces, you
will rip open their pregnant women." *i*

[13]Hazael exclaimed, "How can a dog like me,
your servant,* do anything so important?" "The
LORD has showed you to me as king over Aram,"
replied Elisha. *j*

[14]Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master. "What did Elisha tell you?" asked Ben-
hadad. "He told me that you would surely
recover," replied Hazael. [15]The next day, however, Hazael took a cloth, dipped it in water, and
spread it over the king's face, so that he died.
And Hazael reigned in his stead.

**Reign of Jehoram of Judah** [16]In the fifth year
of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoram,*
son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, became king.
[17] *k*He was thirty-two years old when he began
to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.
[18]He conducted himself like the kings of Israel of
the line of Ahab, since the sister of Ahab was his
wife; and he did evil in the LORD's sight. [19]Even
so, the LORD was unwilling to destroy Judah,
because of his servant David. For he had promised David that he would leave him a lamp in the
LORD's presence for all time. *l* [20]During Jehoram's reign, Edom revolted against the sovereignty of Judah and chose a king of its own.
[21]Thereupon Jehoram with all his chariots
crossed over to Zair. He arose by night and broke
through the Edomites when they had surrounded him and the commanders of his chariots. Then his army fled homeward. [22]To this day
Edom has been in revolt against the rule of
Judah. Libnah also revolted at that time. *m* [23]The
rest of the acts of Jehoram, with all that he did,
are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the
kings of Judah. [24]Jehoram rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of
David. His son Ahaziah succeeded him as king.

**Accession of Ahaziah** [25]Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah, became king in the twelfth
year of Joram,* son of Ahab, king of Israel. [26]He
was twenty-two years old when he began his
reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Athaliah; she was the daughter of Omri, king of Israel. [27]He conducted
himself like the house of Ahab, doing evil in the
LORD's sight as they did, since he was related to

**8, 6:** An official: Literally "eunuch," and perhaps actually so in this instance.

**8, 13:** A dog . . . your servant: Hazael feigns humility (1 Sm 24, 14; 2 Sm 9, 8), without attending to the crimes he would commit after usurping the royal power as the prophet predicts. Anything so important: literally "a great deed" for a patriotic Syrian.

**8, 16:** Jehoram of Judah succeeded his father Jehoshaphat during the reign of Ahaziah of Israel. See note on 2 Kgs 3, 1.

**8, 25:** Twelfth year of Joram: i.e., of Israel, who probably reigned only eight years.

i 2 Kgs 13, 7. j 2 Kgs 15, 16; 1 Kgs 19, 15. k 17ff: 2 Chr 21, 5ff. l 2 Sm 7, 11–16; 21, 17; 1 Kgs 11, 36; 15, 4; 2 Chr 21, 7. m Gn 27, 40; 2 Chr 21, 8ff.

them by marriage. [28]He joined Joram, son of
Ahab, in battle against Hazael, king of Aram, at
Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded
Joram.[n] [29]King Joram returned to Jezreel to be
healed of the wounds which the Arameans had
inflicted on him at Ramah in his battle against
Hazael, king of Aram. Then Ahaziah, son of
Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to Jezreel to
visit him there in his illness.

## CHAPTER 9

**Anointing of Jehu** [1]The prophet Elisha called
one of the guild prophets and said to him: "Gird
your loins, take this flask of oil with you, and go
to Ramoth-gilead.[o] [2]When you get there, look
for Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi.
Enter and take him away from his companions
into an inner chamber.[p] [3]From the flask you
have, pour oil on his head, and say, 'Thus says
the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then
open the door and flee without delay."[q] [4]The
young man (the guild prophet) went to Ramoth-
gilead. [5]When he arrived, the commanders of
the army were in session. "I have a message for
you, commander," he said. "For which one of
us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander," he
answered. [6]Jehu got up and went into the house.
Then the young man poured the oil on his head
and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:
'I anoint you king over the people of the LORD,
over Israel. [7]*You shall destroy the house of
Ahab your master; thus will I avenge the blood
of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all
the other servants of the LORD shed by Jezebel,
[8]r and by all the rest of the family of Ahab. I will
cut off every male in Ahab's line, whether slave
or freeman in Israel. [9]I will deal with the house
of Ahab as I dealt with the house of Jeroboam,
son of Nebat, and with the house of Baasha, son
of Ahijah. [10]Dogs shall devour Jezebel at the
confines of Jezreel, so that no one can bury
her.' " Then he opened the door and fled.

[11]When Jehu rejoined his master's servants,
they asked him, "Is all well? Why did that
madman come to you?" "You know that kind of
man and his talk," he replied. [12]But they said,
"Not at all! Come, tell us." So he told them what
the young man had said to him, and finally,
"Thus says the LORD: 'I anoint you king over
Israel.' " [13]At once each took his garment,
spread it under Jehu on the bare steps, blew the
trumpet, and cried out, "Jehu is king!"[s]

[14]t Thus Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of
Nimshi, formed a conspiracy against Joram.
Joram, with all Israel, had been besieging
Ramoth-gilead against Hazael, king of Aram,
[15]but had returned to Jezreel to be healed of the
wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in
the battle against Hazael, king of Aram.

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**Murder of Joram** "If you are truly with me,"
Jehu said, "see that no one escapes from the city to
report in Jezreel." [16]Then Jehu mounted his char-
iot and drove to Jezreel, where Joram lay ill and
Ahaziah, king of Judah, had come to visit him.

[17]The watchman standing on the tower in
Jezreel saw the troop of Jehu coming and re-
ported, "I see chariots." "Get a driver," Joram
said, "and send him to meet them and to ask
whether all is well." [18]So a driver went out to
meet him and said, "The king asks whether all is
well." "What does it matter to you how things
are?" Jehu said. "Get behind me." The watch-
man reported to the king, "The messenger has
reached them, but is not returning."

[19]Joram sent a second driver, who went to
them and said, "The king asks whether all is
well." "What does it matter to you how things
are?" Jehu replied. "Get behind me."

[20]The watchman reported, "The messenger
has reached them, but is not returning. The
driving is like that of Jehu, son of Nimshi, in its
fury." [21]"Prepare my chariot," said Joram.
When they had done so, Joram, king of Israel,
and Ahaziah, king of Judah, set out, each in his
own chariot, to meet Jehu. They reached him
near the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. [22]When

**9, 7–10:** The editors of the Books of Kings have here added to the prophet's message the same type of indictment and sanctions against the family of Ahab as were invoked against the dynasties of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14, 10f), Baasha (1 Kgs 16, 3f), and Ahab on a previous occasion (1 Kgs 21, 21–24).

n 2 Kgs 9, 14f. o 1 Kgs 21, 29; Hos 1, 4. p 1 Kgs 19, 16; q 1 Kgs 19, 16. r 8ff: 1 Kgs 14, 10f; 16, 3f: 21, 21–24. s Mt 21, 8. t 14f: 2 Kgs 8, 28f; 1 Kgs 22, 3f.

Joram recognized Jehu, he asked, "Is all well,
Jehu?" "How can all be well," Jehu replied, "as
long as the many fornications and witchcrafts*
of your mother Jezebel continue?" 23Joram
reined about and fled, crying to Ahaziah, "Trea-
son, Ahaziah!" 24But Jehu drew his bow and
shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the
arrow went through his heart and he collapsed
in his chariot. 25 [u]Then Jehu said to his adjutant
Bidkar, "Take him and throw him into the field
of Naboth the Jezreelite. For I remember that
when we were driving teams behind his father
Ahab, the LORD delivered this oracle against
him: 26'As surely as I saw yesterday the blood
of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the
LORD, 'I will repay you for it in that very plot of
ground, says the LORD.' So now take him into
this plot of ground, in keeping with the word of
the LORD."

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**Death of Ahaziah** 27 [v]Seeing what was hap-
pening, Ahaziah, king of Judah, fled toward
Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, shouting, "Kill
him too!" And they pierced him as he rode
through the pass of Gur near Ibleam. He contin-
ued his flight as far as Megiddo and died there.
28His servants brought him in a chariot to Jeru-
salem and buried him in the tomb of his ances-
tors in the City of David. 29Ahaziah had be-
come king of Judah in the eleventh year of
Joram, son of Ahab.

**Death of Jezebel** 30When Jezebel learned that
Jehu had arrived in Jezreel, she shadowed her
eyes, adorned her hair, and looked down from
her window. 31As Jehu came through the gate,
she cried out, "Is all well, Zimri, murderer of
your master?" [w] 32Jehu looked up to the window
and shouted, "Who is on my side? Anyone?" At
this, two or three eunuchs looked down toward
him. 33"Throw her down," he ordered. They
threw her down, and some of her blood spurted
against the wall and against the horses. Jehu
rode in over her body 34and, after eating and
drinking, he said: "Attend to that accursed
woman and bury her; after all, she was a king's
daughter." 35But when they went to bury her,
they found nothing of her but the skull, the feet,
and the hands. 36They returned to Jehu, and
when they told him, he said, "This is the
sentence which the LORD pronounced through
his servant Elijah the Tishbite: 'In the confines of
Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel.[x] 37The
corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung in the field in
the confines of Jezreel, so that no one can say:
This was Jezebel.' "

## CHAPTER 10

**Killing of Ahab's Descendants** 1Ahab had
seventy descendants in Samaria. Jehu prepared
letters and sent them to the city rulers, to the
elders, and to the guardians of Ahab's descen-
dants in Samaria.[y] 2"Since your master's sons
are with you," he wrote, "and you have the
chariots, the horses, a fortified city, and the
weapons, when this letter reaches you 3decide
which is the best and the fittest of your master's
offspring, place him on his father's throne, and
fight for your master's house." 4They were
overcome with fright and said, "If two kings
could not withstand him, how can we?" 5So the
vizier and the ruler of the city, along with the
elders and the guardians, sent this message to
Jehu: "We are your servants, and we will do
everything you tell us. We will proclaim no one
king; do whatever you think best." 6So Jehu
wrote them a second letter: "If you are on my
side and will obey me, count the heads of your
master's sons and come to me in Jezreel at this
time tomorrow." [The seventy princes were in
the care of prominent men of the city, who were
rearing them.]

7When the letter arrived, they took the
princes and slew all seventy of them, put their
heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu in
Jezreel. 8"They have brought the heads of the
princes," a messenger came in and told him.
"Pile them in two heaps at the entrance of the
city until morning," he ordered. 9Going out in
the morning, he stopped and said to all the
people: "You are not responsible, and although I
conspired against my lord and slew him, yet who

9, 22: Fornications and witchcrafts: the worship of foreign gods.

u 25f: 1 Kgs 21, 9–16. v 27ff: 2 Chr 22, 7ff. w 1 Kgs 16, 9ff. x 1 Kgs 21, 23. y Jgs 9, 5; 1 Kgs 15, 29; 16, 11.

killed all these? [10]Know that not a single word
which the LORD has spoken against the house of
Ahab shall go unfulfilled. The LORD has accom-
plished all that he foretold through his servant
Elijah."[z] [11]Thereupon Jehu slew all who were
left of the family of Ahab in Jezreel, as well as all
his powerful supporters, intimates, and priests,
leaving him no survivor.[a]

**Ahaziah's Kinsmen** [12][b]Then he set out for
Samaria, and at Beth-eked-haroim on the way,
[13]he came across kinsmen of Ahaziah, king of
Judah. "Who are you?" he asked. "We are
kinsmen of Ahaziah," they replied. "We are
going down to visit the princes and the family of
the queen mother." [14]"Take them alive," Jehu
ordered. They were taken alive, forty-two in
number, then slain at the pit of Beth-eked. Not
one of them was spared.

**Jehu in Samaria** [15]When he had left there,
Jehu met Jehonadab, son of Rechab, on the road.
He greeted him and asked, "Are you sincerely
disposed toward me, as I am toward you?"
"Yes," replied Jehonadab. "If you are," contin-
ued Jehu, "give me your hand." Jehonadab gave
him his hand, and Jehu drew him up into his
chariot.[c] [16]"Come with me," he said, "and see
my zeal for the LORD." And he took him along in
his own chariot.

[17]When he arrived in Samaria, Jehu slew all
who remained there of Ahab's line, doing away
with them completely and thus fulfilling the
prophecy which the LORD had spoken to Elijah.

**Baal's Temple Destroyed** [18]Jehu gathered all
the people together and said to them: "Ahab
served Baal to some extent, but Jehu will serve
him yet more.[d] [19]Now summon for me all Baal's
prophets, all his worshipers, and all his priests.
See that no one is absent, for I have a great
sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is absent shall not
live." This Jehu did as a ruse, so that he might
destroy the worshipers of Baal. [20]Jehu said
further, "Proclaim a solemn assembly in honor of
Baal." They did so, [21]and Jehu sent word of it
throughout the land of Israel. All the worshipers
of Baal without exception came into the temple
of Baal, which was filled to capacity. [22]Then Jehu
said to the custodian of the wardrobe, "Bring out
the garments for all the worshipers of Baal."
When he had brought out the garments for
them,[e] [23]Jehu, with Jehonadab, son of Rechab,
entered the temple of Baal and said to the
worshipers of Baal, "Search and be sure that
there is no worshiper of the LORD here with you,
but only worshipers of Baal." [24]Then they pro-
ceeded to offer sacrifices and holocausts. Now
Jehu had stationed eighty men outside with this
warning, "If one of you lets anyone escape of
those whom I shall deliver into your hands, he
shall pay life for life." [25]As soon as he finished
offering the holocaust, Jehu said to the guards
and officers, "Go in and slay them. Let no one
escape." So the guards and officers put them to
the sword and cast them out. Afterward they
went into the inner shrine of the temple of Baal,
[26]took out the stele of Baal, and burned the
shrine. [27]Then they smashed the stele of Baal,
tore down the building, and turned it into a
latrine, as it remains today.

[28]Thus Jehu rooted out the worship of Baal
from Israel. [29]However, he did not desist from
the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had
caused Israel to commit, as regards the golden
calves at Bethel and at Dan.[f] [30]The LORD said to
Jehu, "Because you have done well what I deem
right, and have treated the house of Ahab as I
desire, your sons to the fourth generation shall
sit upon the throne of Israel."[g] [31]But Jehu was
not careful to observe wholeheartedly the law of
the LORD, the God of Israel, since he did not
desist from the sins which Jeroboam caused
Israel to commit.

[32][h]At that time the LORD began to dismember
Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout
their territory [33]east of the Jordan (all the land of
Gilead, of the Gadites, Reubenites and Manas-
sehites), from Aroer on the river Arnon up
through Gilead and Bashan.

[34]The rest of the acts of Jehu, his valor and all
his accomplishments, are written in the book of
the chronicles of the kings of Israel. [35]Jehu

z 1 Kgs 21, 17–24. 29. a Hos 1, 4. b 12ff: 2 Chr 22, 8f.
c 1 Chr 2, 55; Jer 35, 1–11. d 1 Kgs 16, 30ff. e 1 Kgs 16, 32.
f 1 Kgs 12, 28f. g 2 Kgs 15, 12ff. h Am 1, 3.

rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him as king. [36]The length of Jehu's reign over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 11 See RG 181

**Rule of Athaliah** [1]When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she began to kill off the whole royal family.[i] [2]But Jehosheba,* daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash, his son, and spirited him away, along with his nurse, from the bedroom where the princes were about to be slain. She concealed him from Athaliah, and so he did not die. [3]For six years he remained hidden in the temple of the LORD, while Athaliah ruled the land.

[4][j]But in the seventh year, Jehoiada summoned the captains of the Carians and of the guards. He had them come to him in the temple of the LORD, exacted from them a sworn commitment, and then showed them the king's son. [5]He gave them these orders: "This is what you must do: the third of you who come on duty on the sabbath shall guard the king's palace; [6]another third shall be at the gate Sur; and the last third shall be at the gate behind the guards. [7]The two of your divisions who are going off duty that week shall keep guard over the temple of the LORD for the king. [8]You shall surround the king, each with drawn weapons, and if anyone tries to approach the cordon, kill him; stay with the king, whatever he may do."

[9][k]The captains did just as Jehoiada the priest commanded. Each one with his men, both those going on duty for the sabbath and those going off duty that week, came to Jehoiada the priest. [10][l]He gave the captains King David's spears and shields, which were in the temple of the LORD. [11]And the guards, with drawn weapons, lined up from the southern to the northern limit of the enclosure, surrounding the altar and the temple on the king's behalf. [12]Then Jehoiada led out the king's son and put the crown and the insignia upon him. They proclaimed him king and anointed him, clapping their hands and shouting, "Long live the king!"[m]

[13][n]Athaliah heard the noise made by the people, and appeared before them in the temple of the LORD. [14]When she saw the king standing by the pillar,* as was the custom, and the captains and trumpeters near him, with all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, she tore her garments and cried out, "Treason, treason!" [15]Then Jehoiada the priest instructed the captains in command of the force: "Bring her outside through the ranks. If anyone follows her," he added, "let him die by the sword." He had given orders that she should not be slain in the temple of the LORD. [16]She was led out forcibly to the horse gate of the royal palace, where she was put to death.

[17][o]Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD as one party and the king and the people as the other, by which they would be the LORD's people; and another covenant, between the king and the people. [18]Thereupon all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and demolished it. They shattered its altars and images completely, and slew Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. After appointing a detachment for the temple of the LORD, Jehoiada [19]with the captains, the Carians, the guards, and all the people of the land, led the king down from the temple of the LORD through the guards' gate to the palace, where Joash took his seat on the royal throne. [20]All the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet, now that Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the royal palace.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 12 See RG 181

**Reign of Joash** [1]Joash was seven years old when he became king.[p] [2]Joash began to reign in the seventh year of Jehu, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother, who was named Zibiah, was from Beer-sheba. [3]Joash did what was pleasing to the LORD as long as he lived, because the priest Jehoiada guided him. [4]Still,

11, 2: Jehosheba was the wife of Jehoida, the high priest; cf 2 Chr 22, 11.
11, 14: By the pillar: see note on 2 Chr 23, 13.

i Jgs 9, 5. j 4–8: 2 Chr 23, 1–7. k 9–12: 2 Chr 23, 8–11. l 10ff: 2 Sm 8, 7; 1 Kgs 1, 33f. m 2 Sm 1, 10. n 13–16: 2 Chr 23, 12–15. o 17–20: 2 Chr 23, 16–21. p 1f: 2 Chr 24, 1f.

the high places did not disappear; the people
continued to sacrifice and to burn incense there.
5 [q]For the priests Joash made this rule: "All the
funds for sacred purposes that are brought to the
temple of the LORD—the census tax, personal
redemption money, and whatever funds are
freely brought to the temple of the LORD— 6the
priests may take for themselves, each from his
own clients. However, they must make what-
ever repairs on the temple may prove neces-
sary." 7Nevertheless, as late as the twenty-third
year of the reign of King Joash, the priests had
not made needed repairs on the temple. 8Accord-
ingly, King Joash summoned the priest Jehoiada
and the other priests. "Why do you not repair
the temple?" he asked them. "You must no
longer take funds from your clients, but you shall
turn them over for the repairs." 9 [r]So the priests
agreed that they would neither take funds from
the people nor make the repairs on the temple.
10The priest Jehoiada then took a chest, bored
a hole in its lid, and set it beside the stele, on the
right as one entered the temple of the LORD. The
priests who guarded the entry would put into it
all the funds that were brought to the temple of
the LORD. 11When they noticed that there was a
large amount of silver in the chest, the royal
scribe [and the priest] would come up, and they
would melt down all the funds that were in the
temple of the LORD, and weigh them. 12The
amount thus realized they turned over to the
master workmen in the temple of the LORD.
They in turn would give it to the carpenters and
builders working in the temple of the LORD,
13and to the lumbermen and stone cutters, and
for the purchase of the wood and hewn stone
used in repairing the breaches, and for any other
expenses that were necessary to repair the
temple. 14None of the funds brought to the
temple of the LORD were used there to make
silver cups, snuffers, basins, trumpets, or any
gold or silver article. 15Instead, they were given
to the workmen, and with them they repaired
the temple of the LORD. 16Moreover, no reckon-
ing was asked of the men who were provided
with the funds to give to the workmen, because
they held positions of trust. 17The funds from
guilt-offerings and from sin-offerings, however,
were not brought to the temple of the LORD;
they belonged to the priests.
18 [s]Then King Hazael of Aram mounted a
siege against Gath. When he had taken it,
Hazael decided to go on to attack Jerusalem.[t]
19But King Jehoash of Judah took all the dedi-
cated offerings presented by his forebears, Je-
hoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, kings of Ju-
dah, as well as his own, and all the gold there
was in the treasuries of the temple and the
palace, and sent them to King Hazael of Aram,
who then led his forces away from Jerusalem.
20The rest of the acts of Joash, with all that he
did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of
the kings of Judah. 21Certain of his officials
entered into a plot against him and killed him at
Beth-millo. 22Jozacar, son of Shimeath, and Je-
hozabad, son of Shomer, were the officials who
killed him. He was buried in his forefathers' City
of David, and his son Amaziah succeeded him as
king.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 13
See RG
181–182

**Reign of Jehoahaz of Israel** 1In the twenty-
third year of Joash, son of Ahaziah, king of
Judah, Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, began his
seventeen-year reign over Israel in Samaria. 2He
did evil in the LORD's sight, conducting himself
like Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and not renouncing
the sin he had caused Israel to commit. 3The
LORD was angry with Israel and for a long time
left them in the power of Hazael, king of Aram,
and of Ben-hadad, son of Hazael. 4Then Jehoa-
haz entreated the LORD, who heard him, since
he saw the oppression to which the king of Aram
had subjected Israel.[u] 5So the LORD gave Israel a
savior,* and the Israelites, freed from the power
of Aram, dwelt in their own homes as formerly.
6Nevertheless, they did not desist from the sins
which the house of Jeroboam had caused Israel

13, 5: A savior: by this language, typical of the Book of Judges (Jgs 3, 9. 15), Jeroboam II of Israel is meant; cf 2 Kgs 14, 27.

q 5–8: 2 Chr 24, 5–10. r 9–16: 2 Chr 24, 11–14. s 2 Kgs 8, 12. t 18–22: 2 Chr 24, 23–27. u 2 Kgs 14, 26f.

to commit, but persisted in them. The sacred pole* also remained standing in Samaria.[v] [7]No soldiers were left to Jehoahaz, except fifty horsemen with ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers, since the king of Aram had destroyed them and trampled them like dust. [8]The rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, with all his valor and accomplishments, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. [9]Jehoahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. His son Joash succeeded him as king.

**Reign of Joash of Israel** [10]In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, began his sixteen-year reign over Israel in Samaria. [11]He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not desist from any of the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit, but persisted in them. [12]*[The rest of the acts of Joash, the valor with which he fought against Amaziah, king of Judah, and all his accomplishments, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.[w] [13]Joash rested with his ancestors, and Jeroboam occupied the throne. Joash was buried with the kings of Israel in Samaria.]

[14]When Elisha was suffering from the sickness of which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to visit him. "My father, my father!"* he exclaimed, weeping over him. "Israel's chariots and horsemen!"[x] [15]"Take a bow and some arrows," Elisha said to him. When he had done so, [16]*Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." As the king held the bow, Elisha placed his hands over the king's hands [17]and said, "Open the window toward the east." He opened it, Elisha said, "Shoot," and he shot. The prophet exclaimed, "The LORD's arrow of victory! The arrow of victory over Aram! You will completely conquer Aram at Aphec."

Ch 14 See RG 182

[18]Then he said to the king of Israel, "Take the arrows," which he did. Elisha said to him, "Strike the ground!" He struck the ground three times and stopped. [19]Angry with him, the man of God said: "You should have struck five or six times; you would have defeated Aram completely. Now, you will defeat Aram only three times."

[20]Elisha died and was buried. At the time, bands of Moabites used to raid the land each year. [21]Once some people were burying a man, when suddenly they spied such a raiding band. So they cast the dead man into the grave of Elisha, and everyone went off. But when the man came in contact with the bones of Elisha, he came back to life and rose to his feet.[y]

[22]King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel during the entire reign of Jehoahaz. [23]But the LORD was merciful with Israel and looked on them with compassion because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was unwilling to destroy them or to cast them out from his presence.[z] [24]So when King Hazael of Aram died and his son Ben-hadad succeeded him as king, [25]Joash, son of Jehoahaz, took back from Ben-hadad, son of Hazael, the cities which Hazael had taken in battle from his father Jehoahaz. Joash defeated Ben-hadad three times, and thus recovered the cities of Israel.

## CHAPTER 14

**Amaziah of Judah*** [1]In the second year of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, began to reign. [2][a]He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother, whose name was Jehoaddin, was from Jerusalem. [3]He pleased the LORD, yet not like his forefather David, since he did just as his father Joash had done. [4]Thus the high places did not disappear, but the people continued to

13, 6: Sacred pole: see note on Ex 34, 13.

13, 12f: The conclusion to the reign of Joash is given again in 2 Kgs 14, 15f, where it is more appropriate.

13, 14: My father, my father: the king expresses here the same sentiments as those with which Elisha addressed Elijah.

13, 16–19: Symbolic acts similar to these are seen in Ex 17, 8ff; Jos 8, 18ff; Ez 4, 1ff.

14, 1f: In the second year . . . twenty-nine years in Jerusalem: the reigns of the kings of Judah between Athaliah and Ahaz are assigned too many years in all to correspond to the reigns in Israel from Jehu to the fall of Samaria. It seems probable that Amaziah was murdered as soon as his son Azariah was old enough to rule, and that Amaziah's reign was nearer nineteen than twenty-nine years. The correlation, in 2 Kgs 15, 1, of the beginning of Azariah's reign with the 27th year of Jeroboam II can hardly be correct; and the sixteen-year reign of Jotham of Judah (2 Kgs 15, 33) consisted for the most part of a regency during the illness of his father (2 Kgs 15, 5).

v Ex 34, 13. w 2 Kgs 14, 8–16. x 2 Kgs 2, 12. y Sir 48, 14. z Dt 9, 27. a 2f: 2 Chr 25, 1f.

sacrifice and to burn incense on them. 5 [b]When
Amaziah had the kingdom firmly in hand, he
slew the officials who had murdered the king,
his father. 6But the children of the murderers he
did not put to death, obeying the LORD's com-
mand written in the book of the law of Moses,
"Fathers shall not be put to death for their
children, nor shall children be put to death for
their fathers; each one shall die for his own
sin."[c]

7Amaziah slew ten thousand Edomites in the
Salt Valley, and took Sela in battle. He renamed
it Joktheel, the name it has to this day.[d]

8Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash,
son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, with
this challenge, "Come, let us meet face to
face."[e] 9King Jehoash of Israel sent this reply to
the king of Judah: "The thistle of Lebanon sent
word to the cedar of Lebanon, 'Give your
daughter to my son in marriage,' but an animal
of Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle
underfoot. 10You have indeed conquered Edom,
and you have become ambitious. Enjoy your
glory, but stay at home! Why involve yourself
and Judah with you in misfortune and failure?"

11But Amaziah would not listen. King Jehoash
of Israel then advanced, and he and King Ama-
ziah of Judah met in battle at Beth-shemesh of
Judah. 12Judah was defeated by Israel, and all
the Judean soldiery fled homeward. 13King Jeho-
ash of Israel captured Amaziah, son of Jehoash,
son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh.
He went on to Jerusalem where he tore down
four hundred cubits of the city wall, from the
Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate. 14He took
all the gold and silver and all the utensils there
were in the temple of the LORD and in the
treasuries of the palace, and hostages as well.
Then he returned to Samaria. 15The rest of the
acts of Jehoash, his valor, and how he fought
Amaziah, king of Judah, are recorded in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.[f]
16Jehoash rested with his ancestors; he was
buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. His
son Jeroboam succeeded him as king.

17Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, sur-
vived Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel,
by fifteen years.* 18The rest of the acts of
Amaziah are written in the book of the chroni-
cles of the kings of Judah. 19When a conspiracy
was formed against him in Jerusalem, he fled to
Lachish. But he was pursued to Lachish and
killed there. 20He was brought back on horses
and buried with his ancestors in the City of
David in Jerusalem. 21Thereupon all the people
of Judah took the sixteen-year-old Azariah* and
proclaimed him king to succeed his father Ama-
ziah.[g] 22It was Azariah who rebuilt Elath and
restored it to Judah, after King Amaziah rested
with his ancestors.

**Jeroboam II of Israel** 23In the fifteenth year
of Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, Jero-
boam, son of Joash, king of Israel, began his
forty-one-year reign in Samaria. 24He did evil in
the sight of the LORD; he did not desist from
any of the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat,
had caused Israel to commit. 25He restored the
boundaries of Israel from Labo-of-Hamath to the
sea of the Arabah,* just as the LORD, the God
of Israel, had prophesied through his servant,
the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, from Gath-
hepher. 26For the LORD saw the very bitter
affliction of Israel, where there was neither
slave nor freeman, no one at all to help Israel.[h]
27Since the LORD had not determined to blot
out the name of Israel from under the heavens,
he saved them through Jeroboam, son of Joash.
28The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, his valor and
all his accomplishments, how he fought with
Damascus and turned back Hamath from Israel,
are recorded in the book of the chronicles of
the kings of Israel. 29Jeroboam rested with his
ancestors, the kings of Israel, and his son Zecha-
riah succeeded him as king.

**14, 17:** See note on 2 Kgs 14, 1f.
**14, 21:** Azariah: also called Uzziah in many texts.
**14, 25:** Sea of the Arabah: the Dead Sea. Jonah: see note on Jon 1, 1.

b 5f: 2 Chr 25, 3f. c Dt 24, 16; Ez 18, 20. d 2 Sm 8, 13f; 2 Chr 25, 11. e 2 Kgs 13, 12; Jgs 9, 8–15. f 2 Kgs 13, 12f. g 2 Chr 26, 1f. h 2 Kgs 13, 4f; 1 Kgs 14, 10.

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 15
See RG
182–183

**Azariah of Judah** 1 [i]Azariah, son of Amaziah,
king of Judah, became king in the twenty-
seventh year* of Jeroboam, king of Israel. 2He
was sixteen years old when he began to reign,
and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His
mother, whose name was Jecholiah, was from
Jerusalem. 3He pleased the LORD just as his
father Amaziah had done. 4Yet the high places
did not disappear; the people continued to
sacrifice and to burn incense on them. 5[j]The
LORD afflicted the king, and he was a leper to the
day of his death. He lived in a house apart, while
Jotham, the king's son, was vizier and regent for
the people of the land. 6The rest of the acts of
Azariah, and all his accomplishments, are re-
corded in the book of the chronicles of the kings
of Judah. 7Azariah rested with his ancestors, and
was buried with them in the City of David. His
son Jotham succeeded him as king.

**Zechariah of Israel** 8In the thirty-eighth year
of Azariah, king of Judah, Zechariah, son of
Jeroboam, was king of Israel in Samaria for six
months. 9He did evil in the sight of the LORD as
his fathers had done, and did not desist from the
sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused
Israel to commit. 10Shallum, son of Jabesh,
conspired against Zechariah, attacked and killed
him at Ibleam, and reigned in his place. 11The
rest of the acts of Zechariah are recorded in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.
12Thus the LORD's promise to Jehu, "Your de-
scendants to the fourth generation shall sit upon
the throne of Israel," was fulfilled.[k]

**Shallum of Israel** 13Shallum, son of Jabesh,
became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah,
king of Judah; he reigned one month in Samaria.
14Menahem, son of Gadi, came up from Tirzah
to Samaria, where he attacked and killed Shal-
lum, son of Jabesh, and reigned in his place.
15The rest of the acts of Shallum, and the fact of
his conspiracy, are recorded in the book of the
chronicles of the kings of Israel. 16At that time,
Menahem punished Tappuah, all the inhabitants
of the town and of its whole district, because on
his way from Tirzah they did not let him in. He
punished them even to ripping open all the
pregnant women.

**Menahem of Israel** 17In the thirty-ninth year
of Azariah, king of Judah, Menahem, son of
Gadi, began his ten-year reign over Samaria.
18He did evil in the sight of the LORD, not
desisting from the sins which Jeroboam, son of
Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. During his
reign, 19Pul,* king of Assyria, invaded the land,
and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of
silver to have his assistance in strengthening his
hold on the kingdom. 20Menahem secured the
money to give to the king of Assyria by exacting
it from all the men of substance in the country,
fifty silver shekels from each. The king of Assyria
did not remain in the country but withdrew.
21The rest of the acts of Menahem, and all his
accomplishments, are recorded in the book of
the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 22Menahem
rested with his ancestors, and his son Pekahiah
succeeded him as king.

**Pekahiah of Israel** 23In the fiftieth year of
Azariah, king of Judah, Pekahiah, son of Mena-
hem, began his two-year reign over Israel in
Samaria. 24He did evil in the sight of the LORD,
not desisting from the sins which Jeroboam, son
of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. 25His
adjutant Pekah, son of Remaliah, who had with
him fifty men from Gilead, conspired against
him, killed him within the palace stronghold in
Samaria, and reigned in his place. 26The rest of
the acts of Pekahiah, and all his accomplish-
ments, are recorded in the book of the chroni-
cles of the kings of Israel.

**Pekah of Israel** 27In the fifty-second year of
Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah, son of Remaliah,
began his twenty-year reign over Israel in Sa-
maria.* 28He did evil in the sight of the LORD,
not desisting from the sins which Jeroboam, son
of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. 29During

15, 1: Twenty-seventh year: see note on 2 Kgs 14, 1f.

15, 19: Pul: the Babylonian throne name of the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser III; cf 2 Kgs 15, 29.

15, 27: The twenty years here ascribed to Pekah are an impossibility; the calculation which made his reign, of five years at most, appear so long may have been based on the attempt to give Jotham of Judah a full sixteen-year reign independently of his regency. See 2 Kgs 16, 1 and the note on 2 Kgs 14, 1f.

i 1ff: 2 Chr 26, 3f. j 5ff: 2 Chr 26, 21ff. k 2 Kgs 10, 30.

the reign of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser,
king of Assyria, came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-
maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, all the territory
of Naphtali, Gilead, and Galilee, deporting the
inhabitants to Assyria. 30Hoshea, son of Elah,
conspired against Pekah, son of Remaliah; he
attacked and killed him, and reigned in his place
[in the twentieth year of Jotham, son of Uzziah].
31The rest of the acts of Pekah, and all his
accomplishments, are recorded in the book of
the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

**Jotham of Judah** 32 *l*In the second year of
Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham,
son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign.
33He was twenty-five years old when he became
king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.
His mother's name was Jerusha, daughter of
Zadok. 34He pleased the LORD, just as his father
Uzziah had done. 35Nevertheless the high places
did not disappear and the people continued to
sacrifice and to burn incense on them. It was he
who built the Upper Gate* of the temple of the
LORD. 36The rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his
accomplishments, are recorded in the book of
the chronicles of the kings of Judah. 37It was at
that time that the LORD first loosed Rezin, king
of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, against
Judah. 38Jotham rested with his ancestors and
was buried with them in his forefather's City of
David. His son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

## CHAPTER 16

**Ahaz of Judah** 1 *m*In the seventeenth year of
Pekah, son of Remaliah, Ahaz, son of Jotham,
king of Judah, began to reign. 2Ahaz was twenty
years old when he became king, and he reigned
sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not please the
LORD, his God, like his forefather David, 3but
conducted himself like the kings of Israel, and
even immolated his son by fire, in accordance
with the abominable practice of the nations
whom the LORD had cleared out of the way of
the Israelites.*n* 4Further, he sacrificed and
burned incense on the high places, on hills, and
under every leafy tree.*o*

5Then Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of
Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to
attack it. Although they besieged Ahaz, they
were unable to conquer him.*p* 6At the same time
the king of Edom recovered Elath for Edom,
driving the Judeans out of it. The Edomites then
entered Elath, which they have occupied until
the present.*q*

7Meanwhile, Ahaz sent messengers to
Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, with the plea: "I
am your servant and your son. Come up and
rescue me from the clutches of the king of Aram
and the king of Israel, who are attacking me."*r*
8Ahaz took the silver and gold that were in the
temple of the LORD and in the palace treasuries
and sent them as a present to the king of
Assyria,*s* 9who listened to him and moved
against Damascus, which he captured. He de-
ported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to
death.*

10King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet
Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. When he saw the
altar in Damascus, King Ahaz sent to Uriah the
priest a model of the altar and a detailed design
of its construction. 11Uriah the priest built an
altar according to the plans which King Ahaz
sent him from Damascus, and had it completed
by the time the king returned home. 12On his
arrival from Damascus, the king inspected this
altar, then went up to it and offered sacrifice on
it, 13burning his holocaust and cereal-offering,
pouring out his libation, and sprinkling the blood
of his peace-offerings on the altar.*t* 14The bronze
altar that stood before the LORD he brought from
the front of the temple—that is, from the space

Ch 16
See RG
183

15, 35: The Upper Gate: also the Gate of Benjamin; cf Jer 20, 2; Ez 9, 2.

16, 9: Firmly dated events bearing on chapters 16 through 20 are: the fall of Damascus (16, 9) in 732 B.C., the fall of Samaria (18, 9–11) in 721 B.C., and Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (18, 3) in 701 B.C., which is equated both in Kgs and in Is 36, 1 with the 14th year of Hezekiah. These data make it necessary to credit Ahaz with at least a twenty-year reign, between 735 and c. 715 B.C., and to exclude the correlations between Hoshea of Israel and Hezekiah in chapter 18.

If the 14th-year correspondence for 701 B.C. is given up, other arrangements are possible. The alleged ages of Jotham (15, 33), Ahaz (16, 2), and Hezekiah (18, 2) at their successive accessions to the throne do not argue for an early date for Hezekiah; but one or more of these may be artificial. Azariah (15, 1–7; Is 6, 1) was still on the throne of Judah in 743 B.C.

l 32–38: 2 Chr 27, 1–4. 7–9. m 1–4: 2 Chr 28, 1–4. n Lv 18, 21. o Dt 12, 2. p 2 Chr 28, 5f. q 2 Chr 28, 17. r 2 Chr 28, 16. s 2 Chr 28, 21. t 2 Chr 28, 23.

between the new altar and the temple of the
Lord—and set it on the north side of his altar.
15 [u]"Upon the large altar," King Ahaz com-
manded Uriah the priest, "burn the morning
holocaust and the evening cereal-offering, the
royal holocaust and cereal-offering, as well as the
holocausts, cereal-offerings, and libations of the
people. You must also sprinkle on it all the blood
of holocausts and sacrifices. But the old bronze
altar shall be mine for consultation."* 16Uriah
the priest did just as King Ahaz had commanded.
17King Ahaz detached the frames from the bases
and removed the lavers from them; he also took
down the bronze sea from the bronze oxen that
supported it, and set it on a stone pavement.[v]
18In deference to the king of Assyria he removed
from the temple of the LORD the emplacement
which had been built in the temple for a throne,
and the outer entrance for the king.* 19The rest
of the acts of Ahaz are recorded in the book of
the chronicles of the kings of Judah.[w] 20Ahaz
rested with his ancestors and was buried with
them in the City of David. His son Hezekiah
succeeded him as king.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 17
See RG
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**Hoshea of Israel** 1In the twelfth year of Ahaz,
king of Judah, Hoshea, son of Elah, began his
nine-year reign over Israel in Samaria. 2He did
evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not to the
extent of the kings of Israel before him. 3Shal-
maneser,* king of Assyria, advanced against
him, and Hoshea became his vassal and paid him
tribute.[x] 4But the king of Assyria found Hoshea
guilty of conspiracy for sending envoys to the
king of Egypt at Sais, and for failure to pay the
annual tribute to his Assyrian overlord. 5For this,
the king of Assyria arrested and imprisoned
Hoshea; he then occupied the whole land and
attacked Samaria, which he besieged for three
years. 6In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of
Assyria* took Samaria, and deported the Israel-
ites to Assyria, settling them in Halah, at the
Habor, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the
Medes.[y]

7This came about because the Israelites
sinned against the LORD, their God, who had
brought them up from the land of Egypt, from
under the domination of Pharaoh, king of Egypt,
and because they venerated other gods. 8They
followed the rites of the nations whom the LORD
had cleared out of the way of the Israelites [and
the kings of Israel whom they set up]. 9They
adopted unlawful practices toward the LORD,
their God. They built high places in all their
settlements, the watchtowers as well as the
walled cities. 10They set up pillars and sacred
poles for themselves on every high hill and
under every leafy tree.[z] 11There, on all the high
places, they burned incense like the nations
whom the LORD had sent into exile at their
coming. They did evil things that provoked the
LORD, 12and served idols, although the LORD had
told them, "You must not do this."

13And though the LORD warned Israel and
Judah by every prophet and seer, "Give up your
evil ways and keep my commandments and
statutes, in accordance with the entire law
which I enjoined on your fathers and which I
sent you by my servants the prophets," 14[a]they
did not listen, but were as stiff-necked as their
fathers, who had not believed in the LORD, their
God. 15They rejected his statutes, the covenant
which he had made with their fathers, and the
warnings which he had given them. The vanity
they pursued, they themselves became: they
followed the surrounding nations whom the
LORD had commanded them not to imitate.[b]
16They disregarded all the commandments of
the LORD, their God, and made for themselves
two molten calves; they also made a sacred pole
and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served
Baal.[c] 17[d]They immolated their sons and daugh-
ters by fire, practiced fortune-telling and divina-

16, 15: For consultation: perhaps the introduction into Judah of the Babylonian practice of omen sacrifices; cf Ez 21, 16.

16, 18: Emplacement . . . for a throne, and the outer entrance for the king: signs of sovereignty for the Hebrew kings.

17, 3: Shalmaneser: son and successor of Tiglath-pileser.

17, 6: The king of Assyria: Shalmaneser's successor and usurper, Sargon II.

u Ex 29, 38f; Nm 28, 3f. v 2 Chr 28, 24. w 2 Chr 28, 26f. x 2 Kgs 18, 9; Tb 1, 2. y 2 Kgs 18, 10f. z Ex 23, 24; 34, 13; Dt 12, 2. a Jer 25, 5; Dt 9, 13. b Jer 2, 5. c 1 Kgs 12, 28; Ex 34, 13; Dt 4, 19; 17, 2f. d Lv 18, 21; Dt 18, 10.

tion, and sold themselves into evildoing in the LORD's sight, provoking him [18]till, in his great anger against Israel, the LORD put them away out of his sight. Only the tribe of Judah was left.

[19]Even the people of Judah, however, did not keep the commandments of the LORD, their God, but followed the rites practiced by Israel. [20]So the LORD rejected the whole race of Israel. He afflicted them and delivered them over to plunderers, finally casting them out from before him. [21]When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam, son of Nebat, king: he drove the Israelites away from the LORD, causing them to commit a great sin.[e] [22]The Israelites imitated Jeroboam in all the sins he committed, nor would they desist from them. [23]Finally, the LORD put Israel away out of his sight as he had foretold through all his servants, the prophets; and Israel went into exile from their native soil to Assyria, an exile lasting to the present.[f]

[24]The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. [25]When they first settled there, they did not venerate the LORD, so he sent lions among them that killed some of their number. [26]A report reached the king of Assyria: "The nations whom you deported and settled in the cities of Samaria do not know how to worship the God of the land, and he has sent lions among them that are killing them, since they do not know how to worship the God of the land." [27]The king of Assyria gave the order, "Send back one of the priests whom I deported, to go there and settle, to teach them how to worship the God of the land." [28]So one of the priests who had been deported from Samaria returned and settled in Bethel, and taught them how to venerate the LORD.

[29]But these peoples began to make their own gods in the various cities in which they were living; in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, each people set up gods.[g] [30]Thus the Babylonians made Marduk and his consort; the men of Cuth made Nergal; the men of Hamath made Ashima; [31]the men of Avva made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the men of Sepharvaim immolated their children by fire to their city gods, King Hadad and his consort Anath. [32]They also venerated the LORD, choosing from their number priests for the high places, who officiated for them in the shrines on the high places.[h] [33]But, while venerating the LORD, they served their own gods, following the worship of the nations from among whom they had been deported.

[34]To this day they worship according to their ancient rites.* [They did not venerate the LORD nor observe the statutes and regulations, the law and commandments, which the LORD enjoined on the descendants of Jacob, whom he had named Israel.[i] [35]When he made a covenant with them, he commanded them: "You must not venerate other gods, nor worship them, nor serve them, nor offer sacrifice to them.[j] [36]The LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and outstretched arm: him shall you venerate, him shall you worship, and to him shall you sacrifice. [37]You must be careful to observe forever the statutes and regulations, the law and commandment, which he wrote for you, and you must not venerate other gods. [38]The covenant which I made with you, you must not forget; you must not venerate other gods. [39]But the LORD, your God, you must venerate; it is he who will deliver you from the power of all your enemies." [40]They did not listen, however, but continued in their earlier manner.] [41]Thus these nations venerated the LORD, but also served their idols. And their sons and grandsons, to this day, are doing as their fathers did.

**17, 34–40:** They did not . . . earlier manner: this passage is an adaptation of language denouncing the Israelites to make it applicable to the later Samaritan sect of postexilic times. The original bearing of the discourse (vv 13–15) can be seen by reading it between vv 22 and 23. Cf also 2 Kgs 18, 12.

e 1 Kgs 12, 19f; 12, 26–33. f Jer 25, 9. g Jn 4, 9. h 1 Kgs 12, 31. i Gn 32, 29. j Ex 20, 3ff.

# II: The Kingdom of Judah after 721 B.C.

## CHAPTER 18

Ch 18–20
See RG
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**Hezekiah** 1 [k]In the third year of Hoshea, son of
Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king
of Judah, began to reign. 2He was twenty-five
years old when he became king, and he reigned
twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Abi, daughter of Zechariah. 3He
pleased the LORD, just as his forefather David
had done. 4It was he who removed the high
places, shattered the pillars, and cut down the
sacred poles. He smashed the bronze serpent
called Nehushtan which Moses had made, be-
cause up to that time the Israelites were burning
incense to it.[l] 5He put his trust in the LORD, the
God of Israel; and neither before him nor after
him was there anyone like him among all the
kings of Judah. 6Loyal to the LORD, Hezekiah
never turned away from him, but observed the
commandments which the LORD had given Mo-
ses. 7The LORD was with him, and he prospered
in all that he set out to do. He rebelled against
the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8He
also subjugated the watchtowers and walled
cities of the Philistines, all the way to Gaza and
its territory.

9In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which
was the seventh year of Hoshea, son of Elah,
king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria,
attacked Samaria, laid siege to it,* 10 [m]and after
three years captured it. In the sixth year of
Hezekiah, the ninth year of Hoshea, king of
Israel, Samaria was taken. 11The king of Assyria
then deported the Israelites to Assyria and set-
tled them in Halah, at the Habor, a river of
Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 12This
came about because they had not heeded the
warning of the LORD, their God, but violated his
covenant, not heeding and not fulfilling the
commandments of Moses, the servant of the
LORD.[n]

**Invasion of Sennacherib** 13*In the fourteenth
year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib,* king of
Assyria, went on an expedition against all the
fortified cities of Judah and captured them.[o]
14Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent this message to
the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done
wrong. Leave me, and I will pay whatever
tribute you impose on me." The king of Assyria
exacted three hundred talents of silver and thirty
talents of gold from Hezekiah, king of Judah.
15Hezekiah paid him all the funds there were in
the temple of the LORD and in the palace
treasuries. 16He broke up the door panels and
the uprights of the temple of the LORD which he
himself had ordered to be overlaid with gold,
and gave the gold to the king of Assyria.[p]

17The king of Assyria sent the general, the
lord chamberlain, and the commander* from
Lachish with a great army to King Hezekiah at
Jerusalem. They went up, and on their arrival in
Jerusalem, stopped at the conduit of the upper
pool on the highway of the fuller's field.[q] 18They
called for the king, who sent out to them
Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the master of the palace;
Shebnah the scribe; and the herald Joah, son of
Asaph.[r] 19The commander said to them, "Tell
Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of
Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of
yours? 20Do you think mere words substitute for
strategy and might in war? On whom, then, do
you rely, that you rebel against me? 21This
Egypt, the staff on which you rely, is in fact a
broken reed which pierces the hand of anyone
who leans on it. That is what Pharaoh, king of
Egypt, is to all who rely on him.[s] 22But if you say
to me, We rely on the LORD, our God, is not he
the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah
has removed, commanding Judah and Jerusalem
to worship before this altar in Jerusalem?'

**18, 9:** See note on 2 Kgs 16, 9.
**18, 13—20, 11:** Duplication of Is 36, 1—38, 8. 21. 22.
**18, 13:** Sennacherib succeeded Sargon II as king of Assyria. His Judean campaign was waged in 701 B.C. See note on 2 Kgs 16, 9.
**18, 17:** General, the lord chamberlain . . . commander: the text lists three major functionaries by their Assyrian titles, of which only the first, more nearly "lord lieutenant," is military in origin; the commander was technically the king's chief butler.

k 1ff: 2 Chr 28, 27; 29, 1f. l Ex 23, 24; 34, 13; Nm 21, 9; Dt 12, 2; 2 Chr 31, 1; Wis 16, 6; Jn 3, 14. m 10f: 2 Kgs 17. 6; Tb 1, 2. n 2 Kgs 17, 7–18. o 2 Chr 32, 1ff; Sir 48, 18; Is 36, 1. p 1 Kgs 6, 20–22. q 2 Chr 32, 9; Is 36, 1ff. r Is 22, 13–25. s Is 30, 1–7; 31, 1–3; Ez 29, 6–7.

23 "Now, make a wager with my lord, the king
of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses if
you can put riders on them. 24 How then can you
repulse even one of the least servants of my lord,
relying as you do on Egypt for chariots and
horsemen? 25 Was it without the LORD's will that
I have come up to destroy this place? The LORD
said to me, 'Go up and destroy that land!' "
26 Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah
and Joah said to the commander: "Please speak
to your servants in Aramaic; we understand it.
Do not speak to us in Judean within earshot of
the people who are on the wall."
27 But the commander replied: "Was it to your
master and to you that my lord sent me to speak
these words? Was it not rather to the men sitting
on the wall, who, with you, will have to eat their
own excrement and drink their urine?" 28 Then
the commander stepped forward and cried out
in a loud voice in Judean, "Listen to the words of
the great king, the king of Assyria. 29 Thus says
the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you,
since he cannot deliver you out of my hand.
30 Let not Hezekiah induce you to rely on the
LORD, saying, The LORD will surely save us; this
city will not be handed over to the king of
Assyria. 31 Do not listen to Hezekiah, for the king
of Assyria says: Make peace with me and surren-
der! Then each of you will eat of his own vine
and of his own fig-tree, and drink the water of
his own cistern, 32 until I come to take you to a
land like your own, a land of grain and wine, of
bread and orchards, of olives, oil and fruit syrup.
Choose life, not death. Do not listen to Hezekiah
when he would seduce you by saying, The LORD
will rescue us. 33 Has any of the gods of the
nations ever rescued his land from the hand of
the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of
Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of
Sepharvaim, Hena, and Avva? Where are the
gods of the land of Samaria?[t] 35 Which of the
gods for all these lands ever rescued his land
from my hand? Will the LORD then rescue
Jerusalem from my hand?' " 36 But the people
remained silent and did not answer him one
word, for the king had ordered them not to
answer him.
37 Then the master of the palace, Eliakim, son
of Hilkiah, Shebnah the scribe, and the herald
Joah, son of Asaph, came to Hezekiah with their
garments torn, and reported to him what the
commander had said.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 18-20
See RG
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**Hezekiah and Isaiah** 1 [u] When King Hezekiah
heard this, he tore his garments, wrapped him-
self in sackcloth, and went into the temple of the
LORD. 2 He sent Eliakim, the master of the
palace, Shebnah the scribe, and the elders of the
priests, wrapped in sackcloth, to tell the prophet
Isaiah, son of Amoz, 3 "Thus says Hezekiah:
'This is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of
disgrace. Children are at the point of birth, but
there is no strength to bring them forth.* 4 Per-
haps the LORD, your God, will hear all the words
of the commander, whom his master, the king of
Assyria, sent to taunt the living God, and will
rebuke him for the words which the LORD, your
God, has heard. So send up a prayer for the
remnant that is here.' " 5 When the servants of
King Hezekiah had come to Isaiah, 6 he said to
them, "Tell this to your master: 'Thus says the
LORD: Do not be frightened by the words you
have heard, with which the servants of the king
of Assyria have blasphemed me.[v] 7 I am about to
put in him such a spirit that, when he hears a
certain report, he will return to his own land,
and there I will cause him to fall by the sword.' "
8 When the commander, on his return, heard
that the king of Assyria had withdrawn from
Lachish, he found him besieging Libnah. 9 The
king of Assyria heard a report that Tirhakah, king
of Ethiopia, had come out to fight against him.
Again he sent envoys to Hezekiah with this
message: 10 "Thus shall you say to Hezekiah,
king of Judah: 'Do not let your God on whom
you rely deceive you by saying that Jerusalem
will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.
11 You have heard what the kings of Assyria have
done to all other countries: they doomed them!

19, 3: See note on Is 37, 3.

t 2 Kgs 17, 24. u 1-7: Is 37, 1-7. v Is 10, 5-19.

Will you, then, be saved? [12]Did the gods of the
nations whom my fathers destroyed save them?
Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, or the Edenites in Telas-
sar?[w] [13]Where are the king of Hamath, the king
of Arpad, or the kings of the cities Sepharvaim,
Hena and Avva?' "[x]

[14][y]Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of
the messengers and read it; then he went up to
the temple of the LORD, and spreading it out
before him, [15]he prayed in the LORD's presence:
"O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned upon the
cherubim! You alone are God over all the
kingdoms of the earth. You have made the
heavens and the earth.[z] [16]Incline your ear, O
LORD, and listen! Open your eyes, O LORD, and
see! Hear the words of Sennacherib which he
sent to taunt the living God. [17]Truly, O LORD,
the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations
and their lands, [18]and cast their gods into the
fire; they destroyed them because they were not
gods, but the work of human hands, wood and
stone.[a] [19]Therefore, O LORD, our God, save us
from the power of this man, that all the king-
doms of the earth may know that you alone, O
LORD, are God."[b]

**Punishment of Sennacherib** [20]Then Isaiah,
son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah:
"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, in
answer to your prayer for help against Sennach-
erib, king of Assyria: I have listened! [21]This is
the word the LORD has spoken concerning him:*

" 'She despises you, laughs you to scorn,
the virgin daughter Zion!
Behind you she wags her head,
daughter Jerusalem.
[22]Whom have you insulted and blasphemed,
against whom have you raised your voice
And lifted up your eyes on high?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
[23]Through your servants you have insulted the
LORD.
You said: With my many chariots
I climbed the mountain heights,
the recesses of Lebanon;
I cut down its lofty cedars,
its choice cypresses;
I reached the remotest heights,
its forest park.
[24]I dug wells and drank water in foreign lands;
I dried up with the soles of my feet
all the rivers of Egypt.

[25]" 'Have you not heard?
Long ago I prepared it,
From days of old I planned it.
Now I have brought it to pass:
That you should reduce fortified cities
into heaps of ruins,
[26]While their inhabitants, shorn of power,
are dismayed and ashamed,
Becoming like the plants of the field, like the
green growth,
like the scorched grass on the housetops.
[27]I am aware whether you stand or sit;
I know whether you come or go,[c]
[28] and also your rage against me.
Because of your rage against me
and your fury which has reached my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth,
and make you return the way you came.

[29]" 'This shall be a sign for you:
this year you shall eat the aftergrowth,
next year, what grows of itself;
But in the third year, sow and reap,
plant vineyards and eat their fruit!
[30]The remaining survivors of the house of Judah
shall again strike root below
and bear fruit above.
[31]For out of Jerusalem shall come a remnant,
and from Mount Zion, survivors.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.'

[32]"Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning
the king of Assyria: 'He shall not reach this city,
nor shoot an arrow at it, nor come before it with
a shield, nor cast up siege-works against it. [33]He
shall return by the same way he came, without
entering the city, says the LORD. [34]I will shield

**19, 21–31**: vv 21–28 are addressed to Sennacherib, vv 29–31 to Judah.

w 2 Kgs 17, 6. x 2 Kgs 18, 34. y 14–19: 2 Chr 32, 20; Is 37, 14–20. z Ex 25, 18. a Jer 10, 3. b 1 Kgs 18, 24. c Ps 139, 2f.

and save this city for my own sake, and for the
sake of my servant David.' "[d]
35 That night the angel of the LORD went forth
and struck down one hundred and eighty-five
thousand men in the Assyrian camp. Early the
next morning, there they were, all the corpses of
the dead.[e] 36 So Sennacherib, the king of Assyria,
broke camp, and went back home to Nineveh.
37 When he was worshiping in the temple of
his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and
Sharezer slew him with the sword and fled into
the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon reigned
in his stead.

## CHAPTER 20

**Hezekiah's Illness** 1[f] In those days, when
Hezekiah was mortally ill, the prophet Isaiah,
son of Amoz, came and said to him: "Thus says
the LORD: 'Put your house in order, for you are
about to die; you shall not recover.' " 2 He
turned his face to the wall and prayed to the
LORD: 3 "O LORD, remember how faithfully and
wholeheartedly I conducted myself in your presence, doing what was pleasing to you!" And
Hezekiah wept bitterly.
4 Before Isaiah had left the central courtyard,
the word of the LORD came to him: 5 "Go back
and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people:
'Thus says the LORD, the God of your forefather
David: I have heard your prayer and seen your
tears. I will heal you. In three days you shall go
up to the LORD's temple; 6 I will add fifteen years
to your life. I will rescue you and this city from
the hand of the king of Assyria; I will be a shield
to this city for my own sake, and for the sake of
my servant David.' "
7 Isaiah then ordered a poultice of figs to be
brought and applied to the boil, that he might
recover. 8 Then Hezekiah asked Isaiah, "What is
the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I
shall go up to the temple of the LORD on the
third day?" 9 Isaiah replied, "This will be the sign
for you from the LORD that he will do what he
has promised: Shall the shadow go forward or
back ten steps?"
10 "It is easy for the shadow to advance ten
steps," Hezekiah answered. "Rather, let it go
back ten steps." 11 So the prophet Isaiah invoked
the LORD, who made the shadow retreat the ten
steps it had descended on the staircase to the
terrace of Ahaz.
12 *At that time, when Merodach-baladan, son
of Baladan, king of Babylon, heard that Hezekiah
had been ill, he sent letters and gifts to him.[g]
13 Hezekiah was pleased at this, and therefore
showed the messengers his whole treasury, his
silver, gold, spices and fine oil, his armory, and
all that was in his storerooms; there was nothing
in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did
not show them.
14 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and asked him: "What did these men say
to you? Where did they come from?" "They
came from a distant land, from Babylon," replied Hezekiah. 15 "What did they see in your
house?" the prophet asked. "They saw everything in my house," answered Hezekiah.
"There is nothing in my storerooms that I did
not show them."
16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah: "Hear the
word of the LORD: 17 The time is coming when
all that is in your house, and everything that
your fathers have stored up until this day, shall
be carried off to Babylon; nothing shall be left,
says the LORD. 18 Some of your own bodily
descendants shall be taken and made servants in
the palace of the king of Babylon."
19 Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "The word of
the LORD which you have spoken is favorable."
For he thought, "There will be peace and
security in my lifetime."
20 The rest of the acts of Hezekiah, all his
valor, and his construction of the pool and
conduit* by which water was brought into the
city, are written in the book of the chronicles of
the kings of Judah.[h] 21 Hezekiah rested with his
ancestors and his son Manasseh succeeded him
as king.

Ch 18–20
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**20, 12–19:** Duplication of Is 39, 1–8.
**20, 20:** Pool and conduit: Hezekiah's tunnel; cf 2 Chr 32, 30.

d 2 Sm 7, 12; Hos 1, 7. e Sir 48, 21; 2 Chr 32, 21f; Is 37, 36–38; 1 Mc 7, 41; 2 Mc 8, 19. f 1–9: 2 Chr 32, 24; Is 38, 1–8. g 12f: Is 39, 1f; 2 Chr 32, 27ff. h 2 Chr 32, 30; Sir 48, 17.

## CHAPTER 21

Ch 21
See RG
184–185

**Reign of Manasseh** 1 [i]Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. 2He did evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD had cleared out of the way of the Israelites. 3He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He erected altars to Baal, and also set up a sacred pole, as Ahab, king of Israel, had done. He worshiped and served the whole host of heaven.[j] 4He built altars in the temple of the LORD, about which the LORD had said, "I will establish my name in Jerusalem"— 5altars for the whole host of heaven, in the two courts of the temple.[k]

6He immolated his son by fire. He practiced soothsaying and divination, and reintroduced the consulting of ghosts and spirits. He did much evil in the LORD's sight and provoked him to anger.

7The Asherah idol he had made, he set up in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and to his son Solomon: "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall place my name forever.[l] 8I will not in future allow Israel to be driven off the land I gave their fathers, provided that they are careful to observe all I have commanded them, the entire law which my servant Moses enjoined upon them." 9But they did not listen, and Manasseh misled them into doing even greater evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed at the coming of the Israelites.

10Then the LORD spoke through his servants the prophets: 11"Because Manasseh, king of Judah, has practiced these abominations and has done greater evil than all that was done by the Amorites before him, and has led Judah into sin by his idols,[m] 12therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I will bring such evil on Jerusalem and Judah that, whenever anyone hears of it, his ears shall ring. 13I will measure Jerusalem with the same cord as I did Samaria, and with the plummet I used for the house of Ahab. I will wipe Jerusalem clean as one wipes a dish, wiping it inside and out.[n] 14I will cast off the survivors of my inheritance and deliver them into enemy hands, to become a prey and a booty for all their enemies, 15because they have done evil in my sight and provoked me from the day their fathers came forth from Egypt until today.' "

16In addition to the sin which he caused Judah to commit, Manasseh did evil in the sight of the LORD, shedding so much innocent blood as to fill the length and breadth of Jerusalem. 17The rest of the acts of Manasseh, the sin he committed and all that he did, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.[o] 18Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

**Reign of Amon** 19[p]Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth, daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. 21He followed exactly the path his father had trod, serving and worshiping the idols his father had served. 22He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not follow the path of the LORD. 23Subjects of Amon conspired against him and slew the king in his palace, 24but the people of the land then slew all who had conspired against King Amon, and proclaimed his son Josiah king in his stead. 25The rest of the acts that Amon did are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. 26He was buried in his own grave in the garden of Uzza, and his son Josiah succeeded him as king.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 22
See RG
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**Reign of Josiah** 1 [q]Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2He pleased the LORD and conducted himself unswervingly just as his ancestor David had done.

i 1–10: 2 Chr 33, 1–10. j 2 Kgs 17, 16; 1 Kgs 18, 4; 16, 32f. k Lv 18, 21. l 2 Sm 7, 13; 1 Kgs 8, 16: 9, 3. m 1 Kgs 21, 26; Jer 15, 4. n Is 34, 11; Am 7, 7–9; Lam 2, 8. o 2 Chr 33, 18ff. p 19–26: 2 Chr 33, 21–25. q 1f: 2 Chr 34, 1f.

3 [r]In his eighteenth year, King Josiah sent the
scribe Shaphan,* son of Azaliah, son of Meshul-
lam, to the temple of the LORD with orders to
4 [s]go to the high priest Hilkiah and have him
smelt down the precious metals that had been
donated to the temple of the Lord, which the
doorkeepers had collected from the people.
5 They were to be consigned to the master
workmen in the temple of the LORD, who should
then pay them out to the carpenters, builders,
and lumbermen making repairs on the temple,
6 and for the purchase of wood and hewn stone
for the temple repairs. 7 No reckoning was asked
of them regarding the funds consigned to them,
because they held positions of trust.

**The Book of the Law** 8 The high priest Hil-
kiah informed the scribe Shaphan, "I have
found the book of the law in the temple of the
LORD." Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, who
read it. 9 Then the scribe Shaphan went to the
king and reported, "Your servants have smelted
down the metals available in the temple and
have consigned them to the master workmen in
the temple of the LORD." 10 The scribe Shaphan
also informed the king that the priest Hilkiah
had given him a book, and then read it aloud to
the king. 11 When the king had heard the con-
tents of the book of the law, he tore his gar-
ments[t] 12 and issued this command to Hilkiah
the priest, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, Achbor,
son of Micaiah, the scribe Shaphan, and the
king's servant Asaiah: 13 "Go, consult the LORD
for me, for the people, for all Judah, about the
stipulations of this book that has been found,
for the anger of the LORD has been set furiously
ablaze against us, because our fathers did not
obey the stipulations of this book, nor fulfill our
written obligations."

14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Sha-
phan, and Asaiah betook themselves to the
Second Quarter in Jerusalem, where the prophet-
ess Huldah resided. She was the wife of Shallum,
son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the
wardrobe. When they had spoken to her, 15 she
said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of
Israel: 'Say to the man who sent you to me,
16 Thus says the LORD: I will bring upon this
place and upon its inhabitants all the evil that is
threatened in the book which the king of Judah
has read. 17 Because they have forsaken me and
have burned incense to other gods, provoking
me by everything to which they turn their
hands, my anger is ablaze against this place and
it cannot be extinguished.'

18 "But to the king of Judah who sent you to
consult the LORD, give this response: 'Thus says
the LORD, the God of Israel: As for the threats
you have heard, 19 because you were heartsick
and have humbled yourself before the LORD
when you heard my threats that this place and
its inhabitants would become a desolation and a
curse; because you tore your garments and wept
before me; I in turn have listened, says the
LORD. 20 I will therefore gather you to your
ancestors; you shall go to your grave in peace,
and your eyes shall not see all the evil I will bring
upon this place.' " This they reported to the
king.

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 23
See RG
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1 [u]The king then had all the elders of Judah
and of Jerusalem summoned together before
him. 2 The king went up to the temple of the
LORD with all the men of Judah and all the
inhabitants of Jerusalem: priests, prophets, and
all the people, small and great. He had the entire
contents of the book of the covenant that had
been found in the temple of the LORD, read out
to them. 3 Standing by the column, the king
made a covenant before the LORD that they
would follow him and observe his ordinances,
statutes and decrees with their whole hearts and
souls, thus reviving the terms of the covenant
which were written in this book. And all the
people stood as participants in the covenant.

4 Then the king commanded the high priest

22, 3: Shaphan: head of a prominent family in the reign of Josiah, secretary to the king, bearer and reader of the newfound book of the law (vv 3–13; 2 Chr 34, 8f. 15–20). He and his sons favored the reform of King Josiah and supported the prophet Jeremiah; cf Jer 26, 24.

r 3–13: 2 Chr 34, 8–21. s 4–7: 2 Kgs 12, 11–16. t 11–20: 2 Chr 34, 19–28. u 1–5: 2 Chr 34, 29–33.

Hilkiah, his vicar, and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the objects
that had been made for Baal, Asherah, and the
whole host of heaven. He had these burned
outside Jerusalem on the slopes of the Kidron
and their ashes carried to Bethel.[v] 5He also put
an end to the pseudo-priests whom the kings of
Judah had appointed to burn incense on the high
places in the cities of Judah and in the vicinity of
Jerusalem, as well as those who burned incense
to Baal, to the sun, moon, and signs of the
Zodiac, and to the whole host of heaven.[w]
6From the temple of the LORD he also removed
the sacred pole, to the Kidron Valley, outside
Jerusalem; there he had it burned and beaten to
dust, which was then scattered over the common graveyard.[x] 7He tore down the apartments
of the cult prostitutes* which were in the temple
of the LORD, and in which the women wove
garments for the Asherah.[y]

8He brought in all the priests from the cities of
Judah, and then defiled, from Geba to Beersheba, the high places where they had offered
incense. He also tore down the high place of the
satyrs, which was at the entrance of the Gate of
Joshua, governor of the city, to the left as one
enters the city gate.[z] 9The priests of the high
places could not function at the altar of the LORD
in Jerusalem; but they, along with their relatives,
ate the unleavened bread.

10The king also defiled Topheth in the Valley
of Ben-hinnom, so that there would no longer be
any immolation of sons or daughters by fire* in
honor of Molech.[a] 11He did away with the
horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to
the sun; these were at the entrance of the
temple of the LORD, near the chamber of
Nathan-melech the eunuch, which was in the
large building.* The chariots of the sun he
destroyed by fire. 12He also demolished the
altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof
(the roof terrace of Ahaz), and the altars made by
Manasseh in the two courts of the temple of the
LORD. He pulverized them and threw the dust
into the Kidron Valley.[b] 13The king defiled the
high places east of Jerusalem, south of the
Mount of Misconduct,* which Solomon, king of
Israel, had built in honor of Astarte, the Sidonian
horror, of Chemosh, the Moabite horror, and of
Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites.[c] 14He broke
to pieces the pillars, cut down the sacred poles,
and filled the places where they had been with
human bones.[d] 15Likewise the altar which was
at Bethel, the high place built by Jeroboam, son
of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin—this same
altar and high place he tore down, breaking up
the stones and grinding them to powder, and
burning the Asherah.[e]

16When Josiah turned and saw the graves
there on the mountainside, he ordered the bones
taken from the graves and burned on the altar,
and thus defiled it in fulfillment of the word of
the LORD which the man of God had proclaimed
as Jeroboam was standing by the altar on the
feast day. When the king looked up and saw the
grave of the man of God who had proclaimed
these words, 17he asked, "What is that tombstone I see?" The men of the city replied, "It is
the grave of the man of God who came from
Judah and predicted the very things you have
done to the altar of Bethel." 18f"Let him be," he
said, "let no one move his bones." So they left
his bones undisturbed together with the bones of
the prophet who had come from Samaria.*

19Josiah also removed all the shrines on the
high places near the cities of Samaria which the
kings of Israel had erected, thereby provoking
the LORD; he did the very same to them as he
had done in Bethel.[g] 20He slaughtered upon the
altars all the priests of the high places that were

**23, 7:** Cult prostitutes: of both sexes; cf 1 Kgs 14, 24.

**23, 10:** Topheth . . . by fire: condemned by Deuteronomic law and denounced by Jeremiah (Dt 12, 31; Jer 7, 29ff; Jer 19).

**23, 11:** Large building: to the west of the temple area (1 Chr 26, 18), named in the Hebrew by an Egyptian name for a similar construction.

**23, 13:** Mount of Misconduct: a paranomasia on "Mount of Olives" (in Hebrew Maschit/mishcheh) as suggested by the Targum. Cf Vulgate, "Mount of Offense." Horror . . . idol: in all three phrases here the Hebrew uses a pejorative designation meaning "abomination."

**23, 18:** From Samaria: more narrowly, from Bethel; cf 1 Kgs 13, 31f.

v 2 Chr 34, 3–5; Sir 49, 3. w Dt 17, 3ff. x Dt 16, 21; 1 Kgs 14, 23. y 1 Kgs 14, 24; Dt 23, 18f. z Dt 12, 2f. a Lv 18, 21. b 2 Kgs 21, 5. c 1 Kgs 11, 7. d Dt 16, 21f; 1 Kgs 14, 23. e 1 Kgs 12, 31f; 13, 32. f 1 Kgs 13, 31. g 2 Chr 34, 6f.

at the shrines, and burned human bones upon them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

21The king issued a command to all the people to observe the Passover of the LORD, their God, as it was prescribed in that book of the covenant.[h] 22No Passover such as this had been observed during the period when the Judges ruled Israel, or during the entire period of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, 23until the eighteenth year of King Josiah, when this Passover of the LORD was kept in Jerusalem.

24Further, Josiah did away with the consultation of ghosts and spirits, with the household gods, idols,* and all the other horrors to be seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he might carry out the stipulations of the law written in the book that the priest Helkiah had found in the temple of the LORD.[i]

25Before him there had been no king who turned to the LORD as he did, with his whole heart, his whole soul, and his whole strength, in accord with the entire law of Moses; nor could any after him compare with him.[j]

26Yet, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had given, the LORD did not desist from his fiercely burning anger against Judah. 27The LORD said: "Even Judah will I put out of my sight as I did Israel. I will reject this city, Jerusalem, which I chose, and the temple of which I said, 'There shall my name be.' "[k]

28The rest of the acts of Josiah, with all that he did, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.[l] 29In his time Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, went up toward the river Euphrates to the king of Assyria. King Josiah set out to confront him, but was slain at Megiddo at the first encounter.[m] 30His servants brought his body on a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem, where they buried him in his own grave. Then the people of the land* took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, anointed him, and proclaimed him king to succeed his father.

**Reign of Jehoahaz** 31Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother, whose name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah, was from Libnah.[n] 32He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his forebears had done. 33Pharaoh Neco took him prisoner at Riblah in the land of Hamath, thus ending his reign in Jerusalem. He imposed a fine upon the land of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.* 34Pharaoh Neco then appointed Eliakim, son of Josiah, king in place of his father Josiah; he changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz he took away with him to Egypt, where he died. 35Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but taxed the land to raise the amount Pharaoh demanded. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from each proportionately, to pay Pharaoh Neco.

**Reign of Jehoiakim** 36[o]Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah, daughter of Pedaiah, from Rumah. 37He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his forebears had done.

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 24 See RG 185

1[p]During his reign Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, moved against him, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then Jehoiakim turned and rebelled against him. 2The LORD loosed against him bands of Chaldeans, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites; he loosed them against Judah to destroy it, as the LORD had threatened through his servants the prophets.[q] 3This befell Judah because the LORD had stated that he would inexorably put them out of his sight for the sins Manasseh had committed in all that he did; 4and especially because of the innocent blood he shed, with which he filled Jerusalem, the LORD would not forgive.[r]

5The rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, with all that

**23, 24:** Household gods . . . idols: teraphim. See note on Gn 31, 19.

**23, 30. 35:** People of the land: in this period, the phrase referred to "landed gentry"; in later times it meant "the poor." Cf 2 Kgs 24, 14.

**23, 33:** A talent of gold: some manuscripts of the Greek and Syriac texts have "ten talents."

h Dt 16, 1–8; 2 Chr 35, 1ff. 18f. i 2 Kgs 21, 6; Gn 31, 19; Dt 18, 11; Jgs 18, 14. j Dt 6, 5. k 2 Kgs 24, 2. l 2 Chr 35, 26f. m 2 Chr 35, 20–24. n 2 Chr 36, 2f. o 36f: 2 Chr 36, 4f. p 1–5: 2 Chr 36, 6ff. q 2 Kgs 23, 27. r 2 Kgs 21, 16.

he did, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.[s] 6Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors, and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king. 7The king of Egypt did not again leave his own land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

Ch 25
See RG
185–186

**Reign of Jehoiachin** 8Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months* in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta, daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his forebears had done.

10At that time the officials of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem, and the city came under siege.[t] 11Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, himself arrived at the city while his servants were besieging it. 12Then Jehoiachin, king of Judah, together with his mother, his ministers, officers, and functionaries, surrendered to the king of Babylon, who, in the eighth year of his reign, took him captive. 13He carried off all the treasures of the temple of the LORD and those of the palace, and broke up all the gold utensils that Solomon, king of Israel, had provided in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had foretold.[u] 14He deported all Jerusalem: all the officers and men of the army, ten thousand in number, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None were left among the people of the land except the poor. 15He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon, and also led captive from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother and wives, his functionaries, and the chief men of the land.[v] 16The king of Babylon also led captive to Babylon all seven thousand men of the army, and a thousand craftsmen and smiths, all of them trained soldiers. 17In place of Jehoiachin, the king of Babylon appointed his uncle Mattaniah king, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

**Reign of Zedekiah** 18Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.[w] 19He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. 20The LORD's anger befell Jerusalem and Judah till he cast them out from his presence. Thus Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.[x]

## CHAPTER 25

1*[y] In the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his whole army advanced against Jerusalem, encamped around it, and built siege walls on every side. 2The siege of the city continued until the eleventh year of Zedekiah. 3On the ninth day of the fourth month, when famine had gripped the city, and the people had no more bread, 4the city walls were breached. Then the king and all the soldiers left the city by night through the gate between the two walls which was near the king's garden. Since the Chaldeans had the city surrounded, they went in the direction of the Arabah. 5But the Chaldean army pursued the king and overtook him in the desert near Jericho, abandoned by his whole army.

6The king was therefore arrested and brought to Riblah to the king of Babylon, who pronounced sentence on him. 7He had Zedekiah's sons slain before his eyes. Then he blinded Zedekiah, bound him with fetters, and had him brought to Babylon.

8On the seventh day of the fifth month (this was in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard, came to Jerusalem as the representative of the king of Babylon. 9He burned the house of the LORD, the palace of the king, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every large building was destroyed by fire.[z] 10Then the Chaldean troops who were with the captain of the guard tore down the walls that surrounded Jerusalem.

11Then Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, led into exile the last of the people remaining in

**24, 8:** He reigned three months: in the year 597 B.C.

**25, 1–30:** This chapter parallels Jer 39 and 52; see notes to those parts of Jeremiah.

**25, 11:** Those who had deserted: perhaps on the advice of Jeremiah; cf Jer 38, 2f.

s 2 Chr 36, 8. t 2 Chr 36, 10; Dn 1, 1f. u 2 Kgs 20, 17; Is 39, 6. v Est A, 3; 2, 6. w 2 Chr 36, 9; Jer 37, 1f; 52, 1ff. x 2 Kgs 22, 17; 23, 27. y 1–21: Jer 39, 1–10; 52, 4–28. z 2 Chr 36, 19; Ps 74, 7.

the city, and those who had deserted* to the
king of Babylon, and the last of the artisans.
12 But some of the country's poor, Nebuzaradan,
captain of the guard, left behind as vinedressers
and farmers.

13 The bronze pillars that belonged to the
house of the LORD, and the wheeled carts and
the bronze sea in the house of the LORD, the
Chaldeans broke into pieces; they carried away
the bronze to Babylon.[a] 14 They took also the
pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the bowls, the
pans and all the bronze vessels used for service.[b]
15 The fire-holders and the bowls which were of
gold or silver the captain of the guard also
carried off. 16 The weight in bronze of the two
pillars, the bronze sea, and the wheeled carts, all
of them furnishings which Solomon had made
for the house of the LORD, was never calculated.
17 Each of the pillars was eighteen cubits high; a
bronze capital five cubits high surmounted each
pillar, and a network with pomegranates encir-
cled the capital, all of bronze; and so for the
other pillar, as regards the network.[c]

18 The captain of the guard also took Seraiah
the high priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and
the three keepers of the entry. 19 And from the
city he took one courtier, a commander of
soldiers, five men in the personal service of the
king who were still in the city, the scribe of the
army commander, who mustered the people of
the land, and sixty of the common people still
remaining in the city. 20 The captain of the guard,
Nebuzaradan, arrested these and brought them
to the king of Babylon at Riblah; 21 the king had
them struck down and put to death in Riblah, in
the land of Hamath. Thus was Judah exiled from
her land.

**Governorship of Gedaliah** 22 [d] As for the peo-
ple whom he had allowed to remain in the land
of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,
appointed as their governor Gedaliah, son of
Ahikam, son of Shaphan. 23 Hearing that the king
of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, all
the army commanders with their men came to
him at Mizpah: Ishmael, son of Nethaniah,
Johanan, son of Kareah, Seraiah, son of Tanhu-
meth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah, from
Beth-maacah. 24 Gedaliah gave the commanders
and their men his oath. "Do not be afraid of the
Chaldean officials," he said to them. "Remain in
the country and serve the king of Babylon, and
all will be well with you."

25 But in the seventh month Ishmael, son of
Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of royal descent,
came with ten men, attacked Gedaliah and
killed him, along with the Jews and Chaldeans
who were in Mizpah with him. 26 Then all the
people, great and small, left with the army
commanders and went to Egypt for fear of the
Chaldeans.

**Release of Jehoiachin** 27 [e] In the thirty-seventh
year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, on
the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month,
Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, in the inaugural
year of his own reign, raised up Jehoiachin, king
of Judah, from prison. 28 He spoke kindly to him
and gave him a throne higher than that of the
other kings who were with him in Babylon.
29 Jehoiachin took off his prison garb and ate at
the king's table as long as he lived. 30 The
allowance granted him by the king was a perpet-
ual allowance, in fixed daily amounts, for as long
as he lived.

a 2 Kgs 16, 17; 1 Kgs 7, 15–39; 2 Chr 3, 15; 36, 18; Jer 27, 19. b 1 Kgs 7, 48ff. c 1 Kgs 7, 15; Jer 52, 21ff. d 22–26: Jer 40, 5. 7–41, 1–3. e 27–30: Jer 52, 31–34.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

1Chronicles
See RG
187–192

Originally the two books of Chronicles formed, with the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, a single historical work, uniform in style and basic ideas. The Greek title, paraleipomena, means "things omitted, or passed over (in Samuel and Kings)." The Books of Chronicles, however, are more than a supplement to Samuel and Kings; a comparison of the two histories discloses striking differences in scope and purpose. The Books of Chronicles record in some detail the lengthy span from the reign of Saul to the return from the Exile. Unlike the exact science of history today, wherein factual accuracy and impartiality of judgment are the standards for estimating what is of permanent worth, ancient biblical history, with rare exceptions, was less concerned with reporting in precise detail all the facts of a situation than with explaining the meaning of those facts. Such history was primarily interpretative and, in the Old Testament, its purpose was to disclose the action of the living God in the affairs of men. For this reason we speak of it as "sacred history"; its writer's first concern was to bring out the divine or supernatural dimension in history.

This is apparent when we examine the primary objective of the Chronicler in compiling his work. In view of the situation which confronted the Jewish people at this time (the end of the fifth century B.C.), the Chronicler realized that Israel's political greatness was a thing of the past. It would be a people under God, or nothing. Yet Israel's past held the key to her future. The Chronicler proposed to establish and defend the legitimate claims of the Davidic monarchy in Israel's history, and to underscore the place of Jerusalem and its divinely established temple worship as the center of religious life for the Jewish community of his day. If Judaism was to survive and prosper, it would have to heed the lessons of the past and devoutly serve Yahweh in the place where he had chosen to dwell, the temple of Jerusalem. From the Chronicler's point of view, David's reign was the ideal to which all subsequent rule in Judah must aspire.

The Chronicler was much more interested in David's religious and cultic influence than in his political power. There is little of royal messianism in his book. He apparently regarded as something of the distant past the prophet Zechariah's abortive attempt to have the Davidic kingdom reestablished in the time of Zerubbabel at the end of the sixth century B.C. (Zec 6, 9-15). He saw David's primary importance as deriving from the establishment of Jerusalem and its temple as the center of the true worship of the Lord. Furthermore, he presented David as the one who had authorized the elaborate ritual (which, in point of fact, only gradually evolved in the temple built by Zerubbabel) and who had also appointed Levites to supervise the liturgical services there.

There are good reasons for believing that originally the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah formed the last part of a single literary work that began with 1 and 2 Chronicles. Some authors even regard Ezra himself as having been the anonymous Chronicler. In any case, the Chronicler's Hebrew as well as his religious and political outlook points to c. 400 B.C. as the time of composition of this work.

The Chronicler used sources in writing his history. Besides the canonical Books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua and Ruth, and especially the Books of Samuel and Kings, he cites the titles of many other works no longer extant. "The books of the kings of Israel," or "the books of the kings of Israel and Judah," "the history of Samuel the seer," "the history of Nathan the prophet," "the history of Gad the seer," "the commentary of the Books of Kings," are some of the documents mentioned as historical sources.

In addition, the Chronicler's work contains early preexilic material not found in the Books of Kings. At one time scholars discounted the value of this material, but modern research has shown that, even though the Chronicler may have at times treated the material rather freely, he derived it from authentic and reliable sources.

The principal divisions of 1 Chronicles are as follows:

I. Genealogical Tables (1, 1—9, 34).
II. The History of David (9, 35—29, 30).

## I: Genealogical Tables

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–9
See RG
188–189

**From Adam to Abraham** 1 [a]* Adam, Seth,
Enosh, 2 [b]Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, 3Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech,[c] 4Noah, Shem, Ham, and
Japheth.[d] 5 [e]The descendants of Japheth were
Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech,
and Tiras. 6The descendants of Gomer were
Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 7The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshis, the Kittim,
and the Rodanim.

8 [f]The descendants of Ham were Cush,
Mesraim, Put, and Canaan. 9The descendants of
Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and
Sabteca. The descendants of Raama were Sheba
and Dedan. 10Cush became the father of Nimrod, who was the first to be a conqueror on the
earth. 11 [g]Mesraim became the father of the
Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 12Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from whom
the Philistines sprang. 13Canaan became the
father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth, 14and
the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite, 15the
Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite, 16the Arvadite, the
Zemarite, and the Hamathite.

17 [h]The descendants of Shem were Elam,
Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.
18Arpachshad became the father of Shelah, and
Shelah became the father of Eber. 19Two sons
were born to Eber; the first was named Peleg
(for in his time the world was divided), and his
brother was Joktan. 20Joktan became the father
of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 21Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 22Ebal, Abimael, Sheba,
23Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the
sons of Joktan.

24 [i]Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, 25Eber, Peleg,
Reu, 26Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27Abram, who was
Abraham.[j]

**From Abraham to Jacob** 28The sons of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael.[k] 29These were
their descendants:[l]

Nebaioth, the first-born of Ishmael, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 30Mishma, Dumah,
Massa, Hadad, Tema, 31Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These were the descendants of Ishmael.

32 [m]The descendants of Keturah, Abraham's
concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan,
Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan
were Sheba and Dedan. 33The descendants of
Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and
Eldaah. All these were the descendants of Keturah.

34Abraham became the father of Isaac. The
sons of Isaac were Esau and Israel.[n]

35 [o]The sons of Esau were Eliphaz, Reuel,
Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. 36The sons of Eliphaz
were Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz,
[Timna,] and Amalek. 37The sons of Reuel were
Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

**1, 1—9, 34**: The Chronicler set as his task the retelling, from his particular viewpoint, of the story of God's people from the beginning to his own day. Since his primary interest was the history of David and the Davidic dynasty of Judah, he presents through mere genealogical lists a summary of what preceded the reign of Saul, David's predecessor in the kingdom. The sources for these genealogies are mostly the canonical Hebrew Scriptures that were already in their present form in his time. The cross references in this book indicate in each case the scriptural sources used.

a 1 Chr 4, 25f; Gn 5, 3. 6. 9. b 2ff: Gn 5, 9–32; 10, 2ff. c Gn 4, 25. d Gn 5, 32; 6, 10; 9, 18. e 5ff: Gn 10, 2ff. f Gn 10, 8. g 11–16: Gn 10, 13–18. h 17–23: Gn 10, 22–29; 11, 10–18. i 24–27: Gn 11, 10–26; Lk 3, 34ff. j Gn 17, 5; Neh 9, 7. k Gn 16, 11. 15; 21, 2f; Gal 4, 22f; Heb 11, 11. l 29ff: Gn 25, 13–16. m 32f: Gn 25, 1–4. n Gn 21, 2f; 25, 19. 25f: 32, 28f; Mt 1, 2; Lk 3, 34. o 35ff: Gn 36, 4f. 10–13. 15ff.

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38 [p]The descendants of Seir* were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.
39The sons of Lotan were Hori and Homam;
Timna was the sister of Lotan. 40The sons of
Shobal were Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi,
and Onam. The sons of Zibeon were Aiah and
Anah. 41The sons of Anah: Dishon. The sons of
Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Che-
ran. 42The sons of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan,
and Jaakan. The sons of Dishan were Uz and
Aran.

43 [q]The kings who reigned in the land of Edom
before they had Israelite kings were the follow-
ing: Bela, son of Beor, the name of whose city
was Ninhabah. 44When Bela died, Jobab, son of
Zerah, from Bozrah, succeeded him.[r] 45When
Jobab died, Husham, from the land of the
Temanites, succeeded him.[s] 46Husham died and
Hadad, son of Bedad, succeeded him. He over-
threw the Midianites on the Moabite plateau,
and the name of his city was Avith. 47Hadad died
and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him. 48Sam-
lah died and Shaul from Rehoboth-han-nahar
succeeded him. 49When Shaul died, Baal-hanan,
son of Achbor, succeeded him. 50Baal-hanan
died and Hadad succeeded him. The name of his
city was Pai, and his wife's name was Mehetabel. She was the daughter of Matred, who was
the daughter of Mezahab. 51 [t]After Hadad
died . . . .

These were the chiefs of Edom: the chiefs of
Timna, Aliah, Jetheth, 52Oholibamah, Elah, Pi-
non, 53Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, 54Magdiel, and
Iram were the chiefs of Edom.

## CHAPTER 2

1These were the sons of Israel: Reuben,
Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,[u] 2Dan,
Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.[v]

**Judah** 3The sons of Judah* were: Er, Onan, and
Shelah; these three were born to him of Bath-
shua, a Canaanite woman. But Judah's first-born,
Er, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, so he
killed him.[w] 4Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar
bore him Perez and Zerah, so that he had five
sons in all.[x]

5The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.[y]
6The sons of Zerah were Zimri, Ethan, Heman,
Calcol, and Darda—five in all.[z] 7The sons of
Zimri: Carmi. The sons of Carmi: Achar, who
brought trouble upon Israel by violating the
ban.[a] 8The sons of Ethan: Azariah. 9The sons
born to Hezron were Jerahmeel, Ram, and
Chelubai.[b] *

10*Ram became the father of Amminadab,
and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon,
a prince of the Judahites.[c] 11 [d]Nahshon became
the father of Salma. Salma became the father of
Boaz. 12Boaz became the father of Obed. Obed
became the father of Jesse. 13 [e]Jesse became the
father of Eliab, his first-born, of Abinadab, the
second son, Shimea, the third,[f] 14Nethanel, the
fourth, Raddai, the fifth, 15Ozem, the sixth, and
David, the seventh. 16Their sisters were Zeruiah
and Abigail. Zeruiah had three sons: Abishai,
Joab, and Asahel.[g] 17Abigail bore Amasa, whose
father was Jether the Ishmaelite.[h]

18*By his wife Azubah, Caleb, son of Hezron,
became the father of a daughter, Jerioth. Her
sons were Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon.[i] 19When
Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who bore
him Hur.[j] 20Hur became the father of Uri, and

**1, 38:** Seir: another name for Esau (v 35) or Edom (v 43).

**2, 3—4, 23:** For two reasons, the Chronicler places the genealogy of the tribe of Judah before that of the other tribes, giving it also at greater length than the others: because of his interest in David and because in the Chronicler's time the people of God were almost exclusively Jews. Both David and the Jews were of the tribe of Judah.

**2, 9:** Chelubai: a variant form of the name Caleb (vv 18. 42), distinct from Chelub of 1 Chr 4, 11.

**2, 10–17:** Immediate ancestors of David. A similar list is given in Ru 4, 19–22; each list, independent of the other, derives from a common source.

**2, 18–24:** Descendants of Caleb. In 1 Chr 4, 15, as is often the case in the Pentateuch (Nm 13, 6; 14, 6. 30; 26, 65; etc.), Caleb is called son of Jephunneh. Here he is called son of Hezron, perhaps because the Calebites were reckoned as part of the clan of the Hezronites.

p 38–42; Gn 36, 20–28. q 43–54: Gn 36, 31–43. r Is 34, 6; 63, 1; Jer 49, 13. 22. s Gn 36, 11; Jb 2, 11; Jer 49, 7. 20. t 51–54: Gn 36, 40–43. u Gn 29, 32–35; 30, 18. 20; 35, 23. v Gn 30, 6. 8. 11. 13. 24; 35, 18. 24ff. w 1 Chr 4, 21; Gn 38, 1–5; 46, 12. x Gn 38, 7. 13–30; 46, 12; Rv 4, 12. 18; Mt 1, 3. y Gn 46, 12. z 1 Kgs 5, 11. a Jos 7, 1. 18ff. 24f; 22, 20. b Rv 4, 19; Mt 1, 3. c Rv 4, 19; Mt 1, 4. d 11f: Nm 1, 7; Rv 4, 20f; Mt 1, 4f. e 13ff: 1 Sm 16, 6–13; 17, 13f. f 2 Chr 11, 18. g 2 Sm 2, 18. h 2 Sm 17, 25; 19, 14; 20, 4–13. i 1 Chr 2, 24. j 1 Chr 2, 24.

Uri became the father of Bezalel.[k] 21Then Hezron had relations with the daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, having married her when he was sixty years old. She bore him Segub.[l] 22Segub became the father of Jair,[m] who possessed twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead. 23Geshur and Aram took from them the villages of Jair, that is, Kenath and its towns, sixty cities in all, which had belonged to the sons of Machir, the father of Gilead.[n] 24After the death of Hezron, Caleb had relations with Ephrathah, the widow of his father Hezron, and she bore him Ashhur, the father of Tekoa.[o]

25The sons of Jerahmeel,* the first-born of Hezron, were Ram, the first-born, then Bunah, Oren, and Ozem, his brothers.[p] 26Jerahmeel also had another wife, Atarah by name, who was the mother of Onam. 27The sons of Ram, the first-born of Jerahmeel, were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker. 28The sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai were Nadab and Abishur. 29Abishur's wife, who was named Abihail, bore him Ahban and Molid. 30The sons of Nadab were Seled and Appaim. Seled died without sons. 31The sons of Appaim: Ishi. The sons of Ishi: Sheshan. The sons of Sheshan: Ahlai.[q] 32The sons of Jada, the brother of Shammai, were Jether and Jonathan. Jether died without sons. 33The sons of Jonathan were Peleth and Zaza. These were the descendants of Jerahmeel. 34Sheshan, who had no sons, only daughters, had an Egyptian slave named Jarha. 35Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his slave Jarha, and she bore him Attai. 36Attai became the father of Nathan. Nathan became the father of Zabad. 37Zabad became the father of Ephlal. Ephlal became the father of Obed. 38Obed became the father of Jehu. Jehu became the father of Azariah. 39Azariah became the father of Helez. Helez became the father of Eleasah. 40Eleasah became the father of Sismai. Sismai became the father of Shallum. 41Shallum became the father of Jekamiah. Jekamiah became the father of Elishama.

42The descendants of Caleb,* the brother of Jerahmeel: [Mesha] his first-born, who was the father of Ziph. Then the sons of Mareshah, who was the father of Hebron. 43The sons of Hebron were Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. 44Shema became the father of Raham, who was the father of Jorkeam. Rekem became the father of Shammai. 45The sons of Shammai: Maon, who was the father of Beth-zur. 46Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran became the father of Gazez. 47The sons of Jahdai were Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph. 48Maacah, Caleb's concubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah. 49She also bore Shaaph, the father of Madmannah, Sheva, the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibea. Achsah was Caleb's daughter.[r]

50These were descendants of Caleb, sons of Hur,* the first-born of Ephrathah: Shobal, the father of Kiriath-jearim, 51Salma, the father of Bethlehem, and Hareph, the father of Beth-gader. 52The sons of Shobal, the father of Kiriath-jearim, were Reaiah, half the Manahathites, 53and the clans of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraites. From these the people of Zorah and the Eshtaolites derived.[s] 54The descendants of Salma were Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-Joab, half the Manahathites, and the Zorites. 55[t]The clans of the Sopherim dwelling in Jabez were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. They were the Kenites, who came from Hammath of the ancestor of the Rechabites.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–9 See RG 188–189

1 [u]The following* were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the first-born, Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel; the second, Daniel,* by Abigail of Carmel; 2the third, Absalom, son of Maacah, who was the daughter of

2, 25–41: The Jerahmeelites were a clan in the Negeb of Judah.
2, 42–49: Another list, dating from preexilic times, of the Calebites, a clan that inhabited the south of Judah.
2, 50–55: The Hurites, a clan dwelling to the south and west of Jerusalem and related to the Calebites.
3, 1–9: David's sons.
3, 1: Daniel: called Chileab in 2 Sm 3, 3.

k Ex 24, 14; 31, 2; 35, 30; 2 Chr 1, 5. l Nm 26, 29; 27, 1; 32, 32; Jos 13, 31; Jgs 5, 14. m Nm 32, 41; 1 Kgs 4, 13. n Dt 3, 14; Jos 13, 30; Jgs 10, 4. o 1 Chr 2, 19; 2 Sm 14, 2; 2 Chr 11, 6. p 1 Sm 27, 10; 30, 29; Jb 32, 2. q 1 Chr 4, 20. r Jos 15, 16; Jgs 1, 12. s Jgs 18, 2. t Nm 24, 21; Jgs 1, 16; 4, 11; 1 Sm 15, 6. u 1–4: 2 Sm 3, 2–5.

Talmai, king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah,
son of Haggith; 3the fifth, Shephatiah, by Abital;
the sixth, Ithream, by his wife Eglah. 4Six in all
were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned
seven years and six months. Then he reigned
thirty-three years in Jerusalem,[v] 5[w]where the
following were born to him: Shimea,* Shobab,
Nathan, Solomon—four by Bathsheba, the
daughter of Ammiel,[x] 6Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet,
7Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 8Elishama, Eliada, and
Eliphelet—nine. 9All these were sons of David,
in addition to other sons by concubines; and
Tamar was their sister.[y]

Ch 1–9
See RG
188–189

10[z]* The son of Solomon was Rehoboam,
whose son was Abijah, whose son was Asa,
whose son was Jehoshaphat,[a] 11whose son was
Joram, whose son was Ahaziah, whose son was
Joash,[b] 12whose son was Amaziah, whose son
was Azariah, whose son was Jotham,[c] 13whose
son was Ahaz, whose son was Hezekiah, whose
son was Manasseh,[d] 14whose son was Amon,
whose son was Josiah.[e] 15The sons of Josiah
were: the first-born, Johanan; the second, Jehoia-
kim; the third, Zedekiah; the fourth, Shallum.*[f]
16The sons of Jehoiakim were: Jeconiah, his son;
Zedekiah, his son.[g]

17The sons of Jeconiah* the captive were:
Shealtiel,[h] 18Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar,*
Jekamiah, Shama, and Nedabiah. 19The sons of
Pedaiah were Zerubbabel* and Shimei. The sons
of Zerubbabel were Meshullam and Hananiah;
Shelomith was their sister. 20The sons of Meshul-
lam were Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah,
Jushab-hesed—five. 21The sons of Hananiah
were Pelatiah, Jeshaiah, Rephaiah, Arnan, Oba-
diah, and Shecaniah. 22[i]The sons of Shecaniah
were Shemiah, Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah,
Shaphat—six. 23The sons of Neariah were Elioe-
nai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam—three. 24The sons of
Elioenai were Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Ak-
kub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani—seven.

## CHAPTER 4

1*The descendants of Judah were: Perez,
Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal.[j] 2Reaiah, the
son of Shobal, became the father of Jahath, and
Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad.
These were the clans of the Zorathites.

3These were the descendants of Hareph, the
father of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; their
sister was named Hazzelelponi. 4Penuel was the
father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah.
These were the descendants of Hur, the first-
born of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem.

5Ashhur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives,
Helah and Naarah.[k] 6Naarah bore him Ahuz-
zam, Hepher, the Temenites and the
Ahashtarites. These were the descendants of
Naarah. 7The sons of Helah were Zereth, Izhar,
Ethnan, and Koz. 8Koz became the father of
Anub and Zobebah, as well as of the clans of
Aharhel, son of Harum. 9Jabez was the most
distinguished of the brothers. His mother had
named him Jabez, saying, "I bore him with
pain." 10Jabez prayed to the God of Israel: "Oh,
that you may truly bless me and extend my
boundaries! Help me and make me free of
misfortune, without pain!" And God granted his
prayer.

11Chelub, the brother of Shuhah, became the

**3, 5:** Shimea: called Shammua in 2 Sm 5, 14. Ammiel: called Eliam in 2 Sm 11, 3.

**3, 10–16:** The kings of Judah from Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

**3, 15:** Shallum: the same as Jehoahaz, Josiah's successor; cf Jer 22, 11.

**3, 17–24:** The descendants of King Jechoniah up to the time of the Chronicler. If twenty-five years are allowed to each generation, the ten generations between Jechoniah and Anani (the last name on the list) would bring the birth of the latter to about 405 B.C.—an important item in establishing the approximate date of the Chronicler.

**3, 18:** Shenazzar: presumably the same as Sheshbazzar of Ezr 1, 8. 11; 5, 14ff, the prince of Judah who was the first Jewish governor of Judah after the exile. Both forms of the name probably go back to the Babylonian name Sin-ab-ussar signifying, "O [god] Sin, protect [our] father!"

**3, 19:** Zerubbabel: here called the son of Pedaiah, though elsewhere (Hg 1, 12. 14; 2, 2. 23; Ezr 3, 2. 8; 5, 2; Neh 12, 1) called son of Shealtiel. The latter term may merely mean that Zerubbabel succeeded Shealtiel as head of the house of David.

**4, 1–43:** The southern tribes.

v 2 Sm 2, 11; 5, 5. w 5–8: 2 Sm 5, 14ff. x 2 Sm 5, 5. y 2 Sm 13, 1f. z 10–17: Mt 1, 7–12. a 1 Kgs 11, 43; 14, 31; 15, 1. 8. 24; 2 Chr 9, 31; 12, 16; 13, 23; 17, 1. b 1 Kgs 22, 51; 2 Chr 21, 1; 22, 1; 24, 1. 27. c 2 Kgs 12, 21; 14, 21; 15, 7; 2 Chr 25, 1; 26, 1. 23; 27, 1. d 2 Kgs 15, 38; 16, 20; 20, 21; 2 Chr 28, 1. 27; 32, 33. e 2 Kgs 21, 18. 26; 2 Chr 33, 20. 25. f 2 Kgs 23, 34; 24, 17; 2 Chr 36, 4. 10. g 2 Kgs 24, 6. 17; 2 Chr 36, 8. 10. h 17. 19; Ezr 2, 2; 3, 2. 8; 5, 2; Sir 49, 11; Hg 1, 1. 12. 14; Mt 1, 12f; Lk 3, 27. i Neh 3, 29. j 1 Chr 2, 4f. 7. 9. 50; Gn 38, 29; 46, 12; Mt 1, 3. k 1 Chr 2, 24.

father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton.
12Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah, the father of the city of
Nahash. These were the men of Recah.

13The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel were Hathath and
Meonothai;[l] 14Meonothai became the father of
Ophrah. Seraiah became the father of Joab, the
father of Geharashim, so called because they
were craftsmen. 15The sons of Caleb, son of
Jephunneh, were Ir, Elah, and Naam. The sons
of Elah were . . . and Kenaz.[m] 16The sons of
Jehallelel were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.
17The sons of Ezrah were Jether, Mered, Epher,
and Jalon. Jether became the father of Miriam,
Shammai, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa.
[. . . . . .][n] 18His (Mered's) Egyptian wife bore
Jared, the father of Gedor, Heber, the father of
Soco, and Jekuthiel, the father of Zanoah. These
were the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married. 19The sons of his
Jewish wife, the sister of Naham, the father of
Keilah, were Shimon the Garmite and Ishi the
Maacathite. 20The sons of Shimon were Amnon,
Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. The son of Ishi
was Zoheth and the son of Zoheth . . . .

21The descendants of Shelah, son of Judah,
were: Er, the father of Lecah; Laadah, the father
of Mareshah; the clans of the linen weavers'
guild in Beth-ashbea;[o] 22Jokim; the men of
Cozeba; and Joash and Saraph, who held property in Moab, but returned to Bethlehem. [These
are events of old.] 23They were potters and
inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah, where they
lived in the king's service.

**Simeon** 24The sons of Simeon were Nemuel,
Jamin, Jachin, Zerah, and Shaul,[p] 25whose son
was Shallum, whose son was Mibsam, whose
son was Mishma. 26The descendants of Mishma
were his son Hammuel, whose son was Zaccur,
whose son was Shimei. 27Shimei had sixteen
sons and six daughters. His brothers, however,
did not have many sons, and as a result all their
clans did not equal the number of the Judahites.

28[q]They dwelt in Beer-sheba, Moladah,
Hazar-shual, 29Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, 30Bethuel,
Hormah, Ziklag, 31Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-
susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. Until David
came to reign, these were their cities 32and their
villages. Etam, also, and Ain, Rimmon, Tochen,
and Ashan—five cities, 33together with all their
outlying villages as far as Baal. Here is where
they dwelt, and so it was inscribed of them in
their family records.

34Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah, son of Amaziah, 35Joel, Jehu, son of Joshibiah, son of Seraiah, son of Asiel, 36Elioenai, Jaakobath, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, 37Ziza, son
of Shiphi, son of Allon, son of Jedaiah, son of
Shimri, son of Shemaiah— 38these just named
were princes in their clans, and their ancestral
houses spread out to such an extent[r] 39that they
went to the approaches of Gedor,* east of the
valley, seeking pasture for their flocks. 40They
found abundant and good pastures, and the land
was spacious, quiet, and peaceful. 41They who
have just been listed by name set out during the
reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and attacked
the tents of Ham (for Hamites dwelt there
formerly) and also the Meunites who were
there. They pronounced against them the ban
that is still in force and dwelt in their place
because they found pasture there for their
flocks.[s]

42Five hundred of them (the Simeonites) went
to Mount Seir under the leadership of Pelatiah,
Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, sons of Ishi.
43They attacked the surviving Amalekites who
had escaped, and have resided there to the
present day.[t]

## CHAPTER 5

**Reuben** 1*The sons of Reuben, the first-born
of Israel. (He was indeed the first-born, but

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4, 39: Gedor: in the Greek, Gerar, no doubt correct.
5, 1–26: The Transjordan tribes.

l Jos 15, 17; Jgs 1, 13; 3, 9. 11. m Nm 13, 6; 14, 6; 32, 12; Jos 14, 6. 14. n 1 Sm 30, 28. o 1 Chr 2, 3; Gn 38, 5; 46, 12; Nm 26, 20. p Gn 46, 10; Ex 6, 15; Nm 26, 12f. q 28–32: Jos 19, 2–8. r Nm 1, 2. s 2 Kgs 18, 1f; 2 Chr 29, 1. t Ex 17, 8. 14; Dt 25, 17ff; 1 Sm 14, 48; 15, 3. 7f; 2 Sm 8, 12.

because he disgraced the couch of his father his
birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, son
of Israel, so that he is not listed in the family
records according to birthright.[u] [2]Judah, in
fact, became powerful among his brothers, so
that the ruler came from him, though the
birthright had been Joseph's.)[v] [3]The sons of
Reuben, the first-born of Israel, were Hanoch,
Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.[w] [4]His son was Joel,
whose son was Shemaiah, whose son was Gog,
whose son was Shimei, [5]whose son was Micah,
whose son was Reaiah, whose son was Baal,
[6]whose son was Beerah, whom Tiglath-pileser,
the king of Assyria, took into exile; he was a
prince of the Reubenites.[x] [7]His brothers who
belonged to his clans, when they were listed in
the family records according to their descendants, were: Jeiel, the chief, and Zechariah,
[8]and Bela, son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of
Joel. The Reubenites lived in Aroer and as far
as Nebo and Baal-meon;[y] [9]toward the east they
dwelt as far as the desert which extends from
the Euphrates River, for they had much livestock in the land of Gilead.[z] [10]During the reign
of Saul they waged war with the Hagrites, and
when they had defeated them they occupied
their tents throughout the region east of Gilead.[a]

**Gad** [11]The Gadites lived alongside them in the
land of Bashan as far as Salecah.[b] [12]Joel was
chief, Shapham was second in command, and
Janai was judge in Bashan.[c] [13]Their brothers,
corresponding to their ancestral houses, were:
Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia,
and Eber—seven. [14]These were the sons of
Abihail, son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead,
son of Michael, son of Jeshishai, son of Jahdo,
son of Buz. [15]Ahi, son of Abdiel, son of Guni,
was the head of their ancestral houses. [16]They
dwelt in Gilead, in Bashan and its towns, and in
all the pasture lands of Sirion to the borders.
[17]All were listed in the family records in the time
of Jotham, king of Judah, and of Jeroboam, king
of Israel.

[18]The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of
Manasseh were warriors, men who bore shield
and sword and who drew the bow, trained in
warfare—forty-four thousand seven hundred
and sixty men fit for military service. [19]When
they waged war against the Hagrites and against
Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab,[d] [20]they received
help so that they mastered the Hagrites and all
who were with them. For during the battle they
called on God, and he heard them because they
had put their trust in him.[e] [21]Along with one
hundred thousand men they also captured their
livestock: fifty thousand camels, two hundred
fifty thousand sheep, and two thousand asses.
[22]Many had fallen in battle, for victory is from
God; and they took over their dwelling place
until the time of the exile.[f]

**East Manasseh** [23]The numerous members of
the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land of
Bashan as far as Baal-hermon, Senir, and Mount
Hermon. [24]The following were the heads of
their ancestral houses: Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel,
Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel—men who
were warriors, famous men, and heads over
their ancestral houses.

[25]However, they offended the God of their
fathers by lusting after the gods of the natives of
the land, whom God had cleared out of their
way.[g] [26]Therefore the God of Israel incited
against them the anger of Pul,* king of Assyria,
and of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, who
deported the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the
half-tribe of Manasseh and brought them to
Halah, Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan,
where they have remained to this day.[h]

**Levi*** [27]The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.[i] [28]The sons of Kohath were
Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.[j] [29]The children of Amram were Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu,

5, 26: Pul: the name which the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.) took as king of Babylon.

5, 27—6, 66: The tribe of Levi. The list gives special prominence to Levi's son Kohath, from whom were descended both the Aaronite priests (1 Chr 5, 28–41) and the leading group of temple singers (1 Chr 6, 18–23).

u Gn 35, 22; 48, 5. 15–22; 49, 3f; Dt 33, 6. v 1 Chr 28, 4; Gn 49, 8ff. w Gn 46, 9; Ex 6, 14; Nm 26, 5f. x 2 Kgs 15, 29. y Jos 13, 9. 16f; Nm 32, 3. 38. z Jos 22, 9. a Ps 83, 6. b Jos 13, 11. 24–28. c Gn 46, 16. d 1 Chr 1, 31; 5, 10; Gn 25, 15; Ps 83, 6. e Dt 33, 20f. f Nm 32, 39; Dt 3, 8ff; Jgs 3, 3. g Ex 34, 14ff; 2 Kgs 17, 7. h 2 Kgs 15, 9. 29; 17, 6. i 1 Chr 6, 1; 23, 6; Gn 46, 11; Ex 6, 16; Nm 26, 57. j 1 Chr 6, 3; Ex 6, 18.

Eleazar, and Ithamar.[k] 30*Eleazar became the
father of Phinehas. Phinehas became the father
of Abishua. 31Abishua became the father of
Bukki. Bukki became the father of Uzzi. 32Uzzi
became the father of Zerahiah. Zerahiah be-
came the father of Meraioth. 33Meraioth be-
came the father of Amariah. Amariah became
the father of Ahitub. 34Ahitub became the fa-
ther of Zadok. Zadok became the father of
Ahimaaz. 35Ahimaaz became the father of Aza-
riah. Azariah became the father of Johanan.
36Johanan became the father of Azariah, who
served as priest in the temple Solomon built in
Jerusalem. 37Azariah became the father of Ama-
riah. Amariah became the father of Ahitub.
38Ahitub became the father of Zadok. Zadok
became the father of Shallum. 39Shallum be-
came the father of Hilkiah. Hilkiah became the
father of Azariah. 40Azariah became the father
of Seraiah. Seraiah became the father of Jehoza-
dak. 41Jehozadak was one of those who went
into the exile which the LORD inflicted on Ju-
dah and Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar.

## CHAPTER 6

1The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and
Merari.[l] 2The sons of Gershon were named
Libni and Shimei.[m] 3The sons of Kohath were
Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.[n] 4[o]The sons
of Merari were Mahli and Mushi.

The following were the clans of Levi, distrib-
uted according to their ancestors: 5of Gershon:
his son Libni, whose son was Jahath, whose son
was Zimmah, 6whose son was Joah, whose son
was Iddo, whose son was Zerah, whose son was
Jetherai.

7The descendants of Kohath were: his son
Amminadab, whose son was Korah, whose son
was Assir, 8whose son was Elkanah, whose son
was Ebiasaph, whose son was Assir, 9whose son
was Tahath, whose son was Uriel, whose son
was Uzziah, whose son was Shaul. 10The sons of
Elkanah were Amasai and Ahimoth, 11whose
son was Elkanah, whose son was Zophai, whose
son was Nahath, 12whose son was Eliab, whose
son was Jeroham, whose son was Elkanah,
whose son was Samuel. 13The sons of Samuel
were Joel, the first-born, and Abijah, the second.

14The descendants of Merari were Mahli,
whose son was Libni, whose son was Shimei,
whose son was Uzzah,[p] 15whose son was
Shimea, whose son was Haggiah, whose son was
Asaiah.

16The following were entrusted by David with
the choir services* in the LORD's house from the
time when the ark had obtained a permanent
resting place. 17They served as singers before the
Dwelling of the meeting tent until Solomon built
the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they
performed their services in an order prescribed
for them. 18Those who so performed are the
following, together with their descendants.

Among the Kohathites: Heman, the chanter,
son of Joel, son of Samuel, 19son of Elkanah, son
of Jeroham, son of Eliel, son of Toah, 20son of
Zuth, son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of
Amasi, 21son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of
Azariah, son of Zephaniah, 22son of Tahath, son
of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah,[q] 23son of
Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, son of Israel.

24His brother Asaph stood at his right hand.
Asaph was the son of Berechiah, son of Shimea,
25son of Michael, son of Baaseiah, son of Malchi-
jah, 26son of Ethni, son of Zerah, son of Adaiah,
27son of Ethan, son of Zimmah,[r] son of Shimei,
28son of Jahath, son of Gershon, son of Levi.

29Their brothers, the Merarites, stood at the
left: Ethan, son of Kishi, son of Abdi, son of
Malluch, 30son of Hashabiah, son of Amaziah,
son of Hilkiah, 31son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of
Shemer, 32son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of
Merari, son of Levi.[s]

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**5, 30–41:** The line of preexilic priests. The list seems to be confused in vv 36ff, which repeat the names, mostly in inverse order, that occur in vv 34f. A similar but shorter list is given, with variations, in Ezr 7, 1–5.

**6, 16–32:** The origin of the choir services performed by the levitical families in the postexilic temple at the time of the Chronicler is here attributed to David, somewhat as all the laws in the Pentateuch are attributed to Moses.

k Ex 6, 20; Nm 26, 59f. l 1 Chr 5, 27; 23, 6; Gn 46, 11; Ex 6, 16; Nm 26, 57. m Ex 6, 17. n Ex 6, 18; Nm 3, 19; 26, 59. o 1 Chr 6, 14; Ex 6, 19; Nm 3, 20; 26, 58. p 1 Chr 6, 4; Ex 6, 19; Nm 3, 20; 26, 58. q Ex 6, 24. r 1 Chr 6, 2. 5. s Ex 6, 19; Nm 26, 58.

[33]Their brother Levites were appointed to all
other services of the Dwelling of the house of
God.[t] [34]However, it was Aaron and his descen-
dants who burnt the offerings on the altar of
holocausts and on the altar of incense; they
alone had charge of the holy of holies and of
making atonement for Israel, as Moses, the
servant of God, had ordained.[u]

[35]These were the descendants of Aaron: his
son Eleazer, whose son was Phinehas, whose
son was Abishua, [36]whose son was Bukki,
whose son was Uzzi, whose son was Zerahiah,
[37]whose son was Meraioth, whose son was
Amariah, whose son was Ahitub, [38]whose son
was Zadok, whose son was Ahimaaz.

[39]*The following were their dwelling places
to which their encampment was limited. To the
descendants of Aaron who belonged to the clan
of the Kohathites, since the first lot fell to
them, [40]was assigned Hebron with its adjacent
pasture lands in the land of Judah, [41]although
the open country and the villages belonging to
the city had been given to Caleb, the son of
Jephunneh. [42]There were assigned to the de-
scendants of Aaron: Hebron, a city of asylum,
Libnah with its pasture lands, Jattir with its
pasture lands, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands,
[43]Holon with its pasture lands, Debir with its
pasture lands, [44]Ashan with its pasture lands,
Jetta with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh
with its pasture lands. [45]Also from the tribe of
Benjamin: Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba
with its pasture lands, Almon with its pasture
lands, Anathoth with its pasture lands. In all,
they had thirteen cities with their pasture
lands. [49]The Israelites assigned these cities with
their pasture lands to the Levites, [50]designating
them by name and assigning them by lot from
the tribes of the Judahites, Simeonites, and
Benjaminites.

[46]The other Kohathites obtained ten cities by
lot for their clans from the tribe of Ephraim, from
the tribe of Dan, and from the half-tribe of
Manasseh. [47]The clans of the Gershonites ob-
tained thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar,
Asher, and Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of
Manasseh in Bashan. [48]The clans of the Mera-
rites obtained twelve cities by lot from the tribes
of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

[51]The clans of the Kohathites obtained cities
by lot from the tribe of Ephraim. [52]They were
assigned: Shechem in the mountain region of
Ephraim, a city of asylum, with its pasture lands,
Gezer with its pasture lands, [53]Kibzaim with its
pasture lands, and Beth-horon with its pasture
lands. [54]From the tribe of Dan: Elteke with its
pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands,
Aijalon with its pasture lands, and Gath-rimmon
with its pasture lands. [55]From the half-tribe of
Manasseh: Taanach with its pasture lands and
Ibleam with its pasture lands. These belonged to
the rest of the Kohathite clan.

[56]The clans of the Gershonites received from
the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan
with its pasture lands and Ashtaroth with its
pasture lands. [57]From the tribe of Issachar:
Kedesh with its pasture lands, Daberath with its
pasture lands, [58]Ramoth with its pasture lands,
and En-gannim with its pasture lands. [59]From
the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its pasture
lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, [60]Hilkath
with its pasture lands, and Rehob with its pas-
ture lands. [61]From the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh
in Galilee with its pasture lands, Hammon with
its pasture lands, and Kiriathaim with its pasture
lands.

[62]The rest of the Merarites received from the
tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam with its pasture
lands, Kartah with its pasture lands, Rimmon
with its pasture lands, and Tabor with its pas-
ture lands. [63]Across the Jordan at Jericho [that
is, east of the Jordan] they received from the
tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the desert with its
pasture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands,
[64]Kedemoth with its pasture lands, and Mep-
haath with its pasture lands. [65]From the tribe
of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its pasture
lands, Mahanaim with its pasture lands, [66]Hesh-
bon with its pasture lands, and Jazer with its
pasture lands.

6, 39–66: Regarding the nature of the rights of Levites in the cities assigned to them, see note on Jos 21, 1.

t 1 Chr 15, 17. 19; 16, 41f; 2 Chr 5, 12. u 1 Chr 16, 39f.

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See RG
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## CHAPTER 7

**Issachar*** 1The sons of Issachar were Tola,
Puah, Jashub, and Shimron: four.[v] 2The sons of
Tola were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam,
and Shemuel, warrior heads of the ancestral
houses of Tola. Their kindred numbered twenty-
two thousand six hundred in the time of Da-
vid.[w] 3The sons of Uzzi: Izarahiah. The sons of
Izarahiah were Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and
Isshiah. All five of these were chiefs. 4Their
kindred, by ancestral houses, numbered thirty-
six thousand men in organized military troops,
since they had more wives and sons 5than their
fellow tribesmen. In all the clans of Issachar
there was a total of eighty-seven thousand war-
riors in their family records.

**Benjamin** 6The sons of Benjamin were Bela,
Becher, and Jediael—three.[x] 7The sons of Bela
were Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri—
five. They were heads of their ancestral houses
and warriors. Their family records listed twenty-
two thousand and thirty-four. 8The sons of
Becher were Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai,
Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and
Alemeth—all these were sons of Becher.[y] 9Their
family records listed twenty thousand two hun-
dred of their kindred who were heads of their
ancestral houses and warriors. 10The sons of
Jediael: Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan were Jeush,
Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish,
and Ahishahar. 11All these were descendants of
Jediael, heads of ancestral houses and warriors.
They numbered seventeen thousand two hun-
dred men fit for military service . . . Shupham
and Hupham.[z]

**Dan, Naphtali and Manasseh** 12[a]The sons of
Dan: Hushim. 13The sons of Naphtali were
Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum. These were
descendants of Bilhah. 14The sons of Manasseh,
whom his Aramean concubine bore:[b] she bore
Machir, the father of Gilead.[c] 15Machir took a
wife whose name was Maacah; his sister's name
was Molecheth. Manasseh's second son was
named Zelophehad, but to Zelophehad only
daughters were born.[d] 16Maacah, Machir's wife,
bore a son whom she named Peresh. He had a
brother named Sheresh, whose sons were Ulam
and Rakem. 17The sons of Ulam: Bedan. These
were the descendants of Gilead, the son of
Machir, the son of Manasseh. 18His sister Mo-
lecheth bore Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.
19The sons of Shemida were Ahian, Shechem,
Likhi, and Aniam.

**Ephraim** 20[e]The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah,
whose son was Bered, whose son was Tahath,
whose son was Eleadah, whose son was Tahath,
21whose son was Zabad. Ephraim's son Shuthe-
lah, and Ezer and Elead, who were born in the
land, were slain by the inhabitants of Gath
because they had gone down to take away their
livestock. 22Their father Ephraim mourned a
long time, but after his kinsmen had come and
comforted him, 23he visited his wife, who con-
ceived and bore a son whom he named Beriah,
since evil had befallen his house.[f] 24He had a
daughter, Sheerah, who built lower and upper
Beth-horon and Uzzen-sheerah. 25Zabad's son
was Rephah, whose son was Resheph, whose
son was Telah, whose son was Tahan, 26whose
son was Ladan, whose son was Ammihud,
whose son was Elishama,[g] 27whose son was
Nun, whose son was Joshua.

28Their property and their dwellings were in
Bethel and its towns, Naaran to the east, Gezer
and its towns to the west, and also Shechem and
its towns as far as Ayyah and its towns.[h]
29Manasseh, however, had possession of Beth-
shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns,
Megiddo and its towns, and Dor and its towns.
In these dwelt the descendants of Joseph, the
son of Israel.[i]

**Asher** 30The sons of Asher were Imnah,
Iishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah; their sister was Se-
rah.[j] 31Beriah's sons were Heber and Malchiel,
who was the father of Birzaith. 32Heber became
the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their
sister Shua. 33The sons of Japhlet were Pasach,
Bimhal, and Ashvath; these were the sons of

7, 1–40: The northern tribes.

v Gn 46, 13. w Nm 26, 23f; Jgs 10, 1. x 1 Chr 7, 6; Gn 46, 21; Nm 26, 38. y 1 Chr 7, 8. z Nm 26, 39. a 12f: Gn 46, 24; Nm 26, 48f. b 14–19: Nm 26, 29–32. c Nm 26, 29; Jos 17, 1. d Nm 26, 33; Jos 17, 3. e Nm 26, 35. f 1 Chr 8, 13. g Nm 1, 10; 2, 18; 7, 48; 10, 22. h Gn 12, 8; 1 Kgs 9, 16. i Jos 17, 11. j Gn 46, 17; Nm 26, 44ff.

Japhlet. 34The sons of Shomer were Ahi, Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35The sons of his brother Hotham were Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal. 36The sons of Zophah were Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, 37Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera. 38The sons of Jether were Jephunneh, Pispa, and Ara. 39The sons of Ulla were Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia. 40All these were descendants of Asher, heads of ancestral houses, distinguished men, warriors, and chiefs among the princes. Their family records numbered twenty-six thousand men fit for military service.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 1–9
See RG
188–189

**Benjamin*** 1Benjamin became the father of Bela, his first-born, Ashbel, the second son, Aharah, the third,[k] 2Nohah, the fourth, and Rapha, the fifth. 3The sons of Bela were Addar and Gera, the father of Ehud. 4The sons of Ehud were Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,[l] 5Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram. 6These were the sons of Ehud, family heads over those who dwelt in Geba and were deported to Manahath. 7Also Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera. The last, who led them into exile, became the father of Uzza and Ahihud. 8Shaharaim became a father on the Moabite plateau after he had put away his wives Hushim and Baara. 9By his wife Hodesh he became the father of Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, 10Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, family heads. 11By Hushim he became the father of Abitub and Elpaal. 12The sons of Elpaal were Eber, Misham, Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its nearby towns,[m] 13Beriah, and Shema. They were family heads of those who dwelt in Aijalon, and they put the inhabitants of Gath to flight. 14Their brethren were Elpaal, Shashak, and Jeremoth. 15Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, 16Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were the sons of Beriah. 17Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, 18Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal. 19Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, 20Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, 21Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei. 22Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, 23Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, 24Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, 25Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak. 26Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, 27Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham. 28These were family heads over their kindred, chiefs who dwelt in Jerusalem.

Ch 1–9
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29[n]In Gibeon dwelt Jeiel, the founder of Gibeon, whose wife's name was Maacah; 30also his first-born son, Abdon, and Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, 31Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, and Mikloth. 32Mikloth became the father of Shimeah. These, too, dwelt with their relatives in Jerusalem, opposite their fellow tribesmen. 33[o]Ner became the father of Kish, and Kish became the father of Saul. Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.[p] 34The son of Jonathan was Meribbaal, and Meribbaal became the father of Micah.[q] 35The sons of Micah were Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz. 36Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah, and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri. Zimri became the father of Moza.[r] 37Moza became the father of Binea, whose son was Raphah, whose son was Eleasah, whose son was Azel.[s] 38Azel had six sons, whose names were Azrikam, his first-born, Ishmael, Sheariah, Azariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; all these were the sons of Azel. 39The sons of Eshek, his brother, were Ulam, his first-born, Jeush, the second son, and Eliphelet, the third. 40The sons of Ulam were combat archers, and many were their sons and grandsons: one hundred and fifty. All these were the descendants of Benjamin.

## CHAPTER 9

1Thus all Israel was inscribed in its family records which are recorded in the book of the kings of Israel.[t]

Now Judah had been carried in captivity to

8, 1–40: A second, variant list of the Benjaminites, with special prominence given to Saul's family (vv 33–40).

k 1 Chr 7, 6; Gn 46, 21; Nm 26, 38ff. l Jgs 3, 15. m Neh 11, 35. n 29–32: 1 Chr 9, 35–38. o 33–38: 1 Chr 9, 39–44. p 1 Chr 10, 2; 1 Sm 9, 1; 14, 49. 51; 31, 2. q 2 Sm 4, 4; 9, 6. 10. 12. r 1 Chr 9, 42. s 1 Chr 9, 43. t 2 Chr 16, 11; 20, 34; 25, 26; 27, 7; 33, 18; 36, 8.

Babylon because of its rebellion. [2] [u]*The first to settle again in their cities and dwell there were certain lay Israelites, the priests, the Levites, and the temple slaves.[v]

**Jerusalemites** [3]In Jerusalem lived Judahites and Benjaminites; also Ephraimites and Manassehites. [4]Among the Judahites was Uthai, son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, one of the descendants of Perez, son of Judah. [5]Among the Shelanites were Asaiah, the first-born, and his sons. [6]Among the Zerahites were Jeuel and six hundred and ninety of their brethren. [7]Among the Benjaminites were Sallu, son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah; [8]Ibneiah, son of Jeroham; Elah, son of Uzzi, son of Michri; Meshullam, son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah. [9]Their kindred of various families were nine hundred and fifty-six. All those named were heads of their ancestral houses.

[10]Among the priests were Jedaiah; Jehoiarib; Jachin; [11]Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God; [12]Adaiah, son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah; Maasai, son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son of Immer. [13]Their brethren, heads of their ancestral houses, were one thousand seven hundred and sixty, valiant for the work of the service of the house of God.

[14]Among the Levites were Shemaiah, son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, one of the descendants of Merari; [15]Bakbakkar; Heresh; Galal; Mattaniah, son of Mica, son of Zichri, a descendant of Asaph; [16]Obadiah, son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, a descendant of Jeduthun; and Berechiah, son of Asa, son of Elkanah, whose family lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

[17]The gatekeepers were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their brethren; Shallum was the chief. [18]Previously they had stood guard at the king's gate on the east side; now they became gatekeepers for the encampments of the Levites. [19]Shallum, son of Kore, son of Ebiasaph, a descendant of Korah, and his brethren of the same ancestral house of the Korahites had as their assigned task the guarding of the threshold of the tent, just as their fathers had guarded the entrance to the encampment of the LORD. [20]Phinehas, son of Eleazar, had been their chief in times past—the LORD be with him![w] [21]Zechariah, son of Meshelemiah, guarded the gate of the meeting tent.[x] [22]In all, those who were chosen for gatekeepers at the threshold were two hundred and twelve. They were inscribed in the family records of their villages. David and Samuel the seer had established them in their position of trust. [23]Thus they and their sons kept guard over the gates of the house of the LORD, the house which was then a tent. [24]The gatekeepers were stationed at the four sides, to the east, the west, the north, and the south.[y] [25]Their kinsmen who lived in their own villages took turns in assisting them for seven-day periods,[z] [26]while the four chief gatekeepers were on constant duty. These were the Levites who also had charge of the chambers and treasures of the house of God. [27]At night they lodged about the house of God, for it was in their charge and they had the duty of opening it each morning.

[28]Some of them had charge of the liturgical equipment, tallying it as it was brought in and taken out. [29]Others were appointed to take care of the utensils and all the sacred vessels, as well as the fine flour, the wine, the oil, the frankincense, and the spices. [30]It was the sons of priests, however, who mixed the spiced ointments.[a] [31] [b]Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the first-born of Shallum the Koreite, was entrusted with preparing the cakes. [32]Benaiah the Kohathite, one of their brethren, was in charge of setting out the showbread each sabbath.[c]

[33]These were the chanters and the gatekeepers, family heads over the Levites. They stayed in the chambers when free of duty, for day and night they had to be ready for service. [34]These

9, 2–34: The inhabitants of Jerusalem after the exile. A similar list, with many variants in the names, is given in Neh 11, 3–24.

u 2–22: Neh 11, 3–19. v Ezr 2, 70; 7, 7; Neh 11, 3. w Ex 6, 25; Nm 25, 7. 11; Jgs 20, 28. x 1 Chr 26, 2. 14. y 1 Chr 26, 13. z 2 Chr 23, 4f. a Ex 30, 22–33. b 31f: 1 Chr 23, 29; Lv 2, 1ff; 6, 13ff; 7, 11. c Ex 25, 30; Lv 24, 5–8.

were the levitical family heads over their kindred, chiefs who dwelt in Jerusalem.

## II: The History of David

**Genealogy of Saul** 35 [d]In Gibeon dwelt Jeiel, the founder of Gibeon, whose wife's name was Maacah. 36His first-born son was Abdon; then came Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, 37Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38Mikloth became the father of Shimeam. These, too, with their brethren, dwelt opposite their brethren in Jerusalem. 39Ner became the father of Kish, and Kish became the father of Saul. Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal. 40The son of Jonathan was Meribbaal, and Meribbaal became the father of Micah. 41The sons of Micah were Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz. 42Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah, and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri. Zimri became the father of Moza. 43Moza became the father of Binea, whose son was Rephaiah, whose son was Eleasah, whose son was Azel. 44Azel had six sons, whose names were Azrikam, his first-born, Ishmael, Sheariah, Azariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; these were the sons of Azel.

### CHAPTER 10

Ch 10–16 See RG 189

**His Death and Burial** 1 [e]Now the Philistines were at war with Israel; the Israelites fled before the Philistines, and a number of them fell, slain on Mount Gilboa. 2The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons. When the Philistines had killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, sons of Saul, 3the whole fury of the battle descended upon Saul. Then the archers found him, and wounded him with their arrows.

4Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, that these uncircumcised may not come and maltreat me." But the armor-bearer, in great fear, refused. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it; 5and seeing him dead, the armor-bearer also fell on his sword and died. 6Thus, with Saul and his three sons, his whole house died at one time. 7When all the Israelites who were in the valley saw that Saul and his sons had died in the rout, they left their cities and fled; thereupon the Philistines came and occupied them.

8On the following day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his sons where they had fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9They stripped him, cut off his head, and took his armor; these they sent throughout the land of the Philistines to convey the good news to their idols and their people. 10His armor they put in the house of their gods, but his skull they impaled on the temple of Dagon.

11When all the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead had heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12its warriors rose to a man, recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons, and brought them to Jabesh. They buried their bones under the oak of Jabesh, and fasted seven days.[f]

13*Thus Saul died because of his rebellion against the LORD in disobeying his command, and also because he had sought counsel of a necromancer,[g] 14and had not rather inquired of the LORD. Therefore the LORD slew him, and transferred his kingdom to David, the son of Jesse.[h]

### CHAPTER 11

**David Is Made King** 1 [i]Then all Israel gathered about David in Hebron, and they said: "Surely, we are of the same bone and flesh as you. 2Even formerly, when Saul was still the king, it was you who led Israel in all its battles. And now the LORD, your God, has said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel and be ruler over them.' "[j] 3Then all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and there David made a covenant with them in the presence of the LORD; and they anointed him king over Israel, in accordance with the word of the LORD as revealed through Samuel.[k]

10, 13f: The Chronicler's comment on why Saul met his tragic end: he had disobeyed the Lord's command given through the prophet Samuel (1 Sm 15, 3–9), and had sought counsel of a necromancer (1 Sm 28, 6–19), contrary to the Mosaic law against necromancy (Dt 18, 10f).

d 35–44: 1 Chr 8, 29–38. e 1–12: 1 Sm 31, 1–13. f 2 Sm 2, 5. g Dt 18, 10ff; 1 Sm 13, 13f; 15, 3. 11. 26. h 1 Sm 15, 28; 2 Sm 3, 9f. i 1–9: 2 Sm 5, 1–10. j 1 Sm 18, 5. 13–16. 30; 19, 8. k 1 Sm 16, 1. 13; 2 Sm 2, 4.

**Jerusalem Captured** 4Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, that is, Jebus, where the
natives of the land were called Jebusites.[l] 5The
inhabitants of Jebus said to David, "You shall not
enter here." David nevertheless captured the
fortress of Sion, which is the City of David.
6David said, "Whoever strikes the Jebusites first
shall be made the chief commander." Joab, the
son of Zeruiah, was the first to go up; and so he
became chief.[m] 7David took up his residence in
the fortress, which thenceforth was called the
City of David. 8He rebuilt the city on all sides,
from the Millo all the way around, while Joab
restored the rest of the city.[n] 9David became
more and more powerful, for the LORD of hosts
was with him.

**David's Warriors** 10[o]These were David's chief
warriors who, together with all Israel, supported
him in his reign in order to make him true king,
even as the LORD had commanded concerning
Israel. 11Here is the list of David's warriors:

Ishbaal, the son of Hachamoni, chief of the
Three.* He brandished his spear against three
hundred, whom he slew in a single encounter.

12Next to him Eleazar, the son of Dodo the
Ahohite, one of the Three warriors.[p] 13He was
with David at Pas-dammim, where the Philis-
tines had massed for battle. The plowland was
fully planted with barley, but its defenders were
retreating before the Philistines.[q] 14He made a
stand on the sown ground, kept it safe, and cut
down the Philistines. Thus the LORD brought
about a great victory.

15Three of the Thirty chiefs went down to the
rock, to David, who was in the cave of Adullam
while the Philistines were encamped in the
valley of Rephaim.[r] 16David was then in the
stronghold, and a Philistine garrison was at
Bethlehem. 17David expressed a desire: "Oh,
that someone would give me a drink from the
cistern that is by the gate at Bethlehem!"
18Thereupon the Three broke through the en-
campment of the Philistines, drew water from
the cistern by the gate at Bethlehem, and carried
it back to David. But David refused to drink it.
Instead, he poured it out as a libation to the
LORD, 19saying, "God forbid that I should do
such a thing! Could I drink the blood of these
men who risked their lives?" For at the risk of
their lives they brought it; and so he refused to
drink it. Such deeds as these the Three warriors
performed.

20[s]Abishai, the brother of Joab. He was the
chief of the Thirty;* he brandished his spear
against three hundred, and slew them. Thus he
had a reputation like that of the Three.[t] 21He
was twice as famous as any of the Thirty and
became their commander, but he did not attain
to the Three.

22Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, a valiant man
of mighty deeds, from Kabzeel. He killed the two
sons of Ariel of Moab, and also, on a snowy day,
he went down and killed the lion in the cistern.
23He likewise slew the Egyptian, a huge man
five cubits tall. The Egyptian carried a spear that
was like a weaver's heddle-bar, but he came
against him with a staff, wrested the spear from
the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his
own spear. 24Such deeds as these of Benaiah, the
son of Jehoiada, gave him a reputation like that
of the Three. 25He was more famous than any of
the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three.
David put him in charge of his bodyguard.[u]

26Also these warriors: Asahel, the brother of
Joab; Elhanan, son of Dodo, from Bethlehem;[v]
27Shammoth, from En-harod; Helez, from Palti;
28Ira, son of Ikkesh, from Tekoa; Abiezer, from
Anathoth; 29Sibbecai, from Husha; Ilai, from
Ahoh;[w] 30Maharai, from Netophah; Heled, son
of Baanah, from Netophah;[x] 31Ithai, son of Ribai,
from Gibeah of Benjamin; Benaiah, from Pira-
thon;[y] 32Hurai, from the valley of Gaash; Abiel,
from Beth-arabah; 33Azmaveth, from Bahurim;
Eliahba, from Shaalbon; 34Jashen the Gunite;

**11, 11f:** The Three: the Chronicler names only two of them: Ishbaal and Eleazar. According to 2 Sm 23, 8–12, the Three were Ishbaal, Eleazar, and Shammah.

**11, 20:** The Thirty: listed by name in vv 26–47. The list given in 2 Sm 23, 8–39 often differs in names and spellings; for the numbers, see the note there.

l Jos 15, 8; Jgs 1, 21; 19, 10f. m 2 Sm 2, 13ff; 8, 16. n 1 Kgs 9, 15. 24; 11, 27; 2 Chr 32, 5. o 10–41: 2 Sm 23, 8–39. p 1 Chr 27, 4. q 1 Sm 17, 1. r 1 Chr 14, 9; 2 Sm 5, 18. 22. s 20f: 2 Sm 23, 18f. t 1 Chr 18, 12; 1 Sm 26, 6ff; 2 Sm 16, 9; 18, 2; 21, 17. u 2 Sm 8, 18; 20, 23. v 1 Chr 2, 16; 27, 7. w 1 Chr 27, 11. x 1 Chr 27, 13. y 1 Chr 27, 14.

Jonathan, son of Shagee, from En-harod;
35Ahiam, son of Sachar, from En-harod; Eliphe-
leth, son of 36Ahasabi, from Beth-maacah; Ahi-
jah, from Gilo; 37Hezro, from Carmel; Naarai,
the son of Ezbai; 38Joel, brother of Nathan, from
Rehob, the Gadite; 39Zelek the Ammonite; Naha-
rai, from Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab, son
of Zeruiah; 40Ira, from Jattir; Gareb, from Jattir;
41Uriah the Hittite; Zabad, son of Ahlai, 42and,
in addition to the Thirty, Adina, son of Shiza, the
Reubenite, chief of the tribe of Reuben; 43Ha-
nan, from Beth-maacah; Joshaphat the Mithnite;
44Uzzia, from Ashterath; Shama and Jeiel, sons
of Hotham, from Aroer; 45Jediael, son of Shimri,
and Joha, his brother, the Tizite; 46Eliel the
Mahavite; Jeribai and Joshaviah, sons of Elnaam;
Ithmah, from Moab; 47Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel
the Mezobian.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 10–16
See RG
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**David's Early Followers** 1The following men
came to David in Ziklag while he was still under
banishment from Saul, son of Kish; they, too,
were among the warriors who helped him in his
battles.[z] 2They were archers who could use
either the right or the left hand, both in slinging
stones and in shooting arrows with the bow.
They were some of Saul's kinsmen, from Benja-
min. 3Ahiezer was their chief, along with Joash,
both sons of Shemaah of Gibeah; also Jeziel and
Pelet, sons of Azmaveth; Beracah; Jehu, from
Anathoth;[a] 4Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a warrior
on the level of the Thirty, and in addition to their
number: 5Jeremiah; Jahaziel; Johanan; Jozabad,
from Gederah; 6Eluzai; Jerimoth; Bealiah;
Shemariah; Shephatiah the Haruphite; 7Elka-
nah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Ishbaal, who
were Korahites; 8Joelah, finally, and Zebadiah,
sons of Jeroham, from Gedor.

9Some of the Gadites also went over to David
when he was at the stronghold in the wilder-
ness. They were valiant warriors, experienced
soldiers equipped with shield and spear, who
bore themselves like lions, and were as swift as
the gazelles on the mountains.[b] 10Ezer was their
chief, Obadiah was second, Eliab third, 11Mish-
mannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, 12Attai sixth, Eliel
seventh, 13Johanan eighth, Elzabad ninth, 14Jere-
miah tenth, and Machbannai eleventh. 15These
Gadites were army commanders, the lesser
placed over hundreds and the greater over
thousands. 16It was they who crossed over the
Jordan when it was overflowing both its banks in
the first month, and dispersed all who were in
the valleys to the east and to the west.

17Some Benjaminites and Judahites also came
to David at the stronghold. 18David went out to
meet them and addressed them in these words:
"If you come peacefully, to help me, I am of a
mind to have you join me. But if you have come
to betray me to my enemies though my hands
have done no wrong, may the God of our fathers
see and punish you."

19Then spirit enveloped Amasai, the chief of
the Thirty, who spoke:

"We are yours, O David,
we are with you, O son of Jesse.
Peace, peace to you,
and peace to him who helps you;
your God it is who helps you."

So David received them and placed them among
the leaders of his troops.

20Men from Manasseh also deserted to David
when he came with the Philistines to battle
against Saul. However, he did not help the
Philistines, for their lords took counsel and sent
him home, saying, "At the cost of our heads he
will desert to his master Saul." 21As he was
returning to Ziklag, therefore, these deserted to
him from Manasseh: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael,
Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of
thousands of Manasseh. 22They helped David by
taking charge of his troops, for they were all
warriors and became commanders of his army.
23And from day to day men kept coming to
David's help until there was a vast encampment,
like an encampment of angels.

**The Assembly at Hebron** 24This is the muster
of the detachments of armed troops that came to
David at Hebron to transfer to him Saul's king-
dom, as the LORD had ordained. 25*Judahites

12, 25–38: The Chronicler fills out the pageantry of joyous

z 1 Sm 27, 1–7. a 1 Chr 27, 12. b Dt 33, 20.

bearing shields and spears: six thousand eight
hundred armed troops. [26]Of the Simeonites,
warriors fit for battle: seven thousand one hun-
dred. [27]Of the Levites: four thousand six hun-
dred, [28]along with Jehoiada, leader of the line of
Aaron, with another three thousand seven hun-
dred, [29]and Zadok, a young warrior, with
twenty-two princes of his father's house. [30]Of
the Benjaminites, the brethren of Saul: three
thousand—until this time, most of them had
held their allegiance to the house of Saul. [31]Of
the Ephraimites: twenty thousand eight hundred
warriors, men renowned in their ancestral
houses. [32]Of the half-tribe of Manasseh: eigh-
teen thousand, designated by name to come and
make David king. [33]Of the Issacharites, their
chiefs who were endowed with an understand-
ing of the times and who knew what Israel had
to do: two hundred chiefs, together with all
their brethren under their command. [34]From
Zebulun, men fit for military service, set in battle
array with every kind of weapon for war: fifty
thousand men rallying with a single purpose.
[35]From Naphtali: one thousand captains, and
with them, armed with shield and lance, thirty-
seven thousand men. [36]Of the Danites, set in
battle array: twenty-eight thousand six hundred.
[37]From Asher, fit for military service and set in
battle array: forty thousand. [38]From the other
side of the Jordan, of the Reubenites, Gadites,
and the half-tribe of Manasseh, men equipped
with every kind of weapon of war: one hundred
and twenty thousand.

[39]All these soldiers, drawn up in battle order,
came to Hebron with the resolute intention of
making David king over all Israel. The rest of
Israel was likewise of one mind to make David
king. [40]They remained with David for three
days, feasting and drinking, for their brethren
had prepared for them. [41]Moreover, their neigh-
bors from as far as Issachar, Zebulun, and
Naphtali came bringing food on asses, camels,
mules, and oxen—provisions in great quantity of
meal, pressed figs, raisins, wine, oil, oxen, and
sheep. For there was rejoicing in Israel.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 10-16
See RG
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**Transfer of the Ark** [1] [c]After David had taken
counsel with his commanders of thousands and
of hundreds, that is to say, with every one of his
leaders, [2]he said to the whole assembly of Israel:
"If it seems good to you, and is so decreed by the
LORD our God, let us summon the rest of our
brethren from all the districts of Israel, and also
the priests and the Levites from their cities with
pasture lands, that they may join us; [d] [3]and let us
bring the ark of our God here among us, for in
the days of Saul we did not visit it." [4]And the
whole assembly agreed to do this, for the idea
was pleasing to all the people.

[5]Then David assembled all Israel, from Shihor
of Egypt* to Labo of Hamath, to bring the ark of
God from Kiriath-jearim.[e] [6]David and all Israel
went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, of
Judah, to bring back the ark of God, which was
known by the name "LORD enthroned upon the
cherubim."[f] [7]They transported the ark of God
on a new cart from the house of Abinadab;
Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the cart, [8]while
David and all Israel danced before God with
great enthusiasm, amid songs and music on
lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals, and trum-
pets.

[9]As they reached the threshing floor of Chi-
don,* Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady
the ark, for the oxen were upsetting it. [10]Then
the LORD became angry with Uzzah and struck
him; he died there in God's presence, because
he had laid his hand on the ark. [11]David was
disturbed because the LORD's anger had broken

occasions in keeping with his much later appreciation of the significance of the event in the history of God's people: the numbers in attendance at David's crowning in Hebron (cf 2 Sm 5, 1ff) are recounted in the same spirit of enthusiasm which in v 23 compares David's band of desert freebooters to a numerous encampment of angels.

13, 5: Shihor of Egypt: the eastern branch of the Nile delta. Labo of Hamath: in southern Syria.

13, 9: Chidon: in 2 Sm 6, 6, Nodan.

c 1–14: 2 Sm 6, 1–11. d Nm 35, 1ff; Jos 14, 4; 21, 2ff. e 1 Chr 15, 3; Jos 13, 3. 5; 1 Sm 6, 21; 7, 1f; 2 Sm 6, 1–11. f Jos 15, 9; 18, 14; 1 Sm 4, 4; 7, 1.

out against Uzzah. Therefore that place has been called Perez-uzza* even to this day.

12David was now afraid of God, and he said, "How can I bring the ark of God with me?" 13Therefore he did not take the ark back with him to the City of David, but he took it instead to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 14The ark of God remained in the house of Obed-edom with his family for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom's household and all that he possessed.[g]

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 10–16
See RG
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**David in Jerusalem** 1[h]Hiram, king of Tyre, sent envoys to David along with masons and carpenters, and cedar wood to build him a house.[i] 2David now understood that the LORD had truly confirmed him as king over Israel, for his kingdom was greatly exalted for the sake of his people Israel. 3[j]David took other wives in Jerusalem and became the father of more sons and daughters. 4These are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 5Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, 6Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 7Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

**The Philistine Wars** 8When the Philistines had heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, they went up in unison to seek him out. But when David heard of this, he marched out against them. 9Meanwhile the Philistines had come and raided the valley of Rephaim.[k] 10David inquired of God, "Shall I advance against the Philistines, and will you deliver them into my power?" The LORD answered him, "Advance, for I will deliver them into your power." 11They advanced, therefore, to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, "God has used me to break through my enemies just as water breaks through a dam." Therefore that place was called Baal-perazim. 12The Philistines had left their gods there, and David ordered them to be burnt.[l]

13Once again the Philistines raided the valley, 14and again David inquired of God. But God answered him: "Do not try to pursue them, but go around them and come upon them from the direction of the mastic trees. 15When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mastic trees, then go forth to battle, for God has already gone before you to strike the army of the Philistines." 16David did as God commanded him, and they routed the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.

17Thus David's fame was spread abroad through every land, and the LORD made all the nations fear him.

## CHAPTER 15

**The Ark Brought to Jerusalem** 1David built houses for himself in the City of David and prepared a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it there. 2At that time he said, "No one may carry the ark of God except the Levites, for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister to him forever."[m] 3Then David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring the ark of the LORD to the place which he had prepared for it.[n] 4David also called together the sons of Aaron and the Levites: 5of the sons of Kohath, Uriel, their chief, and one hundred and twenty of his brethren; 6of the sons of Merari, Asaiah, their chief, and two hundred and twenty of his brethren; 7of the sons of Gershon, Joel, their chief, and one hundred and thirty of his brethren; 8of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah, their chief, and two hundred of his brethren; 9of the sons of Hebron, Eliel, their chief, and eighty of his brethren; 10of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab, their chief, and one hundred and twelve of his brethren.

11David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab,[o] 12and said to them: "You, the heads of the levitical families, must sanctify yourselves along with your brethren and bring the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place which I have prepared for it.[p] 13Because you were not with us the first time, the wrath of the LORD our God burst upon us,

**13, 11:** Perez-uzza: A Hebrew term meaning "the breaking out against Uzza."

g 1 Chr 26, 4f. h 1–16: 2 Sm 5, 11–25. i 1 Kgs 5, 1; 2 Chr 2, 3. j 3–7: 1 Chr 3, 5–8; 2 Sm 5, 13–16. k 1 Chr 11, 15. l Dt 7, 5. 25. m Nm 1, 50; 7, 9; Dt 10, 8; 31, 25; 1 Sm 6, 15; Jos 3, 8. n 1 Chr 13, 5; 2 Sm 6, 15. 17. o 1 Chr 16, 39; 2 Sm 8, 17; 15, 29. 35. p 2 Chr 29, 5. 15. 34; 30, 3. 15. 24.

for we did not seek him aright."[q] 14Accordingly,
the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves
to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of
Israel. 15The Levites bore the ark of God on their
shoulders with poles, as Moses had ordained
according to the word of the LORD[r].

16David commanded the chiefs of the Levites
to appoint their brethren as chanters, to play on
musical instruments, harps, lyres, and cymbals,
to make a loud sound of rejoicing.[s] 17Therefore
the Levites appointed Heman, son of Joel, and,
among his brethren, Asaph, son of Berechiah;
and among the sons of Merari, their brethren,
Ethan, son of Kushaiah;[t] 18and, together with
these, their brethren of the second rank: the
gatekeepers Zechariah, Uzziel, Shemiramoth, Je-
hiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah,
Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel.
19The chanters, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan,
sounded brass cymbals. 20Zechariah, Uzziel, She-
miramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and
Benaiah played on harps set to "Alamoth."*
21But Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-
edom, and Jeiel led the chant on lyres set to "the
eighth." 22Chenaniah was the chief of the Le-
vites in the chanting; he directed the chanting,
for he was skillful.[u] 23Berechiah and Elkanah
were gatekeepers before the ark. 24The priests,
Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zecha-
riah, Benaiah, and Eliezer, sounded the trumpets
before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jeiel were
also gatekeepers before the ark.[v]

25[w]Thus David, the elders of Israel, and the
commanders of thousands went to bring up the
ark of the covenant of the LORD with joy from
the house of Obed-edom. 26While the Levites,
with God's help, were bearing the ark of the
covenant of the LORD, seven bulls and seven
rams were sacrificed.[x] 27David was clothed in a
robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who
carried the ark, the singers, and Chenaniah, the
leader of the chant; David was also wearing a
linen ephod.[y] 28Thus all Israel brought back the
ark of the covenant of the LORD with joyful
shouting, and to the sound of horns, trumpets,
and cymbals, and the music of harps and lyres.
29But as the ark of the covenant of the LORD was
entering the City of David, Michal, daughter of
Saul, looked down from her window, and when
she saw King David leaping and dancing, she
despised him in her heart.[z]

## CHAPTER 16

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1[a]They brought in the ark of God and set it
within the tent which David had pitched for it.
Then they offered up holocausts and peace
offerings to God.[b] 2When David had finished
offering up the holocausts and peace offerings,
he blessed the people in the name of the LORD,
3and distributed to every Israelite, to every man
and to every woman, a loaf of bread, a piece of
meat, and a raisin cake.

**The Ministering Levites** 4He now appointed
certain Levites to minister before the ark of the
LORD, to celebrate, thank, and praise the LORD,
the God of Israel.[c] 5Asaph was their chief, and
second to him were Zechariah, Uzziel, Shemira-
moth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-
edom, and Jeiel. These were to play on harps and
lyres, while Asaph was to sound the cymbals,
6and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to be
the regular trumpeters before the ark of the
covenant of God.

7Then, on that same day, David appointed
Asaph and his brethren to sing for the first time
these praises of the LORD:

8 *Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;[d]
make known among the nations his deeds.
9 Sing to him, sing his praise,
proclaim all his wondrous deeds.
10 Glory in his holy name;
rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD!

**15, 20:** Alamoth: a musical term (literally, "young women") of uncertain meaning, occurring also in Ps 46, 1, where it is rendered as virgins. Perhaps it may mean something like "soprano," whereas the term "eighth" (Hebrew sheminith, v 21) may then mean "bass"; cf Pss 6, 1; 12, 1.

**16, 8–36:** A hymn composed of parts, with textual variants, from several Psalms; vv 8–22 = Ps 105, 1–15; vv 23–33 = Ps 96, 1–13; vv 34–36 = Ps 106, 1. 47f.

q 1 Chr 13, 3. r Ex 25, 13ff; Nm 1, 50; 7, 9; 2 Chr 35, 3. s 1 Chr 13, 8; 16, 5; 2 Chr 5, 12; 29, 25; Neh 12, 27. t 1 Chr 6, 31–47; 25, 1–8. u 1 Chr 26, 29. v Nm 10, 8; Jos 6, 4ff. w 25–29: 2 Sm 6, 12–16. x 2 Sm 6, 17; 2 Chr 29, 21. y 1 Sm 2, 18; 2 Sm 6, 14. z 2 Sm 6, 20ff. a 1–3: 2 Sm 6, 17ff. b 1 Chr 15, 1. c Sir 47, 9. d 8–22: Ps 105, 1–15.

11 Look to the LORD in his strength;
seek to serve him constantly.
12 Recall the wondrous deeds that he has wrought,
his portents, and the judgments he has uttered,
13 You descendants of Israel, his servants,
sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!

14 He, the LORD, is our God;
throughout the earth his judgments prevail.
15 He remembers forever his covenant
which he made binding for a thousand generations—
16 Which he entered into with Abraham
and by his oath to Isaac;
17 Which he established for Jacob by statute,
for Israel as an everlasting covenant,
18 Saying, "To you will I give the land of Canaan
as your alloted inheritance."

19 When they were few in number,
a handful, and strangers there,
20 Wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
21 He let no one oppress them,
and for their sake he rebuked kings:
22 "Touch not my anointed,
and to my prophets do no harm."

23 [e]Sing to the LORD, all the earth,
announce his salvation, day after day.
24 Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.
25 For great is the LORD and highly to be praised;
and awesome is he, beyond all gods.
26 For all the gods of the nations are things of nought,
but the LORD made the heavens.
27 Splendor and majesty go before him;
praise and joy are in his holy place.

28 Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
29 Give to the LORD the glory due his name!
Bring gifts, and enter his presence;
worship the LORD in holy attire.
30 Tremble before him, all the earth;
he has made the world firm, not to be moved.

31 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
let them say among the nations: The LORD is king.
32 Let the sea and what fills it resound;
let the plains rejoice and all that is in them!
33 Then shall all the trees of the forest exult
before the LORD, for he comes:
he comes to rule the earth.

34 [f]Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his kindness endures forever;
35 And say, "Save us, O God, our savior,
gather us and deliver us from the nations,
That we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in praising you."
36 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
through all eternity!
Let all the people say, Amen! Alleluia.

37 Then David left Asaph and his brethren there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark regularly according to the daily ritual; 38 he also left there Obed-edom and sixty-eight of his brethren, including Obed-edom, son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, to be gatekeepers.[g]

39 But the priest Zadok and his priestly brethren he left before the Dwelling of the LORD on the high place at Gibeon,[h] 40 to offer holocausts to the LORD on the altar of holocausts regularly, morning and evening, and to do all that is written in the law of the LORD which he has decreed for Israel.[i] 41 With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the others who were chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the LORD, "because his kindness endures forever,"[j] 42 with trumpets and cymbals for accompaniment, and instruments for the sacred chant. The sons of Jeduthun kept the gate.[k]

43 Then all the people departed, each to his own home, and David returned to bless his household.[l]

e 23–33: Ps 96, 1–13. f 34ff: Ps 106, 1. 47f. g 1 Chr 15, 24. h 1 Kgs 3, 4. i Ex 29, 38–42; Lv 6, 9; Nm 28, 3. 6; 2 Chr 13, 11. j 2 Chr 5, 12; 7, 3. 6; 20, 21; Ezr 3, 11. k 2 Chr 29, 27. l 2 Sm 6, 19f.

## CHAPTER 17

**The Oracle of Nathan** 1 [m]After David had taken up residence in his house, he said to Nathan the prophet, "See, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD dwells under tentcloth."[n] 2Nathan replied to David, "Do, therefore, whatever you desire, for God is with you."

3But that same night the word of God came to Nathan: 4"Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the LORD: It is not you who are to build a house for me to dwell in.[o] 5For I have never dwelt in a house, from the time when I led Israel onward, even to this day, but I have been lodging in tent or pavilion 6as long as I have wandered about with all of Israel. Did I ever say a word to any of the judges of Israel whom I commanded to guide my people, such as, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' 7Therefore, tell my servant David, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you might become ruler over my people Israel.[p] 8I was with you wherever you went, and I cut down all your enemies before you. I will make your name great like that of the greatest on the earth. 9I will assign a place for my people Israel and I will plant them in it to dwell there henceforth undisturbed; nor shall wicked men ever again oppress them, as they did at first, 10and during all the time when I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I declare to you that I, the LORD, will build you a house; 11so that when your days have been completed and you must join your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you who will be one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.[q] 12He it is who shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.[r] 13I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me, and I will not withdraw my favor from him as I withdrew it from him who preceded you;[s] 14but I will maintain him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be firmly established forever."

15All these words and this whole vision Nathan related exactly to David.

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**David's Thanksgiving** 16Then David came in and sat in the LORD's presence, saying: "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you should have brought me as far as I have come? 17And yet, even this you now consider too little, O God! For you have made a promise regarding your servant's family reaching into the distant future, and you have looked on me as henceforth the most notable of men, O LORD God.[t] 18What more can David say to you? You know your servant. 19O LORD, for your servant's sake and in keeping with your purpose, you have done this great thing. 20O LORD, there is no one like you and there is no God but you, just as we have always understood.[u]

21"Is there, like your people Israel, whom you redeemed from Egypt, another nation on earth whom a god went to redeem as his people? You won for yourself a name for great and awesome deeds by driving out the nations before your people.[v] 22You made your people Israel your own forever, and you, O LORD, became their God. 23Therefore, O LORD, may the promise that you have uttered concerning your servant and his house remain firm forever. Bring about what you have promised, 24that your renown as LORD of hosts, God of Israel, may be great and abide forever, while the house of David, your servant, is established in your presence.

25"Because you, O my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build him a house, your servant has made bold to pray before you.[w] 26Since you, O LORD, are truly God and have promised this good thing to your servant, 27and since you have deigned to bless the house of your servant, so that it will remain forever—since it is you, O LORD, who blessed it, it is blessed forever."[x]

m 1–27: 2 Sm 7, 1–29. n 1 Chr 15, 1; 2 Sm 5, 11. o 1 Chr 28, 3; 1 Kgs 8, 19. p 1 Sm 16, 11. q 2 Sm 7, 12f. r 1 Chr 22, 10; 28, 6. 10. s 2 Sm 7, 14. t 2 Sm 7, 19. u Sir 36, 4. v Dt 4, 7; 2 Sm 7, 23. w 2 Sm 7, 27. x Nm 22, 6.

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**David's Victories** 1 [y]After this, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and he took Gath and its towns away from the control of the Philistines. 2He also defeated Moab, and the Moabites became his subjects, paying tribute.

3David then defeated Hadadezer, king of Zobah toward Hamath, when the latter was on his way to set up his victory stele at the river Euphrates. 4David took from him twenty thousand foot soldiers, one thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen. Of the chariot horses, David hamstrung all but one hundred.[z] 5The Arameans of Damascus came to the aid of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, but David also slew twenty-two thousand of their men. 6Then David set up garrisons in the Damascus region of Aram, and the Arameans became his subjects, paying tribute. Thus the LORD made David victorious in all his campaigns.

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7David took the golden shields that were carried by Hadadezer's attendants and brought them to Jerusalem. 8He likewise took away from Tibhath and Cun, cities of Hadadezer, large quantities of bronze, which Solomon later used to make the bronze sea and the pillars and the vessels of bronze.[a]

9When Tou, king of Hamath, heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, 10he sent his son Hadoram to wish King David well and to congratulate him on having waged a victorious war against Hadadezer; for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou. He also sent David gold, silver and bronze utensils of every sort.[b] 11These also King David consecrated to the LORD along with all the silver and gold that he had taken from the nations: from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek.

12Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, also slew eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.[c] 13He set up garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. Thus the LORD made David victorious in all his campaigns.

**David's Officials** 14 [d]David reigned over all Israel and dispensed justice and right to all his people. 15Joab, son of Zeruiah, was in command of the army; Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was herald;[e] 16Zadok, son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, were priests;* Shavsha was scribe;[f] 17Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were the chief assistants to the king.*[g]

## CHAPTER 19

**Campaigns against Ammon** 1 [h]Afterward Nahash, king of the Ammonites, died and his son succeeded him as king. 2David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun, the son of Nahash, for his father treated me with kindness." Therefore he sent envoys to him to comfort him over the death of his father. But when David's servants had entered the land of the Ammonites to comfort Hanun, 3the Ammonite princes said to Hanun, "Do you think David is doing this—sending you these consolers—to honor your father? Have not his servants rather come to you to explore the land, spying it out for its overthrow?" 4Thereupon Hanun seized David's servants and had them shaved and their garments cut off half-way at the hips. Then he sent them away. 5When David was informed of what had happened to his men, he sent messengers to meet them, for the men had been greatly disgraced. "Remain at Jericho," the king told them,

**18, 16:** Zadok . . . and Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, were priests: as in the Chronicler's source, 2 Sm 8, 17. But according to 2 Sm 15, 24. 29. 35; 17, 15; 19, 11; 20, 25, and even 1 Chr 15, 11, it was Abiathar who shared the priestly office with Zadok, and he remained in this office even during the early years of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 2, 26; 4, 4). Moreover, according to 1 Sm 22, 20; 23, 6; 30, 7, Ahimelech was the father, not the son, of Abiathar. If the text Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, is not due to a scribal change, one must assume that Abiathar had a son who was named after his grandfather and who shared the priestly office with his father during the last years of David's reign.

**18, 17:** David's sons were the chief assistants to the king: in the parallel passage, 2 Sm 8, 18, which was the Chronicler's source, David's sons were priests. The change is characteristic of the Chronicler, for whom only Aaron's descendants could be priests.

y 1–13: 2 Sm 8, 1–14. z 2 Sm 8, 14; Jos 11, 6. 9. a 2 Sm 8, 8; 1 Kgs 7, 15. 23. 27. b 2 Sm 8, 10. c 2 Sm 8, 13; 2 Kgs 14, 7. d 14–17: 2 Sm 8, 15–18. e 1 Chr 11, 6; 2 Sm 8, 16; 1 Kgs 4, 3. f 1 Chr 24, 3. 6. 31; 2 Sm 8, 17. g 1 Chr 11, 22; 2 Sm 8, 18; 1 Kgs 1, 38. 44. h 1–19: 2 Sm 10, 1–19.

"until your beards have grown again; and then
you may come back here."
6When the Ammonites realized that they had
put themselves in bad odor with David, Hanun
and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents of
silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Aram
Naharaim, from Aram-maacah, and from Zobah.
7They hired thirty-two thousand chariots along
with the king of Maacah and his army, who
came and encamped before Medeba. The Am-
monites also assembled from their cities and
came out for war.
8When David heard of this, he sent Joab and
his whole army of warriors against them. 9The
Ammonites marched out and lined up for battle
at the gate of the city, while the kings who had
come to their help remained apart in the open
field. 10When Joab saw that there was a battle
line both in front of and behind him, he chose
some of the best fighters among the Israelites
and set them in array against the Arameans;[i]
11the rest of the army, which he placed under
the command of his brother Abishai, then lined
up to oppose the Ammonites.[j] 12And he said: "If
the Arameans prove too strong for me, you must
come to my help; and if the Ammonites prove
too strong for you, I will save you. 13Hold
steadfast and let us show ourselves courageous
for the sake of our people and the cities of our
God; then may the LORD do what seems best to
him." 14Joab therefore advanced with his men to
engage the Arameans in battle; but they fled
before him. 15And when the Ammonites saw
that the Arameans had fled, they also took to
flight before his brother Abishai, and reentered
the city. Joab then returned to Jerusalem.
16Seeing themselves vanquished by Israel, the
Arameans sent messengers to bring out the
Arameans from the other side of the River, with
Shophach, the general of Hadadezer's army, at
their head. 17When this was reported to David,
he gathered all Israel together, crossed the
Jordan, and met them. With the army of David
drawn up to fight the Arameans, they gave
battle. 18But the Arameans fled before Israel, and
David slew seven thousand of their chariot
fighters and forty thousand of their foot soldiers;
he also killed Shophach, the general of the army.
19When the vassals of Hadadezer saw them-
selves vanquished by Israel, they made peace
with David and became his subjects. After this,
the Arameans refused to come to the aid of the
Ammonites.

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1At the beginning of the following year, the
time when kings go to war, Joab led the army
out in force, laid waste the land of the Ammon-
ites, and went on to besiege Rabbah, while
David himself remained in Jerusalem. When
Joab had attacked Rabbah and destroyed it,
2[k]David took the crown of Milcom from the
idol's head. It was found to weigh a talent of
gold; and it contained precious stones, which
David wore on his own head. He also brought
out a great amount of booty from the city. 3He
deported the people of the city and set them to
work with saws, iron picks, and axes. Thus
David dealt with all the cities of the Ammonites.
Then he and his whole army returned to Jerusa-
lem.

**Victories over the Philistines** 4[l]Afterward
there was another battle with the Philistines, at
Gezer. At that time, Sibbecai the Hushathite
slew Sippai, one of the descendants of the
Raphaim, and the Philistines were subdued.[m]
5Once again there was war with the Philistines,
and Elhanan, the son of Jair, slew Lahmi, the
brother of Goliath* of Gath, whose spear shaft
was like a weaver's heddle-bar.[n]
6In still another battle, at Gath, they encoun-
tered a giant, also a descendant of the Raphaim,
who had six fingers to each hand and six toes to
each foot; twenty-four in all. 7He defied Israel,
and Jonathan, the son of Shimea, David's
brother, slew him. 8These were the descendants
of the Raphaim of Gath who died at the hands of
David and his servants.

20, 5: Elhanan . . . slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath: the Chronicler thus solves the difficulty of the apparent contradiction between 1 Sm 17, 49ff (David killed Goliath) and 2 Sm 21, 19 (Elhanan killed Goliath).

i 1 Chr 20, 23; 1 Kgs 2, 28. 34. j 1 Chr 23, 18f. k 2f: 2 Sm 12, 30f. l 4–8: 2 Sm 21, 18–22. m 1 Chr 11, 29; 27, 11. n 1 Chr 11, 26; 1 Sm 17, 4. 23.

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## CHAPTER 21

**David's Census; the Plague** 1 [o]A satan* rose up against Israel, and he enticed David into taking a census of Israel.[p] 2David therefore said to Joab and to the other generals of the army, "Go, find out the number of the Israelites from Beer-sheba to Dan, and report back to me that I may know their number." 3But Joab replied: "May the LORD increase his people a hundredfold! My lord king, are not all of them my lord's subjects? Why does my lord seek to do this thing? Why will he bring guilt upon Israel?" 4However, the king's command prevailed over Joab, who departed and traversed all of Israel, and then returned to Jerusalem. 5Joab reported the result of the census to David: of men capable of wielding a sword, there were in all Israel one million one hundred thousand, and in Judah four hundred and seventy thousand. 6Levi and Benjamin, however, he did not include in the census, for the king's command was repugnant to Joab.[q] 7This command displeased God, who began to punish Israel. 8Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly in doing this thing. Take away your servant's guilt, for I have acted very foolishly."

9Then the LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, in these words:[r] 10"Go, tell David: Thus says the LORD: I offer you three alternatives; choose one of them, and I will inflict it on you." 11Accordingly, Gad went to David and said to him: "Thus says the LORD: Decide now— 12will it be three years of famine; or three months of fleeing your enemies, with the sword of your foes ever at your back; or three days of the LORD's own sword, a pestilence in the land, with the LORD's destroying angel in every part of Israel? Therefore choose: What answer am I to give him who sent me?" 13Then David said to Gad: "I am in dire straits. But I prefer to fall into the hand of the LORD, whose mercy is very great, than into the hands of men."

14Therefore the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel died. 15God also sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem; but as he was on the point of destroying it, the LORD saw and decided against the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "Enough now! Stay your hand!"[s]

**Ornan's Threshing Floor** The angel of the LORD was then standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16When David raised his eyes, he saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with a naked sword in his hand stretched out against Jerusalem. David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, prostrated themselves face to the ground, 17and David prayed to God: "Was it not I who ordered the census of the people? I am the one who sinned, I did this wicked thing. But these sheep, what have they done? O LORD, my God, strike me and my father's family, but do not afflict your people with this plague!"

18Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to tell David to go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.[t] 19David went up at Gad's command, given in the name of the LORD. 20While Ornan was threshing wheat, he turned around and saw the king, and his four sons who were with him, without recognizing them. 21But as David came on toward him, he looked up and saw that it was David. Then he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David, his face to the ground. 22David said to Ornan: "Sell me the ground of this threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD. Sell it to me at its full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people." 23But Ornan said to David: "Take it as your own, and let my lord the king do what seems best to him. See, I also give you the oxen for the holocausts, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the cereal offering. I give it all to you." 24But King David replied to

21, 1: A satan: in the parallel passage of 2 Sm 24, 1, the Lord's anger. The change in the term reflects the changed theological outlook of postexilic Israel, when evil could no longer be attributed directly to God. At an earlier period the Hebrew word satan ("adversary," or, especially in a court of law, "accuser"), when not used of men, designated an angel who accused men before God (Jb 1, 6–12; 2, 1–7; Zec 3, 1f). Here, as in later Judaism (Wis 2, 24) and in the New Testament, satan, or the "devil" (from the Greek translation of the word), designates an evil spirit who tempts men to wrongdoing.

o 1–7: 2 Sm 24, 1–25. p Zec 3, 1f. q 1 Chr 27, 24; Nm 1, 49. r 1 Chr 29, 29; 1 Sm 9, 9; 2 Chr 29, 25. s Gn 6, 6; Ex 32, 14; 2 Sm 24, 16; Jon 3, 10. t 2 Chr 3, 1.

Ornan: "No! I will buy it from you properly, at
its full price. I will not take what is yours for the
LORD, nor offer up holocausts that cost me
nothing." 25So David paid Ornan six hundred
shekels of gold* for the place.

**Altar of Holocausts** 26David then built an altar
there to the LORD, and offered up holocausts and
peace offerings. When he called upon the LORD,
he answered him by sending down fire from
heaven upon the altar of holocausts.[u] 27Then the
LORD gave orders to the angel to return his
sword to its sheath.

28Once David saw that the LORD had heard
him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite,
he continued to offer sacrifices there. 29The
Dwelling of the LORD, which Moses had built in
the desert, and the altar of holocausts were at
that time on the high place at Gibeon.[v] 30But
David could not go there to worship God, for he
was fearful of the sword of the angel of the
LORD. 1Therefore David said, "This is the house
of the LORD God, and this is the altar of
holocausts for Israel."*[w]

## CHAPTER 22

**Material for the Temple** 2*David then ordered that all the aliens who lived in the land of Israel be brought together, and he appointed them stonecutters to hew out stone blocks for building the house of God.[x] 3He also laid up large stores of iron to make nails for the doors of the gates, and clamps, together with so much bronze that it could not be weighed,[y] 4and cedar trees without number. The Sidonians and Tyrians brought great stores of cedar logs to David,[z] 5who said: "My son Solomon is young and immature; but the house that is to be built for the LORD must be made so magnificent that it will be renowned and glorious in all countries. Therefore I will make preparations for it." Thus before his death David laid up materials in abundance.[a]

**Charge to Solomon** 6Then he called for his son Solomon and commanded him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. 7[b]David said to Solomon: "My son, it was my purpose to build a house myself for the honor of the LORD, my God. 8But this word of the LORD came to me: 'You have shed much blood, and you have waged great wars. You may not build a house in my honor, because you have shed too much blood upon the earth in my sight. 9However, a son is to be born to you. He will be a peaceful man, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. For Solomon shall be his name, and in his time I will bestow peace* and tranquility on Israel.[c] 10It is he who shall build a house in my honor; he shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish the throne of his kingship over Israel forever.'[d] 11Now, my son, the LORD be with you, and may you succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as he has said you shall. 12May the LORD give you prudence and discernment when he brings you to rule over Israel, so that you keep the law of the LORD, your God. 13Only then shall you succeed, if you are careful to observe the precepts and decrees which the LORD gave Moses for Israel. Be brave and steadfast; do not fear or lose heart.[e] 14See, with great effort I have laid up for the house of the LORD a hundred thousand talents of gold,* a million talents of

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21, 25: Six hundred shekels of gold: about 10,000 dollars. According to 2 Sm 24, 24, David paid 50 shekels of silver, about 20 dollars, for Ornan's threshing floor; but for the Chronicler the site of the temple was much more precious than that.

21, 1: This belongs to ch 22.

22, 2ff: According to 1 Kgs 5, 15–32, it was Solomon who made the material preparations for building the temple, even though David had wished to do so (1 Kgs 5, 17ff). The Chronicler, however, sought to have David, who was Israel's ideal king, more closely connected with Israel's most sacred sanctuary, the temple of Jerusalem.

22, 9: The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, is reflected in the name Solomon, in Hebrew, Shelomo. A contrast is drawn here between Solomon, the peaceful man, and David, who waged great wars (v 8). David was prevented from building the temple, not only because all his time was taken up in waging war (1 Kgs 5, 17), but also because he shed much blood (v 8), and in the eyes of the Chronicler this made him ritually unfit for the task.

22, 14: A hundred thousand talents of gold: about 3,775 tons of gold. A million talents of silver: about 37,750 tons of silver. The fantastically exaggerated figures are intended merely to stress the inestimable value of the temple as the center of Israelite worship. More modest figures are given in 1 Kgs 9, 14. 28; 10, 10. 14.

u Lv 9, 24; Jgs 6, 21; 1 Kgs 18. 38; 2 Chr 7, 1; 2 Mc 2, 10ff. v 1 Chr 16, 39; 1 Kgs 8, 4; 2 Chr 1, 8. w 1 Chr 21, 18. 26. 28; 2 Chr 3, 1. x 1 Kgs 5, 31f; 9, 20f; 2 Chr 2, 16f. y 1 Chr 18, 8; 1 Kgs 7, 47. z 1 Chr 10, 27; Ezr 3, 7. a 1 Chr 29, 1. b 7–10: 1 Chr 17, 1–14; 28, 2–7; 2 Sm 7, 1–16; 1 Kgs 5, 3ff; 8, 17–21. c 2 Sm 12, 24. d Heb 1, 5. e 1 Chr 28, 7. 20; Dt 31, 6. 23; Jos 1, 6f. 9; 1 Kgs 2, 2f.

silver, and bronze and iron in such great quantities that they cannot be weighed. I have also stored up wood and stones, to which you must add.[f] 15Moreover, you have available an unlimited supply of workmen, stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and every kind of craftsman 16skilled in gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Set to work, therefore, and the LORD be with you!"

**Charge to the Leaders** 17David also commanded all of Israel's leaders to help his son Solomon: 18"Is not the LORD your God with you? Has he not given you rest on every side? Indeed, he has delivered the occupants of the land into my power, and the land is subdued before the LORD and his people.[g] 19Therefore, devote your hearts and souls to seeking the LORD your God. Proceed to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, that the ark of the covenant of the LORD and God's sacred vessels may be brought into the house built in honor of the LORD."[h]

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 17–29 See RG 189–192

**The Levitical Classes** 1When David had grown old and was near the end of his days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.[i] 2He then gathered together all the leaders of Israel, together with the priests and the Levites.

3The Levites thirty years old and above were counted, and their total number was found to be thirty-eight thousand men.[j] 4Of these, twenty-four thousand were to direct the service of the house of the LORD, six thousand were to be officials and judges, 5four thousand were to be gatekeepers, and four thousand were to praise the LORD with the instruments which David had devised for praise.[k] 6David divided them into classes according to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.[l]

7To the Gershonites belonged Ladan and Shimei. 8The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the chief, then Zetham and Joel; three in all.[m] 9The sons of Shimei were Shelomoth, Haziel, and Haran; three. These were the heads of the families of Ladan. 10The sons of Shimei were Jahath, Zizah, Jeush, and Beriah; these were the sons of Shimei, four in all. 11Jahath was the chief and Zizah was second to him; but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons, and therefore they were classed as a single family, fulfilling a single office.

12The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel; four in all.[n] 13The sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to be consecrated as most holy, he and his sons forever, to offer sacrifice before the LORD, to minister to him, and to bless his name forever.[o] 14As for Moses, however, the man of God, his sons were counted as part of the tribe of Levi. 15The sons of Moses were Gershon and Eliezer.[p] 16The sons of Gershon: Shubael the chief.[q] 17The sons of Eliezer were Rehabiah the chief—Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous. 18The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief. 19The sons of Hebron: Jeriah, the chief, Amariah, the second, Jahaziel, the third, and Jekameam, the fourth.[r] 20The sons of Uzziel: Micah, the chief, and Isshiah, the second.[s]

21The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish.[t] 22Eleazar died leaving no sons, only daughters; the sons of Kish, their kinsmen, married them.[u] 23The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth; three in all.[v]

24These were the sons of Levi according to their ancestral houses, the family heads as they were enrolled one by one according to their names. They performed the work of the service of the house of the LORD from twenty years of age upward,[w] 27for David's final orders were to enlist the Levites from the time they were twenty years old.

25David said: "The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people, and has taken up his dwelling in Jerusalem.[x] 26Henceforth the Levites need not carry the Dwelling or any of its

f 1 Chr 29, 2ff. g 1 Chr 23, 25; Jos 21, 44; 23, 1; 2 Sm 7, 1. h 1 Kgs 8, 6. 21; 2 Chr 5, 7; 6, 11. i 1 Chr 28, 5; 1 Kgs 1, 30. j Nm 4, 3. 23. 30. 35. 39. 43. 47; 8, 23–26; 2 Chr 31, 17. k 1 Chr 9, 22. l 1 Chr 6, 1. 16–30; 26, 1–19; Ex 6, 16; Nm 3, 17; 26, 57. m 1 Chr 26, 21f; 29, 8. n 1 Chr 26, 23; Ex 6, 18; Nm 3, 19; 26, 23ff. o 1 Chr 6, 49; Ex 6, 20; 28, 1; Nm 6, 23. p Ex 2, 22; 18, 3f. q 1 Chr 26, 24. r 1 Chr 24, 23. s 1 Chr 24, 24f. t 1 Chr 6, 29; 24, 26. 28f; Ex 6, 19; Nm 3, 20. 33. u 1 Chr 24, 28f. v 1 Chr 6, 47; 24, 30. w 2 Chr 31, 17; Ezr 3, 8. x 1 Chr 22, 18; Ps 132, 13.

furnishings or equipment.[y] 28Rather, their duty
shall be to assist the sons of Aaron in the service
of the house of the LORD, having charge of the
courts, the chambers, and the preservation of
everything holy: they shall take part in the
service of the house of God. 29They shall also
have charge of the showbread, of the fine flour
for the cereal offering, of the wafers of un-
leavened bread, and of the baking and mixing,
and of all measures of quantity and size.[z] 30They
must be present every morning to offer thanks
and to praise the LORD, and likewise in the
evening;[a] 31and at every offering of holocausts
to the LORD on sabbaths, new moons, and feast
days, in such numbers as are prescribed, they
must always be present before the LORD.[b]
32They shall observe what is prescribed for them
concerning the meeting tent, the sanctuary, and
the sons of Aaron, their brethren, in the service
of the house of the LORD."[c]

## CHAPTER 24

**The Priestly Classes** 1The descendants of Aaron also were divided into classes. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.[d] 2Nadab and Abihu died before their father, leaving no sons; therefore only Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests.[e] 3David, with Zadok, a descendant of Eleazar, and Ahimelech, a descendant of Ithamar, assigned the functions for the priestly service.[f] 4But since the descendants of Eleazar were found to be more numerous than those of Ithamar, the former were divided into sixteen groups, and the latter into eight groups, each under its family head. 5Their functions were assigned impartially by lot, for there were officers of the holy place, and officers of the divine presence, descended both from Eleazar and from Ithamar. 6The scribe Shemaiah, son of Nethanel, a Levite, made a record of it in the presence of the king, and of the leaders, of Zadok the priest, and of Ahimelech, son of Abiathar,* and of the heads of the ancestral houses of the priests and of the Levites, listing two successive family groups from Eleazar before each one from Ithamar.[g]

7[h]The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to
Jedaiah, 8the third to Harim, the fourth to
Seorim, 9the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to
Mijamin, 10the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to
Abijah,[i] 11the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to
Shecaniah, 12the eleventh to Eliashib, the
twelfth to Jakim, 13the thirteenth to Huppah, the
fourteenth to Ishbaal, 14the fifteenth to Bilgah,
the sixteenth to Immer, 15the seventeenth to
Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, 16the nine-
teenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,
17the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to
Gamul, 18the twenty-third to Delaiah, the
twenty-fourth to Maaziah. 19This was the ap-
pointed order of their service when they func-
tioned in the house of the LORD in keeping with
the precepts given them by Aaron, their father,
as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded
him.[j]

**Other Levites** 20[k]Of the remaining Levites, there were Shubael, of the descendants of Amram, and Jehdeiah, of the descendants of Shubael; 21Isshiah, the chief, of the descendants of Rehabiah; 22Shelomith of the Izharites, and Jahath of the descendants of Shelomith. 23The descendants of Hebron were Jeriah, the chief, Amariah, the second, Jahaziel, the third, Jekameam, the fourth. 24The descendants of Uzziel were Micah; Shamir, of the descendants of Micah; 25Isshiah, the brother of Micah; and Zechariah, a descendant of Isshiah. 26The descendants of Merari were Mahli, Mushi, and the descendants of his son Uzziah. 27The descendants of Merari through his son Uzziah: Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri. 28Descendants of Mahli were Eleazar, who had no sons, 29and Jerahmeel, of the descendants of Kish. 30The descendants of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

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These were the descendants of the Levites according to their ancestral houses. 31They too, in the same manner as their relatives, the

24, 6: Ahimelech, son of Abiathar: see note on 1 Chr 18, 16.

y 1 Chr 15, 15; 2 Chr 35, 3. z 1 Chr 9, 29. 31f; Lv 2, 1. 4f; 24, 5–8. a Nm 28, 3–8. b Nm 28, 2–29. 39. c Nm 3, 6–9; 18, 2–5. d Ex 6, 23; Nm 3, 2ff; 26, 60. e Lv 10, 1–7. 12; Nm 3, 2. 4. f 1 Chr 18, 16; 2 Sm 8, 17; 2 Chr 8, 14. g 1 Chr 18, 16; 2 Sm 8, 17. h 7–10: 1 Chr 9, 10ff; Ezr 2, 36ff; Neh 7, 39ff; 11, 10ff. i Lk 1, 5. j 2 Chr 23, 8. k 20–31: 1 Chr 23, 7–23.

descendants of Aaron, cast lots in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the priestly and levitical families; the more important family did so in the same way as the less important one.[l]

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 17–29 See RG 189–192

**The Singers** [1]David and the leaders of the liturgical cult set apart for service the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, as singers of inspired song to the accompaniment of lyres and harps and cymbals.[m]

This is the list of those who performed this service: [2]*Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah, sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who sang inspired songs under the guidance of the king. [3]Of Jeduthun, these sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah; six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who sang inspired songs to the accompaniment of a lyre, to give thanks and praise to the LORD. [4]Of Heman, these sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael, and Jerimoth; Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. [5]All these were the sons of Heman, the king's seer in divine matters; to enhance his prestige, God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.[n] [6]All these, whether of Asaph, Jeduthun, or Heman, were under their fathers' direction in the singing in the house of the LORD to the accompaniment of cymbals, harps and lyres, serving in the house of God, under the guidance of the king.[o] [7]Their number, together with that of their brethren who were trained in singing to the LORD, all of them skilled men, was two hundred and eighty-eight. [8]They cast lots for their functions equally, young and old, master and pupil alike.[p]

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[9]The first lot fell to Asaph, the family of Joseph; he and his sons and his brethren were twelve. Gedaliah was the second; he and his brethren and his sons were twelve. [10]The third was Zaccur, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [11]The fourth fell to Izri, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [12]The fifth was Nethaniah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [13]The sixth was Bukkiah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [14]The seventh was Jesarelah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [15]The eighth was Jeshaiah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [16]The ninth was Mattaniah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [17]The tenth was Shimei, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [18]The eleventh was Uzziel, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [19]The twelfth fell to Hashabiah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [20]The thirteenth was Shubael, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [21]The fourteenth was Mattithiah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [22]The fifteenth fell to Jeremoth, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [23]The sixteenth fell to Hananiah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [24]The seventeenth fell to Joshbekashah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [25]The eighteenth fell to Hanani, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [26]The nineteenth fell to Mallothi, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [27]The twentieth fell to Eliathah, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [28]The twenty-first fell to Hothir, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [29]The twenty-second fell to Giddalti, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [30]The twenty-third fell to Mahazioth, his sons, and his brethren: twelve. [31]The twenty-fourth fell to Romamti-ezer, his sons, and his brethren: twelve.

## CHAPTER 26

**Classes of Gatekeepers** [1]*q*As for the classes of gatekeepers. Of the Korahites was Meshelemiah, the son of Kore, one of the sons of Abiasaph. [2]Meshelemiah's sons: Zechariah, the first-born, Jediael, the second son, Zebadiah, the third, Jathniel, the fourth, [3]Elam, the fifth,

**25, 2–31:** This list of twenty-four classes of temple singers balances the list of the twenty-four classes of priests (1 Chr 24, 4–19). The last nine names in 1 Chr 25, 4, which seem to form a special group, appear to have been originally fragments or incipits of hymns. With some slight changes in the vocalization, the names would mean: "Have mercy on me, O Lord," "Have mercy on me," "You are my God," "I magnify," "I extol the help of . . . ," "Sitting in adversity," "I have fulfilled," "He made abundant," and "Visions."

l 1 Chr 25, 8; 26, 13. m 1 Chr 6, 31ff; 15, 16f. 19; 16, 37; 2 Chr 5, 12; 35, 15; Neh 12, 27. 45. n 2 Chr 35, 15. o 1 Chr 15, 16. p 1 Chr 24, 31. q 1 Chr 9, 19; 2 Chr 8, 14; 23, 19; 35, 15; Neh 12, 45.

Jehohanan, the sixth, Eliehoenai, the seventh.
4Obed-edom's sons: Shemaiah, the first-born,
Jehozabad, a second son, Joah, the third, Sa-
char, the fourth, Nethanel, the fifth, 5Ammiel,
the sixth, Issachar, the seventh, Peullethai, the
eighth, for God blessed him. 6To his son Shema-
iah were born sons who ruled over their family,
for they were warriors. 7The sons of Shemaiah
were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad; also
his brethren who were men of might, Elihu
and Semachiah. 8All these were of the sons of
Obed-edom, who, together with their sons and
their brethren, were mighty men, fit for the
service. Of Obed-edom, sixty-two. 9Of Meshele-
miah, eighteen sons and brethren, mighty men.

10Hosah, a descendant of Merari, had these
sons: Shimri, the chief (for though he was not
the first-born, his father made him chief),[r]
11Hilkiah, the second son, Tebaliah, the third,
Zechariah, the fourth. All the sons and brethren
of Hosah were thirteen.

12To these classes of gatekeepers, under their
chief men, were assigned watches in the service
of the house of the LORD, for each group in the
same way. 13They cast lots for each gate, the
small and the large families alike. 14When the
lot was cast for the east side, it fell to Meshele-
miah. Then they cast lots for his son Zechariah,
a prudent counselor, and the north side fell to
his lot.[s] 15To Obed-edom fell the south side,
and to his sons the storehouse. 16To Hosah fell
the west side with the Shallecheth gate at the
ascending highway. For each family, watches
were established. 17On the east, six watched
each day, on the north, four each day, on the
south, four each day, and at the storehouse they
were two and two; 18as for the large building*
on the west, there were four at the highway
and two at the large building. 19These were the
classes of the gatekeepers, descendants of Kore
and Merari.

**Treasurers** 20Their brother Levites superin-
tended the stores for the house of God and the
stores of votive offerings.[t] 21Among the descen-
dants of Ladan the Gershonite, the family heads
were descendants of Jehiel: the descendants of
Jehiel,[u] 22[v]Zetham and his brother Joel, who
superintended the treasures of the house of the
LORD. 23From the Amramites, Izharites, Hebron-
ites, and Uzzielites, 24Shubael, son of Gershon,
son of Moses, was chief superintendent over the
treasures. 25[w]His associate pertained to Eliezer,
whose son was Rehabiah, whose son was Jesha-
iah, whose son was Joram, whose son was
Zichri, whose son was Shelomith. 26This Shelo-
mith and his brethren superintended all the
stores of the votive offerings dedicated by King
David, the heads of the families, the comman-
ders of thousands and of hundreds, and the
commanders of the army,[x] 27from the booty they
had taken in the wars, for the enhancement of
the house of the LORD. 28Also, whatever Samuel
the seer, Saul, son of Kish, Abner, son of Ner,
Joab, son of Zeruiah, and all others had conse-
crated, was under the charge of Shelomith and
his brethren.

**Magistrates** 29Among the Izharites, Chananiah
and his sons were in charge of Israel's civil affairs
as officials and judges.[y] 30Among the Hebron-
ites, Hashabiah and his brethren, one thousand
seven hundred police officers, had the admini-
stration of Israel on the western side of the Jordan
in all the work of the LORD and in the service of
the king.[z] 31Among the Hebronites, Jerijah was
their chief according to their family records. In
the fortieth year of David's reign search was
made, and there were found among them out-
standing officers at Jazer of Gilead.[a] 32His breth-
ren were also police officers, two thousand
seven hundred heads of families. King David
appointed them to the administration of the
Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of
Manasseh in everything pertaining to God and to
the king.

26, 18: The large building (in the Hebrew text Parbar): see note on 2 Kgs 23, 11.

r 1 Chr 16, 38. s 1 Chr 9, 24. t 1 Chr 28, 12; 1 Kgs 7, 51. u 1 Chr 23, 7f; 29, 8. v 22ff: 1 Chr 23, 8. 12. 16. w 1 Chr 23, 17f; 24, 21. x 2 Sm 8, 11. y 1 Chr 23, 4. z 1 Chr 27, 17; Neh 11, 15f. a 1 Chr 23, 19; 29, 27; Jos 13, 25.

## CHAPTER 27

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**Army Commanders*** [1]This is the list of the Israelite family heads, commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and other officers who served the king in all that pertained to the divisions, of twenty-four thousand men each, that came and went month by month throughout the year.

[2]Over the first division for the first month was Ishbaal, son of Zabdiel, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men; [3]a descendant of Perez, he was chief over all the commanders of the army for the first month. [4]Over the division of the second month was Eleazar, son of Dodo, from Ahoh, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men.[b] [5][c]The third army commander, chief for the third month, was Benaiah, son of Jehoiada the priest, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [6]This Benaiah was a warrior among the Thirty and over the Thirty. His son Ammizabad was over his division. [7]Fourth, for the fourth month, was Asahel, brother of Joab, and after him his son Zebadiah, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men.[d] [8]Fifth, for the fifth month, was the commander Shamhuth, a descendant of Zerah, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [9]Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira, son of Ikkesh, from Tekoa, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [10]Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helles, from Beth-pheleth, of the sons of Ephraim, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [11]Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, a descendant of Zerah, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men.[e] [12]Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer from Anathoth, of Benjamin, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [13]Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai from Netophah, a descendant of Zerah, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [14]Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah the Pirathonite, of Ephraim, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men. [15]Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of the family of Othniel, and in his division were twenty-four thousand men.

**Tribal Heads** [16]Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites the leader was Eliezer, son of Zichri; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah, son of Maacah; [17]for Levi, Hashabiah, son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; [18]for Judah, Eliab, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri, son of Michael;[f] [19]for Zebulun, Ishmaiah, son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jeremoth, son of Azriel; [20]for the sons of Ephraim, Hoshea, son of Azaziah; for the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel, son of Pedaiah; [21]for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo, son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel, son of Abner; [22]for Dan, Azarel, son of Jeroham. These were the commanders of the tribes of Israel.

[23]David did not count those who were twenty years of age or younger, for the LORD had promised to multiply Israel like the stars of the heavens.[g] [24]Joab, son of Zeruiah, began to take the census, but he did not complete it, for because of it wrath fell upon Israel. Therefore the number did not enter into the book of chronicles of King David.[h]

**Overseers** [25]Over the treasures of the king was Azmaveth, the son of Adiel. Over the stores in the country, the cities, the villages, and the towers was Jonathan, son of Uzziah.[i] [26]Over the farm workers who tilled the soil was Ezri, son of Chelub. [27]Over the vineyards was Shimei from Ramah, and over their produce for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. [28]Over the olive trees and sycamores of the foothills was Baal-hanan the Gederite, and over the stores of oil was Joash. [29]Over the cattle that grazed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite, and over the cattle in the valleys was Shaphat, the son of Adlai; [30]over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite; over the she-asses was Jehdeiah the Merono-

**27, 1–15:** This list of army commanders is similar to, but distinct from, the list of David's warriors as given in 1 Chr 11, 10–47. The schematic enumeration of the soldiers as presented here is, no doubt, artificial and grossly exaggerated (12 × 24,000 = 288,000 men!), unless the Hebrew word (eleph) for thousand is understood as designating a military unit of much smaller size; see note on 1 Chr 12, 25–38.

b 1 Chr 9, 37; 11, 12; 2 Sm 23, 9. c 5f: 1 Chr 11, 22ff; 18, 17; 2 Sm 23, 20ff. d 2 Sm 2, 18; 23, 24. e 1 Chr 11, 29; 20, 4; 2 Sm 21, 18. f 1 Chr 2, 13. g 1 Chr 22, 17. h 2 Sm 24, 10. i 2 Sm 23, 31.

thite; [31]and over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. All these were the overseers of King David's possessions.

**David's Court** [32]Jonathan, David's uncle and a man of intelligence, was counselor and scribe; he and Jehiel, the son of Hachmoni, were tutors of the king's sons. [33]Ahithophel was also the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite was the king's confidant.[j] [34]After Ahithophel* came Jehoiada, the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. The commander of the king's army was Joab.

## CHAPTER 28

**The Assembly at Jerusalem** [1]David assembled at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel, the heads of the tribes, the commanders of the divisions who were in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, the overseers of all the king's estates and possessions, and his sons, together with the courtiers, the warriors, and every important man.[k] [2]King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brethren and my people. It was my purpose to build a house of repose myself for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the footstool for the feet of our God;* and I was preparing to build it. [3]But God said to me, 'You may not build a house in my honor, for you are a man who fought wars and shed blood.' [4]However, the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from all my father's family to be king over Israel forever. For he chose Judah as leader, then one family of Judah, that of my father; and finally, among all the sons of my father, it pleased him to make me king over all Israel.[m] [5]And of all my sons—for the LORD has given me many sons—he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the LORD's royal throne over Israel.[n] [6]For he said to me: 'It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him for my son, and I will be a father to him.[o] [7]I will establish his kingdom forever, if he perseveres in keeping my commandments and decrees as he keeps them now.' [8]Therefore in the presence of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, I exhort you to keep and to carry out all the commandments of the LORD, your God, that you may continue to possess this good land and afterward leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.[p]

[9]"As for you, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing soul, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the mind's thoughts. If you seek him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you abandon him, he will cast you off forever.[q] [10]See, then! The LORD has chosen you to build a house as his sanctuary. Take courage and set to work."

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**Temple Plans Given to Solomon** [11]Then David gave to his son Solomon the pattern of the portico and of the building itself, with its storerooms, its upper rooms and inner chambers, and the room with the propitiatory.[r] [12]He provided also the pattern for all else that he had in mind by way of courts for the house of the LORD, with the surrounding compartments for the stores for the house of God and the stores of the votive offerings, [13]as well as for the divisions of the priests and Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the liturgical vessels of the house of the LORD. [14]He specified the weight of gold to be used in the golden vessels for the various services and the weight of silver to be used in the silver vessels for the various services; [15]likewise for the golden lampstands and their lamps he specified the weight of gold for each lampstand and its lamps, and for the silver lampstands he specified the weight of silver for each lampstand and its

**27, 34:** After Ahithophel: after his suicide (2 Sm 17, 23). Jehoiada then succeeded him as the king's counselor. Abiathar: the priest. The Chronicler does not mention his office because he regards only the Zadokites as legitimate high priests.

**28, 2:** The ark . . . the footstool . . . of our God: the Lord, who was invisibly enthroned upon the cherubim that were associated with the ark of the covenant at Shiloh and later in the Jerusalem temple, had the ark as his footstool; cf Pss 99, 5; 132, 7. The propitiatory (1 Chr 28, 11) and the chariot throne (1 Chr 28, 18) reflect the different circumstances of the postexilic community, for whom only the place of the ark was a focal point of worship, though the ark itself was no longer present.

j 2 Sm 15, 12. 32–37; 16, 16–19. 23; 17, 5–16. 23.
k 1 Chr 27, 2–22. 25–31; 11, 10ff. l 2f: 1 Chr 17, 4; 22, 7ff; 2 Sm 7, 5; 1 Kgs 5, 3; Ps 132, 3–7. m 1 Chr 17, 23; Gn 49, 8ff; 1 Sm 16, 6–13. n 1 Chr 3, 1–9; 14, 3–7; 22, 9; 23, 1; Wis 9, 7. o 1 Chr 17, 11ff; 22, 9f; 2 Sm 7, 12f. p Dt 4, 5. q 1 Chr 29, 17; 2 Chr 15, 2; 1 Kgs 8, 61. r Ex 25, 9. 40; 26, 30.

lamps, depending on the use to which each lampstand was to be put.[s] [16]He specified the weight of gold for each table to hold the showbread, and the silver for the silver tables; [17]the pure gold to be used for the forks and pitchers; the amount of gold for each golden bowl and the silver for each silver bowl; [18]the refined gold, and its weight, to be used for the altar of incense; and, finally, gold for what would suggest a chariot throne:* the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.[t] [19]He had successfully committed to writing the exact specifications of the pattern, because the hand of the LORD was upon him.

[20]Then David said to his son Solomon: "Be firm and steadfast; go to work without fear or discouragement, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or abandon you before you have completed all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.[u] [21]The classes of the priests and Levites are ready for all the service of the house of God; they will help you in all your work with all those who are eager to show their skill in every kind of craftsmanship. Also the leaders and all the people will do everything that you command."[v]

## CHAPTER 29

Ch 17–29
See RG
189–192

**Offerings for the Temple** [1]King David then said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and immature; the work, however, is great, for this castle is not intended for man, but for the LORD God.[w] [2]For this reason I have stored up for the house of my God, as far as I was able, gold for what will be made of gold, silver for what will be made of silver, bronze for what will be made of bronze, iron for what will be made of iron, wood for what will be made of wood, onyx stones and settings for them, carnelian and mosaic stones, every other kind of precious stone, and great quantities of marble.[x] [3]But now, because of the delight I take in the house of my God, in addition to all that I stored up for the holy house, I give to the house of my God my personal fortune in gold and silver: [4]three thousand talents of Ophir gold, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the rooms,[y] [5]for the various utensils to be made of gold and silver, and for every work that is to be done by artisans. Now, who else is willing to contribute generously this day to the LORD?"[z]

[6]Then the heads of the families, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the overseers of the king's affairs came forward willingly[a] [7]and contributed for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.[b] [8]Those who had precious stones gave them into the keeping of Jehiel the Gershonite for the treasury of the house of the LORD.[c] [9]The people rejoiced over these free-will offerings, which had been contributed to the LORD wholeheartedly. King David also rejoiced greatly.[d]

**David's Prayer** [10]Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, praying in these words:

"Blessed may you be, O LORD,
God of Israel our father,
from eternity to eternity.

[11] "Yours, O LORD, are grandeur and power,
majesty, splendor, and glory.
For all in heaven and on earth is yours;
yours, O LORD, is the sovereignty;
you are exalted as head over all.

[12] "Riches and honor are from you,
and you have dominion over all.
In your hand are power and might;
it is yours to give grandeur and strength to all.[e]

[13] Therefore, our God, we give you thanks
and we praise the majesty of your name.

[14] "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should have the means to contribute so

28, 18: Chariot throne: probably suggested by Ez 1, 4–24; 10, 1–22.

s Ex 25, 31–37. t Ex 25, 18–22; 30, 1–10; 1 Kgs 6, 23–28. u 1 Chr 22, 13. 16; Jos 1, 5. v Ex 36, 1–5. w 1 Chr 22, 5; 28, 5. x 1 Chr 22, 14. y 2 Chr 9, 10; 1 Kgs 9, 28; 10, 11. z Ex 25, 2; 35, 5f. a 1 Chr 27, 1. 25–31; 28, 1. b Ezr 2, 69; 8, 27; Neh 7, 70ff. c 1 Chr 23, 8; 26, 21. d 2 Kgs 12, 4. e 2 Chr 20, 6; Wis 6, 3.

freely? For everything is from you, and we only
give you what we have received from you. 15For
we stand before you as aliens: we are only your
guests, like all our fathers. Our life on earth is
like a shadow that does not abide.[f] 16O LORD
our God, all this wealth that we have brought
together to build you a house in honor of your
holy name comes from you and is entirely yours.
17I know, O my God, that you put hearts to the
test and that you take pleasure in uprightness.
With a sincere heart I have willingly given all
these things, and now with joy I have seen your
people here present also giving to you gener-
ously. 18O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham,
Isaac, and Israel, keep such thoughts in the
hearts and minds of your people forever, and
direct their hearts toward you.[g] 19Give to my
son Solomon a wholehearted desire to keep your
commandments, precepts, and statutes, that he
may carry out all these plans and build the castle
for which I have made preparation."

20Then David besought the whole assembly,
"Now bless the LORD your God!" And the whole
assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their
fathers, bowing down and prostrating them-
selves before the LORD and before the king. 21On
the following day they offered sacrifices and
holocausts to the LORD, a thousand bulls, a
thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, together
with their libations and many other sacrifices for
all Israel; 22and on that day they ate and drank
in the LORD's presence with great rejoicing.

**Solomon Anointed** Then for a second time*
they proclaimed David's son Solomon king, and
they anointed him as the LORD's prince, and
Zadok as priest. 23Thereafter Solomon sat on the
throne of the LORD as king in place of his father
David; he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.[h]
24All the leaders and warriors, and also all the
other sons of King David, swore allegiance to
King Solomon. 25And the LORD exalted Solomon
greatly in the eyes of all Israel, giving him a
glorious reign such as had not been enjoyed by
any king over Israel before him.[i]

**Death of David** 26Thus David, the son of Jesse,
had reigned over all Israel. 27The time that he
reigned over Israel was forty years: in Hebron he
reigned seven years, and in Jerusalem thirty-
three.[j] 28He died at a ripe old age, rich in years
and wealth and glory, and his son Solomon
succeeded him as king.[k]

29Now the deeds of King David, first and last,
can be found written in the history of Samuel the
seer, the history of Nathan the prophet, and the
history of Gad the seer,[l] 30together with the
particulars of his reign and valor, and of the
events that affected him and all Israel and all the
kingdoms of the surrounding lands.

**29, 22**: For a second time: the first time is referred to in 1 Chr 23, 1. Here there is a solemn public ratification of David's earlier appointment of Solomon as his successor.

f Lv 25, 23; Wis 2, 5; 5, 9. g Ex 3, 6. 15f; 4. 5; 1 Kgs 18, 36. h 1 Chr 28, 5; 2 Chr 9, 8; 1 Kgs 2, 10ff. i 2 Chr 1, 12; 1 Kgs 3, 13. j 2 Sm 5, 5; 1 Kgs 2, 11. k 1 Chr 23, 1. l 1 Chr 21, 9; 1 Sm 22, 5.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

2Chronicles
See RG
192-197

The Second Book of Chronicles takes up the history of the monarchy where the First Book breaks off. It begins with the account of the reign of Solomon from the special viewpoint of the Chronicler. The portrait of Solomon is an idealized one; he appears as second only to David. The great achievement of the building of the temple and the magnificence of Solomon's court are described in detail while the serious defects of his reign are passed over without comment. All this is in keeping with the Chronicler's purpose of stressing the supreme importance of the temple and its worship. He wishes to impress on his readers the splendor of God's dwelling and the magnificence of the liturgy of sacrifice, prayer and praise offered there. Judah's kings are

judged by their attitude toward the temple and its cult. To this ideal of one people, united in the worship of the one true God at the temple of Jerusalem founded by David and Solomon, the restored community would have to conform.

In treating the period of divided monarchy, the Chronicler gives practically all his attention to the kingdom of Judah. His omission of the northern Israelite kings is significant. In his view, the northern tribes of Israel were in religious schism as long as they worshiped Yahweh in a place other than the temple of Jerusalem. The Chronicler makes no mention of the important sanctuaries of Yahweh at Dan and Bethel—as though they had never existed. Nevertheless he retains the ancient ideal of "all Israel" (a phrase occurring forty-one times in Chronicles) as the people of God. The condition he places for a united people is that "the whole congregation of Israel" worship the Lord only in his temple at Jerusalem. This explains his praise of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah for striving, after the fall of Samaria, to unite the remnants of the northern tribes of Israel into the kingdom of Judah.

At the end of the fifth century B.C., during the Chronicler's own time, "the people of the land" were the descendants of the people of all the tribes (including Judah) who had not gone into exile. These had become intermingled with aliens and had evolved a religion of Yahweh very different from the Judaism that developed during the Babylonian exile. Thus, religious and political cooperation between the returned exiles and these "people of the land" was out of the question for the Chronicler. This he clearly shows in the last part of his work, the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Second Book of Chronicles is divided as follows:

I. The Reign of Solomon (1, 1—9, 31).
II. The Monarchy before Hezekiah (10, 1—27, 9).
III. Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah (28, 1—36, 1).
IV. End of the Kingdom (36, 2-23).

## I: The Reign of Solomon

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

**Solomon at Gibeon** [1]Solomon, son of David, strengthened his hold on the kingdom, for the LORD, his God, was with him, constantly making him more renowned. [2]He sent a summons to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, the judges, the princes of all Israel, and the family heads; [3]a and, accompanied by the whole assembly, he went to the high place at Gibeon, because the meeting tent of God, made in the desert by Moses, the LORD's servant, was there. [4](The ark of God, however, David had brought up from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem, where he had provided a place and pitched a tent for it.) [5]The bronze altar made by Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, he put in front of the LORD's Dwelling* on the high place. There Solomon and the assembly consulted the LORD,b [6]and Solomon offered sacrifice in the LORD's presence on the bronze altar at the meeting tent; he offered a thousand holocausts upon it.

[7]That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Make a request of me, and I will grant it to you." [8]Solomon answered God: "You have shown great favor to my father David, and you have allowed me to succeed him as king. [9]Now, LORD God, may your promise to my father David be fulfilled, for you have made me

1, 5: The bronze altar . . . the Lord's Dwelling: the Chronicler justifies Solomon's worship at the high place of Gibeon. He pictures the Lord's Dwelling, i.e., the Mosaic meeting tent, and the bronze altar made at Moses' command (Ex 31, 1–9) as still at Gibeon after David had removed the ark of the covenant from there to a new tent in Jerusalem (1 Chr 15, 1. 25; 16, 1). The altar made by Bezalel is described as being of acacia wood plated with bronze (Ex 27, 1f). Solomon later made an all-bronze altar for the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 4, 1).

a 3–12: 1 Kgs 3, 4–15; 1 Chr 21, 29. b Ex 27, 1f; 31, 2; 1 Chr 2, 20.

king over a people as numerous as the dust of
the earth. [10]Give me, therefore, wisdom and
knowledge to lead this people, for otherwise
who could rule this great people of yours?"
[11]God then replied to Solomon: "Since this has
been your wish and you have not asked for
riches, treasures and glory, nor for the life of
those who hate you, nor even for a long life for
yourself, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge in order to rule my people over whom I
have made you king, [12]wisdom and knowledge
are given you; but I will also give you riches,
treasures and glory, such as kings before you
never had, nor will those have them who come
after you."

**Solomon's Wealth** [13]Solomon returned to Jerusalem from the high place at Gibeon, from the
meeting tent, and became king over Israel. [14]He
gathered together chariots and drivers, so that he
had one thousand four hundred chariots and
twelve thousand drivers he could station in the
chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.[c]
[15]The king made silver and gold as common in
Jerusalem as stones, while cedars became as
numerous as the sycamores of the foothills.[d]
[16]Solomon also imported horses from Egypt and
Cilicia.[e] The king's agents would acquire them
by purchase from Cilicia,* [17]and would then
bring up chariots from Egypt and export them at
six hundred silver shekels, with the horses going
for a hundred and fifty shekels. At these rates
they served as middlemen for all the Hittite and
Aramean kings.[f]

**Preparations for the Temple** [18]Solomon gave
orders for the building of a house to honor the
LORD and also of a house for his own royal
estate.

## CHAPTER 2

[1]He conscripted seventy thousand men to carry
stone and eighty thousand to cut the stone in the
mountains, and over these he placed three
thousand six hundred overseers.[g] [2][h]Moreover,
Solomon sent this message to Huram, king of
Tyre: "As you dealt with my father David,
sending him cedars to build a house for his
dwelling, so deal with me. [3]I intend to build a
house for the honor of the LORD, my God, and to
consecrate it to him, for the burning of fragrant
incense in his presence, for the perpetual display
of the showbread, for holocausts morning and
evening, and for the sabbaths, new moons, and
festivals of the LORD, our God: such is Israel's
perpetual obligation.[i] [4]And the house I intend to
build must be large, for our God is greater than
all other gods. [5]Yet who is really able to build
him a house, since the heavens and even the
highest heavens cannot contain him? And who
am I that I should build him a house, unless it be
to offer incense in his presence?[j] [6]Now, send me
men skilled at work in gold, silver, bronze and
iron, in purple, crimson, and violet fabrics, and
who know how to do engraved work, to join the
craftsmen who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David appointed. [7]Also
send me boards of cedar, cypress and cabinet
wood from Lebanon, for I realize that your
servants know how to cut the wood of the
Lebanon. My servants will labor with yours [8]in
order to prepare for me a great quantity of wood,
since the house I intend to build must be lofty
and wonderful. [9]I will furnish as food for your
servants, the hewers who cut the wood, twenty
thousand kors of wheat, twenty thousand kors
of barley, twenty thousand measures of wine,
and twenty thousand measures of oil."[k]

[10]Huram, king of Tyre, wrote an answer
which he sent to Solomon: "Because the LORD
loves his people, he has placed you over them as
king." [11]He added: "Blessed be the LORD, the
God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, for
having given King David a wise son of intelligence and understanding, who will build a
house for the LORD and also a house for his royal
estate.[l] [12]I am now sending you a craftsman of

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

1, 16f: Egypt . . . Cilicia: it seems likely that the horses came from Cilicia and the chariots from Egypt. Some read the source of these data in 1 Kgs 10, 28f as containing the name (Musur) of a mountain district north of Cilicia, rather than of Egypt; but the author of Chronicles surely understood Egypt; cf 2 Chr 9, 28.

c 2 Chr 9, 25; 10, 26–29. d 1 Kgs 10, 27. e 1 Kgs 10, 28. f 1 Kgs 10, 29. g 2 Chr 2, 17; 5, 29f. h 2–9: 1 Kgs 5, 15–20; 1 Chr 14, 1. i Lv 24, 5–8; Nm 28–29. j 2 Chr 6, 18. k 1 Kgs 5, 25; Ezr 3, 7. l 1 Kgs 5, 21.

great skill, Huram-abi,[m] [13]son of a Danite
woman* and of a father from Tyre; he knows
how to work with gold, silver, bronze and iron,
with stone and wood, with purple, violet, fine
linen and crimson, and also how to do all kinds
of engraved work and to devise every type of
artistic work that may be given him and your
craftsmen and the craftsmen of my lord David
your father. [14] [n]And now, let my lord send to his
servants the wheat, barley, oil and wine which
he has promised. [15]For our part, we will cut
trees on Lebanon, as many as you need, and float
them down to you at the port of Joppa, whence
you may take them up to Jerusalem."[o]

[16] [p]Thereupon Solomon took a census of all
the alien men who were in the land of Israel
(following the census David his father had taken
of them), who were found to number one
hundred fifty-three thousand six hundred. [17]Of
these he made seventy thousand carriers and
eighty thousand cutters in the mountains, and
three thousand six hundred overseers to keep
the people working.[q]

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

**Building of the Temple** [1] [r]Then Solomon be-
gan to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem
on Mount Moriah,* which had been pointed out
to his father David, on the spot which David had
selected, the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebu-
site. [2]He began to build in the second month of
the fourth year of his reign. [3]These were the
specifications laid down by Solomon for building
the house of God: the length was sixty cubits
according to the old measure, and the width was
twenty cubits;[s] [4]the porch which lay before the
nave along the width of the house was also
twenty cubits, and it was twenty cubits high.*
He overlaid its interior with pure gold.[t] [5]The
nave he overlaid with cypress wood which he
covered with fine gold, embossing on it palms
and chains.[u] [6]He also decorated the building
with precious stones. [7]The house; its beams and
thresholds, as well as its walls and its doors, he
overlaid with gold, and he engraved cherubim
upon the walls. (The gold was from Parvaim.)
[8]He also made the room of the holy of holies. Its
length corresponded to the width of the house,
twenty cubits, and its width was also twenty
cubits. He overlaid it with fine gold to the
amount of six hundred talents.[v] [9]The weight of
the nails was fifty gold shekels. The upper
chambers he likewise covered with gold.

[10] [w]For the room of the holy of holies he made
two cherubim of carved workmanship, which
were then overlaid with gold. [11]The wings of the
cherubim spanned twenty cubits: [12]one wing of
each cherub, five cubits in length, extended to a
wall of the building, while the other wing, also
five cubits in length, touched the corresponding
wing of the second cherub. [13]The combined
wingspread of the two cherubim was thus
twenty cubits. They stood upon their own feet,
facing toward the nave. [14]He made the veil* of
violet, purple, crimson and fine linen, and had
cherubim embroidered upon it.[x]

[15] [y]In front of the building he set two columns
thirty-five cubits high; the capital topping each
was of five cubits. [16]He worked out chains in the
form of a collar with which he encircled the
capitals of the columns, and he made a hundred
pomegranates which he set on the chains. [17]He
set up the columns to correspond with the nave,
one for the right side and the other for the left,
and he called the one to the right Jachin and the
one to the left Boaz.

**2, 13:** A Danite woman: a widow of the tribe of Naphtali (1 Kgs 7, 14). The Danites had settled in the northern section of Naphtali's territory (Jgs 18, 27ff). Bezalel's fellow craftsman was of the tribe of Dan (Ex 31, 6).

**3, 1:** Mount Moriah: the height in the land of Moriah (Gn 22, 2). This is the only place in the Bible where the temple mount is identified with the site where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac.

**3, 4:** The porch . . . twenty cubits high: this measurement, not given in the Books of Kings, is here based on a variant Greek text that may be a later revision. The received Hebrew text says, "one hundred and twenty cubits high." The height of the two free-standing columns adjacent to the porch (1 Kgs 7, 15–16) is nearly doubled by the Chronicler (2 Chr 3, 15).

**3, 14:** The veil: at the entrance of the holy of holies, as also in the Mosaic meeting tent (Ex 26, 31f). Solomon's temple had doors at this place (1 Kgs 6, 31). Apparently there was a veil here in the temple of the Chronicler's time as there was also in Herod's temple (Mt 27, 51; Mk 15, 38; Lk 23, 45).

m 12f: 1 Kgs 7, 13f; Ex 31, 1–5. n 14f: 1 Kgs 5, 22–26. o Ezr 3, 7. p 16f: 1 Chr 22, 2. q 2 Chr 2, 1. r 1f: Gn 22, 2; 1 Kgs 6, 1; 1 Chr 21, 22–26. s 1 Kgs 6, 2; Ez 40, 5. t 1 Kgs 6, 3; Ez 40, 48. u 1 Kgs 6, 15; Ez 41, 1. v 1 Kgs 6, 16f. 20; Ez 41, 3. w 10–13: 1 Kgs 6, 23–27. x Mt 27, 51. y 15ff: 1 Kgs 7, 15–22; Ez 40, 49.

## CHAPTER 4

1Then he made a bronze altar twenty cubits
long, twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high.[z]
2[a]He also made the molten sea. It was perfectly
round, ten cubits in diameter, five in depth, and
thirty in circumference; 3below the rim a ring of
figures of oxen* encircled the sea, ten to the
cubit, all the way around; there were two rows
of these cast in the same mold with the sea. 4It
rested on twelve oxen, three facing north, three
west, three south, and three east, with their
haunches all toward the center; the sea rested
on their backs. 5It was a handbreadth thick, and
its brim was made like that of a cup, being lily-
shaped. It had a capacity of three thousand
measures.*

6Then he made ten basins for washing, placing five of them to the right and five to the left. Here were cleansed the victims for the holocausts; but the sea was for the priests to wash in.[b]

7He made the lampstands of gold, ten of them as was prescribed, and placed them in the nave, five to the right and five to the left.[c] 8He made ten tables and had them set in the nave, five to the right and five to the left; and he made a hundred golden bowls.[d] 9He made the court of the priests and the great courtyard and the gates of the courtyard; the gates he overlaid with bronze.[e] 10The sea was placed off to the southeast from the right side of the temple.[f]

11[g]Huram also made the pots, the shovels and the bowls. Huram thus completed the work he had to do for King Solomon in the house of God: 12two columns, two nodes for the capitals topping these two columns, and two networks covering the nodes of the capitals topping the columns; 13also four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, with two rows of pomegranates to each network, to cover the two nodes of the capitals topping the columns. 14He made the stands, and the basins on the stands; 15one sea, and the twelve oxen under it; 16likewise the pots, the shovels and the forks. Huram-abi made all these articles for King Solomon from polished bronze for the house of the LORD. 17The king had them cast in the Jordan region, in the clayey ground between Succoth and Zeredah. 18Solomon made all these vessels, so many in number that the weight of the bronze was not ascertained.

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192–193

19Solomon had all these articles made for the house of God: the golden altar, the tables on which the showbread lay, 20the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold which were to burn according to prescription before the sanctuary, 21flowers, lamps and gold tongs [this was the purest gold], 22snuffers, bowls, cups and firepans of pure gold. As for the entry to the house, its inner doors to the holy of holies, as well as the doors to the nave, were of gold.

## CHAPTER 5

**Dedication of the Temple** 1[h]When all the work undertaken by Solomon for the temple of the LORD had been completed, he brought in the dedicated offerings of his father David, putting the silver, the gold and all the other articles in the treasuries of the house of God. 2At Solomon's order the elders of Israel and all the leaders of the tribes, the princes of the Israelite ancestral houses, came to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from the City of David (which is Zion). 3All the men of Israel assembled before the king during the festival of the seventh month. 4[i]When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites* took up the ark, 5and they carried the ark and the meeting tent with all the sacred vessels that were in the tent; it was the levitical priests who carried them.

Ch 1–9
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192–193

6King Solomon and the entire community of

4, 3: Oxen: in 1 Kgs 7, 24 this double row of ornaments is described as being gourds. The text of Kings available to the Chronicler may have been faulty on this point as the words are similar in sound. In 2 Chr 4, 16 the forks correspond in a similar way to bowls in the text of 1 Kings (7, 40).

4, 5: Three thousand measures: according to 1 Kgs 7, 26, "two thousand measures."

5, 4: The Levites: The parallel passage in 1 Kgs 8, 3 has the priests; but see 2 Chr 5, 5, where the Deuteronomic term levitical priests is used, as also in 2 Chr 23, 18; 30, 27.

z Ez 43, 13–17. a 2–5: 1 Kgs 7, 23–26; Ez 43, 13. b 1 Kgs 7, 38f; Ez 40, 38. c 1 Kgs 7, 49. d 1 Kgs 7, 50; 1 Chr 28, 16. e 1 Kgs 7, 12. f 1 Kgs 7, 39. g 11–22; 1 Kgs 7, 40–51. h 1–14: 1 Kgs 7, 51–8, 13. i 4f: 2 Chr 35, 3.

Israel gathered about him before the ark were
sacrificing sheep and oxen so numerous that
they could not be counted or numbered. 7The
priests brought the ark of the covenant of the
LORD to its place beneath the wings of the
cherubim in the sanctuary, the holy of holies of
the temple. 8The cherubim had their wings
spread out over the place of the ark, sheltering
the ark and its poles from above. 9The poles
were long enough so that their ends could be
seen from that part of the holy place nearest the
sanctuary; however, they could not be seen
beyond. The ark has remained there to this day.*
10There was nothing in it but the two tablets
which Moses put there on Horeb, the tablets of
the covenant which the LORD made with the
Israelites at their departure from Egypt.

11When the priests came out of the holy place
(all the priests who were present had purified
themselves without reference to the rotation of
their various classes), 12the Levites who were
singers, all who belonged to Asaph, Heman,
Jeduthun, and their sons and brothers, clothed in
fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, stood
east of the altar, and with them a hundred and
twenty priests blowing trumpets.

13When the trumpeters and singers were
heard as a single voice praising and giving thanks
to the LORD, and when they raised the sound of
the trumpets, cymbals and other musical instru-
ments to "give thanks to the LORD, for he is
good, for his mercy endures forever," the build-
ing of the LORD's temple was filled with a cloud.
14The priests could not continue to minister
because of the cloud, since the LORD's glory
filled the house of God.[j]

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

1 [k]Then Solomon said: "The LORD intends to
dwell in the dark cloud. 2I have truly built you a
princely house and dwelling, where you may
abide forever." 3 [l]Turning about, the king
greeted the whole community of Israel as they
stood. 4He said: "Blessed be the LORD, the God
of Israel, who with his own mouth made a
promise to my father David and by his own
hands brought it to fulfillment. He said: 5'Since
the day I brought my people out of the land of
Egypt, I have not chosen any city from among all
the tribes of Israel for the building of a temple to
my honor, nor have I chosen any man to be
commander of my people Israel; 6but now I
choose Jerusalem, where I shall be honored, and
I choose David to rule my people Israel.' 7My
father David wished to build a temple to the
honor of the LORD, the God of Israel, 8but the
LORD said to him: 'In wishing to build a temple
to my honor, you do well. 9However, you shall
not build the temple; rather, your son whom you
will beget shall build the temple to my honor.'

10"Now the LORD has fulfilled the promise
that he made. I have succeeded my father David
and have taken my seat on the throne of Israel,
as the LORD foretold, and I have built the temple
to the honor of the LORD, the God of Israel.
11And I have placed there the ark, in which
abides the covenant of the LORD which he made
with the Israelites."

**Solomon's Prayer** 12 [m]Solomon then took his
place before the altar of the LORD in the presence
of the whole community of Israel and stretched
forth his hands. 13He had made a bronze plat-
form five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three
cubits high, which he had placed in the middle
of the courtyard. Having ascended it, Solomon
knelt in the presence of the whole of Israel and
stretched forth his hands toward heaven.*
14Thus he prayed: "LORD, God of Israel, there is
no god like you in heaven or on earth; you keep
your covenant and show kindness to your ser-
vants who are wholeheartedly faithful to you.
15You have kept the promise you made to my
father David, your servant. With your own
mouth you spoke it, and by your own hand you
have brought it to fulfillment this day. 16Now,

5, 9: The ark has remained there to this day: the Chronicler must have copied this from his source (1 Kgs 8, 8) without reflecting that the ark was lost in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem; cf 2 Mc 2, 4–8.

6, 13: This verse is not found in the Chronicler's source; cf 1 Kgs 8, 22f. He has Solomon praying on a bronze platform . . . in the middle of the courtyard because at the time of the Chronicler only the priests prayed before the altar.

j 2 Chr 7, 2; 1 Kgs 8, 10f. k 1f: 1 Kgs 8, 12f. l 3–11: 1 Kgs 8, 14–21. m 12–41: 1 Kgs 8, 22–53.

therefore, LORD, God of Israel, keep the further
promise you made to my father David, your
servant, when you said, 'You shall always have
someone from your line to sit before me on the
throne of Israel, provided only that your descen-
dants look to their conduct so as always to live
according to my law, even as you have lived in
my presence.' [17]Now, LORD, God of Israel, may
this promise which you made to your servant
David be confirmed.

[18]"Can it indeed be that God dwells with
mankind on earth? If the heavens and the
highest heavens cannot contain you, how much
less this temple which I have built! [19]Look
kindly on the prayer and petition of your ser-
vant, O LORD, my God, and listen to the cry of
supplication your servant makes before you.
[20]May your eyes watch day and night over this
temple, the place where you have decreed you
shall be honored; may you heed the prayer
which I your servant offer toward this place.
[21]Listen to the petitions of your servant and of
your people Israel which they direct toward this
place. Listen from your heavenly dwelling, and
when you have heard, pardon.

[22]"When any man sins against his neighbor
and is required to take an oath of execration
against himself, and when he comes for the oath
before your altar in this temple, [23]listen from
heaven: take action and pass judgment on your
servants, requiting the wicked man and holding
him responsible for his conduct, but absolving
the innocent and rewarding him according to his
virtue. [24]When your people Israel have sinned
against you and are defeated by the enemy, but
afterward they return and praise your name, and
they pray to you and entreat you in this temple,
[25]listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your
people Israel, and bring them back to the land
which you gave them and their fathers. [26]When
the sky is closed so that there is no rain, because
they have sinned against you, but then they pray
toward this place and praise your name, and
they withdraw from sin because you afflict them,
[27]listen in heaven and forgive the sin of your
servants and of your people Israel. But teach
them the right way to live, and send rain upon
your land which you gave your people as their
heritage. [28]When there is famine in the land,
when there is pestilence, or blight, or mildew, or
locusts, or caterpillars; when their enemies be-
siege them at any of their gates; whenever there
is a plague or sickness of any kind; [29]when any
Israelite of all your people offers a prayer or
petition of any kind, and in awareness of his
affliction and pain, stretches out his hands to-
ward this temple, [30]listen from your heavenly
dwelling place, and forgive. Knowing his heart,
render to everyone according to his conduct, for
you alone know the hearts of men. [31]So may
they fear you and walk in your ways as long as
they live on the land you gave our fathers.

[32]"For the foreigner, too, who is not of your
people Israel, when he comes from a distant land
to honor your great name, your mighty power,
and your outstretched arm, when they come in
prayer to this temple, [33]listen from your heav-
enly dwelling place, and do whatever the for-
eigner entreats you, that all the peoples of the
earth may know your name, fearing you as do
your people Israel, and knowing that this house
which I have built is dedicated to your honor.

[34]"When your people go forth to war against
their enemies, wherever you send them, and
pray to you in the direction of this city and of the
house I have built to your honor, [35]listen from
heaven to their prayer and petition, and defend
their cause. [36]When they sin against you (for
there is no man who does not sin), and in your
anger against them you deliver them to the
enemy, so that their captors deport them to
another land, far or near, [37]when they repent in
the land where they are captive and are con-
verted, when they entreat you in the land of
their captivity and say, 'We have sinned and
done wrong; we have been wicked,' [38]and with
their whole heart and with their whole soul they
turn back to you in the land of those who hold
them captive, when they pray in the direction of
their land which you gave their fathers, and of
the city you have chosen, and of the house
which I have built to your honor, [39]listen from
your heavenly dwelling place, hear their prayer
and petitions, and uphold their cause. Forgive

your people who have sinned against you. [40]My
God, may your eyes be open and your ears
attentive to the prayer of this place. [41]And now,

"Advance, LORD God, to your resting place,
you and the ark of your majesty.
May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with
salvation,
may your faithful ones rejoice in good
things.
[42] LORD God, reject not the plea of your
anointed,
remember the devotion of David, your
servant."

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

[1] [n]When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire
came down from heaven and consumed the
holocaust and the sacrifices, and the glory of the
LORD filled the house. [2]But the priests could not
enter the house of the LORD, for the glory of the
LORD had filled the house of the LORD.[o] [3]All the
Israelites looked on while the fire came down
and the glory of the LORD was upon the house,
and they fell down upon the pavement with
their faces to the earth and adored, praising the
LORD, "for he is good, for his mercy endures
forever." [4]The king and all the people were
offering sacrifices before the LORD.[p] [5]King Solo-
mon offered as sacrifice twenty-two thousand
oxen, and one hundred twenty thousand
sheep.[q]

**End of the Dedication** [6]Thus the king and all
the people dedicated the house of God. The
priests were standing at their stations, as were
the Levites, with the musical instruments of the
LORD which King David had made for "praising
the LORD, for his mercy endures forever," when
David used them to accompany the hymns.
Across from them the priests blew the trumpets
and all Israel stood.[r]

[7]Then Solomon consecrated the middle part
of the court which lay before the house of the
LORD; there he offered the holocausts and the fat
of the peace offerings, since the bronze altar
which Solomon had made could not hold the
holocausts, the cereal offerings and the fat.[s]

[8]On this occasion Solomon and with him all
Israel, who had assembled in very large numbers
from Labo of Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt,
celebrated the festival for seven days.[t] [9][u]On the
eighth day they held a special meeting, for they
had celebrated the dedication of the altar for
seven days and the feast* for seven days. [10]On
the twenty-third day of the seventh month he
sent the people back to their tents, rejoicing and
glad at heart at the good things the LORD had
done for David, for Solomon, and for his people
Israel. [11] [v]Solomon completed the house of the
LORD and the royal palace; he successfully
accomplished everything he had planned to do
in regard to the house of the LORD and his own
house.

**God's Promise to Solomon** [12]The LORD ap-
peared to Solomon during the night and said to
him: "I have heard your prayer, and I have
chosen this place for my house of sacrifice. [13]If I
close heaven so that there is no rain, if I
command the locust to devour the land, if I send
pestilence among my people, [14]and if my people,
upon whom my name has been pronounced,
humble themselves and pray, and seek my
presence and turn from their evil ways, I will
hear them from heaven and pardon their sins
and revive their land. [15]Now my eyes shall be
open and my ears attentive to the prayer of this
place. [16]And now I have chosen and consecrated
this house that my name may be there forever;
my eyes and my heart also shall be there always.

[17]"As for you, if you live in my presence as
your father David did, doing all that I have
commanded you and keeping my statutes and
ordinances, [18]I will establish your royal throne as

7, 9f: The feast: of Booths, celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and followed by a solemn octave lasting through the twenty-second day (Lv 23, 33–36; Nm 29, 12–35); the people are therefore sent home on the twenty-third day (v 10). The festival (v 8) for the dedication of the altar and of the temple lasted for seven days before the feast of Booths, from the seventh to the fourteenth day. According to 1 Kgs 8, 65f, the people are dismissed at the end of these seven days.

n 1–10: 1 Kgs 8, 54–66; Jgs 6, 21; 1 Chr 21, 26; 2 Mc 2, 10. o 2 Chr 5, 14; Ex 24, 16; 1 Kgs 8, 10f. p 2 Chr 5, 13; 1 Kgs 8, 62; Ps 136, 1. q 1 Kgs 8, 62f. r Nm 10, 8. 10; Ps 136, 1. s 1 Kgs 8, 64. t 1 Kgs 8, 65. u 9f: 1 Kgs 8, 66. v 11–22: 1 Kgs 9, 1–9.

I covenanted with your father David when I
said, 'There shall never be lacking someone of
yours as ruler in Israel.' [19]But if you turn away
and forsake my statutes and commands which I
placed before you, if you proceed to venerate
and worship strange gods, [20]then I will uproot
the people from the land I gave them; I will cast
from my sight this house which I have conse-
crated to my honor, and I will make it a proverb
and a byword among all peoples. [21]This temple
which is so exalted—everyone passing by it will
be amazed and ask: 'Why has the LORD done
this to this land and to this house?' [22]And men
will answer: 'They forsook the LORD, the God of
their fathers, who brought them out of the land
of Egypt, and they adopted strange gods and
worshiped them and served them. That is why
he has brought down upon them all this evil.' "

## CHAPTER 8

**Public Works** [1] [w]After the twenty years during
which Solomon built the house of the LORD and
his own house, [2]he built up the cities which
Huram had given him,* and settled Israelites
there. [3]Then Solomon went to Hamath of Zoba
and conquered it. [4]He built Tadmor* in the
desert region and all the supply cities, which he
built in Hamath. [5] [x]He built Upper Beth-horon
and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with
walls, gates and bars; [6]also Baalath, all the
supply cities belonging to Solomon, and all the
cities for the chariots, the cities for the horse-
men, and whatever else Solomon decided
should be built in Jerusalem, in the Lebanon, and
in the entire land under his dominion. [7]All the
people that remained of the Hittites, Amorites,
Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who were not
of Israel— [8]that is, their descendants remaining
in the land, whom the Israelites had not
destroyed—Solomon subjected to forced labor,
as they continue to this day. [9]But Solomon did
not enslave the Israelites for his works. They
became soldiers, commanders of his warriors,
and commanders of his chariots and his horse-
men. [10]They were also King Solomon's two
hundred and fifty overseers who had charge of
the people.

**Solomon's Piety** [11]Solomon brought the
daughter of Pharaoh up from the City of David
to the palace which he had built for her, for he
said, "No wife of mine shall dwell in the house
of David, king of Israel, for the places where the
ark of the LORD has come are holy."

[12]In those times Solomon offered holocausts
to the LORD upon the altar of the LORD which he
had built in front of the porch, [13]as was required
day by day according to the command of Moses,
and in particular on the sabbaths, at the new
moons, and on the fixed festivals three times a
year: on the feast of the Unleavened Bread, the
feast of Weeks and the feast of Booths.[y]

[14]And according to the ordinance of his father
David he appointed the various classes of the
priests for their service, and the Levites accord-
ing to their functions of praise and ministry
alongside the priests, as the daily duty required.
The gatekeepers of the various classes stood
guard at each gate, since such was the command
of David, the man of God.[z] [15]There was no
deviation from the king's command in any
respect relating to the priests and Levites or the
treasuries. [16]All of Solomon's work was carried
out successfully from the day the foundation of
the house of the LORD was laid until the house of
the LORD had been completed in every detail.

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

**Glories of the Court** [17]In those times Solo-
mon went to Ezion-geber and to Elath on the
seashore of the land of Edom.[a] [18]Huram,
through his servants, sent him ships and
crewmen acquainted with the sea, who accom-
panied Solomon's servants to Ophir and brought
back from there four hundred and fifty talents of
gold to King Solomon.[b]

8, 2: The cities which Huram had given him: according to 1 Kgs 9, 10–14, Solomon had ceded the cities as payment for the timber and gold received from Tyre. But since Huram was dissatisfied, he may have returned the cities to Solomon.

8, 4: Tadmor: later known as Palmyra, an important caravan city in the Syrian desert. The parallel passage in 1 Kgs 9, 18 has Tamar, in southern Judah; cf Ez 47, 19; 48, 28. But Solomon may well have fortified Tadmor against the Arameans.

w 1f: 1 Kgs 9, 10f. x 5–12: 1 Kgs 9, 18–25. y 1 Kgs 9, 25; Ex 23, 14; Nm 28—29. z 1 Chr 23—26; Neh 12, 46. a 1 Kgs 9, 26; Mt 12, 42; Lk 11, 31. b 1 Kgs 9, 27f.

Ch 1–9
See RG
192–193

## CHAPTER 9

1When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him
with subtle questions, accompanied by a very
numerous retinue and by camels bearing spices,
much gold, and precious stones. She came to
Solomon and questioned him on every subject in
which she was interested.[c] 2Solomon explained
to her everything she asked about, and there
remained nothing hidden from Solomon that he
could not explain to her.

3When the queen of Sheba witnessed Solomon's wisdom, the palace he had built, 4the
food at his table, the seating of his ministers, the
attendance of his servants and their dress, his
cupbearers and their dress, and the holocausts
he offered in the house of the LORD, it took her
breath away. 5"The account I heard in my
country about your deeds and your wisdom is
true," she told the king. 6"Yet I did not believe
the report until I came and saw with my own
eyes. I have discovered that they did not tell me
the half of your great wisdom; you have surpassed the stories I heard. 7Happy are your men,
happy these servants of yours, who stand before
you always and listen to your wisdom. 8Blessed
be the LORD, your God, who has been so pleased
with you as to place you on his throne as king for
the LORD, your God. Because your God has so
loved Israel as to will to make it last forever, he
has appointed you over them as king to administer right and justice." 9Then she gave the king
one hundred and twenty gold talents and a very
large quantity of spices, as well as precious
stones. There was no other spice like that which
the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

10The servants of Huram and of Solomon who
brought gold from Ophir also brought cabinet
wood and precious stones. 11With the cabinet
wood the king made stairs for the temple of the
LORD and the palace of the king; also lyres and
harps for the chanters. The like of these had not
been seen before in the land of Judah.

12King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba
everything she desired and asked him for, more
than she had brought to the king. Then she
returned to her own country with her servants.

13[d]The gold that Solomon received each year
weighed six hundred and sixty-six gold talents,
14in addition to what was collected from travelers and what the merchants brought. All the
kings of Arabia also, and the governors of the
country, brought gold and silver to Solomon.

15Moreover, King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold, six hundred
shekels of beaten gold going into each shield,
16and three hundred bucklers of beaten gold,
three hundred shekels of gold going into each
buckler; these the king put in the hall of the
Forest of Lebanon.

17King Solomon also made a large ivory
throne which he overlaid with fine gold. 18The
throne had six steps; a footstool of gold was
fastened to it, and there was an arm on each side
of the seat, with two lions standing beside the
arms. 19Twelve other lions also stood there, one
on either side of each step. Nothing like this had
ever been produced in any other kingdom.
20Furthermore, all of King Solomon's drinking
vessels were of gold, and all the utensils in the
hall of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold;
silver was not considered of value in Solomon's
time. 21For the king had ships that went to
Tarshish with the servants of Huram. Once every
three years the fleet of Tarshish would return
with a cargo of gold and silver, ivory, apes and
monkeys. 22Thus King Solomon surpassed all the
other kings of the earth in riches as well as in
wisdom.

23All the kings of the earth sought audience
with Solomon, to hear from him the wisdom
which God had put in his heart. 24Year in and
year out, each one would bring his tribute—
silver and gold articles, garments, weapons,
spices, horses and mules. 25Solomon also had
four thousand stalls of horses, chariots, and
twelve thousand horsemen, which he assigned
to the chariot cities and to the king in Jerusalem.
26He was ruler over all the kings from the River
to the land of the Philistines and down to the

c 1 Kgs 10, 1f; Mt 12, 42; Lk 11, 31. d 13–28: 1 Kgs 10, 14–28.

border of Egypt. 27The king made silver as
common in Jerusalem as stones, while cedars
became as numerous as the sycamores of the
foothills. 28Horses were imported for Solomon
from Egypt and from all the lands.*

**The Death of Solomon** 29 *e*The rest of the acts
of Solomon, first and last, are written, as is well
known, in the acts of Nathan the prophet, in the
prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the
visions of Iddo the seer which concern Jero-
boam, son of Nebat. 30Solomon reigned in
Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. 31He
rested with his ancestors; he was buried in his
father's City of David, and his son Rehoboam
succeeded him as king.

## II: The Monarchy before Hezekiah

### CHAPTER 10

**Division of the Kingdom** 1*f*Rehoboam went
to Shechem, for all Israel* had come to Shechem
to proclaim him king. 2When Jeroboam, son of
Nebat, heard of this in Egypt where he had fled
from King Solomon, he returned from Egypt.
3Jeroboam was summoned to the assembly, and
he and all Israel said to Rehoboam: 4"Your father
laid a heavy yoke upon us. If you now lighten
the harsh service and the heavy yoke that your
father imposed on us, we will serve you." 5"In
three days," he answered them, "come back to
me."

When the people had departed, 6King Reho-
boam consulted the elders who had been in the
service of his father during Solomon's lifetime,
asking, "What answer do you advise me to give
this people?" 7They replied, "If you will deal
kindly with this people and give in to them,
acceding to their request, they will be your
servants forever." 8But he ignored the advice the
elders had given him and consulted the young
men who had grown up with him and were in
his service. 9He said to them, "What answer do
you advise me to give this people, who have
asked me to lighten the yoke my father imposed
on them?" 10The young men who had grown up
with him replied: "This is the answer you should
give to this people who have said to you, 'Your
father laid a heavy yoke upon us, but do you
lighten our yoke'; this you should say to them:
'My little finger is thicker than my father's body.
11Whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I
will make it heavier! My father beat you with
whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!"

12On the third day, Jeroboam and all the
people came back to King Rehoboam as he had
instructed them to do. 13Ignoring the advice the
elders had given him, the king gave them a harsh
answer, 14speaking to them according to the
advice of the young men: "My father laid a
heavy yoke on you, but I will make it heavier.
My father beat you with whips, but I will beat
you with scorpions." 15The king would not listen
to the people, for this turn of events was divinely
ordained to fulfill the prophecy the LORD had
uttered to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, through
Ahijah the Shilonite.*g*

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

16 *h*When all Israel saw that the king would
not listen to them, the people answered the
king,

"What share have we in David?
We have no heritage in the son of Jesse.
Everyone to your tents, O Israel!
Now look to your own house, David!"

So all Israel went off to their tents. 17Reho-
boam, therefore, reigned over only those Israel-
ites who lived in the cities of Judah. 18King
Rehoboam then sent out Hadoram, who was
superintendent of the forced labor, but the
Israelites stoned him to death. Rehoboam him-
self managed to mount his chariot and flee to
Jerusalem. 19Thus Israel has been in rebellion
against David's house to this day.

**9, 28**: See note on 2 Chr 1, 16f.

**10, 1**: All Israel: as in the original source (1 Kgs 12, 1), the northern tribes, distinct from Judah and Benjamin. Contrast the Chronicler's own terms, those Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah (v 17), and all the Israelites [literally, all Israel] in Judah and Benjamin (2 Chr 11, 3).

e 29ff: 1 Kgs 11, 41ff. f 1–14: 1 Kgs 12, 1–14. g 1 Kgs 11, 29–39; 12, 15. h 16–19: 1 Kgs 12, 16–19.

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

## CHAPTER 11

1 [i]On his arrival in Jerusalem Rehoboam gathered together the house of Judah and Benjamin,
a hundred and eighty thousand seasoned warriors, to have them fight against Israel and
restore the kingdom to him. 2However, the
word of the LORD came to Shemiah, a man of
God: 3"Say to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king
of Judah, and to all the Israelites in Judah and
Benjamin: 4'Thus says the LORD: You must not
march out to fight against your brothers. Let
every man return home, for what has occurred I
have brought about.' " They obeyed this message of the LORD and gave up the expedition
against Jeroboam.

**Rehoboam's Works*** 5Rehoboam took up residence in Jerusalem and built fortified cities in
Judah. 6He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa,
7Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, 8Gath, Mareshah,
Ziph, 9Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron; these were fortified cities in
Judah and Benjamin. 11Then he strengthened
the fortifications and put commanders in them,
with supplies of food, oil and wine. 12In every
city were shields and spears, and he made them
very strong. Thus Judah and Benjamin remained
his.

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

**Refugees from the North** 13Now the priests
and Levites throughout Israel presented themselves to him from all parts of their land, 14for
the Levites left their assigned pasture lands and
their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem,
because Jeroboam and his sons repudiated them
as priests of the LORD.[j] 15In their place, he
himself appointed priests for the high places and
satyrs and calves he had made.[k] 16After them, all
those of the Israelite tribes who firmly desired to
seek the LORD, the God of Israel, came to
Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of
their fathers. 17Thus they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and made Rehoboam, son of
Solomon, prevail for three years; for they walked
in the way of David and Solomon three years.

**Rehoboam's Family** 18Rehoboam took to himself as wife Mahalath, daughter of Jerimoth, son
of David and of Abihail, daughter of Eliab, son of
Jesse. 19She bore him sons: Jehush, Shemariah
and Zaham. 20After her, he married Maacah,
daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah,
Attai, Ziza and Shelomith.[l] 21Rehoboam loved
Maacah, daughter of Absalom, more than all his
other wives and concubines; he had taken
eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and he
fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.
22Rehoboam constituted Abijah, son of Maacah,
commander among his brothers, for he intended
to make him king. 23He acted prudently, distributing various of his sons throughout all the
districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the
fortified cities; and he furnished them with
copious provisions and sought an abundance of
wives for them.

## CHAPTER 12

**His Apostasy** 1After Rehoboam had consolidated his rule and had become powerful, he
abandoned the law of the LORD, he and all Israel
with him.[m] 2Thus it happened that in the fifth
year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt,
attacked Jerusalem, for they had been unfaithful
to the LORD.[n] 3He came up with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, and
there was no counting the army that came with
him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkites* and Ethiopians. 4They captured the fortified cities of Judah
and came as far as Jerusalem. 5Then Shemaiah
the prophet came to Rehoboam and the commanders of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem
because of Shishak, and said to them: "Thus says
the LORD: 'You have abandoned me, and therefore I have abandoned you to the power of
Shishak.' "[o]

6However, the commanders of Israel and the
king humbled themselves, saying, "The LORD is
just." 7When the LORD saw that they had
humbled themselves, the word of the LORD

**11, 5–12**: These verses, though not found in 1 Kgs, are apparently based on a reliable, ancient source.
**12, 3**: Sukkites: foreign mercenaries in the Egyptian army.

i 1–4: 1 Kgs 12, 21–24. j 1 Kgs 12, 32. k 1 Kgs 12, 32; Lv 17, 7. l 1 Kgs 15, 2. m 1 Kgs 11, 4; 14, 22. n 1 Kgs 14, 25. o 2 Chr 11, 2.

came to Shemaiah: "Because they have humbled
themselves, I will not destroy them; I will give
them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not
be poured out upon Jerusalem through Shishak.
8But they shall be his servants, that they may
know what it is to serve me and what it is to
serve earthly kingdoms." 9 *p*Therefore Shishak,
king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem and carried off
the treasures of the temple of the LORD and of
the king's palace. He took everything, including
the gold bucklers that Solomon had made. 10(To
replace them, King Rehoboam made bronze
bucklers, which he entrusted to the officers of
the guard on duty at the entrance of the royal
palace. 11Whenever the king visited the temple
of the LORD, the troops would come bearing
them, and then they would return them to the
guardroom.) 12Because he had humbled himself,
the anger of the LORD turned from him so that it
did not destroy him completely; and in Judah,
moreover, good deeds were found.

13King Rehoboam consolidated his power in
Jerusalem and continued to rule; he was forty-
one years old when he became king, and he
reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city in
which, out of all the tribes of Israel, the LORD
chose to be honored. Rehoboam's mother was
named Naamah, an Ammonite.*q* 14He did evil,
for he had not truly resolved to seek the LORD.
15 *r*The acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are
written, as is well known, in the history of
Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer [his
family record]. There was war continually be-
tween Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 16Rehoboam
rested with his ancestors; he was buried in the
City of David. His son Abijah succeeded him as
king.

## CHAPTER 13

**War between Abijah and Jeroboam** 1 *s*In the
eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah be-
came king of Judah; 2he reigned three years in
Jerusalem. His mother was named Michaiah,
daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war
between Abijah and Jeroboam.

3Abijah joined battle with a force of four
hundred thousand picked warriors, while Jero-
boam lined up against him in battle with eight
hundred thousand picked and valiant warriors.
4*Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in
the highlands of Ephraim, and said: "Listen to
me, Jeroboam and all Israel! 5Do you not know
that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the
kingdom of Israel to David forever, to him and to
his sons, by a covenant made in salt? 6Yet
Jeroboam, son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon,
son of David, has stood up and rebelled against
his lord!*t* 7Worthless men, scoundrels, joined
him and overcame Rehoboam, son of Solomon,
when Rehoboam was young and unthinking,
and no match for them. 8But now, do you think
you are a match for the kingdom of the LORD
commanded by the sons of David, simply be-
cause you are a huge multitude and have with
you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you
for gods?

9"Have you not expelled the priests of the
LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and
made for yourselves priests like the peoples of
foreign lands? Everyone who comes to conse-
crate himself with a young bull and seven rams
becomes a priest of no-gods. 10But as for us, the
LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.
The priests ministering to the LORD are sons of
Aaron, and the Levites also have their offices.
11They burn holocausts to the LORD and fragrant
incense morning after morning and evening after
evening; they display the showbread on the pure
table, and the lamps of the golden lampstand
burn evening after evening; for we observe our
duties to the LORD, our God, but you have
abandoned him. 12See, God is with us, at our
head, and his priests are here with trumpets to
sound the attack against you. Do not battle
against the LORD, the God of your fathers, O
Israelites, for you will not succeed!"

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

13But Jeroboam had an ambush go around
them to come at them from the rear; so that
while his army faced Judah, his ambush lay
behind them. 14When Judah turned and saw
that they had to battle on both fronts, they cried

**13, 4–12:** This is a free composition of the Chronicler to show that this was a religious, rather than a political, war.

p 9ff: 1 Kgs 14, 25–28. q 1 Kgs 14, 21. r 15f: 1 Kgs 14, 29ff. s 1f: 1 Kgs 15, 1f. t 1 Kgs 11, 26.

out to the LORD and the priests sounded the trumpets. [15]Then the men of Judah shouted; and when they did so, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. [16]The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. [17]Abijah and his people inflicted a severe defeat upon them; five hundred thousand picked men of Israel fell slain. [18]The Israelites were subdued on that occasion and the Judahites were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers. [19]Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took cities from him: Bethel and its dependencies, Jeshanah and its dependencies, and Ephron and its dependencies. [20]Jeroboam did not regain power during the time of Abijah; the LORD struck him down and he died, [21]while Abijah continued to grow stronger. He took to himself fourteen wives and fathered twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

**Death of Abijah** [22] [u]The rest of Abijah's acts, his deeds and his words, are written in the midrash of the prophet Iddo. [23]Abijah rested with his ancestors; they buried him in the City of David. His son Asa succeeded him as king. During his time, ten years of peace began in the land.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 10–36 See RG 193–194

**Asa the Reformer** [1] [v]Asa did what was good and pleasing to the LORD, his God, [2]removing the heathen altars and the high places, breaking to pieces the sacred pillars, and cutting down the sacred poles. [3]He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to observe the law and its commands. [4]He removed the high places and incense stands from all the cities of Judah, and under him the kingdom had peace. [5]He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had peace and no war was waged against him during these years, because the LORD had given him peace. [6]He said to Judah: "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls, towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, for we have sought the LORD, our God; we sought him, and he has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

Ch 10–36 See RG 193–194

**The Ethiopian Invasion*** [7]Asa had an army of three hundred thousand shield- and lance-bearers from Judah, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin who carried bucklers and were archers, all of them valiant warriors. [8]Zerah the Ethiopian moved against them with a force of one million men and three hundred chariots, and he came as far as Mareshah. [w] [9]Asa went out to meet him and set himself in battle array in the valley of Zephathah, near Mareshah. [10]Asa called upon the LORD, his God, praying: "O LORD, there is none like you to help the powerless against the strong. Help us, O LORD, our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. You are the LORD, our God; let no man prevail against you." [x] [11]And so the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and they fled. [y] [12]Asa and those with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians fell until there were no survivors, for they were crushed before the LORD and his army, which carried away enormous spoils. [13]Then the Judahites conquered all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was upon them; they despoiled all the cities, for there was much booty in them. [14]They attacked also the tents of the cattle-herders and carried off a great number of sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 15

**Cult Reform** [1]Upon Azariah, son of Oded, came the spirit of God. [2]He went forth to meet Asa and said to him: "Hear me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin! The LORD is with you when you are with him, and if you seek him he will be present to you; but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. [z] [3]For a long time Israel had no true God, no priest-teacher and no law, [4]but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was present to them. [a] [5]In that former time there was

**14, 7–14:** An Ethiopian invasion of Judah is mentioned only in 1 Chronicles. This account may be a legend contrived to show how the pious King Asa was rewarded through divine assistance. There may, however, have been an incursion of nomads from the Negeb at this time; cf vv 13f.

u 22f: 2 Chr 12, 15; 1 Kgs 7ff. v 1f: 2 Chr 33, 15; Ex 23, 24; 34, 13; 1 Kgs 15, 11f. w 2 Chr 16, 8. x 2 Chr 32, 8. y Pss 20, 7f; 60, 11f. z Jer 29, 13f; Hos 3, 4f. a Dt 4, 29f.

no place for anyone to go or come, but there
were many terrors upon the inhabitants of the
lands. 6Nation crushed nation and city crushed
city, for God destroyed them by every kind of
adversity.[b] 7But as for you, be strong and do not
relax, for your work shall be rewarded."[c]

8When Asa heard these words and the proph-
ecy [Oded the prophet], he was encouraged to
remove the detestable idols from the whole land
of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities he
had taken in the highlands of Ephraim, and to
restore the altar of the LORD which was before
the vestibule of the LORD. 9Then he convened all
Judah and Benjamin, together with those of
Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who sojourned
with them; for many had fled to him from Israel
when they saw that the LORD, his God, was with
him. 10*They gathered at Jerusalem in the third
month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign, 11and
sacrificed to the LORD at that time seven hun-
dred oxen and seven thousand sheep of the
booty they had brought. 12They entered into a
covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their
fathers, with all their heart and soul; 13and
everyone who would not seek the LORD, the
God of Israel, was to be put to death, whether
small or great, whether man or woman.[d] 14They
swore to the LORD with a loud voice, with
shouting and with trumpets and horns. 15All
Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn
with their whole heart and sought him with
complete desire, so that he was present to them.
And the LORD gave them rest on every side.[e]

16[f]Maacah, the mother of King Asa, he de-
posed as queen mother because she had made
an outrageous object for Asherah; Asa cut this
down, smashed it, and burnt it in the Kidron
Valley. 17Although the high places did not disap-
pear from Israel, yet Asa's heart was undivided
as long as he lived. 18He brought into the house
of God his father's votive offerings and his own:
silver, gold, and various utensils. 19There was no
war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

**Asa's Infidelity** 1[g]In the thirty-sixth year of
Asa's reign, Baasha, king of Israel, attacked
Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent any com-
munication with Asa, king of Judah. 2Asa then
brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of
the temple of the LORD and of the royal palace
and sent them to Ben-hadad, king of Aram, who
lived in Damascus, with this message: 3"There is
a treaty between you and me, as there was
between your father and my father. See, I am
sending you silver and gold. Go, break your
treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may
withdraw from me." 4Ben-hadad agreed to King
Asa's request and sent the leaders of his troops
against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon,
Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of
Naphtali. 5When Baasha heard of it, he left off
fortifying Ramah; he stopped his work. 6Then
King Asa commandeered all of Judah to carry
away the stone and wood with which Baasha
had been fortifying Ramah, and with them he
fortified Geba and Mizpah.

7At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa,
king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you
relied on the king of Aram and did not rely on
the LORD, your God, the army of the king of
Aram has escaped* your hand. 8Were not the
Ethiopians and Libyans a vast army, with great
numbers of chariots and drivers? And yet, be-
cause you relied on the LORD, he delivered
them into your power.[h] 9The eyes of the LORD
roam over the whole earth, to encourage those
who are devoted to him wholeheartedly. You
have acted foolishly in this matter, for from
now on you will have wars."[i] 10But Asa be-
came angry with the seer and imprisoned him
in the stocks, so greatly was he enraged at him

**15, 10ff**: With this description of a covenant ceremony in the third month of a year beginning in the spring, the Chronicler lays a foundation for celebrating the ancient feast of Pentecost (Weeks) as the time for a solemn renewal of the people's covenant with God on Mount Sinai; see Ex 19, 1ff; Lv 23, 16 and the note there. This is also the background for Pentecost as the "birthday of the Church."

**16, 7**: The king of Aram . . . escaped: according to the Lucianic recension, "the king of Israel escaped": this may well be the original reading; Asa was friendly with Aram.

b Is 19, 2. c Is 7, 4; Jer 31, 16. d Neh 10, 30. e Dt 4, 29. f 16ff: 1 Kgs 15, 13ff. g 1–6: 1 Kgs 15, 16–21. h 2 Chr 14, 8–14. i Ps 33, 13ff.

over this. Asa also oppressed some of his people at this time.

11 /Now the acts of Asa, first and last, can be found recorded in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa contracted a serious disease in his feet. But even in his sickness he did not seek the LORD, but only the physicians. 13Asa rested with his ancestors; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. 14They buried him in the tomb he had hewn for himself in the City of David, having laid him upon a couch which was filled with spices and various kinds of aromatics compounded into an ointment. They also burned a very great funeral pyre for him.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 10–36 See RG 193–194

**Zeal of Jehoshaphat for the Law** 1His son Jehoshaphat succeeded him as king and strengthened his hold against Israel.[k] 2He placed armed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and put garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which his father Asa had taken. 3The LORD was with Jehoshaphat,* for he walked in the ways his father had pursued in the beginning, and he did not consult the Baals. 4Rather, he sought the God of his father and observed his commands, and not the practices of Israel. 5As a result, the LORD made his kingdom secure, and all Judah gave Jehoshaphat gifts, so that he enjoyed great wealth and glory. 6Thus he was encouraged to follow the LORD's ways, and again he removed the high places and the sacred poles from Judah.[l]

Ch 10–36 See RG 193–194

7In the third year of his reign he sent his leading men, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8With them he sent the Levites Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah and Tobijah, together with the priests Elishama and Jehoram.[m] 9They taught in Judah, having with them the book containing the law of the LORD; they traveled through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.[n]

**His Power** 10Now the fear of the LORD was upon all the kingdoms of the countries surrounding Judah, so that they did not war against Jehoshaphat. 11Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and a tribute of silver; and the Arabs also brought him a flock of seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred he-goats.

12Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built strongholds and store cities in Judah. 13He carried out many works in the cities of Judah, and he had soldiers, valiant warriors, in Jerusalem. 14This was their mustering according to their ancestral houses. Of Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander, and with him three hundred thousand valiant warriors. 15Next to him, Jehohanan the commander, and with him two hundred eighty thousand. 16Next to him, Amasiah, son of Zichri, who offered himself to the LORD, and with him two hundred thousand valiant warriors. 17From Benjamin: Eliada, a valiant warrior, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and buckler. 18Next to him, Jozabad, and with him one hundred and eighty thousand equipped for war. 19These were at the service of the king; in addition were those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

## CHAPTER 18

**Alliance with Israel** 1[o]Jehoshaphat therefore had wealth and glory in abundance; but he became related to Ahab by marriage. 2After some years he went down to Ahab at Samaria; Ahab offered numerous sheep and oxen for him and the people with him, and persuaded him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. 3Ahab, king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, "Will you come with me to Ramoth-gilead?" "You and I are as one," was his answer; "your people and my people as well. We will be with you in the battle." 4But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Seek the word of the LORD at once."

**The Prophets** 5The king of Israel gathered his prophets, four hundred in number, and asked them, "Shall we go to attack Ramoth-gilead, or

17, 3: The Lord was with Jehoshaphat: along with Hezekiah and Josiah, Jehoshaphat was one of the Chronicler's favorite kings.

j 11–14: 1 Kgs 15, 23f. k 1 Kgs 15, 24. l 2 Chr 20, 33; Ex 34, 13. m 2 Chr 19, 8. n Ezr 7, 25. o 1–34: 1 Kgs 22, 1–35.

shall I refrain?" "Go up," they answered. "God
will deliver it over to the king." 6But Jehosha-
phat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD
here whom we may consult?" 7The king of Israel
answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still another
through whom we may consult the LORD, but I
hate him, for he prophesies not good but always
evil about me. That is Micaiah, son of Imlah."
Jehoshaphat said, "Let not your Majesty speak of
evil against you." 8So the king of Israel called an
official, to whom he said, "Get Micaiah, son of
Imlah, at once." 9The king of Israel and King
Jehoshaphat of Judah were seated each on his
throne, clothed in their robes of state on a
threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of
Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying
before them.

10Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, made iron
horns for himself and said: "The LORD says,
'With these you shall gore Aram until you have
destroyed them.' " 11The other prophets prophe-
sied in the same vein, saying: "Go up to Ramoth-
gilead. You shall succeed; the LORD will deliver
it over to the king." 12*The messenger who had
gone to call Micaiah said to him: "Look now, the
prophets unanimously predict good for the king.
Let your word, like each of theirs, predict good."
13"As the LORD lives," Micaiah answered, "I will
say what my God tells me."

14When he came to the king, the king said to
him, "Micaiah, shall we go to fight against
Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Go up," he
answered, "and succeed; they will be delivered
into your power." 15But the king said to him,
"How many times must I adjure you to tell me
nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"
16Then Micaiah answered:

"I see all Israel
scattered on the mountains,
Like sheep without a shepherd,
and the LORD saying, 'These have no
master!
Let each of them go back home in peace.' "

17The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I
not tell you that he prophesies no good about
me, but only evil?" 18But Micaiah continued:
"Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the
LORD seated on his throne, with the whole host
of heaven standing by to his right and to his left.
19The LORD asked, 'Who will deceive Ahab, king
of Israel, so that he will go up and fall at Ramoth-
gilead?' And one said this, another that, 20until a
spirit came forward and presented himself to the
LORD, saying, 'I will deceive him.' The LORD
asked, 'How?' 21He answered, 'I will go forth
and become a lying spirit in the mouths of all his
prophets.' The LORD agreed: 'You shall succeed
in deceiving him. Go forth and do this.' 22So
now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the
mouths of these your prophets, but the LORD
himself has decreed evil against you."

23Thereupon Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah,
came up and slapped Micaiah on the cheek,
saying, "Which way did the spirit of the LORD go
when he left me to speak to you?" 24"You shall
find out," Micaiah replied, "on that day when
you enter an innermost chamber to hide." 25The
king of Israel then said: "Seize Micaiah and take
him back to Amon, prefect of the city, and to
Joash the king's son, 26and say, 'This is the king's
order: Put this man in prison and feed him
scanty rations of bread and water until I return
in safety!' " 27But Micaiah said, "If ever you
return in safety, the LORD has not spoken
through me." And he said, "Hear, O peoples, all
of you!"*

**Ahab's Death** 28The king of Israel and King
Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead
29and the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I
will go into battle disguised, but you put on your
own clothes." So the king of Israel disguised
himself and they entered the fray. 30Meanwhile,
the king of Aram had given his chariot commander-
ers the order, "Fight with no one, small or great,
except the king of Israel." 31When the commander-
ers saw Jehoshaphat, they exclaimed, "That
must be the king of Israel!" and shifted to fight

**18, 12–22:** See note on 1 Kgs 22, 19–23.
**18, 27:** "Hear, O peoples, all of you!": this quotation, which appears in some texts of 1 Kgs 22, 28, ascribes to the prophets Micaiah ben Imlah the opening words of the prophetic utterance of Micah of Moresheth (Mi 1, 2), a century later.

him. But Jehoshaphat cried out and the LORD
helped him; God induced them to leave him.
32The chariot commanders became aware that
he was not the king of Israel and gave up their
pursuit of him. 33Someone, however, drew his
bow at random and hit the king of Israel
between the joints of his breastplate. He ordered
his charioteer, "Rein about and take me out of
the ranks, for I am disabled."[p] 34The battle grew
fierce during the day, and the king of Israel
braced himself up on his chariot facing the
Arameans until evening. He died as the sun was
setting.

## CHAPTER 19

Ch 10–36
See RG
193–194

**Jehoshaphat Rebuked** 1King Jehoshaphat of
Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusa-
lem. 2Jehu the seer, son of Hanani,* met King
Jehoshaphat and said to him: "Should you help
the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?
For this reason, wrath is upon you from the
LORD. 3Yet some good things are to be found in
you, since you have removed the sacred poles
from the land and have been determined to seek
God."

**Judges Appointed** 4Jehoshaphat dwelt in Jeru-
salem; but he went out again among the people
from Beer-sheba to the highlands of Ephraim and
brought them back to the LORD, the God of their
fathers. 5He appointed judges in the land, in all
the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6and he
said to them: "Take care what you do, for you
are judging, not on behalf of man, but on behalf
of the LORD; he judges with you.[q] 7And now, let
the fear of the LORD be upon you. Act carefully,
for with the LORD, our God, there is no injustice,
no partiality, no bribe-taking."[r] 8In Jerusalem
also, Jehoshaphat appointed some Levites and
priests and some of the family heads of Israel to
judge in the name of the LORD and to settle
quarrels among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.[s]
9He gave them this command: "You shall act
faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the
LORD. 10And in every dispute that your brethren
living in their cities bring to you, whether it
concerns bloodguilt or questions of law, com-
mand, statutes, or judgments, warn them lest
they become guilty before the LORD and his
wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do
that and you shall be guiltless.[t] 11See now,
Amariah is high priest over you in everything
that pertains to the LORD, and Zebadiah, son of
Ishmael, is leader of the house of Judah in all
that pertains to the king; and the Levites will be
your officials. Act firmly, and the LORD will be
with the good."

## CHAPTER 20

**Invasion from Edom*** 1After this the Moab-
ites, the Ammonites, and with them some Meu-
nites came to fight against Jehoshaphat. 2The
message was brought to Jehoshaphat: "A great
multitude is coming against you from across the
sea, from Edom; they are already in Hazazon-
tamar" (which is En-gedi). 3Jehoshaphat was
frightened, and he hastened to consult the LORD.
He proclaimed a fast for all Judah. 4Then Judah
gathered to seek help from the LORD; from every
one of the cities of Judah they came to seek the
LORD.[u]

**Prayer of Jehoshaphat** 5Jehoshaphat stood up
in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the
house of the LORD before the new court, 6and he
said: "LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the
God in heaven, and do you not rule over all the
kingdoms of the nations? In your hand is power
and might, and no one can withstand you.[v]
7Was it not you, our God, who drove out the
inhabitants of this land before your people Israel
and gave it forever to the descendants of Abra-
ham, your friend?[w] 8They have dwelt in it and
they built in it a sanctuary to your honor, saying,
9'When evil comes upon us, the sword of
judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will

19, 2: Jehu the seer, son of Hanani: hardly the same seer as Jehu, son of Hanani, who prophesied against Baasha almost 50 years earlier (1 Kgs 16–1).

20, 1–30: Although the account here seems to be a free composition of the Chronicler, there is probably a basis in fact for it; there could well have been a raid of nomads against Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, similar to Zerah's attack on Asa (2 Chr 14, 8–14). The story may also, in some way, be connected with the campaign of Israel and Judah against Moab through the territory of Edom (2 Kgs 3, 4–27).

p 2 Chr 35, 23; 1 Kgs 22, 34. q Dt 1, 16ff; 16, 19f. r Dt 10, 17. s 2 Chr 17, 8f; Dt 17, 8–13; Ps 122, 3ff. t Nm 35, 19. u Jer 36, 6; Jb 1, 14. v 2 Chr 32, 7; Dt 4, 39. w Dn 3, 35.

stand before this house and before you, for your
name is in this house, and we will cry out to you
in our affliction, and you will hear and save!'
10And now, see the Ammonites, Moabites, and
those of Mount Seir whom you did not allow
Israel to invade when they came from the land of
Egypt, but instead they passed them by and did
not destroy them.[x] 11See how they are now
repaying us by coming to drive us out of the
possession you have given us. 12O our God, will
you not pass judgment on them? We are power-
less before this vast multitude that comes against
us. We are at a loss what to do, hence our eyes
are turned toward you."

**Victory Prophesied** 13All Judah was standing
before the LORD, with their little ones, their
wives, and their young sons. 14And the spirit of
the LORD came upon Jahaziel, son of Zechariah,
son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a
Levite of the clan of Asaph, in the midst of the
assembly, 15and he said: "Listen, all of Judah,
inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat!
The LORD says to you: 'Do not fear or lose heart
at the sight of this vast multitude, for the battle is
not yours but God's. 16Go down against them
tomorrow. You will see them coming up by the
ascent of Ziz, and you will come upon them at
the end of the wadi which opens on the wilder-
ness of Jeruel. 17You will not have to fight in this
encounter. Take your places, stand firm, and see
how the LORD will be with you to deliver you,
Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or lose heart.
Tomorrow go out to meet them, and the LORD
will be with you.' "[y] 18Then Jehoshaphat knelt
down with his face to the ground, and all Judah
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before
the LORD in worship. 19Levites from among the
Kohathites and Korahites rose to sing the praises
of the LORD, the God of Israel, in a resounding
chorus.

**The Invaders Destroyed** 20In the early morn-
ing they hastened out to the wilderness of
Tekoa. As they were going out, Jehoshaphat
halted and said: "Listen to me, Judah and
inhabitants of Jerusalem! Trust in the LORD, your
God, and you will be found firm. Trust in his
prophets and you will succeed."[z] 21After consult-
ing with the people, he appointed some to sing
to the LORD and some to praise the holy Appear-
ance* as it went forth at the head of the army.
They sang: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his
mercy endures forever."[a] 22At the moment they
began their jubilant hymn, the LORD laid an
ambush against the Ammonites, Moabites, and
those of Mount Seir who were coming against
Judah, so that they were vanquished. 23For the
Ammonites and Moabites set upon the inhabit-
ants of Mount Seir and completely exterminated
them. And when they had finished with the
inhabitants of Seir, they began to destroy each
other.[b]

24When Judah came to the watchtower of the
desert and looked toward the throng, they saw
only corpses fallen on the ground, with no
survivors. 25Jehoshaphat and his people came to
take plunder, and they found an abundance of
cattle and personal property, garments and pre-
cious vessels. They took so much that they were
unable to carry it all; they were three days taking
the spoil, so great was it. 26On the fourth day
they held an assembly in the Valley of Beracah—
for there they blessed the LORD; therefore that
place has ever since been called the Valley of
Beracah.* 27Then all the men of Judah and
Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head,
turned back toward Jerusalem celebrating the
joyful victory the LORD had given them over
their enemies. 28They came to Jerusalem, to the
house of the LORD, with harps, lyres and trum-
pets. 29And the fear of God came upon all the
kingdoms of the surrounding lands when they
heard how the LORD had fought against the
enemies of Israel. 30Thereafter Jehoshaphat's
kingdom enjoyed peace, for his God gave him
rest on every side.

**Jehoshaphat's Other Deeds** 31[c]Thus Jehosha-
phat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years
old when he became king, and he reigned

20, 21: Holy Appearance: the Lord, who is with the Israelite army (v 17), manifests himself (the same language is in Ps 29, 2) in bringing Israel the victory (Ex 14, 14. 24).

20, 26: Beracah: the Hebrew word for "blessing."

x Dt 2, 4f. 9f. 18f. y Is 8, 10. z Is 7, 9. a Ps 136, 1. b Jos 6, 17; Ez 38, 21. c 31–34: 1 Kgs 22, 41–45.

twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was named Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. [32]He followed the path of his father Asa unswervingly, doing what was right in the LORD's sight. [33]But the high places were not removed, nor as yet had the people fixed their hearts on the God of their fathers.

[34]The rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, can be found written in the chronicle of Jehu, son of Hanani, which is inserted in the book of the kings of Israel. [35]After this, King Jehoshaphat of Judah allied himself with King Ahaziah of Israel, who did evil. [36] [d]He joined with him in building ships to sail to Tarshish; the fleet was built at Ezion-geber. [37]But Eliezer, son of Dodavahu from Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will shatter your work." And the ships were wrecked and were unable to sail to Tarshish.

## CHAPTER 21

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[1]Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors; he was buried with them in the City of David. Jehoram, his son, succeeded him as king.[e] [2]His brothers, sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah; all these were sons of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. [3]Their father gave them numerous gifts of silver, gold and precious objects, together with fortified cities in Judah, but the kingship he gave to Jehoram because he was the first-born.

**Evil Deeds of Jehoram** [4]When Jehoram had come into his father's kingdom and had consolidated his power, he put to the sword all his brothers and also some of the princes of Israel. [5][f]Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. [6]He conducted himself like the kings of Israel of the line of Ahab, because one of Ahab's daughters* was his wife. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, [7]but the LORD would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant he had made with David and because of his promise to give him and his sons a lamp for all time.[g]

[8] [h]During his time Edom revolted against the sovereignty of Judah; they chose a king of their own. [9]Thereupon Jehoram crossed over with his officers and all the chariots he had. He arose by night and broke through the Edomites when they had surrounded him and the commanders of his chariots. [10]However, Edom has continued in revolt against the sovereignty of Judah down to the present time. Libnah also revolted at that time against Jehoram's sovereignty because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers. [11]He also set up high places in the mountains of Judah; he led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into idolatry and seduced Judah.

**Retribution** [12]He received a letter from the prophet Elijah* with this message: Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: 'Because you have not followed the path of your father Jehoshaphat, nor of Asa, king of Judah, [13]but instead have walked in the way of the kings of Israel and have led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into idolatry, as did the house of Ahab, and also because you have murdered your brothers of your father's house who were better than you, [14]the LORD will strike your people, your children, your wives, and all that is yours with a great plague; [15]and you shall have severe pains from a disease in your bowels, while your bowels issue forth because of the disease, day after day.' "

[16]Then the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the animosity of the Philistines and of the Arabs who bordered on the Ethiopians. [17]They came up against Judah, invaded it, and carried away all the wealth found in the king's palace, along with his sons and his wives; there was left to him only one son, Jehoahaz, his youngest. [18]After these events, the LORD afflicted him with an incurable disease of the bowels. [19]As time went on until a

21, 6: One of Ahab's daughters: Athaliah. In 2 Chr 22, 2 (and its source, 2 Kgs 8, 26) she is called Omri's daughter; but this should probably be understood in the sense of granddaughter.

21, 12: Elijah: the only mention by the Chronicler of this prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel. It is doubtful that Elijah was still living in the reign of Jehoram of Judah; in any case, the attribution of the letter to him is most likely an imaginative filling out of the narration.

d 36f: 1 Kgs 22, 48f. e 1 Kgs 22, 51. f 5ff: 2 Kgs 8, 17ff. g 1 Kgs 11, 36; 2 Kgs 8, 19. h 8ff: Gn 27, 40; 2 Kgs 8, 20ff.

period of two years had elapsed, his bowels issued forth because of the disease and he died in great pain. His people did not make a pyre for him like that of his fathers. 20He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed unloved and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.[i]

## CHAPTER 22

**Ahaziah** 1[j]Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his stead, since all the older sons had been slain by the band that had come into the fort with the Arabs. Thus Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, reigned as king of Judah. 2He was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother was named Athaliah, daughter of Omri. 3He, too, followed the ways of the house of Ahab, because his mother counseled him to act sinfully. 4To his own destruction, he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab, since they were his counselors after the death of his father.

5He was also following their counsel when he accompanied Jehoram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, to battle against Hazael, king of Aram, at Ramoth-gilead. There Jehoram was wounded by the Arameans. 6He returned to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds he had received at Rama in his battle against Hazael, king of Aram. Because of this illness, Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to visit Jehoram, son of Ahab, in Jezreel. 7Now it was willed by God for Ahaziah's downfall that he should join Jehoram, for after his arrival he rode out with Jehoram to Jehu, son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut down the house of Ahab.[k] 8While Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he also encountered the princes of Judah and the nephews of Ahaziah who were his attendants, and he slew them.[l] 9Then he looked for Ahaziah himself. They caught him where he was hiding in Samaria and brought him to Jehu, who put him to death. They buried him, for they said, "He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with his whole heart."[m] There remained in Ahaziah's house no one powerful enough to wield the kingship.*

**Usurpation of Athaliah** 10[n]When Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, learned that her son was dead, she proceeded to kill off all the royal offspring of the house of Judah. 11But Jehosheba, a royal princess, secretly took Ahaziah's son Joash from among the king's sons who were about to be slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. In this way Jehosheba, who was the daughter of King Jehoram, a sister of Ahaziah, and wife of Jehoiada the priest, hid the child from Athaliah's sight, so that she did not put him to death. 12For six years he remained hidden with them in the house of God, while Athaliah ruled over the land.

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## CHAPTER 23

**Athaliah Overthrown** 1[o]In the seventh year, Jehoiada took courage and entered a conspiracy with certain captains: Azariah, son of Jehoram; Ishmael, son of Jehohanan; Azariah, son of Obed; Masseiah, son of Adaiah; and Elishaphat, son of Zichri. 2They journeyed about Judah, gathering the Levites from all the cities of Judah and also the heads of the Israelite families. When they had come to Jerusalem, 3the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. Jehoiada said to them: "Here is the king's son who must reign, as the LORD promised concerning the sons of David. 4This is what you must do: a third of your number, both priests and Levites, who come in on the sabbath must guard the thresholds, 5another third must be at the king's palace, and the final third at the Foundation Gate, when all the people will be in the courts of the LORD's temple. 6Let no one enter the LORD's house except the priests and those Levites who are ministering. They may enter because they are holy; but all the other people must observe the prescriptions of the LORD. 7The Levites shall surround the king on all

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22, 9: This account of the death of Ahaziah of Judah is not derived from 2 Kgs 9, 27f, with which it is at variance.

i 2 Kgs 8, 24. j 1–6: 2 Kgs 8, 24–29. k 2 Kgs 9, 21; 10, 12ff. l 2 Kgs 10, 12ff. m 2 Kgs 9, 27f. n 10ff: 2 Kgs 11, 1ff. o 1–17. 19ff: 2 Kgs 11, 4–20.

sides, each with his weapon drawn. Whoever tries to enter the house must be slain. Stay with the king wherever he goes."

[8]The Levites and all Judah did just as Jehoiada the priest commanded. Each brought his men, those who were to come in on the sabbath as well as those who were to depart on the sabbath, since Jehoiada the priest had not dismissed any of the divisions.[p] [9]Jehoiada the priest gave the captains the spears, shields and bucklers of King David which were in the house of God. [10]He stationed all the people, each with his spear in hand, from the southern to the northern extremity of the enclosure, around the altar and the temple on the king's behalf. [11]Then they brought out the king's son, set the crown and the insignia upon him, and made him king. Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they cried, "Long live the king!"

[12]When Athaliah heard the din of the people running and acclaiming the king, she went to the people in the temple of the LORD. [13]She looked, and there was the king standing beside his pillar* at the entrance, the officers and the trumpeters around him, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, while the singers with their musical instruments were leading the acclaim. Athaliah tore her garments and cried out, "Treason! treason!" [14]Then Jehoiada the priest sent out the captains who were in command of the army; he said to them: "Take her outside through the ranks, and if anyone tries to follow her, let him die by the sword. For," the priest continued, "you must not put her to death in the LORD's temple." [15]So they seized her, and when she arrived at the entrance to the Horse Gate of the palace, they put her to death there.

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[16]Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king, that they should be the LORD's people. [17]And all the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed its altars and images, and they slew Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. [18]Then Jehoiada gave the charge of the LORD's temple into the hands of the levitical priests, to whom David had assigned turns in the temple for offering the holocausts of the LORD, as is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and song, as David had provided.[q] [19]Moreover, he stationed guards at the gates of the LORD's temple, so that no one unclean in any respect might enter. [20]Then he took the captains, the nobles, the rulers among the people, and all the people of the land, and led the king out of the LORD's house. When they had come within the upper gate of the king's house, they seated the king upon the royal throne. [21]All the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet, now that Athaliah had been put to death by the sword.

## CHAPTER 24

**The Temple Restored** [1]r[]Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother, named Zibiah, was from Beer-sheba. [2]Joash did what was pleasing to the LORD as long as Jehoiada the priest lived. [3]Jehoiada provided him with two wives, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

[4]After some time, Joash decided to restore the LORD's temple. [5]He called together the priests and Levites and said to them: "Go out to all the cities of Judah and collect money* from all Israel that you may repair the house of your God over the years. You must hasten this affair." But the Levites did not hasten. [6]Then the king summoned Jehoiada, who was in charge, and said to him: "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the LORD, and by the

**23, 13:** Beside his pillar: the king had a special place in the eastern gateway of the temple court that contained the altar of holocausts. He occupied this place on feasts and sabbaths at the time of the statutory offerings, or when he made freewill offerings of his own; cf 2 Kgs 11, 4 and also Ez 46, 1–8 for a later reflection of this.

**24, 5:** Collect money: according to 2 Kgs 12, 5, the people themselves brought the money to the temple; it consisted, at least in part, of voluntary contributions. At the time of the Chronicler (see Neh 10, 32) there was a fixed head tax for the upkeep of the temple (2 Chr 34, 9), based on Ex 30, 12–16. This was still in force in New Testament times (Mt 17, 24f).

p 2 Kgs 11, 9; 1 Chr 24, 19. q 1 Chr 23, 13. r 1–14: 2 Kgs 12, 1–13.

assembly of Israel, for the tent of the testimony?"[s] 7For the wicked Athaliah and her sons had damaged the house of God and had even turned over to the Baals the dedicated resources of the LORD's temple.

8At the king's command, therefore, they made a chest, which they put outside the gate of the LORD's temple.[t] 9They had it proclaimed throughout Judah and Jerusalem that the tax which Moses, the servant of God, had imposed on Israel in the desert should be brought to the LORD.[u] 10All the princes and the people rejoiced; they brought what was asked and cast it into the chest until it was filled. 11Whenever the chest was brought to the royal officials by the Levites and they saw that it contained much money, the royal scribe and an overseer for the high priest came, emptied the chest, then took it back and returned it to its place. This they did day after day until they had collected a large sum of money. 12Then the king and Jehoiada gave it to the workmen in charge of the labor on the LORD's temple, who hired masons and carpenters to restore the temple, and also iron- and bronze-smiths to repair it. 13The workmen labored, and the task of restoration progressed under their hands. They restored the house of God according to its original form, and reinforced it. 14After they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and to Jehoiada, who had it made into utensils for the LORD's temple, utensils for the service and the holocausts, and basins and other gold and silver utensils. They offered holocausts in the LORD's temple continually throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada. 15Jehoiada lived to a ripe old age; he was a hundred and thirty years old when he died. 16He was buried in the City of David with the kings, because he had done good in Israel, in particular with respect to God and his temple.

**Apostasy of King Joash** 17After the death of Jehoiada, the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and the king then listened to them. 18They forsook the temple of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and began to serve the sacred poles and the idols; and because of this crime of theirs, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem.[v] 19Although prophets were sent to them to convert them to the LORD, the people would not listen to their warnings. 20Then the spirit of God possessed Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. He took his stand above the people and said to them: "God says, 'Why are you transgressing the LORD's commands, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have abandoned the LORD, he has abandoned you.' " 21But they conspired against him, and at the king's order they stoned him to death in the court of the LORD's temple. 22Thus King Joash was unmindful of the devotion shown him by Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, and slew his son. And as he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge."

**Retribution** 23At the turn of the year a force of Arameans came up against Joash. They invaded Judah and Jerusalem, did away with all the princes of the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.[w] 24Though the Aramean force came with few men, the LORD surrendered a very large force into their power, because Judah had abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers. So punishment was meted out to Joash.[x] 25[y]After the Arameans had departed from him, leaving him in grievous suffering, his servants conspired against him because of the murder of the son of Jehoiada the priest. They killed him on his sickbed. He was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

26These conspired against him: Zabad, son of Shimeath from Ammon, and Jehozabad, son of Shimrith from Moab. 27Of his sons, and the great tribute imposed on him, and of his rebuilding of the house of God, there is a written account in the midrash of the book of the kings. His son Amaziah succeeded him as king.[z]

## CHAPTER 25

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**Campaign in Edom** 1[a]Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His

s Ex 25, 1–9; Neh 10, 33. t 2 Chr 34, 9. u Ex 30, 13. v Ex 34, 13. w 2 Kgs 12, 17f. x Dt 32, 30. y 25f: 2 Kgs 12, 21f. z 2 Kgs 12, 19. 22. a 1–4: 2 Kgs 14, 1–6.

mother, named Jehoaddan, was from Jerusalem.
[2]He did what was pleasing in the sight of the
LORD, though not wholeheartedly. [3]After he had
strengthened his hold on the kingdom, he slew
those of his servants who had killed the king, his
father; [4]but he did not put their children to
death, for he acted according to what is written
in the law, in the Book of Moses, as the LORD
commanded: "Fathers shall not be put to death
for their children, nor children for their fathers;
but only for his own guilt shall a man be put to
death." [b]

[5]Amaziah mustered Judah and placed them,
out of all Judah and Benjamin according to their
ancestral houses, under leaders of thousands and
of hundreds. When he had counted those of
twenty years and over, he found them to be
three hundred thousand picked men fit for war,
capable of handling lance and shield. [6]He also
hired a hundred thousand valiant warriors from
Israel for a hundred talents of silver. [7]But a man
of God came to him and said: "O king, let not
the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is
not with Israel, with any Ephraimite. [8]Instead,
go on your own, strongly prepared for the
conflict; otherwise the LORD will defeat you in
the face of the enemy. It is God who has the
power to reinforce or to defeat." [9]Amaziah
answered the man of God, "But what is to be
done about the hundred talents that I paid for
the troops of Israel?" The man of God replied,
"The LORD can give you much more than that."
[10]Amaziah then disbanded the troops that had
come to him from Ephraim, and sent them
home. They, however, became furiously angry
with Judah, and returned home blazing with
resentment.

[11]Amaziah now assumed command of his
army. They proceeded to the Valley of Salt, and
there they killed ten thousand men of Seir. [c]
[12]The Judahites also brought back another ten
thousand alive, whom they led to the summit of
the Rock and then cast down, so that they were
all crushed. [13]Meanwhile, the mercenaries
whom Amaziah had dismissed from battle service with him raided the cities of Judah from
Samaria to Beth-horon. They killed three thousand of the inhabitants and took away much
booty.

**Infidelity of Amaziah** [14]When Amaziah returned from his conquest of the Edomites he
brought back with him the gods of the people of
Seir, which he set up as his own gods; he bowed
down before them and offered sacrifice to them.
[15]Then the anger of the LORD blazed out against
Amaziah, and he sent a prophet to him who
said: "Why have you had recourse to this
people's gods that could not save their own
people from your hand?" [16]While he was still
speaking, however, the king said to him: "Have
you been made the king's counselor? Be silent!
Why should it be necessary to kill you?" Therefore the prophet desisted. "I know, however," he
said, "that God has let you take counsel to your
own destruction, because you have done this
thing and have refused to hear my counsel."

**Retribution** [17] [d]Having taken counsel, King
Amaziah of Judah sent messengers to Joash, son
of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, the king of Israel,
saying, "Come, let us meet each other face to
face." [18]King Joash of Israel sent this reply to
King Amaziah of Judah: "The thistle of the
Lebanon sent a message to the cedar of the
Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son
for his wife.' But the wild beasts of the Lebanon
passed by and trampled the thistle down. [e] [19]You
are thinking, 'See, I have beaten Edom!', and
thus ambition makes you proud. Remain at
home. Why involve yourself, and Judah with
you, in misfortune and failure?" [20]But Amaziah
would not listen, for God had determined to
hand them over because they had had recourse
to the gods of Edom.

[21]Therefore King Joash of Israel advanced and
he and King Amaziah met in battle at Beth-shemesh of Judah. [22]There Judah was defeated
by Israel, and all the Judean soldiers fled homeward. [23]King Joash of Israel captured Amaziah,
king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, at
Beth-shemesh and brought him to Jerusalem.
Then he tore down the wall of Jerusalem from
the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a distance

b Dt 24, 16; 2 Kgs 14, 5f; Ez 18, 20. c 2 Kgs 14, 7. d 17–24: 2 Kgs 14, 8–14. e Jgs 9, 7–15; 2 Kgs 14, 9.

of four hundred cubits. [24]He took away all the gold and silver and all the vessels he found in the house of God with Obed-edom,* together with the treasures of the palace, and hostages as well. Then he returned to Samaria.

[25]*f*Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, survived Joash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, by fifteen years. [26]The rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, can be found written, as is well known, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. [27]Now from the time that Amaziah ceased to follow the LORD, a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem; hence he fled to Lachish. But they pursued him to Lachish and put him to death there. [28]They brought him back on horses and buried him with his ancestors in the City of Judah.*

## CHAPTER 26

**The Works of Uzziah** [1]*g*All the people of Judah chose Uzziah, though he was but sixteen years of age, and proclaimed him king to succeed his father Amaziah. [2]He rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah; this was after King Amaziah had gone to rest with his ancestors. [3]Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother, named Jecoliah, was from Jerusalem. [4]He pleased the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done.

[5]He was prepared to seek God as long as Zechariah* lived, who taught him to fear God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.*h* [6]He went out and fought the Philistines and razed the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod [and built cities in the district of Ashdod and in Philistia].*i* [7]God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabs who dwelt in Gurbaal, and against the Meunites. [8]The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah and his fame spread as far as Egypt, for he grew stronger and stronger. [9]Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the Angle, and he fortified them. [10]He built towers in the desert and dug numerous cisterns, for he had many cattle. He had plowmen in the foothills and the plains, and vinedressers in the highlands and the garden land. He was a lover of the soil.

[11]Uzziah also had a standing army of fit soldiers divided into bands according to the number in which they were mustered by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the recorder, under the command of Hananiah, one of the king's officials. [12]The entire number of family heads over these valiant warriors was two thousand six hundred, [13]and at their disposal was a mighty army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred fighting men of great valor to help the king against his enemies. [14]Uzziah provided for them—for the entire army—bucklers, lances, helmets, breastplates, bows and slingstones. [15]He also built machines in Jerusalem, devices contrived to stand on the towers and at the angles of the walls to shoot arrows and cast large stones. His fame spread far and wide, and his power was ascribed to the marvelous help he had received.

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**Pride and Fall** [16]But after he had become strong, he became proud to his own destruction and broke faith with the LORD, his God. He entered the temple of the LORD to make an offering on the altar of incense. [17]But Azariah the priest, and with him eighty other priests of the LORD, courageous men, followed him. [18]They opposed King Uzziah, saying to him: "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who have been consecrated for this purpose. Leave the sanctuary, for you have broken faith and no longer have a part in the glory that comes from the LORD God."*j* [19]Uzziah, who was holding a censer for burning the incense, became angry, but at the moment he showed his anger to the priests, while they were looking at him in the

**25, 24:** With Obed-edom: possibly a reference to the priest of an Edomite false worship (cf v 14), if not to a levitical family of gatekeepers; cf 1 Chr 15, 18; 26, 12–15.

**25, 28:** The City of Judah: in the parallel passage of 2 Kgs 14, 20, the City of David. The Chronicler is referring, by this term, to the capital of Judah, Jerusalem.

**26, 5:** Zechariah: this person, not otherwise identified, is referred to in language suggesting a pious layman rather than a priest or prophet; cf 2 Chr 29, 1.

f 25–28: 2 Kgs 14, 17–20. g 1–4: 2 Kgs 14, 21f; 15, 1ff. h 2 Chr 24, 2. i Am 1, 8. j Ex 30, 7.

house of the LORD beside the altar of incense,
leprosy broke out on his forehead.[k] 20Azariah
the chief priest and all the other priests exam-
ined him, and when they saw that his forehead
was leprous, they expelled him from the temple.
He himself fled willingly, for the LORD had
afflicted him. 21[l]King Uzziah remained a leper to
the day of his death. As a leper he dwelt in a
segregated house, for he was excluded from the
house of the LORD. Therefore his son Jotham was
regent of the palace and ruled the people of the
land.

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22The prophet Isaiah, son of Amos, wrote the
rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last. 23Uzziah
rested with his ancestors; he was buried with
them in the field adjoining the royal cemetery,
for they said, "He was a leper." His son Jotham
succeeded him as king.

## CHAPTER 27

Ch 10–36
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193–194

**Jotham** 1[m]Jotham was twenty-five years old
when he became king, and he reigned sixteen
years in Jerusalem. His mother was named
Jerusa, daughter of Zadok. 2He pleased the LORD
just as his father Uzziah had done, though he did
not enter the temple of the LORD; the people,
however, continued to act sinfully.

3He built the upper gate of the LORD's house
and had much construction done on the wall of
Ophel. 4Moreover, he built cities in the hill
country of Judah, and in the forest land he set up
fortresses and towers. 5He fought with the king
of the Ammonites and conquered them. That
year the Ammonites paid him one hundred
talents of silver, together with ten thousand kors
of wheat and ten thousand of barley. They
brought the same to him also in the second and
in the third year. 6Thus Jotham continued to
grow strong because he lived resolutely in the
presence of the LORD, his God. 7[n]The rest of the
acts of Jotham, his wars and his activities, can be
found written in the book of the kings of Israel
and Judah. 8He was twenty-five years old when
he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in
Jerusalem. 9Jotham rested with his ancestors and
was buried in the City of David, and his son
Ahaz succeeded him as king.

# III: Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah

## CHAPTER 28

**Impiety of Ahaz** 1[o]Ahaz was twenty years old
when he became king, and he reigned sixteen
years in Jerusalem. He did not please the LORD as
his forefather David had done, 2but conducted
himself like the kings of Israel and even made
molten idols of the Baals. 3Moreover, he offered
sacrifice in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, and immo-
lated his sons by fire according to the abomina-
ble practice of the nations which the LORD had
cleared out before the Israelites.[p] 4He offered
sacrifice and incense on the high places, on hills,
and under every leafy tree.

**Retribution** 5Therefore the LORD, his God,
delivered him into the power of the king of
Aram. The Arameans defeated him and carried
away captive a large number of his people,
whom they brought to Damascus. He was also
delivered into the power of the king of Israel,
who defeated him with great slaughter.[q] 6For
Pekah, son of Remaliah, slew one hundred and
twenty thousand of Judah in a single day, all of
them valiant men, because they had abandoned
the LORD, the God of their fathers. 7Zichri, an
Ephraimite warrior, killed Maaseiah, the king's
son, and Azrikam, the master of the palace, and
also Elkanah, who was second to the king. 8The
Israelites took away as captives two hundred
thousand of their brethren's wives, sons and
daughters; they also took from them much
plunder, which they brought to Samaria.

**The Prophecy of Oded** 9In Samaria there was
a prophet of the LORD by the name of Oded. He
went out to meet the army returning to Samaria
and said to them: "It was because the LORD, the
God of your fathers, was angry with Judah that
he delivered them into your hands. You, how-
ever, have slaughtered them with a fury that has
reached up to heaven. 10And now you are

k Nm 12, 10. l 21ff: 2 Kgs 15, 5ff; Lv 13, 46; Nm 19, 20. m 1–3; 2 Kgs 15, 32–35. n 7–9: 2 Kgs 15, 36ff. o 1–4: 2 Kgs 16, 1–4. p 2 Kgs 16, 3; Lv 18, 21. q 2 Kgs 16, 5; Is 7, 1–9.

planning to make the children of Judah and
Jerusalem your slaves and bondwomen. Are not
you yourselves, therefore, guilty of a crime
against the LORD, your God? 11Now listen to
me: send back the captives you have carried off
from among your brethren, for the burning
anger of the LORD is upon you."
12At this, some of the Ephraimite leaders,
Azariah, son of Johanan, Berechiah, son of
Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah, son of Shallum, and
Amasa, son of Hadlai, themselves stood up in
opposition to those who had returned from the
war. 13They said to them: "Do not bring the
captives here, for what you propose will make us
guilty before the LORD and increase our sins and
our guilt. Our guilt is already great, and there is
a burning anger upon Israel." 14Therefore the
soldiers left their captives and the plunder before
the princes and the whole assembly. 15Then the
men just named proceeded to help the captives.
All of them who were naked they clothed from
the booty; they clothed them, put sandals on
their feet, gave them food and drink, anointed
them, and all who were weak they set on asses.
They brought them to Jericho, the city of palms,
to their brethren. Then they returned to Samaria.[r]

**Further Sins of Ahaz** 16At that time King Ahaz
sent an appeal for help to the kings of Assyria.[s]
17The Edomites had returned, attacked Judah,
and carried off captives.[t] 18The Philistines too
had raided the cities of the foothills and the
Negeb of Judah; they captured Beth-shemesh,
Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco and its dependencies,
Timnah and its dependencies, and Gimzo and its
dependencies, and occupied them. 19For the
LORD had brought Judah low because of Ahaz,
king of Israel,* who let Judah go its own way
and proved utterly faithless to the LORD.
20Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, did indeed
come to him, but to oppress him rather than to
help him.[u] 21Though Ahaz plundered the
LORD's house and the houses of the king and the
princes to make payment to the king of Assyria,
it availed him nothing.[v]
22While he was already in distress, the same
King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the
LORD. 23He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus
who had defeated him, saying, "Since it was the
gods of the kings of Aram who helped them, I
will sacrifice to them that they may help me
also." However, they only caused further disaster to him and to all Israel.[w] 24Ahaz gathered up
the utensils of God's house and broke them in
pieces. He closed the doors of the LORD's house
and had altars made for himself in every corner
of Jerusalem.[x] 25In every city throughout Judah
he set up high places to offer sacrifice to other
gods. Thus he angered the LORD, the God of his
fathers.
26[y]The rest of his deeds and his activities, first
and last, can be found written in the book of the
kings of Judah and Israel. 27Ahaz rested with his
ancestors and was buried in Jerusalem—in the
city, for they did not bring him to the tombs of
the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah succeeded
him as king.

## CHAPTER 29

Ch 10–36
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**Reforms of Hezekiah** 1[z]Hezekiah was
twenty-five years old when he became king, and
he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His
mother was named Abia, daughter of Zechariah.
2He pleased the LORD just as his forefather David
had done. 3It was he who, in the first month of
the first year of his reign, opened the doors of the
LORD's house and repaired them.[a] 4He summoned the priests and Levites, gathered them in
the open space to the east, 5and said to them:
"Listen to me, you Levites! Sanctify yourselves
now and sanctify the house of the LORD, the God
of your fathers, and clean out the filth from the
sanctuary. 6Our fathers acted faithlessly and did
evil in the eyes of the LORD, our God. They
abandoned him, turned away their faces from
the LORD's dwelling, and turned their backs on

**28, 19:** Ahaz, king of Israel: in the period of the divided kingdom the term king of Israel would elsewhere mean "king of the northern Kingdom of Israel."

r Lk 10, 25–37. s 2 Kgs 16, 7. t 2 Kgs 16, 6. u 2 Kgs 16, 10; Is 7, 17–20; 8, 5–8. v 2 Kgs 16, 8. w 2 Kgs 16, 12f; Is 10, 20. x 2 Chr 29, 3; 30, 14; 2 Kgs 16, 17. y 26f: 2 Kgs 16, 19f. z 1ff: 2 Kgs 18, 1ff. a 2 Chr 28, 24.

him. [7]They also closed the doors of the vestibule, extinguished the lamps, and refused to burn incense and offer holocausts in the sanctuary to the honor of the God of Israel.[b] [8][c]Therefore the anger of the LORD has come upon Judah and Jerusalem; he has made them an object of terror, astonishment and mockery, as you see with your own eyes. [9]For our fathers, as you know, fell by the sword, and our sons, our daughters and our wives have been taken captive because of this. [10]Now, I intend to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, that his burning anger may withdraw from us. [11]My sons, be not negligent any longer, for it is you whom the LORD has chosen to stand before him, to minister to him, to be his ministers and to offer incense."

[12]Then the Levites arose: Mahath, son of Amasai, and Joel, son of Azariah, descendants of the Kohathites; of the sons of Merari: Kish, son of Abdi, and Azariah, son of Jehallel; of the Gershonites: Joah, son of Zimmah, and Eden, son of Joah; [13]of the sons of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeuel; of the sons of Asaph: Zechariah and Mattaniah; [14]of the sons of Heman: Jehuel and Shimei; of the sons of Jeduthun: Shemiah and Uzziel. [15]They gathered their brethren together and sanctified themselves; then they came as the king had ordered, to cleanse the LORD's house in keeping with his words.

[16]The priests entered the interior of the LORD's house to cleanse it; and whatever they found in the LORD's temple that was unclean they brought out to the court of the LORD's house, where the Levites took it from them and carried it out to the Kidron Valley. [17]They began the work of consecration on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they arrived at the vestibule of the LORD; they consecrated the LORD's house during eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month, they had finished.

[18]Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said: "We have cleansed the entire house of the LORD, the altar of holocausts with all its utensils, and the table for the showbread with all its utensils. [19]All the articles which King Ahaz during his reign had thrown away because of his apostasy, we have restored and consecrated, and they are now before the LORD's altar."

**The Rite of Expiation** [20]Then King Hezekiah hastened to convoke the princes of the city and went up to the LORD's house. [21]Seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs and seven he-goats were brought for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah, and he ordered the sons of Aaron, the priests, to offer them on the altar of the LORD. [22]They slaughtered the bulls, and the priests collected the blood and cast it on the altar. Then they slaughtered the rams and cast the blood on the altar; then they slaughtered the lambs and cast the blood on the altar. [23]Then the he-goats for the sin offering were led before the king and the assembly, who laid their hands upon them. [24]The priests then slaughtered them and offered their blood on the altar to atone for the sin of all Israel; for "The holocaust and the sin offering," the king had said, "is for all Israel."

[25]He stationed the Levites in the LORD's house with cymbals, harps and lyres according to the prescriptions of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the prescriptions were from the LORD through his prophets. [26]The Levites were stationed with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. [27]Then Hezekiah ordered the holocaust to be sacrificed on the altar, and in the same instant that the holocaust began, they also began the song of the LORD, to the accompaniment of the trumpets and the instruments of David, king of Israel. [28]The entire assembly prostrated itself, and they continued to sing the song and to sound the trumpets until the holocaust had been completed. [29]As the holocaust was completed, the king and all who were with him knelt and prostrated themselves. [30]King Hezekiah and the princes then commanded the Levites to sing the praises of the LORD in the words of David and of Asaph the seer. They sang praises till their joy was full, then fell down and prostrated themselves.

b 2 Kgs 16, 15. c 8f: Lv 26, 32f; Dt 28, 25; Jer 25, 18.

31 Hezekiah now spoke out this command:
"You have undertaken a work for the LORD.
Approach, and bring forward the sacrifices and
thank offerings for the house of the LORD." Then
the assembly brought forward the sacrifices and
thank offerings and all the holocausts which
were free-will offerings. 32 The number of holo-
causts that the assembly brought forward was
seventy oxen, one hundred rams, and two
hundred lambs: all of these as a holocaust to the
LORD. 33 As consecrated gifts there were six
hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.
34 Since the priests were too few in number to be
able to skin all the victims for the holocausts,
their brethren the Levites assisted them until the
task was completed and the priests had sancti-
fied themselves; the Levites, in fact, were more
willing than the priests to sanctify themselves.[d]
35 Also, the holocausts were many, along with
the fat of the peace offerings and the libations for
the holocausts. Thus the service of the house of
the LORD was reestablished. 36 Hezekiah and all
the people rejoiced over what God had reestab-
lished for the people, and at how suddenly this
had been done.

## CHAPTER 30

**Invitation to the Passover** 1 Hezekiah sent a
message to all Israel and Judah, and even wrote
letters to Ephraim and Manasseh saying that
they should come to the house of the LORD in
Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in honor of
the LORD, the God of Israel.[e] 2 [f]The king, his
princes, and the entire assembly in Jerusalem
had agreed to celebrate the Passover during the
second month, 3 for they could not celebrate it at
the time of the restoration: the priests had not
sanctified themselves in sufficient numbers, and
the people were not gathered at Jerusalem.
4 When this proposal had been approved by the
king and the entire assembly, 5 they issued a
decree to be proclaimed throughout all Israel
from Beer-sheba to Dan, that everyone should
come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in
honor of the LORD, the God of Israel; for not
many had kept it in the manner prescribed.
6 Accordingly the couriers, with the letters writ-
ten by the king and his princes, traversed all
Israel and Judah, and at the king's command
they said: "Israelites, return to the LORD, the
God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may
return to you, the remnant left from the hands of
the Assyrian kings. 7 Be not like your fathers and
your brethren who proved faithless to the LORD,
the God of their fathers, so that he delivered
them over to desolation, as you yourselves now
see.[g] 8 Be not obstinate, as your fathers were;
extend your hands to the LORD and come to his
sanctuary that he has consecrated forever, and
serve the LORD, your God, that he may turn
away his burning anger from you. 9 For when
you return to the LORD, your brethren and your
children will find mercy with their captors and
return to this land; for merciful and compassion-
ate is the LORD, your God, and he will not turn
away his face from you if you return to him."[h]
10 So the couriers passed from city to city in
the land of Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as
Zebulun, but they were derided and scoffed at.
11 Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and
Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jeru-
salem. 12 In Judah, however, the power of God
brought it about that the people were of one
mind to carry out the command of the king and
the princes in accordance with the word of the
LORD. 13 Thus many people gathered in Jerusa-
lem to celebrate the feast of Unleavened Bread
in the second month; it was a very great
assembly.

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**The Passover Celebrated** 14 They proceeded
to take down the altars that were in Jerusalem;
also they removed all the altars of incense and
cast them into the Kidron Valley.[i] 15 They slaugh-
tered the Passover on the fourteenth day of the
second month. The priests and Levites, touched
with shame, sanctified themselves and brought
holocausts into the house of the LORD. 16 They
stood in the places prescribed for them according
to the law of Moses, the man of God. The priests
sprinkled the blood given them by the Levites;
17 for many in the assembly had not sanctified
themselves, and the Levites were in charge of

d 1 Chr 15, 12. e Ex 12, 1–28. f 2ff: Nm 9, 6–13. g Acts 7, 51. h 1 Kgs 8, 50. i 2 Chr 28, 42f.

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slaughtering the Passover victims for all who were unclean and therefore could not consecrate them to the LORD.[j] [18]The greater part of the people, in fact, chiefly from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves. Nevertheless they ate the Passover, contrary to the prescription; for Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the LORD, who is good, grant pardon to [19]everyone who has resolved to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, though he be not clean as holiness requires." [20]The LORD heard Hezekiah and spared the people.

[21]Thus the Israelites who were in Jerusalem celebrated the feast of Unleavened Bread with great rejoicing for seven days, and the Levites and the priests sang the praises of the LORD day after day with all their strength. [22]Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who had shown themselves well skilled in the service of the LORD. And when they had completed the seven days of festival, slaying peace offerings and singing praises to the LORD, the God of their fathers, [23]the whole assembly agreed to celebrate another seven days. With joy, therefore, they continued the festivity seven days longer. [24]King Hezekiah of Judah had contributed a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep to the assembly, and the princes had contributed to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep. The priests sanctified themselves in great numbers, [25]and the whole assembly of Judah rejoiced, together with the priests and Levites and the rest of the assembly that had come from Israel, as well as the sojourners from the land of Israel and those that lived in Judah. [26]There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, there had not been the like in the city. [27]Then the levitical priests rose and blessed the people; their voice was heard and their prayer reached heaven, God's holy dwelling.

## CHAPTER 31

**Liturgical Reform** [1]After all this was over, those Israelites who had been present went forth to the cities of Judah and smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the sacred poles, and tore down the high places and altars throughout Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh, until all were destroyed. Then the Israelites returned to their various cities, each to his own possession.[k]

[2]Hezekiah reestablished the classes of the priests and the Levites according to their former classification, assigning to each priest and Levite his proper service, whether in regard to holocausts or peace offerings, thanksgiving or praise, or ministering in the gates of the encampment of the LORD. [3]From his own wealth the king allotted a portion for holocausts, those of morning and evening and those on sabbaths, new moons and festivals, as prescribed in the law of the LORD.[l] [4]He also commanded the people living in Jerusalem to provide the support of the priests and Levites, that they might devote themselves entirely to the law of the LORD.

[5]As soon as the order was promulgated, the Israelites brought, in great quantities, the best of their grain, wine, oil and honey, and all the produce of the fields; they gave a generous tithe of everything.[m] [6]Israelites and Judahites living in other cities of Judah also brought in tithes of oxen, sheep, and things that had been consecrated to the LORD, their God; these they brought in and set out in heaps.[n] [7]It was in the third month that they began to establish these heaps, and they completed them in the seventh month.* [8]When Hezekiah and the princes had come and seen the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. [9]Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps, [10]and the priest Azariah, head of the house of Zadoc, answered him, "Since they began to bring the offerings to the house of the LORD, we have eaten to the full and have had

31, 7: Third month . . . seventh month: between the feast of Pentecost and that of Booths, an interval without rain in Palestine, at the end of which the problem of storage (v 11) would become more urgent.

j 2 Chr 35, 6. k 2 Chr 34, 3f; 2 Kgs 18, 4. l 1 Chr 29, 3; Ez 45, 17; Nm 28—29. m Nm 18, 8–24; Dt 14, 22f. n Nm 12, 44–47; 13, 10–13.

much left over, for the LORD has blessed his people. This great supply is what was left over."[o]

[11]Hezekiah then gave orders that chambers should be constructed in the house of the LORD. When this had been done, [12]the offerings, tithes and consecrated things were deposited there in safekeeping. The overseer of these things was Conaniah the Levite, and his brother Shimei was second in charge. [13]Jehiel, Azaziah, Nathan, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath and Benaiah were supervisors subject to Conaniah and his brother Shimei by appointment of King Hezekiah and of Azariah, the prefect of the house of God. [14]Kore, the son of Imnah, a Levite and the keeper of the eastern gate, was in charge of the free-will gifts made to God; he distributed the offerings made to the LORD and the most holy of the consecrated things. [15]Under him in the priestly cities were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah, who faithfully made the distribution to their brethren, great and small alike, according to their classes.

[16]There was also a register by ancestral houses of males thirty years of age and over, for all priests who were eligible to enter the house of the LORD according to the daily rule to fulfill their service in the order of their classes.[p] [17]The priests were inscribed in their family records according to their ancestral houses, and the Levites of twenty years and over according to their various offices and classes.[q] [18]A distribution was also made to all who were inscribed in the family records, for their little ones, wives, sons and daughters—thus for the entire assembly, since they were to sanctify themselves by sharing faithfully in the consecrated things. [19]The sons of Aaron, the priests who lived on the lands attached to their cities, had in every city men designated by name to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to every Levite listed in the family records.

[20]This Hezekiah did in all Judah. He did what was good, upright and faithful before the LORD, his God. [21]Everything that he undertook, for the service of the house of God or for the law and the commandments, was to do the will of his God. He did this wholeheartedly, and he prospered.[r]

## CHAPTER 32

Ch 10–36
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193–194

**Invasion of Sennacherib** [1]But after he had proved his fidelity by such deeds, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came. He invaded Judah, besieged the fortified cities, and proposed to take them by storm.[s] [2]When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was coming with the intention of attacking Jerusalem, [3]he decided in counsel with his princes and warriors to stop the waters of the springs outside the city. When they had pledged him their support, [4][t]a large crowd was gathered which stopped all the springs and also the running stream in the valley nearby. For they said, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find an abundance of water?" [5]He then looked to his defenses: he rebuilt the wall where it was broken down, raised towers upon it, and built another wall outside. He strengthened the Millo of the City of David and had a great number of spears and shields prepared.[u] [6]Then he appointed army commanders over the people. He gathered them together in his presence in the open space at the gate of the city and encouraged them with these words: [7]"Be brave and steadfast; do not be afraid or dismayed because of the king of Assyria and all the throng that is coming with him, for there is more with us than with him.[v] [8]For he has only an arm of flesh, but we have the LORD, our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people took confidence from the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.[w]

**Threat of Sennacherib** [9][x]After this, while Sennacherib, king of Assyria, himself remained at Lachish with all his forces, he sent his officials to Jerusalem with this message for King Hezekiah of Judah, and all the Judahites who were in Jerusalem: [10]"King Sennacherib of Assyria has this to say: On what are you relying, while you remain under siege in Jerusalem? [11]Has not

o Lv 25, 19–22. p 1 Chr 23, 3f. q 1 Chr 23, 6–24. r Ps 119, 2f. s 2 Kgs 18, 13. t Is 22, 9. 11. u Neh 2, 17f. v 2 Chr 14, 10; 20, 6–12. w Is 31, 3. x 9–20: 2 Kgs 18, 17–37; Is 36, 1–22.

Hezekiah deceived you, delivering you over to a
death of famine and thirst, by his claim that 'the
LORD, our God, will save us from the grasp of the
king of Assyria'? 12Has not this same Hezekiah
removed his high places and altars and com-
manded Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall pros-
trate yourselves before one altar only, and on it
alone you shall offer incense'? 13Do you not
know what my fathers and I have done to all the
peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the
nations in those lands able to save their lands
from my hand? 14Who among all the gods of
those nations which my fathers put under the
ban was able to save his people from my hand?
Will your god, then, be able to save you from my
hand? 15Let not Hezekiah mislead you further
and deceive you in any such way. Do not believe
him! Since no other god of any other nation or
kingdom has been able to save his people from
my hand or the hands of my fathers, how much
the less shall your god save you from my hand!"

16His officials said still more against the LORD
God and against his servant Hezekiah, 17for he
had written letters to deride the LORD, the God
of Israel, speaking of him in these terms: "As the
gods of the nations in other lands have not saved
their people from my hand, neither shall Heze-
kiah's god save his people from my hand."[y] 18In
a loud voice they shouted in the Judean language
to the people of Jerusalem who were on the
wall, to frighten and terrify them so that they
might capture their city. 19They spoke of the
God of Israel as though he were one of the gods
of the other peoples of the earth, a work of
human hands. 20But because of this, King Heze-
kiah and the prophet Isaiah, son of Amos, prayed
and called out to heaven.[z]

**Defeat of Sennacherib** 21Then the LORD sent
an angel, who destroyed every valiant warrior,
leader and commander in the camp of the
Assyrian king, so that he had to return shame-
faced to his own country. And when he entered
the temple of his god, some of his own offspring
struck him down there with the sword.[a] 22Thus
the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, king of
Assyria, as from every other power; he gave
them rest on every side. 23Many brought gifts for
the LORD to Jerusalem and costly objects for King
Hezekiah of Judah, who thereafter was exalted
in the eyes of all the nations.[b]

**Hezekiah's Other Deeds** 24In those days
Hezekiah became mortally ill. He prayed to the
LORD, who answered him by giving him a sign.[c]
25Hezekiah, however, did not then discharge his
debt of gratitude, for he had become proud.
Therefore anger descended upon him and upon
Judah and Jerusalem. 26[d]But then Hezekiah
humbled himself for his pride—both he and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem; and therefore the LORD
did not vent his anger on them during the time
of Hezekiah.

27[e]Hezekiah possessed very great wealth and
glory. He had treasuries made for his silver, gold,
precious stones, spices, jewels, and other pre-
cious things of all kinds; 28also storehouses for
the harvest of grain, for wine and oil, and barns
for the various kinds of cattle and for the flocks.
29He built cities for himself, and he acquired
sheep and oxen in great numbers, for God gave
him very great riches. 30This same Hezekiah
stopped the upper outflow of water from Gihon
and led it underground westward to the City of
David. Hezekiah prospered in all his undertak-
ings.[f] 31Nevertheless, in respect to the ambassa-
dors [princes] sent to him from Babylon to
investigate the sign that had occurred in the
land, God forsook him to test him, that he might
know all that was in his heart.

32The rest of Hezekiah's acts, including his
pious works, can be found written in the Vision
of the Prophet Isaiah, son of Amos, and in the
book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 33Hezekiah
rested with his ancestors; he was buried at the
approach to the tombs* of the descendants of
David. All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusa-
lem paid him honor at his death. His son
Manasseh succeeded him as king.

**32, 33:** The approach to the tombs: literally, "the ascent of the tombs," which may mean "the upper section of the tombs," their most prominent and honored place.

y 2 Kgs 19, 9–13; Is 37, 9–13. z 2 Kgs 19, 14–19; Is 37, 14–20. a 2 Kgs 19, 35ff; Is 37, 36ff. b 2 Chr 14, 6. c 2 Kgs 20, 1–11; Is 38, 1–8. d 26. 31: 2 Kgs 20, 12–19; Is 39, 1–8. e 27f: 2 Kgs 20, 13; Is 39, 2. f 2 Kgs 20, 20f.

## CHAPTER 33

**Impiety of Manasseh** 1 [g]Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2He did evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD had cleared out of the way of the Israelites. 3He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had torn down, erected altars for the Baals, made sacred poles, and prostrated himself before the whole host of heaven and worshiped them. 4He even built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever": 5he built altars to the whole host of heaven in the two courts of the LORD's house. 6It was he, too, who immolated his sons by fire in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. He practiced augury, divination and magic, and appointed necromancers and diviners of spirits, so that he provoked the LORD with the great evil that he did in his sight. 7He placed an idol that he had carved in the house of God, of which God had said to David and his son Solomon: "In this house and in Jerusalem which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel I shall place my name forever. 8I will not again allow Israel's feet to leave the land which I assigned to your fathers, provided they are careful to observe all that I commanded them, keeping the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances given by Moses." 9Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into doing even greater evil than the nations which the LORD had destroyed at the coming of the Israelites. 10The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.

**His Conversion** 11 [h]Therefore the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the Assyrian king; they took Manasseh with hooks, shackled him with chains, and transported him to Babylon.* 12In this distress, he began to appease the LORD, his God. He humbled himself abjectly before the God of his fathers 13and prayed to him.* The LORD let himself be won over: he heard his prayer and restored him to his kingdom in Jerusalem. Then Manasseh understood that the LORD is indeed God.

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14Afterward he built an outer wall for the City of David to the west of Gihon in the valley, extending to the Fish Gate and encircling Ophel; he built it very high. He stationed army officers in all the fortified cities of Judah. 15He removed the foreign gods and the idol from the LORD's house and all the altars he had built on the mount of the LORD's house and in Jerusalem, and he cast them outside the city.[i] 16He restored the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed on it peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. 17Though the people continued to sacrifice on the high places, they now did so to the LORD, their God.

18 [j]The rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, can be found written in the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 19His prayer and how his supplication was heard, all his sins and his infidelity, the sites where he built high places and erected sacred poles and carved images before he humbled himself, all can be found written down in the history of his seers. 20Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his own palace. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

**Amon** 21 [k]Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done. Amon offered sacrifice to all the idols which his father Manasseh had made, and worshiped them. 23Moreover, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had

33, 11: There is no evidence elsewhere for an imprisonment of King Manasseh in Babylon. However, according to the Assyrian inscriptions, he paid tribute to the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.) and Asshurbanipal (668–627 B.C.). He may well have been obliged to go to Nineveh to take the oath of allegiance as vassal to the king of Assyria.

33, 13: And prayed to him: these words led an unknown writer to compose the apocryphal "Prayer of Manasseh," which is added as an appendix to many editions of the Vulgate Bible and is used in the public prayers of the church.

g 1–10: 2 Kgs 21, 1–9. h Jb 36, 7f; Ez 19, 9. i 2 Chr 14, 2. j 18. 20: 2 Kgs 21, 17f. k 21–25: 2 Kgs 21, 19–26.

done; on the contrary, Amon only increased his
guilt. [24]His servants conspired against him and
put him to death in his own house. [25]But the
people of the land slew all those who had
conspired against King Amon, and then they, the
people of the land, made his son Josiah king in
his stead.

## CHAPTER 34

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**Reforms of Josiah** [1 l]Josiah was eight years old
when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one
years in Jerusalem. [2]He pleased the LORD, follow-
ing the path of his ancestor David. [3 m]In the
eighth year of his reign, while he was still a
youth, he began to seek after the God of his
forefather David, and in his twelfth year* he
began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high
places, the sacred poles and the carved and
molten images. [4]In his presence, the altars of the
Baals were destroyed; the incense stands erected
above them were torn down; the sacred poles
and the carved and molten images were shat-
tered and beaten into dust, which was strewn
over the tombs of those who had sacrificed to
them; [5]and the bones of the priests he burned
upon their altars. Thus he purged Judah and
Jerusalem. [6]He did likewise in the cities of
Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and in the ruined
villages of the surrounding country as far as
Naphtali; [7]he destroyed the altars, broke up the
sacred poles and carved images and beat them
into dust, and tore down the incense stands
throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned
to Jerusalem.

**The Temple Restored** [8 n]In the eighteenth
year of his reign, in order to cleanse the temple
as well as the land, he sent Shaphan, son of
Azaliah, Maaseiah, the ruler of the city, and
Joah, son of Joahaz, the chamberlain, to restore
the house of the LORD, his God. [9]They came to
Hilkiah the high priest and turned over the
money brought to the house of God which the
Levites, the guardians of the threshold, had
collected from Manasseh, Ephraim, and all the
remnant of Israel, as well as from all of Judah,
Benjamin, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [o]
[10]They turned it over to the master workmen in
the house of the LORD, and these in turn used it
to pay the workmen in the LORD's house who
were restoring and repairing the temple. [11]They
also gave it to the carpenters and the masons to
buy hewn stone and timber for the tie beams
and rafters of the buildings which the kings of
Judah had allowed to fall into ruin. [12]The men
worked faithfully at their tasks; their overseers
were Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the line of
Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the
Kohathites, who directed them. All those Levites
who were skillful with musical instruments
[13]were in charge of the men who carried the
burdens, and they directed all the workers in
every kind of labor. Some of the other Levites
were scribes, officials and gatekeepers.

**The Finding of the Law** [14 p]When they
brought out the money that had been deposited
in the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest
found the book of the law of the LORD given
through Moses. [15]He reported this to Shaphan
the scribe, saying, "I have found the book of the
law in the house of the LORD." Hilkiah gave the
book to Shaphan, [16]who brought it to the king at
the same time that he was making his report to
him. He said, "Your servants are doing every-
thing that has been entrusted to them; [17]they
have turned into bullion the metals deposited in
the LORD's house and have handed it over to the
overseers and the workmen." [18]Then Shaphan
the scribe announced to the king, "Hilkiah the
priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read
from it before the king.

[19]When the king heard the words of the law,
he tore his garments [20]and issued this command
to Hilkiah, to Ahikam, son of Shaphan, to
Abdon, son of Michah, to Shaphan the scribe,

34, 3: In his twelfth year: c. 628 B.C., the year after Ashurbanipal's death, when Judah could free itself from Assyrian domination. From 2 Kgs 22, 1—23, 25 alone, one might think that Josiah's reform began only after the discovery of the book of the law in the temple, in the eighteenth year of his reign. But the Chronicler is no doubt right in placing the beginning of the reform at an earlier period. The very repair of the temple, which led to the finding of the book of the law, must have been occasioned by a cultic reform.

l 1f: 2 Kgs 22, 1f. m 3-7: 2 Chr 14, 1-4; 31, 1; 2 Kgs 23, 4-20. n 8-13: 2 Kgs 22, 3-7. o 2 Chr 24, 8f. p 14-28: 2 Kgs 22, 8-20.

and to Asaiah, the king's servant: 21"On behalf
of myself and those who are left in Israel and
Judah, go, consult the LORD concerning the
words of the book that has been found. For the
anger of the LORD has been set furiously ablaze
against us, since our fathers have not kept the
word of the LORD and have not done all that is
written in this book." 22Then Hilkiah and the
other men from the king went to the prophetess
Huldah, the wife of Shallum, son of Tokhath, son
of Hasrah, the guardian of the wardrobe; she
dwelt in Jerusalem, in the new quarter. They
spoke to her as they had been instructed, 23and
she said to them: "Thus says the LORD, the God
of Israel: 'Tell the one who sent you to me,
24The LORD says: I am prepared to bring evil
upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the
curses written in the book that has been read
before the king of Judah. 25Because they have
abandoned me and have offered incense to other
gods, provoking me by every deed that they have
performed, my anger is ablaze against this place
and cannot be extinguished.'

26"But to the king of Judah who sent you to
consult the LORD, give this response: 'Thus says
the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the
threats you have heard: 27Because you were
heartsick and have humbled yourself before God
on hearing his words spoken against this place
and its inhabitants; because you have humbled
yourself before me, have torn your garments,
and have wept before me, I in turn have
listened—so declares the LORD. 28I will gather
you to your ancestors and you shall be taken to
your grave in peace. Your eyes shall not see all
the evil I will bring upon this place and upon its
inhabitants.' "

They brought back this message to the king.

**Renewal of the Covenant** 29[q]The king now
convened all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.
30He went up to the house of the LORD with all
the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusa-
lem, the priests, the Levites, and all the people,
great and small; and he had read aloud to them
the entire text of the book of the covenant that
had been found in the house of the LORD.
31Standing at his post,* the king made a cove-
nant before the LORD to follow the LORD and to
keep his commandments, decrees, and statutes
with his whole heart and soul, thus observing
the terms of the covenant written in this book.
32He thereby committed all who were of Jerusa-
lem and Benjamin, and the inhabitants of Jerusa-
lem conformed themselves to the covenant of
God, the God of their fathers. 33Josiah removed
every abominable thing from all the territory
belonging to the Israelites, and he obliged all
who were in Israel to serve the LORD, their God.
During his lifetime they did not desert the LORD,
the God of their fathers.[r]

## CHAPTER 35

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**The Passover** 1[s]Josiah celebrated in Jerusalem
a Passover to honor the LORD; the Passover
sacrifice was slaughtered on the fourteenth day
of the first month.[t] 2He reappointed the priests
to their duties and encouraged them in the
service of the LORD's house. 3He said to the
Levites who were to instruct all Israel, and who
were consecrated to the LORD: "Put the holy ark
in the house built by Solomon, son of David,
king of Israel. It shall no longer be a burden on
your shoulders. Serve now the LORD, your God,
and his people Israel.[u] 4Prepare yourselves in
your ancestral houses and your classes according
to the prescriptions of King David of Israel and
his son Solomon. 5Stand in the sanctuary accord-
ing to the divisions of the ancestral houses of
your brethren, the common people, so that the
distribution of the Levites and the families may
be the same.[v] 6Slay the Passover sacrifice, sanc-
tify yourselves, and be at the disposition of your
brethren, that all may be carried out according to
the word of the LORD given through Moses."[w]

7Josiah contributed to the common people a
flock of lambs and kids, thirty thousand in
number, each to serve as a Passover victim for
any who were present, and also three thousand

34, 31: Standing at his post: see note on 2 Chr 23, 13.

q 29–32: 2 Kgs 23, 1ff. r 2 Kgs 23, 4–20. s 1–19: 2 Kgs 23, 21ff. t Ex 12, 1–28; 2 Kgs 23, 21. u 2 Chr 5, 4; 1 Chr 15, 12. 15. v 1 Chr 24—26. w 2 Chr 30, 17.

oxen; these were from the king's property.[x] [8]His princes also gave a free-will gift to the people, the priests and the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah and Jehiel, prefects of the house of God, gave to the priests two thousand six hundred Passover victims together with three hundred oxen.[y] [9]Conaniah and his brothers Shemaiah, Nethanel, Hashabiah, Jehiel and Jozabad, the rulers of the Levites, contributed to the Levites five thousand Passover victims, together with five hundred oxen.

[10]When the service had been arranged, the priests took their places, as did the Levites in their classes according to the king's command. [11]The Passover sacrifice was slaughtered, whereupon the priests sprinkled some of the blood and the Levites proceeded to the skinning. [12]They separated what was destined for the holocaust and gave it to various groups of the ancestral houses of the common people to offer to the LORD, as is prescribed in the book of Moses. They did the same with the oxen. [13]They cooked the Passover on the fire as prescribed, and also cooked the sacred meals in pots, cauldrons and pans, then brought them quickly to all the common people.[z] [14]Afterward they prepared the Passover for themselves and for the priests. Indeed the priests, the sons of Aaron, were busy offering holocausts and the fatty portions until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron. [15]The singers, the sons of Asaph, were at their posts as prescribed by David: Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, the king's seer. The gatekeepers were at every gate; there was no need for them to leave their stations, for their brethren, the Levites, prepared for them. [16]Thus the entire service of the LORD was arranged that day so that the Passover could be celebrated and the holocausts offered on the altar of the LORD, as King Josiah had commanded. [17]The Israelites who were present on that occasion kept the Passover and the feast of the Unleavened Bread for seven days. [18][a]No such Passover had been observed in Israel since the time of the prophet Samuel, nor had any king of Israel kept a Passover like that of Josiah, the priests and Levites, all of Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [19]It was in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign that this Passover was observed.

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**Josiah's Reign Ends** [20]After Josiah had done all this to restore the temple, Neco, king of Egypt, came up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to intercept him. [21]Neco sent messengers to him, saying: "What quarrel is between us, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, for my war is with another kingdom, and God has told me to hasten. Do not interfere with God who is with me, as otherwise he will destroy you." [22]But Josiah would not withdraw from him, for he had sought a pretext for fighting with him. Therefore he would not listen to the words of Neco that came from the mouth of God, but went out to fight in the plain of Megiddo. [23]Then the archers shot King Josiah, who said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am seriously wounded."[b] [24]His servants removed him from his own chariot, placed him in another he had in reserve, and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs of his ancestors, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned him. [25]Jeremiah also composed a lamentation over Josiah,* which is recited to this day by all the male and female singers in their lamentations over Josiah. These have been made obligatory for Israel, and can be found written in the Lamentations.

[26][c]The rest of the chronicle of Josiah, his pious deeds in regard to what is written in the law of the LORD, and his acts, first and last, can be found written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

## CHAPTER 36

[1][d]The people of the land took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, and made him king in Jerusalem in his father's stead.

35, 25: The reference to a lamentation over Josiah composed by Jeremiah is not found either in 2 Kgs or Jer; but see note on Zec 12, 11. Their lamentations: probably a reference to the canonical Book of Lamentations.

x Ex 12, 5. y Nm 7, 1–83. z Nm 12, 8f. a 18f: 2 Kgs 23, 22f. b 2 Chr 18, 33f. c 2 Kgs 23, 28. d 1–4: 2 Kgs 23, 30–34; 1 Chr 3, 15f.

## IV: End of the Kingdom

**Jehoahaz** [2]Jehoahaz was twenty-three years
old when he became king, and he reigned three
months in Jerusalem. [3]The king of Egypt de-
posed him in Jerusalem and fined the land one
hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.
[4]Then the king of Egypt made his brother
Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and
changed his name to Jehoiakim. Neco took his
brother Jehoahaz away and brought him to
Egypt.

**Jehoiakim** [5]Jehoiakim was twenty-five years
old when he became king, and he reigned
eleven years in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight
of the LORD, his God.[e] [6]*f*Nebuchadnezzar, king
of Babylon, came up against him and bound him
with chains to take him to Babylon.* [7]Nebuchad-
nezzar also carried away to Babylon some of the
vessels of the house of the LORD and put them in
his palace in Babylon. [8]The rest of the acts of
Jehoiakim, the abominable things that he did,
and what therefore happened to him, can be
found written in the book of the kings of Israel
and Judah. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him as
king.[g]

**Jehoiachin** [9]Jehoiachin was eighteen years old
when he became king, and he reigned three
months [and ten days] in Jerusalem. He did evil
in the sight of the LORD.[h] [10]At the turn of the
year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and had
him brought to Babylon, along with precious
vessels from the temple of the LORD. He made
his brother Zedekiah* king over Judah and
Jerusalem.[i]

**Zedekiah** [11]Zedekiah was twenty-one years old
when he became king, and he reigned eleven
years in Jerusalem.[j] [12]He did evil in the sight of
the LORD, his God, and he did not humble
himself before the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke
the word of the LORD.[k] [13]He also rebelled
against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made
him swear by God. He became stiff-necked and
hardened his heart rather than return to the
LORD, the God of Israel.[l] [14]Likewise all the
princes of Judah, the priests and the people
added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the
abominations of the nations and polluting the
LORD's temple which he had consecrated in
Jerusalem.

**Dissolution of Judah** [15]Early and often did the
LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messen-
gers to them, for he had compassion on his
people and his dwelling place.[m] [16]But they
mocked the messengers of God, despised his
warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the
anger of the LORD against his people was so
inflamed that there was no remedy.[n] [17]Then he
brought up against them the king of the Chalde-
ans, who slew their young men in their own
sanctuary building, sparing neither young man
nor maiden, neither the aged nor the decrepit;
he delivered all of them over into his grip.[o] [18]All
the utensils of the house of God, the large and
the small, and the treasures of the LORD's house
and of the king and his princes, all these he
brought to Babylon.[p] [19]They burnt the house of
God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its
palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious
objects.[q] [20]Those who escaped the sword he
carried captive to Babylon, where they became
his and his sons' servants until the kingdom of
the Persians came to power. [21]All this was to
fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah:
"Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths,
during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest
while seventy years are fulfilled."

**Decree of Cyrus** [22]*In the first year of Cyrus,

**36, 6:** Nebuchadnezzar . . . bound him with chains to take him to Babylon: the Chronicler does not say that Jehoiakim was actually taken to Babylon. According to 2 Kgs 24, 1–6, Jehoiakim revolted after being Nebuchadnezzar's vassal for three years; he died in Jerusalem before the Babylonian king could reach the city. However, Dn 1, 1f, apparently based on 2 Chr 36, 6f, speaks of Jehoiakim's deportation to Babylon.

**36, 10:** His brother Zedekiah: Zedekiah was actually the brother of Jehoiakim and the uncle of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24, 17; Jer 37, 1), though scarcely older than his nephew (2 Kgs 24, 8. 18; 2 Chr 36, 9. 11).

**36, 22f:** The words of these verses are identical with those of Ezr 1, 1–3a. Originally Ezra-Nehemiah formed the last part of the single work of the Chronicler, of which 1 and 2 Chronicles formed the first part. But when Ezra-Nehemiah was regarded as a natural sequence to the Books of Samuel and of Kings, it was separated from 1 and 2 Chronicles and placed before them. Thus, 1 and 2 Chronicles became the last part of the Hebrew Bible. To

e 2 Kgs 23, 36f; Jer 22, 18f. f 2 Kgs 24, 1f. g 2 Kgs 24, 5. h 2 Kgs 24, 8f. i 2 Kgs 24, 10–16. j 2 Kgs 24, 18ff; Jer 52, 1ff. k Jer 37, 1ff. l 2 Kgs 25, 1; Jer 52, 4; Ex 17, 13–16. m Jer 7, 25; Heb 1, 1. n Mt 23, 34ff. o Lam 1, 15; 5, 11–14. p 2 Kgs 25, 14f. q 2 Kgs 25, 9f; Lam 2, 8.

king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the
LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired
King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation
throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth
and in writing:[r] 23 "Thus says Cyrus, king of
Persia: 'All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD,
the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has
also charged me to build him a house in Jerusa-
lem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore,
among you belongs to any part of his people, let
him go up, and may his God be with him!' "

prevent this work from ending on a note of doom, Ezr 1, 1–3a was repeated as 2 Chr 36, 22f.

r Ezr 1, 1ff.

# THE BOOK OF EZRA

Ezra
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197–202

The last four books of the Hebrew canon are Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles, in that order. Originally, however, Ezra and Nehemiah followed the Books of Chronicles, and formed with them a unified historical work so homogeneous in spirit that one usually speaks of a single author for the four books. He is called "the Chronicler." The treatment of Ezra-Nehemiah as a single book by the earliest chroniclers was undoubtedly due to the fact that in ancient times the two books were put under the one name—Ezra. The combined work Ezra-Nehemiah is our most important literary source for the formation of the Jewish religious community after the Babylonian exile. This is known as the period of the Restoration, and the two men most responsible for the reorganization of Jewish life at this time were Ezra and Nehemiah.

In the present state of the Ezra-Nehemiah text, there are several dislocations of large sections so that the chronological or logical sequence is disrupted. The major instances are pointed out in the footnotes. Although Ezra appears before Nehemiah in this work, it seems probable that Nehemiah's activity preceded his.

What is known of Ezra and his work is due almost exclusively to Ezra 7—10 (the "Ezra Memoirs") and to Neh 8—9. Strictly speaking, the term "Ezra Memoirs" should be used only of that section in which Ezra speaks in the first person, i.e., 7, 27—9, 15. Compare the "Nehemiah Memoirs" in Neh 1, 1—7, 72a; 11, 1f; 12, 27-43; 13, 4-31. The Chronicler combined this material with other sources at his disposal. The personality of Ezra is less known than that of Nehemiah. Ben Sirach, in his praise of the fathers, makes no mention of Ezra. The genealogy of Ezra (7, 1-5) traces his priesthood back to Aaron, brother of Moses. This was the accepted way of establishing the legality of one's priestly office. He is also called *a scribe, well-versed in the law of Moses* (7, 6), indicating Ezra's dedication to the study of the Torah, which he sought to make the basic rule of life in the restored community. It was in religious and cultic reform rather than in political affairs that Ezra made his mark as a postexilic leader. Jewish tradition holds him in great honor; the Talmud even regards him as a second Moses, claiming that the Torah would have been given to Israel through Ezra had not Moses preceded him.

Ezra is sometimes accused of having been a mere legalist who gave excessive attention to the letter of the law. His work, however, should be seen and judged within a specific historical context. He gave to his people a cohesion and spiritual unity which prevented the disintegration of the small Jewish community. Had it not been for the intransigence of Ezra and of those who adopted his ideal, it is doubtful that Judaism would have so effectively resisted Hellenism, then

or in later centuries. Ezra set the tone of the postexilic community, and it was characterized by fidelity to the Torah, Judaism's authentic way of life. It is in this light that we can judge most fairly the work of Ezra during the Restoration.

The Book of Ezra is divided as follows:

I. The Return from Exile (1, 1—6, 22).
II. The Deeds of Ezra (7, 1—10, 44).

The following list of the kings of Persia, with the dates of their reigns, will be useful for dating the events mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah:

| | |
|---|---|
| Cyrus | 538–529 B.C. |
| Cambyses | 529–521 B.C. |
| Darius I | 521–485 B.C. |
| Xerxes | 485–464 B.C. |
| Artaxerxes I | 464–423 B.C. |
| Darius II | 423–404 B.C. |
| Artaxerxes II | 404–358 B.C. |
| Artaxerxes III | 358–337 B.C. |
| End of the Persian Empire (Defeat of Darius III) | 331 B.C. |

## I: The Return from Exile

### CHAPTER 1

**The Decree of Cyrus** 1 [a]In the first year of Cyrus,* king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: 2"Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: 'All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him! 4Let everyone who has survived, in whatever place he may have dwelt, be assisted by the people of that place with silver, gold, goods, and cattle, together with free-will offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.' "

5Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites—everyone, that is, whom God had inspired to do so—prepared to go up to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. 6All their neighbors gave them help in every way, with silver, gold, goods, and cattle, and with many precious gifts besides all their free-will offerings.[b] 7King Cyrus, too, had the utensils of the house of the LORD brought forth which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his god. 8Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought forth by the treasurer Mithredath, and counted out to Sheshbazzar,* the prince of Judah. 9This was the inventory: sacks of goldware, thirty; sacks of silverware, one thousand and twenty-nine; 10golden bowls, thirty; silver bowls, four hundred and ten; other ware, one thousand pieces. 11Total of the gold- and silverware: five thousand four hundred pieces.* All these Sheshbazzar took with him when the exiles were brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem.

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1, 1: In the first year of Cyrus: as sovereign over the world empire which began with his conquest of Babylon; that is, 538 B.C.

1, 8: Sheshbazzar: very probably the fourth son of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, taken captive to Babylon in 598 B.C., listed in 1 Chr 3, 18 as Senneser; if so, he was the uncle of Zerubbabel (Ezr 3, 2ff); see note on 1 Chr 3, 18.

1, 11: Total . . . five thousand four hundred pieces: either this figure or the figures given for one or more of the items listed (vv 9f) have been corrupted in the transmission of the text.

a 1ff: Ezr 36, 22f; Jer 25, 11f; 29, 10; Zec 1, 12. b Ex 3, 22; 11, 2; 12, 35.

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## CHAPTER 2

**Census of the Province** 1*These are the inhabitants of the province who returned from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had carried away to Babylon,[c] and who came back to Jerusalem and Judah, each man in his own city* 2(those who returned with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah):

The census of the men of Israel: 3sons of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; 4sons of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; 5sons of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; 6sons of Pahath-moab, who were sons of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve; 7sons of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; 8sons of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; 9sons of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; 10sons of Bani, six hundred and forty-two; 11sons of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; 12sons of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; 13sons of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; 14sons of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; 15sons of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; 16sons of Ater, who were sons of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 17sons of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; 18sons of Jorah, one hundred and twelve; 19sons of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; 20sons of Gibeon, ninety-five; 21sons of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; 22men of Netophah, fifty-six; 23men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; 24men of Beth-azmaveth, forty-two; 25men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; 26men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; 27men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; 28men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; 29sons of Nebo, fifty-two; 30sons of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six; 31sons of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; 32sons of Harim, three hundred and twenty; 33sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; 34sons of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; 35sons of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

36The priests: sons of Jedaiah, who were of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three; 37sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; 38sons of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven; 39sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

40The Levites: sons of Jeshua, Kadmiel, Binnui, and Hodaviah, seventy-four.[d]

41The singers: sons of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight.

42The gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine in all.

43The temple slaves: sons of Ziha, sons of Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, 44sons of Keros, sons of Siaha, sons of Padon, 45sons of Lebanah, sons of Hagabah, sons of Akkub, 46sons of Hagab, sons of Shamlai, sons of Hanan, 47sons of Giddel, sons of Gahar, sons of Reaiah, 48sons of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, sons of Gazzam, 49sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah, sons of Besai, 50sons of Asnah, sons of the Meunites, sons of the Nephusites, 51sons of Bakbuk, sons of Hakupha, sons of Harhur, 52sons of Bazluth, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha, 53sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, sons of Temah, 54sons of Neziah, sons of Hatipha.

55Descendants of the slaves of Solomon: sons of Sotai, sons of Hassophereth, sons of Peruda, 56sons of Jaalah, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, 57sons of Shephatiah, sons of Hattil, sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, sons of Ami. 58The total of the temple slaves and the descendants of the slaves of Solomon was three hundred and ninety-two.

59The following who returned from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer were unable to prove that their ancestral houses and their descent were Israelite: 60sons of Delaiah, sons of Tobiah, sons of Nekoda, six hundred

**2, 1–67:** As it now stands, this list is an expanded form of the lists of returned captives from the sixth century B.C.; see Neh 7, 6–72, where it reappears.

c Neh 7, 6–67. d Neh 12, 24.

and fifty-two. [61]Also, of the priests: sons of Habaiah, sons of Hakkoz, sons of Barzillai (he had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and became known by his name).[e] [62]These men searched their family records, but their names could not be found written there; hence they were degraded from the priesthood, [63]and His Excellency* ordered them not to partake of the most holy foods until there should be a priest bearing the Urim and Thummim.

[64]The entire assembly taken together came to forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, [65]not counting their male and female slaves, who were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. They also had two hundred male and female singers. [66]Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, [67]their camels four hundred and thirty-five, their asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

[68]When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the family heads made free-will offerings for the house of God, to rebuild it in its place. [69]According to their means they contributed to the treasury for the temple service: sixty-one thousand drachmas of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred garments for the priests. [70]The priests, the Levites, and some of the common people took up residence in Jerusalem; but the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple slaves dwelt in their cities. Thus all the Israelites dwelt in their cities.

## CHAPTER 3

**Restoration of the Altar** [1]Now when the seventh month* came, after the Israelites had settled in their cities, the people gathered at Jerusalem as one man.[f] [2]Then Jeshua, son of Jozadak, together with his brethren the priests, and Zerrubbabel, son of Shealtiel, together with his brethren, set about rebuilding the altar of the God of Israel in order to offer on it the holocausts prescribed in the law of Moses, the man of God. [3]Despite their fear of the peoples of the land, they replaced the altar on its foundations and offered holocausts to the LORD on it, both morning and evening.[g] [4]They also kept the feast of Booths in the manner prescribed, and they offered the daily holocausts in the proper number required for each day.[h] [5]Thereafter they offered the established holocaust, the sacrifices prescribed for the new moons and all the festivals sacred to the LORD, and those which anyone might offer as a free-will gift to the LORD. [6]From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer holocausts to the LORD, though the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not yet been laid.

**Founding of the Temple** [7]Then they hired stonecutters and carpenters, and sent food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and Tyrians that they might ship cedar trees from the Lebanon to the port of Joppa, as Cyrus, king of Persia, had authorized.[i] [8]In the year after their coming to the house of God in Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, son of Jozadak, together with the rest of their brethren, the priests and Levites and all who had come from the captivity to Jerusalem, began by appointing the Levites twenty years of age and over to supervise the work on the house of the LORD. [9]Jeshua and his sons and brethren, with Kadmiel and Binnui, son of Henadad, and their sons and their brethren, the Levites, stood as one man to supervise those who were engaged in the work on the house of God. [10]When the builders had laid the foundation of the LORD's temple, the vested priests with the trumpets and the Levites, sons of Asaph, were stationed there with the cymbals to praise the LORD in the manner

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2, 63: His Excellency: the deputy of the Persian government; from the context, he was one of the Jewish exile leaders. Nehemiah as governor receives the same title (Neh 8, 9; 10, 2). Urim and Thummim: see note on Ex 28, 30.

3, 1f: The seventh month: Tishri (September–October), apparently of 538 B.C.; cf Ezr 1, 1; 4, 5. In this case, it was Sheshbazzar who erected the first altar, since he began the work on the foundations of the temple in Jerusalem; cf Ezr 5, 16. It was in the second year of Darius I, i.e., in 520 B.C., that Jeshua and Zerubbabel resumed the work on the temple that had been temporarily interrupted (Ezr 4, 24—5, 1; Hg 1, 1; 2, 1). The Chronicler or a later editor of the text here attributes to them the beginning of the work which, in reality, they merely completed. Shealtiel: the oldest son of King Jehoiachin of Judah and the brother of Sheshbazzar (1 Chr 3, 18f); Zerubbabel was therefore the grandson of Jehoiachin; see note on Ezr 1, 8.

e 2 Sm 17, 27; 19, 32f; 1 Kgs 2, 7. f Neh 7, 73—8, 1. g 1 Kgs 8, 64; Dn 9, 25. h Ex 23, 16; Nm 28, 3–8. i 1 Chr 22, 4; 2 Chr 2, 9.

laid down by David, king of Israel.[j] [11]They
alternated in songs of praise and thanksgiving to
the LORD, "for he is good, for his kindness to
Israel endures forever"; and all the people raised
a great shout of joy, praising the LORD because
the foundation of the LORD's house had been
laid.[k] [12]Many of the priests, Levites, and family
heads, the old men who had seen the former
house, cried out in sorrow as they watched the
foundation of the present house being laid.[l]
Many others, however, lifted up their voices in
shouts of joy, [13]and no one could distinguish the
sound of the joyful shouting from the sound of
those who were weeping; for the people raised a
mighty clamor which was heard afar off.[m]

## CHAPTER 4

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**Samaritan Interference** [1]When the enemies
of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles
were building a temple for the LORD, the God of
Israel, [2]they approached Zerubbabel and the
family heads and said to them, "Let us build with
you, for we seek your God just as you do, and
we have sacrificed to him since the days of
Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who had us brought
here." [3]But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of
the family heads of Israel answered them, "It is
not your responsibility to build with us a house
for our God, but we alone must build it for the
LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia
has commanded us." [4]Thereupon the people of
the land set out to intimidate and dishearten the
people of Judah so as to keep them from
building. [5]They also suborned counselors to
work against them and thwart their plans during
the remaining years of Cyrus, king of Persia, and
until the reign of Darius,* king of Persia.

**Later Hostility** [6]Also at the beginning of the
reign of Ahashuerus they prepared a written
accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and
Jerusalem.

[7]Again, in the time of Artaxerxes, Mithredath
wrote in concert with Tabeel and the rest of his
fellow officials to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. The
document was written in Aramaic* and was
accompanied by a translation. [Aramaic:]

[8]*Then Rehum, the governor, and Shimshai,
the scribe, wrote the following letter against
Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes: [9]"Rehum, the
governor, Shimshai, the scribe, and their fellow
judges, officials, and agents from among the
Persian, Urukian, Babylonian, Susian (that is,
Elamite), [10]and the other peoples whom the
great and illustrious Assurbanipal transported
and settled in the city of Samaria and elsewhere
in the province West-of-Euphrates, as follows
. . . ." [11]This is a copy of the letter that they sent
to him:

"To King Artaxerxes, your servants, the men
of West-of-Euphrates, as follows: [12]Let it be
known to the king that the Jews who came up
from you to us have arrived at Jerusalem and
are now rebuilding this rebellious and evil city.
They are raising up its walls, and the founda-
tions have already been laid. [13]Now let it be
known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and
its walls are raised up again, they will no longer
pay taxes, tributes, or tolls; thus it can only
result in harm to the throne. [14]Now, since we
partake of the salt of the palace, we ought not
simply to look on while the king is being dishon-
ored. Therefore we have sent this message to
inform you, O king, [15]so that inquiry may be
made in the historical records of your fathers.
In the historical records you can discover and
verify that this city is a rebellious city which has
proved fatal to kings and provinces, and that
sedition has been fostered there since ancient
times. For that reason this city was destroyed.
[16]We inform you, O king, that if this city is
rebuilt and its walls are raised up again, by that

**4, 5:** Darius: Darius I (521–485 B.C.). The temple-building narrative continues in Ezr 4, 24. In between (Ezr 4, 6–23) is a series of notes about the opposition to the returned exiles voiced at the Persian court in the early fifth century B.C., after the temple had been reestablished.

**4, 7:** Aramaic: this word in the original text seems to be a note indicating a change of language from Hebrew to Aramaic, which in fact takes place here. The Aramaic section ends with Ezr 6, 18, but again in Ezr 7, 12–26 a royal letter is cited in Aramaic.

**4, 8–23:** The central question here is the rebuilding of the fortification walls of Jerusalem, not the building of the temple. The interruption of work on the city wall some time before 445 B.C. was the occasion for the coming of Nehemiah to Palestine (Neh 1, 1–4; 2, 1–5). Artaxerxes: Artaxerxes I (464–423 B.C.).

j Ezr 2, 41. k Pss 100, 5; 136; Jer 33, 11. l Hg 2, 3. m Tb 14, 5.

very fact you will no longer own any part of West-of-Euphrates."

[17]The king sent this answer: "To Rehum, the governor, Shimshai, the scribe, and their fellow officials living in Samaria and elsewhere in the province West-of-Euphrates, greetings and the following: [18]The communication which you sent us has been read plainly in my presence. [19]When at my command inquiry was made, it was verified that from ancient times this city has risen up against kings and that rebellion and sedition have been fostered there. [20]Powerful kings were once in Jerusalem who ruled over all West-of-Euphrates, and taxes, tributes, and tolls were paid to them. [21]Give orders, therefore, that will stop the work of these men. This city may not be rebuilt until a further decree has been issued by me. [22]Take care that you do not neglect this matter, lest the evil grow to the detriment of the throne."

[23]As soon as a copy of King Artaxerxes' letter had been read before Rehum, the governor, Shimshai, the scribe, and their fellow officials, they went in all haste to the Jews in Jerusalem and stopped their work by force of arms.[n]

**Rebuilding of the Temple** [24]Thus it was that the work on the house of God in Jerusalem was halted. This inaction lasted until the second year of the reign of Darius,* king of Persia.

## CHAPTER 5

[1]Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah,* son of Iddo, began to prophesy to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel.[o] [2]Thereupon Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, son of Jozadak, began again to build the house of God in Jerusalem, with the prophets of God giving them support. [3]At that time there came to them Tattenai, governor of West-of-Euphrates, and Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow officials, who asked of them: "Who issued the decree for you to build this house and raise this edifice? [4]What are the names of the men who are building this structure?" [5]But their God watched over the elders of the Jews so that they were not hindered, until a report could go to Darius and then a written order be sent back concerning this matter.

[6]A copy of the letter sent to King Darius by Tattenai, governor of West-of-Euphrates, and Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow officials from West-of-Euphrates; [7]they sent him a report in which was written the following:

"To King Darius, all good wishes! [8]Let it be known to the king that we have visited the province of Judah and the house of the great God: it is being rebuilt of cut stone and the walls are being reinforced with timber; the work is being carried on diligently and is making good progress under their hands. [9]We then questioned the elders, addressing to them the following words: 'Who issued the decree for you to build this house and raise this edifice?' [10]We also asked them their names, to report them to you in a list of the men who are their leaders. [11]This was their answer to us: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house built here long years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. [12]But because our fathers provoked the wrath of the God of heaven, he delivered them into the power of the Chaldean, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who destroyed this house and led the people captive to Babylon. [13]However, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree for the rebuilding of this house of God. [14]Moreover, the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and carried off to the temple in Babylon, King Cyrus ordered to be removed from the temple in Babylon and consigned to a certain Sheshbazzar, whom he named governor. [15]And he commanded him: Take these utensils and deposit them in the temple of Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site. [16]Then this same Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of

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**4, 24:** The second year . . . of Darius: 520 B.C.; it marks the beginning of the successful restoration of the temple, which was accomplished within the five years following (Ezr 5, 1—6, 18).

**5, 1:** The prophets Haggai and Zechariah: two of the Minor Prophets, whose books record their role in the encouragement of this work.

n Neh 1, 3. o Hg 1, 14—2, 9; Zec 4, 9.

the house of God in Jerusalem. Since that time
the building has been going on, and it is not yet
completed.' 17Now, if it please the king, let a
search be made in the royal archives of Babylon
to discover whether a decree really was issued
by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of
God in Jerusalem. And may the king's pleasure
in this matter be communicated to us."

## CHAPTER 6

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**The Decree of Darius** 1Thereupon King Da-
rius issued an order to search the archives in
which the Babylonian records were stored away;
2 *p*and in Ecbatana, the stronghold in the prov-
ince of Media, a scroll was found containing the
following text: "Memorandum. 3In the first year
of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree: The
house of God in Jerusalem. The house is to be
rebuilt as a place for offering sacrifices and bring-
ing burnt offerings. Its height is to be sixty cubits
and its width sixty cubits. 4It shall have three
courses of cut stone for each one of timber. The
costs are to be borne by the royal palace. 5Also,
the gold and silver utensils of the house of God
which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple of
Jerusalem and brought to Babylon are to be sent
back: to be returned to their place in the temple
of Jerusalem and deposited in the house of God.

6"Now, therefore, Tattenai, governor of West-
of-Euphrates, and Shethar-bozenai, and you,
their fellow officials in West-of-Euphrates, do not
interfere in that place. 7Let the governor and the
elders of the Jews continue the work on that
house of God; they are to rebuild it on its former
site. 8I also issue this decree concerning your
dealing with these elders of the Jews in the
rebuilding of that house of God: From the royal
revenue, the taxes of West-of-Euphrates, let
these men be repaid for their expenses, in full
and without delay. 9Whatever else is required—
young bulls, rams, and lambs for holocausts to
the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil,
according to the requirements of the priests who
are in Jerusalem—is to be delivered to them day
by day without fail, 10that they may continue to
offer sacrifices of pleasing odor to the God of
heaven and pray for the life of the king and his
sons. 11I also issue this decree: If any man
violates this edict, a beam is to be taken from his
house, and he is to be lifted up and impaled on
it; and his house is to be reduced to rubble for
this offense. 12And may the God who causes his
name to dwell there overthrow every king or
people who may undertake to alter this or to
destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius,
have issued this decree; let it be carefully
executed."

13Then Tattenai, the governor of West-of-
Euphrates, and Shethar-bozenai, and their fellow
officials carried out fully the instructions King
Darius had sent them. 14The elders of the Jews
continued to make progress in the building,
supported by the message of the prophets, Hag-
gai and Zechariah, son of Iddo. They finished the
building according to the command of the God
of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus and Darius
[and of Artaxerxes, king of Persia]. 15They com-
pleted this house on the third day of the month
Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King
Darius. 16The Israelites—priests, Levites, and
the other returned exiles—celebrated the dedica-
tion of this house of God with joy. 17For the
dedication of this house of God, they offered one
hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four
hundred lambs, together with twelve he-goats as
a sin-offering for all Israel, in keeping with the
number of the tribes of Israel. 18Finally, they set
up the priests in their classes and the Levites in
their divisions for the service of God in Jerusa-
lem, as is prescribed in the book of Moses.

**The Passover** 19 *q*The exiles kept the Passover
on the fourteenth day of the first month. 20The
Levites, every one of whom had purified himself
for the occasion, sacrificed the Passover for the
rest of the exiles, for their brethren the priests,
and for themselves. 21The Israelites who had
returned from the exile partook of it together
with all those who had separated themselves
from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land
to join them in seeking the LORD, the God of
Israel.*r* 22They joyfully kept the feast of Un-

p 2–12; Ezr 1, 4–11. q 19–22; Ex 12, 1–20. r Ps 47, 9.

leavened Bread for seven days, for the LORD had filled them with joy by making the king of Assyria* favorable to them, so that he gave them help in their work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

## II: The Deeds of Ezra

### CHAPTER 7

**Ezra the Scribe** [1]After these events,* during the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra, son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, [2]son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, [3]son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, [4]son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, [5]son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of the high priest Aaron— [6]this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a scribe, well-versed in the law of Moses which was given by the LORD, the God of Israel. Because the hand of the LORD, his God, was upon him, the king granted him all that he requested.[s]

[7]Some of the Israelites and some priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and temple slaves also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. [8]Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month of that seventh year of the king. [9]On the first day of the first month he resolved on the journey up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he arrived at Jerusalem, for the favoring hand of his God was upon him. [10]Ezra had set his heart on the study and practice of the law of the LORD and on teaching statutes and ordinances in Israel.[t]

**The Decree of Artaxerxes** [11]This is a copy of the rescript which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest-scribe, the scribe of the text of the LORD's commandments and statutes for Israel:

[12] [u]"Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven (then, after greetings): [13]I have issued this decree, that anyone in my kingdom belonging to the people of Israel, its priests or Levites, who is minded to go up to Jerusalem with you, may do so. [14]You are the envoy from the king and his seven counselors to supervise Judah and Jerusalem in respect of the law of your God which is in your possession, [15]and to bring with you the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely contributed to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, [16]as well as all the silver and gold which you may receive throughout the province of Babylon, together with the free-will offerings which the people and priests freely contribute for the house of their God in Jerusalem. [17]You must take care, therefore, to use this money to buy bulls, rams, lambs, and the cereal offerings and libations proper to these, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem. [18]You and your brethren may do whatever seems best to you with the remainder of the silver and gold, conformably to the will of your God. [19]The utensils consigned to you for the service of the house of your God you are to deposit before the God of Jerusalem. [20]Whatever else you may be required to supply for the needs of the house of your God, you may draw from the royal treasury. [21]I, Artaxerxes the king, issue this decree to all the treasurers of West-of-Euphrates: Whatever Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requests of you, dispense to him accurately, [22]within these limits: silver, one hundred talents; wheat, one hundred kors; wine, one hundred baths; oil, one hundred baths; salt, without limit. [23]Let everything that is ordered by the God of heaven be carried out exactly for the house of the God of heaven, that wrath may not come upon the realm of the king and his sons. [24]We also inform you that it is not permitted to impose taxes, tributes, or tolls on any priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, temple slave, or any other servant of that house of God.

[25]"As for you, Ezra, in accordance with the

Ch 7–10 See RG 199–201

6, 22: Assyria: used here in a broad sense for the Persian Empire.

7, 1–8: The date of Ezra's journey to Palestine is not known with certainty. The seventh year of King Artaxerxes I would be 458 B.C., and the present order of the text suggests that date. The narratives of Ezra and Nehemiah make it seem to many, however, that the arrival of Nehemiah in 445 B.C. should precede that of Ezra. If so, Ezra may be thought to have come in 398 B.C., the seventh year of King Artaxerxes II. Others argue for the thirty seventh year of Artaxerxes I, that is, 428 B.C.; this would suppose that the date given in the text has suffered in transmission.

s Ezr 7, 28; 8, 18; Neh 2, 8. 18. t Ps 119, 45. u 12–17: Ezr 1, 2ff.

wisdom of your God* which is in your possession, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people in West-of-Euphrates, to all, that is, who know the laws of your God. Instruct those who do not know these laws.[v] [26]Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let strict judgment be executed upon him, whether death, or corporal punishment, or a fine on his goods, or imprisonment."

**Ezra and His Companions** [27]Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who thus disposed the mind of the king to glorify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, [28]and who let me find favor with the king, with his counselors, and with all the most influential royal officials. I therefore took courage and, with the hand of the LORD, my God, upon me, I gathered together Israelite family heads to make the return journey with me.[w]

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 7–10 See RG 199–201

[1]This is the list of the family heads who returned with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

[2]Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershon; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush, [3]son of Shecaniah; of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him one hundred and fifty males were enrolled; [4]of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai, son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males; [5]of the sons of Zattu, Shecaniah, son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males; [6]of the sons of Adin, Ebed, son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males; [7]of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah, son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males; [8]of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah, son of Michael, and with him eighty males; [9]of the sons of Joab, Obadiah, son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males; [10]of the sons of Bani, Shelomith, son of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred and sixty males; [11]of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah, son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; [12]of the sons of Azgad, Johanan, son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males; [13]of the sons of Adonikam, younger sons, whose names were Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males; [14]of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai, son of Zakkur, and with him seventy males.

**The Journey to Jerusalem** [15]I had them assemble by the river that flows toward Ahava,* where we made camp for three days. There I perceived that both laymen and priests were present, but I could not discover a single Levite. [16]Therefore I sent Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, wise leaders, [17]with a command for Iddo, the leader in the place Casiphia, instructing them what to say to Iddo and his brethren, and to the temple slaves in Casiphia, in order to procure for us ministers for the house of our God. [18]They sent to us—for the favoring hand of our God was upon us—a well-instructed man, one of the sons of Mahli, son of Levi, son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brethren, eighteen men.[x] [19]They also sent us Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah, sons of Merari, and their brethren and their sons, twenty men. [20]Of the temple slaves (those whom David and the princes appointed to serve the Levites) there were two hundred and twenty. All these men were enrolled by name.[y]

[21]Then I proclaimed a fast, there by the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to petition from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. [22]For I would have been ashamed to ask the king for troops and horsemen to protect us against enemies along the way, since we had said to the king, "The favoring hand of our God is upon all who seek him, but his mighty wrath is against all who forsake him."[z] [23]So we fasted, and prayed to our God for this, and our petition was granted. [24]Next I selected twelve of the priestly leaders along with Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren, [25]and I weighed out before them the silver and the

**7, 25:** The wisdom of your God: the Mosaic law; cf vv 6, 14.
**8, 15:** Ahava: a town at an unidentified site in Babylonia. The river that flowed toward it was probably a branch or canal of the Euphrates.

v 2 Chr 17, 9. w Ezr 7, 6. x Ezr 7, 6. y Ezr 2, 43. z Neh 2, 9.

gold and the utensils offered for the house of our God by the king, his counselors, his officials, and all the Israelites of that region. I consigned it to them in these amounts: [26]silver, six hundred and fifty talents; silver utensils, one hundred; gold, one hundred talents; [27]twenty golden bowls valued at a thousand darics; two vases of excellent polished bronze, as precious as gold. [28]I addressed them in these words: "You are consecrated to the LORD, and the utensils are also consecrated; the silver and the gold are a free-will offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers. [29]Keep good watch over them till you weigh them out in Jerusalem in the presence of the chief priests and Levites and the family leaders of Israel, in the chambers of the house of the LORD." [30]The priests and the Levites then took over the silver, the gold, and the utensils that had been weighed out, to bring them to Jerusalem, to the house of our God.

[31]We set out for Jerusalem from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month. The hand of our God remained upon us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way. [32]Thus we arrived at Jerusalem, where we first rested for three days. [33]On the fourth day, the silver, the gold, and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God and consigned to the priest Meremoth, son of Uriah, who was assisted by Eleazar, son of Phinehas; they were assisted by the Levites Jozabad, son of Jeshua, and Noadiah, son of Binnui. [34]Everything was in order as to number and weight, and the total weight was registered. At that same time, [35]those who had returned from the captivity, the exiles, offered as holocausts to the God of Israel twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve goats as sin-offerings: all these as a holocaust to the LORD. [36]Finally, the orders of the king were presented to the king's satraps and to the governors in West-of-Euphrates, who gave their support to the people and to the house of God.*

8, 30: The story of Ezra's mission is seemingly continued from this point by Neh 7, 72b—8, 18, which may be read before Ezr 9, 1.

9, 7: After this verse, the next part of the prayer attributed to Ezra is perhaps to be found in Neh 9, 6–37, which may be read as leading up to Ezr 9, 8–15.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 7–10
See RG
199–201

**Denunciation of Mixed Marriages** [1]a When these matters had been concluded, the leaders approached me with this report: "Neither the Israelite laymen nor the priests nor the Levites have kept themselves aloof from the peoples of the land and their abominations [Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites]; [2]for they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and thus they have desecrated the holy race with the peoples of the land. Furthermore, the leaders and rulers have taken a leading part in this apostasy!"

**Ezra's Exhortation** [3]When I had heard this thing, I tore my cloak and my mantle, plucked hair from my head and beard, and sat there stupefied.b [4]Around me gathered all who were in dread of the sentence of the God of Israel on this apostasy of the exiles, while I remained motionless until the evening sacrifice.c [5]Then, at the time of the evening sacrifice, I rose in my wretchedness, and with cloak and mantle torn I fell on my knees, stretching out my hands to the LORD, my God.

[6]I said: "My God, I am too ashamed and confounded to raise my face to you, O my God, for our wicked deeds are heaped up above our heads and our guilt reaches up to heaven.d [7]*From the time of our fathers even to this day great has been our guilt, and for our wicked deeds we have been delivered over, we and our kings and our priests, to the will of the kings of foreign lands, to the sword, to captivity, to pillage, and to disgrace, as is the case today.

[8]"And now, but a short time ago, mercy came to us from the LORD, our God, who left us a remnant and gave us a stake in his holy place; thus our God has brightened our eyes and given us relief in our servitude.e [9]For slaves we are, but in our servitude our God has not abandoned us; rather, he has turned the good will of the kings of Persia toward us. Thus he has given us

a 1f: Dt 7, 1; Neh 9, 2. b Ps 119, 136. c Is 66, 2. d Ps 38, 4. e Is 4, 3.

new life to raise again the house of our God and restore its ruins, and has granted us a fence in Judah and Jerusalem.[f] [10]But now, O our God, what can we say after all this? For we have abandoned your commandments, [11]which you gave through your servants the prophets: the land which you are entering to take as your possession is a land unclean with the filth of the peoples of the land, with the abominations with which they have filled it from one end to the other in their uncleanness.[g] [12]Do not, then, give your daughters to their sons in marriage, and do not take their daughters for your sons. Never promote their peace and prosperity; thus you will grow strong, enjoy the produce of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.[h]

[13]"After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt—though you, our God, have made less of our sinfulness than it deserved and have allowed us to survive as we do— [14]shall we again violate your commandments by intermarrying with these abominable peoples? Would you not become so angered with us as to destroy us without remnant or survivor? [15]O LORD, God of Israel, you are just; yet we have been spared, the remnant we are today. Here we are before you in our sins. Because of all this, we can no longer stand in your presence."

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 7–10 See RG 199–201

**The People's Response** [1]While Ezra prayed and acknowledged their guilt, weeping and prostrate before the house of God, a very large assembly of Israelites gathered about him, men, women, and children; and the people wept profusely. [2]Then Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, made this appeal to Ezra: "We have indeed betrayed our God by taking as wives foreign women of the peoples of the land. Yet even now there remains a hope for Israel. [3]Let us therefore enter into a covenant before our God to dismiss all our foreign wives and the children born of them, in keeping with what you, my lord, advise, and those who fear the commandments of our God. Let the law be observed! [4]Rise, then, for this is your duty! We will stand by you, so have courage and take action!"

[5]Ezra rose to his feet and demanded an oath from the chiefs of the priests, from the Levites and from all Israel that they would do as had been proposed; and they swore it. [6]Then Ezra retired from his place before the house of God and entered the chamber of Johanan, son of Eliashib,* where he spent the night neither eating food nor drinking water, for he was in mourning over the betrayal by the exiles. [7]A proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles should gather together in Jerusalem, [8]and that whoever failed to appear within three days would, according to the judgment of the leaders and elders, suffer the confiscation of all his possessions, and himself be excluded from the assembly of the exiles.

[9]All the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered together in Jerusalem within the three-day period: it was in the ninth month,* on the twentieth day of the month. All the people, standing in the open place before the house of God, were trembling both over the matter at hand and because it was raining. [10]Then Ezra, the priest, stood up and said to them: "Your unfaithfulness in taking foreign women as wives has added to Israel's guilt. [11]But now, give praise to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will: separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from these foreign women."[i] [12]In answer, the whole assembly cried out with a loud voice: "Yes, it is our duty to do as you say! [13]But the people are numerous and it is the rainy season, so that we cannot remain out-of-doors; besides, this is not a task that can be performed in a single day or even two, for those of us who

10, 6: Johanan, son of Eliashib: actually, the grandson of Eliashib; the father of Johanan was Eliashib's son Joiada (Neh 12, 10f. 22). Since Eliashib was high priest at the time of Nehemiah (Neh 3, 1. 20f; 13, 4. 7) and Johanan, if not yet high priest, was at least old enough to have his own separate quarters (chamber) in the temple at the time of Ezra, it is practically certain that Nehemiah's activity in Jerusalem must have preceded that of Ezra.

10, 9: Ninth month: Chislev (November–December), during the "early rains" in Palestine. Since the assembly took place in the open . . . all the people . . . were trembling . . . because it was raining.

f Ps 106, 46. g Lv 18, 24f; Ez 36, 17. h Dt 7, 3. i Neh 9, 2.

have sinned in this regard are many. [14]Let our
leaders represent the whole assembly; then let
all those in our cities who have taken foreign
women for wives appear at appointed times,
accompanied by the elders and magistrates of
each city in question, till we have turned away
from us our God's burning anger over this
affair." [15]Only Jonathan, son of Asahel, and
Jahzeiah, son of Tikvah, were against this pro-
posal, with Meshullam and Shabbethai the Le-
vite supporting them.

**The Guilty** [16]*The exiles did as agreed. Ezra
appointed as his assistants men who were family
heads, one for each family, all of them desig-
nated by name. They held sessions to examine
the matter, beginning with the first day of the
tenth month. [17]By the first day of the first month
they had passed judgment on all the men who
had taken foreign women for wives.

[18]Among the priests, the following were
found to have taken foreign women for wives:
Of the sons of Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and his
brethren: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.
[19]They pledged themselves to dismiss their
wives, and as a guilt-offering for their guilt they
gave a ram from the flock. [20]Of the sons of
Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah; [21]of the sons of
Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and
Uzziah; [22]of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai,
Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Ela-
sah.

[23]Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shemei, Kelaiah
(also called Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Elie-
zer.[j]

[24]Of the singers: Eliashib and Zakkur; of the
gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

[25]Among the other Israelites: Of the sons of
Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin,
Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah; [26]of the sons of
Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jere-
moth, and Elijah; [27]of the sons of Zattu: Elioe-
nai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and
Aziza; [28]of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hana-
niah, Zabbai, and Athlai; [29]of the sons of Bani:
Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and
Jeremoth; [30]of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna,
Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel,
Binnui, and Manasseh; [31]of the sons of Harim:
Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
[32]Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah; [33]of the sons
of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphe-
let, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei; [34]of the sons of
Begui: Maadai, Amram, Uel, [35]Benaiah, Bede-
iah, Cheluhi, [36]Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
[37]Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu; [38]of the sons
of Binnui: Shimei, [39]Shelemiah, Nathan, and
Adaiah; [40]of the sons of Zachai: Shashai, Sharai,
[41]Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, [42]Shallum,
Amariah, Joseph; [43]of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel,
Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, Benaiah.

[44]All these had taken foreign wives; but they
sent them away, both the women and their
children.*

10, 16f: The work of the committee lasted three months, from the first day of the tenth month, Tebet (December–January), to the first day of the first month, Nisan (March–April), of the following Jewish year.

10, 44: The account of the problem of mixed marriages at the time of Ezra is continued in Neh 9, 1–5; this may be read immediately after Ezr 10, 44, though the date given in Neh 9, 1 fits more precisely after Ezr 10, 15; cf Hg 2, 10–14.

j Neh 8, 7; 10, 11.

# THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah
See RG
202–207

Problems common to the combined Books Ezra-Nehemiah have been pointed out in the Introduction to the Book of Ezra. The achievements of the two men were complementary; each helped to make it possible for Judaism to maintain its identity during the difficult days of the Restoration. Nehemiah was the man of action who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and introduced

necessary administrative reforms. Ezra in turn was the great religious reformer who succeeded in establishing the Torah as the constitution of the returned community.

The biblical sources for Nehemiah's life and work are the autobiographical portions scattered through the book. They are called the "Memoirs of Nehemiah," and have been used more extensively and effectively by "the Chronicler" than the "Memoirs of Ezra." No competent scholar questions the authenticity of Nehemiah's memoirs. From these and other sources, the picture emerges of a man dedicated to the single purpose of the welfare of his people. Despite temperamental shortcomings, Nehemiah was a man of good practical sense combined with deep faith in God. In view of his selfless service to a community capable of severely testing any leader, we can be indulgent toward his numerous appeals to God to credit him with the work he had done. Nehemiah was a layman, and his generous dedication of talents to the service of God and of God's people remains an example of undiminished force for laymen today.

The Book of Nehemiah is divided as follows:

I. The Deeds of Nehemiah (1, 1—7, 72).
II. Promulgation of the Law (8, 1—13, 31).

## I: The Deeds of Nehemiah

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1-6
See RG
202-203

**Nehemiah's Vocation** [1]The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah.*

In the month Chislev of the twentieth year, I was in the citadel of Susa [2]when Hanani, one of my brothers, came with other men from Judah. I asked them about the Jews, the remnant preserved after the captivity, and about Jerusalem, [3]and they answered me: "The survivors of the captivity there in the province are in great distress and under reproach. Also, the wall of Jerusalem lies breached, and its gates have been gutted with fire." [4]When I heard this report, I began to weep and continued mourning for several days; I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

[5]I prayed: "O LORD, God of heaven, great and awesome God, you who preserve your covenant of mercy toward those who love you and keep your commandments,[a] [6]may your ear be attentive, and your eyes open, to heed the prayer which I, your servant, now offer in your presence day and night for your servants the Israelites, confessing the sins which we of Israel have committed against you, I and my father's house included.[b] [7]Grievously have we offended you, not keeping the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances which you committed to your servant Moses.[c] [8]But remember, I pray, the promise which you gave through Moses, your servant, when you said:[d] 'Should you prove faithless, I will scatter you among the nations; [9]but should you return to me and carefully keep my commandments, even though your outcasts have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, I will gather them from there, and bring them back to the place which I have chosen as the dwelling place for my name.' [10]They are your servants, your people, whom you freed by your great might and your strong hand.[e] [11]O LORD, may your ear be attentive to my prayer and that of all your willing servants who revere your name. Grant success to your servant this day, and let him find favor with this man"—for I was cupbearer to the king.*[f]

1, 1: The first mission of Nehemiah, from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, lasted from the spring (Neh 2, 1) of 445 B.C. until 433 B.C. (Neh 5, 14). It is recounted in Neh 1, 1—6, 15; 12, 27–43; 6, 16—7, 5; 11, 1–21, which may be read in that order.

1, 11: Cupbearer to the king: an important official in the royal household. Because Nehemiah could appear in the queen's presence (Neh 2, 6), it is commonly presumed that he was a eunuch; but this is not necessarily so.

a Dt 7, 9. 12; Dn 9, 4. b 2 Chr 6, 40. c Dn 3, 29f. d 8f: Dt 30, 1–5. e Dt 9, 29. f Ps 118, 25.

## CHAPTER 2

**Appointment by the King** [1]In the month Nisan of the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when the wine was in my charge, I took some and offered it to the king. As I had never before been sad in his presence, [2]the king asked me, "Why do you look sad? If you are not sick, you must be sad at heart." Though I was seized with great fear, [3]I answered the king: "May the king live forever! How could I not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been eaten out by fire?" [4]The king asked me, "What is it, then, that you wish?" I prayed to the God of heaven [5]and then answered the king: "If it please the king, and if your servant is deserving of your favor, send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, to rebuild it." [6]Then the king, and the queen seated beside him, asked me how long my journey would take and when I would return. I set a date that was acceptable to him, and the king agreed that I might go.

[7]I asked the king further: "If it please the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of West-of-Euphrates, that they may afford me safe-conduct till I arrive in Judah; [8]also a letter for Asaph, the keeper of the royal park, that he may give me wood for timbering the gates of the temple-citadel and for the city wall and the house that I shall occupy." The king granted my requests, for the favoring hand of my God was upon me.[g] [9]Thus I proceeded to the governors of West-of-Euphrates and presented the king's letters to them. The king also sent with me army officers and cavalry.[h]

[10]When Sanballat the Horonite* and Tobiah the Ammonite slave had heard of this, they were very much displeased that someone had come to seek the welfare of the Israelites.

Ch 1–6
See RG
202–203

**Circuit of the City** [11]When I had arrived in Jerusalem, I first rested there for three days. [12]Then I set out by night with only a few other men (for I had not told anyone what my God had inspired me to do for Jerusalem) and with no other animals but my own mount. [13]*I rode out at night by the Valley Gate, passed by the Dragon Spring, and came to the Dung Gate, observing how the walls of Jerusalem lay in ruins and its gates had been eaten out by fire. [14]Then I passed over to the Spring Gate and to the King's Pool. Since there was no room here for my mount to pass with me astride, [15]I continued on foot up the wadi by night, inspecting the wall all the while till I once more reached the Valley Gate, by which I went back in. [16]The magistrates knew nothing of where I had gone or what I was doing, for as yet I had disclosed nothing to the Jews, neither to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the magistrates, nor to the others who would be concerned about the matter.

**Rebuilding Jerusalem's Walls** [17]Afterward I said to them: "You see the evil plight in which we stand: how Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been gutted by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer be an object of derision!" [18]Then I explained to them how the favoring hand of my God had rested upon me, and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us be up and building!" And they undertook the good work with vigor.[i]

[19]On hearing of this, Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite slave, and Geshem the Arab mocked us and ridiculed us. "What is this

**2, 10:** Sanballat the Horonite: the governor of the province of Samaria (Neh 3, 33f), apparently a native of one of the Bethhorons. A letter from the Jews living at Elephantine in southern Egypt, dated 408–407 B.C., mentions "Delayah and Shelemyah, the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria." Although his own name was Babylonian—Sin-uballit, i.e., "Sin (the moon god) has given life"—two sons had names referring to Yahweh. Tobiah, the Ammonite slave: the governor of the province of Ammon in Transjordan. His honorary title, "servant" (in Hebrew, ebed), i.e., of the king, could also be understood as slave, and Nehemiah no doubt meant it in this derogatory sense. The Tobiads remained a powerful family even in Maccabean times (2 Mc 3, 11). Sanballat and Tobiah together with Geshem the Arab (Neh 2, 19; 6, 1f), who was probably in charge of Edom and the regions to the south and southeast of Judah, opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls on policital grounds; the city was the capital of a rival province.

**2, 13ff:** Nehemiah left Jerusalem by the Valley Gate near the northwestern end of the old City of David and went south down the Tyropoean Valley toward the Dragon Spring (or the En-rogel of Jos 15, 7; 18, 16; 2 Sm 17, 17; 1 Kgs 1, 9, now known as Job's Well) at the juncture of the Valley of Hinnom and the Kidron Valley; he then turned north at the Dung Gate (or the Potsherd Gate of Jer 19, 2) at the southern end of the city and proceeded up the wadi, that is, the Kidron Valley, passing the Spring Gate (at the Spring of Gihon) and the King's Pool (unidentified); finally he turned west and then south to his starting point.

g Ezr 7, 6. h Ezr 8, 22. i Ezr 7, 6.

that you are about?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" [20]My answer to them was this: "It is the God of heaven who will grant us success. We, his servants, shall set about the rebuilding; but for you there is to be neither share nor claim nor memorial* in Jerusalem."

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–6 See RG 202–203

**List of Workers*** [1]Eliashib the high priest and his priestly brethren took up the task of rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They timbered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, then continued the rebuilding to the Tower of Hananel.[j] [2]At their side the men of Jericho were rebuilding, and next to them was Zaccur, son of Imri. [3]The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah; they timbered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars.[k] [4]At their side Meremoth, son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, carried out the work of repair; next to him was Meshullam, son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel; and next to him was Zadok, son of Baana. [5]Next to him the Tekoites carried out the work of repair; however, some of their outstanding men would not submit to the labor asked by their lords. [6]The New City Gate was repaired by Joiada, son of Paseah; and Meshullam, son of Besodeiah; they timbered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars. [7]At their side were Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, who were under the jurisdiction of the governor of West-of-Euphrates. [8]Next to them the work of repair was carried out by Uzziel, son of Harhaiah, a member of the goldsmiths' guild, and at his side was Hananiah, one of the perfumers' guild. They restored Jerusalem as far as the wall of the public square.* [9]Next to them the work of repair was carried out by Rephaiah, son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, [10]and at his side was Jedaiah, son of Harumaph, who repaired opposite his own house. Next to him Hattush, son of Hashabneiah, carried out the work of repair. [11]The adjoining sector, as far as the Oven Tower, was repaired by Malchijah, son of Harim, and Hasshub, of Pahath-moab. [12]At their side the work of repair was carried out by Shallum, son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, by himself and his daughters. [13]The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they rebuilt it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars. They also repaired a thousand cubits of the wall up to the Dung Gate. [14]The Dung Gate was repaired by Malchijah, son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth-haccherem; he rebuilt it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars. [15]The Spring Gate was repaired by Shallum, son of Colhozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah; he rebuilt it, roofed it over, and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars. He also repaired the wall of the Aqueduct Pool near the king's garden as far as the steps that lead down from the City of David. [16]After him, the work of repair was carried out by Nehemiah, son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth-zur, to a place opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the barracks.

[17]After him, the Levites carried out the work of repair: Rehum, son of Bani. Next to him, for his own district, was Hashabiah, leader of half the district of Keilah. [18]After him, their brethren carried out the work of repair: Binnui, son of Henadad, leader of half the district of Keilah; [19]next to him Ezer, son of Jeshua, leader of Mizpah, who repaired the adjoining sector, the Corner, opposite the ascent to the arsenal. [20]After him, Baruch, son of Zabbai, repaired the adjoining sector from the Corner to the entrance of the house of Eliashib, the high priest. [21]After him, Meremoth, son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, repaired the adjoining sector from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of the house.

[22]After him, the work of repair was carried out by the priests, men of the surrounding

**2, 20:** Neither share nor claim nor memorial: although Sanballat and Tobiah were Yahwist, Nehemiah would not let them participate in any of the rights of the religious community in Jerusalem.

**3, 1–32:** The construction work on the gates and walls of the city is described in counterclockwise direction, beginning and ending at the Sheep Gate (to the north of the temple). The exact sites of many of the topographical points mentioned are uncertain.

**3, 8:** Wall of the public square: that is, the section of wall bounding the place of assembly outside the Gate of Ephraim, or New City Gate; cf Neh 3, 6; 8, 16.

j Jer 31, 38. k Ezr 2, 35; Zep 1, 10.

country. [23]After them, Benjamin and Hasshub carried out the repair in front of their houses; after them, Azariah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, made the repairs alongside his house. [24]After him, Binnui, son of Henadad, repaired the adjoining sector from the house of Azariah to the Corner [that is, to the Angle]. [25]After him, Palal, son of Uzai, carried out the work of repair opposite the Corner and the tower projecting from the Upper Palace at the quarters of the guard. After him, Pedaiah, son of Parosh, carried out the work of repair [26]to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east, and the projecting tower. [27]After him, the Tekoites repaired the adjoining sector opposite the great projecting tower, to the wall of Ophel [the temple slaves were dwelling on Ophel].

[28]Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out the work of repair, each before his own house. [29]After them Zadok, son of Immer, carried out the repair before his house, and after him the repair was carried out by Shemaiah, son of Shecaniah, keeper of the East Gate.[l] [30]After him, Hananiah, son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired the adjoining sector; after them, Meshullam, son of Berechiah, repaired the place opposite his own lodging. [31]After him, Malchijah, a member of the goldsmiths' guild, carried out the work of repair as far as the quarters of the temple slaves and the merchants, before the Gate of Inspection and as far as the upper chamber of the Angle. [32]Between the upper chamber of the Angle and the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out the work of repair.

**Opposition from Judah's Foes** [33]When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, it roused his anger and he became very much incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, [34]saying in the presence of his brethren and the troops of Samaria: "What are these miserable Jews trying to do? Will they complete their restoration in a single day? Will they recover these stones, burnt as they are, from the heaps of dust?" [35]Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said: "It is a rubble heap they are building. Any fox that attacked it would breach their wall of stones!" [36]Take note, O our God, how we were mocked! Turn back their derision upon their own heads and let them be carried away to a land of captivity! [37]Hide not their crime and let not their sin be blotted out in your sight, for they insulted the builders to their face![m] [38]We, however, continued to build the wall, which was soon filled in and completed up to half its height. The people worked with a will.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 1-6
See RG
202-203

[1]When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem was progressing—for the gaps were beginning to be closed up—they became extremely angry. [2]Thereupon they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and thus to throw us into confusion. [3]We prayed to our God and posted a watch against them day and night for fear of what they might do. [4]Meanwhile the Judahites were saying:

"Slackened is the bearers' strength,
  there is no end to the rubbish;
Never shall we be able
  the wall to rebuild."

[5]Our enemies thought, "Before they are aware of it or see us, we shall come into their midst, kill them, and put an end to the work."

[6]When the Jews who lived near them had come to us from one place after another, and had told us ten times over that they were about to attack us, [7]I stationed guards down below, behind the wall, near the exposed points, assigning them by family groups with their swords, their spears, and their bows. [8]I made an inspection, then addressed these words to the nobles, the magistrates, and the rest of the people: "Have no fear of them! Keep in mind the LORD, who is great and to be feared, and fight for your brethren, your sons and daughters, your wives and your homes." [9]When our enemies became aware that we had been warned and that God

l Ezr 40, 6. m Jer 18, 23.

had upset their plan, we all went back, each to
his own task at the wall.
[10]From that time on, however, only half my
able men took a hand in the work, while the
other half, armed with spears, bucklers, bows,
and breastplates, stood guard behind the whole
house of Judah[n] [11]as they rebuilt the wall. The
load carriers, too, were armed; each did his
work with one hand and held a weapon with the
other. [12]Every builder, while he worked, had his
sword girt at his side. Also, a trumpeter stood
beside me, [13]for I had said to the nobles, the
magistrates, and the rest of the people: "Our
work is scattered and extensive, and we are
widely separated from one another along the
wall; [14]wherever you hear the trumpet sound,
join us there; our God will fight with us." [15]Thus
we went on with the work, half of the men with
spears at the ready, from daybreak till the stars
came out.
[16]At the same time I told the people to spend
the nights inside Jerusalem, each man with his
own attendant, so that they might serve as a
guard by night and a working force by day.
[17]Neither I, nor my kinsmen, nor any of my
attendants, nor any of the bodyguard that accompanied me took off his clothes; everyone kept his
weapon at his right hand.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 1–6
See RG
202–203

**Antisocial Conduct** [1][o]Then there rose a great
outcry of the common people and their wives
against certain of their fellow Jews. [2]Some said:
"We are forced to pawn our sons and daughters
in order to get grain to eat that we may live."
[3]Others said: "We are forced to pawn our fields,
our vineyards, and our houses, that we may
have grain during the famine." [4]Still others said:
"To pay the king's tax we have borrowed money
on our fields and our vineyards. [5]And though
these are our own kinsmen and our children are
as good as theirs, we have had to reduce our
sons and daughters to slavery, and violence has
been done to some of our daughters! Yet we can
do nothing about it, for our fields and our
vineyards belong to others."[p]

**Nehemiah's Action** [6]I was extremely angry
when I heard the reasons they had for complaint. [7]After some deliberation, I called the
nobles and magistrates to account, saying to
them, "You are exacting interest from your own
kinsmen!"* I then rebuked them severely, [8]saying to them: "As far as we were able, we bought
back our fellow Jews who had been sold to
Gentiles; you, however, are selling your own
brothers, to have them bought back by us." They
remained silent, for they could find no answer.[q]
[9]I continued: "What you are doing is not good.
Should you not walk in the fear of our God, and
put an end to the derision of our Gentile
enemies? [10]I myself, my kinsmen, and my attendants have lent the people money and grain
without charge. Let us put an end to this usury!
[11]I ask that you return to them this very day
their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves,
and their houses, together with the interest on
the money, the grain, the wine, and the oil that
you have lent them." [12]They answered: "We
will return everything and exact nothing further
from them. We will do just what you ask." Then
I called for the priests and had them administer
an oath to these men that they would do as they
had promised. [13]I also shook out the folds of my
garment, saying, "Thus may God shake from his
home and his fortune every man who fails to
keep this promise, and may he thus be shaken
out and emptied!" And the whole assembly
answered, "Amen," and praised the LORD. Then
the people did as they had promised.

**Nehemiah's Lack of Self-Interest** [14]Moreover, from the time that King Artaxerxes appointed me governor in the land of Judah, from
his twentieth to his thirty-second year—during
these twelve years neither I nor my brethren
lived from the governor's allowance. [15]The earlier governors, my predecessors, had laid a heavy
burden on the people, taking from them each
day forty silver shekels for their food; then too,
their men oppressed the people. But I, because I
feared God, did not act thus. [16]Moreover,
though I had acquired no land of my own, I did

5, 7: You are exacting interest from your own kinsmen!: contrary to the Mosaic law (Dt 23, 20).

n Ps 149, 6. o 1f: Jer 34, 8–22. p Ez 21, 7; Lv 25, 39. q Lv 25, 48.

my part in this work on the wall, and all my men
were gathered there for the work. [17]Though I
set my table for a hundred and fifty persons, Jews
and magistrates, as well as those who came to us
from the nations round about, [18]and though the
daily preparations were made at my expense—
one beef, six choice muttons, poultry—besides
all kinds of wine in abundance every ten days,
despite this I did not claim the governor's
allowance, for the labor lay heavy upon this
people. [19]Keep in mind, O my God, in my favor
all that I did for this people.

## CHAPTER 6

**Plots against Nehemiah** [1]When it had been
reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab,
and our other enemies that I had rebuilt the wall
and that there was no breach left in it (though up
to that time I had not yet set up the doors in the
gates), [2]Sanballat and Geshem sent me this
message: "Come, let us hold council together at
Caphirim in the plain of Ono." They were
planning to do me harm. [3]However, I sent
messengers to them with this reply: "I am
engaged in a great enterprise and am unable to
come down; why should the work stop, while I
leave it to come down to you?" [4]Four times they
sent me this same proposal, and each time I gave
the same reply. [5]Then, the fifth time, Sanballat
sent me the same message by one of his servants,
who bore an unsealed letter [6]containing this
text: "Among the nations it has been reported—
Geshem is witness to this—that you and the
Jews are planning a rebellion; that for this reason
you are rebuilding the wall; and that you are to
be their king"—and so on. [7]"Also, that you have
set up prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim you
king of Judah. Now, since matters like these
must reach the ear of the king, come, let us hold
council together." [8]I sent him this answer:
"Nothing of what you report has taken place;
rather, it is the invention of your own mind."
[9]They were all trying to frighten us, thinking,
"Their hands will slacken in the work, and it will
never be completed." But instead, I now redou-
bled my efforts.

[10]I went to the house of Shemaiah, son of
Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was unable to
go about, and he said:

"Let us meet in the house of God,
inside the temple building;
let us lock the doors of the temple.
For men are coming to kill you;
by night they are coming to kill you."

[11]My answer was: "A man like me take flight?
Can a man like me enter the temple to save his
life? I will not go!" [12]For on consideration it was
plain to me that God had not sent him; rather,
because Tobiah and Sanballat had bribed him, he
voiced this prophecy concerning me [13]that I
might act on it out of fear and commit this sin.
Then they would have had a shameful story with
which to discredit me. [14]Keep in mind Tobiah
and Sanballat, O my God, because of these
things they did; keep in mind as well Noadiah
the prophetess and the other prophets who were
trying to frighten me.[r]

Ch 1–6
See RG
202–203

**Conclusion of the Work** [15]The wall was fin-
ished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul;* it had
taken fifty-two days. [16]When all our enemies
had heard of this, and all the nations round
about had taken note of it, our enemies lost
much face in the eyes of the nations, for they
knew that it was with our God's help that this
work had been completed.[s] [17]*At that same
time, however, many letters were going to
Tobiah from the nobles of Judah, and Tobiah's
letters were reaching them, [18]for many in Judah
were in league with him, since he was the son-
in-law of Shecaniah, son of Arah, and his son
Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshul-
lam, son of Berechiah. [19]Thus they would praise
his good deeds in my presence and relate to him
whatever I said; and Tobiah sent letters trying to
frighten me.

6, 15: Elul: the sixth month (August–September). Fifty-two days: according to Josephus (Antiquities XI, v 8), the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah took two years and four months, which seems more probable.

6, 17ff: These verses should be read immediately after v 14.

r Jer 23, 9–40; Zec 13, 3. s Ps 118, 22f; 127, 1.

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7
See RG
203

1When the wall had been rebuilt, I had the
doors set up, and the gatekeepers [and the
singers and the Levites] were put in charge of
them. 2Over Jerusalem I placed Hanani, my
brother, and Hananiah, the commander of the
citadel, who was a more trustworthy and God-
fearing man than most. 3I said to them: "The
gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the
sun is hot, and while the sun is still shining they
shall shut and bar the doors. Appoint as watch-
men the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their
watch posts, and others before their own
houses."

**Census of the Province** 4Now the city was
quite wide and spacious, but its population was
small, and none of the houses had been rebuilt.
5When my God had put it into my mind to
gather together the nobles, the magistrates, and
the common people, and to examine their family
records, I came upon the family list of those who
had returned in the earliest period. There I
found the following written:

6 *t** These are the inhabitants of the province
who returned from the captivity of the exiles
whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had
carried away, and who came back to Jerusalem
and Judah, each man to his own city 7(those
who returned with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehe-
miah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai,
Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baa-
nah).

The census of the men of Israel: 8sons of
Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-
two; 9sons of Shephatiah, three hundred and
seventy-two; 10sons of Arah, six hundred and
fifty-two; 11sons of Pahath-moab who were sons
of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred
and eighteen; 12sons of Elam, one thousand two
hundred and fifty-four; 13sons of Zattu, eight
hundred and forty-five; 14sons of Zaccai, seven
hundred and sixty; 15sons of Binnui, six hundred
and forty-eight; 16sons of Bebai, six hundred and
twenty-eight; 17sons of Azgad, two thousand
three hundred and twenty-two; 18sons of Adoni-
kam, six hundred and sixty-seven; 19sons of
Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven; 20sons of
Adin, six hundred and fifty-five; 21sons of Ater
who were sons of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 22sons
of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight;
23sons of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four;
24sons of Hariph, one hundred and twelve;
25sons of Gibeon, ninety-five; 26men of Bethle-
hem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-
eight; 27men of Anathoth, one hundred and
twenty-eight; 28men of Beth-azmaveth, forty-
two; 29men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and
Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; 30men
of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-
one; 31men of Michmas, one hundred and
twenty-two; 32men of Bethel and Ai, one hun-
dred and twenty-three; 33men of Nebo, fifty-
two; 34sons of another Elam, one thousand two
hundred and fifty-four; 35sons of Harim, three
hundred and twenty; 36sons of Jericho, three
hundred and forty-five; 37sons of Lod, Hadid,
and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one; 38sons
of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and
thirty.

39The priests: sons of Jedaiah who were of the
house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-
three; 40sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-
two; 41sons of Pashhur, one thousand two
hundred and forty-seven; 42sons of Harim, one
thousand and seventeen.

43The Levites: sons of Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bin-
nui, Hodeviah, seventy-four.

44The singers: sons of Asaph, one hundred
and forty-eight.

45The gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of
Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of
Hatita, sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-
eight.

46The temple slaves: sons of Ziha, sons of
Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, 47sons of Keros, sons
of Sia, sons of Padon, 48sons of Lebana, sons of
Hagaba, sons of Shalmai, 49sons of Hanan, sons
of Giddel, sons of Gahar, 50sons of Reaiah, sons
of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, 51sons of Gazzam,
sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah, 52sons of Besai,
sons of the Meunites, sons of the Nephusites,
53sons of Bakbuk, sons of Hakupha, sons of

7, 6–72a: See note on Ezr 2, 1–67.

t 6–72: Ezr 2, 1–70.

Harhur, [54]sons of Bazlith, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha, [55]sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, sons of Temah, [56]sons of Neziah, sons of Hatipha.

[57]Descendants of the slaves of Solomon: sons of Sotai, sons of Sophereth, sons of Perida, [58]sons of Jaala, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, [59]sons of Shephatiah, sons of Hattil, sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, sons of Amon. [60]The total of the temple slaves and the descendants of the slaves of Solomon was three hundred and ninety-two.

[61]The following who returned from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer were unable to prove that their ancestral houses and their descent were Israelite: [62]sons of Delaiah, sons of Tobiah, sons of Nekoda, six hundred and forty-two. [63]Also, of the priests: sons of Hobaiah, sons of Hakkoz, sons of Barzillai (he had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and became known by his name). [64]These men searched their family records, but their names could not be found written there; hence they were degraded from the priesthood, [65]and His Excellency* ordered them not to partake of the most holy foods until there should be a priest bearing the Urim and Thummim.

[66]The entire assembly taken together came to forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, [67]not counting their male and female slaves, who were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven. They also had two hundred male and female singers. Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, [68]their camels four hundred and thirty-five, their asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

[69]Certain of the family heads contributed to the service. His Excellency put into the treasury one thousand drachmas of gold, fifty basins, thirty garments for priests, and five hundred minas of silver. [70]Some of the family heads contributed to the treasury for the temple service: twenty thousand drachmas of gold and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. [71]The contributions of the rest of the people amounted to twenty thousand drachmas of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven garments for priests.

[72]The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple slaves, and all Israel took up residence in their cities.

## II: Promulgation of the Law

### CHAPTER 8

Ch 8–13
See RG
203–207

**Ezra Reads the Law*** Now when the seventh month came, [1]the whole people gathered as one man in the open space before the Water Gate, and they called upon Ezra the scribe to bring forth the book of the law of Moses which the LORD prescribed for Israel.[u] [2]On the first day of the seventh month, therefore, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. [3]Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate, he read out of the book from daybreak till midday, in the presence of the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand; and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. [4]Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the occasion; at his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, and on his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, Meshullam. [5]Ezra opened the scroll so that all the people might see it (for he was standing higher up than any of the people); and, as he opened it, all the people rose. [6]Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, "Amen, amen!" Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground. [7][The Levites Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah explained the law to the people, who remained in their places.][v] [8]Ezra

7, 65. 69: His Excellency: see note on Ezr 2, 63.

7, 72b—8, 18: to be read after Ezr 8, 36. The gloss mentioning Nehemiah in v 9 was inserted in this Ezra section after the dislocation of several parts of Ezra-Nehemiah had occurred. There is no clear evidence of a simultaneous presence of Nehemiah and Ezra in Jerusalem; Neh 12, 26 and 12, 36 are also scribal glosses.

u Ezr 3, 1. v Neh 10, 11.

read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.[w] 9Then [Nehemiah, that is, His Excellency, and] Ezra the priest-scribe [and the Levites who were instructing the people] said to all the people: "Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep"—for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. 10He said further: "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!"[x] 11[And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Hush, for today is holy, and you must not be saddened."] 12Then all the people went to eat and drink, to distribute portions, and to celebrate with great joy, for they understood the words that had been expounded to them.

Ch 8–13 See RG 203–207

**The Feast of Booths** 13On the second day, the family heads of the whole people and also the priests and the Levites gathered around Ezra the scribe and examined the words of the law more closely. 14They found it written in the law prescribed by the LORD through Moses that the Israelites must dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month;[y] 15and that they should have this proclamation made throughout their cities and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring in branches of olive trees, oleasters, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees, to make booths, as the law prescribes."[z] 16The people went out and brought in branches with which they made booths for themselves, on the roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God, and in the open spaces of the Water Gate and the Gate of Ephraim. 17Thus the entire assembly of the returned exiles made booths and dwelt in them. Now the Israelites had done nothing of this sort from the days of Jeshua, son of Nun, until this occasion; therefore there was very great joy. 18Ezra read from the book of the law of God day after day, from the first day to the last. They kept the feast for seven days, and the solemn assembly on the eighth day, as was required.

## CHAPTER 9

**Confession of the People** 1[a]* On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the Israelites gathered together fasting and in sackcloth, their heads covered with dust. 2Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all who were of foreign extraction, then stood forward and confessed their sins and the guilty deeds of their fathers.[b] 3When they had taken their places, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God, for a fourth part of the day, and during another fourth part they made their confession and prostrated themselves before the LORD their God. 4Standing on the platform of the Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, who cried out to the LORD their God with a loud voice. 5The Levites Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah said,

"Arise, bless the LORD, your God,
from eternity to eternity!"

The Israelites answered with the blessing,

"Blessed is your glorious name,
and exalted above all blessing and praise."[c]

6*Then Ezra said: "It is you, O LORD, you are the only one; you made the heavens, the highest heavens and all their host, the earth and all that is upon it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the heavenly hosts bow down before you.

7"You, O LORD, are the God who chose Abram, who brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and named him Abraham.[d] 8When you had found his heart faithful in your sight, you made the covenant with him to give to him and his posterity the land of the Canaanites,

9, 1–5: This is a continuation of the account concerning the problem of mixed marriages at the time of Ezra; it should be read immediately after Ezr 10, 44.

9, 6–37: The prayer of Ezra which began in Ezr 9, 6f is here continued; see note on Ezr 9, 7.

w Ezr 7, 6. x Est 9, 19. y Ex 23, 14; Lv 23, 33–36. z Ps 118, 27. a Dn 9, 3. b Ezr 9, 1f; 10, 11. c Dn 2, 20; 3, 52. d Gn 12, 1; 17, 5.

Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites. These promises of yours you fulfilled,
for you are just.[e]

9 "You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,
you heard their cry by the Red Sea;[f]
10 You worked signs and wonders against Pharoah,
against all his servants and the people of his land,
Because you knew of their insolence toward them;
thus you made for yourself a name even to this day.[g]
11 The sea you divided before them,
on dry ground they passed through the midst of the sea;
Their pursuers you hurled into the depths,
like a stone into the mighty waters.[h]
12 With a column of cloud you led them by day,
and by night with a column of fire,
To light the way of their journey,
the way in which they must travel.[i]
13 On Mount Sinai you came down,
you spoke with them from heaven;
You gave them just ordinances, firm laws,
good statutes, and commandments;[j]
14 Your holy sabbath you made known to them,
commandments, statutes, and law you prescribed for them,
by the hand of Moses your servant.[k]
15 Food from heaven you gave them in their hunger,
water from a rock you sent them in their thirst.
You bade them enter and occupy the land
which you had sworn with upraised hand to give them.[l]

16 "But they, our fathers, proved to be insolent; they held their necks stiff and would not obey your commandments. 17 They refused to obey and no longer remembered the miracles you had worked for them. They stiffened their necks and turned their heads to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God of pardons, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in mercy; you did not forsake them.[m] 18 Though they made for themselves a molten calf, and proclaimed, 'Here is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and were guilty of great effronteries,[n] 19 yet in your great mercy you did not forsake them in the desert. The column of cloud did not cease to lead them by day on their journey, nor did the column of fire by night cease to light for them the way by which they were to travel.

20 "Your good spirit you bestowed on them, to give them understanding; your manna you did not withhold from their mouths, and you gave them water in their thirst.[o] 21 Forty years in the desert you sustained them: they did not want; their garments did not become worn, and their feet did not become swollen.[p] 22 You gave them kingdoms and peoples, which you divided up among them as border lands. They possessed the land of Sihon, king of Heshbon, and the land of Og, king of Bashan.[q]

23 "You made their children as numerous as the stars of the heavens, and you brought them into the land which you had commanded their fathers to enter and possess.[r] 24 The sons went in to take possession of the land, and you humbled before them the Canaanite inhabitants of the land and delivered them over into their power, their kings as well as the peoples of the land, to do with them as they would. 25 They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all good things, cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. They could eat and have their fill, fatten and feast themselves on your immense good gifts.[s]

26 "But they were contemptuous and rebellious: they cast your law behind their backs, they slew your prophets who bore witness against them in order to bring them back to you, and they were guilty of great effronteries.[t] 27 Therefore you delivered them into the power of their

e Gn 15, 18f. f Ex 2, 23f. g Ex 7—11; 14. h Ex 15, 5. 10. i Ex 13, 21f. j Ex 19—20. k Ex 20, 8. l Ex 16, 4; 17, 1f. m Nm 14, 1–4; Ex 34, 6; Dn 9, 9. n Ex 32, 4. o Dt 2, 7. p Dt 8, 4. q Nm 21, 21—35; Dt 1, 4; 2, 26–3, 11. r Dt 1, 10. s Dt 3, 5; 6, 10f; 11, 11; 32, 15. t Wis 2, 10–20.

enemies, who oppressed them. But in the time
of their oppression they would cry out to you,
and you would hear them from heaven, and
according to your great mercy give them saviors
to deliver them from the power of their ene-
mies.[u]

28"As soon as they had relief, they would go
back to doing evil in your sight. Then again you
abandoned them to the power of their enemies,
who crushed them. Then they cried out to you,
and you heard them from heaven and delivered
them according to your mercy, many times over.
29You bore witness against them, in order to
bring them back to your law. But they were
insolent and would not obey your command-
ments; they sinned against your ordinances,
from which men draw life when they practice
them. They turned stubborn backs, stiffened
their necks, and would not obey.[v] 30You were
patient with them for many years, bearing wit-
ness against them through your spirit, by means
of your prophets; still they would not listen.
Thus you delivered them over into the power of
the peoples of the lands. 31Yet in your great
mercy you did not completely destroy them and
you did not forsake them, for you are a kind and
merciful God.

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32"Now, therefore, O our God, great, mighty,
and awesome God, you who in your mercy
preserve the covenant, take into account all the
disasters that have befallen us, our kings, our
princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers,
and your entire people, from the time of the
kings of Assyria until this day![w] 33In all that has
come upon us you have been just, for you kept
faith while we have done evil.[x] 34Yes, our kings,
our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not
kept your law; they paid no attention to your
commandments and the obligations of which
you reminded them. 35While they were yet in
their kingdom, in the midst of the many good
things that you had given them and in the wide
and fertile land that you had spread out before
them, they did not serve you nor did they turn
away from their evil deeds. 36But, see, we today
are slaves; and as for the land which you gave
our fathers that they might eat its fruits and good
things—see, we have become slaves upon it!
37Its rich produce goes to the kings whom you
set over us because of our sins, who rule over
our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are
in great distress!"

## CHAPTER 10

**Agreement of the People** 1*In view of all
this, we are entering into a firm pact, which we
are putting into writing. On the sealed docu-
ment appear the names of our princes, our
Levites, and our priests.[y]

2On the sealed document: His Excellency
Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah.

3Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 4Pashhur, Ama-
riah, Malchijah, 5Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
6Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 7Daniel, Ginne-
thon, Baruch, 8Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
9Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these are the
priests.

10The Levites: Jeshua, son of Azaniah; Binnui,
of the sons of Henadad; Kadmiel; 11and their
brethren Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah,
Hanan,[z] 12Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, 13Zaccur,
Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 14Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

15The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-
moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 16Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
17Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 18Ater, Hezekiah, Az-
zur, 19Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, 20Hariph, Ana-
thoth, Nebai, 21Magpiash, Meshullam, Hazir,
22Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, 23Pelatiah, Ha-
nan, Anaiah, 24Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
25Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, 26Rehum, Hashab-
nah, Maaseiah, 27Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, 28Mal-
luch, Harim, Baanah.

**Provisions of the Pact** 29The rest of the peo-
ple, priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple
slaves, and all others who have separated them-
selves from the peoples of the lands in favor of
the law of God, with their wives, their sons,
their daughters, all who are of the age of

10, 1–40: This section belongs to the Nehemiah narrative rather than to that of Ezra. It is best read after Neh 13, 31. In view of all this: considering the situation described in Neh 13, 4–31.

u Dn 9, 19. v Lv 18, 5; 30. 16; 32, 47. w Lam 5. x Dn 3, 27; 9, 14. y Neh 12, 12–26. z Ezr 10, 23.

discretion, [30]join with their brethren who are
their princes, and with the sanction of a curse
take this oath to follow the law of God which
was given through Moses, the servant of God,
and to observe carefully all the commandments
of the LORD, our Lord, his ordinances and his
statutes.[a]

[31]Agreed, that we will not marry our daughters to the peoples of the land, and that we will not take their daughters for our sons.[b]

[32]When the peoples of the land bring in merchandise or any kind of grain for sale on the sabbath day, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or on any other holy day. We will forgo the seventh year, as well as every kind of debt.[c]

[33]We impose these commandments on ourselves: to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God,[d] [34]for the showbread, for the daily cereal offering, for the daily holocaust, for the sabbaths, new moons, and festivals, for the holy offerings, for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for every service of the house of our God. [35]We, priests, Levites, and people, have determined by lot concerning the procurement of wood: it is to be brought to the house of our God by each of our family houses at stated times each year, to be burnt on the altar of the LORD, our God, as the law prescribes.[e] [36]*f*We have agreed to bring each year to the house of the LORD the first fruits of our fields and of our fruit trees, of whatever kind; [37]also, as is prescribed in the law, to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who serve in the house of our God, the first-born of our children and our animals, including the first-born of our flocks and herds. [38]The first batch of our dough, and our offerings of the fruit of every tree, of wine and of oil, we will bring to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God. The tithe of our fields we will bring to the Levites; they, the Levites, shall take the tithe in all the cities of our service.[g] [39]An Aaronite priest shall be with the Levites when they take the tithe, and the Levites shall bring the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the treasury. [40]For to these chambers the Israelites and Levites bring the offerings of grain, wine, and oil; there also are housed the utensils of the sanctuary, and the ministering priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.

## CHAPTER 11

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**Repeopling of Jerusalem** [1]*The leaders of the people took up residence in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one man in ten to reside in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine would remain in the other cities.[h] [2]The people applauded all those men who willingly agreed to take up residence in Jerusalem.

**The Residents of Jerusalem** [3]*i*These are the heads of the province who took up residence in Jerusalem. (In the cities of Judah dwelt lay Israelites, priests, Levites, temple slaves, and the descendants of the slaves of Solomon, each man on the property he owned in his own city.)

[4]In Jerusalem dwelt both Judahites and Benjaminites. Of the Judahites: Athaiah, son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mehallalel, of the sons of Perez; [5]Maaseiah, son of Baruch, son of Colhozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, a son of the Shelanites. [6]The total of the sons of Perez who dwelt in Jerusalem was four hundred and sixty-eight valiant men.

[7]These were the Benjaminites: Sallu, son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiah, [8]and his brethren, warriors, nine hundred and twenty-eight in number. [9]Joel, son of Zichri, was their commander, and Judah, son of Hassenuah, was second in charge of the city.

[10]Among the priests were: Jedaiah; Joiarib; Jachin; [11]Seraiah, son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God, [12]and

11, 1–19: This list of the family heads who lived in Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah is best read after Neh 7, 72a. It is basically the same as that given in 1 Chr 9, 2–17, but there are many differences between the two lists.

a Neh 13, 23–27. b Neh 13, 15–22. c Neh 5, 1–13; Ex 20, 8; Lv 25, 2–7. d 2 Chr 24, 6, 9f; Lv 24, 5–9. e Neh 13, 31. f 36f: Ex 13, 1. 11ff; Dt 26, 1. g Neh 13, 10–14; Nm 18, 21. 24ff. h Neh 7, 4. i 3–19: 1 Chr 9, 2–34.

their brethren who carried out the temple service, eight hundred and twenty-two; Adaiah, son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, [13]and his brethren, family heads, two hundred and forty-two; and Amasai, son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, [14]and his brethren, warriors, one hundred and twenty-eight. Their commander was Zabdiel, son of Haggadol.

[15]Among the Levites were Shemaiah, son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; [16]Shabbethai and Jozabad, levitical chiefs who were placed over the external affairs of the house of God; [17]Mattaniah, son of Micah, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, director of the psalms, who led the thanksgiving at prayer; Bakbukiah, second in rank among his brethren; and Abda, son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. [18]The total of the Levites in the holy city was two hundred and eighty-four.

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[19]The gatekeepers were Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren, who kept watch over the gates; one hundred and seventy-two in number.

[20]The rest of Israel, including priests and Levites, were in all the other cities of Judah, each man in his inheritance.

[21]The temple slaves lived on Ophel. Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the temple slaves.

[22]The prefect of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi, son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica; he was one of the sons of Asaph, the singers appointed to the service of the house of God[j] — [23]for they had been appointed by royal decree, and there was a fixed schedule for the singers assigning them their daily duties.

[24]Pethahiah, son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah, son of Judah, was royal deputy in all affairs that concerned the people.

**The Other Cities** [25]As concerns their villages in the country: Judahites lived in Kiriath-arba and its dependencies, in Dibon and its dependencies, in Jekabzeel and its villages, [26]in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth-pelet, [27]in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its dependencies, [28]in Ziklag, in Meconah and its dependencies, [29]in En-rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, [30]Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its countryside, Azekah and its dependencies. They were settled from Beersheba to Ge-hinnom.

[31]Benjaminites were in Geba, Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its dependencies, [32]Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, [33]Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, [34]Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, [35]Lod, Ono, and the Valley of the Artisans.

[36]Some sections of the Levites from Judah settled in Benjamin.

## CHAPTER 12

### Priests and Levites under Zerubbabel

[1]*k*The following are the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, [2]Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, [3]Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, [4]Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, [5]Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, [6]Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, [7]Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the priestly heads and their brethren in the days of Jeshua.

[8]The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, Mattaniah; the last-mentioned, together with his brethren, was in charge of the hymns, [9]while Bakbukiah and Unno and their brethren ministered opposite them by turns.

**High Priests*** [10]Jeshua became the father of Joiakim, Joiakim became the father of Eliashib, and Eliashib became the father of Joiada. [11]Joiada became the father of Johanan, and Johanan became the father of Jaddua.

**12, 10f:** Jeshua, the high priest when Zerubbabel was governor, i.e., the last decades of the sixth century B.C. (Hg 1, 1. 12. 14; 2, 2. 4). He was the grandfather of Eliashib, the high priest at least in the early period of Nehemiah's governorship, i.e., 445–433 B.C. (Ezr 10, 6; Neh 3, 1. 20f; 13, 4. 7). Eliashib, in turn, was the grandfather of Johanan, a grown man, if not yet a high priest, at the time of Ezra, i.e., c. 400 B.C. (Ezr 10, 6, and note). According to Josephus (Antiquities XI, v), whose testimony here is doubtful, Jaddua, son of Johanan, died as an old man about the same time that Alexander the Great died, i.e., 323 B.C. If this list of the postexilic high priests, at least as far as Johanan, comes, as seems probable (cf v 23), from the Chronicler himself and not from a later scribe, it is of prime importance for dating the Chronicler's work in the first decades of the fourth century B.C.

j 2 Chr 20, 14. k 1–6; Neh 12, 12–22.

**Priests and Levites under Joiakim** 12 [1]In the days of Joiakim these were the priestly family heads: for Seraiah, Meraiah; for Jeremiah, Hananiah; [13]for Ezra, Meshullam; for Amariah, Jehohanan; [14]for Malluch, Jonathan; for Shebaniah, Joseph; [15]for Harim, Adna; for Meremoth, Helkai; [16]for Iddo, Zechariah; for Ginnethon, Meshullam; [17]for Abijah, Zichri; for Miamin, . . . ; for Maadiah, Piltai; [18]for Bilgah, Shammua; for Shemaiah, Jehonathan; [19]and for Joiarib, Mattenai; for Jedaiah, Uzzi; [20]for Sallu, Kallai; for Amok, Eber; [21]for Hilkiah, Hashabiah; for Jedaiah, Nethanel.

[22]In the time of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the family heads of the priests were written down in the Book of Chronicles, up until the reign of Darius the Persian. [23]The sons of Levi: the family heads were written down in the Book of Chronicles, up until the time of Johanan, the son of Eliashib.

[24]The heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel. Their brethren who stood opposite them to sing praises and thanksgiving in fulfillment of the command of David, the man of God, one section opposite the other, [m] [25]were Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah.

Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers. They kept watch over the storerooms at the gates. [n]

[26]All these lived in the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak [and in the time of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest-scribe].

**Dedication of the City Wall** [27]*At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out wherever they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate a joyful dedication with thanksgiving hymns and the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres. [28]The levitical singers gathered together from the region about Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, [29]from Beth-gilgal, and from the plains of Geba and Azmaveth (for the singers had built themselves settlements about Jerusalem). [30]The priests and Levites first purified themselves, then they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

[31]I had the princes of Judah mount the wall, and I arranged two great choirs. The first of these proceeded to the right, along the top of the wall, in the direction of the Dung Gate, [32]followed by Hoshaiah and half the princes of Judah, [33]along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, [34]Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, [35]priests with the trumpets, and also Zechariah, son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph, [36]and his brethren Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David, the man of God. [Ezra the scribe was at their head.] [37]At the Spring Gate they went straight up by the steps of the City of David and continued along the top of the wall above the house of David until they came to the Water Gate on the east.

[38]The second choir proceeded to the left, followed by myself and the other half of the princes of the people, along the top of the wall past the Oven Tower as far as the Broad Wall, [39]then past the Ephraim Gate [the New City Gate], the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Hundred Tower, as far as the Sheep Gate [and they came to a halt at the Prison Gate].

[40]The two choirs took up a position in the house of God; I, too, who had with me half the magistrates, [41]the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, Hananiah, with the trumpets, [42]and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers were heard under the leadership of Jezrahiah. [43]Great sacrifices were offered on that day, and there was rejoicing over the great feast of the LORD in which they shared. The women and the children joined in, and the rejoicing at Jerusalem could be heard from afar off.

**12, 27–43:** The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem took place, no doubt, soon after the restoration of the wall and its gates had been completed. Therefore, this section is best read after Neh 6, 15.

1 12–22: Neh 10, 3–9; 12, 1–6. m Ezr 2, 40. n Neh 11, 17.

**Offerings for Priests and Levites*** 44 [o]At that time men were appointed over the chambers set aside for stores, offerings, first fruits, and tithes; in them they were to collect from the fields of the various cities the portions legally assigned to the priests and Levites. For Judah rejoiced in its appointed priests and Levites 45who carried out the ministry of their God and the ministry of purification (as did the singers and the gatekeepers) in accordance with the prescriptions of David and of Solomon, his son. 46For the heads of the families of the singers and the hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God came down from the days of David and Asaph in times of old.[p] 47Thus all Israel, in the days of Zerubbabel [and in the days of Nehemiah], gave the singers and the gatekeepers their portions, according to their daily needs. They made their consecrated offering to the Levites, and the Levites made theirs to the sons of Aaron.[q]

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 8–13
See RG
203–207

**Separation from Aliens** 1 [r]* At that time, when there was reading from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people, it was found written there that "no Ammonite or Moabite may ever be admitted into the assembly of God; 2for they would not succor the Israelites with food and water, but they hired Balaam to curse them, though our God turned the curse into a blessing."[s] 3When they had heard the law, they separated from Israel every foreign element.[t]

**Reform in the Temple** 4*Before this, the priest Eliashib, who had been placed in charge of the chambers of the house of our God and who was an associate of Tobiah, 5had set aside for the latter's use a large chamber in which had previously been stored the cereal offerings, incense and utensils, the tithes in grain, wine, and oil allotted to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the offerings due the priests.[u] 6During all this time I had not been in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, I had gone back to the king. After due time,* however, I asked leave of the king 7and returned to Jerusalem, where I discovered the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in setting aside for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8This displeased me very much, and I had all of Tobiah's household goods thrown outside the chamber. 9Then I gave orders to purify the chambers, and I had them replace there the utensils of the house of God, the cereal offerings, and the incense.

10I learned, too, that the portions due the Levites were no longer being given, so that the Levites and the singers who should have been carrying out the services had deserted, each man to his own field. 11I took the magistrates to task, demanding, "Why is the house of God abandoned?" Then I brought the Levites together and had them resume their stations. 12All Judah once more brought in the tithes of grain, wine, and oil to the storerooms;[v] 13and in charge of the storerooms I appointed the priest Shelemiah, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah, one of the Levites, together with Hanan, son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, as their assistant; for these men were held to be trustworthy. It was their duty to make the distribution to their brethren. 14Remember this to my credit, O my God! Let not the devotion which I showed for the house of my God and its services be forgotten!

**Sabbath Observance** 15In those days I perceived that men in Judah were treading the winepresses on the sabbath; that they were bringing in sheaves of grain, loading them on their asses, together with wine, grapes, figs, and every other

**12, 44–47:** This account of the provisions made for the temple services is apparently a composition of the Chronicler. At that time: a mere connective; no particular time is meant, but the account fits best after that of the restoration of the temple (Ezr 6, 13–18) in the days of Zerubbabel (v 47). The gloss mentioning Nehemiah is not in the ancient Greek version.

**13, 1ff:** These verses were composed by the Chronicler to serve as an introduction to the reforms that Nehemiah instituted during his second mission in Jerusalem (vv 4–31). The part of the book of Moses read to the people is freely quoted here from Dt 23, 3–6.

**13, 4–31:** This is part of the "Memoirs of Nehemiah"; it is continued in Neh 10, 1–40.

**13, 6:** After due time: it is not known when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem or how long his second period of activity there lasted, but it probably ended before Ezra came to Palestine; see note on Ezr 7, 1–8.

o 44f: 1 Chr 23—26; 2 Chr 8, 14. p 2 Chr 29, 30; 35, 15. q Neh 13, 10f; 10, 39; Nm 18, 26. r 1ff: Dt 23, 3–6. s Nm 22—24. t Neh 13, 23–28. u Neh 12, 44. v Neh 10, 38f; 12, 44f. 47; 2 Chr 31, 6.

kind of burden, and bringing them to Jerusalem
on the sabbath day. I warned them to sell none
of these victuals.[w] [16]In Jerusalem itself the Tyr-
ians who were resident there were importing
fish and every other kind of merchandise and
selling it to the Judahites on the sabbath. [17]I took
the nobles of Judah to task, demanding of them:
"What is this evil thing that you are doing, pro-
faning the sabbath day? [18]Did not your fathers
act in this same way, with the result that our
God has brought all this evil upon us and upon
this city? Would you add to the wrath against
Israel by once more profaning the sabbath?"

[19]When the shadows were falling on the gates
of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I ordered the
doors to be closed and forbade them to be
reopened till after the sabbath. I posted some of
my own men at the gates so that no burden
might enter on the sabbath day. [20]The mer-
chants and sellers of various kinds of merchan-
dise spent the night once or twice outside
Jerusalem, [21]but then I warned them, saying to
them: "Why do you spend the night alongside
the wall? If you keep this up, I will lay hands on
you!" From that time on, they did not return on
the sabbath. [22]Then I ordered the Levites to
purify themselves and to go and watch the gates,
so that the sabbath day might be kept holy. This,
too, remember in my favor, O my God, and have
mercy on me in accordance with your great
mercy!

**Mixed Marriages** [23]Also in those days I saw
Jews who had married Ashdodite, Ammonite, or
Moabite wives.[x] [24]Of their children, half spoke
Ashdodite,* and none of them knew how to
speak Jewish; and so it was in regard to the
languages of the various other peoples. [25]I took
them to task and cursed them; I had some of
them beaten and their hair pulled out; and I
adjured them by God: "You shall not marry your
daughters to their sons nor take any of their
daughters for your sons or for yourselves! [26]Did
not Solomon, the king of Israel, sin because of
them? Though among the many nations there
was no king like him, and though he was
beloved of his God and God had made him king
over all Israel, yet even he was made to sin by
foreign women.[y] [27]Must it also be heard of you
that you have done this same very great evil,
betraying our God by marrying foreign women?"

[28]One of the sons of Joiada, son of Eliashib the
high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the
Horonite! I drove him from my presence.[z]
[29]Remember against them, O my God, how they
defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the
priesthood and the Levites!

[30]Thus I cleansed them of all foreign contami-
nation. I established the various functions for the
priests and Levites, so that each had his ap-
pointed task. [31]I also provided for the procure-
ment of wood at stated times and for the first
fruits. Remember this in my favor, O my God![a]

**13, 24**: Ashdodite: the language spoken at Ashdod, more likely an Aramaic rather than a Philistine dialect. Jewish: Hebrew as spoken in postexilic Judah.

w Neh 10, 32; Ex 20, 8. x Neh 10, 31; 13, 1ff; Dt 23, 3. y 1 Kgs 11, 1–13. z Neh 2, 10; 13, 4f. 7ff. a Neh 10, 35f.

# THE BOOK OF TOBIT

Tobit
See RG
207–211

The Book of Tobit, named after its principal hero, combines specifically Jewish piety and morality with oriental folklore in a fascinating story that has enjoyed wide popularity in both Jewish and Christian circles. Prayers, psalms, and words of wisdom, as well as the skillfully constructed story itself, provide valuable insights into the faith and the religious milieu of its unknown author. The book was probably written early in the second century B.C.; it is not known where.

Tobit, a devout and wealthy Israelite living among the captives deported to Nineveh, from the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C., suffers severe reverses and is finally blinded. Because of his misfortunes he begs the Lord to let him die. But recalling the large sum he had formerly

deposited in far-off Media, he sends his son Tobiah there to bring back the money. In Media, at this same time, a young woman, Sarah, also prays for death, because she has lost seven husbands, each killed in turn on his wedding night by the demon Asmodeus. God hears the prayers of Tobit and Sarah, and sends the angel Raphael in disguise to aid them both.

Raphael makes the trip to Media with Tobiah. When Tobiah is attacked by a large fish as he bathes, Raphael orders him to seize it and to remove its gall, heart, and liver because they make "useful medicines." Later, at Raphael's urging, Tobiah marries Sarah, and uses the fish's heart and liver to drive Asmodeus from the bridal chamber. Returning to Nineveh with his wife and his father's money, Tobiah rubs the fish's gall into his father's eyes and cures them. Finally, Raphael reveals his true identity and returns to heaven. Tobit then utters his beautiful hymn of praise. Before dying, Tobit tells his son to leave Nineveh because God will destroy that wicked city. After Tobiah buries his father and mother, he and his family depart for Media, where he later learns that the destruction of Nineveh has taken place.

The inspired author of the book used the literary form of religious novel (as in Jonah and Judith) for the purpose of instruction and edification. There may have been a historical nucleus around which the story was composed, but this possibility has nothing to do with the teaching of the book. The seemingly historical data—names of kings, cities, etc.—are used merely as vivid details to create interest and charm.

Although the Book of Tobit is usually listed with the historical books, it more correctly stands midway between them and the wisdom literature. It contains numerous maxims like those found in the wisdom books (cf 4, 3-19. 21; 12, 6-10; 14, 7.9) as well as the customary sapiential themes: fidelity to the law, the intercessory function of angels, piety toward parents, the purity of marriage, reverence for the dead, and the value of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. The book makes Tobit a relative of *Ahiqar,* a hero of ancient Near Eastern folklore.

Written in Aramaic, the original of the book was lost for centuries. The Greek translation, existing in three different recensions, is our primary source. In 1955, fragments of the book in Aramaic and in Hebrew were recovered from Cave IV at Qumran. These texts are in substantial agreement with the Greek recension that has served as the basis for the present translation.

The divisions of the Book of Tobit are:

I. Tobit's Ordeals (1, 3—3, 6).
II. Sarah's Plight (3, 7-17).
III. Tobiah's Journey and Marriage to Sarah (4, 1—9, 6).
IV. Tobiah's Return; Cure of Tobit's Blindness (10, 1—11, 18).
V. Raphael Reveals His Identity (12, 1-22).
VI. Tobit's Song of Praise (13, 1-18).
VII. Epilogue (14, 1-15).

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1-14
See RG
207-210

**Tobit** [1]This book tells the story of Tobit,* son of Tobiel, son of Hananiel, son of Aduel, son of Gabael of the family of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali, [2]who during the reign of Shalmaneser,* king of Assyria, was taken captive

1, 1: Tobit: in the fragments of the book found at Qumran, is given as Tobi, an abbreviated form of Tobiyah (v 9; Ezr 2, 60) or of Tobiyabu (2 Chr 17, 8), a name which means "Yahweh is good." Tobiel, "God is good"; Hananiel, "God is merciful." The book abounds in theophoric names.

1, 2: Shalmaneser V (727–722 B.C.): began the siege of Samaria; the inhabitants of the northern kingdom were taken into captivity by his successor, Sargon II (722–705). Thisbe and Phogor: towns of Galilee that have not been identified; Thisbe in Gilead was perhaps the birthplace of Elijah. Kedesh: cf Jos 20, 7. Asser: Hazor (Jos 11, 1).

from Thisbe, which is south of Kedesh Naphtali
in upper Galilee, above and to the west of Asser,
north of Phogor.[a]

## I: Tobit's Ordeals

**His Virtue** 3I, Tobit, have walked all the days
of my life on the paths of truth and righteous-
ness. I performed many charitable works for my
kinsmen and my people who had been deported
with me to Nineveh, in Assyria. 4When I lived as
a young man in my own country, Israel, the
entire tribe of my forefather Naphtali had broken
away from the house of David and from Jerusa-
lem. This city had been singled out of all Israel's
tribes, so that they all might offer sacrifice in the
place where the temple, God's dwelling, had
been built and consecrated for all generations to
come. 5[b]All my kinsmen, like the rest of the
tribe of my forefather Naphtali, used to offer
sacrifice on all the mountains of Galilee as well
as to the young bull which Jeroboam, king of
Israel, had made in Dan.*

6[c]I, for my part, would often make the
pilgrimage alone to Jerusalem for the festivals, as
is prescribed for all Israel by perpetual decree.*
Bringing with me the first fruits of the field and
the firstlings of the flock, together with a tenth
of my income and the first shearings of the
sheep,[d] I would hasten to Jerusalem 7[e]and
present them to the priests, Aaron's sons, at the
altar. To the Levites who were doing service in
Jerusalem I would give the tithe of grain, wine,
olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and other fruits.
And except for sabbatical years, I used to give a
second tithe in money, which each year I would
go and disburse in Jerusalem. 8The third tithe I
gave to orphans and widows, and to converts
who were living with the Israelites. Every third
year I would bring them this offering, and we ate
it in keeping with the decree of the Mosaic law
and the commands of Deborah, the mother of
my father Tobiel; for when my father died, he
left me an orphan.

9When I reached manhood, I married Anna, a
woman of our own lineage. By her I had a son
whom I named Tobiah. 10Now after I had been
deported to Nineveh, all my brothers and rela-
tives ate the food of heathens,[f] 11but I refrained
from eating that kind of food. 12Because of this
wholehearted service of God, 13the Most High
granted me favor and status with Shalmaneser,
so that I became purchasing agent for all his
needs.[g] 14Every now and then until his death I
would go to Media to buy goods for him. I also
deposited several pouches containing a great
sum of money* with my kinsman Gabael, son of
Gabri, who lived at Rages, in Media. 15But when
Shalmaneser died and his son Sennacherib*
succeeded him as king, the roads to Media
became unsafe, so I could no longer go there.

**Courage in Burying the Dead** 16During Shal-
maneser's reign I performed many charitable
works for my kinsmen and my people. 17[h]I
would give my bread to the hungry and my
clothing to the naked. If I saw one of my people
who had died and been thrown outside the walls
of Nineveh, I would bury him.* 18I also buried
anyone whom Sennacherib slew when he re-
turned as a fugitive from Judea during the days
of judgment decreed against him by the heav-
enly King because of the blasphemies he had
uttered. In his rage he killed many Israelites, but
I used to take their bodies by stealth and bury
them; so when Sennacherib looked for them, he
could not find them. 19But a certain citizen of

1, 5: Jeroboam established sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel so that the people would no longer go to Jerusalem for the festivals. The gold statues of bulls which he placed in the sanctuaries were considered the throne of Yahweh; but the people soon came to worship the images themselves. Jeroboam also encouraged the high places or hilltop shrines (1 Kgs 12, 26–33).

1, 6ff: Perpetual decree: Dt 12, 11. 13–14. Refusing to worship at Jeroboam's shrines, the faithful Tobit continued to bring his offerings to Jerusalem; see 2 Chr 11, 16. For the various tithes, cf Nm 18, 20–32; 2 Chr 31, 4–6; Dt 14, 22–29; 26, 12f.

1, 14: A great sum of money: literally, "ten silver talents," about ten thousand dollars. Rages: modern Rai, about five miles southeast of Teheran. Media: the northwestern part of modern Iran.

1, 15: Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.): the son of Sargon (722–705 B.C.); neither was descended from Shalmaneser. Inconsistencies such as this point to the fact that the Book of Tobit is a religious novel (see Introduction; also notes on 5, 6 and 14, 15).

1, 17–18: Tobit risked his own life to bury the dead. Deprivation of burial was viewed with horror by the Jews. Cf Tb 4, 3–4; 6, 15; 14, 12–13.

a 2 Kgs 17, 3; 18, 9ff. b 1 Kgs 12, 26–32. c Ex 23, 14f. 17; 34, 23. d Dt 16, 16. e 7f: Nm 18, 12f. 24; Dt 14, 22–29; 18, 4f. f Lv 11: Dt 14, 3–21; Acts 15, 29; 1 Cor 8, 7ff. g Dn 2, 48f. h Jb 31, 16–20.

Nineveh informed the king that it was I who buried the dead. When I found out that the king knew all about me and wanted to put me to death, I went into hiding; then in my fear I took to flight. [20]Afterward, all my property was confiscated; I was left with nothing. All that I had was taken to the king's palace, except for my wife Anna and my son Tobiah.

[21]But less than forty days later the king was assassinated by two of his sons, who then escaped into the mountains of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon,* who succeeded him as king, placed Ahiqar, my brother Anael's son, in charge of all the accounts of his kingdom, so that he took control over the entire administration.[i] [22]Then Ahiqar interceded on my behalf, and I was able to return to Nineveh. For under Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Ahiqar had been chief cupbearer, keeper of the seal, administrator, and treasurer; and Esarhaddon reappointed him. He was a close relative—in fact, my nephew.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1-14
See RG
207-210

[1]Thus under King Esarhaddon I returned to my home, and my wife Anna and my son Tobiah were restored to me. Then on our festival of Pentecost, the feast of Weeks,* a fine dinner was prepared for me, and I reclined to eat.[j] [2]The table was set for me, and when many different dishes were placed before me, I said to my son Tobiah: "My son, go out and try to find a poor man from among our kinsmen exiled here in Nineveh. If he is a sincere worshiper of God, bring him back with you, so that he can share this meal with me. Indeed, son, I shall wait for you to come back."*

[3]Tobiah went out to look for some poor kinsman of ours. When he returned he exclaimed, "Father!" I said to him, "What is it, son?" He answered, "Father, one of our people has been murdered! His body lies in the market place where he was just strangled!" [4]I sprang to my feet, leaving the dinner untouched; and I carried the dead man from the street and put him in one of the rooms, so that I might bury him after sunset. [5]Returning to my own quarters, I washed myself* and ate my food in sorrow.[k] [6]I was reminded of the oracle pronounced by the prophet Amos against Bethel:[l]

"Your festivals shall be returned into
mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation."

[7]And I wept. Then at sunset I went out, dug a grave, and buried him.

[8]The neighbors mocked me, saying to one another: "Will this man never learn! Once before he was hunted down for execution because of this very thing; yet now that he has escaped, here he is again burying the dead!"

**Tobit's Blindness** [9]That same night I bathed, and went to sleep next to the wall of my courtyard. Because of the heat I left my face uncovered. [10]I did not know there were birds perched on the wall above me, till their warm droppings settled in my eyes, causing cataracts.* I went to see some doctors for a cure, but the more they anointed my eyes with various salves, the worse the cataracts became, until I could see no more. For four years I was deprived of eyesight, and all my kinsmen were grieved at my condition. Ahiqar, however, took care of me for two years, until he left for Elymais.

[11]At that time my wife Anna worked for hire at weaving cloth, the kind of work women do. [12]When she sent back the goods to their owners,

**1, 21:** Esarhaddon: 681–669 B.C. Ahiqar: a hero of ancient folklore, known for his outstanding wisdom. The Story (or Wisdom) of Ahiqar was very popular in antiquity and is extant in many different forms: Aramaic, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic (Arabian Nights), Greek (Aesop's Fables), Slavonic, Ethiopic, and Romanian. The sacred author makes Tobit the uncle of the famous Ahiqar in order to enhance Tobit's own prestige. See note on Tb 14, 10.

**2, 1:** The feast of Weeks: also called by its Greek name Pentecost, was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. Cf Lv 23, 15–21; Dt 16, 9–12.

**2, 2:** Almsgiving and charity to the poor are important virtues taught by the book (Tb 4, 7–11. 16f; 12, 8f; 14, 10f).

**2, 5:** I washed myself: because of ritual defilement from touching a corpse (Nm 19, 11–13).

**2, 10:** Cataracts: literally, "white scales, or films." Elymais: the Greek name of ancient Elam, a district northeast of the head of the Persian Gulf.

i 2 Kgs 19, 37; 2 Chr 32, 21; Sir 48, 21; Is 37, 38; 2 Mc 8, 19. j Lv 23, 15–21; Nm 28, 26–31; Dt 16, 9–12. k Nm 19, 11–22. l Am 8, 10; 1 Mc 1, 39.

they would pay her. Late in winter* she finished the cloth and sent it back to the owners. They paid her the full salary, and also gave her a young goat for the table. [13]On entering my house the goat began to bleat. I called to my wife and said: "Where did this goat come from? Perhaps it was stolen! Give it back to its owners; we have no right to eat stolen food!" [14] [m]But she said to me, "It was given to me as a bonus over and above my wages." Yet I would not believe her; and told her to give it back to its owners. I became very angry with her over this. So she retorted: "Where are your charitable deeds now? Where are your virtuous acts? See! Your true character is finally showing itself!"*

## CHAPTER 3

[1]Grief-stricken in spirit, I groaned and wept aloud. Then with sobs I began to pray:

### Tobit's Prayer for Death

[2]"You are righteous, O Lord,
and all your deeds are just;
All your ways are mercy and truth;
you are the judge of the world. [n]
[3]And now, O Lord, may you be mindful of me,
and look with favor upon me.
Punish me not for my sins,
nor for my inadvertent offenses,
nor for those of my fathers. [o]

"They sinned against you,
[4] and disobeyed your commandments.
So you handed us over to plundering, exile, and death,
till we were an object lesson, a byword, a reproach
in all the nations among whom you scattered us. [p]

[5]"Yes, your judgments are many and true
in dealing with me as my sins
and those of my fathers deserve.
For we have not kept your commandments,
nor have we trodden the paths of truth before you.

[6]"So now, deal with me as you please,
and command my life breath to be taken from me,
that I may go from the face of the earth into dust.
It is better for me to die than to live,*
because I have heard insulting calumnies,
and I am overwhelmed with grief. [q]

"Lord, command me to be delivered from such anguish;
let me go to the everlasting abode;
Lord, refuse me not.
For it is better for me to die
than to endure so much misery in life,
and to hear these insults!"

Ch 1–14
See RG
207–210

## II: Sarah's Plight

**Sarah Falsely Accused** [7]*On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it so happened that Raguel's daughter Sarah also had to listen to abuse, from one of her father's maids. [8]For she had been married to seven husbands, but the wicked demon Asmodeus* killed them off before they could have intercourse with her, as it is prescribed for wives. So the maid said to her: "You are the one who strangles your husbands! Look at you! You have already been married seven times, but you have had no joy with any one of your husbands. [9]Why do you beat us? Because your husbands are dead? Then why not join

**2, 12:** Late in winter: literally, "seventh of Dystros," the Macedonian month which corresponds to the Jewish month of Shebat (January–February). For the table: literally, "for the hearth"; the gift had probably been made in view of some springtime festival like the Jewish Purim.

**2, 14:** Anna's sharp rebuke calls to mind the words of Job's wife (Jb 2, 9).

**3, 6:** It is better for me to die than to live: in his distress Tobit uses the words of the petulant Jonah (Jon 4, 3. 8), who wished to die because God did not destroy the hated Ninevites. In similar circumstances, Moses (Nm 11, 15), Elijah (1 Kgs 19, 4), and Job (Jb 7, 15) also prayed for death. Everlasting abode: a reference to Sheol, the dismal abode of the dead from which no one returns (Jb 7, 9–10; 14, 12; Is 26, 14). The revelation of a blessed immortality had not yet been made. See note on Tb 4, 6.

**3, 7:** From here on, the story is told in the third person. V 7 relates one of the several marvelous coincidences which the storyteller uses to heighten interest; see also vv 16. 17; 4, 1; 5, 4. Ecbatana: Hamadan in modern Iran; this was the capital of ancient Media. Raguel: "friend of God."

**3, 8:** Asmodeus: in Persian aeshma daeva, "demon of wrath," adopted into Aramaic with the sense of "the Destroyer." He will be subdued (Tb 8, 3) by Raphael (v 17), "God heals."

m Jb 2, 9. n Pss 25, 10; 119, 137; Dn 3, 27. o Ex 34, 7. p Dt 28, 15; Bar 1, 16–22; 2, 4f; 3, 8; Dn 9, 5f. q Nm 11, 15; 1 Kgs 19, 4; Jb 7, 15; Jon 4, 3. 8.

them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!"

[10]That day she was deeply grieved in spirit. She went in tears to an upstairs room in her father's house with the intention of hanging herself. But she reconsidered, saying to herself: "No! People would level this insult against my father: 'You had only one beloved daughter, but she hanged herself because of ill fortune!' And thus would I cause my father in his old age to go down to the nether world laden with sorrow. It is far better for me not to hang myself, but to beg the Lord to have me die, so that I need no longer live to hear such insults."[r]

[11]At that time, then, she spread out her hands, and facing the window,* poured out this prayer:

**Sarah's Prayer for Death**

"Blessed are you, O Lord, merciful God!
Forever blessed and honored is your holy name;
may all your works forever bless you.[s]
[12]And now, O Lord, to you I turn my face
and raise my eyes.
[13]Bid me to depart from the earth,
never again to hear such insults.

[14]"You know, O Master, that I am innocent
of any impure act with a man,
[15]And that I have never defiled my own name
or my father's name in the land of my exile.

"I am my father's only daughter,
and he has no other child to make his heir,
Nor does he have a close kinsman or other relative
whom I might bide my time to marry.
I have already lost seven husbands;
why then should I live any longer?
But if it please you, Lord, not to slay me,
look favorably upon me and have pity on me;
never again let me hear these insults!"

**An Answer to Prayer** [16]At that very time, the prayer of these two suppliants was heard in the glorious presence of Almighty God. [17][t]So Raphael was sent to heal them both: to remove the cataracts from Tobit's eyes, so that he might again see God's sunlight; and to marry Raguel's daughter Sarah to Tobit's son Tobiah, and then drive the wicked demon Asmodeus from her. For Tobiah had the right* to claim her before any other who might wish to marry her.

In the very moment that Tobit returned from the courtyard to his house, Raguel's daughter Sarah came downstairs from her room.*

## III: Tobiah's Journey and Marriage to Sarah

### CHAPTER 4

Ch 1–14
See RG
207–210

**A Father's Instruction** [1]That same day Tobit remembered the money he had deposited with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he thought, [2]"Now that I have asked for death, why should I not call my son Tobiah and let him know about this money before I die?" [3]So he called his son Tobiah; and when he came, he said to him:* "My son, when I die, give me a decent burial. Honor your mother, and do not abandon her as long as she lives. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her spirit in any way.[u] [4]Remember, my son, that she went through many trials for your sake while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her in the same grave with me.

[5]"Through all your days, my son, keep the Lord in mind, and suppress every desire to sin or to break his commandments. Perform good

3, 11: Facing the window: that is, looking toward Jerusalem; cf Dn 6, 11. Blessed are you and "Blessed be God" are traditional openings of Jewish prayers (Tb 8, 5, 15; 11, 14; 13, 1).

3, 17: Tobiah had the right: according to the patriarchal custom of marriage within the family group. Tobiah was Sarah's closest eligible relative (Tb 6, 12). Cf Tb 4, 12–13; Gn 24.

4, 3–19: A collection of maxims which parallel those in the wisdom literature, especially Prv and Sir (see Introduction): duties toward parents (3–4); cf also Tb 14, 13; perseverance in virtue and avoidance of evil (5–6. 14b); necessity and value of almsgiving and charity (7–11. 16–17); marriage to a kinsman (12–13a); industry (13b); prompt payment of wages (14a); the golden rule (15a); temperance (15b); docility (18); prayer (19).

r Tb 6, 15; Gn 37, 35; 42, 38; 44, 29. 31. s 1 Kgs 8, 44, 48; Pss 28, 2; 134, 2; Dn 6, 11. t Tb 4, 12f; 6, 12f; Gn 24, 3f. u Ex 20, 12; Prv 23, 22; Sir 7, 27.

works all the days of your life, and do not tread
the paths of wrongdoing. 6 [v]For if you are stead-
fast in your service, your good works will bring
success, not only to you, but also to all those
who live uprightly.*

7"Give alms from your possessions. Do not
turn your face away from any of the poor, and
God's face will not be turned away from you.[w]
8Son, give alms in proportion to what you own.
If you have great wealth, give alms out of your
abundance; if you have but little, distribute even
some of that. But do not hesitate to give alms;
9you will be storing up a goodly treasure for
yourself against the day of adversity.[x]
10Almsgiving frees one from death, and keeps
one from going into the dark abode. 11Alms are a
worthy offering in the sight of the Most High for
all who give them.[y]

12"Be on your guard, son, against every form
of immorality, and above all, marry a woman of
the lineage of your forefathers. Do not marry a
stranger who is not of your father's tribe, be-
cause we are sons of the prophets. My boy, keep
in mind Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our
fathers from of old: all of them took wives from
among their own kinsmen and were blessed in
their children. Remember that their posterity
shall inherit the land.[z] 13Therefore, my son, love
your kinsmen. Do not be so proudhearted to-
ward your kinsmen, the sons and daughters of
your people, as to refuse to take a wife for
yourself from among them. For in such arro-
gance there is ruin and great disorder. Likewise,
in worthlessness there is decay and dire poverty,
for worthlessness is the mother of famine.

14"Do not keep with you overnight the wages
of any man who works for you, but pay him
immediately. If you thus behave as God's ser-
vant, you will receive your reward. Keep a close
watch on yourself, my son, in everything you do,
and discipline yourself in all your conduct.[a]
15Do to no one what you yourself dislike. Do not
drink wine till you become drunk, nor let
drunkenness accompany you on your way.[b]

16 [c]"Give to the hungry some of your bread,
and to the naked some of your clothing. What-
ever you have left over, give away as alms; and
do not begrudge the alms you give. 17 [d]Be lavish
with your bread and wine at the burial of the
virtuous, but do not share them with sinners.*

18"Seek counsel from every wise man, and do
not think lightly of any advice that can be useful.
19 [e]At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him
to make all your paths straight and to grant
success to all your endeavors and plans. For no
pagan nation possesses good counsel, but the
Lord himself gives all good things. If the Lord
chooses, he raises a man up; but if he should
decide otherwise, he casts him down to the
deepest recesses of the nether world. So now,
my son, keep in mind my commandments, and
never let them be erased from your heart.*

20"And now, son, I wish to inform you that I
have deposited a great sum of money with
Gabri's son Gabael at Rages in Media. 21Do not
be discouraged, my child, because of our pov-
erty. You will be a rich man if you fear God,
avoid all sin, and do what is right before the Lord
your God."[f]

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 1–14
See RG
207–210

**The Angel Raphael** 1Then Tobiah replied to
his father Tobit: "Everything that you have
commanded me, father, I will do. 2But how
shall I be able to obtain the money from him,
since he does not know me nor do I know him?
What can I show him to make him recognize
me and trust me, so that he will give me the
money? I do not even know which roads to
take for the journey into Media!" 3Tobit an-

4, 6: Before the revelation of retribution for all men in the afterlife—a doctrine taught in the Book of Wisdom—Old Testament man believed that virtue guaranteed earthly prosperity, and sin earthly disaster (cf Dt 28).

4, 17: Tobit counsels his son either to give alms in honor of the dead, or, more probably, to give the "bread of consolation" to the family of the deceased. Cf Jer 16, 7; Ez 24, 17.

4, 19: Prayer is the foundation of a moral life.

v Tb 13, 6; Jn 3, 21; Eph 4, 15. w 7f: Tb 12, 8ff; Dt 15, 7f. 11; Prv 19, 17; Sir 4, 1–6; 14, 13; Lk 14, 13; 1 Jn 3, 17. x Mt 6, 20f. y Sir 3, 30; 29, 12. z Tb 3, 15. 17; 6, 12; Gn 11, 29. 31; 25, 20; 28, 1–4; 29, 15–30; Ex 34, 16; Dt 7, 3; Jgs 14, 3. a Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 15. b Mt 7, 12; Lk 6, 31. c Dt 15, 10; Is 58, 7; Mt 25, 35f; 2 Cor 9, 7. d Jer 16, 7; Lk 14, 13. e Dt 4, 6; Ps 119, 10. f 1 Tm 6, 6ff.

swered his son Tobiah: "We exchanged signatures on a document* written in duplicate; I divided it into two parts, and each of us kept one; his copy I put with the money. Think of it, twenty years have already passed since I deposited that money! So now, my son, find yourself a trustworthy man who will make the journey with you. We will, of course, give him a salary when you return; but get back that money from Gabael."

4Tobiah went to look for someone acquainted with the roads who would travel with him to Media. As soon as he went out, he found the angel Raphael standing before him, though he did not know* that this was an angel of God.[g] 5Tobiah said to him, "Who are you, young man?" He replied, "I am an Israelite, one of your kinsmen. I have come here to work." Tobiah said, "Do you know the way to Media?" 6The other replied: "Yes, I have been there many times. I know the place well and I know all the routes. I have often traveled to Media; I used to stay with our kinsman Gabael, who lives at Rages in Media. It is a good two days' travel from Ecbatana to Rages,* for Rages is situated at the mountains, Ecbatana out on the plateau." 7Tobiah said to him, "Wait for me, young man, till I go back and tell my father; for I need you to make the journey with me. I will, of course, pay you."[h] 8Raphael replied, "Very well, I will wait for you; but do not be long."

9Tobiah went back to tell his father Tobit what had happened. He said to him, "I have just found a man who is one of our own Israelite kinsmen!" Tobit said, "Call the man, so that I may find out what family and tribe he comes from, and whether he is trustworthy enough to travel with you, son." Tobiah went out to summon the man saying, "Young man, my father would like to see you."

10When Raphael entered the house, Tobit greeted him first. Raphael said, "Hearty greetings* to you!" Tobit replied: "What joy is left for me any more? Here I am, a blind man who cannot see God's sunlight, but must remain in darkness, like the dead who no longer see the light! Though alive, I am among the dead. I can hear a man's voice, but I cannot see him." Raphael said, "Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage!" Tobit then said: "My son Tobiah wants to go to Media. Can you go with him to show him the way? I will of course pay you, brother." Raphael answered: "Yes, I can go with him, for I know all the routes. I have often traveled to Media and crossed all its plains and mountains; so I know every road well." 11Tobit asked, "Brother, tell me, please, what family and tribe are you from?" 12Raphael said: "Why? Do you need a tribe and a family? Or are you looking for a hired man to travel with your son?" Tobit replied, "I wish to know truthfully whose son you are, brother, and what your name is."[i]

13Raphael answered, "I am Azariah,* son of Hananiah the elder, one of your own kinsmen." 14Tobit exclaimed: "Welcome! God save you, brother! Do not be provoked with me, brother, for wanting to learn the truth about your family. So it turns out that you are a kinsman, and from a noble and good line! I knew Hananiah and Nathaniah, the two sons of Shemaiah the elder; with me they used to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where we would worship together. No, they did not stray from the right path; your kinsmen are good men. You are certainly of good lineage, and welcome!"

**5, 3:** Document: in Greek cheirographon. In the Middle Ages, notably in England, a deed and its duplicate were written on one piece of parchment, with the Latin word chirographum inscribed across the top of the sheet or between the two copies of the text. The document was then cut in two in either a straight or a wavy line, the parts being given to the persons concerned. Perhaps this procedure derived from the present verse of Tobit. Duplicate documents, usually one open and the other sealed, are well known from the ancient Near East.

**5, 4:** He did not know: the theme of an angel in disguise occurs frequently in folklore as well as in the Old Testament (Gn 18; cf Heb 13, 2).

**5, 6:** It is a good two days' travel from Echatana to Rages: Alexander's army took eleven days in forced marches to cover this distance, about 180 miles. The author is merely using popular impressions about faraway places; he is not teaching geography. (See notes on Tb 1, 15; 3, 7 and Introduction.)

**5, 10:** Hearty greetings and what joy form a wordplay on the Greek verb chairein, "to greet" and "to be joyful."

**5, 13–14:** Azariah, "Yahweh helps"; Hananiah, "Yahweh is merciful"; Nathaniah, "Yahweh gives"; Shemaiah, "Yahweh hears."

g Heb 13, 2. h Tb 12, 2. i Jgs 13, 17f.

[15]Then he added: "For each day you are away
I will give you the normal wages,* plus expenses
for you and for my son. If you go with my son,
[16]I will even add a bonus to your wages!"
Raphael replied: "I will go with him; have no
fear. In good health we shall leave you, and in
good health we shall return to you, for the way is
safe." [17]Tobit said, "God bless you, brother."
Then he called his son and said to him: "My son,
prepare whatever you need for the journey, and
set out with your kinsman. May God in heaven
protect you on the way and bring you back to
me safe and sound; and may his angel accom-
pany you for safety, my son."

Before setting out on his journey, Tobiah
kissed his father and mother. Tobit said to him,
"Have a safe journey." [18]But his mother began to
weep. She said to Tobit: "Why have you decided
to send my child away? Is he not the staff to
which we cling, ever there with us in all that we
do? [19]I hope more money is not your chief
concern! Rather let it be a ransom for our son!
[20]What the Lord has given us to live on is
certainly enough for us." [21]Tobit reassured her:
"Have no such thought. Our son will leave in
good health and come back to us in good health.
Your own eyes will see the day when he returns
to you safe and sound. [22]So, no such thought; do
not worry about them, my love.* For a good
angel will go with him, his journey will be
successful, and he will return unharmed." [1]Then
she stopped weeping.*

## CHAPTER 6

**Journey to Rages** [2]When the boy left home,
accompanied by the angel, the dog followed
Tobiah out of the house and went with him. The
travelers walked till nightfall, and made camp
beside the Tigris River. [3]Now when the boy
went down to wash his feet in the river, a large
fish suddenly leaped out of the water and tried to
swallow his foot. He shouted in alarm. [4]But the
angel said to him, "Take hold of the fish and
don't let it get away!" The boy seized the fish
and hauled it up on the shore. [5]The angel then
told him: "Cut the fish open and take out its gall,
heart, and liver, and keep them with you; but
throw away the entrails. Its gall, heart, and liver
make useful medicines."* [6]After the lad had cut
the fish open, he put aside the gall, heart, and
liver. Then he broiled and ate part of the fish; the
rest he salted and kept for the journey.

**Raphael's Instructions** [7]Afterward they trav-
eled on together till they were near Media. The
boy asked the angel this question: "Brother
Azariah, what medicinal value is there in the
fish's heart, liver, and gall?" [8]He answered: "As
regards the fish's heart and liver, if you burn
them so that the smoke surrounds a man or a
woman who is afflicted by a demon or evil spirit,
the affliction will leave him completely, and no
demons will ever return to him again. [9]And as
for the gall, if you rub it on the eyes of a man
who has cataracts, blowing into his eyes right on
the cataracts, his sight will be restored."

[10]When they had entered Media and were
getting close to Ecbatana, [11]Raphael said to the
boy, "Brother Tobiah!" He answered, "Yes,
what is it?" Raphael continued: "Tonight we
must stay with Raguel, who is a relative of
yours. He has a daughter named Sarah, [12]but no
other child. Since you are Sarah's closest rela-
tive, you before all other men have the right to
marry her. Also, her father's estate is rightfully
yours to inherit. Now the girl is sensible, coura-
geous, and very beautiful; and her father loves
her dearly."[j] [13]He continued: "Since you have
the right to marry her, listen to me, brother.
Tonight I will ask the girl's father to let us have
her as your bride. When we return from Rages,
we will hold the wedding feast for her. I know
that Raguel cannot keep her from you or let her
become engaged to another man; that would be

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**5, 15:** The normal wages: literally, "a drachma," about seventeen cents, a day's wage for a workingman.

**5, 22:** My love: literally, "sister," a term of endearment applied to one's wife; cf Tb 7, 11. 15; 8, 4. 21; 10, 6. 13; Song 4, 9. 10. 12; 5, 1f. A good angel: a reference to the guardian angel, though Tobit does not know, of course, that Raphael himself, disguised as Azariah, is the good angel in this case.

**5, 1:** Then . . . weeping: this verse belongs to ch 6.

**6, 5:** Its gall . . . medicines: belief in the healing power of these organs was common among even the physicians of antiquity.

j Tb 4, 12f; Nm 36, 8.

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a capital crime according to the decree in the Book of Moses,* and he knows that it is your right, before all other men, to marry his daughter. So heed my words, brother; tonight we must speak for the girl, so that we may have her engaged to you. And when we return from Rages, we will take her and bring her back with us to your house."

[14]Tobiah objected, however: "Brother Azariah, I have heard that this woman has already been married seven times, and that her husbands died in their bridal chambers. On the very night they approached her, they dropped dead. And I have heard it said that it was a demon who killed them. [15]So now I too am afraid of this demon. Because he loves her, he does not harm her; but he does slay any man who wishes to come close to her. I am my father's only child. If I should die, I would bring my father and mother down to their grave in sorrow over me. And they have no other son to bury them!" [k]

[16]Raphael said to him: "Do you not remember your father's orders? He commanded you to marry a woman from your own family. So now listen to me, brother; do not give another thought to this demon, but marry Sarah. I know that tonight you shall have her for your wife! [17]When you go into the bridal chamber, take the fish's liver and heart, and place them on the embers for the incense. [18]As soon as the demon smells the odor they give off, he will flee and never again show himself near her. Then when you are about to have intercourse with her, both of you first rise up to pray.* Beg the Lord of heaven to show you mercy and grant you deliverance. But do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world existed. You will save her, and she will go with you. And I suppose that you will have children by her, who will take the place of brothers for you. So do not worry."

When Tobiah heard Raphael say that she was his kinswoman, of his own family's lineage, he fell deeply in love with her, and his heart became set on her.

6, 13: Raguel . . . Book of Moses: Nm 36, 6–8 prescribed marriage within the ancestral tribe, but no death penalty is mentioned.

## CHAPTER 7

**At the House of Raguel** [1]When they entered Ecbatana, Tobiah said, "Brother Azariah, lead me straight to our kinsman Raguel." So he brought him to the house of Raguel, whom they found seated by his courtyard gate. They greeted him first. He said to them, "Greetings to you too, brothers! Good health to you, and welcome!" When he brought them into his home, [2]he said to his wife Edna, "This young man looks just like my kinsman Tobit!" [3]So Edna asked them, "Who are you, brothers?" They answered, "We are of the exiles from Naphtali at Nineveh." [4]She said, "Do you know our kinsman Tobit?" They answered, "Indeed we do!" She asked, "Is he well?" [5]They answered, "Yes, he is alive and well." Then Tobiah exclaimed, "He is my father!" [6]Raguel sprang up and kissed him, shedding tears of joy. [7]But when he heard that Tobit had lost his eyesight, he was grieved and wept aloud. He said to Tobiah: "My child, God bless you! You are the son of a noble and good father. But what a terrible misfortune that such a righteous and charitable man should be afflicted with blindness!" He continued to weep in the arms of his kinsman Tobiah. [8]His wife Edna also wept for Tobit; and even their daughter Sarah began to weep.

**Marriage of Tobiah and Sarah** [9]Afterward, Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and gave them a cordial reception. When they had bathed and reclined to eat, Tobiah said to Raphael, "Brother Azariah, ask Raguel to let me marry my kinswoman Sarah." [10]Raguel overheard the words; so he said to the boy: "Eat and drink and be merry tonight, for no man is more entitled to marry my daughter Sarah than you, brother. Besides, not even I have the right to give her to anyone but you, because you are my closest relative. But I will explain the situation to you very frankly. [11]I have given her in marriage to seven men, all of whom were kinsmen of ours, and all died on the very night they approached her. But now, son, eat and drink. I am sure the Lord will look after you both." Tobiah

6, 18: Rise up to pray: prayer is needed to drive out the demon.

k Tb 3, 10.

answered, "I will eat or drink nothing until you
set aside what belongs to me."

Raguel said to him: "I will do it. She is yours
according to the decree of the Book of Moses.
Your marriage to her has been decided in
heaven! Take your kinswoman; from now on
you are her love, and she is your beloved. She is
yours today and ever after. And tonight, son,
may the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May
he grant you mercy and peace." [12]Then Raguel
called his daughter Sarah, and she came to him.
He took her by the hand and gave her to Tobiah
with the words: "Take her according to the law.
According to the decree written in the Book of
Moses she is your wife. Take her and bring her
back safely to your father. And may the God of
heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity." *l*
[13]He then called her mother and told her to
bring a scroll, so that he might draw up a
marriage contract stating that he gave Sarah to
Tobiah as his wife according to the decree of the
Mosaic law. Her mother brought the scroll, and
he drew up the contract, to which they affixed
their seals. *m*

[14]Afterward they began to eat and drink.
[15]Later Raguel called his wife Edna and said,
"My love, prepare the other bedroom and bring
the girl there." [16]She went and made the bed in
the room, as she was told, and brought the girl
there. After she had cried over her, she wiped
away the tears and said: [17]"Be brave, my daugh-
ter. May the Lord of heaven grant you joy in
place of your grief. Courage, my daughter."
Then she left.

## CHAPTER 8

**Expulsion of the Demon** [1]When they had
finished eating and drinking, the girl's parents
wanted to retire. They brought the young man
out of the dining room and led him into the
bedroom. [2]At this point Tobiah, mindful of
Raphael's instructions, took the fish's liver and
heart from the bag which he had with him, and
placed them on the embers for the incense.*
[3]The demon, repelled by the odor of the fish,
fled into Upper Egypt;* Raphael pursued him
there and bound him hand and foot. Then
Raphael returned immediately.

[4]When the girl's parents left the bedroom and
closed the door behind them, Tobiah arose from
bed and said to his wife, "My love, get up. Let us
pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and
to grant us deliverance." [5]She got up, and they
started to pray and beg that deliverance might be
theirs. He began with these words:

"Blessed are you, O God of our fathers;
praised be your name forever and ever.
Let the heavens and all your creation
praise you forever. *n*
[6]You made Adam and you gave him his wife
Eve
to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race
descended.
You said, 'It is not good for the man to be
alone;
let us make him a partner like himself.' *o*
[7]Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of
mine
not because of lust,
but for a noble purpose.
Call down your mercy on me and on her,
and allow us to live together to a happy old
age."

[8]They said together, "Amen, amen," [9]and went
to bed for the night.

But Raguel got up and summoned his ser-
vants. With him they went out to dig a grave,
[10]for he said, "I must do this, because if Tobiah
should die, we would be subjected to ridicule
and insult." [11]When they had finished digging
the grave, Raguel went back into the house and
called his wife, [12]saying, "Send one of the maids
in to see whether Tobiah is alive or dead, so that

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**8, 2f:** The manner of coping with demonic influences among the ancients seems quaint to us. However, the fish here is part of the story, and not a recipe for exorcism. It is clear that the author places primary emphasis on the value of prayer to God (Tb 6, 18; 8, 4–8), on the role of the angel as God's agent, and on the pious dispositions of Tobiah.

**8, 3:** Into Upper Egypt: to the desert there. The desert was considered the dwelling place of demons. Cf Is 13, 21; 34, 14; Mt 4, 1; 12, 43.

l Gn 24, 50f. m Tb 6, 12. n Dn 3, 26. o Gn 2, 18–23.

if necessary we may bury him without anyone's
knowing about it." [13]She sent the maid, who lit
a lamp, opened the bedroom door, went in, and
found them sound asleep together. [14]The maid
went out and told the girl's parents that Tobiah
was alive, and that there was nothing wrong.
[15]Then Raguel praised the God of heaven in
these words:

"Blessed are you, O God, with every holy and
pure blessing!
Let all your chosen ones praise you;
let them bless you forever!
[16]Blessed are you, who have made me glad;
what I feared did not happen.
Rather you have dealt with us
according to your great mercy.
[17]Blessed are you, for you were merciful
toward two only children.
Grant them, Master, mercy and deliverance,
and bring their lives to fulfillment
with happiness and mercy."

[18]Then he told his servants to fill in the grave
before dawn.

**Wedding Feast** [19]He asked his wife to bake
many loaves of bread; he himself went out to the
herd and picked out two steers and four rams
which he ordered to be slaughtered. So the
servants began to prepare the feast. [20]He sum-
moned Tobiah and made an oath in his presence,
saying: "For fourteen days* you shall not stir
from here, but shall remain here eating and
drinking with me; and you shall bring joy to my
daughter's sorrowing spirit. [21]Take, to begin
with, half of whatever I own when you go back
in good health to your father; the other half will
be yours when I and my wife die. Be of good
cheer, my son! I am your father, and Edna is
your mother; and we belong to you and to your
beloved now and forever. So be happy, son!"

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### CHAPTER 9

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**The Money Recovered** [1]Then Tobiah called
Raphael and said to him: [2]"Brother Azariah, take
along with you four servants and two camels and
travel to Rages. Go to Gabael's house and give
him this bond. Get the money and then bring
him along with you to the wedding celebration.
[4]For you know that my father is counting the
days. If I should delay my return by a single day,
I would cause him intense grief. [3]You witnessed
the oath that Raguel has sworn; I cannot violate
his oath." [5]So Raphael, together with the four
servants and two camels, traveled to Rages in
Media, where they stayed at Gabael's house.
Raphael gave Gabael his bond and told him
about Tobit's son Tobiah, and that he had
married and was inviting him to the wedding
celebration. Gabael promptly checked over the
sealed moneybags, and they placed them on the
camels.

[6]The following morning they got an early start
and traveled to the wedding celebration. When
they entered Raguel's house, they found Tobiah
reclining at table. He sprang up and greeted
Gabael, who wept and blessed him, exclaiming:
"O noble and good child, son of a noble and
good, upright and charitable man, may the Lord
grant heavenly blessing to you and to your wife,
and to your wife's father and mother. Blessed be
God, because I have seen the very image of my
cousin Tobit!"

## IV: Tobiah's Return; Cure of Tobit's Blindness

### CHAPTER 10

**Anxiety of the Parents** [1]Meanwhile, day by
day, Tobit was keeping track of the time Tobiah
would need to go and to return. When the
number of days was reached and his son did not
appear, [2]he said, "I wonder what has happened.
Perhaps he has been detained there; or perhaps
Gabael is dead, and there is no one to give him
the money." [3]And he began to worry. [4]His wife
Anna said, "My son has perished and is no
longer among the living!" And she began to
weep aloud and to wail over her son: [5]"Alas, my
child, light of my eyes, that I let you make this
journey!" [6]But Tobit kept telling her: "Hush, do
not think about it, my love; he is safe! Probably

8, 20: For fourteen days: because of the happy, and unexpected, turn of events, Raguel doubles the time of the wedding feast. When Tobiah returns home, the usual seven-day feast is held (Tb 11, 18). Cf Jgs 14, 12.

they have to take care of some unexpected business there. The man who is traveling with him is trustworthy, and is one of our own kinsmen. So do not worry over him, my love. He will be here soon." [7]But she retorted, "Stop it, and do not lie to me! My child has perished!" She would go out and keep watch all day at the road her son had taken, and she ate nothing. At sunset she would go back home to wail and cry the whole night through, getting no sleep at all.[p]

**Departure from Ecbatana** Now at the end of the fourteen-day wedding celebration which Raguel had sworn to hold for his daughter, Tobiah went to him and said: "Please let me go, for I know that my father and mother do not believe they will ever see me again. So I beg you, father, let me go back to my father. I have already told you how I left him." [8]Raguel said to Tobiah: "Stay, my child, stay with me. I am sending messengers to your father Tobit, and they will give him news of you." [9]But Tobiah insisted, "No, I beg you to let me go back to my father."

[10]Raguel then promptly handed over to Tobiah Sarah his wife, together with half of all his property: male and female slaves, oxen and sheep, asses and camels, clothing, money, and household goods. [11]Bidding them farewell, he let them go. He embraced Tobiah and said to him: "Good-bye, my son. Have a safe journey. May the Lord of heaven grant prosperity to you and to your wife Sarah. And may I see children of yours before I die!" [12]Then he kissed his daughter Sarah and said to her: "My daughter, honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, because from now on they are as much your parents as the ones who brought you into the world. Go in peace, my daughter; let me hear good reports about you as long as I live." Finally he said good-bye to them and sent them away.

[13]Then Edna said to Tobiah: "My child and beloved kinsman, may the Lord bring you back safely, and may I live long enough to see children of you and of my daughter Sarah before I die. Before the Lord, I entrust my daughter to your care. Never cause her grief at any time in your life. Go in peace, my child. From now on I am your mother, and Sarah is your beloved. May all of us be prosperous all the days of our lives." She kissed them both and sent them away in peace.

[14]When Tobiah left Raguel, he was full of happiness and joy, and he blessed the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of all, for making his journey so successful. Finally he said good-bye to Raguel and his wife Edna, and added, "May I honor you all the days of my life!"

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**Homeward Journey** [1]Then they left and began their return journey. When they were near Kaserin, just before Nineveh, [2]Raphael said: "You know how we left your father. [3]Let us hurry on ahead of your wife to prepare the house while the rest of the party are still on the way." [4]So they both went on ahead and Raphael said to Tobiah, "Have the gall in your hand!" And the dog ran along behind them.

[5]Meanwhile, Anna sat watching the road by which her son was to come. [6]When she saw him coming, she exclaimed to his father, "Tobit, your son is coming, and the man who traveled with him!"

[7]Raphael said to Tobiah before he reached his father: "I am certain that his eyes will be opened. [8]Smear the fish gall on them. This medicine will make the cataracts shrink and peel off from his eyes; then your father will again be able to see the light of day."

**Sight Restored** [9]Then Anna ran up to her son, threw her arms around him, and said to him, "Now that I have seen you again, son, I am ready to die!" And she sobbed aloud.[q] [10]Tobit got up and stumbled out through the courtyard gate. Tobiah went up to him [11]with the fish gall in his hand, and holding him firmly, blew into his eyes. "Courage, father," he said. [12]Next he smeared the medicine on his eyes, [13]and it made them smart. Then, beginning at the corners of Tobit's eyes, Tobiah used both hands to peel off the cataracts. When Tobit saw his son, he threw his arms around him [14]and wept. He exclaimed, "I can see you, son, the light of my eyes!" Then he said:

p Gn 45, 26. q Gn 33, 4; 45, 14; 46, 29f; Lk 15, 20.

"Blessed be God,
and praised be his great name,
and blessed be all his holy angels.
May his holy name be praised
throughout all the ages,
[15] Because it was he who scourged me,
and it is he who has had mercy on me.
Behold, I now see my son Tobiah!"

Then Tobit went back in, rejoicing and praising God with full voice. Tobiah told his father that his journey had been a success; that he had brought back the money; and that he had married Raguel's daughter Sarah, who would arrive shortly, for she was approaching the gate of Nineveh.[r]

[16] Rejoicing and praising God, Tobit went out to the gate of Nineveh to meet his daughter-in-law. When the people of Nineveh saw him walking along briskly, with no one leading him by the hand, they were amazed. [17] Before them all Tobit proclaimed how God had mercifully restored sight to his eyes. When Tobit reached Sarah, the wife of his son Tobiah, he greeted her: "Welcome, my daughter! Blessed be your God for bringing you to us, daughter! Blessed are your father and your mother. Blessed is my son Tobiah, and blessed are you, daughter! Welcome to your home with blessing and joy. Come in, daughter!" That day there was joy for all the Jews who lived in Nineveh. [18] Ahiqar and his nephew Nadab also came to rejoice with Tobit. They celebrated Tobiah's wedding feast for seven happy days, and he received many gifts.

## V: Raphael Reveals His Identity

### CHAPTER 12

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**Raphael's Wages*** [1] When the wedding celebration came to an end, Tobit called his son Tobiah and said to him, "Son, see to it that you give what is due to the man who made the journey with you; give him a bonus too." [2] Tobiah said: "Father, how much shall I pay him? It would not hurt me at all to give him half of all the wealth he brought back with me.[s] [3] He led me back safe and sound; he cured my wife; he brought the money back with me; and he cured you. How much of a bonus should I give him?" [4] Tobit answered, "It is only fair, son, that he should receive half of all that he brought back." [5] So Tobiah called Raphael and said, "Take as your wages half of all that you have brought back, and go in peace."

**Exhortation*** [6] Raphael called the two men aside privately and said to them: "Thank God! Give him the praise and the glory. Before all the living, acknowledge the many good things he has done for you, by blessing and extolling his name in song. Before all men, honor and proclaim God's deeds, and do not be slack in praising him.* [7] A king's secret it is prudent to keep, but the works of God are to be declared and made known. Praise them with due honor. Do good, and evil will not find its way to you. [8] Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness.* A little with righteousness is better than abundance with wickedness. It is better to give alms than to store up gold;[t] [9] for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life;[u] [10] but those habitually guilty of sin are their own worst enemies.

**Raphael's Identity** [11] "I will now tell you the whole truth; I will conceal nothing at all from you. I have already said to you, 'A king's secret it is prudent to keep, but the works of God are to be made known with due honor.' [12] [v] I can now tell you that when you, Tobit, and Sarah prayed,

**12, 1–5:** Tobit and his son generously agree to give Azariah far more than the wages agreed upon in Tb 5, 15–16.

**12, 6–10:** In the fashion of a wisdom teacher, Raphael gives the two men a short exhortation similar to the one Tobit gave his son in Tb 4, 3–19.

**12, 6f:** The Jews considered the duty of praising God their most esteemed privilege. Without praise of God, life was meaningless. Cf Is 38, 16–20.

**12, 8:** Prayer . . . fasting . . . almsgiving . . . righteousness: these, together with the proper attitude toward wealth, are treated in great detail by Christ our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6).

**12, 12. 15:** Raphael is one of the seven specially designated intercessors who present man's prayers to God. Angelology was developing in this period. The names of two other angels are given in the Bible: Gabriel (Dn 8, 16; 9, 21; Lk 1, 19. 26) and Michael (Dn 10, 13. 21; 12, 1; Jude 9; Rv 12, 7).

r Tb 13, 2; Dt 32, 39; 1 Sm 2, 6. s Tb 5, 3. 7. 15f. t Tb 4, 7–11; Sir 29, 8–13. u Dn 4, 24. v Jb 33, 23f; Acts 10, 4; Rv 8, 3f.

it was I who presented and read the record of
your prayer before the Glory of the Lord; and I
did the same thing when you used to bury the
dead.* [13]When you did not hesitate to get up
and leave your dinner in order to go and bury
the dead, [14]I was sent to put you to the test.* At
the same time, however, God commissioned me
to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah. [15]I
am Raphael, one of the seven angels who enter
and serve before the Glory of the Lord."[w]

[16]Stricken with fear, the two men fell to the
ground. [17]But Raphael said to them: "No need
to fear; you are safe. Thank God now and
forever. [18]As for me, when I came to you it was
not out of any favor on my part, but because it
was God's will. So continue to thank him every
day; praise him with song. [19]Even though you
watched me eat and drink, I did not really do so;
what you were seeing was a vision. [20]So now get
up from the ground and praise God. Behold, I
am about to ascend to him who sent me; write
down all these things that have happened to
you."[x] [21]When Raphael ascended, they rose to
their feet and could no longer see him. [22]They
kept thanking God and singing his praises; and
they continued to acknowledge these marvelous
deeds which he had done when the angel of God
appeared to them.

## VI: Tobit's Song of Praise

### CHAPTER 13

[1]Then Tobit composed this joyful prayer:*

Blessed be God who lives forever,
because his kingdom lasts for all ages.[y]
[2]For he scourges and then has mercy;
he casts down to the depths of the
netherworld,
and he brings up from the great abyss.
No one can escape his hand.[z]

[3]Praise him, you Israelites, before the Gentiles,
for though he has scattered you among
them,
[4] he has shown you his greatness even there.
Exalt him before every living being,
because he is the Lord our God,
our Father and God forever.
[5]He scourged you for your iniquities,
but will again have mercy on you all.
He will gather you from all the Gentiles
among whom you have been scattered.[a]

[6]When you turn back to him with all your
heart,
to do what is right before him,
Then he will turn back to you,
and no longer hide his face from you.[b]

So now consider what he has done for you,
and praise him with full voice.
Bless the Lord of righteousness,
and exalt the King of the ages.

In the land of my exile I praise him,
and show his power and majesty to a sinful
nation.
"Turn back, you sinners! do the right before
him:
perhaps he may look with favor upon you
and show you mercy.

[7]"As for me, I exalt my God,
and my spirit rejoices in the King of heaven.
[8]Let all men speak of his majesty,
and sing his praises in Jerusalem."

[9]O Jerusalem, holy city,
he scourged you for the works of your
hands,*
but will again pity the children of the
righteous.[c]
[10]Praise the Lord for his goodness,
and bless the King of the ages,
so that his tent may be rebuilt in you with
joy.

Ch 1–14
See RG
207–210

**12, 14:** I was sent . . . test: God often sends trials to purify his faithful servants further. Cf Jb 1—2.

**13, 1–18:** Tobit's hymn of praise (cf Ex 15, 1–18; Jdt 16, 1–17) is divided into two parts. The first part (vv 1–8) is a song of praise that echoes themes from the hymns and psalms of the kingdom; the second (vv 9–18) is addressed to Jerusalem in the style of the prophets who spoke of a new and ideal Jerusalem (Is 60); cf Rv 21.

**13, 9:** Works of your hands: idols.

w Lk 1, 19; Rv 8, 2. x Jgs 13, 20. y Tb 3, 11; 8, 5. 15; 1 Chr 29, 10; Dn 3, 26. z Tb 11, 15; 13, 9; Dt 32, 39; 1 Sm 2, 6; Wis 16, 13. a Dt 30, 3; Neh 1, 9. b Dt 30, 2. c Tb 11, 15; Mi 7, 19; Rv 21.

May he gladden within you all who were captives;
all who were ravaged may he cherish within you
for all generations to come.[d]

11 A bright light will shine to all parts of the earth;
many nations shall come to you from afar,
And the inhabitants of all the limits of the earth,
drawn to you by the name of the Lord God,
Bearing in their hands their gifts for the King of heaven.
Every generation shall give joyful praise in you,
and shall call you the chosen one,
through all ages forever.[e]

12 Accursed are all who speak a harsh word against you;
accursed are all who destroy you
and pull down your walls,
And all who overthrow your towers
and set fire to your homes;
but forever blessed are all those who build you up.[f]

Ch 1-14
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13 Go, then, rejoice over the children of the righteous,
who shall all be gathered together
and shall bless the Lord of the ages.
14 Happy are those who love you,
and happy those who rejoice in your prosperity.

Happy are all the men who shall grieve over you,
over all your chastisements,
For they shall rejoice in you
as they behold all your joy forever.[g]

15 My spirit blesses the Lord, the great King;
16 Jerusalem shall be rebuilt as his home forever.

Happy for me if a remnant of my offspring survive
to see your glory and to praise the King of heaven!

The gates of Jerusalem shall be built with sapphire and emerald,
and all your walls with precious stones.
The towers of Jerusalem shall be built with gold,
and their battlements with pure gold.[h]
17 The streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with rubies and stones of Ophir;
18 The gates of Jerusalem shall sing hymns of gladness,
and all her houses shall cry out, "Alleluia!"

"Blessed be God who has raised you up!
may he be blessed for all ages!"
For in you they shall praise his holy name forever.

The end of Tobit's hymn of praise

# VII: Epilogue

## CHAPTER 14

**Parting Advice** 1 Tobit died peacefully in the age of a hundred and twelve, and received an honorable burial in Nineveh. 2 He was sixty-two years old when he lost his eyesight, and after he recovered it he lived in prosperity, giving alms and continually blessing God and praising the divine Majesty.

3 Just before he died, he called his son Tobiah and Tobiah's seven sons, and gave him this command: "Son, take your children[i] 4 and flee into Media, for I believe God's word which was spoken by Nahum* against Nineveh. It shall all happen, and shall overtake Assyria and Nineveh; indeed, whatever was said by Israel's prophets, whom God commissioned, shall occur. Not one of all the oracles shall remain unfulfilled, but everything shall take place in the time appointed

14, 4f: Nahum: one of the minor prophets, whose book contains oracles of doom against Nineveh. Here, in keeping with the period to which he assigns his story, the sacred author makes Tobit speak as if the punishment of Nineveh, the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.), the exile from Judah and the return, would all take place in the future. The technique of using the facts of past history as seemingly future predictions, is a frequent device of apocalyptic writers. The Good Land: a favorite name for the promised land. Cf Dt 1, 35; 3, 25; 4, 21. 22.

d Is 44, 26, 28; Am 9, 11; Zec 1, 16. e Is 2, 3f; 9, 1; 49, 6; 60, 1; Mi 4, 2; Zec 8, 22. f Bar 4, 31f. g Ps 122, 6; Is 66, 10. h Tb 14, 5; Is 54, 11–13; 62, 2; Rv 21, 10–21. i Gn 47, 29f.

for it. So it will be safer in Media than in Assyria
or Babylon. For I know and believe that what-
ever God has spoken will be accomplished. It
shall happen, and not a single word of the
prophecies shall prove false.

"As for our kinsmen who dwell in Israel, they
shall all be scattered and led away into exile
from the Good Land. The entire country of Israel
shall become desolate; even Samaria and Jerusa-
lem shall become desolate! God's temple there
shall be burnt to the ground and shall be
desolate for a while.[j] [5]But God will again have
mercy on them and bring them back to the land
of Israel. They shall rebuild the temple, but it
will not be like the first one, until the era when
the appointed times shall be completed.* After-
ward all of them shall return from their exile,
and they shall rebuild Jerusalem with splendor.
In her the temple of God shall also be rebuilt;
yes, it will be rebuilt for all generations to come,
just as the prophets of Israel said of her.[k] [6][l]All
the nations of the world shall be converted and
shall offer God true worship; all shall abandon
their idols which have deceitfully led them into
error,* [7]and shall bless the God of the ages in
righteousness. Because all the Israelites who are
to be saved in those days will truly be mindful of
God, they shall be gathered together and go to
Jerusalem; in security shall they dwell forever in
the land of Abraham, which will be given over to
them. Those who sincerely love God shall re-
joice, but those who become guilty of sin shall
completely disappear from the land.[m]

[9]"Now, children, I give you this command:
serve God faithfully and do what is right before
him; you must tell your children to do what is
upright and to give alms, to be mindful of God
and at all times to bless his name sincerely and
with all their strength.

[8]"Now, as for you, my son, depart from Nine-
veh; do not remain here. [10]The day you bury your
mother next to me, do not even stay overnight
within the confines of the city. For I see that
people here shamelessly commit all sorts of wick-
edness and treachery. Think, my son, of all that
Nadab* did to Ahiqar, the very one who brought
him up: Ahiqar went down alive into the earth!
Yet God made Nadab's disgraceful crime rebound
against him. Ahiqar came out again into the light,
but Nadab went into the everlasting darkness, for
he had tried to kill Ahiqar. Because Ahiqar had
given alms to me, he escaped from the deadly trap
Nadab had set for him. But Nadab himself fell into
the deadly trap, and it destroyed him.[n] [11]So, my
children, note well what almsgiving does, and
also what wickedness does—it kills! But now my
spirit is about to leave me."

**Death of Tobit and Tobiah** [12]They placed him
on his bed and he died; and he received an
honorable burial. When Tobiah's mother died,
he buried her next to his father. He then
departed with his wife and children for Media,
where he settled in Ecbatana with his father-in-
law Raguel.[o] [13]He took respectful care of his
aging father-in-law and mother-in-law; and he
buried them at Ecbatana in Media. Then he
inherited Raguel's estate as well as that of his
father Tobit. [14]He died at the venerable age of a
hundred and seventeen. [15]But before he died, he
heard of the destruction of Nineveh and saw its
effects. He witnessed the exile of the city's
inhabitants when Cyaxares,* king of Media, led
them captive into Media. Tobiah praised God for
all that he had done against the citizens of
Nineveh and Assyria. Before dying he rejoiced
over Nineveh's destruction, and he blessed the
Lord God forever and ever. Amen.

**14, 5:** Until the era . . . completed: a reference to the advent of messianic times, in which a new, more perfect temple was to be expected. Cf Heb 9, 1–14.

**14, 6:** Conversion of the Gentiles is also to come in the messianic era.

**14, 10:** Nadab: In the story of Ahiqar, the hero Ahiqar, chancellor under the Assyrian kings Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, adopts his nephew Nadab and prepares him to become his successor. But Nadab treacherously plots to have his uncle put to death. Ahiqar hides in a friend's house, and is finally vindicated (came out again into the light) when Nadab's scheme is discovered. Thereupon Nadab is thrown into a dungeon where he dies (went into everlasting darkness). It was Ahiqar's almsgiving that delivered him from death; see note on Tb 2, 2.

**14, 15:** Cyaxares: Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, and Cyaxares conquered and destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C.; see note on Tb 1, 15.

j Na 2, 2—3, 19. k Neh 12, 27; Jer 31, 38. l Tb 45, 14; Is 60, 1–4. m Is 60, 21; Jer 32, 37; Ex 34, 28; 37, 25; 39, 26. n Tb 1, 21f. o Tb 4, 4.

# THE BOOK OF JUDITH

Judith
See RG
211-215

The Book of Judith is a vivid story relating how, in a grave crisis, God delivered the Jewish people through the instrumentality of a woman. The unknown author composed this edifying narrative of divine providence at the end of the second or the beginning of the first century B.C. The original was almost certainly written in Hebrew, but the Greek text shows so much freedom in adapting from the Septuagint the language of older biblical books that it must be regarded as having a literary character of its own. It is this Greek form of the book, accepted as canonical by the Catholic Church, which is translated here. St. Jerome, who prepared (with some reluctance) a Latin text of Judith, based his work on a secondary Aramaic text available to him in Palestine, combined with an older Latin rendering from the Greek. The long hymn of chapter 16 he took in its entirety from that earlier Latin text.

Since it is no longer possible to determine with any precision the underlying events which may have given rise to this narrative, it is enough to note that the author sought to strengthen the faith of his people in God's abiding presence among them. The Book of Judith is a tract for difficult times; the reader, it was hoped, would take to heart the lesson that God was still the Master of history, who could save Israel from her enemies. Note the parallel with the time of the Exodus: as God had delivered his people by the hand of Moses, so he could deliver them by the hand of the pious widow Judith (see note on 2, 12).

The story can be divided into two parts. In the first (cc 1—7), Holofernes, commander-in-chief of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, leads an overwhelming Assyrian force in a punitive campaign against the vassals who refused to help in the Assyrian war against the Medes. The Jewish people stubbornly resist the enemy at Bethulia, guarding the route of access to Jerusalem. Despite the warning of Achior that the Jews cannot be conquered unless they sin against God, the proud general lays siege to the town and cuts off its water supply. After a siege of thirty-four days, the exhausted defenders are desperate and ready to surrender.

At this point, the climax of the story, Judith (the name means "Jewess") appears and promises to defeat the Assyrians. The rest of the story is too well known to repeat in detail. Having fasted and prayed, Judith dresses in her finest garments and proceeds to the Assyrian camp, where she succeeds in killing Holofernes while he lies in a drunken stupor. The Assyrians panic when they discover this, and the Jews are able to rout and slaughter them. The beautiful hymn of the people honoring Judith (15, 9-10) is often applied to Mary in the liturgy.

Any attempt to read the book directly against the backdrop of Jewish history in relation to the empires of the ancient world is bound to fail. The story was written as a pious reflection on the meaning of the yearly Passover observance. It draws its inspiration from the Exodus narrative (especially Ex 14, 31) and from the texts of Isaiah and the Psalms portraying the special intervention of God for the preservation of Jerusalem. The theme of God's hand as the agent of this providential activity, reflected of old in the hand of Moses and now in the hand of Judith, is again exemplified at a later time in Jewish synagogue art. God's hand reaching down from heaven appears as part of the scene at Dura-Europos (before A.D. 256) in paintings of the Exodus, of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gn 22), and of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones (Ez 37).

The Book of Judith is divided as follows:

I. Peril of the Jews (1, 1—7, 32).
II. Deliverance of the Jews (8, 1—14, 10).
III. Victory (14, 11—16, 25).

# I: Peril of the Jews

## CHAPTER 1

**War against the Medes** [1]It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. At that time Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana. [2]Around this city he built a wall of blocks of stone, each three cubits in height and six in length. He made the wall seventy cubits high and fifty thick. [3]At the gates he raised towers of a hundred cubits, with a thickness of sixty cubits at the base. [4]The gateway he built to a height of seventy cubits, with an opening forty cubits wide for the passage of his chariot forces and the marshaling of his infantry. [5]Then King Nebuchadnezzar waged war against King Arphaxad in the vast plain, in the district of Ragae. [6]To him there rallied all the inhabitants of the mountain region, all who dwelt along the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes, and King Arioch of the Elamites, in the plain. Thus many nations came together to resist the people of Cheleoud.*

**Ultimatum to the West** [7]Now Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, sent messengers to all the inhabitants of Persia, and to all those who dwelt in the West: to the inhabitants of Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, to all who dwelt along the seacoast, [8]to the peoples of Carmel, Gilead, Upper Galilee, and the vast plain of Esdraelon, [9]to all those in Samaria and its cities, and west of the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, Bethany, Chelous, Kadesh, and the River of Egypt; to Tahpanhes, Raamses, all the land of Goshen, [10]Tanis, Memphis and beyond, and to all the inhabitants of Egypt as far as the borders of Ethiopia.

[11]But the inhabitants of all that land disregarded the summons of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, and would not go with him to the war. They were not afraid of him but regarded him as a lone individual opposed to them, and turned away his envoys empty-handed, in disgrace. [12]Then Nebuchadnezzar fell into a violent rage against all that land, and swore by his throne and his kingdom that he would avenge himself on all the territories of Cilicia and Damascus and Syria, and also destroy with his sword all the inhabitants of Moab, Ammon, the whole of Judea, and those living anywhere in Egypt as far as the borders of the two seas.*

Ch 1–7
See RG
211–212

**Defeat of Arphaxad** [13]In the seventeenth year he proceeded with his army against King Arphaxad, and was victorious in his campaign. He routed the whole force of Arphaxad, his entire cavalry and all his chariots, [14]and took possession of his cities. He pressed on to Ecbatana and took its towers, sacked its marketplaces, and turned its glory into shame. [15]Arphaxad himself he overtook in the mountains of Ragae, ran him through with spears, and utterly destroyed him. [16]Then he returned home with all his numerous, motley horde of warriors; and there he and his army relaxed and feasted for a hundred and twenty days.[a]

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1–7
See RG
211–212

**Council of War against the West** [1]In the eighteenth year, on the twenty-second day of the first month, there was a discussion in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, about taking revenge on the whole world, as he had threatened. [2]He summoned all his ministers and nobles, laid before them his secret plan, and urged the total destruction of those countries. [3]They decided to do away with all those who had refused to comply with the order he had issued.

[4]When he had completed his plan, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, summoned Holofernes, general in chief of his forces, second to himself in command, and said to him: [5][b]"Thus says the great king, the lord of all the earth: Go forth from my presence, take with you men of proven valor, a hundred and twenty thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, [6]and proceed against all the land of the West, because they did not comply with the order I issued.

1, 6: Cheleoud: probably the Chaldeans are meant.
1, 12: The two seas: the ancient rulers in Mesopotamia often designated the limits of their realm as extending from the Upper Sea (the Mediterranean) to the Lower Sea (the Persian Gulf).

a Est 1, 3f. b 5f: Est 3, 8f.

7Tell them to have earth and water* ready, for I
will come against them in my wrath; I will cover
all the land with the feet of my soldiers, to
whom I will deliver them as spoils. 8Their slain
shall fill their ravines and wadies, the swelling
torrent shall be choked with their dead; 9and I
will deport them as exiles to the very ends of the
earth.

10"You go before me and take possession of all
their territories for me. If they surrender to you,
guard them for me till the day of their punish-
ment. 11As for those who resist, show them no
quarter, but deliver them up to slaughter and
plunder in each country you occupy. 12For as I
live,* and by the strength of my kingdom, what I
have spoken I will accomplish by my power.
13Do not disobey a single one of the orders of
your lord; fulfill them exactly as I have com-
manded you, and do it without delay."

**Campaign of Holofernes** 14So Holofernes left
the presence of his lord, and summoned all the
princes, and the generals and officers of the
Assyrian army. 15He mustered a hundred and
twenty thousand picked troops, as his lord had
commanded, and twelve thousand mounted
archers, 16and grouped them into a complete
combat force. 17He took along a very large
number of camels, asses, and mules for their
baggage; innumerable sheep, cattle, and goats
for their food supply; 18abundant provisions for
each man, and much gold and silver from the
royal palace.

Ch 1–7
See RG
211–212

19Then he and his whole army proceeded on
their expedition in advance of King Nebuchad-
nezzar, to cover all the western region with their
chariots and cavalry and regular infantry. 20A
huge, irregular force, too many to count, like
locusts or the dust of the earth, went along with
them.[c]

21After a three-day march from Nineveh, they
reached the plain of Bectileth, and from
Bectileth they next encamped near the moun-
tains to the north of Upper Cilicia. 22From there
Holofernes took his whole force, the infantry,
cavalry, and chariots, and marched into the
mountain region. 23He devastated Put and Lud,*
and plundered all the Rassisites and the Ishmael-
ites on the border of the desert toward the south
of Chaldea.

24Then, following the Euphrates, he went
through Mesopotamia, and battered down every
fortified city along the Wadi Abron, until he
reached the sea. 25He seized the territory of
Cilicia, and cut down everyone who resisted
him. Then he proceeded to the southern borders
of Japheth, toward Arabia. 26He surrounded all
the Midianites, burned their tents, and plun-
dered their sheepfolds. 27Descending to the
plain of Damascus at the time of the wheat
harvest, he set fire to all their fields, destroyed
their flocks and herds, despoiled their cities,
devastated their plains, and put all their youths
to the sword.

28The fear and dread of him fell upon all the
inhabitants of the coastland, upon those in Sidon
and Tyre, and those who dwelt in Sur and
Ocina, and the inhabitants of Jamnia. Those in
Azotus and Ascalon also feared him greatly.

## CHAPTER 3

**Submission of the West** 1They therefore sent
messengers to him to sue for peace in these
words: 2"We, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar
the great king, lie prostrate before you; do with
us as you will. 3Our dwellings and all our wheat
fields, our flocks and herds, and all our encamp-
ments are at your disposal; make use of them as
you please. 4Our cities and their inhabitants are
also at your service; come and deal with them as
you see fit."

**2, 7:** Earth and water: in the Persian period, the offering of these to a conqueror was a symbolic gesture of unconditional surrender.

**2, 12:** As I live: in the Old Testament, an oath proper to divinity; cf Dt 32, 40. Nebuchadnezzar is making himself equal to God; see Jdt 6, 2. By my power: literally "by my hand." The hand of Nebuchadnezzar raised in opposition to God and to his people is the occasion for Judith's intervention by a woman's hand; cf Jdt 9, 9f; Is 10, 5–14.

**2, 23:** Put and Lud: the same as the "Put and Lud" mentioned in Ez 30, 5 as allies of Egypt, and in Ez 27, 10 as supplying mercenary soldiers to Tyre. Here they seem inserted to embellish the narrative with assonance and prophetic associations rather than to indicate definite localities.

c Jgs 7, 12.

[5]After the spokesmen had reached Holofernes and given him this message, [6]he went down with his army to the seacoast, and stationed garrisons in the fortified cities; from them he impressed picked troops as auxiliaries. [7]The people of these cities and all the inhabitants of the countryside received him with garlands and dancing to the sound of timbrels. [8]Nevertheless, he devastated their whole territory and cut down their sacred groves, for he had been commissioned to destroy all the gods of the earth, so that every nation might worship Nebuchadnezzar alone, and every people and tribe invoke him as a god.[d] [9]At length Holofernes reached Esdraelon in the neighborhood of Dothan, the approach to the main ridge of the Judean mountains; [10]he set up his camp between Geba* and Scythopolis, and stayed there a whole month to refurbish all the equipment of his army.

## CHAPTER 4

**Israelite Defense** [1]When the Israelites who dwelt in Judea heard of all that Holofernes, commander in chief of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, had done to the nations, and how he had despoiled all their temples and destroyed them, [2]they were in extreme dread of him, and greatly alarmed for Jerusalem and the temple of the LORD, their God. [3]Now, they had lately returned from exile, and only recently had all the people of Judea been gathered together, and the vessels, the altar, and the temple been purified from profanation.* [4]So they sent word to the whole region of Samaria, to Kona, Bethhoron, Belmain, and Jericho, to Choba and Aesora, and to the valley of Salem. [5]The people there posted guards on all the summits of the high mountains, fortified their villages, and since their fields had recently been harvested, stored up provisions in preparation for war.

[6]Joakim, who was high priest* in Jerusalem in those days, wrote to the inhabitants of Bethulia [and Betomesthaim], which is on the way to Esdraelon, facing the plain near Dothan, [7]and instructed them to keep firm hold of the mountain passes, since these offered access to Judea. It would be easy to ward off the attacking forces, as the defile was only wide enough for two abreast. [8]The Israelites carried out the orders given them by Joakim, the high priest, and the senate of the whole people of Israel, which met in Jerusalem.*

**Prayer and Penance** [9]All the men of Israel cried to God with great fervor and did penance— [10][e]they, along with their wives, and children, and domestic animals.* All their resident aliens, hired laborers, and slaves also girded themselves with sackcloth. [11]And all the Israelite men, women, and children who lived in Jerusalem prostrated themselves in front of the temple building,* with ashes strewn on their heads, displaying their sackcloth covering before the LORD. [12]The altar, too, they draped in sackcloth; and with one accord they cried out fervently to the God of Israel not to allow their children to be seized, their wives to be taken captive, the cities of their inheritance to be ruined, or the sanctuary to be profaned and mocked for the nations to gloat over.[f]

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[13]The LORD heard their cry and had regard for their distress. For the people observed a fast of many days' duration throughout Judea, and before the sanctuary of the LORD Almighty in Jerusalem.[g] [14]The high priest Joakim, and all the priests in attendance on the LORD who served his altar, were also girded with sackcloth as they offered the daily holocaust, the votive offerings, and the free-will offerings of the people. [15]With

**3, 10:** Geba: perhaps originally "Gelboe," the mountain range near the eastern end of which lay Scythopolis, the Greek name for ancient Beth-shean (Jos 17, 11).

**4, 3:** Returned from exile . . . profanation: these allusions are variously attributed—to the Persian period (538–323 B.C.), or even to a condition in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.).

**4, 6:** Joakim, who was high priest: see Bar 1, 7 and the footnote on Bar 1, 8f; this name for a high priest cannot be used in dating the events in Jdt.

**4, 8:** The organization of the Jewish nation as subject to a high priest and a senate, or council of elders, was proper to the Greek period (after 323 B.C.), and is reflected in the coinage of John Hyrcanus (135–104 B.C.).

**4, 10:** Domestic animals: see note on Jon 3, 8.

**4, 11:** Prostrated themselves in front of the temple building: for a parallel to this ceremony of entreaty, see Jl 1, 13f; 2, 15ff, and the note on Jl 2, 17.

d Ex 34, 13. e 10f: Jon 3, 7f. f Est 4, 1f. g Est 4, 16.

ashes upon their turbans, they cried to the LORD with all their strength to look with favor on the whole house of Israel.

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**Council against the Israelites** [1]It was reported to Holofernes, commander in chief of the Assyrian army, that the Israelites were ready for battle, and had blocked the mountain passes, fortified the summits of all the higher peaks, and placed roadblocks in the plains. [2]In great anger he summoned all the rulers of the Moabites, the generals of the Ammonites, and all the satraps of the seacoast [3]and said to them: "Now tell me, you Canaanites, what sort of people is this that dwells in the mountains? Which cities do they inhabit? How large is their army? In what does their power and strength consist? Who has set himself up as their king and the leader of their army? [4]Why have they refused to come out to meet me along with all the other inhabitants of the West?"

**Achior's Speech** [5]Then Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to him: "My lord, hear this account from your servant; I will tell you the truth about this people that lives near you [that inhabits this mountain region]; no lie shall escape your servant's lips.[h]

[6]*"These people are descendants of the Chaldeans. [7]They formerly dwelt in Mesopotamia, for they did not wish to follow the gods of their forefathers who were born in the land of the Chaldeans.[i] [8]Since they abandoned the way of their ancestors, and acknowledged with divine worship the God of heaven, their forefathers expelled them from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia and dwelt there a long time. [9]Their God bade them leave their abode and proceed to the land of Canaan. Here they settled, and grew very rich in gold, silver, and a great abundance of livestock.[j] [10]Later, when famine had gripped the whole land of Canaan, they went down into Egypt. They stayed there as long as they found sustenance, and grew into such a great multitude that the number of their race could not be counted.[k] [11][l]The king of Egypt, however, rose up against them, shrewdly forced them to labor at brickmaking, oppressed and enslaved them. [12]But they cried to their God, and he struck the land of Egypt with plagues for which there was no remedy. When the Egyptians expelled them, [13][m]God dried up the Red Sea before them, [14]and led them along the route to Sinai and Kadesh-barnea. First they drove out all the inhabitants of the desert; [15]then they settled in the land of the Amorites, destroyed all the Heshbonites by main force, crossed the Jordan, and took possession of the whole mountain region.[n] [16]They expelled the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites, and all the Gergesites; and they lived in these mountains a long time.[o]

[17][p]"As long as the Israelites did not sin in the sight of their God, they prospered, for their God, who hates wickedness, was with them. [18]But when they deviated from the way he prescribed for them, they were ground down steadily, more and more, by frequent wars, and finally taken as captives into foreign lands. The temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their cities were occupied by their enemies.[q] [19]But now that they have returned to their God, they have come back from the Dispersion wherein they were scattered, and have repossessed Jerusalem, where their sanctuary is, and have settled again in the mountain region which was unoccupied.

[20][r]"So now, my lord and master, if these people are at fault, and are sinning against their God, and if we verify this offense of theirs, then we shall be able to go up and conquer them. [21]But if they are not a guilty nation, then your lordship should keep his distance; otherwise their LORD and God will shield them, and we shall become the laughingstock of the whole world."

5, 6–9: Achior outlines the early history of the Hebrews, whose forefather, Abraham, first lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Gn 11, 28) and then migrated to Haran (Gn 11, 31) in Aram Naharaim (Gn 24, 10), which was called Mesopotamia by the Greeks. The gods of their forefathers were the pagan deities worshiped by Abraham's relatives (Jos 24, 2).

h Jdt 11, 9–19. i Gn 11, 31. j Gn 11, 31—12, 5. k Gn 42, 1–5; 46, 1–7; Ex 1, 7. l 11f: Ex 5, 4–21; 7, 1–9. m 13f: Ex 14, 21f. 29. n Nm 21, 21–32; Jos 2, 10. o Dt 7, 1. p 17f: Dt 28—30; Ps 106, 40–46; Is 59, 7. q 2 Kgs 25. r 20f: Jdt 8, 18ff; 11, 10.

22Now when Achior had concluded his recommendation, all the people standing round about the tent murmured; and the officers of Holofernes and all the inhabitants of the seacoast and of Moab alike said he should be cut to pieces. 23"We are not afraid of the Israelites," they said, "for they are a powerless people, incapable of a strong defense. 24Let us therefore attack them; your great army, Lord Holofernes, will swallow them up."[s]

## CHAPTER 6

**Holofernes' Answer** 1When the noise of the crowd surrounding the council had subsided, Holofernes, commander in chief of the Assyrian army, said to Achior, in the presence of the whole throng of coastland peoples, of the Moabites, and of the Ammonite mercenaries: 2"Who are you, Achior, to prophesy among us as you have done today, and to tell us not to fight against the Israelites because their God protects them? What god is there beside Nebuchadnezzar? He will send his force and destroy them from the face of the earth. Their God will not save them;[t] 3but we, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, will strike them down as one man, for they will be unable to withstand the force of our cavalry.[u] 4We will overwhelm them with it, and the mountains shall be drunk with their blood, and their plains filled with their corpses. Not a trace of them shall survive our attack: they shall utterly perish, says King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of all the earth; for he has spoken, and his words shall not remain unfulfilled.[v] 5As for you, Achior, you Ammonite mercenary, for saying these things in a moment of perversity you shall not see my face after today, until I have taken revenge on this race of people from Egypt. 6Then at my return, the sword of my army or the spear of my servants will pierce your sides, and you shall fall among their slain.[w] 7My servants will now conduct you to the mountain region, and leave you at one of the towns along the ascent. 8You shall not die till you are destroyed together with them. 9If you still cherish the hope that they will not be taken, then there is no need for you to be downcast. I have spoken, and my words shall not prove false in any respect."

**Achior in Bethulia** 10Then Holofernes ordered the servants who were standing by in his tent to seize Achior, conduct him to Bethulia, and hand him over to the Israelites. 11So the servants took him in custody and brought him out of the camp into the plain. From there they led him into the mountain region till they reached the springs below Bethulia. 12When the men of the city saw them, they seized their weapons and ran out of the city to the crest of the ridge; and all the slingers blocked the ascent of Holofernes' servants by hurling stones upon them. 13So they took cover below the mountain, where they bound Achior and left him lying at the foot of the mountain; then they returned to their lord.

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14The Israelites came down to him from their city, loosed him, and brought him into Bethulia. They haled him before the rulers of the city, 15who in those days were Uzziah, son of Micah of the tribe of Simeon, Chabris, son of Gothoniel, and Charmis, son of Melchiel. 16They then convened all the elders of the city; and all their young men, as well as the women, gathered in haste at the place of assembly. They placed Achior in the center of the throng, and Uzziah questioned him about what had happened. 17He replied by giving them an account of what was said in the council of Holofernes, and of all his own words among the Assyrian officers, and of all the boasting threats of Holofernes against the house of Israel.

18At this the people fell prostrate and worshiped God; and they cried out: 19"Lord, God of heaven, behold their arrogance! Have pity on the lowliness of our people, and look with favor this day on those who are consecrated to you."* 20Then they reassured Achior and praised him highly. 21Uzziah brought him from the assembly to his home, where he gave a banquet for the

6, 19: The Latin Vulgate (6, 15) has a longer form of this prayer: "Lord, God of heaven and earth, behold their arrogance; regard our lowliness and look with favor on your holy ones; show that you do not abandon those who trust in you, but that you humble those who trust in themselves and glory in their own strength."

s Jdt 6. 2; 9, 7; 16, 2. t Jdt 3, 8; 9, 7. u Is 36, 18ff. v Jdt 6, 17. w Jdt 5, 22.

elders. That whole night they called upon the God of Israel for help.

## CHAPTER 7

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**Siege of Bethulia** [1]The following day Holofernes ordered his whole army, and all the allied troops that had come to his support, to move against Bethulia, seize the mountain passes, and engage the Israelites in battle. [2]That same day all their fighting men went into action. Their forces numbered a hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand horsemen, not counting the baggage train or the men who accompanied it on foot—a very great army. [3]They encamped at the spring in the valley near Bethulia, and spread out in breadth toward Dothan as far as Balbaim, and in length from Bethulia to Cyamon, which faces Esdraelon.

[4]When the Israelites saw how many there were, they said to one another in great dismay: "Soon they will devour the whole country. Neither the high mountains nor the valleys and hills can support the mass of them." [5]Yet they all seized their weapons, lighted fires on their bastions,* and kept watch throughout the night.

[6]On the second day Holofernes led out all his cavalry in the sight of the Israelites who were in Bethulia. [7]He reconnoitered the approaches to their city and located their sources of water; these he seized, stationing armed detachments around them, while he himself returned to his troops.

[8]All the commanders of the Edomites and all the leaders of the Ammonites, together with the generals of the seacoast, came to Holofernes and said: [9]"Sir, listen to what we have to say, that there may be no losses among your troops. [10]These Israelites do not rely on their spears, but on the height of the mountains where they dwell; it is not easy to reach the summit of their mountains.[x] [11]Therefore, sir, do not attack them in regular formation; thus not a single one of your troops will fall. [12]Stay in your camp, and spare all your soldiers. Have some of your servants keep control of the source of water that flows out at the base of the mountain, [13]for that is where the inhabitants of Bethulia get their water. Then thirst will begin to carry them off, and they will surrender their city. Meanwhile, we and our men will go up to the summits of the nearby mountains, and encamp there to guard against anyone's leaving the city.[y] [14]They and their wives and children will languish with hunger, and even before the sword strikes them they will be laid low in the streets of their city. [15]Thus you will render them dire punishment for their rebellion and their refusal to meet you peacefully."

[16]Their words pleased Holofernes and all his ministers, and he ordered their proposal to be carried out. [17]Thereupon the Moabites moved camp, together with five thousand Assyrians. They encamped in the valley, and held the water supply and the springs of the Israelites. [18]The Edomites and the Ammonites went up and encamped in the mountain region opposite Dothan; and they sent some of their men to the south and to the east opposite Egrebel, near Chusi, which is on Wadi Mochmur. The rest of the Assyrian army was encamped in the plain, covering the whole countryside. Their enormous store of tents and equipment was spread out in profusion everywhere.

[19]The Israelites cried to the LORD, their God, for they were disheartened, since all their enemies had them surrounded, and there was no way of slipping through their lines.[z] [20]The whole Assyrian camp, infantry, chariots, and cavalry, kept them thus surrounded for thirty-four days. All the reservoirs of water failed the inhabitants of Bethulia, [21]and the cisterns ran dry, so that on no day did they have enough to drink, but their drinking water was rationed. [22]Their children fainted away, and the women and youths were consumed with thirst and were collapsing in the streets and gateways of the city, with no strength left in them.

[23]All the people, therefore, including youths,

7, 5: Lighted fires on their bastions: to serve as signals for alerting the neighboring towns. Reference to fire signals in time of siege is made in the Lachish ostraca at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. Kept watch throughout the night: to prevent a surprise attack.

x 1 Kgs 20, 23. 28. y Ex 5, 21. z Ps 106, 6.

women, and children, went in a crowd to
Uzziah and the rulers of the city. They set up a
great clamor and said before the elders: [24]"God
judge between you and us! You have done us
grave injustice in not making peace with the
Assyrians. [25]There is no help for us now! In-
stead, God has sold us into their power by laying
us prostrate before them in thirst and utter
exhaustion. [26]Therefore, summon them and de-
liver the whole city as booty to the troops of
Holofernes and to all his forces; [27]we would be
better off to become their prey. We should
indeed be made slaves, but at least we should
live, and not have to behold our little ones dying
before our eyes and our wives and children
breathing out their souls. [28]We adjure you by
heaven and earth, and by our God, the LORD of
our forefathers, who is punishing us for our sins
and those of our forefathers, to do as we have
proposed, this very day."

[29]All in the assembly with one accord broke
into shrill wailing and loud cries to the LORD
their God. [30]But Uzziah said to them, "Courage,
my brothers! Let us wait five days more for the
LORD our God, to show his mercy toward us; he
will not utterly forsake us. [31]But if those days
pass without help coming to us, I will do as you
say." [32]Then he dispersed the men to their posts,
and they returned to the walls and towers of the
city; the women and children he sent to their
homes. Throughout the city they were in great
misery.

## II: Deliverance of the Jews

### CHAPTER 8

**Judith** [1]Now in those days Judith, daughter of
Merari, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of
Elkiah, son of Ananias, son of Gideon, son of
Raphain, son of Ahitob, son of Elijah, son of
Hilkiah, son of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of
Salamiel, son of Sarasadai,* son of Simeon, son
of Israel, heard of this. [2]Her husband, Manasseh,
of her own tribe and clan, had died at the time of
the barley harvest. [3]While he was in the field
supervising those who bound the sheaves, he
suffered sunstroke; and he died of this illness in
Bethulia, his native city. He was buried with his
forefathers in the field between Dothan and
Balamon. [4]The widowed Judith remained three
years and four months at home, [5]where she set
up a tent* for herself on the roof of her house.
She put sackcloth about her loins and wore
widow's weeds. [6]She fasted all the days of her
widowhood, except sabbath eves and sabbaths,
new moon eves and new moons, feastdays and
holidays of the house of Israel.[a] [7]She was
beautifully formed and lovely to behold. Her
husband, Manasseh, had left her gold and silver,
servants and maids, livestock and fields, which
she was maintaining. [8]No one had a bad word to
say about her, for she was a very God-fearing
woman.

**Her Words to the Elders** [9]When Judith, there-
fore, heard of the harsh words which the people,
discouraged by their lack of water, had spoken
against their ruler, and of all that Uzziah had said
to them in reply, swearing that he would hand
over the city to the Assyrians at the end of five
days, [10]she sent the maid who was in charge of
all her things to ask Uzziah, Chabris, and
Charmis, the elders of the city, to visit her.
[11]When they came, she said to them: "Listen to
me, you rulers of the people of Bethulia. What
you said to the people today is not proper. When
you promised to hand over the city to our
enemies at the end of five days unless within
that time the LORD comes to our aid, you
interposed between God and yourselves this
oath which you took. [12]Who are you, then, that
you should have put God to the test this day,
setting yourselves in the place of God in human
affairs?[b] [13]It is the LORD Almighty for whom you
are laying down conditions; will you never
understand anything? [14]You cannot plumb the
depths of the human heart or grasp the workings
of the human mind; how then can you fathom

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8, 1: Salamiel, son of Sarasadai: head of the tribe of Simeon during the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert (Nm 1, 6).
8, 5: A tent: erected by Judith on the roof of her house (v 5); it was here that the elders came to confer with her (v 11).

a Lk 2, 37. b Jb 38, 2; 40, 2. 7f; 42, 3.

God, who has made all these things, discern his
mind, and understand his plan?[c]
"No, my brothers, do not anger the LORD our
God. [15]For if he does not wish to come to our aid
within the five days, he has it equally within his
power to protect us at such time as he pleases, or
to destroy us in the face of our enemies. [16]It is
not for you to make the LORD our God give
surety for his plans.

"God is not man that he should be moved by
threats,
nor human, that he may be given an
ultimatum.

[17]"So while we wait for the salvation that
comes from him, let us call upon him to help us,
and he will hear our cry if it is his good pleasure.
[18]For there has not risen among us in recent
generations, nor does there exist today, any
tribe, or clan, or town, or city of ours that
worships gods made by hands, as happened in
former days.[d] [19]It was for such conduct that our
forefathers were handed over to the sword and
to pillage, and fell with great destruction before
our enemies.[e] [20]But since we acknowledge no
other god but the LORD, we hope that he will not
disdain us or any of our people. [21]If we are
taken, all Judea will fall, our sanctuary will be
plundered, and God will make us pay for its
profanation with our life's blood. [22]For the
slaughter of our kinsmen, for the taking of exiles
from the land, and for the devastation of our
inheritance, he will lay the guilt on our heads.
Wherever we shall be enslaved among the
nations, we shall be a mockery and a reproach in
the eyes of our masters. [23]Our enslavement will
not be turned to our benefit, but the LORD our
God will maintain it to our disgrace.

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[24]"Therefore, my brothers, let us set an exam-
ple for our kinsmen. Their lives depend on us,
and the defense of the sanctuary, the temple,
and the altar rests with us. [25]f Besides all this, we
should be grateful to the LORD our God, for
putting us to the test, as he did our forefathers.
[26]Recall how he dealt with Abraham, and how
he tried Isaac, and all that happened to Jacob in
Syrian Mesopotamia while he was tending the
flocks of Laban, his mother's brother. [27]Not for
vengeance did the LORD put them in the crucible
to try their hearts, nor has he done so with us. It
is by way of admonition that he chastises those
who are close to him."[g]

**Uzziah's Response** [28]Then Uzziah said to her:
"All that you have said was spoken with good
sense, and no one can gainsay your words. [29]Not
today only is your wisdom made evident, but
from your earliest years all the people have
recognized your prudence, which corresponds
to the worthy dispositions of your heart. [30]The
people, however, were so tortured with thirst
that they forced us to speak to them as we did,
and to bind ourselves by an oath that we cannot
break. [31]But now, God-fearing woman that you
are, pray for us that the LORD may send rain to
fill up our cisterns, lest we be weakened still
further."

[32]Then Judith said to them: "Listen to me! I
will do something that will go down from
generation to generation among the descendants
of our race. [33]Stand at the gate tonight to let me
pass through with my maid; and within the days
you have specified before you will surrender the
city to our enemies, the LORD will rescue Israel
by my hand. [34]You must not inquire into what I
am doing, for I will not tell you until my plan has
been accomplished." [35]Uzziah and the rulers
said to her, "Go in peace, and may the LORD God
go before you to take vengeance upon our
enemies!" [36]Then they withdrew from the tent
and returned to their posts.

## CHAPTER 9

**The Prayer of Judith** [1]Judith threw herself
down prostrate, with ashes strewn upon her
head, and wearing nothing over her sackcloth.
While the incense was being offered in the
temple of God in Jerusalem that evening, Judith
prayed to the LORD with a loud voice:[h] [2]"LORD,

9, 2: The maiden: Dinah, Jacob's daughter, who was violated by Shechem, the Hivite (Gn 34, 2).

c Jb 41, 3; Prv 14, 10; Wis 9, 13; Is 40, 13; Rom 11, 33f; 1 Cor 2, 11 d Jdt 5, 20f; 11, 10. e Pss 78, 56f; 106, 13f; Jer 7, 16–20; 14, 7. f 25f: Gn 22, 1–12; 29, 22–30. g Dt 4, 7. h Ex 30, 7f; Ps 141, 2.

God of my forefather Simeon! You put a sword into his hand to take revenge upon the foreigners who had immodestly loosened the maiden's* girdle, shamefully exposed her thighs, and disgracefully violated her body. This they did, though you forbade it.[i] [3]Therefore you had their rulers slaughtered; and you covered with their blood the bed in which they lay deceived, the same bed that had felt the shame of their own deceiving. You smote the slaves together with their princes, and the princes together with their servants.* [4]Their wives you handed over to plunder, and their daughters to captivity; and all the spoils you divided among your favored sons, who burned with zeal for you, and in their abhorrence of the defilement of their kinswoman, called on you for help.

[5]"O God, my God, hear me also, a widow. It is you who were the author of those events and of what preceded and followed them. The present, also, and the future you have planned. Whatever you devise comes into being;[j] [6]the things you decide on come forward and say, 'Here we are!' All your ways are in readiness, and your judgment is made with foreknowledge.[k]

[7][l]"Here are the Assyrians, a vast force, priding themselves on horse and rider, boasting of the power of their infantry, trusting in shield and spear, bow and sling. They do not know that

[8]" 'You, the LORD, crush warfare;
Lord is your name.'

"Shatter their strength in your might, and crush their force in your wrath; for they have resolved to profane your sanctuary, to defile the tent where your glorious name resides, and to overthrow with iron the horns of your altar. [9]See their pride, and send forth your wrath upon their heads. Give me, a widow, the strong hand to execute my plan.[m] [10]With the guile of my lips, smite the slave together with the ruler, the ruler together with his servant; crush their pride by the hand of a woman.

[11]"Your strength is not in numbers, nor does your power depend upon stalwart men; but you are the God of the lowly, the helper of the oppressed, the supporter of the weak, the protector of the forsaken, the savior of those without hope.

[12]"Please, please, God of my forefather, God of the heritage of Israel, LORD of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all you have created, hear my prayer! [13]Let my guileful speech bring wound and wale on those who have planned dire things against your covenant, your holy temple, Mount Zion, and the homes your children have inherited.[n] [14]Let your whole nation and all the tribes know clearly that you are the God of all power and might, and that there is no other who protects the people of Israel but you alone."

## CHAPTER 10

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**Judith's Departure** [1]As soon as Judith had thus concluded, and ceased her invocation to the God of Israel, [2]she rose from the ground. She called her maid and they went down into the house, which she used only on sabbaths and feast days. [3]She took off the sackcloth she had on, laid aside the garments of her widowhood, washed her body with water, and anointed it with rich ointment. She arranged her hair and bound it with a fillet, and put on the festive attire she had worn while her husband, Manasseh, was living.[o] [4]She chose sandals for her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her other jewelry. Thus she made herself very beautiful, to captivate the eyes of all the men who should see her.[p]

[5]She gave her maid a leather flask of wine and a cruse of oil. She filled a bag with roasted grain, fig cakes, bread and cheese; all these provisions she wrapped up and gave to the maid to carry.[q]

[6]Then they went out to the gate of the city of Bethulia and found Uzziah and the elders of the city, Chabris and Charmis, standing there. [7]When these men saw Judith transformed in

9, 3: Because Shechem had deceived and violated Dinah, her brothers, Simeon and Levi, tricked Shechem and the men of his city into being circumcised, and then slew them while they were confined to bed from the circumcision; cf Gn 34, 13–29.

i Gn 34. j Is 44, 7. k Jb 38, 35; Is 46, 9–13; Bar 3, 35. l 7f: Jdt 5, 23; 6, 2; 16, 2. m Ps 33, 16. n Jdt 10, 4; 11, 20. 23; 16, 6. 9. o Jdt 8, 6ff. p Jdt 9, 13. q Jdt 12, 2.

looks and differently dressed, they were very much astounded at her beauty and said to her, [8]"May the God of our fathers bring you to favor, and make your undertaking a success, for the glory of the Israelites and the exaltation of Jerusalem."

Judith bowed down to God. Then she said to them, [9]"Order the gate of the city opened for me, that I may go to carry out the business we discussed." So they ordered the youths to open the gate for her as she requested. [10]When they did so, Judith and her maid went out. The men of the city kept her in view as she went down the mountain and crossed the valley; then they lost sight of her.

**Judith Captured** [11]As Judith and her maid walked directly across the valley, they encountered the Assyrian outpost. [12]The men took her in custody and asked her, "To what people do you belong? Where do you come from, and where are you going?" She replied: "I am a daughter of the Hebrews, and I am fleeing from them, because they are about to be delivered up to you as prey.* [13]I have come to see Holofernes, the general in chief of your forces, to give him a trustworthy report; I will show him the route by which he can ascend and take possession of the whole mountain district without a single one of his men suffering injury or loss of life." [r]

Ch 8–16 See RG 212–214

[14]When the men heard her words and gazed upon her face, which appeared wondrously beautiful to them, they said to her, [15]"By coming down thus promptly to see our master, you have saved your life. Now go to his tent; some of our men will accompany you to present you to him. [16]When you stand before him, have no fear in your heart; give him the report you speak of, and he will treat you well." [17]So they detailed a hundred of their men as an escort for her and her maid, and these conducted them to the tent of Holofernes.

[18]When the news of her arrival spread among the tents, a crowd gathered in the camp. They came and stood around her as she waited outside the tent of Holofernes, while he was being informed about her. [19]They marveled at her beauty, regarding the Israelites with wonder because of her, and they said to one another, "Who can despise this people that has such women among them? It is not wise to leave one man of them alive, for if any were to be spared they could beguile the whole world."

**Judith Meets Holofernes** [20]The guard of Holofernes and all his servants came out and ushered her into the tent. [21]Now Holofernes was reclining on his bed under a canopy with a netting of crimson and gold, emeralds and other precious stones. [22]When they announced her to him, he came out to the antechamber, preceded by silver lamps; [23]and when Holofernes and his servants beheld Judith, they all marveled at the beauty of her face. She threw herself down prostrate before him, but his servants raised her up.

## CHAPTER 11

[1]Then Holofernes said to her: "Take courage, lady; have no fear in your heart! Never have I harmed anyone who chose to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth. [2]Nor would I have raised my spear against your people who dwell in the mountain region, had they not despised me and brought this upon themselves. [3]But now tell me why you fled from them and came to us. In any case, you have come to safety. Take courage! Your life is spared tonight and for the future. [4]No one at all will harm you. Rather, you will be well treated, as are all the servants of my lord, King Nebuchadnezzar."

[5] [s]Judith answered him: "Listen to the words of your servant, and let your handmaid speak in your presence! I will tell no lie to my lord this night, [6]and if you follow out the words of your handmaid, God will give you complete success, and my lord will not fail in any of his undertakings. [7]By the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth, and by the power of him who has sent you to set all creatures aright! not only do men serve him through you; but even the wild beasts

10, 12f: The deceitful means used by Judith against Holofernes, here and in Jdt 11, 5–19, are to be judged in the light of the moral concepts of Old Testament times; cf Gn 27, 1–25; 34, 13–29; 37, 32ff; Jos 2, 1–7; Jgs 4, 17–22.

r Jdt 11, 5f. s 5f: Jdt 10, 13.

and the cattle and the birds of the air, because of your strength, will live for Nebuchadnezzar and his whole house.[t] [8]Indeed, we have heard of your wisdom and sagacity, and all the world is aware that throughout the kingdom you alone are competent, rich in experience, and distinguished in military strategy.

[9][u]"As for Achior's speech in your council, we have heard of it. When the men of Bethulia spared him, he told them all he had said to you. [10]So then, my lord and master, do not disregard his word, but bear it in mind, for it is true. For our people are not punished, nor does the sword prevail against them, except when they sin against their God.[v] [11]But now their guilt has caught up with them by which they bring the wrath of their God upon them whenever they do wrong; so that my lord will not be repulsed and fail, but death will overtake them. [12]Since their food gave out and all their water ran low, they decided to kill their animals, and determined to consume all the things which God in his laws forbade them to eat. [13]They decreed that they would use up the first fruits of grain and the tithes of wine and oil which they had sanctified and reserved for the priests who minister in the presence of our God in Jerusalem: things which no layman should even touch with his hands. [14]They have sent messengers to Jerusalem to bring back to them authorization from the council of the elders; for the inhabitants there have also done these things. [15]On the very day when the response reaches them and they act upon it, they will be handed over to you for destruction.

[16]"As soon as I, your handmaid, learned all this, I fled from them. God has sent me to perform with you such deeds that people throughout the world will be astonished on hearing of them. [17]Your handmaid is, indeed, a God-fearing woman, serving the God of heaven night and day. Now I will remain with you, my lord; but each night your handmaid will go out to the ravine and pray to God. He will tell me when the Israelites have committed their crimes. [18]Then I will come and let you know, so that you may go out with your whole force, and not one of them will be able to withstand you. [19]I will lead you through Judea, till you come to Jerusalem, and there I will set up your judgment seat. You will drive them like sheep that have no shepherd, and not even a dog will growl at you. This was told me, and announced to me in advance, and I in turn have been sent to tell you."

[20]Her words pleased Holofernes and all his servants; they marveled at her wisdom and exclaimed,[w] [21]"No other woman from one end of the world to the other looks so beautiful and speaks so wisely!" [22]Then Holofernes said to her: "God has done well in sending you ahead of your people, to bring victory to our arms, and destruction to those who have despised my lord. [23]You are fair to behold, and your words are well spoken. If you do as you have said, your God will be my God; you shall dwell in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar, and shall be renowned throughout the earth."[x]

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 8–16
See RG
212–214

**Judith's Conduct** [1]Then he ordered them to lead her into the room where his silverware was kept, and bade them set a table for her with his own delicacies to eat and his own wine to drink. [2]But Judith said, "I will not partake of them, lest it be an occasion of sin; but I shall be amply supplied from the things I brought with me."[y] [3]Holofernes asked her: "But if your provisions give out, where shall we get more of the same to provide for you? None of your people are with us." [4]Judith answered him, "As surely as you, my lord, live, your handmaid will not use up her supplies till the LORD accomplishes by my hand what he has determined."

[5]Then the servants of Holofernes led her into the tent, where she slept till midnight. In the night watch just before dawn, she rose [6]and sent this message to Holofernes, "Give orders, my lord, to let your handmaid go out for prayer." [7]So Holofernes ordered his bodyguard not to hinder her. Thus she stayed in the camp three

t Jer 27, 6; Bar 3, 16f; Dn 2, 38. u 9f: Jdt 5, 5. v Jdt 5, 21; 8, 18. w Jdt 9, 13. x Jdt 9, 13. y Jdt 10, 5; Dn 1, 8.

days. Each night she went out to the ravine of
Bethulia, where she washed herself at the spring
of the camp. [8]After bathing, she besought the
LORD, the God of Israel, to direct her way for the
Ch 8-16 See RG 212-214 triumph of his people. [9]Then she returned
purified to the tent, and remained there until her
food was brought to her toward evening.

**Holofernes' Banquet** [10]On the fourth day
Holofernes gave a banquet for his servants alone,
to which he did not invite any of the officers.*
[11]And he said to Bagoas, the eunuch in charge of
his household: "Go and persuade this Hebrew
woman in your care to come and to eat and
drink with us. [12]It would be a disgrace for us to
have such a woman with us without enjoying
her company. If we do not entice her, she will
laugh us to scorn."

[13]So Bagoas left the presence of Holofernes,
and came to Judith and said, "So fair a maiden
should not be reluctant to come to my lord to
be honored by him, to enjoy drinking wine
with us, and to be like one of the Assyrian
women who live in the palace of Nebuchad-
nezzar." [14]She replied, "Who am I to refuse my
lord? Whatever is pleasing to him I will
promptly do. This will be a joy for me till the
day of my death."

[15]Thereupon she proceeded to put on her
festive garments and all her feminine adorn-
ments. Meanwhile her maid went ahead and
spread out on the ground for her in front of
Holofernes the fleece Bagoas had furnished for
her daily use in reclining at her dinner. [16]Then
Judith came in and reclined on it. The heart of
Holofernes was in rapture over her, and his spirit
was shaken. He was burning with the desire to
possess her, for he had been biding his time to
seduce her from the day he saw her. [17]Holofer-
nes said to her, "Drink and be merry with us!"
[18]Judith replied, "I will gladly drink, my lord, for
at no time since I was born have I ever enjoyed
life as much as I do today." [19]She then took the
things her maid had prepared, and ate and drank
in his presence. [20]Holofernes, charmed by her,
drank a great quantity of wine, more than he had
ever drunk on one single day in his life.

## CHAPTER 13

[1]When it grew late, his servants quickly
withdrew. Bagoas closed the tent from the
outside and excluded the attendants from their
master's presence. They went off to their beds,
for they were all tired from the prolonged
banquet. [2]Judith was left alone in the tent with
Holofernes, who lay prostrate on his bed, for he
was sodden with wine. [3]She had ordered her
maid to stand outside the bedroom and wait, as
on the other days, for her to come out; she said
she would be going out for her prayer. To Bagoas
she had said this also.

**Beheading of Holofernes** [4]When all had de-
parted, and no one, small or great, was left in the
bedroom, Judith stood by Holofernes' bed and
said within herself: "O LORD, God of all might,
in this hour look graciously on my undertaking
for the exaltation of Jerusalem; [5]now is the time
for aiding your heritage and for carrying out my
design to shatter the enemies who have risen
against us." [6]She went to the bedpost near the
head of Holofernes, and taking his sword from it,
[7]drew close to the bed, grasped the hair of his
head, and said, "Strengthen me this day, O God
of Israel!" [8]Then with all her might she struck
him twice in the neck and cut off his head.[z]
[9]She rolled his body off the bed and took the
canopy from its supports. Soon afterward, she
came out and handed over the head of Holofer-
nes to her maid, [10]who put it into her food
pouch; and the two went off together as they
were accustomed to do for prayer.

**The Return to Bethulia** They passed through
the camp, and skirting the ravine, reached
Bethulia on the mountain. As they approached
its gates, [11]Judith shouted to the guards from a
distance: "Open! Open the gate! God, our God,
is with us. Once more he has made manifest his
strength in Israel and his power against our
enemies; he has done it this very day." [12]When

12, 10: Banquet for his servants alone . . . officers: Holofernes invited the officials of his household, but not the officers of his army who were needed for military duty.

z Jgs 4, 21.

the citizens heard her voice, they quickly descended to their city gate and summoned the city elders. [13]All the people, from the least to the greatest, hurriedly assembled, for her return seemed unbelievable. They opened the gate and welcomed the two women. They made a fire for light; and when they gathered around the two, [14]Judith urged them with a loud voice: "Praise God, praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has shattered our enemies by my hand this very night." [15]Then she took the head out of the pouch, showed it to them, and said: "Here is the head of Holofernes, general in charge of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy under which he lay in his drunkenness. The LORD struck him down by the hand of a woman. [a] [16]As the LORD lives, who has protected me in the path I have followed, I swear that it was my face that seduced Holofernes to his ruin, and that he did not sin with me to my defilement or disgrace."

[17]All the people were greatly astonished. They bowed down and worshiped God, saying with one accord, "Blessed are you, our God, who today have brought to nought the enemies of your people." [18]Then Uzziah said to her: "Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth; and blessed be the LORD God, the creator of heaven and earth, who guided your blow at the head of the chief of our enemies. [b] [19]Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell of the might of God. [20]May God make this redound to your everlasting honor, rewarding you with blessings, because you risked your life when your people were being oppressed, and you averted our disaster, walking uprightly before our God." And all the people answered, "Amen! Amen!"

## CHAPTER 14

**Judith's Counsel** [1]Then Judith said to them: "Listen to me, my brothers. Take this head and hang it on the parapet of your wall. [2]At daybreak, when the sun rises on the earth, let each of you seize his weapons, and let all the able-bodied men rush out of the city under command of a captain, as if about to go down into the plain against the advance guard of the Assyrians, but without going down. [3]They will seize their armor and hurry to their camp to awaken the generals of the Assyrian army. When they run to the tent of Holofernes and do not find him, panic will seize them, and they will flee before you. [4]Then you and all the other inhabitants of the whole territory of Israel will pursue them and strike them down in their tracks. [5]But before doing this, summon for me Achior the Ammonite, that he may see and recognize the one who despised the house of Israel and sent him here to meet his death."

**Achior Summoned*** [6]So they called Achior from the house of Uzziah. When he came and saw the head of Holofernes in the hand of one of the men in the assembly of the people, he fell forward in a faint. [7]Then, after they lifted him up, he threw himself at the feet of Judith in homage, saying: "Blessed are you in every tent of Judah; and in every foreign nation, all who hear of you will be struck with terror. [8]But now, tell me all that you did during these days." So Judith told him, in the presence of the people, all that she had been doing from the day she left till the time she began speaking to them. [9]When she finished her account, the people cheered loudly, and their city resounded with shouts of joy. [10]Now Achior, seeing all that the God of Israel had done, believed firmly in him. He had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised, and he has been united with the house of Israel to the present day.

## III: Victory

**Consternation in the Camp** [11]At daybreak they hung the head of Holofernes on the wall. Then all the Israelite men took up their arms and went to the slopes of the mountain. [12]When the

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14, 6–10: In recognizing the head of Holofernes, whom he had known personally, Achior was so overcome with the evidence of the Lord's power exerted through a woman that he believed in the God of Israel.

a Jdt 14, 18. b Jgs 5, 24; Lk 1, 28. 42.

Assyrians saw them, they notified their captains:
these, in turn, went to the generals and division
leaders and all their other commanders. [13]They
came to the tent of Holofernes and said to the
one in charge of all his things, "Waken our
master, for the slaves have dared come down to
give us battle, to their utter destruction."
[14]Bagoas went in, and knocked at the entry of
the tent, presuming that he was sleeping with
Judith. [15]As no one answered, he parted the
curtains, entered the bedroom, and found him
lying on the floor, a headless corpse. [16]He broke
into a loud clamor of weeping, groaning, and
howling, and rent his garments. [17]Then he
entered the tent where Judith had her quarters;
and, not finding her, he rushed out to the troops
and cried: [18]"The slaves have duped us! A single
Hebrew woman has brought disgrace on the
house of King Nebuchadnezzar. Here is Holofernes headless on the ground!" [c]

[19]When the commanders of the Assyrian
army heard these words, they rent their tunics
and were seized with consternation. Loud
screaming and howling arose in the camp.

## CHAPTER 15

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[1]On hearing what had happened, those still in
their tents were amazed, [2]and overcome with
fear and trembling. No one kept ranks any
longer; they scattered in all directions, and fled
along every road, both through the valley and in
the mountains. [3]Those also who were stationed
in the mountain district around Bethulia took to
flight. Then all the Israelite warriors overwhelmed them.

**Pursuit** [4]Uzziah sent messengers to
Betomasthaim, to Choba and Kona, and to the
whole country of Israel to report what had
happened, that all might fall upon the enemy
and destroy them. [5]On hearing this, all the
Israelites, with one accord, attacked them and
cut them down as far as Choba. Even those from
Jerusalem and the rest of the mountain region
took part in this, for they too had been notified
of the happenings in the camp of their enemies.
The Gileadites and the Galileans struck the
enemy's flanks with great slaughter, even beyond Damascus and its territory. [6]The remaining
inhabitants of Bethulia swept down on the camp
of the Assyrians, plundered it, and acquired
great riches. [7]The Israelites who returned from
the slaughter took possession of what was left,
till the towns and villages in the mountains and
on the plain were crammed with the enormous
quantity of booty they had seized. [d]

[8]The high priest Joakim and the elders of the
Israelites, who dwelt in Jerusalem, came to see
for themselves the good things that the LORD
had done for Israel, and to meet and congratulate Judith. [e] [9]When they had visited her, all with
one accord blessed her, saying:

"You are the glory of Jerusalem,
the surpassing joy of Israel;
you are the splendid boast of our people.*
[10]With your own hand you have done all this;
you have done good to Israel,
and God is pleased with what you have
wrought.
May you be blessed by the LORD Almighty
forever and ever!"

And all the people answered, "Amen!"

[11]For thirty days the whole populace plundered the camp, giving Judith the tent of Holofernes, with all his silver, his couches, his dishes,
and all his furniture, which she accepted. She
harnessed her mules, hitched her wagons to
them, and loaded these things on them.

[12]All the women of Israel gathered to see her;
and they blessed her and performed a dance in
her honor. She took branches in her hands and
distributed them to the women around her,[f]
[13]and she and the other women crowned themselves with garlands of olive leaves. At the head
of all the people, she led the women in the
dance, while the men of Israel followed in their
armor, wearing garlands and singing hymns.

15, 9: You are the glory of Jerusalem, the surpassing joy of Israel; you are the splendid boast of our people: these words are used in the liturgy of the Church in regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

c Jdt 13, 15; 16, 5–9; Jgs 9, 54. d Est 9, 5. 16. e Est 9, 10. f Ex 15, 20f; Jgs 11, 34; 1 Sm 18, 6; Jer 31, 4. 13.

**Hymn of Praise** [14]Judith led all Israel in this
song of thanksgiving, and the people swelled this
hymn of praise:

## CHAPTER 16

[1] "Strike up the instruments,
a song to my God with timbrels,
chant to the LORD with cymbals;
Sing to him a new song,
exalt and acclaim his name.[g]
[2] For the LORD is God; he crushes warfare,
and sets his encampment among his people;
he snatched me from the hands of my
persecutors.[h]

[3] "The Assyrian came from the mountains of the
north,
with the myriads of his forces he came;
Their numbers blocked the torrents, their
horses covered the hills.
[4] He threatened to burn my land,
put my youths to the sword,
Dash my babes to the ground,
make my children a prey,
and seize my virgins as spoil.

[5] "But the LORD Almighty thwarted them,
by a woman's hand he confounded them.[i]
[6] Not by youths was their mighty one struck
down,
nor did titans bring him low,
nor huge giants attack him;
But Judith, the daughter of Merari,
by the beauty of her countenance disabled
him.[j]
[7] She took off her widow's garb
to raise up the afflicted in Israel.
She anointed her face with fragrant oil;
[8] with a fillet she fastened her tresses
and put on a linen robe to beguile him.
[9] Her sandals caught his eyes,
and her beauty captivated his mind.
The sword cut through his neck.[k]

[10] "The Persians were dismayed at her daring,
the Medes appalled at her boldness.
[11] When my lowly ones shouted, they were
terrified;
when my weaklings cried out, they
trembled;
at the sound of their war cry, they took to
flight.
[12] The sons of slave girls pierced them through;
the supposed sons of rebel mothers cut
them down;
they perished before the ranks of my LORD.

[13] "A new hymn I will sing to my God.
O LORD, great are you and glorious,
wonderful in power and unsurpassable.[l]
[14] Let your every creature serve you;
for you spoke, and they were made,
You sent forth your spirit, and they were
created;
no one can resist your word.[m]
[15] The mountains to their bases, and the seas, are
shaken;
the rocks, like wax, melt before your
glance.[n]

"But to those who fear you,
you are very merciful.
[16] Though the sweet odor of every sacrifice is a
trifle,
and the fat of all holocausts but little in your
sight,
one who fears the LORD is forever great.[o]

[17] "Woe to the nations that rise against my
people!
The LORD Almighty will requite them;
in the day of judgment he will punish them:
He will send fire and worms into their flesh,*
and they shall burn and suffer forever."[p]

**Thanksgiving** [18]The people then went to Jerusalem to worship God; when they were purified, they offered their holocausts, free-will offerings, and gifts. [19]Judith dedicated, as a votive offering to God, all the things of Holofernes that the people had given her, as well as the canopy that she herself had taken from his bedroom.[q] [20]For

Ch 8–16
See RG
212–214

16, 17: Fire and worms into their flesh: see footnote on Is 66, 24.

g Pss 81, 2f; 135, 1ff; 149, 1ff. h Jdt 5, 23; 6, 2; 9. 7f; Ex 15, 3; Ps 46, 10. i Jdt 14, 8. j Jdt 9, 13. k Jdt 9, 13. l Ps 144, 9. m Pss 33, 9; 104, 30; 148, 5. n Jgs 5, 5; Ps 97, 5. o Ps 86, 11; Sir 34, 13–17. p Is 66, 24. q Nm 31, 48–54; Dt 13, 13–18; Jos 6, 18f.

three months the people continued their celebration in Jerusalem before the sanctuary, and Judith remained with them.

**Judith's Renown** [21]When those days were over, each one returned to his inheritance. Judith went back to Bethulia and remained on her estate. For the rest of her life she was renowned throughout the land. [22]Many wished to marry her, but she gave herself to no man all the days of her life from the time of the death and burial of her husband, Manasseh. [23]She lived to be very old in the house of her husband, reaching the advanced age of a hundred and five. She died in Bethulia, where they buried her in the tomb of her husband, Manasseh;[r] [24]and the house of Israel mourned her for seven days. Before she died, she distributed her goods to the relatives of her husband, Manasseh, and to her own relatives; and to the maid she gave her freedom.

[25] [s]During the life of Judith and for a long time after her death, no one again disturbed the Israelites.*

**16, 25:** The Vulgate adds: "The feast day of this victory was adopted by the Hebrews into the calendar of their holy days, and has been celebrated by the Jews from that time to the present." However, there is no other evidence of such a festivity; and it is the ancient feast of Passover to which the narrative is especially suited.

r Gn 23, 19; 49, 29–32. s Jgs 3, 11. 30; 5, 31; 8, 28.

# THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Esther
See RG
215–220

The Book of Esther is named after its Jewish heroine. It tells the story of the plot of Haman the Agagite, jealous and powerful vizier of King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) of Persia (485–464 B.C.), to destroy in a single day all the Jews living in the Persian Empire. He is moved to this out of hatred for the Jewish servant Mordecai, who for religious motives refuses to render him homage. The day of the proposed massacre is determined by lot. Meanwhile Esther, niece and adopted daughter of Mordecai, is chosen queen by King Xerxes in place of Vashti. She averts the pogrom planned against her people and has the royal decree of extermination reversed against Haman and the enemies of the Jews. Mordecai replaces Haman, and together with Esther, works for the welfare of their people. The event is celebrated with feasting and great joy, and the memory of it is to be perpetuated by the annual observance of the feast of Purim (lots), when the lot of destruction for the Jews was reversed for one of deliverance and triumph by Queen Esther and her uncle Mordecai.

The purpose of the book is didactic: the glorification of the Jewish people and the explanation of the origin, significance and date of the feast of Purim on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar (February–March). The book was intended as a consolation for Israel, a reminder that God's providence continually watches over them, never abandoning them when they serve him faithfully or turn to him in sincere repentance. There is no justification for interpreting the story in mythological or cultic terms, as though Mordecai and Esther represented Marduk and Ishtar in their mythological triumph over two Elamite deities.

The Hebrew text of Esther is found in the Hebrew Bible, where it is the last of the five megilloth (scrolls) read on special feasts of the Jewish liturgical year.

The book is a free composition—not a historical document, despite the Achaemenian coloring of the narrative. Its time of composition may well have been at the end of the Persian Empire, toward the close of the fourth century B.C. The author shows skill in developing his story and in using the art of contrast for instruction and edification. The solution to the

difficulties of the book is to be found in its literary presentation rather than in a forced attempt to square detailed data of the narrative with facts. The evident literary motif of the reversal of fortune of the prosperous wicked and the oppressed virtuous through eventual punishment of the former and triumph of the latter finds parallels in the story of Joseph (Gn 37; 39—45) and of Judith (8—16). The book is vindictive, but it should be remembered that the precept of love of enemies had not yet been taught by the word and example of Christ.

The text of Esther, written originally in Hebrew, was transmitted in two forms: a short Hebrew form and a longer Greek version. The latter contains 107 additional verses, inserted at appropriate places within the Hebrew form of the text. A few of these seem to have a Hebrew origin while the rest are Greek in original composition. It is possible that the Hebrew form of the text is original throughout. If it systematically omits reference to God and his Providence over Israel, this is perhaps due to fear of irreverent response (see note on 4, 14). The Greek text with the above-mentioned additions is probably a later literary paraphrase in which the author seeks to have the reader share his sentiments. This standard Greek text is pre-Christian in origin. The church has accepted the additions as equally inspired with the rest of the book.

In the present translation, the portions preceded by the letters A through F indicate the underlying Greek additions referred to above. The regular chapter numbers apply to the Hebrew text.

The book may be divided as follows:

I. Prologue (A, 1-17).
II. Elevation of Esther (1, 1—2, 23).
III. Haman's Plot against the Jews (3, 1-13; B, 1-7; 3, 14—4, 8; B, 8; 4, 9-16; C, 1—D, 16; 5, 1-14).
IV. Vindication of the Jews (6, 1—8, 12; E, 1-24; 8, 13—10, 3).
V. Epilogue (F, 1-11).

The order of the Vulgate text in relation to the order of the Greek text is as follows:

Vulg. 11, 2—12, 6 = A, 1-17 at the beginning of the book.
13, 1-7 = B, 1-7 after 3, 13.
13, 8—15, 3-19 = C, 1—D, 16 after 4, 16.
15, 1-2 = B, 8.9 after 4, 8.
16, 1-24 = E, 1-24 after 8, 12.
10, 4—10, 13 = F, 1-10 after 10, 3.

## I: Prologue

### CHAPTER A

**Dream of Mordecai** [1]In the second year of the reign of the great King Ahasuerus,* on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream.[a] [2]He was a Jew residing in the city of Susa, a prominent man who served at the king's

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A, 1: King Ahasuerus: Xerxes I (485–464 B.C.). Mordecai: a Babylonian name, after the god Marduk. The genealogy of Mordecai is designed to reflect opposition to Israel's enemy, as narrated in 1 Sm 15, 7ff, where Saul (whose father's name was Kish, of the Tribe of Benjamin) conquered Agag the Amalekite; in A, 17 Haman is said to be the son of an Agagite. Further emphasis on the Benjaminite-Agagite opposition can be seen in Shimei, the Benjaminite who reviled David (2 Sm 16, 5ff). Jair appears to be the minor Judge, a Transjordan Manassehite (Jgs 10, 3). The chronology of the book would make Mordecai well over one hundred years old, since he was deported with Jehoiachin about 598 B.C.; cf Est 2, 5f.

a Est 2, 5.

court, [3]and one of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken from Jerusalem with Jeconiah, king of Judah.[b]

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[4]c[c]This was his dream.* There was noise and tumult, thunder and earthquake—confusion upon the earth. [5]Two great dragons came on, both poised for combat. They uttered a mighty cry, [6]and at their cry every nation prepared for war, to fight against the race of the just. [7]It was a dark and gloomy day. Tribulation and distress, evil and great confusion, lay upon the earth. [8]The whole race of the just were dismayed with fear of the evils to come upon them, and were at the point of destruction. [9]d[d]Then they cried out to God, and as they cried, there appeared to come forth a great river, a flood of water from a little spring. [10]The light of the sun broke forth; the lowly were exalted and they devoured the nobles.

[11]Having seen this dream and what God intended to do, Mordecai awoke. He kept it in mind, and tried in every way, until night, to understand its meaning.

**The Plot Discovered** [12]e[e]Mordecai lodged at the court with Bagathan and Thares, two eunuchs of the king who were court guards. [13]He overheard them plotting, investigated their plans, and discovered that they were preparing to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. So he informed the king about them, [14]and the king had the two eunuchs questioned and, upon their confession, put to death. [15]Then the king had these things recorded; Mordecai, too, put them into writing. [16]The king also appointed Mordecai to serve at the court, and rewarded him* for his actions.[f]

[17]Haman, however, son of Hammedatha the Agagite,* who was in high honor with the king, sought to harm Mordecai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.[g]

A, 4: The interpretation of this dream is given in Est F, 1–6.

A, 16: Rewarded him: this reward comes only later; see the sequence of events from the Hebrew text of Esther at 2, 22f, and 6, 3, below.

A, 17: Haman . . . the Agagite: opposed Mordecai the Benjaminite, by whom, however, he was overcome (Est 7, 9f), just as King Agag the Amalekite, was conquered by King Saul ancestor of Mordecai (1 Sm 15, 7ff).

1, 1: From India to Ethiopia: from western India to Upper Egypt, the greatest extent of the Persian Empire achieved under Darius the Great, father of Ahasuerus.

# II: Elevation of Esther

## CHAPTER 1

**The Banquet of Ahasuerus** [1]During the reign of Ahasuerus—this was the Ahasuerus who ruled over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia *— [2]while he was occupying the royal throne in the stronghold of Susa,* [3]in the third year of his reign, he presided over a feast for all his officers and ministers: the Persian and Median aristocracy, the nobles, and the governors of the provinces.[h] [4]For as many as a hundred and eighty days, he displayed the glorious riches of his kingdom and the resplendent wealth of his royal estate.

[5]At the end of this time the king gave a feast of seven days in the garden court of the royal palace for all the people, great and small, who were in the stronghold of Susa. [6]There were white cotton draperies and violet hangings, held by cords of crimson byssus from silver rings on marble pillars. Gold and silver couches were on the pavement, which was of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored stones. [7]Liquor was served in a variety of golden cups, and the royal wine flowed freely, as befitted the king's munificence. [8]By ordinance of the king the drinking was unstinted, for he had instructed all the stewards of his household to comply with the good pleasure of everyone.

[9]Queen Vashti* also gave a feast for the women inside the royal palace of King Ahasuerus.

**Deposal of Vashti** [10]On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he instructed Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who attended King Ahasuerus,[i] [11]to bring Queen Vashti into his presence wearing the royal crown, that he might display her beauty to the

1, 2: Susa: ancient capital of Elam (Gn 14, 1); under the Achamenid kings, one of the two capitals of the Persian Empire. The other was Persepolis, the summer palace of the kings.

1, 9: Queen Vashti: Herodotus (Histories 7, 61) relates that the wife of Ahasuerus was Amestris.

b Est 2, 6; 2 Kgs 24, 15; 2 Chr 36, 9f; Jer 22, 24ff; 24, 1; 29, 1f. c 4ff: Est F, 2. 4ff. d gf: Est F, 3. e 12–15: Est 2, 21ff; 6, 1ff. f Est 6, 3. g Est 3, 1–15; B, 1–7; E, 13. h Jdt 1, 16. i Dn 5, 1.

populace and the officials, for she was lovely to
behold. [12]But Queen Vashti refused to come at
the royal order issued through the eunuchs. At
this the king's wrath flared up, and he burned
with fury. [13]He conferred with the wise men
versed in the law, because the king's business
was conducted in general consultation with
lawyers and jurists. [14]He summoned Carshena,
Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena
and Memucan, the seven Persian and Median
officials who were in the king's personal service
and held first rank in the realm,[j] [15]and asked
them, "What is to be done by law with Queen
Vashti for disobeying the order of King Ahasuerus issued through the eunuchs?"

[16]In the presence of the king and of the
officials, Memucan answered: "Queen Vashti
has not wronged the king alone, but all the
officials and the populace throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus. [17]For the queen's
conduct will become known to all the women,
and they will look with disdain upon their
husbands when it is reported, 'King Ahasuerus
commanded that Queen Vashti be ushered into
his presence, but she would not come.' [18]This
very day the Persian and Median ladies who
hear of the queen's conduct will rebel against all
the royal officials, with corresponding disdain
and rancor. [19]If it please the king, let an irrevocable royal decree* be issued by him and inscribed
among the laws of the Persians and Medes,
forbidding Vashti to come into the presence of
King Ahasuerus and authorizing the king to give
her royal dignity to one more worthy than she.[k]
[20]Thus, when the decree which the king will
issue is published throughout his realm, vast as it
is, all wives will honor their husbands, from the
greatest to the least."

[21]This proposal found acceptance with the
king and the officials, and the king acted on the
advice of Memucan. [22]He sent letters to all the
royal provinces, to each province in its own
script and to each people in its own language,*
to the effect that every man should be lord in his
own home.

## CHAPTER 2

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**Esther Made Queen** [1]After this, when King
Ahasuerus' wrath had cooled, he thought over
what Vashti had done and what had been
decreed against her. [2]Then the king's personal
attendants suggested: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. [3]Let the king appoint
commissaries in all the provinces of his realm to
bring together all beautiful young virgins to the
harem in the stronghold of Susa. Under the care
of the royal eunuch Hegai, custodian of the
women, let cosmetics be given them. [4]Then the
girl who pleases the king shall reign in place of
Vashti." This suggestion pleased the king, and he
acted accordingly.

[5]There was in the stronghold of Susa a certain
Jew named Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei,
son of Kish, a Benjaminite, [6]who had been
exiled from Jerusalem with the captives taken
with Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had deported.[l] [7]He was
foster father to Hadassah,* that is, Esther, his
cousin; for she had lost both father and mother.
The girl was beautifully formed and lovely to
behold. On the death of her father and mother,
Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter.[m]

[8]When the king's order and decree had been
obeyed and many maidens brought together to
the stronghold of Susa under the care of Hegai,
Esther also was brought in to the royal palace
under the care of Hegai, custodian of the
women. [9]The girl pleased him and won his
favor. So he promptly furnished her with cosmetics and provisions. Then picking out seven maids
for her from the royal palace, he transferred both
her and her maids to the best place in the harem.
[10]Esther did not reveal her nationality or family,
for Mordecai had commanded her not to do so.

1, 19: Irrevocable royal decree: the historian Siculus indicates that such a concept of irrevocable laws existed in the time of Darius III (335–331 B.C.), the last of the Persian kings; cf Est 8, 8.

1, 22: To each province . . . script and to each people . . . language: many languages were spoken in the Persian Empire, the principal ones being Persian, Elamite, Babylonian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Egyptian, and Greek. Each of them had its own script.

2, 7: Hadassah (the feminine form of hadas, myrtle), was the name by which this woman would be known among her Jewish compatriots. Esther is a variant of the name of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

j Ezr 7, 14. k Est 8, 5. 8; Dn 6, 8f. l Est A, 3; 2 Kgs 24, 15; 2 Chr 36, 9f; Jer 22, 24ff; 24, 1; 29, 1f. m Est 2, 15.

[11]Day by day Mordecai would walk about in front of the court of the harem, to learn how Esther was faring and what was to become of her.

[12]Each girl went in turn to visit King Ahasuerus after the twelve months' preparation decreed for the women. Of this period of beautifying treatment, six months were spent with oil of myrrh, and the other six months with perfumes and cosmetics. [13]Then, when the girl was to visit the king, she was allowed to take with her from the harem to the royal palace whatever she chose. [14]She would go in the evening and return in the morning to a second harem under the care of the royal eunuch Shaashgaz, custodian of the concubines. She could not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and had her summoned by name.[n]

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[15]As for Esther, daughter of Abihail and adopted daughter of his nephew Mordecai, when her turn came to visit the king, she did not ask for anything but what the royal eunuch Hegai, custodian of the women, suggested. Yet she won the admiration of all who saw her. [16]Esther was led to King Ahasuerus in his palace in the tenth month, Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. [17]The king loved Esther more than all other women, and of all the virgins she won his favor and benevolence. So he placed the royal diadem on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. [18]Then the king gave a great feast in honor of Esther to all his officials and ministers, granting a holiday* to the provinces and bestowing gifts with royal bounty.

**The Plot Discovered*** [19][o][To resume: From the time the virgins had been brought together,and while Mordecai was passing his time at the king's gate, [20]Esther had not revealed her family or nationality, because Mordecai had told her not to; and Esther continued to follow Mordecai's instructions, just as she had when she was being brought up by him. [21][p]And during the time that Mordecai spent at the king's gate,*Bagathan and Thares, two of the royal eunuchs who guarded the entrance, had plotted in anger to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [22]When the plot became known to Mordecai, he told Queen Esther, who in turn informed the king for Mordecai. [23]The matter was investigated and verified, and both of them were hanged on a gibbet.* This was written in the annals for the king's use.]

## III: Haman's Plot Against the Jews

### CHAPTER 3

**Mordecai Refuses To Honor Haman** [1]After these events King Ahasuerus raised Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to high rank, seating him above all his fellow officials.[q] [2]All the king's servants who were at the royal gate would kneel and bow down to Haman, for that is what the king had ordered in his regard.[r] Mordecai, however, would not kneel and bow down.* [3]The king's servants who were at the royal gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's order?"[s] [4]When they had reminded him day after day and he would not listen to them, they informed Haman, to see whether Mordecai's explanation was acceptable, since he had told them that he was a Jew.

**Haman's Reprisal** [5]When Haman observed that Mordecai would not kneel and bow down to him, he was filled with anger. [6]Moreover, he thought it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Since they had told Haman of Mordecai's nationality, he sought to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai's people, throughout the realm of King Ahasuerus. [7]In the first month,

**2, 18:** A holiday: or perhaps, "a remission of taxes."

**2, 19–23:** This is a resumption, in a slightly different form, of the story already told in Est A, 12–15.

**2, 21:** Mordecai . . . at the king's gate: to exercise watchful care for Esther. Some understand this to mean that Mordecai was stationed at the gate to render royal service; cf Est A, 2.

**2, 23:** Hanged on a gibbet: impaled, perhaps, after the Babylonian manner.

**3, 2:** Mordecai . . . would not kneel and bow down: in order not to render to man, the homage which he regarded as belonging to God alone; cf Est C, 5ff.

**3, 7:** Pur: a Babylonian word which the Hebrew translates as goral, "lot." This word is preserved in the text because its plural, purim, became the name of the feast of Purim commemorating the deliverance of the Jews; cf Est 9, 24. 26.

n Est 2, 19f; 4, 11. 16. o 19f: Est 2, 14. p 21ff: Est A, 12–15; 6, 1ff. q Est B, 3; 5, 11; E, 11. r Est C, 5; 5, 9. 13; 6, 10. 12. s Est 4, 16.

Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, the *pur,** or lot, was cast in Haman's presence, to determine the day and the month for the destruction of Mordecai's people on a single day, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar.[t]

**Decree against the Jews** [8]Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus: "Dispersed among the nations throughout the provinces of your kingdom, there is a certain people living apart, with laws differing from those of every other people. They do not obey the laws of the king, and so it is not proper for the king to tolerate them.[u] [9]If it please the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them; and I will deliver to the procurators ten thousand silver talents for deposit in the royal treasury."[v] [10]The king took the signet ring* from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.[w] [11]"The silver you may keep," the king said to Haman, "but as for this people, do with them whatever you please."

[12]So the royal scribes were summoned; and on the thirteenth day of the first month they wrote, at the dictation of Haman, an order to the royal satraps, the governors of every province, and the officials of every people, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring. [13]Letters were sent by couriers to all the royal provinces, that all the Jews, young and old, including women and children, should be killed, destroyed, wiped out in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, and that their goods should be seized as spoil.[x]

## CHAPTER B

[1]This is a copy of the letter:

"The great King Ahasuerus writes to the satraps of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia, and the governors subordinate to them, as follows: [2]When I came to rule many peoples and to hold sway over the whole world, I determined not to be carried away with the sense of power, but always to deal fairly and with clemency; to provide for my subjects a life of complete tranquillity; and by making my government humane and effective as far as the borders, to restore the peace desired by all men.[y] [3]When I consulted my counselors as to how this might be accomplished, Haman, who excels among us in wisdom, who is outstanding for constant devotion and steadfast loyalty, and who has gained the second rank in the kingdom,[z] [4]brought it to our attention that, mixed in with all the races throughout the world, there is one people of bad will, which by its laws is opposed to every other people and continually disregards the decrees of kings, so that the unity of empire blamelessly designed by us cannot be established.[a]

[5]"Having noted, therefore, that this most singular people is continually at variance with all men, lives by divergent and alien laws, is inimical to our interests, and commits the worst crimes, so that stability of government cannot be obtained, [6]we hereby decree that all those who are indicated to you in the letters of Haman, who is in charge of the administration and is a second father to us, shall, together with their wives and children, be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without any pity or mercy, on the fourteenth day* of the twelfth month, Adar, of the current year;[b] [7]so that when these people, whose present ill will is of long standing, have gone down into the nether world by a violent death on one same day, they may at last leave our affairs stable and undisturbed for the future."

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**3, 10:** Signet ring: a ring containing a seal which was impressed on documents to authenticate them. By giving this ring to Haman, the king bestowed on him the power to authenticate royal decrees.

**B, 6:** Fourteenth day: the Hebrew text, as in Est 2, 13 above, and the Greek text here translated do not agree on the day of the month specified by the king; in fact, a two-day celebration is decreed in chapter 9, and the 13th, 14th and 15th of Adar are all mentioned; see Est 9, 15. 18.

t Est 9, 24ff; F, 10. u Est 3, 13; B, 4; E, 24; Dn 3, 8–12; Wis 2, 14f. v Est 7, 4. w Gn 41, 42. x Est B, 6; 7, 4. y Est E, 8f. z Est 3, 1; 5, 11; E, 11. a Est 3, 8; E, 24. b Est 3, 13; 7, 4; E, 11ff.

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14A copy of the decree to be promulgated as
law in every province was published to all the
peoples, that they might be prepared for that
day. 15The couriers set out in haste at the king's
command; meanwhile, the decree was promul-
gated in the stronghold of Susa. The king and
Haman then sat down to feast, but the city of
Susa was thrown into confusion.

## CHAPTER 4

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**Esther's Aid Sought by Mordecai** 1When
Mordecai learned all that was happening, he tore
his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, and
walked through the city, crying out loudly and
bitterly,[c] 2till he came before the royal gate,
which no one clothed in sackcloth might enter.
3(Likewise in each of the provinces, wherever
the king's legal enactment reached, the Jews
went into deep mourning, with fasting, weeping,
and lament; they all slept on sackcloth and
ashes.)

4Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came
and told her. Overwhelmed with anguish, she
sent garments for Mordecai to put on, so that he
might take off his sackcloth; but he refused.
5Esther then summoned Hathach, one of the
king's eunuchs whom he had placed at her
service, and commanded him to find out what
this action of Mordecai meant and the reason for
it. 6So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the
public square in front of the royal gate, 7and
Mordecai told him all that had happened, as well
as the exact amount of silver Haman had prom-
ised to pay to the royal treasury for the slaughter
of the Jews. 8He also gave him a copy of the
written decree for their destruction which had
been promulgated in Susa, to show and explain
to Esther. He was to instruct her to go to the
king; she was to plead and intercede with him in
behalf of her people. 8*"Remember the days of
your lowly estate," Mordecai had him say,
"when you were brought up in my charge; for
Haman, who is second to the king, has asked for
our death. 9Invoke the LORD and speak to the
king for us; save us from death."

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Hathach returned to Esther and told her what
Mordecai had said. 10Then Esther replied to
Hathach and gave him this message for Morde-
cai: 11"All the servants of the king and the
people of his provinces know that any man or
woman who goes to the king in the inner court
without being summoned, suffers the automatic
penalty of death, unless the king extends to him
the golden scepter, thus sparing his life. Now as
for me, I have not been summoned to the king
for thirty days."[d]

12When Esther's words were reported to
Mordecai, 13he had this reply brought to her:
"Do not imagine that because you are in the
king's palace, you alone of all the Jews will
escape. 14Even if you now remain silent, relief
and deliverance will come to the Jews from
another source;* but you and your father's
house will perish. Who knows but that it was for
a time like this that you obtained the royal
dignity?"

15Esther sent back to Mordecai the response:
16"Go and assemble all the Jews who are in
Susa; fast on my behalf, all of you, not eating or
drinking, night or day, for three days. I and my
maids will also fast in the same way. Thus
prepared, I will go to the king, contrary to the
law. If I perish, I perish!"[e]

## CHAPTER C

**Prayer of Mordecai** Mordecai went away and
did exactly as Esther had commanded. 1Recall-
ing all that the LORD had done, he prayed to him
2and said: "O Lord God, almighty King, all
things are in your power, and there is no one to
oppose you in your will to save Israel. 3You
made heaven and earth and every wonderful
thing under the heavens. 4You are LORD of all,
and there is no one who can resist you, LORD.
5[f]You know all things. You know, O LORD, that
it was not out of insolence or pride or desire for
fame that I acted thus in not bowing down to the
proud Haman. 6Gladly would I have kissed the

**4, 8**: This verse belongs to ch B.
**4, 14**: From another source: very probably Mordecai refers to divine aid; the Greek additions (C) are explicit about this.

c Jdt 4, 12. d Est 2, 14; 4, 12; D, 12. e Est C, 12f. f 5ff: Est 3, 2; 5, 9.

soles of his feet for the salvation of Israel. [7]But I
acted as I did so as not to place the honor of man
above that of God. I will not bow down to
anyone but you, my LORD. It is not out of pride
that I am acting thus. [8]And now, LORD God,
King, God of Abraham, spare your people, for
our enemies plan our ruin and are bent upon
destroying the inheritance that was yours from
*the beginning.* [9]*Do not spurn your portion,*
which you redeemed for yourself out of Egypt.
[10]Hear my prayer; have pity on your inheritance
and turn our sorrow into joy: thus we shall live
to sing praise to your name, O LORD. Do not
silence those who praise you."

[11]All Israel, too, cried out with all their
strength, for death was staring them in the face.

**Prayer of Esther** [12]*g*Queen Esther, seized with
mortal anguish, likewise had recourse to the
LORD. [13]Taking off her splendid garments, she
put on garments of distress and mourning. In
place of her precious ointments she covered her
head with dirt and ashes. She afflicted her body
severely; all her festive adornments were put
aside, and her hair was wholly disheveled.

[14]Then she prayed to the LORD, the God of
Israel, saying: "My LORD, our King, you alone
are God. Help me, who am alone and have no
help but you, [15]for I am taking my life in my
hand.*h* [16]As a child I was wont to hear from the
people of the land of my forefathers that you, O
LORD, chose Israel from among all peoples, and
our fathers from among all their ancestors, as a
lasting heritage, and that you fulfilled all your
promises to them.*i* [17]But now we have sinned in
your sight, and you have delivered us into the
hands of our enemies, [18]because we worshiped
their gods. You are just, O LORD. [19]But now they
are not satisfied with our bitter servitude, but
have undertaken [20]to do away with the decree
you have pronounced, and to destroy your
heritage; to close the mouths of those who
praise you, and to extinguish the glory of your
temple and your altar; [21]to open the mouths of
the heathen to acclaim their false gods, and to
extol an earthly king forever.

[22]"O LORD, do not relinquish your scepter to
those that are nought. Let them not gloat over
our ruin, but turn their own counsel against
them and make an example of our chief enemy.
[23]Be mindful of us, O LORD. Manifest yourself in
the time of our distress and give me courage,
King of gods and Ruler of every power. [24]Put in
my mouth persuasive words in the presence of
the lion and turn his heart to hatred for our
enemy, so that he and those who are in league
with him may perish. [25]Save us by your power,
and help me, who am alone and have no one but
you, O LORD.

"You know all things. [26]You know that I hate
the glory of the pagans, and abhor the bed of the
uncircumcised or of any foreigner. [27]You know
that I am under constraint, that I abhor the sign
of grandeur which rests on my head when I
appear in public; abhor it like a polluted rag, and
do not wear it in private. [28]I, your handmaid,
have never eaten at the table of Haman, nor
have I graced the banquet of the king or drunk
the wine of libations.* [29]From the day I was
brought here till now, your handmaid has had no
joy except in you, O LORD, God of Abraham. [30]O
God, more powerful than all, hear the voice of
those in despair. Save us from the power of the
wicked, and deliver me from my fear."

## CHAPTER D

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**Esther Is Received by the King** [1]On the third
day, putting an end to her prayers, she took off
her penitential garments and arrayed herself in
her royal attire. [2]In making her state appearance,
after invoking the all-seeing God and savior, she
took with her two maids; [3]on the one she leaned
gently for support, [4]while the other followed
her, bearing her train. [5]She glowed with the
perfection of her beauty and her countenance
was as joyous as it was lovely, though her heart
was shrunk with fear. [6]She passed through all
the portals till she stood face to face with the
king, who was seated on his royal throne,
clothed in full robes of state, and covered with
gold and precious stones, so that he inspired

C, 28: Wine of libations: offered in sacrifice to the gods.

g 12f: Est 4, 16. h Est 4, 16. i Dt 4, 20; 7, 6; 9, 29; 14, 2; 26, 18; 32, 9.

great awe. 7As he looked up, his features ablaze
with the height of majestic anger, the queen
staggered, changed color, and leaned weakly
against the head of the maid in front of her. 8But
God changed the king's anger to gentleness. In
great anxiety he sprang from his throne, held her
in his arms until she recovered, and comforted
her with reassuring words. 9"What is it, Es-
ther?" he said to her. "I am your brother. Take
courage! 10You shall not die because of this
general decree of ours. 11Come near!" 12Raising
the golden scepter, he touched her neck with it,
embraced her, and said, "Speak to me."[j]

13She replied: "I saw you, my lord, as an
angel of God, and my heart was troubled with
fear of your majesty. 14For you are awesome, my
lord, though your glance is full of kindness."
15As she said this, she fainted. 16The king
became troubled and all his attendants tried to
revive her.

## CHAPTER 5

Esther
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1*[Now on the third day, Esther put on her
royal garments and stood in the inner courtyard,
looking toward the royal palace, while the king
was seated on his royal throne in the audience
chamber, facing the palace doorway. 2He saw
Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, and
made her welcome by extending toward her the
golden staff which he held. She came up to him,
and touched the top of the staff.]

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3Then the king said to her, "What is it, Queen
Esther? What is your request? Even if it is half of
my kingdom, it shall be granted you."[k] 4"If it
please your majesty," Esther replied, "come
today with Haman to a banquet I have pre-
pared." 5And the king ordered, "Have Haman
make haste to fulfill the wish of Esther."

**First Banquet of Esther** So the king went
with Haman to the banquet Esther had pre-
pared. 6During the drinking of the wine, the
king said to Esther, "Whatever you ask for shall
be granted, and whatever request you make
shall be honored, even if it is for half my
kingdom."[l] 7Esther replied: "This is my petition
and request: 8if I have found favor with the king
and if it pleases your majesty to grant my petition
and honor my request, come with Haman tomor-
row to a banquet which I shall prepare for you;
and then I will do as you ask."

**Haman's Plot against Mordecai** 9That day
Haman left happy and in good spirits. But when
he saw that Mordecai at the royal gate did not
rise, and showed no fear of him, he was filled
with anger toward him.[m] 10Haman restrained
himself, however, and went home, where he
summoned his friends and his wife Zeresh. 11He
recounted the greatness of his riches, the large
number of his sons, and just how the king had
promoted him and placed him above the officials
and royal servants.[n] 12"Moreover," Haman
added, "Queen Esther invited no one but me to
the banquet with the king; again tomorrow I am
to be her guest, with the king. 13Yet none of this
satisfies me as long as I continue to see the Jew
Mordecai sitting at the royal gate."[o] 14His wife
Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a
gibbet set up, fifty cubits in height, and in the
morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged
on it. Then go to the banquet with the king in
good cheer." This suggestion pleased Haman,
and he had the gibbet erected.[p]

# IV: Vindication of the Jews

## CHAPTER 6

**Mordecai's Reward from the King** 1That
night the king, unable to sleep, asked that the
chronicle of notable events be brought in. While
this was being read to him, 2the passage oc-
curred in which Mordecai reported Bagathan
and Teresh, two of the royal eunuchs who
guarded the entrance, for seeking to lay hands
on King Ahasuerus.[q] 3The king asked, "What
was done to reward and honor Mordecai for
this?" The king's attendants replied, "Nothing
was done for him."[r]

4"Who is in the court?" the king asked. Now

5, 1f: The Hebrew text here translated is a short form of the account already given in Greek.

j Est 4, 11. k Est 5, 6; 7, 2; 9, 12. l Est 5, 3. m Est 3, 2f; C, 5ff; 6, 10. 12. n Est 3, 1; B, 3; E, 11; 9, 6–10. o Est 3, 2f; 6, 10, 12. p Est 6, 4; 7, 9f. q Est A, 12ff; 2, 21ff. r Est A, 16.

Haman had entered the outer court of the king's
palace to suggest to the king that Mordecai should
be hanged on the gibbet he had raised for him.[s]
[5]The king's servants answered him, "Haman is
waiting in the court." "Let him come in," the king
said. [6]When Haman entered, the king said to
him, "What should be done for the man whom
the king wishes to reward?" Now Haman thought
to himself, "Whom would the king more probably
wish to reward than me?" [7]So he replied to the
king: "For the man whom the king wishes to
reward [8]there should be brought the royal robe
which the king wore and the horse on which the
king rode when the royal crown was placed on his
head. [9]The robe and the horse should be con-
signed to one of the noblest of the king's officials,
who must clothe the man the king wishes to
reward, have him ride on the horse in the public
square of the city, and cry out before him, 'This is
what is done for the man whom the king wishes
to reward.' "[t] [10]Then the king said to Haman:
"Hurry! Take the robe and horse as you have
proposed, and do this for the Jew Mordecai, who
is sitting at the royal gate. Do not omit anything
you proposed."[u] [11]So Haman took the robe and
horse, clothed Mordecai, had him ride in the pub-
lic square of the city, and cried out before him,
"This is what is done for the man whom the king
wishes to reward."

[12]Mordecai then returned to the royal gate,
while Haman hurried home, his head covered in
grief.[v] [13]When he told his wife Zeresh and all his
friends everything that had happened to him, his
advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If
Mordecai, before whom you are beginning to
decline, is of the Jewish race, you will not prevail
against him, but will surely be defeated by him."

**Esther's Second Banquet** [14]While they were
speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived
and hurried Haman off to the banquet Esther
had prepared.

## CHAPTER 7

[1]So the king and Haman went to the banquet
with Queen Esther. [2]Again, on this second day,
during the drinking of the wine, the king said to
Esther, "Whatever you ask, Queen Esther, shall
be granted you. Whatever request you make
shall be honored, even for half the kingdom."[w]
[3]Queen Esther replied: "If I have found favor
with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, I
ask that my life be spared, and I beg that you
spare the lives of my people. [4]For my people and
I have been delivered to destruction, slaughter,
and extinction. If we were to be sold into slavery
I would remain silent, but as it is, the enemy will
be unable to compensate for the harm done to
the king."[x] [5]"Who and where," said King Ahas-
uerus to Queen Esther, "is the man who has
dared to do this?"[y] [6]Esther replied, "The enemy
oppressing us is this wicked Haman." At this,
Haman was seized with dread of the king and
queen.

[7]The king left the banquet in anger and went
into the garden of the palace, but Haman stayed
to beg Queen Esther for his life, since he saw
that the king had decided on his doom. [8]When
the king returned from the garden of the palace
to the banquet hall, Haman had thrown himself
on the couch on which Esther was reclining;
and the king exclaimed, "Will he also violate the
queen while she is with me in my own house!"
Scarcely had the king spoken, when the face of
Haman was covered over.

**Punishment of Haman** [9][z]Harbona, one of
the eunuchs who attended the king, said, "At
the house of Haman stands a gibbet fifty cubits
high. Haman prepared it for Mordecai, who
gave the report that benefited the king." The
king answered, "Hang him on it." [10]So they
hanged Haman on the gibbet which he had
made ready for Mordecai, and the anger of the
king abated.

## CHAPTER 8

Esther
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[1]That day King Ahasuerus gave the house of
Haman, enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther;
and Mordecai was admitted to the king's pres-
ence, for Esther had revealed his relationship to
her.[a] [2]The king removed his signet ring from

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s Est 5, 14; 7, 9f. t Gn 41, 42f; 1 Kgs 1, 33; Dn 5, 29. u Est 2, 21; 3, 2f; 5, 9. 13. v Est 2, 21; 3, 2f; 5, 9. 13. w Est 5, 3. x Est 3, 13; B, 6. y Est 3, 8f. z 9f: Est 5, 14; 6, 4. a Est 9, 1; Prv 11, 8; 26, 27; Mt 7, 2.

Haman, and transferred it into the keeping of Mordecai; and Esther put Mordecai in charge of the house of Haman.[b]

**The Second Royal Decree** [3]In another audience with the king, Esther fell at his feet and tearfully implored him to revoke the harm done by Haman the Agagite, and the plan he had devised against the Jews. [4]The king stretched forth the golden scepter to Esther. So she rose and, standing in his presence, [5]said: "If it pleases your majesty and seems proper to you, and if I have found favor with you and you love me, let a document be issued to revoke the letters which that schemer Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, wrote for the destruction of the Jews in all the royal provinces.[c] [6]For how can I witness the evil that is to befall my people, and how can I behold the destruction of my race?"

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215–220

[7]King Ahasuerus then said to Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai: "Now that I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gibbet because he attacked the Jews, [8][d]you in turn may write in the king's name what you see fit concerning the Jews and seal the letter with the royal signet ring." For whatever is written in the name of the king and sealed with the royal signet ring cannot be revoked.*

[9]At that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, Sivan, the royal scribes were summoned. Exactly as Mordecai dictated, they wrote to the Jews and to the satraps, governors, and officials of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia: to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. [10]These letters, which he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring, he sent by mounted couriers riding thoroughbred royal steeds. [11][e]In these letters the king authorized the Jews in each and every city to group together and defend their lives, and to kill, destroy, wipe out, along with their wives and children, every armed group of any nation or province which should attack them, and to seize their goods as spoil [12]throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on a single day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, Adar.

## CHAPTER E

[1]The following is a copy of the letter:

"King Ahasuerus the Great to the governors of the provinces in the hundred and twenty-seven satrapies from India to Ethiopia, and to those responsible for our interests: Greetings!

[2]"Many have become the more ambitious the more they were showered with honors through the bountiful generosity of their patrons. [3]Not only do they seek to do harm to our subjects; incapable of bearing such greatness, they even begin plotting against their own benefactors. [4]Not only do they drive out gratitude from among men; with the arrogant boastfulness of those to whom goodness has no meaning, they suppose they will escape the vindictive judgment of the all-seeing God.

[5]"Often, too, the fair speech of friends entrusted with the administration of affairs has induced many placed in authority to become accomplices in the shedding of innocent blood, and has involved them in irreparable calamities [6]by deceiving with malicious slander the sincere good will of rulers. [7]This can be verified in the ancient stories that have been handed down to us, but more fully when one considers the wicked deeds perpetrated in your midst by the pestilential influence of those undeserving of authority. [8][f]We must provide for the future, so as to render the kingdom undisturbed and peaceful for all men, [9]taking advantage of changing conditions and deciding always with equitable treatment matters coming to our attention.

**8, 8:** Whatever is written . . . cannot be revoked: the king cannot directly grant Esther's request (v 5) to revoke the previous decree against the Jews because of the irrevocable character of the laws of the Medes and Persians (Est 1, 19; Dn 6, 9); but he empowers Esther to issue a new decree in his name which renders the earlier decree without effect; cf Est 3, 12f.

b Prv 13, 22; Dn 2, 48f. c Est 1, 19. d Est 1, 19. e 11f: Est 9, 1–4. f 8f: Est B, 2.

[10]"For instance, Haman, son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian,* certainly not of Persian blood, and very different from us in generosity, was hospitably received by us. [11]He so far enjoyed the good will which we have toward all peoples that he was proclaimed 'father of the king,' before whom everyone was to bow down; he attained the rank second to the royal throne.[g] [12]But, unequal to this dignity, he strove to deprive us of kingdom and of life; [13]and by weaving intricate webs of deceit, he demanded the destruction of Mordecai, our savior and constant benefactor, and of Esther, our blameless royal consort, together with their whole race.[h] [14]For by such measures he hoped to catch us defenseless and to transfer the rule of the Persians to the Macedonians. [15]But we find that the Jews, who were doomed to extinction by this arch-criminal, are not evildoers, but rather are governed by very just laws [16]and are the children of the Most High, the living God of majesty, who has maintained the kingdom in a flourishing condition for us and for our forebears.

[17]"You will do well, then, to ignore the letter sent by Haman, son of Hammedatha, [18]for he who composed it has been hanged, together with his entire household, before the gates of Susa. Thus swiftly has God, who governs all, brought just punishment upon him.[i]

[19]"You shall exhibit a copy of this letter publicly in every place, to certify that the Jews may follow their own laws, [20]and that you may help them on the day set for their ruin, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, to defend themselves against those who attack them. [21]For God, the ruler of all, has turned that day for them from one of destruction of the chosen race into one of joy. [22]Therefore, you too must celebrate this memorable day among your designated feasts with all rejoicing, [23]so that both now and in the future it may be, for us and for loyal Persians, a celebration of victory, and for those who plot against us a reminder of destruction.

[24]"Every city and province, without exception, that does not observe this decree shall be ruthlessly destroyed with fire and sword, so that it will be left not merely untrodden by men, but even shunned by wild beasts and birds forever."[j]

## (CHAPTER 8)

Esther
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[13]A copy of the letter to be promulgated as law in each and every province was published among all the peoples, so that the Jews might be prepared on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.* [14]Couriers mounted on royal steeds sped forth in haste at the king's order, and the decree was promulgated in the stronghold of Susa.

[15]Mordecai left the king's presence clothed in a royal robe of violet and of white cotton, with a large crown of gold and a cloak of crimson byssus. The city of Susa shouted with joy,[k] [16]and there was splendor and merriment for the Jews, exultation and triumph. [17]In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's order arrived, there was merriment and exultation, banqueting and feasting for the Jews. And many of the peoples of the land embraced Judaism, for they were seized with a fear of the Jews.[l]

## CHAPTER 9

Esther
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215–220

**Victory of the Jews** [1][m]When the day arrived on which the order decreed by the king was to be carried out, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to become masters of them, the situation was reversed: the Jews became masters of their enemies. [2]The Jews mustered in their cities throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus to attack those who sought to do them harm, and no one could withstand them, but all peoples were seized with a fear of them. [3]More-

E, 10: Macedonian: a redactor of the book in the Hellenistic period used the designation Macedonian, here and in v 14, to express, after Macedonia's conquest of Persia, the most odious kind of man that a Persian ruler could be supposed to think of; the Hebrew text, for a similar reason, called Haman an Agagite. See note on Est A, 17.

8, 13: Avenge themselves on their enemies: partly in self-defense (Est E, 20), and partly to express the fact that the extreme cruelty designed against the Jews by their enemies now recoiled upon the latter as a punishment. Cf 9, 1f.

g Est B, 3. 6. h Est A, 17. i Est 7, 10; 9, 14. j Est 3, 8f; B, 4. k Dn 5, 7. l Est 9, 27. m 1f: Est 8, 11f.

over, all the officials of the provinces, the satraps,
governors, and royal procurators supported the
Jews from fear of Mordecai; [4]for Mordecai was
powerful in the royal palace, and the report was
spreading through all the provinces that he was
continually growing in power.

[5]The Jews struck down all their enemies with
the sword, killing and destroying them; they did
to their enemies as they pleased.[n] [6]o[o]In the
stronghold of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed
five hundred men. [7]They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, [8]Porathai, Adalia, Aridatha, [9]Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha,
[10]p[p]the ten sons of Haman, son of Hammedatha,
the foe of the Jews. However, they did not
engage in plundering.*

[11]On the same day, when the number of
those killed in the stronghold of Susa was
reported to the king, [12]he said to Queen Esther: "In the stronghold of Susa the Jews have
killed and destroyed five hundred men, as well
as the ten sons of Haman. What must they
have done in the other royal provinces! You
shall again be granted whatever you ask, and
whatever you request shall be honored." [13]So
Esther said, "If it pleases your majesty, let the
Jews in Susa be permitted again tomorrow to
act according to today's decree, and let the ten
sons of Haman be hanged on gibbets." [14]The
king then gave an order to this effect, and the
decree was published in Susa. So the ten sons
of Haman were hanged,[q] [15]and the Jews in
Susa mustered again on the fourteenth of the
month of Adar and killed three hundred men
in Susa.* However, they did not engage in
plundering.[r]

[16]The other Jews, who dwelt in the royal
provinces, also mustered and defended themselves, and obtained rest from their enemies.
They killed seventy-five thousand* of their foes,
without engaging in plunder,[s] [17]on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. On the
fourteenth of the month they rested, and made it
a day of feasting and rejoicing.

[18](The Jews in Susa, however, mustered on
the thirteenth and fourteenth of the month. But
on the fifteenth they rested, and made it a day of
feasting and rejoicing.) [19]That is why the rural
Jews, who dwell in villages, celebrate the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of rejoicing
and feasting, a holiday on which they send gifts
of food to one another.

**The Feast of Purim** [20]Mordecai recorded
these events and sent letters to all the Jews, both
near and far, in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. [21]He ordered them to celebrate every year
both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of the
month of Adar [22]as the day on which the Jews
obtained rest from their enemies and as the
month which was turned for them from sorrow
into joy, from mourning into festivity. They were
to observe these days with feasting and gladness,
sending food to one another and gifts to the
poor. [23]The Jews took upon themselves for the
future this observance which they instituted at
the written direction of Mordecai.[t]

[24]u[u]Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite,
the foe of all the Jews, had planned to destroy
them and had cast the *pur,* or lot, for the time of
their defeat and destruction. [25]Yet, when Esther
entered the royal presence, the king ordered in
writing that the wicked plan Haman had devised
against the Jews should instead be turned against
Haman and that he and his sons should be
hanged on gibbets.[v] [26]And so these days have
been named Purim after the word *pur.*

Thus, because of all that was contained in this
letter, and because of what they had witnessed
and experienced in this affair, [27]the Jews established and took upon themselves, their descendants, and all who should join them, the inviolable obligation of celebrating these two days
every year in the manner prescribed by this
letter, and at the time appointed.[w] [28]These days

9, 10: They did not engage in plundering: in contrast to the Israelites who fought Agag (1 Sm 15, 9); cf also vv 15f.

9, 15: This second slaughter explains the two dates (13th and 14th) of the Purim celebration by Jews in Susa (v 18).

9, 16: Seventy-five thousand: according to the Greek text this number was fifteen thousand.

n Jdt 15, 6. o 6–10: Est 5, 11; B, 3; E, 11. p Est 9, 15; Jdt 15, 7. 11. q Est 7, 10; E, 18. r Est 9, 10. s Jdt 15, 6. t Est 9, 29. u 24ff: Est 3, 7; F, 10. v Est 6, 5–13. w Est 8, 12. 17.

were to be commemorated and kept in every generation, by every clan, in every province, and in every city. These days of Purim were never to fall into disuse among the Jews, nor into oblivion among their descendants.

[29]Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail and of Mordecai* the Jew, wrote to confirm with full authority this second letter about Purim, [30]when Mordecai sent documents concerning peace and security to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of Ahasuerus' kingdom.[x] [31]Thus were established, for their appointed time, these days of Purim which Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had designated for the Jews, just as they had previously enjoined upon themselves and upon their race the duty of fasting and supplication.* [32]The command of Esther confirmed these prescriptions for Purim and was recorded in the book.

## CHAPTER 10

[1]King Ahasuerus laid tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea. [2]All the acts of his power and valor, as well as a detailed account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king promoted, are recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. [3]The Jew Mordecai was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, in high standing among the Jews, and was regarded with favor by his many brethren, as the promoter of his people's welfare and the herald of peace for his whole race.[y]

# V: Epilogue

## CHAPTER F

**Mordecai's Dream Fulfilled** [1][z]Then Mordecai said: "This is the work of God. [2]I recall the dream I had about these very things, and not a single detail has been left unfulfilled— [3]the tiny spring that grew into a river, the light of the sun, the many waters. The river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. [4]The two dragons are myself and Haman. [5]The nations are those who assembled to destroy the name of the Jews, [6]but my people is Israel, who cried to God and was saved.

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215–220

"The LORD saved his people and delivered us from all these evils. God worked signs and great wonders, such as have not occurred among the nations. [7]For this purpose he arranged two lots:* one for the people of God, the second for all the other nations. [8]These two lots were fulfilled in the hour, the time, and the day of judgment before God and among all the nations. [9]God remembered his people and rendered justice to his inheritance.[a]

Esther
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215–220

[10]"Gathering together with joy and happiness before God, they shall celebrate these days on the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar throughout all future generations of his people Israel."*

**9, 29**: Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail and of Mordecai: the natural offspring of Abihail and adopted daughter of Mordecai; cf Est 2, 15. This second letter: for the burden of this letter see Est 9, 20ff. It was endorsed by Queen Esther. The first letter, written in the king's name, is referred to in Est 8, 9.

**9, 31**: Fasting and supplication: as the Jews had previously undertaken the duty of fasting and supplication to prevent the impending disaster, they now observe days of festival to commemorate their deliverance—in both cases (cf Est 4, 3. 15f) at the request of Mordecai and Esther.

**F, 7**: Two lots: in this passage of the Greek text, which gives a more religious interpretation of the feast, the two lots are drawn by God to determine, respectively, the destiny of Israel and that of the nations. In Est 3, 7 above, translated from the Hebrew text, the feast is called Purim because of the lots which Aman cast to determine the day for the extinction of the Jews.

**F, 10**: The Greek text of Esther contains a postscript as follows: In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and Levite, and his son Ptolemy brought the present letter of Purim, saying that it was genuine and that Lysimachus, son of Ptolemy, of the community of Jerusalem, had translated it. The date referred to in this postscript is most probably 78–77 B.C., in the reign of Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra V.

x Est 9, 23–26. y 2 Mc 15, 14. z 1–6: Est A, 4–10. a Est 3, 7; 9, 17f. 21. 24–28.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

1 Maccabees
See RG
220–226

The name Maccabee, probably meaning "hammer," is actually applied in the Books of Maccabees to only one man, Judas, third son of the priest Mattathias and first leader of the revolt against the Seleucid kings who persecuted the Jews (1 Mc 2, 4. 66; 2 Mc 8, 5. 16; 10, 1. 16). Traditionally the name has come to be applied to the brothers of Judas, his supporters, and even to other Jewish heroes of the period, such as the seven brothers (2 Mc 7).

The two Books of Maccabees, placed last in the Douai version of the Old Testament, contain independent accounts of events in part identical which accompanied the attempted suppression of Judaism in Palestine in the second century B.C. The vigorous reaction to this attempt established for a time the religious and political independence of the Jews.

1 Maccabees was written about 100 B.C., in Hebrew, but the original has not come down to us. Instead, we have an early, pre-Christian, Greek translation full of Hebrew idioms. The author, probably a Palestinian Jew, is unknown. He was familiar with the traditions and sacred books of his people and had access to much reliable information on their recent history (from 175 to 134 B.C.). He may well have played some part in it himself in his youth. His purpose in writing is to record the salvation of Israel which God worked through the family of Mattathias (5, 62)—especially through his three sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, and his grandson, John Hyrcanus. Implicitly the writer compares their virtues and their exploits with those of the ancient heroes, the Judges, Samuel, and David.

There are seven poetic sections in the book which imitate the style of classical Hebrew poetry: four laments (1, 25-28. 36-40; 2, 8-13; 3, 45), and three hymns of praise of "our fathers" (2, 51-64), of Judas (3, 3-9), and of Simon (14, 4-15).

The doctrine expressed in the book is the customary belief of Israel, without the new developments which appear in 2 Maccabees and Daniel. The people of Israel have been specially chosen by the one true God as his covenant-partner, and they alone are privileged to know him and worship him. He is their eternal benefactor and their unfailing source of help. The people, in turn, must be loyal to his exclusive worship and must observe exactly the precepts of the law he has given them.

There is no doctrine of individual immortality except in the survival of one's name and fame, nor does the book express any messianic expectation, though messianic images are applied historically to "the days of Simon" (14, 4-17). In true deuteronomic tradition, the author insists on fidelity to the law as the expression of Israel's love for God. The contest which he describes is a struggle, not simply between Jew and Gentile, but between those who would uphold the law and those, Jews or Gentiles, who would destroy it. His severest condemnation goes, not to the Seleucid politicians, but to the lawless apostates among his own people, adversaries of Judas and his brothers, who are models of faith and loyalty.

1 Maccabees has importance also for the New Testament. Salvation is paralleled with Jewish national aspirations (1 Mc 4, 46—14, 41), in contrast to the universal reign of God taught by Christ in the Gospel (Mt 13, 47-50; 22, 1-14). Also, destruction of the wall of the temple separating Jew from Gentile is an act of desecration in 1 Mc 9, 54, but in Eph 2, 14, an act of redemption and unification of both through Christ. On the other hand, association, in 1 Mc 2, 52, of Abraham's offering up of Isaac (Gn 22) with his justification by God (Gn 15, 6) is reflected in Jn 2, 21f, just as the Scriptures are regarded as a source of consolation in 1 Mc 12, 9 and in Rom 15, 4.

The Books of Maccabees, though regarded by Jews and Protestants as apocryphal, i.e., not inspired Scripture, because not contained in the Palestinian Canon or list of books drawn up at the end of the first century A.D., have nevertheless always been accepted by the Catholic Church as inspired, on the basis of apostolic tradition.

1 Maccabees is divided as follows:

I. Introduction: Hellenism in Asia Minor (1, 1-9).
II. The Maccabean Revolt (1, 10—2, 70).
III. Leadership of Judas Maccabeus (3, 1—9, 22).
IV. Leadership of Jonathan (9, 23—12, 54).
V. Simon, High Priest and Ethnarch (13, 1—16, 24).

## I: Introduction: Hellenism In Asia Minor

### CHAPTER 1

**Conquests and Death of Alexander** 1 [a]After Alexander the Macedonian, Philip's son, who came from the land of Kittim,* had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, he became king in his place, having first ruled in Greece. 2He fought many campaigns, captured fortresses, and put kings to death. 3He advanced to the ends of the earth, gathering plunder from many nations; the earth fell silent before him, and his heart became proud and arrogant. 4He collected a very strong army and conquered provinces, nations, and rulers, and they became his tributaries. 5But after all this he took to his bed, realizing that he was going to die. 6He therefore summoned his officers, the nobles, who had been brought up with him from his youth, to divide his kingdom among them while he was still alive. 7Alexander had reigned twelve years* when he died.

8So his officers took over his kingdom, each in his own territory, 9and after his death they all put on royal crowns, and so did their sons after them for many years, causing much distress over the earth.

## II: The Maccabean Revolt

Ch 1-2
See RG
222-224

**Pact between Jews and Gentiles** 10There sprang from these a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus, once a hostage at Rome. He became king in the year one hundred and thirty-seven* of the kingdom of the Greeks.[b]

11In those days there appeared in Israel men who were breakers of the law, and they seduced many people, saying: "Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us."[c] 12The proposal was agreeable; 13[d]some from among the people promptly went to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the way of living of the Gentiles. 14Thereupon they built a gymnasium* in Jerusalem according to the Gentile custom. 15They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing.[e]

1, 1: Land of Kittim: Greece. The name referred originally to inhabitants of Kiti, capital of the isle of Cyprus, then to any Cypriots (Is 23, 1; Jer 2, 10), later to Greeks in general, and finally even to Romans. See note on Dn 11, 30. Darius: Darius III, Codoman (336–331 B.C.).

1, 7: Twelve years: 336–323 B.C.

1, 10: The year one hundred and thirty-seven: Antiochus IV seized the throne in September, 175 B.C. Dates are given in this book according to the Seleucid era, which however was reckoned in two different ways. Antiochians considered this date to be October, 312 B.C. (Syrian calendar), while Babylonians and Jewish priests accepted April, 311 B.C. as the commencement of the era (temple calendar). The author of 1 Mc dates political events by the Syrian calendar but religious events by the temple calendar. Accordingly, the civil New Year occurred variously in September or October, the religious New Year in March or April.

1, 14: Gymnasium: symbol and center of athletic and intellectual life, it was the chief instrument of Hellenistic propaganda. Jewish youth were attracted by sports and encouraged to join youth clubs. They received training in military skills and in the duties of citizens. Through participation in the intellectual life, many were gradually won over to paganism.

a 1–10: Dn 8, 20ff; 11, 3f. 21. b 2 Mc 4, 7. c 2 Mc 4, 9–17. d 13ff: 2 Mc 4, 7–17. e 1 Cor 7, 18.

**Egyptian Campaign of Antiochus** [16]When his kingdom seemed secure, Antiochus proposed to become king of Egypt, so as to rule over both kingdoms. [17]He invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants,* and with a large fleet,[f] [18]to make war on Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Ptolemy was frightened at his presence and fled, leaving many casualties. [19]The fortified cities in the land of Egypt were captured, and Antiochus plundered the land of Egypt.

**Persecution of the Jews** [20][g]After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three,* he returned and went up to Israel and to Jerusalem with a strong force. [21]He insolently invaded the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for the light with all its fixtures, [22]the offering table, the cups and the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the golden ornament on the façade of the temple. He stripped off everything, [23]and took away the gold and silver and the precious vessels; he also took all the hidden treasures he could find. [24]Taking all this, he went back to his own country, after he had spoken with great arrogance and shed much blood.

[25]And there was great mourning for Israel, in
every place where they dwelt,
[26] and the rulers and the elders groaned.
Virgins and young men languished,
and the beauty of the women was
disfigured.
[27]Every bridegroom took up lamentation,
she who sat in the bridal chamber mourned,
[28]And the land was shaken on account of its
inhabitants,
and all the house of Jacob was covered with
shame.

[29][h]Two years later, the king sent the Mysian commander to the cities of Judah, and he came to Jerusalem with a strong force. [30]He spoke to them deceitfully in peaceful terms, and won their trust. Then he attacked the city suddenly, in a great onslaught, and destroyed many of the people in Israel. [31]He plundered the city and set fire to it, demolished its houses and its surrounding walls, [32]took captive the women and children, and seized the cattle. [33]Then they built up the City of David* with a high, massive wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel.[i] [34]There they installed a sinful race, perverse men, who fortified themselves inside it, [35]storing up weapons and provisions, and depositing there the plunder they had collected from Jerusalem. And they became a great threat.

[36]The citadel became an ambush against the
sanctuary,
and a wicked adversary to Israel at all times.
[37]And they shed innocent blood around the
sanctuary;
they defiled the sanctuary.
[38]Because of them the inhabitants of Jerusalem
fled away,
and she became the abode of strangers.
She became a stranger to her own offspring,
and her children forsook her.
[39]Her sanctuary was as desolate as a
wilderness;[j]
her feasts were turned into mourning,
Her sabbaths to shame,
her honor to contempt.
[40]Her dishonor was as great as her glory had
been,
and her exaltation was turned into
mourning.

**Prohibitions against Religion** [41]Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, [42]each abandoning his particular customs. All the Gentiles conformed to the command of the king, [43]and many Israelites

1, 17: Elephants: an important part of Seleucid armament. About 300 B.C. Seleucus I, founder of the dynasty, procured five hundred of them from India; cf 1 Mc 6, 34–37.

1, 20: Defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three: 169 B.C. No mention is made in 1 Mc of the second expedition to Egypt a year later, described in 2 Mc 5, 1. 11. Dn 11, 25. 29 records both.

1, 33: City of David: not Mount Zion on the eastern hill of Jerusalem, which David captured from the Jebusites (2 Sm 5, 7), but a new fortress built on the western hill and overlooking the temple and its courts on Mount Zion. It was occupied for twenty-six years by the Syro-Macedonian garrison, together with apostate Jews, and was a continual threat to the temple and the Jewish people (v 36); cf 1 Mc 13, 49ff.

f 2 Mc 5, 1; Dn 11, 25–28. g 20–24: 2 Mc 5, 11–21. h 29–32: 2 Mc 5, 24ff. i 1 Mc 6, 18. j 39f: Tb 2, 6; Am 8, 10.

were in favor of his religion; they sacrificed to
idols and profaned the sabbath.
44 [k]The king sent messengers with letters to
Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, ordering
them to follow customs foreign to their land:
45 to prohibit holocausts, sacrifices, and libations
in the sanctuary, to profane the sabbaths and
feast days, 46 [l]to desecrate the sanctuary and the
sacred ministers, to build pagan altars and temples and shrines, 47 to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, 48 to leave their sons uncircumcised, and to let themselves be defiled with
every kind of impurity and abomination, 49 so
that they might forget the law and change all
their observances. 50 Whoever refused to act
according to the command of the king should be
put to death.[m]
51 Such were the orders he published throughout his kingdom. He appointed inspectors over
all the people, and he ordered the cities of Judah
to offer sacrifices, each city in turn. 52 Many of
the people, those who abandoned the law,
joined them and committed evil in the land.
53 Israel was driven into hiding, wherever places
of refuge could be found.
54 On the fifteenth day of the month Chislev,
in the year one hundred and forty-five,* the king
erected the horrible abomination upon the altar of
holocausts, and in the surrounding cities of Judah
they built pagan altars.[n] 55 They also burnt incense at the doors of houses and in the streets.
56 Any scrolls of the law* which they found they
tore up and burnt. 57 Whoever was found with a
scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the
law, was condemned to death by royal decree.[o]
58 So they used their power against Israel, against
those who were caught, each month, in the cities. 59 On the twenty-fifth day of each month they
sacrificed on the altar erected over the altar of
holocausts. 60 [p]Women who had had their children circumcised were put to death, in keeping
with the decree, 61 with the babies hung from
their necks; their families also and those who had
circumcised them were killed. 62 But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts
not to eat anything unclean; 63 they preferred to
die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or
to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.
Terrible affliction was upon Israel.[q]

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1-2
See RG
222-224

**Mattathias and His Sons** 1 In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the
family of Joarib, left Jerusalem and settled in
Modein.* 2 He had five sons: John, who was
called Gaddi;[r] 3 Simon, who was called Thassi;
4 Judas, who was called Maccabeus; 5 Eleazar,
who was called Avaran; and Jonathan, who was
called Apphus. 6 When he saw the sacrileges that
were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem, 7 he said: "Woe is me! Why was I born to
see the ruin of my people and the ruin of the
holy city, and to sit idle while it is given into the
hands of enemies, and the sanctuary into the
hands of strangers?

8 "Her temple has become like a man disgraced,
9 her glorious ornaments have been carried
off as spoils,
Her infants have been murdered in her streets,
her young men by the sword of the enemy.[s]
10 What nation has not taken its share of her
realm,
and laid its hand on her possessions?
11 All her adornment has been taken away.
From being free, she has become a slave.
12 We see our sanctuary and our beauty
and our glory laid waste,
And the Gentiles have defiled them!
13 Why are we still alive?"

14 Then Mattathias and his sons tore their garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned bitterly.

**1, 54**: Fifteenth day of the month Chislev in the year one hundred and forty-five: early December, 167 B.C. Horrible abomination: in the original Hebrew, a contemptuous pun on the title "Lord of heaven" given to the god Zeus Olympios, to whom an image or perhaps an altar was erected upon the altar of holocausts in the temple of Jerusalem; cf Dn 9, 27; 11, 31.

**1, 56f**: Scrolls of the law: one or more of the first five books of the Old Testament.

**2, 1**: Modein: a village twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem.

k 44–63: 2 Mc 6, 1–11. l 2 Mc 6, 2; Dn 9, 27. m 2 Mc 6, 18—7, 41. n 1 Mc 6, 7; Dn 9, 27; 11, 31. o 2 Mc 2, 14. p 60f: 2 Mc 6, 10. q 2 Mc 6, 10. r 1 Chr 24, 7. s Lam 2, 11, 21.

**Pagan Worship Refused** [15]The officers of the
king in charge of enforcing the apostasy came to
the city of Modein to organize the sacrifices.
[16]Many of Israel joined them, but Mattathias and
his sons gathered in a group apart. [17]Then the
officers of the king addressed Mattathias: "You
are a leader, an honorable and great man in this
city, supported by sons and kinsmen. [18]Come
now, be the first to obey the king's command, as
all the Gentiles and the men of Judah and those
who are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you
and your sons shall be numbered among the
King's Friends,* and shall be enriched with
silver and gold and many gifts." [19]But Mattathias
answered in a loud voice: "Although all the
Gentiles in the king's realm obey him, so that
each forsakes the religion of his fathers and
consents to the king's orders, [20]yet I and my
sons and my kinsmen will keep to the covenant
of our fathers. [21]God forbid that we should
forsake the law and the commandments. [22]We
will not obey the words of the king nor depart
from our religion in the slightest degree."

[23]As he finished saying these words, a certain
Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer
sacrifice on the altar in Modein according to the
king's order. [24]When Mattathias saw him, he
was filled with zeal; his heart was moved and his
just fury was aroused; he sprang forward and
killed him upon the altar. [25]At the same time, he
also killed the messenger of the king who was
forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the
altar. [26]Thus he showed his zeal for the law, just
as Phinehas did with Zimri, son of Salu.[t]

[27]Then Mattathias went through the city
shouting, "Let everyone who is zealous for the
law and who stands by the covenant follow after
me!" [28]Thereupon he fled to the mountains with
his sons, leaving behind in the city all their
possessions.[u] [29]Many who sought to live accord-
ing to righteousness and religious custom went
out into the desert* to settle there, [30]they and
their sons, their wives and their cattle, because
misfortunes pressed so hard on them.

[31]It was reported to the officers and soldiers of
the king who were in the City of David, in
Jerusalem, that certain men who had flouted the
king's order had gone out to the hiding places in
the desert. [32][v]Many hurried out after them, and
having caught up with them, camped opposite
and prepared to attack them on the sabbath.
[33]"Enough of this!" the pursuers said to them.
"Come out and obey the king's command, and
your lives will be spared." [34]But they replied,
"We will not come out, nor will we obey the
king's command to profane the sabbath."
[35]Then the enemy attacked them at once; [36]but
they did not retaliate; they neither threw stones,
nor blocked up their own hiding places. [37]They
said, "Let us all die without reproach; heaven
and earth are our witnesses that you destroy us
unjustly." [38]So the officers and soldiers attacked
them on the sabbath, and they died with their
wives, their children and their cattle, to the
number of a thousand persons.

[39]When Mattathias and his friends heard of it,
they mourned deeply for them. [40]"If we all do as
our kinsmen have done," they said to one an-
other, "and do not fight against the Gentiles for
our lives and our traditions, they will soon destroy
us from the earth." [41]On that day they came to
this decision: "Let us fight against anyone who
attacks us on the sabbath, so that we may not all
die as our kinsmen died in the hiding places."

[42]Then they were joined by a group of
Hasideans,* valiant Israelites, all of them devout
followers of the law. [43]And all those who were
fleeing from the disaster joined them and sup-
ported them. [44]They gathered an army and
struck down sinners in their anger and lawbreak-
ers in their wrath, and the survivors fled to the
Gentiles for safety.[w] [45]Mattathias and his friends

**2, 18:** The King's Friends: a regular order of nobility at Hellenistic courts. The various grades are frequently mentioned in this book: Friends, Chief Friends, Kinsmen.

**2, 29:** The desert: the sparsely inhabited mountain country southward from Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea. It was an arid region with some perennial springs and a fair amount of rain in winter.

**2, 42:** Hasideans: in Hebrew hasidim, "pious ones," a religious group devoted to the strict observance of the law. They were the forerunners of both the Pharisees and the Essenes. They first supported the Maccabean movement, but subsequently opposed it, regarding it as too political.

t 1 Mc 2, 54; Nm 25, 6–14. u 2 Mc 5, 27. v 32–38: 2 Mc 6, 11. w Is 63, 3.

went about and tore down the pagan altars;
46they also forcibly circumcised any uncircumcised boys whom they found in the territory of
Israel. 47They put to flight the arrogant, and the
work prospered in their hands. 48They saved the
law from the hands of the Gentiles and of the
kings and did not let the sinner triumph.

**Death of Mattathias** 49When the time came
for Mattathias to die, he said to his sons:
"Arrogance and scorn have now grown strong; it
is a time of disaster and violent anger. 50Therefore, my sons, be zealous for the law and give
your lives for the covenant of our fathers.

51 "Remember the deeds that our fathers did in their times,
and you shall win great glory and an everlasting name.
52 Was not Abraham found faithful in trial,
and it was reputed to him as uprightness? [x]
53 Joseph, when in distress, kept the commandment,
and he became master of Egypt. [y]
54 Phinehas our father, for his burning zeal,
received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. [z]
55 Joshua, for executing his commission,
became a judge in Israel. [a]
56 Caleb, for bearing witness before the assembly,
received an inheritance in the land. [b]
57 David, for his piety,
received as a heritage a throne of everlasting royalty. [c]
58 Elijah, for his burning zeal for the law,
was taken up to heaven. [d]
59 Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, for their faith,
were saved from the fire. [e]
60 Daniel, for his innocence,
was delivered from the jaws of lions. [f]
61 And so, consider this from generation to generation,
that none who hope in him shall fail in strength.
62 Do not fear the words of a sinful man,
for his glory ends in corruption and worms.
63 Today he is exalted, and tomorrow he is not to be found,
because he has returned to his dust,
and his schemes have perished.
64 Children! be courageous and strong in keeping the law,
for by it you shall be glorified.

65 "Here is your brother Simeon who I know is a
wise man; listen to him always, and he will be a
father to you. 66And Judas Maccabeus, a warrior
from his youth, shall be the leader of your army
and direct the war against the nations. 67You
shall also gather about you all who observe the
law, and you shall avenge the wrongs of your
people. 68Pay back the Gentiles what they deserve, and observe the precepts of the law."

69Then he blessed them, and he was united
with his fathers. 70He died in the year one
hundred and forty-six,* and was buried in the
tombs of his fathers in Modein, and all Israel
mourned him greatly.

## III: Leadership of Judas Maccabeus

### CHAPTER 3

Ch 3–9
See RG
224

**Defeat of Apollonius and Seron** 1Then his
son Judas, who was called Maccabeus, took his
place. 2All his brothers and all who had joined
his father supported him, and they carried on
Israel's war joyfully.

3 He spread abroad the glory of his people,
and put on his breastplate like a giant.
He armed himself with weapons of war;
he planned battles and protected the camp with his sword. [g]
4 In his actions he was like a lion,
like a young lion roaring for prey.
5 He pursued the wicked, hunting them out,
and those who troubled his people he destroyed by fire.
6 The lawbreakers were cowed by fear of him,
and all evildoers were dismayed.

2, 70: In the year one hundred and forty-six: 166 B.C.

x Gn 15, 6; 22, 1ff. y Gn 39, 7–10; 41, 39–43. z Nm 25, 10–13; Sir 45, 28ff. a Jos 1, 2, 5. b Nm 13, 30; 14, 6–9. 24; Jos 14, 14. c 2 Sm 2, 4; 7, 16. d 1 Kgs 19, 10. 14; 2 Kgs 2, 11. e Dn 3, 50. f Dn 6, 23; 14, 31–42. g 2 Mc 8, 5.

By his hand redemption was happily achieved,
7 and he afflicted many kings;
He made Jacob glad by his deeds,
and his memory is blessed forever.
8 He went about the cities of Judah
destroying the impious there.
He turned away wrath from Israel
9 and was renowned to the ends of the earth;
he gathered together those who were
perishing.

10 Then Apollonius* gathered the Gentiles, together with a large army from Samaria, to fight against Israel. 11 When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him and defeated and killed him. Many fell wounded, and the rest fled. 12 Their possessions were seized and the sword of Apollonius was taken by Judas, who fought with it the rest of his life.

13 But Seron, commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judas had gathered many about him, an assembly of faithful men ready for war. 14 So he said, "I will make a name for myself and win glory in the kingdom by defeating Judas and his followers, who have despised the king's command." 15 And again a large company of renegades advanced with him to help him take revenge on the Israelites. 16 When he reached the ascent of Beth-horon,* Judas went out to meet him with a few men. 17 But when they saw the army coming against them, they said to Judas: "How can we, few as we are, fight such a mighty host as this? Besides, we are weak today from fasting." 18 But Judas said: "It is easy for many to be overcome by a few; in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between deliverance by many or by few; 19 for victory in war does not depend upon the size of the army, but on strength that comes from Heaven.[h] 20 With great presumption and lawlessness they come against us to destroy us and our wives and children and to despoil us; 21 but we are fighting for our lives and our laws. 22 He himself* will crush them before us; so do not be afraid of them." 23 When he finished speaking, he rushed suddenly upon Seron and his army, who were crushed before him. 24 He pursued Seron down the descent of Beth-horon into the plain. About eight hundred* of their men fell, and the rest fled to the country of the Philistines.[i] 25 Then Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and dread fell upon the Gentiles about them. 26 His fame reached the king, and all the Gentiles talked about the battles of Judas.

**Regency of Lysias** 27 When Antiochus heard about these events, he was angry; so he ordered a muster of all the forces of his kingdom, a very strong army. 28 He opened his treasure chests, gave his soldiers a year's pay, and commanded them to be prepared for anything. 29 He then found that this exhausted the money in his treasury; moreover the income from the province was small, because of the dissension and distress he had brought upon the land by abolishing the laws which had been in effect from of old. 30 He feared that, as had happened more than once, he would not have enough for his expenses and for the gifts that he had previously given with a more liberal hand than the preceding kings. 31 Greatly perplexed, he decided to go to Persia and levy tribute on those provinces, and so raise a large sum of money. 32 He left Lysias, a nobleman of royal blood, in charge of the king's affairs from the Euphrates River to the frontier of Egypt, 33 and commissioned him to take care of his son Antiochus until his own return. 34 He entrusted to him half of the army, and the elephants, and gave him instructions concerning everything he wanted done. As for the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, 35 Lysias was to send an army against them to crush and destroy the power of Israel and the remnant of

**3, 10:** Apollonius: the Mysian commander mentioned in 1 Mc 1, 29 and in 2 Mc 5, 24.

**3, 16:** Beth-horon: the famous pass leading up from the coastal plain to the Judean hill country. Here Joshua won an important battle (Jos 10, 10f), and in 66 A.D. a Roman force under Cestius was trapped and massacred.

**3, 22:** He himself: out of reverence for God, the author of 1 Mc prefers to use this and other expressions, such as "Heaven," instead of the divine name. Cf 1 Mc 3, 50.

**3, 24:** About eight hundred: the figures given in this book for strength of armies and number of casualties are not to be taken literally. In accordance with biblical usage, they indicate rather the importance of the battle described or the greatness of the victory.

h 1 Sm 14, 16. i Jos 10, 10.

Jerusalem and efface their memory from the land. 36He was to settle foreigners in all their territory and distribute their land by lot.

37The king took the remaining half of the army and set out from Antioch, his capital, in the year one hundred and forty-seven; he crossed the Euphrates River and advanced inland.*

**The Victories of Judas** 38 *j*Lysias chose Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor* and Gorgias, capable men among the King's Friends, *k* 39and with them he sent forty thousand men and seven thousand cavalry to invade the land of Judah and ravage it according to the king's orders. 40Setting out with all their forces, they came and pitched their camp near Emmaus* in the plain. 41When the merchants of the country heard of their fame, they came to the camp, bringing fetters and a large sum of silver and gold, to buy the Israelites as slaves. A force from Idumea and from Philistia joined with them.

42Judas and his brothers saw that the situation had become critical now that armies were encamped within their territory; they knew of the orders which the king had given to destroy and utterly wipe out the people. 43So they said to one another, "Let us restore our people from their ruined estate, and fight for our people and our sanctuary!"

44The assembly gathered together to prepare for battle and to pray and implore mercy and compassion.

45Jerusalem was uninhabited, like a desert;
not one of her children entered or came out.
The sanctuary was trampled on,
and foreigners were in the citadel;
it was a habitation of Gentiles.
Joy had disappeared from Jacob,
and the flute and the harp were silent.

46 *l*Thus they assembled and went to Mizpah near Jerusalem, because there was formerly at Mizpah a place of prayer for Israel.* 47That day they fasted and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their clothes. 48They unrolled the scroll of the law, to learn about the things for which the Gentiles consulted the images of their idols.* 49They brought with them the priestly vestments, the first fruits, and the tithes; and they brought forward the nazirites* who had completed the time of their vows. *m* 50And they cried aloud to Heaven: "What shall we do with these men, and where shall we take them? 51For your sanctuary has been trampled on and profaned, and your priests are in mourning and humiliation. 52Now the Gentiles are gathered together against us to destroy us. You know what they plot against us. 53How shall we be able to resist them unless you help us?" 54Then they blew the trumpets and cried out loudly.

55After this Judas appointed officers among the people, over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens. 56He proclaimed that those who were building houses, or were just married, or were planting vineyards, and those who were afraid, could each return to his home, according to the law. *n* 57Then the army moved off, and they camped to the south of Emmaus. 58Judas said: "Arm yourselves and be brave; in the morning be ready to fight these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. 59It is better for us to die in battle than to witness the ruin of our nation and our sanctuary. Whatever Heaven wills, he will do." *o*

## CHAPTER 4

1Now Gorgias took five thousand infantry and a thousand picked cavalry, and this detachment set out at night 2in order to attack the camp of

Ch 3–9 See RG 224

3, 37: This expedition, in the spring of 165 B.C., resulted in failure; cf ch 6.

3, 38: Nicanor: the leader of another attack against the Jews four years later. He was finally killed by Judas; cf 1 Mc 7, 26–46.

3, 40: Emmaus: probably not the village mentioned in Lk 24, 13, but a settlement about twenty miles west of Jerusalem at the edge of the hill country.

3, 46: . . . Mizpah a place of prayer for Israel: a holy place established of old eight miles north and slightly west of Jerusalem. It was here that Samuel began to judge the Israelites (1 Sm 7, 5–11; 10, 17).

3, 48: To learn . . . idols: favorable omens for the coming battle. A contrast is intended between the idol worship of the pagans and the consultation of the word of God by the Jews; cf 2 Mc 8, 23.

3, 49: Nazirites: see note on Nm 6, 1ff.

j 38–44: 2 Mc 8, 8–15. k 38f: 1 Mc 7, 26; 2 Mc 4, 45; 8, 8f; 10, 14. l 46ff: 1 Sm 7, 5f; 2 Mc 8, 16–23. m Nm 6, 2–5. n Dt 20, 5–8; Jgs 7, 3. o 1 Mc 2, 21f.

the Jews and take them by surprise. Some men
from the citadel were their guides. [3]Judas heard
of it, and himself set out with his soldiers to
attack the king's army at Emmaus, [4]while the
latter's forces were still scattered away from the
camp. [5]During the night Gorgias came into the
camp of Judas, and found no one there; so he
began to hunt for them in the mountains, saying,
"They are fleeing from us."

[6]But at daybreak Judas appeared in the plain
with three thousand men, who lacked such
armor and swords as they would have wished.
[7]They saw the army of the Gentiles, strong and
breastplated, flanked with cavalry, and made up
of expert soldiers. [8]Judas said to the men with
him: "Do not be afraid of their numbers or dread
their attack. [9]Remember how our fathers were
saved in the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued
them with an army.[p] [10]So now let us cry to
Heaven in the hope that he will favor us,
remember his covenant with our fathers, and
destroy this army before us today.[q] [11]All the
Gentiles shall know that there is One who
redeems and delivers Israel."

[12]When the foreigners looked up and saw
them marching toward them, [13]they came out of
their camp for battle, and the men with Judas
blew the trumpet. [14]The battle was joined and
the Gentiles were defeated and fled toward the
plain. [15]Their whole rearguard fell by the sword,
and they were pursued as far as Gazara* and the
plains of Judea, to Azotus and Jamnia. About
three thousand of their men fell.

[16]When Judas and the army returned from the
pursuit, [17]he said to the people: "Do not be
greedy for the plunder, for there is a fight ahead
of us, [18]and Gorgias and his army are near us on
the mountain. But now stand firm against our
enemies and overthrow them. Afterward you
can freely take the plunder."

[19]As Judas was finishing this speech, a detachment appeared, looking down from the mountain. [20]They saw that their army had been put to flight and their camp was being burned. The smoke that could be seen indicated what had happened. [21]When they realized this, they were terrified; and when they also saw the army of Judas in the plain ready to attack, [22]they all fled to Philistine territory.*

[23]Then Judas went back to plunder the camp, and his men collected much gold and silver, violet and crimson cloth, and great treasure. [24]As they returned, they were singing hymns and glorifying Heaven, "for he is good, for his mercy endures forever."[r] [25]Thus Israel had a great deliverance that day.

**Victory over Lysias** [26][s]But those of the foreigners who had escaped went and told Lysias all that had occurred. [27]When he heard it he was disturbed and discouraged, because things in Israel had not turned out as he intended and as the king had ordered.

[28]So the following year he gathered together sixty thousand picked men and five thousand cavalry, to subdue them. [29]They came into Idumea and camped at Beth-zur,* and Judas met them with ten thousand men. [30]Seeing that the army was strong, he prayed thus:

"Blessed are you, O Savior of Israel, who broke the rush of the mighty one by the hand of your servant David and delivered the camp of the Philistines into the hand of Jonathan, the son of Saul, and his armor-bearer.[t] [31]Give this army into the hands of your people Israel; make them ashamed of their troops and their cavalry. [32]Strike them with fear, weaken the boldness of their strength, and let them tremble at their own destruction. [33]Strike them down by the sword of those who love you, that all who know your name may hymn your praise."

[34]Then they engaged in battle, and about five thousand of Lysias' men fell in hand-to-hand

**4, 15:** Gazara: Gezer of the Hebrew Bible, five miles northwest of Emmaus: Azotus, Hebrew Ashdod, lay to the southwest; and Jamnia, Hebrew Jabneel (Jos 15, 11) or Jabneh (2 Chr 26, 6), to the west of Gazara.

**4, 22:** Philistine territory: the coastal cities of southern Palestine, traditionally hostile to Jerusalem. Jamnia in particular was an important base for the Seleucid power.

**4, 29:** Beth-zur: an important frontier city in the mountain area, fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were sympathetic to the Maccabees and refused to receive Lysias.

p Ex 14, 21ff. q 1 Mc 2, 21. r Ps 118, 1ff. 29. s 26–35: 2 Mc 11, 1–12. t 1 Sm 17, 48ff.

fighting. 35When Lysias saw his ranks beginning
to give way, and the increased boldness of Judas,
whose men were ready either to live or to die
bravely, he withdrew to Antioch and began to
recruit mercenaries so as to return to Judea with
greater numbers.*

**Purification of the Temple** 36 [u]Then Judas and
his brothers said, "Now that our enemies have
been crushed, let us go up to purify the sanctu-
ary* and rededicate it." 37So the whole army
assembled, and went up to Mount Zion. 38They
found the sanctuary desolate, the altar dese-
crated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the
courts as in a forest or on some mountain, and
the priests' chambers demolished.[v] 39Then they
tore their clothes and made great lamentation;
they sprinkled their heads with ashes 40and fell
with their faces to the ground. And when the
signal was given with trumpets, they cried out to
Heaven.

41Judas appointed men to attack those in the
citadel, while he purified the sanctuary. 42He
chose blameless priests, devoted to the law;
43these purified the sanctuary and carried away
the stones of the Abomination to an unclean
place. 44They deliberated what ought to be done
with the altar of holocausts that had been dese-
crated.[w] 45The happy thought came to them to
tear it down, lest it be a lasting shame to them that
the Gentiles had defiled it; so they tore down the
altar.[x] 46They stored the stones in a suitable place
on the temple hill, until a prophet should come
and decide what to do with them. 47Then they
took uncut stones, according to the law, and built
a new altar like the former one.[y] 48They also
repaired the sanctuary and the interior of the tem-
ple and purified the courts. 49They made new
sacred vessels and brought the lampstand, the
altar of incense, and the table into the temple.[z]
50Then they burned incense on the altar and
lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these
illuminated the temple.[a] 51They also put loaves
on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they
finished all the work they had undertaken.

52Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day
of the ninth month, that is, the month of
Chislev, in the year one hundred and forty-
eight,* 53they arose and offered sacrifice accord-
ing to the law on the new altar of holocausts that
they had made.[b] 54On the anniversary of the day
on which the Gentiles had defiled it, on that
very day it was reconsecrated with songs, harps,
flutes, and cymbals. 55All the people prostrated
themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who
had given them success.

56For eight days they celebrated the dedica-
tion of the altar and joyfully offered holocausts
and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. 57They
ornamented the façade of the temple with gold
crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and
the priests' chambers and furnished them with
doors. 58There was great joy among the people
now that the disgrace of the Gentiles was
removed. 59Then Judas and his brothers and the
entire congregation of Israel decreed that the
days of the dedication* of the altar should be
observed with joy and gladness on the anniver-
sary every year for eight days, from the twenty-
fifth day of the month Chislev.[c]

60At that time they built high walls and strong
towers around Mount Zion, to prevent the
Gentiles from coming and trampling over it as
they had done before. 61Judas also placed a
garrison there to protect it, and likewise fortified
Beth-zur, that the people might have a strong-
hold facing Idumea.

## CHAPTER 5*

**Punishment of Hostile Acts** 1 [d]When the Gen-
tiles round about heard that the altar had been

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4, 35: According to 2 Mc 11, 13–15, peace negotiations followed between Lysias and Judas.

4, 36: The sanctuary: the whole temple area with its walls, courts and outbuildings, to be distinguished from the temple proper, the oblong edifice with porch, main room and inner shrine.

4, 52: Twenty-fifth day of the ninth month . . . in the year one hundred and forty-eight: December 14, 164 B.C.

4, 59: Days of the dedication . . . Chislev: institution of the feast of Hannukah, also called the feast of Dedication (Jn 10, 22). Josephus Flavius calls it the feast of Lights.

5, 1: The events of this chapter occurred within the year 163 B.C.

u 36–59: 2 Mc 10, 1–8. v Ps 74, 2–7. w 1 Kgs 8, 64. x 1 Mc 6, 7. y Ex 20, 25. z Ex 25, 23–39; 30, 1–6. a Ex 30, 7ff. b 53. 56: Ex 30, 10; Ez 43, 18–27. c Jn 10, 22. d 1f: 1 Mc 13, 6.

rebuilt and the sanctuary consecrated as before,
they were very angry. [2]So they decided to
destroy the descendants of Jacob who were
among them, and they began to massacre and
persecute the people. [3] [e]Then Judas attacked the
sons of Esau at Akrabattene* in Idumea, because
they were blockading Israel; he defeated them
heavily, overcame and despoiled them. [4]He also
remembered the malice of the sons of Baean,*
who had become a snare and a stumblingblock
to the people by ambushing them along the
roads. [5]He forced them to take refuge in towers,
which he besieged; he vowed their annihilation
and burned down the towers along with all the
persons in them. [6]*Then he crossed over to the
Ammonites, where he found a strong army and a
large body of people with Timothy as their
leader. [7]He fought many battles with them,
routed them, and struck them down. [8]After
seizing Jazer and its villages, he returned to
Judea.

**Liberation of Galilean Jews** [9]The Gentiles in
Gilead assembled to attack and destroy the
Israelites who were in their territory; these then
fled to the stronghold of Dathema. [10]They sent a
letter to Judas and his brothers saying: "The
Gentiles around us have combined against us to
destroy us, [11]and they are preparing to come and
seize this stronghold to which we have fled.
Timothy is the leader of their army. [12]Come at
once and rescue us from them, for many of us
have fallen. [13]All our kinsmen who were among
the Tobiads have been killed; the Gentiles have
carried away their wives and children and their
goods, and they have slain there about a thousand men."[f]

[14]While they were reading this letter, suddenly other messengers, in torn clothes, arrived
from Galilee to deliver a similar message: [15]that
the inhabitants of Ptolemais,* Tyre, and Sidon,
and the whole of Gentile Galilee had joined
forces to destroy them. [16]When Judas and the
people heard this, a great assembly convened to
consider what they should do for their unfortunate kinsmen who were being attacked by
enemies.

[17]Judas said to his brother Simon: "Choose
men for yourself, and go, rescue your kinsmen in
Galilee; I and my brother Jonathan will go to
Gilead."

[18]In Judea he left Joseph, son of Zechariah,
and Azariah, leader of the people, with the rest
of the army to guard it. [19]"Take charge of these
people," he commanded them, "but do not fight
against the Gentiles until we return." [20]Three
thousand men were allotted to Simon, to go into
Galilee, and eight thousand men to Judas, for
Gilead.

[21]Simon went into Galilee and fought many
battles with the Gentiles. They were crushed
before him, [22]and he pursued them to the very
gate of Ptolemais. About three thousand men of
the Gentiles fell, and he gathered their spoils.
[23]He took with him the Jews who were in
Galilee and in Arbatta, with their wives and
children and all that they had, and brought them
to Judea with great rejoicing.

**Rescue in Gilead** [24] [g]Judas Maccabeus and his
brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and
marched for three days through the desert.
[25]There they met some Nabateans,* who received them peacefully and told them all that
had happened to the Jews in Gilead: [26]"Many of
them have been imprisoned in Bozrah, in Bosor
near Alema, in Chaspho, Maked, and
Carnaim"—all of these are large, fortified
cities— [27]"and some have been imprisoned in
the other cities of Gilead. Tomorrow their enemies plan to attack the strongholds and to seize
and destroy all these people in one day."

**5, 3:** Akrabattene: a district southwest of the Dead Sea.

**5, 4:** Sons of Baean: 2 Mc 10, 15–23 calls them simply Idumeans.

**5, 6ff:** This summary anticipates the order of events and would fit better between vv 36 and 37. It corresponds to 2 Mc 12, 17–23. The action was probably a reprisal for the massacre referred to in v 13. Timothy was the Seleucid governor of Transjordan. Jazer: a town on the road from the Jordan to Amman.

**5, 15:** Ptolemais: Hebrew Acco (Jgs 1, 31), modern Acre, on the coast north of Haifa.

**5, 25:** Nabateans: an Arab people who acquired wealth and power as caravan merchants in the final two centuries B.C. They settled down, established Petra as their capital, and for a time controlled all of Transjordan, even as far as Damascus. It was from a Nabatean governor that St. Paul escaped about 38 A.D. (2 Cor 11, 32f).

e 3ff: 2 Mc 10, 15–23. f 2 Mc 12, 17. g 24–36: 2 Mc 12, 10ff.

[28]Thereupon Judas suddenly changed direction with his army, marched across the desert to Bozrah, and captured the city. He slaughtered all the male population, took all their possessions, and set fire to the city. [29]He led his army from that place by night, and they marched toward the stronghold of Dathema. [30]When morning came, they looked ahead and saw a countless multitude of people, with ladders and devices for capturing the stronghold, and beginning to attack the people within. [31]When Judas perceived that the struggle had begun and that the noise of the battle was resounding to heaven with trumpet blasts and loud shouting, [32]he said to the men of his army, "Fight for our kinsmen today."

[33]He came up behind them with three columns blowing their trumpets and shouting in prayer. [34]When the army of Timothy realized that it was Maccabeus, they fell back before him, and he inflicted on them a crushing defeat. About eight thousand of their men fell that day. [35]Then he turned toward Alema and attacked and captured it; he killed all the male population, plundered the place, and burned it down. [36]From there he moved on and took Chaspho, Maked, Bosor, and the other cities of Gilead.

[37] *h*After these events Timothy assembled another army and camped opposite Raphon, on the other side of the stream. [38]Judas sent men to spy on the camp, and they reported to him: "All the Gentiles around us have rallied to him, making a very large force; [39]they have also hired Arabs to help them, and have camped beyond the stream, ready to attack you." So Judas went forward to attack them.

[40]As Judas and his army were approaching the running stream, Timothy said to the officers of his army: "If he crosses over to us first, we shall not be able to resist him; he will certainly defeat us.*i* [41]But if he is afraid and camps on the other side of the river, we will cross over to him and defeat him."

[42]But when Judas reached the running stream, he stationed the officers of the people beside the stream and gave them this order: "Do not allow any man to pitch a tent; all must go into battle." [43]He was the first to cross to the attack, with all the people behind him, and the Gentiles were crushed before them; they threw away their arms and fled to the temple enclosure at Carnaim. [44]The Jews captured that city and burnt the enclosure with all who were in it. So Carnaim was subdued, and Judas met with no more resistance.*j*

[45]Then he assembled all the Israelites, great and small, who were in Gilead, with their wives and children and their goods, a great crowd of people, to go into the land of Judah. [46] *k*When they reached Ephron,* a large and strongly fortified city along the way, they found it impossible to encircle it on either the right or the left; they would have to march right through it. [47]But the men in the city shut them out and blocked up the gates with stones.*l* [48]Then Judas sent them his peaceful message: "We wish to cross your territory in order to reach our own; no one will harm you; we will only march through." But they would not open to him.

[49]So Judas ordered a proclamation to be made in the camp that everyone make an attack from the place where he was. [50]When the men of the army took up their positions, he assaulted the city all that day and night, and it was delivered to him. [51]He slaughtered every male, razed and plundered the city, and passed through it over the slain.

[52]Then they crossed the Jordan to the great plain in front of Beth-shan; [53]and Judas kept rounding up the stragglers and encouraging the people the whole way, until he reached the land of Judah. [54]They ascended Mount Zion in joy and gladness and offered holocausts, because not one of them had fallen; they returned in safety.

**Joseph and Azariah Defeated** [55]During the time that Judas and Jonathan were in the land of Gilead, and Simon his brother was in Galilee opposite Ptolemais, [56]Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, the leaders of the army, heard

5, 46: Ephron: a city in Transjordan opposite Beth-shan, about five miles east of the Jordan River. Situated on a height, it dominated the valleys of the two tributaries of the Jordan.

h 37–44; 2 Mc 12, 20–26. i 1 Sm 14, 9f. j 2 Mc 12, 21. k 46–54; 2 Mc 12, 27–31. l Nm 20, 17–21; 21, 21–25.

about the brave deeds and the fighting that they
were doing. [57]They said, "Let us also make a
name for ourselves by going out and fighting
against the Gentiles around us."
[58]They gave orders to the men of their army
who were with them, and marched toward
Jamnia. [59]But Gorgias and his men came out of
the city to meet them in battle. [60]Joseph and
Azariah were beaten, and were pursued to the
frontiers of Judea, and about two thousand
Israelites fell that day. [61]It was a bad defeat for
the people, because they had not obeyed Judas
and his brothers, thinking that they would do
brave deeds. [62]But they did not belong to the
family of those men to whom it was granted to
achieve Israel's salvation. [63]The valiant Judas
and his brothers were greatly renowned in all
Israel and among all the Gentiles, wherever their
name was heard; [64]and men gathered about
them and praised them.
[65]Then Judas and his brothers went out and
attacked the sons of Esau* in the country
toward the south; he took Hebron and its
villages, and he destroyed its strongholds and
burned the towers around it. [66]He then set out
for the land of the Philistines and passed
through Marisa. [67]At that time some priests fell
in battle who had gone out rashly to fight in
their desire to distinguish themselves. [68]Judas
then turned toward Azotus in the land of the
Philistines. He destroyed their altars and
burned the statues of their gods; and after
plundering their cities he returned to the land
of Judah.

## CHAPTER 6

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**Defeat and Death of Antiochus IV** [1] [m]As King
Antiochus was traversing the inland provinces,
he heard that in Persia there was a city called
Elymais,* famous for its wealth in silver and
gold, [2]and that its temple was very rich, containing gold helmets, breastplates, and weapons left
there by Alexander, son of Philip, king of Macedon, the first king of the Greeks. [3]He went
therefore and tried to capture and pillage the
city. But he could not do so, because his plan
became known to the people of the city [4]who
rose up in battle against him. So he retreated and
in great dismay withdrew from there to return to
Babylon.
[5]While he was in Persia, a messenger brought
him news that the armies sent into the land of
Judah had been put to flight; [6]that Lysias had
gone at first with a strong army and been driven
back by the Israelites; that they had grown
strong by reason of the arms, men, and abundant
possessions taken from the armies they had
destroyed; [7]that they had pulled down the
Abomination which he had built upon the altar
in Jerusalem; and that they had surrounded with
high walls both the sanctuary, as it had been
before, and his city of Beth-zur.[n]
[8]When the king heard this news, he was
struck with fear and very much shaken. Sick
with grief because his designs had failed, he took
to his bed. [9]There he remained many days,
overwhelmed with sorrow, for he knew he was
going to die.
[10]So he called in all his Friends and said to
them: "Sleep has departed from my eyes, for
my heart is sinking with anxiety. [11]I said to
myself: 'Into what tribulation have I come, and
in what floods of sorrow am I now! [12]Yet I was
kindly and beloved in my rule.' But I now
recall the evils I did in Jerusalem, when I
carried away all the vessels of gold and silver
that were in it, and for no cause gave orders
that the inhabitants of Judah be destroyed. [13]I
know that this is why these evils have overtaken me; and now I am dying, in bitter grief,
in a foreign land."
[14]Then he summoned Philip, one of his
Friends, and put him in charge of his whole
kingdom. [15]He gave him his crown, his robe,
and his signet ring, so that he might guide the
king's son Antiochus and bring him up to be

5, 65: Sons of Esau: Idumeans.
6, 1: Elymais: the mountainous region of Elam, north of the Persian Gulf. This section continues the story from 1 Mc 3, 37 and pertains to events preceding those in 1 Mc 4, 37ff.

m 1–13: 2 Mc 1, 12–17; 9, 1–29. n 1 Mc 1, 54; 4, 41ff.60f.

king. [16]King Antiochus died in Persia in the year
one hundred and forty-nine.*

**The Citadel Besieged** [17]When Lysias learned
that the king was dead, he set up the king's son
Antiochus,* whom he had reared as a child, to
be king in his place; and he gave him the title
Eupator.[o]

[18]The men in the citadel were hemming in
Israel around the sanctuary, continually trying to
harm them and to strengthen the Gentiles.[p]
[19]But Judas planned to destroy them, and called
all the people together to besiege them. [20]So in
the year one hundred and fifty* they assembled
and stormed the citadel, for which purpose he
constructed catapults and other devices. [21]Some
of the besieged escaped, joined by impious
Israelites; [22]they went to the king and said:

"How long will you fail to do justice and
avenge our kinsmen? [23]We agreed to serve your
father and to follow his orders and obey his
edicts. [24]And for this the sons of our people have
become our enemies; they have put to death as
many of us as they could find and have plun-
dered our estates. [25]They have acted aggres-
sively not only against us, but throughout their
whole territory. [26]Look! They have now be-
sieged the citadel in Jerusalem in order to
capture it, and they have fortified the sanctuary
and Beth-zur. [27]Unless you quickly forestall
them, they will do even worse things than these,
and you will not be able to stop them."

**Campaign against Judas** [28][q]When the king
heard this he was angry, and he called together
all his Friends, the officers of his army, and the
commanders of the cavalry.[r] [29]Mercenary forces
also came to him from other kingdoms and from
the islands of the seas. [30]His army numbered a
hundred thousand foot-soldiers, twenty thou-
sand cavalry, and thirty-two elephants trained for
war. [31]They passed through Idumea and camped
before Beth-zur. For many days they attacked it;
they constructed siege-devices, but the besieged
made a sortie and burned these, and they fought
bravely.

[32]Then Judas marched away from the citadel
and moved his camp to Beth-zechariah, on the
way to the king's camp. [33]The king, rising before
dawn, moved his force hastily along the road to
Beth-zechariah; and the armies prepared for
battle, while the trumpets sounded. [34]They
made the elephants drunk on grape and mul-
berry wine to provoke them to fight. [35]The
beasts were distributed along the phalanxes,
each elephant having assigned to it a thousand
men in coats of mail, with bronze helmets, and
five hundred picked cavalry. [36]These anticipated
the beast wherever it was; and wherever it
moved, they moved too and never left it. [37]A
strong wooden tower covering each elephant,
and fastened to it by a harness, held, besides the
Indian mahout, three soldiers who fought from
it. [38]The remaining cavalry were stationed on
one or the other of the two flanks of the army, to
harass the enemy and to be protected from the
phalanxes. [39]When the sun shone on the gold
and bronze shields, the mountains gleamed with
their brightness and blazed like flaming torches.
[40]Part of the king's army extended over the
heights, while some were on low ground, but
they marched forward steadily and in good
order. [41]All who heard the noise of their num-
bers, the tramp of their marching, and the
clashing of the arms, trembled; for the army was
very great and strong.

[42]Judas with his army advanced to fight, and
six hundred men of the king's army fell. [43]Elea-
zar, called Avaran, saw one of the beasts bigger
than any of the others and covered with royal
armor, and he thought the king must be on it.[s]
[44]So he gave up his life to save his people and
win an everlasting name for himself. [45]He
dashed up to it in the middle of the phalanx,
killing men right and left, so that they fell back
from him on both sides. [46]He ran right under the

**6, 16:** The year one hundred and forty-nine: September 22, 164, to October 9, 163 B.C. A Babylonian list of the Seleucid kings indicates that Antiochus died in November or early December of 164.

**6, 17:** The king's son Antiochus: Antiochus V Eupator, then about nine years old. He was in Antioch, still in the charge of Lysias, who proceeded to govern and wage wars in his name. Both were put to death two years later, when Demetrius, brother of Antiochus IV, arrived to claim the kingship; cf 1 Mc 7, 1ff.

**6, 20:** The year one hundred and fifty: October, 163, to September, 162 B.C.

o 2 Mc 10, 10f. p 1 Mc 1, 33ff. q 28–54: 2 Mc 13, 1–23. r 28ff: 2 Mc 13, 1f. s 2 Mc 13, 15.

elephant and stabbed it in the belly, killing it. The beast fell to the ground on top of him, and he died there.

47When the Jews saw the strength of the royal army and the ardor of its forces, they retreated from them. 48 [t]A part of the king's army went up to Jerusalem to attack them, and the king established camps in Judea and at Mount Zion. 49 [u]He made peace with the men of Beth-zur, and they evacuated the city, because they had no food there to enable them to stand a siege, for that was a sabbath year in the land.* 50The king took Beth-zur and stationed a garrison there to hold it. 51For many days he besieged the sanctuary, setting up artillery and machines, fire-throwers, catapults and mechanical bows for shooting arrows and slingstones. 52The Jews countered by setting up machines of their own, and kept up the fight a long time. 53But there were no provisions in the storerooms, because it was the seventh year, and the tide-over provisions had been eaten up by those who had been rescued from the Gentiles and brought to Judea. 54Few men remained in the sanctuary; the rest scattered, each to his own home, for the famine was too much for them.

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**Peace Treaty** 55 [v]Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus, before his death, had appointed to train his son Antiochus to be king, 56had returned from Persia and Media with the army that accompanied the king, and that he was seeking to take over the government. 57So he hastily resolved to withdraw. He said to the king, the leaders of the army, and the soldiers: "We are growing weaker every day, our provisions are scanty, the place we are besieging is strong, and it is our duty to take care of the affairs of the kingdom. [w] 58Therefore let us now come to terms with these men, and make peace with them and all their nation. 59Let us grant them freedom to live according to their own laws as formerly; it was on account of their laws, which we abolished, that they became angry and did all these things."

60The proposal found favor with the king and the leaders; he sent peace terms to the Jews, and they accepted. 61So the king and the leaders swore an oath to them, and on these terms they evacuated the fortification. 62But when the king entered Mount Zion and saw how the place was fortified, he broke the oath he had sworn and gave orders for the encircling wall to be destroyed. 63Then he departed in haste and returned to Antioch, where he found Philip in possession of the city. He fought against him and took the city by force.

## CHAPTER 7

**Expedition of Bacchides and Alcimus** 1 [x]In the year one hundred and fifty-one,* Demetrius, son of Seleucus, set out from Rome, arrived with a few men in a city on the seacoast, and began to rule there. 2As he was preparing to enter the royal palace of his ancestors, the soldiers seized Antiochus and Lysias to bring them to him. 3When he was informed of this, he said, "Do not show me their faces." 4So the soldiers killed them, and Demetrius sat on the royal throne.

5Then all the lawless and impious men of Israel came to him. They were led by Alcimus,* who desired to be high priest. 6They made this accusation to the king against the people: "Judas and his brothers have destroyed all your friends and have driven us out of our country. 7So now, send a man whom you trust to go and see all the havoc Judas has done to us and to the king's land, and let him punish them and all their supporters."

**6, 49:** A sabbath year in the land: when sowing and reaping were prohibited (Ex 23, 10f; Lv 25, 2–7). The year without a harvest (autumn of 164 to autumn of 163) was followed by a food shortage.

**7, 1ff:** The year one hundred and fifty-one: the spring of 161 B.C. Demetrius, son of Seleucus, was the lawful heir to the kingdom; but when only nine years old, he was taken as a hostage at Rome in place of his uncle, who ruled as Antiochus IV Epiphanes. At the age of twenty-five Demetrius fled secretly from Rome and, with the support of the Syrians, overcame his rival Antiochus V and put him to death. The royal palace: at Antioch.

**7, 5f:** Alcimus: a renegade Jew hostile to the Maccabees, who became high priest after the death of Menelaus (2 Mc 14, 3). He received confirmation in his office from the new King Demetrius (v 9), and brought malicious charges against Judas and his brothers and the people (v 6). He wrought more evils on the Israelites than the Gentiles had done (v 23).

t 48f: 2 Mc 13, 22–23. u Lv 25, 2. v 55–63: 2 Mc 13, 23–26. w 2 Mc 11, 13ff. x 1–7: 2 Mc 14, 1–11.

[8]Then the king chose Bacchides, one of the
King's Friends, governor of West-of-Euphrates, a
great man in the kingdom, and faithful to the
king. [9]*y*He sent him and the impious Alcimus, to
whom he granted the high priesthood, with
orders to take revenge on the Israelites. [10]They
set out and, on arriving in the land of Judah with
a great army, sent messengers who spoke deceit-
fully to Judas and his brothers in peaceful terms.
[11]But these paid no attention to their words,
seeing that they had come with a great army. [12]A
group of scribes, however, gathered about Alci-
mus and Bacchides to ask for a just agreement.
[13]*z*The Hasideans were the first among the
Israelites to seek peace with them, [14]for they
said, "A priest of the line of Aaron has come with
the army, and he will not do us any wrong."
[15]He spoke with them peacefully and swore to
them, "We will not try to injure you or your
friends." [16]So they trusted him. But he arrested
sixty of them and killed them in one day,
according to the text of Scripture:

[17]"The flesh of your saints they have strewn,
and their blood they have shed round about
Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.[a]

[18]Then fear and dread of them came upon all the
people, who said: "There is no truth or justice
among them; they violated the agreement and
the oath that they swore."

[19]Bacchides withdrew from Jerusalem and
pitched his camp in Beth-zaith.* He had many of
the men arrested who deserted to him, throwing
them into the great pit. [20]He handed the prov-
ince over to Alcimus, leaving troops to help him,
while he himself returned to the king.

[21]Alcimus spared no pains to maintain his
high priesthood, [22]and all those who were
disturbing their people gathered about him.
They took possession of the land of Judah and
caused great distress in Israel. [23]When Judas saw
all the evils that Alcimus and his men were
bringing upon the Israelites, more than even the
Gentiles had done, [24]he went about all the
borders of Judea and took revenge on the men
who had deserted, preventing them from going
out into the country. [25]But when Alcimus saw
that Judas and his followers were gaining
strength and realized that he could not oppose
them, he returned to the king and accused them
of grave crimes.

**Defeat of Nicanor** [26]*b*Then the king sent Nica-
nor, one of his famous officers, who was a bitter
enemy of Israel, with orders to destroy the
people. [27]Nicanor came to Jerusalem with a
large force and deceitfully sent to Judas* and his
brothers this peaceable message: [28]"Let there be
no fight between me and you. I will come with a
few men to meet you peaceably."

[29]So he came to Judas, and they greeted one
another peaceably. But Judas' enemies were
prepared to seize him. [30]When he became aware
that Nicanor had come to him with treachery in
mind, Judas was afraid and would not meet him
again.[c] [31]When Nicanor saw that his plan had
been discovered, he went out to fight Judas near
Caphar-salama.* [32]About five hundred men of
Nicanor's army fell; the rest fled to the City of
David.

[33]*d*After this, Nicanor went up to Mount
Zion. Some of the priests from the sanctuary and
some of the elders of the people came out to
greet him peaceably and to show him the
holocaust that was being offered for the king.
[34]But he mocked and ridiculed them, defiled
them,* and spoke disdainfully. [35]In a rage he
swore: "If Judas and his army are not delivered
to me at once, when I return victorious I will
burn this temple down." He went away in great
anger. [36]The priests, however, went in and stood
before the altar and the sanctuary.[e] They wept

**7, 19:** Beth-zaith: about three miles north of Beth-zur and twelve miles south of Jerusalem.

**7, 27:** Nicanor . . . deceitfully sent to Judas: a more favorable picture of Nicanor, as an honest man who became a personal friend of Judas, is given in 2 Mc 14, 17–25. Their friendship was broken by the intrigues of Alcimus (2 Mc 14, 26–30).

**7, 31:** Caphar-salama: a village seven miles north-northwest of Jerusalem, on the road leading to Beth-horon.

**7, 34:** Defiled them: spitting on the priests caused them to become legally defiled.

y 9ff: 2 Mc 14, 46. z 13f: 1 Mc 2, 42. a Ps 79, 1ff. b 26f: 1 Mc 3, 38; 2 Mc 8, 9; 14, 12f. c 2 Mc 14, 30. d 33–38: 2 Mc 14, 31–36. e Jl 2, 17.

and said: [37]"You have chosen this house to bear your name, to be a house of prayer and petition for your people. [38]Take revenge on this man and his army, and let them fall by the sword. Remember their blasphemies, and do not let them continue."

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[39]Nicanor left Jerusalem and pitched his camp at Beth-horon, where the Syrian army joined him. [40]But Judas camped in Adasa* with three thousand men. Here Judas uttered this prayer: [41]"When they who were sent by the king blasphemed, your angel went out and killed a hundred and eighty-five thousand of them.[f] [42]In the same way, crush this army before us today, and let the rest know that Nicanor spoke wickedly against your sanctuary; judge him according to his wickedness."[g]

[43]The armies met in battle on the thirteenth day of the month Adar. Nicanor's army was crushed, and he himself was the first to fall in the battle.[h] [44]When his army saw that Nicanor was dead, they threw down their arms and fled. [45]The Jews pursued them a day's journey, from Adasa to near Gazara, blowing the trumpets behind them as signals. [46]From all the surrounding villages of Judea people came out and closed in on them. They hemmed them in, and all the enemies fell by the sword; not a single one escaped.

[47]Then the Jews collected the spoils and the booty; they cut off Nicanor's head and his right arm, which he had lifted up so arrogantly. These they brought to Jerusalem and displayed there. [48]The people rejoiced greatly, and observed that day as a great festival. [49]They decreed that it should be observed every year on the thirteenth of Adar.* [50]And for a short time* the land of Judah was quiet.

## CHAPTER 8

**Treaty with the Romans*** [1]Judas had heard of the reputation of the Romans. They were valiant fighters and acted amiably to all who took their side. They established a friendly alliance with all who applied to them. [2]He was also told of their battles and the brave deeds that they had performed against the Gauls,* conquering them and forcing them to pay tribute. [3]They had gotten possession of the silver and gold mines in Spain, [4]and by planning and persistence had conquered the whole country, although it was very remote from their own. They had crushed the kings who had come against them from the far corners of the earth and had inflicted on them severe defeat, and the rest paid tribute to them every year. [5]Philip* and Perseus, king of the Macedonians, and the others who opposed them in battle had been overwhelmed and subjugated. [6]Antiochus* the Great, king of Asia, who had fought against them with a hundred and twenty elephants and with cavalry and chariots and a very great army, had been defeated by them. [7]They had taken him alive and obliged him and the kings who succeeded him to pay a heavy tribute, to give hostages and a section of [8]Lycia,

**7, 40:** Adasa: a village southeast of Caphar-salama.

**7, 49:** The thirteenth of Adar: March 27, 160 B.C. This day in the Jewish calendar was called the "Day of Nicanor" (2 Mc 15, 36), but it was not long celebrated by the Jews.

**7, 50:** A short time: about one month following the death of Nicanor. After that began the attack of Bacchides resulting in the death of Judas (1 Mc 9, 1–18).

**8, 1:** This chapter contains the account of the embassy which Judas sent to Rome, probably before the death of Nicanor, to conclude a treaty of alliance between Rome and the Jewish nation. Without precise chronology, the pertinent data are gathered into a unified theme.

The image of the Roman Republic greatly impressed the smaller Eastern peoples seeking support against their overlords (1–16), because of Roman success in war (2–11) and effective aid to their allies (12–13). Numerous interventions by Rome in the politics of the Near East bear witness to its power and prestige in the second century B.C. Cf 1 Mc 1, 10; 7, 2; 12, 3; 15, 15–24; 2 Mc 11, 34. With the Roman control of Palestine in 63 B.C., the Republic and later the Empire became heartily detested. The eulogy of Rome in this chapter is one of the reasons why 1 Maccabees was not preserved by the Palestinian Jews of the century that followed.

**8, 2:** Gauls: probably the Celts of northern Italy and southern France, subdued by the Romans in 222 B.C., and again in 200–191 B.C.; but perhaps also those in Asia Minor (the Galatians), whom the Romans defeated in 189 B.C.

**8, 5:** Philip: Philip V of Macedonia, defeated by a Graeco-Roman alliance at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C. Perseus, his son, was defeated at Pydna in 168 B.C., and died a prisoner. With this, the kingdom of Macedonia came to an end.

**8, 6:** Antiochus: Antiochus III, greatest of the Seleucid kings. He was defeated at Magnesia in 190 B.C. By the Treaty of Apamea in 189, he was obliged to pay Rome a crushing indemnity of 15,000 talents. It was the weakening of Antiochene power and the growing military and economic influence of Rome that led Antiochus IV to adopt the policy of political, religious and cultural unification of Syria and Palestine.

**8, 8:** Lycia, Mysia: regions in western Asia Minor. These names are restored here by conjectural emendation; the Greek text has "India, Media," most likely through scribal error. Eumenes: Eumenes II (197–158), king of Pergamum, an ally of Rome who benefited greatly from Antiochus' losses.

f 41f: 2 Mc 8, 19; 15, 22ff. g Is 37, 36ff. h 2 Mc 15, 25–35.

Mysia,* and Lydia from among their best provinces. The Romans took these from him and
gave them to King Eumenes. 9*When the men
of Greece had planned to come and destroy
them, 10the Romans discovered it, and sent
against the Greeks a single general who made
war on them. Many were wounded and fell, and
the Romans took their wives and children cap-
tive. They plundered them, took possession of
their land, tore down their strongholds and
reduced them to slavery even to this day. 11All
the other kingdoms and islands that had ever
opposed them they destroyed and enslaved;
12with their friends, however, and those who
relied on them, they maintained friendship.
They had conquered kings both far and near, and
all who heard of their fame were afraid of them.
13In truth, those whom they desired to help to a
kingdom became kings, and those whom they
wished to depose they deposed; and they were
greatly exalted. 14Yet with all this, none of them
put on a crown or wore purple as a display of
grandeur. 15They had made for themselves a
senate house, and every day three hundred and
twenty men took counsel, deliberating on all
that concerned the people and their well-being.
16They entrusted their government to one man*
every year, to rule over their entire country, and
they all obeyed that one, and there was no envy
or jealousy among them.

17So Judas chose Eupolemus, son of John, son
of Accos, and Jason, son of Eleazar, and sent
them to Rome to establish an alliance of friend-
ship with them.[i] 18He did this to get rid of the
yoke, for it was obvious that the kingdom of
the Greeks was subjecting Israel to slavery.
19After making a very long journey to Rome,
the envoys entered the senate and spoke as
follows: 20"Judas, called Maccabeus, and his
brothers, with the Jewish people, have sent us
to you to make a peaceful alliance with you,
and to enroll ourselves among your allies and
friends." 21The proposal pleased the Romans,
22and this is a copy of the reply they inscribed
on bronze tablets and sent to Jerusalem,* to
remain there with the Jews as a record of peace
and alliance:[j]

23"May it be well with the Romans and the
Jewish nation at sea and on land forever; may
sword and enemy be far from them. 24But if war
is first made on Rome, or any of its allies in any
of their dominions, 25the Jewish nation will help
them wholeheartedly, as the occasion shall de-
mand; 26and to those who wage war they shall
not give nor provide grain, arms, money, or
ships; this is Rome's decision. They shall fulfill
their obligations without receiving any recom-
pense. 27In the same way, if war is made first on
the Jewish nation, the Romans will help them
willingly, as the occasion shall demand, 28and to
those who are attacking them there shall not be
given grain, arms, money, or ships; this is
Rome's decision. They shall fulfill their obliga-
tions without deception. 29On these terms the
Romans have made an agreement with the
Jewish people. 30But if both parties hereafter
decide to add or take away anything, they shall
do as they choose, and whatever they shall add
or take away shall be valid.

31"Moreover, concerning the wrongs that
King Demetrius has done to them, we have
written to him thus: 'Why have you made your
yoke heavy upon our friends and allies the Jews?
32If they complain about you again, we will do
them justice and make war on you by land and
sea.' "

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9–12
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**Invasion of Judah** 1When Demetrius heard
that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he

**8, 9f:** The revolt of the Achaean League, inserted here, occurred in 146 B.C., after Judas' time. It was crushed by the Roman consul Lucius Mummius and marked the end of Greek independence. The author regards all Greeks as the enemies of God.

**8, 16:** They entrusted their government to one man: actually the Roman Republic always had two consuls as joint heads of the government. Presumably, a single one dealt with embassies and answered letters, hence the impression the Jews received; cf 1 Mc 15, 16.

**8, 22:** The reply . . . on bronze tablets and sent to Jerusalem: the decree of the Senate would be inscribed on bronze and kept in the Roman Capitol, with only a copy in letter form sent to Jerusalem. The translation of the decree into Hebrew and then into Greek, as found here in 1 Mc, may have occasioned this error.

i 1 Mc 12, 1f; 15, 15–22. j 1 Mc 14, 18.

again sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land
of Judah, along with the right wing of his army.
[2]They took the road to Galilee, and camping
opposite the ascent at Arbela, they captured it*
and killed many people. [3]In the first month of
the year one hundred and fifty-two,* they en-
camped against Jerusalem. [4]Then they set out for
Berea with twenty thousand men and two
thousand cavalry. [5]Judas, with three thousand
picked men, had camped at Elasa. [6]When his
men saw the great number of the troops, they
were very much afraid, and many slipped away
from the camp, until only eight hundred men
remained.

[7]As Judas saw that his army was melting away
just when the battle was imminent, he was
panic-stricken, because he had no time to gather
them together. [8]But in spite of his discourage-
ment, he said to those who remained: "Let us go
forward to meet our enemies; perhaps we can
put up a good fight against them." [9]They tried to
dissuade him, saying: "We certainly cannot. Let
us save our lives now, and come back with our
kinsmen, and then fight against them. Now we
are too few." [10]But Judas said: "Far be it from
me to do such a thing as to flee from them! If our
time has come, let us die bravely for our
kinsmen and not leave a stain upon our glory!"

**Death of Judas** [11]Then the army of Bacchides
moved out of camp and took its position for
combat. The cavalry were divided into two
squadrons, and the slingers and the archers
came on ahead of the army, and all the valiant
men were in the front line. [12]Bacchides was on
the right wing. Flanked by the two squadrons,
the phalanx attacked as they blew their trum-
pets. Those who were on Judas' side also blew
their trumpets. [13]The earth shook with the noise
of the armies, and the battle raged from morning
until evening. [14]Seeing that Bacchides was on
the right, with the main force of his army, Judas,
with all the most stouthearted rallying to him,
[15]drove back the right wing and pursued them
as far as the mountain slopes.* [16]But when the
men on the left wing saw that the right wing
was driven back, they turned and followed Judas
and his men, taking them in the rear. [17]The
battle was fought desperately, and many on both
sides fell wounded. [18]Then Judas fell, and the
rest fled.

[19]Jonathan and Simon took their brother Ju-
das and buried him in the tomb of their fathers at
Modein. [20]All Israel bewailed him in great grief.
They mourned for him many days, and they said,
[21]"How the mighty one has fallen, the savior of
Israel!"[k] [22]The other acts of Judas, his battles,
the brave deeds he performed, and his greatness
have not been recorded; but they were very
many.

## IV: Leadership of Jonathan

**Bacchides and Jonathan** [23]After the death of
Judas, the transgressors of the law raised their
heads in every part of Israel, and all kinds of
evildoers appeared. [24]In those days there was a
very great famine, and the country deserted to
them. [25]Bacchides chose impious men and made
them masters of the country. [26]These sought out
and hunted down the friends of Judas and
brought them to Bacchides, who punished and
derided them. [27]There had not been such great
distress in Israel since the time prophets ceased
to appear among the people.

[28]Then all the friends of Judas came together
and said to Jonathan: [29]"Since your brother
Judas died, there has been no one like him to
oppose our enemies, Bacchides and those who
are hostile to our nation. [30]Now therefore we
have chosen you today to be our ruler and leader

9, 2: They took the road . . . Arbela, they captured it: this passage is restored, in part, by conjectural emendation. The present Greek text could be translated, "They took the road to Gilgal, and camping opposite Mesaloth at Arbela, they captured it." But Arbela (modern Khirbet Irbid) was in Galilee—on a high hill overlooking the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Gilgal, on the contrary, was in the Jordan valley near Jericho. "Mesaloth" is probably a corrupt form of a Hebrew word meaning "steps, ascent."

9, 3: The first month of the year one hundred and fifty-two: April/May 160 B.C., by the temple calendar.

9, 15: As far as the mountain slopes: conjectural emendation. The Greek text has "as far as Mount Azotus"; this is most unlikely. Apparently the Greek translator mistook the Hebrew word ashdot, "slopes," for asdod, "Azotus."

k 2 Sam 1, 27.

in his place, and to fight our battle." [31]From that
moment Jonathan accepted the leadership, and
took the place of Judas his brother.

[32]When Bacchides learned of it, he sought to
kill him. [33]But Jonathan and his brother Simon
and all the men with him discovered this, and
they fled to the desert of Tekoa* and camped by
the waters of the pool of Asphar.*

[35]Jonathan sent his brother* as leader of the
convoy to ask permission of his friends, the
Nabateans, to deposit with them their great
quantity of baggage.[l] [36]But the sons of Jambri
from Medaba* made a raid and seized and
carried off John and everything he had. [37]After
this, word was brought to Jonathan and his
brother Simon: "The sons of Jambri are celebrat-
ing a great wedding, and with a large escort they
are bringing the bride, the daughter of one of the
great princes of Canaan, from Nadabath." [38]Re-
membering the blood of John their brother, they
went up and hid themselves under cover of the
mountain. [39]They watched, and suddenly saw a
noisy crowd with baggage; the bridegroom and
his friends and kinsmen had come out to meet
the bride's party with tambourines and musi-
cians and much equipment. [40]The Jews rose up
against them from their ambush and killed them.
Many fell wounded, and after the survivors fled
toward the mountain, all their spoils were taken.
[41]Thus the wedding was turned into mourning,
and the sound of music into lamentation. [42]Hav-
ing taken their revenge for the blood of their
brother, the Jews returned to the marshes of the
Jordan.

[43]When Bacchides heard of it, he came on the
sabbath to the banks of the Jordan with a large
force. [44]Then Jonathan said to his companions,
"Let us get up now and fight for our lives, for
today is not like yesterday and the day before.
[45]The battle is before us, and behind us are the
waters of the Jordan on one side, marsh and
thickets on the other, and there is no way of
escape.* [46]Cry out now to Heaven for deliver-
ance from our enemies." [47]When they joined
battle, Jonathan raised his arm to strike Bacchi-
des, but Bacchides backed away from him.
[48]Jonathan and his men jumped into the Jordan
and swam across to the other side, but the
enemy did not pursue them across the Jordan.
[49]A thousand men on Bacchides' side fell that
day.

[50]On returning to Jerusalem, Bacchides built
strongholds in Judea: the Jericho fortress, as well
as Emmaus, Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnath, Phara-
thon, and Tephon, with high walls and gates and
bars.* [51]In each he put a garrison to oppose
Israel. [52]He fortified the city of Beth-zur, Gazara
and the citadel, and put soldiers in them and
stores of provisions. [53]He took as hostages the
sons of the leaders of the country and put them
in custody in the citadel at Jerusalem.[m]

[54]In the year one hundred and fifty-three, in
the second month,* Alcimus ordered the wall of
the inner court of the sanctuary to be torn down,
thus destroying the work of the prophets. But he
only began to tear it down. [55]Just at that time he
had a stroke, and his work was interrupted; his
mouth was closed and he was paralyzed, so that
he could no longer utter a word to give orders
concerning his house. [56]Finally he died in great
agony. [57]Seeing that Alcimus was dead, Bacchi-
des returned to the king, and the land of Judah
was quiet for two years.

[58]Then all the transgressors of the law held a
council and said: "Jonathan and his companions
are living in peace and security. Now then, let us
have Bacchides return, and he will capture all of
them in a single night." [59]So they went and took
counsel with him. [60]When Bacchides was set-
ting out with a large force, he sent letters
secretly to all his allies in Judea, telling them to
seize Jonathan and his companions. They were

**9, 33:** Tekoa: Home of the prophet Amos in the wild country above the Dead Sea, southeast of Jerusalem.

**9, 34:** Omitted, it is a dittography of verse 43.

**9, 35:** Jonathan sent his brother: this was John who was called Gaddi (1 Mc 2, 2; cf 9, 36. 38).

**9, 36:** Medaba: northeast of the Dead Sea.

**9, 45:** Jonathan's force was apparently trapped in one of the many oxbows of the lower Jordan. Bacchides had crossed and caught them still on the east bank.

**9, 50:** These sites constitute a ring on the edges of the province of Judea.

**9, 54:** In the year . . . second month: May 159 B.C.

l 1 Mc 5, 25. m 1 Mc 10, 9.

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not able to do this, however, because their plot
became known. 61 In fact, Jonathan's men seized
about fifty of the men of the country who were
ringleaders in the mischief and put them to
death. 62 Then Jonathan and Simon and their
companions withdrew to Bethbasi* in the des-
ert; they rebuilt and strengthened its fortifica-
tions that had been demolished. 63 When Bacchi-
des learned of this, he gathered together his
whole force and sent word to those who were in
Judea. 64 He came and pitched his camp before
Bethbasi, and constructing siege-machines, he
fought against it for many days.

65 Leaving his brother Simon in the city, Jona-
than, accompanied by a small group of men,
went out into the field. 66 He struck down
Odomera and his kinsmen and the sons of
Phasiron in their encampment; these men had
set out to go up to the siege with their forces.
67 Simon and his men then sallied forth from
the city and set fire to the machines. 68 They
fought against Bacchides, and he was beaten.
This caused him great distress. Because the
enterprise he had planned came to naught,
69 he was angry with the lawless men who had
advised him to invade the province. He killed
many of them and resolved to return to his
own country.

70 Jonathan learned of this and sent ambassa-
dors to make peace with him and to obtain the
release of the prisoners. 71 He agreed to do as
Jonathan had asked. He swore an oath to him
that he would never try to injure him for the rest
of his life; 72 and he released the prisoners he had
previously taken from the land of Judah. He
returned to his own country and never came
into their territory again.

73 Then the sword ceased in Israel. Jonathan
settled in Michmash; he began to judge* the
people, and he destroyed the impious in Israel.

## CHAPTER 10

**Revolt of Alexander** 1 In the year one hundred
and sixty,* Alexander, who was called
Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, came up and took
Ptolemais. He was accepted and began to reign
there. 2 When King Demetrius heard of it, he
mustered a very large army and marched out to
engage him in combat. 3 Demetrius sent a letter
to Jonathan written in peaceful terms, to pay him
honor; 4 for he said: "Let us be the first to make
peace with him, before he makes peace with
Alexander against us, 5 since he will remember
all the wrongs we have done to him, his
brothers, and his nation."

6 So Demetrius authorized Jonathan, as his
ally, to gather an army and procure arms; and
he ordered that the hostages in the citadel be
released to him. 7 Accordingly Jonathan went
up to Jerusalem and read the letter to all the
people. The men in the citadel 8 were struck
with fear when they heard that the king had
given him authority to gather an army. 9 They
released the hostages to Jonathan, and he gave
them back to their parents.[n] 10 Thereafter Jona-
than dwelt in Jerusalem, and began to build
and restore the city. 11 He ordered the workmen
to build the walls and encircle Mount Zion
with square stones for its fortification, which
they did. 12 The foreigners in the strongholds
that Bacchides had built, took flight; 13 each
one of them left his place and returned to his
own country. 14 Only in Beth-zur did some
remain of those who had abandoned the law
and the commandments, for they used it as a
place of refuge.

**Jonathan Supports Alexander** 15 King Alexan-
der heard of the promises that Demetrius had
made to Jonathan; he was also told of the battles
and valiant deeds of Jonathan and his brothers
and the troubles that they had endured. 16 He

**9, 62:** Bethbasi: two miles east of Bethlehem, and six miles north of Tekoa.

**9, 73:** Began to judge: exercise the governing authority as in the book of Judges. With Jerusalem and the garrison towns (v 50) firmly in Seleucid hands, Jonathan's freedom of action was greatly restricted. Michmash, southeast of Bethel, famous for the exploit of the former Jonathan, son of Saul; cf 1 Sm 14.

**10, 1:** The year one hundred and sixty: 152 B.C. Alexander . . . Antiochus: Alexander Balas claimed to be a son of Antiochus IV. He had the backing of the Romans, who had never forgiven Demetrius for becoming king without their permission. The latter meanwhile had become unpopular with his own people as well as with the Jews.

n 1 Mc 9, 53.

said, "Shall we ever find another man like him?
Let us now make him our friend and ally." [17]So
he sent Jonathan a letter written in these terms:
[18]"King Alexander sends greetings to his brother
Jonathan. [19]We have heard of you, that you are a
mighty warrior and worthy to be our friend.
[20]We have therefore appointed you today to be
high priest of your nation; you are to be called
the King's Friend, and you are to look after our
interests and preserve amity with us." He also
sent him a purple robe and a crown of gold.[o]

[21]Jonathan put on the sacred vestments in the
seventh month of the year one hundred and
sixty at the feast of Booths,* and he gathered
an army and procured many arms. [22]When
Demetrius heard of these things, he was distressed and said: [23]"Why have we allowed Alexander to get ahead of us by gaining the friendship of the Jews and thus strengthening himself?
self? [24]I too will write them conciliatory words
and offer dignities and gifts, so that they may
be an aid to me."

[25]So he sent them this message: "King Demetrius sends greetings to the Jewish nation. [26]We
have heard how you have kept the treaty with us
and continued in our friendship and not gone
over to our enemies, and we are glad. [27]Continue, therefore, to keep faith with us, and we
will reward you with favors in return for what
you do in our behalf. [28]We will grant you many
exemptions and will bestow gifts on you.

[29]"I now free you, as I also exempt all the
Jews, from the tribute, the salt tax, and the
crown levies.[p] [30][q]Instead of collecting the third
of the grain and the half of the fruit of the trees
that should be my share, I renounce the right
from this day forward. Neither now nor in the
future will I collect them from the land of Judah
or from the three districts annexed from Samaria.* [31]Let Jerusalem and her territory, her
tithes and her tolls, be sacred and free from tax.
[32]I also yield my authority over the citadel in
Jerusalem, and I transfer it to the high priest,
that he may put in it such men as he shall choose
to guard it. [33]Every one of the Jews who has
been carried into captivity from the land of Judah
into any part of my kingdom I set at liberty
without ransom; and let all their taxes, even
those on their cattle, be canceled. [34]Let all feast
days, sabbaths, new moon festivals, appointed
days, and the three days that precede each feast
day, and the three days that follow, be days of
immunity and exemption for every Jew in my
kingdom. [35]Let no man have authority to exact
payment from them or to molest any of them in
any matter.

[36]"Let thirty thousand Jews be enrolled in the
king's army and allowances be given them, as is
due to all the king's soldiers. [37]Let some of them
be stationed in the king's principal strongholds,
and of these let some be given positions of trust
in the affairs of the kingdom. Let their superiors
and their rulers be taken from among them, and
let them follow their own laws, as the king has
commanded in the land of Judah.

[38]"Let the three districts that have been added
to Judea from the province of Samaria be incorporated with Judea so that they may be under one
man and obey no other authority than the high
priest. [39]Ptolemais and its confines I give as a
present to the sanctuary in Jerusalem for the
necessary expenses of the sanctuary. [40]I make a
yearly personal grant of fifteen thousand silver
shekels out of the royal revenues, from appropriate places. [41]All the additional funds that the
officials did not hand over as they had done in
the first years, shall henceforth be handed over
for the services of the temple. [42]Moreover, the
dues of five thousand silver shekels that used to
be taken from the revenue of the sanctuary
every year shall be canceled, since these funds
belong to the priests who perform the services.
[43]Whoever takes refuge in the temple of Jerusalem or in any of its precincts, because of money

**10, 21:** Jonathan . . . feast of Booths: Jonathan began to discharge the office of high priest October 23–30, 152 B.C. For seven years after the death of Alcimus there had been no high priest in Jerusalem. It was taken for granted that the king, though a Gentile, had the power to appoint one. The Maccabees, though a priestly family, were not of the line of Zadok, and some in Israel regarded Jonathan's tenure as a usurpation.

**10, 30:** The three districts annexed from Samaria: mentioned by name in 1 Mc 11, 34. The present Greek text, by a scribal error, has added "and Galilee" after "Samaria."

o 1 Mc 2, 18. p 1 Mc 11, 28f. 35. q 1 Mc 11, 28, 34.

he owes the king, or because of any other debt,
shall be released, together with all the goods he
possesses in my kingdom. 44The cost of rebuild-
ing and restoring the structures of the sanctuary
shall be covered out of the royal revenue.
45Likewise the cost of building the walls of
Jerusalem and fortifying it all around, and of
building walls in Judea, shall be donated from
the royal revenue."

46When Jonathan and the people heard these
words, they neither believed nor accepted them,
for they remembered the great evil that Deme-
trius had done in Israel, and how sorely he had
afflicted them. 47They therefore decided in favor
of Alexander, for he had been the first to address
them peaceably, and they remained his allies for
the rest of his life.

48King Alexander gathered together a large
army and encamped opposite Demetrius. 49The
two kings joined battle, and when the army of
Demetrius fled, Alexander pursued him, and
overpowered his soldiers. 50He pressed the bat-
tle hard until sunset, and Demetrius fell that day.

**Treaty of Ptolemy and Alexander** 51Alex-
ander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy, king of
Egypt, with this message: 52"Now that I have
returned to my realm, taken my seat on the
throne of my fathers, and established my rule by
crushing Demetrius and gaining control of my
country— 53for I engaged him in battle, defeated
him and his army, and recovered the royal
throne— 54let us now establish friendship with
each other. Give me your daughter for my wife;
and as your son-in-law, I will give to you and to
her gifts worthy of you."

55King Ptolemy answered in these words:
"Happy the day on which you returned to the
land of your fathers and took your seat on their
royal throne! 56I will do for you what you have
written; but meet me in Ptolemais, so that we
may see each other, and I will become your
father-in-law as you have proposed."

57So Ptolemy with his daughter Cleopatra*
set out from Egypt and came to Ptolemais in the
year one hundred and sixty-two. 58There King
Alexander met him, and Ptolemy gave him his
daughter Cleopatra in marriage. Their wedding
was celebrated at Ptolemais with great splendor
according to the custom of kings.

59King Alexander also wrote to Jonathan to
come and meet him. 60So he went with pomp to
Ptolemais, where he met the two kings and gave
them and their friends silver and gold and many
gifts and thus won their favor.[r] 61Some pestilent
Israelites, transgressors of the law, united against
him to accuse him, but the king paid no heed to
them. 62He ordered Jonathan to be divested of
his ordinary garments and to be clothed in royal
purple; and so it was done. 63The king also had
him seated at his side. He said to his magistrates:
"Go with him to the center of the city and make
a proclamation that no one is to bring charges
against him on any grounds or be troublesome to
him in any way."

64[s]When his accusers saw the honor paid to
him in the proclamation, and the purple with
which he was clothed, they all fled. 65The king
also honored him by numbering him among his
Chief Friends and made him military com-
mander and governor of the province. 66So
Jonathan returned in peace and happiness to
Jerusalem.

**Victory over Apollonius** 67In the year one
hundred and sixty-five,* Demetrius, son of De-
metrius, came from Crete to the land of his
fathers. 68When King Alexander heard of it he
was greatly troubled, and returned to Antioch.
69Demetrius appointed Apollonius governor of
Coelesyria. Having gathered a large army, Apollo-
nius pitched his camp at Jamnia. From there he
sent this message to Jonathan the high priest:

70"You are the only one who resists us. I am
laughed at and put to shame on your account.
Why are you displaying power against us in the
mountains? 71If you have confidence in your
forces, come down now to us in the plain, and
let us test each other's strength there; the city
forces are on my side. 72Inquire and learn who I

10, 57: Cleopatra: Cleopatra Thea, then about fifteen years old. She later married Demetrius II, and later still, his brother Antiochus VII. The year one hundred and sixty-two. 151/150 B.C.

10, 67: The year one hundred and sixty-five: 147 B.C. Demetrius: Demetrius II Nicator.

r 1 Mc 2, 18. s 64f: 1 Mc 2, 18; 11, 27.

am and who the others are who are helping me.
Men say that you cannot make a stand against us
because your fathers were twice put to flight in
their own land. [73]Now you too will be unable to
withstand our cavalry and such a force as this in
the plain, where there is not a stone or a pebble
or a place to flee."

[74]When Jonathan heard the message of Apollo-
nius, he was roused. Choosing ten thousand
men, he set out from Jerusalem, and Simon his
brother joined him to help him. [75]He pitched
camp near Joppa, but the men in the city shut
him out because Apollonius had a garrison there.
When the Jews besieged it, [76]the men of the city
became afraid and opened the gates, and so
Jonathan took possession of Joppa.*

[77]When Apollonius heard of it, he drew up
three thousand horsemen and an innumerable
infantry. He marched on Azotus as though he
were going on through the country, but at the
same time he advanced into the plain, because
he had such a large number of horsemen to rely
on. [78]Jonathan followed him to Azotus, and they
engaged in battle. [79]Apollonius, however, had
left a thousand cavalry in hiding behind them.
[80]When Jonathan discovered that there was an
ambush behind him, his army was surrounded.
From morning until evening they showered his
men with arrows. [81]But his men held their
ground, as Jonathan had commanded, whereas
the enemy's horses became tired out. [82]When
the horsemen were exhausted, Simon attacked
the phalanx, overwhelmed it and put it to flight.
[83]The horsemen too were scattered over the
plain. The enemy fled to Azotus and entered
Beth-dagon, the temple of their idol, to save
themselves. [84]But Jonathan burned and plun-
dered Azotus with its neighboring towns, and
destroyed by fire both the temple of Dagon and
the men who had taken refuge in it.[t] [85]Those
who fell by the sword, together with those who
were burned alive, came to about eight thousand
men. [86]Then Jonathan left there and pitched his
camp at Ashkalon, and the people of that city
came out to meet him with great pomp. [87]He
and his men then returned to Jerusalem, laden
with much booty. [88]When King Alexander heard
of these events, he accorded new honors to
Jonathan. [89]He sent him a gold buckle, such as is
usually given to King's Kinsmen;* he also gave
him Ekron and all its territory as a possession.

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 9–12
See RG
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**Alliance of Demetrius and Ptolemy** [1]The
king of Egypt gathered his forces, as numerous as
the sands of the seashore, and many ships; and
he sought by deceit to take Alexander's kingdom
and add it to his own. [2]He entered Syria with
peaceful words, and the people in the cities
opened their gates to welcome him, as King
Alexander had ordered them to do, since Ptol-
emy was his father-in-law. [3]But when Ptolemy
entered the cities, he stationed garrison troops in
each one. [4]When he reached Azotus, he was
shown the temple of Dagon destroyed by fire,
Azotus and its suburbs demolished, corpses lying
about, and the charred bodies of those burned
by Jonathan in the war and stacked up along his
route.[u] [5]To prejudice the king against Jonathan,
he was told what the latter had done; but the
king said nothing. [6]Jonathan met the king with
pomp at Joppa, and they greeted each other and
spent the night there. [7]Jonathan accompanied
the king as far as the river called Eleutherus*
and then returned to Jerusalem.

[8]Plotting evil against Alexander, King Ptolemy
took possession of the cities along the seacoast as
far as Seleucia-by-the-Sea.* [9]He sent ambassa-
dors to King Demetrius, saying: "Come, let us
make a pact with each other; I will give you my
daughter whom Alexander has married, and you
shall reign over your father's kingdom. [10]I regret

10, 76: Joppa: about forty miles northwest of Jerusalem. For the first time the Maccabees took possession of a seaport; nominally it was on behalf of King Alexander.

10, 89: Kinsmen: a class higher than Chief Friends.

11, 7: Eleutherus: modern Nahr el-Kebir, the northern border of modern Lebanon; in the second century B.C. the northern limit of Coelesyria.

11, 8: Seleucia-by-the-Sea: at the mouth of the Orontes, the port city of Antioch.

t 1 Mc 11, 4; 1 Sm 5, 2–5. u 1 Mc 10, 84.

that I gave him my daughter, for he has sought
to kill me."* [11]His real reason for accusing
Alexander, however, was that he coveted Alexander's kingdom. [12]After taking his daughter
away and giving her to Demetrius, Ptolemy
broke with Alexander; their enmity became
open. [13]Then Ptolemy entered Antioch and
assumed the crown of Asia; he thus wore two
crowns on his head, that of Egypt and that of
Asia.

**Deaths of Alexander and Ptolemy** [14]King
Alexander was in Cilicia at that time, because
the people of that region had revolted. [15]When
Alexander heard the news, he came to challenge
Ptolemy in battle. Ptolemy marched out and met
him with a strong force and put him to flight.
[16]Alexander fled to Arabia to seek protection.
King Ptolemy's triumph was complete [17]when
the Arab Zabdiel cut off Alexander's head and
sent it to Ptolemy. [18]But three days later King
Ptolemy himself died, and his men in the fortified cities were killed by the inhabitants of the
strongholds. [19]Thus Demetrius became king in
the year one hundred and sixty-seven.*

**Pact with Demetrius** [20]At that time Jonathan
gathered together the men of Judea to attack the
citadel in Jerusalem, and they set up many
machines against it. [21]Some transgressors of the
law, enemies of their own nation, went to the
king and informed him that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. [22]When Demetrius heard this, he
was furious, and set out immediately for Ptolemais. He wrote to Jonathan to discontinue the
siege and to meet him for a conference at
Ptolemais as soon as possible.

[23]On hearing this, Jonathan ordered the siege
to continue. He selected some elders and priests
of Israel and exposed himself to danger [24]by
going to the king at Ptolemais. He brought with
him silver, gold apparel, and many other presents, and found favor with the king. [25]Although
some impious men of his own nation brought
charges against him, [26]the king treated him just
as his predecessors had done and showed him
great honor in the presence of all his Friends.
[27]He confirmed him in the high priesthood and
in all the honors he had previously held, and had
him enrolled among his Chief Friends.

[28]Jonathan asked the king to exempt Judea
and the three districts of Samaria from tribute,
promising him in return three hundred talents.[v]
[29]The king agreed and wrote the following letter
to Jonathan about all these matters:

[30][w]"King Demetrius sends greetings to his
brother* Jonathan and to the Jewish nation. [31]We
are sending you, for your information, a copy of
the letter that we wrote to Lasthenes* our kinsman concerning you. [32]'King Demetrius sends
greetings to his father Lasthenes. [33]Because of the
good will they show us, we have decided to bestow benefits on the Jewish nation, who are our
friends and who observe their obligations to us.
[34][x]Therefore we confirm their possession, not
only of the territory of Judea, but also of the three
districts of Aphairema,* Lydda, and Ramathaim.
These districts, together with all their dependencies, were transferred from Samaria to Judea in
favor of all those who offer sacrifices for us in
Jerusalem instead of paying the royal taxes that
formerly the king received from them each year
from the produce of the soil and the fruit of the
trees. [35]From this day on we grant them release
from payment of all other things that would
henceforth be due to us, that is, of tithes and
tribute and of the tax on the salt pans and the
crown tax. [36]Henceforth none of these provisions
shall ever be revoked. [37]Be sure, therefore, to
have a copy of these instructions made and given
to Jonathan, that it may be displayed in a conspicuous place on the holy hill.' "

**11, 10:** I regret . . . to kill me: according to Josephus, Ammonius, a friend of Alexander, had tried to assassinate Ptolemy, and the latter claimed that Alexander was the instigator, thus calumniating him to gain his kingdom (v 11).

**11, 19:** The year one hundred and sixty-seven: 146/145 B.C. The two deaths (vv 17–18) occurred in the summer of 145 B.C.

**11, 30:** Brother: this title and father in v 32 are honorific titles used of the Kinsmen.

**11, 31:** Lasthenes: leader of the mercenary troops who had come with Demetrius from Crete. He was now the young king's chief minister and was apparently responsible for the disastrous policy (v 38) of disbanding the national army.

**11, 34:** Aphairema: the Ophrah of Jos 18, 23; 1 Sm 23, 6; the Ephron of 2 Chr 13, 19; and the Ephraim of Jn 11, 54—modern et-Taiyibeh, five miles northeast of Bethel. Lydda: the Lod of the postexilic Jews (Ez 2, 33; Neh 11, 35) and the hometown of Aeneas, who was cured by Peter (Acts 9, 32ff). It is ten miles southeast of Joppa. Ramathaim: the Ramathaim-zophim of 1 Sm 1, 1, and the Arimathea of Mt 27, 57—modern Rentis, nine miles northeast of Lydda.

v 1 Mc 10, 29; 11, 34. w 30–37: 1 Mc 10, 26–45. x 34f: 1 Mc 10, 29; 11, 28.

**The Intrigue of Trypho** [38]When King Demetrius saw that the land was peaceful under his rule and that he had no opposition, he dismissed his entire army, every man to his home, except the foreign troops which he had hired from the islands of the nations. So all the soldiers who had served under his predecessors hated him. [39]When a certain Trypho, who had previously belonged to Alexander's party, saw that all the troops were grumbling at Demetrius, he went to Imalkue the Arab, who was bringing up Alexander's young son Antiochus.[y] [40]Trypho kept urging Imalkue to hand over the boy to him, that he might make him king in his father's place. During his stay there of many days, he told him of all that Demetrius had done and of the hatred that his soldiers had for him.

**Jonathan Aids Demetrius** [41]Meanwhile Jonathan sent the request to King Demetrius to withdraw his troops from the citadel of Jerusalem and from the other strongholds, for they were constantly hostile to Israel. [42]Demetrius, in turn, sent this word to Jonathan: "I will not only do this for you and your nation, but I will greatly honor you and your nation when I find the opportunity. [43]Do me the favor, therefore, of sending men to fight for me, because all my troops have revolted."

[44]So Jonathan sent three thousand good fighting men to him at Antioch. When they came to the king, he was delighted over their arrival, [45]for the populace, one hundred and twenty thousand strong, had massed in the center of the city in an attempt to kill him. [46]But he took refuge in the palace, while the populace gained control of the main streets and began to fight. [47]So the king called the Jews to his aid. They all rallied around him and spread out through the city. On that day they killed about a hundred thousand men in the city, [48]which, at the same time, they set on fire and plundered on a large scale. Thus they saved the king's life. [49]When the populace saw that the Jews held the city at their mercy, they lost courage and cried out to the king in supplication, [50]"Give us your terms and let the Jews stop attacking us and our city." So they threw down their arms and made peace. [51]The Jews thus gained glory in the eyes of the king and all his subjects, and they became renowned throughout his kingdom. Finally they returned to Jerusalem with much spoil.

[52]But when King Demetrius was sure of his royal throne, and the land was peaceful under his rule, [53]he broke all his promises and became estranged from Jonathan. Instead of rewarding Jonathan for all the favors he had received from him, he caused him much trouble.

**Alliance with Trypho** [54]After this, Trypho returned and brought with him the young boy Antiochus, who became king and wore the royal crown.[z] [55]All the soldiers whom Demetrius had discharged rallied around Antiochus and fought against Demetrius, who was routed and fled. [56]Trypho captured the elephants and occupied Antioch. [57]Then young Antiochus wrote to Jonathan: "I confirm you in the high priesthood and appoint you ruler over the four districts and wish you to be one of the King's Friends." [58]He also sent him gold dishes and a dinner service, gave him the right to drink from gold cups, to dress in royal purple, and to wear a gold buckle.[a] [59]Likewise, he made Jonathan's brother Simon governor of the region from the Ladder of Tyre* to the frontier of Egypt.

[60]Jonathan set out and traveled through West-of-Euphrates* and its cities, and all the forces of Syria espoused his cause as allies. When he arrived at Ashkalon, the citizens welcomed him with pomp. [61]But when he set out for Gaza, the people of Gaza locked their gates against him. So he besieged it and burned and plundered its suburbs. [62]Then the people of Gaza appealed to him for mercy, and he granted them peace. He took the sons of their chief men as hostages and sent them to Jerusalem. He then traveled on through the province as far as Damascus.

**War with Demetrius** [63]Jonathan heard that the generals of Demetrius had come with a

11, 59: Laddir of Tyre: modern Ras en-Naquurah, on the border between Lebanon and Israel, where the mountains reach the sea, so that the coastal road must ascend in a series of steps.

11, 60: West-of-Euphrates: refers here to the territory of Palestine and Coelesyria, but not Upper Syria; cf 1 Mc 3, 32; 7, 8.

y 1 Mc 12, 39. z 1 Mc 11, 39; 12, 39. a 1 Mc 2, 18.

strong force to Kadesh in Galilee, intending to
remove him from office. 64So he went to meet
them, leaving his brother Simon in the province.
65Simon besieged Beth-zur, attacked it for many
days, and blockaded the inhabitants. 66When
they sued for peace, he granted it to them. He
expelled them from the city, took possession of
it, and put a garrison there.

67Meanwhile, Jonathan and his army pitched
their camp near the waters of Gennesaret, and at
daybreak they went to the plain of Hazor.*
68There, in front of him on the plain, was the
army of the foreigners. This army attacked him
in the open, having first detached an ambush
against him in the mountains. 69Then the men in
ambush rose out of their places and joined in the
battle. 70All of Jonathan's men fled; no one
stayed except the army commanders Mattathias,
son of Absalom, and Judas, son of Chalphi.
71Jonathan tore his clothes, threw earth on his
head, and prayed. 72Then he went back to the
combat and so overwhelmed the enemy that
they took to flight. 73Those of his men who were
running away saw it and returned to him; and
with him they pursued the enemy as far as their
camp in Kadesh, where they pitched their own
camp. 74Three thousand of the foreign troops fell
on that day. Then Jonathan returned to Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 9–12
See RG
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**Alliances with Rome and Sparta** 1When Jonathan saw that the times favored him, he sent
selected men to Rome to confirm and renew his
friendship with the Romans.[b] 2He also sent
letters to Sparta and other places for the same
purpose.

3After reaching Rome, the men entered the
senate chamber and said, "The high priest Jonathan and the Jewish people have sent us to
renew the earlier friendship and alliance between you and them." 4The Romans gave them
letters addressed to the authorities in the various
places, requesting them to provide the envoys
with safe conduct to the land of Judah.

5This is a copy of the letter that Jonathan
wrote to the Spartans: 6"Jonathan the high
priest, the senate of the nation, the priests, and
the rest of the Jewish people send greetings to
their brothers the Spartans. 7Long ago a letter
was sent to the high priest Onias* from Arius,
who then reigned over you, stating that you are
our brothers, as the attached copy shows.[c]
8Onias welcomed the envoy with honor and
received the letter, which clearly referred to
alliance and friendship. 9[d]Though we have no
need of these things, since we have for our
encouragement the sacred books that are in our
possession,* 10we have ventured to send word
to you for the renewal of brotherhood and
friendship, so as not to become strangers to you
altogether; a long time has passed since your
mission to us. 11We, on our part, have never
ceased to remember you in the sacrifices and
prayers that we offer on our feasts and other
appropriate days, as it is right and proper to
remember brothers. 12We likewise rejoice in
your renown. 13But many hardships and wars
have beset us, and the kings around us have
attacked us. 14We did not wish to be troublesome to you and to the rest of our allies and
friends in these wars; 15with the help of Heaven
for our support, we have been saved from our
enemies, and they have been humbled. 16So we
have chosen Numenius, son of Antiochus, and
Antipater, son of Jason, and we have sent them
to the Romans to renew our former friendship
and alliance with them.[e] 17We have also ordered
them to come to you and greet you, and to
deliver to you our letter about the renewal of our
brotherhood. 18Therefore kindly send us an
answer on this matter."

19This is a copy of the letter that was sent to
Onias: 20[f]"Arius, king of the Spartans, sends
greetings to Onias the high priest. 21A document

11, 67: Plain of Hazor: the site of the ancient Canaanite city (Jos 11, 10), ten miles north of the Lake of Gennesaret.

12, 7: Onias: Onias I, high priest from 323–300 or 290 B.C. Arius: Arius I, king from 309 to 265 B.C. The letter was sent long ago, i.e., a century and a half before.

12, 9: The sacred books . . . in our possession: a reference to "the law, the prophets and other books," as mentioned in the Prologue to Sirach (v 1), after 132 B.C.

b 1 Mc 8, 17. c 1 Mc 12, 20–23. d Rom 15, 4. e 1 Mc 14, 22; 15, 15. f 20–23: 1 Mc 12, 6f.

has been found stating that the Spartans and the
Jews are brothers; both nations descended from
Abraham. [22]Now that we have learned this,
kindly write to us about your welfare. [23]We, on
our part, are informing you that your cattle and
your possessions are ours, and ours are yours.
We have, therefore, given orders that you should
be told of this."

**Demetrius Repelled** [24]Jonathan heard that
the generals of Demetrius had returned to attack
him with a stronger army than before. [25]He set
out from Jerusalem and went into the country of
Hamath* to meet them, giving them no time to
enter his province. [26]The spies he had sent into
their camp came back and reported that the
enemy had made ready to attack the Jews that
very night. [27]Therefore, when the sun set,
Jonathan ordered his men to be on guard and to
remain armed, ready for combat, throughout the
night. He also set outposts all around the camp.
[28]When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his
men were ready for battle, their hearts sank with
fear and dread. They lighted fires and then
withdrew. [29]But because Jonathan and his men
were watching the lights burning, they did not
know what had happened until morning. [30]Then
Jonathan pursued them, but he could not over-
take them, for they had crossed the river Eleu-
therus. [31]So Jonathan turned aside against the
Arabs who are called Zabadeans, overwhelming
and plundering them. [32]Then he marched on to
Damascus and traversed that whole region.

[33]Simon also set out and went as far as
Ashkalon and its neighboring strongholds. He
then turned to Joppa and occupied it, [34]for he
heard that its men had intended to hand over
this stronghold to the supporters of Demetrius.
He left a garrison there to guard it.

[35]When Jonathan returned, he assembled the
elders of the people, and with them he made
plans for building strongholds in Judea, [36]for
making the walls of Jerusalem still higher, and
for erecting a high barrier between the citadel
and the city, that would isolate the citadel and so
prevent its garrison from commerce with the
city. [37]The people therefore worked together on
building up the city, for part of the east wall
above the ravine had collapsed. The quarter
called Chaphenatha was also repaired. [38]Simon
likewise built up Adida in the Shephelah, and
strengthened its fortifications by providing them
with gates and bars.

**Capture of Jonathan** [39]Trypho was deter-
mined to become king of Asia, assume the
crown, and do away with King Antiochus.[g]
[40]But he was afraid that Jonathan would not
permit him, but would fight against him. Look-
ing for a way to seize and kill him, he set out and
reached Beth-shan. [41]Jonathan marched out
against him with forty thousand picked fighting
men and came to Beth-shan. [42]But when Trypho
saw that Jonathan had arrived with a large army,
he was afraid to offer him violence. [43]Instead, he
received him with honor, introduced him to all
his friends, and gave him presents. He also
ordered his friends and soldiers to obey him as
they would himself. [44]Then he said to Jonathan:
"Why have you put all your soldiers to so much
trouble when we are not at war? [45]Pick out a
few men to stay with you, send the rest back
home, and then come with me to Ptolemais. I
will hand it over to you together with other
strongholds and their garrisons, as well as the
officials, then I will leave and go home. That is
why I came here."

[46]Jonathan believed him and did as he said.
He dismissed his troops, and they returned to
the land of Judah. [47]But he kept with him three
thousand men, of whom he sent two thousand
to Galilee while one thousand accompanied
him. [48]Then as soon as Jonathan had entered
Ptolemais, the men of the city closed the gates
and seized him; all who had entered with him,
they killed with the sword.

[49]Trypho sent soldiers and cavalry to Galilee
and the Great Plain* to destroy all Jonathan's
men. [50]These, upon learning that Jonathan had
been captured and his companions killed, en-

12, 25: Country of Hamath: the Seleucid territory of Upper Syria northeast of Coelesyria and separated from it by the Eleutherus River. The latter territory was under the command of Jonathan (1 Mc 11, 59f).

12, 49: The Great Plain: of Beth-shan (v 41), where Jonathan's disbanded troops remained.

g 1 Mc 11, 39f. 54f.

couraged one another and went out in compact
body ready to fight. [51]As their pursuers saw that
they were ready to fight for their lives, they
turned back. [52]Thus all these men of Jonathan
came safely into the land of Judah. They
mourned over Jonathan and his men, and were
in great fear, and all Israel fell into deep mourn-
ing.
[53]All the nations round about sought to de-
stroy them. They said, "Now that they have no
leader to help them, let us make war on them
and wipe out their memory from among men." [h]

## V: Simon, High Priest and Ethnarch

### CHAPTER 13

Ch 13–16
See RG
224–225

**Simon, Leader of the Jews** [1]When Simon
heard that Trypho was gathering a large army to
invade and ravage the land of Judah, [2]and saw
that the people were in dread and terror, he
went up to Jerusalem. There he assembled the
people [3]and exhorted them in these words:
"You know what I, my brothers, and my father's
house have done for the laws and the sanctuary;
what battles and disasters we have been
through. [4]It was for the sake of these, for the
sake of Israel, that all my brothers have perished,
and I alone am left. [5]Far be it from me, then, to
save my own life in any time of distress, for I am
not better than my brothers. [6]Rather will I
avenge my nation and the sanctuary, as well as
your wives and children, for all the nations out
of hatred have united to destroy us." [i]
[7]As the people heard these words, their spirit
was rekindled. [8]They shouted in reply: "You are
our leader in place of your brothers Judas and
Jonathan. [9]Fight our battles, and we will do
everything that you tell us." [10]So Simon mus-
tered all the men able to fight, and quickly
completing the walls of Jerusalem, fortified it on
every side. [11]He sent Jonathan, son of Absalom,
to Joppa with a large force; Jonathan drove out
the occupants and remained there.

**Deceit and Treachery of Trypho** [12]Then Try-
pho moved from Ptolemais with a large army to
invade the land of Judah, bringing Jonathan with
him as prisoner. [13]But Simon pitched his camp at
Adida, facing the plain. [14]When Trypho learned
that Simon had succeeded his brother Jonathan,
and that he intended to fight him, he sent
envoys to him with this message: [15]"We have
detained your brother Jonathan on account of
the money that he owed the royal treasury in
connection with the offices that he held. [16]There-
fore, if you send us a hundred talents of silver,
and two of his sons as hostages to guarantee that
when he is set free he will not revolt against us,
we will release him."
[17]Although Simon knew that they were speak-
ing deceitfully to him, he gave orders to get the
money and the boys, for fear of provoking much
hostility among the people, who might say [18]that
Jonathan perished because Simon would not
send Trypho the money and the boys. [19]So he
sent the boys and the hundred talents; but
Trypho broke his promise and would not let
Jonathan go. [20]*Next he began to invade and
ravage the country. His troops went around by
the road that leads to Adora, but Simon and his
army moved along opposite him everywhere he
went. [21]The men in the citadel sent messengers
to Trypho, urging him to come to them by way
of the desert, and to send them provisions.
[22]Although Trypho got all his cavalry ready to
go, there was a heavy fall of snow that night, and
he could not go. So he left for Gilead. [23]When he
was approaching Baskama,* he had Jonathan
killed and buried there. [24]Then Trypho returned
to his own country.

**Jonathan's Tomb** [25]Simon sent for the remains
of his brother Jonathan, and buried him in Mo-
dein, the city of his fathers. [26]All Israel bewailed
him with solemn lamentation, mourning over
him for many days. [27]Then Simon erected over
the tomb of his father and his brothers a monu-
ment of stones, polished front and back, and
raised high enough to be seen at a distance.

**13, 20f:** The invaders made a wide flanking movement to invade Judea from the south. Adora was a few miles southwest of Beth-zur. They would avoid Beth-zur itself and other strongholds of the Maccabees by following the way of the desert.

**13, 23:** Baskama: northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

h 1 Mc 5, 2; 13, 6. i 1 Mc 5, 2; 12, 53.

[28]He set up seven pyramids facing one another
for his father and his mother and his four broth-
ers. [29]For the pyramids he devised a setting of big
columns, on which he carved suits of armor as a
perpetual memorial, and next to the armor he
placed carved ships, which could be seen by all
who sailed the sea. [30]This tomb which he built at
Modein is there to the present day.

**Pact between Simon and Demetrius** [31]Try-
pho dealt treacherously with the young King
Antiochus. He killed him [32]and assumed the
kingship in his place, putting on the crown of
Asia. Thus he brought much evil on the land.
[33]Simon, on his part, built up the strongholds of
Judea, strengthening their fortifications with
high towers, thick walls, and gates with bars,
and he stored up provisions in the fortresses.
[34]Simon also sent chosen men to King Deme-
trius with the request that he grant the land a
release from taxation, for all that Trypho did was
to plunder the land. [35]In reply, King Demetrius
sent him the following letter:

[36]"King Demetrius sends greetings to Simon
the high priest, the friend of kings, and to the
elders and the Jewish people. [37]We have re-
ceived the gold crown and the palm branch that
you sent. We are willing to be on most peaceful
terms with you and to write to our official to
grant you release from tribute. [38]Whatever we
have guaranteed to you remains in force, and the
strongholds that you have built shall remain
yours. [39]We remit any oversights and defaults
incurred up to now, as well as the crown tax that
you owe. Any other tax that may have been
collected in Jerusalem shall no longer be col-
lected there. [40]If any of you are qualified for
enrollment in our service, let them be enrolled.
Let there be peace between us."

[41]Thus in the year one hundred and seventy,*
the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from
Israel, [42]and the people began to write in their
records and contracts, "In the first year of
Simon, high priest, governor, and leader of the
Jews."

**Capture of Gazara and the Citadel** [43]In
those days Simon besieged Gazara* and sur-
rounded it with troops. He made a siege ma-
chine, pushed it up against the city, and attacked
and captured one of the towers.[j] [44]The men
who had been on the siege machine jumped
down into the city and caused a great tumult
there. [45]The men of the city, joined by their
wives and children, went up on the wall, with
their garments rent, and cried out in loud voices,
begging Simon to grant them peace. [46]"Do not
treat us according to our evil deeds," they said,
"but according to your mercy."

[47]So Simon came to terms with them and did
not destroy them. He made them leave the city,
however, and he purified the houses in which
there were idols. Then he entered the city with
hymns and songs of praise. [48]After removing
from it everything that was impure, he settled
there men who observed the law. He improved
its fortifications and built himself a residence.

[49]The men in the citadel in Jerusalem were
prevented from going out into the country and
back for the purchase of food; they suffered
greatly from hunger, and many of them died of
starvation. [50]They finally cried out to Simon for
peace, and he gave them peace. He expelled
them from the citadel and cleansed it of impuri-
ties. [51]On the twenty-third day of the second
month,* in the year one hundred and seventy-
one, the Jews entered the citadel with shouts of
jubilation, waving of palm branches, the music
of harps and cymbals and lyres, and the singing
of hymns and canticles, because a great enemy
of Israel had been destroyed.[k] [52]Simon decreed
that this day should be celebrated every year
with rejoicing. He also strengthened the fortifica-
tions of the temple hill alongside the citadel, and
he and his companions dwelt there. [53]Seeing
that his son John* was now a grown man, Simon

13, 41: The year one hundred and seventy: March, 142, to April, 141 B.C., by the temple calendar.

13, 43: Gazara: a key position in the Shephelah, fortified by Bacchides in 160 B.C.; cf 1 Mc 9, 52.

13, 51: The twenty-third day of the second month: June 3, 141 B.C.

13, 53: John: John Hyrcanus, who was to succeed his father as ruler and high priest; cf 1 Mc 16, 23f.

j 2 Mc 10, 32–38. k 1 Mc 1, 36.

made him commander of all his soldiers, with his residence in Gazara.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 13–16
See RG
224–225

**Capture of Demetrius** [1]In the year one hundred and seventy-two,* King Demetrius assembled his army and marched into Media to obtain help so that he could fight Trypho. [2]When Arsaces,* king of Persia and Media, heard that Demetrius had invaded his territory, he sent one of his generals to take him alive. [3]The general went forth and defeated the army of Demetrius; he captured him and brought him to Arsaces, who put him in prison.

### Glory of Simon

[4]The land was at rest all the days of Simon,
who sought the good of his nation.
His people were delighted with his power
and his magnificence throughout his reign.[l]
[5]As his crowning glory he captured the port of Joppa
and made it a gateway to the isles of the sea.
[6]He enlarged the borders of his nation
and gained control of the country.[m]
[7]He took many enemies prisoners of war
and made himself master of Gazara, Bethzur, and the citadel.

He cleansed the citadel of its impurities;
there was no one to withstand him.
[8]The people cultivated their land in peace;
the land yielded its produce
and the trees of the field their fruit.[n]
[9]Old men sat in the squares,
all talking about the good times,
while the young men wore the glorious apparel of war.[o]
[10]He supplied the cities with food
and equipped them with means of defense,
till his glorious name reached the ends of the earth.
[11]He brought peace to the land,
and Israel was filled with happiness.[p]
[12]Every man sat under his vine and his fig tree,
with no one to disturb him.[q]
[13]No one was left to attack them in their land;
the kings in those days were crushed.
[14]He strengthened all the lowly among his people
and was zealous for the law;
he suppressed all the lawless and the wicked.
[15]He made the temple splendid
and enriched its equipment.

**Alliance with Rome and Sparta** [16]When people heard in Rome and even in Sparta that Jonathan had died, they were deeply grieved.* [17]But when the Romans heard that his brother Simon had been made high priest in his place and was master of the country and the cities, [18]they sent him inscribed tablets of bronze to renew with him the friendship and alliance that they had established with his brothers Judas and Jonathan.[r] [19]These were read before the assembly in Jerusalem.

[20]This is a copy of the letter that the Spartans sent: "The rulers and the citizens of Sparta send greetings to Simon the high priest, the elders, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people, our brothers. [21]The envoys you sent to our people have informed us of your glory and fame, and we were happy that they came. [22]In accordance with what they said we have recorded the following in the public decrees: Since Numenius, son of Antiochus, and Antipater, son of Jason, envoys of the Jews, have come to us to renew their friendship with us,[s] [23]the people have voted to receive the men with honor, and to deposit a copy of their words in the public archives, so that the people of Sparta may have a record of them. A copy of this decree has been made for Simon the high priest."

[24]After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome

**14, 1:** The year one hundred and seventy-two: 141–140 B.C. The expedition began most probably in the spring of 140.

**14, 2:** Arsaces: Arsaces VI, also called Mithridates I, the Parthian king (171–138 B.C.). Parthians had overrun Persia and now held Babylonia, both of which had hitherto belonged to the Seleucid empire. The Greeks and Macedonians in these countries had appealed to Demetrius for help.

**14, 16:** The embassy to Rome and Sparta was sent soon after Simon's accession to power, and the replies were received before Demetrius' expedition (vv 1–3)—probably in 142 B.C.

l 1 Mc 3, 3–9. m Ex 34, 24. n Zec 8, 12. o Zec 8, 4f. p Lv 26, 6. q Mi 4, 4; Zec 3, 10. r Mc 8, 22. s 1 Mc 12, 16; 15, 15.

with a great gold shield weighing a thousand minas, to confirm the alliance with the Romans.[t]

**Decree of Honor** [25]When the people heard of these things, they said, "How can we thank Simon and his sons? [26]He and his brothers and his father's house have stood firm and repulsed Israel's enemies. They have thus preserved its liberty." So they made an inscription on bronze tablets, which they affixed to pillars on Mount Zion. [27]The following is a copy of the inscription:

"On the eighteenth day of Elul,* in the year one hundred and seventy-two, that is, the third year under Simon the high priest in Asaramel, [28]in a great assembly of priests, people, rulers of the nation, and elders of the country, the following proclamation was made:

[29]" 'Since there have often been wars in our country, Simon, son of the priest Mattathias, descendant of Joarib, and his brothers have put themselves in danger and resisted the enemies of their nation, so that their sanctuary and law might be maintained, and they have thus brought great glory to their nation. [30]After Jonathan had rallied his nation and become their high priest, he was gathered to his kinsmen. [31]When the enemies of the Jews sought to invade and devastate their country and to lay hands on their temple, [32]Simon rose up and fought for his nation, spending large sums of his own money to equip the men of his nation's armed forces and giving them their pay. [33]He fortified the cities of Judea, especially the frontier city of Beth-zur, where he stationed a garrison of Jewish soldiers, and where previously the enemy's arms had been stored. [34]He also fortified Joppa by the sea and Gazara on the border of Azotus, a place previously occupied by the enemy; these cities he resettled with Jews, and furnished them with all that was necessary for their restoration. [35]When the Jewish people saw Simon's loyalty and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, they made him their leader and high priest because of all he had accomplished and the loyalty and justice he had shown his nation. In every way he sought to exalt his people.

[36]" 'In his time and under his guidance they succeeded in driving the Gentiles out of their country, especially those in the City of David in Jerusalem, who had built for themselves a citadel from which they used to sally forth to defile the environs of the temple and inflict grave injury on its purity. [37]In this citadel he stationed Jewish soldiers, and he strengthened its fortifications for the defense of the land and the city, while he also raised the wall of Jerusalem to a greater height. [38]Consequently, King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood, [39][u]made him one of his Friends, and conferred the highest honors on him. [40]He had indeed heard that the Romans had addressed the Jews as friends, allies, and brothers and that they had received Simon's envoys with honor.

[41]" 'The Jewish people and their priest have, therefore, made the following decisions. Simon shall be their permanent leader and high priest until a true prophet arises. [42]He shall act as governor general over them, and shall have charge of the temple, to make regulations concerning its functions and concerning the country, its weapons and strongholds; [43]he shall be obeyed by all. All contracts made in the country shall be dated by his name. He shall have the right to wear royal purple and gold ornaments. [44]It shall not be lawful for any of the people or priests to nullify any of these decisions, or to contradict the orders given by him, or to convene an assembly in the country without his consent, to be clothed in royal purple or wear an official gold brooch. [45]Whoever acts otherwise or violates any of these prescriptions shall be liable to punishment.

[46]" 'All the people approved of granting Simon the right to act in accord with these decisions, [47]and Simon accepted and agreed to act as high priest, governor general, and ethnarch* of the Jewish people and priests and to exercise supreme authority over all.' "

[48]It was decreed that this inscription should be engraved on bronze tablets, to be set up in a

**14, 27:** Eighteenth day of Elul: September 13, 140 B.C. Asaramel: a Hebrew name meaning "court of the people of God."

**14, 47:** Ethnarch: a subaltern ruler over a racial group whose office needed confirmation by a higher authority within the empire.

t 1 Mc 12, 16; 15, 15. u 39f: 1 Mc 2, 18.

conspicuous place in the precincts of the temple,
49and that copies of it should be deposited in the
treasury, where they would be available to
Simon and his sons.

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 13–16
See RG
224–225

**Letter of Antiochus** 1Antiochus,* son of King
Demetrius, sent a letter from the islands of the
sea to Simon, the priest and ethnarch of the
Jews, and to all the nation, 2which read as
follows:

"King Antiochus sends greetings to Simon,
the priest and ethnarch, and to the Jewish
nation. 3Whereas certain villains have gained
control of the kingdom of my ancestors, I intend
to reclaim it, that I may restore it to its former
state. I have recruited a large number of merce-
nary troops and equipped warships 4to make a
landing in my country and take revenge on those
who have ruined it and laid waste many cities in
my realm.

5"Now, therefore, I confirm to you all the tax
exemptions that the kings before me granted you
and whatever other privileges they conferred on
you. 6I authorize you to coin your own money,
as legal tender in your country. 7Jerusalem and
its temple shall be free. All the weapons you
have prepared and all the strongholds you have
built and now occupy shall remain in your
possession. 8All debts, present or future, due to
the royal treasury shall be canceled for you, now
and for all time. 9When we recover our king-
dom, we will greatly honor you and your nation
and the temple, so that your glory will be
manifest in all the earth."

10In the year one hundred and seventy-four,*
Antiochus invaded the land of his ancestors, and
all the troops rallied to him, so that few were left
with Trypho. 11Pursued by Antiochus, Trypho
fled to Dor, by the sea,* 12realizing what a mass
of troubles had come upon him now that his
soldiers had deserted him. 13Antiochus en-
camped before Dor with a hundred and twenty
thousand infantry and eight thousand horsemen.
14While he invested the city, his ships closed in
along the coast, so that he blockaded it by land
and sea and let no one go in or out.

**Roman Alliance Renewed** 15Meanwhile, Nu-
menius and his companions left Rome with
letters such as this addressed to various kings
and countries: [v]

16"Lucius,* Consul of the Romans, sends
greetings to King Ptolemy. 17Certain envoys of
the Jews, our friends and allies, have come to us
to renew their earlier alliance of friendship. They
had been sent by Simon the high priest and the
Jewish people, 18and they brought with them a
gold shield worth a thousand minas. [w] 19There-
fore we have decided to write to various kings
and countries, that they are not to harm them, or
wage war against them or their cities or their
country, and are not to assist those who fight
against them. 20We have also decided to accept
the shield from them. 21If, then, any troublemak-
ers from their country take refuge with you,
hand them over to Simon the high priest, so that
he may punish them according to their law."

22The consul sent similar letters to Kings
Demetrius, Attalus,* Ariarthes and Arsaces; 23to
all the countries—Sampsames, Sparta, Delos,
Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Ly-
cia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Side,
Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, Cyprus, and Cyrene.
24A copy of the letter was also sent to Simon the
high priest.

**Hostility of Antiochus** 25When King Antio-
chus was encamped before Dor, he assaulted it
continuously both with troops and with the
siege machines he had made. He blockaded
Trypho by preventing anyone from going in or
out. 26Simon sent to Antiochus' support two
thousand elite troops, together with gold and
silver and much equipment. 27But he refused to

**15, 1:** Antiochus: Antiochus VII Sidetes, son of Demetrius I, and younger brother of Demetrius II, now a prisoner of the Parthians. At the age of twenty he set out from the island of Rhodes to take his brother's place and drive out the usurper Trypho.

**15, 10:** The year one hundred and seventy-four: 138 B.C.

**15, 11:** Dor, by the sea: a fortress on the Palestinian coast, fifteen miles south of Carmel.

**15, 16:** Lucius: perhaps Lucius Caecilius Metellus, consul in 142 B.C., or Lucius Calpurnicus Piso, consul in 140–139 B.C. This document pertains to Simon's first year as leader.

**15, 22:** Attalus: Attalus II of Pergamum, reigned 159–138 B.C. Ariarthes: Ariarthes V of Cappadocia, reigned 162–130 B.C. Arsaces: see note on 1 Mc 14, 2.

v 1 Mc 8, 17; 12, 16; 14, 22, 24. w 1 Mc 14, 24.

accept the aid; in fact, he broke all the agreements he had previously made with Simon and became hostile toward him.

[28]He sent Athenobius, one of his Friends, to confer with Simon and say: "You are occupying Joppa and Gazara and the citadel of Jerusalem; these are cities of my kingdom. [29]You have laid waste their territories, done great harm to the land, and taken possession of many districts in my realm. [30]Therefore, give up the cities you have seized and the tribute money of the districts outside the territory of Judea of which you have taken possession; [31]or instead, pay me five hundred talents of silver for the devastation you have caused and five hundred talents more for the tribute money of the cities. If you do not do this, we will come and make war on you."

[32]So Athenobius, the king's Friend, came to Jerusalem, and on seeing the splendor of Simon's court, the gold and silver plate on the sideboard, and the rest of his rich display, he was amazed. When he gave him the king's message, [33]Simon said to him in reply:

"We have not seized any foreign land; what we took is not the property of others, but our ancestral heritage which for a time had been unjustly held by our enemies. [34]Now that we have the opportunity, we are holding on to the heritage of our ancestors. [35]As for Joppa and Gazara, which you demand, the men of these cities were doing great harm to our people and laying waste our country; however, we are willing to pay you a hundred talents for these cities."

[36]Athenobius made no reply, but returned to the king in anger. When he told him of Simon's words, of his splendor, and of all he had seen, the king fell into a violent rage.

**Victory over Cendebeus** [37]Trypho had gotten aboard a ship and escaped to Orthosia.* [38]Then the king appointed Cendebeus commander in chief of the seacoast, and gave him infantry and cavalry forces. [39]He ordered him to move his troops against Judea and to fortify Kedron* and strengthen its gates, so that he could launch attacks against the Jewish people. Meanwhile the king went in pursuit of Trypho. [40]When Cendebeus came to Jamnia, he began to harass the people and to make incursions into Judea, where he took people captive or massacred them. [41]As the king ordered, he fortified Kedron and stationed horsemen and infantry there, so that they could go out and patrol the roads of Judea.

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 13–16 See RG 224–225

[1]John then went up from Gazara and told his father Simon what Cendebeus was doing. [2]Simon called his two oldest sons, Judas and John, and said to them: "I and my brothers and my father's house have fought the battles of Israel from our youth until today, and many times we succeeded in saving Israel. [3]I have now grown old, but you, by the mercy of Heaven, have come to man's estate. Take my place and my brother's, and go out and fight for our nation; and may the help of Heaven be with you!"

[4]John then mustered in the land twenty thousand warriors and horsemen. Setting out against Cendebeus, they spent the night at Modein, [5]rose early, and marched into the plain. There, facing them, was an immense army of foot soldiers and horsemen, and between the two armies was a stream. [6]John and his men took their position against the enemy. Seeing that his men were afraid to cross the stream, John crossed first. When his men saw this, they crossed over after him. [7]Then he divided his infantry into two corps and put his cavalry between them, for the enemy's horsemen were very numerous. [8]They blew the trumpets, and Cendebeus and his army were put to flight; many of them fell wounded, and the rest fled toward the stronghold. [9]It was then that John's brother Judas fell wounded; but John pursued them until Cendebeus reached Kidron, which he had fortified. [10]Some took refuge in the towers on the plain of Azotus, but John set fire to these, and about two thousand of the enemy perished. He then returned to Judea in peace.

15, 37: Orthosia: a port between Tripoli and the Eleutherus River.

15, 39: Kedron: a few miles southeast of Jamnia and facing the fortress of Gazara held by John Hyrcanus.

**Murder of Simon and His Sons** [11]Ptolemy, son of Abubus, had been appointed governor of the plain of Jericho, and he had much silver and gold, [12]being the son-in-law of the high priest. [13]But he became ambitious and sought to get control of the country. So he made treacherous plans to do away with Simon and his sons. [14]As Simon was inspecting the cities of the country and providing for their needs, he and his sons Mattathias and Judas went down to Jericho in the year one hundred and seventy-seven, in the eleventh month* (that is, the month Shebat). [15]The son of Abubus gave them a deceitful welcome in the little stronghold called Dok* which he had built. While serving them a sumptuous banquet, he had his men hidden there. [16]Then, when Simon and his sons had drunk freely, Ptolemy and his men sprang up, weapons in hand, rushed upon Simon in the banquet hall, and killed him, his two sons, and some of his servants. [17]By this vicious act of treason he repaid good with evil.

[18]Then Ptolemy wrote an account of this and sent it to the king, asking that troops be sent to help him and that the country be turned over to him. [19]He sent other men to Gazara to do away with John. To the army officers he sent letters inviting them to come to him so that he might present them with silver, gold, and gifts. [20]He also sent others to seize Jerusalem and the mount of the temple. [21]But someone ran ahead and brought word to John at Gazara that his father and his brothers had perished, and that Ptolemy had sent men to kill him also. [22]On hearing this, John was utterly astounded. When the men came to kill him, he had them arrested and put to death, for he knew what they meant to do. [23]*Now the rest of the history of John, his wars and the brave deeds he performed, his rebuilding of the walls, and his other achievements— [24]these things are recorded in the chronicle of his pontificate, from the time that he succeeded his father as high priest.

**16, 14:** In the year one hundred and seventy-seven, in the eleventh month: January-February, 134 B.C., by the temple calendar.

**16, 15:** Dok: a fortress built on a cliff three miles northwest of Jericho, near modern Ain Duq.

**16, 23f:** John Hyrcanus was ruler and high priest from 134 B.C. till his death in 104 B.C. These verses suggest that the book was written, or at least completed, only after he died.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF MACCABEES

2 Maccabees
See RG 226–230

Although this book, like the preceding one, receives its title from its protagonist, Judas Maccabee (or Maccabeus), it is not a sequel to 1 Maccabees. The two differ in many respects. Whereas the first covers the period from the beginning of the reign of Antiochus IV (175 B.C.) to the accession of John Hyrcanus I (134 B.C.), this present book treats of the events in Jewish history from the time of the high priest Onias III and King Seleucus IV (c. 180 B.C.) to the defeat of Nicanor's army (161 B.C.).

The author of 2 Maccabees states (2, 23) that his one-volume work is an abridgment of a certain five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene; but since this latter has not survived, it is difficult to determine its relationship to the present epitome. One does not know how freely the anonymous epitomizer may have rewritten his shorter composition, or how closely he may have followed the wording of the original in the excerpts he made. Some parts of the text here, clearly not derived from Jason's work, are the Preface (2, 19-32), the Epilogue (15, 37-39), and probably also certain moralizing reflections (e.g., 5, 17-20; 6, 12-17). It is certain, how-

ever, that both works were written in Greek, which explains why the Second Book of Maccabees was not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible.

The book is not without genuine historical value in supplementing 1 Maccabees, and it contains some apparently authentic documents (11, 16-38). Its purpose, whether intended by Jason himself or read into it by the compiler, is to give a theological interpretation to the history of the period. There is less interest, therefore, in the actual exploits of Judas Maccabeus than in God's marvelous interventions. These direct the course of events, both to punish the sacrilegious and blasphemous pagans, and to purify God's holy temple and restore it to his faithful people. The author sometimes effects his purpose by transferring events from their proper chronological order, and giving exaggerated figures for the size of armies and the numbers killed in battle; he also places long, edifying discourses and prayers in the mouths of his heroes, and inclines to elaborate descriptions of celestial apparitions (3, 24-34; 5, 2ff; 10, 29f; 15, 11-16). He is the earliest known composer of stories that glorify God's holy martyrs (6, 18—7, 42; 14, 37-46).

Of theological importance are the author's teachings on the resurrection of the just on the last day (7, 9. 11. 14. 23; 14, 46), the intercession of the saints in heaven for people living on earth (15, 11-16), and the power of the living to offer prayers and sacrifices for the dead (12, 39-46).

The beginning of 2 Maccabees consists of two letters sent by the Jews of Jerusalem to their coreligionists in Egypt. They deal with the observance of the feast commemorating the central event of the book, the purification of the temple. It is uncertain whether the author or a later scribe prefixed these letters to the narrative proper. If the author is responsible for their insertion, he must have written his book some time after 124 B.C., the date of the more recent of the two letters. In any case, Jason's five-volume work very likely continued the history of the Jews well into the Hasmonean period, so that 2 Maccabees would probably not have been produced much before the end of the second century B.C.

The main divisions of 2 Maccabees are:

I. Letters to the Jews in Egypt (1, 1—2, 18).
II. Author's Preface (2, 19-32).
III. Heliodorus' Attempt To Profane the Temple (3, 1-40).
IV. Profanation and Persecution (4, 1—7, 42).
V. Victories of Judas and Purification of the Temple (8, 1—10, 8).
VI. Renewed Persecution (10, 9—15, 36).
VII. Epilogue (15, 37-39).

## I: Letters to the Jews In Egypt

### CHAPTER 1

**First Letter 124 B.C.** [1]The Jews in Jerusalem and in the land of Judea send greetings to their brethren, the Jews in Egypt, and wish them true peace! [2]May God bless you and remember his covenant with his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [3]May he give to all of you a heart to worship him and to do his will readily and generously. [4]May he open your heart to his law and his commandments and grant you peace. [5]May he hear your prayers, and be reconciled to you, and never forsake you in time of adversity. [6]Even now we are praying for you here.

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[7]In the reign of Demetrius,* the year one
hundred and sixty-nine, we Jews wrote to you
during the trouble and violence that overtook us
in those years after Jason and his followers had
revolted against the holy land and the kingdom,[a]
[8]setting fire to the gatehouse and shedding
innocent blood. But we prayed to the LORD, and
our prayer was heard;* we offered sacrifices and
fine flour; we lighted the lamps and set out the
loaves of bread.[b] [9]We are now reminding you to
celebrate the feast of Booths in the month of
Chislev.* [10]Dated in the year one hundred and
eighty-eight.*

**Festival Letter 164 B.C.** The people of Jerusalem and Judea, the senate, and Judas send greetings and good wishes to Aristobulus, counselor of King Ptolemy and member of the family of the anointed priests, and to the Jews in Egypt. [11]Since we have been saved by God from grave dangers, we give him great thanks for having fought on our side against the king;* [12]c it was he who drove out those who fought against the holy city. [13]When their leader arrived in Persia with his seemingly irresistible army, they were cut to pieces in the temple of the goddess Nanea* through a deceitful stratagem employed by Nanea's priests. [14]*On the pretext of marrying the goddess, Antiochus with his Friends had come to the place to get its great treasures by way of dowry. [15]When the priests of the Nanaeon had displayed the treasures, Antiochus with a few attendants came to the temple precincts. As soon as he entered the temple, the priests locked the doors. [16]Then they opened a hidden trapdoor in the ceiling, hurled stones at the leader and his companions and struck them down. They dismembered the bodies, cut off their heads and tossed them to the people outside. [17]Forever blessed be our God, who has thus punished the wicked!

[18]*We shall be celebrating the purification of the temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month Chislev, so we thought it right to inform you that you too may celebrate the feast of Booths and of the fire that appeared when Nehemiah, the rebuilder of the temple* and the altar, offered sacrifices. [19]When our fathers were being exiled to Persia,* devout priests of the time took some of the fire from the altar and hid it secretly in the hollow of a dry cistern, making sure that the place would be unknown to anyone. [20]Many years later, when it so pleased God, Nehemiah, commissioned by the king of Persia, sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to look for it. [21]When they informed us that they could not find any fire, but only muddy water, he ordered them to scoop some out and bring it. After the material for the sacrifices had been prepared, Nehemiah ordered the priests to sprinkle with the water the wood and what lay on it. [22]When this was done and in time the sun, which had been clouded over, began to shine, a great fire blazed up, so that everyone marveled. [23]While the sacrifice was being burned, the

**1, 7:** Demetrius: Demetrius II, king of Syria (145–139, 129–125 B.C.). The year one hundred and sixty-nine of the Seleucid era, 143 B.C. Regarding the dates in 1 and 2 Mc, see note on 1 Mc 1, 10. On the troubles caused by Jason and his revolt against the kingdom, i.e., the rule of the legitimate high priest, see 2 Mc 4, 7–22.

**1, 8:** Our prayer was heard: in the ultimate victory of the Maccabees.

**1, 9:** Feast of Booths in the month of Chislev: really the feast of the Dedication of the temple (2 Mc 10, 1–8), celebrated on the twenty-fifth of Chislev (Nov.-Dec.). Its solemnity resembles that of the true feast of Booths (Lv 23, 33–43), celebrated on the fifteenth of Tishri (Sept.-Oct.); cf 2 Mc 1, 18.

**1, 10:** 124 B.C. The date pertains to the preceding, not the following letter. King Ptolemy: Ptolemy VI Philometor, ruler of Egypt from 180 to 145 B.C.; he is mentioned also in 1 Mc 1, 18; 10, 51–59.

**1, 11f:** The king: Antiochus IV of Syria, the bitter persecutor of the Jews, who, as leader of the Syrian army that invaded Persia, perished there in 164 B.C.

**1, 13:** Nanea: an oriental goddess comparable to Artemis of the Greeks.

**1, 14–17:** A different account of the death of Antiochus IV is given in 2 Mc 9, 1–29, and another variant account in 1 Mc 6, 1–16. The writer of this letter had probably heard a distorted rumor of the king's death. This fact and other indications show that the letter was written very soon after Antiochus IV died, hence in 164 B.C.

**1, 18–36:** This purely legendary account of Nehemiah's miraculous fire is incorporated in the letter because of its connection with the temple and its rededication.

**1, 18:** Nehemiah, the rebuilder of the temple: he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, but the temple had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel almost a century before.

**1, 19:** Persia: actually Babylonia, which later became part of the Persian Empire.

a 2 Mc 4, 7–20. b 1 Mc 4, 38. c 12–17: 2 Mc 9, 1–29; 1 Mc 6, 1–13.

priests recited a prayer, and all present joined in
with them, Jonathan leading and the rest re-
sponding with Nehemiah.
[24]The prayer was as follows: "LORD, LORD
God, creator of all things, awesome and strong,
just and merciful, the only king and benefactor,
[25]who alone are gracious, just, almighty, and
eternal, Israel's savior from all evil, who chose
our forefathers and sanctified them: [26]accept
this sacrifice on behalf of all your people Israel
and guard and sanctify your heritage. [27]Gather
together our scattered people, free those who
are the slaves of the Gentiles, look kindly on
those who are despised and detested, and let the
Gentiles know that you are our God. [28]Punish
those who tyrannize over us and arrogantly
mistreat us. [29]Plant your people in your holy
place, as Moses promised." [d]
[30]Then the priests began to sing hymns.
[31]After the sacrifice was burned, Nehemiah
ordered the rest of the liquid to be poured upon
large stones. [32]As soon as this was done, a flame
blazed up, but its light was lost in the brilliance
cast from a light on the altar. [33]When the event
became known and the king of the Persians was
told that, in the very place where the exiled
priests had hidden the fire, a liquid was found
with which Nehemiah and his people had
burned the sacrifices, [34]the king, after verifying
the fact, fenced the place off and declared it
sacred. [35]To those on whom the king wished to
bestow favors he distributed the large revenues
he received there. [36]Nehemiah and his compan-
ions called the liquid nephthar, meaning purifica-
tion, but most people name it naphtha.*

## CHAPTER 2

[1]*You will find in the records, not only that
Jeremiah the prophet ordered the deportees to
take some of the aforementioned fire with them,
[2]but also that the prophet, in giving them the
law, admonished them not to forget the com-
mandments of the LORD or be led astray in their
thoughts, when seeing the gold and silver idols
and their ornaments. [e] [3]With other similar words
he urged them not to let the law depart from
their hearts. [4]/The same document also tells
how the prophet, following a divine revelation,
ordered that the tent and the ark should accom-
pany him and how he went off to the mountain*
which Moses climbed to see God's inheritance.
[5]When Jeremiah arrived there, he found a room
in a cave in which he put the tent, the ark, and
the altar of incense; then he blocked up the
entrance. [6]Some of those who followed him
came up intending to mark the path, but they
could not find it. [7]When Jeremiah heard of this,
he reproved them: "The place is to remain
unknown until God gathers his people together
again and shows them mercy. [8]Then the LORD
will disclose these things, and the glory of the
LORD will be seen in the cloud, just as it
appeared in the time of Moses and when Solo-
mon prayed that the Place* might be gloriously
sanctified." [g]
[9]It is also related how Solomon in his wisdom
offered a sacrifice at the dedication and the
completion of the temple. [10]Just as Moses prayed
to the LORD and fire descended from the sky and
consumed the sacrifices, so Solomon also prayed
and fire came down and burned up the holo-
causts. [h] [11]Moses had said, [i] "Because it had not
been eaten, the sin offering was burned up."*
[12]Solomon also celebrated the feast in the same
way for eight days.
[13]Besides these things, it is also told in the
records and in Nehemiah's Memoirs* how he
collected the books about the kings, the writings
of the prophets and of David, and the royal
letters about sacred offerings. [14]In like manner
Judas also collected for us the books that had
been scattered because of the war, and we now

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1, 36: By a play on words, the Greek term naphtha (petroleum) is assimilated to some Semitic word, perhaps nephthar, meaning "loosened."

2, 1–8: This legendary account of how Jeremiah hid the sacred tent (which was not mentioned after the time of Solomon!), the ark, and the altar is given for the purpose of explaining why the postexilic temple was the legitimate place of worship even without these sacred objects.

2, 4: The mountain: Nebo; cf Dt 34, 1.

2, 8: The place: the temple of Jerusalem.

2, 11: The statement attributed here to Moses seems to be based on Lv 10, 16–20.

2, 13: Nehemiah's Memoirs: a lost apocryphal work.

d 2 Mc 2, 18; Dt 30, 3ff. e Bar 6, 3–72. f 4f: Dt 32, 49; 34, 1; Rv 11, 19. g 1 Kgs 8, 11. h Lv 9, 23f; 2 Chr 7, 1. i Lv 10, 16–20.

have them in our possession.[j] [15]If you need them, send messengers to get them for you.

[16]As we are about to celebrate the feast of the purification of the temple, we are writing to you requesting you also to please celebrate the feast. [17]It is God who has saved all his people and has restored to all of them their heritage, the kingdom, the priesthood, and the sacred rites, [18]as he promised through the law. We trust in God, that he will soon have mercy on us and gather us together from everywhere under the heavens to his holy Place, for he has rescued us from great perils and has purified his Place.[k]

## II: Author's Preface

[19]This is the story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, of the purification of the great temple, the dedication of the altar, [20]the campaigns against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator,* [21]and of the heavenly manifestations accorded to the heroes who fought bravely for Judaism, so that, few as they were, they seized the whole land, put to flight the barbarian hordes, [22]regained possession of the world-famous temple, liberated the city, and reestablished the laws that were in danger of being abolished, while the LORD favored them with all his generous assistance. [23]All this, which Jason of Cyrene set forth in detail in five volumes, we will try to condense into a single book.

Ch 3–15 See RG 229–230

**Purpose and Method** [24]In view of the flood of statistics, and the difficulties encountered by those who wish to plunge into historical narratives where the material is abundant, [25]we have aimed to please those who prefer simple reading, as well as to make it easy for the studious who wish to commit things to memory, and to be helpful to all. [26]For us who have taken upon ourselves the labor of making this digest, the task, far from being easy, is one of sweat and of sleepless nights, [27]just as the preparation of a festive banquet is no light matter for one who thus seeks to give enjoyment to others. Similarly, to win the gratitude of many we will gladly endure these inconveniences, [28]while we leave the responsibility for exact details to the original author, and confine our efforts to giving only a summary outline. [29]As the architect of a new house must give his attention to the whole structure, while the man who undertakes the decoration and the frescoes has only to concern himself with what is needed for ornamentation, so I think it is with us. [30]To enter into questions and examine them thoroughly from all sides is the task of the professional historian; [31]but the man who is making an adaptation should be allowed to aim at brevity of expression and to omit detailed treatment of the matter. [32]Here, then, we shall begin our account without further ado; it would be nonsense to write a long preface to a story and then abbreviate the story itself.

## III: Heliodorus' Attempt to Profane the Temple*

### CHAPTER 3

**Treachery of Simon** [1]While the holy city lived in perfect peace and the laws were strictly observed because of the piety of the high priest Onias* and his hatred of evil, [2]the kings themselves honored the Place and glorified the temple with the most magnificent gifts. [3]Thus Seleucus,* king of Asia, defrayed from his own revenues all the expenses necessary for the sacrificial services. [4]But a certain Simon, of the priestly course of Bilgah,* who had been appointed superintendent of the temple, had a quarrel with the high priest about the supervision of the city market.[m] [5]Since he could not prevail against Onias, he went to Apollonius of Tarsus, who at that time was governor of Coele-

2, 20: For the account of the campaigns against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, see 2 Mc 4, 7—10, 9; and for the account of those against his son Antiochus V Eupator, see 2 Mc 10, 10—13, 26.

3, 1–40: This legendary episode about Heliodorus is recounted here for the purpose of stressing the inviolability of the temple of Jerusalem; its later profanation was allowed by God because of the people's sins; cf 2 Mc 5, 17f.

3, 1: The high priest Onias: Onias III, who was priest from 196 to 175 B.C., and died in 171 B.C. He was the son of Simon, whose praises are sung in Sir 50, 1–21.

3, 3: Seleucus: Seleucus IV Philopator, who reigned from 187 to 175 B.C.

3, 4: Bilgah: a priestly family mentioned in Neh 12, 5. 18.

j 1 Mc 1, 57. k Dt 30, 3ff. l 1ff: 2 Mc 5, 19f; 15, 12. m 2 Mc 4, 23.

syria and Phoenicia, [6]and reported to him that
the treasury in Jerusalem was so full of untold
riches that the total sum of money was incalcula-
ble and out of all proportion to the cost of the
sacrifices, and that it would be possible to bring
it all under the control of the king.

**Mission of Heliodorus** [7]When Apollonius had
an audience with the king, he informed him
about the riches that had been reported to him.
The king chose his minister Heliodorus and sent
him with instructions to expropriate the afore-
said wealth. [8]So Heliodorus immediately set out
on his journey, ostensibly to visit the cities of
Coelesyria and Phoenicia, but in reality to carry
out the king's purpose. [9]When he arrived in
Jerusalem and had been graciously received by
the high priest of the city, he told him about the
information that had been given, and explained
the reason for his presence, and he asked if these
things were really true. [10]The high priest ex-
plained that part of the money was a care fund
for widows and orphans,[n] [11]and a part was the
property of Hyrcanus, son of Tobias,* a man who
occupied a very high position. Contrary to the
calumnies of the impious Simon, the total
amounted to four hundred talents of silver and
two hundred of gold. [12]He added that it was
utterly unthinkable to defraud those who had
placed their trust in the sanctity of the Place and
in the sacred inviolability of a temple venerated
all over the world. [13]But because of the orders
he had from the king, Heliodorus said that in any
case the money must be confiscated for the royal
treasury. [14]So on the day he had set he went in
to take an inventory of the funds.

**Anguish of the Faithful** There was great dis-
tress throughout the city. [15]Priests prostrated
themselves in their priestly robes before the
altar, and loudly begged him in heaven who had
given the law about deposits to keep the deposits
safe for those who had made them. [16]Whoever
saw the appearance of the high priest was
pierced to the heart, for the changed color of his
face manifested the anguish of his soul. [17]The
terror and bodily trembling that had come over
the man clearly showed those who saw him the
pain that lodged in his heart. [18]People rushed
out of their houses in crowds to make public
supplication, because the Place was in danger of
being profaned. [19]Women, girded with sackcloth
below their breasts, filled the streets; maidens
secluded indoors ran together, some to the gates,
some to the walls, others peered through the
windows, [20]all of them with hands raised to-
ward heaven, making supplication. [21]It was
pitiful to see the populace variously prostrated in
prayer and the high priest full of dread and
anguish.

**Divine Intervention** [22]While they were im-
ploring the almighty LORD to keep the deposits
safe and secure for those who had placed them
in trust, [23]Heliodorus went on with his plan.
[24]But just as he was approaching the treasury
with his bodyguards, the LORD of spirits who
holds all power manifested himself in so strik-
ing a way that those who had been bold
enough to follow Heliodorus were panic-
stricken at God's power and fainted away in
terror. [25]There appeared to them a richly
caparisoned horse, mounted by a dreadful
rider. Charging furiously, the horse attacked
Heliodorus with its front hoofs. The rider was
seen to be wearing golden armor. [26]Then two
other young men, remarkably strong, strikingly
beautiful, and splendidly attired, appeared be-
fore him. Standing on each side of him, they
flogged him unceasingly until they had given
him innumerable blows. [27]Suddenly he fell to
the ground, enveloped in great darkness. Men
picked him up and laid him on a stretcher.
[28]The man who a moment before had entered
that treasury with a great retinue and his
whole bodyguard was carried away helpless,
having dearly experienced the sovereign power
of God. [29]While he lay speechless and deprived
of all hope of aid, due to an act of God's

3, 11: Son of Tobias: a member of the Tobiad family of Transjordan (Neh 2, 10; 6, 17ff; 13, 4–8). Hyrcanus' father was Joseph, whose mother was the sister of the high priest Onias II.

n Dt 14, 29.

power, 30the Jews praised the LORD who had marvelously glorified his holy Place; and the temple, charged so shortly before with fear and commotion, was filled with joy and gladness, now that the almighty LORD had manifested himself.

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31Soon some of the companions of Heliodorus begged Onias to invoke the Most High, praying that the life of the man who was about to expire might be spared. 32Fearing that the king might think that Heliodorus had suffered some foul play at the hands of the Jews, the high priest offered a sacrifice for the man's recovery. 33While the high priest was offering the sacrifice of atonement, the same young men in the same clothing again appeared and stood before Heliodorus. "Be very grateful to the high priest Onias," they told him. "It is for his sake that the LORD has spared your life. 34Since you have been scourged by Heaven, proclaim to all men the majesty of God's power." When they had said this, they disappeared.

**Testimony of Heliodorus** 35After Heliodorus had offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made most solemn vows to him who had spared his life, he bade Onias farewell, and returned with his soldiers to the king. 36Before all men he gave witness to the deeds of the most high God that he had seen with his own eyes. 37When the king asked Heliodorus who would be a suitable man to be sent to Jerusalem next, he answered: 38"If you have an enemy or a plotter against the government, send him there, and you will receive him back well-flogged, if indeed he survives at all; for there is certainly some special divine power about the Place. 39He who has his dwelling in heaven watches over that Place and protects it, and he strikes down and destroys those who come to harm it." 40This was how the matter concerning Heliodorus and the preservation of the treasury turned out.

# IV: Profanation and Persecution

## CHAPTER 4

**Onias Appeals to the King** 1The Simon mentioned above as the informer about the funds against his own country, made false accusations that it was Onias who threatened Heliodorus and instigated the whole miserable affair. 2He dared to brand as a plotter against the government the man who was a benefactor of the city, a protector of his compatriots, and a zealous defender of the laws. 3When Simon's hostility reached such a point that murders were being committed by one of his henchmen, 4Onias saw that the opposition was serious and that Apollonius, son of Menestheus, the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, was abetting Simon's wickedness. 5So he had recourse to the king, not as an accuser of his countrymen, but as a man looking to the general and particular good of all the people. 6He saw that, unless the king intervened, it would be impossible to have a peaceful government, and that Simon would not desist from his folly.

**Jews Led by Jason To Apostatize** 7But Seleucus died,* and when Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes succeeded him on the throne, Onias' brother Jason obtained the high priesthood by corrupt means:[o] 8in an interview, he promised the king three hundred and sixty talents of silver, as well as eighty talents from another source of income. 9Besides this he agreed to pay a hundred and fifty more, if he were given authority to establish a gymnasium and a youth club* for it and to enroll men in Jerusalem as Antiochians.

10When Jason received the king's approval and came into office, he immediately initiated his countrymen into the Greek way of life. 11He set aside the royal concessions granted to the Jews through the mediation of John, father of Eupolemus* (that Eupolemus who would later go on an embassy to the Romans to establish a

4, 7: Seleucus died: he was murdered by Heliodorus. Antiochus Epiphanes was his younger brother. Onias' brother showed his love for the Greek way of life (v 10) by changing his Hebrew name Joshua, or Jesus, to the Greek name Jason.

4, 9: Youth club: an educational institution in which young men were trained both in Greek intellectual culture and in physical fitness. Antiochians: honorary citizens of Antioch, a Hellenistic city of the Seleucid Kingdom that had a corporation of such Antiochians, who enjoyed certain political and commercial privileges.

4, 11: Eupolemus: one of the two envoys sent to Rome by Judas Maccabeus (1 Mc 8, 17).

o 2 Mc 1, 7; 1 Mc 1, 10.

treaty of friendship with them); he abrogated the lawful institutions and introduced customs contrary to the law.[p] [12]He quickly established a gymnasium* at the very foot of the acropolis, where he induced the noblest young men to wear the Greek hat.[q] [13]The craze for Hellenism and foreign customs reached such a pitch, through the outrageous wickedness of the ungodly pseudo-high-priest Jason, [14]that the priests no longer cared about the service of the altar. Disdaining the temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened, at the signal for the discus-throwing, to take part in the unlawful exercises on the athletic field. [15]They despised what their ancestors had regarded as honors, while they highly prized what the Greeks esteemed as glory. [16]Precisely because of this, they found themselves in serious trouble: the very people whose manner of life they emulated, and whom they desired to imitate in everything, became their enemies and oppressors. [17]It is no light matter to flout the laws of God, as the following period will show.

[18]When the quinquennial games were held at Tyre in the presence of the king, [19]the vile Jason sent envoys as representatives of the Antiochians of Jerusalem, to bring there three hundred silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. But the bearers themselves decided that the money should not be spent on a sacrifice, as that was not right, but should be used for some other purpose. [20]So the contribution destined by the sender for the sacrifice to Hercules was in fact applied, by those who brought it, to the construction of triremes.*

[21]When Apollonius, son of Menestheus, was sent to Egypt for the coronation of King Philometor,* Antiochus learned that the king was opposed to his policies; so he took measures for his own security. [22]After going to Joppa, he proceeded to Jerusalem. There he was received with great pomp by Jason and the people of the city, who escorted him with torchlights and acclamations; following this, he led his army into Phoenicia.

**Menelaus Supplants Jason** [23]Three years later Jason sent Menelaus,* brother of the aforementioned Simon, to deliver the money to the king, and to obtain decisions on some important matters. [24]When he had been introduced to the king, he flattered him with such an air of authority that he secured the high priesthood for himself, outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver. [25]He returned with the royal commission, but with nothing that made him worthy of the high priesthood; he had the temper of a cruel tyrant and the rage of a wild beast. [26]Then Jason, who had cheated his own brother and now saw himself cheated by another man, was driven out as a fugitive to the country of the Ammonites.

[27]Although Menelaus had obtained the office, he did not make any payments of the money he had promised to the king, [28]in spite of the demand of Sostratus, the commandant of the citadel, whose duty it was to collect the taxes. For this reason, both were summoned before the king. [29]Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus as his substitute in the high priesthood, while Sostratus left Crates, commander of the Cypriots, as his substitute.

**Murder of Onias** [30]While these things were taking place, the people of Tarsus and Mallus* rose in revolt, because their cities had been given as a gift to Antiochis, the king's mistress. [31]The king, therefore, went off in haste to settle the affair, leaving Andronicus, one of his nobles, as his deputy. [32]Then Menelaus, thinking this a good opportunity, stole some gold vessels from the temple and presented them to Andronicus; he had already sold some other vessels in Tyre and in the neighboring cities. [33]When Onias had

**4, 12:** Since the gymnasium, where the youth exercised naked (Greek gymnos), lay in the Tyropoeon Valley to the east of the citadel, it was directly next to the temple on its eastern side. The Greek hat: a wide-brimmed hat, traditional headgear of Hermes, the patron god of athletic contests; it formed part of the distinctive costume of the members of the "youth club."

**4, 20:** Triremes: war vessels with three banks of oars.

**4, 21:** Philometor: Ptolemy VI, king of Egypt, c. 172 to c. 145 B.C.

**4, 23:** Menelaus: Jewish high priest from c. 172 to his execution in 162 B.C. (2 Mc 13, 3–8).

**4, 30:** Mallus: a city of Cilicia (v 36) in southeastern Asia Minor, about thirty miles east of Tarsus.

p 1 Mc 8, 17. q 1 Mc 1, 14.

clear evidence of the facts, he made a public protest, after withdrawing to the inviolable sanctuary at Daphne, near Antioch. [34]Thereupon Menelaus approached Andronicus privately and asked him to lay hands on Onias. So Andronicus went to Onias, and by treacherously reassuring him through sworn pledges with right hands joined, persuaded him, in spite of his suspicions, to leave the sanctuary. Then, without any regard for justice, he immediately put him to death.

[35]As a result, not only the Jews, but many people of other nations as well, were indignant and angry over the unjust murder of the man. [36]When the king returned from the region of Cilicia, the Jews of the city,* together with the Greeks who detested the crime, went to see him about the murder of Onias. [37]Antiochus was deeply grieved and full of pity; he wept as he recalled the prudence and noble conduct of the deceased. [38]Inflamed with anger, he immediately stripped Andronicus of his purple robe, tore off his other garments, and had him led through the whole city to the very place where he had committed the outrage against Onias; and there he put the murderer to death. Thus the LORD rendered him the punishment he deserved.

**Riot against Lysimachus** [39]Many sacrilegious thefts had been committed by Lysimachus in the city* with the connivance of Menelaus. When word was spread that a large number of gold vessels had been stolen, the people assembled in protest against Lysimachus. [40]As the crowds, now thoroughly enraged, began to riot, Lysimachus launched an unjustified attack against them with about three thousand armed men under the leadership of Auranus, a man as advanced in folly as he was in years. [41]Reacting against Lysimachus' attack, the people picked up stones or pieces of wood or handfuls of the ashes lying there and threw them in wild confusion at Lysimachus and his men. [42]As a result, they wounded many of them and even killed a few, while they put all the rest to flight. The sacrilegious thief himself they slew near the treasury.

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[43]Charges about this affair were brought against Menelaus. [44]When the king came to Tyre, three men sent by the senate* presented to him the justice of their cause. [45]But Menelaus, seeing himself on the losing side, promised Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, a substantial sum of money if he would win the king over.[r] [46]So Ptolemy retired with the king under a colonnade, as if to get some fresh air, and persuaded him to change his mind. [47]Menelaus, who was the cause of all the trouble, the king acquitted of the charges, while he condemned to death those poor men who would have been declared innocent even if they had pleaded their case before Scythians. [48]Thus, those who had prosecuted the case for the city, for the people, and for the sacred vessels, quickly suffered unjust punishment. [49]For this reason, even some Tyrians were indignant over the crime and provided sumptuously for their burial. [50]But Menelaus, thanks to the covetousness of the men in power, remained in office, where he grew in wickedness and became the chief plotter against his fellow citizens.

## CHAPTER 5

**Sedition and Death of Jason** [1]About this time Antiochus sent his second expedition* into Egypt.[s] [2][t]It then happened that all over the city, for nearly forty days, there appeared horsemen charging in midair, clad in garments interwoven with gold—companies fully armed with lances [3]and drawn swords; squadrons of cavalry in battle array, charges and countercharges on this side and that, with brandished shields and bristling spears, flights of arrows and flashes of gold ornaments, together with armor of every sort. [4]Therefore all prayed that this vision might be a good omen.

**4, 36:** The city: Antioch. But some understand the Greek to mean "each city."

**4, 39:** The city: Jerusalem. Menelaus was still in Syria.

**4, 44:** The senate: the council of Jewish elders at Jerusalem; cf 1 Mc 12, 6.

**5, 1:** Second expedition: the first invasion of Egypt by Antiochus in 169 B.C. (1 Mc 1, 16–20) is not mentioned in 2 Mc, unless the coming of the Syrian army to Palestine (2 Mc 4, 21f) is regarded as the first invasion. The author of 2 Mc apparently combines the first pillage of Jerusalem in 169 B.C. after Antiochus' first invasion of Egypt (1 Mc 1, 20–28; cf 2 Mc 5, 5ff) with the second pillage of the city two years later (167 B.C.), following the king's second invasion of Egypt in 168 B.C. (1 Mc 1, 29–35; cf 2 Mc 5, 24ff).

r 2 Mc 8, 8; 1 Mc 3, 38. s 1 Mc 1, 17. t 2f: 2 Mc 3, 24ff; 10, 29f; 11, 8.

[5]But when a false rumor circulated that
Antiochus was dead, Jason* gathered fully a
thousand men and suddenly attacked the city. As
the defenders on the walls were forced back and
the city was finally being taken, Menelaus took
refuge in the citadel. [6]Jason then slaughtered his
fellow citizens without mercy, not realizing that
triumph over one's own kindred was the great-
est failure, but imagining that he was winning a
victory over his enemies, not his fellow country-
men. [7]Even so, he did not gain control of the
government, but in the end received only dis-
grace for his treachery, and once again took
refuge in the country of the Ammonites. [8]At
length he met a miserable end. Called to account
before Aretas,* king of the Arabs, he fled from
city to city, hunted by all men, hated as a
transgressor of the laws, abhorred as the butcher
of his country and his countrymen. After being
driven into Egypt, [9]he crossed the sea to the
Spartans, among whom he hoped to find protec-
tion because of his relations with them. There he
who had exiled so many from their country
perished in exile; [10]and he who had cast out so
many to lie unburied went unmourned himself
with no funeral of any kind or any place in the
tomb of his ancestors.

**The City Ravaged** [11 u]When these happenings
were reported to the king, he thought that Judea
was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set
out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm.
[12]He ordered his soldiers to cut down without
mercy those whom they met and to slay those
who took refuge in their houses. [13]There was a
massacre of young and old, a killing of women
and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants.
[14]In the space of three days, eighty thousand
were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent
death, and the same number being sold into
slavery. [15]Not satisfied with this, the king dared
to enter the holiest temple in the world;
Menelaus, that traitor both to the laws and to his
country, served as guide. [16]He laid his impure
hands on the sacred vessels and gathered up
with profane hands the votive offerings made by
other kings for the advancement, the glory, and
the honor of the Place. [17]Puffed up in spirit,
Antiochus did not realize that it was because of
the sins of the city's inhabitants that the LORD
was angry for a little while and hence disre-
garded the holy Place. [v] [18]If they had not become
entangled in so many sins, this man, like Heliodo-
rus, who was sent by King Seleucus to inspect
the treasury, would have been flogged and
turned back from his presumptuous action as
soon as he approached. [19 w]The LORD, however,
had not chosen the people for the sake of the
Place, but the Place for the sake of the people.*
[20]Therefore, the Place itself, having shared in the
people's misfortunes, afterward participated in
their good fortune; and what the Almighty had
forsaken in his anger was restored in all its glory,
once the great Sovereign became reconciled.

[21]Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred tal-
ents from the temple, and hurried back to
Antioch. In his arrogance he planned to make
the land navigable and the sea passable on foot,
so carried away was he with pride. [x] [22]But he left
governors to harass the nation: at Jerusalem,
Philip, a Phrygian by birth,* and in character
more cruel than the man who appointed him;
[23]at Mount Gerizim,* Andronicus; and besides
these, Menelaus, who lorded it over his fellow
citizens worse than the others did. Out of hatred
for the Jewish citizens, [24 y]the king sent Apollo-
nius,* commander of the Mysians, at the head of
an army of twenty-two thousand men, with
orders to kill all the grown men and sell the
women and young men into slavery. [25]When
this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to

**5, 5:** Jason: brother of Onias III, was claimant of the high priesthood (2 Mc 4, 7–10). Later he was supplanted by Menelaus who drove him into Transjordan (2 Mc 4, 26).

**5, 8:** Aretas: King Aretas I of the Nabateans; cf 1 Mc 5, 25.

**5, 19:** Man is more important than even the most sacred institutions; cf Mk 2, 27.

**5, 22:** Philip, a Phrygian by birth: the Philip of 2 Mc 6, 11 and 8, 8, but probably not the same as Philip the regent of 2 Mc 9, 29 and 1 Mc 6, 14.

**5, 23:** Mount Gerizim: the sacred mountain of the Samaritans at Shechem; cf 2 Mc 6, 2.

**5, 24:** Apollonius: the Mysian commander of 1 Mc 1, 29; mentioned also in 2 Mc 3, 5; 4, 4.

u 11–21: 1 Mc 1, 20–24. v 2 Mc 6, 12–16; 7, 16–19. 32–38. w 19ff: 2 Mc 3, 1ff; 1 Chr 17, 9; Mk 2, 27. x 1 Mc 1, 23f. y 24ff: 1 Mc 1, 29f.

be peacefully disposed and waited until the holy day of the sabbath; then, finding the Jews refraining from work, he ordered his men to parade fully armed. [26]All those who came out to watch, he massacred, and running through the city with armed men, he cut down a large number of people.

[27]But Judas Maccabeus with about nine others withdrew to the wilderness where he and his companions lived like wild animals in the hills, continuing to eat what grew wild to avoid sharing the defilement.[z]

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 3–15 See RG 229–230

**The Temple Desecrated** [1 a]Not long after this the king sent an Athenian senator to force the Jews to abandon the customs of their ancestors and live no longer by the laws of God; [2]also to profane the temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus,* and that on Mount Gerizim to Zeus the Hospitable, as the inhabitants of the place requested.[b] [3]This intensified the evil in an intolerable and utterly disgusting way. [4]The Gentiles filled the temple with debauchery and revelry; they amused themselves with prostitutes* and had intercourse with women even in the sacred court. They also brought into the temple things that were forbidden, [5]so that the altar was covered with abominable offerings prohibited by the laws.

**Abolition of the Law** [6]A man could not keep the sabbath or celebrate the traditional feasts, nor even admit that he was a Jew. [7]Moreover, at the monthly celebration of the king's birthday the Jews had, from bitter necessity, to partake of the sacrifices, and when the festival of Dionysus* was celebrated, they were compelled to march in his procession, wearing wreaths of ivy.

[8]At the suggestion of the citizens of Ptolemais, a decree was issued ordering the neighboring Greek cities to act in the same way against the Jews: oblige them to partake of the sacrifices, [9]and put to death those who would not consent to adopt the customs of the Greeks. It was obvious, therefore, that disaster impended. [10]Thus, two women who were arrested for having circumcised their children were publicly paraded about the city with their babies hanging at their breasts and then thrown down from the top of the city wall.[c] [11]Others, who had assembled in nearby caves to observe the sabbath in secret, were betrayed to Philip and all burned to death. In their respect for the holiness of that day, they had scruples about defending themselves.[d]

**Purpose of Divine Judgment** [12 e]Now I beg those who read this book not to be disheartened by these misfortunes, but to consider that these chastisements were meant not for the ruin but for the correction of our nation. [13]It is, in fact, a sign of great kindness to punish sinners promptly instead of letting them go for long. [14f]Thus, in dealing with other nations, the LORD patiently waits until they reach the full measure of their sins before he punishes them; but with us he has decided to deal differently, [15]in order that he may not have to punish us more severely later, when our sins have reached their fullness. [16]He never withdraws his mercy from us. Although he disciplines us with misfortunes, he does not abandon his own people. [17]Let these words suffice for recalling this truth. Without further ado we must go on with our story.

**Martyrdom of Eleazar*** [18]Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes, a man of advanced age and noble appearance, was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork.[g] [19]But preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement, he spat out the meat, and went forward of his own accord to the instrument of torture, [20]as men ought to do who

6, 2: Olympain Zeus: equated with the Syrian Baal shomem ("the lord of the heavens"), a term which the Jews rendered as "Shiqqus shomem," horrible abomination (Dn 9, 27; 11, 31; 12, 11; 1 Mc 1, 54).

6, 4: Amused themselves with prostitutes: as in the fertility cults of the ancient Near East; see notes on Bar 6, 10. 42f.

6, 7: Dionysus: called also Bacchus the god of the grape harvest and of wine; ivy was one of his symbols.

6, 18—7, 42: The stories of Eleazar and of the mother and her seven sons, among the earliest models of "martyrology," were understandably popular among the Christians of the early centuries. Written originally to encourage God's people in times of persecution, they add gruesome details to the record of tortures, and place long speeches in the mouths of the martyrs.

z 1 Mc 2, 28. a 1–11: 1 Mc 1, 44–63. b 1 Mc 1, 46; Dn 9, 27. c 1 Mc 1, 60f. d 1 Mc 2, 32–38. e 12–16: 2 Mc 5, 17; 7, 16–19. 32–38. f Wis 11, 9f; 12, 2, 22. g Lv 11, 7f; Heb 11, 35.

have the courage to reject the food which it is
unlawful to taste even for love of life. [21]Those in
charge of that unlawful ritual meal took the man
aside privately, because of their long acquain-
tance with him, and urged him to bring meat of
his own providing, such as he could legitimately
eat, and to pretend to be eating some of the meat
of the sacrifice prescribed by the king; [22]in this
way he would escape the death penalty, and be
treated kindly because of their old friendship
with him. [23]But he made up his mind in a noble
manner, worthy of his years, the dignity of his
advanced age, the merited distinction of his gray
hair, and of the admirable life he had lived from
childhood; and so he declared that above all he
would be loyal to the holy laws given by God.

He told them to send him at once to the
abode of the dead, explaining: [24]"At our age it
would be unbecoming to make such a pretense;
many young men would think the ninety-year-
old Eleazar had gone over to an alien religion.
[25]Should I thus dissimulate for the sake of a brief
moment of life, they would be led astray by me,
while I would bring shame and dishonor on my
old age. [26]Even if, for the time being, I avoid the
punishment of men, I shall never, whether alive
or dead, escape the hands of the Almighty.
[27]Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I
will prove myself worthy of my old age, [28]and I
will leave to the young a noble example of how
to die willingly and generously for the revered
and holy laws."

He spoke thus, and went immediately to the
instrument of torture. [29]Those who shortly be-
fore had been kindly disposed, now became
hostile toward him because what he had said
seemed to them utter madness. [30]When he was
about to die under the blows, he groaned and
said: "The LORD in his holy knowledge knows
full well that, although I could have escaped
death, I am not only enduring terrible pain in my
body from this scourging, but also suffering it
with joy in my soul because of my devotion to
him." [31]This is how he died, leaving in his death
a model of courage and an unforgettable exam-
ple of virtue not only for the young but for the
whole nation.

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 3–15
See RG
229–230

**Martyrdom of a Mother and Her Sons** [1]It
also happened that seven brothers with their
mother were arrested and tortured with whips
and scourges by the king, to force them to eat
pork in violation of God's law.[h] [2]One of the
brothers, speaking for the others, said: "What do
you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are
ready to die rather than transgress the laws of
our ancestors." [3]At that the king, in a fury, gave
orders to have pans and caldrons heated. [4]While
they were being quickly heated, he commanded
his executioners to cut out the tongue of the one
who had spoken for the others, to scalp him and
cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of his
brothers and his mother looked on. [5]When he
was completely maimed but still breathing, the
king ordered them to carry him to the fire and
fry him. As a cloud of smoke spread from the
pan, the brothers and their mother encouraged
one another to die bravely, saying such words as
these: [6]"The LORD God is looking on, and he
truly has compassion on us, as Moses declared in
his canticle, when he protested openly with the
words, 'And he will have pity on his servants.' "[i]

[7]When the first brother had died in this
manner, they brought the second to be made
sport of. After tearing off the skin and hair of his
head, they asked him, "Will you eat the pork
rather than have your body tortured limb by
limb?" [8]Answering in the language of his forefa-
thers, he said, "Never!" So he too in turn
suffered the same tortures as the first. [9]At the
point of death he said: "You accursed fiend, you
are depriving us of this present life, but the King
of the world will raise us up* to live again
forever. It is for his laws that we are dying."[j]

[10]After him the third suffered their cruel
sport. He put out his tongue at once when told
to do so, and bravely held out his hands, [11]as he

7, 9: The King of the world will raise us up: here, and in vv 11. 14. 23. 29. 36, belief in the future resurrection of the body, at least for the just, is clearly stated; cf also 2 Mc 12, 44; 14, 46; Dn 12, 2.

h Jer 15, 9. i Dt 32, 36. j 2 Mc 12, 44; 14, 46.

spoke these noble words: "It was from Heaven
that I received these; for the sake of his laws I
disdain them; from him I hope to receive them
again."[k] [12]Even the king and his attendants
marveled at the young man's courage, because
he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

[13]After he had died, they tortured and mal-
treated the fourth brother in the same way.
[14]When he was near death, he said, "It is my
choice to die at the hands of men with the God-
given hope of being restored to life by him; but
for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

[15]They next brought forward the fifth brother
and maltreated him. [16]Looking at the king, he
said:[l] "Since you have power among men,
mortal though you are, do what you please. But
do not think that our nation is forsaken by God.
[17]Only wait, and you will see how his great
power will torment you and your descendants."

[18]After him they brought the sixth brother.
When he was about to die, he said: "Have no
vain illusions. We suffer these things on our own
account, because we have sinned against our
God; that is why such astonishing things have
happened to us. [19]Do not think, then, that you
will go unpunished for having dared to fight
against God."[m]

[20]Most admirable and worthy of everlasting
remembrance was the mother, who saw her
seven sons perish in a single day, yet bore it
courageously because of her hope in the LORD.
[21]Filled with a noble spirit that stirred her
womanly heart with manly courage, she ex-
horted each of them in the language of their
forefathers with these words: [22]"I do not know
how you came into existence in my womb; it
was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor
was it I who set in order the elements of which
each of you is composed. [23]Therefore, since it is
the Creator of the universe who shapes each
man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of
everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back
both breath and life, because you now disregard
yourselves for the sake of his law."

[24]Antiochus, suspecting insult in her words,
thought he was being ridiculed. As the youngest
brother was still alive, the king appealed to him,
not with mere words, but with promises on
oath, to make him rich and happy if he would
abandon his ancestral customs: he would make
him his Friend and entrust him with high office.
[25]When the youth paid no attention to him at
all, the king appealed to the mother, urging her
to advise her boy to save his life. [26]After he had
urged her for a long time, she went through the
motions of persuading her son. [27]In derision of
the cruel tyrant, she leaned over close to her son
and said in their native language: "Son, have pity
on me, who carried you in my womb for nine
months, nursed you for three years, brought you
up, educated and supported you to your present
age. [28]I beg you, child, to look at the heavens
and the earth and see all that is in them; then
you will know that God did not make them out
of existing things;* and in the same way the
human race came into existence. [29]Do not be
afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your
brothers and accept death, so that in the time of
mercy I may receive you again with them."

[30]She had scarcely finished speaking when
the youth said: "What are you waiting for? I will
not obey the king's command. I obey the com-
mand of the law given to our forefathers through
Moses. [31]But you, who have contrived every
kind of affliction for the Hebrews, will not
escape the hands of God. [32][n]We, indeed, are
suffering because of our sins. [33]Though our
living LORD treats us harshly for a little while to
correct us with chastisements, he will again be
reconciled with his servants. [34]But you, wretch,
vilest of all men! do not, in your insolence,
concern yourself with unfounded hopes, as you
raise your hand against the children of Heaven.
[35]You have not yet escaped the judgment of the
almighty and all-seeing God. [36]My brothers,
after enduring brief pain, have drunk of never-
failing life, under God's covenant, but you, by
the judgment of God, shall receive just punish-

**7, 28:** God did not make them out of existing things: that is, God made all things solely by his omnipotent will and his creative word; cf Heb 11, 3.

k 2 Mc 12, 43ff. l 16–19: 2 Mc 5, 17; 6, 12–16. m Acts 5, 39. n 32. 38: 2 Mc 5, 17; 6, 12–16; 17, 16–19.

ments for your arrogance. [37]Like my brothers, I offer up my body and my life for our ancestral laws, imploring God to show mercy soon to our nation, and by afflictions and blows to make you confess that he alone is God. [38]Through me and my brothers, may there be an end to the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation." [39]At that, the king became enraged and treated him even worse than the others, since he bitterly resented the boy's contempt. [40] [o]Thus he too died undefiled, putting all his trust in the LORD. [41]The mother was last to die, after her sons.

[42]Enough has been said about the sacrificial meals and the excessive cruelties.

## V: Victories of Judas and Purification of the Temple

### CHAPTER 8

**Judas Maccabeus** [1] [p]Judas Maccabeus and his companions entered the villages secretly, summoned their kinsmen, and by also enlisting others who remained faithful to Judaism, assembled about six thousand men. [2]They implored the LORD to look kindly upon his people, who were being oppressed on all sides; to have pity on the temple, which was profaned by godless men; [3]to have mercy on the city, which was being destroyed and about to be leveled to the ground; to hearken to the blood that cried out to him; [4]to remember the criminal slaughter of innocent children and the blasphemies uttered against his name; and to manifest his hatred of evil. [5] [q]Once Maccabeus got his men organized, the Gentiles could not withstand him, for the LORD's wrath had now changed to mercy. [6]Coming unexpectedly upon towns and villages, he would set them on fire. He captured strategic positions, and put to flight a large number of the enemy. [7]He preferred the nights as being especially helpful for such attacks. Soon the fame of his valor spread everywhere.

**First Victory over Nicanor*** [8]When Philip saw that Judas was gaining ground little by little and that his successful advances were becoming more frequent, he wrote to Ptolemy, governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, to come to the aid of the king's government.[r] [9]Ptolemy promptly selected Nicanor, son of Patroclus, one of the Chief Friends, and sent him at the head of at least twenty thousand armed men of various nations to wipe out the entire Jewish race. With him he associated Gorgias, a professional military commander, well-versed in the art of war.[s] [10]Nicanor planned to raise the two thousand talents of tribute owed by the king to the Romans by selling captured Jews into slavery. [11]So he immediately sent word to the coastal cities, inviting them to buy Jewish slaves and promising to deliver ninety slaves for a talent—little did he dream of the punishment that was to fall upon him from the Almighty.

[12]When Judas learned of Nicanor's advance and informed his companions about the approach of the army, [13]the cowardly and those who lacked faith in God's justice deserted and got away. [14]But the others sold everything they had left, and at the same time besought the LORD to deliver those whom the ungodly Nicanor had sold before even meeting them. [15]They begged the LORD to do this, if not for their sake, at least for the sake of the covenants made with their forefathers, and because they themselves bore his holy, glorious name. [16]Maccabeus assembled his men, six thousand strong, and exhorted them not to be panicstricken before the enemy, nor to fear the large number of the Gentiles attacking them unjustly, but to fight courageously, [17]keeping before their eyes the lawless outrage perpetrated by the Gentiles against the holy Place and the affliction of the humiliated city, as well as the subversion of their ancestral way of life. [18]"They trust in weapons and acts of daring," he said, "but we trust in almighty God, who can by a mere nod destroy not only those who attack us, but the whole world." [19]He went on to tell them of the times when help had been given their ancestors: both

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**8, 8–29. 34ff:** This account of the campaign of Nicanor and Gorgias against Judas is paralleled, with certain differences, in 1 Mc 3, 38—4, 24.

o 40f: Heb 11, 35. p 1–7: 2 Mc 5, 27; 1 Mc 3, 10–26. q 5ff: 1 Mc 3, 3–9. r 2 Mc 4, 45; 1 Mc 3, 38. s 1 Mc 7, 26.

the time of Sennacherib, when a hundred and eighty-five thousand of his men were destroyed,[t] [20]and the time of the battle in Babylonia against the Galatians, when only eight thousand Jews fought along with four thousand Macedonians; yet when the Macedonians were hard pressed, the eight thousand routed one hundred and twenty thousand and took a great quantity of booty, because of the help they received from Heaven. [21]With such words he encouraged them and made them ready to die for their laws and their country.

Then Judas divided his army into four, [22]placing his brothers, Simon, Joseph,* and Jonathan, each over a division, assigning to each fifteen hundred men. [23](There was also Eleazar.) After reading to them from the holy book and giving them the watchword, "The Help of God," he himself took charge of the first division and joined in battle with Nicanor.[u] [24]With the Almighty as their ally, they killed more than nine thousand of the enemy, wounded and disabled the greater part of Nicanor's army, and put all of them to flight. [25]They also seized the money of those who had come to buy them as slaves. When they had pursued the enemy for some time, [26]they were obliged to return by reason of the late hour. It was the day before the sabbath, and for that reason they could not continue the pursuit. [27]They collected the enemy's arms and stripped them of their spoils, and then observed the sabbath with fervent praise and thanks to the LORD who kept them safe for that day on which he let descend on them the first dew of his mercy. [28]After the sabbath, they gave a share of the booty to the persecuted and to widows and orphans; the rest they divided among themselves and their children. [29]When this was done, they made supplication in common, imploring the merciful LORD to be completely reconciled with his servants.

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**Timothy and Bacchides Defeated** [30]They also challenged the forces of Timothy and Bacchides, killed more than twenty thousand of them, and captured some very high fortresses. They divided the enormous plunder, allotting half to themselves and the rest to the persecuted, to orphans, widows, and the aged. [31]They collected the enemies' weapons and carefully stored them in suitable places; the rest of the spoils they carried to Jerusalem. [32]They also killed the commander of Timothy's forces, a most wicked man, who had done great harm to the Jews. [33]While celebrating the victory in their ancestral city, they burned both those who had set fire to the sacred gates and Callisthenes, who had taken refuge in a little house; so he received the reward his wicked deeds deserved.

**Humiliation of Nicanor** [34][v]The accursed Nicanor, who had brought the thousand slave dealers to buy the Jews, [35]after being humbled through the LORD's help by those whom he had thought of no account, laid aside his fine clothes and fled alone across country like a runaway slave, until he reached Antioch. He was eminently successful in destroying his own army. [36]So he who had promised to provide tribute for the Romans by the capture of the people of Jerusalem testified that the Jews had a champion, and that they were invulnerable for the very reason that they followed the laws laid down by him.

## CHAPTER 9

**Punishment and Death of Antiochus***

[1][w]About that time Antiochus retreated in disgrace from the region of Persia. [2]He had entered the city called Persepolis and attempted to rob the temple and gain control of the city. Thereupon the people had swift recourse to arms, and Antiochus' men were routed, so that in the end Antiochus was put to flight by the natives and forced to beat a shameful retreat. [3]On his arrival

**8, 22**: Joseph: called John in 1 Mc 2, 2; 9, 36. 38. This paragraph interrupts the story of Nicanor's defeat, which is resumed in v 34. The purpose of the author apparently is to group together the defeats suffered by the Syrians on various occasions. Battles against Timothy are recounted in 1 Mc 5, 37–44 and 2 Mc 12, 10–25; against Bacchides in 1 Mc 7, 8–20.

**9, 1–28**: In order to keep together the various accounts of God's punishment of the persecutors of his people, the author places here the stories of Antiochus' illness and death (in actuality the king died only after the purification of the temple; cf 1 Mc 4, 36–59; 6, 1–16; 2 Mc 10, 1–8); of Judas' campaigns in Idumea and Transjordan (cf 2 Mc 5, 1–51; 2 Mc 10, 14–38); and of the first expedition of Lysias (1 Mc 4, 26–35; 2 Mc 11, 1–15).

t 2 Mc 15, 22; 2 Kgs 19, 35; Is 37, 36. u 1 Mc 3, 48. v 34f: 2 Mc 8, 23f; 1 Mc 7, 26. w 1–29: 2 Mc 1, 12–17; 1 Mc 6, 1–13.

in Ecbatana, he learned what had happened to
Nicanor and to Timothy's forces. [4]Overcome
with anger, he planned to make the Jews suffer
for the injury done by those who had put him to
flight. Therefore he ordered his charioteer to
drive without stopping until he finished the
journey.

Yet the condemnation of Heaven rode with
him, since he said in his arrogance, "I will make
Jerusalem the common graveyard of the Jews as
soon as I arrive there." [5]So the all-seeing LORD,
the God of Israel, struck him down with an
unseen but incurable blow; for scarcely had he
uttered those words when he was seized with
excruciating pains in his bowels and sharp
internal torment,[x] [6]a fit punishment for him
who had tortured the bowels of others with
many barbarous torments. [7]Far from giving up
his insolence, he was all the more filled with
arrogance. Breathing fire in his rage against the
Jews, he gave orders to drive even faster. As a
result he hurtled from the dashing chariot, and
every part of his body was racked by the violent
fall. [8][y]Thus he who previously, in his superhu-
man presumption, thought he could command
the waves of the sea, and imagined he could
weigh the mountaintops in his scales, was now
thrown to the ground and had to be carried on a
litter, clearly manifesting to all the power of
God. [9][z]The body of this impious man swarmed
with worms, and while he was still alive in
hideous torments, his flesh rotted off, so that the
entire army was sickened by the stench of his
corruption. [10]Shortly before, he had thought that
he could reach the stars of heaven, and now, no
one could endure to transport the man because
of this intolerable stench.

[11]At last, broken in spirit, he began to give up
his excessive arrogance, and to gain some under-
standing, under the scourge of God, for he was
racked with pain unceasingly. [12]When he could
no longer bear his own stench, he said, "It is
right to be subject to God, and not to think one's
mortal self divine." [13]Then this vile man vowed
to the LORD, who would no longer have mercy
on him, [14]that he would set free the holy city,
toward which he had been hurrying with the
intention of leveling it to the ground and making
it a common graveyard; [15]he would put on
perfect equality with the Athenians all the Jews,
whom he had judged not even worthy of burial,
but fit only to be thrown out with their children
to be eaten by vultures and wild animals; [16]he
would adorn with the finest offerings the holy
temple which he had previously despoiled; he
would restore all the sacred vessels many times
over; and would provide from his own revenues
the expenses required for the sacrifices. [17]Be-
sides all this, he would become a Jew himself
and visit every inhabited place to proclaim there
the power of God. [18]But since God's punish-
ment had justly come upon him, his sufferings
were not lessened, so he lost hope for himself
and wrote the following letter to the Jews in the
form of a supplication. It read thus:

[19]*"To my esteemed Jewish citizens, Antio-
chus, their king and general, sends hearty greet-
ings and best wishes for their health and happi-
ness. [20]If you and your children are well and
your affairs are going as you wish, I thank God
very much, for my hopes are in heaven. [21]Now
that I am ill, I recall with affection the esteem
and good will you bear me. On returning from
the regions of Persia, I fell victim to a trouble-
some illness; so I thought it necessary to form
plans for the general welfare of all. [22]Actually, I
do not despair about my health, since I have
great hopes of recovering from my illness. [23]Nev-
ertheless, I know that my father, whenever he
went on campaigns in the hinterland, would
name his successor, [24]so that, if anything unex-
pected happened or any unwelcome news came,
the people throughout the realm would know to
whom the government had been entrusted, and

**9, 19–27:** Despite the statement in v 18, this letter is not really a supplication. It is rather a notification to all the king's subjects of the appointment of his son as his successor and a request that they be loyal to the new king. Apparently the same letter, which has every appearance of being authentic, was sent to the various peoples throughout the kingdom, with only a few words of address changed for each group.

x Acts 12, 20–23. y Jb 38, 8–11; Ps 65, 6f; Is 40, 12.
z Acts 12, 23.

so not be disturbed. [25]I am also bearing in mind that the neighboring rulers, especially those on the borders of our kingdom, are on the watch for opportunities and waiting to see what will happen. I have therefore appointed as king my son Antiochus, whom I have often before entrusted and commended to most of you, when I made hurried visits to the outlying provinces. I have written to him the letter copied below.* [26]Therefore I beg and entreat each of you to remember the general and individual benefits you have received, and to continue to show good will toward me and my son. [27]I am confident that, following my policy, he will treat you with mildness and kindness in his relations with you."

[28]So this murderer and blasphemer, after extreme sufferings, such as he had inflicted on others, died a miserable death in the mountains of a foreign land. [29]His foster brother Philip brought the body home; but fearing Antiochus' son, he later withdrew into Egypt, to Ptolemy Philometor.

## CHAPTER 10

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**Purification of Temple and City** [1]a When Maccabeus and his companions, under the LORD's leadership, had recovered the temple and the city, [2]they destroyed the altars erected by the Gentiles in the marketplace and the sacred enclosures. [3]After purifying the temple, they made a new altar. Then, with fire struck from flint, they offered sacrifice for the first time in two years,* burned incense, and lighted lamps. They also set out the showbread. [4]When they had done this, they prostrated themselves and begged the LORD that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, and that if they should sin at any time, he might chastise them with moderation and not hand them over to blasphemous and barbarous Gentiles. [5]On the anniversary of the day on which the temple had been profaned by the Gentiles, that is, the twenty-fifth of the same month Chislev, the purification of the temple took place. [6]The Jews celebrated joyfully for eight days as on the feast of Booths, remembering how, a little while before, they had spent the feast of Booths living like wild animals in caves on the mountains. [7]Carrying rods entwined with leaves, green branches and palms, they sang hymns of grateful praise to him who had brought about the purification of his own Place. [8]By public edict and decree they prescribed that the whole Jewish nation should celebrate these days every year.

## VI: Renewed Persecution

**Death of Ptolemy** [9]Such was the end of Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes.b [10]Now we shall relate what happened under Antiochus Eupator, the son of that godless man, and shall give a summary of the chief evils caused by the wars. [11]When Eupator succeeded to the kingdom, he put a certain Lysias in charge of the government as commander in chief of Coelesyria and Phoenicia. [12]Ptolemy, surnamed Macron,* had taken the lead in treating the Jews fairly because of the previous injustice that had been done them, and he endeavored to have peaceful relations with them. [13]As a result, he was accused before Eupator by the King's Friends. In fact, on all sides he heard himself called a traitor for having abandoned Cyprus, which Philometor had entrusted to him, and for having gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. Since he could not command the respect due to his high office, he ended his life by taking poison.

**Victory over the Idumeans*** [14]When Gorgias became governor of the region, he employed foreign troops and used every opportunity to attack the Jews. [15]c At the same time the Idumeans, who held some important strongholds, were harassing the Jews; they welcomed fugitives from Jerusalem and endeavored to continue the war. [16]Maccabeus and his companions, after public prayers asking God to be their ally, moved

9, 25: The letter copied below: not included in the text of 2 Mc.

10, 3: Two years: three years according to 1 Mc 1, 54 and 4, 52.

10, 12: Ptolemy Macron: son of Dorymenes (2 Mc 4, 45), was formerly hostile to the Jews (2 Mc 6, 8).

10, 14–23: Probably the same campaign of Judas against the Idumeans that is mentioned in 1 Mc 5, 1–3.

a 1–8: 1 Mc 4, 36–59. b 2 Mc 2, 21; 1 Mc 6, 17. c 15–23: 1 Mc 5, 3ff.

quickly against the strongholds of the Idumeans.
17Attacking vigorously, they gained control of
the places, drove back all who manned the
walls, and cut down those who opposed them,
killing as many as twenty thousand men.
18When at least nine thousand took refuge in
two very strong towers, containing everything
necessary to sustain a siege, 19Maccabeus left
Simon and Joseph, along with Zacchaeus and his
men, in sufficient numbers to besiege them,
while he himself went off to places where he
was more urgently needed. 20But some of the
men in Simon's force who were money lovers let
themselves be bribed by some of the men in the
towers; on receiving seventy thousand
drachmas, they allowed a number of them to
escape. 21When Maccabeus was told what had
happened, he assembled the rulers of the people
and accused those men of having sold their
kinsmen for money by setting their enemies free
to fight against them. 22So he put them to death
as traitors, and without delay captured the two
towers. 23As he was successful at arms in all his
undertakings, he destroyed more than twenty
thousand men in the two strongholds.

**Victory over Timothy** 24Timothy, who had
previously been defeated by the Jews,* gathered
a tremendous force of foreign troops and col-
lected a large number of cavalry from Asia; then
he appeared in Judea, ready to conquer it by
force. 25At his approach, Maccabeus and his
men made supplication to God, sprinkling earth
upon their heads and girding their loins in
sackcloth. 26Lying prostrate at the foot of the
altar, they begged him to be gracious to them,
and to be an enemy to their enemies, and a foe
to their foes, as the law declares.[d]

27After the prayer, they took up their arms
and advanced a considerable distance from the
city, halting when they were close to the enemy.
28As soon as dawn broke,* the armies joined
battle, the one having as pledge of success and
victory not only their valor but also their reliance
on the LORD, and the other taking fury as their
leader in the fight.

29[e]In the midst of the fierce battle, there
appeared to the enemy from the heavens five
majestic men riding on golden-bridled horses,
who led the Jews on. 30They surrounded
Maccabeus, and shielding him with their own
armor, kept him from being wounded. They shot
arrows and hurled thunderbolts at the enemy,
who were bewildered and blinded, thrown into
confusion and routed. 31Twenty-five hundred of
their foot soldiers and six hundred of their
horsemen were slain. 32Timothy, however, fled
to a well-fortified stronghold called Gazara,
where Chaereas was in command.[f] 33For four
days Maccabeus and his men eagerly besieged
the fortress. 34Those inside, relying on the
strength of the place, kept repeating outrageous
blasphemies and uttering abominable words.
35When the fifth day dawned, twenty young
men in the army of Maccabeus, angered over
such blasphemies, bravely stormed the wall and
with savage fury cut down everyone they en-
countered. 36Others who climbed up the same
way swung around on the defenders, taking the
besieged in the rear; they put the towers to the
torch, spread the fire and burned the blasphem-
ers alive. Still others broke down the gates and
let in the rest of the troops, who took possession
of the city. 37Timothy had hidden in a cistern,
but they killed* him, along with his brother
Chaereas, and Apollophanes. 38On completing
these exploits, they blessed, with hymns of
grateful praise, the LORD who shows great kind-
ness to Israel and grants them victory.

## CHAPTER 11

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**Defeat of Lysias*** 1[g]Very soon afterward, Lys-
ias, guardian and kinsman of the king and head
of the government, being greatly displeased at
what had happened, 2mustered about eighty

10, 24: Timothy . . . previously . . . defeated by the Jews: as recounted in 2 Mc 8, 30ff.

10, 28: As soon as dawn broke: the same battle at dawn as in 1 Mc 5, 30–34.

10, 37: Timothy . . . they killed: apparently, the same Timothy is still alive in 2 Mc 12, 2. 18–25. The present passage is not in chronological order; Gazara, v 32 (Gezer) was not captured by the Jews until much later (cf 1 Mc 9, 50ff; 13, 53).

11, 1–12: The defeat of Lysias at Beth-zur probably occurred before the purification of the temple; cf 1 Mc 4, 26–35.

d Ex 23, 22. e 29f: 2 Mc 3, 24ff; 5, 2f: 10, 29f; 11, 8. f 1 Mc 13, 43–48. g 1–12: 1 Mc 4, 26–35.

thousand infantry and all his cavalry and
marched against the Jews. His plan was to make
Jerusalem a Greek settlement; [3]to levy tribute on
the temple, as he did on the sanctuaries of the
other nations; and to put the high priesthood up
for sale every year. [4]He did not take God's
power into account at all, but felt exultant
confidence in his myriads of foot soldiers, his
thousands of horsemen, and his eighty ele-
phants. [5]So he invaded Judea, and when he
reached Beth-zur, a fortified place about twenty
miles from Jerusalem, launched a strong attack
against it. [6]When Maccabeus and his men
learned that Lysias was besieging the strong-
holds, they and all the people begged the LORD
with lamentations and tears to send a good angel
to save Israel.[h] [7]Maccabeus himself was the first
to take up arms, and he exhorted the others to
join him in risking their lives to help their
kinsmen. Then they resolutely set out together.
[8]Suddenly, while they were still near Jerusalem,
a horseman appeared at their head, clothed in
white garments and brandishing gold weapons.[i]
[9]Then all of them together thanked God for his
mercy, and their hearts were filled with such
courage that they were ready to assault not only
men, but the most savage beasts, yes, even walls
of iron. [10]Now that the LORD had shown his
mercy toward them, they advanced in battle
order with the aid of their heavenly ally. [11]Hurl-
ing themselves upon the enemy like lions, they
laid low eleven thousand foot soldiers and six-
teen hundred horsemen, and put all the rest to
flight. [12]Most of those who got away were
wounded and stripped of their arms, while
Lysias himself escaped only by shameful flight.

**Peace with the Syrians** [13]/But Lysias was not
a stupid man. He reflected on the defeat he had
suffered, and came to realize that the Hebrews
were invincible because the mighty God was
their ally. He therefore sent a message [14]persuad-
ing them to settle everything on just terms, and
promising to persuade the king also, and to
induce him to become their friend.
[15]Maccabeus, solicitous for the common good,
agreed to all that Lysias proposed; and the king,
on his part, granted in behalf of the Jews all the
written requests of Maccabeus to Lysias.

**Official Letters** [16]These are the terms of the
letter which Lysias wrote to the Jews: "Lysias
sends greetings to the Jewish people. [17]John and
Absalom, your envoys, have presented your
signed communication and asked about the
matters contained in it. [18]Whatever had to be
referred to the king I called to his attention, and
the things that were acceptable he has granted.
[19]If you maintain your loyalty to the govern-
ment, I will endeavor to further your interests in
the future. [20]On the details of these matters I
have authorized my representatives, as well as
your envoys, to confer with you. [21]Farewell."
The year one hundred and forty-eight,* the
twenty-fourth of Dioscorinthius.

[22]The king's letter read thus: "King Antiochus
sends greetings to his brother Lysias. [23]Now that
our father has taken his place among the gods,
we wish the subjects of our kingdom to be
undisturbed in conducting their own affairs.
[24]We understand that the Jews do not agree with
our father's policy concerning Greek customs
but prefer their own way of life. They are
petitioning us to let them retain their own
customs. [25]Since we desire that this people too
should be undisturbed, our decision is that their
temple be restored to them and that they live in
keeping with the customs of their ancestors.
[26]Accordingly, please send them messengers to
give them our assurances of friendship, so that,
when they learn of our decision, they may have
nothing to worry about but may contentedly go
about their own business."

[27]The king's letter to the people was as fol-
lows: "King Antiochus sends greetings to the Jew-
ish senate and to the rest of the Jews. [28]If you are
well, it is what we desire. We too are in good
health. [29]Menelaus has told us of your wish to
return home and attend to your own affairs.
[30]Therefore, those who return by the thirtieth of

11, 21: The year one hundred and forty-eight: 164 B.C. The reading of the name of the month and its position in the calendar are uncertain.

h Ex 23, 20. i 2 Mc 3, 24ff; 5, 2f; 10, 29f. j 13–33: 1 Mc 6, 57–61.

Xanthicus will have our assurance of full permission [31]to observe their dietary laws and other laws, just as before, and none of the Jews shall be molested in any way for faults committed through ignorance. [32]I have also sent Menelaus to reassure you. [33]Farewell." In the year one hundred and forty-eight, the fifteenth of Xanthicus.*

[34]The Romans also sent them a letter as follows: "Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, legates of the Romans, send greetings to the Jewish people. [35]Whatever Lysias, kinsman of the king, has granted you, we also approve. [36]But the matters on which he passed judgment should be submitted to the king. As soon as you have considered them, send someone to us with your decisions so that we may present them to your advantage, for we are on our way to Antioch. [37]Make haste, then, to send us those who can inform us of your intentions. [38]Farewell." In the year one hundred and forty-eight, the fifteenth of Xanthicus.*

## CHAPTER 12

**Persecution Renewed** [1]After these agreements were made, Lysias returned to the king, and the Jews went about their farming. [2]But some of the local governors, Timothy and Apollonius, son of Gennaeus,* as also Hieronymus and Demophon, to say nothing of Nicanor, the commander of the Cyprians, would not allow them to live in peace.

[3]Some people of Joppa also committed this outrage: they invited the Jews who lived among them, together with their wives and children, to embark on boats which they had provided. There was no hint of enmity toward them: [4]this was done by public vote of the city. When the Jews, not suspecting treachery and wishing to live on friendly terms, accepted the invitation, the people of Joppa took them out to sea and drowned at least two hundred of them.

**Activity of Judas** [5]As soon as Judas heard of the barbarous deed perpetrated against his countrymen, he summoned his men; [6]and after calling upon God, the just judge, he marched against the murderers of his kinsmen. In a night attack he set the harbor on fire, burnt the boats, and put to the sword those who had taken refuge there. [7]When the gates of the town were shut, he withdrew, intending to come back later and wipe out the entire population of Joppa.

[8]On hearing that the men of Jamnia planned to give like treatment to the Jews who lived among them, [9]he attacked the Jamnian populace by night, setting fire to the harbor and the fleet, so that the glow of the flames was visible as far as Jerusalem, thirty miles away.

[10] [k]When the Jews had gone about a mile from there* in the campaign against Timothy, they were attacked by Arabs numbering at least five thousand foot soldiers, and five hundred horsemen. [11]After a hard fight, Judas and his companions, with God's help, were victorious. The defeated nomads begged Judas to make friends with them and promised to supply the Jews with cattle and to help them in every other way. [12]Realizing that they could indeed be useful in many respects, Judas agreed to make peace with them. After the pledge of friendship had been exchanged, the Arabs withdrew to their tents.

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[13]He also attacked a certain city called Caspin, fortified with earthworks and ramparts and inhabited by a mixed population of Gentiles. [14]Relying on the strength of their walls and their supply of provisions, the besieged treated Judas and his men with contempt, insulting them and even uttering blasphemies and profanity. [15]But Judas and his men invoked the aid of the great Sovereign of the world, who, in the day of Joshua, overthrew Jericho without battering-ram or siege machine; then they furiously stormed the ramparts.[l] [16]Capturing the city by the will of

**11, 33:** The date, which is the same as the date of the Romans' letter (v 38), cannot be correct. The king's letter must be connected with the peace treaty of the year 149 of the Seleucid era, i.e., 163 B.C. Perhaps the mention of the month of Xanthicus in the body of the letter (v 30) caused the date of the Romans' letter to be transferred to this one.

**11, 38:** The date is April 12, 164 B.C.

**12, 2:** Apollonius, son of Gennaeus: not the Apollonius who was the son of Menestheus (2 Mc 4, 21). Nicanor: probably distinct from the Nicanor of 2 Mc 14, 2.

**12, 10:** From there: not from the aforesaid Jamnia (vv 8f) or Joppa (vv 3–7), but from a place in Transjordan; vv 10–26 parallel the account given in 1 Mc 5, 9–13. 24–54 of Judas' campaign in northern Transjordan.

k 10–16: 1 Mc 5, 24–36. l Jos 6, 1–21.

God, they inflicted such indescribable slaughter
on it that the adjacent pool, which was about a
quarter of a mile wide, seemed to be filled with
the blood that flowed into it.

17 [m]When they had gone on some ninety
miles, they reached Charax,[n] where there were
certain Jews known as Toubiani.* 18But they did
not find Timothy in that region, for he had
already departed from there without having
done anything except to leave behind in one
place a very strong garrison. 19But Dositheus and
Sosipater, two of Maccabeus' captains, marched
out and destroyed the force of more than ten
thousand men that Timothy had left in the
stronghold. 20Meanwhile, Maccabeus divided
his army into cohorts, with a commander over
each cohort, and went in pursuit of Timothy,
who had a force of a hundred and twenty
thousand foot soldiers and twenty-five hundred
horsemen. 21When Timothy learned of the ap-
proach of Judas, he sent on ahead of him the
women and children, as well as the baggage, to a
place called Karnion, which was hard to besiege
and even hard to reach because of the difficult
terrain of that region. 22But when Judas' first
cohort appeared, the enemy was overwhelmed
with fear and terror at the manifestation of the
All-seeing. Scattering in every direction, they
rushed away in such headlong flight that in
many cases they wounded one another, pierced
by the swords of their own men. 23Judas pressed
the pursuit vigorously, putting the sinners to the
sword and destroying as many as thirty thousand
men.

24Timothy himself fell into the hands of the
men under Dositheus and Sosipater; but with
great cunning, he asked them to spare his life
and let him go, because he had in his power the
parents and relatives of many of them, and could
make these suffer. 25When he had fully con-
firmed his solemn pledge to restore them un-
harmed, they let him go for the sake of saving
their brethren.

**Further Successes** 26Judas then marched to
Karnion and the shrine of Atargatis,* where he
killed twenty-five thousand people. 27 [o]After the
defeat and destruction of these, he moved his
army to Ephron, a fortified city inhabited by
people of many nationalities. Robust young men
took up their posts in defense of the walls, from
which they fought valiantly; inside were large
supplies of machines and missiles. 28But the
Jews, invoking the Sovereign who forcibly shat-
ters the might of his enemies, got possession of
the city and slaughtered twenty-five thousand of
the people in it. 29Then they set out from there
and hastened on to Scythopolis,* seventy-five
miles from Jerusalem. 30But when the Jews who
lived there testified to the good will shown by
the Scythopolitans and to their kind treatment
even in times of adversity, 31Judas and his men
thanked them and exhorted them to be well
disposed to their race in the future also. Finally
they arrived in Jerusalem, shortly before the feast
of Weeks.

32After this feast called Pentecost, they lost no
time in marching against Gorgias, governor of
Idumea, 33who opposed them with three thou-
sand foot soldiers and four hundred horsemen.
34In the ensuing battle, a few of the Jews were
slain. 35A man called Dositheus, a powerful
horseman and one of Bacenor's men,* caught
hold of Gorgias, grasped his military cloak and
dragged him along by main strength, intending
to capture the vile wretch alive, when a
Thracian horseman attacked Dositheus and cut
off his arm at the shoulder. Then Gorgias fled to
Marisa. 36After Esdris and his men had been
fighting for a long time and were weary, Judas
called upon the Lord to show himself their ally
and leader in the battle. 37Then, raising a battle
cry in his ancestral language, and with songs, he

**12, 17:** Certain Jews known as Toubiani: because they lived "in the land of Tob" (1 Mc 5, 13).

**12, 26:** Atargatis: a Syrian goddess, represented by the body of a fish.

**12, 29:** Scythopolis: the Greek name of the city of Beth-shan; cf 1 Mc 5, 52.

**12, 35:** One of Bacenor's men: certain ancient witnesses to the text have "one of the Toubiani"; cf v 17.

m 17–26: 1 Mc 5, 37–44. n 1 Mc 5, 13. o 27–31: 2 Mc 5, 45–54.

charged Gorgias' men when they were not expecting it and put them to flight.

**Expiation for the Dead** [38]Judas rallied his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the week was ending, they purified themselves according to custom and kept the sabbath there. [39]On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his men went to gather up the bodies of the slain and bury them with their kinsmen in their ancestral tombs. [40]But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had been slain.[p] [41]They all therefore praised the ways of the LORD, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. [42]*Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. [43]He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; [44]for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. [45]But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. [46]Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.

## CHAPTER 13

**The Syrians Invade Judea** [1]In the year one hundred and forty-nine,* Judas and his men learned that Antiochus Eupator was invading Judea with a large force, [2]and that with him was Lysias, his guardian, who was in charge of the government. They led* a Greek army of one hundred and ten thousand foot soldiers, fifty-three hundred horsemen, twenty-two elephants, and three hundred chariots armed with scythes.[q]

**Death of Menelaus** [3]Menelaus also joined them, and with great duplicity kept urging Antiochus on, not for the welfare of his country, but in the hope of being established in office. [4]But the King of kings aroused the anger of Antiochus against the scoundrel. When the king was shown by Lysias that Menelaus was to blame for all the trouble, he ordered him to be taken to Beroea* and executed there in the customary local method.[r] [5]There is at that place a tower seventy-five feet high, full of ashes,* with a circular rim sloping down steeply on all sides toward the ashes. [6]A man guilty of sacrilege or notorious for certain other crimes is brought up there and then hurled down to destruction. [7]In such a manner was Menelaus, the transgressor of the law, fated to die; he was deprived even of decent burial. [8]It was altogether just that he who had committed so many sins against the altar with its pure fire and ashes should meet his death in ashes.

**Skirmish near Modein** [9]The king was advancing, his mind full of savage plans for inflicting on the Jews worse things than those they suffered in his father's time. [10]When Judas learned of this, he urged the people to call upon the LORD night and day, to help them now, if ever, [11]when they were about to be deprived of their law, their country, and their holy temple; and not to allow this nation, which had just begun to revive, to be subjected again to blasphemous Gentiles. [12]When they had all joined in doing this, and

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12, 42–46: This is the earliest statement of the doctrine that prayers (v 42) and sacrifices (v 43) for the dead are beneficial. The statement is made here, however, only for the purpose of proving that Judas believed in the resurrection of the just (2 Mc 7, 9. 14. 23. 36). That is, he believed that expiation could be made for certain sins of otherwise good men—soldiers who had given their lives for God's cause. Thus, they could share in the resurrection. His belief was similar to, but not quite the same as, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

13, 1: In the year one hundred and forty-nine: 163–162 B.C.

13, 2: They led: the Greek means literally "Each (of them) led," but it is unlikely that the author meant the already immense numbers to be doubled; the numbers are similar to those in 1 Mc 6, 30.

13, 4: Beroea: the Greek name of Aleppo.

13, 5: Ashes: probably smoldering ashes; the tower resembles the ancient Persian fire towers.

p Dt 7, 25. q 1 Mc 6, 30. r 1 Tm 6, 15; Rv 17, 14; 19, 16.

had implored the merciful LORD continuously
with weeping and fasting and prostrations for
three days, Judas encouraged them and told
them to stand ready. [13]After a private meeting
with the elders, he decided that, before the
king's army could invade Judea and take posses-
sion of the city, the Jews should march out and
settle the matter with God's help. [14]Leaving the
outcome to the Creator of the world, and
exhorting his followers to fight nobly to death for
the laws, the temple, the city, the country, and
the government, he pitched his camp near
Modein. [15]Giving his men the battle cry "God's
Victory," he made a night attack on the king's
pavilion with a picked force of the bravest young
men and killed about two thousand in the camp.
They also slew* the lead elephant and its rider.[s]
[16]Finally they withdrew in triumph,* having
filled the camp with terror and confusion. [17]Day
was just breaking when this was accomplished
with the help and protection of the LORD.

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**Treaty with Antiochus V** [18][t]The king, having
had a taste of the Jews' daring, tried to take their
positions by a stratagem. [19]So he marched
against Beth-zur, a strong fortress of the Jews;
but he was driven back, checked, and defeated.
[20]Judas then sent supplies to the men inside,
[21]but Rhodocus, of the Jewish army, betrayed
military secrets* to the enemy. He was found
out, arrested, and imprisoned. [22]The king made
a second attempt by negotiating with the men of
Beth-zur. After giving them his pledge and
receiving theirs, he withdrew [23]and attacked
Judas and his men. But he was defeated. Next he
heard that Philip, who was left in charge of the
government in Antioch, had rebelled. Dismayed,
he parleyed with the Jews, submitted to their
terms, and swore to observe their rights. Having
come to this agreement, he offered a sacrifice,
and honored the temple with a generous dona-
tion. [24]He approved of Maccabeus and left him
as military and civil governor of the territory
from Ptolemais to the region of the Gerrenes.*
[25]When he came to Ptolemais, the people of that
city were angered by the peace treaty; in fact
they were so indignant that they wanted to
annul its provisions. [26]But Lysias took the plat-
form, defended the treaty as well as he could,
and won them over by persuasion. After calming
them and gaining their good will, he returned to
Antioch.

That is how the king's attack and withdrawal
went.

## CHAPTER 14

**Antagonism of Alcimus** [1][u]Three years later,*
Judas and his men learned that Demetrius, son
of Seleucus, had sailed into the port of Tripolis
with a powerful army and a fleet, [2]and that he
had occupied the country, after doing away with
Antiochus and his guardian Lysias.

[3]A certain Alcimus, a former high priest, who
had willfully incurred defilement at the time of
the revolt, realized that there was no way for
him to salvage his position and regain access to
the holy altar. [4]So he went to King Demetrius in
the year one hundred and fifty-one and pre-
sented him with a gold crown and a palm
branch, as well as some of the customary olive
branches from the temple. On that occasion he
kept quiet.[v] [5]But he found an opportunity to
further his mad scheme when he was invited to
the council by Demetrius and questioned about
the dispositions and intentions of the Jews. He
replied: [6]"Those Jews called Hasideans, led by
Judas Maccabeus, are warmongers, who stir up
sedition and keep the kingdom from enjoying
peace and quiet. [7]For this reason, now that I am
deprived of my ancestral dignity, that is to say,
the high priesthood, I have come here— [8]first,
out of my genuine concern for the king's inter-
ests, and secondly, out of consideration for my

**13, 15:** Slew: literally "stabbed"; the deed was done by Eleazar (1 Mc 6, 43–46).

**13, 16:** They withdrew in triumph: according to 1 Mc 6, 47 they fled.

**13, 21:** Military secrets: probably about the lack of provisions in the besieged city; cf 1 Mc 6, 49.

**13, 24:** The Greek text is uncertain and may be rendered: "He approved of Maccabeus, then left Hegemonides as governor of the territory . . ." Gerrenes: probably the inhabitants of Gerar, south-east of Gaza.

**14, 1:** Three years later: actually, Demetrius (I Soter), son of Seleucus (IV), landed at Tripolis in the year 151 of the Seleucid era (v 4), i.e., 162–161 B.C.; cf 1 Mc 7, 1–7.

s 1 Mc 6, 43–46. t 18–23: 1 Mc 6, 48–53. u 1–11: 1 Mc 7, 1–7. v 1 Mc 7, 7. 25.

own countrymen, since our entire nation is
suffering great affliction from the unreasonable
conduct of the people just mentioned. [9]When
you have informed yourself in detail on these
matters, O king, act in the interest of our
country and its hard-pressed people with the
same gracious consideration that you show to-
ward all. [10]As long as Judas is around, it is
impossible for the state to enjoy peace." [11]When
he had said this, the other Friends who were
hostile to Judas quickly added fuel to Demetrius'
indignation.

**Dealings with Nicanor** [12] [w]The king immedi-
ately chose Nicanor, who had been in command
of the elephants, and appointed him governor of
Judea. He sent him off [13]with orders to put Judas
to death, to disperse his followers, and to set up
Alcimus as high priest of the great temple. [14]The
Gentiles from Judea, who would have banished
Judas,* came flocking to Nicanor, thinking that
the misfortunes and calamities of the Jews would
mean prosperity for themselves. [15] [x]When the
Jews heard of Nicanor's coming, and that the
Gentiles were rallying to him, they sprinkled
themselves with earth and prayed to him who
established his people forever, and who always
comes to the aid of his heritage. [16]At their
leader's command, they set out at once and
came upon the enemy at the village of Adasa.
[17]Judas' brother Simon had engaged Nicanor,
but because of the sudden appearance of the
enemy suffered a slight repulse. [18]However,
when Nicanor heard of the valor of Judas and his
men, and the great courage with which they
fought for their country, he shrank from deciding
the issue by bloodshed. [19]So he sent Posidonius,
Theodotus and Mattathias to arrange an agree-
ment. [20]After a long discussion of the terms,
each leader communicated them to his troops;
and when general agreement was expressed,
they assented to the treaty. [21]A day was set on
which the leaders would meet by themselves.
From each side a chariot came forward and
thrones were set in place. [22]Judas had posted
armed men in readiness at suitable points for fear
that the enemy might suddenly carry out some
treacherous plan. But the conference was held in
the proper way. [23]Nicanor stayed on in Jerusa-
lem, where he did nothing out of place. He got
rid of the throngs of ordinary people who
gathered around him; [24]but he always kept
Judas in his company, for he had a cordial
affection for the man. [25]He urged him to marry
and have children; so Judas married, settled
down, and shared the common life.

**Threats against Judas** [26]When Alcimus saw
their friendship for each other, he took the treaty
that had been made, went to Demetrius, and
said that Nicanor was plotting against the state,
and that he had appointed Judas, the conspirator
against the kingdom, to be his successor.
[27]Stirred up by the villain's calumnies, the king
became enraged. He wrote to Nicanor, stating
that he was displeased with the treaty, and
ordering him to send Maccabeus as a prisoner to
Antioch without delay. [28]When this message
reached Nicanor he was dismayed, for he hated
to break his agreement with a man who had
done no wrong. [29]However, there was no way of
opposing the king, so he watched for an opportu-
nity to carry out this order by a stratagem. [30]But
Maccabeus noticed that Nicanor was becoming
cool in his dealings with him, and acting with
unaccustomed rudeness when they met; he
concluded that this coldness betokened no good.
So he gathered together a large number of his
men, and went into hiding from Nicanor.

[31] [y]When Nicanor realized that he had been
disgracefully outwitted by the man, he went to
the great and holy temple, at a time when the
priests were offering the customary sacrifices,
and ordered them to surrender Judas. [32]As they
declared under oath that they did not know
where the wanted man was, [33]he raised his right
hand toward the temple and swore this oath: "If
you do not hand Judas over to me as prisoner, I
will level this shrine of God to the ground; I will
tear down the altar, and erect here a splendid
temple to Dionysus." [34]With these words he
went away. The priests stretched out their hands

14, 14: Who would have banished Judas: the meaning of the Greek is uncertain; some render it: "who had fled before Judas."

w 12f: 2 Mc 8, 9; 1 Mc 3, 38f. x 15–19: 1 Mc 7, 26–32. y 31–36: 1 Mc 7, 33–38.

toward heaven, calling upon the unfailing defender of our nation in these words: [35]"LORD of all, though you are in need of nothing, you have approved of a temple for your dwelling place among us.[z] [36]Therefore, O holy One, LORD of all holiness, preserve forever undefiled this house, which has been so recently purified."

**The Story of Razis*** [37]A certain Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor as a patriot. A man highly regarded, he was called a father of the Jews because of his love for them. [38]In the early days of the revolt, he had been convicted of Judaism, and had risked body and life in his ardent zeal for it. [39]Nicanor, to show his detestation of the Jews, sent more than five hundred soldiers to arrest him. [40]He thought that by arresting such a man he would deal the Jews a hard blow. [41]But when these troops, on the point of capturing the tower, were forcing the outer gate and calling for fire to set the door ablaze, Razis, now caught on all sides, turned his sword against himself, [42]preferring to die nobly rather than fall into the hands of vile men and suffer outrages unworthy of his noble birth. [43]In the excitement of the struggle he failed to strike exactly. So while the troops rushed in through the doors, he gallantly ran up to the top of the wall and with manly courage threw himself down into the crowd. [44]But as they quickly drew back and left an opening, he fell into the middle of the empty space. [45]Still breathing, and inflamed with anger, he got up and ran through the crowd, with blood gushing from his frightful wounds. [46]Then, standing on a steep rock, as he lost the last of his blood, he tore out his entrails and flung them with both hands into the crowd, calling upon the LORD of life and of spirit to give these back to him again. Such was the manner of his death.[a]

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 3–15
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229–230

**Nicanor's Blasphemy** [1]When Nicanor learned that Judas and his companions were in the territory of Samaria, he decided to attack them in all safety on the day of rest. [2]The Jews who were forced to follow him pleaded, "Do not massacre them in that way, like a savage barbarian, but show respect for the day which the All-seeing has exalted with holiness above all other days." [3]At this the thrice-sinful wretch asked if there was a ruler in heaven who prescribed the keeping of the sabbath day.[b] [4]When they replied that there was indeed such a ruler in heaven, the living LORD himself, who commanded the observance of the sabbath day, [5]he said, "I, on my part, am ruler on earth, and my orders are that you take up arms and carry out the king's business." Nevertheless he did not succeed in carrying out his cruel plan.

**Fresh Hope** [6]In his utter boastfulness and arrogance Nicanor had determined to erect a public monument of victory* over Judas and his men. [7]But Maccabeus remained confident, fully convinced that he would receive help from the LORD. [8]He urged his men not to fear the enemy, but mindful of the help they had received from Heaven in the past, to expect that now, too, victory would be given them by the Almighty. [9]By encouraging them with words from the law and the prophets,* and by reminding them of the battles they had already won, he filled them with fresh enthusiasm. [10]Having stirred up their courage, he gave his orders and pointed out at the same time the perfidy of the Gentiles and their violation of oaths. [11]When he had armed each of them, not so much with the safety of shield and spear as with the encouragement of noble words, he cheered them all by relating a dream, a kind of vision, worthy of belief.

[12]What he saw was this: Onias, the former high priest,* a good and virtuous man, modest in appearance, gentle in manners, distinguished in speech, and trained from childhood in every virtuous practice, was praying with outstretched arms for the whole Jewish community.[c] [13]Then

**14, 37–46:** The story of Razis belongs to the "martyrology" class of literature; it is similar to the stories in 2 Mc 6, 18—7, 42.

**15, 6:** Public monument of victory: a heap of stones covered with the arms and armor of the fallen enemy.

**15, 9:** The law and the prophets: the first of the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, called the sacred books (1 Mc 12, 9).

**15, 12:** Onias, the former high priest: Onias III (2 Mc 3, 1–40). Evidently the author believed that the departed just were in some way alive even before the resurrection.

z Acts 17, 25. a 2 Mc 7, 9ff. b 1 Mc 7, 34. c 2 Mc 3, 1ff.

in the same way another man appeared, distinguished by his white hair and dignity, and with an air about him of extraordinary, majestic authority. [14]Onias then said of him, "This is God's prophet Jeremiah,* who loves his brethren and fervently prays for his people and their holy city." [15]Stretching out his right hand, Jeremiah presented a gold sword to Judas. As he gave it to him he said, [16]"Accept this holy sword as a gift from God; with it you shall crush your adversaries."

**Defeat and Death of Nicanor** [17]Encouraged by Judas' noble words, which had power to instill valor and stir young hearts to courage, the Jews determined not to delay, but to charge gallantly and decide the issue by hand-to-hand combat with the utmost courage, since their city and its temple with the sacred vessels were in danger. [18]They were not so much concerned about their wives and children or their brothers and kinsmen; their first and foremost fear was for the consecrated sanctuary.[d] [19]Those who remained in the city suffered a like agony, anxious as they were about the battle in the open country.

[20]Everyone now awaited the decisive moment. The enemy were already drawing near with their troops drawn up in battle line, their elephants placed in strategic positions, and their cavalry stationed on the flanks. [21]Maccabeus, contemplating the hosts before him, their elaborate equipment, and the fierceness of their elephants, stretched out his hands toward heaven and called upon the LORD who works miracles; for he knew that it is not through arms but through the LORD's decision that victory is won by those who deserve it. [22][e]He prayed to him thus: "You, O LORD, sent your angel in the days of King Hezekiah of Judea, and he slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand men of Sennacherib's army. [23]Sovereign of the heavens, send a good angel now to spread fear and dread before us. [24]By the might of your arm may those be struck down who have blasphemously come against your holy people!" With this he ended his prayer.

[25][f]Nicanor and his men advanced to the sound of trumpets and battle songs. [26]But Judas and his men met the army with supplication and prayers. [27]Fighting with their hands and praying to God with their hearts, they laid low at least thirty-five thousand, and rejoiced greatly over this manifestation of God's power. [28]When the battle was over and they were joyfully departing, they discovered Nicanor lying there in all his armor; [29]so they raised tumultuous shouts in their native tongue in praise of the divine Sovereign.

[30]Then Judas, who was ever in body and soul the chief defender of his fellow citizens, and had maintained from youth his affection for his countrymen, ordered Nicanor's head and whole right arm to be cut off and taken to Jerusalem. [31]When he arrived there, he assembled his countrymen, stationed the priests before the altar, and sent for those in the citadel.* [32]He showed them the vile Nicanor's head and the wretched blasphemer's arm that had been boastfully stretched out against the holy dwelling of the Almighty. [33]He cut out the tongue of the godless Nicanor, saying he would feed it piecemeal to the birds and would hang up the other wages of his folly opposite the temple. [34]At this, everyone looked toward heaven and praised the LORD who manifests his divine power, saying, "Blessed be he who has kept his own Place undefiled!"

[35]Judas hung up Nicanor's head on the wall of the citadel, a clear and evident proof to all of the Lord's help.[g] [36]By public vote it was unanimously decreed never to let this day pass unobserved,[h] but to celebrate it on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic, the eve of Mordecai's Day.*

**15, 14:** Jeremiah: regarded by the postexilic Jews as one of the greatest figures in their history; cf 2 Mc 2, 1; Mt 16, 14. Who . . . prays for his people: a clear belief in the intercession of the saints.

**15, 31:** Those in the citadel: presumably Jewish soldiers; actually, the citadel was still in the possession of the Syrians.

**15, 36:** Mordecai's Day: the feast of Purim, celebrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar (Est 9, 17–22).

d 1 Mc 4, 36. e 22f: 2 Mc 8, 19; 2 Kgs 19, 35; Is 37, 36; 1 Mc 7, 40f. f 25–36: 2 Mc 8, 39–50. g 1 Sm 31, 9f. h 1 Mc 7, 49.

## VII: Epilogue

**Author's Apology** [37]Since Nicanor's doings ended in this way, with the city remaining in possession of the Hebrews from that time on, I will bring my own story to an end here too. [38]If it is well written and to the point, that is what I wanted; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that is the best I could do. [39]Just as it is harmful to drink wine alone or water alone, whereas mixing wine with water makes a more pleasant drink that increases delight, so a skillfully composed story delights the ears of those who read the work. Let this, then, be the end.

# THE WISDOM BOOKS

Wisdom Books See RG 231–232

The Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Wisdom, and Sirach, are all versified by the skillful use of parallelism, that is, of the balanced and symmetrical phrases peculiar to Hebrew poetry. With the exception of the Psalms, the majority of which are devotional lyrics, and the Song of Songs, a nuptial hymn, these books belong to the general class of wisdom or didactic literature, strictly so called because their chief purpose is instruction.

The wisdom literature of the Bible is the fruit of a movement among ancient oriental people to gather, preserve and express, usually in aphoristic style, the results of human experience as an aid toward understanding and solving the problems of life. In Israel especially, the movement concerned itself with such basic and vital problems as man's origin and destiny, his quest for happiness, the problem of suffering, of good and evil in human conduct, of death, and the state beyond the grave. Originating with oral tradition, these formulations found their way into the historical books of the Old Testament in the shape of proverbs, odes, chants, epigrams, and also into those psalms intended for instruction.

The developed compositions of this literature form the sapiential books. The Book of Proverbs is a collection of sentences or practical norms for moral conduct. The Book of Job is an artistic dialogue skillfully handling the problem of suffering though only from the standpoint of temporal life. Ecclesiastes examines a wide range of human experience only to conclude that all things are vanity except the fear of the Lord and observance of his commandments, and that God requites man in his own good time. Sirach gathers and presents the fruits of past experience, thus preparing for the Book of Wisdom, which sees for the just man seeking happiness the full hope of immortality (Wis 3, 4).

Those who cultivated wisdom were called sages. Men of letters, scribes, skilled in the affairs of government, and counselors to rulers, they were instructors of the people, especially of youth (Sir 51, 13-30). In times of crisis they guided the people by revaluating tradition, thus helping to preserve unity, peace and good will. The most illustrious of the sages, and the originator of wisdom literature in Israel, was Solomon. Because of his fame, some of the wisdom books of which he was not the author bear his name.

Despite numerous resemblances, sometimes exaggerated, between the sapiential literature of pagan nations and the wisdom books of the Bible, the former are often replete with vagaries and abound in polytheistic conceptions; the latter remained profoundly human, universal, fundamentally moral, and essentially religious and monotheistic. Under the influence of the law and the prophets, wisdom became piety and virture; impiety and vice were folly. The teachers of wisdom were regarded as men of God, and their books were placed beside the law and the prophets. The highest wisdom became identified with the spirit of God through which the world was created and preserved (Prv 8, 22-31), and mankind was enlightened.

The limitations of Old Testament wisdom served to crystallize the problems of human life and destiny, thus preparing for their solution through New Testament revelation. Ecclesiastes' vain search for success and happiness on earth ends when the Savior assures these things to his followers, not in this world but in the bliss of heaven. The anxiety in the Book of Job over reconciling God's justice and wisdom with the suffering of the innocent is relieved by the account of the crucified and risen Redeemer in the gospel. By fulfilling all that the Psalms foretold concerning him, Jesus makes the Psalter his prayer book and that of the church for all time. The love of God for the chosen people which underlies the Song of Songs is perfected in

the union of Christ with his church. The personification of the wisdom of Proverbs, Wisdom and Sirach shines forth in resplendent reality in the Word who was with God, and who was God, and who became incarnate to dwell among us; cf Jn 1, 2. 14.

# THE BOOK OF JOB

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The Book of Job, named after its protagonist, is an exquisite dramatic poem which treats of the problem of the suffering of the innocent, and of retribution. The contents of the book, together with its artistic structure and elegant style, place it among the literary masterpieces of all time.

Job, an oriental chieftain, pious and upright, richly endowed in his own person and in domestic prosperity, suffers a sudden and complete reversal of fortune. He loses his property and his children; a loathsome disease afflicts his body; and sorrow oppresses his soul. Nevertheless, Job does not complain against God. When some friends visit him to condole with him, Job protests his innocence and does not understand why he is afflicted. He curses the day of his birth and longs for death to bring an end to his sufferings. The debate which ensues consists of three cycles of speeches. Job's friends insist that his plight can only be a punishment for personal wrongdoing and an invitation from God to repentance. Job rejects their inadequate explanation and calls for a response from God himself. At this point the speeches of a youth named Elihu (ch 32–37) interrupt the development.

In response to Job's plea that he be allowed to see God and hear from him the cause of his suffering, God answers, not by justifying his action before men, but by referring to his own omniscience and almighty power. Job is content with this. He recovers his attitude of humility and trust in God, which is deepened now and strengthened by his experience of suffering.

The author of the book is not known; it was composed some time between the 7th and 5th centuries; B.C. Its literary form, with speeches, prologue and epilogue disposed according to a studied plan, indicates that the purpose of the writing is didactic. The lesson is that even the just may suffer here, and their sufferings are a test of their fidelity. They shall be rewarded in the end. Man's finite mind cannot probe the depths of the divine omniscience that governs the world. The problems we encounter can be solved by a broader and deeper awareness of God's power, presence (42, 5) and wisdom.

The divisions of the Book of Job are as follows:

I. Prologue (1, 1—2, 13).
II. First Cycle of Speeches (3, 1—14, 22).
III. Second Cycle of Speeches (15, 1—21, 34).
IV. Third Cycle of Speeches (22, 1—28, 28).
V. Job's Final Summary of His Cause (29, 1—31, 37)
VI. Elihu's Speeches (32, 1—37, 24).
VII. The Lord's Speech (38, 1—42, 6).
VIII. Epilogue (42, 7-17).

# I: Prologue

## CHAPTER 1

**Job's Wealth and Piety** [1]In the land of Uz* there was a blameless and upright man named Job,[a] who feared God and avoided evil. [2]*Seven sons and three daughters were born to him; [3]and he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and a great number of work animals, so that he was greater than any of the men of the East.* [4]His sons used to take turns giving feasts, sending invitations to their three sisters to eat and drink with them. [5]And when each feast had run its course, Job would send for them and sanctify them, rising early and offering holocausts for every one of them. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and blasphemed God in their hearts." This Job did habitually.

[6][b]One day, when the sons of God* came to present themselves before the LORD, Satan also came among them.[c] [7]And the LORD said to Satan, "Whence do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said,[d] "From roaming the earth and patrolling it." [8]And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job, and that there is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil?" [9]But Satan answered the LORD and said, "Is it for nothing that Job is God-fearing? [10]Have you not surrounded him and his family and all that he has with your protection? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock are spread over the land. [11][e]But now put forth your hand and touch anything that he has, and surely he will blaspheme you to your face." [12]And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand upon his person." So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

**The First Trial** [13]And so one day, while his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, [14]a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the asses grazing beside them, [15]and the Sabeans* carried them off in a raid. They put the herdsmen to the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." [16]While he was yet speaking, another came and said, "Lightning* has fallen from heaven and struck the sheep and their shepherds and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you." [17]While he was yet speaking, another came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three columns, seized the camels, carried them off, and put those tending them to the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." [18]While he was yet speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, [19]when suddenly a great wind came across the desert and smote the four corners of the house. It fell upon the young people and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you." [20]Then Job began to tear his cloak and cut off his hair. He cast himself prostrate upon the ground, [21]and said,

"Naked I came forth from my mother's
  womb,[f]
 and naked shall I go back again.*
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
 blessed be the name of the LORD!"

[22]In all this Job did not sin,[g] nor did he say anything disrespectful of God.

## CHAPTER 2

**The Second Trial** [1]Once again the sons of God[h] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. [2]And the LORD said to Satan, "Whence do you come?" And Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming the earth and patrolling it." [3]And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job, and that there is no one on earth like him, faultless and upright, fearing God and

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1, 1: Uz: somewhere in Edom or Arabia. Job: a not uncommon name in ancient Semitic circles; its original meaning was "enemy."
1, 2f: The numbers mentioned here indicate Job's great wealth and happiness, external proof of God's friendship.
1, 3: Men of the East: that is, east of Palestine.
1, 6: Sons of God: angels. Satan: literally, "adversary."
1, 15: Sabeans: from southern Arabia.
1, 16: Lightning: literally, "God's fire."
1, 21: Go back again: to the earth; cf Gn 2, 7; Sir 40, 1.

a Jb 2, 3. b 6ff: Jb 2. 1ff. c Gn 6, 2, 4; Zec 3, 1; Lk 22, 31; Rv 12, 9. d 1 Pt 5, 8. e Jb 2, 5. f Eccl 5, 14; 1 Tm 6, 7. g Jb 2, 10; Jas 5, 11. h Jb 1, 6.

avoiding evil?[i] He still holds fast to his innocence although you incited me against him to
ruin him without cause." [4]And Satan answered
the LORD and said, "Skin for skin!* All that a
man has will he give for his life. [5]/But now put
forth your hand and touch his bone and his flesh,
and surely he will blaspheme you to your face."
[6]And the LORD said to Satan, "He is in your
power; only spare his life." [7]So Satan went forth
from the presence of the LORD and smote Job
with severe boils from the soles of his feet to the
crown of his head. [8]And he took a potsherd to
scrape himself, as he sat among the ashes. [9]Then
his wife said to him,[k] "Are you still holding to
your innocence? Curse God and die."* [10]But he
said to her, "Are even you going to speak as
senseless women do? We accept good things
from God; and should we not accept evil?"
Through all this, Job said nothing sinful.[l]

**Job's Three Friends** [11]Now when three of
Job's friends heard of all the misfortune that had
come upon him, they set out each one from his
own place: Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from
Shuh, and Zophar from Naamath.* They met and
journeyed together to give him sympathy and
comfort. [12]But when, at a distance, they lifted up
their eyes and did not recognize him, they began
to weep aloud; they tore their cloaks and threw
dust upon their heads. [13]Then they sat down
upon the ground with him seven days and seven
nights, but none of them spoke a word to him; for
they saw how great was his suffering.

## II: First Cycle of Speeches

### CHAPTER 3

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**Job's Plaint** [1]After this, Job opened his mouth
and cursed his day. [2]Job spoke out and said:

[3]Perish the day on which I was born,[m]
the night when they said, "The child is a
boy!"
[4]May that day be darkness:
let not God above call for it,
nor light shine upon it!
[5]May darkness and gloom claim it,
clouds settle upon it,
the blackness of night affright it!
[6]May obscurity seize that day;
let it not occur among the days of the year,
nor enter into the count of the months!
[7]May that night be barren;
let no joyful outcry greet it!
[8]Let them curse it who curse the sea,
the appointed disturbers of Leviathan!*
[9]May the stars of its twilight be darkened;
may it look for daylight, but have none,
nor gaze on the eyes of the dawn,
[10]Because it kept not shut the doors of the
womb
to shield my eyes from trouble!
[11]Why did I not perish at birth,[n]
come forth from the womb and expire?
[16]Or why was I not buried away like an
untimely birth,*
like babes that have never seen the light?
[12]Wherefore did the knees receive me?
or why did I suck at the breasts?
[13]For then I should have lain down and been
tranquil;
had I slept, I should then have been at rest
[14]With kings and counselors of the earth
who built where now there are ruins
[15]Or with princes who had gold
and filled their houses with silver.
[17]There* the wicked cease from troubling,
there the weary are at rest.

**2, 4:** Skin for skin: an expression which, as applied to Job, means that he has borne his suffering patiently thus far only because he seeks to avoid greater suffering and to receive greater favors from God.

**2, 9:** Curse God and die: you have nothing to hope for from God and therefore nothing to live for.

**2, 11:** The names of Job's friends suggest Edomite origin. The Edomites (Ob 8f) and more specifically the Temanites (Jer 49, 7) enjoyed a reputation for wisdom.

**3, 8:** Leviathan: in Jb 40, 25, the crocodile; here the reference is probably to a mythological sea monster symbolizing primeval chaos. Cf Jb 9, 13; 26, 13; Pss 74, 13f; 104, 26; Is 27, 1.

**3, 16:** This verse has been placed between vv 11 and 12 where it probably stood originally. There is reason to believe that here, as well as in several other places in Job, the original order of the poetic lines was accidentally disturbed in the early transmission of the text; so in chapters 12–15; 19–21; 24–31; 34; 36; 38–42. The verse numbers given in such cases are always those of the current Hebrew text, though the arrangement may differ. The footnotes will advise the reader of the difficulties and provide him with further indications for following the progress of thought in the book.

**3, 17:** There: in death.

i Jb 1, 1. j Jb 1, 11. k Jb 19, 17. l Jb 1, 22; Sir 2, 4; Jas 5, 11. m Jer 20, 14. n Jb 10, 18f.

18 There the captives are at ease together,
and hear not the voice of the slave driver.
19 Small and great are there the same,
and the servant is free from his master.
20 Why is light given to the toilers,
and life to the bitter in spirit?
21 They wait for death and it comes not;
they search for it rather than for hidden treasures,
22 Rejoice in it exultingly,
and are glad when they reach the grave:
23 Men whose path is hidden from them,
and whom God has hemmed in!
24 For sighing comes more readily to me than food,
and my groans well forth like water.
25 For what I fear overtakes me,
and what I shrink from comes upon me.
26 I have no peace nor ease;
I have no rest, for trouble comes!

## CHAPTER 4

**Eliphaz's First Speech** 1 Then spoke Eliphaz the Temanite, who said:

2 If someone attempts a word with you, will you mind?
For how can anyone refrain from speaking?
3 Behold, you have instructed many,
and have made firm their feeble hands.
4 Your words have upheld the stumbler;
you have strengthened his faltering knees.
5 But now that it comes to you, you are impatient;
when it touches yourself, you are dismayed.
6 Is not your piety a source of confidence,
and your integrity of life your hope?
7 Reflect now, what innocent person perishes? [o]
Since when are the upright destroyed?
8 As I see it, those who plow for mischief
and sow trouble, reap the same.
9 By the breath of God they perish, [p]
and by the blast of his wrath they are consumed.
10 Though the lion* roars, though the king of beasts cries out,
yet the teeth of the young lions are broken;
11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.
12 For a word was stealthily brought to me,*
and my ear caught a whisper of it.
13 In my thoughts during visions of the night, [q]
when deep sleep falls on men,
14 Fear came upon me, and shuddering,
that terrified me to the bones.
15 Then a spirit passed before me,
and the hair of my flesh stood up.
16 It paused, but its likeness I could not discern;
a figure was before my eyes,
and I heard a still voice:
17 "Can a man be righteous as against God? [r]
Can a mortal be blameless against his Maker?
18 Lo, he puts no trust in his servants, [s]
and with his angels he can find fault.
19 How much more with those that dwell in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed more easily than the moth!
20 Morning or evening they may be shattered;
with no heed paid to it, they perish forever.
21 The pegs of their tent are plucked up;
they die without knowing wisdom."

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## CHAPTER 5

1 Call now! Will anyone respond to you?
To which of the holy ones will you appeal?
2 Nay, impatience kills the fool
and indignation slays the simpleton.
3 I have seen a fool spreading his roots, [t]
but his household suddenly decayed.
4 His children shall be far from safety;
they shall be crushed at the gate* without a rescuer.
5 What they have reaped the hungry shall eat up;
[or God shall take it away by blight;]

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**4, 10:** The lion: used figuratively here for the violent, rapacious sinner who cannot prevail against God.
**4, 12–21:** A dramatic presentation of the idea of man's nothingness in contrast to God's greatness.
**5, 4:** At the gate: of the city, where justice was administered.

o Ps 37, 25. p Ps 18, 16; Is 11, 4; 2; Thes 2, 8. q Jb 33, 15. r Jb 9, 2; 15, 14ff; 25, 4; Pss 130, 3; 143, 2. s Jb 15, 15; 2 Pt 2, 4; Jude 6. t Ps 37, 35f.

and the thirsty shall swallow their
substance.
6 For mischief comes not out of the earth,
nor does trouble spring out of the ground;
7 But man himself begets mischief,
as sparks* fly upward.
8 In your place, I would appeal to God,
and to God I would state my plea.*
10 He gives rain upon the earth
and sends water upon the fields;
11 [u] He sets up on high the lowly,
and those who mourn he exalts to safety.
12 He frustrates the plans of the cunning,
so that their hands achieve no success;
13 He catches the wise in their own ruses, [v]
and the designs of the crafty are routed.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and at noonday they grope as though it
were night.
15 But the poor from the edge of the sword
and from the hand of the mighty, he saves.
16 Thus the unfortunate have hope,
and iniquity closes her mouth.
17 Happy is the man whom God reproves!
The Almighty's chastening do not reject.
18 For he wounds, but he binds up; [w]
he smites, but his hands give healing.
19 Out of six troubles he will deliver you,
and at the seventh* no evil shall touch you.
20 In famine he will deliver you from death,
and in war from the threat of the sword;
21 From the scourge of the tongue you shall be
hidden,
and shall not fear approaching ruin.
22 At destruction and want you shall laugh;
the beasts of the earth you need not dread.
23 You shall be in league with the stones of the
field,
and the wild beasts shall be at peace with
you.
24 And you shall know that your tent is secure;
taking stock of your household, you shall
miss nothing.
25 You shall know that your descendants are
many,
and your offspring as the grass of the earth.
26 You shall approach the grave in full vigor,
as a shock of grain comes in at its season.
27 Lo, this we have searched out; so it is!
This we have heard, and you should know.

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## CHAPTER 6

**Job's First Reply** 1 Then Job answered and said:

2 Ah, could my anguish but be measured
and my calamity laid with it in the scales,
3 They would now outweigh the sands of the
sea!
Because of this I speak without restraint.
4 For the arrows of the Almighty pierce me, [x]
and my spirit drinks in their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.
5 Does the wild ass bray when he has grass?*
Does the ox low over his fodder?
6 Can a thing insipid be eaten without salt?
Is there flavor in the white of an egg?
7 I refuse to touch them;
they are loathsome food to me.
8 Oh, that I might have my request,
and that God would grant what I long for:
9 Even that God would decide to crush me,
that he would put forth his hand and cut me
off!
10 Then I should still have consolation
and could exult through unremitting pain,
because I have not transgressed the
commands of the Holy One.
11 What strength have I that I should endure,
and what is my limit that I should be
patient?
12 Have I the strength of stones,
or is my flesh of bronze?

**5, 7:** Sparks: in Hebrew, "sons of resheph," which the ancient versions took as the name of a bird.
**5, 9:** Omitted here; it is a duplicate of Jb 9, 10.
**5, 19:** Six . . . the seventh: proverbial expression for any large number; cf Prv 24, 16; Lk 17, 4.
**6, 5f:** Job would not complain if his life were as pleasant to him as fodder to a hungry animal; but his life is as disagreeable as insipid food. White of an egg: thus the obscure Hebrew has been understood in Jewish tradition; some render it "mallow juice."

u 1 Sm 2, 7f; Ps 113, 7; Lk 1, 52. v 1 Cor 3, 19. w Hos 6, 1f. x Ps 88, 17.

13 Have I no helper,[y]
and has advice deserted me?
14 A friend owes kindness to one in despair,
though he have forsaken the fear of the Almighty.
15 My brethren are undependable as a brook,
as watercourses that run dry in the wadies;
16 Though they may be black with ice,
and with snow heaped upon them,
17 Yet once they flow, they cease to be;
in the heat, they disappear from their place.
18 Caravans turn aside from their routes;
they go into the desert and perish.
19 The caravans of Tema* search,
the companies of Sheba have hopes;
20 They are disappointed, though they were confident;
they come there and are frustrated.
21 It is thus that you have now become for me;
you see a terrifying thing and are afraid.
22 Have I asked you to give me anything,
to offer a gift for me from your possessions,
23 Or to deliver me from the enemy,
or to redeem me from oppressors?
24 Teach me, and I will be silent;
prove to me wherein I have erred.
25 How agreeable are honest words;
yet how unconvincing is your argument!
26 Do you consider your words as proof,
but the sayings of a desperate man as wind?
27 You would even cast lots for the orphan,
and would barter away your friend!
28 Come, now, give me your attention;
surely I will not lie to your face.
29 Think it over; let there be no injustice.
Think it over; I still am right.
30 Is there insincerity on my tongue,
or cannot my taste discern falsehood?

## CHAPTER 7

1 [z]Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?*
Are not his days those of a hireling?
2 He is a slave who longs for the shade,
a hireling who waits for his wages.
3 So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been told off for me.
4 If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"
then the night drags on;
I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.
5 My flesh is clothed with worms and scabs;[a]
my skin cracks and festers;
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;
they come to an end without hope.
7 Remember that my life is like the wind;[b]
I shall not see happiness again.
8 The eye that now sees me shall no more behold me;
as you look at me, I shall be gone.
9 As a cloud dissolves and vanishes,[c]
so he who goes down to the nether world shall come up no more.
10 He shall not again return to his house;
his place shall know him no more.
11 My own utterance I will not restrain;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 *Am I the sea, or a monster of the deep,
that you place a watch over me?*
Why have you set me up as an object of attack?
or why should I be a target for you?
13 When I say, "My bed shall comfort me,
my couch shall ease my complaint,"
14 Then you affright me with dreams
and with visions terrify me,
15 So that I should prefer choking
and death rather than my pains.
16 I waste away: I cannot live forever;[d]
let me alone, for my days are but a breath.
17 What is man, that you make much of him,
or pay him any heed?
18 You observe him with each new day[e]
and try him at every moment!
19 How long will it be before you look away from me,

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6, 19: Tema: in northwest Arabia. Sheba: see note on Jb 1, 15.
7, 1: Drudgery: taken by some to refer to military service; cf also Jb 14, 14.
7, 12: An allusion in poetic imagery to primeval chaos as a monstrous ocean vanquished by God at the world's creation.
7, 12–21: Job now speaks, not to his friends, but to God.

y Jb 19, 14f. z Jb 14, 14. a Jb 2, 7f. b Pss 8, 5; 144, 3. c 9f: Jb 10. 21; 14, 10ff; 2 Sm 12, 23; 14, 14; Wis 2, 1. d Jb 14, 1ff, 5. e Ps 17, 3.

and let me alone long enough to swallow
my spittle?
20 Though I have sinned, what can I do to you,
O watcher of men?
21 Why do you not pardon my offense,
or take away my guilt?
For soon I shall lie down in the dust;
and should you seek me I shall then be
gone.

## CHAPTER 8

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**Bildad's First Speech** 1 Bildad the Shuhite spoke out and said:

2 How long will you utter such things?
The words from your mouth are like a
mighty wind!
3 Does God pervert judgment,[f]
and does the Almighty distort justice?
4 If your children have sinned against him
and he has left them in the grip of their
guilt,
5 Still, if you yourself have recourse to God
and make supplication to the Almighty,
6 Should you be blameless and upright,
surely now he will awake for you
and restore your rightful domain;
7 Your former state will be of little moment,
for in time to come you will flourish indeed.
8 If you inquire of the former generations,
and give heed to the experience of the
fathers[g]
9 (As we are but of yesterday and have no
knowledge,
because our days on earth are but a
shadow),[h]
10 Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter their words of understanding?
11 Can the papyrus grow up without mire?*
Can the reed grass flourish without water?
12 While it is yet green and uncut,
it withers quicker than any grass.
13 So is the end of everyone who forgets God,
and so shall the hope of the godless man
perish.

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14 His confidence is but a gossamer thread
and his trust is a spider's web.
15 He shall rely upon his family, but it shall not
last;
he shall cling to it, but it shall not endure.
16 He is full of sap before sunrise,
and beyond his garden his shoots go forth;
17 About a heap of stones are his roots entwined;
among the rocks he takes hold.
18 Yet if one tears him from his place,
it will disown him: "I have never seen
you!"
19 There he lies rotting beside the road,
and out of the soil another sprouts.
20 Behold, God will not cast away the upright;
neither will he take the hand of the wicked.
21 Once more will he fill your mouth with
laughter,
and your lips with rejoicing.
22 They that hate you shall be clothed with
shame,
and the tent of the wicked shall be no more.

## CHAPTER 9

**Job's Second Reply** 1 Then Job answered and said:

2 I know well that it is so;
but how can a man be justified before God?
3 Should one wish to contend with him,
he could not answer him once in a
thousand times.
4 God is wise in heart and mighty in strength;
who has withstood him and remained
unscathed?
5 He removes the mountains before they know
it;
he overturns them in his anger.
6 He shakes the earth out of its place,[i]
and the pillars beneath it tremble.
7 He commands the sun, and it rises not;
he seals up the stars.
8 He alone stretches out the heavens[j]
and treads upon the crests of the sea.
9 He made the Bear and Orion,

8, 11ff: As marsh plants need water, so man needs God. These verses are taken by some as a quotation from the teaching of the forefathers; cf v 10.

f Jb 34, 10ff. g Dt 4, 32; 32, 7. h Jb 14, 2; Pss 102, 12; 109, 23; 144, 4; Wis 2, 5. i Jb 26, 11. j Ps 104, 2; Is 40, 22.

the Pleiades and the constellations of the south;
10 He does great things past finding out,
marvelous things beyond reckoning.
11 Should he come near me, I see him not;
should he pass by, I am not aware of him;
12 Should he seize me forcibly, who can say him nay?
Who can say to him, "What are you doing?"
13 He is God and he does not relent;
the helpers of Rahab* bow beneath him.
14 How much less shall I give him any answer,
or choose out arguments against him!
15 Even though I were right, I could not answer him,[k]
but should rather beg for what was due me.
16 If I appealed to him and he answered my call,
I could not believe that he would hearken to my words;
17 With a tempest he might overwhelm me,
and multiply my wounds without cause;
18 He need not suffer me to draw breath,
but might fill me with bitter griefs.
19 If it be a question of strength, he is mighty;
and if of judgment, who will call him to account?
20 Though I were right, my own mouth might condemn me;[l]
were I innocent, he might put me in the wrong.
21 Though I am innocent, I myself cannot know it;
I despise my life.
22 It is all one! therefore I say:
Both the innocent and the wicked he destroys.[m]
23 When the scourge slays suddenly,
he laughs at the despair of the innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hands of the wicked;
he covers the faces of its judges.
If it is not he, who then is it?
25 My days are swifter than a runner,
they flee away; they see no happiness;[n]
26 They shoot by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping upon its prey.
27 If I say: I will forget my complaining,
I will lay aside my sadness and be of good cheer,
28 Then I am in dread of all my pains;
I know that you* will not hold me innocent.
29 If I must be accounted guilty,
why then should I strive in vain?
30 If I should wash myself with snow
and cleanse my hands with lye,
31 Yet you would plunge me in the ditch,
so that my garments would abhor me.
32 For he is not a man like myself, that I should answer him,
that we should come together in judgment.
33 Would that there were an arbiter between us,
who could lay his hand upon us both
34 and withdraw his rod from me.
Would that his terrors did not frighten me;
35 that I might speak without being afraid of him.
Since this is not the case with me,
1 *I loathe my life.[o]

## CHAPTER 10

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I will give myself up to complaint;
I will speak from the bitterness of my soul.
2 I will say to God: Do not put me in the wrong!
Let me know why you oppose me.
3 Is it a pleasure for you to oppress,
to spurn the work of your hands,
and smile on the plan of the wicked?
4 Have you eyes of flesh?
Do you see as man sees?
5 Are your days as the days of a mortal,[p]
and are your years as a man's lifetime,
6 That you seek for guilt in me
and search after my sins,
7 Even though you know that I am not wicked,[q]
and that none can deliver me out of your hand?

9, 13: Rahab: cf Jb 26, 12. See note on Ps 89, 11.
9, 28–31: You: refers to God.
10, 1: I loathe my life: this is the first verse of ch 10.

k Jb 10, 15. l Jb 15, 6. m Eccl 9, 2. n Jb 7, 6. o Jb 9, 21. p Jb 36, 26. q Jb 2, 3. 9; Dt 32, 39; Wis 16, 15.

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8 Your hands have formed me and fashioned me;
will you then turn and destroy me?
9 Oh, remember that you fashioned me from clay! [r]
Will you then bring me down to dust again?
10 Did you not pour me out as milk,
and thicken me like cheese?
11 With skin and flesh you clothed me,
with bones and sinews knit me together.
12 Grace and favor you granted me,
and your providence has preserved my spirit.
13 Yet these things you have hidden in your heart;
I know that they are your purpose:
14 If I should sin, you would keep a watch against me,
and from my guilt you would not absolve me.
15 If I should be wicked, alas for me!
if righteous, I dare not hold up my head,
filled with ignominy and sodden with affliction!
16 Should it lift up, you hunt me like a lion:
repeatedly you show your wondrous power against me,
17 You renew your attack upon me
and multiply your harassment of me;
in waves your troops come against me.
18 Why then did you bring me forth from the womb? [s]
I should have died and no eye have seen me.
19 I should be as though I had never lived;
I should have been taken from the womb to the grave.
20 Are not the days of my life few?
Let me alone, that I may recover a little
21 Before I go whence I shall not return, [t]
to the land of darkness and of gloom,
22 The black, disordered land
where darkness is the only light.

## CHAPTER 11

**Zophar's First Speech** 1 And Zophar the Naamathite spoke out and said:

2 Should not the man of many words be answered,
or must the garrulous man necessarily be right?
3 Shall your babblings keep men silent,
and shall you deride and no one give rebuke?
4 Shall you say: "My teaching is pure,
and I am clean in your sight"?
5 But oh, that God would speak,
and open his lips against you,
6 And tell you that the secrets of wisdom
are twice as effective:
So you might learn that God
will make you answer for your guilt.
7 Can you penetrate the designs of God? [u]
Dare you vie with the perfection of the Almighty?
8 It is higher than the heavens; what can you do?
It is deeper than the nether world; what can you know?
9 It is longer than the earth in measure,
and broader than the sea.
10 If he seize and imprison
or call to judgment, who then can say him nay?
11 For he knows the worthlessness of men
and sees iniquity; will he then ignore it?
12 Will empty man then gain understanding,
and the wild jackass [v] be made docile?
13 If you set your heart aright
and stretch out your hands toward him,
14 If you remove all iniquity from your conduct,
and let not injustice dwell in your tent,
15 Surely then you may lift up your face in innocence;
you may stand firm and unafraid.
16 For then you shall forget your misery,
or recall it like waters that have ebbed away.

r Jb 4, 19; 33, 6; Gn 2, 7; 3, 19; Ps 146, 4. s Jb 3, 3, 11. t Jb 7, 9f; 16, 22. u Rom 11, 33. v Jb 39, 5–8.

17 Then your life shall be brighter than the noonday;
its gloom shall become as the morning,
18 And you shall be secure, because there is hope;
you shall look round you and lie down in safety, [w]
19 and you shall take your rest with none to disturb.
Many shall entreat your favor,
20 but the wicked, looking on, shall be consumed with envy.
Escape shall be cut off from them,
they shall wait to expire.

## CHAPTER 12

**Job's Third Reply** 1 Then Job replied and said:

2 No doubt you are the intelligent folk,
and with you wisdom shall die!
3 But I have intelligence as well as you; [x]
for who does not know such things as these?
4 I have become the sport of my neighbors:*
"The one whom God answers when he calls upon him,
the just, the perfect man," is a laughingstock; [y]
5 The undisturbed esteem my downfall a disgrace
such as awaits unsteady feet;
6 Yet the tents of robbers are prosperous,
and those who provoke God are secure.
7 But now ask the beasts to teach you,
and the birds of the air to tell you;
8 Or the reptiles on earth to instruct you,
and the fish of the sea to inform you.
9 Which of all these does not know
that the hand of God has done this?
10 In his hand is the soul of every living thing, [z]
and the life breath of all mankind.
11 Does not the ear judge words
as the mouth tastes food? [a]
12 So with old age is wisdom, [b]
and with length of days understanding.
13 With him are wisdom and might;
his are counsel and understanding.
14 If he breaks a thing down, there is no rebuilding; [c]
if he imprisons a man, there is no release.
15 He holds back the waters and there is drought; [d]
he sends them forth and they overwhelm the land.
18 He loosens the bonds imposed by kings
and leaves but a waistcloth to bind the king's own loins.*
21 He breaks down the barriers of the streams
19 and lets their never-failing waters flow away.
16 With him are strength and prudence;
the misled and the misleaders are his.
17 He sends counselors away barefoot,
and of judges he makes fools.
20 He silences the trusted adviser,
and takes discretion from the aged.
22 The recesses of the darkness he discloses,
and brings the gloom forth to the light.
23 He makes nations great and he destroys them;
he spreads peoples abroad and he abandons them.
24 He takes understanding from the leaders of the land,
25 till they grope in the darkness without light;
he makes them stagger like drunken men.

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## CHAPTER 13

1 Lo, all this my eye has seen;
my ear has heard and perceived it.
2 What you know, I also know; [e]
I fall not short of you.
3 But I would speak with the Almighty; [f]
I wish to reason with God.
4 You are glossing over falsehoods
and offering vain remedies, every one of you!
5 Oh, that you would be altogether silent!
This for you would be wisdom.

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**12, 4f:** The Hebrew is somewhat obscure, but the general sense is that the wicked mock at the pious when the latter appear to be abandoned by God; cf Ps 22, 7ff; Mt 27, 39–43.

**12, 18:** Waistcloth . . . loins: he reduces kings to the condition of slaves, who wear only a cloth wrapped about the waist.

w Lv 26, 6; Ps 4, 9. x Jb 13, 2; 15, 9. y Jb 21, 3; 30, 1. z Acts 17, 28. a Jb 34, 3. b Jb 32, 7. c Rv 3, 7. d Gn 7, 11–24. e Jb 12, 3; 15, 9. f Jb 23, 4.

[6] Hear now the rebuke I shall utter
and listen to the reproof from my lips.
[7] Is it for God that you speak falsehood?
Is it for him that you utter deceit?
[8] Is it for him that you show partiality?
Do you play advocate on behalf of God?
[9] Will it be well when he shall search you out?
Would you impose on him as one does on men?
[10] He will openly rebuke you
if even in secret you show partiality.
[11] Surely will his majesty affright you
and the dread of him fall upon you.
[12] Your reminders are ashy maxims,
your fabrications are mounds of clay.
[13] Be silent, let me alone! that I may speak
and give vent to my feelings.
[14] I will carry my flesh between my teeth,
and take my life in my hand.*
[15] Slay me though he might,[g] I will wait for him;
I will defend my conduct before him.
[16] And this shall be my salvation,
that no impious man can come into his presence.
[17] Pay careful heed to my speech,
and give my statement a hearing.
[18] Behold, I have prepared my case,[h]
I know that I am in the right.
[19] If anyone can make a case against me,
then I shall be silent and die.
[20] These things only do not use against me,*
then from your presence I need not hide:
[21] Withdraw your hand far from me,
and let not the terror of you frighten me.
[22] Then call me, and I will respond;
or let me speak first, and answer me.
[23] What are my faults and my sins?
My misdeeds and my sins make known to me!
[24] Why do you hide your face[i]
and consider me your enemy?
[25] Will you harass a wind-driven leaf,
or pursue a withered straw?
[26] For you draw up bitter indictments against me,
and punish in me the faults of my youth.
[27] You put my feet in the stocks;
you watch all my paths
and trace out all my footsteps.

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## CHAPTER 14

[1] Man born of woman
is short-lived and full of trouble,[j]
[2] Like a flower that springs up and fades,[k]
swift as a shadow that does not abide.
[3] Upon such a one will you cast your eyes
so as to bring him into judgment before you,
[28] Though he wears out like a leather bottle,
like a garment that the moth has consumed?*
[4] Can a man be found who is clean of defilement?[l]
There is none, [5] however short his days.
You know the number of his months;
you have fixed the limit which he cannot pass.
[6] Look away from him and let him be,
while, like a hireling, he completes his day.
[7] For a tree there is hope,
if it be cut down, that it will sprout again
and that its tender shoots will not cease.
[8] Even though its root grow old in the earth,
and its stump die in the dust,
[9] Yet at the first whiff of water it may flourish again
and put forth branches like a young plant.
[10] But when a man dies, all vigor leaves him;[m]
when man expires, where then is he?
[11] As when the waters of a lake fail,
or a stream grows dry and parches,
[12] So men lie down and rise not again.
Till the heavens are no more, they shall not awake,
nor be roused out of their sleep.[n]

**13, 14:** The second half of the verse is a common biblical expression for risking one's life; cf Jgs 12, 3; 1 Sm 19, 5; 28, 21; Ps 119, 109; the first half of the verse must have a similar meaning. Job is so confident of his innocence that he is willing to risk his life by going to judgment with God.

**13, 20:** From here to the end of chapter 14, Job pleads his case, addressing God rather than his three friends.

**14, 28:** This verse has been transposed from ch 13.

g Jb 27, 5. h Jb 33, 9. i Jb 19, 11; 33, 10. j Jb 10, 20; 15, 14; Pss 39, 5f; 89, 46; Wis 2, 1. k Jb 8, 9; Pss 90:6; 102, 12; 103, 15; 109, 23; 144, 4; Is 40, 6f; Jas 1, 10. l Ps 51, 4, 7. m Jb 20, 7. n Jb 7, 10.

13 Oh, that you would hide me in the nether world
and keep me sheltered till your wrath is past;
would fix a time for me, and then remember me!
14 When a man has died, were he to live again,
all the days of my drudgery I would wait,[o]
until my relief should come.
15 You would call, and I would answer you;
you would esteem the work of your hands.
16 Surely then you would count my steps,[p]
and not keep watch for sin in me.
17 My misdeeds would be sealed up in a pouch,*
and you would cover over my guilt.
18 But as a mountain falls at last
and its rock is moved from its place,
19 As waters wear away the stones
and floods wash away the soil of the land,
so you destroy the hope of man.
20 You prevail once for all against him and he passes on;
with changed appearance you send him away.
21 If his sons are honored, he is not aware of it;
if they are in disgrace, he does not know about them.
22 Only his own flesh pains him,
and his soul grieves for him.

## III: Second Cycle of Speeches

### CHAPTER 15

**Second Speech of Eliphaz** 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite spoke and said:

2 Should a wise man answer with airy opinions,
or puff himself up with wind?
3 Should he argue in speech which does not avail,
and in words which are to no profit?
4 You in fact do away with piety,
and you lessen devotion toward God,
5 Because your wickedness instructs your mouth,
and you choose to speak like the crafty.
6 Your own mouth condemns you, not I;[q]
your own lips refute you.
7 Are you indeed the first-born of mankind,
or were you brought forth before the hills?
8 Are you privy to the counsels of God,[r]
and do you restrict wisdom to yourself?
9 What do you know that we do not know?[s]
What intelligence have you which we have not?
10 There are gray-haired old men among us
more advanced in years than your father.
11 Are the consolations of God not enough for you,
and speech that deals gently with you?
12 Why do your notions carry you away,
and why do your eyes blink,
13 So that you turn your anger against God
and let such words escape your mouth!
14 What is a man that he should be blameless,[t]
one born of woman that he should be righteous?[u]
15 If in his holy ones God places no confidence,[v]
and if the heavens are not clean in his sight,
16 How much less so is the abominable, the corrupt:
man, who drinks in iniquity like water!
17 I will show you, if you listen to me;
what I have seen I will tell—
18 What wise men relate
and have not contradicted since the days of their fathers,
19 To whom alone the land was given,
when no foreigner moved among them.
20 The wicked man is in torment all his days,
and limited years are in store for the tyrant;
21 The sound of terrors is in his ears;
when all is prosperous, the spoiler comes upon him.
22 He despairs of escaping the darkness,
and looks ever for the sword;
23 A wanderer, food for the vultures,
he knows that his destruction is imminent.
24 By day the darkness fills him with dread;

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14, 17: Sealed up in a pouch: hidden away and forgotten.

o Jb 7, 1. p Jb 31, 4; 34, 21. q Jb 9, 20. r Jb 11, 7; Wis 9, 13; Jer 23, 18; Rom 11, 34; 1 Cor 2, 11, 16. s Jb 12, 3; 13 2. t 14ff: Jb 25, 4ff. u Jb 14, 4. v Jb 4, 18f.

distress and anguish overpower him.
25 Because he has stretched out his hand against God
and bade defiance to the Almighty,
26 One shall rush sternly upon him
with the stout bosses of his shield,
like a king prepared for the charge.
27 Because he has blinded himself with his crassness,
padding his loins with fat,
28 He shall dwell in ruinous cities,
in houses that are deserted,
That are crumbling into clay
29 with no shadow to lengthen over the ground.
He shall not be rich, and his possessions shall not endure;
31 for vain shall be his bartering.
30 A flame shall wither him up in his early growth,
and with the wind his blossoms shall disappear.
32 His stalk shall wither before its time,
and his branches shall be green no more.
33 He shall be like a vine that sheds its grapes unripened,
and like an olive tree casting off its bloom.
34 For the breed of the impious shall be sterile, [w]
and fire shall consume the tents of extortioners.
35 They conceive malice and bring forth emptiness; [x]
they give birth to failure.*

## CHAPTER 16

Job
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232–241

**Job's Fourth Reply** 1 Then Job answered and said:

2 I have heard this sort of thing many times. [y]
Wearisome comforters are you all!
3 Is there no end to windy words?
Or what sickness have you that you speak on?
4 I also could talk as you do,
were you in my place.
I could declaim over you,
or wag my head at you;
5 I could strengthen you with talk,
or shake my head with silent lips.
6 If I speak, this pain I have will not be checked;
if I leave off, it will not depart from me.
7 But now that I am exhausted and stunned,
all my company has closed in on me.
8 As a witness there rises up
my traducer, speaking openly against me;
9 I am the prey his wrath assails,
he gnashes his teeth against me.
My enemies lord it over me;
10 their mouths are agape to bite me.
They smite me on the cheek insultingly;
they are all enlisted against me.
11 God has given me over to the impious;
into the clutches of the wicked he has cast me.
12 I was in peace, but he dislodged me;
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces.
He has set me up for a target;
13 his arrows strike me from all directions,
He pierces my sides without mercy,
he pours out my gall upon the ground.
14 He pierces me with thrust upon thrust;
he attacks me like a warrior.
15 I have fastened sackcloth over my skin,
and have laid my brow in the dust.
16 My face is inflamed with weeping
and there is darkness over my eyes,
17 Although my hands are free from violence,
and my prayer is sincere.
18 O earth, cover not my blood,
nor let my outcry come to rest!*
19 Even now, behold, my witness* is in heaven,
and my spokesman is on high.
20 My friends it is who wrong me;
before God my eyes drop tears,
21 That he may do justice for a mortal in his presence

**15, 35:** They give birth to failure: their wicked plans yield nothing but futile results. Cf Ps 7, 15; Is 59, 4.

**16, 18:** As the blood of those who were unjustly slain cries to heaven for vengeance (Gn 4, 10; Ez 24, 6–9), so Job's sufferings demand redress.

**16, 19:** Witness: refers either to God or, more probably, to Job's prayer.

w Wis 3, 11, 18. x Ps 7, 15; Is 59, 4. y Jb 12, 3.

and decide between a man and his
neighbor.
22 For my years are numbered now,
and I am on a journey from which I shall
not return.

## CHAPTER 17

1 My spirit is broken, my lamp of life
extinguished;
my burial is at hand.
2 I am indeed mocked,
and, as their provocation mounts, my eyes
grow dim.
3 Grant me one to offer you a pledge on my
behalf:*
who is there that will give surety for me?
4 You darken their minds to knowledge;
therefore they do not understand.
5 My lot is described as evil,
6 and I am made a byword of the people;[z]
their object lesson I have become.
7 My eye has grown blind with anguish,
and all my frame is shrunken to a shadow.
8 Upright men are astonished at this,
and the innocent aroused against the
wicked.
9 Yet the righteous shall hold to his way,
and he who has clean hands increase in
strength.
10 But turn now, and come on again;
for I shall not find a wise man among you!
11 My days are passed away, my plans are at an
end,
the cherished purposes of my heart.
12 Such men change the night into day;
where there is darkness they talk of
approaching light.
13 If I look for the nether world as my dwelling,
if I spread my couch in the darkness,
14 If I must call corruption "my father,"
and the maggot "my mother" and "my
sister,"
15 Where then is my hope,
and my prosperity, who shall see?
16 Will they descend with me into the nether
world?
Shall we go down together into the dust?

## CHAPTER 18

Job
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232–241

**Bildad's Second Speech** 1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied and said:

2 When will you put an end to words?
Reflect, and then we can have discussion.
3 Why are we accounted like the beasts,
their equals in your sight?
4 You who tear yourself in your anger,*
shall the earth be neglected on your account
[or the rock be moved out of its place]?
5 Truly, the light of the wicked is extinguished;
no flame brightens his hearth.
6 The light is darkened in his tent;
in spite of him, his lamp goes out.[a]
7 His vigorous steps are hemmed in,
and his own counsel casts him down.
8 For he rushes headlong into a net,
and he wanders into a pitfall.
9 A trap seizes him by the heel,
and a snare lays hold of him.
10 A noose for him is hid on the ground,
and the toils for him on the way.
11 On every side terrors affright him;[b]
they harry him at each step.
12 Disaster is ready at his side,
13 the first-born of death* consumes his limbs.
14 Fiery destruction lodges in his tent,
and marches him off to the king of terrors.*
He is plucked from the security of his tent;
15 over his abode brimstone is scattered.
16 Below, his roots dry up,
and above, his branches wither.
17 His memory perishes from the land,[c]
and he has no name on the earth.
18 He is driven from light into darkness,
and banished out of the world.
19 He has neither son nor grandson among his
people,
nor any survivor where once he dwelt.

**17, 3:** Addressed to God; v 10 to Job's friends.
**18, 4:** Job himself is portrayed as having the heedless rage of wild beasts, despite which God does not forsake the usual course of Divine Providence.
**18, 13:** First-born of death: that is, disease, plague.
**18, 14:** The king of terrors: of the nether world, death; however, the Hebrew is obscure.

z Jb 30, 9. a Jb 21, 17; Prv 13, 9; 24, 20. b Jb 15, 20–24; 27, 20. c Ps 34, 17; Prv 2, 22; 10, 7.

20 They who come after shall be appalled at his fate;
they who went before are struck with horror.
21 So is it then with the dwelling of the impious man,
and such is the place of him who knows not God!

## CHAPTER 19

Job
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232-241

**Job's Fifth Reply** 1 Then Job answered and said:

2 How long will you vex my soul,
grind me down with words?
3 These ten times you have reviled me,
have assailed me without shame!
4 Be it indeed that I am at fault
and that my fault remains with me.
5 Even so, if you would vaunt yourselves against me
and cast up to me my reproach,
6 Know then that God has dealt unfairly with me,
and compassed me round with his net.
7 If I cry out "Injustice!" I am not heard.[d]
I cry for help, but there is no redress.
8 He has barred my way and I cannot pass;
he has veiled my path in darkness;
9 He has stripped me of my glory,
and taken the diadem from my brow.
10 He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone;
my hope he has uprooted like a tree.
11 His wrath he has kindled against me;
he counts me among his enemies.[e]
12 His troops advance as one man;
they build up their road to attack me,
and they encamp around my tent.
13 My brethren have withdrawn from me,[f]
and my friends are wholly estranged.
14 My kinsfolk and companions neglect me,
and my guests have forgotten me.
15 Even my handmaids treat me as a stranger;
I am an alien in their sight.
16 I call my servant, but he gives no answer,
though in my speech I plead with him.
17 My breath is abhorred by my wife;[g]
I am loathsome to the men of my family.
18 The young children, too, despise me;
when I appear, they speak against me.
19 All my intimate friends hold me in horror;
those whom I loved have turned against me![h]
20 My bones cleave to my skin,
and I have escaped with my flesh between my teeth.*
21 Pity me, pity me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has struck me!
22 Why do you hound me as though you were divine,*
and insatiably prey upon me?
23 Oh, would that my words were written down![i]
Would that they were inscribed in a record:*
24 That with an iron chisel and with lead
they were cut in the rock forever!
25 But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives,*
and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust;[j]
27 Whom I myself shall see:
my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him,
26 And from my flesh I shall see God;
my inmost being is consumed with longing.
28 But you who say, "How shall we persecute him,
seeing that the root of the matter is found in him?"

**19, 20:** With my flesh between my teeth: meaning perhaps that Job has been reduced to such an extremity that he scarcely has thin lips over his teeth. But the current Hebrew text of this line is probably corrupt.

**19, 22:** Divine: possessing God's attributes of judgment and authority to punish.

**19, 23f:** Job regards what he is about to say as so important that he wishes it recorded in a permanent manner.

**19, 25. 27:** The meaning of this passage is obscure because the original text has been poorly preserved and the ancient versions do not agree among themselves. It is certain that Job expresses his belief in a future vindication by God (called here in the Hebrew "Goel"), but the time and manner of this vindication are undefined. In the Vulgate Job is made to indicate a belief in physical resurrection after death, but the Hebrew and the other ancient versions are less specific.

d Jb 30, 20. e Jb 13, 24; 33, 10. f Jb 6, 13. g Jb 2, 9. h Sir 6, 8. i Jb 31, 35. j 25ff: Phil 3, 20; Ti 2, 13.

29 Be afraid of the sword for yourselves,
for these crimes deserve the sword;
that you may know that there is a
judgment.

## CHAPTER 20

**Zophar's Second Speech** 1 Then Zophar the Naamathite spoke and said:

3 A rebuke which puts me to shame I hear,
2 and because of this I am disturbed.
So now my thoughts provide me with an
answer,
and from my understanding a spirit gives
me a reply.
4 Do you not know this from olden time,
since man was placed upon the earth,
5 That the triumph of the wicked is short
and the joy of the impious but for a
moment? [k]
6 Though his pride mount up to the heavens
and his head reach to the clouds,
7 Yet he perishes forever like the fuel of his fire,
and the onlookers say, "Where is he?" [l]
8 Like a dream he takes flight and is not found
again;
he fades away like a vision of the night.
9 The eye which saw him does so no more;
nor shall his dwelling again behold him.
11 Though his frame is full of youthful vigor,
this shall lie with him in the dust.
12 Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth,
and he hides it under his tongue,
13 Though he retains it and will not let it go
but keeps it still within his mouth,
14 Yet in his stomach the food shall turn;
it shall be venom of asps inside him.
15 The riches he swallowed he shall disgorge;
God shall compel his belly to disown them.
16 The poison of asps he shall drink in;
the viper's fangs shall slay him.
17 He shall see no streams of oil,*
no torrents of honey or milk.
18 Restoring his gains, he shall not enjoy them;
though his wealth increases, he shall not
rejoice.
19 Because he has oppressed the poor,
and stolen a patrimony he had not built up,
21 Therefore his prosperity shall not endure,
10 and his hands shall yield up his riches. [m]
20 Though he has known no quiet in his greed,
his treasures shall not save him. [n]
22 [o] When he abounds to overflowing, he shall be
brought into straits,
and nought shall be left of his goods.
23 God shall send against him the fury of his
wrath
and rain down his missiles of war upon him.
24 Should he escape the iron weapon,
the bow of bronze shall pierce him through;
25 The dart shall come out of his back;
terrors shall fall upon him.
26 Complete darkness is in store for him;
the fire which shall consume him needs not
to be fanned. [p]
27 The heavens shall reveal his guilt,
and the earth shall rise up against him.
28 The flood shall sweep away his house
with the waters that run off in the day of
God's anger.
29 This is the portion of a wicked man,
and the heritage appointed him by God. [q]

Job
See RG
232–241

## CHAPTER 21

**Job's Sixth Reply** 1 Then Job said in reply:

2 At least listen to my words, [r]
and let that be the consolation you offer.
3 Bear with me while I speak;
and after I have spoken, you can mock!
4 Is my complaint toward man?
And why should I not be impatient?
5 Look at me and be astonished,
put your hands over your mouths.
6 When I think of it, I am dismayed,
and horror takes hold on my flesh.

7 Why do the wicked survive,
grow old, become mighty in power? [s]

Job
See RG
232–241

**20, 17:** Oil: olive oil, one of the main agricultural products of Palestine, a land proverbially rich in honey and milk.

k Jb 21, 13; Ps 37, 35f. l Jb 14, 10; Ps 37, 10, 36. m Jb 27, 14. n Eccl 5, 9; Lk 12, 20. o Jb 15, 20–35. p Dt 32, 22. q Jb 27, 13. r Jb 13, 17. s Jb 12, 6; Pss 37, 35; 73, 3; Eccl 8, 14; Jer 12, 1f; Mal 3, 14f.

8 Their progeny is secure in their sight;
they see before them their kinsfolk and their offspring.
9 Their homes are safe and without fear,
nor is the scourge of God upon them.
10 Their bulls gender without fail;
their cows calve and do not miscarry.
11 These folk have infants numerous as lambs,
and their children dance.
12 They sing to the timbrel and harp,
and make merry to the sound of the flute.
13 They live out their days in prosperity,
and tranquilly go down to the nether world.[t]
14 Yet they say to God, "Depart from us,[u]
for we have no wish to learn your ways!
15 What is the Almighty that we should serve him?
And what gain shall we have if we pray to him?"[v]
16 If their happiness is not in their own hands
and if the counsel of the wicked is repulsive to God,[w]
17 How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?
How often does destruction come upon them,
the portion he allots in his anger?

18 Let them be like straw before the wind,
and like chaff which the storm snatches away!
19 May God not store up the man's misery for his children;
let him requite the man himself so that he feels it,
20 Let his own eyes see the calamity,
and the wrath of the Almighty let him drink!
21 For what interest has he in his family after him,
when the number of his months is finished?

23 One dies in his full vigor,
wholly at ease and content;
24 His figure is full and nourished,
and his bones are rich in marrow.

25 Another dies in bitterness of soul,
having never tasted happiness.
26 Alike they lie down in the dust,
and worms cover them both.

27 Behold, I know your thoughts,
and the arguments you rehearse against me.
28 For you say, "Where is the house of the magnate,
and where the dwelling place of the wicked?"
29 Have you not asked the wayfarers
and do you not recognize their monuments?
30 Nay, the evil man is spared calamity when it comes;
32 and on the day he is carried to the grave
31 Who will charge him with his conduct to his face,
and for what he has done who will repay him?
33 Sweet to him are the clods of the valley,
and over him the funeral mound keeps watch,
While all the line of mankind follows him,
and the countless others who have gone before.
34 How then can you offer me vain comfort,
while in your answers perfidy remains?

## IV: Third Cycle of Speeches

### CHAPTER 22

Job
See RG
232–241

**Eliphaz's Third Speech** 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

2 Can a man be profitable to God?[x]
Though to himself a wise man be profitable!
22 Can anyone teach God knowledge,
seeing that he judges those on high?*
3 Is it of advantage to the Almighty if you are just?[y]
Or is it a gain to him if you make your ways perfect?
4 Is it because of your piety that he reproves you—

22, 22: Those on high: the angels. (This verse has been transposed from ch 21.)

t Jb 34, 20. u Jb 22, 17. v Mal 3, 14. w Jb 22, 18. x Jb 9, 2. y Jb 35, 7.

that he enters with you into judgment?
5 Is not your wickedness manifold?
Are not your iniquities endless?

6 You have unjustly kept your kinsmen's goods in pawn,*
left them stripped naked of their clothing.[z]
7 To the thirsty you have given no water to drink,
and from the hungry you have withheld bread;
8 As if the land belonged to the man of might,
and only the privileged were to dwell in it.
9 You have sent widows away empty-handed,
and the resources of orphans you have destroyed.[a]
10 Therefore snares are round about you,[b]
and a sudden terror causes you dismay,
11 Or darkness, in which you cannot see;
a deluge of waters covers you.

12 Does not God, in the heights of the heavens,[c]
behold the stars, high though they are?
13 Yet you say, "What does God know?[d]
Can he judge through the thick darkness?
14 Clouds hide him so that he cannot see;
he walks upon the vault of the heavens!"

15 Do you indeed keep to the ancient way
trodden by worthless men,
16 Who were snatched away before their time;
whose foundations a flood swept away?
17 These men said to God, "Depart from us!"
and, "What can the Almighty do to us?"
18 [Yet he had filled their houses with good things![e]
But far be from me the mind of the impious!]*
19 The just look on and are gladdened,
and the innocent deride them:[f]
20 "Truly these have been destroyed where they stood,
and such as were left, fire has consumed!"

21 Come to terms with him to be at peace.
In this shall good come to you:
22 Receive instruction from his mouth,
and lay up his words in your heart.
23 If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored;
if you put iniquity far from your tent,
24 And treat raw gold like dust,
and the fine gold of Ophir* as pebbles from the brook,
25 Then the Almighty himself shall be your gold
and your sparkling silver.

26 For then you shall delight in the Almighty
and you shall lift up your face toward God.
27 You shall entreat him and he will hear you,[g]
and your vows you shall fulfill.
28 When you make a decision, it shall succeed for you,
and upon your ways the light shall shine.
29 For he brings down the pride of the haughty,
but the man of humble mien he saves.[h]
30 God delivers him who is innocent;
you shall be delivered through cleanness of hands.[i]

## CHAPTER 23

**Job's Seventh Reply** 1 Again Job answered and said:

Job
See RG 232–241

2 Though I know my complaint is bitter,
his hand is heavy upon me in my groanings.
3 Oh, that today I might find him,
that I might come to his judgment seat!
4 I would set out my cause before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments;
5 I would learn the words with which he would answer,
and understand what he would reply to me.
6 Even should he contend against me with his great power,
yet, would that he himself might heed me!
7 There the upright man might reason with him,
and I should once and for all preserve my rights.

**22, 6ff:** This criticism of Job by Eliphaz is altogether untrue, but it is made to dramatize the latter's argument that God always acts justly when he causes someone to suffer. Verse 8 is misplaced.
**22, 18:** A gloss, taken partly from Jb 21, 16.
**22, 24:** Ophir: cf note to Ps 45, 10.

z Jb 24, 3; Dt 24, 6, 17; Ez 18, 12, 16. a Dt 24, 17; 27, 19. b Jb 18, 8ff. c Jb 11, 8. d 13f: Pss 10, 11; 73, 11; 94, 7; Is 29, 15; Ez 8, 12: 9, 9. e Jb 21, 16. f Ps 107, 42. g Jb 33, 26. h Ps 138, 6; Prv 29, 23; Mt 23, 12; Lk 1, 52; Jas 4, 10; 1 Pt 5, 5. i Jb 17.9; Ps 18, 21, 25.

8 But if I go to the east, he is not there;
or to the west, I cannot perceive him;
9 Where the north enfolds him, I behold him not;
by the south he is veiled, and I see him not.
10 Yet he knows my way;
if he proved me, I should come forth as gold.[j]
11 My foot has always walked in his steps;
his way I have kept and have not turned aside.
12 From the commands of his lips I have not departed;
the words of his mouth I have treasured in my heart.
13 But he has decided, and who can say him nay?
What he desires, that he does.[k]
14 For he will carry out what is appointed for me;
and many such things may yet be in his mind.

15 Therefore am I dismayed before him;
when I take thought, I fear him.
16 Indeed God has made my courage fail;
the Almighty has put me in dismay.
17 Yes, would that I had vanished in darkness,
and that thick gloom were before me to conceal me.

## CHAPTER 24

Job
See RG
232–241

1 Why are not times set by the Almighty,
and why do his friends not see his days?*
2 The wicked remove landmarks;
they steal away herds and pasture them.
3 The asses of orphans they drive away;
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4 They force the needy off the road;
all the poor of the land are driven into hiding.
5 Like wild asses in the desert, these go forth
to their task of seeking food;
The steppe provides food for the young among them;
6 they harvest at night in the untilled land.
7 They pass the night naked, without clothing,
for they have no covering against the cold;
8 They are drenched with the rain of the mountains,
and for want of shelter they cling to the rock.
11 Between the rows they press out the oil;
they glean in the vineyard of the wicked.
They tread the wine presses, yet suffer thirst,
10 and famished are those who carry the sheaves.

12 From the dust the dying groan,
and the souls of the wounded cry out
[yet God does not treat it as unseemly].
13 There are those who are rebels against the light;[l]
they know not its ways;
they abide not in its paths.
14 When there is no light the murderer rises,
to kill the poor and needy.
15 The eye of the adulterer watches for the twilight;[m]
he says, "No eye will see me."
In the night the thief roams about,
and he puts a mask over his face;
16 in the dark he breaks into houses.
By day they shut themselves in;
none of them know the light,
17 for daylight they regard as darkness.*

* * *

18 Their portion in the land is accursed,
20 and wickedness is splintered like wood.
19.21. . . . . .
22 To him who rises without assurance of his life

**24, 1:** Why does not God favor his friends by the speedy punishment of his enemies? (The text and order of verses in this chapter are not certain; note the omission of v 9 which duplicates words of vv 2–4.)

**24, 17:** The asterisks which follow this verse mark off a passage (vv 18–24) which cannot be ascribed to Job with certainty. Vv 17–24 are in general poorly preserved; and much of vv 18–21 has not been translated because these verses are obscure. St. Jerome renders them as follows: (18) "He is light upon the face of the water, cursed be his portion on the earth; let him not walk by the way of vineyards. (19) Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat, and his sin even to hell. (20) Let mercy forget him; may worms be his sweetness; let him be remembered no more, but be broken in pieces as an unfruitful tree. (21) For he has fed the barren that bears not, and to the widow he has done no good."

j Ps 66, 10; Prv 17, 3; Mal 3, 3; 1 Pt 1, 7. k Jb 42, 2; Pss 115, 3; 135, 6. l Jn 3, 19f. m Prv 7, 9f.

23 he gives safety and support.
He sustains the mighty by his strength,
and his eyes are on their ways.
24 They are exalted for a while, and then they are gone;
they are laid low and, like all others, are gathered up;
like ears of grain they shrivel.

* * *

25 If this be not so, who will confute me,
and reduce my argument to nought?

## CHAPTER 25

**Bildad's Third Speech** 1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2 Dominion and awesomeness are his
who brings about harmony in his heavens.
3 Is there any numbering of his troops?*
Yet to which of them does not his light extend?
4 How can a man be just in God's sight, [n]
or how can any woman's child be innocent?
5 Behold, even the moon is not bright
and the stars are not clear in his sight.
6 How much less man, who is but a maggot,
the son of man, who is only a worm? [o]

## CHAPTER 26

**Job's Reply** 1 Then Job spoke again and said:*

2 What help you give to the powerless,
what strength to the feeble arm!
3 How you counsel, as though he had no wisdom;
how profuse is the advice you offer!
4 With whose help have you uttered those words,
and whose is the breath that comes forth from you? [p]
5 The shades* beneath writhe in terror, [q]
the waters, and their inhabitants.
6 Naked before him is the nether world,*
and Abaddon has no covering. [r]
7 He stretches out the North* over empty space,
and suspends the earth over nothing at all;
8 He binds up the waters in his clouds,
yet the cloud is not rent by their weight;
9 He holds back the appearance of the full moon
by spreading his clouds before it.

10 He has marked out a circle* on the surface of the deep [s]
as the boundary of light and darkness.
11 The pillars of the heavens tremble [t]
and are stunned at his thunderous rebuke;
12 By his power he stirs up the sea,
and by his might he crushes Rahab;*
13 With his angry breath he scatters the water,
and he hurls the lightning against it relentlessly;
His hand pierces the fugitive dragon*
as from his hand it strives to flee. [u]
14 Lo, these are but the outlines of his ways,
and how faint is the word we hear!

## CHAPTER 27

**Job's Reply**

1 I will teach you the manner of God's dealings,
and the way of the Almighty I will not conceal.
2 As God lives,* who withholds my deserts, [v]
the Almighty, who has made bitter my soul,
3 So long as I still have life in me
and the breath of God is in my nostrils,

Job
See RG 232–241

**25, 3:** His troops: the heavenly hosts, the stars or the angels. His light: compare the wording in Jb 24, 13: those who are rebels against the light.

**26, 1–14:** Probably to be read as Job's reply to Bildad's short speech. Some, however, would make it the reply to Zophar (Jb 27, 13–21); it would thus lead up to the poem of ch 28.

**26, 5:** Shades: the dead in Sheol, the nether world; cf Pss 6, 6; 88, 11.

**26, 6:** Nether world: cf note to Ps 6, 6. Abaddon: Hebrew for "(place of) destruction," a synonym for nether world; cf Jb 28, 22; Rv 9, 11.

**26, 7:** The North: used here as a synonym for the firmament, the heavens; cf Is 14, 13.

**26, 10:** Circle: the horizon of the ocean which serves as the boundary for the activity of light and darkness.

**26, 12:** Rahab: cf Jb 9, 13; see note on Ps 89, 11.

**26, 13:** The fugitive dragon: the same term occurs in Is 27, 1 in apposition to Leviathan; see note on Jb 3, 8. This is actually Jb 27, 22.

**27, 2–12:** This is probably to be read as Job's reply to Zophar's speech of Jb 27, 13–21. In the current Hebrew text the heading for this chapter (Jb 27, 1, here omitted) is identical with Jb 29, 1; we should expect rather such a heading as is Jb 21, 1; 23, 1; 26, 1.

n Jb 4, 17ff; 9, 2. o Jb 4, 19; 15, 16. p Gn 2, 7. q Prv 9, 18. r Ps 139, 7–12. s Jb 38, 8–11; Prv 8, 29. t Jb 9, 6. u Is 27, 1. v Jb 34, 5.

4 My lips shall not speak falsehood,
nor my tongue utter deceit!
5 Far be it from me to account you right;
till I die I will not renounce my innocence.[w]
6 My justice I maintain and I will not relinquish it;
my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.
7 Let my enemy be as the wicked
and my adversary as the unjust!
8 For what can the impious man expect when he is cut off,
when God requires his life?
9 Will God then attend to his cry
when calamity comes upon him?
10 Will he then delight in the Almighty
and call upon him constantly?
12 Behold, you yourselves have all seen it;
why then do you spend yourselves in idle words!

Job
See RG
232–241

* * *

13 *This is the portion of a wicked man from God,
the inheritance an oppressor receives from the Almighty:[x]
14 Though his children be many, the sword is their destiny.
His offspring shall not be filled with bread.
15 His survivors, when they die, shall have no burial,
and their widows shall not be mourned.
16 Though he heap up silver like dust
and store away mounds of clothing,
17 What he has stored the just man shall wear,
and the innocent shall divide the silver.
18 He builds his house as of cobwebs,
or like a booth put up by the vinekeeper.
19 He lies down a rich man, one last time;
he opens his eyes and nothing remains to him.[y]
20 Terrors rush upon him by day;
at night the tempest carries him off.
21 The storm wind seizes him and he disappears;
it sweeps him out of his place.*

* * *

## CHAPTER 28

### The Inaccessibility of Wisdom

1 There is indeed a mine for silver,*
and a place for gold which men refine.
2 Iron is taken from the earth,
and copper is melted out of stone.
4 . . . . . .
5 The earth, though out of it comes forth bread,
is in fiery upheaval underneath.
6 Its stones are the source of sapphires,
and there is gold in its dust.

12 But whence can wisdom be obtained,
and where is the place of understanding?[z]
13 Man knows nothing to equal it,
nor is it to be had in the land of the living.
15 Solid gold cannot purchase it,
nor can its price be paid with silver.[a]
16 It cannot be bought with gold of Ophir,*
with the precious onyx or the sapphire.
17 Gold or crystal cannot equal it,
nor can golden vessels reach its worth.
18 Neither coral nor jasper should be thought of;
it surpasses pearls and 19 Arabian topaz.

20 Whence, then, comes wisdom,
and where is the place of understanding?
21 It is hid from the eyes of any beast;
from the birds of the air it is concealed.
7 The path to it no bird of prey knows,
nor has the hawk's eye seen that path.

**27, 13–21:** This is probably to be read as Zophar's third speech. The asterisks are present to indicate it is not likely that the sacred writer intended these words to be ascribed to Job.

**27, 21:** The Hebrew has two more verses: v 22 (read above with Jb 26, 13); and v 23, which is a variant form of v 21.

**28, 1–28:** Note the changed order of verses; v 4 is uncertain. This chapter contains a beautifully vivid description of that Wisdom which is beyond the attainment of creatures; known only to God, it is reflected in the order and majesty of his creation. Man, however, can, in a way, participate in this Wisdom by fearing the Lord and avoiding evil. Scholars are not agreed regarding the authorship of this poem, though it is altogether worthy of the author of the Book of Job. Used here as a counterpoise to ch 3 at the beginning of the dialogue, it may have been first conceived as an independent poem.

**28, 16:** Ophir: cf note to Ps 45, 10.

w Jb 2, 3, 9; 13, 15; 33, 9. x Jb 20, 4–29. y Pss 49, 18; 76, 6. z Eccl 7, 24f; Bar 3, 14f. 29–33. a Prv 3, 14; 8, 10f, 19; 16, 16; Wis 7, 7–11.

8 The proud beasts have not trodden it,
nor has the lion gone that way.
14 The abyss declares, "It is not in me";
and the sea says, "I have it not."
22 Abaddon* and Death say,
"Only by rumor have we heard of it."

23 God knows the way to it; [b]
it is he who is familiar with its place. [c]
24 For he beholds the ends of the earth
and sees all that is under the heavens.
3 He has set a boundary for the darkness;
to the farthest confines he penetrates.
9 He sets his hand to the flinty rock,
and overturns the mountains at their foundations.
10 He splits channels in the rocks;
his eyes behold all that is precious.
11 He probes the wellsprings of the streams,
and brings hidden things to light.
25 He has weighed out the wind,
and fixed the scope of the waters;
26 When he made rules for the rain
and a path for the thunderbolts, [d]
27 Then he saw wisdom and appraised it,
gave it its setting, knew it through and through.
28 And to man he said:
Behold, the fear of the LORD is wisdom;
and avoiding evil is understanding. [e]

## V: Job's Final Summary of His Cause

### CHAPTER 29

1 Job took up his theme anew and said:

2 Oh, that I were as in the months past!
as in the days when God watched over me, [f]
3 While he kept his lamp shining above my head,
and by his light I walked through darkness;
4 As I was in my flourishing days,
when God sheltered my tent;
5 When the Almighty was yet with me,
and my children were round about me;
6 When my footsteps were bathed in milk,
and the rock flowed with streams of oil;*
7 When I went forth to the gate of the city
and set up my seat in the square—

8 Then the young men saw me and withdrew,
while the elders rose up and stood;
9 The chief men refrained from speaking
and covered their mouths with their hands; [g]
10 The voice of the princes was silenced,
and their tongues stuck to the roofs of their mouths.

21 For me they listened and waited;
they were silent for my counsel.
22 Once I spoke, they said no more,
but received my pronouncement drop by drop.
23 They waited for me as for the rain;
they drank in my words like the spring rains.

24 When I smiled on them they were reassured;
25 mourners took comfort from my cheerful glance.
I chose out their way and presided;
I took a king's place in the armed forces.
11 Whoever heard of me blessed me;
those who saw me commended me.

12 For I rescued the poor who cried out for help,
the orphans, and the unassisted;
13 The blessing of those in extremity came upon me,
and the heart of the widow I made joyful.
14 I wore my honesty like a garment;
justice was my robe and my turban.
15 I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame was I;
16 I was a father to the needy;
the rights of the stranger I studied,
17 And I broke the jaws of the wicked man;
from his teeth I forced the prey.

Job
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232–241

**28, 22:** Abaddon: cf note to Jb 26, 6.
**29, 6:** Hyperbole to express abundance; see note on Jb 20, 17.

b 23–27: Prv 8, 22–31. c Prv 2, 6; Sir 1, 1; Jas 1, 5. d Jb 38, 25; Prv 3, 20. e Ps 111, 10; Prv 1, 7; 9, 10; Sir 1, 16. f Jb 1, 10. g Wis 8, 10ff.

18 Then I said: "In my own nest I shall grow old;
I shall multiply years like the phoenix.*
19 My root is spread out to the waters;
the dew rests by night on my branches.
20 My glory is fresh within me,
and my bow is renewed in my hand!"

## CHAPTER 30

Job
See RG
232–241

1 But now they hold me in derision
who are younger in years than I; [h]
Whose fathers I should have disdained
to rank with the dogs of my flock.
2 Such strength as they had, to me meant nought;
they were utterly destitute.

3 In want and hunger was their lot, [i]
they who fled to the parched wastelands:
4 They plucked saltwort* and shrubs;
the roots of the broom plant were their food.
5 They were banished from among men,
with an outcry like that against a thief—
6 To dwell on the slopes of the wadies,
in caves of sand and stone;
7 Among the bushes they raised their raucous cry;
under the nettles they huddled together.
8 Irresponsible, nameless men,
they were driven out of the land.

9 Yet now they sing of me in mockery;
I am become a byword among them. [j]
10 They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,
they do not hesitate to spit in my face!
11 Indeed, they have loosed their bonds; they lord it over me,
and have thrown off restraint in my presence.

12 To subvert my paths they rise up;
they build their approaches for my ruin.
13 To destroy me, they attack with none to stay them;

Job
See RG
232–241

14 as through a wide breach they advance.
Amid the uproar they come on in waves;
15 over me rolls the terror.
My dignity is borne off on the wind,
and my welfare vanishes like a cloud.
18 One with great power lays hold of my clothing;*
by the collar of my tunic he seizes me:
19 He has cast me into the mire;
I am leveled with the dust and ashes.

20 I cry to you, but you do not answer me; [k]
you stand off and look at me,
21 Then you turn upon me without mercy
and with your strong hand you buffet me.
22 You raise me up and drive me before the wind;
I am tossed about by the tempest.
23 Indeed I know you will turn me back in death
to the destined place of everyone alive. [l]
24 Yet should not a hand be held out
to help a wretched man in his calamity?
25 Or have I not wept for the hardships of others;
was not my soul grieved for the destitute? [m]
26 Yet when I looked for good, then evil came;
when I expected light, then came darkness.

16 My soul ebbs away from me;
27 days of affliction have overtaken me.
17 My frame takes no rest by night;
my inward parts seethe and will not be stilled.
28 I go about in gloom, without the sun;
I rise up in public to voice my grief.

29 I have become the brother of jackals,
companion to the ostrich.
30 My blackened skin falls away from me;
the heat scorches my very frame.
31 My harp is turned to mourning,
and my reed pipe to sounds of weeping.

## CHAPTER 31

2 But what is man's lot from God above,
his inheritance from the Almighty on high?

**29, 18:** Phoenix: a legendary bird which, after several centuries of life, consumed itself in fire, then rose from its ashes in youthful freshness. This meaning, originally intended in the Greek, later came to mean "palm tree." Some render the Hebrew as "sand."

**30, 4:** Saltwort: found in salt marshes and very sour to the taste; eaten by the extremely poor as a cooked vegetable. Broom plant: the juniper or brushwood; cf Ps 120, 4; a figure of bitterness and poverty, because of its bitter-tasting roots which are practically inedible.

**30, 18–23:** Job here refers to God's stern treatment of him.

h Jb 12, 4; 19, 18. i 3–8: Jb 24, 5f. j Jb 17, 6. k Jb 19, 7. l Heb 9, 27. m Jb 29, 12–16.

3 Is it not calamity for the unrighteous,
and woe for evildoers?
4 Does he not see my ways,
and number all my steps? [n]
6 Let God weigh me in the scales of justice;
thus will he know my innocence! [o]

5 If I have walked in falsehood*
and my foot has hastened to deceit;
7 If my steps have turned out of the way,
and my heart has followed my eyes,
or any stain clings to my hands,
8 Then may I sow, but another eat of it,
or may my planting be rooted up!

38 If my land has cried out against me
till its very furrows complained;
39 If I have eaten its produce without payment
and grieved the hearts of its tenants;
40 Then let the thistles grow instead of wheat
and noxious weeds instead of barley!

1 If I have made an agreement with my eyes*
and entertained any thoughts against a maiden;
9 If my heart has been enticed toward a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door;
10 Then may my wife grind for another,
and may others cohabit with her!

11 For that would be heinous,
a crime to be condemned; [p]
12 A fire that should burn down to the abyss
till it consumed all my possessions to the roots. [q]
13 Had I refused justice to my manservant
or to my maid, when they had a claim against me,
14 What then should I do when God rose up;
what could I answer when he demanded an account?
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make him?
Did not the same One fashion us before our birth?

16 If I have denied anything to the poor, [r]
or allowed the eyes of the widow to languish
17 While I ate my portion alone,
with no share in it for the fatherless,
18 Though like a father God has reared me from my youth,
guiding me even from my mother's womb—
19 If I have seen a wanderer without clothing,
or a poor man without covering,
20 Whose limbs have not blessed me
when warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
21 If I have raised my hand against the innocent
because I saw that I had supporters at the gate—*
22 Then may my arm fall from the shoulder,
my forearm be broken at the elbow!
23 For the dread of God will be upon me,
and his majesty will overpower me.
24 Had I put my trust in gold
or called fine gold my security;
25 Or had I rejoiced that my wealth was great,
or that my hand had acquired abundance—
26 Had I looked upon the sun as it shone, [s]
or the moon in the splendor of its progress,*
27 And had my heart been secretly enticed
to waft them a kiss with my hand;
28 This too would be a crime for condemnation,
for I should have denied God above. [t]

29 Had I rejoiced at the destruction of my enemy
or exulted when evil fell upon him, [u]
30 Even though I had not suffered my mouth to sin
by uttering a curse against his life—

31 Had not the men of my tent exclaimed,
"Who has not been fed with his meat!"*
32 Because no stranger lodged in the street,

**31, 5–34:** Job's final protestation of his innocence.
**31, 1. 9:** Note the gradation: avoidance of sinful glances and thoughts against a maiden; desire for another's wife.
**31, 21:** Gate: cf notes on Jb 5, 4; Ru 4, 1.
**31, 26ff:** Job never sinned by worshiping the sun or the moon; waft them a kiss: an act of idolatrous worship.
**31, 31:** The members of his household will testify to his hospitality.

n Jb 14, 16; 34, 21; Ps 139, 3; Prv 5, 21. o Jb 23, 10. p Ex 20, 14; Lv 20, 10; Dt 22, 22. q Sir 9, 8f. r 16–23: Jb 29, 12–16. s 26f: Dt 4, 19. t Dt 17, 2–7. u Prv 24, 17.

but I opened my door to wayfarers—
33 Had I, out of human weakness, hidden my sins
and buried my guilt in my bosom*
34 Because I feared the noisy multitude
and the scorn of the tribes terrified me—
then I should have remained silent, and not come out of doors!

35 Oh, that I had one to hear my case,
and that my accuser would write out his indictment! [v]
36 Surely, I should wear it on my shoulder*
or put it on me like a diadem;
37 Of all my steps I should give him an account;
like a prince* I should present myself before him.

This is my final plea; let the Almighty answer me!
The words of Job are ended.

## VI: Elihu's Speeches

### CHAPTER 32

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1 Then the three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous [w] in his own eyes.
2 [x] But the anger of Elihu,* son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was kindled. He was angry with Job for considering himself rather than God to be in the right. 3 [y] He was angry also with the three friends because they had not found a good answer and had not condemned Job. 4 But since these men were older than he, Elihu bided his time before addressing Job. 5 When, however, Elihu saw that there was no reply in the mouths of the three men, his wrath was inflamed. 6 So Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, spoke out and said:

I am young and you are very old;
therefore I held back and was afraid
to declare to you my knowledge.
7 Days should speak, I thought,
and many years teach wisdom! [z]
8 But it is a spirit in man, [a]
the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.
9 It is not those of many days who are wise,
nor the aged who understand the right.
10 Therefore I say, hearken to me;
let me too set forth my knowledge!

11 Behold, I have waited for your discourses,
and have given ear to your arguments.
12 Yes, I followed you attentively
as you searched out what to say;
And behold, there is none who has convicted Job,
not one of you who could refute his statements.
13 Yet do not say, "We have met wisdom.*
God may vanquish him but not man!"
14 For had he addressed his words to me,
I should not then have answered him as you have done.

15 They are dismayed, they make no more reply;
words fail them.
16 Must I wait? Now that they speak no more,
and have ceased to make reply,
17 I too will speak my part;
I also will show my knowledge!

18 For I am full of matters to utter;
the spirit within me compels me.
19 Like a new wineskin with wine under pressure,
my bosom is ready to burst.
20 Let me speak and obtain relief;
let me open my lips, and make reply.

**31, 33f:** Job's present protest is made, not in spite of hidden sins which he had been unwilling to disclose, but out of genuine innocence.

**31, 36:** On my shoulder: i.e., boldly, proudly.

**31, 37:** Like a prince: not as a frightened criminal. Final plea: literally, "tau," the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet; in the current Hebrew text this line is in v 35, while the following one ends v 40.

**32, 2:** Elihu means "My God is he." This speaker was from Buz, which, according to Jer 25, 23, was near Tema and Dedan. A young man, he impetuously and impatiently upbraids Job for his boldness toward God, and the three friends for not successfully answering Job. He undertakes to defend God's absolute justice and to explain more clearly why there is suffering. While fundamentally his position is the same as that of the three friends, he does locate more definitely, though not perfectly, the place of suffering in the divine plan.

**32, 13:** Met wisdom: in Job's arguments.

v Jb 19, 23; 23, 3–7. w Jb 33, 9. x Jb 13, 18; 27, 6; 34, 5; 35, 2. y Jb 22, 5. z Jb 12, 12. a Jb 33, 4.

21 I would not be partial to anyone,
nor give flattering titles to any.
22 For I know nought of flattery;
if I did, my Maker would soon take me away.

## CHAPTER 33

1 Therefore, O Job, hear my discourse,
and hearken to all my words.
2 Behold, now I open my mouth;
my tongue and my voice form words.
3 I will state directly what is in my mind,
my lips shall utter knowledge sincerely;
4 For the spirit of God has made me,
the breath of the Almighty keeps me alive. [b]

5 If you are able, refute me;
draw up your arguments and stand forth.
6 Behold I, like yourself, have been taken
from the same clay by God. [c]
7 Therefore no fear of me should dismay you,
nor should my presence weigh heavily upon you.

8 But you have said in my hearing,
as I listened to the sound of your words:
9 "I am clean and without transgression;
I am innocent; there is no guilt in me. [d]
10 Yet he invents pretexts against me
and reckons me as his enemy. [e]
11 He puts my feet in the stocks;
he watches all my ways!" [f]

12 In this you are not just, let me tell you;
for God is greater than man.
13 Why, then, do you make complaint against him
that he gives no account of his doings? [g]
14 For God does speak, perhaps once,
or even twice, though one perceive it not.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
[when deep sleep falls upon men]
as they slumber in their beds,
16 It is then he opens the ears of men
and as a warning to them, terrifies them;
17 By turning man from evil
and keeping pride away from him,
18 He withholds his soul from the pit
and his life from passing to the grave.

19 Or a man is chastened on his bed by pain
and unceasing suffering within his frame,
20 So that to his appetite food becomes repulsive,
and his senses reject the choicest nourishment. [h]

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21 His flesh is wasted so that it cannot be seen,
and his bones, once invisible, appear;
22 His soul draws near to the pit,
his life to the place of the dead.

23 If then there be for him an angel,*
one out of a thousand, a mediator,
To show him what is right for him
and bring the man back to justice,
24 He will take pity on him and say,
"Deliver him from going down to the pit;
I have found him a ransom."

25 Then his flesh shall become soft as a boy's;
he shall be again as in the days of his youth.
26 He shall pray and God will favor him;
he shall see God's face with rejoicing. [i]
27 He shall sing before men and say,
"I sinned and did wrong,
yet he has not punished me accordingly.
28 He delivered my soul from passing to the pit,
and I behold the light of life."

29 Lo, all these things God does,
twice, or thrice, for a man,
30 Bringing back his soul from the pit
to the light, in the land of the living.
31 Be attentive, O Job; listen to me!
Be silent and I will speak.
32 If you have aught to say, then answer me.
Speak out! I should like to see you justified.
33 If not, then do you listen to me;
be silent while I teach you wisdom.

## CHAPTER 34

1 Then Elihu continued and said:

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2 Hear, O wise men, my discourse,
and you that have knowledge, hear me!

**33, 23:** Angel: one of the thousands who stand between God and man as intermediaries, reminding man of his duties and giving God an account of their fulfillment.

b Jb 32, 8. c Jb 31, 15. d Jb 10, 7; 13, 18; 27, 5f; 29, 14; 32, 1; 34, 5. e Jb 13, 24; 19, 11. f Jb 13, 27; 31, 4. g Jb 31, 35. h Jb 6, 7. i Jb 22, 26–29.

3 For the ear tests words,
as the taste does food.[j]
4 Let us discern for ourselves what is right;
let us learn between us what is good.
5 For Job has said, "I am innocent,
but God has taken what is my due.[k]
6 Notwithstanding my right I am set at nought;
in my wound the arrow rankles, sinless
though I am."[l]

7 What man is like Job?
He drinks in blasphemies like water,
8 Keeps company with evildoers
and goes along with wicked men,
9 When he says, "It profits a man nought
that he is pleasing to God."[m]

10 Therefore, men of understanding, hearken to me:
far be it from God to do wickedness;
far from the Almighty to do wrong![n]
11 Rather, he requites men for their conduct,
and brings home to a man his way of life.[o]
12 Surely, God cannot act wickedly,
the Almighty cannot violate justice.[p]
13 Who gave him government over the earth,
or who else set all the land in its place?[q]
14 If he were to take back his spirit to himself,
withdraw to himself his breath,
15 All flesh would perish together,
and man would return to the dust.[r]

16 Now, do you, O Job, hear this!
Hearken to the words I speak!
17 Can an enemy of justice indeed be in control,
or will you condemn the supreme Just One,
18 Who says to a king, "You are worthless!"
and to nobles, "You are wicked!"
19 Who neither favors the person of princes,
nor respects the rich more than the poor?
For they are all the work of his hands;[s]
20 in a moment they die, even at midnight.[t]
He brings on nobles, and takes them away,
removing the powerful without lifting a hand;

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21 For his eyes are upon the ways of man,
and he beholds all his steps.

22 There is no darkness so dense
that evildoers can hide in it.
25 Therefore he discerns their works;
he turns at night and crushes them.
23 For he forewarns no man of his time
to come before God in judgment.
24 Without a trial he breaks the mighty,[u]
and sets others in their stead,
27 Because they turned away from him
and heeded none of his ways,
28 But caused the cries of the poor to reach him,
so that he heard the plea of the afflicted.

29 If he remains tranquil, who then can condemn?*
If he hides his face, who then can behold him?
30

. . . . . .

31 When anyone says to God,
"I was misguided; I will offend no more.
32 Teach me wherein I have sinned;
if I have done wrong, I will do so no more,"
33 Would you then say that God must punish,
since you reject what he is doing?
It is you who must choose, not I;
speak, therefore, what you know.

34 Men of understanding will say to me,
every wise man who hears my views:
35 "Job speaks without intelligence,
and his words are without sense."[v]
36 Let Job be tried to the limit,
since his answers are those of the impious;
37 For he is adding rebellion to his sin
by brushing off our arguments
and addressing many words to God.

## CHAPTER 35

1 Then Elihu proceeded and said:

2 Do you think it right to say,

34, 26. 29f: The extant Hebrew text of these verses contains several added phrases which either represent duplication or are very obscure.

j Jb 12, 11. k Jb 33, 9f. l Jb 9, 20. m Jb 9, 22f. 30f; 21, 15; 35, 3. n Jb 36, 23. o Ps 62, 13; Prv 24, 12; Mt 16, 27; Rom 2, 6; 2 Cor 5, 10; Rv 22, 12. p Jb 8, 3. q Jb 38, 4–7. r Jb 10, 9. s Dt 10, 17; 2 Chr 19, 7; Wis 6, 7; Acts 10, 34; Rom 2, 11; Eph 6, 9; Col 3, 25; 1 Pt 1, 17. t Jb 21, 3. u Ps 2, 9. v Jb 35, 16; 38, 2; 42, 3.

"I am just rather than God"?[w]
3 To say, "What does it profit me;
what advantage have I more than if I had sinned?"[x]
4 I have words for a reply to you*
and your three companions as well.
5 Look up to the skies and behold;
regard the heavens high above you.
6 If you sin, what injury do you do to God?
Even if your offenses are many, how do you hurt him?
7 If you are righteous, what do you give him,
or what does he receive from your hand?[y]
8 Your wickedness can affect only a man like yourself;
and your justice only a fellow human being.

9 In great oppression men cry out;
they call for help because of the power of the mighty,
10 Saying, "Where is God, my Maker,
who has given visions in the night,
11 Taught us rather than the beasts of the earth,
and made us wise rather than the birds of the heavens?"
12 Though thus they cry out, he answers not
against the pride of the wicked.
13 But it is idle to say God does not hear
or that the Almighty does not take notice.
14 Even though you say that you see him not,*
the case is before him; with trembling should you wait upon him.
15 But now that you have done otherwise, God's anger punishes,
nor does he show concern that a man will die.
16 Yet Job to no purpose opens his mouth,
and without knowledge multiplies words.[z]

## CHAPTER 36

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1 Elihu proceeded further and said:

2 Wait yet a little and I will instruct you,
for there are still words to be said on God's behalf.
3 I will bring my knowledge from afar,
and to my Maker I will accord the right.
4 For indeed, my theme cannot fail me:
the one perfect in knowledge I set before you.

5 Behold, God rejects the obstinate in heart;*
he preserves not the life of the wicked,
6 He withholds not the just man's rights,
but grants vindication to the oppressed[a]
7 And with kings upon thrones
he sets them, exalted forever.[b]

8 Or if they are bound with fetters
and held fast by bonds of affliction,
9 Then he makes known to them what they have done
and their sins of boastful pride.
10 He opens their ears to correction
and exhorts them to turn back from evil.

11 If they obey and serve him,
they spend their days in prosperity,
their years in happiness.
12 But if they obey not, they perish;
they die for lack of knowledge.*

13 The impious in heart lay up anger for themselves;
they cry not for help when he enchains them;
14 Therefore they expire in youth,
and perish among the reprobate.*
15 But he saves the unfortunate through their affliction,
and instructs them through distress.
16-20 . . . . . .*

**35, 4:** A reply to you: Elihu refers to Job's statement that the innocent suffer as much as the wicked, and especially to Eliphaz's words in Jb 22, 2f.

**35, 14f:** The text here is uncertain. It seems to indicate that Job should have realized God's indifference is only apparent, and that, because he has not done so, God will punish him.

**36, 5–21:** Perhaps this section should be read between vv 6 and 7 of chapter 34.

**36, 12:** Knowledge: practical wisdom in serving God, which they lack because they refused it when warned (cf v 10).

**36, 14:** Reprobate: cf Dt 23, 18f.

**36, 16–20:** The Hebrew text here is in disorder. The Vulgate has: "(16) Therefore he will give you most ample salvation from the narrow mouth which has no foundations beneath it; but the repose of your table will be filled with fatness. (17) Your case has been judged as that of the wicked; case and judgment you will receive. (18) Let no wrath, then, overcome you, that you oppress anyone; nor let numerous gifts mislead you. (19) Lay down your greatness without tribulation, and all who are mighty in strength. (20) Do not draw out the night, that people may go in place of them."

w Jb 32, 2. x Jb 34, 9. y Jb 22, 3; 41, 2; Lk 17, 10; Rom 11, 35. z Jb 34, 35; 38, 2; 42, 3. a Ps 72, 4. 12f. b Ps 113, 7f.

21 Take heed, turn not to evil;
for you have preferred carousal to affliction.

22 Behold, God is sublime in his power.
What teacher is there like him?
23 Who prescribes for him his conduct,
or who can say, "You have done wrong"? [c]
24 Remember, you should extol his work,
which men have praised in song.
25 All men contemplate it;
man beholds it from afar.

26 Lo, God is great beyond our knowledge;
the number of his years is past searching out.
27 He holds in check the waterdrops
that filter in rain through his mists,
28 Till the skies run with them
and the showers rain down on mankind.
31 For by these* he nourishes the nations,
and gives them food in abundance.
29.30 Lo! he spreads the clouds in layers
as the carpeting of his tent.*
32 In his hands he holds the lightning,
and he commands it to strike the mark.
33 His thunder speaks for him
and incites the fury of the storm.

## CHAPTER 37

Job
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1 At this my heart trembles
and leaps out of its place,
2 To hear his angry voice*
as it rumbles forth from his mouth!
3 Everywhere under the heavens he sends it,
with his lightning, to the ends of the earth.
4 Again his voice roars—
the majestic sound of his thunder.
5 He does great things beyond our knowing;
wonders past our searching out.
6 For he says to the snow, "Fall to the earth";
likewise to his heavy, drenching rain.
7 He shuts up all mankind indoors;
8 the wild beasts take to cover
and remain quietly in their dens.

9 Out of its chamber* comes forth the tempest;
from the north winds, the cold.
10 With his breath God brings the frost,
and the broad waters become congealed. [d]
11 With hail, also, the clouds are laden,
as they scatter their flashes of light.
12 He it is who changes their rounds,* according to his plans,
in their task upon the surface of the earth,
13 whether for punishment or mercy, as he commands.

14 Hearken to this, O Job!
Stand and consider the wondrous works of God!
15 Do you know how God lays his commands upon them,
and makes the light shine forth from his clouds?
16 Do you know how the clouds are banked,
the wondrous work of him who is perfect in knowledge?
17 You, whom the streams of water fail
when a calm from the south comes over the land,
18 Do you spread out with him the firmament of the skies,
hard as a brazen mirror?*

19 Teach us then what we shall say to him;
we cannot, for the darkness, make our plea.
20 Will he be told about it when I speak,
or when a man says he is being destroyed?*
21 Nay, rather, it is as the light which men see not
while it is obscured among the clouds,
till the wind comes by and sweeps the clouds away.*

**36, 31:** These: refers to the showers of v 28, if the verse order indicated above is correct.
**36, 29f:** Because of the uncertainty of the text, no translation of these verses has received unanimous approval from exegetes.
**37, 2:** Voice: the thunder.
**37, 9:** Chamber: where it was popularly believed storms were kept enclosed.
**37, 12:** Their rounds: of rain (Jb 36, 27), of clouds (Jb 36, 29f), of lightning and thunder (Jb 36, 32f), of snow (Jb 37, 6), of winds (Jb 37, 9).
**37, 18:** The firmament . . . mirror: the ancients thought of the sky as a ceiling above which were the "upper waters" (cf Gn 1, 6f; 7, 11); when this ceiling became as hard as metal, the usual rain failed to fall on the earth (cf Lv 26, 19; Dt 28, 23).
**37, 20:** Will an angel bring this to God's attention?
**37, 21:** Even though God seems not to know our circumstances, he does know them, just as surely as the sun shines, unseen by man, behind the clouds.

c Jb 34, 10; Is 40, 13. d Ps 148, 17.

22 From the North the splendor comes,*
surrounding God's awesome majesty!
23 The Almighty! we cannot discover him,
pre-eminent in power and judgment;
his great justice owes no one an accounting.
24 Therefore men revere him,
though none can see him, however wise
their hearts.

## VII: The Lord's Speech

### CHAPTER 38

1 Then the LORD* addressed Job out of the storm and said:

2 Who is this that obscures divine plans
with words of ignorance?
3 Gird up your loins* now, like a man;
I will question you, and you tell me the
answers! [e]
4 Where were you when I founded the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
5 Who determined its size; do you know?
Who stretched out the measuring line for it?
6 Into what were its pedestals sunk,
and who laid the cornerstone,
7 While the morning stars sang in chorus
and all the sons of God* shouted for joy?

8 And who shut within doors the sea,
when it burst forth from the womb;[f]
9 When I made the clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling bands?
10 When I set limits for it
and fastened the bar of its door,
11 And said: Thus far shall you come but no
farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stilled!

12 Have you ever in your lifetime commanded
the morning
and shown the dawn its place
13 For taking hold of the ends of the earth,
till the wicked are shaken from its surface?
14 The earth is changed as is clay by the seal,
and dyed as though it were a garment;
15 But from the wicked the light is withheld,
and the arm of pride is shattered.

16 Have you entered into the sources of the sea,
or walked about in the depths of the abyss?
17 Have the gates of death been shown to you,
or have you seen the gates of darkness?
18 Have you comprehended the breadth of the
earth?
Tell me, if you know all:
19 Which is the way to the dwelling place of
light,
and where is the abode of darkness,
20 That you may take them to their boundaries
and set them on their homeward paths?
21 You know, because you were born before
them,
and the number of your years is great!*
22 Have you entered the storehouse of the snow,
and seen the treasury of the hail
23 Which I have reserved for times of stress,
for the days of war* and of battle?
24 Which way to the parting of the winds,
whence the east wind spreads over the
earth?
25 Who has laid out a channel for the downpour
and for the thunderstorm a path
26 To bring rain to no man's land,
the unpeopled wilderness;
27 To enrich the waste and desolate ground
till the desert blooms with verdure?
28 Has the rain a father;
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
29 Out of whose womb comes the ice,
and who gives the hoarfrost its birth in the
skies,

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**37, 22:** Now the storms of doubt and ignorance disappear, and from the North, used here as a symbol for God's mysterious abode, comes the splendor of the manifestation of God's majestic ways.

**38, 1:** Now the Lord enters the debate and addresses two discourses (38—39 and 40—41) to Job, in which he speaks of his wisdom and power, which are altogether beyond the capacity of Job, who therefore should never dare to demand a reason for the divine actions. Out of the storm: frequently the background of the appearances of the Lord in the Old Testament; cf Pss 18; 50; Na 1, 3; Hb 3.

**38, 3:** Gird up your loins: prepare for combat—figuratively, be ready to defend yourself in debate.

**38, 7:** Sons of God: angels; cf Jb 1, 6.

**38, 21:** Divine irony.

**38, 22f:** Hail . . . of war: thus God used a hailstorm to rout Joshua's foes in the battle of Gibeon; cf Jos 10, 11; Sir 46, 5.

e Jb 40, 1. f Gn 1, 9.

30 When the waters lie covered as though with stone
that holds captive the surface of the deep?

31 Have you fitted a curb to the Pleiades,*
or loosened the bonds of Orion?
32 Can you bring forth the Mazzaroth in their season,
or guide the Bear with its train?
33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens;
can you put into effect their plan on the earth?

34 Can you raise your voice among the clouds,
or veil yourself in the waters of the storm?*
35 Can you send forth the lightnings on their way,
or will they say to you, "Here we are"?*
37 Who counts the clouds in his wisdom?
Or who tilts the water jars of heaven
38 So that the dust of earth is fused into a mass
and its clods made solid?
39 Do you hunt the prey for the lioness
or appease the hunger of her cubs,
40 While they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in the thicket?
36 Who puts wisdom in the heart,
and gives the cock its understanding?*
41 Who provides nourishment for the ravens
when their young ones cry out to God,[g]
and they rove abroad without food?

## CHAPTER 39

Job
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1 Do you know about the birth of the mountain goats,
watch for the birth pangs of the hinds,
2 Number the months that they must fulfill,
and fix the time of their bringing forth?
3 They crouch down and bear their young;
they deliver their progeny in the desert.
4 When their offspring thrive and grow,
they leave and do not return.

5 Who has given the wild ass his freedom,
and who has loosed him from bonds?
6 I have made the wilderness his home
and the salt flats his dwelling.
7 He scoffs at the uproar of the city,
and hears no shouts of a driver.
8 He ranges the mountains for pasture,
and seeks out every patch of green.

9 Will the wild ox consent to serve you,
and to pass the nights by your manger?
10 Will a rope bind him in the furrow,
and will he harrow the valleys after you?
11 Will you trust him for his great strength
and leave to him the fruits of your toil?
12 Can you rely on him to thresh out your grain
and gather in the yield of your threshing floor?
13 The wings of the ostrich* beat idly;
her plumage is lacking in pinions.
14 When she leaves her eggs on the ground*
and deposits them in the sand,
15 Unmindful that a foot may crush them,
that the wild beasts may trample them,
16 She cruelly disowns her young
and ruthlessly makes nought of her brood;
17 For God has withheld wisdom from her
and has given her no share in understanding.
18 Yet in her swiftness of foot
she makes sport of the horse and his rider.

19 Do you give the horse his strength,*
and endow his neck with splendor?
20 Do you make the steed to quiver
while his thunderous snorting spreads terror?
21 He jubilantly paws the plain
and rushes in his might against the weapons.
22 He laughs at fear and cannot be deterred;
he turns not back from the sword.
23 Around him rattles the quiver,

**38, 31f:** Pleiades . . . Orion . . . Bear: cf Jb 9, 9. Mazzaroth: it is uncertain what astronomical group is meant by this Hebrew word; perhaps a southern constellation (cf Jb 9, 9).
**38, 34:** Veil yourself . . . storm: wrap yourself in a cloud, as God comes in a theophany; cf Ps 18, 12.
**38, 35:** Here we are: at your service.
**38, 36:** Understanding: the reflection of divine Wisdom discernible in the created animal instincts of the cock.

**39, 13:** The wings of the ostrich cannot raise her from the ground, but they help her to run swiftly.
**39, 14ff:** It was popularly believed that, because the ostrich laid her eggs on the sand, she was thereby cruelly abandoning them; cf Lam 4, 3.
**39, 19–25:** The famous description of a war horse.

g Ps 147, 9.

flashes the spear and the javelin.
24 Frenzied and trembling he devours the ground;
he holds not back at the sound of the trumpet,
25 but at each blast he cries, "Aha!"
Even from afar he scents the battle,
the roar of the chiefs and the shouting.

26 Is it by your discernment that the hawk soars,
that he spreads his wings toward the south?
27 Does the eagle fly up at your command
to build his nest aloft?
28 On the cliff he dwells and spends the night,
on a spur of the cliff or the fortress.
29 From thence he watches for his prey;
his eyes behold it afar off.
30 His young ones greedily drink blood;
where the slain are, there is he.[h]

## CHAPTER 40

1 The LORD then said to Job:

2 Will we have arguing with the Almighty by the critic?
Let him who would correct God give answer![i]

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 Behold, I am of little account; what can I answer you?
I put my hand over my mouth.
5 Though I have spoken once, I will not do so again;
though twice, I will do so no more.

6 Then the LORD addressed Job out of the storm and said:

7 Gird up your loins now, like a man.
I will question you, and you tell me the answers!
8 Would you refuse to acknowledge my right?
Would you condemn me that you may be justified?

9 Have you an arm like that of God,
or can you thunder with a voice like his?
10 Adorn yourself with grandeur and majesty,
and array yourself with glory and splendor.
11 Let loose the fury of your wrath;
12 tear down the wicked and shatter them.
Bring down the haughty with a glance;
13 bury them in the dust together;
in the hidden world imprison them.
14 Then will I too acknowledge
that your own right hand can save you.

15 See, besides you I made Behemoth,*
that feeds on grass like an ox.
16 Behold the strength in his loins,
and his vigor in the sinews of his belly.
17 He carries his tail like a cedar;
the sinews of his thighs are like cables.
18 His bones are like tubes of bronze;
his frame is like iron rods.

19 He came at the beginning of God's ways,
and was made the taskmaster of his fellows;
20 For the produce of the mountains is brought to him,
and of all wild animals he makes sport.
21 Under the lotus trees he lies,
in coverts of the reedy swamp.
22 The lotus trees cover him with their shade;
all about him are the poplars on the bank.
23 If the river grows violent, he is not disturbed;
he is tranquil though the torrent surges about his mouth.
24 Who can capture him by his eyes,
or pierce his nose* with a trap?

25 Can you lead about Leviathan* with a hook,
or curb his tongue with a bit?
26 Can you put a rope into his nose,
or pierce through his cheek with a gaff?
27 Will he then plead with you, time after time,
or address you with tender words?
28 Will he make an agreement with you
that you may have him as a slave forever?
29 Can you play with him, as with a bird?
Can you put him in leash for your maidens?

Job
See RG
232–241

**40, 15:** Behemoth: the hippopotamus.
**40, 24:** Eyes . . . nose: the only exposed parts of the submerged beast.

**40, 25:** Leviathan here is the crocodile. But cf Jb 3, 8.

h Mt 24, 28; Lk 17, 37. i Jb 38, 3.

30 Will the traders bargain for him?
Will the merchants* divide him up?

31 Can you fill his hide with barbs,
or his head with fish spears?
32 Once you but lay a hand upon him,
no need to recall any other conflict!

## CHAPTER 41

Job
See RG
232–241

2 Is he not relentless when aroused;
who then dares stand before him?*
1 Whoever might vainly hope to do so
need only see him to be overthrown.
3 Who has assailed him and come off safe—
who under all the heavens?

4 I need hardly mention his limbs,
his strength, and the fitness of his armor.
5 Who can strip off his outer garment,
or penetrate his double corselet?
6 Who can force open the doors of his mouth,
close to his terrible teeth?
7 Rows of scales are on his back,
tightly sealed together;
8 They are fitted each so close to the next
that no space intervenes;
9 So joined one to another
that they hold fast and cannot be parted.

Job
See RG
232–241

10 When he sneezes, light flashes forth;
his eyes are like those of the dawn.
11 Out of his mouth go forth firebrands;
sparks of fire leap forth.
12 From his nostrils issues steam,
as from a seething pot or bowl.
13 His breath sets coals afire;
a flame pours from his mouth.
14 Strength abides in his neck,
and terror leaps before him.

15.16 His heart is hard as stone:
his flesh, as the lower millstone.
17 When he rises up, the mighty are afraid;
the waves of the sea fall back.*
18 Should the sword reach him, it will not avail;
nor will the spear, nor the dart, nor the
javelin.
19 He regards iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
20 The arrow will not put him to flight;
slingstones used against him are but straws.
21 Clubs he esteems as splinters;
he laughs at the crash of the spear.

22 His belly is sharp as pottery fragments;
he spreads like a threshing sledge upon the
mire.
23 He makes the depths boil like a pot;
the sea he churns like perfume in a kettle.
24 Behind him he leaves a shining path;
you would think the deep had the hoary
head of age.
25 Upon the earth there is not his like,
intrepid he was made.
26 All, however lofty, fear him;
he is king over all proud beasts.

## CHAPTER 42

1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 I know that you can do all things,*
and that no purpose of yours can be
hindered.
3 I have dealt with great things that I do not
understand;
things too wonderful for me, which I cannot
know.[j]
5 I had heard of you by word of mouth,
but now my eye has seen you.
6 Therefore I disown what I have said,
and repent in dust and ashes.

# VIII: Epilogue

**Job's Restoration** 7 And it came to pass after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am

**40, 30:** Merchants: literally, "Canaanites," whose reputation for trading was so widespread that their name came to be used for merchants; cf Prv 31, 24. The meaning of this verse is that the crocodile is too powerful a creature to be sold like common fish.

**41, 2:** Before him: some read, "before me," i.e., God; also in v 3.

**41, 17:** The text here is uncertain.

**42, 2–6:** In the current Hebrew text, this final utterance of Job is interrupted by words ascribed to God (vv 3f) which are in large part a duplication of Jb 38, 2f.

**42, 7:** The three friends of Job (Elihu is ignored in the Epilogue) are criticized by the Lord because they had (even though in good faith) leveled false charges against him.

j Jb 34, 35; 35, 16; 38, 2.

angry with you and with your two friends;* for
you have not spoken rightly concerning me, as
has my servant Job. [8]Now, therefore, take seven
bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant
Job, and offer up a holocaust for yourselves; and
let my servant Job pray for you;* for his prayer I
will accept, not to punish you severely. For you
have not spoken rightly concerning me, as has
my servant Job." [9]Then Eliphaz the Temanite,
and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naama-
thite, went and did as the LORD had commanded
them. And the LORD accepted the intercession of
Job.

[10]Also, the LORD restored the prosperity of
Job, after he had prayed for his friends; the LORD
even gave to Job twice as much as he had before.
[11]Then all his brethren and his sisters came to
him, and all his former acquaintances, and they
dined with him in his house. They condoled
with him and comforted him for all the evil
which the LORD had brought upon him; and
each one gave him a piece of money* and a gold
ring.

[12] [k]Thus the LORD blessed the latter days of
Job more than his earlier ones. For he had
fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a
thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-
asses. [13]And he had seven sons and three
daughters, [14]of whom* he called the first Jemi-
mah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-
happuch. [15]In all the land no other women were
as beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their
father gave them an inheritance* among their
brethren. [16]After this, Job lived a hundred and
forty years;* and he saw his children, his grand-
children, and even his great-grandchildren.[l]
[17]Then Job died, old and full of years.

**42, 8:** Job becomes the intercessor for his friends, as were other great Old Testament characters, e.g., Abraham and Moses, and as our Lord would be, whom he prefigured. Seven: a symbolic number.

**42, 11:** A piece of money: the term is the same as that used in Gn 33, 19; Jos 24, 32. Gold ring: for the nose or ear.

**42, 14:** Job's daughters had names symbolic of their charms: Jemimah, dove; Keziah, precious perfume (cf Ps 45, 9); Keren-happuch, cosmetic jar—more precisely, a container for a black powder that was used like modern mascara.

**42, 15:** Ordinarily daughters did not inherit property unless there were no sons; cf Nm 27, 1–11.

**42, 16:** As his other rewards were twice as much as he had before (v 10), so Job's hundred and forty years were double the expected span of human life; cf Ps 90, 10.

k Jb 1, 3. l Jb 5, 25f.

# THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalms
See RG
241–255

The Hebrew Psalter numbers 150 songs. The corresponding number in the LXX differs because of a different division of certain psalms. Hence the numbering in the Greek Psalter (which was followed by the Latin Vulgate) is usually one digit behind the Hebrew. In *The New American Bible* the numbering of the verses follows the Hebrew numbering; many of the traditional English translations are often a verse number behind the Hebrew because they do not count the superscriptions as a verse.

The superscriptions derive from pre-Christian Jewish tradition, and they contain technical terms, many of them apparently liturgical, which are no longer known to us. Seventy-three psalms are attributed to David, but there is no sure way of dating any psalm. Some are preexilic (before 587), and others are postexilic (after 539), but not as late as the Maccabean period (ca 165). The psalms are the product of many individual collections (e.g., Songs of Ascents, Pss 120–134), which were eventually combined into the present work in which one can detect five "books," because of the doxologies which occur at 41, 14; 72, 18–19; 89, 53; 106, 48.

Two important features of the psalms deserve special notice. First, the majority were composed originally precisely for liturgical worship. This is shown by the frequent indication of liturgical leaders interacting with the community (e.g., 118, 1–4). Secondly, they follow certain distinct patterns or literary forms. Thus, the hymn is a song of praise, in which a community is urged joyfully to sing out the praise of God. Various reasons are given for this praise (often introduced by "for" or "because"): the divine work of creation and sustenance (Pss 8; 104), or the divine acts in Israel's favor (Pss 135, 1–12; 136). Some of the hymns have received a more specific classification, based on content. The "Songs of Zion" are so called because they exalt Zion, the city in which God dwells among the people (Pss 46; 48). Others are termed "enthronement" psalms because they re-enact or re-present in the liturgy the kingship of the Lord (Pss 47; 96–99). Characteristic of the songs of praise is the joyful summons to get involved in the activity; Ps 104 is an exception to this, although it remains universal in its thrust.

Another type of psalm is similar to the hymn: the thanksgiving psalm. This too is a song of praise acknowledging the Lord as the rescuer of the psalmist from a desperate situation. Very often the psalmist will give a flash-back, recounting the past distress, and the plea that was uttered (Pss 30; 116). The setting for such prayers seems to have been the offering of a *todah* (a "praise" sacrifice) with friends in the Temple.

There are more psalms of lament than of any other type. They may be individual (e.g., Pss 3–7; 22) or communal (e.g., Ps 44). Although they usually begin with a cry for help, they develop in various ways. The description of the distress is couched in the broad imagery typical of the Bible (one is in Sheol, the Pit, or is afflicted by enemies or wild beasts, etc.)—in such a way that one cannot pinpoint the exact nature of the psalmist's plight. However, Ps 51 (cf also Ps 130) seems to refer clearly to deliverance from sin. Several laments end on a note of certainty that the Lord has heard the prayer (cf Ps 7, but contrast Ps 88), and the Psalter has been characterized as a movement from lament to praise. If this is somewhat of an exaggeration, it serves at least to emphasize the frequent expressions of trust which characterize the lament. In some cases it would seem as if the theme of trust has been lifted out to form a literary type all its own; cf Pss 23; 62; 91. Among the communal laments can be counted Pss 74 and 79. They complain to the Lord about some national disaster, and try to motivate God to intervene in favor of the suffering people.

Other psalms are clearly classified on account of content, and they may be in themselves laments or psalms of thanksgiving. Among the "royal" psalms, that deal directly with the currently reigning king, are Pss 20; 21; and 72. Many of the royal psalms were given a messianic interpretation by Christians. In Jewish tradition they were preserved, even after kingship had disappeared, because they were read in the light of the Davidic covenant reported in 2 Samuel 7. Certain psalms are called wisdom psalms because they seem to betray the influence of the concerns of the sages (cf Pss 37; 49), but there is no general agreement as to the number of these prayers. Somewhat related to the wisdom psalms are the "torah" psalms, in which the torah (instruction or law) of the Lord is glorified (Pss 1; 19, 8–14; 119). Pss 78; 105 and 106 can be considered as "historical" psalms. Although the majority of the psalms have a liturgical setting, there are certain prayers that may be termed "liturgies," so clearly does their structure reflect a liturgical incident (e.g., Pss 15; 24).

It is obvious that not all of the psalms can be pigeon-holed into neat classifications, but even a brief sketch of these types help us to catch the structure and spirit of the psalms we read. It has been rightly said that the psalms are "a school of prayer." They not only provide us with models to follow, but inspire us to voice our own deepest feelings and aspirations.

# FIRST BOOK—PSALMS 1–41

## PSALM 1*

### True Happiness in God's Law

I

1 Happy those* who do not follow
the counsel of the wicked,
Nor go the way* of sinners,
nor sit in company with scoffers. [a]
2 Rather, the law of the LORD* is their joy;
God's law they study day and night. [b]
3 They are like a tree [c]
planted near streams of water,
that yields its fruit in season;
Its leaves never wither;
whatever they do prospers.

II

4 But not the wicked!*
They are like chaff driven by the wind. [d]
5 Therefore the wicked will not survive
judgment,
nor will sinners in the assembly of the just.
6 The LORD watches over the way of the just, [e]
but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

Ps 1 See RG 244

## PSALM 2*

### A Psalm for a Royal Coronation

1 Why do the nations protest
and the peoples grumble in vain? [f]

Ps 2 See RG 244, 250, 251

**Ps 1:** A preface to the whole Book of Psalms, contrasting with striking similes the destiny of the good and the wicked. The psalm views life as activity, as choosing either the good or the bad. Each "way" brings its inevitable consequences. The wise through their good actions will experience rootedness and life, and the wicked, rootlessness and death.

**1, 1: Those:** literally, "the man." That word is used here and in many of the Psalms as typical, and therefore is translated "they." **The way:** a common biblical term for manner of living or moral conduct (Pss 32, 8; 101, 2. 6; Prv 2, 20; 1 Kgs 8, 36).

**1, 2: The law of the LORD:** either the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, or, more probably, divine teaching or instruction.

**1, 4: The wicked:** those who by their actions distance themselves from God's life-giving presence.

**Ps 2:** A royal psalm. To rebellious kings (1–3) God responds vigorously (4–6). A speaker proclaims the divine decree (in the legal adoption language of the day), making the Israelite king the earthly representative of God (7–9) and warning kings to obey (10–11). The psalm has a messianic meaning for the Church; the New Testament understands it of Christ (Acts 4, 25–27; 13, 33; Heb 1, 5).

a Pss 26, 4–5; 40, 5. b Jos 1, 8; Ps 119; Sir 39, 1. c Pss 52, 10; 92, 13–15; Jer 17, 8. d Pss 35, 5; 83, 14–16; Jb 21, 18. e Ps 37, 18. f Rv 11, 18.

2 Kings on earth rise up
and princes plot together
against the LORD and his anointed:[g]*
3 "Let us break their shackles
and cast off their chains!"[h]
4 The one enthroned in heaven laughs;
the LORD derides them,[i]
5 Then speaks to them in anger,
terrifies them in wrath:
6 "I myself have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain."
7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD,
who said to me, "You are my son;
today I am your father.[j]
8 Only ask it of me,
and I will make your inheritance the nations,
your possession the ends of the earth.
9 With an iron rod you shall shepherd them,
like a clay pot you will shatter them."[k]
10 And now, kings, give heed;
take warning, rulers on earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear;
with trembling bow down in homage,
Lest God be angry and you perish from the way
in a sudden blaze of anger.
Happy are all who take refuge in God![l]

Ps 4
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 3*

### Threatened but Trusting

1 A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.[m]*

I

2 How many are my foes, LORD!
How many rise against me!
3 How many say of me,
"God will not save that one."[n] *Selah**
4 But you, LORD, are a shield around me;
my glory, you keep my head high.[o]

II

5 Whenever I cried out to the LORD,
I was answered from the holy mountain.
*Selah*
6 Whenever I lay down and slept,
the LORD preserved me to rise again.[p]
7 I do not fear, then, thousands of people
arrayed against me on every side.

III

8 Arise, LORD! Save me, my God!
You will shatter the jaws of all my foes;
you will break the teeth of the wicked.[q]
9 Safety comes from the LORD!
Your blessing for your people![r] *Selah*

Ps 3
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 4*

### Trust in God

1 For the leader;* with stringed instruments.
A psalm of David.

I

2 Answer when I call, my saving God.
In my troubles, you cleared a way;
show me favor; hear my prayer.[s]

II

3 How long will you people mock my honor,
love what is worthless, chase after lies?[t]
*Selah*
4 Know that the LORD works wonders for the faithful;
the LORD hears when I call out.

**2, 2: Anointed**: in Hebrew *mashiah*, "anointed"; in Greek *christos*, whence English Messiah and Christ. In Israel kings (Jgs 9, 8; 1 Sm 9, 16; 16, 12–13) and high priests (Lv 8, 12; Nm 3, 3) received the power of their office through anointing.

**Ps 3**: An individual lament complaining of enemies who deny that God will come to the rescue (2–3). Despite such taunts the psalmist hopes for God's protection even in sleep (4–7). The psalm prays for an end to the enemies' power to speak maliciously (8) and closes peacefully with an expression of trust (9).

**3, 1**: The superscription, added later, relates the psalm to an incident in the life of David.

**3, 3. 5. 9: Selah**: the term is generally considered a direction to the cantor or musicians but its exact meaning is not known. It occurs 71 times in 39 psalms.

**Ps 4**: An individual lament emphasizing trust in God. The petition is based upon the psalmist's vivid experience of God as savior (2). That experience of God is the basis for the warning to the wicked: revere God who intervenes on the side of the faithful (3–6). The faithful psalmist exemplifies the blessings given to the just (7–9).

**4, 1: For the leader**: many psalm headings contain this rubric. Its exact meaning is unknown but may signify that such psalms once stood together in a collection of "the choirmaster." Cf 1 Chr 15, 21.

g Ps 83, 6. h Ps 149, 8. i Pss 37, 13; 59, 9; Wis 4, 18. j Pss 89, 27; 110, 2–3; Is 49, 1. k Rv 2, 27; 12, 5; 19, 15. l Pss 34, 9; 146, 5; Prv 16, 20. m 2 Sm 15, 13ff. n Ps 71, 11. o Pss 7, 11; 18, 3; 62, 7–8; Dt 33, 29; Is 60, 19. p Ps 4, 9; Prv 3, 24. q Ps 58, 7. r Ps 28, 9; Jon 2, 10. s Ps 118, 5. t Ps 62, 4.

5 Tremble* and do not sin;
upon your beds ponder in silence. [u]
6 Offer fitting sacrifice
and trust in the LORD. [v]

III

7 Many say, "May we see better times!
LORD, show us the light of your face!" [w]

*Selah*

8 But you have given my heart more joy
than they have when grain and wine
abound.
9 In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, [x]
for you alone, LORD, make me secure.

## PSALM 5*

### Prayer for Divine Help

1 For the leader; with wind instruments.
A psalm of David.

I

2 Hear my words, O LORD;
listen to my sighing. [y]
3 Hear my cry for help,
my king, my God!
To you I pray, O LORD;
4 at dawn you will hear my cry;
at dawn I will plead before you and wait. [z]

II

5 You are not a god who delights in evil;
no wicked person finds refuge with you;
6 the arrogant cannot stand before you.
You hate all who do evil;
7 you destroy all who speak falsely. [a]
Murderers and deceivers
the LORD abhors.

III

8 But I can enter your house
because of your great love.
I can worship in your holy temple
because of my reverence for you, LORD. [b]
9 Guide me in your justice because of my foes;
make straight your way before me. [c]

IV

10 For there is no sincerity in their mouths;
their hearts are corrupt.
Their throats* are open graves; [d]
on their tongues are subtle lies.
11 Declare them guilty, God;
make them fall by their own devices. [e]
Drive them out for their many sins;
they have rebelled against you.

V

12 Then all who take refuge in you will be glad
and forever shout for joy. [f]
Protect them that you may be the joy
of those who love your name.
13 For you, LORD, bless the just;
you surround them with favor like a shield.

Ps 5
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 6*

### Prayer in Distress

1 For the leader; with stringed instruments, "upon
the eighth."* A psalm of David.

I

2 Do not reprove me in your anger, LORD,
nor punish me in your wrath. [g]
3 Have pity on me, LORD, for I am weak;
heal me, LORD, for my bones are
trembling. [h]

Ps 6
See RG
242–243

**4, 5: Tremble**: be moved deeply with religious awe. The Greek translation understood the emotion to be anger, and it is so cited in Eph 4, 26.

**Ps 5**: A lament contrasting the security of the house of God (8–9. 12–13) with the danger of the company of evildoers (5–7. 10–11). The psalmist therefore prays that God will hear (2–4) and grant the protection and joy of the temple.

**5, 10: Their throats**: their speech brings harm to their hearers (cf Jer 5, 16). The verse mentions four parts of the body, each a source of evil to the innocent.

**Ps 6**: The first of the seven Penitential Psalms (Pss 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143), a designation dating from the seventh century A.D. for psalms suitable to express repentance. The psalmist does not, as in many laments, claim to be innocent but appeals to God's mercy (5). Sin here, as often in the Bible, is both the sinful act and its injurious consequences; here it is physical sickness (3–4. 7–8) and the attacks of enemies (8. 9. 11). The psalmist prays that the effects of personal and social sin be taken away.

**6, 1: Upon the eighth**: apparently a musical notation, now lost.

u Eph 4, 26. v Ps 51, 19. w Pss 31, 17; 44, 4; 67, 1; 80, 4; Jb 13, 24; Nm 6, 25; Dn 9, 17. x Ps 3, 6. y Pss 86, 6; 130, 1–2. z Wis 16, 28. a Ps 101, 7; Wis 14, 9; Hb 1, 13. b Ps 138, 2; Jon 2, 5. c Ps 23, 3; Prv 4, 11; Is 26, 7. d Rom 3, 13. e Ps 141, 10. f Ps 64, 11. g Ps 38, 2. h Jer 17, 14–15.

4 In utter terror is my soul—
and you, LORD, how long . . . ?[i]*
5 Turn, LORD, save my life;
in your mercy* rescue me.
6 For who among the dead remembers you?
Who praises you in Sheol?[j]*

II

7 I am wearied with sighing;
all night long tears drench my bed;
my couch is soaked with weeping.
8 My eyes are dimmed with sorrow,
worn out because of all my foes.[k]

III

9 Away from me, all who do evil![l]
The LORD has heard my weeping.
10 The LORD has heard my prayer;
the LORD takes up my plea.
11 My foes will be terrified and disgraced;
all will fall back in sudden shame.[m]

Ps 7
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 7*

### God the Vindicator

1 A plaintive song of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, the Benjaminite.

I

2 LORD my God, in you I take refuge;
rescue me; save me from all who pursue me,[n]
3 Lest they maul me like lions,
tear me to pieces with none to save.

II

4 LORD my God, if I am at fault in this,*
if there is guilt on my hands,
5 If I have repaid my friend with evil—
I spared even those who hated me without cause—
6 Then let my enemy pursue and overtake me,
trample my life to the ground,
and leave me dishonored in the dust.[o]

*Selah*

III

7 Rise up, LORD, in your anger;
rise against the fury of my foes.[p]
Wake to judge as you have decreed.
8 Have the assembly of the peoples gather about you;
sit on your throne high above them,
9 O LORD, judge of the nations.
Grant me justice, LORD, for I am blameless,
free of any guilt.
10 Bring the malice of the wicked to an end;
uphold the innocent,
O God of justice,
who tries hearts and minds.[q]

IV

11 A shield before me is God
who saves the honest heart.[r]
12 God is a just judge,
who rebukes in anger every day.
13 If sinners do not repent,
God sharpens his sword,
strings and readies the bow,[s]
14 Prepares his deadly shafts,
makes arrows blazing thunderbolts.[t]

V

15 Sinners conceive iniquity;
pregnant with mischief,
they give birth to failure.[u]
16 They open a hole and dig it deep,
but fall into the pit they have dug.[v]
17 Their mischief comes back upon themselves;
their violence falls on their own heads.

**6, 4: How long?**: elliptical for "How long will it be before you answer my prayer?" Cf Ps 13, 2–3.

**6, 5: Mercy**: Hebrew *hesed*, translated as "mercy" or "love," describes God's affectionate fidelity to human beings, which is rooted in divine and not human integrity.

**6, 6**: A motive for God to preserve the psalmist from death: in the shadowy world of the dead no one offers you praise. Sheol is the biblical term for the underworld where the insubstantial souls of dead human beings dwelt. It was similar to the Hades of Greek and Latin literature. In the second century B.C., biblical books begin to speak positively of life with God after death (Dn 12, 1–3; Wis 3).

**Ps 7**: An individual lament. The psalmist flees to God's presence in the sanctuary for justice and protection (2–3) and takes an oath that only the innocent can swear (4–6). The innocent psalmist can thus hope for the just God's protection (7–14) and be confident that the actions of the wicked will come back upon their own heads (15–17). The justice of God leads the psalmist to praise (18).

**7, 4: At fault in this**: in the accusation the enemies have made against the psalmist.

i Pss 13, 2–3; 74, 10; 89, 47. j Pss 30, 10; 88, 11; 115, 17; Is 38, 18. k Pss 31, 10; 38, 11; 40, 13. l Ps 119, 115; Mt 7, 23; Lk 13, 27. m Pss 35, 4. 26; 40, 15; 71, 13. n Pss 6, 5; 22, 21. o Ps 143, 3. p Pss 9, 4; 19, 20. q Pss 17, 3; 26, 2; 35, 24; 43, 1; 139, 23; Jer 17, 10; 20, 12. r Ps 3, 4. s Ps 11, 2. t Is 50, 11. u Jb 15, 35; Is 59, 4. v Pss 9, 16; 35, 8; 57, 7; Prv 26, 27; Eccl 10, 8; Sir 27, 26.

VI

18 I praise the justice of the LORD;
I celebrate the name of the LORD Most
High.[w]

## PSALM 8*

### Divine Majesty and Human Dignity

1 For the leader; "upon the *gittith*."*
A psalm of David.

2 O LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all the
earth!
You have set your majesty above the
heavens!
3 Out of the mouths of babes[x] and infants*
you have drawn a defense* against your
foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.*
4 When I see your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place—
5 What are humans that you are mindful of
them,[y]
mere mortals* that you care for them?[z]
6 Yet you have made them little less than a
god,*
crowned them with glory and honor.
7 You have given them rule over the works of
your hands,[a]
put all things at their feet:
8 All sheep and oxen,
even the beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.
10 O LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all the
earth!

Ps 8
See RG
242, 245,
249, 250

## PSALMS 9–10*

### Thanksgiving for Victory and Prayer for Justice

1 For the leader; according to *Muth Labben*.*
A psalm of David.

Pss 9–10
See RG
243, 244

A

I

2 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will declare all your wondrous deeds.
3 I will delight and rejoice in you;
I will sing hymns to your name, Most High.
4 For my enemies turn back;
they stumble and perish before you.

II

5 You upheld my right and my cause,
seated on your throne, judging justly.
6 You rebuked the nations, you destroyed the
wicked;
their name you blotted out for all time.[b]
7 The enemies have been ruined forever;
you destroyed their cities;
their memory has perished.

**Ps 8:** While marvelling at the limitless grandeur of God (2–3), the psalmist is struck first by the smallness of human beings in creation (4–5), and then by the royal dignity and power that God has graciously bestowed upon them (6–10).

**8, 1: Upon the gittith:** probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung or a musical instrument.

**8, 3: Babes and infants:** the text is obscure. Some join this line to the last line of 2 (itself obscure) to read: "(you) whose majesty is exalted above the heavens / by the mouths of babes and infants." **Drawn a defense:** some prefer the Septuagint's "fashioned praise," which is quoted in Mt 21, 16. **Enemy and avenger:** probably cosmic enemies. The primeval powers of watery chaos are often personified in poetic texts (Pss 74, 13–14; 89, 11; Jb 9, 13; 26, 12–13; Is 51, 9).

**8, 5: Humans . . . mere mortals:** literally, "(mortal) person" . . . "son of man (in sense of a human being, Hebrew *'adam*)." The emphasis is on the fragility and mortality of human beings to whom God has given great dignity.

**8, 6: Little less than a god:** Hebrew *'elohim*, the ordinary word for "God" or "the gods" or members of the heavenly court. The Greek version translated *'elohim* by "angel, messenger"; several ancient and modern versions so translate. The meaning seems to be that God created human beings almost at the level of the beings in the heavenly world. Heb 2, 9 finds the eminent fulfillment of this verse in Jesus Christ, who was humbled before being glorified. Cf also 1 Cor 15, 27, where St. Paul applies to Christ the closing words of v 7.

**Pss 9–10:** Pss 9 and 10 in the Hebrew text have been transmitted as separate poems but they actually form a single acrostic poem and are so transmitted in the Greek and Latin tradition. Each verse of the two psalms begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (though several letters have no corresponding stanza). The psalm states loosely connected themes: the rescue of the helpless poor from their enemies, God's worldwide judgment and rule over the nations, the psalmist's own concern for rescue (14–15).

**9, 1: Muth Labben:** probably the melodic accompaniment of the psalm, now lost.

w Pss 18, 50; 30, 5; 135, 3; 146, 2. x Mt 21, 16; Wis 10, 21. y Ps 144, 3; Jb 7, 17. z Heb 2, 6ff. a 7ff: Gn 1, 26. 28; Wis 9, 2; 1 Cor 15, 27. b Jb 18, 17.

III

8 The LORD rules forever,
has set up a throne for judgment.
9 It is God who governs the world with justice,[c]
who judges the peoples with fairness.
10 The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.[d]
11 Those who honor your name trust in you;
you never forsake those who seek you,
LORD.

IV

12 Sing hymns to the LORD enthroned on Zion;
proclaim God's deeds among the nations!
13 For the avenger of bloodshed remembers,
does not forget the cry of the afflicted.[e]

V

14 Have mercy on me, LORD;
see how my foes afflict me!
You alone can raise me from the gates of
death.[f]
15 Then I will declare all your praises,
sing joyously of your salvation
in the gates of daughter Zion.*

VI

16 The nations fall into the pit they dig;
in the snare they hide, their own foot is
caught.
17 The LORD is revealed in this divine rule:
by the deeds they do the wicked are
trapped.[g]* *Higgaion. Selah*

VII

18 To Sheol the wicked will depart,
all the nations that forget God.
19 The needy will never be forgotten,
nor will the hope of the afflicted ever
fade.[h]
20 Arise, LORD, let no mortal prevail;
let the nations be judged in your presence.
21 Strike them with terror, LORD;
show the nations they are mere mortals.
*Selah*

**B**

I

1 Why, LORD, do you stand at a distance
and pay no heed to these troubled times?
2 Arrogant scoundrels pursue the poor;
they trap them by their cunning schemes.[i]

II

3 The wicked even boast of their greed;
these robbers curse and scorn the LORD.[j]
4 In their insolence the wicked boast:
"God doesn't care, doesn't even exist."[k]
5 Yet their affairs always succeed;
they ignore your judgment on high;
they sneer at all who oppose them.
6 They say in their hearts, "We will never fall;
never will we see misfortune."
7 Their mouths are full of oaths, violence, and
lies;
discord and evil are under their tongues.[l]
8 They wait in ambush near towns;
their eyes watch for the helpless,
to murder the innocent in secret.[m]
9 They lurk in ambush like lions in a thicket,
hide there to trap the poor,
snare them and close the net.[n]
10 The helpless are crushed, laid low;
they fall into the power of the wicked,
11 Who say in their hearts, "God pays no
attention,
shows no concern, never bothers to
look."[o]

III

12 Rise up, LORD God! Raise your arm!
Do not forget the poor!
13 Why should the wicked scorn God,
say in their hearts, "God doesn't care"?
14 But you do see;
you do observe this misery and sorrow;[p]
you take the matter in hand.
To you the helpless can entrust their cause;
you are the defender of orphans.[q]

9, 15: **Daughter Zion**: an ancient Near Eastern city could sometimes be personified as a woman or a queen, the spouse of the god of the city.

9, 17: **The LORD is revealed in this divine rule**: God has so made the universe that the wicked are punished by the very actions they perform.

c Pss 96, 10; 98, 9. d Ps 37, 39; Is 25, 4. e Jb 16, 18. f Wis 16, 13. g Sir 27, 26. h Prv 23, 18. i Is 32, 7. j Ps 36, 2. k Ps 14, 1; Jb 22, 13; Is 29, 15; Jer 5, 12; Zep 1, 12. l Is 32, 7; Rom 3, 14. m Ps 11, 2; Jb 24, 14. n Ps 17, 12; Prv 1, 11; Jer 5, 26. o Pss 44, 25; 64, 6; 73, 11; 94, 7; Ez 9, 9. p Pss 31, 8; 56, 9; 2 Kgs 20, 5; Is 25, 8; Rv 7, 17. q Ex 22, 21–22.

15 Break the arms of the wicked and depraved;
make them account for their crimes;
let none of them survive.

IV

16 The LORD is king forever; [r]
the nations have vanished from God's land.
17 You listen, LORD, to the needs of the poor;
you encourage them and hear their prayers.
18 You win justice for the orphaned and
oppressed; [s]
no one on earth will cause terror again.

## PSALM 11*

### Confidence in the Presence of God

1 For the leader. Of David.

I

In the LORD I take refuge;
how can you say to me,
"Flee like a bird to the mountains! [t]
2 See how the wicked string their bows,
fit their arrows to the string
to shoot from the shadows at the upright. [u]
3 When foundations* are being destroyed,
what can the upright do?"

II

4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven. [v]
God's eyes keep careful watch;
they test all peoples.
5 The LORD tests the good and the bad,
hates those who love violence,
6 And rains upon the wicked
fiery coals and brimstone,
a scorching wind their allotted cup. [w]*
7 The LORD is just and loves just deeds;
the upright shall see his face.

## PSALM 12*

### Prayer against Evil Tongues

Ps 12
See RG
242–243

1 For the leader; "upon the eighth." A psalm of David.

I

2 Help, LORD, for no one loyal remains;
the faithful have vanished from the human
race. [x]
3 Those who tell lies to one another
speak with deceiving lips and a double
heart. [y]

II

4 May the LORD cut off all deceiving lips,
and every boastful tongue,
5 Those who say, "By our tongues we prevail;
when our lips speak, who can lord it over
us?" [z]

Ps 11
See RG
243

III

6 "Because they rob the weak, and the needy
groan,
I will now arise," says the LORD;
"I will grant safety to whoever longs for
it." [a]

IV

7 The promises of the LORD are sure,
silver refined in a crucible,*
silver purified seven times. [b]
8 LORD, protect us always;
preserve us from this generation.
9 On every side the wicked strut;
the shameless are extolled by all.

## PSALM 13*

### Prayer in Time of Illness

Ps 13
See RG
242–243

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 How long, LORD? Will you utterly forget me?

Ps 11: A song of trust. Though friends counsel flight to the mountain country (a traditional hideout) to escape trouble (1–3), the innocent psalmist reaffirms confidence in God, who protects those who seek asylum in the temple (4–7).

11, 3: **Foundations**: usually understood of public order. Cf Ps 82, 5.

11, 6: **Their allotted cup**: the cup that God gives people to drink is a common figure for their destiny. Cf Pss 16, 5; 75, 9; Mt 20, 22; 26, 39; Rv 14, 10.

Ps 12: A lament. The psalmist, thrown into a world where lying and violent people persecute the just (2–3), prays that the wicked be punished (4–5). The prayer is not simply for vengeance but arises from a desire to see God's justice appear on earth. V 6 preserves the word of assurance spoken by the priest to the lamenter; it is not usually transmitted in such psalms. In vv 7–9 the psalmist affirms the intention to live by the word of assurance.

12, 7: **A crucible**: literally, "in a crucible in the ground." The crucible was placed in the ground for support.

Ps 13: A lament in which the psalmist, seriously ill (4), expresses fear that enemies will interpret his or her death as a divine

r Ps 145, 13; Jer 10, 10. s Dt 10, 18. t Pss 55, 7; 91, 4. u Pss 7, 13; 37, 14; 57, 5; 64, 4. v Pss 14, 2; 102, 20; Hb 2, 20; Dt 26, 15; Is 66, 1; Mt 5, 34. w Pss 120, 4; 140, 11; Prv 16, 27; Ez 38, 22; Rv 8, 5; 20, 10. x Pss 14, 3; 116, 11; Is 59, 15; Mi 7, 2. y Pss 28, 3; 55, 22; Is 59, 3–4; Jer 9, 7. z Sir 5, 3. a Is 33, 10. b Pss 18, 31; 19, 8; Prv 30, 5.

How long will you hide your face from
me? [c]
3 How long must I carry sorrow in my soul,
grief in my heart day after day?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
II
4 Look upon me, answer me, LORD, my God!
Give light to my eyes lest I sleep in death,
5 Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed,"
lest my foes rejoice at my downfall. [d]
III
6 I trust in your faithfulness.
Grant my heart joy in your help,
That I may sing of the LORD,
"How good our God has been to me!" [e]

Ps 15
See RG
244–245

## PSALM 14*

### A Lament over Widespread Corruption

1 For the leader. Of David.

Ps 14
See RG
242–243,
250

I
Fools* say in their hearts,
"There is no God." [f]
Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt;
not one does what is right.
2 The LORD looks down from heaven
upon the human race, [g]
To see if even one is wise, [h]
if even one seeks God.
3 All have gone astray;
all alike are perverse.
Not one does what is right,
not even one. [i]
II
4 Will these evildoers never learn?
They devour my people as they devour
bread; [j]
they do not call upon the LORD. [k]
5 They have good reason, then, to fear;
God is with the company of the just.
6 They would crush the hopes of the poor,
but the poor have the LORD as their refuge.
III
7 Oh, that from Zion might come
the deliverance of Israel,
That Jacob may rejoice, and Israel be glad
when the LORD restores his people! [l]*

## PSALM 15*

### The Righteous Israelite

1 A psalm of David.

I
LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain? [m]*
II
2 Whoever walks without blame, [n]
doing what is right,
speaking truth from the heart;
3 Who does not slander a neighbor,
does no harm to another,
never defames a friend;
4 Who disdains the wicked,
but honors those who fear the LORD;
Who keeps an oath despite the cost,
5 lends no money at interest,*
accepts no bribe against the innocent. [o]
III
Whoever acts like this
shall never be shaken.

judgment. Hence the heartfelt prayer (2–3) is for healing that will signal to those enemies that the psalmist enjoys God's favor (4–5). The poem ends with a confession of trust in God and a statement of praise (6).

**Ps 14:** The lament (duplicated in Ps 53) depicts the world as consisting of two types of people: "the fools" (= the wicked, 1–3) and "the company of the just" (4–6; also called "my people," and "the poor"). The wicked persecute the just, but the psalm expresses the hope that God will punish the wicked and reward the good.

**14, 1: Fools:** literally, "the fool." The singular is used typically, hence the plural translation.

**14, 7: Israel . . . Jacob . . . his people:** the righteous poor are identified with God's people.

**Ps 15:** The psalm records a liturgical scrutiny at the entrance to the temple court (cf Ps 24, 3–6; Is 33, 14b–16). The Israelite wishing to be admitted had to ask the temple official what conduct was appropriate to God's precincts. Note the emphasis on virtues relating to one's neighbor.

**15, 1: Your tent . . . your holy mountain:** the temple could be referred to as "tent" (Ps 61, 5; Is 33, 20), a reference to the tent of the wilderness period and the tent of David (2 Sm 6, 17; 7, 2), predecessors of the temple. **Holy mountain:** a venerable designation of the divine abode (Pss 2, 6; 3, 5; 43, 3; 48, 2, etc.).

**15, 5: Lends no money at interest:** lending money in the Old Testament was often seen as assistance to the poor in their distress, not as an investment; making money off the poor by charging interest was thus forbidden (Ex 22, 24; Lv 25, 36–37; Dt 23, 20).

c Pss 6, 4; 44, 25; 77, 8; 79, 5; 89, 47; 94, 3; Lam 5, 20. d Ps 38, 17. e Ps 116, 7. f Pss 10, 4; 36, 2; Is 32, 6; Jer 5, 12. g Pss 11, 4; 102, 20. h 2b–3: Rom 3, 11–12. i Ps 12, 1. j Ps 27, 2; Is 9, 11. k Ps 79, 6. l Ps 85, 2. m Is 56, 7. n Ps 119, 1. o Ex 22, 24; 23, 8.

## PSALM 16*

### God the Supreme Good

1 A *miktam** of David.

I

Keep me safe, O God;
in you I take refuge.[p]
2 I say to the LORD,
you are my Lord,
you are my only good.
3 Worthless are all the false gods of the land.
Accursed are all who delight in them.
4 They multiply their sorrows
who court other gods.
Blood libations to them I will not pour out,
nor will I take their names* upon my lips.
5 LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you have made my destiny secure.[q]
6 Pleasant places were measured out for me;*
fair to me indeed is my inheritance.

II

7 I bless the LORD who counsels me;
even at night my heart exhorts me.
8 I keep the LORD always before me;
with the Lord at my right, I shall never be shaken.[r]
9 Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices;
my body also dwells secure,
10 For you will not abandon me to Sheol,
nor let your faithful servant see the pit.[s]*
11 You will show me the path to life,
abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

## PSALM 17*

### Prayer for Rescue from Persecutors

1 A prayer of David.

I

Hear, LORD, my plea for justice;
pay heed to my cry;
Listen to my prayer
spoken without guile.
2 From you let my vindication come;
your eyes see what is right.
3 You have tested my heart,
searched it in the night.[t]
You have tried me by fire,
but find no malice in me.
My mouth has not transgressed
4 as humans often do.
As your lips have instructed me,
I have kept the way of the law.
5 My steps have kept to your paths;
my feet have not faltered.[u]

II

6 I call upon you; answer me, O God.
Turn your ear to me; hear my prayer.
7 Show your wonderful love,
you who deliver with your right arm
those who seek refuge from their foes.
8 Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings*
9 from the violence of the wicked.[v]

III

My ravenous enemies press upon me;[w]
10 they close their hearts,*

Ps 16 See RG 243

Ps 17 See RG 242–243

**Ps 16:** In the first section, the psalmist rejects the futile worship of false gods (2–5), preferring Israel's God (1), the giver of the land (6). The second section reflects on the wise and life-giving presence of God (7–11).

**16,1: Miktam:** a term occurring six times in psalm superscriptions, always with "David." Its meaning is unknown.

**16, 4: Take their names:** to use the gods' names in oaths and hence to affirm them as one's own gods.

**16, 6: Pleasant places were measured out for me:** the psalmist is pleased with the plot of land measured out to the family, which was to be passed on to succeeding generations ("my inheritance").

**16, 10: Nor let your faithful servant see the pit:** Hebrew *shahath* means here the pit, a synonym for Sheol, the underworld. The Greek translation derives the word here and elsewhere from the verb *shahath*, "to be corrupt." On the basis of the Greek, Acts 2, 25–32 and 13, 35–37 apply the verse to Christ's resurrection, "Nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption."

**Ps 17:** A lament of an individual unjustly attacked who has taken refuge in the temple. Confident of being found innocent, the psalmist cries out for God's just judgment (1–5) and requests divine help against enemies (6–9a). Those ravenous lions (9b–12) should be punished (13–14). The psalm ends with a serene statement of praise (15). The Hebrew text of vv 3–4 and 14 is uncertain.

**17, 8: Apple of your eye . . . shadow of your wings:** images of God's special care. Cf Dt 32, 10; Prv 7, 2; Is 49, 2.

**17, 10–12. 14:** An extended metaphor: the enemies are lions.

p Ps 25, 20. q Pss 23, 5; 73, 26; Nm 18, 20; Lam 3, 24. r Pss 73, 23; 121, 5. 8–12; Acts 2, 25–28. s Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 49, 16; 86, 13; Jon 2, 7; Acts 13, 35. t Pss 26, 2; 139, 23. u Ps 18, 36; Jb 23, 11–12. v Pss 36, 8; 57, 2; 61, 5; 63, 8; 91, 4; Dt 32, 10; Ru 2, 12; Zec 2, 12; Mt 23, 37. w 9b–12: Pss 10, 9; 22, 14. 22; 35, 17; 58, 7; Jb 4, 10–11.

fill their mouths with proud roaring.
[11] Their steps even now encircle me;
they watch closely, keeping low to the ground,
[12] Like lions eager for prey,
like young lions lurking in ambush.
[13] Rise, O LORD, confront and cast them down;
rescue me so from the wicked.
[14] Slay them with your sword;
with your hand, LORD, slay them;
snatch them from the world in their prime.
Their bellies are being filled with your friends;
their children are satisfied too,
for they share what is left with their young.
[15] I am just—let me see your face;
when I awake,* let me be filled with your presence.[x]

## PSALM 18*

Ps 18
See RG
244

### A King's Thanksgiving for Victory

[1] For the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD, who sang to the LORD the words of this song after the LORD had rescued him from the clutches of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. [2] He said:

I

I love you, LORD, my strength,
[3] LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,[y]
My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, my saving horn,* my stronghold![z]
[4] Praised be the LORD, I exclaim!
I have been delivered from my enemies.

II

[5] The breakers of death surged round about me;
the menacing floods terrified me.
[6] The cords* of Sheol tightened;
the snares of death lay in wait for me.[a]
[7] In my distress I called out: LORD!
I cried out to my God.[b]
From his temple* he heard my voice;
my cry to him reached his ears.
[8] The earth rocked and shook;*
the foundations of the mountains trembled;
they shook as his wrath flared up.[c]
[9] Smoke rose in his nostrils,
a devouring fire poured from his mouth;
it kindled coals into flame.
[10] He parted the heavens and came down,
a dark cloud under his feet.[d]
[11] Mounted on a cherub* he flew,
borne along on the wings of the wind.
[12] He made darkness the cover about him;
his canopy, heavy thunderheads.
[13] Before him scudded his clouds,
hail and lightning too.[e]
[14] The LORD thundered from heaven;
the Most High made his voice resound.[f]
[15] He let fly his arrows* and scattered them;
shot his lightning bolts and dispersed them.[g]
[16] Then the bed of the sea appeared;
the world's foundations lay bare,[h]
At the roar of the LORD,
at the storming breath of his nostrils.
[17] He reached down from on high and seized me;
drew me out of the deep waters.[i]
[18] He rescued me from my mighty enemy,

**17, 15: When I awake**: probably the psalmist has spent the night in the sanctuary (cf 3) and hopes to wake to an oracle assuring God's protective presence.

**Ps 18**: A royal thanksgiving for a military victory, duplicated in 2 Sm 22. Thanksgiving psalms are in essence reports of divine rescue. The psalm has two parallel reports of rescue, the first told from a heavenly perspective (5–20), and the second from an earthly perspective (36–46). The first report adapts old mythic language of a cosmic battle between sea and rainstorm in order to depict God's rescue of the Israelite king from his enemies. Each report has a short hymnic introduction (2–4. 32–35) and conclusion (21–31. 47–51).

**18, 3: My saving horn**: my strong savior. The horn referred to is the weapon of a bull and the symbol of fertility. Cf 1 Sm 2, 10; Ps 132, 17; Lk 1, 69.

**18, 6: Cords**: hunting imagery, the cords of a snare.

**18, 7: His temple**: his heavenly abode.

**18, 8–16**: God appears in the storm, which in Palestine comes from the west. The introduction to the theophany (vv 8–9) is probably a description of a violent, hot, and dry east-wind storm. In the fall transition period from the rainless summer to the rainy winter such storms regularly precede the rains. Cf Ex 14, 21–22.

**18, 11: Cherub**: a winged creature, derived from myth, in the service of the deity (Gn 3, 24; Ex 25, 18–20; 37, 6–9). Cherubim were the throne bearers of the deity (Pss 80, 2; 99, 1; 1 Kgs 6, 23–28; 8, 6–8).

**18, 15: Arrows**: lightning.

x Pss 4, 7; 31, 17; 67, 2; 80, 4; Nm 6, 25; Dn 9, 17. y 2–51: 2 Sm 22, 2–51. z Pss 3, 4; 31, 3–4; 42, 10; Gn 49, 24; Dt 32, 4. a Pss 88, 8; 93, 3–4; 116, 3–4. b Jon 2, 3. c Pss 97, 3–4; 99, 1; Jgs 5, 4–5; Is 64, 1; Hab 3, 9–11. d Pss 104, 3; 144, 5; Is 63, 19. e Ex 13, 21; 19, 16. f Pss 29; 77, 19; Ex 19, 19; Jb 37, 3–4. g Ps 144, 6; Wis 5, 21. h Ps 77, 17; Zec 9, 14. i Ps 144, 7.

from foes too powerful for me.
19 They attacked me on a day of distress,
but the LORD came to my support.
20 He set me free in the open;
he rescued me because he loves me.

III

21 The LORD acknowledged my righteousness,
rewarded my clean hands.[j]
22 For I kept the ways of the LORD;
I was not disloyal to my God.
23 His laws were all before me,
his decrees I did not cast aside.
24 I was honest toward him;
I was on guard against sin.
25 So the LORD rewarded my righteousness,
the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
26 Toward the faithful you are faithful;
to the honest you are honest;[k]
27 Toward the sincere, sincere;
but to the perverse you are devious.
28 Humble people you save;
haughty eyes you bring low.[l]
29 You, LORD, give light to my lamp;
my God brightens the darkness about me.[m]
30 With you I can rush an armed band,
with my God to help I can leap a wall.
31 God's way is unerring;
the LORD's promise is tried and true;
he is a shield for all who trust in him.[n]

IV

32 Truly, who is God except the LORD?
Who but our God is the rock?[o]
33 This God who girded me with might,
kept my way unerring,
34 Who made my feet swift as a deer's,
set me safe on the heights,[p]
35 Who trained my hands for war,
my arms to bend even a bow of bronze.[q]*

V

36 You have given me your protecting shield;
your right hand has upheld me;
you stooped to make me great.
37 You gave me room to stride;
my feet never stumbled.[r]
38 I pursued my enemies and overtook them;
I did not turn back till I destroyed them.
39 I struck them down; they could not rise;
they fell dead at my feet.
40 You girded me with strength for war,
subdued adversaries at my feet.
41 My foes you put to flight before me;
those who hated me I destroyed.
42 They cried for help, but no one saved them;
cried to the LORD but got no answer.
43 I ground them fine as dust in the wind;
like mud in the streets I trampled them down.
44 You rescued me from the strife of peoples;
you made me head over nations.
A people I had not known became my slaves;
45 as soon as they heard of me they obeyed.
Foreigners cringed before me;
46 their courage failed;
they came trembling from their fortresses.[s]

VI

47 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock![t]
Exalted be God, my savior!
48 O God who granted me vindication,
made peoples subject to me,[u]
49 and preserved me from my enemies,
Truly you have exalted me above my adversaries,
from the violent you have rescued me.
50 Thus I will proclaim you, LORD, among the nations;
I will sing the praises of your name.[v]
51 You have given great victories to your king,
and shown kindness to your anointed,
to David and his posterity forever.[w]

## PSALM 19*

### God's Glory in the Heavens and in the Law

Ps 19 See RG 242

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 The heavens declare the glory of God;

18, 35: **Bow of bronze**: hyperbole for a bow difficult to bend and therefore capable of propelling an arrow with great force.

Ps 19: The heavenly elements of the world, now beautifully

j Ps 26; 1 Sm 26, 23. k Ps 125, 4. l Jb 22, 29; Prv 3, 34. m Pss 27, 1; 36, 10; 43, 3; 119, 105; Jb 29, 3; Mi 7, 8. n Pss 12, 6; 77, 13; Prv 30, 5. o Is 44, 8; 45, 21. p Hb 3, 19. q Ps 144, 1. r Ps 17, 5. s Mi 7, 17. t Ps 144, 1. u Ps 144, 2. v Pss 7, 18; 30, 5; 57, 9; 135, 3; 146, 2; Rom 15, 9. w Pss 89, 28–37; 144, 10; 1 Sm 2, 10.

the sky proclaims its builder's craft.[x]
3 One day to the next conveys that message;
one night to the next imparts that knowledge.
4 There is no word or sound;*
no voice is heard;
5 Yet their report goes forth through all the earth,
their message, to the ends of the world.
God has pitched there a tent for the sun;*
6 it comes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber,
and like an athlete joyfully runs its course.
7 From one end of the heavens it comes forth;
its course runs through to the other;
nothing escapes its heat.

II

8 The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.[y]
9 The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart.
The command of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eye.
10 The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The statutes of the LORD are true,
all of them just;
11 More desirable than gold,
than a hoard of purest gold,
Sweeter also than honey
or drippings from the comb.[z]
12 By them your servant is instructed;*
obeying them brings much reward.

III

13 Who can detect heedless failings?
Cleanse me from my unknown faults.
14 But from willful sins keep your servant;
let them never control me.
Then shall I be blameless,
innocent of grave sin.
15 Let the words of my mouth meet with your favor,
keep the thoughts of my heart before you,
LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Ps 20
See RG
244

## PSALM 20*

### Prayer for the King in Time of War

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 The LORD answer you in time of distress;
the name of the God of Jacob defend you!
3 May God send you help from the temple,
from Zion be your support.[a]
4 May God remember* your every offering,
graciously accept your holocaust, *Selah*
5 Grant what is in your heart,
fulfill your every plan.
6 May we shout for joy at your victory,*
raise the banners in the name of our God.
The LORD grant your every prayer!

II

7 Now I know victory is given
to the anointed of the LORD.[b]
God will answer him from the holy heavens
with a strong arm that brings victory.
8 Some rely on chariots, others on horses,
but we on the name of the LORD our God.[c]

arranged, bespeak the power and wisdom of their creator (2–7). The creator's wisdom is available to human beings in the law (8–11), toward which the psalmist prays to be open (12–15). The themes of light and speech unify the poem.

**19, 4: No word or sound:** the regular functioning of the heavens and the alternation of day and night inform humans without words of the creator's power and wisdom.

**19, 5: The sun:** in other religious literature the sun is a judge and lawgiver since it sees all in its daily course; 5b–7 form a transition to the law in 8–11. The six synonyms for God's revelation (8–11) are applied to the sun in comparable literature.

**19, 12: Instructed:** the Hebrew verb means both to shine and to teach. Cf Dn 12, 3.

**Ps 20:** The people pray for the king before battle. The people ask for divine help (2–6) and express confidence that such help will be given (7–10). A solemn assurance of divine help may well have been given between the two sections in the liturgy, something like the promises of Pss 12, 6 and 21, 9–13. The final verse (10) echoes the opening verse.

**20, 4: Remember:** God's remembering implies readiness to act. Cf Gn 8, 1; Ex 2, 24.

**20, 6: Victory:** the Hebrew root is often translated "salvation," "to save," but in military contexts it can have the specific meaning of "victory."

x Pss 8, 1; 50, 6; 97, 6. y Pss 12, 7; 119. z Sir 24, 19. a Pss 128, 5; 134, 3. b Pss 18, 51; 144, 10; 1 Sm 2, 10. c Ps 147, 10–11; 2 Chr 14, 10; Prv 21, 31; 1 Sm 17, 45; Is 31, 1; 36, 9.

9 They collapse and fall,
but we stand strong and firm.[d]
10 LORD, grant victory to the king;
answer when we call upon you.

## PSALM 21*

### Thanksgiving and Assurances for the King

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 LORD, the king finds joy in your power;[e]
in your victory how greatly he rejoices!
3 You have granted him his heart's desire;
you did not refuse the prayer of his lips.
*Selah*
4 For you welcomed him with goodly blessings;
you placed on his head a crown of pure gold.
5 He asked life of you;
you gave it to him,
length of days forever.[f]
6 Great is his glory in your victory;
majesty and splendor you confer upon him.
7 You make him the pattern of blessings forever,
you gladden him with the joy of your presence.
8 For the king trusts in the LORD,
stands firm through the love of the Most High.

II

9 Your hand will reach all your enemies;
your right hand will reach your foes!
10 At the time of your coming
you will drive them into a furnace.
Then the LORD's anger will consume them,
devour them with fire.
11 Even their descendants you will wipe out from the earth,
their offspring from the human race.
12 Though they intend evil against you,
devising plots, they will not succeed,
13 For you will put them to flight;
you will aim at them with your bow.

III

14 Arise, LORD, in your power![g]
We will sing and chant the praise of your might.

Ps 21
See RG
244

## PSALM 22*

### The Prayer of an Innocent Person

1 For the leader; according to "The deer of the dawn."* A psalm of David.

I

2 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why so far from my call for help,
from my cries of anguish?[h]
3 My God, I call by day, but you do not answer;
by night, but I have no relief.[i]
4 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the glory of Israel.[j]
5 In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted and you rescued them.
6 To you they cried out and they escaped;
in you they trusted and were not disappointed.[k]
7 But I am a worm, hardly human,*
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.[l]
8 All who see me mock me;
they curl their lips and jeer;
they shake their heads at me:[m]
9 "You relied on the LORD—let him deliver you;
if he loves you, let him rescue you."[n]
10 Yet you drew me forth from the womb,

Ps 22
See RG
242–243.
251

**Ps 21:** The first part of this royal psalm is a thanksgiving (2–8), and the second is a promise that the king will triumph over his enemies (9–14). The king's confident prayer (3. 5) and trust in God (8) enable him to receive the divine gifts of vitality, peace, and military success. V 14 reprises v 1. When kings ceased in Israel after the sixth century B.C., the psalm was sung of a future Davidic king.

**Ps 22:** A lament unusual in structure and in intensity of feeling. The psalmist's present distress is contrasted with God's past mercy in vv 2–12. In vv 13–22 enemies surround the psalmist. The last third is an invitation to praise God (23–27), becoming a universal chorus of praise (28–32). The psalm is important in the New Testament. Its opening words occur on the lips of the crucified Jesus (Mk 15, 34; Mt 27, 46), and several other verses are quoted, or at least alluded to, in the accounts of Jesus' passion (Mt 27, 35. 43; Jn 19, 24).

**22, 1: The deer of the dawn:** apparently the title of the melody.

**22, 7: I am a worm, hardly human:** the psalmist's sense of isolation and dehumanization, an important motif of Ps 22, is vividly portrayed here.

d Is 40, 30. e Ps 63, 12. f 1 Kgs 3, 14. g Nm 10, 35. h Is 49, 14; 54, 7; Mt 27, 46; Mk 15, 34. i Sir 2, 10. j Is 6, 3. k Ps 25, 3; Is 49, 23; Dn 3, 40. l Is 53, 3. m Ps 109, 25; Mt 27, 39; Mk 15, 29; Lk 23, 35. n Ps 71, 11; Wis 2, 18–20; Mt 27, 43.

made me safe at my mother's breast.
11 Upon you I was thrust from the womb;
since birth you are my God.[o]
12 Do not stay far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is no one to help.[p]

II

13 Many bulls* surround me;
fierce bulls of Bashan* encircle me.
14 They open their mouths against me,
lions that rend and roar.[q]
15 Like water my life drains away;
all my bones grow soft.
My heart has become like wax,
it melts away within me.
16 As dry as a potsherd is my throat;
my tongue sticks to my palate;
you lay me in the dust of death.*
17 Many dogs surround me;
a pack of evildoers closes in on me.
So wasted are my hands and feet
18 that I can count all my bones.[r]
They stare at me and gloat;
19 they divide my garments among them;
for my clothing they cast lots.[s]
20 But you, LORD, do not stay far off;
my strength, come quickly to help me.
21 Deliver me from the sword,
my forlorn life from the teeth of the dog.
22 Save me from the lion's mouth,
my poor life from the horns of wild bulls.[t]

III

Ps 23
See RG
243, 249

23 Then I will proclaim your name to the assembly;
in the community I will praise you:[u]*
24 "You who fear the LORD, give praise!
All descendants of Jacob, give honor;
show reverence, all descendants of Israel!
25 For God has not spurned or disdained
the misery of this poor wretch,
Did not turn away* from me,
but heard me when I cried out.
26 I will offer praise in the great assembly;
my vows I will fulfill before those who fear him.
27 The poor* will eat their fill;
those who seek the LORD will offer praise.
May your hearts enjoy life forever!"[v]

IV

28 All the ends of the earth
will worship and turn to the LORD;
All the families of nations
will bow low before you.[w]
29 For kingship belongs to the LORD,
the ruler over the nations.[x]
30 All who sleep in the earth
will bow low before God;
All who have gone down into the dust*
will kneel in homage.
31 And I will live for the LORD;
my descendants will serve you.
32 The generation to come will be told of the Lord,
that they may proclaim to a people yet unborn
the deliverance you have brought.[y]

## PSALM 23*

### The Lord, Shepherd and Host

1 A psalm of David.

I

The LORD is my shepherd;*
there is nothing I lack.[z]

**22, 13–14: Bulls**: the enemies of the psalmist are also portrayed in less-than-human form, as wild animals (cf 17. 21–22). **Bashan**: a grazing land east of the Jordan, famed for its cattle. Cf Dt 32, 14; Ez 39, 18; Am 4, 1.

**22, 16: The dust of death**: the netherworld, the domain of the dead.

**22, 23: In the community I will praise you**: the person who offered a thanksgiving sacrifice in the temple recounted to the other worshipers the favor received from God and invited them to share in the sacrificial banquet. The final section (24–32) may be a summary or a citation of the psalmist's poem of praise.

**22, 25: Turn away**: literally, "hides his face from me," an important metaphor for God withdrawing from someone, e.g., Mi 3, 4; Is 8, 17; Pss 27, 9; 69, 18; 88, 15.

**22, 27: The poor**: originally the poor, who were dependent on God; the term (*'anawim*) came to include the religious sense of "humble, pious, devout."

**22, 30**: Hebrew unclear. The translation assumes that all on earth (28–29) and under the earth (30) will worship God.

o Ps 71, 6; Is 44, 2; 46, 3. p Pss 35, 22; 38, 22; 71, 12. q Ps 17, 12; Jb 4, 10; 1 Pt 5, 8. r Ps 109, 24. s Mt 27, 35; Mk 15, 24; Lk 23, 34; Jn 19, 24. t Pss 7, 2–3; 17, 12; 35, 17; 57, 5; 58, 7; 2 Tm 4, 17. u Pss 26, 12; 35, 18; 40, 10; 109, 30; 149, 1; 2 Sm 22, 50; Heb 2, 12. v Pss 23, 5; 69, 33. w Ps 86, 9; Tb 13, 11; Is 45, 22; 52, 10; Zec 14, 16. x Ps 103, 19; Ob 21; Zec 14, 9. y Pss 48, 14–15; 71, 18; 78, 6; 102, 19; Is 53, 10. z Pss 80, 2; 95, 7; 100, 3; Dt 2, 7.

2 In green pastures you let me graze;
to safe waters you lead me;
3 you restore my strength.
You guide me along the right path*
for the sake of your name.[a]
4 Even when I walk through a dark valley,[b]*
I fear no harm for you are at my side;
your rod and staff give me courage.

II

5 You set a table before me*
as my enemies watch;*
You anoint my head with oil;[c]*
my cup overflows.[d]
6 Only goodness and love* will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD[e]
for years to come.

## PSALM 24*

### The Glory of God in Procession to Zion

1 A psalm of David.

I

The earth is the LORD's and all it holds,[f]
the world and those who live there.
2 For God founded it on the seas,
established it over the rivers.[g]

II

3 Who may go up the mountain of the LORD?[h]
Who can stand in his holy place?
4 "The clean of hand and pure of heart,*
who are not devoted to idols,
who have not sworn falsely.
5 They will receive blessings from the LORD,
and justice from their saving God.
6 Such are the people that love the LORD,
that seek the face of the God of Jacob."
*Selah*

III

7 Lift up your heads, O gates;
rise up, you ancient portals,*
that the king of glory may enter.[i]
8 Who is this king of glory?
The LORD, a mighty warrior,
the LORD, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates;
rise up, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may enter.
10 Who is this king of glory?
The LORD of hosts is the king of glory. *Selah*

Ps 24 See RG 244–245

## PSALM 25*

### Confident Prayer for Forgiveness and Guidance

1 Of David.

I

I wait for you, O LORD;
I lift up my soul 2 to my God.[j]
In you I trust; do not let me be disgraced;[k]
do not let my enemies gloat over me.
3 No one is disgraced who waits for you,[l]
but only those who lightly break faith.

Ps 25 See RG 242–243, 244

**Ps 23:** God's loving care for the psalmist is portrayed under the figures of a shepherd for the flock (1–4) and a host's generosity toward a guest (5–6). The imagery of both sections is drawn from traditions of the exodus (Is 40, 11; 49, 10; Jer 31, 10).

**23, 1: My shepherd:** God as good shepherd is common in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Ez 34, 11–16 and Jn 10, 11–18).

**23, 3: The right path:** connotes "right way" and "way of righteousness."

**23, 4: A dark valley:** a different division of the Hebrew consonants yields the translation "the valley of the shadow of death."

**23, 5: You set a table before me:** this expression occurs in an exodus context in Ps 78, 19. **As my enemies watch:** my enemies see that I am God's friend and guest. **Oil:** a perfumed ointment made from olive oil, used especially at banquets (Ps 104, 15; Mt 26, 7; Lk 7, 37. 46; Jn 12, 2).

**23, 6: Goodness and love:** the blessings of God's covenant with Israel.

**Ps 24:** The psalm apparently accompanied a ceremony of the entry of God (invisibly enthroned upon the ark), followed by the people, into the temple. The temple commemorated the creation of the world (1–2). The people had to affirm their fidelity before being admitted into the sanctuary (3–6; cf Ps 15). A choir identifies the approaching God and invites the very temple gates to bow down in obeisance (7–10).

**24, 4–5:** Literally, "the one whose hands are clean." The singular is used for the entire class of worshipers, hence the plural translation.

**24, 7. 9: Lift up your heads, O gates . . . you ancient portals:** the literal meaning is impossible since the portcullis (a gate that moves up and down) was unknown in the ancient world. Extrabiblical parallels suggest a full personification of the circle of gate towers: they are like a council of elders, bowed down and anxious, awaiting the return of the army and the Great Warrior gone to battle.

**Ps 25:** A lament. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Such acrostic psalms are often a series of statements only loosely connected. The psalmist mixes ardent pleas (1–2. 16–22) with expressions of confidence in God who forgives and guides.

a Prv 4, 11. b Jb 10, 21–22; Is 50, 10. c Ps 92, 11. d Ps 16, 5. e Ps 27, 4. f Pss 50, 12; 89, 12; Dt 10, 14; 1 Cor 10, 26. g Ps 136, 6; Is 42, 5. h Ps 15, 1. i Ps 118, 19–20. j Pss 86, 4; 143, 8. k Ps 71, 1. l Ps 22, 6; Is 49, 23; Dn 3, 40.

4 Make known to me your ways, LORD;
teach me your paths.[m]
5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.
For you I wait all the long day,
because of your goodness, LORD.*
6 Remember your compassion and love, O LORD;
for they are ages old.[n]
7 Remember no more the sins of my youth;[o]
remember me only in light of your love.

II

8 Good and upright is the LORD,
who shows sinners the way,
9 Guides the humble rightly,
and teaches the humble the way.
10 All the paths of the LORD are faithful love
toward those who honor the covenant demands.
11 For the sake of your name, LORD,
pardon my guilt, though it is great.
12 Who are those who fear the LORD?
God shows them the way to choose.[p]
13 They live well and prosper,
and their descendants inherit the land.[q]
14 The counsel of the LORD belongs to the faithful;
the covenant instructs them.
15 My eyes are ever upon the LORD,
who frees my feet from the snare.[r]

III

16 Look upon me, have pity on me,
for I am alone and afflicted.[s]
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart;
bring me out of my distress.
18 Put an end to my affliction and suffering;
take away all my sins.
19 See how many are my enemies,
see how fiercely they hate me.
20 Preserve my life and rescue me;
do not let me be disgraced, for I trust in you.
21 Let honesty and virtue preserve me;
I wait for you, O LORD.
22 Redeem Israel, God,*
from all its distress!

Ps 26
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 26*

### Prayer of Innocence

1 Of David.

I

Grant me justice, LORD!
I have walked without blame.[t]
In the LORD I have trusted;
I have not faltered.
2 Test me, LORD, and try me;
search my heart and mind.[u]
3 Your love is before my eyes;
I walk guided by your faithfulness.[v]

II

4 I do not sit with deceivers,
nor with hypocrites do I mingle.
5 I hate the company of evildoers;
with the wicked I do not sit.
6 I will wash my hands* in innocence[w]
and walk round your altar, LORD,
7 Lifting my voice in thanks,
recounting all your wondrous deeds.
8 LORD, I love the house where you dwell,
the tenting-place of your glory.[x]

III

9 Do not take me away with sinners,
nor my life with the violent.[y]
10 Their hands carry out their schemes;
their right hands are full of bribes.
11 But I walk without blame;[z]
redeem me, be gracious to me![a]

**25, 5: Because of your goodness, LORD:** these words have been transposed from the end of 7 to preserve the pattern of two lines per letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the acrostic poem.

**25, 22:** A final verse beginning with the Hebrew letter *pe* is added to the normal 22-letter alphabet. Thus the letters *aleph*, *lamed*, and *pe* open the first, middle (v 11), and last lines of the psalm. Together, they spell *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet.

**Ps 26:** Like a priest washing before approaching the altar (Ex 30, 17–21), the psalmist seeks God's protection upon entering the temple. 1–3, matched by 11–12, remind God of past integrity while asking for purification; 4–5, matched by 9–10, pray for inclusion among the just; 6–8, the center of the poem, express the joy in God at the heart of all ritual.

**26, 6: I will wash my hands:** the washing of hands was a liturgical act (Ex 30, 19. 21; 40, 31–32), symbolic of inner as well as outer cleanness. Cf Is 1, 16.

m Pss 27, 11; 86, 11; 119, 12. 35; 143, 8. 10. n Sir 51, 8. o Jb 13, 26; Is 64, 8. p Prv 19, 23. q Ps 37, 9. 29. r Pss 123, 1. 2; 141, 8. s Pss 86, 16; 119, 132. t Ps 7, 9. u Pss 17, 3; 139, 23. v Ps 86, 11. w Ps 73, 13. x Pss 29, 9; 63, 3; Ex 24, 16; 25, 8. y Ps 28, 3. z Ps 101, 6. a Ps 25, 16.

12 My foot stands on level ground;*
in assemblies* I will bless the LORD.[b]

## PSALM 27*

### Trust in God

1 Of David.

**A**

I

The LORD is my light and my salvation;[c]
whom do I fear?
The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom am I afraid?
2 When evildoers come at me
to devour my flesh,[d]*
These my enemies and foes
themselves stumble and fall.
3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart does not fear;
Though war be waged against me,
even then do I trust.

II

4 One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:
To dwell in the LORD's house
all the days of my life,
To gaze on the LORD's beauty,
to visit his temple.[e]
5 For God will hide me in his shelter
in time of trouble,[f]
Will conceal me in the cover of his tent;
and set me high upon a rock.
6 Even now my head is held high
above my enemies on every side!
I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and chant praise to the LORD.

**B**

I

Ps 27
See RG
242–243

7 Hear my voice, LORD, when I call;
have mercy on me and answer me.
8 "Come," says my heart, "seek God's face";*
your face, LORD, do I seek![g]
9 Do not hide your face from me;
do not repel your servant in anger.
You are my help; do not cast me off;
do not forsake me, God my savior!
10 Even if my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me in.[h]

II

11 LORD, show me your way;
lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.[i]
12 Do not abandon me to the will of my foes;
malicious and lying witnesses have risen
against me.
13 But I believe I shall enjoy the LORD's goodness
in the land of the living.[j]*
14 Wait for the LORD, take courage;
be stouthearted, wait for the LORD!

## PSALM 28*

### Petition and Thanksgiving

1 Of David.

I

Ps 28
See RG
242–243

To you, LORD, I call;
my Rock, do not be deaf to me.[k]
If you fail to answer me,
I will join those who go down to the pit.[l]*

**26, 12: On level ground**: in safety, where there is no danger of tripping and falling. **In assemblies**: at the temple. Having walked around the altar, the symbol of God's presence, the psalmist blesses God.

**Ps 27**: Tradition has handed down the two sections of the psalm (1–6 and 7–14) as one psalm, though each part could be understood as complete in itself. Asserting boundless hope that God will bring rescue (1–3), the psalmist longs for the presence of God in the temple, protection from all enemies (4–6). In part B there is a clear shift in tone (7–12); the climax of the poem comes with "I believe" (13), echoing "I trust" (3).

**27, 2: To devour my flesh**: the psalmist's enemies are rapacious beasts (Pss 7, 3; 17, 12; 22, 14. 17).

**27, 8: Seek God's face** (literally, "to seek his face"): to commune with God in the temple. The idiom is derived from the practice of journeying to sacred places. Cf Hos 5, 15; 2 Sm 21, 1; Ps 24, 6.

**27, 13: In the land of the living**: or "in the land of life," an epithet of the Jerusalem temple (Pss 52, 7; 116, 9; Is 38, 11), where the faithful had access to the life-giving presence of God.

**Ps 28**: A lament asking that the psalmist, who has taken refuge in the temple (2), not be punished with the wicked, who are headed inevitably toward destruction (1. 3–5). The statement of praise is exceptionally lengthy and vigorous (6–7). The psalm ends with a prayer (8–9).

**28, 1: The pit**: a synonym for Sheol, the shadowy place of the dead.

b Pss 22, 23; 35, 18; 149, 1. c Pss 18, 29; 36, 10; 43, 3; Is 10, 17; Mi 7, 8. d Ps 14, 4. e Pss 23, 6; 61, 5. f Ps 31, 21. g Ps 24, 6; Hos 5, 15. h Is 49, 15. i Pss 25, 4; 86, 11. j Ps 116, 9; Is 38, 11. k Ps 18, 2. l Pss 30, 4; 88, 5; 143, 7; Prv 1, 12.

2 Hear the sound of my pleading when I cry to you,
lifting my hands toward your holy place.[m]*
3 Do not drag me off with the wicked,
with those who do wrong,[n]
Who speak peace to their neighbors
though evil is in their hearts.[o]
4 Repay them for their deeds,
for the evil that they do.
For the work of their hands repay them;
give them what they deserve.[p]
5 They pay no heed to the LORD's works,
to the deeds of God's hands.[q]
God will tear them down,
never to be rebuilt.

II

6 Blessed be the LORD,
who has heard the sound of my pleading.*
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield,
in whom my heart trusted and found help.
So my heart rejoices;
with my song I praise my God.

III

8 LORD, you are the strength of your people,*
the saving refuge of your anointed king.
9 Save your people, bless your inheritance;
feed and sustain them forever!

Ps 30 See RG 243

## PSALM 29*

### The Lord of Majesty Acclaimed as King of the World

Ps 29 See RG 242, 245, 250

1 A psalm of David.

I

Give to the LORD, you heavenly beings,*
give to the LORD glory and might;
2 Give to the LORD the glory due God's name.
Bow down before the LORD's holy splendor![r]

II

3 The voice of the LORD* is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over the mighty waters.
4 The voice of the LORD is power;
the voice of the LORD is splendor.[s]
5 The voice of the LORD cracks the cedars;
the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon,
6 Makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
and Sirion* like a young bull.
7 The voice of the LORD strikes with fiery flame;
8 the voice of the LORD rocks the desert;
the LORD rocks the desert of Kadesh.*
9 The voice of the LORD twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
All in his palace say, "Glory!"*

III

10 The LORD sits enthroned above the flood![t]*
The LORD reigns as king forever!
11 May the LORD give might to his people;*
may the LORD bless his people with peace![u]

## PSALM 30*

### Thanksgiving for Deliverance

1 A psalm. A song for the dedication of the temple.*
Of David.

I

2 I praise you, LORD, for you raised me up
and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.
3 O LORD, my God,

**28, 2: Your holy place**: the innermost part of the temple, the holy of holies, containing the ark. Cf 1 Kgs 6, 16. 19–23; 8, 6–8.

**28, 6**: The psalmist shifts to fervent thanksgiving, probably responding to a priestly or prophetic oracle in 5cd (not usually transmitted) assuring the worshiper that the prayer has been heard.

**28, 8: Your people . . . your anointed king**: salvation is more than individual, affecting all the people and their God-given leader.

**Ps 29**: The hymn invites the members of the heavenly court to acknowledge God's supremacy by ascribing glory and might to God alone (1–2a. 9b). Divine glory and might are dramatically visible in the storm (3–9a). The storm apparently comes from the Mediterranean onto the coast of Syria-Palestine and then moves inland. In 10 the divine beings acclaim God's eternal kingship. The psalm concludes with a prayer that God will impart the power just displayed to the Israelite king and through the king to Israel.

**29, 1: You heavenly beings**: literally, "sons of God," i.e., members of the heavenly court who served Israel's God in a variety of capacities.

**29, 3: The voice of the LORD**: the sevenfold repetition of the phrase imitates the sound of crashing thunder and may allude to God's primordial slaying of Leviathan, the seven-headed sea monster of Canaanite mythology.

**29, 6: Sirion**: the Phoenician name for Mount Hermon. Cf Dt 3, 9.

**29, 8: The desert of Kadesh**: probably north of Palestine in the neighborhood of Lebanon and Hermon.

**29, 9b–10**: Having witnessed God's supreme power (3–9a), the gods acknowledge the glory that befits the king of the divine and human world.

m Ps 134, 2. n Ps 26, 9. o Pss 12, 2; 55, 22; 62, 5; Prv 26, 24–28. p 2 Sm 3, 39. q Is 5, 12. r Pss 68, 35; 96, 7–9. s Pss 46, 7; 77, 18–19; Jb 37, 4; Is 30, 30. t Bar 3, 3. u Ps 68, 36.

I cried out to you and you healed* me.
4 LORD, you brought me up from Sheol;
you kept me from going down to the pit.[v]*

II

5 Sing praise to the LORD, you faithful;
give thanks to God's holy name.
6 For divine anger lasts but a moment;
divine favor lasts a lifetime.
At dusk weeping comes for the night;
but at dawn there is rejoicing.

III

7 Complacent,* I once said,
"I shall never be shaken."
8 LORD, when you showed me favor
I stood like the mighty mountains.
But when you hid your face
I was struck with terror.[w]
9 To you, LORD, I cried out;
with the Lord I pleaded for mercy:
10 "What gain is there from my lifeblood,
from my going down to the grave?
Does dust give you thanks
or declare your faithfulness?*
11 Hear, O LORD, have mercy on me;
LORD, be my helper."

IV

12 You changed my mourning into dancing;
you took off my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness.[x]
13 With my whole being I sing
endless praise to you.
O LORD, my God,
forever will I give you thanks.

## PSALM 31*

Ps 31
See RG
242–243

### Prayer in Distress and Thanksgiving for Escape

1 For the leader. A psalm
of David.

I

2 In you, LORD, I take refuge;[y]
let me never be put to shame.
In your justice deliver me;
3 incline your ear to me;
make haste to rescue me!
Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to save me.
4 You are my rock and my fortress;[z]
for your name's sake lead and guide me.
5 Free me from the net they have set for me,
for you are my refuge.
6 Into your hands I commend my spirit;[a]*
you will redeem me, LORD, faithful God.
7 You hate those who serve worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
8 I will rejoice and be glad in your love,
once you have seen my misery,
observed my distress.[b]
9 You will not abandon me into enemy hands,
but will set my feet in a free and open space.

II

10 Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am in distress;
with grief my eyes are wasted,
my soul and body spent.
11 My life is worn out by sorrow,
my years by sighing.
My strength fails in affliction;

**29, 10: The flood**: God defeated the primordial waters and made them part of the universe. Cf Pss 89, 10–13 and 93, 3–4.

**29, 11: His people**: God's people, Israel.

**Ps 30**: An individual thanksgiving in four parts: praise and thanks for deliverance and restoration (2–4); an invitation to others to join in (5–6); a flashback to the time before deliverance (7–11); a return to praise and thanks (12–13). Two sets of images recur: 1) going down, death, silence; 2) coming up, life, praising. God has delivered the psalmist from one state to the other.

**30, 1: For the dedication of the temple**: a later adaptation of the psalm to celebrate the purification of the temple in 164 B.C. during the Maccabean Revolt.

**30, 3: Healed**: for God as healer, see also Pss 103, 3; 107, 20; Hos 6, 1; 7, 1; 11, 3; 14, 5.

**30, 4: Sheol . . . pit**: the shadowy underworld residence of the spirits of the dead, here a metaphor for near death.

**30, 7: Complacent**: untroubled existence is often seen as a source of temptation to forget God. Cf Dt 8, 10–18; Hos 13, 6; Prv 30, 9.

**30, 10**: In the stillness of Sheol no one gives you praise; let me live and be among your worshipers. Cf Pss 6, 6; 88, 11–13; 115, 17; Is 38, 18.

**Ps 31**: A lament (2–19) with a strong emphasis on trust (4. 6. 15–16), ending with an anticipatory thanksgiving (20–25). As is usual in laments, the affliction is couched in general terms. The psalmist feels overwhelmed by evil people but trusts in the "faithful God" (6).

**31, 6: Into your hands I commend my spirit**: in Lk 23, 46 Jesus breathes his last with this psalm verse. Stephen in Acts 7, 59 alludes to these words as he is attacked by enemies. The verse is used as an antiphon in the Divine Office at Compline, the last prayer of the day.

v Ps 28, 1; Jon 2, 7. w Ps 104, 29. x Is 61, 3; Jer 31, 13. y 2–4: Ps 71, 1–3. z Ps 18, 2. a Lk 23, 46; Acts 7, 59. b Ps 10, 14.

my bones are consumed.[c]
12 To all my foes I am a thing of scorn,
to my neighbors, a dreaded sight,
a horror to my friends.
When they see me in the street,
they quickly shy away.[d]
13 I am forgotten, out of mind like the dead;
I am like a shattered dish.*
14 I hear the whispers of the crowd;
terrors are all around me.*
They conspire against me;
they plot to take my life.
15 But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, "You are my God."[e]
16 My times are in your hands;
rescue me from my enemies,
from the hands of my pursuers.
17 Let your face shine on your servant;[f]
save me in your kindness.
18 Do not let me be put to shame,
for I have called to you, LORD.
Put the wicked to shame;
reduce them to silence in Sheol.
19 Strike dumb their lying lips,
proud lips that attack the just
in contempt and scorn.[g]

III

20 How great is your goodness, LORD,
stored up for those who fear you.
You display it for those who trust you,
in the sight of all the people.
21 You hide them in the shelter of your presence,
safe from scheming enemies.
You keep them in your abode,
safe from plotting tongues.[h]
22 Blessed be the LORD,
who has shown me wondrous love,
and been for me a city most secure.
23 Once I said in my anguish,
"I am shut out from your sight."[i]
Yet you heard my plea,
when I cried out to you.
24 Love the LORD, all you faithful.
The LORD protects the loyal,
but repays the arrogant in full.
25 Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.

Ps 32
See RG
243

## PSALM 32*

### Remission of Sin

1 Of David. A *maskil.*

I

Happy the sinner whose fault is removed,
whose sin is forgiven.[j]
2 Happy those to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no deceit.

II

3 As long as I kept silent,* my bones wasted away;
I groaned all the day.[k]
4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength withered as in dry summer heat. *Selah*
5 Then I declared my sin to you;
my guilt I did not hide.[l]
I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD,"
and you took away the guilt of my sin. *Selah*
6 Thus should all your faithful pray
in time of distress.
Though flood waters* threaten,
they will never reach them.[m]
7 You are my shelter; from distress you keep me;
with safety you ring me round. *Selah*

31, 13: **Like a shattered dish**: a common comparison for something ruined and useless. Cf Is 30, 14; Jer 19, 11; 22, 28.
31, 14: **Terrors are all around**: a cry used in inescapable danger. Cf Jer 6, 25; 20, 10; 46, 5; 49, 29.
Ps 32: An individual thanksgiving and the second of the seven Penitential Psalms (cf Ps 6). The opening declaration—the forgiven are blessed (1–2)—arises from the psalmist's own experience. At one time the psalmist was stubborn and closed, a victim of sin's power (3–4), and then became open to the forgiving God (5–7). Sin here, as often in the Bible, is not only the personal act of rebellion against God but also the consequences of that act—frustration and waning of vitality. Having been rescued, the psalmist can teach others the joys of justice and the folly of sin (8–11).
32, 3: **I kept silent**: did not confess the sin before God.
32, 6: **Flood waters**: the untamed waters surrounding the earth, a metaphor for danger.

c Pss 32, 3; 38, 10–11. d Jb 19, 13–19. e Ps 140, 7; Is 25, 1. f Ps 67, 1; Nm 6, 24. g Ps 12, 4. h Ps 27, 5. i Jon 2, 5. j Is 1, 18; Ps 65, 3; Rom 4, 7–8. k Ps 31, 11. l Pss 38, 19; 51, 5. m Ps 18, 5.

III

8 I will instruct you and show you the way you
should walk,
give you counsel and watch over you.
9 Do not be senseless like horses or mules;
with bit and bridle their temper is curbed,
else they will not come to you.

IV

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but love surrounds those who trust in the
LORD.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just;
exult, all you upright of heart. [n]

## PSALM 33*

### Praise of the Lord's Power and Providence

I

1 Rejoice, you just, in the LORD;
praise from the upright is fitting. [o]
2 Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;
on the ten-stringed lyre offer praise. [p]
3 Sing to God a new song;
skillfully play with joyful chant.
4 For the LORD's word is true;
all his works are trustworthy.
5 The LORD loves justice and right
and fills the earth with goodness. [q]

II

6 By the LORD's word the heavens were made;
by the breath of his mouth all their host. [r]*
7 The waters of the sea were gathered as in a
bowl;*
in cellars the deep was confined. [s]

III

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all who dwell in the world show
reverence.
9 For he spoke, and it came to be,
commanded, and it stood in place. [t]
10 The LORD foils the plan of nations,
frustrates the designs of peoples.
11 But the plan of the LORD stands forever,
wise designs through all generations. [u]
12 Happy the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people chosen as his very own. [v]

IV

13 From heaven the LORD looks down
and observes the whole human race, [w]
14 Surveying from the royal throne
all who dwell on earth.
15 The one who fashioned the hearts of them all
knows all their works.

V

Ps 33
See RG
242

16 A king is not saved by a mighty army,
nor a warrior delivered by great strength.
17 Useless is the horse for safety;
its great strength, no sure escape.
18 But the LORD's eyes are upon the reverent,
upon those who hope for his gracious help,
19 Delivering them from death,
keeping them alive in times of famine.

VI

20 Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and shield. [x]
21 For in God our hearts rejoice;
in your holy name we trust.
22 May your kindness, LORD, be upon us;
we have put our hope in you.

## PSALM 34*

### Thanksgiving to God Who Delivers the Just

Ps 34
See RG
243, 244

1 Of David, when he feigned madness before
Abimelech,* who forced him to depart.

I

2 I will bless the LORD at all times;

Ps 33: A hymn in which the just are invited (1–3) to praise God, who by a mere word (4–5) created the three-tiered universe of the heavens, the cosmic waters, and the earth (6–9). Human words, in contrast, effect nothing (10–11). The greatness of human beings consists in God's choosing them as a special people and their faithful response (12–22).

33, 6: **All their host**: the stars of the sky are commonly viewed as a vast army, e.g., Neh 9, 6; Is 40, 26; 45, 12; Jer 33, 22.

33, 7: **The waters . . . as in a bowl**: ancients sometimes attributed the power keeping the seas from overwhelming land to a primordial victory of the storm-god over personified Sea. God confines the seas as easily as one puts water in a bowl.

Ps 34: A thanksgiving in acrostic form, each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In this psalm one letter is missing and two are in reverse order. The psalmist, fresh from the experience of being rescued (5. 7), can teach the "poor," those who are defenseless, to trust in God alone (4. 12). God will make them powerful (5–11) and give them protection (12–23).

34, 1: **Abimelech**: a scribal error for Achish. In 1 Sm 21, 13–16, David feigned madness before Achish, not Abimelech.

n Ps 33, 1. o Pss 32, 11; 147, 1. p Pss 92, 4; 144, 9. q Ps 119, 64. r Gn 2, 1. s Ps 78, 13; Gn 1, 9–10; Ex 15, 8. t Ps 148, 5; Gn 1, 3f; Jdt 16, 14. u Prv 19, 21; Is 40, 8. v Ps 144, 15; Ex 19, 6; Dt 7, 6. w Jb 34, 21; Sir 15, 19; Jer 16, 17; 32, 19. x Ps 115, 9.

praise shall be always in my mouth.[y]
3 My soul will glory in the LORD
that the poor may hear and be glad.
4 Magnify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.

II

5 I sought the LORD, who answered me,
delivered me from all my fears.
6 Look to God that you may be radiant with joy
and your faces may not blush for shame.
7 In my misfortune I called,
the LORD heard and saved me from all distress.
8 The angel of the LORD, who encamps with them,
delivers all who fear God.[z]
9 Learn to savor how good the LORD is;
happy are those who take refuge in him.[a]
10 Fear the LORD, you holy ones;
nothing is lacking to those who fear him.[b]
11 The powerful* grow poor and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

III

12 Come, children,* listen to me;[c]
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
13 Who among you loves life,[d]
takes delight in prosperous days?
14 Keep your tongue from evil,
your lips from speaking lies.
15 Turn from evil and do good;[e]
seek peace and pursue it.
16 The LORD has eyes for the just[f]
and ears for their cry.
17 The LORD's face is against evildoers
to wipe out their memory from the earth.
18 When the just cry out, the LORD hears
and rescues them from all distress.
19 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted,
saves those whose spirit is crushed.
20 Many are the troubles of the just,
but the LORD delivers from them all.
21 God watches over all their bones;
not a one shall be broken.[g]
22 Evil will slay the wicked;
those who hate the just are condemned.
23 The LORD redeems loyal servants;
no one is condemned whose refuge is God.

Ps 35
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 35*

### Prayer for Help against Unjust Enemies

1 Of David.

I

Oppose, LORD, those who oppose me;*
war upon those who make war upon me.
2 Take up the shield and buckler;
rise up in my defense.
3 Brandish lance and battle-ax
against my pursuers.
Say to my heart,
"I am your salvation."
4 Let those who seek my life
be put to shame and disgrace.
Let those who plot evil against me[h]
be turned back and confounded.
5 Make them like chaff before the wind,[i]
with the angel of the LORD driving them on.
6 Make their way slippery and dark,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

II

7 Without cause they set their snare for me;
without cause they dug a pit for me.
8 Let ruin overtake them unawares;
let the snare they have set catch them;
let them fall into the pit they have dug.[j]
9 Then I will rejoice in the LORD,
exult in God's salvation.
10 My very bones shall say,

**34, 11: The powerful:** literally, "lions." Fierce animals were sometimes metaphors for influential people.

**34, 12: Children:** the customary term for students in Wisdom literature.

Ps 35: A lament of a person betrayed by friends. The psalmist prays that the evildoers be publicly exposed as unjust (1–8), and gives thanks in anticipation of vindication (9–10). Old friends are the enemies (11–16). May their punishment come quickly (17–21)! The last part (22–26) echoes the opening in praying for the destruction of the psalmist's persecutors. The psalm may appear vindictive, but one must keep in mind that the psalmist is praying for *public* redress now of a *public* injustice. There is at this time no belief in an afterlife in which justice will be redressed.

**35, 1–6:** The mixture of judicial, martial, and hunting images shows that the language is figurative. The actual injustice is false accusation of serious crimes (11. 15. 20–21). The psalmist seeks lost honor through a trial before God.

y Ps 145, 2. z Ex 14, 19. a Ps 2, 12. b Prv 3, 7. c Prv 1, 8; 4, 1. d 13–17: 1 Pt 3, 10–12. e Ps 37, 27. f Ps 33, 18. g Jn 19, 36. h Pss 40, 15; 71, 13. i Pss 1, 4; 83, 14; Jb 21, 18. j Pss 7, 16; 9, 16; 57, 7; Prv 26, 27; Eccl 10, 8; Sir 27, 26.

"O LORD, who is like you,[k]
Who rescue the afflicted from the powerful,
the afflicted and needy from the despoiler?"

III

11 Malicious witnesses come forward,
accuse me of things I do not know.
12 They repay me evil for good
and I am all alone.[l]
13 Yet I, when they were ill, put on sackcloth,*
afflicted myself with fasting,
sobbed my prayers upon my bosom.
14 I went about in grief as for my brother,
bent in mourning as for my mother.
15 Yet when I stumbled they gathered with glee,
they gathered against me like strangers.
They slandered me without ceasing;
16 without respect they mocked me,
gnashed their teeth against me.

IV

17 LORD, how long will you look on?
Save me from roaring beasts,
my precious life from lions![m]
18 Then I will thank you in the great assembly;
I will praise you before the mighty throng.[n]
19 Do not let lying foes smirk at me,
my undeserved enemies wink knowingly.[o]
20 They speak no words of peace,
but against the quiet in the land
they fashion deceitful speech.[p]
21 They open wide their mouths against me.
They say, "Aha! Good!
Our eyes relish the sight!"[q]
22 You see this, LORD; do not be silent;[r]
Lord, do not withdraw from me.
23 Awake, be vigilant in my defense,
in my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Defend me because you are just, LORD;
my God, do not let them gloat over me.
25 Do not let them say in their hearts,
"Aha! Just what we wanted!"
Do not let them say,
"We have devoured that one!"
26 Put to shame and confound
all who relish my misfortune.
Clothe with shame and disgrace
those who lord it over me.
27 But let those who favor my just cause
shout for joy and be glad.
May they ever say, "Exalted be the LORD
who delights in the peace of his loyal
servant."
28 Then my tongue shall recount your justice,
declare your praise, all the day long.[s]

## PSALM 36*

### Human Wickedness and Divine Providence

Ps 36
See RG
242–243,
249

1 For the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD.

I

2 Sin directs the heart of the wicked;
their eyes are closed to the fear of God.[t]
3 For they live with the delusion:
their guilt will not be known and hated.*
4 Empty and false are the words of their mouth;
they have ceased to be wise and do good.
5 In their beds they hatch plots;
they set out on a wicked way;
they do not reject evil.[u]

II

6 LORD, your love reaches to heaven;
your fidelity, to the clouds.[v]
7 Your justice is like the highest mountains;
your judgments,* like the mighty deep;
all living creatures you sustain, LORD.
8 How precious is your love, O God!
We take refuge in the shadow of your
wings.[w]*
9 We feast on the rich food of your house;
from your delightful stream[x] you give us
drink.

**35, 13. 15–17:** The Hebrew is obscure.

**Ps 36:** A psalm with elements of wisdom (2–5), the hymn (6–10), and the lament (11–13). The rule of sin over the wicked (2–5) is contrasted with the rule of divine love and mercy over God's friends (6–10). The psalm ends with a prayer that God's guidance never cease (11–13).

**36, 3: Hated:** punished by God.

**36, 6–7: Love . . . judgments:** God actively controls the entire world.

**36, 8: The shadow of your wings:** metaphor for divine protection. It probably refers to the winged cherubim in the holy of holies in the temple. Cf 1 Kgs 6, 23–28. 32; 2 Chr 3, 10–13; Ez 1, 4–9.

k Ps 86, 8; 89, 7. 9; Ex 15, 11. l Pss 27, 12; 38, 20–21; 109, 5; Jer 18, 20. m Pss 17, 12; 22, 22; 58, 7. n Pss 22, 23; 26, 12; 35, 18; 40, 10; 149, 1. o Ps 38, 17. p Ps 120, 6–7. q Ps 40, 16; Lam 2, 16. r Pss 22, 12; 38, 21; 109, 1. s Ps 71, 15–16. t Rom 3, 18. u Mi 2, 1. v Pss 57, 11; 71, 19. w Ps 17, 8. x Gn 2, 8. 10.

10 For with you is the fountain of life,[y]
and in your light we see light.[z]
11 Continue your kindness toward your friends,
your just defense of the honest heart.
12 Do not let the foot of the proud overtake me,
nor the hand of the wicked disturb me.
13 There make the evildoers fall;
thrust them down, never to rise.

Ps 37
See RG
244, 250

## PSALM 37*

### The Fate of Sinners and the Reward of the Just

1 Of David.

ALEPH

Do not be provoked by evildoers;
do not envy those who do wrong.[a]
2 Like grass they wither quickly;
like green plants they wilt away.[b]

BETH

3 Trust in the LORD and do good
that you may dwell in the land* and live
secure.[c]
4 Find your delight in the LORD
who will give you your heart's desire.[d]

GIMEL

5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust that God will act[e]
6 And make your integrity shine like the dawn,
your vindication like noonday.[f]

DALETH

7 Be still before the LORD;
wait for God.
Do not be provoked by the prosperous,
nor by malicious schemers.

HE

8 Give up your anger, abandon your wrath;
do not be provoked; it brings only harm.
9 Those who do evil will be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD will
possess the land.[g]

WAW

10 Wait a little, and the wicked will be no more;
look for them and they will not be there.
11 But the poor will possess the land,[h]
will delight in great prosperity.

ZAYIN

12 The wicked plot against the just
and grind their teeth at them;
13 But the LORD laughs at them,[i]
knowing their day is coming.

HETH

14 The wicked draw their swords;
they string their bows
To fell the poor and oppressed,
to slaughter those whose way is honest.[j]
15 Their swords will pierce their own hearts;
their bows will be broken.

TETH

16 Better the poverty of the just
than the great wealth of the wicked.[k]
17 The arms of the wicked will be broken;
the LORD will sustain the just.

YODH

18 The LORD watches over the days of the
blameless;
their heritage lasts forever.
19 They will not be disgraced when times are
hard;
in days of famine they will have plenty.

KAPH

20 The wicked perish,
the enemies of the LORD;

**Ps 37:** The psalm responds to the problem of evil, which the Old Testament often expresses as a question: Why do the wicked prosper and the good suffer? The psalm answers that the situation is only temporary. God will reverse things, rewarding the good and punishing the wicked here on earth. The perspective is concrete and earthbound: people's very actions place them among the ranks of the good or wicked. Each group or "way" has its own inherent dynamism—eventual frustration for the wicked, eventual reward for the just. The psalm is an acrostic, i.e., each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has its own imagery and logic.

**37, 3. 9. 11. 22. 27. 29. 34: The land:** the promised land, Israel, which became for later interpreters a type or figure of heaven. Cf Heb 11, 9–10. 13–16. The New Testament Beatitudes (Mt 5, 3–12; Lk 6, 20–26) have been influenced by the psalm, especially their total reversal of the present and their interpretation of the happy future as possession of the land.

y Is 55, 1; Jn 4, 14. z Ps 80, 4. 8. 20. a Prv 3, 31; 23, 17; 24, 1. 19. b Pss 90, 5–6; 102, 12; 103, 15–16; Jb 14, 2; Is 40, 7. c Ps 128, 2. d Prv 10, 24. e Ps 55, 23; Prv 3, 5; 16, 3. f Wis 5, 6; Is 58, 10. g Ps 25, 13; Prv 2, 21; Is 57, 13. h Mt 5, 4. i Pss 2, 4; 59, 9; Wis 4, 18. j Pss 11, 2; 57, 5; 64, 4. k Prv 15, 16; 16, 8.

Like the beauty of meadows they vanish;
like smoke they disappear.[l]

LAMEDH

21 The wicked borrow but do not repay;
the just are generous in giving.
22 For those blessed by the Lord will possess the land,
but those accursed will be cut off.

MEM

23 Those whose steps are guided by the LORD;[m]
whose way God approves,
24 May stumble, but they will never fall,
for the LORD holds their hand.

NUN

25 Neither in my youth, nor now in old age
have I ever seen the just abandoned[n]
or their children begging bread.
26 The just always lend generously,
and their children become a blessing.

SAMEKH

27 Turn from evil and do good,
that you may inhabit the land forever.[o]
28 For the LORD loves justice
and does not abandon the faithful.

AYIN

When the unjust are destroyed,
and the children of the wicked cut off,
29 The just will possess the land
and live in it forever.[p]

PE

30 The mouths of the just utter wisdom;[q]
their tongues speak what is right.
31 God's teaching is in their hearts;[r]
their steps do not falter.

SADHE

32 The wicked spy on the just
and seek to kill them.
33 But the LORD does not leave the just in their power,
nor let them be condemned when tried.

QOPH

34 Wait eagerly for the LORD,
and keep to the way;[s]
God will raise you to possess the land;
you will gloat when the wicked are cut off.

RESH

35 I have seen ruthless scoundrels,
strong as flourishing cedars.[t]
36 When I passed by again, they were gone;
though I searched, they could not be found.

SHIN

37 Observe the honest, mark the upright;
those at peace with God have a future.[u]
38 But all sinners will be destroyed;
the future of the wicked will be cut off.

TAW

39 The salvation of the just is from the LORD,
their refuge in time of distress.[v]
40 The LORD helps and rescues them,
rescues and saves them from the wicked,
because in God they take refuge.

## PSALM 38*

Ps 38
See RG
242–243

### Prayer of an Afflicted Sinner

1 A psalm of David. For remembrance.

I

2 LORD, punish me no more in your anger;
in your wrath do not chastise me![w]
3 Your arrows have sunk deep in me;[x]
your hand has come down upon me.
4 My flesh is afflicted because of your anger;
my frame aches because of my sin.[y]
5 My iniquities overwhelm me,
a burden beyond my strength.[z]

II

6 Foul and festering are my sores
because of my folly.
7 I am stooped and deeply bowed;[a]
all day I go about mourning.

**Ps 38:** In this lament, one of the Penitential Psalms (cf Ps 6), the psalmist acknowledges the sin that has brought physical and mental sickness and social ostracism. There is no one to turn to for help; only God can undo the past and restore the psalmist.

l Wis 5, 14. m Prv 20, 24. n Jb 4, 7; Sir 2, 10. o Ps 34, 14–15; Am 5, 14. p Ps 25, 13; Prv 2, 21; Is 57, 13. q Prv 10, 31. r Ps 40, 9; Dt 6, 6; Is 51, 7; Jer 31, 33. s Ps 31, 24. t Ps 92, 8–9; Is 2, 13; Ez 31, 10–11. u Prv 23, 18; 24, 14. v Ps 9, 10; Is 25, 4. w Ps 6, 2. x Jb 6, 4; Lam 3, 12; Pss 31, 11; 64, 7. y Is 1, 5–6. z Ps 40, 13; Ezr 9, 6. a Ps 35, 14.

8 My loins burn with fever;
my flesh is afflicted.
9 I am numb and utterly crushed;
I wail with anguish of heart.[b]
10 My Lord, my deepest yearning is before you;
my groaning is not hidden from you.
11 My heart shudders, my strength forsakes me;
the very light of my eyes has failed.[c]
12 Friends and companions shun my pain;
my neighbors stand far off.
13 Those who seek my life lay snares for me;
they seek my misfortune, they speak of ruin;
they plot treachery all the day.

III

14 But I am like the deaf, hearing nothing,
like the dumb, saying nothing,
15 Like someone who does not hear,
who has no answer ready.
16 LORD, I wait for you;
O Lord, my God, answer me.[d]
17 For I fear they will gloat,
exult over me if I stumble.

IV

18 I am very near to falling;
my pain is with me always.
19 I acknowledge my guilt
and grieve over my sin.[e]
20 But many are my foes without cause,
a multitude of enemies without reason,
21 Repaying me evil for good,
harassing me for pursuing good.[f]
22 Forsake me not, O LORD;
my God, be not far from me![g]
23 Come quickly to help me,[h]
my Lord and my salvation!

Ps 40
See RG
242–243,
250

Ps 39
See RG
242–243,
250

## PSALM 39*

### The Vanity of Life

1 For the leader, for Jeduthun.[i] A psalm of David.

I

2 I said, "I will watch my ways,
lest I sin with my tongue;
I will set a curb on my mouth."
3 Dumb and silent before the wicked,
I refrained from any speech.
But my sorrow increased;
4 my heart smoldered within me.[j]
In my thoughts a fire blazed up,
and I broke into speech:

II

5 LORD, let me know my end, the number of my days,
that I may learn how frail I am.
6 You have given my days a very short span;
my life is as nothing before you.
All mortals are but a breath.[k] *Selah*
7 Mere phantoms, we go our way;
mere vapor, our restless pursuits;
we heap up stores without knowing for whom.
8 And now, Lord, what future do I have?
You are my only hope.
9 From all my sins deliver me;
let me not be the taunt of fools.

III

10 I was silent and did not open my mouth
because you were the one who did this.
11 Take your plague away from me;
I am ravaged by the touch of your hand.
12 You rebuke our guilt and chasten us;
you dissolve all we prize like a cobweb.
All mortals are but a breath. *Selah*
13 Listen to my prayer, LORD, hear my cry;
do not be deaf to my weeping!
I sojourn with you like a passing stranger,
a guest, like all my ancestors.[l]
14 Turn your gaze from me, that I may find peace
before I depart to be no more.

## PSALM 40*

### Gratitude and Prayer for Help

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

A

I

2 I waited, waited for the LORD;

**Ps 39:** The lament of a mortally ill person who at first had resolved to remain silently submissive (2–4). But the grief was too much and now the psalmist laments the brevity and vanity of life (5–7), yet remaining hopeful (8–10). The psalmist continues to express both acceptance of the illness and hope for healing in 11–14.

b Ps 102, 4–6. c Pss 6, 8; 31, 10. d Ps 13, 4. e Pss 32, 5; 51, 5. f Ps 109, 5. g Pss 22, 2. 12. 20; 35, 22. h Ps 40, 14. i 1 Chr 16, 41; Pss 62, 1; 77, 1. j Jer 20, 9. k Pss 62, 10; 90, 9–10; 144, 4; Jb 7, 6. 16; 14, 1. 5; Eccl 6, 12; Wis 2, 5. l Ps 119, 19; Gn 23, 4; Heb 11, 13; 1 Pt 2, 11.

who bent down and heard my cry,[m]
3 Drew me out of the pit of destruction,
out of the mud of the swamp,[n]
Set my feet upon rock,
steadied my steps,
4 And put a new song* in my mouth,[o]
a hymn to our God.
Many shall look on in awe
and they shall trust in the LORD.

II

5 Happy those whose trust is the LORD,
who turn not to idolatry
or to those who stray after falsehood.[p]
6 How numerous, O LORD, my God,
you have made your wondrous deeds!
And in your plans for us
there is none to equal you.[q]
Should I wish to declare or tell them,
too many are they to recount.[r]

III

7 Sacrifice and offering you do not want;[s]*
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts and sin-offerings you do not
require;
8 so I said, "Here I am;
your commands for me are written in the
scroll.
9 To do your will is my delight;
my God, your law is in my heart!"[t]
10 I announced your deed to a great assembly;
I did not restrain my lips;
you, LORD, are my witness.[u]
11 Your deed I did not hide within my heart;
your loyal deliverance I have proclaimed.
I made no secret of your enduring kindness
to a great assembly.

B

I

12 LORD, do not withhold your compassion from
me;
may your enduring kindness ever preserve
me.[v]
13 For all about me are evils beyond count;
my sins so overcome me I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head;
my courage fails me.[w]

II

14 LORD, graciously rescue me![x]
Come quickly to help me, LORD!
15 Put to shame and confound
all who seek to take my life.
Turn back in disgrace
those who desire my ruin.[y]
16 Let those who say "Aha!"[z]
know dismay and shame.
17 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
May those who long for your help
always say, "The LORD be glorified."[a]
18 Though I am afflicted and poor,
the Lord keeps me in mind.
You are my help and deliverer;
my God, do not delay!

## PSALM 41*

### Thanksgiving after Sickness

Ps 41
See RG
243

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 Happy those concerned for the lowly and
poor;*

Ps 40: A thanksgiving (2–13) has been combined with a lament (14–18), that appears also in Ps 70. The psalmist describes the rescue in spatial terms—being raised up from the swampy underworld to firm earth where one can praise God (2–4). All who trust God will experience like protection (5–6)! The psalm stipulates the precise mode of thanksgiving: not animal sacrifice but open and enthusiastic proclamation of the salvation just experienced (7–11). A prayer for protection concludes (12–18).

**40, 4: A new song:** a song in response to the new action of God (cf Pss 33, 3; 96, 1; 144, 9; 149, 1; Is 42, 10). Giving thanks is not purely a human response but is itself a divine gift.

**40, 7–9:** Obedience is better than sacrifice (cf 1 Sm 15, 22; Is 1, 10–20; Hos 6, 6; Am 5, 22–25; Mi 6, 6–8; Acts 7, 42–43 [quoting Am 5, 25–26 LXX]). Heb 10, 5–9 quotes the somewhat different Greek version and interprets it as Christ's self-oblation.

Ps 41: A thanksgiving for rescue from illness (4. 5. 9). Many people, even friends, have interpreted the illness as a divine punishment for sin and have ostracized the psalmist (5–11). The healing shows the return of God's favor and rebukes the psalmist's detractors (12–13).

**41, 2: Happy those concerned for the lowly and poor:** other psalms use the same formula ("Happy those") for those whom God favors. Cf Pss 32, 1–2; 34, 9; 40, 5; 65, 5. The psalmist's

m Lam 3, 25. n Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 69, 3. 15–16; 88, 5; Prv 1, 12; Jon 2, 7. o Ps 33, 3. p Ps 1, 1; Prv 16, 20; Jer 17, 7. q Ps 35, 10. r Pss 71, 15; 139, 17–18. s 7–9: Heb 10, 5–7; Ps 51, 18–19; Am 5, 22; Hos 6, 6; Is 1, 11–15. t Ps 37, 31. u Pss 22, 23; 26, 12; 35, 18; 149, 1. v Ps 89, 34. w Ps 38, 5. 11; Ezr 9, 6. x 14–18: Pss 70, 2–6; 71, 12. y Ps 35, 4. 26. z Ps 35, 21. 25. a Ps 35, 27.

when misfortune strikes, the LORD delivers
them.[b]
3 The LORD keeps and preserves them,
makes them happy in the land,
and does not betray them to their enemies.
4 The LORD sustains them on their sickbed,
allays the malady when they are ill.

II

5 Once I prayed, "LORD, have mercy on me;
heal me, I have sinned against you.
6 My enemies say the worst of me:
'When will that one die and be forgotten?'
7 When people come to visit me,
they speak without sincerity.
Their hearts store up malice;
they leave and spread their vicious lies.[c]
8 My foes all whisper against me;
they imagine the worst about me:
9 I have a deadly disease, they say;
I will never rise from my sickbed.
10 Even the friend who had my trust,
who shared my table, has scorned me.[d]*
11 But you, LORD, have mercy and raise me up
that I may repay them as they deserve."*

III

12 By this I know you are pleased with me,
that my enemy no longer jeers at me.
13 For my integrity you have supported me
and let me stand in your presence forever.

* * *

14 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from all eternity and forever.
Amen. Amen.[e]*

Pss 42–43
See RG
242–243

# SECOND BOOK—PSALMS 42–72

## PSALMS 42–43*

### Longing for God's Presence in the Temple

1 For the leader. A *maskil* of the Korahites.*

I

2 As the deer longs for streams of water,[f]
so my soul longs for you, O God.
3 My being thirsts for God, the living God.
When can I go and see the face of God?[g]*
4 My tears have been my food day and night,[h]
as they ask daily, "Where is your God?"[i]
5 Those times I recall
as I pour out my soul,[j]
When I went in procession with the crowd,
I went with them to the house of God,
Amid loud cries of thanksgiving,
with the multitude keeping festival.[k]
6 Why are you downcast, my soul;
why do you groan within me?
Wait for God, whom I shall praise again,
my savior and my God.

II

7 My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
From the land of the Jordan* and Hermon,
from the land of Mount Mizar.[l]
8 Here deep calls to deep* in the roar of your
torrents.
All your waves and breakers sweep over
me.[m]
9 At dawn may the LORD bestow faithful love

---

statement about God's love of the poor is based on the experience of being rescued (1–3).

**41, 10: Even the friend . . . has scorned me:** Jn 13, 18 cites this verse to characterize Judas as a false friend. **Scorned me:** an interpretation of the unclear Hebrew, "made great the heel against me."

**41, 11: That I may repay them as they deserve:** the healing itself is an act of judgment through which God decides for the psalmist and against the false friends. The prayer is not necessarily for strength to punish enemies.

**41, 14:** The doxology, not part of the psalm, marks the end of the first of the five books of the Psalter. Compare Pss 72, 18–20; 89, 53; 106, 48.

**Pss 42–43:** Pss 42–43 form a single lament of three sections, each section ending in an identical refrain (42, 6. 12; 43, 5). The psalmist is in the extreme north of Israel, far from Jerusalem, and longs for the divine presence that Israel experienced in the temple liturgy. Despite sadness, the psalmist hopes once again to join the worshiping crowds.

**42, 1: The Korahites:** a major guild of temple singers (2 Chr 20, 19) whose name appears in the superscriptions of Pss 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88.

**42, 3: See the face of God:** "face" designates a personal presence (Gn 33, 10; Ex 10, 28–29; 2 Sm 17, 11). The expressions "see God/God's face" occur elsewhere (Pss 11, 7; 17, 15; 63, 3; cf Ex 24, 10; 33, 7–11; Jb 33, 26) for the presence of God in the temple.

**42, 7: From the land of the Jordan:** the sources of the Jordan are in the foothills of Mount Hermon in present-day southern Lebanon. Mount Mizar is presumed to be a mountain in the same range.

**42, 8: Here deep calls to deep:** to the psalmist, the waters arising in the north are overwhelming and far from God's presence, like the waters of chaos (Pss 18, 5; 69, 2–3. 15; Jon 2, 3–6).

b Tb 4, 7–11. c Pss 31, 12; 38, 12–13; 88, 8; Jb 19, 13–19; Jer 20, 10. d Ps 55, 14–15; Jn 13, 18. e Neh 9, 5. f 2–3: Pss 63, 2; 84, 3; 143, 6; Is 26, 9. g Ps 27, 4. h Pss 80, 6; 102, 10. i Ps 79, 10; Jl 2, 17. j Lam 3, 20. k Ps 122, 5. l Ps 43, 3. m Pss 18, 5; 32, 6; 69, 2; 88, 8; Jon 2, 4.

that I may sing praise through the night,
praise to the God of my life.
10 I say to God, "My rock,
why do you forget me?[n]
Why must I go about mourning
with the enemy oppressing me?"
11 It shatters my bones, when my adversaries
reproach me.
They say to me daily: "Where is your God?"
12 Why are you downcast, my soul,
why do you groan within me?
Wait for God, whom I shall praise again,
my savior and my God.

III

1 Grant me justice, God;
defend me from a faithless people;
from the deceitful and unjust rescue me.[o]
2 You, God, are my strength.
Why then do you spurn me?
Why must I go about mourning,
with the enemy oppressing me?
3 Send your light and fidelity,*
that they may be my guide[p]
And bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place of your dwelling,[q]
4 That I may come to the altar of God,
to God, my joy, my delight.
Then I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.
5 Why are you downcast, my soul?
Why do you groan within me?
Wait for God, whom I shall praise again,
my savior and my God.

## PSALM 44*

### God's Past Favor and Israel's Present Need

1 For the leader. A *maskil* of the Korahites.

I

2 O God, we have heard with our own ears;
our ancestors have told us[r]
The deeds you did in their days,
with your own hand in days of old:
3 You rooted out nations to plant them,[s]
crushed peoples to make room for them.
4 Not with their own swords did they conquer
the land,[t]
nor did their own arms bring victory;
It was your right hand, your own arm,
the light of your face, for you favored
them.[u]
5 You are my king and my God,[v]
who bestows victories on Jacob.
6 Through you we batter our foes;
through your name, trample our
adversaries.
7 Not in my bow do I trust,
nor does my sword bring me victory.
8 You have brought us victory over our enemies,
shamed those who hate us.
9 In God we have boasted all the day long;
your name we will praise forever. *Selah*

II

10 But now you have rejected and disgraced us;[w]
you do not march out with our armies.[x]
11 You make us retreat* before the foe;
those who hate us plunder us at will.[y]
12 You hand us over like sheep to be slaughtered,
scatter us among the nations.[z]
13 You sell your people for nothing;
you make no profit from their sale.[a]
14 You make us the reproach of our neighbors,[b]
the mockery and scorn of those around us.
15 You make us a byword among the nations;
the peoples shake their heads at us.
16 All day long my disgrace is before me;
shame has covered my face
17 At the sound of those who taunt and revile,
at the sight of the spiteful enemy.

Ps 44
See RG
242–243,
247

**43, 3: Your light and fidelity:** a pair of divine attributes personified as guides for the pilgrimage. The psalmist seeks divine protection for the journey to Jerusalem.

**Ps 44:** In this lament the community reminds God of past favors which it has always acknowledged (2–9). But now God has abandoned Israel to defeat and humiliation (10–17), though the people are not conscious of any sin against the covenant (18–23). They struggle with being God's special people amid divine silence; yet they continue to pray (24–27).

**44, 11: You make us retreat:** the corollary of v 4. Defeat, like victory, is God's doing; neither Israel nor its enemies can claim credit (23).

n Pss 18, 2; 31, 3–4. o Ps 119, 154. p Pss 18, 29; 27, 1; 36, 10; Mi 7, 8. q Ps 122, 1. r Ps 78, 3. s Pss 78, 55; 80, 9f. t Dt 8, 17f; Jos 24, 12. u Pss 4, 7; 31, 17; 67, 2; 80, 4; Nm 6, 25; Dn 9, 17. v Ps 145, 1. w 10–27: Ps 89, 39–52. x Ps 60, 12. y Lv 26, 17; Dt 28, 25. z Lv 26, 33; Dt 28, 64. a Dt 32, 30; Is 52, 3. b 14–17: Pss 79, 4; 80, 7; 123, 3–4; Jb 12, 4; Dn 9, 16.

III

18 All this has come upon us,
though we have not forgotten you,
nor been disloyal to your covenant.
19 Our hearts have not turned back,*
nor have our steps strayed from your path.
20 Yet you have left us crushed,
desolate in a place of jackals; [c]*
you have covered us with darkness.
21 If we had forgotten the name of our God,
stretched out our hands to another god,
22 Would not God have discovered this,
God who knows the secrets of the heart?
23 For you we are slain all the day long,
considered only as sheep to be
slaughtered. [d]

IV

24 Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord?
Rise up! Do not reject us forever! [e]
25 Why do you hide your face;[f]
why forget our pain and misery?
26 We are bowed down to the ground;[g]
our bodies are pressed to the earth.
27 Rise up, help us!
Redeem us as your love demands.

## PSALM 45*

Ps 45
See RG
244

### Song for a Royal Wedding

1 For the leader; according to "Lilies." A *maskil* of the Korahites. A love song.

I

2 My heart is stirred by a noble theme,
as I sing my ode to the king.
My tongue is the pen of a nimble scribe.

II

3 You are the most handsome of men;
fair speech has graced your lips,
for God has blessed you forever. [h]
4 Gird your sword upon your hip, mighty
warrior!
In splendor and majesty ride on
triumphant! [i]
5 In the cause of truth and justice
may your right hand show you wondrous
deeds.
6 Your arrows are sharp;
peoples will cower at your feet;
the king's enemies will lose heart.
7 Your throne, O god,* stands forever;[j]
your royal scepter is a scepter for justice.
8 You love justice and hate wrongdoing;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your fellow
kings.
9 With myrrh, aloes, and cassia
your robes are fragrant.
From ivory-paneled palaces*
stringed instruments bring you joy.
10 Daughters of kings are your lovely wives;
a princess arrayed in Ophir's gold*
comes to stand at your right hand.

III

11 Listen, my daughter, and understand;
pay me careful heed.
Forget your people and your father's house,*
12 that the king might desire your beauty.
He is your lord;

**44, 19: Our hearts have not turned back**: Israel's defeat was not caused by its lack of fidelity.

**44, 20: A place of jackals**: following Israel's defeat and exile (11–12), the land lies desolate, inhabited only by jackals. Cf Is 13, 22; Jer 9, 10; 10, 22. Others take *tannim* as "sea monster" (cf Ez 29, 3; 32, 2) and render: "you crushed us as you did the sea monster."

**Ps 45**: A song for the Davidic king's marriage to a foreign princess from Tyre in Phoenicia. The court poet sings (2. 18) of God's choice of the king (3. 8), of his role in establishing divine rule (4–8), and of his splendor as he waits for his bride (9–10). The woman is to forget her own house when she becomes wife to the king (11–13). Her majestic beauty today is a sign of the future prosperity of the royal house (14–18). The psalm was retained in the collection when there was no reigning king, and came to be applied to the king who was to come, the messiah.

**45, 7: O god**: the king, in courtly language, is called "god," i.e., more than human, representing God to the people. Heb 1, 8–9 applies 7–8 to Christ.

**45, 9: Ivory-paneled palaces**: literally, "palaces of ivory." Ivory paneling and furniture decoration have been found in Samaria and other ancient Near Eastern cities. Cf Am 3, 15.

**45, 10: Ophir's gold**: uncertain location, possibly a region on the coast of southern Arabia or eastern Africa, famous for its gold. Cf 1 Kgs 9, 28; 10, 11; Jb 22, 24.

**45, 11: Forget your people and your father's house**: the bride should no longer consider herself a daughter of her father's house, but the wife of the king—the queen.

c Jer 9, 10. d Rom 8, 36. e Pss 10, 1; 74, 1; 77, 8; 79, 5; 83, 2. f Pss 10, 11; 89, 47; Jb 13, 24. g Ps 119, 25. h Song 5, 10–16. i Ps 21, 5. j 7–8: Heb 1, 8–9.

13 honor him, daughter of Tyre.
Then the richest of the people
will seek your favor with gifts.[k]
14 All glorious is the king's daughter as she enters,[l]
her raiment threaded with gold;
15 In embroidered apparel she is led to the king.
The maids of her train are presented to the king.
16 They are led in with glad and joyous acclaim;
they enter the palace of the king.

IV

17 The throne of your fathers your sons will have;
you shall make them princes through all the land.[m]
18 I will make your name renowned through all generations;
thus nations shall praise you forever.[n]

## PSALM 46*

### God, the Protector of Zion

1 For the leader. A song of the Korahites.
According to *alamoth.**

I

2 God is our refuge and our strength,
an ever-present help in distress.[o]
3 Thus we do not fear, though earth be shaken*
and mountains quake to the depths of the sea,
4 Though its waters rage and foam
and mountains totter at its surging.[p]
The LORD of hosts is with us;*
our stronghold is the God of Jacob. *Selah*

II

5 Streams of the river gladden the city of God,
the holy dwelling of the Most High.[q]*
6 God is in its midst; it shall not be shaken;
God will help it at break of day.[r]
7 Though nations rage and kingdoms totter,
God's voice thunders and the earth trembles.[s]
8 The LORD of hosts is with us;
our stronghold is the God of Jacob. *Selah*

III

9 Come and see the works of the LORD,
who has done fearsome deeds on earth;[t]
10 Who stops wars to the ends of the earth,
breaks the bow, splinters the spear,
and burns the shields with fire;[u]
11 Who says:
"Be still and confess that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
exalted on the earth."[v]
12 The LORD of hosts is with us;
our stronghold is the God of Jacob. *Selah*

Ps 46 See RG 242

## PSALM 47*

### The Ruler of All the Nations

1 For the leader. A psalm of the Korahites.

I

2 All you peoples, clap your hands;
shout to God with joyful cries.[w]
3 For the LORD, the Most High, inspires awe,
the great king over all the earth,[x]
4 Who made people subject to us,
brought nations under our feet,[y]
5 Who chose a land for our heritage,
the glory* of Jacob, the beloved.[z] *Selah*

II

6 God mounts the throne* amid shouts of joy;

Ps 47 See RG 242

**Ps 46:** A song of confidence in God's protection of Zion with close parallels to Ps 48. The dominant note in Ps 46 is sounded by the refrain, **The LORD of hosts is with us** (4. 8. 12). The first strophe (2–4) sings of the security of God's presence even in utter chaos; the second (5–8), of divine protection of the city from its enemies; the third (9–12), of God's imposition of imperial peace.

**46, 1: Alamoth:** the melody of the psalm, now lost.

**46, 3–4:** Figurative ancient Near Eastern language to describe social and political upheavals.

**46, 4b:** The first line of the refrain is similar in structure and meaning to Isaiah's name for the royal child, Immanuel, **With us is God** (Is 7, 14; 8, 8. 10).

**46, 5:** Jerusalem is not situated on a river. This description derives from mythological descriptions of the divine abode and symbolizes the divine presence as the source of all life (cf Is 33, 21; Ez 47, 1–12; Jl 4, 18; Zec 14, 8; Rv 22, 1–2).

**Ps 47:** A hymn calling on the nations to acknowledge the universal rule of Israel's God (2–5) who is enthroned as king over Israel and the nations (6–10).

**47, 5: Our heritage . . . the glory:** the land of Israel (cf Is 58, 14), which God has given Israel in an act of sovereignty.

**47, 6: God mounts the throne:** "has gone up to the throne," according to the context (9). Christian liturgical tradition has applied the verse to the ascension of Christ.

k Ps 72, 10–11; Is 60, 5f. l 14–16: Ez 16, 10–13. m Gn 17, 6. n Is 60, 15. o Ps 48, 4; Is 33, 2. p Ps 93, 3–4; Jb 9, 5–6; Is 24, 18–20; 54, 10. q Pss 48, 2–3; 76, 3. r Is 7, 14. s Pss 2, 1–5; 48, 5–8; 76, 7–9; Is 17, 12–14. t Ps 48, 9–10. u Ps 76, 4. v Ps 48, 11. w Ps 89, 16; Zep 3, 14. x Ps 95, 3; Ex 15, 18; Is 24, 23; 52, 7. y Ps 2, 8. z Is 58, 14.

the LORD, amid trumpet blasts.[a]
7 Sing praise to God, sing praise;
sing praise to our king, sing praise.

III

8 God is king over all the earth;[b]
sing hymns of praise.
9 God rules over the nations;
God sits upon his holy throne.
10 The princes of the peoples assemble
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For the rulers of the earth belong to God,
who is enthroned on high.[c]

## PSALM 48*

Ps 48
See RG
242

### The Splendor of the Invincible City

1 A psalm of the Korahites.* A song.

I

2 Great is the LORD and highly praised
in the city of our God:[d]
The holy mountain, 3 fairest of heights,
the joy of all the earth,[e]
Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon,[f]*
the city of the great king.

II

Ps 49
See RG
244, 251

4 God is its citadel,
renowned as a stronghold.
5 See! The kings assembled,
together they invaded.
6 When they looked* they were astounded;
terrified, they were put to flight![g]
7 Trembling seized them there,
anguish, like a woman's labor,[h]
8 As when the east wind wrecks
the ships of Tarshish!*

III

9 What we had heard we now see*
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
In the city of our God,
founded to last forever. *Selah*
10 O God, within your temple
we ponder your steadfast love.
11 Like your name, O God,
your praise reaches the ends of the earth.[i]
Your right hand is fully victorious.
12 Mount Zion is glad!
The cities of Judah rejoice
because of your saving deeds![j]

IV

13 Go about Zion, walk all around it,
note the number of its towers.
14 Consider the ramparts, examine its citadels,
that you may tell future generations:[k]
15 "Yes, so mighty is God,*
our God who leads us always!"

## PSALM 49*

### Confidence in God rather than in Riches

1 For the leader. A psalm of the Korahites.*

2 Hear this, all you peoples!
Give ear, all who inhabit the world,
3 You of lowly birth or high estate,

**Ps 48:** A Zion hymn, praising the holy city as the invincible dwelling place of God. Unconquerable, it is an apt symbol of God who has defeated all enemies. After seven epithets describing the city (2–3), the psalm describes the victory by the Divine Warrior over hostile kings (4–8). The second half proclaims the dominion of the God of Zion over all the earth (9–12) and invites pilgrims to announce that God is eternally invincible like Zion itself (13–15).

**48, 1: Korahites:** see note on Ps 42, 1.

**48, 3: The heights of Zaphon:** the mountain abode of the Canaanite storm-god Baal in comparable texts. To speak of Zion as if it were Zaphon was to claim for Israel's God what Canaanites claimed for Baal. Though topographically speaking Zion is only a hill, viewed religiously it towers over other mountains as the home of the supreme God (cf Ps 68, 16–17).

**48, 6: When they looked:** the kings are stunned by the sight of Zion, touched by divine splendor. The language is that of holy war, in which the enemy panics and flees at the sight of divine glory.

**48, 8: The ships of Tarshish:** large ships, named after the distant land or port of Tarshish, probably ancient Tartessus in southern Spain, although other identifications have been proposed. Cf Is 2, 16; 60, 9; Jon 1, 3.

**48, 9: What we had heard we now see:** the glorious things that new pilgrims had heard about the holy city—its beauty and awesomeness—they now see with their own eyes. The seeing here contrasts with the seeing of the hostile kings in 6.

**48, 15: So mighty is God:** Israel's God is like Zion in being eternal and invincible. The holy city is therefore a kind of "sacrament" of God.

**Ps 49:** The psalm affirms confidence in God (cf Pss 23; 27, 1–6; 62) in the face of the apparent good fortune of the unjust rich. Cf Pss 37; 73. Reliance on wealth is misplaced (8–10) for it is of no avail in the face of death (18–20). After inviting all to listen to this axiom of faith (2–5), the psalmist depicts the self-delusion of

a Pss 24, 8. 10; 68, 18–19; 98, 6. b 8–9: Pss 72, 11; 93, 1; 96, 10; 97, 1; 99, 1; Jer 10, 7. c Ps 89, 19; Ex 3, 6; Is 2, 2–4. d Pss 96, 4; 145, 3. e Ps 50, 2; Lam 2, 15. f Is 14, 13. g Jgs 5, 19. h Ex 15, 14; Jer 4, 31. i Mal 1, 11. j Ps 97, 8. k Pss 22, 31–32; 71, 18.

rich and poor alike.
4 My mouth shall speak wisdom,
my heart shall offer insight.[l]
5 I will turn my attention to a problem,*
expound my question* to the music of a lyre.

I

6 Why should I fear in evil days,
when my wicked pursuers ring me round,
7 Those who trust in their wealth
and boast of their abundant riches?[m]
8 One cannot redeem oneself,*
pay to God a ransom.[n]
9 Too high the price to redeem a life;
one would never have enough
10 To stay alive forever
and never see the pit.
11 Anyone can see that the wisest die,
the fool and the senseless pass away too,[o]
and must leave their wealth to others.[p]
12 Tombs are their homes forever,
their dwellings through all generations,
though they gave their names to their lands.
13 For all their riches
mortals do not abide;
they perish like the beasts.[q]

II

14 This is the destiny of those who trust in folly,
the end of those so pleased with their wealth. *Selah*
15 Like sheep they are herded into Sheol,
where death will be their shepherd.
Straight to the grave they descend,
where their form will waste away,
Sheol will be their palace.
16 But God will redeem my life, *Selah*
will take me* from the power of Sheol.[r]
17 Do not fear when others become rich,
when the wealth of their houses grows great.
18 When they die they will take nothing with them,
their wealth will not follow them down.[s]
19 When living, they congratulate themselves and say:
"All praise you, you do so well."
20 But they will join the company of their forebears,
never again to see the light.[t]
21 For all their riches,
if mortals do not have wisdom,
they perish like the beasts.

## PSALM 50*

Ps 50
See RG
245

### The Acceptable Sacrifice

1 A psalm of Asaph.

I

The LORD, the God of gods,
has spoken and summoned the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.[u]
2 From Zion God shines forth,[v]
perfect in beauty.
3 Our God comes and will not be silent!
Devouring fire precedes,
storming fiercely round about.[w]
4 God summons the heavens above
and the earth to the judgment of his people:
5 "Gather my faithful ones before me,
those who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."
6 The heavens proclaim divine justice,
for God alone is the judge.[x] *Selah*

---

the ungodly (6–13), whose destiny is to die like ignorant beasts (13. 18; cf Prv 7, 21–23). Their wealth should occasion no alarm, for they will come to nought, whereas God will save the just (14–21).

**49, 1: Korahites**: see note on Ps 42, 1.

**49, 5: Problem**: the psalmist's personal solution to the perennial biblical problem of the prosperity of the wicked. **Question**: parallel in meaning to **problem**; in Wisdom literature it means the mysterious way of how the world works.

**49, 8: One cannot redeem oneself**: an axiom. For the practice of redemption, cf Jb 6, 21–23. A play on the first Hebrew word of v 8 and v 16 relates the two verses.

**49, 16: Will take me**: the same Hebrew verb is used of God "taking up" a favored servant: Enoch in Gn 5,24; Elijah in 2 Kgs 2, 11–12; the righteous person in Ps 73, 24. The verse apparently states the hope that God will rescue the faithful psalmist in the same manner.

**Ps 50**: A covenant lawsuit stating that the sacrifice God really wants is the sacrifice of praise accompanied by genuine obedience (cf Mi 6, 1–8). It begins with a theophany and the summoning of the court (1–6). Then in direct address God explains what is required of the faithful (7–15), rebukes the hypocritical worshiper

l Ps 78, 2; Mt 13, 35. m Jb 31, 24. n Prv 10, 15; 11, 4; Ez 7, 19; Mt 16, 26. o Eccl 2, 16. p Ps 39, 7; Sir 11, 18–19. q Eccl 3, 18–21. r Pss 16, 10; 86, 13; 103, 4; 116, 8. s Sir 11, 18–19; Eccl 5, 15; 1 Tm 6, 7. t Jb 10, 21–22. u Dt 10, 17; Jos 22, 22. v Ps 48, 2. w Ps 97, 3; Dn 7, 10. x Pss 19, 2; 97, 6.

II

7 "Listen, my people, I will speak;
Israel, I will testify against you;
God, your God, am I.
8 Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you,
nor for your holocausts, set before me daily.
9 I need no bullock from your house,
no goats from your fold.[y]
10 For every animal of the forest is mine,
beasts by the thousands on my mountains.
11 I know every bird of the heavens;
the creatures of the field belong to me.
12 Were I hungry, I would not tell you,
for mine is the world and all that fills it.[z]
13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?
14 Offer praise as your sacrifice to God;[a]
fulfill your vows to the Most High.
15 Then call on me in time of distress;[b]
I will rescue you, and you shall honor me."

III

16 But to the wicked God says:
"Why do you recite my commandments
and profess my covenant with your lips?
17 You hate discipline;
you cast my words behind you!
18 When you see thieves, you befriend them;
with adulterers you throw in your lot.
19 You give your mouth free rein for evil;
you harness your tongue to deceit.
20 You sit maligning your own kin,
slandering the child of your own mother.
21 When you do these things should I be silent?
Or do you think that I am like you?
I accuse you, I lay the charge before you.

IV

22 "Understand this, you who forget God,
lest I attack you with no one to rescue.
23 Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me;
to the obedient I will show the salvation of God."[c]

Ps 51
See RG
242-243

## PSALM 51*

### The Miserere: Prayer of Repentance

1 For the leader. A psalm of David,
2 when Nathan the prophet came to him
after his affair with Bathsheba.[d]

I

3 Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.
4 Wash away all my guilt;
from my sin cleanse me.
5 For I know my offense;
my sin is always before me.[e]
6 Against you alone have I sinned;
I have done such evil in your sight
That you are just in your sentence,
blameless when you condemn.[f]
7 True, I was born guilty,
a sinner, even as my mother conceived me.[g]*
8 Still, you insist on sincerity of heart;
in my inmost being teach me wisdom.
9 Cleanse me with hyssop,* that I may be pure;
wash me, make me whiter than snow.[h]
10 Let me hear sounds of joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

II

11 Turn away your face from my sins;

(16–21), and concludes with a threat and a promise (22–23; cf Is 1, 19–20).

**Ps 51**: A lament, the most famous of the seven Penitential Psalms, prays for the removal of the personal and social disorders that sin has brought. The poem has two parts of approximately equal length: 3–10 and 11–19, and a conclusion in 20–21. The two parts interlock by repetition of "blot out" in the first verse of each section (3. 11), of "wash (away)" just after the first verse of each section (4) and just before the last verse (9) of the first section, and of "heart," "God," and "spirit" in 12 and 19. The first part (3–10) asks deliverance from sin, which is not just a past act but its emotional, physical, and social consequences. The second part (11–19) seeks something more profound than wiping the slate clean: nearness to God, living by the spirit of God (12–13), like the relation between God and people described in Jer 31, 33–34. Nearness to God brings joy and the authority to teach sinners (15–16). Such proclamation is better than offering sacrifice (17–19). The last two verses ask for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (20–21).

**51, 7: A sinner, even as my mother conceived me**: literally, "In iniquity was I conceived," an instance of hyperbole: at no time was the psalmist ever without sin. Cf Ps 88, 16, "I am mortally afflicted since youth," i.e., I have always been afflicted. The verse does not imply that the sexual act of conception is sinful.

**51, 9: Hyssop**: a small bush whose many woody twigs make a natural sprinkler. It was prescribed in the Mosaic law as an instrument for sprinkling sacrificial blood or lustral water for cleansing. Cf Ex 12, 22; Lv 14, 4; Nm 19, 18.

y Ps 69, 32; Am 5, 21–22. z Pss 24, 1; 89, 12; Dt 10, 14; 1 Cor 10, 26. a Heb 13, 15. b Ps 77, 3. c Ps 91, 16. d 2 Sm 12. e Pss 32, 5; 38, 19; Is 59, 12. f Rom 3, 4. g Jb 14, 4. h Jb 9, 30; Is 1, 18; Ez 36, 25.

blot out all my guilt.
12 A clean heart create for me, God;
renew in me a steadfast spirit.[i]
13 Do not drive me from your presence,
nor take from me your holy spirit.[j]
14 Restore my joy in your salvation;
sustain in me a willing spirit.
15 I will teach the wicked your ways,
that sinners may return to you.
16 Rescue me from death, God, my saving God,
that my tongue may praise your healing power.[k]
17 Lord, open my lips;
my mouth will proclaim your praise.
18 For you do not desire sacrifice;*
a burnt offering you would not accept.[l]
19 My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit;
God, do not spurn a broken, humbled heart.

III

20 Make Zion prosper in your good pleasure;*
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.[m]
21 Then you will be pleased with proper sacrifice,
burnt offerings and holocausts;
then bullocks will be offered on your altar.

## PSALM 52*

### The Deceitful Tongue

1 For the leader. A *maskil* of David,
2 when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul,
"David went to the house of Ahimelech."[n]

I

3 Why do you glory in evil,
you scandalous liar?
All day long 4 you plot destruction;
your tongue is like a sharpened razor,
you skillful deceiver.[o]
5 You love evil rather than good,
lies rather than honest speech.[p] *Selah*
6 You love any word that destroys,
you deceitful tongue.[q]

II

7 Now God will strike you down,
leave you crushed forever,
Pluck you from your tent,
uproot you from the land of the living.[r]
*Selah*
8 The righteous will look on with awe;
they will jeer and say:[s]
9 "That one did not take God as a refuge,
but trusted in great wealth,
relied on devious plots."[t]

III

10 But I, like an olive tree in the house of God,[u]*
trust in God's faithful love forever.
11 I will praise you always
for what you have done.
I will proclaim before the faithful[v]
that your name is good.

## PSALM 53*

Ps 53
See RG
242–243

### A Lament over Widespread Corruption

1 For the leader; according to *Mahalath.*
A *maskil* of David.

I

Ps 52
See RG
242–243

2 Fools say in their hearts,[w]
"There is no God."[x]
Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt;
not one does what is right.
3 God looks down from heaven
upon the human race,[y]
To see if even one is wise,[z]
if even one seeks God.
4 All have gone astray;
all alike are perverse.

**51, 18: For you do not desire sacrifice**: the mere offering of the ritual sacrifice apart from good dispositions is not acceptable to God. Cf Ps 50.

**51, 20–21**: Most scholars think that these verses were added to the psalm some time after the destruction of the temple in 587 B.C. The verses assume that the rebuilt temple will be an ideal site for national reconciliation.

**Ps 52**: A condemnation of the powerful and arrogant (3–6), who bring down upon themselves God's judgment (7). The just, those who trust in God alone, are gladdened and strengthened by the downfall of their traditional enemies (8–11).

**52, 10: Like a green olive tree**: the righteous will flourish in the house of God like a well-watered olive tree. Cf Pss 92, 14; 128, 3.

**Ps 53**: A lament of an individual, duplicated in Ps 14, except that "God" is used for "the LORD," and v 6 is different. See under Ps 14.

i Ez 11, 19. j Wis 1, 5; 9, 17; Is 63, 11; Hg 2, 5; Rom 8, 9. k Ps 30, 10. l Pss 40, 7; 50, 8; Am 5, 21–22; Hos 6, 6; Is 1, 11–15; Heb 10, 5–7. m Jer 31, 4; Ez 36, 33. n 1 Sm 21, 8; 22, 6ff. o Pss 12, 3; 59, 8; 120, 2–3; Sir 51, 3. p Jer 4, 22; Jn 3, 19–20. q Jer 9, 4. r Pss 27, 13; 28, 5; 56, 14; Jb 18, 14; Prv 2, 22; Is 38, 11. s Pss 44, 14; 64, 9. t Jb 31, 24; Prv 11, 28. u Pss 1, 3; 92, 12–14; Jer 11, 16; 17, 8. v Pss 22, 23; 26, 12; 35, 18; 149, 1. w 2–6a: Ps 14, 1–5a. x Pss 10, 4; 36, 2; Is 32, 6; Jer 5, 12. y Pss 11, 4; 102, 20. z 2b–3: Rom 3, 11–12.

Not one does what is right, not even one.[a]
II
5 Will these evildoers never learn?
They devour my people as they devour bread;[b]
they do not call upon God.[c]
6 They have good reason to fear,
though now they do not fear.
For God will certainly scatter
the bones of the godless.
They will surely be put to shame,
for God has rejected them.
III
7 Oh, that from Zion might come
the deliverance of Israel,
That Jacob may rejoice and Israel be glad[d]
when God restores the people!

Ps 55 See RG 242–243

## PSALM 54*

Ps 54 See RG 242–243

### Confident Prayer in Great Peril

1 For the leader. On stringed instruments.
A *maskil* of David,
2 when the Ziphites came and said to Saul,
"David is hiding among us."[e]
I
3 O God, by your name* save me.
By your strength defend my cause.
4 O God, hear my prayer.
Listen to the words of my mouth.
5 The arrogant have risen against me;
the ruthless seek my life;
they do not keep God before them.[f] *Selah*
II
6 God is present as my helper;[g]
the Lord sustains my life.
7 Turn back the evil upon my foes;
in your faithfulness, destroy them.[h]
8 Then I will offer you generous sacrifice
and praise your gracious name, LORD,
9 Because it has rescued me from every trouble,
and my eyes look down on my foes.[i]

## PSALM 55*

### A Lament over Betrayal

1 For the leader. On stringed instruments.
A *maskil* of David.
I
2 Listen, God, to my prayer;[j]
do not hide from my pleading;
3 hear me and give answer.
I rock with grief; I groan
4 at the uproar of the enemy,
the clamor of the wicked.
They heap trouble upon me,
savagely accuse me.
5 My heart pounds within me;
death's terrors fall upon me.
6 Fear and trembling overwhelm me;
shuddering sweeps over me.
7 I say, "If only I had wings like a dove
that I might fly away and find rest.[k]
8 Far away I would flee;
I would stay in the desert.[l] *Selah*
9 I would soon find a shelter
from the raging wind and storm."
II
10 Lord, check and confuse their scheming.
I see violence and strife in the city
11 making rounds on its walls day and night.
Within are mischief and evil;
12 treachery is there as well;
oppression and fraud never leave its streets.[m]
13 If an enemy had reviled me,

**Ps 54:** A lament in which the person under attack calls directly upon God for help (3–5). Refusing to despair, the psalmist hopes in God, who is active in history and just (6–7). The psalm ends with a serene promise to return thanks (8–9).

**54, 3: By your name:** one is present in one's name, hence God as revealed to humans.

**Ps 55:** The psalmist, betrayed by intimate friends (14–15. 21–22), prays that God punish those oath breakers and thus be acknowledged as the protector of the wronged. The sufferings of the psalmist include both ostracism (4) and mental turmoil (5–6), culminating in the wish to flee society (7–9). The wish for a sudden death for one's enemies (16) occurs elsewhere in the psalms; an example of such a death is the earth opening under the wicked Dathan and Abiram (Nm 16, 31–32). The psalmist, confident of vindication, exhorts others to a like trust in the God of justice (23–24). The psalm is not so much for personal vengeance as for a public vindication of God's righteousness now. There was no belief in an afterlife where such vindication could take place.

a Ps 12, 2. b Ps 27, 2; Is 9, 11. c Ps 79, 6. d Ps 85, 2. e 1 Sm 23, 19; 26, 1. f Ps 86, 14. g Ps 118, 7. h Ps 143, 12. i Pss 59, 11; 91, 8; 92, 12. j 2–3: Pss 5, 2–3; 55, 2–3; 86, 6; 130, 1–2; Lam 3, 56; Jon 2, 3. k Ps 11, 1. l Jer 9, 1; Rv 12, 6. m Jer 5, 1; 6, 6; Ez 22, 2; Hb 1, 3; Zep 3, 1.

that I could bear;
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,
from that I could hide.
14 But it was you, my other self,
my comrade and friend,[n]
15 You, whose company I enjoyed,
at whose side I walked
in procession in the house of God.

III

16 Let death take them by surprise;
let them go down alive to Sheol,[o]
for evil is in their homes and hearts.
17 But I will call upon God,
and the LORD will save me.
18 At dusk, dawn, and noon
I will grieve and complain,
and my prayer will be heard.[p]
19 God will give me freedom and peace
from those who war against me,
though there are many who oppose me.
20 God, who sits enthroned forever,[q]
will hear me and humble them.
For they will not mend their ways;
they have no fear of God.
21 They strike out at friends
and go back on their promises.
22 Softer than butter is their speech,
but war is in their hearts.
Smoother than oil are their words,
but they are unsheathed swords.[r]
23 Cast your care upon the LORD,
who will give you support.
God will never allow
the righteous to stumble.[s]
24 But you, God, will bring them down
to the pit of destruction.[t]
These bloodthirsty liars
will not live half their days,
but I put my trust in you.[u]

## PSALM 56*

### Trust in God

Ps 56
See RG
242–243

1 For the director. According to *Yonath elem rehoqim.** A *miktam* of David, when the Philistines seized him at Gath.[v]

I

2 Have mercy on me, God,
for I am treated harshly;
attackers press me all the day.
3 My foes treat me harshly all the day;
yes, many are my attackers.
O Most High, 4 when I am afraid,
in you I place my trust.
5 God, I praise your promise;
in you I trust, I do not fear.[w]
What can mere flesh do to me?[x]

II

6 All the day they foil my plans;
their every thought is of evil against me.
7 They hide together in ambush;
they watch my every step;
they lie in wait for my life.[y]
8 They are evil; watch them, God!
Cast the nations down in your anger!
9 My wanderings you have noted;
are my tears not stored in your vial,*
recorded in your book?[z]
10 My foes turn back when I call on you.
This I know: God is on my side.
11 God, I praise your promise;
12 in you I trust, I do not fear.
What can mere mortals do to me?

III

13 I have made vows to you, God;
with offerings I will fulfill them,[a]
14 Once you have snatched me from death,
kept my feet from stumbling,
That I may walk before God
in the light of the living.

**Ps 56:** Beset physically (2–3) and psychologically (6–7), the psalmist maintains a firm confidence in God (5. 9–10). Nothing will prevent the psalmist from keeping the vow to give thanks for God's gift of life (13–14). A refrain (5. 11–12) divides the psalm in two equal parts.

**56, 1: Yonath elem rehoqim:** Hebrew words probably designating the melody to which the psalm was to be sung.

**56, 9: Are my tears not stored in your vial:** a unique saying in the Old Testament. The context suggests that the tears are saved because they are precious; God puts a high value on each of the psalmist's troubles.

n Ps 41, 10; Jer 9, 3; Mt 26, 21–24 par. o Ps 49, 15; Nm 16, 33; Prv 1, 2; Is 5, 14. p Dn 6, 11. q Pss 29, 10; 93, 2; Bar 3, 3. r Pss 12, 3; 28, 3; 57, 5; 62, 5; 64, 4; Prv 26, 24–28; Jer 9,7. s Ps 37, 5; Prv 3, 5; 16, 3; 1 Pt 5, 7. t Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 40, 3; 88, 5; 143, 7; Prv 1, 12; Jon 2, 7. u Pss 25, 2; 56, 4; 130, 5. v 1 Sm 21, 10. w Ps 130, 5. x Ps 118, 6; Heb 13, 6. y Ps 140, 5–6. z Ps 10, 14; 2 Kgs 20, 5; Is 25, 8; Rv 7, 17. a Nm 30, 3.

Ps 57
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 57*

### Confident Prayer for Deliverance

1 For the director. Do not destroy.* A *miktam* of
David, when he fled from Saul into a cave.[b]

I

2 Have mercy on me, God,
have mercy on me.
In you I seek shelter.
In the shadow of your wings* I seek shelter
till harm pass by.[c]
3 I call to God Most High,
to God who provides for me.
4 May God send help from heaven to save me,
shame those who trample upon me.
May God send fidelity and love. *Selah*
5 I must lie down in the midst of lions
hungry for human prey.[d]
Their teeth are spears and arrows;
their tongue, a sharpened sword.[e]
6 Show yourself over the heavens, God;
may your glory appear above all the earth.[f]

II

7 They have set a trap for my feet;
my soul is bowed down;
They have dug a pit before me.
May they fall into it themselves![g] *Selah*
8 My heart is steadfast, God,
my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and chant praise.[h]
9 Awake, my soul;
awake, lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn.[i]*
10 I will praise you among the peoples, Lord;
I will chant your praise among the nations.[j]
11 For your love towers to the heavens;
your faithfulness, to the skies.[k]
12 Show yourself over the heavens, God;
may your glory appear above all the earth.

Ps 58
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 58*

### The Dethroning of Unjust Rulers

1 For the leader. Do not destroy.*
A *miktam* of David.

I

2 Do you indeed pronounce justice, O gods;*
do you judge mortals fairly?[l]
3 No, you freely engage in crime;
your hands dispense violence to the earth.

II

4 The wicked have been corrupt since birth;
liars from the womb, they have gone astray.
5 Their poison is like the poison of a snake,*
like that of a serpent stopping its ears,[m]
6 So as not to hear the voice of the charmer
who casts such cunning spells.

III

7 O God, smash the teeth in their mouths;
break the jaw-teeth of these lions, LORD![n]
8 Make them vanish like water flowing away;[o]
trodden down, let them wither like grass.[p]
9 Let them dissolve like a snail that oozes
away,*
like an untimely birth that never sees the
sun.[q]
10 Suddenly, like brambles or thistles,

**Ps 57:** Each of the two equal strophes contains a prayer for rescue from enemies, accompanied by joyful trust in God (2–5. 7–11). The refrain prays that God be manifested as saving (6. 12). Ps 108 is nearly identical to part of this psalm (57, 8–12 = 108, 2–6).

**57, 1: Do not destroy:** probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung.

**57, 2: The shadow of your wings:** probably refers to the wings of the cherubim (powerful winged animals) whose wings spread over the ark in the inner chamber of the temple (1 Kgs 6, 23–28).

**57, 9: I will wake the dawn:** by a bold figure the psalmist imagines the sound of music and singing will waken a new day.

**Ps 58:** A lament expressing trust in God's power to dethrone all powers obstructing divine rule of the world. First condemned are "the gods," the powers that were popularly imagined to control human destinies (2–3), then "the wicked," the human instruments of these forces (4–6). The psalmist prays God to prevent them from harming the just (7–10). The manifestation of justice will gladden the just; they will see that their God is with them (11–12). The psalm is less concerned with personal vengeance than with public vindication of God's justice now.

**58, 1: Do not destroy:** probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung.

**58, 2: Gods:** the Bible sometimes understands pagan gods to be lesser divine beings who are assigned by Israel's God to rule the foreign nations. Here they are accused of injustice, permitting the human judges under their patronage to abuse the righteous. Cf Ps 82.

**58, 5–6:** The image is that of a poisonous snake that is controlled by the voice or piping of its trainer.

**58, 9: A snail that oozes away:** empty shells suggested to ancients that snails melted away as they left a slimy trail.

b 1 Sm 22, 1. c Pss 17, 8; 36, 8. d Pss 17, 11–12; 22, 22; 58, 7. e Pss 11, 2; 64, 4. f Ps 72, 19; Nm 14, 21. g Pss 7, 15; 140, 5–6. h Ps 108, 2. i Jb 38, 12. j Pss 9, 12; 18, 50. k Pss 36, 6; 71, 19. l Ps 82, 2; Dt 16, 19. m Pss 64, 4; 140, 3; Rom 3, 13. n Ps 3, 7. o Wis 16, 29. p Ps 37, 2. q Jb 3, 16.

have the whirlwind snatch them away.[r]
11 Then the just shall rejoice to see the
vengeance
and bathe their feet in the blood of the
wicked.[s]
12 Then it will be said:
"Truly there is a reward for the just;
there is a God who is judge on earth!"

## PSALM 59*

### Complaint against Bloodthirsty Enemies

1 For the director. Do not destroy.* A *miktam*
of David, when Saul sent people to watch his house
and kill him.[t]

I

2 Rescue me from my enemies, my God;
lift me out of reach of my foes.
3 Deliver me from evildoers;
from the bloodthirsty save me.
4 They have set an ambush for my life;
the powerful conspire against me.
For no offense or misdeed of mine, LORD,
5 for no fault they hurry to take up arms.
Come near and see my plight!
6 You, LORD of hosts, are the God of Israel!
Awake! Punish all the nations.
Have no mercy on these worthless traitors.
*Selah*
7 Each evening they return,
growling like dogs, prowling the city.[u]
8 Their mouths pour out insult;
sharp words are on their lips.
They say: "Who is there to hear?"*
9 You, LORD, laugh at them;
you deride all the nations.[v]
10 My strength, for you I watch;
you, God, are my fortress, 11 my loving
God.

II

May God go before me,
and show me my fallen foes.
12 Slay them, God,
lest they deceive my people.
Shake them by your power;
Lord, our shield, bring them down.
13 For the sinful words of their mouths and lips
let them be caught in their pride.
For the lies they have told under oath[w]
14 destroy them in anger,
destroy till they are no more.
Then people will know God rules over Jacob,
yes, even to the ends of the earth.[x] *Selah*
15 Each evening they return,
growling like dogs, prowling the city.
16 They roam about as scavengers;
if they are not filled, they howl.

III

17 But I shall sing of your strength,
extol your love at dawn,
For you are my fortress,
my refuge in time of trouble.
18 My strength, your praise I will sing;
you, God, are my fortress, my loving God.

Ps 59 See RG 242–243

## PSALM 60*

### Lament after Defeat in Battle

1 For the leader; according to "The Lily of. . . ."
A *miktam* of David (for teaching),
2 when he fought against Aram-Naharaim and
Aram-Zobah; and Joab, coming back, killed
twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.[y]

I

3 O God, you rejected us, broke our defenses;
you were angry but now revive us.
4 You rocked the earth, split it open;[z]
repair the cracks for it totters.
5 You made your people go through hardship,
made us stagger from the wine you gave
us.[a]
6 Raise up a flag for those who revere you,

Ps 60 See RG 242–243, 252

**Ps 59:** A lament in two parts (2–9. 11b–17), each ending in a refrain (10. 18). Both parts alternate prayer for vindication (2–3. 5b–6. 11b–14) with vivid depictions of the psalmist's enemies (4–5a. 7–8. 15–16). The near curse in 12–13 is not a crude desire for revenge but a wish that God's just rule over human affairs be recognized now.

**59, 1: Do not destroy:** probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung.

**59, 8: Who is there to hear?:** a sample of the enemies' godless reflection. The answer is that God hears their blasphemies.

**Ps 60:** The community complains that God has let the enemy win the battle (3–5) and asks for an assurance of victory (6–7). In the oracle God affirms ownership of the land; the invasion of other nations is not permanent and will be reversed ultimately (8–10).

r Jb 21, 18; Hos 13, 3; Na 1, 10. s Ps 68, 24; Is 63, 1–6. t 1 Sm 19, 11. u Ps 55, 11. v Pss 2, 4; 37, 13; Wis 4, 18. w Prv 12, 13; 18, 7. x Ps 83, 18–19; Ez 5, 13. y 2 Sm 8, 2. 3. 13; 1 Chr 18, 2. 3. 12. z Ps 75, 4; Is 24, 19. a Ps 75, 9; Is 51, 17. 21–22; Jer 25, 15.

a refuge for them out of bowshot. *Selah*
7 Help with your right hand and answer us*
that your loved ones may escape.

II

8 In the sanctuary God promised:
"I will exult, will apportion Shechem;
the valley of Succoth* I will measure out.*
9 Gilead is mine, mine is Manasseh;
Ephraim is the helmet for my head,
Judah, my own scepter.*
10 Moab is my washbowl;*
upon Edom I cast my sandal.[b]*
I will triumph over Philistia."

III

11 Who will bring me to the fortified city?*
Who will lead me into Edom?
12 Was it not you who rejected us, God?
Do you no longer march with our armies?[c]
13 Give us aid against the foe;
worthless is human help.
14 We will triumph with the help of God,
who will trample down our foes.

Ps 62
See RG
243

## PSALM 61*

### Prayer of the King in Time of Danger

1 For the leader; with stringed instruments. Of David.

I

2 Hear my cry, O God,
listen to my prayer!
3 From the brink of Sheol* I call;
my heart grows faint.
Raise me up, set me on a rock,
4 for you are my refuge,
a tower of strength against the foe.[d]
5 Then I will ever dwell in your tent,
take refuge in the shelter of your wings.[e]
*Selah*

II

6 O God, when you accept my vows
and hear the plea of those
who revere your name in prayer:*
7 "Add to the days of the king's life;
may his years be many generations;[f]
8 May he reign before God forever;[g]
may your love and fidelity preserve
him"—[h]
9 Then* I will sing your name forever,
fulfill my vows day after day.

Ps 61
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 62*

### Trust in God Alone

1 For the leader; *'al Jeduthun.** A psalm of David.

I

2 My soul rests in God alone,[i]
from whom comes my salvation.
3 God alone is my rock and salvation,
my secure height; I shall never fall.
4 How long will you set upon people,
all of you beating them down,
As though they were a sagging fence
or a battered wall?
5 Even from my place on high
they plot to dislodge me.
They delight in lies;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.[j] *Selah*

---

With renewed confidence, the community resolves to fight again (11). The opening lament is picked up again (12–14), but this time with new awareness of God's power and human limitation.

**60, 7–14:** These verses occur again as the second half of Ps 108.

**60, 8: I will apportion . . . measure out:** God lays claim to these places. **The valley of Succoth:** probably the lower stretch of the Jabbok valley.

**60, 9: Judah, my own scepter:** an allusion to the Testament of Jacob, Gn 49, 10.

**60, 10: Moab is my washbowl:** Moab borders the Dead Sea, hence a metaphor for the country. **Upon Edom I cast my sandal:** an ancient legal gesture of taking possession of land.

**60, 11: The fortified city:** perhaps Bozrah, the fortified capital of Edom. Cf Is 34, 6; 63, 1; Am 1, 12.

**Ps 61:** A lament of the king who feels himself at the brink of death (3) and cries out for the strong and saving presence of God (3b–5). The king cites the prayer being made for him (7–8), and promises to give thanks to God.

**61, 3: Brink of Sheol:** literally, "edge of the earth," "earth" being taken in its occasional meaning "the underworld." Cf Jon 2, 3.

**61, 6: In prayer:** added for sense. Vv 7–8 express **the plea** of v 6.

**61, 9: Then:** Hebrew "just as," i.e., in accord with the vows referred to in v 6.

**Ps 62:** A song of trust displaying serenity from experiencing God's power (the refrains of 2–3 and 6–7) and anger toward unjust enemies (4–5). From the experience of being rescued, the psalmist can teach others to trust in God (10–13).

**62, 1: 'Al Jeduthun:** apparently the Hebrew name for the melody.

b Ru 4, 7–8. c Ps 44, 10. d Ps 46, 2. e Pss 17, 8; 36, 8; 57, 2. f Ps 21, 5. g Pss 72, 5; 89, 5. 30. 37. h Pss 85, 11; 89, 15. 25; Prv 20, 28. i 2–3. 6–7: Pss 18, 3; 31, 3–4; 42, 10; 118, 8; 146, 3. j Pss 12, 3; 28, 3; 55, 22; Prv 26, 24–25.

II

6 My soul, be at rest in God alone,
from whom comes my hope.
7 God alone is my rock and my salvation,
my secure height; I shall not fall.
8 My safety and glory are with God, [k]
my strong rock and refuge.
9 Trust God at all times, my people!
Pour out your hearts to God our refuge!
*Selah*

III

10 Mortals are a mere breath,
the powerful but an illusion; [l]
On a balance they rise;*
together they are lighter than air.
11 Do not trust in extortion;
in plunder put no empty hope.
Though wealth increase,
do not set your heart upon it. [m]
12 One thing God has said;
two things* I have heard: [n]
Power belongs to God;
13 so too, Lord, does kindness,
And you render to each of us
according to our deeds. [o]

## PSALM 63*

### Ardent Longing for God

1 A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. [p]

I

2 O God, you are my God—
for you I long!
For you my body yearns;
for you my soul thirsts,
Like a land parched, lifeless,
and without water. [q]
3 So I look to you in the sanctuary
to see your power and glory.
4 For your love is better than life;*
my lips offer you worship!

II

5 I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands, calling on your name.
6 My soul shall savor the rich banquet of praise,
with joyous lips my mouth shall honor you!
7 When I think of you upon my bed,
through the night watches I will recall
8 That you indeed are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. [r]
9 My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

III

10 But those who seek my life will come to ruin;
they shall go down to the depths of the earth!
11 They shall be handed over to the sword
and become the prey of jackals!
12 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by the Lord* shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be shut! [s]

Ps 63 See RG 242–243

## PSALM 64*

### Treacherous Conspirators Punished by God

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 O God, hear my anguished voice;
from the foes I dread protect my life.

Ps 64 See RG 242–243

**62, 10: On a balance they rise:** precious objects were weighed by balancing two pans suspended from a beam. The lighter pan rises.

**62, 12: One thing . . . two things:** parallelism of numbers for the sake of variation, a common device in Semitic poetry. One should not literally add up the numbers. Cf Am 1, 3; Prv 6, 16–19; 30, 15. 18. 21.

**Ps 63:** A psalm expressing the intimate relationship between God and the worshiper. Separated from God (2), the psalmist longs for the divine life given in the temple (3–6), which is based on a close relationship with God (7–9). May all my enemies be destroyed and God's true worshipers continue in giving praise (10–12)!

**63, 4: For your love is better than life:** only here in the Old Testament is anything prized above life—in this case God's love.

**63, 12: All who swear by the Lord:** to swear by a particular god meant that one was a worshiper of that god (Is 45, 23; 48, 1; Zep 1, 5).

**Ps 64:** A lament of a person overwhelmed by the malice of the wicked who are depicted in the psalms as the enemies of the righteous (2–7). When people see God bringing upon the wicked the evil they intended against others, they will know who is the true ruler of the world (8–10). The final verse is a vow of praise (11).

k Ps 3, 3; Is 26, 4; 60, 19. l Pss 39, 6–7; 144, 4; Jb 7, 16; Wis 2, 5. m Jb 31, 25; Eccl 5, 9; Jer 17, 11; Mt 6, 19–21. 24. n Jb 40, 5. o Pss 28, 4; 31, 24; 2 Sm 3, 39; Jb 34, 11; Jer 17, 10; Mt 16, 27; Rom 2, 6; 2 Tm 4, 14. p 1 Sm 24. q Pss 42, 2; 143, 6; Is 26, 9. r Pss 17, 8; 36, 8. s Ps 107, 42.

3 Hide me from the malicious crowd,
the mob of evildoers.
4 They sharpen their tongues like swords,
ready their bows for arrows of poison
words.[t]
5 They shoot at the innocent from ambush,
shoot without risk, catch them unawares.*
6 They resolve on their wicked plan;
they conspire to set snares;
they say: "Who will see us?"
7 They devise wicked schemes,
conceal the schemes they devise;
the designs of their hearts are hidden.[u]

II

8 But God will shoot arrows at them
and strike them unawares.[v]
9 They will be brought down by their own
tongues;
all who see them will shake their heads.[w]
10 Then all will fear and proclaim God's deed,
pondering what has been done.
11 The just will rejoice and take refuge in the
LORD;
all the upright will glory in their God.[x]

## PSALM 65*

Ps 65
See RG
243, 250

### Thanksgiving for God's Blessings

1 For the leader. A psalm of David. A song.

I

2 To you we owe our hymn of praise,
O God on Zion;
To you our vows* must be fulfilled,
3 you who hear our prayers.
To you all flesh must come[y]*
4 with its burden of wicked deeds.
We are overcome by our sins;
only you can pardon them.[z]
5 Happy the chosen ones you bring
to dwell in your courts.
May we be filled with the good things of your
house,
the blessings of your holy temple!

II

6 You answer us with awesome deeds* of
justice,
O God our savior,
The hope of all the ends of the earth
and of far distant islands.[a]
7 You are robed in power,
you set up the mountains by your might.
8 You still the roaring of the seas,[b]
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.[c]
9 Distant peoples stand in awe of your
marvels;
east and west you make resound
with joy.
10 You visit the earth and water it,*
make it abundantly fertile.[d]
God's stream* is filled with water;
with it you supply the world with grain.
Thus do you prepare the earth:
11 you drench plowed furrows,
and level their ridges.
With showers you keep the ground soft,
blessing its young sprouts.
12 You adorn the year with your bounty;
your paths* drip with fruitful rain.
13 The untilled meadows also drip;
the hills are robed with joy.
14 The pastures are clothed with flocks,
the valleys blanketed with grain;
they cheer and sing for joy.[e]

**64, 5: Catch them unawares:** literally, "suddenly," i.e., "unexpectedly."

**Ps 65:** The community, aware of its unworthiness (3–4), gives thanks for divine bounty (5), a bounty resulting from God's creation victory (6–9). At God's touch the earth comes alive with vegetation and flocks (10–14).

**65, 2: Vows:** the Israelites were accustomed to promising sacrifices in the temple if their prayers were heard.

**65, 3: To you all flesh must come:** all must have recourse to God's mercy.

**65, 6: Awesome deeds:** the acts of creating—installing mountains, taming seas, restraining nations (7–8)—that are visible worldwide (6. 9).

**65, 10–14:** Apparently a description of the agricultural year, beginning with the first fall rains that soften the hard sun-baked soil (10–11).

**65, 10: God's stream:** the fertile waters of the earth derive from God's fertile waters in the heavenly world.

**65, 12: Paths:** probably the tracks of God's storm chariot dropping rain upon earth.

t Pss 11, 2; 37, 14; 55, 22; 57, 5. u Ps 140, 3; Prv 6, 14. v Pss 7, 13–14; 38, 3; Dt 32, 42. w Pss 5, 11; 44, 14; 52, 6. x Pss 36, 8; 57, 2. y Is 66, 23. z Pss 32, 1–2; 78, 38; Is 1, 18. a Is 66, 19. b Pss 89, 10; 107, 29; Jb 38, 11; Mt 8, 26. c Is 17, 12. d Lv 26, 4; Is 30, 23. 25; Jl 2, 22–23. e Is 44, 23.

## PSALM 66*

### Praise of God, Israel's Deliverer

1 For the leader. A song; a psalm.

I

Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth;
2 sing of his glorious name;
give him glorious praise.[f]
3 Say to God: "How awesome your deeds!
Before your great strength your enemies cringe.
4 All on earth fall in worship before you;[g]
they sing of you, sing of your name!" *Selah*

II

5 Come and see the works of God,*
awesome in the deeds done for us.
6 He changed the sea to dry land;
through the river they passed on foot.[h]
Therefore let us rejoice in him,
7 who rules by might forever,
Whose eyes are fixed upon the nations.
Let no rebel rise to challenge! *Selah*
8 Bless our God, you peoples;
loudly sound his praise,
9 Who has kept us alive
and not allowed our feet to slip.[i]
10 You tested us, O God,
tried us as silver tried by fire.[j]
11 You led us into a snare;
you bound us at the waist as captives.
12 You let captors set foot on our neck;*
we went through fire and water;
then you led us out to freedom.[k]

III

13 I will bring holocausts* to your house;
to you I will fulfill my vows,
14 The vows my lips pronounced
and my mouth spoke in distress.
15 Holocausts of fatlings I will offer you
and burnt offerings of rams;
I will sacrifice oxen and goats. *Selah*
16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,
while I recount what has been done for me.
17 I called to the Lord with my mouth;
praise was upon my tongue.
18 Had I cherished evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard.
19 But God did hear
and listened to my voice in prayer.
20 Blessed be God, who did not refuse me
the kindness I sought in prayer.

Ps 66
See RG
243, 249

## PSALM 67*

### Harvest Thanks and Petition

1 For the leader; with stringed instruments.
A psalm; a song.

I

2 May God be gracious to us* and bless us;
may God's face shine upon us.[l] *Selah*
3 So shall your rule be known upon the earth,
your saving power among all the nations.[m]
4 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you!

II

5 May the nations be glad and shout for joy;
for you govern the peoples justly,
you guide the nations upon the earth.[n]
*Selah*
6 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you!

Ps 67
See RG
243

**Ps 66:** In the first part (1–12), the community praises God for powerful acts for Israel, both in the past (the exodus from Egypt and the entry into the land [6]) and in the present (deliverance from a recent but unspecified calamity [8–12]). In the second part (13–20), an individual from the rescued community fulfills a vow to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. As often in thanksgivings, the rescued person steps forward to teach the community what God has done (16–20).

**66, 5–6:** Cf the events described in Ex 14, 1—15, 21; Jos 3, 11—4, 24, and Ps 114.

**66, 12: You let captors set foot on our neck:** literally, "you let men mount our head." Conquerors placed their feet on the neck of their enemies as a sign of complete defeat. Cf Jos 10, 24. A ceremonial footstool of the Egyptian king Tutankhamen portrays bound and prostrate bodies of enemies ready for the king's feet on their heads, and one of Tutankhamen's ceremonial chariots depicts the king as a sphinx standing with paw atop the neck of an enemy.

**66, 13: Holocausts:** wholly burnt offerings. Cf Lv 1, 3–13; 6, 1–4; 22, 17–20.

**Ps 67:** A petition for a bountiful harvest (7), made in the awareness that Israel's prosperity will persuade the nations to worship its God.

**67, 2: May God be gracious to us:** the people's petition echoes the blessing pronounced upon them by the priests. Cf Nm 6, 22–27.

f Ps 65, 14; Is 44, 23. g 3–4: Ps 18, 45; Mi 7, 17. h Pss 74, 15; 114, 3; Ex 14, 21f; Jos 3, 14ff; Is 44, 27; 50, 2. i Pss 91, 12; 121, 3; 1 Sm 2, 9; Prv 3, 23. j Is 48, 10. k Is 43, 2. l Pss 4, 7; 31, 17; 44, 4; 80, 4; Dn 9, 17. m Jer 33, 9. n Ps 98, 9.

III

7 The earth has yielded its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us. [o]
8 May God bless us still;
that the ends of the earth may revere our God.

Ps 68
See RG
243, 250

## PSALM 68*

### The Exodus and Conquest, Pledge of Future Help

1 For the leader. A psalm of David; a song.

I

2 God will arise for battle;*
the enemy will be scattered;
those who hate God will flee. [p]
3 The wind will disperse them like smoke;
as wax is melted by fire,
so the wicked will perish before God. [q]
4 Then the just will be glad;
they will rejoice before God;
they will celebrate with great joy.

II

5 Sing to God, praise the divine name;
exalt the rider of the clouds.*
Rejoice before this God
whose name is the LORD. [r]
6 Father of the fatherless, defender of widows—[s]
this is the God whose abode is holy,
7 Who gives a home to the forsaken,
who leads prisoners out to prosperity,
while rebels live in the desert.*

III

8 God, when you went forth before your people, [t]
when you marched through the desert,
*Selah*
9 The earth quaked, the heavens shook,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
10 You claimed a land as your own, O God;
11 your people settled there.
There you poured abundant rains, God,
graciously given to the poor in their need.

IV

12a The Lord announced the news of victory:*
13a "The kings and their armies are in desperate flight. [u]
12b All you people so numerous,
14a will you stay by the sheepfolds? [v]
13b Every household will share the booty,
14b perhaps a dove sheathed with silver,
14c its wings covered with yellow gold."
15 When the Almighty routed the kings there,
the spoils were scattered like snow on Zalmon.*

**Ps 68**: The psalm is extremely difficult because the Hebrew text is badly preserved and the ceremony that it describes is uncertain. The translation assumes the psalm accompanied the early autumn Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth), which included a procession of the tribes (25–28). Israel was being oppressed by a foreign power, perhaps Egypt (31–32)—unless Egypt stands for any oppressor. The psalm may have been composed from segments of ancient poems, which would explain why the transitions are implied rather than explicitly stated. At any rate, v 2 is based on Nm 10, 35–36, and vv 8–9 are derived from Jgs 5, 4–5.

The argument develops in nine stanzas (each of three to five poetic lines): 1) confidence that God will destroy Israel's enemies (2–4); 2) call to praise God as savior (5–7); 3) God's initial rescue of Israel from Egypt (8), the Sinai encounter (9), and the settlement in Canaan (10–11); 4) the defeat of the Canaanite kings (12–15); 5) the taking of Jerusalem, where Israel's God will rule the world (16–19); 6) praise for God's past help and for the future interventions that will be modeled on the ancient exodus-conquest (20–24); 7) procession at the Feast of Tabernacles (25–28); 8) prayer that the defeated enemies bring tribute to the temple (29–32); 9) invitation for all kingdoms to praise Israel's God (33–36).

**68, 2:** The opening line alluding to Nm 10, 35 makes clear that God's assistance in the period of the exodus and conquest is the model and assurance of all future divine help.

**68, 5: Exalt the rider of the clouds**: God's intervention is in the imagery of Canaanite myth in which the storm-god mounted the storm clouds to ride to battle. Such theophanies occur throughout the psalm: 2–3. 8–10. 12–15. 18–19. 22–24. 29–32. 34–35. See Dt 33, 26; Ps 18, 8–16; Is 19, 1.

**68, 7: While rebels live in the desert**: rebels must live in the arid desert, whereas God's people will live in the well-watered land (vv 8–11).

**68, 12–15**: The Hebrew text upon which the translation is based has apparently suffered dislocation and has been substantially rearranged for sense. The version of the defeat of the kings differs from that in the Book of Joshua, where the people play a significant role. Here God alone is responsible for the victory (though the actual battle is not described); Israel only gathers the spoils. God alone is the source of Israel's success; human effort is not important.

**68, 15: Zalmon**: generally taken as the name of a mountain where snow is visible in winter, perhaps to be located in the Golan Heights or in the mountains of Bashan or Hauran east of the Sea of Galilee.

o Ps 85, 13; Lv 26, 4; Ez 34, 27; Hos 2, 23–24. p Nm 10, 35. q Ps 97, 5; Jdt 16, 15; Wis 5, 14; Mi 1, 4. r Pss 18, 10; 104, 3; Dt 33, 26; Is 19, 1. s 6–7: Pss 103, 6; 146, 7. 9; Ex 22, 20–22; Bar 6, 37. t 8–9: Pss 44, 10; 114, 4. 7; Jgs 5, 4–5; Heb 12, 26. u Jgs 5, 19. 22. v Jgs 5, 16.

V

16 You high mountains of Bashan,
you rugged mountains of Bashan,
17 You rugged mountains, why look with envy
at the mountain* where God has chosen to dwell,
where the LORD resides forever? [w]
18 God's chariots were myriad, thousands upon thousands;
from Sinai the Lord entered the holy place.
19 You went up to its lofty height;
you took captives, received slaves as tribute. [x]
No rebels can live in the presence of God.

VI

20 Blessed be the Lord day by day,
God, our salvation, who carries us. [y]
*Selah*
21 Our God is a God who saves;
escape from death is in the LORD God's hands.
22 God will crush the skulls of the enemy,
the hairy heads of those who walk in sin. [z]
23 The Lord has said:
"Even from Bashan I will fetch them,
fetch them even from the depths of the sea.*
24 You will wash your feet in your enemy's blood;
the tongues of your dogs will lap it up." [a]

VII

25 Your procession* comes into view, O God,
your procession into the holy place, my God and king.
26 The singers go first, the harpists follow;
in their midst girls sound the timbrels. [b]
27 In your choirs, bless God;
bless the LORD, you from Israel's assemblies.
28 In the lead is Benjamin, few in number;
there the princes of Judah, a large throng,
the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali, too. [c]

VIII

29 Summon again, O God, your power,
the divine power you once showed for us.
30 Show it from your temple on behalf of Jerusalem,
that kings may bring you tribute.
31 Roar at the wild beast of the reeds,*
the herd of mighty bulls, the lords of nations;
scatter the nations that delight in war.
32 Exact rich tribute from lower Egypt, [d]*
from upper Egypt,* gold and silver;
make Ethiopia* extend its hands to God. [e]

IX

33 You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; [f]
chant the praises of the Lord, *Selah*
34 Who rides the heights of the ancient heavens,
whose voice is thunder, mighty thunder.
35 Confess the power of God,
whose majesty protects Israel,
whose power is in the sky.
36 Awesome is God in his holy place,
the God of Israel,
who gives power and strength to his people. [g]
Blessed be God!

**68, 17: The mountain**: Mount Zion, the site of the temple.
**68, 23: Even from Bashan . . . from the depths of the sea**: the heights and the depths, the farthest places where enemies might flee.
**68, 25–28: Your procession**: the procession renews God's original taking up of residence on Zion, described in 16–19.
**68, 31: The wild beast of the reeds**: probably the Nile crocodile, a symbol for Egypt; see 32 and Ez 29, 2–5.
**68, 31–32: Lower Egypt** is the delta area north of Cairo. **Upper Egypt** is the Nile Valley from Cairo to Aswan. **Ethiopia** is still further south.

w Ps 132, 13–14; Ez 43, 7. x Ps 47, 8; Eph 4, 8–10. y Pss 34, 2; 145, 2; Is 46, 3–4; 63, 9. z Dt 32, 42. a Pss 58, 11; 1 Kgs 21, 19; 22, 38; Is 63, 1–6. b Pss 81, 2–3; 87, 7; 149, 3; 150, 3–5; 2 Sm 6, 5. c Is 8, 23. d Ez 29, 2ff. e Is 18, 7; 45, 14. f Ps 138, 4. g Pss 28, 8; 29, 11.

Ps 69
See RG
242–243,
251

## PSALM 69*

### A Cry of Anguish in Great Distress

1 For the leader; according to "Lilies."* Of David.

I

2 Save me, God,
for the waters* have reached my neck. [h]
3 I have sunk into the mire of the deep,
where there is no foothold.
I have gone down to the watery depths;
the flood overwhelms me. [i]
4 I am weary with crying out;
my throat is parched.
My eyes have failed,
looking for my God. [j]
5 More numerous than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause. [k]
Too many for my strength
are my treacherous enemies.
Must I now restore
what I did not steal?*

II

6 God, you know my folly;
my faults are not hidden from you.
7 Let those who wait for you, LORD of hosts,
not be shamed through me.
Let those who seek you, God of Israel, [l]
not be disgraced through me.
8 For your sake I bear insult,
shame covers my face. [m]
9 I have become an outcast to my kin,
a stranger to my mother's children. [n]
10 Because zeal for your house consumes me,*
I am scorned by those who scorn you. [o]*
11 I have wept and fasted, [p]
but this led only to scorn.
12 I clothed myself in sackcloth;
I became a byword for them.
13 They who sit at the gate gossip about me;
drunkards make me the butt of their songs.

III

14 But I pray to you, LORD,
for the time of your favor.
God, in your great kindness answer me
with your constant help. [q]
15 Rescue me from the mire; [r]
do not let me sink.
Rescue me from my enemies
and from the watery depths.
16 Do not let the floodwaters overwhelm me,
nor the deep swallow me,
nor the mouth of the pit close over me.
17 Answer me, LORD, in your generous love;
in your great mercy turn to me.
18 Do not hide your face from your servant;
in my distress hasten to answer me! [s]
19 Come and ransom my life;
because of my enemies redeem me.
20 You know my reproach, my shame, my disgrace;
before you stand all my foes.
21 Insult has broken my heart, and I am weak;
I looked for compassion, but there was none,
for comforters, but found none. [t]
22 Instead they put gall in my food;
for my thirst they gave me vinegar. [u]

IV

23 Make their own table a snare for them,
a trap for their friends. [v]
24 Make their eyes so dim they cannot see;

**Ps 69**: A lament complaining of suffering in language both metaphorical (2–3 and 15–16, the waters of chaos) and literal (4. 5. 9. 11–13, exhaustion, alienation from family and community, false accusation). In the second part the psalmist prays with special emphasis that the enemies be punished for all to see (23–29). Despite the pain, the psalmist does not lose hope that all be set right, and promises public praise (30–37). The psalm, which depicts the suffering of the innocent just person vividly, is cited often by the New Testament especially in the passion accounts, e.g., v 5 in Jn 15, 25; v 22 in Mk 15, 23. 36 and parallels and in Jn 19, 29. The psalm prays not so much for personal vengeance as for public vindication of God's justice. There was, at this time, no belief in an afterlife where such vindication could take place. Redress had to take place now, in the sight of all.

**69, 1: "Lilies"**: apparently the name of the melody.

**69, 2: Waters**: the waters of chaos from which God created the world are a common metaphor for extreme distress. Cf Pss 18, 5; 42, 8; 88, 8; Jon 2, 3–6.

**69, 5: What I did not steal**: the psalmist, falsely accused of theft, is being forced to make restitution.

**69, 10: Zeal for your house consumes me**: the psalmist's commitment to God's cause brings only opposition. Cf Jn 2, 17. I

h Pss 18, 5; 93, 3–4; Jb 22, 11. i Pss 40, 2; 124, 4–5. j Pss 25, 15; 119, 82; 123, 2; 141, 8; Is 38, 14. k Ps 40, 13; Lam 3, 52; Jn 15, 25. l Ps 40, 17. m Jer 15, 15. n Jb 19, 13–15. o Ps 119, 139; Jn 2, 17; Rom 15, 3. p 11–13: Ps 109, 24–25; Jb 30, 9; Lam 3, 14. q Is 49, 8. r 15–16: Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 32, 6; 40, 3; 88, 5; Prv 1, 12. s Pss 102, 3; 143, 7. t Lam 1, 2. u Lam 3, 15; Mt 27, 34. 48; Mk 15, 23. v Rom 11, 9–10.

keep their backs ever feeble.
25 Pour out your wrath upon them;
let the fury of your anger overtake them.
26 Make their camp desolate,
with none to dwell in their tents.[w]
27 For they pursued the one you struck,
added to the pain of the one you wounded.
28 Add that to their crimes;
let them not attain to your reward.
29 Strike them from the book of the living;
do not count them among the just![x]

V

30 But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your saving help protect me, God,
31 That I may praise God's name in song*
and glorify it with thanksgiving.
32 My song will please the LORD more than oxen,
more than bullocks with horns and hooves:[y]
33 "See, you lowly ones, and be glad;
you who seek God, take heart![z]
34 For the LORD hears the poor,
does not spurn those in bondage.
35 Let the heavens and the earth sing praise,
the seas and whatever moves in them!"

VI

36 God will rescue Zion,
rebuild the cities of Judah.[a]
God's servants shall dwell in the land and possess it;
37 it shall be the heritage of their descendants;
those who love God's name shall dwell there.[b]

## PSALM 70*

### Prayer for Divine Help

1 For the leader; of David. For remembrance.

2 Graciously rescue me, God![c]
Come quickly to help me, LORD![d]
3 Confound and put to shame
those who seek my life.[e]
Turn back in disgrace
those who desire my ruin.
4 Let those who say "Aha!"[f]
turn back in their shame.
5 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
May those who long for your help
always say, "God be glorified!"[g]
6 Here I am, afflicted and poor.
God, come quickly!
You are my help and deliverer.
LORD, do not delay!

## PSALM 71*

Ps 71
See RG
242–243

### Prayer in Time of Old Age

I

1 In you, LORD, I take refuge;[h]
let me never be put to shame.[i]
2 In your justice rescue and deliver me;
listen to me and save me!
3 Be my rock and refuge,
my secure stronghold;
for you are my rock and fortress.[j]
4 My God, rescue me from the power of the wicked,
from the clutches of the violent.[k]
5 You are my hope, Lord;
my trust, GOD, from my youth.
6 On you I depend since birth;
from my mother's womb you are my strength;[l]
my hope in you never wavers.
7 I have become a portent to many,*
but you are my strong refuge!
8 My mouth shall be filled with your praise,

Ps 70
See RG
242–243

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**am scorned by those who scorn you**: Rom 15, 3 uses the verse as an example of Jesus' unselfishness.

**69, 31: That I may praise God's name in song**: the actual song is cited in 33–35, the word "praise" in 35 referring back to "praise" in 31.

**Ps 70**: A lament of a poor and afflicted person (6) who has no resource except God, and who cries out to be saved from the enemy. The psalm is almost identical to Ps 40, 14–18.

**Ps 71**: A lament of an old person (9. 18) whose afflictions are interpreted by enemies as a divine judgment (11). The first part of the psalm pleads for help (1–4) on the basis of a hope learned from a lifetime's experience of God; the second part describes the menace (9–13) yet remains buoyant (14–16); the third develops the theme of hope and praise.

**71, 7: A portent to many**: the afflictions of the sufferer are taken as a manifestation of God's anger. Cf Dt 28, 46; Ps 31, 12.

w Acts 1, 20. x Ps 139, 16; Ex 32, 32; Is 4, 3; Dn 12, 1; Mal 3, 16; Rv 3, 5. y Pss 40, 7; 50, 8–9. 14; 51, 18; Is 1, 11–15; Hos 6, 6; Am 5, 21–22; Heb 10, 5–8. z Pss 22, 27; 35, 27; 70, 5. a Is 44, 26; Ez 36, 10. b Ps 102, 29; Is 65, 9. c 2–6: Ps 40, 14–18. d Ps 71, 12. e Ps 35, 4. 26. f Ps 35, 21. 25. g Ps 35, 27. h 1–3: Ps 31, 2–4. i Ps 25, 2. j Ps 18, 3. k Ps 140, 2. l Ps 22, 11.

shall sing your glory every day.

II

9 Do not cast me aside in my old age;
as my strength fails, do not forsake me.
10 For my enemies speak against me;
they watch and plot against me.[m]
11 They say, "God has abandoned that one.
Pursue, seize the wretch!
No one will come to the rescue!"
12 God, do not stand far from me;
my God, hasten to help me.[n]
13 Bring to a shameful end
those who attack me;
Cover with contempt and scorn
those who seek my ruin.[o]
14 I will always hope in you
and add to all your praise.
15 My mouth shall proclaim your just deeds,
day after day your acts of deliverance,
though I cannot number them all.[p]
16 I will speak of the mighty works of the Lord;
O God, I will tell of your singular justice.

III

17 God, you have taught me from my youth;
to this day I proclaim your wondrous deeds.
18 Now that I am old and gray,[q]
do not forsake me, God,
That I may proclaim your might
to all generations yet to come,[r]
Your power 19 and justice, God,
to the highest heaven.
You have done great things;[s]
O God, who is your equal?[t]
20 You have sent me many bitter afflictions,
but once more revive me.
From the watery depths of the earth
once more raise me up.
21 Restore my honor;
turn and comfort me,
22 That I may praise you with the lyre
for your faithfulness, my God,
And sing to you with the harp,
O Holy One of Israel!
23 My lips will shout for joy as I sing your praise;
my soul, too, which you have redeemed.
24 Yes, my tongue shall recount
your justice day by day.
For those who sought my ruin
will have been shamed and disgraced.

Ps 72
See RG
244

## PSALM 72*

### A Prayer for the King

1 Of Solomon.

I

O God, give your judgment to the king;
your justice to the son of kings;[u]*
2 That he may govern your people with justice,
your oppressed with right judgment,[v]
3 That the mountains may yield their bounty for the people,
and the hills great abundance,[w]
4 That he may defend the oppressed among the people,
save the poor and crush the oppressor.

II

5 May he live as long as the sun endures,
like the moon, through all generations.[x]
6 May he be like rain coming down upon the fields,
like showers watering the earth,[y]
7 That abundance may flourish in his days,
great bounty, till the moon be no more.

III

8 May he rule from sea to sea,
from the river to the ends of the earth.[z]*
9 May his foes kneel before him,
his enemies lick the dust.[a]

**Ps 72:** A royal psalm in which the Israelite king, as the representative of God, is the instrument of divine justice (1–4. 12–14) and blessing (5–7. 15–17) for the whole world. The king is human, giving only what he has received from God. Hence intercession must be made for him. The extravagant language is typical of oriental royal courts.

**72, 1: The king . . . the son of kings:** the crown prince is the king's son; the prayer envisages the dynasty.

**72, 8: From sea to sea . . . the ends of the earth:** the boundaries of the civilized world known at the time: from the Mediterranean Sea (the western sea) to the Persian Gulf (the eastern sea), and from the Euphrates (the river) to the islands and lands of southwestern Europe, "the ends of the earth." The words may also have a mythic nuance—the earth surrounded by cosmic waters, hence everywhere.

m Pss 3, 2; 22, 8. n Ps 22, 20. o Pss 35, 4; 40, 15; 70, 3. p Ps 35, 28. q Is 46, 3–4. r Pss 22, 31–32; 48, 14–15; 145, 4. s Ps 72, 18. t Ps 86, 8. u Ps 99, 4; Jer 23, 5. v Prv 31, 8–9. w Is 52, 7; 55, 12. x Ps 89, 37–38; Jer 31, 35. y Dt 32, 2; Is 45, 8; Hos 6, 3. z Dt 11, 24; Zec 9, 10. a Is 49, 23; Mi 7, 17.

10 May the kings of Tarshish and the islands*
bring tribute,
the kings of Arabia and Seba* offer
gifts.[b]
11 May all kings bow before him,
all nations serve him.[c]
12 For he rescues the poor when they cry out,
the oppressed who have no one to help.
13 He shows pity to the needy and the poor[d]
and saves the lives of the poor.
14 From extortion and violence he frees them,
for precious is their blood* in his sight.

IV

15 Long may he live, receiving gold from
Arabia,
prayed for without cease, blessed day
by day.
16 May wheat abound in the land,
flourish even on the mountain heights.
May his fruit increase like Lebanon's,
his wheat like the grasses of the land.[e]*
17 May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun, may his name endure.[f]
May the tribes of the earth give blessings with
his name;*
may all the nations regard him as favored.[g]

* * *

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,*
who alone does wonderful deeds.[h]
19 Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may all the earth be filled with the LORD's
glory.[i]
Amen and amen.

20 The end of the psalms of David, son of
Jesse.

# THIRD BOOK —PSALMS 73–89

## PSALM 73*

Ps 73
See RG
244

### The Trial of the Just

1 A psalm of Asaph.

How good God is to the upright,
the Lord, to those who are clean of heart!

I

2 But, as for me, I lost my balance;
my feet all but slipped,
3 Because I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.[j]
4 For they suffer no pain;
their bodies are healthy and sleek.
5 They are free of the burdens of life;
they are not afflicted like others.
6 Thus pride adorns them as a necklace;
violence clothes them as a robe.
7 Out of their stupidity comes sin;
evil thoughts flood their hearts.[k]
8 They scoff and spout their malice;
from on high they utter threats.[l]
9 They set their mouths against the heavens,*
their tongues roam the earth.
10 So my people turn to them
and drink deeply of their words.*
11 They say, "Does God really know?"
"Does the Most High have any
knowledge?"[m]
12 Such, then, are the wicked,
always carefree, increasing their wealth.

II

13 Is it in vain that I have kept my heart
clean,

**72, 10: Tarshish and the islands**: the far west (Ps 48, 6); **Arabia and Seba**: the far south (1 Kgs 10, 1).

**72, 14: Their blood**: cf Ps 116, 15.

**72, 16**: The translation of the difficult Hebrew is tentative.

**72, 17: May the tribes of the earth give blessing with his name**: an echo of the promise to the ancestors (Gn 12, 3; 26, 4; 28, 14), suggesting that the monarchy in Israel fulfilled the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**72, 18–19**: A doxology marking the end of Book II of the Psalter.

**Ps 73**: The opening verse of this probing poem (cf Pss 37; 49) is actually the psalmist's hard-won conclusion from personal experience: God is just and good! The psalmist describes near loss of faith (2–3), occasioned by observing the wicked who blasphemed God with seeming impunity (4–12). Feeling abandoned despite personal righteousness, the psalmist could not bear the injustice until an experience of God's nearness in the temple made clear how deluded the wicked were. Their sudden destruction shows their impermanence (13–20). The just can thus be confident, for, as the psalmist now knows, their security is from God (1. 23–28).

**73, 9: They set their mouths against the heavens**: in an image probably derived from mythic stories of half-divine giants, the monstrous speech of the wicked is likened to enormous jaws gaping wide, devouring everything in sight.

**73, 10**: The Hebrew is obscure.

b Ps 68, 30; Is 60, 5–6; 1 Kgs 10, 1ff. c Pss 47, 8. d Prv 31, 9. e Is 27, 6; Hos 14, 6–8; Am 9, 13. f Ps 21, 7. g Gn 12, 3; Zec 8, 13. h Pss 41, 14; 89, 53; 106, 48; 136, 4. i Ps 57, 5; Nm 14, 21. j Ps 37, 1; Jb 21, 13. k Jb 15, 27. l Ps 17, 10. m Ps 10, 11; Jb 22, 13.

washed my hands in innocence? [n]
[14] For I am afflicted day after day,
chastised every morning.
[15] Had I thought, "I will speak as they do,"
I would have betrayed your people.
[16] Though I tried to understand all this,
it was too difficult for me,
[17] Till I entered the sanctuary of God
and came to understand their end.*

III

[18] You set them, indeed, on a slippery road;
you hurl them down to ruin.
[19] How suddenly they are devastated;
undone by disasters forever!
[20] They are like a dream after waking, Lord,
dismissed like shadows when you arise. [o]

IV

[21] Since my heart was embittered
and my soul deeply wounded,
[22] I was stupid and could not understand;
I was like a brute beast in your presence.
[23] Yet I am always with you;
you take hold of my right hand. [p]
[24] With your counsel you guide me,
and at the end receive me with honor.*
[25] Whom else have I in the heavens?
None beside you delights me on earth.
[26] Though my flesh and my heart fail,
God is the rock of my heart, my portion
forever.
[27] But those who are far from you perish;
you destroy those unfaithful to you.
[28] As for me, to be near God is my good,
to make the Lord GOD my refuge.
I shall declare all your works
in the gates of daughter Zion.

Ps 74
See RG 242–243, 247

## PSALM 74*

### Prayer at the Destruction of the Temple

[1] A *maskil* of Asaph.

I

Why, God, have you cast us off forever? [q]*
Why does your anger burn against the
sheep of your pasture? [r]
[2] Remember your flock that you gathered of old,
the tribe you redeemed as your very own.
Remember Mount Zion where you dwell. [s]
[3] Turn your steps toward the utter ruins,
toward the sanctuary devastated by the
enemy.
[4] Your foes roared triumphantly in your shrine;
they set up their own tokens of victory.
[5] They hacked away like foresters gathering
boughs,
swinging their axes in a thicket of trees.
[6] They smashed all your engraved work,
pounded it with hammer and pick.
[7] They set your sanctuary on fire;
the abode of your name they razed and
profaned. [t]
[8] They said in their hearts, "Destroy
them all!
Burn all the shrines of God in the land!"
[9] Now we see no signs,*
we have no prophets, [u]
no one who knows how long.
[10] How long, O God, shall the enemy jeer? [v]

**73, 17: And came to understand their end:** the psalmist receives a double revelation in the temple: 1) the end of the wicked comes unexpectedly (18–20); 2) God is with me.

**73, 24: And at the end receive me with honor:** a perhaps deliberately enigmatic verse. It is understood by some commentators as reception into heavenly glory, hence the traditional translation, "receive me into glory." The Hebrew verb can indeed refer to mysterious divine elevation of a righteous person into God's domain: Enoch in Gn 5, 24; Elijah in 2 Kgs 2, 11–12; the righteous psalmist in Ps 49, 16. Personal resurrection in the Old Testament, however, is clearly attested only in the second century B.C. The verse is perhaps best left unspecified as a reference to God's nearness and protection.

**Ps 74:** A communal lament sung when the enemy invaded the temple; it would be especially appropriate at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Israel's God is urged to look upon the ruined sanctuary and remember the congregation who worshiped there (1–11). People and sanctuary are bound together; an attack on Zion is an attack on Israel. In the second half of the poem, the community brings before God the story of their origins—their creation (12–17)—in order to move God to reenact that deed of creation now. Will God allow a lesser power to destroy the divine project (18–23)?

**74, 1: Forever:** the word implies that the disaster is already of long duration. Cf 74, 9 and note.

**74, 9: Now we see no signs:** ancients often asked prophets to say for how long a divine punishment was to last. Cf 2 Sm 24, 13. Here no prophet has arisen to indicate the duration.

n Ps 26, 6; Mal 3, 14. o Jb 20, 8. p Ps 121, 5. q Pss 10, 1; 44, 24; 77, 8. r Ps 80, 5. s Pss 68, 17; 132, 13; Ex 15, 17; Jer 10, 16; 51, 19. t Is 64, 10; Ps 79, 1. u Lam 2, 9. v Ps 89, 47.

Shall the foe revile your name forever?
11 Why draw back your right hand,
why keep it idle beneath your cloak?
II
12 Yet you, God, are my king from of old,*
winning victories throughout the earth.
13 You stirred up the sea in your might; [w]
you smashed the heads of the dragons on the waters. [x]
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan, [y]
tossed him for food to the sharks.
15 You opened up springs and torrents,
brought dry land out of the primeval waters.
16 Yours the day and yours the night;
you set the moon and sun in place.
17 You fixed all the limits of the earth;
summer and winter you made. [z]
18 Remember how the enemy has jeered, O LORD,
how a foolish people has reviled your name.
19 Do not surrender to beasts those who praise you;
do not forget forever the life of your afflicted.
20 Look to your covenant,
for the land is filled with gloom;
the pastures, with violence.
21 Let not the oppressed turn back in shame;
may the poor and needy praise your name.
22 Arise, God, defend your cause;
remember the constant jeers of the fools.
23 Do not ignore the clamor of your foes,
the unceasing uproar of your enemies.

## PSALM 75*

### God the Judge of the World

Ps 75
See RG 243, 249

1 For the leader. Do not destroy! A psalm of Asaph; a song.
I
2 We thank you, God, we give thanks;
we call upon your name,
declare your wonderful deeds.
You said:*
3 "I will choose the time;
I will judge fairly.
4 The earth and all its inhabitants will quake,
but I have firmly set its pillars." [a] *Selah*
II
5 So I say to the boastful: "Do not boast!" [b]
to the wicked: "Do not raise your horns!*
6 Do not raise your horns against heaven!
Do not speak arrogantly against the Rock!" [c]
7 For judgment comes not from east or from west,
not from the desert or from the mountains, [d]
8 But from God who decides,
who brings some low and raises others high. [e]
9 Yes, a cup* is in the LORD's hand,
foaming wine, fully spiced.*
When God pours it out,
they will drain it even to the dregs;
all the wicked of the earth must drink. [f]
10 But I will rejoice forever;
I will sing praise to the God of Jacob,
11 Who has said:
"I will break off all the horns of the wicked,
but the horns of the just shall be lifted up." [g]

**74, 12–17:** Comparable Canaanite literature describes the storm-god's victory over all-encompassing Sea and its allies (dragons and Leviathan) and the subsequent peaceful arrangement of the universe, sometimes through the placement of paired cosmic elements (day and night, sun and moon). Cf Ps 89, 12–13. The psalm apparently equates the enemies attacking the temple with the destructive cosmic forces already tamed by God. Why then are those forces now raging untamed against your own people?

**Ps 75:** The psalmist gives thanks and rejoices (2. 10) for the direct intervention of God, which is promised in two oracles (3–4. 11). Expecting that divine intervention, the psalmist warns evildoers to repent (5–9).

**75, 2: You said:** supplied for clarity here and in v 11. The translation assumes in both places that the psalmist is citing an oracle of God.

**75, 5: Do not raise your horns!:** the horn is the symbol of strength; to raise one's horn is to exalt one's own power as v 6 explains.

**75, 9: A cup:** "the cup of God's wrath" is the punishment inflicted on the wicked. Cf Is 51, 17; Jer 25, 15–29; 49, 12; Ez 23, 31–33. **Spiced:** literally, "a mixed drink"; spices or drugs were added to wine. Cf Prv 9, 2. 5.

w Ps 89, 10. x Is 51, 9–10. y Jb 3, 8; 40, 25; Is 27, 1. z 16–17: Gn 1. a Pss 46, 3; 60, 4; 93, 1; 96, 10; 104, 5; 1 Sm 2, 8; Is 24, 19. b 1 Sm 2, 3; Zec 2, 1–4. c Jb 15, 25. d Mt 24, 23–27. e Jb 5, 11; 1 Sm 2, 7. f Ps 60, 5; Jb 21, 20; Is 51, 17. 21–22; Jer 25, 15ff; Hb 2, 16. g Ps 92, 11.

Ps 76
See RG
242, 249

Ps 77
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 76*

### God Defends Zion

1 For the leader; a psalm with stringed instruments.
A song of Asaph.

I

2 Renowned in Judah is God, [h]
whose name is great in Israel.
3 On Salem* is God's tent, a shelter on Zion.
4 There the flashing arrows were shattered,
shield, sword, and weapons of war. [i] *Selah*

II

5 Terrible and awesome are you,
stronger than the ancient mountains.*
6 Despoiled are the bold warriors;
they sleep their final sleep;
the hands of all the mighty have failed. [j]
7 At your roar, O God of Jacob,
chariots and steeds lay still.
8 So terrible and awesome are you;
who can stand before you and your great anger? [k]
9 From the heavens you pronounced sentence;
the earth was terrified and reduced to silence,
10 When you arose, O God, for judgment
to deliver the afflicted of the land. *Selah*
11 Even wrathful Edom praises you;
the remnant of Hamath* keeps your feast.

III

12 Make and keep vows to the LORD your God. [l]
May all present bring gifts to this awesome God,
13 Who checks the pride of princes,
inspires awe among the kings of earth.

## PSALM 77*

### Confidence in God during National Distress

1 For the leader; *'al Jeduthun.* A psalm of Asaph.

I

2 I cry aloud to God,
cry to God to hear me.
3 On the day of my distress I seek the Lord;
by night my hands are raised unceasingly; [m]
I refuse to be consoled.
4 When I think of God, I groan;
as I ponder, my spirit grows faint. [n] *Selah*
5 My eyes cannot close in sleep;
I am troubled and cannot speak.
6 I consider the days of old;
the years long past 7 I remember. [o]
In the night I meditate in my heart;
I ponder and my spirit broods:
8 "Will the Lord reject us forever, [p]
never again show favor?
9 Has God's love ceased forever?
Has the promise failed for all ages?
10 Has God forgotten mercy,
in anger withheld compassion?" *Selah*
11 I conclude:* "My sorrow is this,
the right hand of the Most High has left us." [q]

II

12 I will remember* the deeds of the LORD;
yes, your wonders of old I will remember. [r]
13 I will recite all your works;
your exploits I will tell.
14 Your way, O God, is holy;
what god is as great as our God? [s]
15 You alone are the God who did wonders;

**Ps 76:** A song glorifying Zion, the mountain of Jerusalem where God destroyed Israel's enemies. Zion is thus the appropriate site to celebrate the victory (3–4), a victory described in parallel scenes (5–7, 8–11). Israel is invited to worship its powerful patron deity (12–13).

**76, 3: Salem:** an ancient name for Jerusalem, used here perhaps on account of its allusion to the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom.* Cf Gn 14, 18; Heb 7, 1–3.

**76, 5: Ancient mountains:** conjectural translation of a difficult Hebrew phrase on the basis of Gn 49, 26. The mountains are part of the structure of the universe (Ps 89, 12–13).

**76, 11: Edom . . . Hamath:** conjectural translation. Israel's neighbors to the southeast and north.

**Ps 77:** A community lament in which the speaker ("I") describes the anguish of Israel at God's silence when its very existence is at stake (2–11). In response the speaker recites the story of how God brought the people into existence (12–21). The question is thus posed to God: Will you allow the people you created to be destroyed?

**77, 11: I conclude:** literally, "I said." The psalmist, after pondering the present distress and God's promises to Israel, has decided that God has forgotten the people.

**77, 12: I will remember:** the verb sometimes means to make present the great deeds of Israel's past by reciting them. Cf Pss 78, 42; 105, 5; 106, 7.

h Hb 3, 2. i Pss 46, 10; 122, 6–9. j 2 Kgs 19, 35; Jer 51, 39; Na 3, 18. k Dt 7, 21; 1 Sm 6, 20; Na 1, 6; Mal 3, 2. l Nm 30, 3. m Pss 50, 15; 88, 2. n Jon 2, 8. o Ps 143, 5; Dt 32, 7. p 8–10: Pss 13, 2; 44, 24; 74, 1; 80, 5; 89, 47; Lam 3, 31. q Ex 15, 6. 12; Pss 17, 7; 18, 36. r Ps 143, 5. s Ps 18, 31; Ex 15, 11.

among the peoples you revealed your
might.[t]
16 With your arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.[u]
*Selah*
17 The waters saw you, God;
the waters saw you and lashed about,
trembled even to their depths.[v]
18 The clouds poured down their rains;
the thunderheads rumbled;
your arrows flashed back and forth.[w]
19 The thunder of your chariot wheels
resounded;
your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.[x]
20 Through the sea was your path;
your way, through the mighty waters,
though your footsteps were unseen.[y]
21 You led your people like a flock
under the care of Moses and Aaron.[z]

## PSALM 78*

### A New Beginning in Zion and David

1 A *maskil* of Asaph.

I

Attend, my people, to my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in story,*
drawing lessons from of old.[a]
3 We have heard them, we know them;
our ancestors have recited them to us.[b]
4 We do not keep them from our children;
we recite them to the next generation,
The praiseworthy and mighty deeds of the
LORD,
the wonders that he performed.[c]
5 God set up a decree in Jacob,
established a law in Israel:[d]
What he commanded our ancestors,
they were to teach their children;
6 That the next generation might come to know,
children yet to be born.[e]
In turn they were to recite them to their
children,
7 that they too might put their trust in God,
And not forget the works of God,
keeping his commandments.
8 They were not to be like their ancestors,
a rebellious and defiant generation,[f]
A generation whose heart was not constant,[g]
whose spirit was not faithful to God,
9 Like the ranks of Ephraimite archers,*
who retreated on the day of battle.
10 They did not keep God's covenant;
they refused to walk by his law.
11 They forgot his works,
the wondrous deeds he had shown them.

Ps 78
See RG
245

II

A

12 In the sight of their ancestors God did
wonders,
in the land of Egypt, the plain of Zoan.[h]*
13 He split the sea and led them across,[i]
piling up the waters rigid as walls.[j]
14 God led them with a cloud by day,
all night with the light of fire.[k]
15 He split rock in the desert,

**Ps 78:** A recital of history to show that past generations did not respond to God's gracious deeds and were punished by God making the gift into a punishment. Will Israel now fail to appreciate God's new act—the choosing of Zion and of David? The tripartite introduction invites Israel to learn the lessons hidden in its traditions (1–4. 5–7. 8–11); each section ends with the mention of God's acts. There are two distinct narratives of approximately equal length: the wilderness events (12–39) and the movement from Egypt to Canaan (40–72). The structure of both is parallel: gracious act (12–16. 40–55), rebellion (17–20. 56–58), divine punishment (21–31. 59–64), God's readiness to forgive and begin anew (32–39. 65–72). The psalm may reflect the reunification program of either King Hezekiah (late eighth century) or King Josiah (late seventh century) in that the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim, Joseph) is especially invited to accept Zion and the Davidic king.

**78, 2: Story:** Hebrew *mashal* literally means "comparison" and can signify a story with a hidden meaning. Mt 13, 35 cites the verse to explain Jesus' use of parables.

**78, 9: Ephraimite archers:** Ephraim was the most important tribe of the Northern Kingdom. Its military defeat (here unspecified) demonstrates its infidelity to God, who otherwise would have protected it.

**78, 12. 43: Zoan:** a city on the arm of the Nile, a former capital of Egypt.

t Pss 86, 10; 89, 6. u Gn 46, 26–27; Neh 1, 10. v Pss 18, 16; 114, 3; Na 1, 4. w Pss 18, 14–15; 29; 144, 6; Jb 37, 3–4; Wis 5, 21; Hb 3, 10–11; Zec 9, 14. x Pss 18, 8; 97, 4; 99, 1; Ex 19, 16; Jgs 5, 4–5. y Neh 9, 11; Wis 14, 3; Is 51, 10; Hb 3, 15. z Ps 78, 52; Is 63, 11–14; Hos 12, 14; Mi 6, 4. a Ps 49, 5; Mt 13, 35. b Ps 44, 2. c Ex 10, 2; Dt 4, 9; Jb 8, 8. d Ps 147, 19; Dt 33, 4. e Ps 22, 31–32; Dt 4, 9; 6, 7. f Dt 31, 27; 32, 5. g Ps 95, 10. h Ps 106, 7. i 13–14: Ex 14–15; Ps 136, 13. j Ex 14, 22; 15, 8. k Ps 105, 39; Ex 13, 21; Wis 18, 3.

gave water to drink, abounding as the
deep.[l]
16 He made streams flow from crags,
drew out rivers of water.

B

17 But they went on sinning against him,
rebelling against the Most High in the
desert.[m]
18 They tested God in their hearts,
demanding the food they craved.[n]
19 They spoke against God, and said,
"Can God spread a table in the desert?[o]
20 True, when he struck the rock,
water gushed forth,
the wadis flooded.
But can he also provide bread,
give meat to his people?"

C

21 The LORD heard and grew angry;[p]
fire blazed up against Jacob;
anger flared up against Israel.
22 For they did not believe in God,
did not trust in his saving power.
23 So he commanded the skies above;*
the doors of heaven he opened.
24 God rained manna upon them for food;
bread from heaven he gave them.[q]
25 All ate a meal fit for heroes;
food he sent in abundance.
26 He stirred up the east wind in the heavens;
by his power God brought on the south
wind.
27 He rained meat upon them like dust,
winged fowl like the sands of the sea,
28 Brought them down in the midst of the camp,
round about their tents.
29 They ate and were well filled;
he gave them what they had craved.
30 But while they still wanted more,
and the food was still in their mouths,
31 God's anger attacked them,
killed their best warriors,
laid low the youth of Israel.[r]
32 In spite of all this they went on sinning,
they did not believe in his wonders.

D

33 God ended their days abruptly,
their years in sudden death.
34 When he slew them, they began to seek him;
they again inquired of their God.[s]
35 They remembered* that God was their rock,
God Most High, their redeemer.
36 But they deceived him with their mouths,
lied to him with their tongues.
37 Their hearts were not constant toward him;
they were not faithful to his covenant.[t]
38 But God is merciful and forgave their sin;
he did not utterly destroy them.
Time and again he turned back his anger,
unwilling to unleash all his rage.[u]*
39 He was mindful that they were flesh,
a breath that passes and does not return.

III

A

40 How often they rebelled against God in the
desert,
grieved him in the wasteland.
41 Again and again they tested God,
provoked the Holy One of Israel.
42 They did not remember his power,
the day he redeemed them from the foe,[v]
43 When he displayed his wonders in Egypt,*
his marvels in the plain of Zoan.[w]
44 God changed their rivers to blood;
their streams they could not drink.
45 He sent insects that devoured them,[x]
frogs that destroyed them.
46 He gave their harvest to the caterpillar,
the fruits of their labor to the locust.
47 He killed their vines with hail,[y]

**78, 23–31:** On the manna and the quail, see Ex 16 and Nm 11. Unlike Ex 16, here both manna and quail are instruments of punishment, showing that a divine gift can become deadly because of Israel's apostasy.

**78, 35: Remembered:** invoked God publicly in worship. Their words were insincere (36).

**78, 38:** God is always ready to forgive and begin anew, as in choosing Zion and David (65–72).

**78, 43–55:** Ex 7–12 records ten plagues. Here there are six

l Pss 105, 41; 114, 8; Ex 17, 1–7; Nm 20, 2–13; Dt 8, 15; Wis 11, 4; Is 48, 21. m Dt 9, 7; Ez 20, 13. n Ps 106, 14; Ex 16, 2–36. o Ps 23, 5. p 21f: Nm 11; Dt 32, 22. q Ps 105, 40; Ex 16, 4. 14; Dt 8, 3; Wis 16, 20; Jn 6, 31. r Nm 14, 29. s Dt 32, 15. 18; Is 26, 16. t Ps 95, 10; Is 29, 13. u Ps 85, 4; Ex 32, 14; Is 48, 9; Ez 20, 22. v Ps 106, 21. w 43f: Pss 105, 27–36; 135, 9; Ex 7, 14—11, 10; 12, 29–36; Wis 16–18. x Ex 8, 17. y Wis 16, 16.

their sycamores with frost.
48 He exposed their flocks to deadly hail,
their cattle to lightning.[z]
49 He unleashed against them his fiery breath,
roar, fury, and distress,
storming messengers of death.
50 He cleared a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death;
he delivered their beasts to the plague.
51 He struck all the firstborn of Egypt,[a]
love's first child in the tents of Ham.
52 God led forth his people like sheep;
he guided them through the desert like a flock.[b]
53 He led them on secure and unafraid,
but the sea enveloped their enemies.[c]
54 He brought them to his holy land,
the mountain his right hand had won.[d]
55 God drove out the nations before them,
apportioned them a heritage by lot,
settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.

B

56 But they tested, rebelled against God Most High,
his decrees they did not observe.
57 They turned back, deceitful like their ancestors;
they proved false like a bow with no tension.
58 They enraged him with their high places;
with their idols they goaded him.[e]

C

59 God heard and grew angry;
he rejected Israel completely.
60 He forsook the shrine at Shiloh,[f]*
the tent where he dwelt with humans.
61 He gave up his might into captivity,
his glorious ark into the hands of the foe.[g]
62 God abandoned his people to the sword;
he was enraged against his heritage.
63 Fire consumed their young men;
their young women heard no wedding songs.[h]
64 Their priests fell by the sword;
their widows made no lamentation.

D

65 Then the Lord awoke as from sleep,
like a warrior from the effects of wine.
66 He put his enemies to flight;
everlasting shame he dealt them.
67 He rejected the tent of Joseph,
chose not the tribe of Ephraim.
68 God chose the tribe of Judah,*
Mount Zion which he favored.[i]
69 He built his shrine like the heavens,
like the earth which he founded forever.
70 He chose David his servant,
took him from the sheepfold.[j]
71 From tending sheep God brought him,
to shepherd Jacob, his people,
Israel, his heritage.[k]
72 He shepherded them with a pure heart;
with skilled hands he guided them.

## PSALM 79*

Ps 79
See RG
242–243

### A Prayer for Jerusalem

1 A psalm of Asaph.

I

O God, the nations have invaded your heritage;
they have defiled your holy temple,
have laid Jerusalem in ruins.[l]
2 They have left the corpses of your servants
as food for the birds of the heavens,
the flesh of your faithful for the beasts of the earth.[m]

---

divine attacks upon Egypt; the seventh climactic act is God's bringing Israel to the holy land.

**78, 60: Shiloh**: an important shrine in the north prior to Jerusalem. Despite its holy status, it was destroyed (60–64; cf Jer 7, 12. 14).

**78, 68. 70:** God's ultimate offer of mercy to the sinful helpless people is Zion and the Davidic king.

**Ps 79:** A communal lament complaining that the nations have defiled the temple and murdered the holy people, leaving their corpses unburied (1–4). The occasion is probably the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army in 587 B.C. The people ask how long the withdrawal of divine favor will last (5), pray for action now (6–7), and admit that their own sins have brought about the catastrophe (8–9). They seek to persuade God to act for reasons of honor: the nations who do not call upon the Name are running amok (6); the divine honor is compromised (1. 10. 12); God's own servants suffer (2–4. 11).

z Ex 9, 3. a Pss 105, 36; 136, 10; Ex 12, 29. b Ps 77, 21. c Ex 14, 26–28. d Ex 15, 17. e Dt 32, 16. 21. f Jos 18, 1; 1 Sm 1, 3; Jer 7, 12; 26, 6. g 1 Sm 4, 11. 22. h Dt 32, 25; Jer 7, 34. i Pss 48, 2; 50, 2; Lam 2, 15. j Ps 89, 21; Ez 34, 23; 37, 24; 2 Chr 6, 6. k 1 Sm 16, 11–13; 2 Sm 7, 8. 12 Kgs 25, 9–10; Lam 1, 10. m Jer 7, 33.

Ps 80
See RG
242–243,
247

3 They have spilled their blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and no one is left to bury them. [n]
4 We have become the reproach of our
neighbors,
the scorn and derision of those around us. [o]

II

5 How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever?
Will your rage keep burning like fire? [p]
6 Pour out your wrath on nations that reject
you,
on kingdoms that do not call on your
name, [q]
7 For they have devoured Jacob,
laid waste his home.
8 Do not hold past iniquities against us;
may your compassion come quickly,
for we have been brought very low. [r]

III

9 Help us, God our savior,
for the glory of your name.
Deliver us, pardon our sins
for your name's sake. [s]
10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?" [t]
Before our eyes make clear to the nations
that you avenge the blood of your servants. [u]

IV

11 Let the groans of prisoners come before you;
by your great power free those doomed to
death. [v]
12 Lord, inflict on our neighbors sevenfold
the disgrace they inflicted on you. [w]
13 Then we, your people, the sheep of your
pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
through all ages we will declare your praise.

## PSALM 80*

### Prayer to Restore God's Vineyard

1 For the leader; according to "Lilies." *Eduth.**
A psalm of Asaph.

I

2 Shepherd of Israel, listen,
guide of the flock of Joseph!
From your throne upon the cherubim reveal
yourself [x]
3 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.
Stir up your power, come to save us.
4 O LORD of hosts, restore us;
Let your face shine upon us,
that we may be saved. [y]

II

5 LORD of hosts,
how long will you burn with anger
while your people pray? [z]
6 You have fed them the bread of tears,
made them drink tears in abundance. [a]
7 You have left us to be fought over by our
neighbors;
our enemies deride us. [b]
8 O LORD of hosts, restore us;
let your face shine upon us,
that we may be saved.

III

9 You brought a vine* out of Egypt;
you drove away the nations and planted it.
10 You cleared the ground;
it took root and filled the land.
11 The mountains were covered by its shadow,
the cedars of God by its branches.
12 It sent out boughs as far as the sea,*
shoots as far as the river.*
13 Why have you broken down the walls,
so that all who pass by pluck its fruit? [c]

**Ps 80:** A community lament in time of military defeat. Using the familiar image of Israel as a vineyard, the people complain that God has broken down the wall protecting the once splendid vine brought from Egypt (9–14). They pray that God will again turn to them and use the Davidic king to lead them to victory (15–20).

**80, 1: Lilies . . . . Eduth:** the first term is probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung; the second is unexplained.

**80, 9: A vine:** a frequent metaphor for Israel. Cf Is 5, 1–7; 27, 2–5; Jer 2, 21; Hos 10, 1; Mt 21, 33.

**80, 12: The sea:** the Mediterranean. **The river:** the Euphrates. Cf Gn 15, 18; 1 Kgs 5, 1. The terms may also have a mythic nuance—the seas that surround the earth; sea and river are sometimes paralleled in poetry.

n 1 Mc 7, 17; Jer 14, 16. o Pss 44, 14; 80, 7; 123, 3–4; Jb 12, 4; Dn 9, 16; Zep 2, 8. p Pss 13, 2; 44, 24; 89, 47; Dt 4, 24. q Ps 14, 4; Jer 10, 25. r Ps 142, 7. s Ez 20, 44; 36, 22. t Pss 42, 4; 115, 2; Jl 2, 17. u Jl 4, 21. v Ps 102, 21. w Ps 89, 51–52. x Pss 23, 1–3; 95, 7; 100, 3; Gn 48, 15; Ex 25, 22; 1 Sm 4, 4; 2 Sm 6, 2; Mi 7, 14. y 4. 8. 20: Pss 4, 7; 31, 17; 67, 2; 85, 5; Nm 6, 25; Dn 9, 17. z Pss 13, 2; 44, 24; 74, 1; 79, 5; 89, 47; Dt 4, 24. a Pss 42, 4; 102, 10. b Pss 44, 14; 79, 4; 123, 3–4; Jb 12, 4; Dn 9, 16; Zep 2, 8. c Ps 89, 41.

14 The boar from the forest strips the vine;
the beast of the field feeds upon it.[d]
15 Turn again, LORD of hosts;
look down from heaven and see;
Attend to this vine,
16 the shoot your right hand has planted.
17 Those who would burn or cut it down—
may they perish at your rebuke.
18 May your help be with the man at your right hand,
with the one* whom you once made strong.
19 Then we will not withdraw from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.
20 LORD of hosts, restore us;
let your face shine upon us,
that we may be saved.

## PSALM 81*

### An Admonition to Fidelity

1 For the leader; "upon the *gittith*."* Of Asaph.

I

2 Sing joyfully to God our strength;[e]
shout in triumph to the God of Jacob!
3 Take up a melody, sound the timbrel,
the sweet-sounding harp and lyre.
4 Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon,* on our solemn feast.[f]
5 For this is a law in Israel,
an edict of the God of Jacob,[g]
6 Who made it a decree for Joseph
when he came out of the land of Egypt.

II

I hear a new oracle:*
7 "I relieved their shoulders of the burden;*
their hands put down the basket.[h]*
8 In distress you called and I rescued you;
unseen, I spoke to you in thunder;
At the waters of Meribah* I tested you and said:[i] *Selah*
9 'Listen, my people, I give you warning!
If only you will obey me, Israel![j]
10 There must be no foreign god among you;[k]*
you must not worship an alien god.
11 I, the LORD, am your God,
who brought you up from the land of Egypt.
Open wide your mouth that I may fill it.'
12 But my people did not listen to my words;
Israel did not obey me.
13 So I gave them over to hardness of heart;
they followed their own designs.[l]
14 But even now if my people would listen,
if Israel would walk in my paths,[m]
15 In a moment I would subdue their foes,
against their enemies unleash my hand.[n]
16 Those who hate the LORD would tremble,
their doom sealed forever.
17 But Israel I would feed with the finest wheat,
satisfy them with honey from the rock."[o]

Ps 81 See RG 245

## PSALM 82*

### The Downfall of Unjust Gods

1 A psalm of Asaph.

I

God rises in the divine council,

Ps 82 See RG 245

**80, 18: The man at your right hand . . . the one**: the Davidic king who will lead the army in battle.

**Ps 81**: At a pilgrimage feast, probably harvest in the fall, the people assemble in the temple in accord with the Sinai ordinances (2–6a). They hear a divine word (mediated by a temple speaker) telling how God rescued them from slavery in Egypt (7–9), gave them the fundamental commandment of fidelity (9–11), which would bring punishment if they refused to obey (12–13). But if Israel repents, God will be with them once again, bestowing protection and fertility (14–17).

**81, 1: Upon the gittith**: probably the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung or a musical instrument.

**81, 4: New moon . . . full moon**: the pilgrimage feast of harvest began with a great assembly (Lv 23, 24; Nm 29, 1), used the new moon as a sign (Nm 29, 6), and included trumpets (Lv 23, 24).

**81, 6: I hear a new oracle**: literally, "a tongue I do not know I hear." A temple official speaks the word of God (6b–17), which is authoritative and unlike merely human words (cf Nm 24, 4. 16).

**81, 7: I relieved their shoulders of the burden**: literally, "his [Israel's] shoulder," hence the plural translation. A reference to the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. **The basket**: for carrying clay to make bricks. Cf Ex 1, 14.

**81, 8: Meribah**: place of rebellion in the wilderness; cf Ex 17, 7; Nm 20, 13.

**81, 10: There must be no foreign god among you**: as in Pss 50 and 95, Israel is challenged to obey the first commandment of fidelity to God after the proclamation of the exodus.

**Ps 82**: As in Ps 58, the pagan gods are seen as subordinate divine beings to whom Israel's God had delegated oversight of the foreign countries in the beginning (Dt 32, 8–9 LXX). Now God

d Hos 2, 14. e Pss 43, 4; 68, 26; 149, 3; 150, 3–4; Jdt 16, 1. f Lv 23, 24; Nm 29, 1. g Ex 23, 14ff. h Ex 1, 14; 6, 6. i Ps 95, 8; Ex 2, 23ff; 17, 7; 19, 16; Nm 20, 13; 27, 14. j Ex 15, 26; Is 55, 2–3. k 10–11: Ex 20, 2–6; Dt 5, 6–10. l Jer 3, 17; 7, 24. m Is 48, 18. n Lv 26, 7–8. o Ps 147, 14; Dt 32, 13–14.

gives judgment in the midst of the gods.[p]
2 "How long will you judge unjustly
and favor the cause of the wicked?[q] *Selah*
3 Defend the lowly and fatherless;
render justice to the afflicted and needy.
4 Rescue the lowly and poor;
deliver them from the hand of the
wicked."[r]

II

5 The gods neither know nor understand,
wandering about in darkness,
and all the world's foundations shake.*
6 I declare: "Gods though you be,*
offspring of the Most High all of you,
7 Yet like any mortal you shall die;
like any prince you shall fall."
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth,*
for yours are all the nations.

## PSALM 83*

Ps 83
See RG
242–243,
247

### Prayer against a Hostile Alliance

1 A song; a psalm of Asaph.

I

2 God, do not be silent;
God, be not still and unmoved![s]
3 See how your enemies rage;
your foes proudly raise their heads.
4 They conspire against your people,
plot against those you protect.[t]
5 They say, "Come, let us wipe out their nation;
let Israel's name be mentioned no more!"
6 They scheme with one mind,
in league against you:[u]
7 The tents of Ishmael and Edom,*
the people of Moab and Hagar,[v]*
8 Gebal,* Ammon, and Amalek,[w]
Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre.[x]
9 Assyria, too, in league with them
gives aid to the descendants of Lot.* *Selah*

II

10 Deal with them as with Midian;*
as with Sisera and Jabin at the torrent
Kishon,[y]
11 Those destroyed at Endor,
who became dung for the ground.[z]
12 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
13 Who made a plan together,
"Let us seize the pastures of God."
14 My God, turn them into withered grass,
into chaff flying before the wind.[a]
15 As a fire raging through a forest,
a flame setting mountains ablaze,[b]
16 Pursue them with your tempest;
terrify them with your storm.[c]
17 Cover their faces with shame,
till they pay you homage, LORD.
18 Let them be dismayed and shamed forever;
let them perish in disgrace.
19 Show them you alone are the LORD,
the Most High over all the earth.[d]

## PSALM 84*

Ps 84
See RG
242

### Prayer of a Pilgrim to Jerusalem

1 For the leader; "upon the *gittith*." A psalm
of the Korahites.

I

2 How lovely your dwelling,

arises in the heavenly assembly (1) to rebuke the unjust "gods" (2–4), who are stripped of divine status and reduced in rank to mortals (5–7). They are accused of misruling the earth by not upholding the poor. A short prayer for universal justice concludes the psalm (8).

**82, 5:** The gods are blind and unable to declare what is right. Their misrule shakes earth's foundations (cf Pss 11, 3; 75, 4), which God made firm in creation (Ps 96, 10).

**82, 6: I declare: "Gods though you be":** in Jn 10, 34 Jesus uses the verse to prove that those to whom the word of God is addressed can fittingly be called "gods."

**82, 8: Judge the earth:** according to Dt 32, 8–9 LXX, Israel's God had originally assigned jurisdiction over the foreign nations to the subordinate deities, keeping Israel as a personal possession. Now God will directly take over the rulership of the whole world.

**Ps 83:** The community lament complains to God of the nations' attempts to wipe out the name of Israel (2–9). The psalmist sees all Israel's enemies throughout its history united in a conspiracy (3–9). May God destroy the current crop of enemies as the enemies of old were destroyed (10–13), and may they be pursued until they acknowledge the name of Israel's God (14–19).

**83, 7–9:** Apart from the Assyrians, all the nations listed here were neighbors of Israel. **The people of . . . Hagar:** a tribe of the desert regions east of **Ammon** and **Moab** (1 Chr 5, 10. 19–22). **Gebal** is the Phoenician city of Byblos or perhaps a mountain region south of the Dead Sea. **The descendants of Lot** are Moab and Edom (Gn 19, 36–38 and Dt 2, 9). These nations were never united against Israel in the same period; the psalm has lumped them all together.

**83, 10–13:** For the historical events, see Jgs 4–8.

**Ps 84:** Israelites celebrated three pilgrimage feasts in Jerusalem

p Is 3, 13–14. q Ps 58, 2. r Dt 1, 17. s Pss 10, 1; 44, 24; 109, 1. t Jer 11, 9. u Ps 2, 2. v Nm 20, 23; 1 Chr 5, 10. 19. w Ex 17, 8. x Jos 13, 2. y Ex 2, 15; Is 9, 3; 10, 26. z Jer 8, 2. a Pss 1, 4; 35, 5; 58, 10; Is 5, 24; 10, 17; 17, 13; 29, 5; Ez 21, 3. b Ps 50, 3. c Jb 25, 32; 27, 21. d Ps 97, 9; Dt 4, 39; Dn 3, 45.

O LORD of hosts! [e]
[3] My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the LORD.[f]
My heart and flesh cry out
for the living God.
[4] As the sparrow finds a home
and the swallow a nest to settle her young,*
My home is by your altars,
LORD of hosts, my king and my God! [g]
[5] Happy are those who dwell in your house!
They never cease to praise you.

*Selah*

II

[6] Happy are those who find refuge in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrim roads.
[7] As they pass through the Baca valley,*
they find spring water to drink.
Also from pools the Lord provides water
for those who lose their way.
[8] They pass through outer and inner wall
and see the God of gods on Zion.

III

[9] LORD of hosts, hear my prayer;
listen, God of Jacob.

*Selah*

[10] O God, look kindly on our shield;
look upon the face of your anointed. [h]*

IV

[11] Better one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere.
Better the threshold of the house of my God
than a home in the tents of the wicked.
[12] For a sun and shield is the LORD God,
bestowing all grace and glory.
The LORD withholds no good thing
from those who walk without reproach.
[13] O LORD of hosts,
happy are those who trust in you!

## PSALM 85*

### Prayer for Divine Favor

[1] For the leader. A psalm of the Korahites.

Ps 85
See RG
242–243,
249

I

[2] You once favored, LORD, your land,
restored the good fortune of Jacob. [i]
[3] You forgave the guilt of your people,
pardoned all their sins.

*Selah*

[4] You withdrew all your wrath,
turned back your burning anger. [j]

II

[5] Restore us once more, God our savior;
abandon your wrath against us. [k]
[6] Will you be angry with us forever,
drag out your anger for all generations? [l]
[7] Please give us life again,
that your people may rejoice in you.
[8] Show us, LORD, your love;
grant us your salvation.

III

[9] I will listen for the word of God;
surely the LORD will proclaim peace
To his people, to the faithful,
to those who trust in him.*
[10] Near indeed is salvation for the loyal;
prosperity will fill our land.
[11] Love and truth will meet;*
justice and peace will kiss. [m]
[12] Truth will spring from the earth;
justice will look down from heaven. [n]
[13] The LORD will surely grant abundance;
our land will yield its increase. [o]
[14] Prosperity will march before the LORD,
and good fortune will follow behind.

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annually. The psalm expresses the sentiments of the pilgrims eager to enjoy the divine presence.

**84, 4:** The desire of a restless bird for a secure home is an image of the desire of a pilgrim for the secure house of God. Cf Ps 42, 2–3, where the image for the desire of the pilgrim is the thirst of the deer for water.

**84, 7: Baca valley:** Hebrew obscure; probably a valley on the way to Jerusalem.

**84, 10: Our shield . . . your anointed:** the king had a role in the liturgical celebration. For the king as shield, cf Ps 89, 19.

**Ps 85:** A national lament reminding God of past favors and forgiveness (2–4) and begging for forgiveness and grace now (5–8). A speaker represents the people who wait humbly with open hearts (9–10): God will be active on their behalf (11–14). The situation suggests the conditions of Judea during the early post-exilic period, the fifth century B.C.; the thoughts are similar to those of postexilic prophets (Hg 1, 5–11; 2, 6–9).

**85, 9:** The prophet listens to God's revelation. Cf Hb 2, 1.

**85, 11–14:** Divine activity is personified as pairs of virtues.

e Pss 43, 3–4; 122, 1. f Pss 42, 2–3; 63, 2–3; 143, 6; Is 26, 9. g Ps 5, 3. h Ps 89, 19. i Pss 14, 7; 126, 4. j Ps 78, 38; Ex 32, 14; Is 48, 9. k Ps 80, 4. l Pss 79, 5; 89, 47. m Pss 89, 15; 97, 2. n Is 45, 8. o Ps 67, 7; Lv 26, 4; Ez 34, 27; Hos 2, 23–24; Zec 8, 12.

Ps 86
See RG
242–243,
249

## PSALM 86*

### Prayer in Time of Distress

1 A prayer of David.

I

Hear me, LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and oppressed.
2 Preserve my life, for I am loyal;
save your servant who trusts in you.
3 You are my God; pity me, Lord;
to you I call all the day.
4 Gladden the soul of your servant;
to you, Lord, I lift up my soul. [p]
5 Lord, you are kind and forgiving,
most loving to all who call on you. [q]
6 LORD, hear my prayer;
listen to my cry for help. [r]
7 In this time of trouble I call,
for you will answer me.

II

8 None among the gods can equal you, O Lord;
nor can their deeds compare to yours. [s]
9 All the nations you have made shall come
to bow before you, Lord,
and give honor to your name. [t]
10 For you are great and do wondrous deeds;
and you alone are God.

III

11 Teach me, LORD, your way
that I may walk in your truth, [u]
single-hearted and revering your name.
12 I will praise you with all my heart,
glorify your name forever, Lord my God.
13 Your love for me is great;
you have rescued me from the depths of
Sheol. [v]
14 O God, the arrogant have risen against me;
a ruthless band has sought my life;
to you they pay no heed.
15 But you, Lord, are a merciful and gracious
God,
slow to anger, most loving and true. [w]
16 Turn to me, have pity on me;
give your strength to your servant;
save this child of your handmaid. [x]
17 Give me a sign of your favor:
make my enemies see, to their confusion,
that you, LORD, help and comfort me.

Ps 87
See RG
242

## PSALM 87*

### Zion the True Birthplace of Diaspora Pilgrims

1 A psalm of the Korahites. A song.

I

The LORD loves the city [y]
founded on holy mountains,
2 Loves the gates* of Zion
more than any dwelling in Jacob.
3 Glorious things are said of you,
O city of God! *Selah*

II

4 From Babylon and Egypt I count
those who acknowledge the LORD.
Philistia, Ethiopia, Tyre,
of them it can be said:
"This one was born there."
5 But of Zion it must be said:*
"They all were born here." [z]
The Most High confirms this; [a]
6 the LORD notes in the register of the
peoples:
"This one was born here." [b] *Selah*
7 So all sing in their festive dance:
"Within you is my true home." [c]

**Ps 86:** An individual lament. The psalmist, "poor and oppressed" (1), "devoted" (2), "your servant" (2. 4. 16), "rescued from the depths of Sheol" (13), attacked by the ruthless (14), desires only God's protection (1–7. 11–17).

**Ps 87:** A song of Zion, like Psalms 46; 48; 76; and 132. After the exile of the sixth century B.C., diaspora Jews from all over the world (4) made the long pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the city of God (1–3). Such Jews may have hailed from distant lands, but the psalm sees them as children of Zion (5–7). The original occasion may have been Pentecost, which always attracted a large number of diaspora Jews.

**87, 2: The gates:** the city itself, a common Hebrew idiom.

**87, 5–6:** The bond between the exile and the holy city was so strong as to override the exile's citizenship of lesser cities.

p Pss 25, 1; 143, 8. q Jl 2, 13. r Pss 5, 2; 130, 1–2. s Pss 35, 10; 89, 9; Ex 15, 11; Dt 3, 24; Jer 10, 6. t Ps 22, 28; Zec 14, 16; Rv 15, 4. u Pss 25, 4; 26, 3; 27, 11; 119, 12. 35; 143, 8. 10. v Pss 30, 4; 40, 3; Jon 2, 7. w Pss 103, 8; 130, 7; 145, 8; Ex 34, 6. x Pss 25, 16; 116, 16; Wis 9, 5. y 1–2: Pss 76, 2–3; 78, 68–69. z Gal 4, 26. a Ps 48, 9. b Is 4, 3. c Pss 68, 26; 149, 3.

## PSALM 88*

### A Despairing Lament

1 A song; a psalm of the Korahites. For the leader;
according to *Mahalath*. For singing; a *maskil* of
Heman the Ezrahite.

I

2 LORD, my God, I call out by day;
at night I cry aloud in your presence. [d]
3 Let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry. [e]
4 For my soul is filled with troubles;[f]*
my life draws near to Sheol.
5 I am reckoned with those who go down to the
pit;
I am weak, without strength.
6 My couch is among the dead,
with the slain who lie in the grave.
You remember them no more;
they are cut off from your care.
7 You plunged me into the bottom of the pit,
into the darkness of the abyss.
8 Your wrath lies heavy upon me;
all your waves crash over me. [g]

*Selah*

9 Because of you my friends shun me;
you make me loathsome to them; [h]
Caged in, I cannot escape;
10 my eyes grow dim from trouble.

II

All day I call on you, LORD;
I stretch out my hands to you.
11 Do you work wonders for the dead?*
Do the shades arise and praise you? [i]

*Selah*

12 Is your love proclaimed in the grave,
your fidelity in the tomb?
13 Are your marvels declared in the darkness,
your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

III

14 But I cry out to you, LORD;
in the morning my prayer comes before
you.
15 Why do you reject me, LORD?
Why hide your face from me?
16 I am mortally afflicted since youth;
lifeless, I suffer your terrible blows.
17 Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have reduced me to silence. [j]
18 All the day they surge round like a flood;
from every side they close in on me.
19 Because of you companions shun me; [k]
my only friend is darkness.

Ps 88
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 89*

### A Lament over God's Promise to David

1 A *maskil* of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I

2 The promises of the LORD I will sing forever, [l]
proclaim your loyalty through all ages.
3 For you said, "My love is established forever;*
my loyalty will stand as long as the
heavens.
4 I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
5 I will make your dynasty stand forever
and establish your throne through all
ages." [m]

*Selah*

II

6 The heavens praise your marvels, LORD,
your loyalty in the assembly of the holy
ones. [n]
7 Who in the skies ranks with the LORD?

Ps 89
See RG
242–243,
249

**Ps 88:** A lament in which the psalmist prays for rescue from the alienation of approaching death. Each of the three stanzas begins with a call to God (2. 10b. 14) and complains of the death that separates one from God. The tone is persistently grim.

**88, 4–8:** In imagination the psalmist already experiences the alienation of Sheol.

**88, 11–13:** The psalmist seeks to persuade God to act out of concern for divine honor: the shades give you no worship, so keep me alive to offer you praise.

**Ps 89:** The community laments the defeat of the Davidic king, to whom God promised kingship as enduring as the heavens (2–5). The psalm narrates how God became king of the divine beings (6–9) and how the Davidic king became king of earthly kings (20–38). Since the defeat of the king calls into question God's promise, the community ardently prays God to be faithful to the original promise to David (39–52).

**89, 3–5:** David's dynasty is to be as long-lasting as the heavens, a statement reinforced by using the same verbs (establish, stand) both of the divine love and loyalty and of the Davidic dynasty and throne. Cf 29–30.

d Ps 77, 3. e Ps 119, 170. f 4–7: Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 40, 3; 86, 13; 143, 7; Nm 16, 33; Jb 17, 1; Jon 2, 7. g Pss 18, 5; 32, 6; 42, 8; 69, 2; Jon 2, 4. h Pss 38, 12; 79, 4; 80, 7; 123, 3–4; 142, 8; Jb 12, 4; 19, 13; Lam 3, 7; Dn 9, 16. i Pss 6, 6; 30, 10; 38, 18; 115, 17. j Jb 6, 4; 20, 25. k Jb 19, 13. l Is 63, 7. m Pss 61, 7–8; 132, 11; 2 Sm 7, 8–16. n Pss 29, 1; 82, 1; Jb 1, 6; 5, 1.

Who is like the LORD among the gods?[o]*
8 A God dreaded in the council of the holy ones,
greater and more awesome than all who sit there!
9 LORD, God of hosts, who is like you?
Mighty LORD, your loyalty is always present.
10 You rule the raging sea;[p]
you still its swelling waves.
11 You crushed Rahab* with a mortal blow;
your strong arm scattered your foes.
12 Yours are the heavens, yours the earth;
you founded the world and everything in it.[q]
13 Zaphon and Amanus* you created;
Tabor* and Hermon* rejoice in your name.
14 Mighty your arm, strong your hand,
your right hand is ever exalted.
15 Justice and judgment are the foundation of your throne;
love and loyalty march before you.[r]
16 Happy the people who know you, LORD,
who walk in the radiance of your face.
17 In your name they sing joyfully all the day;
at your victory they raise the festal shout.[s]
18 You are their majestic strength;
by your favor our horn* is exalted.[t]
19 Truly the LORD is our shield,
the Holy One of Israel, our king![u]

III

20 Once you spoke in vision;[v]
to your faithful ones you said:
"I have set a leader over the warriors;
I have raised up a hero from the army.
21 I have chosen David, my servant;
with my holy oil I have anointed him.
22 My hand will be with him;[w]
my arm will make him strong.
23 No enemy shall outwit him,
nor shall the wicked defeat him.
24 I will crush his foes before him,
strike down those who hate him.
25 My loyalty and love will be with him;
through my name his horn will be exalted.
26 I will set his hand upon the sea,
his right hand upon the rivers.*
27 He shall cry to me, 'You are my father,[x]
my God, the Rock that brings me victory!'
28 I myself make him firstborn,
Most High* over the kings of the earth.
29 Forever I will maintain my love for him;[y]
my covenant with him stands firm.
30 I will establish his dynasty forever,
his throne as the days of the heavens.
31 If his descendants forsake my law,[z]
do not follow my decrees,
32 If they fail to observe my statutes,
do not keep my commandments,
33 I will punish their crime with a rod
and their guilt with lashes.
34 But I will not take my love from him,
nor will I betray my bond of loyalty.[a]
35 I will not violate my covenant;
the promise of my lips I will not alter.[b]
36 By my holiness I swore once for all:[c]
I will never be false to David.
37 His dynasty will continue forever,[d]
his throne, like the sun before me.
38 Like the moon it will stand eternal,
forever firm like the sky!"* *Selah*

**89, 7: The gods**: literally, "the sons of gods," "the holy ones" and "courtiers" of 6 and 8. These heavenly spirits are members of God's court.

**89, 11: Rahab**: a mythological sea monster whose name is used in the Bible mainly as a personification of primeval chaos. Cf Jb 9, 13; 26, 12; Ps 74, 13–14; Is 51, 9.

**89, 13: Zaphon and Amanus**: two sacred mountains in northern Syria. **Tabor**: a high hill in the valley of Jezreel in northern Israel. **Hermon**: a mountain in Lebanon, forming the southern spur of the Anti-Lebanon range.

**89, 18. 25: Horn**: a concrete noun for an abstract quality; horn is a symbol of strength.

**89, 26: The sea . . . the rivers**: geographically the limits of the Davidic Empire (the Mediterranean and the Euphrates); mythologically, the traditional forces of chaos. See note on v 11.

**89, 28: Most High**: a divine title, which is here extended to David as God's own king. Cf Ps 2, 7–9; Is 9, 5. As God rules over the members of the heavenly council (6–9), so David, God's surrogate, rules over earthly kings.

**89, 37–38: Like the sun before me . . . like the sky**: as enduring as the heavenly lights. Cf 2–5 and Ps 72, 5. 17.

o 7–9: Pss 35, 10; 86, 8; 113, 5; Ex 15, 11; Jer 10, 6. p 10–11: Pss 65, 8; 74, 13–15; 107, 29; Jb 7, 12; Is 51, 9–10. q Pss 24, 1–2; 50, 12; Dt 10, 14; 1 Cor 10, 26. r Pss 85, 11–12; 97, 2. s Ps 47, 2; Zep 3, 14. t Pss 112, 9; 148, 14. u Pss 47, 9; 96, 10; 97, 1; 99, 1; Is 6, 3. v 20–21: Pss 78, 70; 132, 11–12; 2 Sm 7, 4. 8–16; 1 Chr 17, 3. 7–14; Is 42, 1; Acts 13, 22. w 22–25: 1 Sm 2, 9–10. x 27–28: Pss 2, 7; 110, 2–3; 2 Sm 7, 9. 14; Col 1, 15. 18; Rv 1, 5. y 29–30: Pss 18, 51; 61, 8; 144, 10; 2 Sm 7, 11; Is 55, 3. z 31–33: Lv 26, 14–33. a Ps 40, 12; Sir 47, 22. b Jer 33, 20–21. c Am 4, 2. d 37–38: Pss 61, 8; 72, 5; Sir 43, 6.

IV

39 But now you have rejected and spurned, [e]
been enraged at your anointed.
40 You renounced the covenant with your servant,
defiled his crown in the dust.
41 You broke down all his defenses, [f]
left his strongholds in ruins.
42 All who pass through seize plunder;
his neighbors deride him.
43 You have exalted the right hand of his foes,
have gladdened all his enemies. [g]
44 You turned back his sharp sword,
did not support him in battle.
45 You brought to an end his splendor,
hurled his throne to the ground.
46 You cut short the days of his youth,
covered him with shame. *Selah*
47 How long, LORD?
Will you stay hidden forever?
Must your wrath smolder like fire? [h]
48 Remember how brief is my life,
how frail the race you created! [i]
49 What mortal can live and not see death?
Who can escape the power of Sheol? [j] *Selah*
50 Where are your promises of old, Lord,
the loyalty sworn to David?
51 Remember, Lord, the insults to your servants,
how I bear all the slanders of the nations. [k]
52 Your enemies, LORD, insult your anointed;
they insult my every endeavor.

* * *

53 Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and amen! [l]*

# FOURTH BOOK—PSALMS 90–106

## PSALM 90*

Ps 90
See RG 242–243, 247

### God's Eternity and Human Frailty

1 A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

I

Lord, you have been our refuge
through all generations.
2 Before the mountains were born,
the earth and the world brought forth,
from eternity to eternity you are God. [m]
4* A thousand years in your eyes
are merely a yesterday, [n]
3 But humans you return to dust,
saying, "Return,* you mortals!" [o]
4c Before a watch passes in the night,*
5 you have brought them to their end; [p]*
They disappear like sleep at dawn;
they are like grass that dies.
6 It sprouts green in the morning;
by evening it is dry and withered. [q]*

II

7 Truly we are consumed by your anger,
filled with terror by your wrath.
8 You have kept our faults before you,
our hidden sins exposed to your sight. [r]
9 Our life ebbs away under your wrath; [s]
our years end like a sigh.
10 Seventy is the sum of our years,
or eighty, if we are strong;
Most of them are sorrow and toil;
they pass quickly, we are all but gone.
11 Who comprehends your terrible anger?
Your wrath matches the fear it inspires.

**89, 53:** The doxology at the end of the third book of the Psalms; it is not part of Ps 89.

**Ps 90:** A communal lament that describes only in general terms the cause of the community's distress. After confidently invoking God (1), the psalm turns to a complaint contrasting God's eternity with the brevity of human life (2–6) and sees in human suffering the punishment for sin (7–12). The psalm concludes with a plea for God's intervention (13–17).

**90, 3: Return:** one word of God is enough to return mortals to the dust from which they were created. Humans were created from earth in Gn 2, 7; 3, 19.

**90, 4:** The translation reverses the order of the difficult Hebrew verses 3 and 4 to get the probable original order. **A watch in the night:** the night was divided into three sentry periods or watches. Cf Jgs 7, 19.

**90, 5: You have brought them to their end:** an interpretation of the unclear Hebrew.

**90, 6: It is dry and withered:** the transitory nature of the grass under the scorching sun was proverbial. Cf Ps 129, 6; Is 40, 6–8.

e 39–47: Ps 44, 10–25. f 41–42: Ps 80, 13–14. g Lam 1, 5. h Pss 13, 2; 44, 25; 74, 10; 79, 5; Dt 4, 24. i Pss 39, 5–6; 62, 10; 90, 9–10; 144, 4; Jb 7, 6. 16; 14, 1. 5; Eccl 6, 12; Wis 2, 5. j Ps 90, 3. k Ps 79, 12. l Pss 41, 14; 72, 18; 106, 48. m Pss 48, 15; 55, 20; 93, 2; 102, 13; Hb 1, 12. n 2 Pt 3, 8. o Pss 103, 14; 104, 29; 146, 4; Gn 3, 19; 1 Mc 2, 63; Jb 34, 14–15; Eccl 3, 20; 12, 7; Sir 40, 11. p Ps 89, 48. q Pss 37, 2; 102, 11; 103, 15–16; Jb 14, 1–2; Is 40, 6–8. r Ps 109, 14–15; Hos 7, 2. s 9–10: Pss 39, 5–7; 62, 10; 102, 24–25; 144, 4; Gn 6, 3; Jb 7, 6. 16; 14, 5; Prv 10, 27; Eccl 6, 12; Wis 2, 5; Sir 18, 8; Is 65, 20.

12 Teach us to count our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
13 Relent, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!
14 Fill us at daybreak with your love,[t]
that all our days we may sing for joy.
15 Make us glad as many days as you humbled us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.[u]
16 Show your deeds to your servants,
your glory to their children.
17 May the favor of the Lord our God be ours.[v]
Prosper the work of our hands!
Prosper the work of our hands!

## PSALM 91*

Ps 91
See RG
243

### Security Under God's Protection

I

1 You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,*
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,*
2 Say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress,
my God in whom I trust."[w]
3 God will rescue you from the fowler's snare,
from the destroying plague,
4 Will shelter you with pinions,
spread wings that you may take refuge;[x]
God's faithfulness is a protecting shield.
5 You shall not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrow that flies by day,[y]
6 Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness,
nor the plague that ravages at noon.[z]
7 Though a thousand fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
near you it shall not come.
8 You need simply watch;
the punishment of the wicked you will see.[a]
9 You have the LORD for your refuge;
you have made the Most High your stronghold.
10 No evil shall befall you,
no affliction come near your tent.[b]
11 For God commands the angels[c]*
to guard you in all your ways.[d]
12 With their hands they shall support you,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.[e]
13 You shall tread upon the asp and the viper,
trample the lion and the dragon.[f]

II

14 Whoever clings to me I will deliver;
whoever knows my name I will set on high.[g]
15 All who call upon me I will answer;[h]
I will be with them in distress;[i]
I will deliver them and give them honor.
16 With length of days I will satisfy them
and show them my saving power.[j]

## PSALM 92*

Ps 92
See RG
243

### A Hymn of Thanksgiving for God's Fidelity

1 A psalm. A sabbath song.

I

2 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High,[k]
3 To proclaim your love in the morning,
your faithfulness in the night,
4 With the ten-stringed harp,
with melody upon the lyre.[l]
5 For you make me jubilant, LORD, by your deeds;
at the works of your hands I shout for joy.

II

6 How great are your works, LORD![m]
How profound your purpose!

**Ps 91:** A prayer of someone who has taken refuge in the security of the temple (1–2). The psalmist is confident that God's presence will protect the people in every dangerous situation (3–13). The final verses are an oracle of salvation promising salvation to those who trust in God (14–16).

**91, 1: The shelter of the Most High:** basically "hiding place" but in the psalms a designation for the protected temple precincts. Cf Pss 27, 5; 31, 21; 61, 5. **The shadow of the Almighty:** literally, "the shadow of the wings of the Almighty." Cf Pss 17, 8; 36, 8; 57, 2; 63, 8. V 4 makes clear that the shadow is an image of the safety afforded by the outstretched wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies.

**91, 11–12:** The words are cited in Lk 4, 10–11; Mt 4, 6, as Jesus' reply to Satan in the desert.

**Ps 92:** A hymn of praise and thanks for God's faithful deeds (2–5). The wicked, deluded by their prosperity (6–9), are punished (10), whereas the psalmist has already experienced God's protection (11–16).

t Ps 17, 15. u Nm 14, 34; Jer 31, 13. v Ps 33, 22. w Pss 18, 3; 31, 3–4; 42, 10; 142, 6; 2 Sm 22, 3. x Pss 17, 8; 36, 8; 57, 2; 63, 8; Dt 32, 11; Ru 2, 12; Mt 23, 37. y Prv 3, 25; Song 3, 8. z Dt 32, 24. a Ps 92, 12. b Prv 12, 21; Dt 7, 15. c 11–12: Mt 4, 6; Lk 4, 10f. d Heb 1, 14. e Ps 121, 3; Prv 3, 23. f Is 11, 8; Lk 10, 19. g Pss 9, 11; 119, 132. h Jer 33, 3; Zec 13, 9. i Is 43, 2. j Prv 3, 2. k Pss 33, 1; 147, 1. l Pss 33, 2; 144, 9. m 6–7: Pss 131, 1; 139, 6. 17; Wis 13, 1; 17, 1.

7 A senseless person cannot know this;
a fool cannot comprehend.
8 Though the wicked flourish like grass
and all sinners thrive, [n]
They are destined for eternal destruction;
9 for you, LORD, are forever on high.
10 Indeed your enemies, LORD,
indeed your enemies shall perish;
all sinners shall be scattered. [o]

III

11 You have given me the strength of a wild bull; [p]
you have poured rich oil upon me. [q]
12 My eyes look with glee on my wicked enemies;
my ears delight in the fall of my foes. [r]
13 The just shall flourish like the palm tree,
shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon. [s]
14 Planted* in the house of the LORD,
they shall flourish in the courts of our God.
15 They shall bear fruit even in old age,
always vigorous and sturdy,
16 As they proclaim: "The LORD is just;
our rock, in whom there is no wrong." [t]

## PSALM 93*

### God is a Mighty King

1 The LORD is king,* robed with majesty;
the LORD is robed, girded with might. [u]
The world will surely stand in place,
never to be moved. [v]
2 Your throne stands firm from of old;
you are from everlasting, LORD. [w]
3 The flood* has raised up, LORD;
the flood has raised up its roar;
the flood has raised its pounding waves.
4 More powerful than the roar of many waters,
more powerful than the breakers of the sea,
powerful in the heavens is the LORD.
5 Your decrees are firmly established;
holiness belongs to your house, LORD,
for all the length of days.

## PSALM 94*

### A Prayer for Deliverance from the Wicked

Ps 94 See RG 242–243

I

1 LORD, avenging God,
avenging God, shine forth! [x]
2 Rise up, judge of the earth;
give the proud what they deserve. [y]

II

3 How long, LORD, shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked glory? [z]
4 How long will they mouth haughty speeches,
go on boasting, all these evildoers? [a]
5 They crush your people, LORD,
torment your very own.
6 They kill the widow and alien;
the fatherless they murder. [b]
7 They say, "The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob takes no notice." [c]

Ps 93 See RG 242

III

8 Understand, you stupid people!
You fools, when will you be wise? [d]
9 Does the one who shaped the ear not hear?
The one who formed the eye not see? [e]
10 Does the one who guides nations not rebuke?
The one who teaches humans not have knowledge?

**92, 14: Planted**: the just are likened to trees growing in the sacred precincts of the temple, which is often seen as the source of life and fertility because of God's presence. Cf Ps 36, 9. 10; Ez 47, 1–12.

**Ps 93**: A hymn celebrating the kingship of God, who created the world (1–2) by defeating the sea (3–4). In the ancient myth that is alluded to here, Sea completely covered the land, making it impossible for the human community to live. Sea, or Flood, roars in anger against God, who is personified in the storm. God's utterances or decrees are given authority by the victory over Sea (5).

**93, 1: The LORD is king**: literally, "the LORD reigns." This psalm, and Pss 47 and 96–99, are sometimes called enthronement psalms. They may have been used in a special liturgy during which God's ascent to the throne was ritually reenacted. They have also been interpreted eschatologically, pointing to the coming of God as king at the end-time.

**93, 3: The flood**: the primordial sea was tamed by God in the act of creation. It is a figure of chaos and rebellion. Cf Ps 46, 4.

**Ps 94**: A lament of an individual who is threatened by wicked people. The danger affects the whole community. Calling upon God as judge (1–2), the psalm complains about oppression of the holy community by people within (3–7). Bold declarations of faith follow: denunciation of evildoers (8–11) and assurance to the just (12–15). The psalm continues with further lament (16–19) and ends with strong confidence in God's response (20–23).

n Ps 37, 35. o Pss 68, 1–2; 125, 5. p Ps 75, 10; Dt 33, 17. q Ps 23, 5. r Ps 91, 8. s Pss 1, 3; 52, 10; Jer 17, 8. t Dt 32, 4. u Pss 47, 8; 96, 10; 97, 1; 99, 1. v Pss 75, 2–3; 104, 5. w Pss 55, 20; 90, 2; 102, 13; Hb 1, 12. x Na 1, 2. y Jer 51, 56; Lam 3, 64. z Pss 13, 2; 75, 5; Jer 12, 1. a Ps 73; Mal 2, 17; 3, 14. b Ex 22, 21–22; Dt 24, 17–22. c Pss 10, 11; 64, 6; 73, 11; Jb 22, 13–14; Ez 9, 9. d Prv 1, 22; 8, 5. e Ex 4, 11; Prv 20, 12.

11 The LORD does know human plans;
they are only puffs of air.[f]

IV

12 Happy those whom you guide, LORD,[g]
whom you teach by your instruction.
13 You give them rest from evil days,
while a pit is being dug for the wicked.
14 You, LORD, will not forsake your people,
nor abandon your very own.[h]
15 Judgment shall again be just,
and all the upright of heart will follow it.

V

16 Who will rise up for me against the wicked?
Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
17 If the LORD were not my help,
I would long have been silent in the grave.[i]
18 When I say, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, LORD, holds me up.[j]
19 When cares increase within me,
your comfort gives me joy.

VI

20 Can unjust judges be your allies,
those who create burdens in the name of law,
21 Those who conspire against the just
and condemn the innocent to death?
22 No, the LORD is my secure height,
my God, the rock where I find refuge,
23 Who will turn back their evil upon them[k]
and destroy them for their wickedness.
Surely the LORD our God will destroy them![l]

Ps 96
See RG 242, 246, 250

Ps 95
See RG 244–245

## PSALM 95*

### A Call to Praise and Obedience

I

1 Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
cry out to the rock of our salvation.[m]
2 Let us greet him with a song of praise,
joyfully sing out our psalms.
3 For the LORD is the great God,
the great king over all gods,[n]
4 Whose hand holds the depths of the earth;
who owns the tops of the mountains.
5 The sea and dry land belong to God,
who made them, formed them by hand.[o]

II

6 Enter, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
7 For this is our God,
whose people we are,
God's well-tended flock.[p]

III

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:[q]
8 Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah,*
as on the day of Massah* in the desert.
9 There your ancestors tested me;
they tried me though they had seen my works.[r]
10 Forty years I loathed that generation;
I said: "This people's heart goes astray;
they do not know my ways."[s]
11 Therefore I swore in my anger:
"They shall never enter my rest."*

## PSALM 96*

### God of the Universe

I

1 Sing to the LORD a new song;[t]
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
announce his salvation day after day.
3 Tell God's glory among the nations;
among all peoples, God's marvelous deeds.[u]

**Ps 95:** Twice the psalm calls the people to praise and worship God (1–2. 6), the king of all creatures (3–5) and shepherd of the flock (7ab). The last strophe warns the people to be more faithful than were their ancestors in the journey to the promised land (7c–11). This invitation to praise God regularly opens the Church's official prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours.

**95, 8: Meribah:** literally, "contention"; the place where the Israelites quarreled with God. **Massah:** "testing," the place where they put God to the trial. Cf Ex 17, 7; Nm 20, 13.

**95, 11: My rest:** the promised land as in Dt 12, 9. Heb 4 applies the verse to the eternal rest of heaven.

**Ps 96:** A hymn inviting all humanity to praise the glories of Israel's God (1–3), who is the sole God (4–6). To the just ruler of all belongs worship (7–10); even inanimate creation is to offer praise (11–13). This psalm has numerous verbal and thematic contacts with Is 40–55, as does Ps 98. Another version of the psalm is 1 Chr 16, 23–33.

f Ps 33, 15; 1 Cor 3, 20. g Ps 119, 71; Jb 5, 17. h 1 Sm 12, 22; Sir 47, 22. i Ps 115, 17. j Ps 145, 14. k Pss 7, 16; 9, 16; 35, 8; 57, 7; Prv 26, 27; Eccl 10, 8; Sir 27, 26. l Ps 107, 42. m Dt 32, 15. n Pss 47, 2; 135, 5. o Ps 24, 1–2. p Pss 23, 1–3; 100, 3; Mi 7, 14. q 7c–11: Pss 81, 8; 106, 32; Heb 3, 7–11. 15; 4, 3. 5. 7. r Nm 14, 22; 20, 2–13; Dt 6, 16; 33, 8. s Ps 78, 8; Nm 14, 34; Dt 32, 5. t Ps 98, 1; Is 42, 10. u Pss 98, 4; 105, 1.

II

4 For great is the LORD and highly to be praised,
to be feared above all gods.[v]*
5 For the gods of the nations all do nothing,
but the LORD made the heavens.[w]
6 Splendor and power go before him;
power and grandeur are in his holy place.

III

7 Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and might;
8 give to the LORD the glory due his name![x]
Bring gifts and enter his courts;
9 bow down to the LORD, splendid in holiness.
Tremble before God, all the earth;
10 say among the nations: The LORD is king.[y]
The world will surely stand fast, never to be moved.
God rules the peoples with fairness.

IV

11 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
let the sea and what fills it resound;[z]
12 let the plains be joyful and all that is in them.
Then let all the trees of the forest rejoice
13 before the LORD who comes,
who comes to govern the earth,[a]
To govern the world with justice
and the peoples with faithfulness.

## PSALM 97*

### The Divine Ruler of All

I

1 The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice;
let the many islands be glad.[b]
2 Cloud and darkness surround the Lord;
justice and right are the foundation of his throne.[c]
3 Fire goes before him;
everywhere it consumes the foes.
4 Lightning illumines the world;
the earth sees and trembles.[d]
5 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.[e]
6 The heavens proclaim God's justice;
all peoples see his glory.[f]

II

7 All who serve idols are put to shame,
who glory in worthless things;
all gods* bow down before you.[g]
8 Zion hears and is glad,
and the cities of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments, O LORD.[h]
9 You, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth,[i]
exalted far above all gods.
10 The LORD loves those who hate evil,
protects the lives of the faithful,[j]
rescues them from the hand of the wicked.
11 Light dawns for the just;
gladness, for the honest of heart.[k]
12 Rejoice in the LORD, you just,
and praise his holy name.[l]

## PSALM 98*

Ps 98
See RG
242, 246

### The Coming of God

1 A psalm.

Ps 97
See RG
242

I

Sing a new song to the LORD,
who has done marvelous deeds,[m]
Whose right hand and holy arm*
have won the victory.[n]*

96, 4: For references to other gods, see comments on Pss 58 and 82.

Ps 97: The hymn begins with God appearing in a storm, a traditional picture of some ancient Near Eastern gods (1–6); cf Ps 18, 8–16; Mi 1, 3–4; Hb 3, 3–15. Israel rejoices in the overthrowing of idol worshipers and their gods (7–9) and the rewarding of the faithful righteous (10–12).

97, 7: **All gods**: divine beings thoroughly subordinate to Israel's God. The Greek translates "angels," an interpretation adopted by Heb 1, 6.

Ps 98: A hymn, similar to Ps 96, extolling God for Israel's victory (1–3). All nations (4–6) and even inanimate nature (7–8) are summoned to welcome God's coming to rule over the world (9).

98, 1: **Marvelous deeds . . . victory**: the conquest of all threats to the peaceful existence of Israel, depicted in the psalms variously as a cosmic force such as sea, or nations bent on Israel's destruction, or evildoers seemingly triumphant. **Whose right hand and holy arm**: God is pictured as a powerful warrior.

v Pss 48, 2; 95, 3; 145, 3. w Ps 97, 7; Is 40, 17; 1 Cor 8, 4. x Ps 29, 2. y Pss 75, 4; 93, 1. z Ps 98, 7. a Ps 98, 9. b Pss 75, 4; 93, 1; 96, 10. c Pss 85, 11; 89, 15; Ex 19, 6; Dt 4, 11; 5, 22; 1 Kgs 8, 12. d Pss 18, 8; 50, 3; 77, 18; 99, 1; Jgs 5, 4–5. e Jdt 16, 15; Mi 1, 4. f Ps 50, 6. g Ps 96, 5. h Ps 48, 12. i Ps 83, 19. j Ps 121, 7. k Ps 112, 4. l Ps 30, 5. m Ps 96, 1; Is 42, 10. n Is 59, 16; 63, 5.

2 The LORD has made his victory known;
has revealed his triumph for the nations to see,
3 Has remembered faithful love
toward the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.

II

4 Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth;
break into song; sing praise.
5 Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
shout with joy to the King, the LORD.[o]

III

7 Let the sea and what fills it resound,[p]
the world and those who dwell there.
8 Let the rivers clap their hands,
the mountains shout with them for joy,[q]
9 Before the LORD who comes,
who comes to govern the earth,[r]
To govern the world with justice
and the peoples with fairness.[s]

Ps 100
See RG
242

Ps 99
See RG
242

## PSALM 99*

### The Holy King

I

1 The LORD is king, the peoples tremble;
God is enthroned on the cherubim,* the earth quakes.[t]
2 The LORD is great on Zion,
exalted above all the peoples.
3 Let them praise your great and awesome name:
holy is God![u]

II

4 O mighty king, lover of justice,
you alone have established fairness;
you have created just rule in Jacob.[v]
5 Exalt the LORD, our God;
bow down before his footstool;[w]*
holy is God!

III

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel among those who called on God's name;
they called on the LORD, who answered them.[x]
7 From the pillar of cloud God spoke to them;
they kept the decrees, the law they received.[y]
8 O LORD, our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God,
though you punished their offenses.[z]
9 Exalt the LORD, our God;
bow down before his holy mountain;
holy is the LORD, our God.

## PSALM 100*

### Processional Hymn

1 A psalm of thanksgiving.

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
2 worship the LORD with cries of gladness;
come before him with joyful song.
3 Know that the LORD is God,
our maker to whom we belong,
whose people we are, God's well-tended flock.[a]*
4 Enter the temple gates with praise,
its courts with thanksgiving.
Give thanks to God, bless his name;[b]
5 good indeed is the LORD,

Ps 99: A hymn to God as the king whose grandeur is most clearly seen on Mount Zion (2) and in the laws given to Israel (4). Israel is special because of God's word of justice, which was mediated by the revered speakers, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel (6–8). The poem is structured by the threefold statement that God is holy (3. 5. 9) and by the twice-repeated command to praise (5. 9).

99, 1: **Enthroned on the cherubim**: cherubim were composite beings with animal and human features, common in ancient Near Eastern art. Two cherubim were placed on the ark (or box) of the covenant in the holy of holies. Upon them God was believed to dwell invisibly. Cf Ex 25, 20–22; 1 Sm 4, 4; 2 Sm 6, 2; Ps 80, 2.

99, 5: **Footstool**: a reference to the ark. Cf 1 Chr 28, 2; Ps 132, 7.

Ps 100: A hymn inviting the people to enter the temple courts with thank offerings for the God who created them.

100, 3: Although the people call on all the nations of the world to join in their hymn, they are conscious of being the chosen people of God.

o Ps 47, 6–7. p Ps 96, 11. q Is 44, 23; 55, 12. r Ps 96, 13. s Ps 67, 5. t Pss 18, 8–11; 80, 2; 93, 1; Ex 25, 22; 1 Sm 4, 4; 2 Sm 6, 2. u Is 6, 3. v Pss 72, 1; 99, 4; Jer 23, 5. w Ps 132, 7. x Jer 15, 1. y Ex 33, 9; Nm 12, 5. z Ex 32, 11; Nm 20, 12. a Pss 23, 1; 95, 7; Mi 7, 14; Is 64, 7. b 4–5: Pss 106, 1; 107, 1; 118, 1; 136, 1; 138, 8; Jer 33, 11.

Whose love endures forever,
whose faithfulness lasts through every age.

## PSALM 101*

### Norm of Life for Rulers

[1] A psalm of David.

I

I sing of love and justice;
to you, LORD, I sing praise.
[2] I follow the way of integrity; [c]
when will you come to me?
I act with integrity of heart
within my royal court. [d]*
[3] I do not allow into my presence
anyone who speaks perversely.
Whoever acts shamefully I hate;
no such person can be my friend. [e]
[4] I shun the devious of heart;
the wicked I do not tolerate.
[5] Whoever slanders another in secret
I reduce to silence. [f]
Haughty eyes and arrogant hearts [g]
I cannot endure.

II

[6] I look to the faithful of the land;*
they alone can be my companions.
Those who follow the way of integrity, [h]
they alone can enter my service.
[7] No one who practices deceit
can hold a post in my court.
No one who speaks falsely
can be among my advisors. [i]
[8] Each morning* I clear the wicked from the land,*
and rid the LORD's city of all evildoers.

## PSALM 102*

### Prayer in Time of Distress

[1] The prayer of one afflicted and wasting away whose anguish is poured out before the LORD.

I

[2] LORD, hear my prayer;
let my cry come to you.
[3] Do not hide your face from me
now that I am in distress. [j]
Turn your ear to me;
when I call, answer me quickly.
[4] For my days vanish like smoke; [k]
my bones burn away as in a furnace.
[5] I am withered, dried up like grass,
too wasted to eat my food.
[6] From my loud groaning
I become just skin and bones.
[7] I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.
[8] I lie awake and moan,
like a lone sparrow on the roof.
[9] All day long my enemies taunt me;
in their rage, they make my name a curse.*
[10] I eat ashes like bread,
mingle my drink with tears. [l]
[11] Because of your furious wrath,
you lifted me up just to cast me down.
[12] My days are like a lengthening shadow; [m]
I wither like the grass. [n]

II

[13] But you, LORD, are enthroned forever;
your renown is for all generations. [o]
[14] You will again show mercy to Zion;
now is the time for pity;
the appointed time has come.

Ps 102 See RG 242-243

Ps 101 See RG 244

**Ps 101:** The king, grateful at being God's chosen (1), promises to be a ruler after God's own heart (2–3), allowing into the royal service only the God-fearing (3–8).

**101, 2: Within my royal court:** the king promises to make his own household a model for Israel, banning all officials who abuse their power.

**101, 6: I look to the faithful of the land:** the king seeks companions only among those faithful to God.

**101, 8: Each morning:** the normal time for the administration of justice (2 Sm 15, 2; Jer 21, 12) and for the arrival of divine aid (Pss 59, 17; 143, 8; Is 33, 2). **I clear the wicked from the land:** the king, as God's servant, is responsible for seeing that divine justice is carried out.

**Ps 102:** A lament, one of the Penitential Psalms. The psalmist, experiencing psychic and bodily disintegration (4–12), cries out to God (1–3). In the temple precincts where God has promised to be present, the psalmist recalls God's venerable promises to save the poor (13–23). The final part (24–29) restates the original complaint and prayer, and emphasizes God's eternity.

**102, 9: They make my name a curse:** enemies use the psalmist's name in phrases such as, "May you be as wretched as this person!"

c Ps 26, 11. d 1 Kgs 9, 4; Is 33, 15. e Prv 11, 20. f Prv 17, 20; 30, 10. g Prv 21, 4. h Ps 26, 11; Prv 20, 7. i Ps 5, 5; Prv 25, 5. j Pss 69, 18; 143, 7. k 4–6: Ps 38, 7–9. l Pss 42, 4; 80, 6. m Pss 109, 23; 144, 4; Jb 8, 9; 14, 2; Eccl 6, 12; Wis 2, 5. n Ps 90, 5–6. o Pss 55, 20; 90, 2; 93, 2; 102, 13; 135, 13; 145, 13; Lam 5, 19; Hb 1, 12.

Ps 103
See RG
242, 249,
250

15 Its stones are dear to your servants;
its dust moves them to pity.
16 The nations shall revere your name, LORD,
all the kings of the earth, your glory,[p]
17 Once the LORD has rebuilt Zion
and appeared in glory,
18 Heeding the plea of the lowly,
not scorning their prayer.
19 Let this be written for the next generation,
for a people not yet born,
that they may praise the LORD:[q]
20 "The LORD looked down from the holy heights,*
viewed the earth from heaven,[r]
21 To attend to the groaning of the prisoners,
to release those doomed to die."[s]
22 Then the LORD's name will be declared on Zion,
the praise of God in Jerusalem,
23 When all peoples and kingdoms gather
to worship the LORD.[t]

III

24 God has shattered my strength in mid-course,
has cut short my days.
25 I plead, O my God,
do not take me in the midst of my days.[u]*
Your years last through all generations.
26 Of old you laid the earth's foundations;[v]
the heavens are the work of your hands.
27 They perish, but you remain;
they all wear out like a garment;
Like clothing you change them and they are changed,
28 but you are the same, your years have no end.
29 May the children of your servants live on;
may their descendants live in your presence.[w]

## PSALM 103*

### Praise of Divine Goodness

1 Of David.

I

Bless the LORD, my soul;
all my being, bless his holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, my soul;
do not forget all the gifts of God,
3 Who pardons all your sins,
heals all your ills,
4 Delivers your life from the pit,[x]
surrounds you with love and compassion,
5 Fills your days with good things;
your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

II

6 The LORD does righteous deeds,
brings justice to all the oppressed.[y]
7 His ways were revealed to Moses,
mighty deeds to the people of Israel.
8 Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger, abounding in kindness.[z]
9 God does not always rebuke,
nurses no lasting anger,
10 Has not dealt with us as our sins merit,
nor requited us as our deeds deserve.

III

11 As the heavens tower over the earth,
so God's love towers over the faithful.[a]
12 As far as the east is from the west,
so far have our sins been removed from us.
13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on the faithful.
14 For he knows how we are formed,
remembers that we are dust.[b]
15 Our days are like the grass;
like flowers of the field we blossom.[c]
16 The wind sweeps over us and we are gone;
our place knows us no more.

**102, 20–23:** Both 20–21 and 22–23 depend on 19.

**102, 25: In the midst of my days:** when the normal span of life is but half completed. Cf Is 38, 10; Jer 17, 11.

**Ps 103:** The speaker in this hymn begins by praising God for personal benefits (1–5), then moves on to God's mercy toward all the people (6–18). Even sin cannot destroy that mercy (11–13), for the eternal God is well aware of the people's human fragility (14–18). The psalmist invites the heavenly beings to join in praise (19–22).

**103, 5: Your youth is renewed like the eagle's:** because of the eagle's long life it was a symbol of perennial youth and vigor. Cf Is 40, 31.

p Is 59, 19; 66, 18. q Ps 22, 31–32. r Pss 11, 4; 14, 2. s Ps 79, 11. t Is 60, 3–4; Zec 2, 15; 8, 22. u Pss 39, 5; 90, 10; Jb 14, 5. v 26–28: Heb 1, 10–12. w Ps 69, 36–37. x Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 40, 3; 69, 16; 88, 5; 143, 7; Prv 1, 12; Jon 2, 7. y Ps 146, 6–7. z Pss 86, 15; 145, 8; Ex 34, 6–7; Nm 14, 18; Jer 3, 12; Jl 2, 13; Jon 4, 2. a Is 55, 9. b Ps 90, 3. c Pss 37, 2; 90, 5–6; Is 40, 7.

17 But the LORD's kindness is forever,
toward the faithful from age to age.
He favors the children's children
18 of those who keep his covenant,
who take care to fulfill its precepts.

IV

19 The LORD's throne is established in heaven;
God's royal power rules over all.
20 Bless the LORD, all you angels, [d]
mighty in strength and attentive,
obedient to every command.
21 Bless the LORD, all you hosts,
ministers who do God's will.
22 Bless the LORD, all creatures,
everywhere in God's domain.
Bless the LORD, my soul!

## PSALM 104*

### Praise of God the Creator

I

1 Bless the LORD, my soul!
LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
You are clothed with majesty and glory,
2 robed in light as with a cloak.
You spread out the heavens like a tent; [e]
3 you raised your palace upon the waters.*
You make the clouds your chariot;
you travel on the wings of the wind.
4 You make the winds your messengers;
flaming fire, your ministers. [f]

II

5 You fixed the earth on its foundation,*
never to be moved.
6 The ocean covered it like a garment;
above the mountains stood the waters.
7 At your roar they took flight;
at the sound of your thunder they fled. [g]
8 They rushed up the mountains, down the valleys
to the place you had fixed for them.
9 You set a limit they cannot pass;
never again will they cover the earth. [h]

III

10 You made springs flow into channels
that wind among the mountains.
11 They give drink to every beast of the field; [i]
here wild asses quench their thirst.
12 Beside them the birds of heaven nest;
among the branches they sing.
13 You water the mountains from your palace;
by your labor the earth abounds.
14 You raise grass for the cattle
and plants for our beasts of burden.
You bring bread from the earth,
15 and wine to gladden our hearts,
Oil to make our faces gleam,
food to build our strength.
16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill,*
the cedars of Lebanon, which you planted.
17 There the birds build their nests;
junipers are the home of the stork. [j]
18 The high mountains are for wild goats;
the rocky cliffs, a refuge for badgers.

IV

19 You made the moon to mark the seasons, [k]
the sun that knows the hour of its setting.
20 You bring darkness and night falls,
then all the beasts of the forest roam abroad.
21 Young lions roar for prey;
they seek their food from God. [l]
22 When the sun rises, they steal away
and rest in their dens.
23 People go forth to their work,
to their labor till evening falls.

V

24 How varied are your works, LORD!
In wisdom you have wrought them all;
the earth is full of your creatures. [m]

Ps 104
See RG
242, 245,
250

**Ps 104:** A hymn praising God who easily and skillfully made rampaging waters and primordial night into a world vibrant with life. The psalmist describes God's splendor in the heavens (1–4), how the chaotic waters were tamed to fertilize and feed the world (5–18), and how primordial night was made into a gentle time of refreshment (19–23). The picture is like Gn 1, 1–2: a dark and watery chaos is made dry and lighted so that creatures might live. The psalmist reacts to the beauty of creation with awe (24–34). May sin not deface God's work (35)!

**104, 3: Your palace upon the waters:** God's heavenly dwelling above the upper waters of the sky. Cf Gn 1, 6–7; Ps 29, 10.

**104, 5–9:** God places the gigantic disk of the earth securely on its foundation and then, as a warrior, chases away the enveloping waters and confines them under, above, and around the earth.

**104, 16–18:** Even the exotic flora and fauna of the high mountains of the Lebanon range receive adequate water.

d Ps 148, 2; Dn 3, 58. e Prv 8, 27–28; Jb 9, 8; Is 40, 22; Gn 1, 6–7; Am 9, 6. f Heb 1, 7. g Ps 29, 3. h Jer 5, 22; Gn 9, 11–15. i 11–14: Ps 147, 8–9. j Ez 31, 6. k Sir 43, 6. l Jb 38, 39. m Ps 92, 6; Sir 39, 16.

25 Look at the sea, great and wide!
It teems with countless beings,
living things both large and small.[n]
26 Here ships ply their course;
here Leviathan,* your creature, plays.[o]

VI

27 All of these look to you
to give them food in due time.[p]
28 When you give to them, they gather;
when you open your hand, they are well filled.
29 When you hide your face, they are lost.*
When you take away their breath, they perish
and return to the dust from which they came.[q]
30 When you send forth your breath, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.

VII

31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in these works!
32 If God glares at the earth, it trembles;
if God touches the mountains, they smoke![r]
33 I will sing to the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God while I live.[s]
34 May my theme be pleasing to God;
I will rejoice in the LORD.
35 May sinners vanish from the earth,
and the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, my soul! Hallelujah!*

## PSALM 105*

Ps 105
See RG 245

### God's Fidelity to the Promise

I

1 Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;[t]
make known among the peoples his deeds![u]
2 Sing praise, play music;
proclaim all his wondrous deeds!
3 Glory in his holy name;
rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD!
4 Rely on the mighty LORD;
constantly seek his face.[v]
5 Recall the wondrous deeds he has done,
his signs and his words of judgment,
6 You descendants of Abraham his servant,
offspring of Jacob the chosen one!

II

7 The LORD is our God
who rules the whole earth.
8 He remembers forever his covenant,
the pact imposed for a thousand generations,
9 Which was made with Abraham,
confirmed by oath to Isaac,[w]
10 And ratified as binding for Jacob,
an everlasting covenant for Israel:
11 "To you I give the land of Canaan,
your own allotted heritage."[x]

III

12 When they were few in number,[y]
a handful, and strangers there,
13 Wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another,
14 He let no one oppress them;
for their sake he rebuked kings:*
15 "Do not touch my anointed,
to my prophets* do no harm."

IV

16 Then he called down a famine on the land,
destroyed the grain that sustained them.[z]
17 He had sent a man ahead of them,

**104, 26: Leviathan**: a sea monster symbolizing primeval chaos. Cf Ps 74, 14; Is 27, 1; Jb 40, 25. God does not destroy chaos but makes it part of the created order.

**104, 29–30:** On one level, the spirit (or wind) of God is the fall and winter rains that provide food for all creatures. On another, it is the breath (or spirit) of God that makes beings live.

**104, 35: Hallelujah**: a frequent word in the last third of the Psalter. The word combines the plural imperative of praise (*hallelu*) with an abbreviated form of the divine name Yah(weh).

**Ps 105**: A hymn to God who promised the land of Canaan to the holy people. Cf Pss 78; 106; 136. Israel is invited to praise and seek the presence of God (1–6), who is faithful to the promise of land to the ancestors (7–11). In every phase of the national story—the ancestors in the land of Canaan (12–15), Joseph in Egypt (16–22), Israel in Egypt (23–38), Israel in the desert on the way to Canaan (39–45)—God remained faithful, reiterating the promise of the land to successive servants.

**105, 14: Kings**: Pharaoh and Abimelech of Gerar. Cf Gn 12, 17; 20, 6–7.

**105, 15: My anointed . . . my prophets**: the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were "anointed" in the sense of being consecrated and recipients of God's revelation.

n Sir 43, 26. o Jb 3, 8; 40, 25. p Pss 136, 25; 145, 15–16. q Jb 34, 14–15; Eccl 3, 20; Ps 90, 3. r Ps 144, 5. s Ps 146, 2. t 1–15: 1 Chr 16, 8–22. u Pss 18, 50; 96, 3; 145, 5; Is 12, 4–5. v Pss 24, 6; 27, 8. w Gn 15, 1ff; 26, 3. x Gn 12, 7; 15, 18. y 12–13: Dt 4, 27; 26, 5. z Gn 41, 54. 57.

Joseph, sold as a slave.[a]
18 They shackled his feet with chains;
collared his neck in iron,[b]
19 Till his prediction came to pass,
and the word of the LORD proved him true.[c]
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of peoples set him free.[d]
21 He made him lord over his palace,
ruler over all his possessions,[e]
22 To instruct his princes by his word,
to teach his elders wisdom.

V

23 Then Israel entered Egypt;[f]
Jacob lived in the land of Ham.*
24 God greatly increased his people,
made them too many for their foes.[g]
25 He turned their hearts to hate his people,
to treat his servants unfairly.[h]
26 He sent his servant Moses,
Aaron whom he had chosen.[i]
27 They worked his signs in Egypt[j]*
and wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness and it grew dark,
but they rebelled against his word.
29 He turned their waters into blood
and killed all their fish.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke and there came swarms of flies,
gnats through all their country.
32 For rain he gave them hail,
flashes of lightning throughout their land.
33 He struck down their vines and fig trees,
shattered the trees of their country.
34 He spoke and the locusts came,
grasshoppers without number.[k]
35 They devoured every plant in the land;
they ravaged the crops of their fields.
36 He struck down every firstborn in the land,
the first fruits of all their vigor.
37 He brought his people out,
laden with silver and gold;[l]
no stragglers among the tribes.
38 Egypt rejoiced when they left,
for panic had seized them.

VI

39 He spread a cloud as a cover,
and made a fire to light up the night.[m]
40 They asked and he brought them quail;
with bread from heaven he filled them.[n]
41 He split the rock and water gushed forth;
it flowed through the desert like a river.[o]
42 For he remembered his sacred word
to Abraham his servant.
43 He brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with shouts of triumph.
44 He gave them the lands of the nations,
the wealth of the peoples to own,[p]
45 That they might keep his laws
and observe his teachings.[q]
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 106*

Ps 106
See RG
242–243,
247

### Israel's Confession of Sin

1 Hallelujah!

**A**

Give thanks to the LORD, who is good,
whose love endures forever.[r]
2 Who can tell the mighty deeds of the LORD,

**105, 23. 27: The land of Ham:** a synonym for Egypt. Cf Gn 10, 6.

**105, 27–38:** This psalm and Ps 78, 43–51 have an account of the plagues differing in number or in order from Ex 7, 14–12, 30. Several versions of the exodus story were current.

**Ps 106:** Israel is invited to praise the God whose mercy has always tempered judgment of Israel (1–3). The speaker, on behalf of all, seeks solidarity with the people, who can always count on God's fidelity despite their sin (4–5). Confident of God's mercy, the speaker invites national repentance (6) by reciting from Israel's history eight instances of sin, judgment, and forgiveness. The sins are the rebellion at the Red Sea (6–12; see Ex 14–15), the craving for meat in the desert (13–15; see Nm 11), the challenge to Moses' authority (16–18; see Nm 16), the golden calf episode (19–23; see Ex 32–34), the refusal to take Canaan by the southern route (24–27; see Nm 13–14 and Dt 1–2), the rebellion at Baal-Peor (28–31; see Nm 25, 1–10), the anger of Moses (32–33; see Nm 20, 1–13), and mingling with the nations (34–47). The last, as suggested by its length and generalized language, may be the sin that invites the repentance of the present generation. The text gives the site of each sin: Egypt (7), the desert (14), the camp (16), Horeb (19), in their tents (25), Baal-Peor (28), the waters of Meribah (32), Canaan (38).

a Gn 37, 28. 36; 45, 5. b Gn 39, 20. c Gn 40–41. d Gn 41, 14. e Gn 41, 41–44. f Gn 46, 1–47, 12; Acts 7, 15. g Ex 1, 7; Acts 7, 17. h Ex 1, 8–14. i Ex 3, 10; 4, 27. j 27–36: Ps 78, 43–51; Ex 7–12. k Jl 1, 4. l Ex 12, 33–36. m Ps 78, 14; Ex 13, 21–22; Wis 18, 3. n Ps 78, 24–28; Ex 16, 13–15; Nm 11, 31ff; Wis 16, 20. o Ps 78, 15–16; Ex 17, 1–7; Nm 20, 11. p Dt 4, 37–40. q Dt 6, 20–25; 7, 8–11. r Pss 100, 5; 107, 1; 1 Chr 16, 34; Jer 33, 11; Dn 3, 89.

proclaim in full God's praise?
3 Happy those who do what is right,
whose deeds are always just.[s]
4 Remember me, LORD, as you favor your people;
come to me with your saving help,[t]
5 That I may see the prosperity of your chosen,
rejoice in the joy of your people,
and glory with your heritage.

**B**

6 We have sinned like our ancestors;[u]
we have done wrong and are guilty.

I

7 Our ancestors in Egypt
did not attend to your wonders.
They did not remember your great love;
they defied the Most High at the Red Sea.
8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake
to make his power known.[v]
9 He roared at the Red Sea and it dried up.
He led them through the deep as through a desert.[w]
10 He rescued them from hostile hands,
freed them from the power of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their oppressors;
not one of them survived.
12 Then they believed his words
and sang songs of praise.[x]

II

13 But they soon forgot all he had done;
they had no patience for his plan.
14 In the desert they gave way to their cravings,
tempted God in the wasteland.[y]
15 So he gave them what they asked
and sent among them a wasting disease.[z]

III

16 In the camp they challenged Moses[a]
and Aaron, the holy one of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed Dathan,
it closed on the followers of Abiram.
18 Against that company the fire blazed;
flames consumed the wicked.

IV

19 At Horeb they fashioned a calf,[b]
worshiped a metal statue.
20 They exchanged their glorious God
for the image of a grass-eating bull.
21 They forgot the God who saved them,
who did great deeds in Egypt,[c]
22 Amazing deeds in the land of Ham,
fearsome deeds at the Red Sea.
23 He would have decreed their destruction,
had not Moses, the chosen leader,
Withstood him in the breach*
to turn back his destroying anger.[d]

V

24 Next they despised the beautiful land;[e]
they did not believe the promise.
25 In their tents they complained;
they did not obey the LORD.
26 So with raised hand he swore
to destroy them in the desert,
27 To scatter their descendants among the nations,
disperse them in foreign lands.

VI

28 They joined in the rites of Baal of Peor,[f]
ate food sacrificed to dead gods.
29 They provoked him by their actions,
and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas rose to intervene,
and the plague was brought to a halt.
31 This was counted for him as a righteous deed
for all generations to come.

VII

32 At the waters of Meribah they angered God,[g]
and Moses suffered because of them.*
33 They so embittered his spirit

**106, 23: Withstood him in the breach**: the image is that of Moses standing in a narrow break made in the wall to keep anyone from entering.

**106, 32: Moses suffered because of them**: Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land because of his rash words (Nm 20, 12). According to Dt 1, 37, Moses was not allowed to cross because of the people's sin, not his own.

s Is 56, 1–2. t Ps 25, 7; Neh 5, 19. u 6–7: Ps 78, 11–17; Ex 14, 11; Lv 26, 40; 1 Kgs 8, 47; Bar 2, 12; Dn 9, 5. v Ez 36, 20–22. w Ex 14, 21–31; Is 50, 2; 63, 11–14; Na 1, 4. x Ex 15, 1–21. y Ps 78, 18; Ex 15, 24; 16, 3; Nm 11, 1–6. z Ps 78, 26–31; Nm 11, 33. a 16–18: Nm 16; Dt 11, 6; Is 26, 11. b 19–20: Ex 32; Dt 9, 8–21; Jer 2, 11; Acts 7, 41; Rom 1, 23. c Ps 78, 42–58; Dt 32, 18; Jer 2, 32. d Ex 32, 11; Dt 9, 25; Ez 22, 30. e 24–27: Lv 26, 33; Nm 14; Dt 1, 25–36; Ez 20, 15. 23. f 28–31: Nm 25; Dt 26, 14; Sir 45, 23–24. g 32–33: Ps 95, 8–9; Ex 17, 1–7; Nm 20, 2–13; Dt 6, 16; 33, 8.

that rash words crossed his lips.

VIII

34 They did not destroy the peoples
as the LORD had commanded them, [h]
35 But mingled with the nations
and imitated their ways. [i]
36 They worshiped their idols
and were ensnared by them. [j]
37 They sacrificed to the gods*
their own sons and daughters,
38 Shedding innocent blood,
the blood of their own sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
desecrating the land with bloodshed.
39 They defiled themselves by their actions,
became adulterers by their conduct.
40 So the LORD grew angry with his people,
abhorred his own heritage.
41 He handed them over to the nations,
and their adversaries ruled them. [k]
42 Their enemies oppressed them,
kept them under subjection.
43 Many times did he rescue them,
but they kept rebelling and scheming
and were brought low by their own guilt. [l]
44 Still God had regard for their affliction
when he heard their wailing.
45 For their sake he remembered his covenant
and relented in his abundant love, [m]
46 Winning for them compassion
from all who held them captive.

C

47 Save us, LORD, our God;
gather us from among the nations
That we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in praising you. [n]

* * *

48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
Let all the people say, Amen! [o]
Hallelujah!*

# FIFTH BOOK—PSALMS 107–150

## PSALM 107*

Ps 107
See RG
243

### God the Savior of Those in Distress

1 "Give thanks to the LORD who is good,
whose love endures forever!" [p]
2 Let that be the prayer of the LORD's redeemed,
those redeemed from the hand of the foe, [q]
3 Those gathered from foreign lands,
from east and west, from north and south. [r]

I

4 Some had lost their way in a barren desert;
found no path toward a city to live in.
5 They were hungry and thirsty;
their life was ebbing away. [s]
6 In their distress they cried to the LORD,
who rescued them in their peril,
7 Guided them by a direct path [t]
so they reached a city to live in. [u]
8 Let them thank the LORD for such kindness,
such wondrous deeds for mere mortals.
9 For he satisfied the thirsty,
filled the hungry with good things. [v]

II

10 Some lived in darkness and gloom,
in prison, bound with chains,
11 Because they rebelled against God's word,
scorned the counsel of the Most High, [w]
12 Who humbled their hearts through hardship;
they stumbled with no one to help. [x]
13 In their distress they cried to the LORD,
who saved them in their peril,

**106, 37: The gods:** Hebrew *shedim*, customarily translated "demons," occurs in parallelism with "gods" in an important inscription from Transjordan and hence is translated "gods."

**106, 48:** A doxology ending Book IV of the Psalter. It is not part of the psalm.

**Ps 107:** A hymn inviting those who have been rescued by God to give praise (1–3). Four archetypal divine rescues are described, each ending in thanksgiving: from the sterile desert (4–9), from imprisonment in gloom (10–16), from mortal illness (17–22), and from the angry sea (23–32). The number four connotes totality, all the possible varieties of rescue. The same saving activity of God is shown in Israel's history (33–41); whenever the people were endangered God rescued them. The last verses invite people to ponder the persistent saving acts of God (42–43).

h Dt 7, 1; Jgs 2, 1–5. i Lv 18, 3; Jgs 1, 27–35; 3, 5. j 36–38: Lv 18, 21; Nm 35, 33; Dt 32, 17; Jgs 2, 11–13. 17. 19; 2 Kgs 16, 3; Bar 4, 7; 1 Cor 10, 20. k Jgs 2, 14–23. l Is 63, 7–9. m Lv 26, 42. n 1 Chr 16, 35. o Pss 41, 14; 72, 18; 89, 53; 1 Chr 16, 36; Neh 9, 5. p Pss 100, 4–5; 106, 1; Jer 33, 11. q Is 63, 12. r Is 43, 5–6; 49, 12; Zec 8, 7. s Dt 8, 15; 32, 10; Is 49, 10. t Is 35, 8; 40, 3; 43, 19. u Dt 6, 10. v Lk 1, 53. w Is 42, 7. 22; Jb 36, 8–9; Prv 1, 25. x Ps 106, 43.

14 Led them forth from darkness and gloom
and broke their chains asunder.[y]
15 Let them thank the LORD for such kindness,
such wondrous deeds for mere mortals.
16 For he broke down the gates of bronze
and snapped the bars of iron.

III

17 Some fell sick from their wicked ways,
afflicted because of their sins.
18 They loathed all manner of food;[z]
they were at the gates of death.
19 In their distress they cried to the LORD,
who saved them in their peril,
20 Sent forth the word to heal them,[a]
snatched them from the grave.
21 Let them thank the LORD for such kindness,
such wondrous deeds for mere mortals.
22 Let them offer a sacrifice in thanks,
declare his works with shouts of joy.

IV

23 Some went off to sea in ships,
plied their trade on the deep waters.[b]
24 They saw the works of the LORD,
the wonders of God in the deep.
25 He spoke and roused a storm wind;
it tossed the waves on high.[c]
26 They rose up to the heavens, sank to the depths;
their hearts trembled at the danger.
27 They reeled, staggered like drunkards;
their skill was of no avail.[d]
28 In their distress they cried to the LORD,
who brought them out of their peril,
29 Hushed the storm to a murmur;
the waves of the sea were stilled.[e]
30 They rejoiced that the sea grew calm,
that God brought them to the harbor they longed for.
31 Let them thank the LORD for such kindness,
such wondrous deeds for mere mortals.
32 Let them praise him in the assembly of the people,
give thanks in the council of the elders.

V

33 God changed rivers into desert,*
springs of water into thirsty ground,[f]
34 Fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the wickedness of its people.[g]
35 He changed the desert into pools of water,
arid land into springs of water,[h]
36 And settled the hungry there;
they built a city to live in.[i]
37 They sowed fields and planted vineyards,
brought in an abundant harvest.[j]
38 God blessed them, they became very many,
and their livestock did not decrease.[k]
40 But he poured out contempt on princes,
made them wander the trackless wastes,[l]
39 Where they were diminished and brought low
through misery and cruel oppression,
41 While the poor were released from their affliction;
their families increased like their flocks.[m]
42 The upright saw this and rejoiced;[n]
all wickedness shut its mouth.
43 Whoever is wise will take note of these things,[o]
will ponder the merciful deeds of the LORD.

## PSALM 108*

### Prayer for Victory

1 A song; a psalm of David.

I

2 My heart is steadfast, God;[p]
my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and chant praise.
3 Awake, my soul; awake, lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn.[q]
4 I will praise you among the peoples, LORD;

Ps 108 See RG 245

**107, 33–41:** God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in Gn 18–19, which the psalm sees as the destruction of the wicked inhabitants of Canaan to prepare the way for Israel (33–34). God then led Israel through the desert to give them a fertile land (35–38) and protected them from every danger (39–41).

**Ps 108:** A prayer compiled from two other psalms: 2–6 are virtually the same as Ps 57, 8–12; 7–14 are the same as Ps 60, 7–14. An old promise of salvation (8–10) is combined with a confident assurance (1–6. 14) and petition (7. 12–13).

y Is 42, 7; 49, 9; 51, 14. z Jb 6, 6–7; 33, 20. a Ps 147, 15; Wis 16, 12; Is 55, 11; Mt 8, 8. b Sir 43, 25. c Jon 1, 4. d Is 29, 9. e Pss 65, 8; 89, 10; Mt 8, 26 par. f Is 35, 7; 42, 15; 50, 2. g Gn 19, 23–28; Dt 29, 22; Sir 39, 23. h Ps 114, 8; Is 41, 8. i Ez 36, 35. j Is 65, 21; Jer 31, 5. k Dt 7, 13–14. l Jb 12, 23–25. m Ps 113, 7. n Pss 58, 11; 63, 12. o Hos 14, 10. p 2–6: Ps 57, 8–12. q Jb 38, 12.

I will chant your praise among the nations.[r]
5 For your love towers to the heavens;
your faithfulness, to the skies.[s]
6 Appear on high over the heavens, God;
may your glory appear above all the earth.
7 Help with your right hand and answer us
that your loved ones may escape.

II

8 God promised in the sanctuary:[t]
"I will exult, I will apportion Shechem;
the valley of Succoth I will measure out.
9 Gilead is mine, mine is Manasseh;
Ephraim is the helmet for my head,
Judah, my own scepter.
10 Moab is my washbowl;
upon Edom I cast my sandal;[u]
I will triumph over Philistia."

III

11 Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
12 Was it not you who rejected us, God?
Do you no longer march with our armies?[v]
13 Give us aid against the foe;
worthless is human help.
14 We will triumph with the help of God,
who will trample down our foes.

## PSALM 109*

### Prayer of a Person Falsely Accused

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

O God, whom I praise, do not be silent,[w]
2 for wicked and treacherous mouths attack me.
They speak against me with lying tongues;
3 with hateful words they surround me,
attacking me without cause.
4 In return for my love they slander me,
even though I prayed for them.
5 They repay me evil for good,
hatred for my love.[x]

II

My enemies say of me:
6 "Find a lying witness,
an accuser* to stand by his right hand,
7 That he may be judged and found guilty,
that his plea may be in vain.
8 May his days be few;
may another take his office.[y]
9 May his children be fatherless,
his wife, a widow.[z]
10 May his children be vagrant beggars,
driven from their hovels.
11 May the usurer snare all he owns,
strangers plunder all he earns.
12 May no one treat him kindly
or pity his fatherless children.
13 May his posterity be destroyed,[a]
his name cease in the next generation.
14 May the LORD remember his fathers' guilt;
his mother's sin not be canceled.[b]
15 May their guilt be always before the LORD,[c]
till their memory is banished from the earth,[d]
16 For he did not remember to show kindness,
but hounded the wretched poor
and brought death to the brokenhearted.
17 He loved cursing; may it come upon him;
he hated blessing; may none come to him.
18 May cursing clothe him like a robe;
may it enter his belly like water,
seep into his bones like oil.
19 May it be near as the clothes he wears,
as the belt always around him."

III

20 May the LORD bring all this* upon my accusers,
upon those who speak evil against me.

Ps 109 See RG 242–243

**Ps 109:** A lament notable for the length and vehemence of its prayer against evildoers (6–20); the cry to God (1) and the complaint (22–25) are brief in comparison. The psalmist is apparently the victim of a slander campaign, potentially devastating in a society where reputation and honor are paramount. In the emotional perspective of the psalm, there are only two types of people: the wicked and their poor victims. The psalmist is a poor victim (22. 31) and by that fact a friend of God and enemy of the wicked. The psalmist seeks vindication not on the basis of personal virtue but because of God's promise to protect the poor.

**109, 6: An accuser:** Hebrew *satan*, a word occurring in Jb 1–2 and Zec 3, 1–2. In the latter passage Satan stands at the right hand of the high priest to bring false accusations against him before God. Here the accuser is human.

**109, 20: May the LORD bring all this:** the psalmist prays that God ratify the curses of 6–19 and bring them upon the wicked.

r Pss 9, 12; 18, 50; 148, 13. s Pss 36, 6; 71, 19. t 8–14: Ps 60, 8–14. u Ru 4, 7–8. v Ps 44, 10. w Pss 35, 22; 83, 1. x Pss 35, 12; 38, 21; Prv 17, 13; Jer 18, 20. y Acts 1, 20. z Ex 22, 23; Jer 18, 21. a Ps 21, 11; Prv 10, 7. b Ex 20, 5. c Ps 90, 8. d Ps 34, 16.

21 But you, LORD, my God,
deal kindly with me for your name's sake;
in your great mercy rescue me.
22 For I am sorely in need;
my heart is pierced within me.
23 Like a lengthening shadow I near my end,
all but swept away like the locust.
24 My knees totter from fasting; [e]
my flesh has wasted away.
25 I have become a mockery to them;
when they see me, they shake their heads.
26 Help me, LORD, my God;
save me in your kindness.
27 Make them know this is your hand,
that you, LORD, have acted.
28 Though they curse, may you bless;
shame my foes, that your servant may rejoice.
29 Clothe my accusers with disgrace;
make them wear shame like a mantle.
30 I will give fervent thanks to the LORD;
before all I will praise my God.[f]
31 For God stands at the right hand of the poor
to defend them against unjust accusers.

Ps 111 See RG 242, 244

## PSALM 110*

### God Appoints the King both King and Priest

1 A psalm of David.

The LORD says to you, my lord:*
"Take your throne at my right hand,
while I make your enemies your footstool." [g]*

Ps 110 See RG 244, 251

2 The scepter of your sovereign might
the LORD will extend from Zion.
The LORD says: "Rule over your enemies!
3 Yours is princely power from the day of your birth.
In holy splendor before the daystar,*
like the dew I begot you." [h]*
4 The LORD has sworn and will not waver:
"Like Melchizedek* you are a priest forever." [i]
5 At your right hand is the Lord,
who crushes kings on the day of wrath,[j]
6 Who, robed in splendor, judges nations,
crushes heads across the wide earth,
7 Who drinks from the brook by the wayside*
and thus holds high his head.[k]

## PSALM 111*

### Praise of God for Goodness to Israel

1 Hallelujah.

I will praise the LORD with all my heart[l]
in the assembled congregation of the upright.*
2 Great are the works of the LORD,
to be treasured for all their delights.
3 Majestic and glorious is your* work,
your wise design endures forever.
4 You won renown for your wondrous deeds;
gracious and merciful is the LORD.[m]
5 You gave food to those who fear you,*
mindful of your covenant forever.
6 You showed powerful deeds to your people,

Ps 110: A royal psalm in which a court singer recites three oracles in which God assures the king that his enemies are conquered (1–2), makes the king "son" in traditional adoption language (3), gives priestly status to the king and promises to be with him in future military ventures (4–7).

110, 1: **The LORD says to you, my lord**: literally, "The LORD says to my lord," a polite form of address of an inferior to a superior. Cf 1 Sm 25, 25; 2 Sm 1, 10. The court singer refers to the king. Jesus in the synoptic gospels (Mt 22, 41–46 and parallels) takes the psalmist to be David and hence "my lord" refers to the messiah, who must be someone greater than David. **Your footstool**: in ancient times victorious kings put their feet on the prostrate bodies of their enemies.

110, 3: **Before the daystar**: possibly an expression for before the world began (Prv 8, 22). **Like the dew I begot you**: an adoption formula as in Pss 2, 7; 89, 27–28.

110, 4: **Like Melchizedek**: Melchizedek was the ancient king of Salem (Jerusalem) who blessed Abraham (Gn 14, 18–20); like other kings of the time he performed priestly functions. Heb 7 sees in Melchizedek a type of Christ.

110, 7: **Who drinks from the brook by the wayside**: the meaning is uncertain. Some see an allusion to a rite of royal consecration at the Gihon spring (cf 1 Kgs 1, 33. 38). Others find here an image of the divine warrior (or king) pursuing enemies so relentlessly that he does not stop long enough to eat and drink.

Ps 111: A temple singer (1) tells how God is revealed in Israel's history (2–10). The deeds reveal God's very self, powerful, merciful, faithful. The poem is an acrostic, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

111, 1: **In the assembled congregation of the upright**: in the temple. Cf Ps 149, 1.

111, 3: **Your**: the psalm refers to God in the third person throughout; the shift to the second person is for the sake of inclusive language.

111, 5: **Food to those who fear you**: probably a reference to the manna in the desert, which elsewhere is seen as a type of the Eucharist. Cf Jn 6, 31–33. 49–51.

e 24–25: Ps 69, 11–13. f Ps 111, 1. g Mt 22, 44; Acts 2, 34–35; 1 Cor 15, 25; Heb 1, 13; 8, 1; 10, 12–13; 1 Pt 3, 22. h Pss 2, 7; 89, 27; Is 49, 1. i Pss 89, 35; 132, 11; Gn 14, 18; Heb 5, 6; 7, 21. j Ps 2, 9; Rv 2, 27; 12, 5; 19, 15. k Ps 3, 4. l Ps 138, 1. m Pss 103, 8; 112, 4.

giving them the lands* of the nations.
7 The works of your hands are right and true,
reliable all your decrees,
8 Established forever and ever,
to be observed with loyalty and care.
9 You sent deliverance to your people,
ratified your covenant forever;
holy and awesome is your name.
10 The fear of the LORD* is the beginning of
wisdom; [n]
prudent are all who live by it.
Your praise endures forever.

## PSALM 112*

### The Blessings of the Just

1 Hallelujah!

Happy are those* who fear the LORD,
who greatly delight in God's commands. [o]
2 Their descendants shall be mighty in the land,
a generation upright and blessed.
3 Wealth and riches shall be in their homes;
their prosperity* shall endure forever.
4 They shine through the darkness, a light for
the upright; [p]
they are gracious, merciful, and just.
5 All goes well for those gracious in lending,
who conduct their affairs with justice.
6 They shall never be shaken;
the just shall be remembered forever. [q]
7 They shall not fear an ill report;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting the LORD.
8 Their hearts are tranquil, without fear,
till at last they look down on their foes.
9 Lavishly they give to the poor;
their prosperity shall endure forever; [r]
their horn* shall be exalted in honor.
10 The wicked shall be angry to see this;
they will gnash their teeth and waste away;
the desires of the wicked come to nothing.

## PSALM 113*

Ps 113
See RG
242

### Praise of God's Care of the Poor

1 Hallelujah!

I

Praise, you servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD. [s]
2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
both now and forever.
3 From the rising of the sun to its setting
let the name of the LORD be praised.

Ps 112
See RG
244

II

4 High above all nations is the LORD;
above the heavens God's glory. [t]
5 Who is like the LORD,
our God enthroned on high,
6 looking down on heaven and earth? [u]
7 The LORD raises the needy from the dust,
lifts the poor from the ash heap, [v]
8 Seats them with princes,
the princes of the people,
9 Gives the childless wife a home,
the joyful mother of children. [w]
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 114*

Ps 114
See RG
242, 245,
249

### The Lord's Wonders at the Exodus

1 When Israel came forth from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from an alien people,
2 Judah became God's holy place,

111, 6: **Lands**: literally, "inheritance, heritage."

111, 10: **The fear of the LORD**: reverence for God, the Hebrew term for religion.

Ps 112: An acrostic poem detailing the blessings received by those who remain close to God by obedience to the commandments. Among their blessings are children (2), wealth that enables them to be magnanimous (3. 5. 9), and virtue by which they encourage others (4). The just person is an affront to the wicked, whose hopes remain unfulfilled (10). The logic resembles Pss 1 and 111.

112, 1: **Happy are those**: literally, "Happy the person." "Person" is used typically, hence the plural translation.

112, 3: **Prosperity**: literally, "justice." In the Second Temple Period the word acquired the nuance of liberality and almsgiving. Cf Sir 3, 30; 7, 10; Mt 6, 1–4.

112, 9: **Their horn**: the symbol for vitality and honor.

Ps 113: A hymn exhorting the congregation to praise God's name, i.e., the way in which God is present in the world; the name is mentioned three times in 1–3. The divine name is especially honored in the temple (1) but its recognition is not limited by time (2) and space (3), for God is everywhere active (4–5) especially in rescuing the lowly faithful (7–9).

Ps 114: A hymn celebrating Israel's escape from Egypt, journey through the wilderness, and entry into the promised land, and the miracles of nature that bore witness to God's presence in their midst. In the perspective of the psalm, the people proceed directly from Egypt into the promised land (1–2). Sea and Jordan, which stood like soldiers barring the people from their land, flee before the mighty God as the earth recoils from the battle (3–4). The poet taunts the natural elements as one taunts defeated enemies (5–6).

n Prv 1, 7; 9, 10; Sir 1, 16. o Pss 1, 1–2; 119, 1–2; 128, 1. p Pss 37, 6; 97, 11; Prv 13, 9; Is 58, 10. q Prv 10, 7; Wis 8, 13. r Prv 22, 9; 2 Cor 9, 9. s Ps 135, 1. t Ps 148, 13. u Ps 89, 7–9. v Ps 107, 41; 1 Sm 2, 7–8. w 1 Sm 2, 5; Is 54, 1.

Israel, God's domain.[x]
3 The sea beheld and fled;*
the Jordan turned back.[y]
4 The mountains skipped like rams;
the hills, like lambs of the flock.[z]
5 Why was it, sea, that you fled?
Jordan, that you turned back?
6 You mountains, that you skipped like rams?
You hills, like lambs of the flock?
7 Tremble, earth, before the Lord,[a]
before the God of Jacob,
8 Who turned rock into pools of water,
stone into flowing springs.[b]*

## PSALM 115*

Ps 115 See RG 243

### The Greatness of the True God

I

1 Not to us, LORD, not to us
but to your name give glory
because of your faithfulness and love.[c]
2 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"[d]*
3 Our God is in heaven;
whatever God wills is done.[e]

II

4 Their idols are silver and gold,[f]
the work of human hands.[g]
5 They have mouths but do not speak,
eyes but do not see.
6 They have ears but do not hear,
noses but do not smell.
7 They have hands but do not feel,
feet but do not walk,
and no sound rises from their throats.
8 Their makers shall be like them,
all who trust in them.

III

9 The house of Israel trusts in the LORD,[h]
who is their help and shield.[i]
10 The house of Aaron trusts in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
11 Those who fear the LORD* trust in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us,
will bless the house of Israel,
will bless the house of Aaron,
13 Will bless those who fear the LORD,
small and great alike.
14 May the LORD increase your number,
you and your descendants.
15 May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
16 The heavens* belong to the LORD,
but the earth is given to us.[j]
17 The dead do not praise the LORD,
all those gone down into silence.[k]*
18 It is we who bless the LORD,
both now and forever.
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 116*

Ps 116 See RG 243

### Thanksgiving to God Who Saves from Death

I

1 I love the LORD, who listened
to my voice in supplication,
2 Who turned an ear to me

114, 3–4: Pairs of cosmic elements such as sea and rivers, mountains and hills, are sometimes mentioned in creation accounts. Personified here as warriors, the pairs tremble in fear before the Divine Warrior. The quaking also recalls the divine appearance in the storm at Sinai (Ex 19, 16–19) and elsewhere (Jgs 5, 4–5; Ps 18, 8–16).

114, 8: The miracles of giving drink to the people in the arid desert. Cf Ex 17, 1–7; Is 41, 17–18.

Ps 115: A response to the enemy taunt, "Where is your God?" This hymn to the glory of Israel's God (1–3) ridicules the lifeless idols of the nations (4–8), expresses in a litany the trust of the various classes of the people in God (9–11), invokes God's blessing on them as they invoke the divine name (12–15), and concludes as it began with praise of God. Ps 135, 15–18 similarly mocks the Gentile gods and has a similar litany and hymn (Ps 135, 19–21).

115, 2: **Where is their God?**: implies that God cannot help them.

115, 9–11: **The house of Israel . . . the house of Aaron . . . those fear the LORD**: the laity of Israelite birth, the priests, and the converts to Judaism. Cf Pss 118, 2–4; 135, 19–21. In the New Testament likewise "those who fear the Lord" means converts to Judaism (cf Acts 10, 2. 22. 35; 13, 16. 26).

115, 16: **The heavens**: literally, "the heaven of heavens" or "the highest heavens," i.e., above the firmament. See note on Ps 148, 4.

115, 17: See note on Ps 6, 6.

Ps 116: A thanksgiving in which the psalmist responds to divine rescue from mortal danger (3–4) and from near despair (10–11) with vows and temple sacrifices (13–14. 17–19). The Greek and Latin versions divide the psalm into two parts: 1–9 and 10–19, corresponding to its two major divisions.

x Ex 19, 6. y Ex 14, 21f; Jos 3, 14ff; Pss 66, 6; 74, 15. z Ps 29, 6; Wis 19, 9. a Ps 68, 9. b Ex 17, 6; Nm 20, 11. c Ez 36, 22–23. d Ps 79, 10. e Ps 135, 6. f 4–10: Ps 135, 15–19; Wis 15, 15–16; Is 44, 9f; Jer 10, 1–5. g Is 40, 19. h Ps 118, 2–4. i Ps 33, 20. j Gn 1, 28. k Pss 6, 6; 88, 11ff; Sir 17, 22f; Is 38, 18.

on the day I called.
3 I was caught by the cords of death;[l]*
the snares of Sheol had seized me;
I felt agony and dread.
4 Then I called on the name of the LORD,
"O LORD, save my life!"

II

5 Gracious is the LORD and just;
yes, our God is merciful.[m]
6 The LORD protects the simple;
I was helpless, but God saved me.
7 Return, my soul, to your rest;
the LORD has been good to you.[n]
8 For my soul has been freed from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from
stumbling.[o]
9 I shall walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.[p]*

III

10 I kept faith, even when I said,*
"I am greatly afflicted!"[q]
11 I said in my alarm,
"No one can be trusted!"[r]
12 How can I repay the LORD
for all the good done for me?
13 I will raise the cup of salvation*
and call on the name of the LORD.
14 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.
15 Too costly in the eyes of the LORD*
is the death of his faithful.[s]
16 LORD, I am your servant,
your servant, the child of your
maidservant;[t]
you have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.[u]
18 I will pay my vows to the LORD[v]
in the presence of all his people,
19 In the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 117*

### The Nations Called to Praise

Ps 117
See RG
242, 249

1 Praise the LORD, all you nations!
Give glory, all you peoples![w]
2 The LORD's love for us is strong;
the LORD is faithful forever.
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 118*

### Hymn of Thanksgiving

Ps 118
See RG
243, 251,
252

I

1 Give thanks to the LORD, who is good,[x]
whose love endures forever.
2 Let the house of Israel say:
God's love endures forever.
3 Let the house of Aaron say,
God's love endures forever.
4 Let those who fear the LORD say,[y]
God's love endures forever.

II

5 In danger I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me free.
6 The LORD is with me; I am not afraid;
what can mortals do against me?[z]
7 The LORD is with me as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on my foes.

**116, 3: The cords of death**: death is personified here; it attempts to capture the psalmist with snares and nets. Cf Ps 18, 6.

**116, 9: The land of the living**: the phrase elsewhere is an epithet of the Jerusalem temple (cf Pss 27, 13; 52, 7; Is 38, 11). Hence the psalmist probably refers to being present to God in the temple.

**116, 10: I kept faith, even when I said**: even in the days of despair, the psalmist did not lose all hope.

**116, 13: The cup of salvation**: probably the libation of wine poured out in gratitude for rescue. Cf Ex 25, 29; Nm 15, 5. 7. 10.

**116, 15: Too costly in the eyes of the LORD**: the meaning is that the death of God's faithful is grievous to God, not that God is pleased with the death. Cf Ps 72, 14. In Wis 3, 5–6 God accepts the death of the righteous as a sacrificial burnt offering.

**Ps 117**: This shortest of hymns calls on the nations to acknowledge God's supremacy. The supremacy of Israel's God has been demonstrated to them by the people's secure existence, which is owed entirely to God's gracious fidelity.

**Ps 118**: A thanksgiving liturgy accompanying a victory procession of the king and the people into the temple precincts. After an invocation in the form of a litany (1–4), the psalmist (very likely speaking in the name of the community) describes how the people confidently implored God's help (5–9) when hostile peoples threatened its life (10–14); vividly God's rescue is recounted (15–18). Then follows a dialogue at the temple gates between the priests and the psalmist as the latter enters to offer the thanksgiving sacrifice (19–25). Finally, the priests impart their blessing (26–27), and the psalmist sings in gratitude (28–29).

l Ps 18, 5; Jon 2, 3. m Ex 34, 6. n Ps 13, 6. o Ps 56, 14; Is 25, 8; Rv 21, 4. p Pss 27, 13; 56, 14; Is 38, 11. q 2 Cor 4, 13. r Ps 12, 2. s Ps 72, 14; Is 43, 4. t Pss 86, 16; 143, 12; Wis 9, 5. u Lv 7, 12ff. v Jon 2, 10. w Rom 15, 11. x Pss 100, 5; 136, 1f. y Ps 115, 9–11. z Ps 27, 1; Heb 13, 6.

8 Better to take refuge in the LORD[a]
than to put one's trust in mortals.
9 Better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put one's trust in princes.

III

10 All the nations surrounded me;
in the LORD's name I crushed them.
11 They surrounded me on every side;
in the LORD's name I crushed them.
12 They surrounded me like bees;[b]
they blazed like fire among thorns;
in the LORD's name I crushed them.
13 I was hard pressed and falling,
but the LORD came to my help.[c]
14 The LORD, my strength and might,
came to me as savior.[d]

IV

15 The joyful shout of deliverance
is heard in the tents of the victors:
"The LORD's right hand strikes with power;
16 the LORD's right hand is raised;
the LORD's right hand strikes with power."
17 I shall not die but live
and declare the deeds of the LORD.
18 The LORD chastised me harshly,
but did not hand me over to death.

V

19 Open the gates of victory;
I will enter and thank the LORD.[e]
20 This is the LORD's own gate,
where the victors enter.*
21 I thank you for you answered me;
you have been my savior.
22 The stone the builders rejected*
has become the cornerstone.[f]
23 By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.
24 This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice in it and be glad.
25 LORD, grant salvation!*
LORD, grant good fortune!

VI

26 Blessed is he
who comes in the name of the LORD.[g]
We bless you from the LORD's house.
27 The LORD is God and has given us light.
Join in procession with leafy branches
up to the horns of the altar.

VII

28 You are my God, I give you thanks;
my God, I offer you praise.
29 Give thanks to the LORD, who is good,
whose love endures forever.

Ps 119
See RG
244

## PSALM 119*

### A Prayer to God, the Lawgiver

ALEPH

1 Happy those whose way is blameless,
who walk by the teaching of the LORD.[h]
2 Happy those who observe God's decrees,
who seek the LORD with all their heart.[i]
3 They do no wrong;
they walk in God's ways.
4 You have given them the command
to keep your precepts with care.

**118, 20: Where the victors enter**: their victory has demonstrated that God favors them; they are "just" in the biblical sense.

**118, 22: The stone the builders rejected**: a proverb: what is insignificant to human beings has become great through divine election. The "stone" may originally have meant the foundation stone or capstone of the temple. The New Testament interpreted the verse as referring to the death and resurrection of Christ (Mt 21, 42; Acts 4, 11; cf Is 28, 16 and Rom 9, 33; 1 Pt 2, 7).

**118, 25: Grant salvation**: the Hebrew for this cry has come into English as "Hosanna." This cry and the words in 26 were used in the gospels to welcome Jesus entering the temple on Palm Sunday (Mk 11, 9–10).

**Ps 119**: This psalm, the longest by far in the Psalter, praises God for giving such splendid laws and instruction for people to live by. The author glorifies and thanks God for the Torah, prays for protection from sinners enraged by others' fidelity to the law, laments the cost of obedience, delights in the law's consolations, begs for wisdom to understand the precepts, and asks for the rewards of keeping them. Several expected elements do not appear in the psalm: Mount Sinai with its story of God's revelation and gift to Israel of instruction and commandments, the temple and other institutions related to revelation and laws (frequent in other psalms). The psalm is fascinated with God's word directing and guiding human life.

The poem is an acrostic; its twenty-two stanzas (of eight verses each) are in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses within a stanza begins with the same letter. Each verse contains one word for "instruction." The translation here given attempts to translate each Hebrew word for "instruction" with the same English word. There are, however, nine words for "instruction," not eight, so the principle of a different word for "instruction" in each verse cannot be maintained with perfect consistency. The nine words for "instruction" in the translation are: law, edict, command, precept, word, utterance, way, decree, and teaching.

a 8f: Ps 146, 3. b Dt 1, 44. c Ps 129, 1–2. d Ex 15, 2; Is 12, 2. e Is 26, 2. f Mt 21, 42; Lk 20, 17; Acts 4, 11; Rom 9, 33; 1 Pt 2, 7. g Mt 21, 9; 23, 39. h Pss 1, 1–2; 15, 2; 112, 1. i Dt 4, 29.

5 May my ways be firm
in the observance of your laws!
6 Then I will not be ashamed
to ponder all your commands.
7 I will praise you with sincere heart
as I study your just edicts.
8 I will keep your laws;
do not leave me all alone.

BETH

9 How can the young walk without fault?
Only by keeping your words.
10 With all my heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commands.
11 In my heart I treasure your promise,
that I may not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your laws.[j]
13 With my lips I recite
all the edicts you have spoken.
14 I find joy in the way of your decrees
more than in all riches.
15 I will ponder your precepts
and consider your paths.
16 In your laws I take delight;
I will never forget your word.

GIMEL

17 Be kind to your servant that I may live,
that I may keep your word.
18 Open my eyes to see clearly
the wonders of your teachings.
19 I am a sojourner in the land;[k]*
do not hide your commands from me.
20 At all times my soul is stirred
with longing for your edicts.
21 With a curse you rebuke the proud
who stray from your commands.
22 Free me from disgrace and contempt,
for I observe your decrees.
23 Though princes meet and talk against me,
your servant studies your laws.
24 Your decrees are my delight;
they are my counselors.

DALETH

25 I lie prostrate in the dust;[l]
give me life in accord with your word.
26 I disclosed my ways and you answered me;
teach me your laws.
27 Make me understand the way of your
precepts;
I will ponder your wondrous deeds.
28 I weep in bitter pain;
in accord with your word to strengthen me.
29 Lead me from the way of deceit;
favor me with your teaching.
30 The way of loyalty I have chosen;
I have set your edicts before me.
31 I cling to your decrees, LORD;
do not let me come to shame.
32 I will run the way of your commands,
for you open my docile heart.*

HE

33 LORD, teach me the way of your laws;
I shall observe them with care.[m]
34 Give me insight to observe your teaching,
to keep it with all my heart.
35 Lead me in the path of your commands,[n]
for that is my delight.
36 Direct my heart toward your decrees
and away from unjust gain.
37 Avert my eyes from what is worthless;
by your way give me life.
38 For your servant fulfill your promise
made to those who fear you.
39 Turn away from me the taunts I dread,
for your edicts bring good.
40 See how I long for your precepts;
in your justice give me life.

WAW

41 Let your love come to me, LORD,
salvation in accord with your promise.
42 Let me answer my taunters with a word,
for I trust in your word.
43 Do not take the word of truth from my mouth,
for in your edicts is my hope.

**119, 19: A sojourner in the land:** like someone without the legal protection of a native inhabitant, the psalmist has a special need for the guidance of God's teaching.

**119, 32: For you open my docile heart:** literally, "you make broad my heart."

j Pss 25, 4; 27, 11; 86, 11; 143, 8. 10. k Ps 39, 13. l Ps 44, 26. m Ps 19, 12. n Pss 25, 4; 27, 11; 86, 11; 143, 8. 10.

44 I will keep your teachings always,
for all time and forever.
45 I will walk freely in an open space
because I cherish your precepts.
46 I will speak openly of your decrees
without fear even before kings.
47 I delight in your commands,
which I dearly love.
48 I lift up my hands to your commands;*
I study your laws, which I love.

ZAYIN

49 Remember your word to your servant
by which you give me hope.
50 This is my comfort in affliction,
your promise that gives me life.
51 Though the arrogant utterly scorn me,
I do not turn from your teaching.
52 When I recite your edicts of old
I am comforted, LORD.
53 Rage seizes me because of the wicked;
they forsake your teaching.
54 Your laws become my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 Even at night I remember your name
in observance of your teaching, LORD.
56 This is my good fortune,
for I have observed your precepts.

HETH

57 My portion is the LORD;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I entreat you with all my heart:
have mercy on me in accord with your promise.
59 I have examined my ways
and turned my steps to your decrees.
60 I am prompt, I do not hesitate
in keeping your commands.
61 Though the snares of the wicked surround me,
your teaching I do not forget.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you
because your edicts are just.
63 I am the friend of all who fear you,
of all who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, LORD, is filled with your love; [o]
teach me your laws.

TETH

65 You have treated your servant well,
according to your word, O LORD.
66 Teach me wisdom and knowledge,
for in your commands I trust.
67 Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I hold to your promise.
68 You are good and do what is good;
teach me your laws.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but I observe your precepts with all my heart.
70 Their hearts are gross and fat; [p]
as for me, your teaching is my delight.
71 It was good for me to be afflicted,
in order to learn your laws.
72 Teaching from your lips is more precious to me
than heaps of silver and gold.

YODH

73 Your hands made me and fashioned me;
give me insight to learn your commands.
74 Those who fear you rejoice to see me,
because I hope in your word.
75 I know, LORD, that your edicts are just;
though you afflict me, you are faithful.
76 May your love comfort me
in accord with your promise to your servant.
77 Show me compassion that I may live,
for your teaching is my delight.
78 Shame the proud for oppressing me unjustly,
that I may study your precepts.
79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
those who acknowledge your decrees.
80 May I be wholehearted toward your laws,
that I may not be put to shame.

KAPH

81 My soul longs for your salvation;
I put my hope in your word. [q]
82 My eyes long to see your promise. [r]
When will you comfort me?

119, 48: **I lift up my hands to your commands**: to lift up the hands was an ancient gesture of reverence to God. Here the picture is applied to God's law.

o Ps 33, 5. p Pss 17, 10; 73, 7; Jb 15, 27. q Ps 130, 6. r Pss 25, 15; 123, 1–2; 141, 8.

83 I am like a wineskin shriveled by smoke,[s]
but I have not forgotten your laws.
84 How long can your servant survive?
When will your edict doom my foes?
85 The arrogant have dug pits for me;
defying your teaching.
86 All your commands are steadfast.
Help me! I am pursued without cause.
87 They have almost ended my life on earth,
but I do not forsake your precepts.
88 In your kindness give me life,
to keep the decrees you have spoken.

LAMEDH

89 Your word, LORD, stands forever;[t]*
it is firm as the heavens.
90 Through all generations your truth endures;
fixed to stand firm like the earth.
91 By your edicts they stand firm to this day,
for all things are your servants.
92 Had your teaching not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
93 I will never forget your precepts;
through them you give me life.
94 I am yours; save me,
for I cherish your precepts.
95 The wicked hope to destroy me,
but I pay heed to your decrees.
96 I have seen the limits of all perfection,
but your command is without bounds.

MEM

97 How I love your teaching, LORD!
I study it all day long.
98 Your command makes me wiser than my foes,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
because I ponder your decrees.
100 I have more insight than my elders,
because I observe your precepts.[u]
101 I keep my steps from every evil path,
that I may obey your word.
102 From your edicts I do not turn,
for you have taught them to me.
103 How sweet to my tongue is your promise,
sweeter than honey to my mouth![v]
104 Through your precepts I gain insight;
therefore I hate all false ways.

NUN

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.[w]
106 I make a solemn vow
to keep your just edicts.
107 I am very much afflicted, LORD;
give me life in accord with your word.
108 Accept my freely offered praise;[x]
LORD, teach me your decrees.
109 My life is always at risk,
but I do not forget your teaching.
110 The wicked have set snares for me,
but from your precepts I do not stray.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 My heart is set on fulfilling your laws;
they are my reward forever.

SAMEKH

113 I hate every hypocrite;
your teaching I love.
114 You are my refuge and shield;
in your word I hope.
115 Depart from me, you wicked,[y]
that I may observe the commands of my God.
116 Sustain me by your promise that I may live;
do not disappoint me in my hope.
117 Strengthen me that I may be safe,
ever to contemplate your laws.
118 You reject all who stray from your laws,
for vain is their deceit.
119 Like dross you regard all the wicked on earth;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh shudders with dread of you;
I hold your edicts in awe.

AYIN

121 I have fulfilled your just edict;
do not abandon me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's welfare;

**119, 89–91:** God's word creates the world, which manifests that word by its permanence and reliability.

s Jb 30, 30. t Is 40, 8. u Jb 32, 6; Wis 4, 8–9. v Ps 19, 11. w Ps 18, 29; Prv 6, 23. x Ps 50, 14. 23; Heb 13, 15. y Pss 6, 9; 139, 19; Jb 21, 14.

do not let the arrogant oppress me.
123 My eyes long to see your salvation
and the justice of your promise.
124 Act with kindness toward your servant;
teach me your laws.
125 I am your servant; give me discernment
that I may know your decrees.
126 It is time for the LORD to act;
they have disobeyed your teaching.
127 Truly I love your commands
more than the finest gold.
128 Thus I follow all your precepts;
every wrong way I hate.

PE

129 Wonderful are your decrees;
therefore I observe them.
130 The revelation of your words sheds light,
gives understanding to the simple.
131 I sigh with open mouth,
yearning for your commands.
132 Turn to me and be gracious,[z]
your edict for lovers of your name.
133 Steady my feet in accord with your promise;
do not let iniquity lead me.
134 Free me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Let your face shine upon your servant;
teach me your laws.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your teaching is not followed.

SADHE

137 You are righteous, LORD,
and just are your edicts.[a]
138 You have issued your decrees in justice
and in surpassing faithfulness.
139 I am consumed with rage,
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your servant loves your promise;
it has been proved by fire.
141 Though belittled and despised,
I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your justice is forever right,
your teaching forever true.
143 Though distress and anguish come upon me,
your commands are my delight.
144 Your decrees are forever just;
give me discernment that I may live.

QOPH

145 I call with all my heart, O LORD;
answer me that I may observe your laws.
146 I call to you to save me
that I may keep your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry out;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes greet the night watches
as I meditate on your promise.[b]
149 Hear my voice in your love, O LORD;
by your edict give me life.
150 Malicious persecutors draw near me;
they are far from your teaching.
151 You are near, O LORD;
reliable are all your commands.
152 Long have I known from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

RESH

153 Look at my affliction and rescue me,
for I have not forgotten your teaching.
154 Take up my cause and redeem me;[c]
for the sake of your promise give me life.
155 Salvation is far from sinners
because they do not cherish your laws.
156 Your compassion is great, O LORD;
in accord with your edicts give me life.
157 Though my persecutors and foes are many
I do not turn from your decrees.
158 I view the faithless with loathing,[d]
because they do not heed your promise.
159 See how I love your precepts, LORD;
in your kindness give me life.
160 Your every word is enduring;
all your just edicts are forever.

SHIN

161 Princes persecute me without reason,
but my heart reveres only your word.
162 I rejoice at your promise,
as one who has found rich spoil.

z Pss 25, 16; 86, 16. a Tb 3, 2. b Pss 63, 7; 77, 7. c Ps 43, 1. d Ps 139, 22.

163 Falsehood I hate and abhor;
your teaching I love.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
because your edicts are just.
165 Lovers of your teaching have much peace; [e]
for them there is no stumbling block.
166 I look for your salvation, LORD,
and I fulfill your commands.
167 I observe your decrees;
I love them very much.
168 I observe your precepts and decrees;
all my ways are before you.

TAW

169 Let my cry come before you, LORD; [f]
in keeping with your word give me
discernment.
170 Let my prayer come before you;
rescue me according to your promise.
171 May my lips pour forth your praise,
because you teach me your laws.
172 May my tongue sing of your promise,
for all your commands are just.
173 Keep your hand ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
174 I long for your salvation, LORD;
your teaching is my delight.
175 Let me live to praise you;
may your edicts give me help.
176 I have wandered like a lost sheep;
seek out your servant,
for I do not forget your commands. [g]

## PSALM 120*

Ps 120
See RG
242–243

### Prayer of a Returned Exile

1 A song of ascents.*

I

The LORD answered me
when I called in my distress: [h]
2 LORD, deliver me from lying lips,
from treacherous tongues. [i]

II

3 What will the Lord inflict on you,
O treacherous tongue,
and what more besides?*
4 A warrior's sharpened arrows
and fiery coals of brushwood! [j]*

III

5 Alas, I was an alien in Meshech,*
I lived near the tents of Kedar!
6 Too long did I live
among those who hated peace.
7 When I spoke of peace,
they were for war. [k]

## PSALM 121*

Ps 121
See RG
243, 250

### The Lord My Guardian

1 A song of ascents.

I

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.*
From where will my help come? [l]
2 My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth. [m]

**Ps 120:** A thanksgiving, reporting divine rescue (1) yet with fervent prayer for further protection against lying attackers (2–4). The psalmist is acutely conscious of living away from God's own land where divine peace prevails (5–7).

**120, 1: Song of ascents:** Pss 120–134 all begin with this superscription. Most probably these fifteen psalms once formed a collection of psalms sung when pilgrims went to Jerusalem, since one "ascended" to Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12, 28; Pss 24, 3; 122, 4; Lk 2, 42) or to the house of God or to an altar (1 Kgs 12, 33; 2 Kgs 23, 2; Ps 24, 3). Less probable is the explanation that these psalms were sung by the exiles when they "ascended" to Jerusalem from Babylonia (cf Ezr 7, 9). The idea, found in the Mishnah, that the fifteen steps on which the Levites sang corresponded to these fifteen psalms (*Middot* 2, 5) must underlie the Vulgate translation *canticum graduum*, "song of the steps" or "gradual song."

**120, 3: More besides:** a common curse formula in Hebrew was "May the Lord do such and such evils to you [the evils being specified], and add *still more* to them." Cf 1 Sm 3, 17; 14, 44; 25, 22. Here the psalmist is at a loss for a suitable malediction.

**120, 4: Coals of brushwood:** coals made from the stalk of the broom plant burn with intense heat. The psalmist thinks of lighted coals cast at his enemies.

**120, 5: Meshech** was in the far north (Gn 10, 2) and **Kedar** was a tribe of the north Arabian desert (Gn 25, 13). The psalmist may be thinking generally of all aliens living among inhospitable peoples.

**Ps 121:** A blessing given to someone embarking on a dangerous journey, whether a soldier going on a campaign or a pilgrim returning home from the temple. People look anxiously at the wooded hills. Will God protect them on their journey (1)? The speaker declares that God is not confined to a place or a time (2), that every step is guarded (3–4); night and day (5–6) God watches over their every movement (7–8).

**121, 1: The mountains:** possibly Mount Zion, the site of the temple and hence of safety, but more probably mountains as a place of dangers, causing anxiety to the psalmist.

e Ps 72, 7. f Ps 88, 3. g Is 53, 6; Jer 50, 6; Lk 15, 1–7. h Jon 2, 3. i Ps 12, 3–5; Sir 51, 3. j Pss 11, 6; 140, 11; Prv 16, 27. k Pss 35, 20; 140, 3–4. l Jer 3, 23. m Pss 124, 8; 146, 6.

II

3 God will not allow your foot to slip; [n]
your guardian does not sleep.
4 Truly, the guardian of Israel
never slumbers nor sleeps.
5 The LORD is your guardian;*
the LORD is your shade
at your right hand. [o]
6 By day the sun cannot harm you,
nor the moon by night. [p]
7 The LORD will guard you from all evil,
will always guard your life. [q]
8 The LORD will guard your coming and going
both now and forever. [r]

Ps 123
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 122*

### A Pilgrim's Prayer for Jerusalem

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

I

I rejoiced when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD." [s]
2 And now our feet are standing
within your gates, Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem, built as a city,
walled round about. [t]*
4 Here the tribes have come,
the tribes of the LORD,
As it was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD. [u]
5 Here are the thrones of justice,
the thrones of the house of David.

II

6 For the peace of Jersusalem pray:
"May those who love you prosper!
7 May peace be within your ramparts,
prosperity within your towers." [v]
8 For family and friends I say,
"May peace be yours."
9 For the house of the LORD, our God, I pray,
"May blessings be yours."

Ps 122
See RG
242

## PSALM 123*

### Reliance on the Lord

1 A song of ascents.

To you I raise my eyes,
to you enthroned in heaven. [w]
2 Yes, like the eyes of a servant
on the hand of his master,
Like the eyes of a maid
on the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes are on the LORD our God,
till we are shown favor.
3 Show us favor, LORD, show us favor,
for we have our fill of contempt. [x]
4 We have our fill of insult from the insolent,
of disdain from the arrogant.

## PSALM 124*

### God, the Rescuer of the People

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

I

Had not the LORD been with us,
let Israel say, [y]
2 Had not the LORD been with us,
when people rose against us,
3 They would have swallowed us alive, [z]
for their fury blazed against us.
4 The waters would have engulfed us,

Ps 124
See RG
243

**121, 5–6:** The image of shade, a symbol of protection, is apt: God as shade protects from the harmful effects that ancients believed were caused by the sun and moon.

**Ps 122:** A song of Zion, sung by pilgrims obeying the law to visit Jerusalem three times on a journey. The singer anticipates joining the procession into the city (1–3). Jerusalem is a place of encounter, where the people praise God (4) and hear the divine justice mediated by the king (5). The very buildings bespeak God's power (cf Ps 48, 13–15). May the grace of this place transform the people's lives (6–9)!

**122, 3: Walled round about:** literally, "which is joined to it," probably referring both to the density of the buildings and to the dense population.

**Ps 123:** A lament that begins as a prayer of an individual (1), who expresses by a touching comparison exemplary confidence in God (2). The psalm ends in prayer that God relieve the people's humiliation at the hands of the arrogant (3–4).

**Ps 124:** A thanksgiving which teaches that Israel's very existence is owed to God who rescues them. In the first part Israel's enemies are compared to the mythic sea dragon (2b–3a; cf Jer 51, 34) and Flood (3b–5; cf Is 51, 9–10). The psalm heightens the malice of human enemies by linking them to the primordial enemies of God's creation. Israel is a bird freed from the trapper's snare (6–8)—freed originally from Pharaoh and now from the current danger.

**124, 8: Our help is the name:** for the idiom, see Ex 18, 4.

**Ps 125:** In response to exilic anxieties about the ancient promises of restoration, the psalm expresses confidence that God will

n Pss 66, 9; 91, 12; 1 Sm 2, 9; Prv 3, 23. o Pss 16, 8; 73, 23. p Wis 18, 3; Is 25, 4; 49, 10. q Ps 97, 10. r Dt 28, 6. s Pss 43, 3–4; 84, 2–5. t Ps 48, 13–14. u Dt 16, 16. v Ps 128, 5. w Pss 25, 15; 119, 82; 141, 8. x Ps 44, 13–14; Jb 12, 4. y Ps 129, 1. z Prv 1, 12.

the torrent overwhelmed us;[a]
5 seething waters would have drowned us.
II
6 Blessed be the LORD, who did not leave us
to be torn by their fangs.
7 We escaped with our lives
like a bird from the fowler's snare;
the snare was broken and we escaped.
8 Our help is the name* of the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.[b]

## PSALM 125*

### Israel's Protector

1 A song of ascents.
I
Like Mount Zion are they
who trust in the LORD,
unshakable, forever enduring.[c]
2 As mountains surround Jerusalem,
the LORD surrounds his people
both now and forever.[d]
II
3 The scepter of the wicked will not prevail
in the land given to the just,*
Lest the just themselves
turn their hands to evil.
III
4 Do good, LORD, to the good,
to those who are upright of heart.[e]
5 But those who turn aside to crooked ways
may the LORD send down with the wicked.[f]
Peace upon Israel![g]

## PSALM 126*

### The Reversal of Zion's Fortunes

1 A song of ascents.
I
When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,[h]
then we thought we were dreaming.
2 Our mouths were filled with laughter;
our tongues sang for joy.[i]
Then it was said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
3 The LORD had done great things for us;
Oh, how happy we were!
4 Restore again our fortunes, LORD,
like the dry stream beds of the Negeb.*
II
5 Those who sow in tears
will reap with cries of joy.[j]
6 Those who go forth weeping,
carrying sacks of seed,
Will return with cries of joy,
carrying their bundled sheaves.

Ps 125 See RG 243

## PSALM 127*

### The Need of God's Blessing

1 A song of ascents. Of Solomon.
I
Unless the LORD build the house,
they labor in vain who build.
Unless the LORD guard the city,
in vain does the guard keep watch.
2 It is vain for you to rise early
and put off your rest at night,
To eat bread earned by hard toil—
all this God gives to his beloved in sleep.[k]
II
3 Children too are a gift from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb, a reward.[l]
4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children born in one's youth.
5 Blessed are they whose quivers are full.
They will never be shamed
contending with foes at the gate.*

Ps 127 See RG 244

Ps 126 See RG 242–243

surround the people as the mountains surround Zion (1–2). The just will not be contaminated by the wicked (3). May God judge between the two groups (4–5).

**125, 3: The land given to the just**: literally, "the lot of the just." The promised land was divided among the tribes of Israel by lot (Nm 26, 55; Jos 18). **The just** are the members of the people who are obedient to God. If the domination of the wicked were to continue in the land, even the just would be infected by their evil attitudes.

**Ps 126**: A lament probably sung shortly after Israel's return from exile. The people rejoice that they are in Zion (1–3) but mere presence in the holy city is not enough; they must pray for the prosperity and the fertility of the land (4). The last verses are probably an oracle of promise: the painful work of sowing will be crowned with life (5–6).

**126, 4: Like the dry stream beds of the Negeb**: the psalmist prays for rain in such abundance that the dry riverbeds will run.

**Ps 127**: The psalm puts together two proverbs (1–2 and 3–5) on God establishing "houses" or families. The prosperity of human groups is not the work of humans but the gift of God.

**127, 5: At the gate**: the reference is not to enemies besieging

a Pss 18, 5; 69, 2. b Pss 121, 2; 146, 6. c Prv 10, 25. d Dt 32, 11. e Ps 18, 25ff. f Prv 3, 32. g Ps 128, 6. h Ps 14, 7. i Jb 8, 21. j Bar 4, 23; Is 65, 19. k Eccl 2, 24. l Pss 115, 14; 128, 3; Dt 28, 11; Prv 17, 6.

Ps 128
See RG
244

## PSALM 128*

### The Happy Home of the Just

1 A song of ascents.

I

Happy are all who fear the LORD,*
who walk in the ways of God. [m]
2 What your hands provide you will enjoy;
you will be happy and prosper: [n]
3 Like a fruitful vine
your wife within your home,
Like olive plants
your children around your table. [o]
4 Just so will they be blessed
who fear the LORD.

II

Ps 130
See RG
242–243

5 May the LORD bless you from Zion,
all the days of your life [p]
That you may share Jerusalem's joy
6 and live to see your children's children. [q]
Peace upon Israel! [r]

Ps 129
See RG
243

## PSALM 129*

### Against Israel's Enemies

1 A song of ascents.

I

Much have they oppressed me from my youth,
now let Israel say. [s]
2 Much have they oppressed me from my
youth, [t]
yet they have not prevailed.
3 Upon my back the plowers plowed,
as they traced their long furrows. [u]
4 But the just LORD cut me free
from the ropes of the yoke of the wicked.*

II

5 May they be scattered in disgrace,
all who hate Zion.
6 May they be like grass on the rooftops*
withered in early growth, [v]
7 Never to fill the reaper's hands,
nor the arms of the binders of sheaves,
8 With none passing by to call out:
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you!*
We bless you in the name of the LORD!" [w]

## PSALM 130*

### Prayer for Pardon and Mercy

1 A song of ascents.

I

Out of the depths* I call to you, LORD;
2 Lord, hear my cry!
May your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy. [x]
3 If you, LORD, mark our sins,
Lord, who can stand? [y]
4 But with you is forgiveness
and so you are revered.*

II

5 I wait with longing for the LORD,
my soul waits for his word. [z]

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the walls of a city but to adversaries in litigation. Law courts functioned in the open area near the main city gate. The more adult sons a man had, the more forceful he would appear in disputes. Cf Prv 31, 23.

**Ps 128:** A statement that the ever-reliable God will bless the reverent (1). God's blessing is concrete: satisfaction and prosperity, a fertile spouse and abundant children (2–4). The perspective is that of the adult male, ordinarily the ruler and representative of the household to the community. The last verses extend the blessing to all the people for generations to come (5–6).

**128, 1: All who fear the LORD:** literally, singular: "the one fearing," is used in a typical sense and so is translated by the plural.

**Ps 129:** A psalm giving thanks for God's many rescues of Israel over the long course of their history (1–4); the people pray that their oppressors never know the joy of harvest (5–8).

**129, 4: The ropes of the yoke of the wicked:** usually understood as the rope for yoking animals to the plow. If it is severed, the plowing (cf 3) comes to a halt.

**129, 6: Like grass on the rooftops:** after the spring rains, grass would sprout from the coat of mud with which the flat roofs of simple houses were covered, but when the dry summer began there was no moisture in the thin roof-covering to sustain the grass.

**129, 8: The blessing of the LORD be upon you:** harvesters greeted one another with such blessings. Cf Ru 2, 4.

**Ps 130:** This lament, a Penitential Psalm, is the *De profundis* used in liturgical prayers for the faithful departed. In deep sorrow the psalmist cries to God (1–2), asking for mercy (3–4). The psalmist's trust (5–6) becomes a model for the people (7–8).

**130, 1: The depths:** Sheol here is a metaphor of total misery. Deep anguish makes the psalmist feel "like those descending to the pit" (Ps 143, 7).

**130, 4: And so you are revered:** the experience of God's mercy leads one to a greater sense of God.

m Ps 112, 1. n Ps 112, 3. o Jb 29, 5; Ps 144, 12. p Pss 20, 3; 134, 3. q Jb 42, 16; Prv 17, 6. r Ps 125, 5. s Ps 124, 1. t Ps 118, 13. u Is 51, 23. v Is 37, 27. w Ps 118, 26. x Pss 5, 2–3; 55, 2–3; 86, 6; Lam 3, 55–56; Jon 2, 3. y Na 1, 6. z Ps 119, 81.

6 My soul looks for the Lord
more than sentinels for daybreak.[a]
More than sentinels for daybreak,
7 let Israel look for the LORD,
For with the LORD is kindness,
with him is full redemption,[b]
8 And God will redeem Israel
from all their sins.[c]

## PSALM 131*

### Humble Trust in God

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

LORD, my heart is not proud;
nor are my eyes haughty.
I do not busy myself with great matters,
with things too sublime for me.[d]
2 Rather, I have stilled my soul,
hushed it like a weaned child.
Like a weaned child on its mother's lap,
so is my soul within me.[e]
3 Israel, hope in the LORD,
now and forever.

## PSALM 132*

### The Covenant between David and God

1 A song of ascents.

I

LORD, remember David
and all his anxious care;*
2 How he swore an oath to the LORD,
vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:*
3 "I will not enter the house where I live,[f]
nor lie on the couch where I sleep;
4 I will give my eyes no sleep,
my eyelids no rest,
5 Till I find a home for the LORD,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."
6 "We have heard of it in Ephrathah;*
we have found it in the fields of Jaar.*
7 Let us enter God's dwelling;
let us worship at God's footstool."[g]
8 "Arise, LORD, come to your resting place,[h]
you and your majestic ark.
9 Your priests will be clothed with justice;
your faithful will shout for joy."
10 For the sake of David your servant,
do not reject your anointed.

II

11 The LORD swore an oath to David,
a pledge never to be broken:[i]
"Your own offspring[j] I will set upon your throne.
12 If your sons observe my covenant,
the laws I shall teach them,
Their sons, in turn,
shall sit forever on your throne."
13 Yes, the LORD has chosen Zion,
desired it for a dwelling:
14 "This is my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I desire it.
15 I will bless Zion with meat;
its poor I will fill with bread.
16 I will clothe its priests with blessing;
its faithful shall shout for joy.[k]
17 There I will make a horn sprout for David's line;[l]*
I will set a lamp for my anointed.

Ps 131 See RG 243

Ps 132 See RG 244, 249

**Ps 131:** A song of trust, in which the psalmist gives up self-sufficiency (1), like a babe enjoying the comfort of its mother's lap (2), thus providing a model for Israel's faith (3).

**Ps 132:** A song for a liturgical ceremony in which the ark, the throne of Israel's God, was carried in procession to the temple. The singer asks that David's care for the proper housing of the ark be regarded with favor (1–5), and tells how it was brought to Jerusalem (6–10). There follows God's promise of favor to the Davidic dynasty (11–12) and to Zion (13–17). The transfer of the ark to the tent in Jerusalem is described in 2 Sm 6.

**132, 1: All his anxious care:** to build the temple. Cf 2 Sm 7, 1–17 and 1 Kgs 8, 17.

**132, 2. 5: Mighty One of Jacob:** one of the titles of Israel's God. Cf Gn 49, 24; Is 49, 26; 60, 16.

**132, 6: Ephrathah:** the homeland of David. Cf Ru 4, 11. **The fields of Jaar:** poetic for Kiriath-jearim, a town west of Jerusalem, where the ark remained for several generations. Cf 1 Sm 7, 1–2 ; 2 Sm 6, 2; 1 Chr 13, 5–6.

**132, 17: A horn sprout for David's line:** the image of the horn, a symbol of strength, is combined with that of a "sprout," a term used for the Davidic descendant (cf Jer 23, 5; 33, 15; Zec 3, 8; 6, 12). Early Christians referred the latter designation to Christ as son of David (Lk 1, 69).

a Is 21, 11; 26, 9. b Pss 86, 15; 100, 5; 103, 8. c Ps 25, 22; Mt 1, 21. d Ps 139, 6. e Is 66, 12–13. f 2 Sm 7; 1 Chr 28, 2. g Ps 99, 5. h 8–10: Pss 2, 2; 89, 21; 95, 11; Nm 10, 35; 2 Chr 6, 41–42; Sir 24, 7. i Ps 110, 4; 2 Sm 7, 12. j 11–14: Ps 68, 17; 1 Kgs 8, 13; Sir 24, 7. k 2 Chr 6, 41; Is 61, 10. l Is 11, 1; Jer 33, 15; Ez 29, 21; Zec 3, 8; Lk 1, 69.

Ps 135
See RG
242, 245

18 His foes I will clothe with shame,
but on him my crown shall gleam."

Ps 133
See RG
245

## PSALM 133*

### A Vision of a Blessed Community

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

How good it is, how pleasant,
where the people* dwell as one!
2 Like precious ointment* on the head, [m]
running down upon the beard,
Upon the beard of Aaron,
upon the collar of his robe.
3 Like dew* of Hermon* coming down
upon the mountains of Zion. [n]
There the LORD has lavished blessings,
life for evermore! [o]

Ps 134
See RG
245

## PSALM 134*

### Exhortation to the Night Watch to Bless God

1 A song of ascents.

Come, bless the LORD,
all you servants of the LORD*
Who stand in the house of the LORD
through the long hours of night. [p]
2 Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary, [q]
and bless the LORD.
3 May the LORD who made heaven and earth [r]
bless you from Zion.

## PSALM 135*

### Praise of God, the Ruler and Benefactor of Israel

1 Hallelujah!

I

Praise the name of the LORD!
Praise, you servants of the LORD, [s]
2 Who stand in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God! [t]
3 Praise the LORD; the LORD is good!
Sing to God's name; it is gracious!
4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob,
Israel as a treasured possession. [u]*

II

5 I know that the LORD is great,
our Lord is greater than all gods. [v]
6 Whatever the LORD wishes
he does in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and in all the deeps. [w]
7 He raises storm clouds from the end of the earth,
makes lightning and rain,
brings forth wind from the storehouse. [x]

III

8 He struck down Egypt's firstborn, [y]
human and beast alike,
9 And sent signs and portents against you, Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his servants.
10 The Lord struck down many nations, [z]
slew mighty kings—

**Ps 133:** A benediction over a peaceful community, most probably the people Israel, but appropriate too for Israelite families (1). The history of Israel, whether of its ancestors in the book of Genesis or of later periods, was a history of distinct groups struggling to live in unity. Here that unity is declared blessed, like the holy oils upon the priest Aaron or the dew of the rainless summer that waters the crops (2–3).

**133, 1: The people:** literally, "brothers," i.e., male and female members of a kin group or people—most probably, the people Israel.

**133, 2: Ointment:** oil was used at the consecration of the high priest (Ex 30, 22–33).

**133, 3: Dew:** dew was an important source of moisture in the dry climate (Gn 27, 28; Hos 14, 6). **Hermon:** the majestic snow-capped mountain visible in the north of Palestine.

**Ps 134:** A brief liturgy exhorting the temple singers to acknowledge the great deeds of God at a night service (cf Is 30, 29). Mount Zion is the place from which blessings affect the lives of humans, for there Israel's God dwells.

**134, 1: Servants of the LORD:** priests and Levites. Cf Dt 10, 8; Pss 113, 1; 135, 1; Dn 3, 84–85.

**Ps 135:** The hymn begins and ends with an invitation to praise God (1–3. 19–20) for the great act of choosing Israel (4). The story of Israel's emergence as a people is told in 5–14; God created and redeemed the people, easily conquering all opposition. God's defeat of hostile powers means that the powers themselves and their images are useless (15–18). The last three verses appear also in Ps 115, 4–8.

**135, 4:** Though all nations are God's, Israel has a special status as God's "treasured" people: Ex 19, 5; Dt 7, 6; 14, 2; 26, 18; Mal 3, 17.

m Ex 30, 25. 30. n Hos 14, 6. o Dt 28, 8; 30, 20. p Ps 135, 1–2; 1 Chr 9, 33. q Pss 28, 2; 141, 2. r Pss 20, 3; 128, 5; Nm 6, 24. s Ps 113, 1. t Ps 134, 1. u Pss 33, 12; 144, 15; Ex 19, 6; Dt 7, 6. v Ps 95, 3; Ex 18, 11. w Ps 115, 3. x Ps 148, 8; Jer 10, 13; 51, 16; Jb 37, 9. y 8–9: Pss 78, 51; 105, 27. 36; 136, 10; Ex 12, 29. z 10–12: Nm 21, 21–35; Dt 2, 24—3, 17; Ps 136, 17–22.

11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
Og, king of Bashan,
all the kings of Canaan—
12 And made their land a heritage,
a heritage for Israel his people.
13 O LORD, your name is forever,
your renown, from age to age! [a]
14 For the LORD defends his people,
shows mercy to his servants. [b]

IV

15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, [c]
the work of human hands.
16 They have mouths but speak not;
they have eyes but see not;
17 They have ears but hear not;
no breath is in their mouths.
18 Their makers shall be like them,
all who trust in them.

V

19 House of Israel, bless the LORD! [d]
House of Aaron, bless the LORD!
20 House of Levi, bless the LORD!
You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!
21 Blessed from Zion be the LORD,
who dwells in Jerusalem!
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 136*

### Hymn of Thanksgiving for God's Everlasting Love

I

1 Praise the LORD, who is so good; [e]
God's love endures forever;
2 Praise the God of gods;
God's love endures forever;
3 Praise the Lord of lords;
God's love endures forever;

II

4 Who alone has done great wonders, [f]
God's love endures forever;
5 Who skillfully made the heavens, [g]
God's love endures forever;
6 Who spread the earth upon the waters, [h]
God's love endures forever;
7 Who made the great lights,
God's love endures forever;
8 The sun to rule the day,
God's love endures forever;
9 The moon and stars to rule the night, [i]
God's love endures forever;

III

10 Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, [j]
God's love endures forever;
11 And led Israel from their midst,
God's love endures forever;
12 With mighty hand and outstretched arm, [k]
God's love endures forever;
13 Who split in two the Red Sea,
God's love endures forever;
14 And led Israel through,
God's love endures forever;
15 But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, [l]
God's love endures forever;
16 Who led the people through the desert, [m]
God's love endures forever;

IV

17 Who struck down great kings, [n]
God's love endures forever;
18 Slew powerful kings,
God's love endures forever;
19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
God's love endures forever;
20 Og, king of Bashan,
God's love endures forever;
21 And made their lands a heritage,
God's love endures forever;
22 A heritage for Israel,* God's servant,
God's love endures forever.

Ps 136 See RG 242

**Ps 136:** The hymn praises Israel's God ("the God of gods," 2), who has created the world in which Israel lives. The refrain occurring after every line suggests that a speaker and chorus sang the psalm in antiphonal fashion. A single act of God is described in 4–25: God arranges the heavens and the earth as the environment for human community, and then creates the community by freeing them and giving them land. In the final section (23–25) God, who created the people and gave them land, continues to protect and nurture them.

**136, 22: A heritage for Israel:** the land was given to Israel by God to be handed on to future generations.

a Ps 102, 13; Ex 3, 15. b Dt 32, 36. c 15–18: Ps 115, 4–6. 8. d 19–20: Ps 118, 2–4. e Pss 100, 5; 118, 1. f Ps 72, 18. g Gn 1, 9–19. h Ps 24, 2. i Jer 31, 35. j Ex 12, 29. 51; 14, 22. 27; 15, 22; Pss 78, 51–52; 135, 8. k Dt 4, 34. l Ex 14, 21f. m Dt 8, 2. 15. n 17–22: Ps 135, 10–12.

V

23 The LORD remembered us in our misery,
God's love endures forever;
24 Freed us from our foes,
God's love endures forever;
25 And gives food to all flesh,
God's love endures forever.

VI

26 Praise the God of heaven,
God's love endures forever.

Ps 138 See RG 243

Ps 137 See RG 242–243

## PSALM 137*

### Sorrow and Hope in Exile

I

1 By the rivers of Babylon
we sat mourning and weeping
when we remembered Zion. [o]
2 On the poplars* of that land
we hung up our harps. [p]
3 There our captors asked us
for the words of a song;
Our tormentors, for a joyful song:
"Sing for us a song of Zion!"
4 But how could we sing a song of the LORD
in a foreign land?

II

5 If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand wither. [q]
6 May my tongue stick to my palate
if I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
beyond all my delights.

III

7 Remember, LORD, against Edom
that day at Jerusalem.
They said: "Level it, level it
down to its foundations!" [r]
8 Fair Babylon, you destroyer,
happy those who pay you back
the evil you have done us! [s]
9 Happy those who seize your children
and smash them against a rock. [t]*

## PSALM 138*

### Hymn of a Grateful Heart

1 Of David.

I

I thank you, LORD, with all my heart; [u]
before the gods* to you I sing.
2 I bow low toward your holy temple;
I praise your name for your fidelity and love.
For you have exalted over all
your name and your promise.
3 When I cried out, you answered;
you strengthened my spirit.

II

4 All the kings of earth will praise you, LORD,
when they hear the words of your mouth.
5 They will sing of the ways of the LORD:
"How great is the glory of the LORD!"
6 The LORD is on high, but cares for the lowly [v]
and knows the proud from afar.
7 Though I walk in the midst of dangers,
you guard my life when my enemies rage.
You stretch out your hand;
your right hand saves me.
8 The LORD is with me to the end.
LORD, your love endures forever.
Never forsake the work of your hands!

Ps 137: A temple singer refuses to sing the people's sacred songs in an alien land despite demands from Babylonian captors (1–4). The singer swears an oath by what is most dear to a musician—hands and tongue—to exalt Jerusalem always (5–6). The psalm ends with a prayer that the old enemies of Jerusalem, Edom and Babylon, be destroyed (7–9).

137, 2: **Poplars**: sometimes incorrectly translated "willow." The Euphrates poplar is a high tree common on riverbanks in the Orient.

137, 9: **Happy those who seize your children and smash them against a rock**: the infants represent the future generations, and so must be destroyed if the enemy is truly to be eradicated.

Ps 138: A thanksgiving to God, who came to the rescue of the psalmist. Divine rescue was not the result of the psalmist's virtues but of God's loving fidelity (1–3). The act is not a private transaction but a public act that stirs the surrounding nations to praise God's greatness and care for the people (4–6). The psalmist, having experienced salvation, trusts that God will always be there in moments of danger (7–8).

138, 1: **Before the gods**: i.e., heavenly beings, who were completely subordinate to Israel's God. The earthly temple represents the heavenly palace of God.

o Ez 3, 15; Lam 3, 48. p Is 24, 8; Lam 5, 14. q Jer 51, 50. r Jer 49, 7; Lam 4, 21–22; Ez 25, 12–14. s Is 47, 1–3; Jer 50–51. t Hos 14, 1. u Ps 9, 1. v Lk 1, 51–52.

## PSALM 139*

### The All-knowing and Ever-present God

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
2 you know when I sit and stand; [w]*
you understand my thoughts from afar.
3 My travels and my rest you mark;
with all my ways you are familiar.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
LORD, you know it all.
5 Behind and before you encircle me
and rest your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is beyond me,
far too lofty for me to reach. [x]

II

7 Where can I hide from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
8 If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in Sheol, you are there too. [y]
9 If I fly with the wings of dawn*
and alight beyond the sea,*
10 Even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,
and night shall be my light" —*
12 Darkness is not dark for you,
and night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one. [z]

III

13 You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb. [a]
14 I praise you, so wonderfully you made me;
wonderful are your works!
My very self you knew;
15 my bones were not hidden from you,
When I was being made in secret,
fashioned as in the depths of the earth.*
16 Your eyes foresaw my actions;
in your book all are written down; [b]
my days were shaped, before one came to be.

IV

17 How precious to me are your designs, O God;
how vast the sum of them!
18 Were I to count, they would outnumber the sands;
to finish, I would need eternity. [c]
19 If only you would destroy the wicked, O God,
and the bloodthirsty would depart from me! [d]
20 Deceitfully they invoke your name;
your foes swear faithless oaths.
21 Do I not hate, LORD, those who hate you?
Those who rise against you, do I not loathe? [e]
22 With fierce hatred I hate them,
enemies I count as my own.

V

23 Probe me, God, know my heart;
try me, know my concerns. [f]
24 See if my way is crooked,
then lead me in the ancient paths.*

Ps 139
See RG
245, 250

## PSALM 140*

### Prayer for Deliverance from the Wicked

1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

I

2 Deliver me, LORD, from the wicked;
preserve me from the violent, [g]

Ps 140
See RG
242–243

**Ps 139:** A hymnic meditation on God's omnipresence and omniscience. The psalmist is keenly aware of God's all-knowing gaze (1–6), of God's presence in every part of the universe (7–12), and of God's control over the psalmist's very self (13–16). Summing up 1–16, 17–18 express wonder. There is only one place hostile to God's rule—wicked people. The psalmist prays to be removed from their company (19–24).

**139, 2: When I sit and stand:** in all my physical movement.

**139, 9: Fly with the wings of dawn:** go to the extremities of the east. **Beyond the sea:** uttermost bounds of the west; the sea is the Mediterranean.

**139, 11: Night shall be my light:** night to me is what day is to others.

**139, 15: The depths of the earth:** figurative language for the womb, stressing the hidden and mysterious operations that occur there.

**139, 24: My way . . . the ancient paths:** the manner of living of our ancestors, who were faithful to God's will. Cf Jer 6, 16.

**Ps 140:** A lament seeking rescue from violent and treacherous foes (2–6). The psalmist remains trusting (7–8), vigorously praying that the plans of the wicked recoil upon themselves (9–12). A serene statement of praise ends the psalm (13–14). The psalmist is content to be known as one of "the needy," "the poor," "the just," "the upright" (13–14), a class of people expecting divine protection.

w 2 Kgs 19, 27; Jb 12, 13. x Ps 131, 1. y Jb 23, 8–9; Jer 23, 23–24. z Jb 12, 22. a Wis 7, 1; Eccl 11, 5; Jb 1, 21. b Mal 3, 16. c Jb 11, 7. d Jb 21, 14. e Ps 119, 158. f Pss 17, 3; 26, 2. g Ps 71, 4.

3 From those who plan evil in their hearts,
who stir up conflicts every day,
4 Who sharpen their tongues like serpents,
venom of asps upon their lips.[h]* *Selah*

II

5 Keep me, LORD, from the clutches of the wicked;
preserve me from the violent,
who plot to trip me up.[i]
6 The arrogant have set a trap for me;
villains have spread a net,*
laid snares for me by the wayside. *Selah*
7 I say to the LORD: You are my God;[j]
listen, LORD, to the words of my prayer.
8 My revered LORD, my strong helper,
my helmet on the day of battle.
9 LORD, do not grant the desires of the wicked;
do not let their plots succeed. *Selah*
10 Around me they raise their proud heads;
may the mischief they threaten overwhelm them.
11 May God rain burning coals upon them,[k]
cast them into the grave never more to rise.

III

12 Slanderers will not survive on earth;
evil will quickly entrap the violent.
13 For I know the LORD will secure
justice for the needy, their rights for the poor.
14 Then the just will give thanks to your name;
the upright will dwell in your presence.[l]

Ps 142
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 141*

### Prayer for Deliverance from the Wicked

1 A psalm of David.

LORD, I call to you;
come quickly to help me;
listen to my plea when I call.
2 Let my prayer be incense* before you;
my uplifted hands* an evening sacrifice.[m]
3 Set a guard, LORD, before my mouth,
a gatekeeper at my lips.[n]
4 Do not let my heart incline to evil,
or yield to any sin.
I will never feast upon
the fine food of evildoers.
5 Let the just strike me; that is kindness;*
let them rebuke me; that is oil for my head.[o]
All this I shall not refuse,
but will pray despite these trials.
6 When their leaders are cast over the cliff,
all will learn that my prayers were heard.
7 As when a farmer plows a field into broken clods,
so their bones will be strewn at the mouth of Sheol.
8 My eyes are upon you, O GOD, my Lord;[p]
in you I take refuge; do not strip me of life.
9 Guard me from the trap they have set for me,
from the snares of evildoers.[q]
10 Into their own nets let all the wicked fall,
while I make good my own escape.

Ps 141
See RG
242–243

## PSALM 142*

### A Prayer in Time of Trouble

1 A *maskil* of David, when he was in the cave.*
A prayer.

2 With full voice I cry to the LORD;
with full voice I beseech the LORD.
3 Before God I pour out my complaint,
lay bare my distress.
4 My spirit is faint within me,[r]
but you know my path.[s]

**140, 4:** Similar metaphors for a wicked tongue are used in Pss 52, 4; 55, 22; 58, 5.

**140, 6: Have set a trap . . . have spread a net:** the same figure, of hunters setting traps, occurs in Pss 9, 16; 31, 5; 35, 7; 64, 6. Cf Mt 22, 15; Lk 11, 54.

**Ps 141:** A lament of an individual (1–2) who is keenly aware that only the righteous can worship God properly and who therefore prays to be protected from the doomed wicked (3–10).

**141, 2: Incense:** literally, "smoke," i.e., the fragrant fumes arising from the altar at the burning of sacrificial animals or of aromatic spices; also used in Rv 5, 8 as a symbol of prayer. **My uplifted hands:** the gesture of supplication. Cf Pss 28, 2; 63, 5; 88, 10; 119, 48; 134, 2; 143, 6.

**141, 5–7:** The Hebrew text is obscure.

**Ps 142:** In this lament imploring God for help (2–4b), the psalmist tells how enemies have set a trap (4c–5), and prays for rescue (6–8). The speaker feels utterly alone (5), exhausted (7), and may even be imprisoned (8a). Prison is possibly a metaphor for general distress. The last two verses are the vow of praise, made after receiving an assurance of divine help (8cd).

**142, 1: In the cave:** cf 1 Sm 22, 1; 24, 1–3; Ps 57, 1.

h Ps 64, 4; Rom 3, 13. i Jer 18, 22; Pss 56, 7; 57, 7. j Ps 31, 15. k Pss 11, 6; 120, 4; Gn 19, 24. l Pss 11, 7; 16, 11; 17, 15. m Ps 134, 2; Ex 30, 8. n Sir 22, 27. o Prv 9, 8; 25, 12. p Pss 25, 15; 123, 1–2. q Ps 142, 4. r Ps 143, 4. s Ps 139, 24.

Along the way I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.[t]
5 I look to my right hand,[u]
but no friend is there.
There is no escape for me;
no one cares for me.
6 I cry out to you, LORD,
I say, You are my refuge,[v]
my portion in the land of the living.[w]
7 Listen to my cry for help,
for I am brought very low.[x]
Rescue me from my pursuers,
for they are too strong for me.
8 Lead me out of my prison,
that I may give thanks to your name.
Then the just shall gather around me*
because you have been good to me.

## PSALM 143*

### A Prayer in Distress

1 A psalm of David.

LORD, hear my prayer;
in your faithfulness listen to my pleading;
answer me in your justice.
2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant;
before you no living being can be just.[y]
3 The enemy has pursued me;
they have crushed* my life to the ground.[z]
They have left me in darkness
like those long dead.[a]
4 My spirit is faint within me;
my heart is dismayed.[b]
5 I remember the days of old;
I ponder all your deeds;
the works of your hands I recall.[c]
6 I stretch out my hands to you;
I thirst for you like a parched land.[d] *Selah*
7 Hasten to answer me, LORD;
for my spirit fails me.
Do not hide your face from me,
lest I become like those descending to the pit.[e]
8 At dawn let me hear of your kindness,
for in you I trust.
Show me the path I should walk,
for to you I entrust my life.[f]
9 Rescue me, LORD, from my foes,
for in you I hope.
10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
May your kind spirit guide me
on ground that is level.
11 For your name's sake, LORD, give me life;
in your justice lead me out of distress.
12 In your kindness put an end to my foes;
destroy all who attack me,
for I am your servant.[g]

Ps 143
See RG
242-243

## PSALM 144*

### A Prayer for Victory and Prosperity

1 Of David.

I

Blessed be the LORD, my rock,*
who trains my hands for battle,
my fingers for war;
2 My safeguard and my fortress,
my stronghold, my deliverer,
My shield, in whom I trust,

Ps 144
See RG
244, 250

**142, 8: Then the just shall gather around me:** in the temple, when the psalmist offers a thanksgiving sacrifice.

**Ps 143:** One of the Church's seven Penitential Psalms, this lament is a prayer to be freed from death-dealing enemies. The psalmist addresses God, aware that there is no equality between God and humans; salvation is a gift (1–2). Victimized by evil people (3–4), the psalmist recites ("remembers") God's past actions on behalf of the innocent (5–6). The psalm continues with fervent prayer (7–9) and a strong desire for guidance and protection (10–12).

**143, 3: They have crushed:** literally, "he crushed"; the singular is used typically, hence the plural translation.

**Ps 144:** The psalm may reflect a ceremony in which the king, as leader of the army, asked God's help (1–8). In 9 the poem shifts abruptly from pleading to thanksgiving, and (except for 11) shifts again to prayer for the people. The first section (1–2) is a prayer of thanks for victory; the second (3–7a), a humble acknowledgment of human nothingness and a supplication that God show forth saving power; the third (9–11), a promise of future thanksgiving; the fourth (12–15), a wish for prosperity and peace. A prayer for deliverance from treacherous foes serves as a refrain after the second and third sections (7b–8. 11). Except for its final section, the psalm is made up almost entirely of verses from other psalms.

**144, 1–2:** Composed of phrases from Ps 18, 3. 35. 47–48.

t Ps 141, 9. u Pss 16, 8; 73, 23; 121, 5. v Ps 91, 2. 9. w Pss 16, 5; 27, 13; 116, 9; Is 38, 11. x Ps 79, 8. y Eccl 7, 20; Jb 4, 17; Rom 3, 20. z Ps 7, 6. a Lam 3, 6. b Ps 142, 4; Jb 17, 1. c Ps 77, 6. 12. d Pss 42, 2; 63, 2. e Pss 28, 1; 30, 4; 88, 5; Prv 1, 12. f Pss 25, 4; 27, 11; 86, 11; 119, 12. 35. g Ps 116, 16.

who subdues peoples under me.

II

3 LORD, what are mortals that you notice them;
human beings, that you take thought of them? [h]*

Ps 145
See RG
242, 244

4 They are but a breath;
their days are like a passing shadow. [i]*
5 LORD, incline your heavens and come;*
touch the mountains and make them smoke. [j]
6 Flash forth lightning and scatter my foes;
shoot your arrows and rout them.
7 Reach out your hand from on high;
deliver me from the many waters;
rescue me from the hands of foreign foes.
8 Their mouths speak untruth;
their right hands are raised in lying oaths.*
9 O God, a new song I will sing to you;
on a ten-stringed lyre I will play for you. [k]
10 You give victory to kings;
you delivered David your servant. [l]
From the menacing sword 11 deliver me;
rescue me from the hands of foreign foes.
Their mouths speak untruth;
their right hands are raised in lying oaths.

III

12 May our sons be like plants [m]
well nurtured from their youth,
Our daughters, like carved columns,
shapely as those of the temple.
13 May our barns be full
with every kind of store.
May our sheep increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields;
may our oxen be well fattened.
14 May there be no breach in the walls,
no exile, no outcry in our streets. [n]
15 Happy the people so blessed;
happy the people whose God is the LORD. [o]

## PSALM 145*

### The Greatness and Goodness of God

1 Praise. Of David.

I will extol you, my God and king;
I will bless your name forever.
2 Every day I will bless you;
I will praise your name forever. [p]
3 Great is the LORD and worthy of high praise; [q]
God's grandeur is beyond understanding.
4 One generation praises your deeds to the next
and proclaims your mighty works. [r]
5 They speak of the splendor of your majestic glory,
tell of your wonderful deeds. [s]
6 They speak of your fearsome power
and attest to your great deeds. [t]
7 They publish the renown of your abounding goodness
and joyfully sing of your justice.
8 The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in love. [u]
9 The LORD is good to all,
compassionate to every creature. [v]
10 All your works give you thanks, O LORD
and your faithful bless you. [w]
11 They speak of the glory of your reign
and tell of your great works,
12 Making known to all your power,
the glorious splendor of your rule.
13 Your reign is a reign for all ages,
your dominion for all generations. [x]
The LORD is trustworthy in every word,
and faithful in every work.
14 The LORD supports all who are falling

144, 3: Similar to Ps 8, 5.
144, 4: Composed of phrases from Pss 39, 6; 102, 12.
144, 5–7: Adapted in large part from Pss 18, 10. 15. 17; 104, 32.
144, 8b. 11b: **Their right hands are raised in lying oaths**: the psalmist's enemies give false testimony.
Ps 145: A hymn in acrostic form; every verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostic poems usually do not develop ideas but consist rather of loosely connected statements. The singer invites all to praise God (1–3. 21). The "works of God" make God present and invite human praise (4–7); they climax in a confession (8–9). God's mighty acts show forth divine kingship (10–20), a major theme in the literature of early Judaism and in Christianity.

h Jb 7, 17. i Pss 62, 10; 90, 9–10; Jb 7, 16; Eccl 6, 12; Wis 2, 5. j Is 63, 19. k Ps 33, 2–3. l Ps 18, 51. m Ps 128, 3. n Is 65, 19. o Ps 33, 12. p Ps 34, 2. q Pss 48, 2; 95, 3; 96, 4; Jb 36, 26. r Pss 22, 31–32; 48, 14–15; 71, 18; 78, 4; Ex 10, 2; Dt 4, 9. s Pss 96, 3; 105, 2. t Ps 66, 3. u Pss 86, 5. 15; 103, 8; Ex 34, 6; Sir 2, 11. v Ps 103, 13; Wis 11, 24. w Dn 3, 57. x Pss 10, 16; 102, 13; 146, 10; Lam 5, 19; Dn 3, 100; Rv 11, 15.

and raises up all who are bowed down.[y]
15 The eyes of all look hopefully to you;
you give them their food in due season.[z]
16 You open wide your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
17 You, LORD, are just in all your ways,
faithful in all your works.[a]
18 You, LORD, are near to all who call upon you,
to all who call upon you in truth.[b]
19 You satisfy the desire of those who fear you;
you hear their cry and save them.[c]
20 You, LORD, watch over all who love you,
but all the wicked you destroy.[d]
21 My mouth will speak your praises, LORD;
all flesh will bless your holy name forever.[e]

## PSALM 146*

### Trust in God the Creator and Redeemer

1 Hallelujah!

2 Praise the LORD, my soul;
I shall praise the LORD all my life,
sing praise to my God while I live.[f]

I

3 Put no trust in princes,
in mere mortals powerless to save.[g]
4 When they breathe their last, they return to the earth;
that day all their planning comes to nothing.[h]

II

5 Happy those whose help is Jacob's God,
whose hope is in the LORD, their God,
6 The maker of heaven and earth,
the seas and all that is in them,[i]
Who keeps faith forever,
7 secures justice for the oppressed,[j]
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets prisoners free;[k]
8 the LORD gives sight to the blind.
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;[l]
the LORD loves the righteous.
9 The LORD protects the stranger,
sustains the orphan and the widow,[m]
but thwarts the way of the wicked.
10 The LORD shall reign forever,
your God, Zion, through all generations![n]
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 147*

Ps 147
See RG
242, 250

### God's Word Restores Jerusalem

1 Hallelujah!

I

Ps 146
See RG
242

How good to celebrate our God in song;
how sweet to give fitting praise.[o]
2 The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem,
gathers the dispersed of Israel,[p]
3 Heals the brokenhearted,
binds up their wounds,[q]
4 Numbers all the stars,
calls each of them by name.[r]
5 Great is our Lord, vast in power,
with wisdom beyond measure.[s]
6 The LORD sustains the poor,
but casts the wicked to the ground.[t]

II

7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
with the lyre celebrate our God,[u]
8 Who covers the heavens with clouds,*
provides rain for the earth,
makes grass sprout on the mountains,[v]
9 Who gives animals their food
and ravens what they cry for.[w]

**Ps 146:** A hymn of someone who has learned there is no other source of strength except the merciful God. Only God, not mortal humans (3–4), can help vulnerable and oppressed people (5–9). The first of the five hymns that conclude the Psalter.

**Ps 147:** The hymn is divided into three sections by the calls to praise in 1, 7, and 12. The first section praises the powerful creator who restores exiled Judah (1–6); the second section, the creator who provides food to animals and humans; the third and climactic section exhorts the holy city to recognize it has been recreated and made the place of disclosure for God's word, a word as life-giving as water.

**147, 8–9:** God clothes the fields and feeds the birds. Cf Mt 6, 26. 30.

y Pss 94, 18; 146, 8. z Pss 136, 25; 104, 27–28; Mt 6, 25–26. a Dt 32, 4. b Dt 4, 7; Is 55, 6; 58, 9. c Ps 34, 18. d Jgs 5, 31. e Sir 40, 35. f Pss 103, 1; 104, 33. g Ps 118, 8–9. h Pss 90, 3; 104, 29; 1 Mc 2, 63; Jb 34, 14–15; Eccl 3, 20; 12, 7; Sir 40, 11; Is 2, 22. i Ex 20, 11; Pss 121, 2; 124, 8; Acts 14, 15; Rv 14, 7. j Ps 103, 6. k Ps 68, 7; Is 49, 9; 61, 1. l Ps 145, 14. m Ps 68, 6; Dt 10, 18. n Ps 145, 13; Lam 5, 19. o Pss 33, 1; 92, 2. p Is 11, 12; 56, 8; Jer 31, 10. q Jb 5, 18; Is 30, 26; 61, 1; Jer 33, 6. r Is 40, 26. s Jdt 16, 13; Jer 51, 15. t Ps 146, 9; 1 Sm 2, 7–8. u Ps 71, 22. v Ps 104, 13f; Jb 5, 10; Jer 14, 22; Jl 2, 23. w Jb 38, 41; Mt 6, 26.

10 God takes no delight in the strength of
horses,*
no pleasure in the runner's stride.[x]
11 Rather the LORD takes pleasure in the devout,
those who await his faithful care.

III

12 Glorify the LORD, Jerusalem;
Zion, offer praise to your God,
13 Who has strengthened the bars of your gates,
blessed your children within you,[y]
14 Brought peace to your borders,
and filled you with finest wheat.[z]
15 The LORD sends a command to earth;*
his word runs swiftly![a]
16 Thus snow is spread like wool,
frost is scattered like ash,[b]
17 Hail is dispersed like crumbs;
before such cold the waters freeze.
18 Again he sends his word and they melt;
the wind is unleashed and the waters flow.
19 The LORD also proclaims his word to Jacob,
decrees and laws to Israel.[c]
20 God has not done this for other nations;
of such laws they know nothing.
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 148*

Ps 148
See RG
242, 245,
250

### All Creation Summoned to Praise

1 Hallelujah!

I

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
give praise in the heights.
2 Praise him, all you angels;
give praise, all you hosts.[d]
3 Praise him, sun and moon;
give praise, all shining stars.
4 Praise him, highest heavens,*
you waters above the heavens.
5 Let them all praise the LORD's name;
for the LORD commanded and they were
created,[e]
6 Assigned them duties forever,
gave them tasks that will never change.

II

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deep waters;[f]
8 You lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
storm winds that fulfill his command;
9 You mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;[g]
10 You animals wild and tame,
you creatures that crawl and fly;[h]
11 You kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all who govern on earth;
12 Young men and women too,
old and young alike.
13 Let them all praise the LORD's name,
for his name alone is exalted,
majestic above earth and heaven.[i]
14 The LORD has lifted high the horn of his
people;*
to the glory of all the faithful,
of Israel, the people near to their God.
Hallelujah!

## PSALM 149*

Ps 149
See RG
242

### Praise God with Song and Sword

1 Hallelujah!

Sing to the LORD a new song,
a hymn in the assembly of the faithful.[j]

**147, 10–11:** Acknowledging one's dependence upon God rather than claiming self-sufficiency pleases God. Cf Pss 20, 8; 33, 16–19.

**147, 15–19:** God speaks through the thunder of nature and the word of revealed law. Cf Is 55, 10–11. The weather phenomena are well known in Jerusalem: a blizzard of snow and hail followed by a thunderstorm that melts the ice.

**Ps 148:** A hymn inviting the beings of heaven (1–6) and of earth (7–14) to praise God. The hymn does not distinguish between inanimate and animate (and rational) nature.

**148, 4: Highest heavens:** literally, "the heavens of the heavens," i.e., the space above the firmament, where the "upper waters" are stored. Cf Gn 1, 6–7; Dt 10, 14; 1 Kgs 8, 27; Ps 104, 3. 13.

**148, 14: The LORD has lifted high the horn of his people:** horn = strength, the concrete noun for the abstract. Of all peoples God has chosen Israel to return praise and thanks in a special way.

**Ps 149:** A hymn inviting the people of Israel to celebrate their God in song and festive dance (1–3. 5) because God has chosen them and given them victory (4). The exodus and conquest are the defining acts of Israel; the people must be ready to do again those acts in the future at the divine command (6–9).

x Pss 20, 8; 33, 16–18. y Ps 48, 14. z Ps 81, 17. a Ps 33, 9. b Jb 6, 16; 37, 10; 38, 22. c Ps 78, 5; Bar 3, 37; Dt 4, 7–8. d Dn 3, 58–63; Ps 103, 20f. e Ps 33, 9; Gn 1, 3f; Jdt 16, 14. f Gn 1, 21; Ps 135, 6. g Is 44, 23. h Gn 1, 21. 24f; Ps 30, 5; Dt 4, 7. i Ps 30, 5; Dt 4, 7. j Pss 22, 23; 26, 12; 35, 18; 40, 10; Jdt 16, 1.

2 Let Israel be glad in their maker,
the people of Zion rejoice in their king.
3 Let them praise his name in festive dance,
make music with tambourine and lyre.[k]*
4 For the LORD takes delight in his people,
honors the poor with victory.
5 Let the faithful rejoice in their glory,
cry out for joy at their banquet,*
6 With the praise of God in their mouths,
and a two-edged sword in their hands,[l]
7 To bring retribution on the nations,
punishment on the peoples,[m]
8 To bind their kings with chains,
shackle their nobles with irons,
9 To execute the judgments decreed for them—
such is the glory* of all God's faithful.
Hallelujah!

149, 3: **Make music with tambourine and lyre**: the verse recalls the great exodus hymn of Ex 15, 20.

149, 5: **At their banquet**: literally, "upon their couches." The people reclined to banquet.

149, 9: **The glory**: what brings honor to the people is their readiness to carry out the divine will, here conceived as punishing injustice done by the nations.

**Ps 150**: The psalm is a closing doxology both for the fifth book of the Psalms (107–149) and for the Psalter as a whole. Temple musicians and dancers are called to lead all beings on earth and in heaven in praise of God. The psalm proclaims to whom praise shall be given, and where (1); what praise shall be given, and why (2); how praise shall be given (3–5), and by whom (6).

## PSALM 150*

### Final Doxology

1 Hallelujah!

Praise God in his holy sanctuary;[n]*
give praise in the mighty dome of heaven.*
2 Give praise for his mighty deeds,[o]
praise him for his great majesty.
3 Give praise with blasts upon the horn,[p]
praise him with harp and lyre.
4 Give praise with tambourines and dance,
praise him with flutes and strings.[q]
5 Give praise with crashing cymbals,
praise him with sounding cymbals.
6 Let everything that has breath
give praise to the LORD![r]
Hallelujah!

150, 1: **His holy sanctuary**: God's temple on earth. **The mighty dome of heaven**: literally, "[God's] strong vault"; heaven is here imagined as a giant plate separating the inhabited world from the waters of the heavens.

k Pss 68, 26; 81, 2–3; 87, 7; 150, 3–4. l Neh 4, 10–12; 2 Mc 15, 27. m Wis 3, 8. n Dn 3, 53. o Dt 3, 24. p 3ff: Pss 81, 3–4; 149, 3; 2 Sm 6, 5; 1 Chr 13, 8; 16, 5. 42; 2 Chr 5, 12–13; 7, 6. q Ps 68, 26; Ex 15, 20. r Rv 5, 13.

Ps 150
See RG
241, 242

# THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs
See RG
255–264

The first word of this book, *Mishle,* has provided the title by which it is generally designated in Jewish and Christian circles. The name "Proverbs," while not an exact equivalent of *Mishle,* describes the main contents satisfactorily, even though it is hardly an adequate designation for such parts as 1, 1—9, 18 or 31, 10-31. Among some early Christian writers the book was also known by the name of "Wisdom," and in the Roman Missal it was for many centuries referred to as a "Book of Wisdom."

The Book of Proverbs is an anthology of didactic poetry forming part of the sapiential literature of the Old Testament. Its primary purpose, indicated in the first sentence (1, 2f), is to teach wisdom. It is thus directed particularly to the young and inexperienced (1, 4); but also to those who desire advanced training in wisdom (1, 5f). The wisdom which the book teaches covers a wide field of human and divine activity, ranging from matters purely secular to most lofty moral and religious truths, such as God's omniscience (5, 21; 15, 3-11), power (19, 21; 21, 30), providence (20, 1-24), goodness (15, 29), and the joy and strength resulting from abandonment to him (3, 5; 16, 20; 18, 10). The teaching of the entire book is placed on a firm religious foundation by the principle that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1, 7; cf 9, 10).

To Solomon are explicitly ascribed parts II and V of the book; he is the patron of Hebrew wisdom. Of Agur (part VI) and Lemuel (part VIII), nothing further is known. Parts III and IV are attributed to "the wise." The remaining parts are anonymous.

The manner of compilation is conjectural. Parts II and V may have circulated first as independent collections, compiled before the fall of Jerusalem, as the references to Solomon (10, 1) and Hezekiah (25, 1) suggest. Parts III, IV and VII would seem to belong together as a third collection of a similar kind. The author of the first nine chapters, a religious sage familiar with the earlier sacred books, was the editor of the whole as we have it, probably in the early part of the fifth century B.C.

Christ and the Apostles often expressly quoted the Proverbs (Jn 7, 38; Rom 12, 20; Jas 4, 6) or repeated their teaching; compare Lk 10, 14, and Prv 25, 7; 1 Pt 4, 8; Jas 5, 20 and Prv 10, 12. The book has an important place in the Latin and Greek liturgies.

On the basis of titles, subject matter, and poetic structure the Book of Proverbs may be divided as follows:

I. Introduction: The Value of Wisdom (1, 1—9, 18).
II. First Collection of the Proverbs of Solomon (10, 1—22, 16).
III. Sayings of the Wise (22, 17—24, 22).
IV. Other Sayings of the Wise (24, 23-34).
V. Second Collection of the Proverbs of Solomon (25, 1—29, 27).
VI. The Words of Agur (30, 1-6).
VII. Numerical Proverbs (30, 7-33).
VIII. The Words of Lemuel (31, 1-9).
IX. The Ideal Wife (31, 10–31).

# I: Introduction: The Value Of Wisdom

## CHAPTER 1

### Purpose of the Proverbs of Solomon*

1 The proverbs of Solomon,[a] the son of David,
king of Israel:
2 That men may appreciate wisdom and
discipline,*
may understand words of intelligence;
3 May receive training in wise conduct,
in what is right, just and honest;
4 That resourcefulness may be imparted to the
simple,*
to the young man knowledge and
discretion.
5 A wise man by hearing them will advance in
learning,
an intelligent man will gain sound guidance,
6 That he may comprehend proverb and
parable,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the LORD* is the beginning of
knowledge;[b]
wisdom and instruction fools despise.

### The Path of the Wicked: Greed and Violence*

8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching;
9 A graceful diadem will they be for your head;
a torque for your neck.
10 My son, should sinners entice you, 11 and say,
"Come along with us!
Let us lie in wait for the honest man,
let us, unprovoked, set a trap for the
innocent;
12 Let us swallow them up, as the nether world
does, alive,
in the prime of life, like those who go down
to the pit!
13 All kinds of precious wealth shall we gain,
we shall fill our houses with booty;
14 Cast in your lot with us,
we shall all have one purse!"—

15 My son, walk not in the way with them,
hold back your foot from their path!
16 [For their feet run to evil,
they hasten to shed blood.[c]]
17 It is in vain that a net is spread*
before the eyes of any bird—
18 These men lie in wait for their own blood,
they set a trap for their own lives.
19 This is the fate of everyone greedy of loot:
unlawful gain takes away the life of him
who acquires it.

### Wisdom in Person Gives Warning*

20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
in the open squares she raises her voice;[d]
21 Down the crowded ways she calls out,
at the city gates she utters her words:
22 "How long, you simple ones, will you love
inanity,
23 how long will you turn away at my reproof?
Lo! I will pour out to you my spirit,
I will acquaint you with my words.

24 "Because I called and you refused,
I extended my hand and no one took
notice;[e]
25 Because you disdained all my counsel,
and my reproof you ignored—
26 I, in my turn, will laugh at your doom;
I will mock when terror overtakes you;

Prov
See RG
255–264

1, 1–6: This prologue explains the purpose of the book: to educate the inexperienced in knowledge and right conduct, and to increase the learning of the wise man by proverbs, parables and riddles.

1, 2: Discipline: education or formation which dispels ignorance and corrects vice.

1, 4: Simple: immature and inexperienced, hence easily influenced for good or evil.

1, 7: Fear of the Lord: reverential fear and respect for God on account of his sovereignty, goodness and justice toward men. This is the foundation of religion.

1, 8–19: A warning against association with the greedy and the violent who seek to destroy the honest man and to steal his possessions (11–14). The trap which the wicked set for the innocent (11), in the end (19) takes away the life of the wicked themselves.

1, 17: Instructed by the wise man, the youth (of v 4) will recognize the invitation of the wicked (11–14) as a net spread before him, and he will thus, like the bird, be protected against falling into it.

1, 20–33: Wisdom is here personified: with divine authority she sets forth and proclaims the moral order, instructing and threatening (24–33) the multitudes in the streets and places of assembly.

a Prv 10, 1; 25, 1; 1 Kgs 4, 32. b Prv 9, 10; Jb 28, 28; Ps 111, 10; Sir 1, 16. c Is 59, 7. d Prv 8, 1–3; 9, 3. e Is 65, 2. 12; 66, 4; Jer 7, 13.

27 When terror comes upon you like a storm,
and your doom approaches like a whirlwind;
when distress and anguish befall you.

28 "Then they call me, but I answer not;
they seek me, but find me not;*
29 Because they hated knowledge,
and chose not the fear of the LORD;
30 They ignored my counsel,
they spurned all my reproof;
And in their arrogance they preferred arrogance,
and like fools they hated knowledge:

31 "Now they must eat the fruit of their own way,
and with their own devices be glutted.*
32 For the self-will of the simple kills them,
the smugness of fools destroys them.
33 But he who obeys me dwells in security,
in peace, without fear of harm."[f]

## CHAPTER 2*

Prov
See RG
255–264

### The Blessings of Wisdom*

1 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure my commands,
2 Turning your ear to wisdom,*
inclining your heart to understanding;
3 Yes, if you call to intelligence,
and to understanding raise your voice;
4 If you seek her like silver,
and like hidden treasures search her out:

5 Then will you understand the fear of the LORD;
the knowledge of God you will find;
6 For the LORD gives wisdom,
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;[g]

7 He has counsel in store for the upright,
he is the shield of those who walk honestly,
8 Guarding the paths of justice,
protecting the way of his pious ones.

9 Then you will understand rectitude and justice,
honesty, every good path;
10 For wisdom will enter your heart,
knowledge will please your soul,
11 Discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you;

12 Saving you from the way of evil men,
from men of perverse speech,
13 Who leave the straight paths
to walk in ways of darkness,
14 Who delight in doing evil,
rejoice in perversity;
15 Whose ways are crooked,
and devious their paths;

16 Saving you from the wife of another,
from the adulteress with her smooth words,[h]
17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth
and forgets the pact with her God;
18 For her path sinks down to death,
and her footsteps lead to the shades;[i]
19 None who enter thereon come back again,
or gain the paths of life.

20 Thus you may walk in the way of good men,
and keep to the paths of the just.
21 For the upright will dwell in the land,[j]
the honest will remain in it;
22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land,
the faithless will be rooted out of it.

**1, 28:** Overtaken by doom, the foolish seek wisdom, but in vain because they do so too late. Cf Jn 7, 34; 8, 21.

**1, 31:** Sinners are punished by the bad fruits which their sins produce. Cf Wis 11, 16.

**2—7:** These chapters form an ordered discourse in seven "columns" of twenty-two verses each. Chapter 2 introduces the four topics about which the sage instructs his pupil: the service of God (3, 1–12. 25–34), the search for wisdom (3, 13–24. 35; 4, 1–9), the avoidance of evil companions among men (4, 10–27; 5, 21–23), and among women (5, 1–20; 6, 20—7, 27). The last topic is treated at a length equal to the first three because the discourse is meant especially for youths (cf Prv 1, 4).

**2, 1–22:** The search for wisdom (1–4) leads to the protection of God (5–8) and of wisdom herself (9ff; cf Prv 1, 20–33) and to deliverance from evil men (12–15) and evil women (16–19), and so to lasting happiness (20ff).

**2, 2f:** Wisdom, understanding, intelligence: various names or aspects of the same gift.

f Prv 8, 33f. g Jb 32, 8; Wis 7, 25; Sir 1, 1; Jas 1, 5. h Prv 5, 3. 20; 6, 24; 7, 5; 22, 14. i Prv 5, 5f; 7, 27. j 21f: Prv 10, 7, 30; Jb 18, 17; Pss 21, 9–13; 37, 22. 28.

## CHAPTER 3

### Attitude toward the Lord*

1 My son, forget not my teaching,
keep in mind my commands;
2 For many days, and years of life, [k]
and peace, will they bring you.

3 Let not kindness and fidelity leave you;
bind them around your neck;
4 Then will you win favor and good esteem
before God and man.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
on your own intelligence rely not;
6 In all your ways be mindful of him,
and he will make straight your paths.

7 Be not wise in your own eyes, [l]
fear the LORD and turn away from evil;
8 This will mean health for your flesh
and vigor for your bones.

9 Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with first fruits of all your produce; [m]
10 Then will your barns be filled with grain,
with new wine your vats will overflow.
11 The discipline of the LORD, my son, disdain not; [n]
spurn not his reproof;
12 For whom the LORD loves he reproves,
and he chastises the son he favors. [o]

### The Value of Wisdom*

13 Happy the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gains understanding! [p]
14 For her profit is better than profit in silver,
and better than gold is her revenue;
15 She is more precious than corals,*
and none of your choice possessions can
compare with her. [q]

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16 Long life is in her right hand,
in her left are riches and honor;
17 Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace;
18 She is a tree of life* to those who grasp her, [r]
and he is happy who holds her fast.

19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth,
established the heavens by understanding;
20 By his knowledge the depths break open,
and the clouds drop down dew.*
21 My son, let not these slip out of your sight:
keep advice and counsel in view;
22 So will they be life to your soul,
and an adornment for your neck.
23 Then you may securely go your way;
your foot will never stumble;
24 When you lie down, you need not be afraid,
when you rest, your sleep will be sweet.
35 Honor is the possession of wise men,
but fools inherit shame.

### Attitude toward Fellow Men*

25 Be not afraid of sudden terror,
of the ruin of the wicked* when it comes;
26 For the LORD will be your confidence,
and will keep your foot from the snare.

27 Refuse no one the good on which he has a claim
when it is in your power to do it for him.
28 Say not to your neighbor, "Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give," when you can give at once.

**3, 1–12:** Many are the rewards for fidelity and trust in God, and for diffidence of self (1–8). Cf Dt 30, 20; Is 38, 19. The offering of material things for divine worship is blessed by an increase of such goods (9f). Even correction and chastisement are a mark of God's love and favor (11f).

**3, 13–24:** Wisdom, or understanding, is more valuable than silver and gold. Its fruit is long life, riches, honor and happiness (13–18). Even the creation of the universe and its adornment (Gn 1) were not done without wisdom (19f). It is the life of the soul and gives security in work and in repose (21–24).

**3, 15:** Corals: some precious stone may be intended.

**3, 18:** A tree of life: cf Prv 11, 30; 13, 12; Gn 2, 9.

**3, 20:** For the Hebrews, the depths enclosed the great subterranean ocean; the rain and dew descended from the celestial ocean above the firmament; cf Gn 1, 6–10; Jb 26, 8. 12; Pss 18, 16; 24, 2.

**3, 25–34:** Serving God with confidence in him (25f) requires serving one's neighbor through kindness (27f), peace with the good (29ff), no envy of the wicked (31), because the Lord's friendship and kindness are with the just; his curse is with the wicked.

**3, 25:** The ruin of the wicked: i.e., the ruin that comes upon the wicked.

k Prv 4, 10; 9, 11; 10, 27. l Rom 11, 25; 12, 16. m Ex 34, 26; Lv 27, 30; Dt 26, 2; Sir 7, 31; 35, 7. n Heb 12, 5f. o Jdt 8, 27; Rv 3, 19. p Prv 8, 34f. q Prv 8, 11. 19; Wis 7, 8–11. r Prv 4, 13; 8, 35; 11, 30; Gn 2, 9; 3, 22.

29 Plot no evil against your neighbor,
against him who lives at peace with you.
30 Quarrel not with a man without cause,
with one who has done you no harm.
31 Envy not the lawless man
and choose none of his ways: [s]
32 To the LORD the perverse man is an abomination,
but with the upright is his friendship.

33 The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked,
but the dwelling of the just he blesses;
34 When he is dealing with the arrogant, he is stern, [t]
but to the humble he shows kindness.

## CHAPTER 4

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### Wisdom: the Supreme Guide of Men*

1 Hear, O children, a father's instruction,
be attentive, that you may gain understanding!
2 Yes, excellent advice I give you;
my teaching do not forsake.
3 When I was my father's child,
frail, yet the darling of my mother,
4 He taught me, and said to me:
"Let your heart hold fast my words: [u]
keep my commands, that you may live!

5 "Get wisdom, get understanding!
Do not forget or turn aside from the words I utter.
6 Forsake her not, and she will preserve you;
love her, and she will safeguard you;
7 The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom;
at the cost of all you have, get understanding.
8 Extol her, and she will exalt you;
she will bring you honors if you embrace her;
9 She will put on your head a graceful diadem;
a glorious crown will she bestow on you."

**4, 1–9:** The sage speaks as a father admonishing his children to secure wisdom at any cost.

**4, 10–27:** The way of wisdom leads directly to life (10–13); it is a light that grows brighter (18). The wise man is bound to shun (14–17) the dark and violent path of the wicked (19). Singleness of purpose and right conduct proceed from the heart of a wise man as from the source of life (23–26); they save him from destruction on evil paths (4, 27; 5, 21ff).

### The Good and the Evil Way*

10 Hear, my son, and receive my words,
and the years of your life shall be many. [v]
11 On the way of wisdom I direct you,
I lead you on straightforward paths.
12 When you walk, your step will not be impeded,
and should you run, you will not stumble.
13 Hold fast to instruction, never let her go;
keep her, for she is your life.

14 The path of the wicked enter not,
walk not on the way of evil men;
15 Shun it, cross it not,
turn aside from it, and pass on.
16 For they cannot rest unless they have done evil;
to have made no one stumble steals away their sleep.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
19 The way of the wicked is like darkness;
they know not on what they stumble.
18 But the path of the just is like shining light,
that grows in brilliance till perfect day.*

20 My son, to my words be attentive,
to my sayings incline your ear;
21 Let them not slip out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
22 For they are life to those who find them, [w]
to man's whole being they are health.

23 With closest custody, guard your heart,
for in it are the sources of life.
24 Put away from you dishonest talk,
deceitful speech put far from you.
25 Let your eyes look straight ahead
and your glance be directly forward.
26 Survey the path for your feet,
and let all your ways be sure.
27 Turn neither to right nor to left,
keep your foot far from evil.

**4, 18:** Till perfect day: literally, "till the day is established"; this may refer to full daylight or to noonday.

s Prv 23, 17; 24, 1. 19; Ps 37, 1. t Prv 1, 26. u 1 Kgs 2, 2ff. v Prv 3, 2. w Prv 8, 35.

## CHAPTER 5

### Warning against Adultery*

1 My son, to my wisdom be attentive,
to my knowledge incline your ear,
2 That discretion may watch over you,
and understanding may guard you.
3 The lips of an adulteress drip with honey,
and her mouth is smoother than oil; [x]
4 But in the end she is as bitter as wormwood,
as sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death,
to the nether world her steps attain; [y]
6 Lest you see before you the road to life,
her paths will ramble, you know not where.

7 So now, O children, listen to me,
go not astray from the words of my mouth.
8 Keep your way far from her, [z]
approach not the door of her house,
9 Lest you give your honor* to others, [a]
and your years to a merciless one;
10 Lest strangers have their fill of your wealth,
your hard-won earnings go to an alien's house;
11 And you groan in the end,
when your flesh and your body are consumed;
12 And you say, "Oh, why did I hate instruction,
and my heart spurn reproof!
13 Why did I not listen to the voice of my teachers,
nor to my instructors incline my ear!
14 I have all but come to utter ruin,
condemned by the public assembly!"

15 Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.
16 How may your water sources be dispersed abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
17 Let your fountain be yours alone,
not one shared with strangers;
18 And have joy of the wife of your youth,
19 your lovely hind, your graceful doe.*
Her love will invigorate you always,
through her love you will flourish continually,
22 When you lie down she will watch over you,
and when you wake, she will share your concerns;
wherever you turn, she will guide you.*
20 Why then, my son, should you go astray for another's wife
and accept the embraces of an adulteress?

21 For each man's ways are plain to the LORD's sight;*
all their paths he surveys; [b]
22 By his own iniquities the wicked man will be caught,
in the meshes of his own sin he will be held fast;
23 He will die from lack of discipline,
through the greatness of his folly he will be lost.

## CHAPTER 6

### Miscellaneous Proverbs*

1 My son, if you have become surety to your neighbor, [c]
given your hand in pledge* to another,
2 You have been snared by the utterance of your lips,
caught by the words of your mouth;
3 So do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into your neighbor's power:
Go, hurry, stir up your neighbor!
4 Give no sleep to your eyes,

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**5, 1–20:** Understanding and discretion guard a man against the wiles of an adulteress, which lead astray and beget bitterness, bloodshed and death (1–6). They destroy honor, waste the years of life, despoil hard-earned wealth, consume the flesh, and bring remorse in the end (7–14). Conjugal fidelity and love for one wife only bring happiness and security (15–20). Cf Prv 6, 20—7, 27.

**5, 9:** Honor: the words "life" and "wealth" have also been read in this place. A merciless one: the offended husband; cf Prv 6, 34f.

**5, 19:** Lovely hind . . . graceful doe: oriental symbols of feminine beauty and charm; cf Song 2, 7. 9. 17.

**5, 22:** This is transposed from chapter 6, 22.

**5, 21–23:** These verses are best read after Prv 4, 27.

**6, 1–19:** These verses interrupt the discourse of chapters 2—7, which should be read apart from them; they contain four shorter proverbs akin to those in chapter 30.

**6, 1:** Given your hand in pledge: literally, "struck your hands"; this was probably the legal method for closing a contract.

x Prv 7, 5. y Prv 2, 18; 7, 27. z Prv 7, 25. a 9f: Sir 9, 6. b Jb 14, 16; 31, 4; 34, 21. c 1f: Prv 11, 15; 22, 26; Sir 8, 13; 29, 19.

nor slumber to your eyelids;
5 Free yourself as a gazelle from the snare,
or as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

6 Go to the ant, [d] O sluggard,
study her ways and learn wisdom;
7 For though she has no chief,
no commander or ruler,
8 She procures her food in the summer,
stores up her provisions in the harvest.
9 How long, O sluggard, will you rest?
when will you rise from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the arms to rest—*
11 Then will poverty come upon you like a highwayman,
and want like an armed man.

12 A scoundrel, a villain, is he
who deals in crooked talk.
13 He winks his eyes,
shuffles his feet,
makes signs with his fingers;
14 He has perversity in his heart,
is always plotting evil,
sows discord.
15 Therefore suddenly ruin comes upon him;
in an instant he is crushed beyond cure.

16 There are six things the LORD hates,
yes, seven are an abomination to him;*
17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood;
18 A heart that plots wicked schemes,
feet that run swiftly to evil,
19 The false witness who utters lies,
and he who sows discord among brothers.

### Warning against Adultery*

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20 Observe, my son, your father's bidding,
and reject not your mother's teaching;
21 Keep them fastened over your heart always,
put them around your neck;
23 For the bidding is a lamp, and the teaching a light,
and a way to life are the reproofs of discipline;
24 To keep you from your neighbor's wife,
from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. [e]

25 Lust not in your heart after her beauty,
let her not captivate you with her glance! [f]
26 For the price of a loose woman
may be scarcely a loaf of bread,
But if she is married,
she is a trap for your precious life.*
27 Can a man take fire to his bosom,
and his garments not be burned?
28 Or can a man walk on live coals,
and his feet not be scorched?
29 So with him who goes in to his neighbor's wife—
none who touches her shall go unpunished. [g]

30 Men despise not the thief if he steals
to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry;
31 Yet if he be caught he must pay back sevenfold;
all the wealth of his house he may yield up.
32 But he who commits adultery is a fool;
he who would destroy himself does it.
33 A degrading beating will he get,
and his disgrace will not be wiped away;
34 For vindictive is the husband's wrath,
he will have no pity on the day of vengeance;
35 He will not consider any restitution,
nor be satisfied with the greatest gifts.

## CHAPTER 7

1 My son, keep my words,
and treasure my commands.
2 Keep my commands and live,
my teaching as the apple of your eye;

**6, 10:** This verse may be regarded as the sluggard's reply or as a continuation of the remonstrance.

**6, 16–19:** The seven vices symbolized for the most part by bodily organs are pride, lying, murder, intrigue, readiness to do evil, false witness, and the stirring up of discord.

**6, 20—7, 27:** Parental training and the love of wisdom are an invaluable and constant help for the young (6, 20–23; 7, 1–4). They are the best defense against adultery (6, 24; 7, 5. 24f), which involves the guilty in many dangers and punishments (6, 26–35; 7, 6–27). Cf Prv 5, 1–20.

**6, 26:** Some interpret the verse in a progressive sense, i.e., to satisfy the increasing demands of a courtesan a man is reduced to poverty; if the woman is married, even his very life is endangered.

d Prv 30, 25. e Prv 2, 16; 7, 5. f Ex 20, 17; Dt 5, 21; Sir 9, 8; 25, 20; Mt 5, 28. g Sir 9, 9.

3 Bind them on your fingers,
write them on the tablet of your heart.[h]
4 Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister!"
call Understanding, "Friend!"
5 That they may keep you from another's wife,
from the adulteress with her smooth
words.[i]
6 For at the window of my house,
through my lattice I looked out—

7 And I saw among the simple ones,
I observed among the young men,
a youth with no sense,
8 Going along the street near the corner,
then walking in the direction of her
house—
9 In the twilight, at dusk of day,
at the time of the dark of night.
10 And lo! the woman comes to meet him,
robed like a harlot, with secret designs—
11 She is fickle and unruly,
in her home her feet cannot rest;
12 Now she is in the streets, now in the open
squares,
and at every corner she lurks in ambush—
13 When she seizes him, she kisses him,
and with an impudent look says to him:

14 "I owed peace offerings,
and today I have fulfilled my vows;*
15 So I came out to meet you,
to look for you, and I have found you!
16 With coverlets I have spread my couch,
with brocaded cloths of Egyptian linen;
17 I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh,
with aloes, and with cinnamon.

18 "Come, let us drink our fill of love,
until morning, let us feast on love!
19 For my husband is not at home,
he has gone on a long journey;
20 A bag of money he took with him,
not till the full moon will he return home."

21 She wins him over by her repeated urging,
with her smooth lips she leads him astray;[j]
22 He follows her stupidly,
like an ox that is led to slaughter;
Like a stag that minces toward the net,
23 till an arrow pierces its liver;
Like a bird that rushes into a snare,
unaware that its life is at stake.

24 So now, O children, listen to me,
be attentive to the words of my mouth!
25 Let not your heart turn to her ways,
go not astray in her paths;
26 For many are those she has struck down dead,
numerous, those she has slain.
27 Her house is made up of ways to the nether
world,
leading down into the chambers of death.[k]

## CHAPTER 8

Prov
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### The Discourse of Wisdom*

1 Does not Wisdom call,
and Understanding raise her voice?[l]
2 On the top of the heights along the road,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
3 By the gates at the approaches of the city,
in the entryways she cries aloud:
4 "To you, O men, I call;
my appeal is to the children of men.
5 You simple ones, gain resource,
you fools,* gain sense.
6 "Give heed! for noble things I speak;
honesty opens my lips.
7 Yes, the truth my mouth recounts,*
but wickedness my lips abhor.
8 Sincere are all the words of my mouth,
no one of them is wily or crooked;

**7, 14:** "Peace offerings . . . vows": a portion of the sacrifice reverted to the donor and had to be eaten on the same day at a family festival (Lv 7, 11–15). In this figure, the adulteress offers to share with the foolish young man the deadly feast of her sensuality.

**8, 1–36:** Wisdom is here personified as in Prv 1, 20–33, to confirm the words of the teacher of wisdom. She exalts her grandeur and origin, and invites all (1–11) to be attentive to her salutary influence in human society (12–21), for she was privileged to be present at the creation of the world (22–31). Finally, she promises life and the favor of God to those who find her, death to those who despise her.

**8, 5:** Simple ones . . . fools: see note on Prv 1, 4.

**8, 7f:** The truth and sincerity of wisdom are absolute because they are divine. They can neither deceive nor tolerate deception. An intelligent man understands and accepts them.

h Dt 6, 8. i Prv 2, 16; 6, 24. j Prv 5, 3; 6, 24. k Prv 2, 18f; 5, 5. l Prv 1, 20f; 9, 3.

9 All of them are plain to the man of
intelligence,
and right to those who attain
knowledge.
10 Receive my instruction in preference to
silver,
and knowledge rather than choice
gold.
11 [For Wisdom is better than corals,
and no choice possession can compare with
her.[m] ]

12 "I, Wisdom, dwell with experience,
and judicious knowledge I attain.
13 [The fear of the LORD is to hate
evil;]
Pride, arrogance, the evil way,
and the perverse mouth I hate.[n]
14 Mine are counsel and advice;
mine is strength; I am understanding.*
15 By me kings reign,
and lawgivers establish justice;
16 By me princes govern,
and nobles; all the rulers of earth.

17 "Those who love me I also love,
and those who seek me find me.
18 With me are riches and honor,[o]
enduring wealth and prosperity.
19 My fruit is better than gold, yes, than pure
gold,
and my revenue than choice silver.[p]
20 On the way of duty I walk,
along the paths of justice,
21 Granting wealth to those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.

22 "The LORD begot me, the first-born of his
ways,*
the forerunner of his prodigies of long ago;[q]
23 From of old I was poured forth,*
at the first, before the earth.[r]
24 When there were no depths I was brought
forth,*
when there were no fountains or springs of
water;
25 Before the mountains were settled into place,
before the hills, I was brought forth;
26 While as yet the earth and the fields were not
made,
nor the first clods of the world.

27 "When he established the heavens I was
there,[s]
when he marked out the vault over the face
of the deep;
28 When he made firm the skies above,
when he fixed fast the foundations of the
earth;
29 When he set for the sea its limit,
so that the waters should not transgress his
command;
30 Then was I beside him as his craftsman,*
and I was his delight day by day,[t]
Playing before him all the while,
31 playing on the surface of his earth;
and I found delight in the sons of men.

32 "So now, O children, listen to me;
33 instruction and wisdom do not reject!
Happy the man who obeys me,
and happy those who keep my ways,
34 Happy the man watching daily at my gates,
waiting at my doorposts;
35 For he who finds me finds life,[u]
and wins favor from the LORD;
36 But he who misses me harms himself;
all who hate me love death."

**8, 14:** What is here predicated of wisdom is elsewhere attributed to God (Jb 12, 13–16).

**8, 22–31:** Wisdom is of divine origin. It is here represented as a being which existed before all things (22–26) and concurred with God when he planned and executed the creation of the universe, adorned it with beauty and variety, and established its wonderful order (27–30). Here that plurality of divine Persons is foreshadowed which was afterward to be fully revealed when Wisdom in the Person of Jesus Christ became incarnate.

**8, 23:** Poured forth: the exact meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; the expression must imply the equivalent of "born." The Hebrews likened the movement of air and of spirit to that of liquids.

**8, 24–26:** The formless mass from which God created the heavens and the earth; cf Gn 1, 1f; 2, 4ff.

**8, 30:** His craftsman: furnishing God with the plan, as it were, for the creation of all things; cf Jb 38, 1f; Wis 7, 22—8, 1. I was his delight: the ever-present object of God's complacency.

m Prv 3, 15; Wis 7, 8. n Prv 6, 16f; 16, 5. o Prv 3, 16. p Prv 3, 14. q Wis 9, 9; Sir 1, 1; 24, 9. r Sir 1, 4. s Prv 3, 19; Sir 24, 4f. t Wis 9, 9. u Prv 3, 13–18; 4, 22.

## CHAPTER 9

### The Two Banquets*

1 Wisdom has built her house,
she has set up her seven columns;
2 She has dressed her meat, mixed her wine,
yes, she has spread her table.
3 She has sent out her maidens; she calls*
from the heights out over the city: [v]
4 "Let whoever is simple turn in here;
to him who lacks understanding, I say,
5 Come, eat of my food,
and drink of the wine I have mixed!
6 Forsake foolishness that you may live;
advance in the way of understanding.
11 For by me your days will be multiplied
and the years of your life increased." [w]

7 He who corrects an arrogant man earns insult;
and he who reproves a wicked man incurs opprobrium.
8 Reprove not an arrogant man, lest he hate you;
reprove a wise man, and he will love you. [x]
9 Instruct a wise man, and he becomes still wiser;
teach a just man, and he advances in learning.

10 The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. [y]
12 If you are wise, it is to your own advantage;
and if you are arrogant, you alone shall bear it.

13 The woman Folly is fickle, [z]
she is inane, and knows nothing.
14 She sits at the door of her house
upon a seat on the city heights,
15 Calling to passers-by
as they go on their straight way:
16 "Let whoever is simple turn in here,
or who lacks understanding; for to him I say,
17 Stolen water is sweet,
and bread gotten secretly is pleasing!"*
18 Little he knows that the shades are there,
that in the depths of the nether world are her guests!*

Prov
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## II: First Collection Of The Proverbs Of Solomon*

## CHAPTER 10

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 The Proverbs of Solomon:

A wise son makes his father glad,
but a foolish son is a grief to his mother. [a]

2 Ill-gotten treasures profit nothing,
but virtue saves from death. [b]

3 The LORD permits not the just to hunger,
but the craving of the wicked he thwarts.

4 The slack hand impoverishes,
but the hand of the diligent enriches. [c]

5 A son who fills the granaries in summer is a credit;
a son who slumbers during harvest, a disgrace.

6 Blessings are for the head of the just,
but a rod for the back of the fool.

7 The memory of the just will be blessed,
but the name of the wicked will rot.

8 A wise man heeds commands,
but a prating fool will be overthrown.

**9, 1–6. 13–18:** Wisdom and folly are represented as matrons, each inviting people to her banquet. Wisdom offers the food and drink of divine doctrine and virtue which give life (1–6). Unstable and senseless folly furnishes the stolen bread and water of deceit and vice which bring death to her guests.

**9, 3:** She calls: i.e., indirectly, through her maidens; but the text could also mean that wisdom herself publicly proclaims her invitation.

**9, 17:** The secrecy implies wrongdoing.

**9, 18:** The banquet chamber of folly is a tomb from which no one who enters it is released.

**10, 1—22, 16:** The varied contents of this first collection of Solomon's proverbs apply mostly to individual life. Each of its three hundred and seventy-five proverbs is meant to be distinct from the others, developing one idea through contrasting parallelism in chapters 10—15, and a climactic treatment in 16—22.

v Prv 8, 1f. w Prv 3, 2. 16; 4, 10; 10, 27. x Sir 10, 27. y Prv 1, 7; Jb 28, 28; Ps 111, 10; Sir 1, 16. z 13–18; Prv, 7, 7–27. a Prv 1, 1; 15, 20; 17, 25; 19, 13; 25, 1; 29, 15. b Prv 11, 4. 6. c Prv 6, 11; 12, 24; 13, 4; 20, 13; 28, 19.

9 He who walks honestly walks securely,
but he whose ways are crooked will fare
badly.

10 He who winks at a fault causes trouble,
but he who frankly reproves promotes
peace.

11 A fountain of life is the mouth of the just,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals
violence.

12 Hatred stirs up disputes,
[d]but love covers all offenses.*

13 On the lips of the intelligent is found wisdom,
[but the mouth of the wicked conceals
violence].

14 Wise men store up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool is imminent ruin.

15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city;
the ruination of the lowly is their poverty.*

16 The just man's recompense leads to life,
the gains of the wicked, to sin.[e]

17 A path to life is his who heeds admonition,
but he who disregards reproof goes astray.[f]

18 It is the lips of the liar that conceal hostility;
but he who spreads accusations is a fool.

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19 Where words are many, sin is not wanting;
but he who restrains his lips does well.[g]

20 Like choice silver is the just man's tongue;
the heart of the wicked is of little worth.

21 The just man's lips nourish many,
but fools die for want of sense.

22 It is the LORD's blessing that brings wealth,[h]
and no effort can substitute for it.*

23 Crime is the entertainment of the fool;
so is wisdom for the man of sense.

24 What the wicked man fears will befall him,
but the desire of the just will be granted.

25 When the tempest passes, the wicked man is
no more;
but the just man is established forever.

26 As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes,
is the sluggard to those who use him as a
messenger.

27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
but the years of the wicked are brief.[i]

28 The hope of the just brings them joy,
but the expectation of the wicked comes to
nought.

29 The LORD is a stronghold to him who walks
honestly,
but to evildoers, their downfall.

30 The just man will never be disturbed,
but the wicked will not abide in the land.

31 The mouth of the just yields wisdom,
but the perverse tongue will be cut off.

32 The lips of the just know how to please,
but the mouth of the wicked, how to
pervert.

## CHAPTER 11

1 False scales are an abomination to the LORD,
but a full weight is his delight.[j]

2 When pride comes, disgrace comes;
but with the humble is wisdom.

3 The honesty of the upright guides them;
the faithless are ruined by their duplicity.

4 Wealth is useless on the day of wrath,[k]
but virtue saves from death.*

5 The honest man's virtue makes his way
straight,

**10, 12:** Love covers all offenses: a favorite maxim of the Apostles; cf 1 Cor 13, 7; Jas 5, 20; 1 Pt 4, 8; also Prv 17, 9.

**10, 15:** The inspired author reflects upon the reality of the power of money and the defeat of poverty, without approving these things.

**10, 22:** The blessing of God rather than our own industry crowns our efforts with success; cf Ps 127, 1f; Mt 6, 25–34.

**11, 4:** Wealth . . . death: not what a man is worth but what he is, counts before God.

d 1 Cor 13, 4–7; 1 Pt 4, 8. e Prv 11, 18f. f Prv 15, 10. g Prv 17, 27; Sir 20, 17; Jas 1, 19. h Sir 11, 22. i Prv 3, 2; 4, 10; 9, 11; 14, 27. j Prv 16, 11; 20, 10; Lv 19, 35f. k Prv 10, 2.

but by his wickedness the wicked man
falls.[l]

6 The virtue of the upright saves them,
but the faithless are caught in their own
intrigue.

7 When a wicked man dies his hope perishes,[m]
and what is expected from strength comes
to nought.

8 The just man escapes trouble,
and the wicked man falls into it in his stead.

9 With his mouth the impious man would ruin
his neighbor,[n]
but through their knowledge the just make
their escape.

10 When the just prosper, the city rejoices;[o]
and when the wicked perish, there is
jubilation.

11 Through the blessing of the righteous the city
is exalted,
but through the mouth of the wicked it is
overthrown.

12 He who reviles his neighbor has no sense,
but the intelligent man keeps silent.

13 A newsmonger reveals secrets,[p]
but a trustworthy man keeps a confidence.

14 For lack of guidance a people falls;
security lies in many counselors.[q]

15 He is in a bad way who becomes surety for
another,[r]
but he who hates giving pledges is safe.

16 A gracious woman wins esteem,
but she who hates virtue is covered with
shame.

[The slothful become impoverished,
but the diligent gain wealth.]

17 A kindly man benefits himself,
but a merciless man harms himself.

18 The wicked man makes empty profits,
but he who sows virtue has a sure reward.[s]

19 Virtue directs toward life,
but he who pursues evil does so to his
death.

20 The depraved in heart are an abomination to
the LORD,
but those who walk blamelessly are his
delight.

21 Truly the evil man shall not go unpunished,
but those who are just shall escape.

22 Like a golden ring in a swine's snout
is a beautiful woman with a rebellious
disposition.

23 The desire of the just ends only in good;
the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

24 One man is lavish yet grows still richer;
another is too sparing, yet is the poorer.

25 He who confers benefits will be amply
enriched,
and he who refreshes others will himself be
refreshed.

26 Him who monopolizes grain, the people
curse—
but blessings upon the head of him who
distributes it!

27 He who seeks the good commands favor,
but he who pursues evil will have evil befall
him.

28 He who trusts in his riches will fall,
but like green leaves the just flourish.[t]

29 He who upsets his household has empty air for
a heritage;
and the fool will become slave to the wise
man.

30 The fruit of virtue is a tree of life,
but violence takes lives away.

31 If the just man is punished on earth,
how much more the wicked and the
sinner![u]

l Prv 28, 18. m Prv 10, 28; Wis 3, 18. n Prv 29, 5. o Prv 28, 12; 29, 2. p Prv 20, 19. q Prv 15, 22; 20, 18; 24, 6. r Prv 6, 1f. s Prv 10, 16. t Ps 52, 9f. u 1 Pt 4, 18.

## CHAPTER 12

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 He who loves correction loves knowledge,
but he who hates reproof is stupid.[v]

2 The good man wins favor from the LORD,
but the schemer is condemned by him.

3 No man is built up by wickedness,
but the root of the just will never be disturbed.

4 A worthy wife is the crown of her husband,[w]
but a disgraceful one is like rot in his bones.

5 The plans of the just are legitimate;
the designs of the wicked are deceitful.

6 The words of the wicked are a deadly ambush,
but the speech of the upright saves them.

7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the just stands firm.

8 According to his good sense a man is praised,
but one with a warped mind is despised.

9 Better a lowly man who supports himself
than one of assumed importance who lacks bread.[x]

10 The just man takes care of his beast,
but the heart of the wicked is merciless.

11 He who tills his own land has food in plenty,
but he who follows idle pursuits is a fool.[y]

12 The stronghold of evil men will be demolished,
but the root of the just is enduring.

13 In the sin of his lips the evil man is ensnared,
but the just comes free of trouble.

Prov
See RG
255–264

14 From the fruit of his words a man has his fill of good things,[z]
and the work of his hands comes back to reward him.*

15 The way of the fool seems right in his own eyes,
but he who listens to advice is wise.

16 The fool immediately shows his anger,
but the shrewd man passes over an insult.

17 He tells the truth who states what he is sure of,
but a lying witness speaks deceitfully.[a]

18 The prating of some men is like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise is healing.

19 Truthful lips endure forever,
the lying tongue, for only a moment.

20 Deceit is in the hands of those who plot evil,
but those who counsel peace have joy.

21 No harm befalls the just,
but the wicked are overwhelmed with misfortune.

22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,[b]
but those who are truthful are his delight.

23 A shrewd man conceals his knowledge,
but the hearts of fools gush forth folly.

24 The diligent hand will govern,
but the slothful will be enslaved.[c]

25 Anxiety in a man's heart depresses it,
but a kindly word makes it glad.[d]

26 The just man surpasses his neighbor,
but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

27 The slothful man catches not his prey,
but the wealth of the diligent man is great.

28 In the path of justice there is life,
but the abominable way leads to death.

## CHAPTER 13

1 A wise son loves correction,
but the senseless one heeds no rebuke.

2 From the fruit of his words a man eats good things,[e]
but the treacherous one craves violence.

3 He who guards his mouth protects his life;
to open wide one's lips brings downfall.[f]

12, 14: Cf Mt 7, 17; Gal 6, 8.

v Prv 15, 5. 10; 29, 1; Sir 19, 5; 21, 6. w Sir 26, 1. 16. x Sir 10, 26. y Prv 28, 19; Sir 20, 27. z Prv 13, 2; 18, 20. a Prv 14, 5. b Prv 6, 17. c Prv 10, 4; 13, 4. d Prv 15, 13; 17, 22. e Prv 12, 14; 18, 20. f Prv 18, 7; 21, 23.

e soul of the sluggard craves in vain,
but the diligent soul is amply satisfied.

5 Anything deceitful the just man hates,
but the wicked brings shame and disgrace.

6 Virtue guards one who walks honestly,
but the downfall of the wicked is sin.[g]

7 One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing;
another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.

8 A man's riches serve as ransom for his life,
but the poor man heeds no rebuke.

9 The light of the just shines gaily,
but the lamp* of the wicked goes out.[h]

10 The stupid man sows discord by his insolence,
but with those who take counsel is wisdom.

11 Wealth quickly gotten dwindles away,
but amassed little by little, it grows.[i]

12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a wish fulfilled is a tree of life.

13 He who despises the word* must pay for it,
but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.

14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
that a man may avoid the snares of death.

15 Good sense brings favor,
but the way of the faithless is their ruin.

16 The shrewd man does everything with prudence,
but the fool peddles folly.

17 A wicked messenger brings on disaster,
but a trustworthy envoy is a healing remedy.

18 Poverty and shame befall the man who disregards correction,
but he who heeds reproof is honored.

19 Lust indulged starves the soul,
but fools hate to turn from evil.

20 Walk with wise men and you will become wise,
but the companion of fools will fare badly.[j]

21 Misfortune pursues sinners,
but the just shall be recompensed with good.

22 The good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the just.

23 A lawsuit devours the tillage of the poor,
but some men perish for lack of a law court.

24 He who spares his rod hates his son,
but he who loves him takes care to chastise him.[k]

25 When the just man eats, his hunger is appeased;
but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

## CHAPTER 14

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 Wisdom builds her house,
but Folly tears hers down with her own hands.

2 He who walks uprightly fears the LORD,
but he who is devious in his ways spurns him.

3 In the mouth of the fool is a rod for his back,
but the lips of the wise preserve them.

4 Where there are no oxen, the crib remains empty;
but large crops come through the strength of the bull.

5 A truthful witness does not lie,
but a false witness utters lies.[l]

6 The senseless man seeks in vain for wisdom,
but knowledge is easy to the man of intelligence.

7 To avoid the foolish man, take steps!

13, 9: Light . . . lamp: symbols of life and prosperity; cf Prv 4, 18f.
13, 13: Word: advice, or God's law.

g Prv 11, 3. 5f. h Prv 24, 20. i Prv 28, 20. 22. j Sir 6, 34; 8, 8. 17. k Prv 19, 18; 22, 15; 23, 13f; 29, 15; Sir 30, 1. 8–13. l Prv 12. 17.

But knowing lips one meets with by
surprise.

8 The shrewd man's wisdom gives him
knowledge of his way,
but the folly of fools is their deception.

9 Guilt lodges in the tents of the arrogant,
but favor in the house of the just.

10 The heart knows its own bitterness,
and in its joy no one else shares.

11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
but the tent of the upright will flourish. [m]

12 Sometimes a way seems right to a man,
but the end of it leads to death! [n]

13 Even in laughter the heart may be sad
and the end of joy may be sorrow.

14 The scoundrel suffers the consequences of his
ways,
and the good man reaps the fruit of his
paths.

15 The simpleton believes everything,
but the shrewd man measures his steps.

16 The wise man is cautious and shuns evil;
the fool is reckless and sure of himself.

17 The quick-tempered man makes a fool of
himself,
but the prudent man is at peace.

18 The adornment of simpletons is folly,
but shrewd men gain the crown of
knowledge.

19 Evil men must bow down before the good,
and the wicked, at the gates of the just.

20 Even by his neighbor the poor man is hated,
but the friends of the rich are many. [o]

21 He sins who despises the hungry;
but happy is he who is kind to the poor!

Prov
See RG
255–264

22 Do not those who plot evil go astray?
But those intent on good gain kindness and
constancy.

23 In all labor there is profit,
but mere talk tends only to penury.

24 The crown of the wise is resourcefulness;
the diadem of fools is folly.

25 The truthful witness saves lives,
but he who utters lies is a betrayer.

26 In the fear of the LORD is a strong defense;
even for one's children he will be a refuge.

27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
that a man may avoid the snares of death.

28 In many subjects lies the glory of the king;
but if his people are few, it is the prince's
ruin.

29 The patient man shows much good sense,
but the quick-tempered man displays folly at
its height. [p]

30 A tranquil mind gives life to the body,
but jealousy rots the bones.

31 He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his
Maker,
but he who is kind to the needy glorifies
him. [q]

32 The wicked man is overthrown by his
wickedness,
but the just man finds a refuge in his
honesty.

33 In the heart of the intelligent wisdom abides,
but in the bosom of fools it is unknown.

34 Virtue exalts a nation,
but sin is a people's disgrace.

35 The king favors the intelligent servant,
but the worthless one incurs his wrath.

## CHAPTER 15

1 A mild answer calms wrath, [r]
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

2 The tongue of the wise pours out knowledge,
but the mouth of fools spurts forth folly.

m Prv 3, 33; 12, 7; 15, 25. n Prv 16, 25. o Prv 19, 4. 7; Sir 6, 8, 12. p Prv 16, 32; 19, 11; Jas 1, 19. q Prv 17, 5. r Prv 25, 15; Sir 6, 5.

3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.

4 A soothing tongue is a tree of life,
but a perverse one crushes the spirit.

5 The fool spurns his father's admonition,
but prudent is he who heeds reproof.[s]

6 In the house of the just there are ample resources,
but the earnings of the wicked are in turmoil.

7 The lips of the wise disseminate knowledge,
but the heart of fools is perverted.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,[t]
but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but he loves the man who pursues virtue.[u]

10 Severe punishment is in store for the man who goes astray;
he who hates reproof will die.

11 The nether world and the abyss* lie open before the LORD;
how much more the hearts of men!

12 The senseless man loves not to be reproved;
to wise men he will not go.

13 A glad heart lights up the face,
but by mental anguish the spirit is broken.[v]

14 The mind of the intelligent man seeks knowledge,
but the mouth of fools feeds on folly.

15 Every day is miserable for the depressed,
but a lighthearted man has a continual feast.

16 Better a little with fear of the LORD*
than a great fortune with anxiety.

17 Better a dish of herbs where love is
than a fatted ox and hatred with it.

18 An ill-tempered man stirs up strife,[w]
but a patient man allays discord.

19 The way of the sluggard is hemmed in as with thorns,
but the path of the diligent is a highway.

20 A wise son makes his father glad,
but a fool of a man despises his mother.[x]

21 Folly is joy to the senseless man,
but the man of understanding goes the straight way.

22 Plans fail when there is no counsel,
but they succeed when counselors are many.[y]

23 There is joy for a man in his utterance;
a word in season, how good it is![z]

24 The path of life leads the prudent man upward,
that he may avoid the nether world below.

25 The LORD overturns the house of the proud,
but he preserves intact the widow's landmark.

26 The wicked man's schemes are an abomination to the LORD,[a]
but the pure speak what is pleasing to him.

27 He who is greedy of gain brings ruin on his own house,
but he who hates bribes will live.

28 The just man weighs well his utterance,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.

29 The LORD is far from the wicked,
but the prayer of the just he hears.

30 A cheerful glance brings joy to the heart;
good news invigorates the bones.

31 He who listens to salutary reproof[b]
will abide among the wise.

15, 11: Nether world . . . abyss: the abode of the dead, signifying the profound obscurity which is open nevertheless to the sight and power of God.

15, 16f: Not the amount of temporal goods but the virtue of their possessor makes them a source of happiness.

s Prv 12, 1; 13, 18. t Prv 21, 27; Eccl 4, 17; Sir 34, 18ff; Is 1, 11–15. u Prv 11, 20; 21, 21. v Prv 12, 25; 17, 22; Sir 30, 22. w Prv 26, 21; 29, 22; Sir 28, 11. x Prv 10, 1; 29, 3. y Prv 11, 14. z Prv 25, 11; Sir 20, 6. a Prv 6, 18. b Prv 25, 12.

32 He who rejects admonition despises his own soul,
but he who heeds reproof gains understanding.

33 The fear of the LORD is training for wisdom,
and humility goes before honors. [c]

## CHAPTER 16

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 Man may make plans in his heart,
but what the tongue utters is from the LORD.*

2 All the ways of a man may be pure in his own eyes,
but it is the LORD who proves the spirit. [d]

3 Entrust your works to the LORD,
and your plans will succeed.

4 The LORD has made everything for his own ends,
even the wicked for the evil day.*

5 Every proud man is an abomination to the LORD; [e]
I assure you that he will not go unpunished.

6 By kindness and piety guilt is expiated,
and by the fear of the LORD man avoids evil.

7 When the LORD is pleased with a man's ways,
he makes even his enemies be at peace with him.

8 Better a little with virtue,
than a large income with injustice.

9 In his mind a man plans his course,
but the LORD directs his steps. [f]

10 The king's lips are an oracle;
no judgment he pronounces is false.*

11 Balance and scales belong to the LORD;
all the weights used with them are his concern. [g]

12 Kings have a horror of wrongdoing,
for by righteousness the throne endures. [h]

13 The king takes delight in honest lips,
and the man who speaks what is right he loves. [i]

14 The king's wrath is like messengers of death, [j]
but a wise man can pacify it.

15 In the light of the king's countenance is life,
and his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.

16 How much better to acquire wisdom than gold!
To acquire understanding is more desirable than silver. [k]

17 The path of the upright avoids misfortune;
he who pays attention to his way safeguards his life.

18 Pride goes before disaster,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

19 It is better to be humble with the meek
than to share plunder with the proud. [l]

20 He who plans a thing will be successful;
happy is he who trusts in the LORD!

21 The wise man is esteemed for his discernment,
yet pleasing speech increases his persuasiveness.

22 Good sense is a fountain of life to its possessor,
but folly brings chastisement on fools.

23 The mind of the wise man makes him eloquent,
and augments the persuasiveness of his lips.

24 Pleasing words are a honeycomb,
sweet to the taste and healthful to the body.

25 Sometimes a way seems right to a man,
but the end of it leads to death! [m]

**16, 1:** Words, like actions, often produce results different from those which were planned.

**16, 4:** Even the wicked, in their punishment, cannot escape glorifying God's justice.

**16, 10:** Decisions of supreme judicial authority were presumed disinterested and correct.

c Prv 1, 7; Sir 1, 24. d Prv 21, 2. e Prv 6, 16f; 8, 13. f Prv 19, 21; 20, 24. g Prv 11, 1. h Prv 25, 5. i Prv 14, 35; 22, 11. j Prv 19, 12; 20, 2. k Prv 8, 10f. 19. l Prv 11, 2. m Prv 14, 12.

26 The laborer's appetite labors for him,
for his mouth urges him on.[n]

27 A scoundrel is a furnace of evil,
and on his lips there is a scorching fire.

28 An intriguer sows discord,
and a talebearer separates bosom friends.[o]

29 A lawless man allures his neighbor,
and leads him into a way that is not good.

30 He who winks his eye is plotting trickery;
he who compresses his lips has mischief ready.

31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;[p]
it is gained by virtuous living.

32 A patient man is better than a warrior,
and he who rules his temper, than he who takes a city.[q]

33 When the lot is cast into the lap,
its decision depends entirely on the LORD.*

## CHAPTER 17

1 Better a dry crust with peace
than a house full of feasting with strife.

2 An intelligent servant will rule over a worthless son,
and will share the inheritance with the brothers.*

3 The crucible for silver, and the furnace for gold,
but the tester of hearts is the LORD.

4 The evil man gives heed to wicked lips,
and listens to falsehood from a mischievous tongue.*

5 He who mocks the poor blasphemes his Maker;[r]
he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

6 Grandchildren are the crown of old men,
and the glory of children is their parentage.

7 Fine words are out of place in a fool;
how much more, lying words in a noble!

8 A man who has a bribe to offer rates it a magic stone;
at every turn it brings him success.

9 He who covers up a misdeed fosters friendship,
but he who gossips about it separates friends.

10 A single reprimand does more for a man of intelligence
than a hundred lashes for a fool.

11 On rebellion alone is the wicked man bent,
but a merciless messenger will be sent against him.

12 Face a bear robbed of her cubs,
but never a fool in his folly!

13 If a man returns evil for good,
from his house evil will not depart.[s]

Prov
See RG
255–264

14 The start of strife is like the opening of a dam;
therefore, check a quarrel before it begins!

15 He who condones the wicked,[t] he who condemns the just,
are both an abomination to the LORD.

16 Of what use in the fool's hand are the means
to buy wisdom, since he has no mind for it?

17 He who is a friend is always a friend,
and a brother is born for the time of stress.[u]

18 Senseless is the man who gives his hand in pledge,
who becomes surety for his neighbor.[v]

19 He who loves strife loves guilt;[w]
he who builds his gate high* courts disaster.

**16, 33:** The favorable or unfavorable result of chance depends on God. Deciding strifes and doubts by lot was practiced by the ancient Hebrews; cf Ex 28, 15–30; Lv 16, 8; Jos 7, 14; 1 Sm 10, 20f.

**17, 2:** Intelligence and ability are esteemed more highly than nobility of blood.

**17, 4:** To justify his own evil ways, a wicked man judges evil of others. Cf Mt 7, 1–5.

**17, 19:** Builds . . . high: a symbol of arrogance.

n Prv 10, 4. o Prv 6, 14. 19; 17, 9; 26, 22; Sir 28, 15. p Prv 20, 29. q Prv 14, 29. r Prv 14, 31. s Mt 5, 39; Rom 12, 17; 1 Thes 5, 15; 1 Pt 3, 9. t Prv 24, 24; Is 5, 23. u Prv 18, 24. v Prv 6, 1f; 11, 15. w Prv 15, 18.

20 He who is perverse in heart finds no good,
and a double-tongued man falls into trouble.

21 To be a fool's parent is grief for a man;
the father of a numskull has no joy.

22 A joyful heart is the health of the body,
but a depressed spirit dries up the bones. [x]

23 The wicked man accepts a concealed bribe
to pervert the course of justice.

24 The man of intelligence fixes his gaze on wisdom, [y]
but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

25 A foolish son is vexation to his father,
and bitter sorrow to her who bore him. [z]

26 It is wrong to fine an innocent man,
but beyond reason to scourge princes.

27 He who spares his words is truly wise,
and he who is chary of speech is a man of intelligence. [a]

28 Even a fool, if he keeps silent, is considered wise;
if he closes his lips, intelligent.

## CHAPTER 18

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 In estrangement one seeks pretexts:
with all persistence he picks a quarrel.

2 The fool takes no delight in understanding,
but rather in displaying what he thinks.

3 With wickedness comes contempt,
and with disgrace comes scorn.

4 The words from a man's mouth are deep waters,
but the source of wisdom is a flowing brook. [b]

5 It is not good to be partial to the guilty,
and so to reject a rightful claim. [c]

6 The fool's lips lead him into strife,
and his mouth provokes a beating.

7 The fool's mouth is his ruin;
his lips are a snare to his life. [d]

8 The words of a talebearer are like dainty morsels
that sink into one's inmost being. [e]

9 The man who is slack in his work
is own brother to the man who is destructive.

10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;*
the just man runs to it and is safe.

11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city; [f]
he fancies it a high wall.

12 Before his downfall a man's heart is haughty, [g]
but humility goes before honors.*

13 He who answers before he hears [h] —
his is the folly and the shame.*

14 A man's spirit sustains him in infirmity—
but a broken spirit who can bear?

15 The mind of the intelligent gains knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

16 A man's gift clears the way for him,
and gains him access to great men. [i]

17 The man who pleads his case first seems to be in the right;
then his opponent comes and puts him to the test.

18 The lot puts an end to disputes,
and is decisive in a controversy between the mighty.*

19 A brother is a better defense than a strong city,
and a friend is like the bars of a castle.

**18, 10f:** Religion is a strong support and sure refuge in the struggle of life. The rich foolishly rely on their wealth for such support.

**18, 12:** Compare the Savior's words: "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23, 12).

**18, 13:** To speak without first listening is characteristic of a fool; cf Prv 10, 14; Sir 11, 8.

**18, 18:** See note on Prv 16, 33.

x Prv 12, 25; 15, 13. y Eccl 8, 1. z Prv 10, 1; 29, 15. a Prv 10, 19; Sir 1, 21; Jas 1, 19. b Prv 20, 5; Jn 7, 38. c Prv 24, 23; 28, 21. d Prv 10, 14; 12, 13; 13, 3; Eccl 10, 12. e Prv 26, 22. f Prv 10, 15. g Prv 11, 2; 16, 18; Sir 10, 15. h Sir 11, 8. i Prv 21, 14.

20 From the fruit of his mouth a man has his fill;*
with the yield of his lips he sates himself.[j]

21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue;[k]
those who make it a friend shall eat its fruit.

22 He who finds a wife finds happiness;
it is a favor he receives from the LORD.[l]

23 The poor man implores,
but the rich man answers harshly.

24 Some friends bring ruin on us,
but a true friend is more loyal than a brother.[m]

## CHAPTER 19

1 Better a poor man who walks in his integrity
than he who is crooked in his ways and rich.[n]

2 Without knowledge even zeal is not good;
and he who acts hastily, blunders.

3 A man's own folly upsets his way,
but his heart is resentful against the LORD.

4 Wealth adds many friends,
but the friend of the poor man deserts him.[o]

5 The false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who utters lies will not escape.[p]

6 Many curry favor with a noble;
all are friends of the man who has something to give.

7 All the poor man's brothers hate him;
how much more do his friends shun him!

8 He who gains intelligence is his own best friend;
he who keeps understanding will be successful.

9 The false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who utters lies will perish.

10 Luxury is not befitting a fool;
much less should a slave rule over princes.

11 It is good sense in a man to be slow to anger,
and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

12 The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion,
but his favor, like dew on the grass.[q]

13 The foolish son is ruin to his father,[r]
and the nagging of a wife is a persistent leak.

14 Home and possessions are an inheritance from parents,
but a prudent wife is from the LORD.[s]

15 Laziness plunges a man into deep sleep,
and the sluggard must go hungry.[t]

16 He who keeps the precept keeps his life,
but the despiser of the word will die.[u]

17 He who has compassion on the poor lends to the LORD,[v]
and he will repay him for his good deed.*

18 Chastise your son, for in this there is hope;
but do not desire his death.[w]

19 The man of violent temper pays the penalty;
even if you rescue him, you will have it to do again.

20 Listen to counsel and receive instruction,
that you may eventually become wise.

21 Many are the plans in a man's heart,
but it is the decision of the LORD that endures.[x]

22 From a man's greed comes his shame;
rather be a poor man than a liar.

23 The fear of the LORD is an aid to life;
one eats and sleeps without being visited by misfortune.

24 The sluggard loses his hand in the dish;
he will not even lift it to his mouth.[y]

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**18, 20f:** Everyone must accept the consequences, of benefit or harm to himself, which his words produce.
**19, 17:** Cf Mt 25, 34–40.

j Prv 12, 14; 13, 2. k Sir 37, 18. l Prv 12, 4; 19, 14; Sir 7, 26. m Prv 17, 17. n Prv 28, 6. o Prv 14, 20; Sir 13, 20ff. p Dt 19, 16–20; Dn 13, 61. q Prv 20, 2. r Prv 10, 1; 17, 25. s Prv 18, 22. t Prv 6, 9ff. u Prv 13, 13; 16, 17. v Prv 14, 21; 22, 9; 28, 27. w Prv 13, 24; 23, 13f. x Prv 16, 9. y Prv 26, 15.

25 If you beat an arrogant man, the simple learn a lesson;
if you rebuke an intelligent man, he gains knowledge.[z]

26 He who mistreats his father, or drives away his mother,
is a worthless and disgraceful son.[a]

27 If a son ceases to hear instruction,
he wanders from words of knowledge.

28 An unprincipled witness perverts justice,
and the mouth of the wicked pours out iniquity.

29 Rods are prepared for the arrogant,
and blows for the backs of fools.[b]

## CHAPTER 20

Prov
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1 Wine is arrogant, strong drink is riotous;
none who goes astray for it is wise.[c]

2 The dread of the king is as when a lion roars;[d]
he who incurs his anger forfeits his life.

3 It is honorable for a man to shun strife,
while every fool starts a quarrel.

4 In seedtime the sluggard plows not;
when he looks for the harvest, it is not there.

5 The intention in the human heart is like water far below the surface,
but the man of intelligence draws it forth.[e]

6 Many are declared to be men of virtue:
but who can find one worthy of trust?

7 When a man walks in integrity and justice,
happy are his children after him!

8 A king seated on the throne of judgment
dispels all evil with his glance.

9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean,[f]
I am cleansed of my sin"?*

10 Varying weights, varying measures,
are both an abomination to the LORD.[g]

11 Even by his manners the child betrays
whether his conduct is innocent and right.

12 The ear that hears, and the eye that sees—
the LORD has made them both.

13 Love not sleep, lest you be reduced to poverty;
eyes wide open mean abundant food.

14 "Bad, bad!" says the buyer;
but once he has gone his way, he boasts.*

15 Like gold or a wealth of corals,
wise lips are a precious ornament.

16 Take his garment who becomes surety for another,[h]
and for strangers yield it up!*

17 The bread of deceit is sweet to a man,
but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

18 Plans made after advice succeed;
so with wise guidance wage your war.

19 A newsmonger reveals secrets;
so have nothing to do with a babbler!

20 If one curses his father or mother,
his lamp will go out* at the coming of darkness.[i]

21 Possessions gained hastily at the outset
will in the end not be blessed.

22 Say not, "I will repay evil!"
Trust in the LORD and he will help you.[j]

23 Varying weights are an abomination to the LORD,
and false scales are not good.[k]

**20, 9:** Man can be free of sin only by the power of God. Cf 1 Kgs 8, 46ff; Jb 4, 17; 14, 4; Pss 51, 2ff; 130, 3f; Rom 3, 23f; 1 Jn 1, 8.

**20, 14:** What one wishes to buy is valued cheaply in order that it may be obtained at a low price; once purchased, it is deemed more valuable.

**20, 16:** Caution is again advised in the matter of becoming surety; cf Prv 6, 1ff.

**20, 20:** His lamp will go out: misfortune, even death, awaits him; cf Prv 13, 9; Ex 21, 17.

z Prv 17, 10; 21, 11. a Sir 3, 16. b Prv 26, 3. c Prv 23, 29–35. d Prv 19, 12. e Prv 18, 4. f 1 Kgs 8, 46; 2 Chr 6, 36; Eccl 7, 20; 1 Jn 1, 8. g Prv 11, 1; 20, 23. h Prv 27, 13. i Prv 30, 11. 17; Ex 21, 17; Lv 20, 9; Mt 15, 4. j Prv 24, 29; Sir 28, 1; Mt 5, 39; Rom 12, 17. 19; 1 Thes 5, 15; 1 Pt 3, 9. k Prv 11, 1; 20, 10.

24 Man's steps are from the LORD; [l]
how, then, can a man understand his way?*

25 Rashly to pledge a sacred gift is a trap for a man,
or to regret a vow once made.*

26 A wise king winnows the wicked,
and threshes them under the cartwheel.

27 A lamp from the LORD is the breath of man;
it searches through all his inmost being.

28 Kindness and piety safeguard the king,
and he upholds his throne by justice. [m]

29 The glory of young men is their strength,
and the dignity of old men is gray hair. [n]

30 Evil is cleansed away by bloody lashes,
and a scourging to the inmost being.

## CHAPTER 21

1 Like a stream is the king's heart in the hand of the Lord;
wherever it pleases him, he directs it.

2 All the ways of a man may be right in his own eyes,
but it is the LORD who proves hearts. [o]

3 To do what is right and just [p]
is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart—
the tillage of the wicked is sin.

5 The plans of the diligent are sure of profit,
but all rash haste leads certainly to poverty.

6 He who makes a fortune by a lying tongue
is chasing a bubble over deadly snares.

7 The oppression of the wicked will sweep them away,
because they refuse to do what is right.

8 The way of the culprit is crooked,
but the conduct of the innocent is right.

9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop
than in a roomy house with a quarrelsome woman. [q]

10 The soul of the wicked man desires evil;
his neighbor finds no pity in his eyes.

11 When the arrogant man is punished, the simple are the wiser;
when the wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge. [r]

12 The just man appraises the house of the wicked:
there is one who brings down the wicked to ruin.

13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself also call and not be heard.

14 A secret gift allays anger,
and a concealed present, violent wrath.

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15 To practice justice is a joy for the just,
but terror for evildoers. [s]

16 The man who strays from the way of good sense
will abide in the assembly of the shades.*

17 He who loves pleasure will suffer want;
he who loves wine and perfume will not be rich.

18 The wicked man serves as ransom for the just,*
and the faithless man for the righteous. [t]

19 It is better to dwell in a wilderness
than with a quarrelsome and vexatious wife.

20 Precious treasure remains in the house of the wise,

**20, 24:** Man is dependent upon God and cannot fully foresee his own course.

**20, 25:** This verse cautions against making vows without proper reflection; cf Dt 23, 22ff; Eccl 5, 4f.

**21, 3:** External rites or sacrifices do not please God unless accompanied by internal worship and right moral conduct; cf Prv 15, 8; 21, 27; Is 1, 11–15; Am 5, 22; Mal 1, 12.

**21, 16:** Assembly of the shades: cf note on Jb 26, 5.

**21, 18:** Wicked . . . ransom for the just: exemplified in the history of God's chosen people whom he ransomed from Egypt at the cost of the life of Pharaoh and his army (Ex 14, 23–31), and from Babylon by giving to Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, the richest lands of the world (Is 43, 1ff).

l Prv 16, 9. m Prv 16, 12. n Prv 16, 31. o Prv 16, 2. p 1 Sm 15, 22; Hos 6, 6. q Prv 21, 19; 25, 24; 27, 15; Sir 25, 23. r Prv 19, 25. s Prv 10, 29. t Prv 11, 8.

but the fool consumes it.

21 He who pursues justice and kindness
will find life and honor.

22 The wise man storms a city of the mighty,
and overthrows the stronghold in which it trusts.

23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself from trouble. [u]

24 Arrogant is the name for the man of overbearing pride
who acts with scornful effrontery.

25 The sluggard's propensity slays him,
for his hands refuse to work.

26 Some are consumed with avarice all the day,
but the just man gives unsparingly.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination,
the more so when they offer it with a bad intention. [v]

28 The false witness will perish, [w]
but he who listens will finally have his say.

29 The wicked man is brazenfaced,
but the upright man pays heed to his ways.

30 There is no wisdom, no understanding,
no counsel, against the LORD.

31 The horse is equipped for the day of battle,
but victory is the LORD's.

## CHAPTER 22

Prov
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255–264

1 A good name is more desirable than great riches,
and high esteem, than gold and silver. [x]

2 Rich and poor have a common bond:
the LORD is the maker of them all. [y]

3 The shrewd man perceives evil and hides,
while simpletons continue on and suffer the penalty. [z]

4 The reward of humility and fear of the LORD
is riches, honor and life.

5 Thorns and snares are on the path of the crooked;
he who would safeguard his life will shun them.

6 Train a boy in the way he should go;
even when he is old, he will not swerve from it.

7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

8 He who sows iniquity reaps calamity, [a]
and the rod destroys his labors.

9 The kindly man will be blessed,
for he gives of his sustenance to the poor.

10 Expel the arrogant man and discord goes out;
strife and insult cease.

11 The LORD loves the pure of heart; [b]
the man of winning speech has the king for his friend.

12 The eyes of the LORD safeguard knowledge,
but he defeats the projects of the faithless.

13 The sluggard says, "A lion is outside; [c]
in the streets I might be slain."*

14 The mouth of the adulteress is a deep pit; [d]
he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it.

15 Folly is close to the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

16 He who oppresses the poor to enrich himself
will yield up his gains to the rich as sheer loss.*

**22, 13:** To avoid the effort required for doing good, the sluggard exaggerates the difficulties that must be overcome.
**22, 16:** Money gained by exploiting the poor is in turn lost to those who are more wealthy.

u Prv 13, 3. v Prv 15, 8; Sir 34, 18ff. w Prv 19, 5. 9. x Eccl 7, 1. y Prv 29, 13. z Prv 27, 12. a Jb 4, 8; Sir 7, 3; Hos 8, 7. b Mt 5, 8. c Prv 26, 13. d Prv 23, 27.

## III: Sayings of the Wise*

17 The sayings of the wise:*

Incline your ear, and hear my words,[e]
and apply your heart to my doctrine;
18 For it will be well if you keep them in your bosom,
if they all are ready on your lips.
19 That your trust may be in the LORD,
I make known to you the words of Amen-em-Ope.*
20 Have I not written for you the "Thirty,"
with counsels and knowledge,
21 To teach you truly
how to give a dependable report to one who sends you?

22 Injure not the poor because they are poor,
nor crush the needy at the gate;
23 For the LORD will defend their cause,[f]
and will plunder the lives of those who plunder them.

24 Be not friendly with a hotheaded man,
nor the companion of a wrathful man,
25 Lest you learn his ways,
and get yourself into a snare.

26 Be not one of those who give their hand in pledge,
of those who become surety for debts;[g]
27 For if you have not the means to pay,
your bed will be taken from under you.

28 Remove not the ancient landmark
which your fathers set up.[h]

29 You see a man skilled at his work?
He will stand in the presence of kings;
he will not stand in the presence of obscure men.

## CHAPTER 23

Prov
See RG
255–264

1 When you sit down to dine with a ruler,
keep in mind who is before you;
2 And put a knife to your throat*
if you have a ravenous appetite.
3 Do not desire his delicacies;
they are deceitful food.
4 Toil not to gain wealth,
cease to be concerned about it;
5 While your glance flits to it, it is gone!
for assuredly it grows wings,
like the eagle that flies toward heaven.

6 Do not take food with a grudging man,
and do not desire his dainties;
7 For in his greed he is like a storm.
"Eat and drink," he says to you,
though his heart is not with you;
8 The little you have eaten you will vomit up,
and you will have wasted your agreeable words.
9 Speak not for the fool's hearing;
he will despise the wisdom of your words.[i]

10 Remove not the ancient landmark,[j]
nor invade the fields of orphans;
11 For their redeemer is strong;
he will defend their cause against you.[k]

12 Apply your heart to instruction,
and your ears to words of knowledge.

13 Withhold not chastisement from a boy;
if you beat him with the rod, he will not die.[l]
14 Beat him with the rod,[m]
and you will save him from the nether world.

15 My son, if your heart be wise,
my own heart also will rejoice;

**22, 17—24, 22:** This collection of proverbs, introduced as sayings of the wise, is given in the more intimate and personal form of an address to a pupil called the son and is arranged in strophes instead of couplets.

**22, 17—23, 35:** The maxims warn against: oppression of the poor and defenseless (22, 22f), anger (24f), giving surety for debts (26f), bad manners at a king's table (23, 1f), anxiety for riches (4f), a grudging host (6ff), intemperance in food and drink (19ff. 29–35), and adultery (26ff). They exhort to: careful workmanship (22, 29), respect for the rights of orphans (23, 10f), correction of the young (13f), filial piety (15f. 22–25), and fear of the Lord (17f).

**22, 19f:** Amen-em-Ope: an Egyptian scribe to whom is attributed a collection of maxims in Thirty chapters (v 20) composed for the instruction of his children and addressed to a young man who wishes to enter upon a career. The inspired editor of Proverbs does not translate these, but uses their materials in constructing a similar collection of proverbs.

**23, 2:** Put a knife to your throat: a proverbial metaphor for self-restraint.

e Prv 5, 1. f Prv 23, 11. g Prv 6, 1f; 11, 15; 17, 18. h Prv 23, 10; Dt 19, 14; 27, 17. i Prv 9, 7. j Prv 22, 28. k Prv 22, 23. l Prv 13, 24; 19, 18; Sir 30, 1. m Prv 29, 15. 17.

16 And my inmost being will exult,
when your lips speak what is right.

17 Let not your heart emulate sinners, [n]
but be zealous for the fear of the LORD always;
18 For you will surely have a future,
and your hope will not be cut off. [o]

19 Hear, my son, and be wise,
and guide your heart in the right way.
20 Consort not with winebibbers,
nor with those who eat meat to excess;
21 For the drunkard and the glutton come to poverty,
and torpor clothes a man in rags.

Prov
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22 Listen to your father who begot you,
and despise not your mother when she is old.
23 Get the truth, and sell it not—
wisdom, instruction and understanding.
24 The father of a just man will exult with glee;
he who begets a wise son will have joy in him. [p]
25 Let your father and mother have joy;
let her who bore you exult.

26 My son, give me your heart,
and let your eyes keep to my ways.
27 For the harlot is a deep ditch,
and the adulteress a narrow pit;
28 Yes, she lies in wait like a robber, [q]
and increases the faithless among men.

29 Who scream? Who shriek?*
Who have strife? Who have anxiety?
Who have wounds for nothing?
Who have black eyes?
30 Those who linger long over wine,
those who engage in trials of blended wine. [r]
31 Look not on the wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the glass.
It goes down smoothly;
32 but in the end it bites like a serpent,
or like a poisonous adder.
33 Your eyes behold strange sights,
and your heart utters disordered thoughts;
34 You are like one now lying in the depths of the sea,
now sprawled at the top of the mast.
35 "They struck me, but it pained me not;
they beat me, but I felt it not;
When shall I awake
to seek wine once again?"*

## CHAPTER 24

1 Be not emulous of evil men,*
and desire not to be with them; [s]
2 For their hearts plot violence,
and their lips speak of foul play.

3 By wisdom is a house built,
by understanding is it made firm;
4 And by knowledge are its rooms filled
with every precious and pleasing possession.
5 A wise man is more powerful than a strong man,
and a man of knowledge than a man of might; [t]
6 For it is by wise guidance that you wage your war,
and the victory is due to a wealth of counselors. [u]

7 For a fool, to be silent is wisdom; [v]
not to open his mouth at the gate.*
8 He who plots evil doing—
men call him an intriguer.
9 Beyond intrigue and folly and sin,
it is arrogance that men find abominable.

10 If you remain indifferent* in time of adversity,

**23, 29–35:** A vivid description of the evil effects, physical and psychological, of drunkenness.

**23, 35:** Wine makes the drunkard insensible to bodily and moral harm. His one desire is to indulge again.

**24, 1–22:** These verses continue an exhortation to wisdom (vv 3–7. 13f), and against: violence (1f), pride and intrigue (8f), callousness (10–12), injustice (15f), joy in the failure of others (17f) or scandal at their success (19f), and rebellion against authority (21f).

**24, 7:** At the gate: of the city, where justice was administered and public affairs discussed; see note on Ru 4, 1. Cf also Pss 69, 13; 127, 5; Prv 22, 22; 31, 23. 31.

**24, 10:** Indifferent: to those who suffer unjustly.

n Prv 3, 31; 24, 1.19. o Prv 24, 14. p Prv 10, 1. q Prv 7, 10–27. r Prv 20, 1; Sir 19, 2; Hos 4, 11. s Prv 3, 31; 23, 17. t Prv 21, 22. u Prv 20, 18. v Sir 6, 21.

your strength will depart from you.
11 Rescue those who are being dragged to death,*
and from those tottering to execution withdraw not.
12 If you say, "I know not this man!"
does not he who tests hearts perceive it?
He who guards your life knows it,
and he will repay each one according to his deeds.[w]

13 If you eat honey, my son, because it is good,
if virgin honey is sweet to your taste;
14 Such, you must know, is wisdom to your soul.
If you find it, you will have a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.[x]

15 Lie not in wait against the home of the just man,
ravage not his dwelling place;
16 For the just man* falls seven times and rises again,
but the wicked stumble to ruin.

17 Rejoice not when your enemy falls,
and when he stumbles, let not your heart exult,
18 Lest the LORD see it, be displeased with you,
and withdraw his wrath from your enemy.

19 Be not provoked with evildoers,
nor envious of the wicked;
20 For the evil man has no future,
the lamp of the wicked will be put out.[y]

21 My son, fear the LORD and the king;*
have nothing to do with those who rebel against them;
22 For suddenly arises the destruction they send,
and the ruin from either one, who can measure?

## IV: Other Sayings of the Wise*

23 These also are sayings of the wise:

To show partiality in judgment is not good.[z]
24 He who says to the wicked man, "You are just"—
men will curse him, people will denounce him;
25 But those who convict the evildoer will fare well,
and on them will come the blessing of prosperity.
26 He gives a kiss on the lips*
who makes an honest reply.

27 Complete your outdoor tasks,
and arrange your work in the field;
afterward you can establish your house.*

28 Be not a witness against your neighbor without just cause,[a]
thus committing folly with your lips.
29 Say not, "As he did to me, so will I do to him;[b]
I will repay the man according to his deeds."*

30 I passed by the field of the sluggard,
by the vineyard of the man without sense;
31 And behold! it was all overgrown with thistles;
its surface was covered with nettles,
and its stone wall broken down.
32 And as I gazed at it, I reflected;
I saw and learned the lesson:
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,[c]
a little folding of the arms to rest—
34 Then will poverty come upon you like a highwayman,
and want like an armed man.

**24, 11:** Rescue . . . death: most probably refers to the legal rescue of those unjustly condemned to death.
**24, 16:** The just man overcomes every misfortune which oppresses him. Seven times: i.e., an indefinite number; cf Mt 18, 21f; Lk 17, 4.
**24, 21f:** One owes obedience to God and to supreme civil authority (Mt 22, 21; Rom 13, 1ff; 1 Pt 2, 13f). The punishments for failure in either duty transcend the limits of private justice.
**24, 23–34:** This collection of sayings continues in the same vein as the preceding: it instructs in fairness (23–26) and preparation for the future (27); and warns against vengeance (28f) and slothfulness (30–34).
**24, 26:** He gives a kiss on the lips: shows himself a true friend.
**24, 27:** This verse is commonly interpreted as advocating careful and practical preparation for marriage.
**24, 29:** This verse indicates great progress from the principle on the law of Talion (see note on Ex 21, 23ff) toward the teaching found in Rom 12, 17ff. Cf also Prv 25, 21ff.

w Ps 62, 13; Sir 16, 12; Mt 16, 27; Rom 2, 6. x Prv 23, 18. y Prv 13, 9. z Prv 18, 5; 28, 21; Lv 19, 15; Dt 1, 17; 16, 19. a Prv 19, 5; 25, 18. b Prv 20, 22. c 33f: Prv 6, 10f.

## V: Second Collection Of The Proverbs Of Solomon

### CHAPTER 25

Prov
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255–264

1 These also are proverbs of Solomon.[d] The
men of Hezekiah,* king of Judah, transmitted
them.

2 God has glory in what he conceals,
kings have glory in what they fathom.
3 As the heavens in height, and the earth in
depth,
the heart of kings is unfathomable.

4 Remove the dross from silver,
and it comes forth perfectly purified;
5 Remove the wicked from the presence of the
king,
and his throne is made firm through
righteousness.

6 Claim no honor in the king's presence,*
nor occupy the place of great men;
7 For it is better that you be told, "Come up
closer!"
than that you be humbled before the
prince.[e]

8 What your eyes have seen
bring not forth hastily against an opponent;
For what will you do later on
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Discuss your case with your neighbor,
but another man's secret do not disclose;
10 Lest, hearing it, he reproach you,
and your ill repute cease not.

11 Like golden apples in silver settings
are words spoken at the proper time.

12 Like a golden earring, or a necklace of fine
gold,
is a wise reprover to an obedient ear.

13 Like the coolness of snow in the heat of the
harvest
is a faithful messenger for the one who
sends him.
[He refreshes the soul of his master.]

14 Like clouds and wind when no rain follows
is the man who boastfully promises what he
never gives.

15 By patience is a ruler persuaded,[f]
and a soft tongue will break a bone.

16 If you find honey, eat only what you need,
lest you become glutted with it and vomit it
up.

17 Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's
house,
lest he have more than enough of you, and
hate you.

18 Like a club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow,
is the man who bears false witness against
his neighbor.

19 Like an infected tooth or an unsteady foot
is [dependence on] a faithless man in time of
trouble.

20 Like a moth in clothing, or a maggot in wood,
sorrow gnaws at the human heart.[g]

21 If your enemy be hungry, give him food to
eat,*
if he be thirsty, give him to drink;[h]

22 For live coals you will heap on his head,
and the LORD will vindicate you.

23 The north wind brings rain,
and a backbiting tongue an angry
countenance.

24 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop
than in a roomy house with a quarrelsome
woman.[i]

25 Like cool water to one faint from thirst
is good news from a far country.

**25, 1:** The men of Hezekiah: literary men at the royal court of Hezekiah who are represented as transcribing the proverbs from other collections. Hezekiah was a reformer of national religious life (2 Chr 29, 25–30).

**25, 6f:** Compare the lesson on humility which was taught by Christ (Lk 14, 7–11).

**25, 21f:** Charity is invaluable in resolving enmities and restoring peace. Live coals: i.e., either remorse and embarrassment for the harm done, or increased punishment for refusing reconciliation. Cf Mt 5, 44; Rom 12, 20.

d Prv 1, 1. e Lk 14, 8ff. f Prv 15, 1. 4. g Sir 30, 24. h Rom 12, 20. i Prv 21, 9.

26 Like a troubled fountain or a polluted spring
is a just man who gives way before the wicked.

27 To eat too much honey is not good;
nor to seek honor after honor.*

28 Like an open city with no defenses
is the man with no check on his feelings.

## CHAPTER 26*

1 Like snow in summer, or rain in harvest,
honor for a fool is out of place.

2 Like the sparrow in its flitting, like the swallow in its flight,
a curse uncalled-for arrives nowhere.

3 The whip for the horse, the bridle for the ass,
and the rod for the back of fools.[j]

4 Answer not the fool according to his folly,*
lest you too become like him.

5 Answer the fool according to his folly,
lest he become wise in his own eyes.

6 He cuts off his feet, he drinks down violence,
who sends messages by a fool.

7 A proverb in the mouth of a fool*
hangs limp, like crippled legs.

8 Like one who entangles the stone in the sling
is he who gives honor to a fool.

9 Like a thorn stick brandished by the hand of a drunkard
is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

10 Like an archer wounding all who pass by
is he who hires a drunken fool.

11 As the dog returns to his vomit,
so the fool repeats his folly.[k]

12 You see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the street,
a lion in the middle of the square!"[l]

14 The door turns on its hinges,
the sluggard, on his bed!

15 The sluggard loses his hand in the dish;
he is too weary to lift it to his mouth.[m]

16 The sluggard imagines himself wiser
than seven men who answer with good sense.

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17 Like the man who seizes a passing dog by the ears
is he who meddles in a quarrel not his own.

18 Like a crazed archer
scattering firebrands and deadly arrows

19 Is the man who deceives his neighbor,
and then says, "I was only joking."

20 For lack of wood, the fire dies out;
and when there is no talebearer, strife subsides.

21 What a bellows is to live coals, what wood is to fire,
such is a contentious man in enkindling strife.[n]

22 The words of a talebearer are like dainty morsels
that sink into one's inmost being.[o]

23 Like a glazed finish on earthenware
are smooth lips with a wicked heart.

24 With his lips an enemy pretends,
but in his inmost being he maintains deceit;

25 When he speaks graciously, trust him not,[p]
for seven abominations* are in his heart.

26 A man may conceal hatred under dissimulation,

**25, 27:** Nor . . . honor after honor: the text is uncertain.
**26, 1–28:** Concrete images describe the vices of fools (1–12), of sluggards (13–16), of meddlers (17–19), of talebearers (20ff), and of flatterers (23–28).
**26, 4f:** There is no contradiction between these two proverbs. In any answer the wise man gives he must protect his own interest against the fool.

**26, 7ff:** The fool abuses whatever knowledge he possesses.
**26, 25:** Seven abominations: many evil intentions.

j Pv 19, 29; Sir 33, 25. k 2 Pt 2, 22. l Prv 22, 13. m Prv 19, 24. n Prv 15, 18; 29, 22. o Prv 18, 8. p Sir 12, 10; 27, 23.

but his malice will be revealed in the
assembly.

27 He who digs a pit falls into it;
and a stone comes back upon him who rolls
it.[q]

28 The lying tongue is its owner's enemy,
and the flattering mouth works ruin.

## CHAPTER 27

Prov
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1 Boast not of tomorrow,
for you know not what any day may bring
forth.

2 Let another praise you—not your own mouth;
someone else—not your own lips.

3 Stone is heavy, and sand a burden,
but a fool's provocation is heavier than
both.[r]

4 Anger is relentless, and wrath
overwhelming—
but before jealousy who can stand?

5 Better is an open rebuke
than a love that remains hidden.

6 Wounds from a friend may be accepted as well
meant,
but the greetings of an enemy one prays
against.

7 One who is full, tramples on virgin honey;
but to the man who is hungry, any bitter
thing is sweet.

8 Like a bird that is far from its nest
is a man who is far from his home.

9 Perfume and incense gladden the heart,
but by grief the soul is torn asunder.

10 Your own friend and your father's friend
forsake not;
but if ruin befalls you, enter not a kinsman's
house.
Better is a neighbor near at hand
than a brother far away.

11 If you are wise, my son, you will gladden my
heart,
and I will be able to rebut him who taunts
me.

12 The shrewd man perceives evil and hides;
simpletons continue on and suffer the
penalty.[s]

13 Take his garment who becomes surety for
another,[t]
and for the sake of a stranger, yield it up!*

14 When one greets his neighbor with a loud
voice in the early morning,
a curse can be laid to his charge.*

15 For a persistent leak on a rainy day
the match is a quarrelsome woman.[u]

16 He who keeps her stores up a stormwind;
he cannot tell north from south.

17 As iron sharpens iron,
so man sharpens his fellow man.

18 He who tends a fig tree eats its fruit,
and he who is attentive to his master will be
enriched.

19 As one face differs from another,
so does one human heart from another.

20 The nether world and the abyss are never
satisfied;[v]
so too the eyes of men.

21 As the crucible tests silver and the furnace
gold,
so a man is tested by the praise he receives.

22 Though you should pound the fool to bits
with the pestle, amid the grits in a mortar,
his folly would not go out of him.

23 Take good care of your flocks,*
give careful attention to your herds;

24 For wealth lasts not forever,
nor even a crown from age to age.

**27, 13:** See note on Prv 20, 16.
**27, 14:** The loud voice suggests hypocrisy in the greeting.
**27, 23–27:** The land of Palestine was very suitable for flocks and herds, which formed the principal source of wealth for their owners.

q Eccl 10, 8; Sir 27, 25f. r Sir 22, 14f. s Prv 22, 3. t Prv 20, 16. u Prv 21, 9; 25, 24. v Prv 30, 16; Eccl 4, 8.

25 When the grass is taken away and the
aftergrowth appears,
and the mountain greens are gathered in,

26 The lambs will provide you with clothing,
and the goats will bring the price of a field,

27 And there will be ample goat's milk to supply
you,
to supply your household,
and maintenance for your maidens.

## CHAPTER 28

1 The wicked man flees although no one
pursues him;
but the just man, like a lion, feels sure of
himself.

2 If a land is rebellious, its princes will be many;
but with a prudent man it knows security.*

3 A rich man who oppresses the poor
is like a devastating rain that leaves no food.

4 Those who abandon the law* praise the
wicked man,
but those who keep the law war against
him.

5 Evil men understand nothing of justice,
but those who seek the LORD understand
all.

6 Better a poor man who walks in his integrity
than he who is crooked in his ways and
rich. [w]

7 He who keeps the law is a wise son,
but the gluttons' companion disgraces his
father.

8 He who increases his wealth by interest and
overcharge*
gathers it for him who is kind to the
poor.

9 When one turns away his ear from hearing the
law, [x]
even his prayer is an abomination.*

10 He who seduces the upright into an evil way
will himself fall into his own pit.
[And blameless men will gain prosperity.]

11 The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
but a poor man who is intelligent sees
through him.

12 When the just are triumphant, there is great
jubilation;
but when the wicked gain pre-eminence,
people hide.

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13 He who conceals his sins prospers not,
but he who confesses and forsakes them
obtains mercy.

14 Happy the man who is always on his guard;
but he who hardens his heart will fall into
evil.

15 Like a roaring lion or a ravenous bear
is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

16 The less prudent the prince, the more his
deeds oppress.
He who hates ill-gotten gain prolongs his
days.

17 Though a man burdened with human blood
were to flee to the grave, none should
support him.

18 He who walks uprightly is safe,
but he whose ways are crooked falls into
the pit.

19 He who cultivates his land will have plenty of
food,
but from idle pursuits a man has his fill of
poverty. [y]

20 The trustworthy man will be richly blessed;

**28, 2:** The meaning of this poorly preserved verse seems to be that frequent changes of rulers often result from moral corruption and political disorder.

**28, 4:** The law: religious and moral teaching.

**28, 8:** Interest and overcharge were strictly forbidden in the old law among Israelites because it was presumed that the borrower was in distress; cf Ex 22, 25; Lv 25, 35ff; Dt 23, 19; Ps 15, 5; Ez 18, 8. Civil and divine law will take the offender's wealth from him.

**28, 9:** Prayers offered in bad faith are displeasing to God.

w Prv 19, 1. x Prv 21, 27. y Prv 12, 11.

he who is in haste to grow rich will not go
unpunished.[z]

21 To show partiality is never good:[a]
for even a morsel of bread a man may do
wrong.

22 The avaricious man is perturbed about his
wealth,
and he knows not when want will come
upon him.

23 He who rebukes a man gets more thanks in
the end
than one with a flattering tongue.

24 He who defrauds father or mother and calls it
no sin,[b]
is a partner of the brigand.

25 The greedy man stirs up disputes,
but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.

26 He who trusts in himself is a fool,
but he who walks in wisdom is safe.

27 He who gives to the poor suffers no want,[c]
but he who ignores them gets many a curse.

28 When the wicked gain pre-eminence, other
men hide;
but at their fall the just flourish.

## CHAPTER 29

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1 The man who remains stiff-necked and hates
rebuke
will be crushed suddenly beyond cure.

2 When the just prevail, the people rejoice;
but when the wicked rule, the people
groan.[d]

3 He who loves wisdom makes his father glad,
but he who consorts with harlots squanders
his wealth.[e]

4 By justice a king gives stability to the land;
but he who imposes heavy taxes ruins it.

5 The man who flatters his neighbor
is spreading a net under his feet.

6 The wicked man steps into a snare,
but the just man runs on joyfully.

7 The just man has a care for the rights of the
poor;
the wicked man has no such concern.

8 Arrogant men set the city ablaze,
but wise men calm the fury.[f]

9 If a wise man disputes with a fool,
he may rage or laugh but can have no
peace.

10 Bloodthirsty men hate the honest man,
but the upright show concern for his life.

11 The fool gives vent to all his anger;
but by biding his time, the wise man calms
it.[g]

12 If a ruler listens to lying words,
his servants all become wicked.

13 The poor and the oppressor* have a common
bond:[h]
the Lord gives light to the eyes of
both.

14 If a king is zealous for the rights of the
poor,
his throne stands firm forever.

15 The rod of correction gives wisdom,
but a boy left to his whims disgraces his
mother.[i]

16 When the wicked prevail, crime increases;
but their downfall the just will behold.

17 Correct your son, and he will bring you
comfort,
and give delight to your soul.

18 Without prophecy the people become
demoralized;
but happy is he who keeps the law.

19 By words no servant can be trained;[j]
for he understands what is said, but obeys
not.

29, 13: God gives life to all classes of people; cf Prv 22, 2.

z Prv 13, 11. a Prv 24, 23. b Mk 7, 11ff. c Prv 19, 17; Sir 4, 3–8. d Prv 11, 10. e Prv 5, 10; 10, 1. f Prv 11, 11. g Prv 12, 16; 25, 28; Sir 21, 26. h Prv 22, 2. i Prv 13, 24; 22, 15; 23, 13f; Sir 22. 6; 30, 1. j Sir 33, 25f.

20 Do you see a man hasty in his words?[k]
More can be hoped for from a fool!

21 If a man pampers his servant from childhood,
he will turn out to be stubborn.

22 An ill-tempered man stirs up disputes,
and a hotheaded man is the cause of many sins.[l]

23 Man's pride causes his humiliation,
but he who is humble of spirit obtains honor.[m]

24 The accomplice of a thief is his own enemy:*
he hears himself put under a curse, yet discloses nothing.

25 The fear of man brings a snare,
but he who trusts in the LORD is safe.

26 Many curry favor with the ruler,
but the rights of each are from the LORD.

27 The evildoer is an abomination to the just,
and he who walks uprightly is an abomination to the wicked.

## VI: The Words of Agur

### CHAPTER 30

1 The words of Agur,* son of Jakeh the Massaite:

The pronouncement of mortal man: "I am not God;*
I am not God, that I should prevail.
2 Why, I am the most stupid of men,
and have not even human intelligence;
3 Neither have I learned wisdom,
nor have I the knowledge of the Holy One.
4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down again—
who has cupped the wind in his hands?
Who has bound up the waters in a cloak—
who has marked out all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, what is his son's name,
if you know it?"
5 Every word of God is tested;[n]
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
6 Add nothing to his words,[o]
lest he reprove you, and you be exposed as a deceiver.

## VII: Numerical Proverbs

7 Two things I ask of you,
deny them not to me before I die:
8 Put falsehood and lying far from me,
give me neither poverty nor riches;
[provide me only with the food I need;]
9 Lest, being full, I deny you,
saying, "Who is the LORD?"
Or, being in want, I steal,
and profane the name of my God.

10 Slander not a servant to his master,
lest he curse you, and you have to pay the penalty.

11 There is a group of people that curses its father,*
and blesses not its mother.[p]
12 There is a group that is pure in its own eyes,
yet is not purged of its filth.
13 There is a group—how haughty their eyes!
how overbearing their glance!
14 There is a group whose incisors are swords,
whose teeth are knives,
Devouring the needy from the earth,
and the poor from among men.

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**29, 24:** Is his own enemy: because he not only incurs guilt as an accomplice but, by his silence, brings down on himself the curse invoked on the unknown guilty partner.

**30, 1:** Agur: an unknown person. Massaite: from Massa in northern Arabia, elsewhere referred to as an encampment of the Ishmaelites (Gn 25, 14). But the word may not be intended as a place name; it might signify "an oracle," "a prophecy."

**30, 1ff:** Agur wishes to stress man's insignificance when he is compared to God; cf Jb 38—39.

**30, 11–14:** Perverted people are here classified as unfilial (11), self-righteous (12), proud (13) and rapacious (14).

k Eccl 5, 1. l Prv 15, 18; 26, 21. m Prv 11, 2; 16, 18; 18, 12; Jb 22, 29. n Ps 12, 7. o Dt 4, 2. p Prv 20. 20.

15 The two daughters of the leech are, "Give,
Give."*
Three things are never satisfied,
four never say, "Enough!"
16 The nether world, and the barren womb; [q]
the earth, that is never saturated with
water,
and fire, that never says, "Enough!"
17 The eye that mocks a father,
or scorns an aged mother,
Will be plucked out by the ravens in the
valley;
the young eagles will devour it.

18 Three things are too wonderful for me,*
yes, four I cannot understand:
19 The way of an eagle in the air,
the way of a serpent upon a rock,
The way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a maiden.
20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman:
she eats, wipes her mouth,
and says, "I have done no wrong."*

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21 Under three things the earth trembles,
yes, under four it cannot bear up:
22 Under a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when he is glutted with food; [r]
23 Under an odious woman when she is wed,
and a maidservant when she displaces her
mistress.

24 Four things are among the smallest on the
earth,
and yet are exceedingly wise:
25 Ants—a species not strong,
yet they store up their food in the summer;
26 Rock-badgers*—a species not mighty,
yet they make their home in the crags;
27 Locusts—they have no king,
yet they migrate all in array;
28 Lizards—you can catch them with your
hands,
yet they find their way into kings' palaces.

29 Three things are stately in their stride,
yes, four are stately in their carriage:
30 The lion, mightiest of beasts,
who retreats before nothing;
31 The strutting cock, and the he-goat,
and the king at the head of his people.

32 If you have foolishly been proud*
or presumptuous—put your hand on your
mouth;
33 For the stirring of milk brings forth curds,
and the stirring of anger brings forth blood.

## VIII: The Words of Lemuel

### CHAPTER 31

1 The words of Lemuel, king of Massa. The
advice which his mother gave him:

2 What, my son, my first-born!
what, O son of my womb;
what, O son of my vows!
3 Give not your vigor to women,
nor your strength to those who ruin kings. [s]
4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
not for kings to drink wine;
strong drink is not for princes! [t]
5 Lest in drinking they forget what the law
decrees,
and violate the rights of all who are in need.
6 Give strong drink to one who is perishing,
and wine to the sorely depressed;
7 When they drink, they will forget their misery,
and think no more of their burdens.
8 Open your mouth in behalf of the dumb,
and for the rights of the destitute;

**30, 15f:** The two daughters . . . "Give, Give": the text is obscure but the sense seems to be that the leech is insatiable in its desire for blood, just as are the nether world for victims, the barren womb for offspring, the parched earth for water, and fire for fuel (16).

**30, 18f:** The soaring flight of the eagle, the mysterious movement upon a rock of the serpent which has no feet, the path of the ship through the trackless deep, and the marvelous procreation of human life, excite great wonderment.

**30, 20:** This verse portrays the indifference of an adulterous woman who thinks there is no trace of her wicked act.

**30, 26:** Rock-badgers: cf note on Ps 104, 18.

**30, 32f:** The anger aroused by overweening pride threatens an awesome punishment.

q Prv 27, 20. r Prv 19, 10; Eccl 10, 6f. s Prv 5, 9. t Prv 20, 1.

9 Open your mouth, decree what is just,
defend the needy and the poor!

## IX: The Ideal Wife

10 When one finds a worthy wife,[u]
her value is far beyond pearls.
11 Her husband, entrusting his heart to her,
has an unfailing prize.
12 She brings him good, and not evil,*
all the days of her life.
13 She obtains wool and flax
and makes cloth with skillful hands.
14 Like merchant* ships,
she secures her provisions from afar.
15 She rises while it is still night,
and distributes food to her household.
16 She picks out a field to purchase;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
17 She is girt about with strength,
and sturdy are her arms.
18 She enjoys the success of her dealings;
at night her lamp is undimmed.*
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her fingers ply the spindle.
20 She reaches out her hands to the poor,
and extends her arms to the needy.
21 She fears not the snow for her household;
all her charges are doubly clothed.
22 She makes her own coverlets;
fine linen and purple are her clothing.
23 Her husband is prominent at the city gates
as he sits with the elders of the land.
24 She makes garments and sells them,
and stocks the merchants with belts.
25 She is clothed with strength and dignity,
and she laughs at the days to come.*
26 She opens her mouth in wisdom,
and on her tongue is kindly counsel.
27 She watches the conduct of her household,
and eats not her food in idleness.
28 Her children rise up and praise her;
her husband, too, extols her:
29 "Many are the women of proven worth,
but you have excelled them all."
30 Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting;
the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*
31 Give her a reward of her labors,
and let her works praise her at the city gates.

**31, 12:** Good and not evil: i.e., prosperity, not adversity.
**31, 14:** Merchant: literally, "Canaanite" (cf v 24), probably because the merchant class had been composed chiefly of Canaanites.
**31, 18:** Her lamp is undimmed: indicates abundance of productive work and its accompanying prosperity; cf Prv 20, 20; Jb 18, 6.
**31, 25:** Laughs at the days to come: anticipates the future with gladness free from anxiety.
**31, 30:** The true charm of the ideal wife is her religious spirit, for she fears the Lord; cf note on Prv 1, 7.

u 10–31: Sir 26, 1ff. 13–18.

# THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes
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The title *Ecclesiastes* given to this book is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name *Qoheleth* meaning, perhaps, "one who convokes an assembly." The book, however, does not consist of public addresses, but is a treatise, more or less logically developed, on the vanity of all things. Reflections in prose and aphorisms in verse are intermingled in Ecclesiastes, which contains, besides, an introduction and an epilogue.

The book is concerned with the purpose and value of human life. While admitting the existence of a divine plan, it considers such a plan to be hidden from man, who seeks happiness without ever finding it here below (3, 11; 8, 7. 17). Ecclesiastes applies his "Vanity of vanities" to everything "under the sun," even to that wisdom which seeks to find at last a semblance of good in the things of the world. Merit does not yield happiness for it is often tried by suffering. Riches and pleasures do not avail. Existence is monotonous, enjoyment

fleeting and vain; darkness quickly follows. Life, then, is an enigma beyond human ability to solve.

While Ecclesiastes concedes that there is an advantage for man in the enjoyment of certain legitimate pleasures lest he lapse into pessimism and despair, he nevertheless considers this indulgence also vanity unless man returns due thanks to the Creator who has given him all. Under this aspect, earthly wisdom would rise to the higher level of true spiritual wisdom. This true wisdom is not found "under the sun" but is perceived only by the light of faith, inasmuch as it rests with God, who is the final Judge of the good and the bad, and whose reign endures forever. The Epilogue gives the clue to this thought (12, 13f).

The moral teaching of the book is imperfect, like the Old Testament itself (Heb 7, 19), yet it marks an advance in the development of the doctrine of divine retribution. While rejecting the older solution of earthly rewards and punishments, Ecclesiastes looks forward to a more lasting one. The clear answer to the problem was to come with the light of Christ's teaching concerning future life.

The author of the book was a teacher of popular wisdom (12, 9). Qoheleth was obviously only his literary name. Because he is called "David's son, king in Jerusalem," it was commonly thought that he was King Solomon. Such personation, however, was but a literary device to lend greater dignity and authority to the book—a circumstance which does not in any way impugn its inspired character. The Epilogue seems to have been written by an editor, probably a disciple of Qoheleth. The entire work differs considerably in language and style from earlier books of the Old Testament. It reflects a late period of Hebrew, and was probably written about three centuries before Christ.

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## CHAPTER 1

1 The words of David's son, Qoheleth,* king
in Jerusalem: [a]

### Vanity of Toil without Profit

2 Vanity of vanities,* says Qoheleth,
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity! [b]
3 What profit has man from all the labor [c]
which he toils at under the sun?*
4 One generation passes and another comes,
but the world forever stays.
5 The sun rises and the sun goes down;
then it presses on to the place where it rises.
6 Blowing now toward the south, then toward
the north,
the wind turns again and again, resuming its
rounds.
7 All rivers go to the sea,
yet never does the sea become full.
To the place where they go,
the rivers keep on going.
8 All speech is labored;
there is nothing man can say.*
The eye is not satisfied with seeing
nor is the ear filled with hearing. [d]

9 What has been, that will be; what has been
done, that will be done. Nothing is new under
the sun. [e] 10 Even the thing of which we say,
"See, this is new!" has already existed in the
ages that preceded us. [f] 11 There is no remem-
brance of the men of old; [g] nor of those to come
will there be any remembrance among those
who come after them.*

1, 1: Qoheleth: see Introduction.
1, 2: Vanity of vanities: a Hebrew superlative expressing the supreme degree of futility and emptiness.
1, 3: Under the sun: used throughout this book to signify "on the earth."
1, 8: All speech . . . man can say: or "All things are wearisome beyond man's power to tell."
1, 11: Men remember nothing long; God, however, never forgets.

a Eccl 7, 27; 12, 8f. b Eccl 12, 8. c Eccl 2, 11. 22; 3, 9; 5, 15. d Eccl 8, 17. e Eccl 3, 15; 6, 10. f Eccl 3, 15. g Eccl 2, 16.

## I: Qoheleth's Investigation of Life

**Twofold Introduction** 12I, Qoheleth, was king
over Israel in Jerusalem, 13and I applied my mind
to search and investigate in wisdom all things
that are done under the sun.[h]

A thankless task God has appointed
for men to be busied about.

14I have seen all things that are done under
the sun,[i] and behold, all is vanity and a chase
after wind.*

15What is crooked cannot be made straight,
and what is missing cannot be supplied.

16[j]Though I said to myself, "Behold, I have
become great and stored up wisdom beyond all
who were before me in Jerusalem, and my mind
has broad experience of wisdom and knowl-
edge"; 17yet when I applied my mind to know
wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, I
learned that this also is a chase after wind.[k]

18For in much wisdom there is much sorrow,
and he who stores up knowledge stores up
grief.

### CHAPTER 2

**Study of Pleasure-seeking** 1I said to myself,*
"Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and
the enjoyment of good things."[l] But behold, this
too was vanity. 2Of laughter I said: "Mad!" and
of mirth: "What good does this do?" 3I thought
of beguiling my senses with wine, though my
mind was concerned with wisdom,* and of
taking up folly, until I should understand what is
best for men to do under the heavens during the
limited days of their life.

4I undertook great works; I built myself
houses and planted vineyards; 5I made gardens
and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all
sorts. 6And I constructed for myself reservoirs to
water a flourishing woodland. 7I acquired male
and female slaves, and slaves were born in my
house. I also had growing herds of cattle and
flocks of sheep, more than all who had been
before me in Jerusalem. 8I amassed for myself
silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and
provinces. I got for myself male and female
singers and all human luxuries. 9I became great,
and I stored up more than all others before me in
Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.
10[m]Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny
them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my
heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was
my share for all my toil. 11[n]But when I turned to
all the works that my hands had wrought, and to
the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold!
all was vanity and a chase after wind, with
nothing gained under the sun. 12For what will
the man do who is to come after the king? What
men have already done!

**Study of Wisdom and Folly** I went on to the
consideration of wisdom, madness and folly.
13And I saw that wisdom has the advantage over
folly as much as light has the advantage over
darkness.

14The wise man has eyes in his head,
but the fool walks in darkness.[o]

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Yet I knew that one lot befalls both of them.
15So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall
me also, why then should I be wise? Where is
the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart
that this too is vanity. 16[p]Neither of the wise
man nor of the fool will there be an abiding
remembrance, for in days to come both will have
been forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies
as well as the fool! 17Therefore I loathed life,
since for me the work that is done under the sun
is evil; for all is vanity and a chase after wind.

1, 14: Chase after wind: futility, like an attempt to corral the winds. Cf Hos 12, 2. The ancient versions understood "affliction of spirit." These words are used to conclude sections of the discourse, as far as Eccl 6, 9.

2, 1–11: The author here assumes the role of Solomon.

2, 3: Though my mind . . . wisdom: while indulging in pleasure the author hopes to discover wherein man's true happiness consists.

h Eccl 8, 9. i Eccl 2, 11. 17. j Eccl 2, 9. k Eccl 2, 3; 7, 25. l Wis 2, 6. m Eccl 3, 22; 5, 18. n Eccl 1, 17; Sir 44, 9. o 14f: Eccl 6, 8; 9, 2f. p Eccl 1, 11; Wis 2, 4.

### Study of the Fruits of Toil To Others the Profits

18And I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me. 19And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruits of my wise labor under the sun. This also is vanity. 20So my feelings turned to despair of all the fruits of my labor under the sun. 21For there is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune. 22 [q]For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun? 23All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

24 [r]There is nothing better for man than to eat and drink and provide himself with good things by his labors. Even this, I realized, is from the hand of God.* 25For who can eat or drink apart from him? 26 [s]For to whatever man he sees fit he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering possessions to be given to whatever man God sees fit. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

## CHAPTER 3

Eccles
See RG
264–270

### Man Cannot Hit on the Right Time To Act

1 There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
2 A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build.
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
5 A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.
6 A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
7 A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 [t]What advantage has the worker from his toil? 10I have considered the task which God has appointed for men to be busied about. 11 [u]He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without men's ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done. 12I recognized that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life. 13 [v]For every man, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his labor is a gift of God. 14I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it, or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered. 15 [w]What now is has already been; what is to be, already is; and God restores* what would otherwise be displaced.

### The Problem of Retribution

16 [x]And still under the sun in the judgment place I saw wickedness, and in the seat of justice, iniquity. 17 [y]And I said to myself, both the just and the wicked God will judge, since there is a time for every affair and on every work a judgment. 18I said to myself: As for the children of men, it is God's way of testing them and of showing that they are in themselves like beasts. 19For the lot of man and of beast is one lot; the one dies as well as the other. Both have the same life-breath, and man has no advantage over the beast; but all is vanity. 20 [z]Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they both return. 21 [a]Who knows if the life-breath of the children of men goes upward and the life-breath of beasts goes earthward? 22 [b]And I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to rejoice in his

2, 24: Unrestrained indulgence is not advocated here, but legitimate pleasure and the cheerfulness it begets.
3, 15: God restores: the meaning is probably that God allows no part of his creation to drop out of existence.

q Eccl 1, 3. r Eccl 3, 12f. 22; 5, 17f; 8, 15. s Prv 13, 22. t Eccl 1, 3. u Eccl 8, 17; 11, 5; Gn 1, 31. v Eccl 2, 24. w Eccl 1, 9. x Eccl 4, 1. y Eccl 12, 14. z Eccl 12, 7; Gn 2, 7; 3, 19; Ps 103, 14; Wis 2, 3; Sir 10, 9; 17, 1; 40, 11. a Wis 2, 2. b Eccl 8, 7; 10, 14.

work; for this is his lot. Who will let him see what is to come after him?

## CHAPTER 4

**Vanity of Toil** [1]Again I considered all the oppressions that take place under the sun: the tears of the victims with none to comfort them! From the hand of their oppressors comes violence, and there is none to comfort them! [c] [2]And those now dead, I declared more fortunate in death than are the living to be still alive. [d] [3]And better off than both is the yet unborn, who has not seen the wicked work that is done under the sun. [4]Then I saw that all toil and skillful work is the rivalry of one man for another. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

[5]"The fool folds his arms
and consumes his own flesh"*—
[6]Better is one handful with tranquility
than two with toil and a chase after wind!

**Companions and Successors** [7]Again I found this vanity under the sun: [8]a solitary man with no companion; with neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his toil, and riches do not satisfy his greed. "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good things?" This also is vanity and a worthless task. [9]Two are better than one: they get a good wage for their labor. [10]If the one falls, the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For if he should fall, he has no one to lift him up. [11]So also, if two sleep together, they keep each other warm. How can one alone keep warm? [12]Where a lone man may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken.

[13]Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows caution; [14]for from a prison house* one comes forth to rule, since even in his royalty he was poor at birth. [15]Then I saw all those who are to live and move about under the sun with the heir apparent who will succeed to his place.* [16]There is no end to all these people, to all over whom he takes precedence; yet the later generations will not applaud him. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

Eccles
See RG
264–270

**Vanity of Many Words** [17] [e]Guard your step when you go to the house of God. Let your approach be obedience, rather than the fools' offering of sacrifice;* for they know not how to keep from doing evil.

## CHAPTER 5

Eccles
See RG
264–270

[1]Be not hasty in your utterance and let not your heart be quick to make a promise in God's presence. God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.

[2]For nightmares* come with many cares,
and a fool's utterance with many words.

[3] [f]When you make a vow to God, delay not its fulfillment. For God has no pleasure in fools; fulfill what you have vowed. [4]You had better not make a vow than make it and not fulfill it. [5]Let not your utterances make you guilty, and say not before his representative, "It was a mistake," lest God be angered by such words and destroy the works of your hands. [6] [g]Rather, fear God!

**Gain and Loss of Goods** [7] [h]If you see oppression of the poor, and violation of rights and justice in the realm, do not be shocked by the fact, for the high official has another higher than he watching him and above these are others higher still—. [8]Yet an advantage for a country in every respect is a king for the arable land.*

[9] [i]The covetous man is never satisfied with money, and the lover of wealth reaps no fruit from it; so this too is vanity. [10]Where there are great riches, there are also many to devour them. Of what use are they to the owner except to feast his eyes upon? [11]Sleep is sweet to the

**4, 5:** Consumes his own flesh: refuses to work for the necessities of life and consequently suffers hunger and impairs his bodily health.

**4, 14:** Prison house: probably his mother's womb, from which the king issues without possessions. Cf Eccl 5, 14.

**4, 15:** The king is no sooner dead than the people transfer their allegiance to his successor.

**4, 17:** The fools' . . . sacrifice: unacceptable to God because of their disobedience; cf 1 Sm 15, 22; Hos 6, 6.

**5, 2:** Nightmares: literally, "dreams."

**5, 8:** The wording of this verse has perhaps never been adequately explained.

c Eccl 5, 7. d Eccl 7, 2. e 1 Sm 15, 22; Hos 6, 6. f Nm 30, 3; Dt 23, 23; Ps 50, 14. g Eccl 12, 13; Dt 10, 12. h Eccl 3, 16; 4, 1. i Prv 28, 22.

laboring man, whether he eats little or much,
but the rich man's abundance allows him no
sleep.
12 [j]This is a grievous evil which I have seen
under the sun: riches kept by their owner to his
hurt. 13 Should the riches be lost through some
misfortune, he may have a son when he is
without means. 14 [k]As he came forth from his
mother's womb, so again shall he depart, naked
as he came, having nothing from his labor that
he can carry in his hand. 15 This too is a grievous
evil, that he goes just as he came. What then
does it profit him to toil for wind? 16 All the days
of his life are passed in gloom and sorrow, under
great vexation, sickness and wrath.
17 [l]Here is what I recognize as good: it is well
for a man to eat and drink and enjoy all the fruits
of his labor under the sun during the limited
days of the life which God gives him; for this is
his lot. 18 Any man to whom God gives riches
and property, and grants power to partake of
them, so that he receives his lot and finds joy in
the fruits of his toil, has a gift from God. 19 For he
will hardly dwell on the shortness of his life,
because God lets him busy himself with the joy
of his heart.*

## CHAPTER 6

Eccles
See RG
264–270

**Limited Worth of Enjoyment** 1 There is an-
other evil which I have seen under the sun, and
it weighs heavily upon man: 2 [m]there is the man
to whom God gives riches and property and
honor, so that he lacks none of all the things he
craves; yet God does not grant him power to
partake of them, but a stranger devours them.
This is vanity and a dire plague. 3 Should a man
have a hundred children and live many years, no
matter to what great age, still if he has not the
full benefit of his goods, or if he is deprived of
burial, of this man I proclaim that the child born
dead is more fortunate than he.* 4 Though it
came in vain and goes into darkness and its
name is enveloped in darkness; 5 though it has
not seen or known the sun, yet the dead child is
at rest rather than such a man. 6 Should he live
twice a thousand years and not enjoy his goods,
do not both go to the same place?*
7 All man's toil is for his mouth,* yet his desire
is not fulfilled. 8 For what advantage has the wise
man over the fool, or what advantage has the
poor man in knowing how to conduct himself in
life? 9 "What the eyes see is better than what the
desires wander after."* This also is vanity and a
chase after wind.

Eccles
See RG
264–270

## II: Qoheleth's Conclusions

10 Whatever is, was long ago given its name,
and the nature of man is known, and that he
cannot contend in judgment with one who is
stronger than he.* 11 For though there are many
sayings that multiply vanity, what profit is there
for a man? 12 [n]For who knows what is good for a
man in life, the limited days of his vain life
(which God has made like a shadow)?
Because—who is there to tell a man what will
come after him under the sun?

### A. Man Cannot Find Out What Is Good for Him To Do

## CHAPTER 7

**Critique of Sages on the Day of Adversity**

1 A good name is better than good ointment,*
and the day of death than the day of birth. [o]
2 It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to the house of feasting,
For that is the end of every man,
and the living should take it to heart. [p]
3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
because when the face is sad the heart
grows wiser.

5, 19: The meaning is that the joys of life, though temporary, keep a man from dwelling on the ills which afflict humanity.
6, 3: A large family, a long life, an honorable burial, all were highly esteemed by the Hebrews, and it was considered a great misfortune to be deprived of them.
6, 6: Same place: the grave.
6, 7: Mouth: appetite, and therefore, body.
6, 9: Better . . . wander after: the good that is present to us is better than that which is absent and, perhaps, unattainable.
6, 10: The one who is stronger than man is God.
7, 1: Ointment: applied to the child at birth; a good name remains even after death.

j Jb 20, 20. k Jb 1, 21; 1 Tm 6, 7. l 17f: Eccl 2, 24. m Eccl 2, 18f. n Jb 8, 9; 14, 2; Ps 102, 12. o Eccl 4, 2; Prv 22, 1; Sir 41, 13. p Eccl 4, 2.

[4]The heart of the wise is in the house of
mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of
mirth.
[5]It is better to hearken to the wise man's
rebuke
than to hearken to the song of fools;
[6]For as the crackling of thorns under a pot,
so is the fool's laughter.
This also is vanity,
[7]For oppression can make a fool of a wise man,
and a bribe corrupts the heart.
[8]Better is the end of speech than its beginning;
better is the patient spirit than the lofty
spirit.
[9]Do not in spirit become quickly discontented,
for discontent lodges in the bosom of a fool.

[10]Do not say: How is it that former times were better than these? For it is not in wisdom that you ask about this.

[11]Wisdom and an inheritance are good,
and an advantage to those that see the sun.

[12]For the protection of wisdom is as the protection of money; and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner.

[13]Consider the work of God. Who can make straight what he has made crooked? [14]On a good day enjoy good things, and on an evil day consider: Both the one and the other God has made, so that man cannot find fault with him in anything.

**Critique of Sages on Justice and Wickedness** [15]I have seen all manner of things in my vain days: a just man perishing in his justice, and a wicked one surviving in his wickedness. [16] [q]"Be not just to excess, and be not overwise, lest you be ruined.* [17]Be not wicked to excess, and be not foolish. Why should you die before your time?"* [18]It is good to hold to this rule, and not to let that one* go; but he who fears God will win through at all events.

[19]Wisdom is a better defense for the wise man than would be ten princes in the city, [20] [r]yet there is no man on earth so just as to do good and never sin.* [21] [s]Do not give heed to every word that is spoken lest you hear your servant speaking ill of you, [22]for you know in your heart that you have many times spoken ill of others.

[23]All these things I probed in wisdom. I said, "I will acquire wisdom"; but it was beyond me. [24]What exists is far-reaching; it is deep, very deep: who can find it out? [25] [t]I turned my thoughts toward knowledge; I sought and pursued wisdom and reason, and I recognized that wickedness is foolish and folly is madness.

**Critique of Sages on Women** [26] [u]More bitter than death I find the woman who is a hunter's trap, whose heart is a snare and whose hands are prison bonds. He who is pleasing to God will escape her, but the sinner will be entrapped by her. [27]Behold, this have I found, says Qoheleth, adding one thing to another that I might discover the answer [28]which my soul still seeks and has not found: One man out of a thousand have I come upon, but a woman among them all I have not found.* [29]Behold, only this have I found out: God made mankind straight, but men have had recourse to many calculations.*

## CHAPTER 8

Eccles
See RG
264–270

### Critique of Sages on the Wise Man and the King

[1]Who is like the wise man,
and who knows the explanation of things?

7, 16: St. Jerome explains the warning against excessive justice in reference to the self-righteous man who is so stern that he is never willing to forgive sin in others; cf vv 20ff.

7, 17: Untimely death was traditionally recognized as a divine punishment of the wicked; cf 1 Sm 2, 31–34; Jer 17, 11; Ps 55, 24; Prv 10, 27. This warning against presumptuous wickedness is not an endorsement of any lesser degree of misconduct.

7, 18: This rule . . . that one: the sayings cited in vv 16f. Others refer this and that to riches and wisdom (cf 7, 12), justice and wisdom, or justice and wickedness. This last supposition makes the author's thought hard to follow.

7, 20: This is to be understood in the sense of Rom 5, 12. See note there.

7, 28: The author found sincerity rare among men, but among women still more rare.

7, 29: Calculations: the many vain attempts and schemes of men to attain happiness by their own efforts.

q 16f: Eccl 8, 12ff. r Jb 25, 4; Prv 20, 9; 1 Kgs 8, 46; Rom 3, 23; Jas 3, 2; 1 Jn 1, 8. s 21f: 1 Kgs 8, 46. t Eccl 1, 17. u Prv 5, 4.

A man's wisdom illumines his face,
but an impudent look is resented.

[2]Observe the precept of the king, and in view
of your oath to God, [3]be not hasty to withdraw
from the king; do not join in with a base plot, for
he does whatever he pleases, [4]because his word
is sovereign, and who can say to him, "What are
you doing?"

[5]"He who keeps the commandment experi-
ences no evil, and the wise man's heart knows
times and judgments; [6]for there is a time and a
judgment for everything."—Yet it is a great
affliction for man [7] [v]that he is ignorant of what is
to come; for who will make known to him how
it will be? [8]There is no man who is master of the
breath of life so as to retain it, and none has
mastery of the day of death. There is no exemp-
tion from the struggle, nor are the wicked saved
by their wickedness. [9] [w]All these things I consid-
ered and I applied my mind to every work that is
done under the sun, while one man tyrannizes
over another to his hurt.

Eccles
See RG
264–270

**The Problem of Retribution** [10]Meanwhile I
saw wicked men approach and enter; and as
they left the sacred place, they were praised in
the city for what they had done. This also is
vanity.* [11]Because the sentence against evildo-
ers is not promptly executed, therefore the
hearts of men are filled with the desire to
commit evil— [12]because the sinner does evil a
hundred times and survives. Though indeed I
know that it shall be well with those who fear
God, for their reverence toward him; [13]and that
it shall not be well with the wicked man, and he
shall not prolong his shadowy* days, for his lack
of reverence toward God.

[14]This is a vanity which occurs on earth: there
are just men treated as though they had done
evil and wicked men treated as though they had
done justly. This, too, I say is vanity.
[15] [x]Therefore I commend mirth, because there is
nothing good for man under the sun except
eating and drinking and mirth: for this is the
accompaniment of his toil during the limited
days of the life which God gives him under the
sun.*

[16] [y]When I applied my heart to know wisdom
and to observe what is done on earth, [17] [z]I
recognized that man is unable to find out all
God's work that is done under the sun, even
though neither by day nor by night do his eyes
find rest in sleep. However much man toils in
searching, he does not find it out; and even if the
wise man says that he knows, he is unable to
find it out.

## B. Man Does Not Know What Is To Come

### CHAPTER 9

[1]All this I have kept in mind and recognized:*
the just, the wise, and their deeds are in the
hand of God. Love from hatred* man cannot
tell; both appear equally vain, [2] [a]in that there is
the same lot for all, for the just and the wicked,
for the good and the bad, for the clean and the
unclean, for him who offers sacrifice and him
who does not. As it is for the good man, so it is
for the sinner; as it is for him who swears rashly,
so it is for him who fears an oath. [3]Among all the
things that happen under the sun, this is the
worst, that things turn out the same for all.
Hence the minds of men are filled with evil, and
madness is in their hearts during life; and
afterward they go to the dead.

[4]Indeed, for any among the living there is
hope; a live dog is better off than a dead lion.
[5] [b]For the living know that they are to die, but
the dead no longer know anything. There is no
further recompense for them, because all mem-
ory of them is lost. [6]For them, love and hatred
and rivalry have long since perished. They will

8, 10: The text is obscure. The Latin has "wicked men buried, who, while still alive, were in the holy place, and were praised in the city as if their works were just."

8, 13: Shadowy: perhaps an addition here; cf Eccl 6, 12.

8, 15: See notes on Eccl 2, 24; 5, 19.

9, 1–10: These statements are based on a very imperfect concept of life beyond the grave. With Christian revelation about the future life came the only satisfactory solution of the problem which so perplexed the author.

9, 1: Love from hatred: divine favor or disfavor.

v Eccl 3, 22; 10, 14. w Eccl 1, 13f. x Eccl 2, 24; 9, 7. y Eccl 1, 13; 3, 10. z Eccl 3, 11. a Eccl 2, 14. b Eccl 1, 11.

never again have part in anything that is done
under the sun.
7 [c]Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your
wine with a merry heart, because it is now that
God favors your works. 8At all times let your
garments be white, and spare not the perfume
for your head. 9Enjoy life with the wife whom
you love, all the days of the fleeting life that is
granted you under the sun. This is your lot in
life, for the toil of your labors under the sun.
10Anything you can turn your hand to, do with
what power you have; for there will be no work,
nor reason, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the
nether world where you are going.

**The Evil Time Not Known** 11Again I saw
under the sun that the race is not won by the
swift, nor the battle by the valiant, nor a
livelihood by the wise, nor riches by the shrewd,
nor favor by the experts; for a time of calamity
comes to all alike. 12Man no more knows his
own time* than fish taken in the fatal net, or
birds trapped in the snare; like these the children of men are caught when the evil time falls
suddenly upon them.

**The Uncertain Future and the Sages** 13On
the other hand I saw this wise deed under the
sun, which I thought sublime. 14Against a small
city with few men in it advanced a mighty king,
who surrounded it and threw up great
siegeworks about it. 15But in the city lived a man
who, though poor, was wise, and he delivered it
through his wisdom. Yet no one remembered
this poor man. 16 [d]Though I had said, "Wisdom
is better than force," yet the wisdom of the poor
man is despised and his words go unheeded.

17 "The quiet words of the wise are better
heeded
than the shout of a ruler of fools"—!

18 "A fly that dies can spoil the perfumer's
ointment,
and a single slip can ruin much that is
good."

9, 12: His own time: the time of death or sudden disaster.
10, 2: It is doubtful whether the author is endorsing either direction; cf Prv 4, 25ff.
10, 15: He who . . . city: perhaps a proverbial expression for supreme stupidity.

## CHAPTER 10

Eccles
See RG
264–270

1 More weighty than wisdom or wealth is a little
folly!
2 The wise man's understanding turns him to
his right;
the fool's understanding turns him to his
left.*

3 When the fool walks through the street, in
his lack of understanding he calls everything
foolish.
4 Should the anger of the ruler burst upon you,
forsake not your place; for mildness abates great
offenses.
5 I have seen under the sun another evil, like a
mistake that proceeds from the ruler: 6a fool put
in lofty position while the rich sit in lowly places.
7 I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes
walked on the ground like slaves.

8 He who digs a pit may fall into it, [e]
and he who breaks through a wall may be
bitten by a serpent.

9 He who moves stones may be hurt by them,
and he who chops wood is in danger from
it.

10 If the iron becomes dull, though at first he
made easy progress, he must increase his efforts;
but the craftsman has the advantage of his skill.

11 If the serpent bites because it has not been
charmed,
then there is no advantage for the charmer.

12 Words from the wise man's mouth win favor,
but the fool's lips consume him.[f]
13 The beginning of his words is folly,
and the end of his talk is utter madness;
14 yet the fool multiplies words.
Man knows not what is to come,
for who can tell him what is to come after
him?[g]
15 When will the fool be weary of his labor,
he who knows not the way to the city?*

c Eccl 2, 1. 24; 8, 15; 11, 9. d Prv 24, 5. e 8f: Prv 26, 27; Sir 27, 29. f Sir 21, 19. g Eccl 5, 2; 8, 7.

**Man Does Not Know What Evil Will Come**

16 Woe to you, O land, whose king was a servant,
and whose princes dine in the morning!
17 Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of noble birth,
and whose princes dine at the right time
(for vigor and not in drinking bouts).
18 When hands are lazy, the rafters sag;
when hands are slack, the house leaks.
19 Bread and oil call forth merriment
and wine makes the living glad,
but money answers for everything.
20 Even in your thoughts do not make light of the king,
nor in the privacy of your bedroom revile the rich,
Because the birds of the air may carry your voice,
a winged creature may tell what you say.

## CHAPTER 11

Eccles
See RG
264–270

1 Cast your bread upon the waters;*
after a long time you may find it again.

Eccles
See RG
264–270

2 Make seven or eight portions;*
you know not what misfortune may come upon the earth.

**Man Does Not Know What Good Will Come**

3 When the clouds are full,
they pour out rain upon the earth.
Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
wherever it falls, there shall it lie.
4 One who pays heed to the wind will not sow,
and one who watches the clouds will never reap.
5 Just as you know not how the breath of life
fashions the human frame in the mother's womb,
So you know not the work of God
which he is accomplishing in the universe.[h]
6 In the morning sow your seed,
and at evening let not your hand be idle:
For you know not which of the two will be successful,
or whether both alike will turn out well.

**Poem on Youth and Old Age** 7 Light is sweet!
and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.
8 However many years a man may live, let him,
as he enjoys them all, remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that is to come is vanity.

9 Rejoice, O young man, while you are young,
and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.
Follow the ways of your heart,
the vision of your eyes;
Yet understand that as regards all this
God will bring you to judgment.
10 Ward off grief from your heart
and put away trouble from your presence,
though the dawn of youth is fleeting.*

## CHAPTER 12

1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,
before the evil days come
And the years approach of which you will say,
I have no pleasure in them;
2 Before the sun is darkened,
and the light, and the moon, and the stars,
while the clouds return* after the rain;
3 When the guardians* of the house tremble,
and the strong men are bent,
And the grinders are idle because they are few,
and they who look through the windows grow blind;
4 When the doors* to the street are shut,
and the sound of the mill is low;
When one waits for the chirp of a bird,
but all the daughters of song are suppressed;

**11, 1:** This may refer to a spirit of adventure in business or to generosity in almsgiving. Waters: of the ocean, which sometimes carry lost treasures to the shore.

**11, 2:** This verse refers either to almsgiving or to the wisdom of not putting all one's cargo into a single vessel.

**11, 10:** Dawn . . . fleeting: literally, "youth and the dawn [of life] are vanity."

**12, 2:** The sun . . . return: the cloudy and rainy Palestinian winter, a natural symbol of old age.

**12, 3:** Guardians: the arms; strong men: the legs; grinders; the teeth; they who . . . windows: the eyes.

**12, 4:** Doors: the tightly compressed lips; sound of the mill: perhaps the sound of mastication; daughters of song: the voice.

h Eccl 8, 17.

[5]And one fears heights,
and perils in the street;
When the almond tree blooms,*
and the locust grows sluggish
and the caper berry is without effect,
Because man goes to his lasting home,
and mourners go about the streets;
[6]Before the silver cord is snapped
and the golden bowl* is broken,
And the pitcher is shattered at the spring,
and the broken pulley falls into the well,
[7]And the dust returns to the earth as it once was,
and the life breath returns to God who gave it.[i]

[8]Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,
all things are vanity![j]

**Epilogue** [9]Besides being wise, Qoheleth taught the people knowledge, and weighed, scrutinized and arranged many proverbs. [10]Qoheleth sought to find pleasing sayings, and to write down true sayings with precision. [11]The sayings of the wise are like goads; like fixed spikes are the topics given by one collector.* [12][k]As to more than these, my son, beware. Of the making of many books there is no end, and in much study there is weariness for the flesh.

[13][l]The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all;* [14][m]because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad.

**12, 5:** The almond tree blooms: resembling the white hair of age. The locust . . . sluggish: an image of the stiffness in movement of the aged. The caper berry: a stimulant for appetite.

**12, 6:** The golden bowl suspended by the silver cord was a symbol of life; the snapping of the cord and the breaking of the bowl, a symbol of death. The pitcher . . . the broken pulley: another pair of metaphors for life and its ending.

**12, 11:** Goads . . . one collector: the sayings were stimulants to thought and also spikes or centers around which to group correlated pronouncements of the wise.

**12, 13:** Man's all: St. Jerome explains: "Unto this is every man born, that, knowing his Maker, he may revere him in fear, honor, and the observance of his commandments."

i Eccl 3, 20f; Jb 34, 15. j Eccl 1, 2. k Eccl 1, 18. l Eccl 5, 6. m Eccl 11, 9.

# THE SONG OF SONGS

Song
See RG
270–276

The Song of Songs, meaning the greatest of songs (1, 1), contains in exquisite poetic form the sublime portrayal and praise of the mutual love of the Lord and his people. The Lord is the Lover and his people are the beloved. Describing this relationship in terms of human love, the author simply follows Israel's tradition. Isaiah (5, 1-7; 54, 4-8), Jeremiah (2, 2f. 32), and Ezekiel (16; 23) all characterize the covenant between the Lord and Israel as a marriage. Hosea the prophet sees the idolatry of Israel in the adultery of Gomer (1—3). He also represents the Lord speaking to Israel's heart (2, 16) and changing her into a new spiritual people, purified by the Babylonian captivity and betrothed anew to her divine Lover "in justice and uprightness, in love and mercy" (2, 21).

The author of the Song, using the same literary figure, paints a beautiful picture of the ideal Israel, the chosen people of the Old and New Testaments, whom the Lord led by degrees to an exalted spiritual union with himself in the bond of perfect love. When the Song is thus interpreted there is no reason for surprise at the tone of the poem, which employs in its descriptions the courtship and marriage customs of the author's time. Moreover, the poem is not an allegory in which each remark, e.g., in the dialogue of the lovers, has a higher meaning. It is a parable in which the true meaning of mutual love comes from the poem as a whole.

While the Song is thus commonly understood by most Catholic scholars, it is also possible to see in it an inspired portrayal of ideal human love. Here we would have from God a description of the sacredness and the depth of married union.

Although the poem is attributed to Solomon in the traditional title (1, 1), the language and style of the work, among other considerations, point to a time after the end of the Babylonian Exile (538 B.C.) as that in which an unknown poet composed this masterpiece. The structure of the Song is difficult to analyze; here it is regarded as a lyric dialogue, with dramatic movement and interest.

The use of marriage as a symbol, characteristic of the Song, is found extensively also in the New Testament (Mt 9, 15; 25, 1-13; Jn 3; 29; 2 Cor 11, 2; Eph 5, 23-32; Rv 19, 7ff; 21, 9ff). In Christian tradition, the Song has been interpreted in terms of the union between Christ and the Church and, particularly by St. Bernard, of the union between Christ and the individual soul. Throughout the liturgy, especially in the Little Office, there is a consistent application of the Song of Songs to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## I: The Song Of Songs By Solomon*

### CHAPTER 1

Song
See RG
270–276

#### Love's Desires

2 B Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth!*
More delightful is your love than wine! [a]
3 Your name spoken is a spreading perfume—
that is why the maidens love you.
4 Draw me!—
D We will follow you eagerly!
B Bring me, O king, to your chambers.

D With you we rejoice and exult,
we extol your love; it is beyond
wine: [b]
how rightly you are loved!

#### Love's Boast

5 B I am as dark—but lovely,
O daughters of Jerusalem*—
As the tents of Kedar,
as the curtains of Salma.
6 Do not stare at me because I am swarthy,*
because the sun has burned me.
My brothers have been angry with me;
they charged me with the care of the
vineyards:
my own vineyard I have not cared for.

#### Love's Inquiry

7 B Tell me, you whom my heart loves,*
where you pasture your flock,
where you give them rest at midday,
Lest I be found wandering
after the flocks of your companions.

8 G If you do not know,
O most beautiful among women,
Follow the tracks of the flock
and pasture the young ones
near the shepherds' camps.

#### Love's Vision

9 G To the steeds of Pharaoh's chariots*
would I liken you, my beloved:
10 Your cheeks lovely in pendants,

1, 1: This title is actually the first verse of chapter 1.

1, 2ff: The marginal letters indicate the speaker of the verses: B—Bride; D—Daughters of Jerusalem; G—Bridegroom. In vv 2–7 the bride and the daughters address the bridegroom who appears here as a king, but more often in the poem as a shepherd. King and shepherd are familiar figures of the Lord in the Sacred Scriptures. Cf Ps 23, 1; Is 40, 11; Jn 10, 1–16.

1, 5: Daughters of Jerusalem: the chorus whom the bride addresses and who ask her questions (Song 5, 9; 6, 1), thus developing action within the poem. Kedar: a Syrian desert region whose name suggests blackness; tents were often made of black goat hair. Curtains: tent coverings of Salma, a region close to Kedar.

1, 6: Swarthy: tanned by the sun from working in her brothers' vineyards. My own vineyard: the bride herself; cf Is 5, 1–7, where Israel is designated as the vineyard and the Lord is the Lover.

1, 7: Here and elsewhere in the Song (3, 1; 5, 8; 6, 1), the bride expresses her desire to be in the company of her lover. These verses point to a certain tension in the poem. Only at the end (Song 8, 5ff) does mutual possession of the lovers become final.

1, 9ff: The bridegroom compares the girl's beauty to the rich adornment of the royal chariot of Pharaoh.

a 2f: Song 4, 10. b Song 4, 10.

your neck in jewels.
11 We will make pendants of gold for you,
and silver ornaments.

### Love's Union

12 B For the king's banquet
my nard* gives forth its fragrance.
13 My lover is for me a sachet of myrrh*
to rest in my bosom.
14 My lover is for me a cluster of henna*
from the vineyards of Engedi.

15 G Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, [c]
ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves!*

16 B Ah, you are beautiful, my lover—
yes, you are lovely.
Our couch, too, is verdant;*
17 the beams of our house are cedars,
our rafters, cypresses.

## CHAPTER 2

1 I am a flower of Sharon,*
a lily of the valley.

2 G As a lily among thorns,
so is my beloved among women.
3 B As an apple tree among the trees of the woods,
so is my lover among men.
I delight to rest in his shadow,
and his fruit is sweet to my mouth.
4 He brings me into the banquet hall*
and his emblem over me is love. [d]
5 Strengthen me with raisin cakes,
refresh me with apples,
for I am faint with love. [e]
6 His left hand is under my head
and his right arm embraces me. [f]
7 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, [g]
by the gazelles and hinds* of the field,
Do not arouse, do not stir up love
before its own time.

### A Tryst in the Spring

8 B Hark! my lover—here he comes*
springing across the mountains,
leaping across the hills.
9 My lover is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Here he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattices.
10 My lover speaks; he says to me,
"Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,
and come!
11 "For see, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
12 The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of pruning the vines has come,
and the song of the dove is heard in our land.
13 The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.
Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,
and come!

14 "O my dove in the clefts of the rock,*
in the secret recesses of the cliff,
Let me see you,
let me hear your voice,
For your voice is sweet,
and you are lovely."

15 B Catch us the foxes, the little foxes*
that damage the vineyards; for our vineyards are in bloom!

Song
See RG
270–276

1, 12: Nard: a precious perfume, a figure of the bride; cf Song 4, 14.
1, 13: Myrrh: produced from aromatic resin of balsam or roses.
1, 14: Henna: a plant which bears white scented flowers.
1, 15: Doves: suggesting innocence and charm.
1, 16f: Though the meeting place of the lovers is but a shepherd's hut of green branches, it becomes a palace with beams of cedar and rafters of cypress when adorned with their love.
2, 1: Flower of Sharon: probably the narcissus, which grows in the fertile Plain of Sharon lying between Mount Carmel and Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast.
2, 4ff: The banquet hall, the sweet things of the table, the embrace of the bride and bridegroom, express the delicacy of their affection and the intimacy of their love.
2, 7: By the gazelles and hinds: the swiftness of these animals and the luster and soft expression of their eyes are suggestive of love; cf Prv 5, 19.
2, 8ff: In this sudden change of scene, the bride pictures her lover hastening toward her dwelling until his voice is heard bidding her come to him.
2, 14: The bride is addressed as though she were a dove in a mountain fastness out of sight and reach.
2, 15: A snatch of song in answer to the request of v 14; cf Song 8, 13f. Foxes: all who threaten to disturb the security of love symbolized by the vineyard; cf v 16.

c Song 4, 1. 7. d Song 1, 4. e Song 5, 8. f Song 8, 3. g Song 3, 5; 8, 4.

16 My lover belongs to me and I to him;
he browses among the lilies.[h]
17 Until the day breathes cool* and the shadows lengthen,
roam, my lover,
Like a gazelle or a young stag
upon the mountains of Bether.[i]

## CHAPTER 3

Song
See RG
270–276

### Loss and Discovery

1 B On my bed at night I sought him*
whom my heart loves—
I sought him but I did not find him.[j]
2 I will rise then and go about the city;
in the streets and crossings I will seek
Him whom my heart loves.
I sought him but I did not find him.
3 The watchmen came upon me,
as they made their rounds of the city:
Have you seen him whom my heart loves?
4 I had hardly left them
when I found him whom my heart loves.
I took hold of him and would not let him go
till I should bring him to the home of my mother,[k]
to the room of my parent.
5 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Do not arouse, do not stir up love
before its own time.[l]

Song
See RG
270–276

### Regal State of the Bridegroom

6 D What is this coming up from the desert,*
like a column of smoke
Laden with myrrh, with frankincense,
and with the perfume of every exotic dust?[m]
7 Ah, it is the litter of Solomon;
sixty valiant men surround it,
of the valiant men of Israel:
8 All of them expert with the sword,
skilled in battle,
Each with his sword at his side
against danger in the watches of the night.

9 King Solomon made himself a carriage
of wood from Lebanon.
10 He made its columns of silver,
its roof of gold,
Its seat of purple cloth,
its framework inlaid with ivory.
11 Daughters of Jerusalem, come forth
and look upon King Solomon
In the crown with which his mother has crowned him
on the day of his marriage,
on the day of the joy of his heart.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Charms of the Beloved

1 G Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved,[n]
ah, you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves[o]
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
streaming down the mountains of Gilead.
2 Your teeth* are like a flock of ewes to be shorn,
which come up from the washing,
All of them big with twins,
none of them thin and barren.
3 Your lips are like a scarlet strand;
your mouth is lovely.
Your cheek is like a half-pomegranate*
behind your veil.

4 Your neck is like David's tower[p]
girt with battlements;
A thousand bucklers hang upon it,
all the shields of valiant men.*
5 Your breasts are like twin fawns,[q]
the young of a gazelle
that browse among the lilies.

**2, 17:** Breathes cool: in the evening when the sun is going down. Cf Gn 3, 8. Bether: a very obscure word; some interpret it in the sense of ruggedness; others, of spices; still others, of sacrifice (Gn 15, 10).

**3, 1ff:** See the parallel in Song 5, 2–8.

**3, 6ff:** The lover is portrayed as King Solomon, escorted by sixty armed men, coming in royal procession to meet his bride.

**4, 2:** Teeth: praised for whiteness and regularity.

**4, 3:** Pomegranate: a fruit somewhat like an orange, with a firm skin and deep red color. The girl's cheek is compared, in roundness and tint, to a half-pomegranate.

**4, 4:** The ornaments about her neck are compared to the trophies on the city walls. Cf 1 Kgs 10, 10; 14, 26ff; Ez 27, 10.

h Song 6, 3; 7, 10. i Song 4, 6; 8, 14. j 1ff: Song 5, 2ff. k Song 8, 2. l Song 2, 7; 8, 4. m Song 6, 10; 8, 5. n Song 1, 15. o 1ff: Song 6, 5ff. p Song 7, 5. q Song 7, 4.

6 Until the day breathes cool and the shadows
lengthen,[r]
I will go to the mountain of myrrh,
to the hill of incense.*
7 You are all-beautiful, my beloved,
and there is no blemish in you.*

8 Come from Lebanon, my bride,
come from Lebanon, come!
Descend from the top of Amana,
from the top of Senir and Hermon,*
From the haunts of lions,
from the leopards' mountains.
9 You have ravished my heart, my sister,* my
bride;[s]
you have ravished my heart with one glance
of your eyes,
with one bead of your necklace.
10 How beautiful is your love, my sister, my
bride,[t]
how much more delightful is your love than
wine,
and the fragrance of your ointments than all
spices!
11 Your lips drip honey,* my bride,
sweetmeats and milk are under your
tongue;
And the fragrance of your garments
is the fragrance of Lebanon.

### The Lover and His Garden

12 G You are an enclosed garden, my sister, my
bride,[u]
an enclosed garden, a fountain sealed.*
13 You are a park that puts forth pomegranates,
with all choice fruits;
14 Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all kinds of incense;
Myrrh and aloes,
with all the finest spices.*
15 You are a garden fountain, a well of water
flowing fresh from Lebanon.
16 Arise, north wind! Come, south wind!
blow upon my garden*
that its perfumes may spread abroad.
B Let my lover come to his garden
and eat its choice fruits.

## CHAPTER 5

Song
See RG
270–276

1 G I have come to my garden, my sister, my
bride;[v]
I gather my myrrh and my spices,
I eat my honey and my sweetmeats,
I drink my wine and my milk.

D Eat, friends; drink!* Drink freely of love!

### A Fruitless Search

2 B I was sleeping, but my heart kept vigil;*
I heard my lover knocking:
"Open to me, my sister, my beloved,
my dove, my perfect one![w]
For my head is wet with dew,
my locks with the moisture of the night."
3 I have taken off my robe,*
am I then to put it on?
I have bathed my feet,
am I then to soil them?

4 My lover put his hand through the opening;
my heart trembled within me,
and I grew faint when he spoke.
5 I rose to open to my lover,
with my hands dripping myrrh:
With my fingers dripping choice myrrh
upon the fittings of the lock.
6 I opened to my lover—
but my lover had departed, gone.[x]

**4, 6:** Mountain of myrrh . . . hill of incense: spoken figuratively of the bride; cf Song 8, 14.
**4, 7:** Cf St. Paul's description of the church in Eph 5, 27. This verse is also applied to Our Lady, especially in the liturgy of the feast of the Immaculate Conception.
**4, 8:** Amana . . . Senir and Hermon: these rugged heights symbolize obstacles that would separate the lovers; cf Song 2, 14.
**4, 9:** Sister: a term of endearment; it forms part of the conventional language of love used in this canticle.
**4, 11:** Honey: sweet words. Cf Prv 5, 3.
**4, 12:** Enclosed garden . . . fountain sealed: reserved for the bridegroom alone. The bride's fidelity is implied. Cf Prv 5, 15–19.
**4, 14:** These plants are all known for their sweet scent.
**4, 16:** The last two lines of the verse are spoken by the girl, inviting her lover to herself, the garden.
**5, 1:** Eat, friends; drink!: the lovers are encouraged to enjoy the delights of their love, symbol of Christ's union with the church.
**5, 2–8:** A trial similar to that in Song 3, 1ff.
**5, 3f:** The bride's hesitation is due, not to levity, but to strong emotion.

r Song 2, 17. s Song 6, 5. t Song 1, 2f. u Song 6, 2. 11. v Song 6, 2. w 2ff: Song 3, 1f. x Song 3, 1.

I sought him but I did not find him;
I called to him but he did not answer me.*

7 The watchmen came upon me[y]
as they made their rounds of the city;
They struck me, and wounded me,
and took my mantle from me,
the guardians of the walls.*
8 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,[z]
if you find my lover—
What shall you tell him?—
that I am faint with love.

Song
See RG
270–276

### The Charms of the Lost Lover

9 D How does your lover differ from any other,
O most beautiful among women?
How does your lover differ from any other,
that you adjure us so?

10 B My lover is radiant and ruddy;*
he stands out among thousands.
11 His head is pure gold;
his locks are palm fronds,
black as the raven.
12 His eyes are like doves
beside running waters,
His teeth would seem bathed in milk,
and are set like jewels.
13 His cheeks are like beds of spice
with ripening aromatic herbs.
His lips are red blossoms;
they drip choice myrrh.

14 His arms are rods of gold
adorned with chrysolites.
His body is a work of ivory
covered with sapphires.
15 His legs are columns of marble
resting on golden bases.
His stature is like the trees on Lebanon,
imposing as the cedars.
16 His mouth is sweetness itself;
he is all delight.
Such is my lover, and such my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 6

### Discovery

1 D Where has your lover gone,
O most beautiful among women?
Where has your lover gone
that we may seek him with you?*
2 B My lover has come down to his garden,*
to the beds of spice,
To browse in the garden[a]
and to gather lilies.
3 My lover belongs to me and I to him;
he browses among the lilies.[b]

### The Charms of the Beloved

4 G You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my beloved,*
as lovely as Jerusalem,
as awe-inspiring as bannered troops.
5 Turn your eyes from me,[c]
for they torment me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
streaming down from Gilead.
6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes[d]
which come up from the washing,
All of them big with twins,
none of them thin and barren.
7 Your cheek is like a half-pomegranate
behind your veil.

8 There are sixty queens, eighty concubines,
and maidens without number—
9 One alone is my dove, my perfect one,
her mother's chosen,
the dear one of her parent.
The daughters saw her and declared her fortunate,
the queens and concubines, and they sang her praises;

**5, 6:** The disappearance of the lover seems to be a deliberate trial and test inflicted on the girl.

**5, 7:** The watchmen do not know the reason for the girl's appearance in the city streets; cf Song 3, 2ff.

**5, 10f:** In answer to the question of v 9, the girl sings her lover's praises (vv 10–16). Gold: indicates how precious the lover is. Palm fronds: his thick, luxuriant growth of hair.

**6, 1:** The daughters of Jerusalem are won by this description of the lover and offer their aid in seeking him.

**6, 2f:** Determined to share her lover with no one, the girl refuses the aid offered by the daughters in seeking him. She implies that she had never really lost him, for he has come down to his garden.

**6, 4–9:** The lover again celebrates her beauty. Tirzah: probably meaning "pleasant"; it was the early capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs 16).

y Song 3, 3. z Song 2, 5. a Song 4, 12; 5, 1. b Song 2, 16; 7, 11. c Song 4, 9. d 6f: Song 4, 1ff.

10 D Who is this that comes forth like the dawn,[e]
as beautiful as the moon, as resplendent as the sun,
as awe-inspiring as bannered troops?

### Love's Meeting

11 B I came down to the nut garden[f]
to look at the fresh growth of the valley,
To see if the vines were in bloom,
if the pomegranates had blossomed.
12 Before I knew it, my heart had made me
the blessed one of my kinswomen.*

## CHAPTER 7

### The Beauty of the Bride

1 D Turn, turn, O Shulammite,*
turn, turn, that we may look at you!

B Why would you look at the Shulammite
as at the dance of the two companies?

2 D How beautiful are your feet in sandals,*
O prince's daughter!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the handiwork of an artist.
3 Your navel is a round bowl
that should never lack for mixed wine.
Your body is a heap of wheat
encircled with lilies.
4 Your breasts are like twin fawns,
the young of a gazelle.[g]
5 Your neck is like a tower of ivory.[h]
Your eyes are like the pools in Heshbon
by the gate of Bath-rabbim.
Your nose is like the tower on Lebanon
that looks toward Damascus.*
6 Your head rises like Carmel;
your hair is like draperies of purple;
a king is held captive in its tresses.

### Love's Desires

7 G How beautiful you are, how pleasing,
my love, my delight!
8 Your very figure is like a palm tree,*
your breasts are like clusters.
9 I said: I will climb the palm tree,
I will take hold of its branches.
Now let your breasts be like clusters of the vine
and the fragrance of your breath like apples,
10 And your mouth like an excellent wine—

Song
See RG
270–276

### Love's Union

B that flows smoothly for my lover,
spreading over the lips and the teeth.*
11 I belong to my lover*
and for me he yearns.[i]
12 Come, my lover, let us go forth to the fields
and spend the night among the villages.
13 Let us go early to the vineyards, and see
if the vines are in bloom,
If the buds have opened,
if the pomegranates have blossomed;[j]
There will I give you my love.
14 The mandrakes* give forth fragrance,
and at our doors are all choice fruits;
Both fresh and mellowed fruits, my lover,
I have kept in store for you.

## CHAPTER 8

1 Oh, that you were my brother,
nursed at my mother's breasts!

Song
See RG
270–276

**6, 12:** The text is obscure in Hebrew and in the ancient versions. The Vulgate reads: "I did not know; my soul disturbed me because of the chariots of Aminadab."

**7, 1:** Shulammite: so called either because the girl is considered to be from Shulam in the plain of Esdraelon (cf 1 Kgs 1, 3) or because the name may mean "the peaceful one," and thus recall the name of Solomon. As at the dance of the two companies: the meaning is uncertain. The question in this verse could be construed as a refusal to dance; more probably, however, the girl accedes, as the following verses suggest.

**7, 2–6:** A flattering description of the girl's charms. Rounded . . . jewels: the meaning of these Hebrew words is not certain. Wine and wheat are symbolic of fertility; they are here associated with parts of the body which have a close relation to fruitfulness.

**7, 5:** The comparison emphasizes the stateliness and whiteness of the neck, and the limpidity of the eyes. Bath-rabbim: a proper name which occurs only here; there was a city of Rabbah northeast of Heshbon in Transjordan. Cf Jer 49, 3.

**7, 8f:** Palm tree: a figure of stateliness. The bridegroom is eager to enjoy the possession of his bride.

**7, 10:** The bride delicately turns his compliment into an expression of the love and tenderness she feels for him.

**7, 11–14:** The girl's answer assures him of her affection and invites him to return with her to the rural delights which are associated with their love and which recall the meeting described in Song 6, 11f.

**7, 14:** Mandrakes: herbs believed to have power to arouse love and promote fertility; cf Gn 30, 14ff.

e Song 3, 6; 8, 5. f Song 4, 12ff; 7, 13. g Song 4, 5. h Song 4, 4. i Song 2, 16; 6, 3. j Song 6, 11.

If I met you out of doors, I would kiss you
and none would taunt me.
2 I would lead you, bring you in
to the home of my mother.[k]
There you would teach me to give you
spiced wine to drink, and pomegranate
juice.

3 His left hand is under my head
and his right arm embraces me.[l]
4 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles and hinds of the field,
Do not arouse, do not stir up love,
before its own time.[m]

### Homecoming

5 D Who is this coming up from the desert,[n]
leaning upon her lover?*
G Under the apple tree I awakened you;
it was there that your mother conceived
you,
it was there that your parent conceived.

### True Love

6 B Set me as a seal* on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;
For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.
7 Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away.
Were one to offer all he owns to purchase love,
he would be roundly mocked.

### Chastity and Its Welcome

8 "Our sister is little*
and she has no breasts as yet.
What shall we do for our sister
when her courtship begins?
9 If she is a wall,
we will build upon it a silver parapet;
If she is a door,
we will reinforce it with a cedar plank."

10 I am a wall,
and my breasts are like towers.
So now in his eyes I have become
one to be welcomed.

### The Bride and Her Dowry

11 B Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;*
he gave over the vineyard to caretakers.
For its fruit one would have to pay
a thousand silver pieces.
12 My vineyard is at my own disposal;
the thousand pieces are for you,
O Solomon,
and two hundred for the caretakers of its
fruit.

### Life Together

13 G O garden-dweller,*
my friends are listening for your voice,
let me hear it!

14 B Be swift, my lover,
like a gazelle or a young stag
on the mountains of spices![o]

**8, 5:** The lovers are pictured walking homeward, enjoying the fulfillment of the desire which the girl expressed in vv 1f. The groom speaks of their first meeting.

**8, 6f:** Seal: this could be worn bound to the arm, as here, or suspended at the neck, or as a ring (Jer 22, 24). It was used for identification and signatures. Stern . . . relentless: in human experience, death and the nether world are inevitable, unrelenting; in the end they always triumph. Love, which is just as certain of its victory, matches its strength against the natural enemies of life; waters cannot extinguish it nor floods carry it away. It is more priceless than all riches.

**8, 8ff:** The bride affirms her chastity. In 8, 9 she quotes the course of action which her elder brothers had decided on. While she is yet immature, they will shelter her in view of eventual marriage. If she is virtuous, she will be honored; if she is unchaste, she will be kept under strict vigilance. In reply to this she proclaims her virtue and boasts of having found welcome from her lover.

**8, 11f:** These enigmatic verses have been variously interpreted. In v 11 the girl alludes to a vineyard of great value which is compared to her own self in v 12. Her enormous dowry, a thousand silver pieces, is in keeping with her intrinsic worth. She has been the generous lover, giving herself and a dowry to her lover, referred to as Solomon, and also smaller gifts to her brothers, the caretakers (cf vv 8ff).

**8, 13f:** As in Song 2, 14f, her lover asks for a word or a song and she replies in words similar to those found in Song 2, 17.

k Song 3, 4. l Song 2, 6. m Song 2, 7; 3, 5. n Song 3, 6; 6, 10. o Song 2, 9. 17; 4, 6.

# THE BOOK OF WISDOM

Wisdom
See RG
276–282

The Book of Wisdom was written about a hundred years before the coming of Christ. Its author, whose name is not known to us, was a member of the Jewish community at Alexandria, in Egypt. He wrote in Greek, in a style patterned on that of Hebrew verse. At times he speaks in the person of Solomon, placing his teachings on the lips of the wise king of Hebrew tradition in order to emphasize their value. His profound knowledge of the earlier Old Testament writings is reflected in almost every line of the book, and marks him, like Ben Sira, as an outstanding representative of religious devotion and learning among the sages of postexilic Judaism.

The primary purpose of the sacred author was the edification of his co-religionists in a time when they had experienced suffering and oppression, in part at least at the hands of apostate fellow Jews. To convey his message he made use of the most popular religious themes of his time, namely the splendor and worth of divine wisdom (6, 22—11, 1), the glorious events of the Exodus (11, 2-16; 12, 23-27; 15, 18—19, 22), God's mercy (11, 17—12, 22), the folly of idolatry (13, 1—15, 17), and the manner in which God's justice is vindicated in rewarding or punishing the individual soul (1, 1—6, 21). The first ten chapters especially form a preparation for the fuller teachings of Christ and his church. Many passages from this section of the book, notably 3, 1-8, are used by the church in her liturgy.

The principal divisions of the Book of Wisdom are:

I. The Reward of Justice (1, 1—6, 21).
II. Praise of Wisdom by Solomon (6, 22—11, 1).
III. Special Providence of God during the Exodus (11, 2-16; 12, 23-27; 15, 18—19, 22) with digressions on God's mercy (11, 17—12, 22) and on the folly and shame of idolatry (13, 1—15, 17).

## I: The Reward Of Justice

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–6
See RG
278–279

#### Exhortation to Justice, the Key to Life

1 Love justice,* you who judge the earth; [a]
think of the LORD in goodness,
and seek him in integrity of heart; [b]
2 Because he is found by those who test him not,
and he manifests himself to those who do not disbelieve him. [c]
3 For perverse counsels separate a man from God,
and his power, put to the proof, rebukes the foolhardy; [d]
4 Because into a soul that plots evil wisdom enters not,
nor dwells she in a body under debt of sin. [e]
5 For the holy spirit of discipline* flees deceit
and withdraws from senseless counsels;
and when injustice occurs it is rebuked. [f]
6 For wisdom is a kindly spirit,
yet she acquits not the blasphemer of his guilty lips;
Because God is the witness of his inmost self [g]
and the sure observer of his heart
and the listener to his tongue. [h]
7 For the spirit of the LORD fills the world, [i]
is all-embracing, and knows what man says.*

1, 1: Justice: not merely the cardinal virtue of that name (cf Wis 8, 7), but the universal moral quality which is the application of Wisdom to moral conduct.
1, 5: Discipline: here and elsewhere, another name for Wisdom; injustice: the opposite of the virtue in Wis 1, 1.

1, 7: This verse is applied to the Holy Spirit in the liturgy at Pentecost.

a 1 Chr 29, 17; Ps 2, 10; Is 26, 9. b 1f: Sir 1, 25. c 1 Chr 28, 9. d Is 59, 2. e Sir 15, 7f; Rom 7, 14. f Is 63, 10. g Jer 17, 10. h 6f: Jer 23, 24f. i Wis 12, 1.

8 Therefore no one who utters wicked things
can go unnoticed,
nor will chastising condemnation pass him
by.[j]
9 For the devices of the wicked man shall be
scrutinized,
and the sound of his words shall reach the
LORD,
for the chastisement of his transgressions;
10 Because a jealous ear hearkens to everything,[k]
and discordant grumblings are no secret.
11 Therefore guard against profitless grumbling,
and from calumny* withhold your tongues;
For a stealthy utterance does not go
unpunished,
and a lying mouth slays the soul.
12 Court not death by your erring way of life,
nor draw to yourselves destruction by the
works of your hands.
13 Because God did not make death,[l]
nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the
living.
14 For he fashioned all things that they might
have being;
and the creatures of the world are
wholesome,
And there is not a destructive drug among
them
nor any domain of the nether world on
earth,
15 For justice is undying.[m]

### The Wicked Reject Immortality and Justice Alike

16 It was the wicked who with hands and words
invited death,
considered it a friend, and pined for it,
and made a covenant with it,
Because they deserve to be in its possession,[n]

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1–6
See RG
278–279

1 they who said among themselves, thinking
not aright:
"Brief and troublous is our lifetime;[o]
neither is there any remedy for man's dying,
nor is anyone known to have come back
from the nether world.
2 For haphazard were we born,
and hereafter we shall be as though we had
not been;
Because the breath in our nostrils is a smoke
and reason is a spark at the beating of our
hearts,
3 And when this is quenched, our body will be
ashes
and our spirit will be poured abroad like
unresisting air.[p]
4 Even our name will be forgotten in time,
and no one will recall our deeds.
So our life will pass away like the traces of a
cloud,
and will be dispersed like a mist
pursued by the sun's rays
and overpowered by its heat.
5 For our lifetime is the passing of a shadow;
and our dying cannot be deferred
because it is fixed with a seal; and no one
returns.[q]
6 Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things
that are real,
and use the freshness of creation avidly.[r]
7 Let us have our fill of costly wine and
perfumes,
and let no springtime blossom pass us by;
8 let us crown ourselves with rosebuds ere
they wither.
9 Let no meadow be free from our
wantonness;*
everywhere let us leave tokens of our
rejoicing,
for this our portion is, and this our lot.[s]
10 Let us oppress the needy just man;
let us neither spare the widow
nor revere the old man for his hair grown
white with time.[t]
11 But let our strength be our norm of justice;
for weakness proves itself useless.

1, 11: Calumny: speech against God and his providence is meant.
2, 9: Let no meadow . . . wantonness: the extant Greek Mss have "Let none of us be without part in our wanton doings." Most Latin Mss have both forms of this line.

j Prv 19, 5. k 10f: Nm 14, 27f. l 13f: Ez 18, 32; 33, 11; 2 Pt 3, 9. m Is 51, 6ff. n Is 28, 15. o Jb 14, 1; 7, 9. p Jb 7, 9; Jas 4, 14. q Ps 144, 4. r Is 22, 13; 1 Cor 15, 32. s Jer 13, 25. t Ex 22, 22ff; Lv 19, 32.

12 *Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us;
he sets himself against our doings,
Reproaches us for transgressions of the law*
and charges us with violations of our training. [u]
13 He professes to have knowledge of God
and styles himself a child of the LORD. [v]
14 To us he is the censure of our thoughts;
merely to see him is a hardship for us, [w]
15 Because his life is not like other men's,
and different are his ways.
16 He judges us debased;
he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure.
He calls blest the destiny of the just
and boasts that God is his Father. [x]
17 Let us see whether his words be true;
let us find out what will happen to him. [y]
18 For if the just one be the son of God, he will defend him
and deliver him from the hand of his foes. [z]
19 With revilement and torture let us put him to the test
that we may have proof of his gentleness
and try his patience.
20 Let us condemn him to a shameful death;
for according to his own words, God will take care of him." [a]
21 These were their thoughts, but they erred;
for their wickedness blinded them, [b]
22 And they knew not the hidden counsels of God;
neither did they count on a recompense of holiness
nor discern the innocent souls' reward. [c]
23 For God formed man to be imperishable;
the image of his own nature he made him. [d]
24 But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world,
and they who are in his possession experience it. [e]

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–6
See RG
278–279

### The Hidden Counsels of God

#### A. On Suffering

1 But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, [f]
and no torment shall touch them.*
2 They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was thought an affliction
3 and their going forth from us, utter destruction.
But they are in peace. [g]
4 For if before men, indeed, they be punished,
yet is their hope full of immortality;
5 Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed,
because God tried them
and found them worthy of himself. [h]
6 As gold in the furnace, he proved them,
and as sacrificial offerings* he took them to himself. [i]
7 In the time of their visitation* they shall shine,
and shall dart about as sparks through stubble; [j]
8 They shall judge nations and rule over peoples,
and the LORD shall be their King forever. [k]
9 Those who trust in him shall understand truth,
and the faithful shall abide with him in love:
Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, [l]
and his care is with his elect.

2, 12–20: Often applied to the Passion of our Lord; many have understood these verses as a direct prophecy. Cf Mt 27, 41–44.
2, 12: Law: the law of Moses; training has the same meaning.
3, 1–8: Verses frequently applied to the martyrs.
3, 6: Offerings: the image is that of the holocaust, in which the victim is completely consumed by fire.
3, 7: Visitation: God's loving judgment of those who have been faithful to him; the same word is used in Wis 14, 11 for the punishment of the wicked at God's final judgment. Cf also Wis 3, 13.

u Hos 8, 1. v Mt 27, 43; Jn 8, 55; 10, 36–39. w Mt 9, 4. x Jer 6, 30. y Gn 37, 20. z Ps 22, 9; Is 42, 1; Mt 27, 43; Jn 5, 18. a Jas 5, 6. b Rom 1, 21. c Ps 18, 24f; Prv 11, 18; Mt 11, 25. d Gn 1, 26f; Is 54, 16 LXX. e Gn 3, 1–24; Rom 5, 12. f Jb 12, 10; 5, 19. g Is 57, 2. h Tb 12, 13; 2 Cor 4, 17; 1 Pt 1, 6f. i Ps 51, 19; Prv 17, 3; Sir 2, 5; Is 48, 10. j Dn 12, 3; Ob 18; Mal 3, 3; Mt 13, 43. k Wis 8, 14; Prv 8, 16; Dn 7, 22; 1 Cor 6, 2; Rv 20, 4. l Wis 3, 9; 4, 15; Jb 10, 12; Jn 15, 10.

Ch 1–6
See RG
278–279

10 But the wicked shall receive a punishment to
match their thoughts,*
since they neglected justice and forsook the
LORD.
11 For he who despises wisdom and instruction is
doomed. [m]
Vain is their hope, fruitless are their labors,
and worthless are their works. [n]
12 Their wives are foolish and their children
wicked;
accursed is their brood. [o]

B. ON CHILDLESSNESS

13 Yes, blessed is she who, childless and
undefiled,
knew not transgression of the marriage bed;
she shall bear fruit at the visitation of
souls.*
14 So also the eunuch whose hand wrought no
misdeed,
who held no wicked thoughts against the
LORD—
For he shall be given fidelity's choice reward*
and a more gratifying heritage in the LORD's
temple. [p]
15 For the fruit of noble struggles is a glorious
one;
and unfailing is the root of understanding. [q]
16 But the children of adulterers will remain
without issue,
and the progeny of an unlawful bed will
disappear. [r]
17 For should they attain long life, they will be
held in no esteem,
and dishonored will their old age be at last;
18 While should they die abruptly, they have no
hope
nor comfort in the day of scrutiny;
19 for dire is the end of the wicked
generation. [s]

## CHAPTER 4

1 Better is childlessness with virtue;
for immortal is its memory:*
because both by God is it acknowledged,
and by men. [t]
2 When it is present men imitate it,
and they long for it when it is gone;
And forever it marches crowned in triumph,
victorious in unsullied deeds of valor.
3 But the numerous progeny of the wicked shall
be of no avail;
their spurious offshoots shall not strike deep
root
nor take firm hold. [u]
4 For even though their branches flourish for a
time,
they are unsteady and shall be rocked by the
wind
and, by the violence of the winds,
uprooted; [v]
5 Their twigs shall be broken off untimely,
and their fruit be useless, unripe for eating,
and fit for nothing.
6 For children born of lawless unions
give evidence of the wickedness of their
parents, when they are examined.

C. ON EARLY DEATH

7 But the just man, though he die early, shall be
at rest. [w]
8 For the age that is honorable comes not with
the passing of time, [x]
nor can it be measured in terms of years.
9 Rather, understanding is the hoary crown for
men,
and an unsullied life, the attainment of old
age.
10 He who pleased God was loved; [y]
he who lived among sinners was
transported—*

**3, 10:** To match their thoughts: a fate as empty as that which they describe; cf Wis 2, 1–5.

**3, 13:** Visitation of souls: that is, the last judgment. Cf Wis 3, 7–9.

**3, 14:** Fidelity's choice reward: cf Is 56, 1–8. More gratifying: better than sons and daughters; cf Is 56, 5.

**4, 1:** The Latin form of this line, "Oh, how fair is the chaste generation in its glory!" is a later adaptation, which is applied in the liturgy to the splendor of virginity.

**4, 10f:** There are allusions here to Enoch (Gn 5, 21–24), who was young by patriarchal standards, and to Lot (Gn 19, 10f; 2 Pt 2, 7f). Cf also Is 57, 1f.

m Prv 1, 7. n 11f: Sir 41, 8. o Dt 28, 18ff. p Is 56, 2–5. q Sir 1, 18. r 2 Sm 12, 14. s Ps 34, 22. t Sir 16, 1ff; Prv 3, 3f. u Sir 23, 25. v Sir 40, 15; Is 40, 24. w Wis 3, 3. x 8f: Jb 12, 12; 32, 9; Sir 25, 4ff. y Gn 5, 24; Sir 44, 16; Heb 11, 5.

11 Snatched away, lest wickedness pervert his mind
or deceit beguile his soul; [z]
12 For the witchery of paltry things obscures what is right
and the whirl of desire transforms the innocent mind. [a]
13 Having become perfect in a short while,
he reached the fullness of a long career;
14 for his soul was pleasing to the LORD,
therefore he sped him out of the midst of wickedness. [b]
But the people saw and did not understand,
nor did they take this into account.*
16 Yes, the just man dead condemns the sinful who live,
and youth swiftly completed
condemns the many years of the wicked man grown old. [c]
17 For they see the death of the wise man
and do not understand what the LORD intended for him,
or why he made him secure.
18 They see, and hold him in contempt;
but the LORD laughs them to scorn. [d]
19 And they shall afterward become dishonored corpses [e]
and an unceasing mockery among the dead.
For he shall strike them down speechless and prostrate [f]
and rock them to their foundations;
They shall be utterly laid waste
and shall be in grief
and their memory shall perish.

### The Final Judgment of the Wicked

20 Fearful shall they come, at the counting up* of their sins,
and their lawless deeds shall convict them to their face.

## CHAPTER 5

1 Then shall the just one with great assurance confront [g]
his oppressors who set at nought his labors. [h]
2 Seeing this, they shall be shaken with dreadful fear,
and amazed at the unlooked-for salvation.
3 They shall say among themselves, rueful
and groaning through anguish of spirit:
"This is he whom once we held as a laughingstock
and as a type for mockery, 4 fools that we were!
His life we accounted madness,
and his death dishonored.
5 See how he is accounted among the sons of God;
how his lot is with the saints! [i]
6 We, then, have strayed from the way of truth, [j]
and the light of justice did not shine for us,
and the sun did not rise for us. [k]
7 We had our fill of the ways of mischief and of ruin;
we journeyed through impassable deserts,
but the way of the LORD we knew not.
8 What did our pride avail us?
What have wealth and its boastfulness afforded us? [l]
9 All of them passed like a shadow
and like a fleeting rumor; [m]
10 Like a ship traversing the heaving water,
of which, when it has passed, no trace can be found,
no path of its keel in the waves.
11 Or like a bird flying through the air;
no evidence of its course is to be found—
But the fluid air, lashed by the beat of pinions,
and cleft by the rushing force
Of speeding wings, is traversed:
and afterward no mark of passage can be found in it.
12 Or as, when an arrow has been shot at a mark,
the parted air straightway flows together again

Ch 1–6
See RG
278–279

4, 15: The verse here omitted repeats the last two lines of Wis 3, 9.
4, 20: Counting up: the last judgment.

z Is 57, 1f. a Wis 2, 21; Dn 13, 9. b Gn 19, 22. 29; 2 Pt 2, 7. c Mt 12, 41f. d Ps 37, 13. e Neh 1, 10 LXX; Ps 18, 8; Is 14, 19; Jer 23, 39f. f 2 Mc 3, 29. g 1f: 2 Thes 1, 6f. h Col 2, 15. i Acts 26, 18; Col 1, 12. j Prv 4, 18f; Jn 12, 35. k 6f. Is 59, 6–14. l Ps 49, 7; Prv 10, 2. m 9ff. 1 Chr 20, 15; Ps 144, 4; Jb 9, 25f LXX.

so that none discerns the way it went through—
13 Even so we, once born, abruptly came to nought
and held no sign of virtue to display,
but were consumed in our wickedness." [n]
14 Yes, the hope of the wicked is like thistledown borne on the wind,
and like fine, tempest-driven foam;
Like smoke scattered by the wind,
and like the passing memory of the nomad camping for a single day. [o]
15 But the just live forever,
and in the LORD is their recompense,
and the thought of them is with the Most High. [p]
16 Therefore shall they receive the splendid crown,
the beauteous diadem, from the hand of the LORD—
For he shall shelter them with his right hand,
and protect them with his arm. [q]
17 He shall take his zeal for armor [r]
and he shall arm creation to requite the enemy;
18 He shall don justice for a breastplate
and shall wear sure judgment for a helmet;
19 He shall take invincible rectitude as a shield [s]
20 and whet his sudden anger for a sword,
And the universe shall war with him against the foolhardy.
21 Well-aimed shafts of lightnings shall go forth
and from the clouds as from a well-drawn bow shall leap to the mark; [t]
22 and as from his sling, wrathful hailstones shall be hurled.
The water of the sea shall be enraged against them
and the streams shall abruptly overflow; [u]
23 A mighty wind shall confront them
and a tempest winnow them out;
Thus lawlessness shall lay the whole earth waste
and evildoing overturn the thrones of potentates. [v]

Ch 6–11 See RG 280–281

## CHAPTER 6

### Exhortation To Seek Wisdom

1 Hear, therefore, kings, and understand; [w]
learn, you magistrates of the earth's expanse!
2 Hearken, you who are in power over the multitude
and lord it over throngs of peoples!
3 Because authority was given you by the LORD
and sovereignty by the Most High,
who shall probe your works and scrutinize your counsels! [x]
4 Because, though you were ministers of his kingdom, you judged not rightly,
and did not keep the law,*
nor walk according to the will of God,
5 Terribly and swiftly shall he come against you,
because judgment is stern for the exalted—
6 For the lowly may be pardoned out of mercy [y]
but the mighty shall be mightily put to the test.
7 For the Lord of all shows no partiality,
nor does he fear greatness, [z]
Because he himself made the great as well as the small,
and he provides for all alike;
8 but for those in power a rigorous scrutiny impends.
9 To you, therefore, O princes, are my words addressed [a]
that you may learn wisdom and that you may not sin.
10 For those who keep the holy precepts hallowed shall be found holy,
and those learned in them will have ready a response.*

**6, 4:** Law: that of Moses; cf v 10; Wis 2, 12.
**6, 10:** Response: a suitable plea before the great Judge. Cf Prv 22, 21; Jb 31, 14; Hb 2, 1; Sir 8, 9.

n Ez 33, 10. o Jb 21, 18; Ps 1, 4; 37, 20; Is 17, 13. p Is 62, 11; Ez 18, 9. q Ex 33, 22; Is 62, 3; 2 Tm 4, 8; 1 Pt 5, 4. r 17: Is 59, 16. s 19f: Dt 32, 40ff. t Hb 3, 9ff. u Dt 11, 4. v Wis 11, 20; Sir 10, 13f. w 1f: Wis 1, 1; Sir 33, 19; Mi 3, 1. 9. x 2 Chr 36, 23; Prv 8, 15f; Jn 19, 11; Rom 13, 1ff. y 6ff: Lk 12, 48. z Dt 1, 17; Prv 22, 2. a 9ff: Dt 4, 10; Ps 2, 12; Sir 32, 14; 1 Jn 3, 7.

11 Desire therefore my words;
long for them and you shall be instructed.
12 Resplendent and unfading is Wisdom,
and she is readily perceived by those who love her,
and found by those who seek her.[b]
13 She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of men's desire;[c]
14 he who watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed,
for he shall find her sitting by his gate.
15 For taking thought of her is the perfection of prudence,
and he who for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care;
16 Because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,
and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solicitude.[d]
17 For the first step toward discipline is a very earnest desire for her;[e]
then, care for discipline is love of her;
18 love means the keeping of her laws;
To observe her laws is the basis for incorruptibility;
19 and incorruptibility makes one close to God;
20 thus the desire for Wisdom leads up to a kingdom.
21 If, then, you find pleasure in throne and scepter, you princes of the peoples,
honor Wisdom, that you may reign as kings forever.

## II: Praise Of Wisdom By Solomon

### Introduction

22 Now what Wisdom is, and how she came to be, I shall relate;
and I shall hide no secrets from you,
But from the very beginning I shall search out
and bring to light knowledge of her,
nor shall I diverge from the truth.[f]
23 Neither shall I admit consuming jealousy to my company,
because that can have no fellowship with Wisdom.[g]
24 A great number of wise men is the safety of the world,
and a prudent king, the stability of his people;[h]
25 so take instruction from my words, to your profit.

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 6–11
See RG
280–281

### Solomon Is Like All Other Men

1 I too am a mortal man, the same as all the rest,[i]
and a descendant of the first man formed of earth.*
And in my mother's womb I was molded into flesh
2 in a ten-months' period*—body and blood,
from the seed of man, and the pleasure that accompanies marriage.
3 And I too, when born, inhaled the common air,
and fell upon the kindred earth;
wailing, I uttered that first sound common to all.
4 In swaddling clothes and with constant care I was nurtured.
5 For no king has any different origin or birth,
6 but one is the entry into life for all; and in one same way they leave it.[j]

### Solomon Prayed and Wisdom and Riches Came to Him

7 Therefore I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.[k]
8 I preferred her to scepter and throne,[l]

7, 1: First man formed of earth: Adam. The author omits throughout the book the proper names of the characters in sacred history of whom he speaks; see especially chapter 10.
7, 2: In a ten-months' period: thus the ancients were accustomed to reckon the period of pregnancy.

b Wis 7, 10; Prv 8, 17; Jer 29, 13. c 13ff: Prv 8, 3. 17. 34. d Prv 8, 20f; Sir 15, 1ff. e 17–21; Ps 2, 10ff; Prv 4, 4–9; 7, 1–4; 8, 15f; Dn 7, 27; Jn 14, 15. 21; 1 Jn 5, 3. f Tb 12, 7. 11; Mt 13, 11; Jn 15, 15. g Wis 7, 13; Jas 3, 14f. h Prv 24, 6; 29, 4; Sir 10, 1ff. i 1f: Wis 10, 1; Gn 2, 7; Jb 10, 9–12; 33, 6; 1 Cor 15, 47ff. j Jb 1, 21; 1 Tm 6, 7f. k 1 Kgs 3, 5–15; Prv 2, 3–11. l 8f: Wis 8, 5; 1 Kgs 10, 21; Prv 3, 14ff; 8, 10. 18f; Jb 28, 15–19.

And deemed riches nothing in comparison
with her,
9 nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;
Because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
and before her, silver is to be accounted
mire.
10 Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
And I chose to have her rather than the light,
because the splendor of her never yields to
sleep. [m]
11 Yet all good things together came to me in her
company, [n]
and countless riches at her hands;
12 And I rejoiced in them all, because Wisdom is
their leader,
though I had not known that she is the
mother of these. [o]

### Solomon Prays for Help To Speak of Wisdom

13 Simply I learned about her, and ungrudgingly
do I share—
her riches I do not hide away; [p]
14 For to men she is an unfailing treasure;
those who gain this treasure win the
friendship of God,
to whom the gifts they have from
discipline* commend them.
15 Now God grant I speak suitably
and value these endowments at their
worth:
For he is the guide of Wisdom
and the director of the wise.
16 For both we and our words are in his hand,
as well as all prudence and knowledge of
crafts. [q]
17 For he gave me sound knowledge of existing
things,
that I might know the organization of the
universe and the force of its elements,
18 The beginning and the end and the midpoint
of times,
the changes in the sun's course and the
variations of the seasons.
19 Cycles of years, positions of the stars,
20 natures of animals, tempers of beasts,
Powers of the winds and thoughts of men,
uses of plants and virtues of roots—
21 Such things as are hidden I learned, and such
as are plain;
22 for Wisdom, the artificer of all, taught me. [r]

### Nature and Incomparable Dignity of Wisdom

For in her is a spirit
intelligent, holy, unique,
Manifold, subtle, agile,
clear, unstained, certain,
Not baneful, loving the good, keen, [s]
unhampered, beneficent, 23 kindly,
Firm, secure, tranquil,
all-powerful, all-seeing,
And pervading all spirits,
though they be intelligent, pure and very
subtle.
24 For Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion,
and she penetrates and pervades all things
by reason of her purity. [t]
25 For she is an aura of the might of God
and a pure effusion of the glory of the
Almighty;
therefore nought that is sullied enters into
her.
26 For she is the refulgence of eternal light,
the spotless mirror of the power of God,
the image of his goodness. [u]
27 And she, who is one, can do all things,
and renews everything while herself
perduring;
And passing into holy souls from age to age,
she produces friends of God and prophets. [v]
28 For there is nought God loves, be it not one
who dwells with Wisdom.
29 For she is fairer than the sun [w]
and surpasses every constellation of the
stars.
Compared to light, she takes precedence;

7, 14: Discipline: cf note on Wis 1, 5.

m Prv 6, 23. n Prv 8, 21. o Prv 8, 14f. p Wis 6, 23. q Wis 3, 1. r Wis 14, 2; Prv 8, 30. s 22f: Heb 4, 12f; Jas 3, 17. t Wis 8, 1. u 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15; Heb 1, 3. v Ex 33, 11; Jb 42, 2; Ps 104, 29; Jl 3, 1. w 29f: Song 6, 3. 9.

30 for that, indeed, night supplants,
but wickedness prevails not over Wisdom.

## CHAPTER 8

1 Indeed, she reaches from end to end* mightily
and governs all things well.[x]

### Solomon Sought Wisdom, the Source of Blessings

2 Her I loved and sought after from my youth;
I sought to take her for my bride
and was enamored of her beauty.[y]
3 She adds to nobility the splendor of
companionship with God;
even the LORD of all loved her.
4 For she is instructress in the understanding of
God,
the selector of his works.[z]
5 And if riches be a desirable possession in life,
what is more rich than Wisdom, who
produces all things?[a]
6 And if prudence renders service,[b]
who in the world is a better craftsman than
she?
7 Or if one loves justice,
the fruits of her works are virtues;
For she teaches moderation and prudence,
justice and fortitude,*
and nothing in life is more useful for men
than these.
8 Or again, if one yearns for copious learning,
she knows the things of old, and infers
those yet to come.
She understands the turns of phrases and the
solutions of riddles;
signs and wonders she knows in advance
and the outcome of times and ages.[c]

### Solomon Sought Wisdom as His Counselor and Comfort

9 So I determined to take her to live with me,
knowing that she would be my counselor
while all was well,
and my comfort in care and grief.
10 For her sake I should have glory among the
masses,[d]
and esteem from the elders, though I be but
a youth.
11 I should become keen in judgment,
and should be a marvel before rulers.
12 They would abide my silence and attend my
utterance;
and as I spoke on further,
they would place their hands upon their
mouths.*
13 For her sake I should have immortality
and leave to those after me an everlasting
memory.[e]
14 I should govern peoples, and nations would be
my subjects—[f]
15 terrible princes, hearing of me, would be
afraid;
in the assembly I should appear noble, and
in war courageous.
16 Within my dwelling, I should take my repose
beside her;
For association with her involves no bitterness
and living with her no grief,
but rather joy and gladness.[g]

### Solomon Realizes That Wisdom Is a Gift of God

17 Thinking thus within myself,
and reflecting in my heart
That there is immortality in kinship with
Wisdom,[h]
18 and good pleasure in her friendship,
and unfailing riches in the works of her
hands,
And that in frequenting her society there is
prudence,
and fair renown in sharing her discourses,
I went about seeking to take her for my
own.
19 Now, I was a well-favored child,*

Ch 6–11
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8, 1: End to end: from one end of the heavens to the other.
8, 7: Moderation . . . fortitude: what are now known as the cardinal virtues.
8, 12: Hands upon their mouths: an oft-mentioned sign of respect among the ancients for unanswerable wisdom; cf Jb 40, 4.
8, 19f: Here the sacred writer mentions first bodily, then spiritual, excellence. To make it plain that the latter is the governing factor in the harmonious development of the human person, he then reverses the order.

x Wis 7, 24; 15, 1. y 1 Kgs 3, 7ff; Ps 45, 12; Prv 5, 18; 8, 17. z Prv 8, 27–31. a Prv 8, 18f. b 6f: Prv 8, 14f. c Prv 1, 6; Sir 39, 1ff; 42, 19f; Dn 2, 21. d 10ff: 1 Kgs 3, 28; Jb 29, 8ff. 21f. e Sir 15, 6; 41, 12f; Is 56, 5. f Wis 3, 8; Ps 18, 48; 47, 4. g Prv 29, 6; Sir 15, 6; Bar 3, 38. h Prv 3, 18.

and I came by a noble nature;
20 or rather, being noble, I attained an unsullied body.
21 And knowing that I could not otherwise possess her* except God gave it—
and this, too, was prudence, to know whose is the gift—
I went to the LORD and besought him,[i]
and said with all my heart:

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 6–11
See RG
280–281

### Solomon's Prayer

1 God of my fathers, LORD of mercy,[j]
you who have made all things by your word[k]
2 And in your wisdom have established man
to rule the creatures produced by you,[l]
3 To govern the world in holiness and justice,
and to render judgment in integrity of heart:[m]
4 Give me Wisdom, the attendant at your throne,
and reject me not from among your children;[n]
5 For I am your servant, the son of your handmaid,
a man weak and short-lived
and lacking in comprehension of judgment and of laws.[o]
6 Indeed, though one be perfect among the sons of men,
if Wisdom, who comes from you, be not with him,
he shall be held in no esteem.[p]
7 You have chosen me king over your people
and magistrate for your sons and daughters.[q]
8 You have bid me build a temple on your holy mountain
and an altar in the city that is your dwelling place,
a copy of the holy tabernacle which you had established from of old.[r]
9 Now with you is Wisdom, who knows your works
and was present when you made the world;
Who understands what is pleasing in your eyes
and what is conformable with your commands.[s]
10 Send her forth from your holy heavens
and from your glorious throne dispatch her
That she may be with me and work with me,
that I may know what is your pleasure.[t]
11 For she knows and understands all things,
and will guide me discreetly in my affairs
and safeguard me by her glory;[u]
12 Thus my deeds will be acceptable,
and I shall judge your people justly
and be worthy of my father's throne.[v]
13 For what man knows God's counsel,
or who can conceive what the LORD intends?[w]
14 For the deliberations of mortals are timid,
and unsure are our plans.
15 For the corruptible body burdens the soul
and the earthen shelter weighs down the mind that has many concerns.[x]
16 And scarce do we guess the things on earth,
and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;
but when things are in heaven, who can search them out?[y]
17 Or who ever knew your counsel, except you had given Wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?[z]
18 And thus were the paths of those on earth made straight,
and men learned what was your pleasure,
and were saved by Wisdom.[a]

8, 21: Possess her: in the Latin, "be continent." Though this verse has often been cited in connection with the virtue of chastity, the original must certainly mean "be possessed of Wisdom."

i 1 Kgs 3, 9; 4, 29; Prv 2, 6; Jas 1, 5. j Ps 86, 15. k 1f: Gn 1; Ps 33, 6; Prv 3, 19; Jer 10, 12; Jn 1, 3. 10. l Ps 8, 7ff; Sir 17, 2ff. m 1 Kgs 3, 6; 9 4f; Ps 9, 8f. n 2 Chr 1, 10. o 1 Kgs 3, 7; Ps 116, 16. p Wis 3, 17; 1 Kgs 11, 4; 1 Cor 3, 18ff. q 1 Chr 28, 5. r Ex 25, 8f; 2 Sm 7, 13; 1 Chr 28, 5; 2 Chr 6, 1f; 7, 7; Tb 1, 4; Pss 15. 1; 48, 2f. s Dt 6, 17f; Prv 8, 22–31; Jn 1, 1ff. 10. t Wis 18, 15; Mt 5, 34; Jn 3, 17; 20, 21. u Wis 8, 8. v 1 Kgs 3, 6–9. w Is 40, 13; Bar 3, 31. x Jb 4, 19. y Sir 1. 3; Jn 3, 12. z Jn 14, 26. a Wis 10, 9; Prv 28, 26.

## CHAPTER 10*

### Wisdom Preserves Her Followers

1 She preserved the first-formed father* of the world[b]
when he alone had been created;[c]
And she raised him up from his fall,
2 and gave him power to rule all things.[d]
3 But when the unjust man* withdrew from her in his anger,
he perished through his fratricidal wrath.[e]
4 When on his account the earth was flooded, Wisdom again saved it,
piloting the just man* on frailest wood.[f]
5 She, when the nations were sunk in universal wickedness,
knew the just man,* kept him blameless before God,
and preserved him resolute against pity for his child.[g]
6 She delivered the just man* from among the wicked who were being destroyed,[h]
when he fled as fire descended upon Pentapolis—
7 Where as a testimony to its wickedness,
there yet remain a smoking desert,
Plants bearing fruit that never ripens,
and the tomb of a disbelieving soul,* a standing pillar of salt.[i]
8 For those who forsook Wisdom
first were bereft of knowledge of the right,
And then they left mankind a memorial of their folly—
so that they could not even be hidden in their fall.
9 But Wisdom delivered from tribulations those who served her.[j]
10 She, when the just man fled from his brother's anger,[k]
guided him in direct ways,*
Showed him the kingdom of God
and gave him knowledge of holy things;
She prospered him in his labors
and made abundant the fruit of his works,
11 Stood by him against the greed of his defrauders,
and enriched him;[l]
12 She preserved him from foes,
and secured him against ambush,
And she gave him the prize for his stern struggle
that he might know that devotion to God* is mightier than all else.[m]
13 She did not abandon the just man* when he was sold,[n]
but delivered him from sin.[o]
14 She went down with him into the dungeon,
and did not desert him in his bonds,
Until she brought him the scepter of royalty and authority over his oppressors,
Showed those who had defamed him false,
and gave him eternal glory.
15 The holy people and blameless race—it was she
who delivered them from the nation that oppressed them.[p]
16 She entered the soul of the LORD's servant,*
and withstood fearsome kings with signs and portents;[q]
17 she gave the holy ones the recompense of their labors,[r]
Conducted them by a wondrous road,
and became a shelter for them by day
and a starry flame by night.

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**10, 1–21**: This chapter prepares for the following section (11, 2—19, 22) on the history of Israel in the Exodus, by reviewing the dealings of Wisdom with the patriarchs. It has a parallel in Sir 44–50; cf also Wis 18, 9.
**10, 1f**: Adam.
**10, 3**: Cain.
**10, 4**: Noah.
**10, 5**: Abraham.
**10, 6**: Lot. Pentapolis: the five cities, including Sodom; cf Gn 14, 2.
**10, 7**: Disbelieving soul: Lot's wife; cf Gn 19, 26.
**10, 10ff**: Jacob.
**10, 12**: Devotion to God: in the Greek this signifies "piety" or "religion," and is the equivalent of the Hebrew "fear of the Lord"; cf Prv 1, 7.
**10, 13f**: Joseph.
**10, 16**: Moses.

b 1–16: Heb 11, 17–27. c Wis 7, 1. d Gn 1, 28. e Gn 4, 1–16. f Wis 14, 5f; Gn 6, 5–9. g Gn 22, 7–10. h Gn 18, 22–33; 19, 15–25; 2 Pt 2, 6f. i Gn 19, 26; Lk 17, 32. j Wis 16, 8. k Gn 27, 43ff; 28, 12–15. l Gn 30, 29f; 31, 5–12. m Gn 32, 24–29; 1 Tm 4, 8. n 13f: Gn 37–45. o Gn 39, 7–10. p Ex 3, 9; 14, 30; 19, 6. q Wis 1, 4; 7, 27; Ex 4, 10; Ps 76, 13. r 17ff; Wis 14, 3; 19, 7; Ex 13, 21f; 14—15; Pss 77, 20f; 78, 13. 53; Is 4, 5f.

18 She took them across the Red Sea
and brought them through the deep waters—
19 But their enemies she overwhelmed,
and cast them up* from the bottom of the depths.
20 Therefore the just despoiled the wicked;
and they sang, O LORD, your holy name
and praised in unison your conquering hand[s]—
21 Because Wisdom opened the mouths of the dumb,
and gave ready speech to infants.[t]

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 11–19 See RG 281

1 She made their affairs prosper through the holy prophet.[u]

# III: Special Providence Of God During The Exodus

### Introduction

2 They journeyed through the uninhabited desert,*
and in solitudes they pitched their tents;[v]
3 they withstood enemies and took vengeance on their foes.[w]
4 When they thirsted, they called upon you,
and water was given them from the sheer rock,
assuagement for their thirst from the hard stone.
5 For by the things through which their foes were punished
they in their need were benefited.[x]

### First Example: Water Punishes the Egyptians and Benefits the Israelites

6 Instead of a spring, when the perennial river*
was troubled with impure blood[y]
7 as a rebuke to the decree for the slaying of infants,
You gave them abundant water in an unhoped-for way,
8 once you had shown by the thirst they then had
how you punished their adversaries.
9 For when they had been tried, though only mildly chastised,[z]
they recognized how the wicked,
condemned in anger, were being tormented.
11 Both those afar off and those close by were afflicted:[a]
10 the latter you tested, admonishing them as a father;
the former as a stern king you probed and condemned.
12 For a twofold grief took hold of them[b]
and a groaning at the remembrance of the ones who had departed.
13 For when they heard that the cause of their own torments
was a benefit to these others, they recognized the Lord.
14 Him who of old had been cast out in exposure
they indeed mockingly rejected;
but in the end of events, they marveled at him,
since their thirst proved unlike that of the just.[c]

### Second Example: Animals Punish the Egyptians and Benefit the Israelites

15 And in return for their senseless, wicked thoughts,
which misled them into worshiping dumb* serpents and worthless insects,
You sent upon them swarms of dumb creatures for vengeance;[d]
16 that they might recognize that a man is punished by the very things through which he sins.[e]

10, 19: Cast them up: their bodies, on the shore.
11, 2ff: Few verses in these later chapters can be fully understood without consulting the passages in the Mosaic books which are indicated in the cross references. The theme of this part of the book is expressed in Wis 11, 5, and is illustrated in the following chapters by five examples drawn from Exodus events.
11, 6ff: The perennial river: the Nile; the contrast is between the first plague of Egypt (Ex 7, 17–24) and the water drawn from the rock in Horeb (Ex 17, 5–7; Nm 20, 8–11).
11, 15: Dumb: that is, irrational.

s Ex 12, 35f; 15, 1–21. t Ex 4, 10–15; Ps 8, 3; Mt 11, 25. u Dt 2, 7; Hos 12, 14. v 2ff: Ex 17, 2–6; Nm 20, 1–13; Pss 63, 2; 107, 4–7; Jer 2, 6. w Ex 17, 8–16; Nm 21, 1ff. 21–35; 31, 1–12; Ps 118, 10ff. x Wis 16, 1f. y 6ff: Wis 18, 5; Ex 1, 22; 7, 17–24. z 9ff: Wis 3, 5; 16, 3f; Dt 8, 2–5; Ps 6, 2; Prv 3, 12; 2 Mc 6, 12–11.11 a Ps 6, 2. b 12f: Wis 16, 8; Ex 14, 4. 18. c Ex 2, 3. d Wis 12, 23f; 15, 18–16, 1; Ex 7, 26ff. e Wis 12, 23. 27; Ex 10, 16; Prv 1, 31f; 26, 27.

### Digression on God's Mercy

17 For not without means was your almighty hand,[f]
that had fashioned the universe from formless matter,
to send upon them a drove of bears or fierce lions,
18 Or new-created, wrathful, unknown beasts
to breathe forth fiery breath,
Or pour out roaring smoke,
or flash terrible sparks from their eyes.
19 Not only could these attack and completely destroy them;
even their frightful appearance itself could slay.
20 Even without these, they could have been killed at a single blast,
pursued by retribution
and winnowed out by your mighty spirit;
But you have disposed all things by measure and number and weight.[g]
21 For with you great strength abides always;
who can resist the might of your arm?[h]
22 Indeed, before you the whole universe is as a grain from a balance,*
or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth.[i]
23 But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things;
and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent.[j]
24 For you love all things that are
and loathe nothing that you have made;
for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.[k]
25 And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it;
or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?[l]
26 But you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls,[m]

### CHAPTER 12

1 for your imperishable spirit is in all things![n]
2 Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little,
warn them, and remind them of the sins they are committing,
that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!
3 For, truly, the ancient inhabitants of your holy land,[o]
4 whom you hated for deeds most odious—
Works of witchcraft and impious sacrifices;
5 a cannibal feast of human flesh
and of blood, from the midst of . . . *—
These merciless murderers of children,
6 and parents who took with their own hands defenseless lives,[p]
You willed to destroy by the hands of our fathers,
7 that the land that is dearest of all to you
might receive a worthy colony of God's children.[q]
8 But even these, as they were men, you spared,
and sent wasps as forerunners of your army
that they might exterminate them by degrees.[r]
9 Not that you were without power to have the wicked vanquished in battle by the just,
or wiped out at once by terrible beasts or by one decisive word;[s]
10 But condemning them bit by bit, you gave them space for repentance.
You were not unaware that their race was wicked
and their malice ingrained,[t]
And that their dispositions would never change;
11 for they were a race accursed from the beginning.
Neither out of fear for anyone
did you grant amnesty for their sins.[u]

Ch 11–19 See RG 281

**11, 22:** Grain from a balance: a tiny particle used for weighing on sensitive scales.

**12, 5:** And of blood, from the midst of . . . : this line is obscure in the current Greek text and in all extant translations. Either one or two words would complete it. The horrible crimes here spoken of (cf Wis 14, 23) were not unheard of in the ancient pagan world.

f 17ff: Wis 12, 8f; 16, 1. 5; Gn 1, 1f; Dt 32, 24; 2 Kgs 17, 25f; Hos 13, 4–8. g Jb 4, 9. h Wis 12, 12; 2 Chr 20, 6. i Hos 13, 3. j Wis 12, 10; Dt 9, 27; Acts 17, 30; Rom 2, 4; 11, 32; 2 Pt 3, 9. k Ps 145, 9. l Is 41, 4. m Wis 12, 16; Is 63, 9. n Wis 1, 7. o 3ff: Wis 14, 23; Dt 18, 9–12; Pss 5, 6; 106, 28. 34–39; Jer 19, 4f; Ez 16, 3. 20f. 36. p Nm 33, 52. q Dt 11, 12. r Ex 23, 28ff; Dt 7, 17–24. s Wis 11, 18; 18, 15; Nm 16, 21. t Wis 11, 23; Ps 55, 20; Sir 16, 9. u Gn 9, 25.

12 For who can say to you, "What have you done?"
or who can oppose your decree?
Or when peoples perish, who can challenge you, their maker;
or who can come into your presence as vindicator of unjust men? [v]
13 For neither is there any god besides you who have the care of all,
that you need show you have not unjustly condemned; [w]
14 Nor can any king or prince confront you on behalf of those you have punished. [x]
15 But as you are just, you govern all things justly;
you regard it as unworthy of your power to punish one who has incurred no blame. [y]
16 For your might is the source of justice;
your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. [z]
17 For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved;*
and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. [a]
18 But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency,
and with much lenience you govern us;
for power, whenever you will, attends you.
19 And you taught your people, by these deeds, [b]
that those who are just must be kind;
And you gave your sons good ground for hope
that you would permit repentance for their sins.
20 For these were enemies of your servants, doomed to death;
yet, while you punished them with such solicitude and pleading,
granting time and opportunity to abandon wickedness,
21 With what exactitude you judged your sons,
to whose fathers you gave the sworn covenants of goodly promises! [c]

Ch 11–19 See RG 281

22 Us, therefore, you chastise, and our enemies with a thousand blows you punish,
that we may think earnestly of your goodness when we judge,
and, when being judged, may look for mercy.

### Second Example Resumed

23 Hence those unjust also, who lived a life of folly,
you tormented through their own abominations. [d]
24 For they went far astray in the paths of error,
taking for gods the worthless and disgusting among beasts,
deceived like senseless infants. [e]
25 Therefore as though upon unreasoning children,
you sent your judgment on them as a mockery; [f]
26 But they who took no heed of punishment which was but child's play
were to experience a condemnation worthy of God.
27 For in the things through which they suffered distress,
since they were tortured by the very things they deemed gods,
They saw and recognized the true God whom before they had refused to know;
with this, their final condemnation came upon them. [g]

### Digression on False Worship

## CHAPTER 13

### A. Nature Worship

1 For all men were by nature foolish who were in ignorance of God,
and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing him who is,*
and from studying the works did not discern the artisan; [h]

12, 17: The brunt of God's anger and vindictive justice is borne by those who know him and yet defy his authority and might. Cf Wis 1, 2; 15, 2, but also Wis 12, 27; 18. 13.

13, 1: Him who is: the Hebrew sacred name of God; cf Ex 3, 14.

v 2 Sm 16, 10; Eccl 8, 4; Sir 46, 19; Is 45, 9; Dn 4, 32; Rom 9, 19ff. w Wis 6, 7; Dt 3, 24; 32, 39; Is 44, 6. 8. x Jer 49, 19; 50, 44. y Gn 18, 23ff; Dt 32, 4. z Wis 2, 11; 11, 26; Ps 103, 19. a Wis 15, 2f; Ex 9, 16. b 19f: Wis 11, 23; Sir 17, 24. c Wis 18, 22; Gn 50, 24; Dt 7, 6–14; Ps 105, 8ff. d Wis 11, 16; 16, 1. e Dt 11, 28; Jer 5, 28; Rom 1, 23. f Jer 4, 22. g Wis 16, 16; Ex 14, 4. 28. h Acts 14, 17; Eph 4, 17ff.

2 But either fire, or wind, or the swift air,
or the circuit of the stars, or the mighty water,
or the luminaries of heaven,* the governors of the world, they considered gods.[i]
3 Now if out of joy in their beauty they thought them gods,
let them know how far more excellent is the Lord than these;
for the original source of beauty fashioned them.[j]
4 Or if they were struck by their might and energy,
let them from these things realize how much more powerful is he who made them.[k]
5 For from the greatness and the beauty of created things
their original author, by analogy, is seen.
6 But yet, for these the blame is less;*
For they indeed have gone astray perhaps,
though they seek God and wish to find him.
7 For they search busily among his works,
but are distracted by what they see, because the things seen are fair.
8 But again, not even these are pardonable.
9 For if they so far succeeded in knowledge
that they could speculate about the world,
how did they not more quickly find its LORD?

### B. Idolatry

10 But doomed are they, and in dead things are their hopes,
who termed gods things made by human hands:
Gold and silver, the product of art, and likenesses of beasts,
or useless stone, the work of an ancient hand.[l]

### The Carpenter and Wooden Idols

11 A carpenter may saw out a suitable tree[m]
and skillfully scrape off all its bark,
And deftly plying his art,
produce something fit for daily use,[n]
12 and use up the refuse from his handiwork in preparing his food, and have his fill;
13 Then the good-for-nothing refuse from these remnants,
crooked wood grown full of knots,
he takes and carves to occupy his spare time.[o]
This wood he models with listless skill,
and patterns it on the image of a man
14 or makes it resemble some worthless beast.
When he has daubed it with red and crimsoned its surface with red stain,
and daubed over every blemish in it,[p]
15 He makes a fitting shrine for it
and puts it on the wall, fastening it with a nail.[q]
16 Thus lest it fall down he provides for it,
knowing that it cannot help itself;
for, truly, it is an image and needs help.[r]
17 But when he prays about his goods or marriage or children,[s]
he is not ashamed to address the thing without a soul.
And for vigor he invokes the powerless;
18 and for life he entreats the dead;
And for aid he beseeches the wholly incompetent,
and about travel, something that cannot even walk.
19 And for profit in business and success with his hands
he asks facility of a thing with hands completely inert.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 11–19 See RG 281

1 Again, one preparing for a voyage and about to traverse the wild waves
cries out to wood more unsound than the boat that bears him.[t]

**13, 2:** Luminaries of heaven: the Latin interprets, "sun and moon"; governors: cf Gn 1, 16.
**13, 6:** The blame is less: the greater blame is incurred by those mentioned in Wis 13, 10 and 15, 14ff.

i Gn 1, 14–19; Dt 4, 19; Jb 31, 26ff. j Ps 8, 4. k Jer 10, 2; Bar 6, 39. l Wis 3, 11; 15, 5. 17; Dt 4, 25–28; 7, 25; 27, 15; Ps 115, 4; Hos 14, 4; Acts 17, 29. m 11–19: Is 44, 9–20. n Wis 15, 7; Bar 6, 58. o Dt 4, 16. p Jer 10, 9. q Is 40, 20; 41, 7; 44, 13. r 1 Sm 5, 3ff; Bar 6, 57. s 17ff: Wis 15, 15. t Is 46, 7.

[2] For the urge for profits devised this latter,
and Wisdom the artificer produced it.
[3] But your providence, O Father! guides it,
for you have furnished even in the sea a road,
and through the waves a steady path,[u]
[4] Showing that you can save from any danger,
so that even one without skill may embark.[v]
[5] But you will that the products of your Wisdom be not idle;
therefore men trust their lives even to frailest wood,
and have been safe crossing the surge on a raft.[w]
[6] For of old, when the proud giants were being destroyed,
the hope of the universe, who took refuge on a raft,*
left to the world a future for his race, under the guidance of your hand.[x]
[7] For blest is the wood through which justice comes about;*
[8] but the handmade idol is accursed, and its maker as well:
he for having produced it, and it, because though corruptible, it was termed a god.[y]
[9] Equally odious to God are the evildoer and his evil deed;
[10] and the thing made shall be punished with its contriver.
[11] Therefore upon even the idols of the nations shall a visitation come,
since they have become abominable amid God's works,
Snares for the souls of men
and a trap for the feet of the senseless.[z]

### The Origin and Evils of Idolatry

[12] For the source of wantonness is the devising of idols;
and their invention was a corruption of life.[a]
[13] For in the beginning they were not,
nor shall they continue forever;[b]
[14] for by the vanity of men they came into the world,
and therefore a sudden end is devised for them.
[15] For a father, afflicted with untimely mourning,
made an image of the child so quickly taken from him,
And now honored as a god what was formerly a dead man
and handed down to his subjects mysteries and sacrifices.
[16] Then, in time, the impious practice gained strength and was observed as law,
and graven things were worshiped by princely decrees.[c]
[17] Men who lived so far away that they could not honor him in his presence
copied the appearance of the distant king
And made a public image of him they wished to honor,
out of zeal to flatter him when absent, as though present.
[18] And to promote this observance among those to whom it was strange,
the artisan's ambition provided a stimulus.
[19] For he, mayhap in his determination to please the ruler,
labored over the likeness to the best of his skill;[d]
[20] And the masses, drawn by the charm of the workmanship,
soon thought he should be worshiped who shortly before was honored as a man.[e]
[21] And this became a snare for mankind,
that men enslaved to either grief or tyranny
conferred the incommunicable Name on stocks and stones.
[22] Then it was not enough for them to err in their knowledge of God;[f]
but even though they live in a great war of ignorance,
they call such evils peace.[g]

**14, 6:** Noah.
**14, 7:** Often applied to the Cross of our Lord.

u Ps 107, 23–30; Is 43, 16. v Wis 16, 8. w Wis 10, 4. x Gn 6, 4; 17, 1ff. 21f. y Rom 1, 23. z Wis 3, 7; 23, 33; Nm 33, 4; Jos 23, 13; Ps 115, 4; Jer 6, 15; 10, 15; 46, 25; Hos 9, 15. a Rom 1, 23ff. b Is 2, 18. c Dn 3, 4ff; 1 Mc 1, 47–50. d Is 44, 12f LXX. e Wis 15, 4. f 22–31: Jer 2, 20; 3, 1–25; Hos 4, 1f. 9–19; Rom 1, 26–31; Gal 5, 19ff; 1 Tm 1, 9f. g Jer 6, 14; Ez 13, 10.

23 For while they celebrate either child-slaying
sacrifices or clandestine mysteries,
or frenzied carousals in unheard-of rites, [h]
24 They no longer safeguard either lives or pure
wedlock;
but each either waylays and kills his
neighbor, or aggrieves him by adultery.
25 And all is confusion—blood and murder, theft
and guile, [i]
corruption, faithlessness, turmoil, perjury,
26 Disturbance of good men, neglect of gratitude,
besmirching of souls, unnatural lust,
disorder in marriage, adultery and
shamelessness.
27 For the worship of infamous idols
is the reason and source and extremity of all
evil. [j]
28 For they either go mad with enjoyment, or
prophesy lies,
or live lawlessly or lightly forswear
themselves. [k]
29 For as their trust is in soulless idols,
they expect no harm when they have sworn
falsely.
30 But on both counts shall justice overtake
them:
because they thought ill of God and devoted
themselves to idols, [l]
and because they deliberately swore false
oaths, despising piety.*
31 For not the might of those that are sworn by
but the retribution of sinners
ever follows upon the transgression of the
wicked.*

## CHAPTER 15

1 But you, our God, are good and true,
slow to anger, and governing all with
mercy. [m]
2 For even if we sin, we are yours, and know
your might;
but we will not sin, knowing that we belong
to you. [n]
3 For to know you well is complete justice,
and to know your might is the root of
immortality. [o]
4 For neither did the evil creation of men's fancy
deceive us,
nor the fruitless labor of painters, [p]
A form smeared with varied colors,
5 the sight of which arouses yearning in the
senseless man,
till he longs for the inanimate form of a dead
image.
6 Lovers of evil things, and worthy of such
hopes
are they who make them and long for them
and worship them. [q]

### The Potter's Clay Idols

7 For truly the potter, laboriously working the
soft earth,
molds for our service each several article:
Both the vessels that serve for clean purposes
and their opposites, all alike;
As to what shall be the use of each vessel of
either class
the worker in clay is the judge. [r]
8 And with misspent toil he molds a
meaningless god from the selfsame clay;
though he himself shortly before was made
from the earth
And after a little, is to go whence he was
taken,
when the life that was lent him is
demanded back. [s]
9 But his concern is not that he is to die
nor that his span of life is brief;
Rather, he vies with goldsmiths and
silversmiths
and emulates molders of bronze,
and takes pride in modeling counterfeits. [t]
10 Ashes his heart is! more worthless than earth
is his hope, [u]
and more ignoble than clay his life;
11 Because he knew not the one who fashioned
him,

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14, 30: Piety: the sanctity of oaths.
14, 31: Perjury is a form of deceit which calls for punishment even though it be practiced in the name of a lifeless idol.

h Wis 12, 4f; 14, 15; Is 57, 5. i 25f: Jer 7, 8f; 22, 17. j Ex 23, 13. k Jer 5, 31; 29, 26. l Wis 1, 1. 8; 11, 20; Jer 5, 2. 7. m Ex 34, 6f; Pss 86, 5. 15; 145, 8. 9. 14. n Jb 10, 14f LXX. o Wis 3, 15; Jn 17, 3. p Wis 13, 14. q Ps 115, 8. r Wis 13, 11; Jer 18, 3f; Rom 9, 21; 2 Tm 2, 20f. s Gn 3, 19; Eccl 12, 7. t Bar 6, 46. u Jb 13, 12 LXX.

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and breathed into him a quickening soul,
and infused a vital spirit.[v]
12 Instead, he esteemed our life a plaything,
and our span of life a holiday for gain;
"For one must," says he, "make profit every way, be it even out of evil."[w]
13 For this man more than any knows that he is sinning,
when out of earthen stuff he creates fragile vessels and idols alike.
14 But all quite senseless, and worse than childish in mind,
are the enemies of your people who enslaved them.[x]
15 For they esteemed all the idols of the nations, gods,
which have no use of the eyes for vision,
nor nostrils to snuff the air,
Nor ears to hear,
nor fingers on their hands for feeling;
even their feet are useless to walk with.[y]
16 For a man made them;[z]
one whose spirit has been lent him fashioned them.
For no man succeeds in fashioning a god like himself;
17 being mortal, he makes a dead thing with his lawless hands.
For he is better than the things he worships;
he at least lives, but never they.

### Second Example Resumed

18 And besides, they worship* the most loathsome beasts—[a]
for compared as to folly, these are worse than the rest,*
19 Nor for their looks are they good or desirable beasts,
but they have escaped both the approval of God and his blessing.[b]

## CHAPTER 16

1 Therefore they* were fittingly punished by similar creatures,
and were tormented by a swarm of insects.[c]
2 Instead of this punishment, you benefited your people
with a novel dish, the delight they craved,
by providing quail for their food;[d]
3 That those others, when they desired food,
since the creatures sent to plague them were so loathsome,
should be turned from even the craving of necessities,
While these, after a brief period of privation,
partook of a novel dish.[e]
4 For upon those oppressors, inexorable want had to come;
but these needed only be shown how their enemies were being tormented.[f]
5 For when the dire venom of beasts came upon them[g]
and they were dying from the bite of crooked serpents,
your anger endured not to the end.
6 But as a warning, for a short time they were terrorized,
though they had a sign* of salvation, to remind them of the precept of your law.
7 For he who turned toward it was saved,
not by what he saw,
but by you, the savior of all.
8 And by this also you convinced our foes
that you are he who delivers from all evil.[h]
9 For the bites of locusts and of flies slew them,
and no remedy was found to save their lives
because they deserved to be punished by such means;[i]
10 But not even the fangs of poisonous reptiles overcame your sons,
for your mercy brought the antidote to heal them.[j]

15, 18ff: The author here returns to the main theme of chapters 11—19, which was interrupted by the digression 13, 1—15, 17.
15, 18: For . . . rest: this may mean that the creatures worshiped by the Egyptians (e.g., crocodiles, serpents, scarabs, etc.) were more patently lacking in intelligence than the general run of beasts; cf Wis 11, 15; 12, 24.
16, 1: They: the Egyptian idolaters.
16, 6: Sign: the brazen serpent; cf Nm 21, 9.

v Gn 2, 7; Zec 12, 1. w Jas 4, 13f. x Ex 1, 13. y Wis 14, 11; Dt 4, 28; Pss 115, 4–7; 135, 15ff. z 16f: Wis 13. 10. a Wis 11, 15; 12, 24. b Gn 1, 25; 3, 14. c Wis 11, 15f; 12, 23. 27; Ex 7, 27; 8, 12. 17. d Wis 11, 13; 19, 11f; Ex 16, 13; Nm 11, 31f; Ps 105, 40. e Wis 11, 15; Ex 8, 10; 16, 3. f Wis 11, 8f. g 5f: Nm 21, 4–9; Dt 32, 24; Jer 8, 7 LXX. h Gn 48, 16; 2 Mc 1, 24f. i Ex 8, 16–28; 10, 4–19; Pss 78, 45f; 105, 31. 34; Rv 9, 1–11. j Dt 32, 33.

[11] For as a reminder of your injunctions, they were stung,
and swiftly they were saved,
Lest they should fall into deep forgetfulness
and become unresponsive to your beneficence.[k]
[12] For indeed, neither herb nor application cured them,
but your all-healing word, O LORD![l]
[13] For you have dominion over life and death;[m]
you lead down to the gates of the nether world, and lead back.
[14] Man, however, slays in his malice,
but when the spirit has come away, it does not return,
nor can he bring back the soul once it is confined.*
[15] But your hand none can escape.

### Third Example: A Rain of Manna for Israel instead of the Plague of Storms

[16] For the wicked who refused to know you
were punished by the might of your arm,
Pursued by unwonted rains and hailstorms and unremitting downpours,
and consumed by fire.[n]
[17] For against all expectation, in water which quenches anything,
the fire grew more active;
For the universe fights on behalf of the just.[o]
[18] For now the flame was tempered[p]
so that the beasts might not be burnt up that were sent upon the wicked,
but that these might see and know they were struck by the judgment of God;
[19] And again, even in the water, fire blazed beyond its strength
so as to consume the produce of the wicked land.
[20] Instead of this, you nourished your people with food of angels
and furnished them bread from heaven, ready to hand, untoiled-for,
endowed with all delights and conforming to every taste.[q]
[21] For this substance of yours revealed your sweetness toward your children,
and serving the desire of him who received it,
was blended to whatever flavor each one wished.[r]
[22] Yet snow and ice* withstood fire and were not melted,
that they might know that their enemies' fruits
Were consumed by a fire that blazed in the hail
and flashed lightning in the rain.[s]
[23] But this fire, again, that the just might be nourished,
forgot even its proper strength;[t]
[24] For your creation, serving you, its maker,
grows tense for punishment against the wicked,
but is relaxed in benefit for those who trust in you.[u]
[25] Therefore at that very time, transformed in all sorts of ways,
it was serving your all-nourishing bounty
according to what they needed and desired;
[26] That your sons whom you loved might learn, O LORD,
that it is not the various kinds of fruits that nourish man,
but it is your word that preserves those who believe you![v]
[27] For what was not destroyed by fire,
when merely warmed by a momentary sunbeam, melted;[w]
[28] So that men might know that one must give you thanks before the sunrise,
and turn to you at daybreak.[x]
[29] For the hope of the ingrate melts like a wintry frost
and runs off like useless water.[y]

**16, 14:** Confined: in the nether world, in limbo.
**16, 22:** Snow and ice: the manna; cf Wis 16, 27; 19, 21.

k Ps 78, 11. l Ex 15, 26. m 13ff: Dt 32, 39; 1 Sm 2, 6; Tb 13, 2; Ps 78, 34. 39; Eccl 8, 8; Dn 5, 19; 2 Mc 6, 26; 7, 23. n Wis 11, 21; 12, 27; Ex 5, 2; 9, 29–34. o Wis 10, 20; 19, 20; Ex 9, 23–28; 2 Mc 8, 36; 14, 34. p 18f: Wis 19, 20f. q Ex 16, 4; Nm 11, 8; Ps 78, 24f; Jn 6, 31. r Ps 34, 9. s Ex 9, 25–31; 10, 12; Ps 148, 8. t Wis 19, 21. u Wis 5, 17. 20; 19, 6; Sir 39, 25ff. v Dt 8, 3; Mt 4, 4. w Ex 16, 21. x Pss 57, 9f; 92, 3. y Wis 5, 14; 2 Sm 14, 14.

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## CHAPTER 17

### Fourth Example: Darkness Afflicts the Egyptians, While the Israelites Have Light

1 For great are your judgments, and hardly to be
described;
therefore the unruly souls were wrong.[z]
2 For when the lawless thought to enslave the
holy nation,
shackled with darkness, fettered by the long
night,
they lay confined beneath their own roofs as
exiles from the eternal providence.[a]
3 For they who supposed their secret sins were
hid[b]
under the dark veil of oblivion
Were scattered in fearful trembling,
terrified by apparitions.
4 For not even their inner chambers kept them
fearless,
for crashing sounds on all sides terrified
them,
and mute phantoms with somber looks
appeared.
5 No force, even of fire, was able to give light,
nor did the flaming brilliance of the stars
succeed in lighting up that gloomy night.[c]
6 But only intermittent, fearful fires*
flashed through upon them;
And in their terror they thought beholding
these was worse
than the times when that sight was no
longer to be seen.[d]
7 And mockeries of the magic art were in
readiness,
and a jeering reproof of their vaunted
shrewdness.[e]
8 For they who undertook to banish fears and
terrors from the sick soul
themselves sickened with a ridiculous fear.
9 For even though no monstrous thing
frightened them,
they shook at the passing of insects and the
hissing of reptiles,[f]
10 And perished trembling,
reluctant to face even the air that they could
nowhere escape.
11 For wickedness, of its nature cowardly,
testifies in its own condemnation,
and because of a distressed conscience,
always magnifies misfortunes.[g]
12 For fear is nought but the surrender of the
helps that come from reason;
13 and the more one's expectation is of itself
uncertain,
the more one makes of not knowing the
cause that brings on torment.
14 So they, during that night, powerless though it
was,
that had come upon them from the recesses
of a powerless* nether world,
while all sleeping the same sleep,
15 Were partly smitten by fearsome apparitions
and partly stricken by their soul's
surrender;
for fear came upon them, sudden and
unexpected.[h]
16 Thus, then, whoever was there fell
into that unbarred prison and was kept
confined.[i]
17 For whether one was a farmer, or a shepherd,
or a worker at tasks in the wasteland,
Taken unawares, he served out the
inescapable sentence;
18 for all were bound by the one bond of
darkness.[j]
And were it only the whistling wind,
or the melodious song of birds in the
spreading branches,
Or the steady sound of rushing water,
19 or the rude crash of overthrown rocks,
Or the unseen gallop of bounding animals,
or the roaring cry of the fiercest beasts,
Or an echo resounding from the hollow of the
hills,
these sounds, inspiring terror, paralyzed
them.

**17, 6:** Fires: that is, lightnings.
**17, 14:** Powerless: the nether world, the home of darkness, has no power against God, nor even against such men as do not submit to it of themselves; cf Wis 1, 14ff.

z Ex 6, 6 LXX. a Wis 18, 4; Ex 1, 13f; 19, 6; 10, 21ff. b 3f: Wis 1, 7f; 10, 8; 18, 17. c Wis 10, 17; Jer 23, 24 LXX. d Ex 9, 23f. e Wis 12, 25f; Ex 7, 11f. 22; 8, 3; 9, 11; 10, 2. f Wis 16, 1; Jer 26, 22 LXX. g Wis 4, 6; 10, 7; Rom 2, 15. h Ex 11, 9f. i Wis 18, 4; Ex 10, 23. j 18f: Lv 26, 36.

20 For the whole world shone with brilliant light[k]
and continued its works without
interruption;
21 Over them alone was spread oppressive night,
an image of the darkness that next should
come upon them;
yet they were to themselves more
burdensome than the darkness.

## CHAPTER 18

1 But your holy ones had very great light;
And those others, who heard their voices but
did not see their forms,
since now they themselves had suffered,
called them blest;
2 And because they who formerly had been
wronged did not harm them, they
thanked them,
and pleaded with them, for the sake of the
difference between them.*
3 Instead of this, you furnished the flaming pillar
which was a guide on the unknown way,
and the mild sun for an honorable
migration.[l]
4 For those deserved to be deprived of light and
imprisoned by darkness,
who had kept your sons confined
through whom the imperishable light of the
law was to be given to the world.[m]

### Fifth Example: Death of the Egyptian First-born; the Israelites Are Spared

5 When they determined to put to death the
infants of the holy ones,
and when a single boy* had been cast forth
but saved,
As a reproof you carried off their multitude of
sons
and made them perish all at once in the
mighty water.[n]
6 That night was known beforehand to our
fathers,
that, with sure knowledge of the oaths in
which they put their faith, they might
have courage.[o]
7 Your people awaited
the salvation of the just and the destruction
of their foes.[p]
8 For when you punished our adversaries,
in this you glorified us whom you had
summoned.[q]
9 For in secret the holy children of the good
were offering sacrifice
and putting into effect with one accord the
divine institution,
That your holy ones should share alike the
same good things and dangers,[r]
having previously sung the praises of the
fathers.*
10 But the discordant cry of their enemies
responded,
and the piteous wail of mourning for
children was borne to them.[s]
11 And the slave was smitten with the same
retribution as his master;
even the plebeian suffered the same as the
king.[t]
12 And all alike by a single death
had countless dead;
For the living were not even sufficient for the
burial,
since at a single instant their nobler
offspring were destroyed.[u]
13 For though they disbelieved at every turn on
account of sorceries,
at the destruction of the first-born they
acknowledged that the people* was
God's son.[v]
14 For when peaceful stillness compassed
everything
and the night in its swift course was half
spent,
15 Your all-powerful word from heaven's royal
throne

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**18, 2:** The difference between them: God's distinctive manner of treating the Israelites and the Egyptians according to their respective merits.
**18, 5:** Single boy: Moses.
**18, 9:** Praises of the fathers: cf Sir 44—50; Wis 10.
**18, 13:** People: the Hebrews.

k 20f: Ex 10, 23; Is 9, 1; 60, 1ff; 2 Pt 2, 17. l Ex 13, 21. m Wis 17, 2; Ps 119, 105; Is 2, 3. 5. n Wis 11, 7. 14; Ex 1, 16. 22; 2, 3. 6–10; 15, 10; Neh 9, 11. o Wis 12, 21; Ex 6, 8; 13, 5. p Ex 14, 13. q Wis 19, 22; Ex 3, 18; Is 43, 3f. r Ex 12, 21–28; Sir 44—50. s Ex 12, 30; Jer 9, 17. 19. t Ex 11, 5; 12, 29. u Nm 33, 4. v Wis 17, 7; Ex 4, 22f; 12, 12. 29; 13, 2. 13. 15.

bounded, a fierce warrior, into the doomed
land,[w]
16 bearing the sharp sword of your inexorable
decree.
And as he alighted, he filled every place with
death;
he still reached to heaven, while he stood
upon the earth.[x]
17 Then, forthwith, visions in horrible dreams
perturbed them[y]
and unexpected fears assailed them;
18 And cast half-dead, one here, another there,
each was revealing the reason for his dying.
19 For the dreams that disturbed them had
proclaimed this beforehand,
lest they perish unaware of why they
suffered ill.
20 But the trial of death touched at one time even
the just,
and in the desert a plague struck the
multitude;
Yet not for long did the anger last.[z]
21 For the blameless man* hastened to be their
champion,
bearing the weapon of his special office,
prayer and the propitiation of incense;
He withstood the wrath and put a stop to the
calamity,
showing that he was your servant.[a]
22 And he overcame the bitterness
not by bodily strength, not by force of arms;
But by word he overcame the smiter,*
recalling the sworn covenants with their
fathers.[b]
23 For when corpses had already fallen one on
another in heaps,
he stood in the midst and checked the
anger,
and cut off the way to the living.[c]
24 For on his full-length robe was the whole
world,
and the glories of the fathers were carved in
four rows upon the stones,
and your grandeur* was on the crown upon
his head.[d]
25 To these names the destroyer yielded, and
these he feared;
for the mere trial of anger was enough.[e]

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## CHAPTER 19

1 But the wicked, merciless wrath assailed until
the end.
For he* knew beforehand what they were
yet to do:[f]
2 That though they themselves had agreed to
the departure
and had anxiously sent them* on their way,
they would regret it and pursue them.[g]
3 For while they* were still engaged in funeral
rites
and were mourning at the burials of the
dead,
They adopted another senseless plan;
and those whom they had sent away with
entreaty,
they pursued as fugitives.[h]
4 For a compulsion suited to this ending drew
them on,
and made them forgetful of what had
befallen them,
That they might fill out the torments of their
punishment,
5 and your people might experience a
glorious* journey
while those others met an extraordinary
death.
6 For all creation, in its several kinds, was being
made over anew,
serving its natural laws,
that your children might be preserved
unharmed.[i]
7 The cloud overshadowed their camp;

**18, 21:** Blameless man: Aaron acting according to his office of high priest and intercessor.
**18, 22:** Smiter: the destroying angel; cf v 25.
**18, 24:** Glories . . . grandeur: the name of God and the names of the tribes were inscribed on the high priest's apparel.
**19, 1:** He: i.e., God.
**19, 2:** Them: the Hebrews.
**19, 3:** They: the Egyptians.
**19, 5:** Glorious: more precisely, "wondrous," but the word reflects glorified in Wis 18, 8 and 19, 22.

w Wis 9, 10; Ex 15, 3. x 1 Chr 21, 16; Heb 4, 12; Rv 1, 16. y 17ff: Wis 17, 3f. z Wis 16, 5; Nm 17, 9–15. a Wis 12, 21; Ex 32, 12f; Ps 20, 8. b 12, 21; Ex 32, 12f. c Nm 14, 29f. d Ex 28, 15–21. 31–38; Sir 45, 8–12; 50, 11. e 1 Chr 21, 15. f Ex 14, 4. g Ex 12, 33; 14, 5. 8. h Wis 18, 10. 12; Ex 12, 30ff. i Wis 5, 17; 16, 24.

and out of what had before been water, dry
land was seen emerging:
Out of the Red Sea an unimpeded road,
and a grassy plain out of the mighty flood.[j]
[8] Over this crossed the whole nation sheltered
by your hand,
after they beheld stupendous wonders.
[9] For they ranged about like horses,
and bounded about like lambs,
praising you, O Lord! their deliverer.[k]
[10] For they were still mindful of what had
happened in their sojourn:
how instead of the young of animals the
land brought forth gnats,
and instead of fishes the river swarmed with
countless frogs.[l]
[11] And later they saw also a new kind of bird[m]
when, prompted by desire, they asked for
pleasant foods;
[12] For to appease them quail came to them from
the sea.
[13] And the punishments came upon the sinners
only after forewarnings from the violence of
the thunderbolts.
For they justly suffered for their own
misdeeds,
since indeed they treated their guests with
the more grievous* hatred.[n]
[14] For those others did not receive unfamiliar
visitors,[o]
but these were enslaving beneficent guests.
[15] And not that only; but what punishment was
to be theirs*
since they received strangers unwillingly!
[16] Yet these, after welcoming them with
festivities,
oppressed with awful toils
those who now shared with them the same
rights.[p]
[17] And they were struck with blindness,
as those others had been at the portals of
the just—
When, surrounded by yawning darkness,
each sought the entrance of his own gate.[q]
[18] For the elements, in variable harmony among
themselves,
like strings of the harp, produce new
melody,
while the flow of music steadily persists.
And this can be perceived exactly from a
review of what took place.
[19] For land creatures were changed into water
creatures,
and those that swam went over on to the
land.
[20] Fire in water maintained its own strength,[r]
and water forgot its quenching nature;
[21] Flames, by contrast, neither consumed the
flesh
of the perishable animals that went about in
them,
nor melted the icelike, quick-melting kind
of ambrosial food.
[22] For every way, O LORD! you magnified and
glorified your people;
unfailing, you stood by them in every time
and circumstance.[s]

19, 13: More grievous: than that of the people of Sodom; cf Gn 19.
19, 15: Theirs: the people of Sodom.

j Ex 14, 21–29. k Wis 10, 20; 16, 8; Ex 15, 1–18; Ps 114, 4–6. l Ex 7, 27ff; 8, 12–15; Ps 105, 30f. m 11f: Wis 16, 2; Ps 78, 18. n 2 Mc 7, 18. 32. o 14f: Gn 15, 13; Ex 2, 22. p Gn 45, 17–20; 47, 4ff; Ex 1, 11. q Wis 17, 2; Gn 19, 11. r 20f: Wis 16, 17ff. 22f. 27. s Wis 18, 8; Lv 26, 44; Ps 126, 3.

Sirach
See RG
282-286

# THE BOOK OF SIRACH

## (Ecclesiasticus)

The Book of Sirach derives its name from the author, Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach (50, 27). Its earliest title seems to have been "Wisdom of the Son of Sirach." The designation "Liber Ecclesiasticus," meaning "Church Book," appended to some Greek and Latin manuscripts was due to the extensive use which the church made of this book in presenting moral teaching to catechumens and to the faithful.

The author, a sage who lived in Jerusalem, was thoroughly imbued with love for the law, the priesthood, the temple, and divine worship. As a wise and experienced observer of life he addressed himself to his contemporaries with the motive of helping them to maintain religious faith and integrity through study of the holy books, and through tradition.

The book contains numerous maxims formulated with care, grouped by affinity, and dealing with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, the law, religious worship, and many other matters which reflect the religious and social customs of the time.

Written in Hebrew between 200 and 175 B.C., the text was translated into Greek sometime after 132 B.C. by the author's grandson, who also wrote a Foreword which contains information about the book, the author, and the translator himself. Until the close of the nineteenth century Sirach was known only in translations, of which this Greek rendering was the most important. From it the Latin version was made. Between 1896 and 1900, again in 1931, and several times since 1956, manuscripts were discovered containing in all about two thirds of the Hebrew text, which agrees substantially with the Greek. One such text, from Masada, is pre-Christian in date.

Though not included in the Hebrew Bible after the first century A.D., nor accepted by Protestants, the Book of Sirach has always been recognized by the Catholic Church as divinely inspired and canonical. The Foreword, though not inspired, is placed in the Bible because of its antiquity and importance.

The contents of Sirach are of a discursive nature not easily divided into separate parts. Chapters 1—43 deal largely with moral instruction; chapters 44, 1—50, 24 contain a eulogy of the heroes of Israel and some of the patriarchs. There are two appendices in which the author expresses his gratitude to God, and appeals to the unlearned to acquire true wisdom.

The church uses the Book of Sirach extensively in her liturgy.

### FOREWORD

Many important truths have been handed down to us through the law, the prophets, and the later authors; and for these the instruction and wisdom of Israel merit praise. Now, those who are familiar with these truths must not only understand them themselves but, as lovers of wisdom, be able, in speech and in writing, to help others less familiar. Such a one was my grandfather, Jesus, who, having devoted himself for a long time to the diligent study of the law, the prophets, and the rest of the books[1] of our ancestors, and having developed a thorough

[1] The law, the prophets and the rest of the books: the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament written before the time of Sirach, according to the threefold division of the present Hebrew Bible.

familiarity with them, was moved to write something himself in the nature of instruction and wisdom, in order that those who love wisdom might, by acquainting themselves with what he too had written, make even greater progress in living in conformity with the divine law.

You therefore are now invited to read it in a spirit of attentive good will, with indulgence for any apparent failure on our part, despite earnest efforts, in the interpretation of particular passages. For words spoken originally in Hebrew are not as effective when they are translated into another language. That is true not only of this book but of the law itself, the prophets and the rest of the books, which differ no little when they are read in the original.

I arrived in Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of King Euergetes,[2] and while there, I found a reproduction of our valuable teaching.[3] I therefore considered myself in duty bound to devote some diligence and industry to the translation of this book. Many sleepless hours of close application have I devoted in the interval to finishing the book for publication, for the benefit of those living abroad who wish to acquire wisdom and are disposed to live their lives according to the standards of the law.

[2] Thirty-eighth . . . Euergetes: 132 B.C. The reference is to Ptolemy VII, Physkon Euergetes II (170–163; 145, 117 B.C.).
[3] Reproduction . . . teaching: may refer to the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Hebrew wisdom writings predating Sirach.

# THE WISDOM OF SIRACH

## CHAPTER 1

### Praise of Wisdom*

1 All wisdom* comes from the LORD
and with him it remains forever. [a]
2 The sand of the seashore, the drops of rain,
the days of eternity: who can number these?
3 Heaven's height, earth's breadth,
the depths of the abyss: who can explore these?
4 Before all things else wisdom was created;
and prudent understanding, from eternity.
5 To whom has wisdom's root been revealed?
Who knows her subtleties? [b]
6 There is but one, wise and truly awe-inspiring,
seated upon his throne:
7 It is the LORD; he created her,
has seen her and taken note of her. [c]
8 He has poured her forth upon all his works,
upon every living thing according to his bounty;
he has lavished her upon his friends.
9 *Fear of the LORD* is glory and splendor,
gladness and a festive crown.
10 Fear of the LORD warms the heart,
giving gladness and joy and length of days.
11 He who fears the LORD will have a happy end;
even on the day of his death he will be blessed.
12 The beginning of wisdom is fear of the LORD,
which is formed with the faithful in the womb. [d]
13 With devoted men was she created from of old,
and with their children her beneficence abides.
14 Fullness of wisdom is fear of the LORD;
she inebriates men with her fruits. [e]
15 Her entire house she fills with choice foods,

Ch 1
See RG
283, 284

1, 1–8: The Lord is the source and preserver of wisdom (1); he created her from eternity, before all things else (4–7); all his works reflect wisdom (2f. 8).

1, 1: Wisdom: here the author speaks of true wisdom, namely God's external revelation of himself. Throughout the book he describes in great detail just what wisdom is; sometimes it is divine; sometimes it is a synonym for God's law; sometimes it is human. But the author makes clear that even human wisdom, properly understood, comes from God.

1, 9–18: Here are described the spiritual and temporal blessings that come during the lifetime of him who fears the Lord, i.e., practices true religion.

1, 9: Fear of the Lord: see note on Ps 111, 10.

a 1 Kgs 3, 9. b Bar 3, 15. c Jb 28, 27. d Jb 28, 28; Ps 111, 10; Prv 1, 7; 9, 10. e Eccl 12, 13.

her granaries with her harvest.
16 Wisdom's garland is fear of the LORD,
with blossoms of peace and perfect health.[f]
17 Knowledge and full understanding she showers down;
she heightens the glory of those who possess her.
18 The root of wisdom is fear of the LORD;
her branches are length of days.

19 One cannot justify unjust anger;*
anger plunges a man to his downfall.
20 A patient man need stand firm but for a time,
and then contentment comes back to him.
21 For a while he holds back his words,
then the lips of many herald his wisdom.
22 Among wisdom's treasures is the paragon of prudence;
but fear of the LORD is an abomination to the sinner.
23 If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments,
and the LORD will bestow her upon you;
24 For fear of the LORD is wisdom and culture;
loyal humility is his delight.
25 Be not faithless to the fear of the LORD,*
nor approach it with duplicity of heart.
26 Play not the hypocrite before men;
over your lips keep watch.
27 Exalt not yourself lest you fall
and bring upon you dishonor;
28 For then the LORD will reveal your secrets
and publicly cast you down,
29 Because you approached the fear of the LORD
with your heart full of guile.

## CHAPTER 2

### Duties toward God

Ch 1–23 See RG 283

1 My son, when you come to serve the LORD,*
prepare yourself for trials.[g]
2 Be sincere of heart and steadfast,
undisturbed in time of adversity.
3 Cling to him, forsake him not;
thus will your future be great.
4 Accept whatever befalls you,
in crushing misfortune be patient;
5 For in fire gold is tested,
and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation.[h]
6 Trust God and he will help you;
make straight your ways and hope in him.

7 You who fear the LORD, wait for his mercy,
turn not away lest you fall.
8 You who fear the LORD, trust him,
and your reward will not be lost.
9 You who fear the LORD, hope for good things,
for lasting joy and mercy.
10 Study the generations long past and understand;
has anyone hoped in the LORD and been disappointed?
Has anyone persevered in his fear and been forsaken?
has anyone called upon him and been rebuffed?[i]
11 Compassionate and merciful is the LORD;
he forgives sins, he saves in time of trouble.

12 Woe to craven hearts and drooping hands,*
to the sinner who treads a double path!
13 Woe to the faint of heart who trust not,
who therefore will have no shelter!
14 Woe to you who have lost hope!
what will you do at the visitation of the LORD?
15 Those who fear the LORD disobey not his words;
those who love him keep his ways.[j]
16 Those who fear the LORD seek to please him,
those who love him are filled with his law.

**1, 19–22:** The disciple of wisdom shuns unjust anger which brings downfall. By patience and self-control he preserves calm, recovers contentment, and receives public praise. The sinner, on the contrary, despises the restraints which religion imposes.

**1, 25–29:** Infidelity to religion, or the use of it for any but the single purpose of serving God, is hypocrisy and self-exaltation, deserving of public disgrace.

**2, 1–11:** Serving God is not without its trials (1); moreover, it must be done with sincerity, steadfastness and fidelity (2f). Misfortune and humiliation merely purify man and prove his worth (4f). Patience and unwavering trust in God are always rewarded with the benefits of God's mercy and of lasting joy (6–11).

**2, 12–18:** A warning to those who compromise their religion in time of affliction; they fail in courage and trust and therefore have no security (12ff). But those who fear the Lord through obedience, reverence, love and humility find his mercy equal to his majesty (15–18).

f Sir 21, 11. g 2 Tm 3, 12. h Prv 17, 3; Wis 3, 6; 1 Pt 1, 7. i Pss 31, 2; 145, 18f. j Jn 14, 23.

17 Those who fear the LORD prepare their hearts
and humble themselves before him.
18 Let us fall into the hands of the LORD
and not into the hands of men,
For equal to his majesty
is the mercy that he shows. [k]

## CHAPTER 3

### Duties toward Parents*

1 Children, pay heed to a father's right;
do so that you may live.
2 For the LORD sets a father in honor over his children;
a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.
3 He who honors his father atones for sins;
4 he stores up riches who reveres his mother.
5 He who honors his father is gladdened by children,
and when he prays he is heard.
6 He who reveres his father will live a long life;
he obeys the LORD who brings comfort to his mother.

7 He who fears the LORD honors his father,
and serves his parents as rulers.
8 In word and deed honor your father
that his blessing may come upon you; [l]
9 For a father's blessing gives a family firm roots,
but a mother's curse uproots the growing plant. [m]
10 Glory not in your father's shame,
for his shame is no glory to you!
11 His father's honor is a man's glory;
disgrace for her children, a mother's shame.
12 My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives. [n]
13 Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him;
revile him not in the fullness of your strength.
14 For kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
it will serve as a sin offering—it will take lasting root.
15 In time of tribulation it will be recalled to your advantage,
like warmth upon frost it will melt away your sins.
16 A blasphemer is he who despises his father;
accursed of his Creator, he who angers his mother. [o]

Ch 3 See RG 285

### Humility*

17 My son, conduct your affairs with humility,
and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.
18 Humble yourself the more, the greater you are,
and you will find favor with God. [p]
19 For great is the power of God;
by the humble he is glorified.*
20 What is too sublime for you, seek not,
into things beyond your strength search not. [q]
21 What is committed to you, attend to;
for what is hidden is not your concern.
22 With what is too much for you meddle not,
when shown things beyond human understanding.
23 Their own opinion has misled many,
and false reasoning unbalanced their judgment.
24 Where the pupil of the eye is missing, there is no light,
and where there is no knowledge, there is no wisdom.

25 A stubborn man will fare badly in the end,
and he who loves danger will perish in it.
26 A stubborn man will be burdened with sorrow;
a sinner will heap sin upon sin.

**3, 1–16:** Besides the virtues that must characterize our conduct toward God, special duties toward our neighbor are enjoined, such as honor and respect toward parents, with corresponding blessings (1–9). Even to old and infirm parents this respect is due (10–13); through it, the sins of children are pardoned (14f). Failure to render respect is blasphemy and merits a curse from God (16). Cf Ex 20, 12; Eph 6, 2f.

**3, 17–27:** Humility gives a true estimate of self (17ff). Through it a man performs duty, avoids what is beyond his understanding and strength (20ff). Pride, however, begets false greatness, misjudgment, stubbornness, sorrow, affliction and perdition (23–27).

**3, 19:** An alternate or additional line would read: "For though many have been great in the course of time, it is to the humble he reveals his secrets." Cf Mt 11, 25f; 1 Cor 1, 26–29.

k Sir 18, 3. l Ex 20, 12; Dt 5, 16; Mt 15, 4; Mk 7, 10; Eph 6, 2. m Gn 27, 29; 49, 2–27. n Prv 23, 22. o Prv 19, 26; 30, 11. 14. 17. p Mt 23, 12. q Ps 131, 1.

27 For the affliction of the proud man there is no cure;
he is the offshoot of an evil plant.[r]
28 The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs,
and an attentive ear is the wise man's joy.

### Alms for the Poor*

29 Water quenches a flaming fire,
and alms atone for sins.[s]
30 He who does a kindness is remembered afterward;
when he falls, he finds a support.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4 See RG 284

1 My son, rob not the poor man of his livelihood:
force not the eyes of the needy* to turn away.[t]
2 A hungry man grieve not,
a needy man anger not;
3 Do not exasperate the downtrodden;
delay not to give to the needy.
4 A beggar in distress do not reject;
avert not your face from the poor.
5 From the needy turn not your eyes,
give no man reason to curse you;
6 For if in the bitterness of his soul he curse you,
his Creator will hear his prayer.
7 Endear yourself to the assembly;
before a ruler bow your head.
8 Give a hearing to the poor man,
and return his greeting with courtesy;
9 Deliver the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor;
let not justice be repugnant to you.
10 To the fatherless be as a father,
and help their mother as a husband would;
Thus will you be like a son to the Most High,
and he will be more tender to you than a mother.

### The Rewards of Wisdom*

11 Wisdom instructs her children
and admonishes those who seek her.
12 He who loves her loves life;
those who seek her out win her favor.
13 He who holds her fast inherits glory;
wherever he dwells, the LORD bestows blessings.
14 Those who serve her serve the Holy One;
those who love her the LORD loves.[u]
15 He who obeys her judges nations;
he who hearkens to her dwells in her inmost chambers.
16 If one trusts her, he will possess her;
his descendants too will inherit her.
17 She walks with him as a stranger,
and at first she puts him to the test;
Fear and dread she brings upon him
and tries him with her discipline;
With her precepts she puts him to the proof,
until his heart is fully with her.
18 Then she comes back to bring him happiness
and reveal her secrets to him.
19 But if he fails her, she will abandon him
and deliver him into the hands of despoilers.

### Sincerity and Justice*

20 Use your time well; guard yourself from evil,
and bring upon yourself no shame.
21 There is a sense of shame laden with guilt,
and a shame that merits honor and respect.
22 Show no favoritism to your own discredit;
let no one intimidate you to your own downfall.
23 Refrain not from speaking at the proper time,
and hide not away your wisdom;
24 For it is through speech that wisdom becomes known,
and knowledge through the tongue's rejoinder.

**3, 29—4, 10:** Mercy and kindness toward those in misfortune atone for sin and endear a man to God and to his fellow men.

**4, 1:** Eyes of the needy: when they look for help; cf Sir 18, 17.

**4, 11–19:** The Hebrew text presents wisdom speaking in the first person, as in ch 24. The precious fruits of wisdom: life, favor, glory, blessings, God's love, are intended to arouse desire for her (11–14). Her disciples are like priests (14) and judges (15), even partners who possess her for themselves and their descendants (16). They enjoy happiness and penetrate her profound secrets after surviving her tests (17f). Those who fail her are abandoned to destruction (19).

**4, 20–31:** Besides the interior trials of discipline and precept, the disciple of wisdom is warned against external dangers to his sincerity and justice, namely evil, human respect (20f), compromise of liberty in speech and action (22–25), false shame, and ignorance (26). He must fight for the truth (28), and avoid cynicism and laziness (29), and inconsistency in his conduct (30).

r Dt 32, 32; Wis 12, 10. s Dn 4, 27. t Tb 4, 7–11. u Wis 7, 28.

25 Never gainsay the truth,
and struggle not against the rushing stream.
26 Be not ashamed to acknowledge your guilt,
but of your ignorance rather be ashamed.
27 Do not abase yourself before an impious man,
nor refuse to do so before rulers.
28 Even to the death fight for truth,
and the LORD your God will battle for you.
29 Be not surly in your speech,
nor lazy and slack in your deeds.
30 Be not a lion at home,
nor sly and suspicious at work.
31 Let not your hand be open to receive
and clenched when it is time to give.

## CHAPTER 5

### Against Presumption*

1 Rely not on your wealth;
say not: "I have the power." [v]
2 Rely not on your strength
in following the desires of your heart.
3 Say not: "Who can prevail against me?"
for the LORD will exact the punishment.
4 Say not: "I have sinned, yet what has befallen me?"
for the LORD bides his time.
5 Of forgiveness be not overconfident,
adding sin upon sin.
6 Say not: "Great is his mercy;
my many sins he will forgive."
7 For mercy and anger alike are with him;
upon the wicked alights his wrath.
8 Delay not your conversion to the LORD,
put it not off from day to day;
9 For suddenly his wrath flames forth;
at the time of vengeance, you will be destroyed.
10 Rely not upon deceitful wealth,
for it will be no help on the day of wrath. [w]

### Sincerity in Speech

11 Winnow not in every wind,
and start not off in every direction.*
12 Be consistent in your thoughts;
steadfast be your words.*
13 Be swift to hear,
but slow to answer. [x]
14 If you have the knowledge, answer your neighbor;
if not, put your hand over your mouth.
15 Honor and dishonor through talking!
A man's tongue can be his downfall.
16 Be not called a detractor;
use not your tongue for calumny;
17 For shame has been created for the thief,
and the reproach of his neighbor for the double-tongued.

Ch 1–23
See RG
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## CHAPTER 6

Ch 1–23
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1 Say nothing harmful, small or great;
be not a foe instead of a friend;
A bad name and disgrace will you acquire:
"That for the evil man with double tongue!"*
2 Fall not into the grip of desire, [y]
lest, like fire, it consume your strength;
3 Your leaves it will eat, your fruits destroy,
and you will be left a dry tree,
4 For contumacious desire destroys its owner
and makes him the sport of his enemies.

### True Friendship*

5 A kind mouth multiplies friends,
and gracious lips prompt friendly greetings.
6 Let your acquaintances be many,
but one in a thousand your confidant.
7 When you gain a friend, first test him, [z]
and be not too ready to trust him.
8 For one sort of friend is a friend when it suits him,

**5, 1–10:** The vices of the rich are pride and independence (1f), presumption (3), false security (4–7), and impenitence (8), which cannot escape the divine wrath (9f). Cf Prv 18, 23; 19, 1; 28, 6.

**5, 11:** A proverbial expression condemning inconstancy and advocating sincerity and honesty.

**5, 12—6, 1:** Proper use of the tongue requires constancy in speech (5, 12), prudence (13f), reserve (15), charity (6, 1), as well as the avoidance of detraction, calumny (16) and double talk, which bring shame and disgrace (5, 17; 6, 1).

**6, 1:** "That . . . double tongue!": people will say this against the man whose deceitful tongue has brought him to disgrace.

**6, 5–17:** True friends are discerned not by prosperity (11) but through the trials of adversity: distress, quarrels (9), sorrow (10) and misfortune (12). Such friends are rare and their value is beyond estimation, a gift from God (14–17).

v Lk 12, 19. w Prv 10, 2; 11, 4. 28. x Prv 29, 20; Jas 1, 19. y 2–3: Sir 9, 8; 23, 17; Jb 31, 12; Is 56, 3. z 7ff: Sir 12, 8f; 37, 1–5; Prv 19, 4.

but he will not be with you in time of
distress.
9 Another is a friend who becomes an enemy,
and tells of the quarrel to your shame.
10 Another is a friend, a boon companion,
who will not be with you when sorrow
comes.
11 When things go well, he is your other self,
and lords it over your servants;
12 But if you are brought low, he turns against
you
and avoids meeting you.
13 Keep away from your enemies;
be on your guard with your friends.
14 A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;
he who finds one finds a treasure.
15 A faithful friend is beyond price,
no sum can balance his worth.
16 A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,
such as he who fears God finds;
17 For he who fears God behaves accordingly,
and his friend will be like himself.

### Blessings of Wisdom*

18 My son, from your youth embrace discipline;
thus will you find wisdom with graying hair.
19 As though plowing and sowing, draw close to
her;
then await her bountiful crops.
20 For in cultivating her you will labor but little,
and soon you will eat of her fruits.
21 How irksome she is to the unruly!
The fool cannot abide her.
22 She will be like a burdensome stone to test
him,
and he will not delay in casting her aside.
23 For discipline* is like her name,
she is not accessible to many.

24 Listen, my son, and heed my advice;
refuse not my counsel.
25 Put your feet into her fetters,
and your neck under her yoke.
26 Stoop your shoulders and carry her
and be not irked at her bonds.
27 With all your soul draw close to her;
with all your strength keep her ways.
28 Search her out, discover her; seek her and you
will find her.
Then when you have her, do not let her go;
29 Thus will you afterward find rest in her,
and she will become your joy.
30 Her fetters will be your throne of majesty;
her bonds, your purple cord.
31 You will wear her as your robe of glory,[a]
bear her as your splendid crown.*

32 My son, if you wish, you can be taught;
if you apply yourself, you will be shrewd.
33 If you are willing to listen, you will learn;
if you give heed, you will be wise.
34 Frequent the company of the elders;
whoever is wise, stay close to him.
35 Be eager to hear every godly discourse;
let no wise saying escape you.[b]
36 If you see a man of prudence, seek him out;
let your feet wear away his doorstep!
37 Reflect on the precepts of the LORD,
let his commandments be your constant
meditation;
Then he will enlighten your mind,
and the wisdom you desire he will grant.[c]

## CHAPTER 7

### Conduct in Public Life*

1 Do no evil, and evil will not overtake you;
2 avoid wickedness, and it will turn aside
from you.
3 Sow not in the furrows of injustice,
lest you harvest it sevenfold.[d]
4 Seek not from the LORD authority,

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**6, 18–37:** The various figures in each of the three strophes urge the search for wisdom through patience (19–23), docility (32–37), and perseverance in trials (25ff), promising rich rewards (28–31). Cf 4, 11–19.

**6, 23:** Discipline (musar, in the sense of wisdom) is a perfect homonym for musar, "removed, withdrawn"; thus the path of discipline is inaccessible to many.

**6, 31:** Some forms of the text speak also of the "yoke" of wisdom under the imagery of golden ornaments.

**7, 1–17:** In the conduct of social relations wisdom forbids evil and injustice (1ff), pride (5. 15ff), ambition and human respect (4, 6), public disorder (7), presumption and impatience toward God (9f), ridicule (11), mischief and deceit toward one's neighbor (8. 12f).

a Is 62, 3. b Sir 8, 9. c Ps 1, 2. d Prv 22, 8.

nor from the king a place of honor.
5 Parade not your justice before the LORD,
and before the king flaunt not your
wisdom.[e]
6 Seek not to become a judge
if you have not strength to root out crime,
Or you will show favor to the ruler
and mar your integrity.
7 Be guilty of no evil before the city's populace,
nor disgrace yourself before the assembly.
8 Do not plot to repeat a sin;
not even for one will you go unpunished.
9 Say not: "He will appreciate my many gifts;
the Most High will accept my offerings."[f]
10 Be not impatient in prayers,
and neglect not the giving of alms.
11 Laugh not at an embittered man;
be mindful of him who exalts and
humbles.*
12 Plot no mischief against your brother,
nor against your friend and companion.
13 Delight not in telling lie after lie,
for it never results in good.
14 Thrust not yourself into the deliberations of
princes,[g]
and repeat not the words of your prayer.*
15 Hate not laborious tasks,
nor farming, which was ordained by the
Most High.[h]
16 Do not esteem yourself better than your
fellows;
remember, his wrath will not delay.
17 More and more, humble your pride;
what awaits man is worms.[i]

## Duties of Family Life, Religion and Charity*

18 Barter not a friend for money,
nor a dear brother for the gold of Ophir.*
19 Dismiss not a sensible wife;
a gracious wife is more precious than corals.
20 Mistreat not a servant who faithfully serves,
nor a laborer who devotes himself to his
task.[j]
21 Let a wise servant be dear to you as your own
self;
refuse him not his freedom.*
22 If you have livestock, look after them;
if they are dependable, keep them.
23 If you have sons, chastise them;
bend their necks* from childhood.[k]
24 If you have daughters, keep them chaste,
and be not indulgent to them.[l]
25 Giving your daughter in marriage ends a great
task;
but give her to a worthy man.[m]
26 If you have a wife, let her not seem odious to
you;
but where there is ill-feeling, trust her not.
27 With your whole heart honor your father;
your mother's birthpangs forget not.[n]
28 Remember, of these parents you were born;
what can you give them for all they gave
you?
29 With all your soul, fear God,
revere his priests.
30 With all your strength, love your Creator,
forsake not his ministers.
31 Honor God and respect the priest;
give him his portion as you have been
commanded:[o]
First fruits and contributions,
due sacrifices and holy offerings.*
32 To the poor man also extend your hand,
that your blessing may be complete;
33 Be generous to all the living,

**7, 11:** Him who exalts and humbles: God; cf 1 Sm 2, 7; Ps 75, 8; Lk 1, 52.

**7, 14:** Repeat not . . . prayer: brevity of speech in dealings with superiors and more especially with God is a sign of reverence and respect; cf Eccl 5, 1; Mt 6, 7.

**7, 18–36:** The duties of respect and appreciation, justice and kindness should characterize relations toward members of the household (18–28), and also toward God and his priests (29ff), the poor and afflicted, the living and the dead (32–36).

**7, 18:** Ophir was the port, at present unidentified, to which the ships of Solomon sailed and from which they brought back gold and silver; cf note on Ps 45, 10.

**7, 21:** After six years of service a Hebrew slave was entitled to freedom; cf Ex 21, 2; Dt 15, 12–15.

**7, 23:** Bend their necks: keep them from rebellious pride; so with the Greek. Cf Sir 30, 12. The present Hebrew text, which is probably not original here, reads: "Choose wives for them while they are young."

**7, 31:** First fruits . . . holy offerings: cf Ex 29, 27; Lv 7, 31–34; Nm 18, 8–20; Dt 18, 1–5.

**7, 33:** This seems to refer to the observances ordained toward the dead, that is, proper mourning and burial. Cf 2 Sm 21, 12ff; Tb 1, 20; 12, 12. When this verse is read in the light of later teaching, prayers for the souls of the deceased would also be recommended. Cf 2 Mc 12, 43ff.

e Jb 9, 2; Ps 143, 2; Prv 25, 6; 1 Cor 4, 4. f Sir 34, 18; 35, 12. g Sir 32, 7ff; Mt 6, 7. h Gn 2, 15; 3, 17. i Is 66, 24. j Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 14f; Jas 5, 4. k Sir 30, 8–13; Prv 13, 24. l Sir 42, 9ff. m 1 Cor 7, 36ff. n Ex 20, 12. o Lv 7, 31; Nm 18, 18.

and withhold not your kindness from the dead.*
34 Avoid not those who weep,
but mourn with those who mourn; [p]
35 Neglect not to visit the sick—
for these things you will be loved. [q]
36 In whatever you do, remember your last days,
and you will never sin.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 1–23
See RG
283

### Prudence in Dealing with Other Men*

1 Contend not with an influential man,
lest you fall into his power.
2 Quarrel not with a rich man,
lest he pay out the price of your downfall;
For gold has dazzled many,
and perverts the character of princes. [r]
3 Dispute not with a man of railing speech,
heap no wood upon his fire. [s]
4 Be not too familiar with an unruly man,
lest he speak ill of your forebears.
5 Shame not a repentant sinner; [t]
remember, we all are guilty.*
6 Insult no man when he is old,
for some of us, too, will grow old.
7 Rejoice not when a man dies;
remember, we are all to die.

Ch 1–23
See RG
283

8 Spurn not the discourse of the wise, [u]
but acquaint yourself with their proverbs;
From them you will acquire the training
to serve in the presence of princes.
9 Reject not the tradition of old men
which they have learned from their fathers;
From it you will obtain the knowledge
how to answer in time of need.
10 Kindle not the coals of a sinner,
lest you be consumed in his flaming fire.
11 Let not the impious man intimidate you;
it will set him in ambush against you.*
12 Lend not to one more powerful than yourself;
and whatever you lend, count it as lost. [v]
13 Go not surety beyond your means;
think any pledge a debt you must pay.
14 Contend not at law with a judge,
for he will settle it according to his whim.
15 Travel not with a ruthless man,
lest he weigh you down with calamity;
For he will go his own way straight,
and through his folly you will perish with him.
16 Provoke no quarrel with a quick-tempered man
nor ride with him through the desert;
For bloodshed is nothing to him;
when there is no one to help you, he will destroy you.
17 Take no counsel with a fool,
for he can keep nothing to himself.
18 Before a stranger do nothing that should be kept secret,
for you know not what it will engender. [w]
19 Open your heart to no man,
and banish not your happiness.

## CHAPTER 9

### Advice concerning Women*

1 Be not jealous of the wife of your bosom,
lest you teach her to do evil against you.*
2 Give no woman power over you
to trample upon your dignity. [x]
3 Be not intimate with a strange woman,
lest you fall into her snares.
4 With a singing girl be not familiar,
lest you be caught in her wiles.
5 Entertain no thoughts against a virgin,

8, 1–19: A prudent man will be circumspect, avoiding conflict with the powerful, the rich and insolent, the impious, the irascible, and with judges (1ff. 10ff. 14. 16). He will seek friendship not with the undisciplined (4. 12f) and the ruthless (15), nor with fools and strangers (17ff), but with the wise and the ancients of the people (8f).

8, 5: We all are guilty: cf 1 Kgs 8, 46; 2 Chr 6, 36; Eccl 7, 20; Rom 3, 9f; 1 Jn 1, 8.

8, 11: To give in to the wicked in one instance becomes an occasion of sin for the future.

9, 1–9: Prudence and reserve in dealing with women are the best defense of morality. To preserve the liberty and dignity of his person and the integrity of his possessions, a man must avoid jealousy toward his own wife and familiarity toward all other women. Cf Sir 25, 12—26, 18.

9, 1: Unjust suspicions often engender hatred between husband and wife and may prompt a wife to commit those faults of which heretofore she had been innocent.

p Rom 12, 15. q Mt 25, 36. r Sir 31, 6; Dt 16, 19. s Prv 26, 20. t 1 Kgs 8, 46; 1 Jn 1, 8. u 8f: Sir 6, 35. v Sir 29, 4–7; Prv 17, 18. w Prv 25, 9f. x Sir 25, 21.

lest you be enmeshed in damages for her.*
6 Give not yourself to harlots,
lest you surrender your inheritance.[y]
7 Gaze not about the lanes of the city
and wander not through its squares;
8 Avert your eyes from a comely woman;
gaze not upon the beauty of another's wife—
Through woman's beauty many perish,
for lust for it burns like fire.[z]
9 With a married woman dine not,
recline not at table to drink by her side,
Lest your heart be drawn to her
and you go down in blood to the grave.

### Choice of Friends*

10 Discard not an old friend,
for the new one cannot equal him.
A new friend is like new wine
which you drink with pleasure only when it has aged.
11 Envy not a sinner's fame,
for you know not what disaster awaits him.
12 Rejoice not at a proud man's success;
remember he will not reach death unpunished.
13 Keep far from the man who has power to kill,
and you will not be filled with the dread of death.
But if you approach him, offend him not,
lest he take away your life;
Know that you are stepping among snares
and walking over a net.
14 As best you can, take your neighbors' measure,
and associate with the wise.
15 With the learned be intimate;
let all your conversation be about the law of the LORD.
16 Have just men for your table companions;
in the fear of God be your glory.

### Concerning Rulers*

17 Skilled artisans are esteemed for their deftness;
but the ruler of his people is the skilled sage.
18 Feared in the city is the man of railing speech,
and he who talks rashly is hated.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10 See RG 285

1 A wise magistrate lends stability to his people,
and the government of a prudent man is well ordered.[a]
2 As the people's judge, so are his ministers;[b]
as the head of a city, its inhabitants.
3 A wanton king destroys his people,
but a city grows through the wisdom of its princes.[c]
4 Sovereignty over the earth is in the hand of God,
who raises up on it the man of the hour;
5 Sovereignty over every man is in the hand of God,
who imparts his majesty to the ruler.

### The Sin of Pride*

6 No matter the wrong, do no violence to your neighbor,
and do not walk the path of arrogance.[d]
7 Odious to the LORD and to men is arrogance,
and the sin of oppression they both hate.
8 Dominion is transferred from one people to another
because of the violence of the arrogant.
9 Why are dust and ashes proud?*
even during life man's body decays;
10 A slight illness—the doctor jests,
a king today—tomorrow he is dead.
11 When a man dies, he inherits corruption;

**9, 5:** Cf Ex 22, 15f; Dt 22, 28f; Jb 31, 1.

**9, 10–16:** In social relations, adherence to the law of the Lord should serve as a guide (15). Associate with true friends (10), with the just and the learned (14ff); avoid the company of the mighty and of sinners doomed to punishment (11ff). Cf Sir 8, 1–19.

**9, 17—10, 5:** Public office as conducted justly or unjustly benefits or destroys the people, according to the axiom, "as the prince, so the people." Cf Is 24, 2. God, however, has sovereignty over both.

**10, 6–18:** Glory displayed through arrogance and pride is false and displeasing to God and men, because founded on dust and ashes (6–11). It is the denial of the glory due to God, and therefore the source of all sin (12f). Even the memory of the proud is destroyed and God transfers their power to the lowly (14–18).

**10, 9f:** The text is uncertain. Its general implication is that man deteriorates physically even while alive: a slight illness today may be followed by death tomorrow. The uncertainty of life leaves no room for pride.

y Prv 5, 3–11; 6, 24; 29, 3. z Sir 25, 20; 41, 21. a Wis 6, 24. b 2f: Prv 29, 12. c Prv 29, 4. 8. d Lv 19, 18.

worms and gnats and maggots.[e]
12 The beginning of pride is man's stubbornness
in withdrawing his heart from his Maker;
13 For pride is the reservoir of sin,
a source which runs over with vice;
Because of it God sends unheard-of afflictions
and brings men to utter ruin.[f]
14 The thrones of the arrogant God overturns
and establishes the lowly in their stead.
15 The roots of the proud God plucks up,
to plant the humble in their place:
16 He breaks down their stem to the level of the ground,
then digs their roots from the earth.
17 The traces of the proud God sweeps away
and effaces the memory of them from the earth.
18 Insolence is not allotted to a man,
nor stubborn anger to one born of woman.

Ch 11 See RG 285

### True Glory*

19 Whose offspring can be in honor? Those of men.
Which offspring are in honor? Those who fear God.
Whose offspring can be in disgrace? Those of men.
Which offspring are in disgrace? Those who transgress the commandments.
20 Among brethren their leader is in honor;
he who fears God is in honor among his people.
21 Be it tenant or wayfarer, alien or pauper,
his glory is the fear of the LORD.
22 It is not just to despise a man who is wise but poor,
nor proper to honor any sinner.[g]
23 The prince, the ruler, the judge are in honor;
but none is greater than he who fears God.
24 When free men serve a prudent slave,
the wise man does not complain.[h]
25 Flaunt not your wisdom in managing your affairs,
and boast not in your time of need.
26 Better the worker who has plenty of everything
than the boaster who is without bread.[i]
27 My son, with humility have self-esteem;
prize yourself as you deserve.
28 Who will acquit him who condemns himself?
who will honor him who discredits himself?
29 The poor man is honored for his wisdom
as the rich man is honored for his wealth;
30 Honored in poverty, how much more so in wealth!
Dishonored in wealth, in poverty how much the more!

## CHAPTER 11

1 The poor man's wisdom lifts his head high
and sets him among princes.
2 Praise not a man for his looks;
despise not a man for his appearance.
3 Least is the bee among winged things,
but she reaps the choicest of all harvests.
4 Mock not the worn cloak
and jibe at no man's bitter day:
For strange are the works of the LORD,
hidden from men his deeds.
5 The oppressed often rise to a throne,
and some that none would consider wear a crown.*
6 The exalted often fall into utter disgrace;
the honored are given into enemy hands.

### Moderation*

7 Before investigating, find no fault;
examine first, then criticize.
8 Before hearing, answer not,
and interrupt no one in the middle of his speech.[j]
9 Dispute not about what is not your concern;

**10, 19—11, 6:** Regardless of social barriers, genuine honor among men comes from fear of the Lord and a true estimate of self. The Lord exalts the lowly and oppressed; transgressors of the commandments merit dishonor and disgrace.

**11, 5:** Cf 1 Sm 2, 8; Ps 105, 17–22; Lk 1, 52.

**11, 7–25:** Discretion regulates a man's conduct toward others and their affairs (7ff); as regards his own interests, a man should avoid solicitude for the passing external benefits of life and property (10–14. 18f. 21. 23ff), and cultivate the lasting inward gifts of wisdom and virtue (15. 17. 20. 22).

e Jb 17, 14. f Prv 18, 12. g Jas 2, 1–4. h Prv 17, 2. i Prv 12, 9. j Prv 18, 13.

in the strife of the arrogant take no part.
[10] My son, why increase your cares,
since he who is avid for wealth will not be blameless?
Even if you run after it, you will never overtake it;
however you seek it, you will not find it.
[11] One may toil and struggle and drive,
and fall short all the more.[k]
[12] Another goes his way a weakling and a failure,
with little strength and great misery—
Yet the eyes of the LORD look favorably upon him;
he raises him free of the vile dust,
[13] Lifts up his head and exalts him
to the amazement of the many.
[14] Good and evil, life and death,[l]
poverty and riches, are from the LORD.*
[15] Wisdom and understanding and knowledge of affairs,*
love and virtuous paths are from the LORD.
[16] Error and darkness were formed with sinners from their birth,
and evil grows old with evildoers.
[17] The LORD's gift remains with the just;
his favor brings continued success.
[18] A man may become rich through a miser's life,
and this is his allotted reward:
[19] When he says: "I have found rest,[m]
now I will feast on my possessions,"
He does not know how long it will be
till he dies and leaves them to others.*

[20] My son, hold fast to your duty, busy yourself with it,
grow old while doing your task.
[21] Admire not how sinners live,
but trust in the LORD and wait for his light;
For it is easy with the LORD
suddenly, in an instant, to make a poor man rich.
[22] God's blessing is the lot of the just man,
and in due time his hopes bear fruit.
[23] Say not: "What do I need?
What further pleasure can be mine?"
[24] Say not: "I am independent.
What harm can come to me now?"
[25] The day of prosperity makes one forget adversity;
the day of adversity makes one forget prosperity.[n]
[26] For it is easy with the LORD on the day of death*
to repay man according to his deeds.
[27] A moment's affliction brings forgetfulness of past delights;
when a man dies, his life is revealed.
[28] Call no man happy before his death,
for by how he ends, a man is known.

### Care in Choosing Friends

[29] Bring not every man into your house,
for many are the snares of the crafty one;
[30] Though he seem like a bird confined in a cage,
yet like a spy he will pick out the weak spots.
[31] The talebearer turns good into evil;
with a spark he sets many coals afire.
[32] The evil man lies in wait for blood,
and plots against your choicest possessions.
[33] Avoid a wicked man, for he breeds only evil,
lest you incur a lasting stain.
[34] Lodge a stranger with you, and he will subvert your course,
and make a stranger of you to your own household.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 1–23 See RG 283

[1] If you do good, know for whom you are doing it,*
and your kindness will have its effect.
[2] Do good to the just man and reward will be yours,
if not from him, from the LORD.

**11, 14:** Divine Providence ultimately governs the lives of men. Evil: misfortune and calamity sent by God either in punishment or as an incentive to repentance or to greater virtue.
**11, 15f:** Some ancient witnesses omit these two verses.
**11, 19:** Cf the parable of the rich man, Lk 12, 16–21.
**11, 26ff:** Sirach, writing before Christian revelation, did not go beyond the hour of death to find full divine retribution.

**12, 1–7:** The limitations to the practice of charity here reflected were removed by Christ, who requires that good be done even to enemies and to those who hate, persecute and calumniate us (Mt 5, 43–48).

k Ps 127, 2; Eccl 4, 8. l Jb 1, 21; 2, 10. m Eccl 4, 8; 6, 2; Lk 12, 19. n Sir 18, 25.

3 No good comes to him who gives comfort to the wicked,*
nor is it an act of mercy that he does.
4 Give to the good man, refuse the sinner; [o]
refresh the downtrodden, give nothing to the proud man.
5 No arms for combat should you give him,
lest he use them against yourself;
6 With twofold evil you will meet
for every good deed you do for him.
7 The Most High himself hates sinners,
and upon the wicked he takes vengeance.

Ch 1–23
See RG
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8 In our prosperity we cannot know our friends;*
in adversity an enemy will not remain concealed. [p]
9 When a man is successful even his enemy is friendly;
in adversity even his friend disappears. [q]
10 Never trust your enemy,
for his wickedness is like corrosion in bronze.
11 Even though he acts humbly and peaceably toward you,
take care to be on your guard against him.
Rub him as one polishes a brazen mirror,*
and you will find that there is still corrosion.
12 Let him not stand near you,
lest he oust you and take your place.
Let him not sit at your right hand,
lest he then demand your seat,
And in the end you appreciate my advice,
when you groan with regret, as I warned you.
13 Who pities a snake charmer when he is bitten,
or anyone who goes near a wild beast?
14 So is it with the companion of the proud man,
who is involved in his sins:
15 While you stand firm, he makes no bold move;
but if you slip, he cannot hold back.
16 With his lips an enemy speaks sweetly,
but in his heart he schemes to plunge you into the abyss.
Though your enemy has tears in his eyes,
if given the chance, he will never have enough of your blood.
17 If evil comes upon you, you will find him at hand;
feigning to help, he will trip you up,
18 Then he will nod his head and clap his hands
and hiss repeatedly, and show his true face.

## CHAPTER 13

### Caution Regarding Associates*

1 He who touches pitch blackens his hand;
he who associates with an impious man learns his ways.
2 Bear no burden too heavy for you;
go with no one greater or wealthier than yourself.
How can the earthen pot go with the metal cauldron?
When they knock together, the pot will be smashed:
3 The rich man does wrong and boasts of it,
the poor man is wronged and begs forgiveness.
4 As long as the rich man can use you he will enslave you,
but when you are exhausted, he will abandon you.
5 As long as you have anything he will speak fair words to you,
and with smiles he will win your confidence;
6 When he needs something from you he will cajole you,
then without regret he will impoverish you.
7 While it serves his purpose he will beguile you,
then twice or three times he will terrify you;

**12, 3ff:** The author advises against generosity to those who would abuse it.

**12, 8–18:** Through adversity friends are distinguished from enemies; to trust the latter or permit them intimacy is to invite disaster. Cf note on Sir 6, 5–17.

**12, 11:** Brazen mirror: see note on Ex 38, 8.

**13, 1—14, 2:** By means of various figures Sirach indicates the practical impossibility of genuine and sincere companionship between the poor and the proud rich. He lays down the principle of associating with equals (13, 15).

o 4f: Gal 6, 10. p Prv 17, 17. q Prv 19, 4–7.

When later he sees you he will pass you by,
and shake his head over you.
8 Guard against being presumptuous;
be not as those who lack sense.
9 When invited by a man of influence, keep your distance;
then he will urge you all the more.
10 Be not bold with him lest you be rebuffed,
but keep not too far away lest you be forgotten.
11 Engage not freely in discussion with him,
trust not his many words;
For by prolonged talk he will test you,
and though smiling he will probe you.
12 Mercilessly he will make of you a laughingstock,
and will not refrain from injury or chains.
13 Be on your guard and take care
never to accompany men of violence.

14 Every living thing loves its own kind,
every man a man like himself.
15 Every being is drawn to its own kind;
with his own kind every man associates.
16 Is a wolf ever allied with a lamb?
So it is with the sinner and the just.[r]
17 Can there be peace between the hyena and the dog?
Or between the rich and the poor can there be peace?*
18 Lion's prey are the wild asses of the desert;
so too the poor are feeding grounds for the rich.
19 A proud man abhors lowliness;
so does the rich man abhor the poor.
20 When a rich man stumbles he is supported by a friend;
when a poor man trips he is pushed down by a friend.
21 Many are the supporters for a rich man when he speaks;
though what he says is odious, it wins approval.
When a poor man speaks they make sport of him;
he speaks wisely and no attention is paid him.
22 A rich man speaks and all are silent,
his wisdom they extol to the clouds.
A poor man speaks and they say: "Who is that?"
If he slips they cast him down.
23 Wealth is good when there is no sin;
but poverty is evil by the standards of the proud.
24 The heart of a man changes his countenance,
either for good or for evil.[s]
25 The sign of a good heart is a cheerful countenance;
withdrawn and perplexed is the laborious schemer.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 14 See RG 284

1 Happy the man whose mouth brings him no grief,
who is not stung by remorse for sin.[t]
2 Happy the man whose conscience does not reproach him,
who has not lost hope.

### The Use of Wealth

3 Wealth ill becomes the mean man;*
and to the miser, of what use is gold?
4 What he denies himself he collects for others,
and in his possessions a stranger will revel.[u]
5 To whom will he be generous who is stingy with himself
and does not enjoy what is his own?
6 None is more stingy than he who is stingy with himself;
he punishes his own miserliness.
7 If ever he is generous, it is by mistake;
and in the end he displays his greed.
8 In the miser's opinion his share is too small;
9 he refuses his neighbor and brings ruin on himself.

13, 17: The hostility between the dogs which guard the flocks at night and the rapacious hyenas is proverbial in Palestine.

14, 3–16: The miser does no good even to himself (3–10); wealth should be wisely used during life, for it must be left behind at death (11–16). In the light of the gospel, generosity has a higher motivation and promise of reward than the Old Testament writer could propose. Cf Mt 6, 19ff; Lk 12, 32ff.

r 2 Cor 6, 14ff. s Prv 15, 13. t Sir 19, 15; 25, 8; Jas 3, 2. u Eccl 6, 2.

Ch 1–23
See RG
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10 The miser's eye is rapacious for bread,
but on his own table he sets it stale.
11 My son, use freely whatever you have
and enjoy it as best you can; [v]
12 Remember that death does not tarry,
nor have you been told the grave's
appointed time.
13 Before you die, be good to your friend,
and give him a share in what you possess. [w]
14 Deprive not yourself of present good things,
let no choice portion escape you.
15 Will you not leave your riches to others,
and your earnings to be divided by lot?
16 Give, take, and treat yourself well,
for in the nether world there are no joys to
seek.
17 All flesh grows old, like a garment;
the age-old law is: All must die. [x]
18 As with the leaves that grow on a vigorous
tree:
one falls off and another sprouts—
So with the generations of flesh and blood:
one dies and another is born. [y]
19 All man's works will perish in decay,
and his handiwork will follow after him.

### The Search for Wisdom and Its Blessings*

20 Happy the man who meditates on wisdom,
and reflects on knowledge; [z]
21 Who ponders her ways in his heart,
and understands her paths;
22 Who pursues her like a scout,
and lies in wait at her entry way;
23 Who peeps through her windows,
and listens at her doors;
24 Who encamps near her house,
and fastens his tent pegs next to her walls;
25 Who pitches his tent beside her,
and lives as her welcome neighbor;
26 Who builds his nest in her leafage,
and lodges in her branches;
27 Who takes shelter with her from the heat,
and dwells in her home.

## CHAPTER 15

1 He who fears the LORD will do this;
he who is practiced in the law will come to
wisdom.
2 Motherlike she will meet him,
like a young bride she will embrace him,
3 Nourish him with the bread of understanding,
and give him the water of learning to
drink. [a]
4 He will lean upon her and not fall,
he will trust in her and not be put to shame.
5 She will exalt him above his fellows;
in the assembly she will make him
eloquent.
6 Joy and gladness he will find,
an everlasting name inherit. [b]
7 Worthless men will not attain to her,
haughty men will not behold her.
8 Far from the impious is she,
not to be spoken of by liars.
9 Unseemly is praise on a sinner's lips,
for it is not accorded to him by God.
10 But praise is offered by the wise man's tongue;
its rightful steward will proclaim it.

### Man's Free Will

11 Say not: "It was God's doing that I fell away";
for what he hates he does not do.
12 Say not: "It was he who set me astray";
for he has no need of wicked man. [c]
13 Abominable wickedness the LORD hates,
he does not let it befall those who fear him.
14 When God, in the beginning, created man,
he made him subject to his own free
choice. [d]
15 If you choose you can keep the
commandments;
it is loyalty to do his will.
16 There are set before you fire and water;
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your
hand.
17 Before man are life and death,
whichever he chooses shall be given him. [e]

**14, 20—15, 20:** From his social teaching the sage now turns to consider individual responsibility. Happiness is to be found in the pursuit and possession of wisdom (14, 20—15, 5). Joy and honor are given, not to the sinner (7ff), but to him who fears God and observes his law (1–6. 10). The sinner is fully responsible for his conduct because God, who sees all things (18f), is not the author of wickedness (11ff. 20): he gives to every man the liberty to choose between good and evil (14–17).

v Prv 3, 9. w Sir 4, 1; Tb 4, 7. x Ps 103; 14ff; Is 40, 6; Jas 1, 10; 1 Pt 1, 24. y Eccl 1, 4. z Ps 1, 2. a Jn 4, 10; 6, 31ff. b Sir 6, 29–32. c Jas 1, 13. d Gn 1, 27. e Dt 30, 15.

18 Immense is the wisdom of the LORD;
he is mighty in power, and all-seeing.
19 The eyes of God see all he has made;
he understands man's every deed.[f]
20 No man does he command to sin,
to none does he give strength for lies.

## CHAPTER 16

### God's Punishment of Sinners*

1 Desire not a brood of worthless children,
nor rejoice in wicked offspring.
2 Many though they be, exult not in them
if they have not the fear of the LORD.
3 Count not on their length of life,[g]
have no hope in their future.
For one can be better than a thousand;
rather die childless than have godless children!
4 Through one wise man can a city be peopled;
through a clan of rebels it becomes desolate.
5 Many such things has my eye seen,
even more than these has my ear heard.
6 Against a sinful band fire is enkindled,[h]
upon a godless people wrath flames out.*
7 He forgave not the leaders of old*
who rebelled long ago in their might;[i]
8 He spared not the neighbors of Lot[j]
whom he detested for their pride;*
9 Nor did he spare the doomed people*
who were uprooted because of their sin;
10 Nor the six hundred thousand foot soldiers[k]
who perished for the impiety of their hearts.*
11 And had there been but one stiffnecked man,
it were a wonder had he gone unpunished.
For mercy and anger alike are with him
who remits and forgives, though on the wicked alights his wrath.
12 Great as his mercy is his punishment;
he judges men, each according to his deeds.
13 A criminal does not escape with his plunder;
a just man's hope God does not leave unfulfilled.
14 Whoever does good has his reward,
which each receives according to his deeds.
15 Say not: "I am hidden from God;
in heaven who remembers me?
Among so many people I cannot be known;
what am I in the world of spirits?
16 Behold, the heavens, the heaven of heavens,
the earth and the abyss tremble at his visitation;
17 The roots of the mountains, the earth's foundations,
at his mere glance, quiver and quake.
18 Of me, therefore, he will take no thought;
with my ways who will concern himself?
19 If I sin, no eye will see me;
if all in secret I am disloyal, who is to know?[l]
20 Who tells him of just deeds
and what could I expect for doing my duty?"
21 Such are the thoughts of senseless men,
which only the foolish knave will think.

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### Divine Wisdom Seen in Creation*

22 Hearken to me, my son, take my advice,
apply your mind to my words,
23 While I propose measured wisdom,
and impart accurate knowledge.
24 When at the first God created his works
and, as he made them, assigned their tasks,[m]
25 He ordered for all time what they were to do

16, 1–21: Sinful offspring are a great misfortune (1–4), for history and experience show how God punishes sin (5–10). He judges everyone according to his deeds (11ff); no one is hidden from him or escapes retribution at his hand (15–21).

16, 6: For Korah and his band (6a), see Nm 16, 35; Ps 106, 18; for the disgruntled Israelites (6b), Ps 78, 21f.

16, 7: The leaders of old: the "mighty men of old" who were destroyed by the flood: Gn 6, 4; Wis 14, 6; Bar 3, 26ff.

16, 8: The people of Sodom and Gomorrah: Gn 19, 24f; Ez 16, 49f.

16, 9: The Canaanites: Ex 23, 23f. 27–31; 33, 2; Dt 7, 1; Wis 12, 3.

16, 10: The Israelites who murmured against Moses: Nm 11, 20; 14, 12. 22ff.

16, 22—17, 18: In harmony with Gn 1—2, the author describes God's wisdom in creating the universe and all things in it (22–28), endowing man with a moral nature, with wisdom and knowledge and freedom of will according to his own image (17, 1. 6), so that man may govern the earth (3f), praise God's name (8), obey his law (9–12), and render to him an account of his deeds (18). Cf Pss 19; 104.

f Pss 33, 18; 34, 16; Heb 4, 13. g 3f: Wis 4, 1f. h Sir 21, 9. i Gn 6, 4; Wis 14, 6; Bar 3, 26ff. j Gn 19, 24ff. k Nm 14, 29. l Sir 23, 18. m Gn 1, 4ff.

and their domains from generation to
generation.
They were not to hunger, nor grow weary,
nor ever cease from their tasks.
26 Not one should ever crowd its neighbor,
nor should they ever disobey his word.
27 Then the LORD looked upon the earth,
and filled it with his blessings. [n]
28 Its surface he covered with all manner of life
which must return into it again.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 16–17
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1 The LORD from the earth created man,
and in his own image he made him. [o]
2 Limited days of life he gives him [p]
and makes him return to earth again.
3 He endows man with a strength of his own,
and with power over all things else on
earth.
4 He puts the fear of him in all flesh,
and gives him rule over beasts and birds.
5 He forms men's tongues and eyes and ears,
and imparts to them an understanding
heart.
6 With wisdom and knowledge he fills them;
good and evil he shows them.
7 He looks with favor upon their hearts,
and shows them his glorious works,
8 That they may describe the wonders of his
deeds
and praise his holy name.
9 He has set before them knowledge,
a law of life as their inheritance;
10 An everlasting covenant* he has made with
them,
his commandments he has revealed to
them.
11 His majestic glory their eyes beheld,
his glorious voice their ears heard.
12 He says to them, "Avoid all evil";
each of them he gives precepts about his
fellow men.
13 Their ways are ever known to him,
they cannot be hidden from his eyes.
14 Over every nation he places a ruler,*
but the LORD's own portion is Israel. [q]
15 All their actions are clear as the sun to him,
his eyes are ever upon their ways.
16 Their wickedness cannot be hidden from him;
all of their sins are before the LORD.
17 A man's goodness God cherishes like a signet
ring,
a man's virtue, like the apple of his eye.
18 Later he will rise up and repay them,
and requite each one of them as they
deserve. [r]

### Appeal for a Return to God*

19 But to the penitent he provides a way back,
he encourages those who are losing hope!
20 Return to the LORD and give up sin,
pray to him and make your offenses few.
21 Turn again to the Most High and away from
sin,
hate intensely what he loathes;
22 Who in the nether world can glorify the Most
High [s]
in place of the living who offer their praise?
23 No more can the dead give praise than those
who have never lived;
they glorify the LORD who are alive and
well.
24 How great the mercy of the LORD,
his forgiveness of those who return to him!
25 The like cannot be found in men,
for not immortal is any son of man.
26 Is anything brighter than the sun? Yet it can be
eclipsed.
How obscure* then the thoughts of flesh
and blood!

**17, 10:** An everlasting covenant . . . his commandments: the various covenants which God entered into with mankind, e.g., Gn 2, 15ff; 17, 1–22, especially on Mount Sinai where the people saw God's glory and heard his voice (Ex 19, 16—24, 18).

**17, 14:** Ruler: this may refer to civil authority or to angels placed over nations as guardians; see note on Dt 32, 8, and the cross references above.

**17, 19–27:** Exhorting the sinner to return to God (19ff. 24ff), the author implies that the Lord will postpone death for a repentant sinner so that he may fulfill his destiny of praising God on earth (22f). In the light of Christian teaching, the gift of final penitence extends this divine purpose into life everlasting. See note on Ps 6, 6; cf also Ez 18, 23; 33, 11–16.

**17, 26:** Obscure: literally, evil; compare Gn 6, 5. Though moral fault is not excluded, the thought here is the inability to understand the merciful designs of God. Cf Wis 9, 14–18.

n Gn 1, 20ff. o Gn 2, 7; 3. 19. p 2ff: Gn 1, 26ff; Ps 8, 4–8. q Ex 19, 5; Dt 4, 19f; 32, 8f; Dn 10, 13–21; 12, 1; Rom 13, 1. r Jb 19, 25; Jl 3, 4. s 22f: Pss 6, 6; 115, 17; Is 38, 18.

27 God watches over the hosts of highest heaven,
while all men are dust and ashes.

## CHAPTER 18

### The Divine Power and Mercy*

1 The Eternal is the judge of all things without exception;
the LORD alone is just.
2 Whom has he made equal to describing his works,
and who can probe his mighty deeds?
3 Who can measure his majestic power,
or exhaust the tale of his mercies?
4 One cannot lessen, nor increase,
nor penetrate the wonders of the LORD.
5 When a man ends he is only beginning,
and when he stops he is still bewildered.
6 What is man, of what worth is he?
the good, the evil in him, what are these?
7 The sum of a man's days is great
if it reaches a hundred years: [t]
8 Like a drop of sea water, like a grain of sand,
so are these few years among the days of eternity.
9 That is why the LORD is patient with men
and showers upon them his mercy.
10 He sees and understands that their death is grievous,
and so he forgives them all the more.
11 Man may be merciful to his fellow man,
but the LORD's mercy reaches all flesh,
12 Reproving, admonishing, teaching,
as a shepherd guides his flock; [u]
13 Merciful to those who accept his guidance,
who are diligent in his precepts.

### The Necessity of Prudence

14 My son, to your charity add no reproach,*
nor spoil any gift by harsh words.
15 Like dew that abates a burning wind,
so does a word improve a gift.
16 Sometimes the word means more than the gift;
both are offered by a kindly man.
17 Only a fool upbraids before giving;
a grudging gift wears out the expectant eyes. [v]
18 Be informed before speaking;
before sickness prepare the cure.
19 Before you are judged, seek merit for yourself,
and at the time of visitation you will have a ransom.*
20 Before you have fallen, humble yourself;
when you have sinned, show repentance.
21 Delay not to forsake sins,
neglect it not till you are in distress.
22 Let nothing prevent the prompt payment of your vows;*
wait not to fulfill them when you are dying. [w]
23 Before making a vow have the means to fulfill it;
be not one who tries the LORD.
24 Think of wrath and the day of death,
the time of vengeance when he will hide his face. [x]
25 Remember the time of hunger in the time of plenty,
poverty and want in the day of wealth. [y]
26 Between morning and evening the weather changes;
before the LORD all things are fleeting.
27 A wise man is circumspect in all things;
when sin is rife he keeps himself from wrongdoing.
28 Any learned man should make wisdom known,*
and he who attains to her should declare her praise;

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**18, 1–13:** Not only are God's justice and power beyond man's understanding (1–5), his mercy also is boundless and surpasses all human compassion (6–13).

**18, 14–27:** The practice of charity is an art which avoids every offense to the recipient (14–18). Prudence directs the changing circumstances of daily life toward the attainment of its reward at the time of visitation, i.e., the day of reckoning (19–27).

**18, 19:** Merit . . . ransom: almsgiving is often portrayed in the Bible as a means of approach to the forgiving mercy of God. Cf Sir 3, 29f; 29, 11f; Tb 12, 12f; Dn 4, 24; Lk 16, 9; Acts 10, 31.

**18, 22f:** The usual object of a vow in Old Testament times was the offering of a bloody sacrifice.

**18, 28f:** A general statement on the teaching of wisdom, serving either as a conclusion to the preceding section or as an introduction to the following one. The neighbors of the wise man are regarded as the field into which he channels the waters of wisdom to encourage growth. Cf Sir 24, 28–31.

t Ps 90, 10. u Jn 10, 11. v Sir 20, 13. w Nm 30, 3; Dt 23, 22; Ps 50, 14; Prv 20, 25; Eccl 5, 4. x Sir 7, 16. y Sir 11, 25.

29 Those trained in her words must show their wisdom,
dispensing sound proverbs like life-giving waters.

### Self-Control*

30 Go not after your lusts, [z]
but keep your desires in check.
31 If you satisfy your lustful appetites
they will make you the sport of your enemies.
32 Have no joy in the pleasures of a moment
which bring on poverty redoubled;
33 Become not a glutton and a winebibber
with nothing in your purse.

## CHAPTER 19

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1 He who does so grows no richer;
he who wastes the little he has will be stripped bare.
2 Wine and women make the mind giddy,
and the companion of harlots becomes reckless. [a]
4 He who lightly trusts in them has no sense,
and he who strays after them sins against his own life.
3 Rottenness and worms will possess him,
for contumacious desire destroys its owner.

### The Proper Use of Speech*

5 He who gloats over evil will meet with evil,
and he who repeats an evil report has no sense.
6 Never repeat gossip,
and you will not be reviled. [b]
7 Tell nothing to friend or foe;
if you have a fault, reveal it not, [c]
8 For he who hears it will hold it against you,
and in time become your enemy.
9 Let anything you hear die within you;
be assured it will not make you burst.
10 When a fool hears something, he is in labor,
like a woman giving birth to a child.
11 Like an arrow lodged in a man's thigh
is gossip in the breast of a fool.
12 Admonish your friend—he may not have done it;
and if he did, that he may not do it again. [d]
13 Admonish your neighbor—he may not have said it;
and if he did, that he may not say it again.
14 Admonish your friend—often it may be slander;
every story you must not believe.
15 Then, too, a man can slip and not mean it;
who has not sinned with his tongue? [e]
16 Admonish your neighbor before you break with him;
thus will you fulfill the law of the Most High. [f]

### How To Recognize True Wisdom*

17 All wisdom is fear of the LORD;
perfect wisdom is the fulfillment of the law. [g]
18 The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom,
nor is there prudence in the counsel of sinners.
19 There is a shrewdness that is detestable,
while the simple man may be free from sin.
20 There are those with little understanding who fear God,
and those of great intelligence who violate the law.
21 There is a shrewdness keen but dishonest,
which by duplicity wins a judgment.
22 There is the wicked man who is bowed in grief,
but is full of guile within;
23 He bows his head and feigns not to hear,

**18, 30—19, 4:** Inordinate gratification of the senses makes a man unreasonable, the slave of passion, the sport of his enemies. In the end it destroys him physically and spiritually.

**19, 5–16:** An excellent commentary on the eighth commandment of the Decalogue, forbidding intemperance in speech through calumny, rash judgment, and detraction (5f), and inculcating discreet silence in defense of self and of neighbor (7–11). Justice requires that an accused neighbor be given a hearing, and charity urges fraternal correction; both together fulfill the law of the Most High (12–16); cf Mt 7, 1f; 18, 15f.

**19, 17–26:** True and false wisdom as here described are synonymous with virtue and vice, with the fulfillment of the law and the violation of it.

z Rom 6, 12; 13, 14. a Prv 20, 1; 23, 20ff. b Prv 25, 10. c Sir 8, 18f. d Lv 19, 17; Mt 18, 15; Lk 17, 3. e Sir 14, 1; Jas 3, 2. f Lv 19, 17. g Sir 1, 1. 12. 14; Jb 28, 28; Ps 111, 10; Prv 1, 7; 9, 10.

but when not observed, he will take
advantage of you:
24 Even though his lack of strength keeps him
from sinning,
when he finds the opportunity, he will do
harm.
25 One can tell a man by his appearance;
a wise man is known as such when first
met.
26 A man's attire, his hearty laughter and his gait,
proclaim him for what he is.

## CHAPTER 20

### Conduct of the Wise and the Foolish

1 An admonition can be inopportune,*
and a man may be wise to hold his peace.
2 It is much better to admonish than to lose
one's temper,
for one who admits his fault will be kept
from disgrace.
3 Like a eunuch lusting for intimacy with a
maiden
is he who does right under compulsion.*
4 One man is silent and is thought wise,
another is talkative and is disliked.
5 One man is silent because he has nothing to
say;
another is silent, biding his time.[h]
6 A wise man is silent till the right time comes,
but a boasting fool ignores the proper time.
7 He who talks too much is detested;
he who pretends to authority is hated.

8 Some misfortunes bring success;*
some things gained are a man's loss.
9 Some gifts do one no good,
and some must be paid back double.*
10 Humiliation can follow fame,
while from obscurity a man can lift up his
head.
11 A man may buy much for little,
but pay for it seven times over.
12 A wise man makes himself popular by a few
words,
but fools pour forth their blandishments in
vain.
13 A gift from a rogue will do you no good,
for in his eyes his one gift is equal to
seven.
14 He gives little and criticizes often,
and like a crier he shouts aloud.
He lends today, he asks it back tomorrow;
hateful indeed is such a man.
15 A fool has no friends,
nor thanks for his generosity;
16 Those who eat his bread have an evil tongue.
How many times they laugh him to scorn!

17 A fall to the ground is less sudden than a slip of
the tongue;*
that is why the downfall of the wicked
comes so quickly.
18 Insipid food is the untimely tale;
the unruly are always ready to offer it.
19 A proverb when spoken by a fool is
unwelcome,
for he does not utter it at the proper time.
20 A man through want may be unable to sin,
yet in this tranquility he cannot rest.
21 One may lose his life through shame,
and perish through a fool's intimidation.
22 A man makes a promise to a friend out of
shame,
and has him for his enemy needlessly.
23 A lie is a foul blot in a man,
yet it is constantly on the lips of the
unruly.
24 Better a thief than an inveterate liar,
yet both will suffer disgrace;
25 A liar's way leads to dishonor,
his shame remains ever with him.

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**20, 1–7:** Wisdom indicates the proper times for speech and silence, that is, the occasions when the most benefit can be gained from them.

**20, 3:** The sense is that violence or force against a person can prevent an external act of sin or compel a good deed without eliminating the internal sin or desire of wrongdoing. Cf Sir 20, 20.

**20, 8–16:** In a series of paradoxes the author indicates how much true and lasting values differ from apparent ones.

**20, 9:** And some . . . double: or perhaps, "but some are doubly precious."

**20, 17–25:** The ill-timed speech of the wicked, the unruly and a fool is repulsive (17ff); human respect exposes one to intimidation, rash promises and enmity (21f); lies bring dishonor and lasting disgrace (23ff).

h Sir 20, 1; Prv 10, 19; 17, 28.

26 A wise man advances himself by his words,*
a prudent man pleases the great.
27 He who works his land has abundant crops,
he who pleases the great is pardoned his faults.
28 Favors and gifts blind the eyes;
like a muzzle over the mouth they silence reproof.[i]
29 Hidden wisdom and unseen treasure—
of what value is either?
30 Better the man who hides his folly
than the one who hides his wisdom.

## CHAPTER 21

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### Sin Must Be Avoided*

1 My son, if you have sinned, do so no more,
and for your past sins pray to be forgiven.
2 Flee from sin as from a serpent
that will bite you if you go near it;
Its teeth are lion's teeth,
destroying the souls of men.
3 Every offense is a two-edged sword;
when it cuts, there can be no healing.
4 Violence and arrogance wipe out wealth;
so too a proud man's home is destroyed.
5 Prayer from a poor man's lips is heard at once,
and justice is quickly granted him.
6 He who hates correction walks the sinner's path,
but he who fears the LORD repents in his heart.
7 Widely known is the boastful speaker,
but the wise man knows his own faults.
8 He who builds his house with another's money
is collecting stones for his funeral mound.
9 A band of criminals is like a bundle of tow;
they will end in a flaming fire.[j]
10 The path of sinners is smooth stones
that end in the depths of the nether world.*

### The Wise and the Foolish Differ*

11 He who keeps the law controls his impulses;
he who is perfect in fear of the LORD has wisdom.
12 He can never be taught who is not shrewd,
but one form of shrewdness is thoroughly bitter.
13 A wise man's knowledge wells up in a flood,
and his counsel, like a living spring;[k]
14 A fool's mind is like a broken jar—
no knowledge at all can it hold.
15 When an intelligent man hears words of wisdom,
he approves them and adds to them;
The wanton hears them with scorn
and casts them behind his back.
16 A fool's chatter is like a load on a journey,
but there is charm to be found upon the lips of the wise.
17 The views of a prudent man are sought in an assembly,
and his words are considered with care.
18 Like a house in ruins is wisdom to a fool;
the stupid man knows it only as inscrutable words.
19 Like fetters on the legs is learning to a fool,
like a manacle on his right hand.
20 A fool raises his voice in laughter,
but a prudent man at the most smiles gently.[l]
21 Like a chain of gold is learning to a wise man,
like a bracelet on his right arm.
22 The fool steps boldly into a house,

**20, 26–30:** Unlike the fool who invites disaster through misuse of his tongue, the sage through prudent speech gains in honor and esteem among the great (26f). He must beware, however, of accepting bribes, lest he share in evil through silence when he should reprove (28ff).

**21, 1–10:** Under various figures the consequences of sin are described as destructive of wealth, and even of bodily life, and deserving of death and a place in the depths of the nether world (2ff. 6a. 8ff). Through prayer, forgiveness can be sought (1), and through fear of the Lord, repentance is achieved (1, 5. 6b).

**21, 10:** The path of sinners . . . nether world: eternal retribution is not yet proposed in this reference. It became clearly revealed through the teaching of Christ; cf Mt 7, 13f; 25, 41–46; Lk 16, 19–31.

**21, 11–28:** The mind of the wise man is a fountain of knowledge (13. 15); his will is trained to keep the law (11); his words are gracious, valued, carefully weighed, sincere (16f. 25f); his conduct is respectful, cultured and restrained (20. 22ff). The fool's mind is devoid of knowledge and impenetrable to it (12. 14. 18f); his will rejects it (15); his talk is burdensome (16), his laughter unrestrained (20), his conversation shallow and meddlesome (25f); his conduct is bold and rude (22ff); his abuse of others redounds on himself (27f).

i Ex 23, 8; Dt 16, 19. j Ps 21, 9. k Prv 13, 14; 16, 22. l Eccl 7, 6.

while the well-bred man remains outside; [m]
23 A boor peeps through the doorway of a house,
but a cultured man keeps his glance cast down.
24 It is rude for one to listen at a door;
a cultured man would be overwhelmed by the disgrace of it.
25 The lips of the impious talk of what is not their concern,
but the words of the prudent are carefully weighed.
26 Fools' thoughts are in their mouths,
wise men's words are in their hearts.
27 When a godless man curses his adversary,*
he really curses himself.
28 A slanderer besmirches himself,
and is hated by his neighbors.

## CHAPTER 22

### On Laziness and Foolishness

1 The sluggard is like a stone in the mud;*
everyone hisses at his disgrace.
2 The sluggard is like a lump of dung;
whoever touches him wipes his hands.
3 An unruly child is a disgrace to its father;
if it be a daughter, she brings him to poverty. [n]
4 A thoughtful daughter becomes a treasure to her husband,
a shameless one is her father's grief.
5 A hussy shames her father and her husband;
by both she is despised.
6 Like a song in time of mourning is inopportune talk,*
but lashes and discipline are at all times wisdom.
7 Teaching a fool is like gluing a broken pot, [o]
or like disturbing a man in the depths of sleep;
8 He talks with a slumberer who talks with a fool,
for when it is over, he will say, "What was that?"
9 Weep over the dead man, for his light has gone out;
weep over the fool, for sense has left him.
10 Weep but a little over the dead man, for he is at rest;
but worse than death is the life of a fool.
11 Seven days of mourning for the dead,
but for the wicked fool a whole lifetime. [p]

12 Speak but seldom with the stupid man,
be not the companion of a brute;
13 Beware of him lest you have trouble
and be spattered when he shakes himself;
Turn away from him and you will find rest
and not be wearied by his lack of sense.
14 What is heavier than lead,
and what is its name but "Fool"?
15 Sand and salt and an iron mass
are easier to bear than a stupid man. [q]

16 Masonry bonded with wooden beams*
is not loosened by an earthquake;
Neither is a resolve constructed with careful deliberation
shaken in a moment of fear.
17 A resolve that is backed by prudent understanding
is like the polished surface of a smooth wall.
18 Small stones lying on an open height
will not remain when the wind blows;
Neither can a timid resolve based on foolish plans
withstand fear of any kind.

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**21, 27:** Adversary: this can be understood in the sense that, if a man curses one who led him into sin, he implicitly curses himself for having yielded to the sin; or in the sense that the enemy is the man's own sinful nature; or even in the sense that the enemy is the devil, since the Hebrew word used here is satan. Cf 1 Chr 21, 1; Zec 3, 2; 2 Pt 2, 12f; Jude 9.

**22, 1–15:** To Sirach, a lazy person and an unruly child are a cause of shame and disgrace; everyone wishes to be rid of them (1–5). A wicked fool is as senseless as a man asleep or dead, but the grief he causes others lasts a lifetime (7–11). He is like a brute, troublesome and intolerable (12–15).

**22, 6:** Like a song . . . is . . . talk: some understand talk in the sense of a rebuke unheeded by the unruly as a joyful song is out of place among mourners. Corporal punishment, however, is always effective.

**22, 16ff:** A prudent mind firmly resolved is undisturbed by violent and conflicting thoughts, whereas a foolish person is tossed about by the winds of fear, like small stones whipped about by high winds.

m Prv 25, 17. n Prv 17, 21; 19, 13. o 7–11: Prv 23, 9. p Gn 50, 10. q Prv 27, 3.

### The Preservation of Friendship*

19 One who jabs the eye brings tears:
he who pierces the heart bares its feelings.
20 He who throws stones at birds drives them away,
and he who insults a friend breaks up the friendship.
21 Should you draw a sword against a friend,
despair not, it can be undone.
22 Should you speak sharply to a friend,
fear not, you can be reconciled.
But a contemptuous insult, a confidence broken,
or a treacherous attack will drive away any friend.

23 Make fast friends with a man while he is poor;
thus will you enjoy his prosperity with him.
In time of trouble remain true to him,
so as to share in his inheritance when it comes.
24 Before flames burst forth an oven smokes;
so does abuse come before bloodshed.
25 From a friend in need of support
no one need hide in shame;
26 But from him who brings harm to his friend
all will stand aloof who hear of it.

### Prayer*

27 Who will set a guard over my mouth,
and upon my lips an effective seal,
That I may not fail through them,
that my tongue may not destroy me? [r]

## CHAPTER 23

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1 LORD, Father and Master of my life,*
permit me not to fall by them!
2 Who will apply the lash to my thoughts,
to my mind the rod of discipline,
That my failings may not be spared,
nor the sins of my heart overlooked;
3 Lest my failings increase,
and my sins be multiplied;
Lest I succumb to my foes,
and my enemy rejoice over me?
4 LORD, Father and God of my life,
abandon me not into their control!
5 A brazen look allow me not;
ward off passion from my heart,
6 Let not the lustful cravings of the flesh master me,
surrender me not to shameless desires.

### The Proper Use of the Tongue*

7 Give heed, my children, to the instruction that I pronounce,
for he who keeps it will not be enslaved.
8 Through his lips is the sinner ensnared;
the railer and the arrogant man fall thereby.
9 Let not your mouth form the habit of swearing,
or becoming too familiar with the Holy Name. [s]
10 Just as a slave that is constantly under scrutiny*
will not be without welts,
So one who swears continually by the Holy Name
will not remain free from sin.
11 A man who often swears heaps up obligations;
the scourge will never be far from his house.
If he swears in error, he incurs guilt;
if he neglects his obligation, his sin is doubly great. [t]
If he swears without reason he cannot be found just,
and all his house will suffer affliction.
12 There are words which merit death;

**22, 19–26:** As disputes and violence weaken friendship, and disloyalty and abuse of confidence destroy it utterly (19–22. 24. 26), so kindness to a poor man in time of poverty and adversity builds up friendship and merits a share in his prosperity and inheritance (23. 25).

**22, 27—23, 6:** The sage implores the divine assistance to preserve him through stern discipline from sins of the tongue (22, 27; 23, 1); ignorance of mind and weakness of will (2f); and inclinations of the senses and the flesh, lest he fall into the hands of his enemies, or become a prey of shameful desires (3–6).

**23, 1:** Lord, Father and Master of my life: these words express the tender personal relationship between the author's soul and God, the need of his assistance, and the truth of his providence.

**23, 7–15:** A warning against sins of the tongue through misuse of the Holy Name, thoughtless swearing which involves obligation and incurs guilt (7–11), blasphemy (12), talk that is coarse and blundersome (13f), and the incorrigible habit of abusive language (15).

**23, 10:** As a slave . . . under scrutiny, so is he who calls on God to witness the truth of what he says.

r Ps 141, 3. s Ex 20, 7; Lv 19, 12; Dt 5, 11; Mt 5, 33ff. t Lv 5, 4ff.

may they never be heard among Jacob's
heirs.
For all such words are foreign to the devout,
who do not wallow in sin.
13 Let not your mouth become used to coarse
talk,
for in it lies sinful matter.
14 Keep your father and mother in mind
when you sit among the mighty,
Lest in their presence you commit a blunder
and disgrace your upbringing,
By wishing you had never been born
or cursing the day of your birth. [u]
15 A man who has the habit of abusive language
will never mature in character as long as he
lives.

### Sins of the Flesh*

16 Two types of men multiply sins,
a third* draws down wrath;
For burning passion is a blazing fire,
not to be quenched till it burns itself out:
A man given to sins of the flesh,
who never stops until the fire breaks forth;
17 The rake to whom all bread is sweet
and who is never through till he dies; [v]
18 And the man who dishonors his marriage bed
and says to himself, "Who can see me?
Darkness surrounds me, walls hide me;
no one sees me; why should I fear to sin?" [w]
Of the Most High he is not mindful,
19 fearing only the eyes of men;
He does not understand that the eyes of the
LORD,
ten thousand times brighter than the sun,
Observe every step a man takes
and peer into hidden corners.
20 He who knows all things before they exist
still knows them all after they are made.
21 Such a man will be punished in the streets of
the city; [x]
when he least expects it, he will be
apprehended.*
22 So also with the woman who is unfaithful to
her husband
and offers as heir her son by a stranger.
23 First, she has disobeyed the law of the Most
High;
secondly, she has wronged her husband;
Thirdly, in her wanton adultery
she has borne children by another man.*
24 Such a woman will be dragged before the
assembly,*
and her punishment will extend to her
children;
25 Her children will not take root;
her branches will not bring forth fruit.
26 She will leave an accursed memory;
her disgrace will never be blotted out.
27 Thus all who dwell on the earth shall know,
and all who inhabit the world shall
understand,
That nothing is better than the fear of the
LORD,
nothing more salutary than to obey his
commandments. [y]

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 24
See RG
283, 284

### Praise of Wisdom

1 Wisdom sings her own praises,*
before her own people she proclaims her
glory;

**23, 16–27:** From sins of the tongue the author proceeds to treat of sins of the flesh and their dire consequences. The passion of lust tyrannizes over its victims and, like fire, consumes and utterly destroys them (16f. 22–26). The false security of the adulterer serves but to aggravate his inevitable fate (18–21). Only the fear of the Lord and observance of his commandments can assure moral safety (27).

**23, 16:** Two types . . . a third: three kinds of sins of impurity, with increasing degrees of gravity: solitary sins (16), fornication (17) and adultery (18–21).

**23, 21:** Cf Lv 20, 10; Dt 22, 22.

**23, 23:** The detailed evil of adultery includes disobedience to God's law (Ex 20, 14), injustice to a partner in marriage, and disgraceful offspring.

**23, 24f:** The judgment of the assembly determined the illegitimacy of children born of adultery or incest and excluded them from the "community of the Lord" (Dt 23, 3). Cf Wis 3, 16–19; 4, 3–6.

**24, 1–27:** In this chapter Wisdom speaks in the first person, describing her origin, her dwelling place in Israel, and the reward she gives her followers. As in Prv 8, Wisdom is described as a being who comes from God and is distinct from him. While we do not say with certainty that this description applies to a personal being, it does foreshadow the beautiful doctrine of the Word of God later developed in St. John's Gospel (Jn 1, 1–14). In the liturgy this chapter is applied to the Blessed Virgin because of her constant and intimate association with Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom.

u Sir 7, 27; Ex 20, 12; Dt 5, 16. v Prv 9, 17. w Is 29, 15. x 21f: Lv 20, 10; Dt 22, 21. y Sir 1, 10–18. 24; Prv 3, 1f.

[2] In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,
in the presence of his hosts she declares her worth:
[3] "From the mouth of the Most High I came forth,[z]
and mistlike covered the earth.
[4] In the highest heavens did I dwell,
my throne on a pillar of cloud.
[5] The vault of heaven I compassed alone,
through the deep abyss I wandered.
[6] Over waves of the sea, over all the land,
over every people and nation I held sway.
[7] Among all these I sought a resting place;
in whose inheritance should I abide?

[8] "Then the Creator of all gave me his command,
and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent,
Saying, 'In Jacob make your dwelling,
in Israel your inheritance.'
[9] Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me,
and through all ages I shall not cease to be.
[10] In the holy tent I ministered before him,
and in Zion I fixed my abode.
[11] Thus in the chosen city he has given me rest,
in Jerusalem is my domain.
[12] I have struck root among the glorious people,
in the portion of the LORD, his heritage.

[13] "Like a cedar on Lebanon I am raised aloft,
like a cypress on Mount Hermon,
[14] Like a palm tree in Engedi,
like a rosebush in Jericho,
Like a fair olive tree in the field,
like a plane tree growing beside the water.
[15] Like cinnamon, or fragrant balm, or precious myrrh,
I give forth perfume;[a]
Like galbanum and onycha and sweet spices,
like the odor of incense in the holy place.*
[16] I spread out my branches like a terebinth,
my branches so bright and so graceful.
[17] I bud forth delights like the vine,
my blossoms become fruit fair and rich.
[18] Come to me, all you that yearn for me,
and be filled with my fruits;*
[19] You will remember me as sweeter than honey,
better to have than the honeycomb.
[20] He who eats of me will hunger still,*
he who drinks of me will thirst for more;[b]
[21] He who obeys me will not be put to shame,
he who serves me will never fail."

[22] All this is true of the book of the Most High's covenant,[c]
the law which Moses commanded us
as an inheritance for the community of Jacob.*
[23] It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom—[d]
like the Tigris in the days of the new fruits.
[24] It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding,
like the Jordan at harvest time.
[25] It sparkles like the Nile with knowledge,
like the Gihon* at vintage time.
[26] The first man never finished comprehending wisdom,
nor will the last succeed in fathoming her.
[27] For deeper than the sea are her thoughts;
her counsels, than the great abyss.

[28] Now I, like a rivulet from her stream,*
channeling the waters into a garden,
[29] Said to myself, "I will water my plants,
my flower bed I will drench";
And suddenly this rivulet of mine became a river,
then this stream of mine, a sea.

**24, 15:** These substances were associated with worship, being mentioned in Ex 30, 22f. 34 as the ingredients of the anointing oil and the sacred incense. Israel was a priestly nation.

**24, 18:** Compare the words of the Savior in Mt 11, 28ff.

**24, 20:** So pleasing is wisdom to man that, far from being satiated, he will always desire more.

**24, 22:** Here the author begins to speak once more, Wisdom having ended her discourse in the preceding verse. Wisdom and the law of Moses are now identified.

**24, 25:** Gihon: understood by some to have been a name for the Nile; cf Gn 2, 13.

**24, 28–31:** Spoken by the author. He had at first drawn a small portion of the water of wisdom for his own private benefit, but finding it so useful, he soon began to let others share in this boon by teaching them the lessons of wisdom.

z 3ff: Sir 1, 1; Prv 2, 6; 8, 22–36; Wis 7, 24f. a Ex 30, 22–25. b Is 55, 1; Jn 6, 35. c Ex 24, 7. d 23ff: Gn 2, 11–14.

30 Thus do I send my teachings forth shining like
the dawn,
to become known afar off.
31 Thus do I pour out instruction like prophecy
and bestow it on generations to come.

## CHAPTER 25

### Those Who Are Worthy of Praise*

1 With three things I am delighted,
for they are pleasing to the LORD and to
men:
Harmony among brethren, friendship among
neighbors,
and the mutual love of husband and wife.
2 Three kinds of men I hate;
their manner of life I loathe indeed:
A proud pauper, a rich dissembler,
and an old man lecherous in his dotage.

3 What you have not saved in your youth,
how will you acquire in your old age?
4 How becoming to the gray-haired is judgment,
and a knowledge of counsel to those on in
years!
5 How becoming to the aged is wisdom,
understanding and prudence to the
venerable!
6 The crown of old men is wide experience;
their glory, the fear of the LORD.

7 There are nine who come to my mind as
blessed,
a tenth whom my tongue proclaims:
The man who finds joy in his children,
and he who lives to see his enemies'
downfall.
8 Happy is he who dwells with a sensible wife,
and he who plows not like a donkey yoked
with an ox.*
Happy is he who sins not with his tongue,
and he who serves not his inferior.
9 Happy is he who finds a friend
and he who speaks to attentive ears.
10 He who finds wisdom is great indeed,
but not greater than he who fears the LORD.
11 Fear of the LORD surpasses all else,
its possessor is beyond compare.

Ch 25
See RG
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### Wicked and Virtuous Women*

12 Worst of all wounds is that of the heart,
worst of all evils is that of a woman.
13 Worst of all sufferings is that from one's foes,
worst of all vengeance is that of one's
enemies:
14 No poison worse than that of a serpent,
no venom greater than that of a woman.
15 With a dragon or a lion I would rather dwell
than live with an evil woman.
16 Wickedness changes a woman's looks,
and makes her sullen as a female bear.
17 When her husband sits among his neighbors,
a bitter sigh escapes him unawares.

18 There is scarce any evil like that in a woman;
may she fall to the lot of the sinner!
19 Like a sandy hill to aged feet
is a railing wife to a quiet man.
20 Stumble not through woman's beauty,
nor be greedy for her wealth;
21 The man is a slave, in disgrace and shame,
when a wife supports her husband.
22 Depressed mind, saddened face,
broken heart—this from an evil wife.
Feeble hands and quaking knees—
from a wife who brings no happiness to her
husband.
23 In woman was sin's beginning,
and because of her we all die.*

**25, 1–11:** While praising brotherly love, love of neighbor, and conjugal love, the sage condemns their opposites in the arrogant pauper who despises his brother, the fraudulent rich man who cheats his neighbor, and the lecherous old man unfaithful to his wife (1f). This last, sensual from his youth, lacks the mature blessings of judgment and wisdom in old age (3–6), and the joy of a peaceful household, where honesty and dignity, friendship, wisdom and fear of God prevail (7–11).

**25, 8:** Like a donkey yoked with an ox: incompatibility between husband and wife.

**25, 12–25:** Wickedness in a woman is most grievous, painful and bitter to her husband. Through it she becomes vengeful, dangerous and intolerable, jealous, talkative, intemperate and unchaste. Even her very appearance is changed (12–17). The worst of all evils, a source of grief, a snare and a disgrace to her husband, she depresses his mind, saddens and breaks his heart, destroys his strength (18–22). She must not be indulged but made obedient or punished (24f).

**25, 23:** According to the account in Gn 3, to which Ben Sirach refers, sin, the cause of death, originated in woman: Eve, the first human being to sin, induced Adam to follow her example. But it is through Adam, as head of the race, that original sin and its punishment of spiritual death are presented by St. Paul (Rom 5) as having entered the world, to become the occasion for the redemptive work of Christ our Lord.

24 Allow water no outlet,
and be not indulgent to an erring wife.
25 If she walks not by your side,
cut her away from you.

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 24–43
See RG
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1 Happy the husband of a good wife,*
twice-lengthened are his days; [e]
2 A worthy* wife brings joy to her husband,
peaceful and full is his life.
3 A good wife is a generous gift
bestowed upon him who fears the LORD;[f]
4 Be he rich or poor, his heart is content,
and a smile is ever on his face.

5 There are three things at which my heart quakes,
a fourth before which I quail:
Though false charges in public, trial before all the people,
and lying testimony are harder to bear than death,
6 A jealous wife is heartache and mourning*
and a scourging tongue like the other three.
7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke;
he who marries her seizes a scorpion.
8 A drunken wife arouses great anger,
for she does not hide her shame.
9 By her eyelids and her haughty stare
an unchaste wife can be recognized.
10 Keep a strict watch over an unruly wife,
lest, finding an opportunity, she make use of it; [g]

Ch 24–43
See RG
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11 Follow close if her eyes are bold,
and be not surprised if she betrays you:
12 As a thirsty traveler with eager mouth
drinks from any water that he finds,
So she settles down before every tent peg
and opens her quiver for every arrow.
13 A gracious wife delights her husband,
her thoughtfulness puts flesh on his bones;
14 A gift from the LORD is her governed speech,
and her firm virtue is of surpassing worth.
15 Choicest of blessings is a modest wife,
priceless her chaste person.
16 Like the sun rising in the LORD's heavens,
the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.
17 Like the light which shines above the holy lampstand,*
are her beauty of face and graceful figure.
18 Golden columns on silver bases
are her shapely limbs and steady feet.*

### Dangers to Integrity and Friendship

19 These two bring grief to my heart,
and the third arouses my horror:
A wealthy man reduced to want;
illustrious men held in contempt;
And the man who passes from justice to sin,
for whom the LORD makes ready the sword. [h]

20 A merchant can hardly remain upright,*
nor a shopkeeper free from sin;

## CHAPTER 27

1 For the sake of profit many sin,
and the struggle for wealth blinds the eyes. [i]
2 Like a peg driven between fitted stones,

**26, 1–4. 13–18:** A good wife is as a gift from God, bringing joy and peace, happiness and contentment to her husband (1–4) through her thoughtfulness, reserve, modesty and chastity, beauty, grace and virtue (13–18).

**26, 2:** Worthy: gifted spiritually, mentally and physically. Cf Prv 31, 10.

**26, 6–12:** A repetition of the thought expressed in Sir 25, 12–25.

**26, 17f:** The holy lampstand and the golden columns stood in the holy place of the ancient Tabernacle (Ex 25, 31–40; 26, 32).

**26, 18:** Among the additions found here in some manuscripts are the following lines:

"My son, take care in the prime of life
not to surrender your strength to strangers;
Single out from the land a goodly field
and there with confidence sow the seed of your increase;
So shall you have your offspring around you,
and in confidence shall they grow up.
"Though a woman for hire be thought of as a trifle,
a married woman is a deadly snare for those who embrace her. [Cf Prv 6, 26.]
"A wife's complaint should be made in meekness,
and show itself in a slight flush;
But a loud-mouthed, scolding wife
is a trumpet signaling for battle:
Any human being who answers that challenge
will spend his life amid the turbulence of war."

**26, 20—27, 15:** From proper conduct in family life, the author proceeds to social morality, warning especially against injustice in commerce (26, 20—27, 3), and perversity of speech in business (4–7). The pursuit of justice in these matters is all the more meritorious as it is difficult (8ff). The discourses of the devout are marked with wisdom, but the conversations of the wicked, with offense, swearing, cursing, quarrels and even bloodshed (11–15).

e Sir 25, 8; Prv 18, 22; 31, 10ff. f Sir 36, 24. g Sir 42, 11. h Ez 18, 24ff. i Sir 7, 18; 31, 6; Prv 30, 8f.

between buying and selling sin is wedged in.
3 Unless you earnestly hold fast to the fear of the LORD,
suddenly your house will be thrown down.
4 When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear;
so do a man's faults when he speaks.
5 As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace,
so in his conversation is the test of a man.[j]
6 The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had;
so too does a man's speech disclose the bent of his mind.[k]
7 Praise no man before he speaks,
for it is then that men are tested.
8 If you strive after justice you will attain it,
and put it on like a splendid robe.
9 Birds nest with their own kind,
and fidelity comes to those who live by it.
10 As a lion crouches in wait for prey,
so do sins for evildoers.
11 Ever wise are the discourses of the devout,
but the godless man, like the moon, is inconstant.
12 Limit the time you spend among fools,
but frequent the company of thoughtful men.
13 The conversation of the wicked is offensive,
their laughter is wanton guilt.
14 Their oath-filled talk makes the hair stand on end,
their brawls make one stop one's ears.
15 Wrangling among the haughty ends in bloodshed,
their cursing is painful to hear.[l]
16 He who betrays a secret cannot be trusted,*
he will never find an intimate friend.[m]
17 Cherish your friend, keep faith with him;
but if you betray his confidence, follow him not;
18 For as an enemy might kill a man,
you have killed your neighbor's friendship.
19 Like a bird released from the hand,
you have let your friend go and cannot recapture him;
20 Follow him not, for he is far away,
he has fled like a gazelle from the trap.
21 A wound can be bound up, and an insult forgiven,
but he who betrays secrets does hopeless damage.[n]

### Malice, Anger and Vengeance

22 He who has shifty eyes plots mischief
and no one can ward him off;
23 In your presence he uses honeyed talk,
and admires your every word,
But later he changes his tone
and twists your words to your ruin.[o]
24 There is nothing that I hate so much,
and the LORD hates him as well.[p]
25 As a stone falls back on him who throws it up,[q]
so a blow struck in treachery injures more than one.
26 As he who digs a pit falls into it,
and he who lays a snare is caught in it,
27 Whoever does harm will be involved in it
without knowing how it came upon him.

28 Mockery and abuse will be the lot of the proud,
and vengeance lies in wait for them like a lion.
29 The trap seizes those who rejoice in pitfalls,
and pain will consume them before they die;
30 Wrath and anger are hateful things,
yet the sinner hugs them tight.

## CHAPTER 28

1 The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance,
for he remembers their sins in detail.[r]
2 Forgive your neighbor's injustice;
then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.[s]

Ch 28 See RG 285

**27, 16—28, 11:** Betrayal of confidence through indiscretion destroys friendship and does irreparable harm (16–21); cf Sir 22, 22. False friendship based on hypocrisy and deceit is hateful to God and man (22ff); it soon becomes a victim of its own treachery (25ff). The same fate awaits the malicious and vengeful (27, 28—28, 1). They can obtain mercy and forgiveness only by first forgiving their neighbor, being mindful of death and of the commandments of the Most High (28, 2–7). And they must avoid quarrels and strife (8–11).

j 1 Pt 1, 7. k Mt 7, 20. l Sir 23, 9–15. m Prv 11, 13; 20, 19. n Sir 22, 20. o Prv 26, 24ff. p Prv 6, 13. 16. q 25f: Ps 7, 16f; Prv 26, 27: Eccl 10, 8. r Dt 32, 35; Rom 12, 19. s Mt 6, 14.

3 Should a man nourish anger against his fellows
and expect healing from the LORD? [t]
4 Should a man refuse mercy to his fellows,
yet seek pardon for his own sins?
5 If he who is but flesh cherishes wrath,
who will forgive his sins?
6 Remember your last days, set enmity aside;
remember death and decay, and cease from sin! [u]
7 Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor;
of the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

8 Avoid strife and your sins will be fewer,
for a quarrelsome man kindles disputes,
9 Commits the sin of disrupting friendship
and sows discord among those at peace. [v]
10 The more wood, the greater the fire, [w]
the more underlying it, the fiercer the fight;
The greater a man's strength, the sterner his anger,
the greater his power, the greater his wrath.
11 Pitch and resin make fires flare up,
and insistent quarrels provoke bloodshed.

### The Evil Tongue*

12 If you blow upon a spark, it quickens into flame,
if you spit on it, it dies out;
yet both you do with your mouth!
13 Cursed be gossips and the double-tongued,
for they destroy the peace of many. [x]
14 A meddlesome tongue subverts many,
and makes them refugees among the peoples;
It destroys walled cities,
and overthrows powerful dynasties.
15 A meddlesome tongue can drive virtuous women from their homes
and rob them of the fruit of their toil;
16 Whoever heeds it has no rest,
nor can he dwell in peace.

17 A blow from a whip raises a welt,
but a blow from the tongue smashes bones;
18 Many have fallen by the edge of the sword,
but not as many as by the tongue. [y]
19 Happy he who is sheltered from it,
and has not endured its wrath;
Who has not borne its yoke
nor been fettered with its chains;
20 For its yoke is a yoke of iron
and its chains are chains of bronze!
21 Dire is the death it inflicts,
besides which even the nether world is a gain;
22 It will not take hold among the just
nor scorch them in its flame,
23 But those who forsake the LORD will fall victims to it,
as it burns among them unquenchably!
It will hurl itself against them like a lion;
like a panther, it will tear them to pieces.
24 As you hedge round your vineyard with thorns,
set barred doors over your mouth; [z]
25 As you seal up your silver and gold,
so balance and weigh your words.
26 Take care not to slip by your tongue
and fall victim to your foe waiting in ambush.

## CHAPTER 29

### Loans, Alms and Surety*

Ch 29
See RG
285

1 He does a kindness who lends to his neighbor,
and he fulfills the precepts who holds out a helping hand. [a]
2 Lend to your neighbor in his hour of need,

**28, 12–26:** Further treatment of sins of the tongue and their havoc; cf Sir 5, 12—6, 1; 19, 5–16; 20, 17–25; 23, 7–15. Gossips and the double-tongued destroy domestic peace (12–16). The whip, the sword, chains, even the nether world, are not so cruel as the suffering inflicted by an evil tongue (17–21). Not the just but those who forsake the Lord are victims of their evil tongues (22f). Therefore, guard your mouth and tongue as you would guard treasure against an enemy (24ff).

**29, 1–20:** Some practical maxims concerning the use of wealth. Give to a poor man (8f), lend to a needy neighbor, but repay when a loan falls due lest the lender's burden be increased (1–5) and his kindness abused (6f); through charity build up defense against evil (10–13). Go surety for your neighbor according to your means, but take care (20) not to fall, for the shameless play false and bring their protectors and themselves to misfortune and ruin (14–19).

t Mt 18, 23ff. u Sir 7, 36; 38, 20. v Prv 15, 18. w 10ff: Prv 26, 20f. x Sir 5, 16f. y Jas 3, 5ff. z Sir 22, 27; Ps 141, 3. a Dt 15, 8; Ps 112, 5; Prv 19, 17.

and pay back your neighbor when a loan
falls due;[b]
3 Keep your promise, be honest with him,
and you will always come by what you
need.
4 Many a man who asks for a loan
adds to the burdens of those who help him;
5 When he borrows, he kisses the lender's hand
and speaks with respect of his creditor's
wealth;
But when payment is due he disappoints him
and says he is helpless to meet the claim.
6 If the lender is able to recover barely half,
he considers this an achievement;
If not, he is cheated of his wealth
and acquires an enemy at no extra charge;
With curses and insults the borrower pays him
back,
with abuse instead of honor.
7 Many refuse to lend, not out of meanness,
but from fear of being cheated.

8 To a poor man, however, be generous;
keep him not waiting for your alms;
9 Because of the precept, help the needy,
and in their want, do not send them away
empty-handed.[c]

10 Spend your money for your brother and friend,
and hide it not under a stone to
perish;
11 Dispose of your treasure as the Most High
commands,
for that will profit you more than the
gold.[d]
12 Store up almsgiving in your treasure house,
and it will save you from every evil;
13 Better than a stout shield and a sturdy spear
it will fight for you against the foe.

14 A good man goes surety for his neighbor,
and only the shameless would play him
false;[e]
15 Forget not the kindness of your backer,
for he offers his very life for you.
16 The wicked turn a pledge on their behalf into
misfortune,
and the ingrate abandons his protector;
17 Going surety has ruined many prosperous men
and tossed them about like waves of the
sea,[f]
18 Has exiled men of prominence
and sent them wandering through foreign
lands.
19 The sinner through surety comes to grief,
and he who undertakes too much falls into
lawsuits.
20 Go surety for your neighbor according to your
means,
but take care lest you fall thereby.

### Frugality and Its Rewards*

21 Life's prime needs are water, bread, and
clothing,
a house, too, for decent privacy.[g]
22 Better a poor man's fare under the shadow of
one's own roof
than sumptuous banquets among
strangers.[h]
23 Be it little or much, be content with what you
have,
and pay no heed to him who would
disparage your home;
24 A miserable life it is to go from house to
house,
for as a guest you dare not open your
mouth.
25 The visitor has no thanks for filling the cups;
besides, you will hear these bitter
words:
26 "Come here, stranger, set the table,
give me to eat the food you have!
27 Away, stranger, for one more worthy;
for my brother's visit I need the room!"
28 Painful things to a sensitive man
are abuse at home and insults from his
creditors.

**29, 21–28:** The man who provides his own basic needs of food, clothing and dwelling, and is content with what he has, preserves his freedom and self-respect (21ff). But if he lives as a guest, even among the rich, he exposes himself to insult and abuse (24–28).

b Ex 22, 24ff; Lv 25, 36; Mt 5, 42. c Sir 4, 1ff; Lv 19, 9f; 23, 22; Dt 15, 8. d Sir 17, 17; Tb 4, 7ff. e Sir 8, 13. f Prv 6, 1f; 11, 15. g Sir 39, 26. h Sir 40, 29.

## CHAPTER 30

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### The Training of Children*

1 He who loves his son chastises him often,
that he may be his joy when he grows up.[i]
2 He who disciplines his son will benefit from him,
and boast of him among his intimates.
3 He who educates his son makes his enemy jealous,
and shows his delight in him among his friends.
4 At the father's death, he will seem not dead,
since he leaves after him one like himself,
5 Whom he looks upon through life with joy,
and even in death, without regret:
6 The avenger he leaves against his foes,
and the one to repay his friends with kindness.

7 He who spoils his son will have wounds to bandage,
and will quake inwardly at every outcry.
8 A colt untamed turns out stubborn;
a son left to himself grows up unruly.
9 Pamper your child and he will be a terror for you,
indulge him and he will bring you grief.
10 Share not in his frivolity lest you share in his sorrow,
when finally your teeth are clenched in remorse.
11 Give him not his own way in his youth,
and close not your eyes to his follies.
12 Bend him to the yoke when he is young,
thrash his sides while he is still small,
Lest he become stubborn, disobey you,
and leave you disconsolate.[j]

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13 Discipline your son, make heavy his yoke,
lest his folly humiliate you.

### Health of Soul and Body*

14 Better a poor man strong and robust,
than a rich man with wasted frame.
15 More precious than gold is health and well-being,
contentment of spirit than coral.
16 No treasure greater than a healthy body;
no happiness, than a joyful heart!
17 Preferable is death to a bitter life,[k]
unending sleep to constant illness.*
18 Dainties set before one who cannot eat
are like the offerings placed before a tomb.[l]
19 What good is an offering to an idol
that can neither taste nor smell?
20 So it is with the afflicted man
who groans at the good things his eyes behold!

21 Do not give in to sadness,
torment not yourself with brooding;[m]
22 Gladness of heart is the very life of man,
cheerfulness prolongs his days.
23 Distract yourself, renew your courage,
drive resentment far away from you;
For worry has brought death to many,
nor is there aught to be gained from resentment.[n]
24 Envy and anger shorten one's life,
worry brings on premature old age.
25 One who is cheerful and gay while at table
benefits from his food.[o]

## CHAPTER 31

### The Proper Attitude toward Riches*

1 Keeping watch over riches wastes the flesh,
and the care of wealth drives away rest.

**30, 1–13:** Sound discipline and careful education of children correct frivolity and stubbornness, prevent remorse and humiliation, and bring to parents lasting joy and delight, prestige among friends, jealousy of enemies, perpetuation and vindication of themselves through their offspring (1–6). Lack of discipline and overindulgence of children bring sorrow and disappointment, terror and grief (7–13).

**30, 14–25:** Health of mind and body and joy of heart are judged more precious than wealth (14ff); bitterness, constant illness and affliction more difficult to bear than death (17–20). Sadness, resentment, anxiety, envy and anger shorten . . . life; they should be dispelled by cheerfulness and gladness of heart, which help to prolong one's days (21–25).

**30, 17:** Preferable is death . . . constant illness: the true value of human suffering was revealed through the passion and death of Christ. It serves as reparation for sin, and when united with Christ's suffering, as merit for eternal life.

**31, 1–11:** Solicitude for acquiring wealth and anxiety over preserving it disturb repose and easily lead to sin and ruin (1–7). Cf Mt 6, 25–34. A rich man who has not sinned or been seduced by wealth is worthy of praise (8–11).

i Prv 13, 24; 23, 13; 29, 15; Heb 12, 7. j Sir 7, 23. k Sir 41, 2. l Tb 4, 17. m Sir 38, 20; Prv 12, 25; 15, 13; 17, 22. n Sir 38, 18f. o Prv 15, 15.

2 Concern for one's livelihood banishes slumber;
more than a serious illness it disturbs repose.*
3 The rich man labors to pile up wealth,
and his only rest is wanton pleasure;
4 The poor man toils for a meager subsistence,
and if ever he rests, he finds himself in want.
5 The lover of gold will not be free from sin,
for he who pursues wealth is led astray by it.
6 Many have been ensnared by gold,
though destruction lay before their eyes; [p]
7 It is a stumbling block to those who are avid for it,
a snare for every fool.

8 Happy the rich man found without fault,*
who turns not aside after gain! [q]
9 Who is he, that we may praise him?
he, of all his kindred, has done wonders,
10 For he has been tested by gold and come off safe,
and this remains his glory;
He could have sinned but did not,
could have done evil but would not,
11 So that his possessions are secure,
and the assembly recounts his praises. [r]

### Table Etiquette*

12 If you are dining with a great man,
bring not a greedy gullet to his table,
Nor cry out, "How much food there is here!"
13 Remember that gluttony is evil.
No creature is greedier than the eye:
therefore it weeps for any cause. [s]
15 Recognize that your neighbor feels as you do,
and keep in mind your own dislikes:
14 Toward what he eyes, do not put out a hand;
nor reach when he does for the same dish.
16 Behave at table like a favored guest,
and be not greedy, lest you be despised.
17 Be the first to stop, as befits good manners;
gorge not yourself, lest you give offense. [t]
18 If there are many with you at table,
be not the first to reach out your hand.
19 Does not a little suffice for a well-bred man?
When he lies down, it is without discomfort. [u]
20 Distress and anguish and loss of sleep,
and restless tossing for the glutton!
Moderate eating ensures sound slumber
and a clear mind next day on rising.
21 If perforce you have eaten too much,
once you have emptied your stomach,* you will have relief.
22 Listen to me, my son, and scorn me not;
later you will find my advice good.
In whatever you do, be moderate,
and no sickness will befall you.
23 On a man generous with food, blessings are invoked,
and this testimony to his goodness is lasting; [v]
24 He who is miserly with food is denounced in public,
and this testimony to his stinginess is lasting.
25 Let not wine-drinking be the proof of your strength,
for wine has been the ruin of many.
26 As the furnace probes the work of the smith,
so does wine the hearts of the insolent.
27 Wine is very life to man
if taken in moderation.
Does he really live who lacks the wine
which was created for his joy? [w]
28 Joy of heart, good cheer and merriment
are wine drunk freely at the proper time.
29 Headache, bitterness and disgrace

**31, 2:** The Hebrew adds a verse that seems out of place here: "A faithful comrade drives away reproach, and the friend who keeps secrets is as dear as life."

**31, 8ff:** The church in her liturgy applies this passage to holy confessors of the Faith.

**31, 12—32, 13:** A man observing etiquette at table avoids greed and selfishness (31, 12f), is considerate of a neighbor's likes and dislikes and generous toward him (14f. 23f), observes proper manners (16ff), is moderate in eating and drinking (19–22. 25–30). A good host makes himself one with his guests, is solicitous for them (32, 1f), provides conversation and diversion (3–6), is modest in speech (7f. 10), is respectful of elders (9), polite in comportment and grateful to God for his favors (11ff).

**31, 21:** Emptied your stomach: the practice of induced vomiting, well-known among pagan Romans, and less well-known among the Jews, seems to be referred to here.

p Sir 8, 2. q Sir 5, 1. 10. r Prv 29, 14. s Sir 37, 28ff; Prv 23, 1f. t Sir 37, 29. u Eccl 5, 11. v Prv 22, 9. w Ps 104, 15; 1 Tm 5, 23.

is wine drunk amid anger and strife.
30 More and more wine is a snare for the fool;
it lessens his strength and multiplies his wounds.
31 Rebuke not your neighbor when wine is served,
nor put him to shame while he is merry;
Use no harsh words with him
and distress him not in the presence of others.

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1 If you are chosen to preside at dinner, be not puffed up,
but with the guests be as one of themselves;
Take care of them first before you sit down;
2 when you have fulfilled your duty, then take your place,
To share in their joy
and win praise for your hospitality.
3 Being older, you may talk; that is only your right,
but temper your wisdom, not to disturb the singing.
4 When wine is present, do not pour out discourse,
and flaunt not your wisdom at the wrong time.
5 Like a seal of carnelian in a setting of gold
is a concert when wine is served.
6 Like a gold mounting with an emerald seal
is string music with delicious wine.

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7 Young man, speak only when necessary,[x]
when they have asked you more than once;
8 Be brief, but say much in those few words,
be like the wise man, taciturn.
9 When among your elders be not forward,
and with officials be not too insistent.
10 Like the lightning that flashes before a storm
is the esteem that shines on modesty.
11 When it is time to leave, tarry not;
be off for home! There take your ease,
12 And there enjoy doing as you wish,
but without sin or words of pride.
13 Above all, give praise to your Creator,
who showers his favors upon you.

### The Providence of God

14 He who would find God must accept discipline;*
he who seeks him obtains his request.[y]
15 He who studies the law masters it,
but the hypocrite finds it a trap.[z]
16 His judgment is sound who fears the LORD;
out of obscurity he draws forth a clear plan.[a]
17 The sinner turns aside reproof
and distorts the law to suit his purpose.[b]
18 The thoughtful man will not neglect direction;
the proud and insolent man is deterred by nothing.
19 Do nothing without counsel,
and then you need have no regrets.[c]
20 Go not on a way that is set with snares,
and let not the same thing trip you twice.
21 Be not too sure even of smooth roads,
22 be careful on all your paths.
23 Whatever you do, be on your guard,
for in this way you will keep the commandments.
24 He who keeps the law preserves himself;
and he who trusts in the LORD shall not be put to shame.

## CHAPTER 33

1 No evil can harm the man who fears the LORD;
through trials, again and again he is safe.[d]
2 He who hates the law is without wisdom,
and is tossed about like a boat in a storm.
3 The prudent man trusts in the word of the LORD,
and the law is dependable for him as a divine oracle.*
4 Prepare your words and you will be listened to;

**32, 14—33, 4:** God is shown to reveal himself through the discipline of his law, a clear and safe plan of life for the pious Jew of old. Direction and counsel are aids in following it (14ff. 18–24; 33, 1. 3f). Sinners and hypocrites, hating the law or distorting it, fail in wisdom and are devoid of security (32, 15. 17f; 33, 2).

**33, 3:** Oracle: as the answer given through the Urim and Thummim to the high priest is true, so the law proves itself true to him who obeys it. Cf Ex 28, 30; Nm 27, 21.

x 7ff: Sir 7, 14. y Sir 4, 13. z Sir 2, 16. a Ps 37, 6. b Sir 21, 6; Prv 12, 1. c Sir 37, 16; Tb 4, 18. d Ps 91, 10.

draw upon your training, and then give
your answer.

5 Like the wheel of a cart is the mind of a fool;*
his thoughts revolve in circles.
6 A fickle friend is like the stallion
that neighs, no matter who the rider.
7 Why is one day more important than another,
when it is the sun that lights up every day?
8 It is due to the LORD's wisdom that they
differ;
it is through him the seasons and feasts
come and go. [e]
9 Some he dignifies and sanctifies,
and others he lists as ordinary days.[f]
10 So too, all men are of clay,
for from earth man was formed; [g]
11 Yet with his great knowledge the LORD makes
men unlike;
in different paths he has them walk.
12 Some he blesses and makes great,
some he sanctifies and draws to himself.
Others he curses and brings low,
and expels them from their place.
13 Like clay in the hands of a potter,
to be molded according to his pleasure,
So are men in the hands of their Creator,
to be assigned by him their function. [h]
14 As evil contrasts with good, and death with
life,
so are sinners in contrast with the just; [i]
15 See now all the works of the Most High:
they come in pairs, the one the opposite of
the other.

16 Now I am the last to keep vigil,*
like a gleaner after the vintage;
17 Since by the LORD's blessing I have made
progress
till like a vintager I have filled my
winepress,
18 I would inform you that not for myself only
have I toiled,
but for every seeker after wisdom.

### Property and Servants*

19 Listen to me, O leaders of the multitude;
O rulers of the assembly, give ear! [j]
20 Let neither son nor wife, neither brother nor
friend,
have power over you as long as you live.
21 While breath of life is still in you,
let no man have dominion over you.
Give not to another your wealth,
lest then you have to plead with him;
22 Far better that your children plead with you
than that you should look to their
generosity.
23 Keep control over all your affairs;
let no one tarnish your glory.
24 When your few days reach their limit,
at the time of death distribute your
inheritance.

25 Fodder and whip and loads for an ass;
the yoke and harness and the rod of his
master.
27 Food, correction and work for a slave;
and for a wicked slave, punishment in the
stocks.
26 Make a slave work and he will look for his
rest;
let his hands be idle and he will seek to be
free. [k]
28 Force him to work that he be not idle,
for idleness is an apt teacher of mischief.
29 Put him to work, for that is what befits him;
if he becomes unruly, load him with chains.
30 But never lord it over any human being,
and do nothing unjust.
31 If you have but one slave, treat him like
yourself,

**33, 5–15:** Contrasts observable in the physical universe as well as in the moral order serve the purposes of divine wisdom (5–9). All creatures are like clay . . . in the hands of their Creator—the fool and the wise man, the sinner, and the just (10–15). This does not imply that man is created to be a sinner: God is not the author of wickedness. Cf Jas 1, 13f.

**33, 16ff:** Here the author refers to himself as the most recent of the writers who have endeavored to present true wisdom to their readers.

**33, 19–33:** Public officials should reject every influence that would restrict their freedom in the management of their affairs. They must make their own household subservient to them rather than be subservient to it (19–24). Slaves are to be given food and work and correction but never to be treated unjustly (25–29). Great care should be taken of good slaves (30–33).

e Gn 1, 14. f Ex 20, 11. g Gn 2, 7. h Wis 15, 7; Jer 18, 1–6; Rom 9, 20f. i Sir 42, 25. j Wis 6, 1f. k Prv 29, 19.

for you have acquired him with your life's
blood; [l]
32 If you have but one slave, deal with him as a
brother,
for you need him as you need your life:
33 If you mistreat him and he runs away,
in what direction will you look for
him?

## CHAPTER 34

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### Trust in the Lord and Not in Dreams*

1 Empty and false are the hopes of the senseless,
and fools are borne aloft by dreams.
2 Like a man who catches at shadows or chases
the wind,
is the one who believes in dreams.
3 What is seen in dreams is to reality
what the reflection of a face is to the face
itself.
4 Can the unclean produce the clean?
can the liar ever speak the truth? [m]
5 Divination, omens and dreams all are unreal;
what you already expect, the mind depicts.
6 Unless it be a vision specially sent by the Most
High,
fix not your heart on it;
7 For dreams have led many astray,
and those who believed in them have
perished.
8 The law is fulfilled without fail,
and perfect wisdom is found in the mouth
of the faithful man.
9 A man with training gains wide knowledge;
a man of experience speaks sense.
10 One never put to the proof knows little,
whereas with travel a man adds to his
resourcefulness.
11 I have seen much in my travels,
learned more than ever I could say.
12 Often I was in danger of death,
but by these attainments I was saved.
13 Lively is the courage of those who fear the
LORD,
for they put their hope in their savior;
14 He who fears the LORD is never alarmed,
never afraid; for the LORD is his hope. [n]
15 Happy the soul that fears the LORD!
In whom does he trust, and who is his
support?
16 The eyes of the LORD are upon those who love
him;
he is their mighty shield and strong support,
A shelter from the heat, a shade from the
noonday sun,
a guard against stumbling, a help against
falling. [o]
17 He buoys up the spirits, brings a sparkle to the
eyes,
gives health and life and blessing.

### True Worship of God*

18 Tainted his gifts who offers in sacrifice
ill-gotten goods!
Mock presents from the lawless win not
God's favor. [p]
19 The Most High approves not the gifts of the
godless,
nor for their many sacrifices does he forgive
their sins.
20 Like the man who slays a son in his father's
presence
is he who offers sacrifice from the
possessions of the poor.
21 The bread of charity is life itself for the
needy; [q]
he who withholds it is a man of blood.
22 He slays his neighbor who deprives him of his
living;
he sheds blood who denies the laborer his
wages.
23 If one man builds up and another tears down,
what do they gain but trouble?
24 If one man prays and another curses,

**34, 1–17:** Confidence placed in dreams, divinations and omens is false because these are devoid of reality (1–8). True confidence is founded on knowledge and experience (9–12), and above all on the fear of the Lord, with its accompanying blessings of divine assistance and protection (13–17).

**34, 18–26:** To be acts of true religion, sacrifice and penance must be accompanied by the proper moral dispositions. To offer to God goods taken from the poor (18–22), or to practice penance without interior reform, is a mockery, worthless in the sight of God (23–26). Cf Mt 15, 4–7; Mk 7, 9–13.

l Sir 7, 21. m Jb 14, 4. n Pss 23, 4; 112, 7f; Prv 3, 23ff; 28, 1. o Pss 33, 18; 34, 16. p Sir 35, 11; Prv 21, 27. q 21f: Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 14f; Tb 4, 14.

whose voice will the LORD hear?
25 If a man again touches a corpse after he has bathed,
what did he gain by the purification?[r]
26 So with a man who fasts for his sins,
but then goes and commits them again:
Who will hear his prayer,
and what has he gained by his mortification?

## CHAPTER 35*

1 To keep the law is a great oblation,[s]
and he who observes the commandments sacrifices a peace offering.
2 In works of charity one offers fine flour,*
and when he gives alms he presents his sacrifice of praise.
3 To refrain from evil pleases the LORD,
and to avoid injustice is an atonement.
4 Appear not before the LORD empty-handed,
for all that you offer is in fulfillment of the precepts.[t]
5 The just man's offering enriches the altar
and rises as a sweet odor before the Most High.
6 The just man's sacrifice is most pleasing,
nor will it ever be forgotten.
7 In generous spirit pay homage to the LORD,
be not sparing of freewill gifts.[u]
8 With each contribution show a cheerful countenance,
and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy.[v]
9 Give to the Most High as he has given to you,
generously, according to your means.

10 For the LORD is one who always repays,
and he will give back to you sevenfold.[w]
11 But offer no bribes, these he does not accept!
Trust not in sacrifice of the fruits of extortion,[x]
12 For he is a God of justice,
who knows no favorites.[y]
13 Though not unduly partial toward the weak,
yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.*
14 He is not deaf to the wail of the orphan,[z]
nor to the widow when she pours out her complaint;

15 Do not the tears that stream down her cheek
cry out against him that causes them to fall?
16 He who serves God willingly is heard;
his petition reaches the heavens.
17 The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds;
it does not rest till it reaches its goal,
18 Nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds,
judges justly and affirms the right.

19 God indeed will not delay,
and like a warrior, will not be still[a]
20 Till he breaks the backs of the merciless
and wreaks vengeance upon the proud;
21 Till he destroys the haughty root and branch,
and smashes the scepter of the wicked;
22 Till he requites mankind according to its deeds,
and repays men according to their thoughts;
23 Till he defends the cause of his people,
and gladdens them by his mercy.
24 Welcome is his mercy in time of distress
as rain clouds in time of drought.

## CHAPTER 36

### A Prayer for God's People*

1 Come to our aid, O God of the universe,
and put all the nations in dread of you!
2 Raise your hand against the heathen,
that they may realize your power.
3 As you have used us to show them your holiness,

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**35, 1–24:** Keeping the commandments of the law and avoiding injustice constitute sacrifice pleasing and acceptable to God (1ff). Offerings also should be made to him, cheerfully and generously; these he repays . . . sevenfold (4–10). Extortion from widows and orphans is injustice, which God quickly repays (11–18). Punishing the proud and the merciless and coming to the aid of the distressed, he requites all according to their deeds (19–24).

**35, 2:** Fine flour, together with oil and frankincense, was a prescribed offering to God; cf Lv 2, 1ff.

**35, 13:** Cf Lv 19, 15.

**36, 1–17:** Making an act of faith and hope in the supreme Lord of the universe, the author begs God to continue manifesting his holiness and mercy through Israel, his people (1ff. 10–13), and his power and justice through the punishment of the nations (2. 5–9), that all the earth may acknowledge him the eternal God (4. 14–17).

r Nm 19, 11f; Prv 26, 11; 2 Pt 2, 22. s 1ff: 1 Sm 15, 22; Ps 51, 18f; Is 1, 11–18; Hos 6, 6; Am 5, 21–24. t Ex 23, 15; 34, 20; Dt 16, 16. u Sir 7, 31. v 2 Cor 9, 7. w Prv 19, 17. x Sir 34, 18f; Prv 21, 27. y Dt 10, 17; 2 Chr 19, 7; Jb 34, 19; Wis 6, 7; Acts 10, 34; Rom 2, 11; Gal 2, 6; 1 Pt 1, 17. z 14f: Ex 22, 22. a Is 42, 13ff: 2 Pt 3, 9.

so now use them to show us your glory.
4 Thus they will know, as we know,
that there is no God but you.

5 Give new signs and work new wonders;
show forth the splendor of your right hand and arm;
6 Rouse your anger, pour out wrath,
humble the enemy, scatter the foe.[b]
7 Hasten the day, bring on the time;
9 crush the heads of the hostile rulers.
8 Let raging fire consume the fugitive,
and your people's oppressors meet destruction.
10 Gather all the tribes of Jacob,
that they may inherit the land as of old.
11 Show mercy to the people called by your name;
Israel, whom you named your first-born.[c]
12 Take pity on your holy city,
Jerusalem, your dwelling place.[d]
13 Fill Zion with your majesty,
your temple with your glory.

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14 Give evidence of your deeds of old;
fulfill the prophecies spoken in your name,
15 Reward those who have hoped in you,
and let your prophets be proved true.
16 Hear the prayer of your servants,
for you are ever gracious to your people;
17 Thus it will be known to the very ends of the earth
that you are the eternal God.

### Choice of Associates*

18 The throat can swallow any food,
yet some foods are more agreeable than others;
19 As the palate tests meat by its savor,
so does a keen mind insincere words.
20 A deceitful character causes grief,
but an experienced man can turn the tables on him.
21 Though any man may be accepted as a husband,
yet one girl will be more suitable than another:
22 A woman's beauty makes her husband's face light up,
for it surpasses all else that charms the eye;[e]
23 And if, besides, her speech is kindly,
his lot is beyond that of mortal men.
24 A wife is her husband's richest treasure,
a helpmate, a steadying column.[f]
25 A vineyard with no hedge will be overrun;
a man with no wife becomes a homeless wanderer.
26 Who will trust an armed band
that shifts from city to city?
27 Or a man who has no nest,
but lodges where night overtakes him?[g]

## CHAPTER 37

1 Every friend declares his friendship,
but there are friends who are friends in name only.[h]
2 Is it not a sorrow unto death
when your bosom companion becomes your enemy?
3 "Alas, my companion! Why were you created
to blanket the earth with deceit?"
4 A false friend will share your joys,
but in time of trouble he stands afar off.
5 A true friend will fight with you against the foe,
against your enemies he will be your shield-bearer.
6 Forget not your comrade during the battle,
and neglect him not when you distribute your spoils.

7 Every counselor points out a way,
but some counsel ways of their own;
8 Be on the alert when one proffers advice,
find out first of all what he wants.

**36, 18—37, 15:** In the choice of wife, friend or associate, experience is a discerner of character (18–21). Beauty and kindly speech make a woman desirable as wife (22f). The good wife becomes her husband's richest treasure, his helpmate in establishing his household (24–27). A true friend fights for his comrade and shares his spoils with him (37, 5f); a false one deceives and abandons him in time of need (1–4). A true counselor and associate should be sought among those who keep the commandments, not among those who break them and seek their own advantage (7–12). In all things pray to God for light and follow conscience (13ff).

b Ps 79, 6. c Ex 4, 22. d 2 Chr 6, 41; Ps 132, 8. 14; Is 2, 1ff; Mi 4, 1ff. e Sir 26, 13ff. f Gn 2, 18; Prv 18, 22. g Prv 27, 8. h Sir 6, 7ff.

For he may be thinking of himself alone;
why should the profit fall to him?
9 He may tell you how good your way will be,
and then stand by to watch your
misfortune.
10 Seek no advice from one who regards you
with hostility;
from those who envy you, keep your
intentions hidden.
11 Speak not to a woman about her rival,
nor to a coward about war,
to a merchant about business,
to a buyer about value,
to a miser about generosity,
to a cruel man about mercy,
to a lazy man about work,
to a seasonal laborer about the harvest,
to an idle slave about a great task:
pay no attention to any advice they give.
12 Instead, associate with a religious man,
who you are sure keeps the
commandments;
Who is like-minded with yourself
and will feel for you if you fall.
13 Then, too, heed your own heart's counsel;
for what have you that you can depend on
more?
14 A man's conscience can tell him his situation
better than seven watchmen in a lofty
tower.
15 Most important of all, pray to God
to set your feet in the path of truth.

### Wisdom and Temperance

16 A word is the source of every deed;*
a thought, of every act. [i]
17 The root of all conduct is the mind;
four branches it shoots forth:
18 Good and evil, death and life,
their absolute mistress is the tongue. [j]
19 A man may be wise and benefit many,
yet be of no use to himself.
20 Though a man may be wise, if his words are
rejected
he will be deprived of all enjoyment.
21 When a man is wise to his own advantage,
the fruits of his knowledge are seen in his
own person;
22 When a man is wise to his people's advantage,
the fruits of his knowledge are enduring: [k]
23 Limited are the days of one man's life,
but the life of Israel is days without number.
24 One wise for himself has full enjoyment,
and all who see him praise him;
25 One wise for his people wins a heritage of
glory,
and his name endures forever. [l]

26 My son, while you are well, govern your
appetite*
so that you allow it not what is bad for you;
27 For not every food is good for everyone,
nor is everything suited to every taste. [m]
28 Be not drawn after every enjoyment, [n]
neither become a glutton for choice foods,
29 For sickness comes with overeating,
and gluttony brings on biliousness.
30 Through lack of self-control many have died,
but the abstemious man prolongs his life.

## CHAPTER 38

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### Sickness and Death

1 Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential
to you,*
and God it was who established his
profession.
2 From God the doctor has his wisdom,
and the king provides for his sustenance.
3 His knowledge makes the doctor
distinguished,

**37, 16–25:** Thoughts determine action. Wisdom is the source of good and life; folly, of evil and death (16ff). If the fruits of a man's wisdom benefit himself, he may be praised in his own lifetime; if they benefit his people, his praise endures after him, in their lives (19–25).

**37, 26–30:** Temperance and self-control should govern a man's appetite for food, which is intended not to destroy but to preserve life.

**38, 1–15:** The profession of medicine comes from God, who makes the earth yield healing herbs and gives the physician knowledge of their virtue (1–8). In illness the sick man should cleanse his soul from sin and petition God for help through an offering of sacrifice; the physician, too, does well to invoke God that he may understand the illness and apply the proper remedy (9–14). The sinner, in contrast, defies both his Maker and the doctor (15).

i Sir 32, 19. j Prv 18, 21. k Sir 15, 1ff. l Sir 39, 9; 44, 13f. m 1 Cor 6, 12; 10, 23. n 28f: Sir 31, 13. 16ff.

and gives him access to those in authority.
4 God makes the earth yield healing herbs
which the prudent man should not neglect;
5 Was not the water sweetened by a twig
that men might learn his power? [o]
6 He endows men with the knowledge
to glory in his mighty works,
7 Through which the doctor eases pain
and the druggist prepares his medicines;
8 Thus God's creative work continues without cease
in its efficacy on the surface of the earth.

9 My son, when you are ill, delay not,
but pray to God, who will heal you: [p]
10 Flee wickedness; let your hands be just,
cleanse your heart of every sin;
11 Offer your sweet-smelling oblation and petition,
a rich offering according to your means. [q]
12 Then give the doctor his place
lest he leave; for you need him too.
13 There are times that give him an advantage,
14 and he too beseeches God
That his diagnosis may be correct
and his treatment bring about a cure.
15 He who is a sinner toward his Maker
will be defiant toward the doctor.

16 My son, shed tears for one who is dead*
with wailing and bitter lament;
As is only proper, prepare the body,
absent not yourself from his burial: [r]
17 Weeping bitterly, mourning fully,
pay your tribute of sorrow, as he deserves,
18 One or two days, to prevent gossip;
then compose yourself after your grief,
19 For grief can bring on an extremity
and heartache destroy one's health. [s]
20 Turn not your thoughts to him again;
cease to recall him; think rather of the end. [t]
21 Recall him not, for there is no hope of his return;
it will not help him, but will do you harm. [u]
22 Remember that his fate will also be yours;
for him it was yesterday, for you today. [v]
23 With the departed dead, let memory fade;
rally your courage, once the soul has left.

### Vocations of the Craftsman and the Scribe*

24 The scribe's profession increases his wisdom;
whoever is free from toil can become a wise man.
25 How can he become learned who guides the plow,
who thrills in wielding the goad like a lance,
Who guides the ox and urges on the bullock,
and whose every concern is for cattle?
26 His care is for plowing furrows,
and he keeps a watch on the beasts in the stalls.

27 So with every engraver and designer
who, laboring night and day,
Fashions carved seals,
and whose concern is to vary the pattern.
His care is to produce a vivid impression,
and he keeps watch till he finishes his design.

28 So with the smith standing near his anvil,
forging crude iron.
The heat from the fire sears his flesh,
yet he toils away in the furnace heat.
The clang of the hammer deafens his ears,
his eyes are fixed on the tool he is shaping.
His care is to finish his work,
and he keeps watch till he perfects it in detail.

29 So with the potter sitting at his labor
revolving the wheel with his feet.
He is always concerned for his products,

**38, 16–23:** A period of mourning for the deceased and care for their burial is becoming (16ff). But grief should not be excessive, for it neither helps the dead, who cannot return, nor fails to harm the living. The mourner's own end will quickly follow, and the time to prepare for it is now (19–23).

**38, 24—39, 11:** More excellent than the useful service of craftsmen—farmer, engraver, smith, potter (25–34)—is the profession of the scribe (24), who studies and meditates on the law of the Most High, seeks him in prayer of thanksgiving, petition and repentance for sin (39, 1. 6f), explores the wisdom of the past and present, travels abroad to observe the conduct of many peoples, and attends rulers and great men. Through the spirit of understanding granted by God, he will show forth his wisdom to the glory of God's law, gaining renown for generations to come (2–5. 8–11).

o Ex 15, 25. p Is 38, 2f. q Lv 2, 1ff. r Sir 22, 9f. s Prv 12, 25; 15, 13; 17, 22. t Sir 7, 36; 18, 24; 30, 21. u 2 Sm 12, 23; Wis 2, 1. v Jas 4, 13ff.

and turns them out in quantity.
30 With his hands he molds the clay,
and with his feet softens it.
His care is for proper coloring,
and he keeps watch on the fire of his kiln.
31 All these men are skilled with their hands,
each one an expert at his own task;
32 Without them no city could be lived in,
and wherever they stay, they need not hunger.
33 They do not occupy the judge's bench,
nor are they prominent in the assembly;
They set forth no decisions or judgments,
nor are they found among the rulers;
34 Yet they maintain God's ancient handiwork,
and their concern is for exercise of their skill.

## CHAPTER 39

1 How different the man who devotes himself
to the study of the law of the Most High!
He explores the wisdom of the men of old
and occupies himself with the prophecies;
2 He treasures the discourses of famous men,
and goes to the heart of involved sayings;
3 He studies obscure parables,
and is busied with the hidden meanings of the sages.
4 He is in attendance on the great,
and has entrance to the ruler.
5 He travels among the peoples of foreign lands
to learn what is good and evil among men.
6 His care is to seek the LORD, his Maker,
to petition the Most High,
To open his lips in prayer,
to ask pardon for his sins.
Then, if it pleases the LORD Almighty,
he will be filled with the spirit of understanding;
He will pour forth his words of wisdom
and in prayer give thanks to the LORD,
7 Who will direct his knowledge and his counsel,
as he meditates upon his mysteries.
8 He will show the wisdom of what he has learned
and glory in the law of the LORD's covenant.
9 Many will praise his understanding;
his fame can never be effaced;
Unfading will be his memory,
through all generations his name will live; [w]
10 Peoples will speak of his wisdom,
and in assembly sing his praises.
11 While he lives he is one out of a thousand,
and when he dies his renown will not cease.

### Praise of God the Creator*

12 Once more I will set forth my theme
to shine like the moon in its fullness!
13 Listen, my faithful children: open up your petals,
like roses planted near running waters;
14 Send up the sweet odor of incense,
break forth in blossoms like the lily.
Send up the sweet odor of your hymn of praise;
bless the LORD for all he has done!
15 Proclaim the greatness of his name,
loudly sing his praises,
With music on the harp and all stringed instruments;
sing out with joy as you proclaim:

16 The works of God are all of them good;
in its own time every need is supplied. [x]
17 At his word the waters become still as in a flask;
he had but to speak and the reservoirs were made. [y]
18 He has but to command and his will is done;
nothing can limit his achievement.
19 The works of all mankind are present to him;
not a thing escapes his eye. [z]
20 His gaze spans all the ages;
to him there is nothing unexpected.

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**39, 12–35:** The sage invites his disciples to join him in joyfully proclaiming his favorite theme: The works of God are all of them good; in its own time every need is supplied (12–16. 32–35). He describes God's omniscience, supreme power and wisdom, whereby all created things, good in themselves, are ever present to him, obey him, and fulfill their intended purpose (17–21), bringing blessing to the virtuous, but evil and punishment to the wicked who misuse them (22–31). Cf similar hymns of praise, Sir 36, 1–17; 42, 15—43, 35.

w Sir 37, 25; 44, 14. x Gn 1, 31; Eccl 3, 11. y Gn 1, 6–10; Ex 14, 21f; Jos 3, 16. z Sir 15, 19; 42, 20.

21 No cause then to say: "What is the purpose of this?"
Everything is chosen to satisfy a need.
22 His blessing overflows like the Nile;
like the Euphrates it enriches the surface of the earth.
23 Again, his wrath expels the nations
and turns fertile land into a salt marsh. [a]
24 For the virtuous his paths are level,
to the haughty they are steep;
25 Good things for the good he provided from the beginning,
but for the wicked good things and bad.
26 Chief of all needs for human life
are water and fire, iron and salt,
The heart of the wheat, milk and honey,
the blood of the grape, and oil, and cloth; [b]
27 For the good all these are good,
but for the wicked they turn out evil.
28 There are storm winds created to punish,
which in their fury can dislodge mountains;
When destruction must be, they hurl all their force
and appease the anger of their Maker.
29 In his treasury also, kept for the proper time,
are fire and hail, famine, disease,
30 Ravenous beasts, scorpions, vipers,
and the avenging sword to exterminate the wicked;
31 In doing his bidding they rejoice,
in their assignments they disobey not his command.
32 So from the first I took my stand,
and wrote down as my theme:
33 The works of God are all of them good;
every need when it comes he fills. [c]
34 No cause then to say: "This is not as good as that";
for each shows its worth at the proper time.

Ch 24–43
See RG
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35 So now with full joy of heart proclaim
and bless the name of the Holy One.

## CHAPTER 40

### Joys and Miseries of Life

1 A great anxiety has God allotted,*
and a heavy yoke, to the sons of men; [d]
From the day one leaves his mother's womb
to the day he returns to the mother of all the living,*
2 His thoughts, the fear in his heart,
and his troubled forebodings till the day he dies—
3 Whether he sits on a lofty throne
or grovels in dust and ashes,
4 Whether he bears a splendid crown
or is wrapped in the coarsest of cloaks—
5 Are of wrath and envy, trouble and dread,
terror of death, fury and strife.
Even when he lies on his bed to rest,
his cares at night disturb his sleep.
6 So short is his rest it seems like none,
till in his dreams he struggles as he did by day,
Terrified by what his mind's eye sees,
like a fugitive being pursued;
7 As he reaches safety, he wakes up
astonished that there was nothing to fear.
8 So it is with all flesh, with man and with beast,
but for sinners seven times more.
9 Plague and bloodshed, wrath and the sword,
plunder and ruin, famine and death: [e]
10 For the wicked, these were created evil,
and it is they who bring on destruction.

11 All that is of earth returns to earth,
and what is from above returns above.*
12 All that comes from bribes or injustice will be wiped out,

40, 1–16: The former idyllic description of the universe is contrasted with the picture of the evils afflicting humanity. Every man, high or low, is burdened from birth to death with fears, anxieties and troubles, by day and often by night, the time appointed for rest (1–7). For sinners, the suffering is much greater (8ff). What they gained by violence and injustice is quickly destroyed; but justice endures forever (14ff).

40, 1: Mother of all the living: the earth from which man was taken. Cf Gn 2, 7; 3, 19f; Jb 1, 21; Ps 139, 15.

40, 11: All that is of earth . . . returns above: a reference to bodily mortality and to the divine origin of life from the Spirit of God. Cf Sir 41, 10; Gn 2, 7; 3, 19; Jb 34, 14f; Pss 104, 29f; 146, 4; Eccl 12, 7. The Greek and the Latin render the second half of the verse: "all waters shall return to the sea."

a Jos 1, 2–6. b Sir 29, 21. c Sir 39, 16; Gn 1, 31; Eccl 3, 11. d Gn 3, 17; Jb 7, 1; 14, 1; Eccl 2, 23. e Sir 39, 28ff.

but loyalty remains for ages.
13 Wealth out of wickedness is like a wadi in spate:
like a mighty stream with lightning and thunder,
14 Which, in its rising, rolls along the stones,
but suddenly, once and for all, comes to an end.[f]
15 The offshoot of violence will not flourish,
for the root of the godless is on sheer rock;
16 Or they are like reeds on the riverbank,
withered before all other plants.
17 But goodness will never be cut off,
and justice endures forever.

Wealth or wages can make life sweet,*
but better than either is finding a treasure.
18 A child or a city will preserve one's name,
but better than either, attaining wisdom.[g]
19 Sheepfolds and orchards bring flourishing health;
but better than either, a devoted wife;
20 Wine and music delight the soul,
but better than either, conjugal love.[h]
21 The flute and the harp offer sweet melody,
but better than either, a voice that is true.
22 Charm and beauty delight the eye,
but better than either, the flowers of the field.[i]
23 A friend, a neighbor, are timely guides,
but better than either, a prudent wife.
24 A brother, a helper, for times of stress;
but better than either, charity that rescues.
25 Gold and silver make one's way secure,
but better than either, sound judgment.
26 Wealth and vigor build up confidence,
but better than either, fear of God.
Fear of the LORD leaves nothing wanting;
he who has it need seek no other support:
27 The fear of God is a paradise of blessings;
its canopy, all that is glorious.[j]
28 My son, live not the life of a beggar,*
better to die than to beg;
29 When one has to look to another's table,
his life is not really a life.
His neighbor's delicacies bring revulsion of spirit
to one who understands inward feelings:[k]
30 In the mouth of the shameless man begging is sweet,
but within him it burns like fire.

## CHAPTER 41

Ch 24–43
See RG
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1 O death! how bitter the thought of you*
for the man at peace amid his possessions,
For the man unruffled and always successful,
who still can enjoy life's pleasures.
2 O death! how welcome your sentence
to the weak man of failing strength,
Tottering and always rebuffed,
with no more sight, with vanished hope.[l]
3 Fear not death's decree for you;
remember, it embraces those before you, and those after.[m]
4 Thus God has ordained for all flesh;
why then should you reject the will of the Most High?
Whether one has lived a thousand years, a hundred, or ten,
in the nether world he has no claim on life.

5 A reprobate line are the children of sinners,[n]
and witless offspring are in the homes of the wicked.
6 Their dominion is lost to sinners' children,
and reproach abides with their descendants.
7 Children curse their wicked father,
for they suffer disgrace through him.
8 Woe to you, O sinful men,
who forsake the law of the Most High.
9 If you have children, calamity will seize them;
you will beget them only for groaning.

**40, 17–27:** Of the many treasures making life sweet, such as health, children, friends, music, vigor, the best are called true conjugal love, wisdom, and above all, fear of God; cf Sir 25, 6–11.

**40, 28ff:** Among the Jews, beggary was considered degrading to human dignity; it was agreeable only to the shameless, who had lost their sense of honor. Cf Sir 29, 22f.

**41, 1–13:** Whether death seems bitter to one who enjoys peace, success and pleasure, or welcome to one who is weak and in despair, it comes to all and must be accepted as the will of God (1–4). As the human body passes away (11), so do those who have sinned through the body and their offspring alike, who, needy and accursed, pass on with their parents as if they had never been (5–10). Only the good name of the virtuous endures (11ff).

f Sir 23, 25; Wis 4, 3ff. g Prv 19, 14. h Ps 104, 15. i Mt 6, 28f. j Is 4, 5. k Sir 29, 24. l Sir 30, 17. m Sir 38, 20ff. n 5ff: Sir 3, 9ff; Wis 3, 16–19.

When you stumble, there is lasting joy;
at death, you become a curse.
10 Whatever is of nought returns to nought,
so too the godless from void to void.[o]
11 Man's body is a fleeting thing,
but a virtuous name will never be
annihilated.[p]
12 Have a care for your name, for it will stand by
you
better than precious treasures in the
thousands;[q]
13 The boon of life is for limited days,
but a good name, for days without
number.*

Ch 42–43
See RG
283, 284

### True and False Shame*

14 My children, heed my instruction about
shame;
judge of disgrace only according to my
rules,
For it is not always well to be ashamed,
nor is it always the proper thing to blush:
15 Before father and mother be ashamed of
immorality,
before master and mistress, of falsehood;
16 Before prince and ruler, of flattery;
before the public assembly, of crime;
17 Before friend and companion, of disloyalty,
and of breaking an oath or agreement.
18 Be ashamed of theft from the people where
you settle,
and of stretching out your elbow when you
dine;
19 Of refusing to give when asked,
of defrauding another of his appointed
share,
20 Of failing to return a greeting,
and of rebuffing a friend;
21 Of gazing at a married woman,
and of entertaining thoughts about
another's wife;[r]
Of trifling with a servant girl you have,
and of violating her couch;
22 Of using harsh words with friends,
and of following up your gifts with insults;[s]
23 Of repeating what you hear,
and of betraying secrets—[t]
24 These are the things you should rightly avoid
as shameful
if you would be looked upon by everyone
with favor.

## CHAPTER 42

1 But of these things be not ashamed,
lest you sin through human respect:[u]
2 Of the law of the Most High and his precepts,
or of the sentence to be passed upon the
sinful;
3 Of sharing the expenses of a business or a
journey,
or of dividing an inheritance or property;
4 Of accuracy of scales and balances,
or of tested measures and weights;[v]
5 Of acquiring much or little,
or of bargaining in dealing with a merchant;
Of constant training of children,
or of beating the sides of a disloyal servant;[w]
6 Of a seal to keep an erring wife at home,
or of a lock placed where there are many
hands;
7 Of numbering every deposit,
or of recording all that is given or received;
8 Of chastisement of the silly and the foolish,
or of the aged and infirm answering for
wanton conduct.
Thus you will be truly cautious
and recognized by all men as discreet.

### A Father's Care for His Daughter*

9 A daughter is a treasure that keeps her father
wakeful,
and worry over her drives away rest:[x]
Lest she pass her prime unmarried,
or when she is married, lest she be disliked;

**41, 13:** After this verse many texts repeat Sir 20, 29f.

**41, 14—42, 8:** The author illustrates the subject of true and false shame with numerous and detailed examples of sin (14–24) and virtue (42, 1–8), following the norm of the commandments.

**42, 9–14:** The author considers a daughter to be a source of anxiety to her father, lest she fail to marry, or be seduced, or lest, marrying, she be disliked, prove unfaithful, or find herself sterile (9f). He is advised to keep a close watch on her at home, and on her companionship while abroad, lest he suffer on her account among the people (11–14).

o Sir 40, 11; Wis 4, 19. p Prv 10, 7. q Prv 22, 1; Eccl 7, 1. r Sir 9, 8; Mt 5, 28. s Sir 18, 14; 20, 13. t Sir 27, 16. u Prv 24, 23; Jas 2, 1. v Prv 11, 1. w Sir 30, 1–13; 33, 25–33. x Sir 7, 24f.

10 While unmarried, lest she be seduced,
or, as a wife, lest she prove unfaithful;
Lest she conceive in her father's home,
or be sterile in that of her husband.
11 Keep a close watch on your daughter,
lest she make you the sport of your enemies,
A byword in the city, a reproach among the people,
an object of derision in public gatherings.
See that there is no lattice in her room,
no place that overlooks the approaches to the house.[y]
12 Let her not parade her charms before men,[z]
or spend her time with married women;
13 For just as moths come from garments,
so harm to women comes from women:
14 Better a man's harshness than a woman's indulgence,
and a frightened daughter than any disgrace.

### The Works of God in Nature*

15 Now will I recall God's works;
what I have seen, I will describe.
At God's word were his works brought into being;
they do his will as he has ordained for them.[a]
16 As the rising sun is clear to all,
so the glory of the LORD fills all his works;
17 Yet even God's holy ones must fail
in recounting the wonders of the LORD,
Though God has given these, his hosts, the strength
to stand firm before his glory.
18 He plumbs the depths and penetrates the heart;
their innermost being he understands.
The Most High possesses all knowledge,
and sees from of old the things that are to come:
19 He makes known the past and the future,
and reveals the deepest secrets.
20 No understanding does he lack;
no single thing escapes him.[b]
21 Perennial is his almighty wisdom;
he is from all eternity one and the same,
22 With nothing added, nothing taken away;
no need of a counselor for him![c]
23 How beautiful are all his works!
even to the spark and fleeting vision!
24 The universe lives and abides forever;
to meet each need, each creature is preserved.
25 All of them differ, one from another,
yet none of them has he made in vain,
For each in turn, as it comes, is good;
can one ever see enough of their splendor?[d]

## CHAPTER 43

Ch 42–43 See RG 283, 284

1 The clear vault of the sky shines forth[e]
like heaven itself, a vision of glory.
2 The orb of the sun, resplendent at its rising:
what a wonderful work of the Most High!
3 At noon it seethes the surface of the earth,
and who can bear its fiery heat?
4 Like a blazing furnace of solid metal,
it sets the mountains aflame with its rays;
By its fiery darts the land is consumed;
the eyes are dazzled by its light.
5 Great indeed is the LORD who made it,
at whose orders it urges on its steeds.
6 The moon, too, that marks the changing times,
governing the seasons, their lasting sign,[f]
7 By which we know the feast days and fixed dates,
this light-giver which wanes in its course:
8 As its name says, each month it renews itself;
how wondrous in this change!
9 The beauty, the glory, of the heavens are the stars
that adorn with their sparkling the heights of God,[g]
10 At whose command they keep their place

**42, 15—43, 35:** These verses comprise a new section. In them the author contemplates God's power, beauty and goodness as manifested in the mighty work of creating and preserving the universe (42, 15ff. 23. 25; 43, 1–27), his omniscience (42, 18ff), his perfect wisdom (21f), his eternity (24). The conclusion is a fervent hymn of praise (43, 28–35). Cf Sir 16, 22—18, 13.

y Sir 26, 10. z 12f: Sir 9, 1–9. a Ps 77, 12f. b Sir 39, 19; Wis 1, 6–10. c Is 40, 13; Rom 11, 34. d Sir 33, 15. e 1ff: Ps 19, 2f. f Lv 23, 5; Nm 28, 11–14; Ps 81, 4. g Ps 8, 4.

and never relax in their vigils.
A weapon against the flood waters stored on high,
lighting up the firmament by its brilliance,
11 Behold the rainbow! Then bless its Maker,
for majestic indeed is its splendor; [h]
12 It spans the heavens with its glory,
this bow bent by the mighty hand of God.

13 His rebuke marks out the path for the lightning,
and speeds the arrows of his judgment to their goal.
14 At it the storehouse is opened,
and like vultures the clouds hurry forth.
15 In his majesty he gives the storm its power
and breaks off the hailstones.
16 The thunder of his voice makes the earth writhe;
before his might the mountains quake.
17 A word from him drives on the south wind,
the angry north wind, the hurricane and the storm.
18 He sprinkles the snow like fluttering birds;
it comes to settle like swarms of locusts.
19 Its shining whiteness blinds the eyes,
the mind is baffled by its steady fall.
20 He scatters frost like so much salt;
it shines like blossoms on the thornbush.
21 Cold northern blasts he sends
that turn the ponds to lumps of ice.
He freezes over every body of water,
and clothes each pool with a coat of mail.
22 When the mountain growth is scorched with heat,
and the flowering plains as though by flames,
23 The dripping clouds restore them all,
and the scattered dew enriches the parched land.
24 His is the plan that calms the deep,
and plants the islands in the sea.
25 Those who go down to the sea tell part of its story,
and when we hear them we are thunderstruck; [i]
26 In it are his creatures, stupendous, amazing,
all kinds of life, and the monsters of the deep.
27 For him each messenger succeeds,
and at his bidding accomplishes his will. [j]
28 More than this we need not add;
let the last word be, he is all in all!*
29 Let us praise him the more, since we cannot fathom him,
for greater is he than all his works;
30 Awful indeed is the LORD's majesty,
and wonderful is his power.
31 Lift up your voices to glorify the LORD,
though he is still beyond your power to praise;
32 Extol him with renewed strength,
and weary not, though you cannot reach the end:
33 For who can see him and describe him?
or who can praise him as he is? [k]
34 Beyond these, many things lie hid;
only a few of his works have we seen.
35 It is the LORD who has made all things,
and to those who fear him he gives wisdom. [l]

## CHAPTER 44

### Praise of Israel's Great Ancestors

1 Now will I praise those godly men,*
our ancestors, each in his own time:*
2 The abounding glory of the Most High's portion,
his own part, since the days of old.
Subduers of the land in kingly fashion,
men of renown for their might, [m]

Ch 44–49 See RG 283

**43, 28:** All in all: the perfections reflected in creation are found in a transcendent way in God, who alone is their source.

**44, 1—50, 24:** As in the previous section God's wisdom shone forth in the works of nature, so in these chapters it is also revealed through the history of God's people as seen in the lives of their patriarchs, prophets, priests and rulers. The example of these great men, whose virtues are here recalled, constitutes a high point of the author's teaching and illustrates his belief in the canonical Scriptures.

**44, 1–15:** The reader is here introduced to those men of Israel, later mentioned by name, who through various achievements and beneficial social activities have acquired great renown (1–8. 14f); and also to those who, though forgotten, endure through the fruit of their virtues and through their families because of God's covenant with them (9–13).

h Gn 9, 13. i Ps 104, 25–30. j Ps 33, 6. k Ps 106, 2. l Jb 28, 28. m Dt 32, 8f.

3 Or counselors in their prudence,
or seers of all things in prophecy; [n]
4 Resolute princes of the folk,
and governors with their staves;
Authors skilled in composition,
and forgers of epigrams with their spikes;
5 Composers of melodious psalms,
or discoursers on lyric themes;
6 Stalwart men, solidly established
and at peace in their own estates—
7 All these were glorious in their time,
each illustrious in his day.
8 Some of them have left behind a name
and men recount their praiseworthy deeds;
9 But of others there is no memory,
for when they ceased, they ceased.
And they are as though they had not lived,
they and their children after them.
10 Yet these also were godly men
whose virtues have not been forgotten;
11 Their wealth remains in their families,
their heritage with their descendants;
12 Through God's covenant with them their family endures,
their posterity for their sake.
13 And for all time their progeny will endure,
their glory will never be blotted out;
14 Their bodies are peacefully laid away,
but their name lives on and on. [o]
15 At gatherings their wisdom is retold,
and the assembly proclaims their praise.

### The Early Patriarchs

16 [ENOCH* walked with the LORD and was taken up, [p]
that succeeding generations might learn by his example.]
17 NOAH, found just and perfect,
renewed the race in the time of devastation. [q]
Because of his worth there were survivors,
and with a sign to him the deluge ended;
18 A lasting agreement was made with him,
that never should all flesh be destroyed.
19 ABRAHAM, father of many peoples,
kept his glory without stain: [r]
20 He observed the precepts of the Most High,
and entered into an agreement with him;
In his own flesh he incised the ordinance,*
and when tested he was found loyal. [s]
21 For this reason, God promised him with an oath
that in his descendants the nations would be blessed,
That he would make him numerous as the grains of dust,
and exalt his posterity like the stars;
That he would give them an inheritance from sea to sea,
and from the River* to the ends of the earth.
22 And for ISAAC he renewed the same promise
because of Abraham, his father.
The covenant with all his forebears was confirmed,
and the blessing rested upon the head of JACOB. [t]
23 God acknowledged him as the first-born,
and gave him his inheritance.
He fixed the boundaries for his tribes,
and their division into twelve.

## CHAPTER 45

### Praise of Moses, Aaron and Phinehas

1 From him was to spring the man*
who won the favor of all: [u]

Ch 44–49 See RG 283

**44, 16:** Enoch: because of his friendship with God and also by reason of his unusual disappearance from the earth, this prophet's renown was great among the chosen people, particularly in the two centuries just before the coming of Christ; cf Gn 5, 21–24; Heb 11, 5. The present verse is an expansion of the original text; cf Sir 49, 14.

**44, 20:** In his own flesh . . . ordinance: the covenant of circumcision; cf Gn 17, 10–14. And when tested . . . loyal: Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at the Lord's command; cf Gn 22, 9–12.

**44, 21:** The River: the Euphrates; cf Gn 2, 14.

**45, 1–5:** Moses manifested God's power through miracles (1ff), God's authority through the promulgation of the commandments and the law (5), and God's mercy through the intimacy granted him by the Lord for his own faithfulness and meekness (4f). The very personification of the old covenant, Moses was also a type of Christ, the Prophet and Legislator of the new; cf Dt 18, 15.

n Sir 39, 1. o Wis 3, 3. p Sir 49, 14; Gn 5, 18–24; Heb 11, 5. q Gn 6, 8—9, 29; Heb 11, 7. r Gn 12, 1—25, 10; Gal 3, 6; Heb 11, 8–19. s Gn 17, 10; 22, 1. t Gn 26, 3. 5. 24; 27, 28f; 28, 14. u Ex 2, 2; 11, 3; 33, 11; Nm 12, 7.

Dear to God and men,
Moses, whose memory is held in
benediction.
2 God's honor[v] devolved upon him,*
and the Lord strengthened him with fearful
powers;[w]
3 God wrought swift miracles at his words
and sustained him in the king's presence.
He gave him the commandments for his
people,
and revealed to him his glory.[x]
4 For his trustworthiness and meekness
God selected him from all mankind;[y]
5 He permitted him to hear his voice,
and led him into the cloud,
Where, face to face,* he gave him the
commandments,
the law of life and understanding,
That he might teach his precepts to Jacob,
his judgments and decrees to Israel.

6 He raised up also, like Moses in holiness,*
his brother Aaron, of the tribe of Levi.[z]
7 He made him perpetual in his office
when he bestowed on him the priesthood*
of his people;
He established him in honor
and crowned him with lofty majesty;
8 He clothed him with splendid apparel,
and adorned him with the glorious
vestments:
Breeches and tunic and robe
with pomegranates around the hem,
9 And a rustle of bells round about,
through whose pleasing sound at each step
He would be heard within the sanctuary,
and the children of his race would be
remembered;
10 The sacred vestments of gold, of violet,
and of crimson, wrought with embroidery;
The breastpiece for decision, the ephod and
cincture
11 with scarlet yarn, the work of the weaver;
Precious stones with seal engravings
in golden settings, the work of the jeweler,
To commemorate in incised letters
each of the tribes of Israel;
12 On his turban the diadem of gold,
its plate wrought with the insignia of
holiness,
Majestic, glorious, renowned for splendor,
a delight to the eyes, beauty supreme.
13 Before him, no one was adorned with these,
nor may they ever be worn by any
Except his sons and them alone,
generation after generation, for all time.
14 His cereal offering is wholly burnt
with the established sacrifice twice each
day;
15 For Moses ordained him
and anointed him with the holy oil,
In a lasting covenant with him
and with his family, as permanent as the
heavens,
That he should serve God in his priesthood
and bless his people in his name.
16 He chose him from all mankind
to offer holocausts and choice offerings,
To burn sacrifices of sweet odor for a
memorial,
and to atone for the people of Israel.
17 He gave to him his laws,
and authority to prescribe and to judge:
To teach the precepts to his people,
and the ritual to the descendants of Israel.
18 Men of other families were inflamed against
him,
were jealous of him in the desert,
The followers of Dathan and Abiram,

**45, 2:** God's honor devolved upon him: Moses was actually God's substitute in dealing with Pharaoh, hence God entrusted his own honor to Moses.

**45, 5:** Face to face: on God's intimacy with Moses, see Ex 33, 11; Nm 12, 8. St. Paul alluded to this in 1 Cor 13, 12.

**45, 6–21:** The author here expresses his reverence and esteem for the priesthood of the old covenant. He recalls God's choice of Aaron and his sons for this sublime office (6f), and describes in detail the beauty of the high priest's vestments (8–13). He relates the ordination of Aaron at the hands of Moses, his brother (15), and describes the priestly functions, of offering sacrifice to God (16), and of blessing (15), teaching, governing and judging the people (17); the inheritance of the high priest (20ff); the punishment of those families who were jealous of Aaron (18f); and the confirmation of the covenant of the priesthood with Aaron's descendants through Phinehas (23ff).

**45, 7:** The priesthood of Aaron was superseded by the priesthood of Christ; cf Heb 7, 18–28.

v Ex 7, 1—13, 22. w 2–5: Ex 7—Dt 34. x Ex 4, 17; 7, 1. y Nm 12, 3. 7. z 6ff: Ex 28f; Wis 18, 24. a Nm 16, 1ff.

and the band of Korah in their defiance.[a]
[19] But the LORD saw this and became angry,
he destroyed them in his burning wrath.
He brought down upon them a miracle,
and consumed them with his flaming fire.
[20] Then he increased the glory of Aaron[b]
and bestowed upon him his inheritance:
The sacred offerings he allotted to him,
with the showbread as his portion;
[21] The oblations of the LORD are his food,
a gift to him and his descendants.
[22] But he holds no land among the people
nor shares with them their heritage;
For the LORD himself is his portion,
his inheritance in the midst of Israel.

[23] PHINEHAS too, the son of Eleazar,
was the courageous third of his line
When, zealous for the God of all,
he met the crisis of his people[c]
And, at the prompting of his noble heart,
atoned for the children of Israel.
[24] Therefore on him again God conferred the right,
in a covenant of friendship, to provide for the sanctuary,
So that he and his descendants
should possess the high priesthood forever.
[25] For even his covenant with David,
the son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah,
Was an individual heritage through one son alone;
but the heritage of Aaron is for all his descendants.[d]

[26] And now bless the LORD
who has crowned you with glory!
May he grant you wisdom of heart
to govern his people in justice,
Lest their welfare should ever be forgotten,
or your authority, throughout all time.

## CHAPTER 46

Ch 44–49 See RG 283

### Joshua, Caleb and the Judges

[1] Valiant leader was JOSHUA, son of Nun*
assistant to Moses in the prophetic office,
Formed to be, as his name implies,
the great savior of God's chosen ones,
To punish the enemy
and to win the inheritance for Israel.[e]
[2] What glory was his when he raised his arm,
to brandish his javelin against the city![f]
[3] And who could withstand him
when he fought the battles of the LORD?*
[4] Did he not by his power stop the sun,
so that one day became two?[g]
[5] He called upon the Most High God
when his enemies beset him on all sides,
And God Most High gave answer to him
in hailstones of tremendous power,
[6] Which he rained down upon the hostile army
till on the slope he destroyed the foe;
That all the doomed nations might know
that the LORD was watching over his people's battles.
And because he was a devoted follower of God
[7] and in Moses' lifetime showed himself loyal,
He and CALEB,* son of Jephunneh,
when they opposed the rebel assembly,
Averted God's anger from the people
and suppressed the wicked complaint—[h]
[8] Because of this, they were the only two spared
from the six hundred thousand infantry,
To lead the people into their inheritance,
the land flowing with milk and honey.[i]
[9] And the strength he gave to Caleb
remained with him even in his old age
Till he won his way onto the summits of the land;
his family too received an inheritance,[j]
[10] That all the people of Jacob might know

**46, 1–6:** Joshua: whose name means "the LORD is savior" (1), was the instrument through which God delivered his people in miraculous ways (2–6) by destroying their enemies, whose land he gave to the Israelites as an inheritance (1).
**46, 3:** The battles of the Lord: cf Jos 6—10.
**46, 7–10:** Caleb, who with Joshua advised Moses and the people in the desert to conquer Canaan, despite the counsel of their companion scouts and the rebellion of the people, merited to lead the Israelites of the succeeding generation into the Promised Land. Caleb in his old age received as his inheritance a portion of land which he himself had previously conquered; cf Jos 15, 13f.

b 20f: Nm 18, 11–21; Dt 10, 9. c Nm 25, 7–13; Ps 106, 30f; 1 Mc 2, 26. 54. d 2 Sm 7, 12–16. e Ex 17, 9; Nm 27, 18; Dt 34, 9; Jos 1, 1–4. f Jos 8, 18. g Jos 10, 13. h Nm 13, 30; 14, 6. i Nm 14, 22–38. j Jos 14, 6; 15, 13.

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how good it is to be a devoted follower of
the LORD.
11 The JUDGES,* too, each one of them,
whose hearts were not deceived,
Who did not abandon God:
may their memory be ever blessed, [k]
12 Their bones return to life from their resting
place,
and their names receive fresh luster in their
children!
13 Beloved of his people, dear to his Maker,
dedicated from his mother's womb,
Consecrated to the LORD as a prophet,
was SAMUEL, the judge and priest.
At God's word he established the kingdom
and anointed princes to rule the people. [l]
14 By the law of the LORD he judged the nation,
when he visited the encampments of Jacob.
15 As a trustworthy prophet he was sought out
and his words proved him true as a seer.
16 He, too, called upon God,
and offered him a suckling lamb; [m]
17 Then the LORD thundered forth from heaven,
and the tremendous roar of his voice was
heard. [n]
18 He brought low the rulers of the enemy
and destroyed all the lords of the
Philistines.
19 When Samuel approached the end of his life,
he testified before the LORD and his
anointed prince,
"No bribe or secret gift have I taken from any
man!"
and no one dared gainsay him. [o]
20 Even when he lay buried, his guidance was
sought;
he made known to the king his fate,
And from the grave he raised his voice
as a prophet, to put an end to wickedness. [p]

## CHAPTER 47

### Nathan, David and Solomon

1 After him came NATHAN*
who served in the presence of David. [q]
2 Like the choice fat of the sacred offerings,
so was DAVID in Israel. [r]
3 He made sport of lions as though they were
kids,
and of bears, like lambs of the flock. [s]
4 As a youth he slew the giant
and wiped out the people's disgrace,
When his hand let fly the slingstone
that crushed the pride of Goliath. [t]
5 Since he called upon the Most High God,
who gave strength to his right arm
To defeat the skilled warrior
and raise up the might of his people,
6 Therefore the women sang his praises
and ascribed to him tens of thousands.
When he assumed the royal crown, he
battled [u]
7 and subdued the enemy on every side.
He destroyed the hostile Philistines
and shattered their power till our own day. [v]
8 With his every deed he offered thanks
to God Most High, in words of praise.
With his whole being he loved his Maker
and daily had his praises sung;
9 He added beauty to the feasts
and solemnized the seasons of each year
With string music before the altar,
providing sweet melody for the psalms [w]
10 So that when the Holy Name was praised,
before daybreak the sanctuary would
resound.
11 The LORD forgave him his sins
and exalted his strength forever;
He conferred on him the rights of royalty
and established his throne in Israel. [x]

**46, 11–20:** Of the Judges praised and blessed for their fidelity to God in opposing idolatry, Samuel, a man of spotless integrity, was the greatest (11f. 19). He was judge of the entire nation, and was also a prophet and priest who through his sacrificial offering obtained victory over the Philistines. He established the kingdom, anointed kings (13–18), and even after his death foretold the king's fate and put an end to wickedness (20).

**47, 1–11:** David, a youthful and fearless warrior, the favorite of all Israel, by defeating Goliath, the boastful Philistine giant, removed the people's disgrace and greatly strengthened their power (1–7). With his whole being he loved and praised God, and his devotion to divine worship led him to develop liturgical cult. David fell into sin, but repenting, received pardon from God and the promise of an everlasting kingdom (8–11).

k Jgs 1, 1—16, 31. l 1 Sm 1, 10ff; 8, 4ff; 10, 1; 16, 13. m 1 Sm 7, 9. n Sir 12, 18. o 1 Sm 12, 3. p 1 Sm 28, 14. q 2 Sm 7, 2. r 1 Sm 16, 11. s 1 Sm 17, 35. t 1 Sm 17, 49. u 1 Sm 18, 7. v 2 Sm 5, 6–25. w 1 Chr 16, 4ff; 23, 2ff; 25, 1–7. x 2 Sm 12, 13; 7, 12–16.

12 Because of his merits he had as his successor*
a wise son, who lived in security:[y]
13 SOLOMON reigned during an era of peace,
for God made tranquil all his borders.
He built a house to the name of God,
and established a lasting sanctuary.[z]
14 How wise you were when you were young,
overflowing with instruction, like the Nile in flood![a]
15 Your understanding covered the whole earth,
and, like a sea, filled it with knowledge.
16 Your fame reached distant coasts,
and their peoples came to hear you;
17 With song and story and riddle,
and with your answers, you astounded the nations.
18 You were called by that glorious name
which was conferred upon Israel.*
Gold you gathered like so much iron,
you heaped up silver as though it were lead;
19 But you abandoned yourself to women
and gave them dominion over your body.[b]
20 You brought dishonor upon your reputation,
shame upon your marriage,
Wrath upon your descendants,
and groaning upon your domain;
21 Thus two governments came into being,
when in Ephraim kingship was usurped.[c]
22 But God does not withdraw his mercy,
nor permit even one of his promises to fail.
He does not uproot the posterity of his chosen one,
nor destroy the offspring of his friend.
So he gave to Jacob a remnant,
to David a root from his own family.[d]
23 Solomon finally slept with his fathers,
and left behind him one of his sons,
Expansive* in folly, limited in sense,
REHOBOAM, who by his policy made the people rebel;
Until one arose who should not be remembered,
the sinner who led Israel into sin,[e]
Who brought ruin to Ephraim
24 and caused them to be exiled from their land.

### Elijah and Elisha

Their sinfulness grew more and more,
25 and they lent themselves to every evil,*

## CHAPTER 48

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1 Till like a fire there appeared the prophet
whose words were as a flaming furnace.[f]
2 Their staff of bread he shattered,
in his zeal he reduced them to straits;
3 By God's word he shut up the heavens
and three times brought down fire.[g]
4 How awesome are you, ELIJAH!
Whose glory is equal to yours?
5 You brought a dead man back to life
from the nether world, by the will of the LORD.[h]
6 You sent kings down to destruction,
and nobles, from their beds of sickness.[i]
7 You heard threats at Sinai,
at Horeb avenging judgments.[j]
8 You anointed kings who should inflict vengeance,
and a prophet as your successor.[k]
9 You were taken aloft in a whirlwind,
in a chariot with fiery horses.[l]

**47, 12–24:** Solomon, son and successor of David, inherited peace through his father's conquests. He built the magnificent temple of Jerusalem (12f) and received from God the favor of unparalleled wisdom, through which he obtained great fame (14–17). Luxury and sensuality, however, brought disgrace upon him, and because of his oppressive burdens, he disposed the kingdom for division after his death (19–21. 23f). Nevertheless God did not withdraw his promise of establishing his throne in the descendants of David (22).

**47, 18:** Cf 2 Sm 12, 25, where Solomon is called Jedidiah, "beloved of the Lord." The same term is used of Israel in Jer 11, 15.

**47, 23:** Expansive: the name Rehoboam means "the people is expansive," that is, widespread. The sinner: Jeroboam; cf 1 Kgs 12, 2. 20. 26–32.

**47, 25—48, 11:** The prophetic ministry of Elijah amid widespread idolatry is here described as a judgment by fire (47, 25f). Through his preaching, miracles and vengeance against God's enemies within and without Israel, the prophet succeeded for a time in destroying idols and in restoring faith and the worship of the true God (48, 2–8). His miraculous departure from this life gave rise to the belief that he did not die but would return before the end of the world to put an end to wrath and restore the tribes of Israel (9ff). Cf Mt 17, 9–13.

y 1 Kgs 2, 12. z 1 Kgs 5, 1. 5. a 14–18: 1 Kgs 5, 9–14; 10, 14–28. b 1 Kgs 11, 1ff. c 1 Kgs 12, 1ff. d 2 Sm 7, 15; Ps 89, 34ff. e 1 Kgs 11, 43; 12, 13. 21; 13, 34; 2 Kgs 17, 6ff. f 1 Kgs 17, 1. g 1 Kgs 17, 1; 2 Kgs 1, 9–14. h 1 Kgs 17, 22. i 1 Kgs 21, 19; 2 Kgs 1, 17. j 1 Kgs 19, 8ff. k 1 Kgs 19, 15ff. l 2 Kgs 2, 11.

10 You are destined, it is written, in time to come
to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD,
To turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons,
and to re-establish the tribes of Jacob. [m]
11 Blessed is he who shall have seen you before he dies,
12 O Elijah, enveloped in the whirlwind! [n]

Then ELISHA, filled with a twofold portion of his spirit,*
wrought many marvels by his mere word.
During his lifetime he feared no one,
nor was any man able to intimidate his will.
13 Nothing was beyond his power; [o]
beneath him flesh was brought back into life.
14 In life he performed wonders,
and after death, marvelous deeds.
15 Despite all this the people did not repent,
nor did they give up their sins,
Until they were rooted out of their land
and scattered all over the earth.
But Judah remained, a tiny people,
with its rulers from the house of David. [p]
16 Some of these did what was right,
but others were extremely sinful.

Ch 44–49 See RG 283

### Hezekiah and Isaiah*

17 HEZEKIAH fortified his city
and had water brought into it; [q]
With iron tools he cut through the rock
and he built reservoirs for water.
18 During his reign Sennacherib led an invasion,
and sent his adjutant;
He shook his fist at Zion
and blasphemed God in his pride. [r]
19 The people's hearts melted within them,
and they were in anguish like that of childbirth.
20 But they called upon the Most High God
and lifted up their hands to him;
He heard the prayer they uttered,
and saved them through ISAIAH. [s]
21 God struck the camp of the Assyrians
and routed them with a plague. [t]
22 For Hezekiah did what was right
and held fast to the paths of David,
As ordered by the illustrious prophet Isaiah, who saw the truth in visions.
23 In his lifetime he turned back the sun
and prolonged the life of the king. [u]
24 By his powerful spirit he looked into the future [v]
and consoled the mourners of Zion;
25 He foretold what should be till the end of time,
hidden things yet to be fulfilled.

## CHAPTER 49

### Josiah and the Prophets*

1 The name JOSIAH is like blended incense,
made lasting by a skilled perfumer. [w]
Precious is his memory, like honey to the taste,
like music at a banquet.
2 For he grieved over our betrayals
and destroyed the abominable idols.
3 He turned to God with his whole heart,
and, though times were evil, he practiced virtue.
4 Except for David, Hezekiah and Josiah,
they all were wicked;
They abandoned the law of the Most High,
these kings of Judah, right to the very end.
5 So he gave over their power to others,
their glory to a foolish foreign nation
6 Who burned the holy city

**48, 12–16:** Elisha fearlessly continued the work of his predecessor by numerous miracles (12ff), but the obstinacy of the people eventually brought on the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the dispersion of its subjects. Judah, however, survived under the rule of Davidic kings, both good and bad (15f).

**48, 17–25:** The fidelity, trust and courage of King Hezekiah (17. 22), the zeal of the prophet Isaiah, and the prayer of the people (20) availed with God. The Assyrian oppressors were routed (18f. 21), the king's life was prolonged, and consolations were granted the people through Isaiah's prophecies concerning the future (23ff), especially the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom; cf Is 7, 14; 9, 6f; 40—65.

**49, 1–10:** The author's praise of King Josiah (1–3), of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel and likewise the minor prophets (7–10) derives from their spirit of fidelity to the Lord and his law amid the infidelity of kings and people (4ff. 10).

m Mal 3, 23f; Mt 17, 10. n 2 Kgs 2, 9; 3, 13. o 13f: 2 Kgs 13, 21. p 2 Kgs 15, 29; 18, 11. q 2 Kgs 20, 20; 2 Chr 32, 3ff. 30. r 2 Kgs 18, 13ff; Is 36, 1ff. s 2 Kgs 19, 20. t 2 Kgs 19, 35; Is 37, 36. u 2 Kgs 20, 11; Is 38, 8. v 24f: 2 Kgs 20, 17; Is 40, 1ff; 42, 9; 46, 10; 48, 6; 61, 2. w 2 Kgs 22, 1; 2 Chr 34, 1.

and left its streets desolate,
As JEREMIAH had foretold;[x] 7 for they had treated him badly
who even in the womb had been made a prophet,
To root out, pull down, and destroy,
and then to build and to plant.[y]
8 EZEKIEL beheld the vision
and described the different creatures of the chariot;[z]
9 He also referred to JOB,
who always persevered in the right path.[a]
10 Then, too, the TWELVE PROPHETS—
may their bones return to life from their resting place!—
Gave new strength to Jacob
and saved him by their faith and hope.

### The Heroes after the Exile

11 How can we fittingly praise ZERUBBABEL,*
who was like a signet ring on God's right hand,[b]
12 And Jeshua, Jozadak's son?
In their time they built the house of God;
They erected the holy temple,
destined for everlasting glory.
13 Extolled be the memory of NEHEMIAH!
He rebuilt our ruined walls,
Restored our shattered defenses,
and set up gates and bars.[c]

### The Earliest Patriarchs

14 Few on earth have been made the equal of ENOCH,*
for he was taken up bodily.[d]
15 Was ever a man born like JOSEPH?
Even his dead body was provided for.[e]
16 Glorious, too, were SHEM and SETH and ENOS;
but beyond that of any living being
was the splendor of ADAM.[f]

## CHAPTER 50

Ch 50
See RG
282, 283,
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### Simon, Son of Jochanan

1 The greatest among his brethren, the glory of his people,
was SIMON the priest, son of Jochanan,*
In whose time the house of God was renovated,
in whose days the temple was reinforced.
2 In his time also the wall was built
with powerful turrets for the temple precincts;
3 In his time the reservoir was dug,
the pool with a vastness like the sea's.
4 He protected his people against brigands
and strengthened his city against the enemy.
5 How splendid he was as he appeared from the tent,
as he came from within the veil!
6 Like a star shining among the clouds,
like the full moon at the holyday season;
7 Like the sun shining upon the temple,
like the rainbow appearing in the cloudy sky;
8 Like the blossoms on the branches in springtime,
like a lily on the banks of a stream;
Like the trees of Lebanon in summer,
9 like the fire of incense at the sacrifice;
Like a vessel of beaten gold,
studded with precious stones;
10 Like a luxuriant olive tree thick with fruit,
like a cypress standing against the clouds;
11 Vested in his magnificent robes,
and wearing his garments of splendor,[g]

**49, 11ff:** Zerubbabel and Jeshua, in rebuilding the temple, and Nehemiah, the governor, in repairing the walls of the Holy City, also restored what these constructions signify, namely, religious worship and civil authority as prescribed in the law.

**49, 14ff:** The patriarchs here mentioned were glorious because of their spirit of religion, i.e., their profound reverence for God and obedience to him. The splendor of Adam, moreover, was due to his direct origin from God.

**50, 1–21:** The son of Jochanan here mentioned was Simon II, in whose time as high priest (219–196 B.C.) great works were accomplished for the benefit of public worship and welfare (1–4). The author, a contemporary of this high priest, describes in great detail and by numerous comparisons the impression of awful majesty received, the lofty joy aroused, at sight of the high priest fully vested entering the sanctuary, ascending the altar (6–11), and, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, encircled by assistant priests bearing offerings, sacrificing the burnt offering on the Day of Atonement, while the trumpets blast and the people bow down in adoration of the Most High (12–17). The hymnody, the joyful shouts of the multitude, and finally the high priest's blessing, in which he pronounces—once only in the year, on this occasion—the holy name of Yahweh, climax the description of this most solemn Jewish liturgical function (18–21).

x 2 Kgs 25, 9; 2 Chr 36, 19. y Jer 1, 5, 10. z Ez 1, 4ff. a Ez 14, 14. 20. b 11f: Ezr 3, 2; Hg 1, 12; Zec 3, 1. c Neh 1, 1; 3, 1. d Sir 44, 16; Gn 5, 18–24. e Gn 37—50; Ex 13, 19; Jos 24, 32. f Gn 1, 27; 4, 25f. g Sir 45, 8–12; Ex 28, 2–5; 39, 1–21.

As he ascended the glorious altar
and lent majesty to the court of the sanctuary.
12 When he received the sundered victims from the priests
while he stood before the sacrificial wood,
His brethren ringed him about like a garland,
like a stand of cedars on Lebanon;
13 All the sons of Aaron in their dignity
clustered around him like poplars,
With the offerings to the LORD in their hands,
in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel.
14 Once he had completed the services at the altar
with the arranging of the sacrifices for the Most High,
15 And had stretched forth his hand for the cup,[h]
to offer blood of the grape,
And poured it out at the foot of the altar,
a sweet-smelling odor to the Most High God,
16 The sons of Aaron would sound a blast,
the priests, on their trumpets of beaten metal;
A blast to resound mightily
as a reminder before the Most High.[i]
17 Then all the people with one accord
would quickly fall prostrate to the ground
In adoration before the Most High,
before the Holy One of Israel.
18 Then hymns would re-echo,
and over the throng sweet strains of praise resound.
19 All the people of the land would shout for joy,
praying to the Merciful One,
As the high priest completed the services at the altar
by presenting to God the sacrifice due;
20 Then coming down he would raise his hands
over all the congregation of Israel.[j]
The blessing of the LORD would be upon his lips,
the name of the LORD would be his glory.
21 Then again the people would lie prostrate
to receive from him the blessing of the Most High.

22 And now, bless the God of all,*
who has done wondrous things on earth;
Who fosters men's growth from their mother's womb,
and fashions them according to his will!
23 May he grant you joy of heart
and may peace abide among you;
24 May his goodness toward us endure in Israel
as long as the heavens are above.

### Epilogue and Canticles

25 My whole being loathes two nations,*
the third is not even a people:*
26 Those who live in Seir* and Philistia,
and the degenerate folk who dwell in Shechem.[k]

27 Wise instruction, appropriate proverbs,*
I have written in this book,
I, Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach,
as they gushed forth from my heart's understanding.
28 Happy the man who meditates upon these things,
wise the man who takes them to heart!
29 If he puts them into practice, he can cope with anything,
for the fear of the LORD is his lamp.

## CHAPTER 51

Ch 51
See RG
283

1 I give you thanks, O God of my father;*
I praise you, O God my savior!

**50, 22ff:** Praise and thanksgiving are given to God for his wondrous works, and a blessing is invoked on man that he may enjoy peace and gladness of heart and the abiding goodness of the Most High.

**50, 25f:** The author's abhorrence of the pagan Edomites (Idumeans), Philistines and Samaritans can be understood in the light of Old Testament thinking, which does not always distinguish between hatred of evildoers and hatred of the evil they do.

**50, 25:** Not even a people: the Samaritans.

**50, 26:** Seir: Mount Seir in the territory of the Edomites. Shechem: a city in Samaria.

**50, 27ff:** These verses contain the subscription of the author, Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach, to his long and beautiful treatise on wisdom as applying to all of human life, integrating it under the direction of the fear of the Lord.

**51, 1–12:** A canticle of praise and thanks to God for delivering the author from slander, dangers, destruction, death, the nether world, and evil of every kind.

h 15f: Nm 15, 5; 28, 7. i Nm 10, 10. j Nm 6, 23–26. k 2 Kgs 17, 24; Jn 4, 9.

I will make known your name, refuge of my life; [l]
2 you have been my helper against my adversaries.
You have saved me from death,
and kept back my body from the pit,
From the clutches of the nether world you have snatched my feet; [m]
3 you have delivered me, in your great mercy,
From the scourge of a slanderous tongue,
and from lips that went over to falsehood;
From the snare of those who watched for my downfall,
and from the power of those who sought my life; [n]
From many a danger you have saved me,
4 from flames that hemmed me in on every side; [o]
From the midst of unremitting fire,
5 from the deep belly of the nether world;
From deceiving lips and painters of lies,
6 from the arrows of dishonest tongues.
I was at the point of death,
my soul was nearing the depths of the nether world; [p]
7 I turned every way, but there was no one to help me,
I looked for one to sustain me, but could find no one. [q]
8 But then I remembered the mercies of the LORD,
his kindness through ages past;
For he saves those who take refuge in him,
and rescues them from every evil.
9 So I raised my voice from the very earth,
from the gates of the nether world, my cry.
10 I called out: O Lord, you are my father,
you are my champion and my savior;
Do not abandon me in time of trouble,
in the midst of storms and dangers. [r]
11 I will ever praise your name
and be constant in my prayers to you.
Thereupon the LORD heard my voice,
he listened to my appeal;
12 He saved me from evil of every kind
and preserved me in time of trouble.
For this reason I thank him and I praise him;
I bless the name of the LORD.*

13 *When I was young and innocent,*
I sought wisdom. [s]
14 She came to me in her beauty,
and until the end I will cultivate her.
15 As the blossoms yielded to ripening grapes,
the heart's joy,
My feet kept to the level path
because from earliest youth I was familiar with her.

**51, 12:** After this verse the Hebrew text gives the litany of praise contained below. It is similar to Ps 136. Though not found in any versions, and therefore of doubtful authenticity, the litany seems from internal evidence to go back to the time of Sirach:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the God of glory, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the guardian of Israel, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the creator of the universe, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the redeemer of Israel, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to him who gathers the dispersed of Israel, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to him who builds his city and his sanctuary, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to him who makes a horn to sprout forth, for the house of David, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to him who has chosen for his priests the sons of Zadok, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the shield of Abraham, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the rock of Isaac, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the mighty one of Jacob, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to him who has chosen Zion, for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the king over kings of kings, for his mercy endures forever;
He has lifted up the horn of his people, be this his praise from all his faithful ones,
From the children of Israel, the people close to him. Alleluia! (Cf Ps 148, 14.)

**51, 13–30:** An alphabetic canticle describing: a) the approach to wisdom through prayer, persistent study and instruction (13–17), purification from sin, enlightenment and ardent desire; b) the possession of wisdom (18–22). The author concludes with an urgent invitation to men to receive instruction in wisdom from him, and to live by it, because wisdom gives herself to those who seek her (23–26); and for their labor. God will reward them in the end (27–30). Cf Mt 11, 28; Eccl 12, 14.

In the Greek of 13f there is an expansion introducing Solomon as the speaker. This deviates from the original author's intent. It reads, "Publicly, in my prayer, facing the temple, I asked for her."

l Ps 138, 1. m Ps 91, 3. n Pss 40, 5; 91, 3. o Ps 66, 12. p Pss 88, 4; 94, 17. q Pss 22, 12; 142, 5. r Ps 89, 27. s Sir 34, 11.

16 In the short time I paid heed,
I met with great instruction.
17 Since in this way I have profited,
I will give my teacher grateful praise.

18 I became resolutely devoted to her—
the good I persistently strove for.
19 I burned with desire for her,
never turning back.
I became preoccupied with her,
never weary of extolling her.
My hand opened her gate
and I came to know her secrets.
20 For her I purified my hands;
in cleanness I attained to her.
At first acquaintance with her, I gained understanding
such that I will never forsake her. [t]
21 My whole being was stirred as I learned about her;
therefore I have made her my prize possession.
22 The LORD has granted me my lips as a reward,
and my tongue will declare his praises.

23 Come aside to me, you untutored,
and take up lodging in the house of instruction; [u]
24 How long will you be deprived of wisdom's food,
how long will you endure such bitter thirst?
25 I open my mouth and speak of her:
gain, at no cost, wisdom for yourselves. [v]
26 Submit your neck to her yoke,
that your mind may accept her teaching.
For she is close to those who seek her,
and the one who is in earnest finds her. [w]
27 See for yourselves! I have labored only a little,
but have found much.
28 Acquire but a little instruction;
you will win silver and gold through her.
29 Let your spirits rejoice in the mercy of God,
and be not ashamed to give him praise.
30 Work at your tasks in due season,
and in his own time God will give you your reward. [x]

t Prv 4, 6. u Prv 8, 5. v Sir 6, 20. w Sir 6, 25. x Sir 2, 8; Jb 34, 11; Jn 9, 4.

# THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

Prophetic Books
See RG 287–387

The prophetic books bear the names of the four major and twelve minor prophets, besides Lamentations and Baruch. The terms "major" and "minor" refer merely to the length of the respective compositions and not to any distinction in the prophetic office. Jonah is a story of the mission of the prophet rather than a collection of prophecies. Lamentations and Daniel are listed among the hagiographa in the Hebrew Bible, not among the prophetic books. The former contains a series of elegies on the fate of Jerusalem; the latter is apocalyptic in character. Daniel, who lived far removed from Palestine, was not called by God to preach; yet the book is counted as prophecy. Baruch, though excluded from the Hebrew canon, is found in the Septuagint version, and the church has always acknowledged it to be sacred and inspired.

The prophetic books, together with the oral preaching of the prophets, were the result of the institution of prophetism, in which a succession of Israelites chosen by God and appointed by him to be prophets received communications from him and transmitted them to the people in his name (Dt 18, 15-20). The prophets were spokesmen of God, intermediaries between him and his people. The communications they received from God came through visions, dreams, and ecstasies and were transmitted to the people through sermons, writings, and symbolic actions.

The office of prophet was due to a direct call from God. It was not the result of heredity, just as it was not a permanent gift but a transient one, subject entirely to the divine will. The prophets preserved and developed revealed religion (1 Sm 12, 6-25), denounced idolatry (1 Kgs 14, 1-13), defended the moral law (2 Sm 12, 1-15), gave counsel in political matters (Is 31, 1ff), and often also in matters of private life (1 Sm 9, 6-9). At times miracles confirmed their preaching, and their predictions of the future intensified the expectation of the Messiah and of his kingdom.

The prophetic literature in this volume contains the substance of the prophets' authentic preaching, resumes, and genuine samples of such preaching. Some parts were recorded by the prophets themselves, some by persons other than the prophets who uttered them.

The prophecies express judgments of the people's moral conduct, on the basis of the Mosaic alliance between God and Israel. They teach sublime truths and lofty morals. They contain exhortations, threats, announcements of punishment, promises of deliverance, made with solemn authority and in highly imaginative language. In the affairs of men, their prime concern is the interests of God, especially in what pertains to the chosen people through whom the Messiah is to come; hence their denunciations of idolatry and of that externalism in worship which excludes the interior spirit of religion. They are concerned also with the universal nature of the moral law, with personal responsibility, with the person and office of the Messiah, and with the conduct of foreign nations.

In content, the literary genre of prophecy uses warning and threat besides exhortation and promise to declare in God's name events of the near and distant future (Is 8–9). In form, the divine source of prophetic declaration appears in: "The word (or oracle) of the Lord," or "Thus says the Lord," followed by the announcement of a coming event and its moral cause (Hos 4, 7-10). Divine exhortation and promise are introduced by such forms as: "Hear this word, O men of Israel, that the Lord pronounces over you" (Am 3, 1). Kindly and persuasive tones pervade the promises of reward and even the threats of punishment (Am 5, 14-15).

Disregard for exact chronological perspective in the prophecies is an additional characteristic.

Predictions of the immediate and distant future are often interrelated, not on the basis of years separating the events but on the analogy of the pattern joining present with very distant, though similar, conditions and circumstances. This is prophetic compenetration, idealization in which persons and things of the more immediate present, in the prophet's day, fade into a wider and more perfect order of persons and things of the future; the former are figures and types of the latter. Thus, some details of what the Psalmist said of the kingdom of David and Solomon (Ps 72) went beyond what was fulfilled in these men, as St. Thomas points out, and found their realization only in the kingdom of Christ. St. Jerome before him, and still earlier the apostles themselves—Peter (Acts 2, 14-36) and Paul (Gal 4, 21-31)—taught us that through anticipation in types we discover in Sacred Scripture the truth of things to come.

Thus the universal blessing for mankind, often promised by God through the mouths of his prophets in figures and types, was in time to become personalized and to confer its full benefit on us through the Word made flesh, who became for us the New Covenant through his life, death, and resurrection, as the prophets had foretold.

# THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah
See RG
287–304

The greatest of the prophets appeared at a critical moment of Israel's history. The second half of the eighth century B.C. witnessed the collapse of the northern kingdom under the hammerlike blows of Assyria (722), while Jerusalem itself saw the army of Sennacherib drawn up before its walls (701). In the year that Uzziah, king of Judah, died (742), Isaiah received his call to the prophetic office in the Temple of Jerusalem. Close attention should be given to chapter 6, where this divine summons to be the ambassador of the Most High is circumstantially described.

The vision of the Lord enthroned in glory stamps an indelible character on Isaiah's ministry and provides the key to the understanding of his message. The majesty, holiness and glory of the Lord took possession of his spirit and, conversely, he gained a new awareness of human pettiness and sinfulness. The enormous abyss between God's sovereign holiness and man's sin overwhelmed the prophet. Only the purifying coal of the seraphim could cleanse his lips and prepare him for acceptance of the call: "Here I am, send me!"

The ministry of Isaiah may be divided into three periods, covering the reigns of Jotham (742–735), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687). To the first period belong, for the most part, the early oracles (1—5) which exposed the moral breakdown of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. With the accession of Ahaz, the prophet became adviser to the king, whose throne was threatened by the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. Rejecting the plea of Isaiah for faith and courage, the weak Ahaz turned to Assyria for help. From this period came the majority of messianic oracles found in the section of Immanuel prophecies (6—12).

Hezekiah succeeded his father and undertook a religious reform which Isaiah undoubtedly supported. But the old intrigues began again, and the king was soon won over to the pro-Egyptian party. Isaiah denounced this "covenant with death" and again summoned Judah to faith in Yahweh as her only hope. But it was too late; the revolt had already begun. Assyria acted quickly and her army, after ravaging Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem (701). "I shut up Hezekiah like a bird in his cage," boasts the famous inscription of Sennacherib. But Yahweh delivered the

city, as Isaiah had promised: God is the Lord of history, and Assyria but an instrument in his hands.

Little is known about the last days of this great religious leader, whose oracles, of singular poetic beauty and power constantly reminded his wayward people of their destiny and the fidelity of Yahweh to his promises.

The complete Book of Isaiah is an anthology of poems composed chiefly by the great prophet, but also by disciples, some of whom came many years after Isaiah. In 1—39 most of the oracles come from Isaiah and faithfully reflect the situation in eighth-century Judah. To disciples deeply influenced by the prophet belong sections such as the Apocalypse of Isaiah (24—27), the oracles against Babylon (13—14), and probably the poems of 34—35.

Chapters 40—55, sometimes called the Deutero-Isaiah, are generally attributed to an anonymous poet who prophesied toward the end of the Babylonian exile. From this section come the great messianic oracles known as the songs of the Servant, whose mysterious destiny of suffering and glorification is fulfilled in the passion and glorification of Christ. Chapters 56—66 contain oracles from a later period and were composed by disciples who inherited the spirit and continued the work of the great prophet.

The principal divisions of the Book of Isaiah are the following:

A. The Book of Judgment:
- I. Indictment of Israel and Judah (1, 1—5, 30).
- II. Immanuel Prophecies (6, 1—12, 6).
- III. Oracles against the Pagan Nations (13, 1—23, 18).
- IV. Apocalypse of Isaiah (24, 1—27, 13).
- V. The Lord Alone, Israel's and Judah's Salvation (28, 1—33, 24).
- VI. The Lord, Zion's Avenger (34, 1—35, 10).
- VII. Historical Appendix (36, 1—39, 8).

B. The Book of Consolation:
- I. The Lord's Glory in Israel's Liberation (40, 1—48, 21).
- II. Expiation of Sin, Spiritual Liberation of Israel (49, 1—55, 13).
- III. Return of the First Captives (56, 1—66, 24).

A. THE BOOK OF JUDGMENT

## I: Indictment of Israel and Judah

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
290-291

**Israel's Sinfulness** 1 The vision* which Isaiah,
son of Amoz, had concerning Judah and Jerusa-
lem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and
Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth,
for the LORD speaks:
Sons have I raised and reared,
but they have disowned me! [a]
3 An ox knows its owner,
and an ass, its master's manger;
But Israel* does not know,
my people has not understood.
4 Ah! sinful nation, people laden with
wickedness,
evil race, corrupt children!

1, 1: The title of the book: an editorial addition. Isaiah: meaning "the salvation of the Lord," or "The Lord is salvation." Amoz: not the minor prophet. Judah: the southern kingdom of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Uzziah: also called Azariah; cf 2 Kgs 15, 1; 2 Chr 26, 1.

1, 3: Israel, not the northern kingdom, as in Is 9, 11, exclusively, which Isaiah usually calls "Ephraim" from the tribe bordering on the southern kingdom, but the entire chosen people; cf Is 8, 14.

a Dt 32, 1. 5f.

They have forsaken the LORD,
spurned the Holy One of Israel,*
apostatized.[b]
5 Where would you yet be struck,*
you that rebel again and again?
The whole head is sick,
the whole heart faint.
6 From the sole of the foot to the head
there is no sound spot:
Wound and welt and gaping gash,
not drained, or bandaged,
or eased with salve.
7 Your country is waste,
your cities burnt with fire;
Your land before your eyes
strangers devour
[a waste, like Sodom overthrown]—
8 And daughter Zion* is left
like a hut in a vineyard,
Like a shed in a melon patch,
like a city blockaded.

9 Unless the LORD of hosts*
had left us a scanty remnant,
We had become as Sodom,
we should be like Gomorrah.[c]
10 Hear the word of the LORD,
princes of Sodom!
Listen to the instruction of our God,
people of Gomorrah!
11 What care I for the number of your
sacrifices?*
says the LORD.
I have had enough of whole-burnt rams
and fat of fatlings;
In the blood of calves, lambs and goats
I find no pleasure.[d]

12 When you come in to visit me,
who asks these things of you?
13 Trample my courts no more!
Bring no more worthless offerings;
your incense is loathsome to me.
New moon and sabbath, calling of assemblies,
octaves with wickedness:* these I cannot
bear.[e]
14 Your new moons and festivals I detest;
they weigh me down, I tire of the load.
15 When you spread out your hands,*
I close my eyes to you;
Though you pray the more,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood![f]
16 Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;
cease doing evil; 17 learn to do good.
Make justice your aim: redress the wronged,
hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow.[g]

18 Come now, let us set things right,
says the LORD:
Though your sins be like scarlet,
they may become white as snow;
Though they be crimson red,
they may become white as wool.[h]
19 If you are willing, and obey,
you shall eat the good things of the land;
20 But if you refuse and resist,
the sword shall consume you:
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken!

21 How has she turned adulteress,
the faithful city, so upright!*
Justice used to lodge within her,
but now, murderers.[i]
22 Your silver is turned to dross,
your wine is mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels
and comrades of thieves;
Each one of them loves a bribe

**1, 4:** Holy One of Israel: a title used frequently by Isaiah, rarely by other writers.
**1, 5–8:** Sufferings inflicted upon God's people for their sins.
**1, 8:** Daughter Zion: Jerusalem. Hut . . . shed: for the shelter of watchmen and laborers.
**1, 9:** Lord of hosts: God, who is the Creator and Ruler of the heavenly armies of the angels, stars, etc. Remnant: St. Paul uses this text in Rom 9, 29, where he speaks of God's saving mercy toward the Jews and Gentiles. Sodom . . . Gomorrah: cf Gn 19.
**1, 11:** The number of your sacrifices: however numerous, they are not acceptable without the right dispositions on the part of the worshipers.
**1, 13:** Octaves with wickedness: the solemnity of the feasts marred by evil deeds.
**1, 15:** Spread out your hands: in prayer.
**1, 21:** A picture of Jerusalem, once so faithful to God. Apostasy from the covenant is often likened by the prophets to unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.

b Is 5, 24; Dt 32, 15. c Rom 9, 29. d Ps 50, 8–13; Sir 34, 19; Mi 6, 7. e Prv 15, 8; Jer 6, 20. f Prv 1, 28; Sir 34, 21–25. g Ex 23, 6; Dt 24, 17; Sir 4, 9f; Jer 22, 3; Ez 22, 7; Zec 7, 9f. h Ps 51, 9. i Jer 3, 8; Hos 2, 7.

and looks for gifts.
The fatherless they defend not,
and the widow's plea does not reach them.[j]
24 Now, therefore, says the Lord,
the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:
Ah! I will take vengeance on my foes
and fully repay my enemies![k]
25 I will turn my hand against you,
and refine your dross in the furnace,
removing all your alloy.
26 I will restore your judges as at first,
and your counselors as in the beginning;
After that you shall be called
city of justice, faithful city.[l]

27 Zion shall be redeemed by judgment,
and her repentant ones by justice.*
28 Rebels and sinners alike shall be crushed,
those who desert the LORD shall be consumed.
29 You shall be ashamed of the terebinths which you prized,
and blush for the groves which you chose.*
30 You shall become like a tree with falling leaves,
like a garden that has no water.
31 The strong man shall turn to tow,
and his work shall become a spark;
Both shall burn together,
and there shall be none to quench the flames.

## CHAPTER 2

**Zion, the Messianic Capital** 1 This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

2 In days to come,*
The mountain of the LORD's house[m]
shall be established as the highest mountain
and raised above the hills.
All nations shall stream toward it;[n]
3 many peoples shall come and say:
"Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
That he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths."[o]
For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and impose terms on many peoples.
They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
One nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again.[p]

5 O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the LORD!

### The Lord's Judgment against Idols

6 You have abandoned your people,
the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled with fortune-tellers
and soothsayers,* like the Philistines;
they covenant with strangers.[q]
7 Their land is full of silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
Their land is full of horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is full of idols;
they worship the works of their hands,
that which their fingers have made.[r]

9 But man is abased,
each one brought low.
[Do not pardon them!]
10 Get behind the rocks,
hide in the dust,

Ch 2
See RG
291

**1, 27:** This verse is the key to the whole Book of Isaiah. Zion's defiant persistence in sin has demanded a divine judgment, by which her survivors will be cleansed and will return to God in justice; cf Is 40, 2.

**1, 29:** Terebinths which you prized . . . groves which you chose: as popular shrines for idolatrous worship.

**2, 1:** An editorial addition introducing chapters 2–5.

**2, 2–4:** The messianic destiny which ensures Judah's later restoration. In the messianic kingdom the prophets generally see the Lord's house as the seat of authority and the source of clear and certain doctrine; also, its rule willingly accepted by all peoples, maintained by spiritual sanctions, and tending to universal peace. This passage is found substantially unchanged in Mi 4, 1–3; it probably, although not certainly, has Isaiah as its author.

**2, 3:** Zion . . . Jerusalem: types of the earthly center of the messianic kingdom.

**2, 6:** Fortunetellers and soothsayers: divination was strictly forbidden; cf Dt 18, 9–14.

j Ex 23, 8; Dt 16, 19. k Dt 32, 41. l Jer 33, 7ff; Zec 8, 3. m 2ff: Mi 4, 1ff. n Is 56, 7. o Zec 8, 20–23. p Is 9, 7; 11, 4; Ps 72, 3f; Zec 9, 10. q Is 8, 19; 19, 3. r Is 31, 1ff.

Ch 2–5
See RG
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From the terror of the LORD
and the splendor of his majesty! [s]
11 The haughty eyes of man will be lowered,
the arrogance of men will be abased,
and the LORD alone will be exalted, on that day.*
12 For the LORD of hosts will have his day
against all that is proud and arrogant,
all that is high, and it will be brought low;
13 Yes, against all the cedars of Lebanon*
and all the oaks of Bashan,
14 Against all the lofty mountains
and all the high hills,
15 Against every lofty tower
and every fortified wall,
16 Against all the ships of Tarshish*
and all stately vessels.
17 Human pride will be abased,
the arrogance of men brought low,
And the LORD alone will be exalted, on that day.

18 The idols will perish forever.

19 Men will go into caves in the rocks
and into holes in the earth,
From the terror of the LORD
and the splendor of his majesty,
when he arises to overawe the earth.

20 On that day men will throw to the moles and the bats the idols of silver and gold which they made for worship.

21 They go into caverns in the rocks
and into crevices in the cliffs,
From the terror of the LORD
and the splendor of his majesty,
when he arises to overawe the earth.

22 As for you, let man alone,
in whose nostrils is but a breath;
for what is he worth?

## CHAPTER 3

### Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem

1 The Lord, the LORD of hosts,*
shall take away from Jerusalem and from Judah
support and prop [all supplies of bread and water]: [t]
2 Hero and warrior,
judge and prophet, fortune-teller and elder,
3 The captain of fifty and the nobleman,
counselor, skilled magician, and expert charmer.
4 I will make striplings their princes;
the fickle shall govern them,
5 And the people shall oppress one another,
yes, every man his neighbor.
The child shall be bold toward the elder,
and the base toward the honorable.
6 When a man seizes his brother
in his father's house, saying,
"You have clothes! Be our ruler,
and take in hand this ruin!"—
7 Then shall he answer in that day:
"I will not undertake to cure this,
when in my own house there is no bread or clothing!
You shall not make me ruler of the people."

8 Jerusalem is crumbling, Judah is falling;
for their speech and their deeds are before the LORD,
a provocation in the sight of his majesty.
9 Their very look bears witness against them;
their sin like Sodom they vaunt,
They hide it not. Woe to them!
they deal out evil to themselves.
10 Happy the just, for it will be well with them,
the fruit of their works they will eat.
11 Woe to the wicked man! All goes ill,
with the work of his hands he will be repaid.

2, 11: That day: the day of the Lord, a day of retribution, often referred to, especially by the minor prophets, and described in terms of natural phenomena: earthquake, fire, storm.
2, 13: Lebanon: Mount Lebanon in Syria, famed for its cedars. Bashan: the wooded uplands east of the Jordan River.
2, 16: Tarshish: cf note on Ps 48, 8.
3, 1–12: Anarchy will reign in Jerusalem and Judah. In the prevailing desperation, even the most unworthy and the least qualified will be sought as rulers.

s 2 Thes 1, 9. t Lv 26, 26; Ez 4, 16.

12 My people—a babe in arms will be their
tyrant,
and women will rule them!
O my people, your leaders mislead,
they destroy the paths you should follow.

13 The LORD rises to accuse,
standing to try his people.
14 The Lord enters into judgment
with his people's elders and princes:
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
the loot wrested from the poor is in your
houses.
15 What do you mean by crushing my people,
and grinding down the poor when they look
to you?
says the Lord, the God of hosts. [u]
16 The LORD said: [v]
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
and walk with necks outstretched
Ogling and mincing as they go,
their anklets tinkling with every step,
17 The Lord shall cover the scalps of Zion's
daughters with scabs,
and the LORD shall bare their heads.*

18 On that day the LORD will do away with the finery of the anklets, sunbursts, and crescents; 19 the pendants, bracelets, and veils; 20 the head-dresses, bangles, cinctures, perfume boxes, and amulets; 21 the signet rings, and the nose rings;* 22 the court dresses, wraps, cloaks, and purses; 23 the mirrors, linen tunics, turbans, and shawls.

24 Instead of perfume there will be stench,
instead of the girdle, a rope,
And for the coiffure, baldness;
for the rich gown, a sackcloth skirt.
Then, instead of beauty:
25 Your men will fall by the sword,
and your champions, in war;
26 Her gates will lament and mourn,
as the city sits desolate on the ground.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 2–5
See RG
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1 Seven women will take hold of one man*
on that day, saying:
"We will eat our own food
and wear our own clothing;
Only let your name be given us,
put an end to our disgrace!"

### The Messianic Branch

2 On that day,
The branch of the LORD* will be luster and
glory,
and the fruit of the earth will be honor and
splendor
for the survivors of Israel. [w]
3 He who remains in Zion
and he that is left in Jerusalem
Will be called holy:
every one marked down for life* in
Jerusalem. [x]
4 When the Lord washes away
the filth of the daughters of Zion,
And purges Jerusalem's blood from her midst
with a blast of searing judgment,
5 Then will the LORD create,
over the whole site of Mount Zion
and over her place of assembly,
A smoking cloud by day
and a light of flaming fire by night. [y]
6 For over all, his glory will be shelter and
protection:
shade from the parching heat of day,
refuge and cover from storm and rain.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 2–5
See RG
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### The Vineyard Song

1 Let me now sing of my friend,
my friend's song concerning his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard*
on a fertile hillside;
2 He spaded it, cleared it of stones,
and planted the choicest vines;

**3, 17:** Bare their heads: a mark of social disgrace; cf Nm 5, 18.
**3, 21:** Nose rings: of gold, a feminine ornament in the East; cf note on Gn 24, 22.
**4, 1:** Seven women . . . one man: the disproportion of the sexes due to war leaves the female population almost without male partners. The women are eager to marry, not for support, but to avoid the disgrace of being childless.

**4, 2:** Branch of the Lord: divine blessings in general, which later culminated in the Messiah; cf Jer 23, 5; Zec 3, 8; 6, 12.
**4, 3:** Marked down for life: in God's list of his elect; cf Ex 32, 32.
**5, 1:** My friend had a vineyard: the Lord and his chosen people.

u Lv 25, 42. 55. v 16ff: Is 32, 11f. w Is 11, 1; Jer 23, 5; 33, 15. x Is 6, 13; 10, 20; Ob 17. y Ex 13, 21.

Within it he built a watchtower,
and hewed out a wine press.
Then he looked for the crop of grapes,
but what it yielded was wild grapes.

3 Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard:
4 What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I had not done?
Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes,
did it bring forth wild grapes?
5 Now, I will let you know
what I mean to do to my vineyard:
Take away its hedge, give it to grazing,
break through its wall, let it be trampled!
6 Yes, I will make it a ruin:
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
but overgrown with thorns and briers;
I will command the clouds
not to send rain upon it.
7 The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah are his cherished plant;
He looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed!
for justice, but hark, the outcry!*

### Doom of the Unjust

8 Woe to you who join house to house,*
who connect field with field,
Till no room remains, and you are left to dwell
alone in the midst of the land! [z]
9 In my hearing the LORD of hosts has sworn:
Many houses shall be in ruins,
large ones and fine, with no one to live in them. [a]
10 Ten acres* of vineyard
shall yield but one liquid measure,
And a homer of seed
shall yield but an ephah.
17 Lambs shall graze there at pasture,
and kids shall eat in the ruins of the rich.

11 Woe to those who demand strong drink
as soon as they rise in the morning,
And linger into the night
while wine inflames them!
12 With harp and lyre, timbrel and flute,
they feast on wine;
But what the LORD does, they regard not,
the work of his hands they see not. [b]
13 Therefore my people go into exile,
because they do not understand;
Their nobles die of hunger,
and their masses are parched with thirst.
14 Therefore the nether world* enlarges its throat
and opens its maw without limit;
Down go their nobility and their masses,
their throngs and their revelry. [c]
15 Men shall be abased, each one brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty lowered,
16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted by his judgment,
and God the Holy shall be shown holy by his justice.

18 Woe to those who tug at guilt with cords of perversity,
and at sin as if with cart ropes!
19 To those who say, "Let him make haste
and speed his work, that we may see it;
On with the plan of the Holy One of Israel!
let it come to pass, that we may know it!" [d]
20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil,
who change darkness into light, and light into darkness,
who change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter!
21 Woe to those who are wise in their own sight,
and prudent in their own esteem! [e]
22 Woe to the champions at drinking wine,
the valiant at mixing strong drink! [f]
23 To those who acquit the guilty for bribes,
and deprive the just man of his rights! [g]

**5, 7:** Judgment . . . bloodshed . . . justice . . . outcry: in Hebrew, these adversative terms constitute a play on words.

**5, 8–10:** Land-grabbers who unjustly acquire property will be impoverished instead of enriched.

**5, 10:** Ten acres: a field requiring ten days of plowing by a yoke of oxen. Liquid measure: in Hebrew, a "bath," i.e., about ten gallons. Homer: a dry measure of about ten bushels. Ephah: a dry measure of about one bushel.

**5, 14:** Nether world: cf note on Ps 6, 6.

z Mi 2, 2. a Is 6, 12. b Am 6, 5f. c Hb 2, 5. d Jer 5, 12; 2 Pt 3, 4. e Prv 3, 7; Rom 12, 16. f Sir 31, 3. g Ex 23, 8; Prv 17, 15.

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire licks up stubble,
as dry grass shrivels in the flame,
Even so their root shall become rotten
and their blossom scatter like dust;
For they have spurned the law of the LORD of hosts,
and scorned the word of the Holy One of Israel.
25 Therefore the wrath of the LORD blazes against his people,
he raises his hand to strike them;
When the mountains quake,
their corpses shall be like refuse in the streets.
For all this, his wrath is not turned back,
and his hand is still outstretched.

**Invasion***

26 He will give a signal to a far-off nation,
and whistle to them from the ends of the earth;
speedily and promptly will they come.
27 None of them will stumble with weariness,
none will slumber and none will sleep.
None will have his waist belt loose,
nor the thong of his sandal broken.
28 Their arrows are sharp,
and all their bows are bent.
The hoofs of their horses seem like flint,
and their chariot wheels like the hurricane.
29 Their roar is that of the lion,
like the lion's whelps they roar;
They growl and seize the prey,
they carry it off and none will rescue it.
30 [They will roar over it, on that day,
with a roaring like that of the sea.] [h]

# II: Immanuel Prophecies

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6
See RG
291–292

**Call of Isaiah** 1 In the year king Uzziah died,* I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, [i]
with the train of his garment filling the temple.*
2 Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two they veiled their feet, and with two they hovered aloft. [j]
3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!" they cried one to the other. "All the earth is filled with his glory!" 4 [k] At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke.*
5 Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!* For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" [l] 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar.
7 He touched my mouth with it. "See," he said, "now that this has touched your lips,* your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." [m]
8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am;" I said; "send me!" 9 And he replied: Go and say to this people:*

Listen carefully, but you shall not understand!
Look intently, but you shall know nothing! [n]
10 You are to make the heart of this people sluggish,
to dull their ears and close their eyes;
Else their eyes will see, their ears hear,
their heart understand,
and they will turn and be healed. [o]

5, 26–30: A description of the invading Assyrian army, God's instrument for punishing his people.

6, 1: In the year King Uzziah died: 742 B.C.

6, 1ff: Temple: the holy place, just in front of the holy of holies. Seraphim: literally "the burning ones," are celestial beings who surround the throne of God. Each has six wings. Reverence for the divine majesty causes them to veil their faces with two wings; modesty, to veil their extremities in similar fashion; alacrity in God's service, to extend two wings in preparation for flight. Holy, holy, holy: God's perfect interior holiness whose exterior manifestation is his glory. These words are found in the Roman liturgy just before the Canon of the Mass.

6, 4: Smoke: reminiscent of the clouds which surrounded God at Mount Sinai; cf Ex 19, 16–19; Dt 4, 11f.

6, 5: Doomed: it was popularly believed that to see God would lead to one's death; cf Gn 32, 31; Ex 33, 20; Jgs 13, 22.

6, 7: Touched your lips: Isaiah is thus symbolically purified to be worthy of his vocation as God's prophet. In the Roman liturgy, the celebrant at Mass makes reference to this incident just before he reads the gospel.

6, 9f: The truth that the nation will remain impenitent is vividly foretold, as if its obstinacy would be caused, instead of merely occasioned, by the prophet's warning. Cf Mt 13, 13ff; Mk 4, 12; Lk 8, 10.

h Is 8, 22. i Jn 12, 41. j Rv 4, 8. k 1 Kgs 8, 10f; Rv 15, 8. l Gn 32, 3; Ex 20, 19; 33, 20; Jgs 6, 22; 13, 22. m Jer 1, 9; Dn 10, 16. n Mt 13, 14f; Mk 4, 12; Lk 8, 10; Acts 28, 26f. o Jer 5, 21; Jn 12, 40.

11 "How long, O Lord?" I asked. And he replied:

Until the cities are desolate,
without inhabitants,
Houses, without a man,
and the earth is a desolate waste.
12 Until the LORD removes men far away,
and the land is abandoned more and more.*
13 If there be still a tenth part in it,
then this in turn shall be laid waste;
As with a terebinth or an oak
whose trunk remains when its leaves have fallen.
[Holy offspring is the trunk.] p

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7–12 See RG 292

**Birth of Immanuel** 1 In the days of Ahaz,* king of Judah, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, king of Israel, son of Remaliah, went up to attack Jerusalem, q but they were not able to conquer it. 2 When word came to the house of David that Aram was encamped in Ephraim, the heart of the king and the heart of the people trembled, as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind.

3 r Then the LORD said to Isaiah: Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub,* at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field, 4 and say to him: Take care you remain tranquil and do not fear; let not your courage fail before these two stumps of smoldering brands [the blazing anger of Rezin and the Arameans, and of the son of Remaliah], 5 because of the mischief that Aram [Ephraim and the son of Remaliah] plots against you, saying, 6 "Let us go up and tear Judah asunder, make it our own by force, and appoint the son of Tabeel* king there."

7 Thus says the LORD:

This shall not stand, it shall not be!
8 Damascus is the capital of Aram,
and Rezin the head of Damascus;
Samaria is the capital of Ephraim,
and Remaliah's son the head of Samaria.
9 But within sixty years and five,*
Ephraim shall be crushed, no longer a nation.
Unless your faith is firm
you shall not be firm! s

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: 11 Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the sky!* 12 But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"* 13 Then he said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary men, must you also weary my God? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:* the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. 15 He shall be living on curds and honey* by the time he learns to reject the bad and choose the good. 16 For before the child learns to reject the bad and choose the good, the land of those two kings whom you dread shall be deserted.

17 The LORD shall bring upon you and your

6, 12: Several limited deportations in the time of Isaiah would later culminate in the Babylonian Exile.

7, 1: Days of Ahaz: who ruled from 735 to 715 B.C. This attack against Jerusalem by the kings of Aram (Syria) and Israel was occasioned by Ahaz' refusal to enter with them into an anti-Assyrian alliance; cf 2 Kgs 16.

7, 3: Shear-jashub: this name means "a remnant will return."

7, 6: Son of Tabeel: an adherent of Jerusalem's enemies. His appointment would interrupt the lawful succession from David.

7, 9: Within sixty years and five: if the text is correct, its reference is unknown.

7, 11: Deep . . . sky: an extraordinary or miraculous sign that would prove God's firm will to save the royal house of David from its oppressors.

7, 12: Tempt the Lord: Ahaz expresses in this hypocritical way his preference for depending upon the might of Assyria rather than upon God.

7, 14: The sign proposed by Isaiah was concerned with the preservation of Judah in the midst of distress (cf Is 7, 15. 17), but more especially with the fulfillment of God's earlier promise to David (2 Sm 7, 12–16) in the coming of Immanuel (meaning, "With us is God") as the ideal king (cf Is 9, 5–6; 11, 1–5). The church has always followed St. Matthew in seeing the transcendent fulfillment of this verse in Christ and his Virgin Mother. The prophet need not have known the full force latent in his own words; and some Catholic writers have sought a preliminary and partial fulfillment in the conception and birth of the future King Hezekiah, whose mother, at the time Isaiah spoke, would have been a young, unmarried woman (Hebrew, almah). The Holy Spirit was preparing, however, for another Nativity which alone could fulfill the divinely given terms of Immanuel's mission, and in which the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God was to fulfill also the words of this prophecy in the integral sense intended by the divine Wisdom.

7, 15: Curds and honey: the restricted diet of those who remain after devastation has changed the once fertile fields of Judah into grazing land; cf Is 7, 21–25.

p Is 10, 22. q 2 Kgs 16, 5; 2 Chr 28, 5–15. r Is 36, 2; 2 Chr 32, 3. s Is 8, 6ff.

people and your father's house days worse than
any since Ephraim seceded from Judah. [This
means the king of Assyria.] [18]On that day

The LORD shall whistle
for the fly that is in the farthest streams of
Egypt,
and for the bee in the land of Assyria.
[19]All of them shall come and settle
in the steep ravines and in the rocky clefts,
on all thornbushes and in all pastures.

[20]On that day the LORD shall shave with the razor hired from across the River [with the king of Assyria] the head, and the hair between the legs. It shall also shave off the beard.*

[21]On that day a man shall keep a heifer or a couple of sheep, [22]and from their abundant yield of milk he shall live on curds; curds and honey shall be the food of all who remain in the land. [23]On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand pieces of silver, shall be turned to briers and thorns. [24]Men shall go there with bow and arrows; for all the country shall be briers and thorns. [25]For fear of briers and thorns you shall not go upon any mountainside which used to be hoed with the mattock; they shall be grazing land for cattle and shall be trampled upon by sheep.

## CHAPTER 8

**The Son of Isaiah** [1]The LORD said to me: Take a large cylinder-seal, and inscribe on it in ordinary letters:* "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz." [2]And I took reliable witnesses,* Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah. [3]Then I went to the prophetess* and she conceived and bore a son. The LORD said to me: Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz, [4]for before the child knows how to call his father or mother by name, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried off by the king of Assyria.

[5]Again the LORD spoke to me:

[6]Because this people* has rejected
the waters of Shiloah that flow gently,[t]
And melts with fear before the loftiness of
Rezin and Remaliah's son,
[7]Therefore the LORD raises against them
the waters of the River, great and mighty
[the king of Assyria and all his power].
It shall rise above all its channels,
and overflow all its banks;
[8]It shall pass into Judah, and flood it all
throughout:
up to the neck it shall reach;
It shall spread its wings
the full width of your land, Immanuel!
[9]Know, O peoples, and be appalled!
Give ear, all you distant lands!
Arm, but be crushed! Arm, but be crushed!
[10]Form a plan,* and it shall be thwarted;
make a resolve, and it shall not be carried
out,
for "With us is God!"

**Disciples of Isaiah** [11]For thus said the LORD to me, taking hold of me and warning me not to walk in the way of this people:[u]

[12]Call not alliance what this people calls
alliance,
and fear not, nor stand in awe of what they
fear.
[13]But with the LORD of hosts make your
alliance—
for him be your fear and your awe.
[14]Yet he shall be a snare, an obstacle and a
stumbling stone
to both the houses of Israel,
A trap and a snare

Ch 7–12
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**7, 20:** God will use the Assyrians from across the River (the Euphrates) as his instrument (razor) to inflict disgrace and suffering upon his people.

**8, 1:** Ordinary letters: easily read by all. Maher-shalal-hash-baz: a symbolic name to be given to another son of Isaiah (v 3); it means "quick spoils; speedy plunder," and describes what the Assyrians will do.

**8, 2:** Reliable witnesses: who would testify that Isaiah had indeed prophesied the future destruction. Uriah the priest: cf 2 Kgs 16, 10.

**8, 3:** The prophetess: wife of Isaiah.

**8, 6ff:** This people: Judah. Waters of Shiloah: the stream that flows into the pool of Shiloah in Jerusalem, its slow current symbolizing the silent, divine protection which Judah has rejected. God will therefore summon the mighty Assyrian army, symbolized by the River (Euphrates), to devastate Judah, which, however, will not be entirely destroyed, because it is the land of Immanuel.

**8, 10:** The plan of Israel's enemies will be thwarted because, as the name "Immanuel" signifies, With us is God.

t Jn 9. 7. 11. u Ez 3, 14.

to those who dwell in Jerusalem; [v]
15 And many among them shall stumble and fall,
broken, snared, and captured.

16 The record is to be folded and the sealed
instruction kept among my disciples.* 17 For I
will trust in the LORD, who is hiding his face
from the house of Jacob; yes, I will wait for him.
18 Look at me and the children whom the Lord
has given me: we are signs* and portents in
Israel from the LORD of hosts who dwells on
Mount Zion. 19 [w] And when they say to you,
"Inquire of mediums and fortune-tellers (who
chirp and mutter!*); should not a people inquire
of their gods, apply to the dead on behalf of the
living?"— 20 then this document will furnish its
instruction. That kind of thing they will surely
say.*

**The Prince of Peace** 23 First he degraded the
land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali;* but in
the end he has glorified the seaward road, the
land west of the Jordan, the District of the
Gentiles.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:
for there is no gloom where until now
there was distress.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 7–12
See RG
292

1 The people who walked in darkness [x]
have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
2 You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
As they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as men make merry when dividing spoils.
3 For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
And the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.
4 For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
will be burned as fuel for flames. [y]
5 For a child* is born to us, a son is given us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor,
God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. [z]
6 His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,
From David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains
By judgment and justice,
both now and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this! [a]

### Fall of the Northern Kingdom

7 The Lord has sent word against Jacob,
it falls upon Israel;
8 And all the people know it,
Ephraim and those who dwell in Samaria,
those who say in arrogance and pride of
heart,
9 "Bricks have fallen,
but we will build with cut stone;
Sycamores are felled,
but we will replace them with cedars."
10 But the LORD raises up their foes against them
and stirs up their enemies to action:
11 Aram* on the east and the Philistines on the
west
devour Israel with open mouth.
For all this, his wrath is not turned back,
and his hand is still outstretched!

**8, 16:** Kept among my disciples: for preservation and transmission.

**8, 18:** Signs: Isaiah and his sons had symbolic names.

**8, 19:** Chirp and mutter: a mocking reference to the sounds uttered by necromancers, as if the dead were speaking; all such practices were forbidden.

**8, 21f:** These verses have been transposed and placed within Is 14, 25, which affords the context in which they can be understood.

**8, 23:** Zebulun . . . Naphtali: northern Palestine, which was first to be attacked by the Assyrians; God, however, redeems it, as he redeems all his people. Seaward road: from Damascus, across southern Galilee to the Mediterranean Sea. District of the Gentiles: northern Galilee, inhabited by pagans; cf Jos 20, 7; Is 9, 1. Mt 4, 15f refers to this, since Jesus began his public mission in Galilee.

**9, 5:** A child: the Immanuel of Is 7, 14 and 8, 8; cf Is 11, 1. 2. 9. In Christian tradition and liturgy, this passage is used to refer to Christ. Upon his shoulder dominion rests: authority. Wonder-Counselor: remarkable for his wisdom and prudence. God-Hero: a warrior and a defender of his people, like God himself. Father-Forever: ever devoted to his people. Prince of Peace: his reign will be characterized by peace.

**9, 11:** Aram: the Syrian kingdom, with its capital at Damascus.

v Rom 9, 33; 1 Pt 2, 8. w Lv 19, 31; Dt 18, 10ff. x 1f: Mt 4, 15f. y Sir 39, 9. z Ps 72, 7; Lk 2, 11. 14. a Jer 23, 5; Lk 1, 32f.

12 The people do not turn to him who struck them,
nor seek the LORD of hosts.
13 So the LORD severs from Israel head and tail,
palm branch and reed in one day.
14 [The elder and the noble are the head,
the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.]
15 The leaders of this people mislead them
and those to be led are engulfed. [b]
16 For this reason, the Lord does not spare their young men,
and their orphans and widows he does not pity;
They are wholly profaned and sinful,
and every mouth gives vent to folly.
For all this, his wrath is not turned back,
his hand is still outstretched!

17 For wickedness burns like fire,
devouring brier and thorn;
It kindles the forest thickets,
which go up in columns of smoke.
18 At the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land quakes,
and the people are like fuel for fire;
No man spares his brother,
each devours the flesh of his neighbor.
19 Though they hack on the right, they are hungry;
though they eat on the left, they are not filled.
20 Manasseh devours Ephraim,* and Ephraim Manasseh;
together they turn on Judah.
For all this, his wrath is not turned back,
his hand is still outstretched!

## CHAPTER 10

### Social Injustice

1 Woe to those who enact unjust statutes
and who write oppressive decrees, [c]
2 Depriving the needy of judgment
and robbing my people's poor of their rights,
Making widows their plunder,
and orphans their prey! [d]
3 What will you do on the day of punishment,
when ruin comes from afar?
To whom will you flee for help?
Where will you leave your wealth,
4 Lest it sink beneath the captive
or fall beneath the slain?
For all this, his wrath is not turned back,
his hand is still outstretched!

### Assyria the Unconscious Instrument of God

5 Woe to Assyria! My rod in anger,
my staff in wrath.
6 Against an impious nation* I send him,
and against a people under my wrath I order him
To seize plunder, carry off loot,
and tread them down like the mud of the streets.
7 But this is not what he intends,
nor does he have this in mind;
Rather, it is in his heart to destroy,
to make an end of nations not a few.
8 "Are not my commanders all kings?" he says,
9 "Is not Calno like Carchemish, [e]
Or Hamath like Arpad,
or Samaria like Damascus?*
10 Just as my hand reached out to idolatrous kingdoms
that had more images than Jerusalem and Samaria,
11 Just as I treated Samaria and her idols,
shall I not do to Jerusalem and her graven images?" [f]

12 *[But when the LORD has brought to an end
all his work on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,

I will punish the utterance
of the king of Assyria's proud heart,
13 and the boastfulness of his haughty eyes.
For he says:]

"By my own power I have done it,

Ch 7–12 See RG 292

9, 20: Manasseh . . . Ephraim: two of the leading tribes of the northern kingdom.
10, 6f: Impious nation: Israel. It was God's intention to use Assyria merely to punish, not to destroy, his people.

10, 9: Calno . . . Damascus: cities captured by the Assyrians.

b Is 28, 7; Jer 2, 8; 5, 31; 20, 6; 23, 13f; 29, 30ff; Ez 13, 1–7; 22, 28; Mi 3, 11. c Jer 8, 8. d Is 1, 23. e Is 36, 19; Am 6, 2. f Is 36, 20.

and by my wisdom, for I am shrewd.
I have moved the boundaries of peoples,
their treasures I have pillaged,
and, like a giant, I have put down the enthroned.
14 My hand has seized like a nest
the riches of nations;
As one takes eggs left alone,
so I took in all the earth;
No one fluttered a wing,
or opened a mouth, or chirped!"

15 Will the axe boast against him who hews with it?
Will the saw exalt itself above him who wields it?
As if a rod could sway him who lifts it,
or a staff him who is not wood!
16 Therefore the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
will send among his fat ones* leanness,
And instead of his glory there will be kindling
like the kindling of fire.
17 The Light of Israel will become a fire,
Israel's Holy One a flame,
That burns and consumes his briers
and his thorns in a single day.
18 His splendid forests and orchards
will be consumed, soul and body;
19 And the remnant of the trees in his forest
will be so few,
Like poles set up for signals,
that any boy can record them.
20 On that day
The remnant of Israel,
the survivors of the house of Jacob,
will no more lean upon him who struck them;
But they will lean upon the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, in truth.
21 A remnant will return,* the remnant of Jacob,
to the mighty God.
22 For though your people, O Israel,
were like the sand of the sea,
Only a remnant of them will return;
their destruction is decreed
as overwhelming justice demands.[g]

23 Yes, the destruction he has decreed, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will carry out within the whole land. 24 Therefore thus says the Lord, the GOD of hosts: O my people, who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian, though he strikes you with a rod, and raises his staff against you. 25 For only a brief moment more, and my anger shall be over; but them I will destroy in wrath. 26 Then the LORD of hosts will raise against them a scourge such as struck Midian at the rock of Oreb; and he will raise his staff over the sea as he did against Egypt.[h] 27 On that day,*

His burden shall be taken from your shoulder,
and his yoke shattered from your neck.

### Sennacherib's Invasion

He has come up from the direction of Rimmon,
28 he has reached Aiath, passed through Migron,
at Michmash his supplies are stored.
29 They cross the ravine:
"We will spend the night at Geba."
Ramah is in terror,
Gibeah of Saul has fled.
30 Cry and shriek, O daughter of Gallim!
Hearken, Laishah! Answer her, Anathoth!
31 Madmenah is in flight,
the inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge.
32 Even today he will halt at Nob,*
he will shake his fist at the mount of daughter Zion,
the hill of Jerusalem!
33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
lops off the boughs with terrible violence;
The tall of stature are felled,
and the lofty ones brought low;
34 The forest thickets are felled with the axe,
and Lebanon in its splendor falls.

**10, 16:** His fat ones: the strong men of the king of Assyria.
**10, 21:** A remnant will return: in Hebrew, shear-jashub, an allusion to the name of Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub; cf Is 7, 3.
**10, 27–32:** A poetic description of the progress of the Assyrian army, advancing from the north through Judah to the gates of Jerusalem.
**10, 32ff:** Just when the enemy is about to capture Jerusalem, God intervenes and destroys the hostile army.

g Rom 9, 27f. h Jgs 7, 25.

## CHAPTER 11

### The Rule of Immanuel

1 But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of
Jesse,*
and from his roots a bud shall blossom. [i]
2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: [j]
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
A spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the
LORD,*
3 and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.
Not by appearance shall he judge,
nor by hearsay shall he decide,
4 But he shall judge the poor with justice,
and decide aright for the land's afflicted. [k]
He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his
mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall slay
the wicked.
5 Justice shall be the band around his waist,
and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

6 Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,*
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
The calf and the young lion shall browse
together,
with a little child to guide them. [l]
7 The cow and the bear shall be neighbors,
together their young shall rest;
the lion shall eat hay like the ox.
8 The baby shall play by the cobra's den,
and the child lay his hand on the adder's
lair.
9 There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy
mountain;
for the earth shall be filled with knowledge
of the LORD,
as water covers the sea. [m]

### Union of Ephraim and Judah

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10 On that day,
The root of Jesse,
set up as a signal for the nations,
The Gentiles shall seek out,
for his dwelling shall be glorious. [n]
11 On that day,
The Lord shall again take it in hand [o]
to reclaim the remnant of his people
that is left from Assyria and Egypt,
Pathros, Ethiopia, and Elam,
Shinar, Hamath, and the isles of the
sea.*
12 He shall raise a signal to the nations
and gather the outcasts of Israel;
The dispersed of Judah he shall assemble
from the four corners of the earth.
13 The envy of Ephraim shall pass away,
and the rivalry of Judah be removed;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not be hostile to
Ephraim; [p]
14 But they shall swoop down on the foothills
of the Philistines to the west,
together they shall plunder the Kedemites;*
Edom and Moab shall be their possessions,
and the Ammonites their subjects.
15 The LORD shall dry up the tongue of the Sea of
Egypt,*
and wave his hand over the Euphrates in his
fierce anger
And shatter it into seven streamlets,
so that it can be crossed in sandals. [q]
16 There shall be a highway for the remnant of
his people
that is left from Assyria,
As there was for Israel
when he came up from the land of Egypt.

**11, 1:** Jesse: David's father. Shoot . . . stump: after the Babylonian exile only a stump of the Davidic dynasty will remain; from it will arise the new shoot, the messianic King.

**11, 2f:** The source of the traditional names of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Septuagint and the Vulgate read "piety" for fear of the Lord in its first occurrence, thus listing seven gifts.

**11, 6–9:** This picture of the idyllic harmony of paradise is a dramatic symbol of the universal peace and justice of messianic times.

**11, 11:** Pathros . . . sea: where God's people lived in exile. Pathros: upper Egypt. Elam: east of Babylonia. Shinar: Babylonia. Hamath: on the Orontes River in Syria. Isles: or coastlands, in the Mediterranean.

**11, 14:** Kedemites: tribes in the Arabian Desert.

**11, 15:** Tongue . . . Egypt: the body of water between Egypt and Palestine.

i Lk 3, 32. j Mt 3, 16; Mk 1, 10. k Pss 72, 2. 4; 98, 9; 2 Thes 2, 8. l Is 65, 25. m Hb 2, 14. n Is 49, 22; Rom 15, 12. o Is 27, 13; Mi 7, 12; Zec 10, 10. p Ex 37, 16–17. q Ex 14, 29.

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## CHAPTER 12

### Song of Thanksgiving*

1 On that day, you will say:
I give you thanks, O LORD;
though you have been angry with me,
your anger has abated, and you have consoled me.
2 God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior. [r]

3 With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation, 4 and say on that day:
Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.
5 Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth. [s]
6 Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel! [t]

# III: Oracles Against the Pagan Nations

## CHAPTER 13

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**Babylon** 1 An oracle concerning Babylon; a vision of Isaiah, son of Amoz.

2 Upon the bare mountains set up a signal;
cry out to them,*
Wave for them to enter
the gates of the volunteers. [u]

3 I have commanded my dedicated soldiers,*
I have summoned my warriors,
eager and bold to carry out my anger.
4 Listen! the rumble on the mountains:
that of an immense throng!
Listen! the noise of kingdoms,
nations assembled!
The LORD of hosts is mustering
an army for battle. [v]
5 They come from a far-off country,
and from the end of the heavens,
The LORD and the instruments of his wrath,
to destroy all the land.

6 Howl, for the day of the LORD* is near;
as destruction from the Almighty it comes. [w]
7 Therefore all hands fall helpless, [x]
the bows of the young men fall from their hands.
Every man's heart melts 8 in terror.
Pangs and sorrows take hold of them,
like a woman in labor they writhe;
They look aghast at each other,
their faces aflame. [y]
9 Lo, the day of the LORD comes,
cruel, with wrath and burning anger;
To lay waste the land
and destroy the sinners within it!
10 The stars and constellations of the heavens
send forth no light;
The sun is dark when it rises,
and the light of the moon does not shine. [z]
11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil
and the wicked for their guilt.
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,
the insolence of tyrants I will humble. [a]
12 I will make mortals more rare than pure gold,
men, than gold of Ophir.*
13 For this I will make the heavens tremble
and the earth shall be shaken from its place,
At the wrath of the LORD of hosts
on the day of his burning anger.

14 Like a hunted gazelle,
or a flock that no one gathers,
Every man shall turn to his kindred

12, 1–6: Israel's thanksgiving to the Lord, expressed in language like that of the Psalms.

13, 2: To them: the Medes (v 17) and Persians, who would destroy Babylon. Gates of the volunteers: the mustering places of Babylon's enemies for war against her.

13, 3: Dedicated soldiers: in the sense that they will wage a "holy war" and carry out God's plan.

13, 6ff: Day of the Lord: described often in prophetical writings, it generally signified the coming of the Lord in power and majesty to destroy his enemies and inaugurate his kingdom. Here it refers to the overthrow of Babylon. The figures used convey the idea of horror and destruction. Read vv 6–8 with vv 14–16.

13, 12: Ophir: cf note to Ps 45, 10.

r Ex 15, 2; Ps 118, 14. s Ex 15, 1. t Is 41, 14. 16; 54, 1; Zep 3, 14; Zec 2, 10. u Is 5, 26. v Jer 50, 9. w Jer 46, 10; Jl 1, 15. x Ez 7, 17. y Is 21, 3; Ps 48, 7; Mi 4, 9. z Is 24, 23. a Is 2, 17; Jer 50. 32.

and flee to his own land.[b]
15 Everyone who is caught shall be run through;
to a man, they shall fall by the sword.
16 Their infants shall be dashed to pieces in their sight;
their houses shall be plundered
and their wives ravished.[c]

17 I am stirring up against them the Medes,
who think nothing of silver
and take no delight in gold.[d]
18 The fruit of the womb they shall not spare,
nor shall they have eyes of pity for children.
19 And Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,
the glory and pride of the Chaldeans,
Shall be overthrown by God
like Sodom and like Gomorrah.
20 She shall never be inhabited,
nor dwelt in, from age to age;
The Arab shall not pitch his tent there,
nor shepherds couch their flocks.[e]
21 But wildcats shall rest there
and owls shall fill the houses;
There ostriches shall dwell,
and satyrs* shall dance.[f]
22 Desert beasts shall howl in her castles,
and jackals in her luxurious palaces.
Her time is near at hand
and her days shall not be prolonged.

## CHAPTER 14

**The King of Babylon** 1 When the LORD has pity on Jacob and again chooses Israel and settles them on their own soil, the aliens will join them and be counted with the house of Jacob.[g] 2 The house of Israel will take them and bring them along to its place, and possess them as male and female slaves on the Lord's soil, making captives of its captors and ruling over its oppressors.[h] 3 On the day the LORD relieves you of sorrow and unrest and the hard service in which you have been enslaved,[i] 4 you will take up this taunt-song* against the king of Babylon:[j]

How the oppressor has reached his end!
how the turmoil is stilled!
5 The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked,
the staff of the tyrants
6 That struck the peoples in wrath
relentless blows;
That beat down the nations in anger,
with oppression unchecked.
7 The whole earth rests peacefully,
song breaks forth;
8 The very cypresses rejoice over you,
and the cedars of Lebanon:
"Now that you are laid to rest,
there will be none to cut us down."[k]

9 The nether world below is all astir
preparing for your coming;
It awakens the shades to greet you,
all the leaders of the earth;
It has the kings of all nations
rise from their thrones.
10 All of them speak out
and say to you,
"You too have become weak like us,
you are the same as we.
11 Down to the nether world your pomp is brought,
the music of your harps.
The couch beneath you is the maggot,
your covering, the worm."[l]

12 How have you fallen from the heavens,
O morning star,* son of the dawn!
How are you cut down to the ground,
you who mowed down the nations!
13 You said in your heart:[m]
"I will scale the heavens;
Above the stars of God
I will set up my throne;
I will take my seat on the Mount of Assembly,
in the recesses of the North.*
14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will be like the Most High!"[n]

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13, 21: Satyrs: in the popular mind, demons of goatlike form dwelling in ruins, symbols of immorality; cf Lv 17, 7.

14, 4–21: This taunt-song, or satire, is one of the finest in the Bible.

14, 12: Morning star: the king of Babylon. The Vulgate has "Lucifer," a name applied by the church Fathers to Satan.

14, 13: Recesses of the North: see note on Ps 48, 3.

b Jer 50, 16. c Na 3, 10. d Is 21, 2; Jer 51, 11. 28. e Jer 51, 62. f Is 34, 13f; 35, 7. g Is 56, 3; 60, 4; Ps 102, 14; Jer 24, 6; Zec 1, 17. h Is 66, 20. i Jer 30, 10. j Hb 2, 6. k Ez 31, 16. l Sir 10, 13. m Jer 51, 53; Am 9, 2. n Ez 28, 2.

15 Yet down to the nether world you go
to the recesses of the pit!
16 When they see you they will stare,
pondering over you:
"Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
and kingdoms quake?
17 Who made the world a desert,
razed its cities,
and gave his captives no release?
18 All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
each in his own tomb;
19 But you are cast forth without burial,
loathsome and corrupt,
Clothed as those slain at sword-point,
a trampled corpse.
Going down to the pavement of the pit,
20 you will never be one with them in the grave."
For you have ruined your land,
you have slain your people!

Let him not be named forever,
that scion of an evil race!
21 Make ready to slaughter his sons
for the guilt of their fathers;
Lest they rise and possess the earth,
and fill the breadth of the world with tyrants.

22 I will rise up against them, says the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, progeny and offspring, says the LORD.[o]
23 I will make it a haunt of hoot owls and a marshland; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of hosts.

### Assyria

24 The LORD of hosts has sworn:
As I have resolved,
so shall it be;
As I have proposed,
so shall it stand:
25 I will break the Assyrian in my land
and trample him on my mountains;
21 *He shall pass through it hard-pressed and hungry,
and in his hunger he shall become enraged,
and curse his king and his gods.
He shall look upward,
but there shall be strict darkness
without any dawn;
22 He shall gaze at the earth,
but there shall be distress and darkness,
with the light blacked out by its clouds.
(25) Then his yoke shall be removed from them,
and his burden from their shoulder.
26 This is the plan proposed for the whole earth,
and this the hand outstretched over all nations.
27 The LORD of hosts has planned;
who can thwart him?
His hand is stretched out;
who can turn it back?

**Philistia** 28 In the year that King Ahaz died,* there came this oracle:

29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, not a man of you,
that the rod* which smote you is broken;
For out of the serpent's root shall come an adder,
its fruit shall be a flying saraph.
30 In my pastures the poor shall eat,
and the needy lie down in safety;
But I will kill your root with famine
that shall slay even your remnant.
31 Howl, O gate; cry out, O city!
Philistia, all of you melts away!
For there comes a smoke from the north,
without a straggler in the ranks.
32 What will one answer the messengers of the nation?
"The LORD has established Zion,
and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge."[p]

14, 21f: He . . . clouds: the two verses have been transposed from chap. 8.
14, 28: The year that King Ahaz died: 715 B.C.

14, 29: Rod: an Assyrian oppressor whose identity is uncertain. Flying saraph: a poisonous serpent, distinguished by its speedy movement; cf note on Nm 21, 6.

o Jer 51, 62. p Pss 87, 5; 102, 17f; Zep 3, 12.

## CHAPTER 15

### Moab

1 Oracle on Moab:
Laid waste in a night,
Ar of Moab is destroyed;
Laid waste in a night,
Kir of Moab is destroyed.[q]
2 Up goes daughter Dibon[r]
to the high places to weep;
Over Nebo and over Medeba
Moab wails.
Every head is shaved,
every beard sheared off.*
3 In the streets they wear sackcloth,
lamenting and weeping;
On rooftops and in the squares
everyone wails.
4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,
they are heard as far as Jahaz.
At this the loins of Moab tremble,
his soul quivers within him;[s]
5 The heart of Moab cries out,
his fugitives reach Zoar
[Eglath-shelishiyah].
The ascent of Luhith
they climb weeping;
On the way to Horonaim[t]
they utter rending cries.

6 The waters of Nimrim
have become a waste;
The grass is withered,
new growth is gone,
nothing is green.
7 So now whatever they have acquired or stored away
they carry across the Gorge of the Poplars,
8 For the cry has gone round
the land of Moab;
As far as Eglaim the wailing,
and to Beer-elim, the wail.

9 The waters of Dimon were filled with blood,*
but I will bring still more upon Dimon:
Lions for those who are fleeing from Moab
and for those who remain in the land!

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## CHAPTER 16

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1 Send them forth, hugging the earth like reptiles,
from Sela across the desert,
to the mount of daughter Zion.
2 Like flushed birds,
like startled nestlings,
Are the daughters of Moab
at the fords of the Arnon.*
3 Offer counsel, take their part:*
at high noon let your shadow be like the night,
To hide the outcasts,
to conceal the fugitives.
4 Let the outcasts of Moab live with you,
be their shelter from the destroyer.
When the struggle is ended, the ruin complete,
and they have done with trampling the land,
5 A throne shall be set up in mercy,
and on it shall sit in fidelity
[in David's tent]
A judge upholding right
and prompt to do justice.[u]

6 We have heard of the pride of Moab,
how very proud he is,
With his haughty, arrogant insolence
that his empty words do not match.[v]

7 Therefore Moab wails for Moab,*
everywhere they wail;
For the raisin cakes* of Kir-hareseth
they sigh, stricken with grief.[w]
8 The terraced slopes of Heshbon languish,

**15, 2:** Every head . . . sheared off: traditional signs of grief.
**15, 9:** There is in the Hebrew a play on words: Dimon and dam, the latter signifying "blood."
**16, 2:** The Arnon: principal river of Moab.
**16, 3–5:** Directed to Jerusalem, which should receive the suffering Moabites with mercy, as befits the city of David's family, who were partly descended from Ruth the Moabite.
**16, 7–14:** Moab had been prosperous; now it has become a desert.
**16, 7:** Raisin cakes: masses of dried compressed grapes used as food (cf 2 Sm 6, 19; 1 Chr 16, 3; Ct 2, 5), and also in pagan cult (Hos 3, 1).

q Is 16, 7. r Jer 48, 38f. s Jer 48, 34. t Is 16, 9; Jer 48, 3. u Is 32, 1. v Jer 48, 29. w Is 15, 3.

the vines of Sibmah,
Whose clusters overpowered
the lords of nations,
While they reached as far as Jazer
and scattered over the desert,*
And whose branches spread forth
and extended over the sea.
9 Therefore I weep with Jazer
for the vines of Sibmah;
I water you with tears,
Heshbon and Elealeh;
For on your summer fruits and harvests
the battle cry has fallen.[x]
10 From the orchards are taken away
joy and gladness,
In the vineyards there is no singing,
no shout of joy;
In the wine presses no one treads grapes,
the vintage shout is stilled.[y]
11 Therefore for Moab
my breast moans like a lyre,
and my heart for Kir-hareseth.[z]
12 When Moab grows weary on the high places,[a]
he shall enter his sanctuary to pray,
but it shall avail him nothing.*

13 *This is the word the LORD spoke against Moab in times past. 14 But now the LORD has spoken: In three years, like those of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be degraded despite all its great multitude; there shall be a remnant, very small and weak.

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 13–23
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### Damascus

1 Oracle on Damascus:*
Lo, Damascus shall cease to be a city
and become a ruin;[b]
2 Her cities shall be forever abandoned,
given over to flocks to lie in undisturbed.
3 The fortress shall be lost to Ephraim*
and the kingdom to Damascus;
The remnant of Aram shall have the same glory
as the Israelites,
says the LORD of hosts.
4 On that day
The glory of Jacob shall fade,
and his full body grow thin,[c]
5 Like the reaper's mere armful of stalks
when he gathers the standing grain;
Or as when one gleans the ears
in the Valley of Rephaim.*
6 Only a scattering of grapes shall be left!
As when an olive tree has been beaten,
Two or three olives remain at the very top,
four or five on its fruitful branches,*
says the LORD, the God of Israel.[d]

7 On that day man shall look to his maker,
his eyes turned toward the Holy One of Israel.[e]
8 He shall not look to the altars, his handiwork,
nor shall he regard what his fingers have made:
the sacred poles* or the incense stands.
9 On that day his strong cities shall be
like those abandoned by the Hivites and Amorites
When faced with the children of Israel:
they shall be laid waste.[f]
10 For you have forgotten God, your savior,
and remembered not the Rock, your strength.
Therefore, though you plant your pagan plants*
and set out your foreign vine slips,[g]

16, 8: Desert: to the east. Sea: the Dead Sea.
16, 12: In vain do the Moabites appeal to their god Chemosh.
16, 13f: A prose application of the preceding poetic oracle against Moab (15, 1—16, 12); cf Jer 4, 8. Like those of a hireling: who fulfills his period of service according to the shortest manner of reckoning; cf Is 21, 16.
17, 1: Damascus: capital of Syria, destroyed in 732 B.C.
17, 3: Ephraim: Israel, leagued with Syria against Assyria and Judah; destroyed in 721 B.C. Aram: Syria.
17, 5: Valley of Rephaim: a fertile plain to the southwest of Jerusalem; cf Jos 15, 8; 2 Sm 5, 18.
17, 6: Olives not easily picked by hand were knocked from the tree by means of a long stick; cf Is 24, 13.
17, 8: Sacred poles: see note on Ex 34, 13. Incense stands: small altars on which incense was burned in idolatrous worship; cf Is 27, 9; Lv 26, 30.
17, 10: Pagan plants: literally, "plants of delights," understood by some as planted in honor of the god of fertility.

x Is 15, 5; Jer 48, 32. y Is 24, 8. z Is 15, 5; Jer 48, 36. a Jer 48, 13. b Jer 49, 23. c Is 10, 16. d Is 24, 13. e Mi 5, 12. f Is 27, 10. g Jer 2, 32; Hos 8, 14.

11 Though you make them grow the day you plant them
and make your sprouts blossom on the next morning,
The harvest shall disappear on the day of the grievous blow,
the incurable blight.

12 Ah! the roaring of many peoples*
that roar like the roar of the seas!
The surging of nations
that surge like the surging of mighty waves!
13 But God shall rebuke them,
and they shall flee far away;
Windswept, like chaff on the mountains,
like tumbleweed in a storm.
14 In the evening, they spread terror,
before morning, they are gone!
Such is the portion of those who despoil us,
the lot of those who plunder us.

## CHAPTER 18

### Ethiopia

1 Ah, land of buzzing insects,*
beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,*
2 Sending ambassadors by sea,
in papyrus boats on the waters!
Go, swift messengers,
to a nation tall and bronzed,
To a people dreaded near and far,
a nation strong and conquering,
whose land is washed by rivers.[h]
3 All you who inhabit the world,
who dwell on earth,
When the signal is raised on the mountain, look!
When the trumpet blows, listen!
4 For thus says the LORD to me:
I will quietly look on from where I dwell,
Like the glowing heat of sunshine,
like a cloud of dew at harvest time.
5 Before the vintage, when the flowering is ended,
and the blooms are succeeded by ripening grapes,
Then comes the cutting of branches with pruning hooks
and the discarding of the lopped-off shoots.
6 They shall all be left to the mountain birds of prey,
and to the beasts in the land;
The birds of prey shall summer on them
and on them all the beasts of the earth shall winter.

7 Then will gifts be brought to the LORD of hosts from a people tall and bronzed, from a people dreaded near and far, a nation strong and conquering, whose land is washed by rivers—to Mount Zion where dwells the name of the LORD of hosts.[i]

## CHAPTER 19

### Egypt

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1 Oracle on Egypt:
See, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud
on his way to Egypt;
The idols of Egypt tremble before him,
the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.
2 I will rouse Egypt against Egypt:
brother will war against brother,
Neighbor against neighbor,
city against city, kingdom against kingdom.
3 The courage of the Egyptians ebbs away within them,
and I will bring to nought their counsel;
They shall consult idols and charmers,
ghosts and spirits.[j]
4 I will deliver Egypt
into the power of a cruel master,*
A harsh king who shall rule over them,
says the Lord, the LORD of hosts.[k]

**17, 12f:** Many peoples: the hordes that accompanied the invading Assyrians, whom God repels just as he vanquished the primeval waters of chaos; see notes on Jb 3, 8; 7, 12; Ps 89, 11.

**18, 1:** Land of buzzing insects: the region of the Upper Nile where these multiplied with great rapidity.

**18, 1f:** Papyrus boats: light and serviceable vessels made of bundles of papyrus stalks and sealed with pitch. Egypt, ruled by a dynasty from Ethiopia, had invited Judah to join a coalition against Assyria, but Isaiah bade the ambassadors return to their own people.

**19, 4:** Cruel master: the king of Assyria.

h Is 18, 7. i Is 45, 14; Zep 3, 10; Mal 1, 11. j Is 44, 25. k Ez 29, 19; 30, 10.

5 The waters shall be drained from the sea,
the river shall shrivel and dry up; [l]
6 Its streams shall become foul,
and the canals of Egypt shall dwindle and dry up.
Reeds and rushes shall wither away,
7 and bulrushes on the bank of the Nile;
All the sown land along the Nile
shall dry up and blow away, and be no more.
8 The fishermen shall mourn and lament,
all who cast hook in the Nile;
Those who spread their nets in the water
shall pine away.
9 The linen-workers shall be disappointed,
the combers and weavers shall turn pale; [m]
10 The spinners shall be crushed,
all the hired laborers shall be despondent.
11 Utter fools are the princes of Zoan!*
the wisest of Pharaoh's advisers give stupid counsel.
How can you say to Pharaoh,
"I am a disciple of wise men, of ancient kings"?
12 Where then are your wise men?
Let them tell you and make known
What the LORD of hosts has planned
against Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan have become fools,
the princes of Memphis have been deceived.
The chiefs of her tribes
have led Egypt astray.
14 The LORD has prepared among them
a spirit of dizziness,
And they have made Egypt stagger in whatever she does,
as a drunkard staggers in his vomit.
15 Egypt shall have no work to do [n]
for head or tail, palm branch or reed.*

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16 On that day the Egyptians shall be like women, trembling with fear, because of the LORD of hosts shaking his fist at them. [o] 17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror to the Egyptians. Every time they remember Judah, they shall stand in dread because of the plan which the LORD of hosts has in mind for them. [p]

18 On that day there shall be five cities* in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan and swearing by the LORD of hosts; one shall be called "City of the Sun."

19 On that day there shall be an altar to the LORD in the land of Egypt, and a sacred pillar to the LORD near the boundary. 20 It shall be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt, when they cry out to the LORD against their oppressors, and he sends them a savior to defend and deliver them. 21 The LORD shall make himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day; they shall offer sacrifices and oblations, and fulfill the vows they make to the LORD. [q] 22 Although the LORD shall smite Egypt severely, he shall heal them; they shall turn to the LORD and he shall be won over and heal them.

23 On that day there shall be a highway from Egypt to Assyria; the Assyrians shall enter Egypt, and the Egyptians enter Assyria, and Egypt shall serve Assyria.

24 On that day Israel shall be a third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land, [r] 25 when the LORD of hosts blesses it: "Blessed be my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and my inheritance, Israel."

## CHAPTER 20

**Captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia** 1 In the year the general sent by Sargon, king of Assyria, fought against Ashdod and captured it, 2 the LORD gave a warning through Isaiah,* the son of Amoz: Go and take off the sackcloth from your waist, and remove the sandals from your feet. This he did, walking naked and barefoot. 3 Then

**19, 11. 13:** Zoan: later known as Tanis, and Memphis (in Hebrew Noph) were the key cities of the Nile Delta.

**19, 15:** Head or tail, palm branch or reed: the leaders or the people; cf Is 9, 13f.

**19, 18:** Five cities: colonies of Jews living together and speaking their languages, Hebrew and Aramaic; cf Jer, chap. 43. City of the Sun: the meaning is uncertain, but the reference seems to be to the city known later as Heliopolis.

**20, 2–6:** The symbolic act of the prophet conveyed the idea that Assyria would lead captive the Egyptians and Ethiopians. The Judeans and their allies would then realize the folly of having trusted in them.

l Ez 30, 12; 32, 2. m Ez 27, 7. n Is 9, 14. o Na 3, 13. p Ex 14, 25. q Zec 14, 16. 18. r Gn 12, 2.

the LORD said: Just as my servant Isaiah has gone
naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and
portent against Egypt and Ethiopia, [4]so shall the
king of Assyria lead away captives from Egypt,
and exiles from Ethiopia, young and old, naked
and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered [the
shame of Egypt]. [5]They shall be dismayed and
ashamed because of Ethiopia, their hope, and
because of Egypt, their boast.[s] [6]The inhabitants
of this coastland shall say on that day, "Look at
our hope! We have fled here for help and
deliverance from the king of Assyria; where can
we flee now?"[t]

## CHAPTER 21

### Fall of Babylon

1 Oracle on the wastelands by the sea:*
Like whirlwinds sweeping in waves through
the Negeb,
there comes from the desert,
from the fearful land,
[2]A cruel sight, revealed to me:
the traitor betrays,
the despoiler spoils.
"Go up, Elam; besiege, O Media;*
I will put an end to all groaning!"[u]
[3]Therefore my loins are filled with anguish,
pangs have seized me like those of a woman
in labor;
I am too bewildered to hear,
too dismayed to look.[v]
[4]My mind reels,
shuddering assails me;
My yearning for twilight
has turned into dread.
[5]They set the table,
spread out the rugs;
they eat, they drink.*
Rise up, O princes,
oil the shield!
[6]For thus says my Lord to me:
Go, station a watchman,
let him tell what he sees.
[7]If he sees a chariot,
a pair of horses,
Someone riding an ass,
someone riding a camel,
Then let him pay heed,
very close heed.
8 Then the watchman cried,
"On the watchtower, O my Lord,
I stand constantly by day;
And I stay at my post
through all the watches of the night.[w]
[9]Here he comes now:
a single chariot,
a pair of horses;
He calls out and says,
'Fallen, fallen is Babylon,
And all the images of her gods
are smashed to the ground.' "[x]
[10]O my people who have been threshed,
beaten on my threshing floor!
What I have heard
from the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel,
I have announced to you.[y]

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### Edom

11 Oracle on Edom:
They call to me from Seir,*
"Watchman, how much longer the night?
Watchman, how much longer the night?"
12 The watchman replies,
"Morning has come, and again night.
If you will ask, ask; come back again."

### Arabia

13 Oracle on Arabia:*
In the thicket in the nomad country spend the
night,

21, 1: Wastelands by the sea: Babylonia. Negeb: the desert south of Judah.
21, 2: Elam . . . Media: nations which, under the leadership of Cyrus, captured Babylon in 538 B.C. End to all groaning: those who were captives of Babylon shall be freed.
21, 5: Babylon is destroyed while its leaders are feasting; cf Dn 5. Oil the shield: shields were oiled and greased so as to divert blows more easily.
21, 11f: Seir: another name for Edom. The Edomites ask the prophet how much longer they must suffer (the night of suffering); he answers ambiguously: "Liberation (morning) and further suffering (night)," but perhaps they will later receive a more encouraging answer (ask; come back again).
21, 13f: Arabia: that is, the nomad country. Dedanites: an Arab tribe associated with Edom and Tema, and living east of the Red Sea; cf Gn 10, 7; 25, 3; Jer 25, 23.

s Is 30, 3. 5. t Is 31, 3; 36. 6. u Is 13, 17. v Ps 38, 8. w Hb 2, 1. x Is 46, 1; Jer 50, 2: 51, 8; Rv 14, 8. y Is 51, 23.

O caravans of Dedanites.
14 Meet the thirsty, bring them water;
you who dwell in the land of Tema,
greet the fugitives with bread.
15 They flee from the sword,
from the whetted sword;
From the taut bow,
from the fury of battle.

16 For thus says the Lord to me: In another year, like those of a hireling,* all the glory of Kedar shall come to an end. 17 Few of Kedar's stalwart archers shall remain, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 13–23 See RG 293

### Jerusalem

1 Oracle of the Valley of Vision:*
What is the matter with you now, that you have gone up,
all of you, to the housetops,
2 O city full of noise and chaos,
O wanton town!
Your slain are not slain with the sword,
nor killed in battle.[z]
3 All your leaders fled away together,
fled afar off;
All who were in you were captured together,
captured without the use of a bow.[a]
4 At this I say: Turn away from me,
let me weep bitterly;
Do not try to comfort me
for the ruin of the daughter of my people.[b]
5 It is a day of panic, rout and confusion,
from the Lord, the GOD of hosts, in the Valley of Vision.
Walls crash;
they cry for help to the mountains.[c]
6 Elam* takes up the quivers,
Aram mounts the horses,
and Kir uncovers the shields.
7 Your choice valleys are filled with chariots,
and horses are posted at the gates,
8 and shelter over Judah is removed.

*On that day you looked to the weapons in the House of the Forest; 9 you saw that the breaches in the City of David were many; you collected the water of the lower pool. 10 You numbered the houses of Jerusalem, tearing some down to strengthen the wall; 11 you made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to the city's Maker, nor did you consider him who built it long ago.

12 On that day the Lord,
the GOD of hosts, called on you
To weep and mourn,
to shave your head and put on sackcloth.[d]
13 But look! you feast and celebrate,
you slaughter oxen and butcher sheep,
You eat meat and drink wine:
"Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"[e]
14 This reaches the ears of the LORD of hosts—
You shall not be pardoned this wickedness till you die,
says the Lord, the GOD of hosts.

### Shebna and Eliakim

15 Thus says the Lord, the GOD of hosts:
Up, go to that official,
Shebna,* master of the palace,
16 Who has hewn for himself a sepulcher on a height
and carved his tomb in the rock:
"What are you doing here, and what people have you here,
that here you have hewn for yourself a tomb?"
17 The LORD shall hurl you down headlong, mortal man!
He shall grip you firmly
18 And roll you up and toss you like a ball

**21, 16:** Year . . . of a hireling: see note on Is 16, 14. Kedar: a nomad tribe in Arabia; cf Is 42, 11; 60, 7; Ps 120, 5.
**22, 1–8:** Valley of Vision: while the people live in revelry and disorder, the prophet foresees the impending doom of the city.
**22, 6:** Elam, Aram, Kir: all allies of Assyria. Kir: perhaps the same people referred to in Am 1, 5.
**22, 8–11:** Defense measures, in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem placed their trust instead of relying on God. House of the Forest: an armory built by Solomon; its columns of wood suggested the trees of a forest; cf 1 Kgs 7, 2; 10, 17.
**22, 15:** Shebna: referred to as the scribe in Is 36, 3.

z Is 32. 13. a 2 Kgs 25, 4. b Jer 6, 26; 9, 1; 14, 17. c Is 37, 3. d Jl 2, 17. e Is 56, 12; Wis 2, 6; 1 Cor 15, 32.

into an open land
To perish there, you and the chariots you glory in,
you disgrace to your master's house!
19 I will thrust you from your office
and pull you down from your station.

20 On that day I will summon my servant
Eliakim,* son of Hilkiah;[f]
21 I will clothe him with your robe,
and gird him with your sash,
and give over to him your authority.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and to the house of Judah.
22 I will place the key* of the House of David on his shoulder;
when he opens, no one shall shut,
when he shuts, no one shall open.[g]
23 I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot,
to be a place of honor for his family;
24 On him shall hang all the glory of his family:*
descendants and offspring,
all the little dishes, from bowls to jugs.

25 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, the peg fixed in a sure spot shall give way, break off and fall, and the weight that hung on it shall be done away with; for the LORD has spoken.

## CHAPTER 23

### Tyre and Sidon

1 Oracle on Tyre:
Wail, O ships of Tarshish,*
for your port is destroyed;
From the land of the Kittim*
the news reaches them.
2 Silence! you who dwell on the coast,
you merchants of Sidon,
Whose messengers crossed the sea
3 over the deep waters.
The grain of Shihor,* the harvest of the Nile,
was her revenue,
and she the merchant among nations.
4 Shame, O Sidon, fortress on the sea,
for the sea has spoken:*
"I have not been in labor, nor given birth,
nor raised young men,
nor reared virgins."
5 When it is heard in Egypt
they shall be in anguish at the news of Tyre.
6 Pass over to Tarshish, wailing,
you who dwell on the coast!
7 Is this your wanton city,
whose origin is from of old,
Whose feet have taken her
to dwell in distant lands?
8 Who has planned such a thing
against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,
Whose merchants are princes,
whose traders are the earth's honored men?
9 The LORD of hosts has planned it,
to disgrace all pride of majesty,
to degrade all the earth's honored men.[h]
10 Cross to your own land,
O ship of Tarshish;
the harbor is no more.
11 His hand he stretches out over the sea,
he shakes kingdoms;
The LORD has ordered the destruction
of Canaan's strongholds.*
12 You shall exult no more, he says,
you who are now oppressed, virgin daughter Sidon.
Arise, pass over to the Kittim,
even there you shall find no rest.[i]
13 *[This people is the land of the Chaldeans, not Assyria.]
She whom the impious founded,
setting up towers for her,
Has had her castles destroyed,
and has been turned into a ruin.[j]

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**22, 20:** Eliakim: also referred to in Is 36, 3; he is described as loyal to God.
**22, 22:** Key: symbol of authority; cf Mt 16, 19; Rv 3, 7.
**22, 24f:** If Eliakim should anger God, he and his family (compared here to dishes, bowls and jugs) will suffer disaster.
**23, 1–4. 12ff:** These verses refer to Sidon, vv 5–11 to Tyre.
**23, 1:** Kittim: Cyprus.
**23, 3:** Shihor: a synonym for the Nile.
**23, 4:** The sea brings to distant coasts the news that Sidon must disown her children; her people are dispersed.
**23, 11:** Canaan's strongholds: the fortresses of Phoenicia.
**23, 13:** The gloss here identifies she whom the impious founded with the land of the Chaldeans.

f 2 Kgs 18, 18. 37. g Rv 3, 7. h Ez 28, 7. i Ez 28, 21f. j Ez 26, 7.

14 Lament, O ships of Tarshish,
for your haven is destroyed.

15 On that day, Tyre shall be forgotten for seventy years. With the days of another king, at the end of seventy years,* it shall be for Tyre as in the song about the harlot: [k]

16 Take a harp, go about the city,
O forgotten harlot;
Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs,
that they may remember you.

17 At the end of the seventy years the LORD shall visit Tyre. She shall return to her hire and deal with all the world's kingdoms on the face of the earth. [l] 18 But her merchandise and her hire shall be sacred to the LORD. It shall not be stored up or laid away, but from her merchandise those who dwell before the LORD shall eat their fill and clothe themselves in choice attire.*

## IV: Apocalypse of Isaiah*

### CHAPTER 24

Ch 24–27
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**Devastation of the World: A Remnant Saved**

1 Lo, the LORD empties the land and lays it waste;
he turns it upside down,
scattering its inhabitants: [m]
2 Layman and priest alike,
servant and master,
The maid as her mistress,
the buyer as the seller,
The lender as the borrower,
the creditor as the debtor.
3 The earth is utterly laid waste, utterly stripped,
for the LORD has decreed this thing.
4 The earth mourns and fades,
the world languishes and fades;
both heaven and earth languish.
5 The earth is polluted because of its inhabitants,
who have transgressed laws, violated statutes,
broken the ancient covenant.*
6 Therefore a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants pay for their guilt;
Therefore they who dwell on earth turn pale,
and few men are left.
7 The wine mourns, the vine languishes,
all the merry-hearted groan. [n]
8 Stilled are the cheerful timbrels,
ended the shouts of the jubilant,
stilled is the cheerful harp. [o]
9 They cannot sing and drink wine;
strong drink is bitter to those who partake of it.
10 Broken down is the city of chaos,*
shut against entry, every house. [p]
11 In the streets they cry out for lack of wine;
all joy has disappeared
and cheer has left the land. [q]
12 In the city nothing remains but ruin;
its gates are battered and desolate.
13 Thus it is within the land,
and among the peoples,
As with an olive tree after it is beaten,
as with a gleaning when the vintage is done. [r]
14 These* lift up their voice in acclaim;
from the sea they proclaim the majesty of the LORD:
15 "For this, in the coastlands,
give glory to the LORD!
In the coastlands of the sea,
to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel!" [s]
16 From the end of the earth we hear songs:
"Splendor to the Just One!"
But I said, "I am wasted, wasted away.
Woe is me! The traitors betray:
with treachery have the traitors betrayed!

**23, 15:** Seventy years: a conventional period of time indicating simply a long disaster; cf Jer 25, 11 and 29, 10.
**23, 18:** Describes the conversion of Tyre.
**24, 1—27, 13:** This section, probably composed at a later date, contains oracles on the day of the Lord, combined with hymns of thanksgiving and of supplication.
**24, 5:** Ancient covenant: God's commandments to all mankind.
**24, 10:** City of chaos: a symbol of godlessness as opposed to Jerusalem, the city of God.
**24, 14:** These: the saved.

k Jer 25, 11. l Ez 27, 12. m Is 13, 9; Hos 4, 9. n Jl 1, 10. o Jer 7, 34; Hos 2, 13. p Is 25, 2. q Jer 48, 33; Lam 5, 14f. r Is 17, 6; Mi 7, 1. s Is 42. 10. 12; Zep 2, 11.

17 Terror, pit, and trap[t]
are upon you, inhabitant of the earth;
18 He who flees at the sound of terror
will fall into the pit;
He who climbs out of the pit
will be caught in the trap.
For the windows on high will be opened
and the foundations of the earth will shake.
19 The earth will burst asunder,
the earth will be shaken apart,
the earth will be convulsed.
20 The earth will reel like a drunkard,
and it will sway like a hut;
Its rebellion will weigh it down,
until it falls, never to rise again."[u]

21 On that day the LORD will punish
the host of the heavens* in the heavens,
and the kings of the earth on the earth.[v]
22 They will be gathered together
like prisoners into a pit;
They will be shut up in a dungeon,
and after many days they will be punished.
23 Then the moon will blush[w]
and the sun grow pale,
For the LORD of hosts will reign
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
glorious in the sight of his elders.*

## CHAPTER 25

1 O LORD, you are my God,*
I will extol you and praise your name;
For you have fulfilled your wonderful plans of old,
faithful and true.[x]
2 For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
The castle of the insolent is a city no more,
nor ever to be rebuilt.[y]
3 Therefore a strong people will honor you,
fierce nations will fear you.
4 For you are a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in distress;
Shelter from the rain,
shade from the heat.[z]
As with the cold rain,
5 as with the desert heat,
even so you quell the uproar of the wanton.
6 On this mountain* the LORD of hosts
will provide for all peoples
A feast of rich food and choice wines,
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.
7 On this mountain he will destroy
the veil that veils all peoples,
The web that is woven over all nations;[a]
8 he will destroy death forever.
The Lord GOD will wipe away
the tears from all faces;
The reproach of his people he will remove
from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken.

9 On that day it will be said:
"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!
This is the LORD for whom we looked;
let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"[b]
10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain,
but Moab* will be trodden down
as a straw is trodden down in the mire.[c]
11 He will stretch forth his hands in Moab
as a swimmer extends his hands to swim;
He will bring low their pride
as his hands sweep over them.[d]
12 The high-walled fortress he will raze,
and strike it down level with the earth, with the very dust.[e]

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 24–27
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**The Divine Vindicator** 1 On that day they will sing this song in the land of Judah:

"A strong city have we;
he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us.
2 Open up the gates

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**24, 21:** Host of the heavens: the stars, which were regarded by the pagans as gods; cf Dt 4, 19; Jer 8, 2.
**24, 23:** His elders: the heavenly courtiers surrounding the throne of God.
**25, 1–8:** Victory in messianic times.
**25, 6:** This mountain: Zion, symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem.
**25, 10:** Moab: symbol of God's enemies.

t 17f. Jer 48, 43f. u Is 9, 14. v Ps 76, 13. w Is 13, 10; Jl 3, 3f; 4, 15. x Ex 15, 2. y Jer 9, 11. z Is 14, 32; 32, 2; Na 1, 7. a Is 60, 1. 3; 1 Cor 15, 53ff; Rv 7, 17; 21, 4. b Is 30, 18f. c Zep 2, 9f. d Is 16, 6f. 14. e Is 26, 5.

to let in a nation that is just,
one that keeps faith.[f]
3 A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace;
in peace, for its trust in you."[g]

4 Trust in the LORD forever!
For the LORD is an eternal Rock.[h]
5 He humbles those in high places,
and the lofty city he brings down;
He tumbles it to the ground,
levels it with the dust.[i]
6 It is trampled underfoot by the needy,
by the footsteps of the poor.
7 The way of the just is smooth;
the path of the just you make level.[j]
8 Yes, for your way and your judgments,
O LORD,
we look to you;
Your name and your title
are the desire of our souls,
9 My soul yearns for you in the night,
yes, my spirit within me keeps vigil for you;
When your judgment dawns upon the earth,
the world's inhabitants learn justice.[k]
10 The wicked man, spared, does not learn
justice;
in an upright land he acts perversely,
and sees not the majesty of the LORD.[l]
11 O LORD, your hand is uplifted,
but they behold it not;
Let them be shamed when they see your zeal
for your people:
let the fire prepared for your enemies
consume them.
12 O LORD, you mete out peace to us,
for it is you who have accomplished all we
have done.[m]
13 O LORD, our God, other lords than you have
ruled us;
it is from you only that we can call upon
your name.

14 Dead they are, they have no life,
shades that cannot rise;
For you have punished and destroyed them,
and wiped out all memory of them.
15 You have increased the nation, O LORD,
increased the nation to your own glory,
and extended far all the borders of the
land.[n]
16 O LORD, oppressed by your punishment,
we cried out in anguish under your
chastising.[o]
17 As a woman about to give birth
writhes and cries out in her pains,
so were we in your presence, O LORD.[p]
18 We conceived and writhed in pain,
giving birth to wind;
Salvation we have not achieved for the earth,
the inhabitants of the world cannot bring it
forth.
19 But your dead shall live, their corpses shall
rise;
awake and sing, you who lie in the dust.[q]
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the land of shades gives birth.*

### Day of the Lord: Reward and Punishment

20 Go, my people, enter your chambers,
and close your doors behind you;
Hide yourselves for a brief moment,
until the wrath is past.
21 See, the LORD goes forth from his place,
to punish the wickedness of the earth's
inhabitants;
The earth will reveal the blood upon her,
and no longer conceal her slain.[r]

## CHAPTER 27

Ch 24–27
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1 On that day,
The LORD will punish with his sword
that is cruel, great, and strong,
Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan the coiled serpent;
and he will slay the dragon* that is in the
sea.[s]

26, 19: This verse refers to the restoration of Israel in messianic times under the figure of the resurrection of the dead; cf Ez, chap. 37.

27, 1: Leviathan . . . dragon: symbols of the forces of evil which God vanquishes even as he overcame primeval chaos; cf notes on Jb 3, 8; 7, 12.

f Ps 118, 19f. g Is 32, 17f; 54, 13. h Is 30, 29; Ps 62, 8. i Is 25, 12; 32, 19. j Ps 23, 3f; Prv 11, 3. 5. k Ps 94, 15. l Is 5, 12. m Jer 29, 11. n Is 54, 2f; Neh 9, 23. o Hos 6, 1. p Mi 4, 10. q Ez 37, 5f; Dn 12. 2; Hos 6, 2. r Mi 1, 3. s Jb 40, 25–32; Ez 32, 2.

2 On that day—
The pleasant vineyard, sing about it! [t]
3 I, the LORD, am its keeper,
I water it every moment;
Lest anyone harm it,
night and day I guard it. [u]
4 I am not angry,
but if I were to find briers and thorns,
In battle I should march against them;
I should burn them all. [v]
8 Expunging and expelling, I should strive against them,
carrying them off with my cruel wind in time of storm. [w]
6 In days to come Jacob shall take root,
Israel shall sprout and blossom,
covering all the world with fruit.
7 Is he to be smitten as his smiter was smitten?
or slain as his slayer was slain?*
5 Or shall he cling to me for refuge?*
He must make peace with me;
peace shall he make with me! [x]
9 This, then, shall be the expiation of Jacob's guilt,
this the whole fruit of the removal of his sin:
He shall pulverize all the stones of the altars
like pieces of chalk;
no sacred poles or incense altars shall stand.
10 For the fortified city* shall be desolate,
an abandoned pasture, a forsaken wilderness,
where calves shall browse and lie. [y]
Its boughs shall be destroyed,
11 its branches shall wither and be broken off,
and women shall come to build a fire with them.
This is not an understanding people;
therefore their maker shall not spare them,
nor shall he who formed them have mercy on them. [z]
12 On that day,
The LORD shall beat out the grain
between the Euphrates and the Wadi of Egypt,*
and you shall be gleaned one by one, O sons of Israel.
13 On that day,*
A great trumpet shall blow,
and the lost in the land of Assyria
and the outcasts in the land of Egypt
Shall come and worship the LORD
on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem. [a]

## V: The Lord Alone, Israel's and Judah's Salvation

### CHAPTER 28

Ch 28–35
See RG
294

#### The Fate of Samaria

1 Woe to the majestic garland
of the drunkard Ephraim,*
To the fading blooms of his glorious beauty,
on the head of him who is stupefied with wine. [b]
2 Behold, the LORD has a strong one and a mighty,*
who, like a downpour of hail, a destructive storm,
Like a flood of water, great and overflowing,
levels to the ground with violence; [c]
3 With feet that will trample
the majestic garland of the drunkard Ephraim.
4 The fading blooms of his glorious beauty
on the head of the fertile valley
Will be like an early fig before summer:

**27, 7:** God's people will not be treated as sternly as were their enemies.
**27, 5. 9:** Israel will make peace with God and destroy all signs of idolatrous worship.
**27, 10f:** The fortified city: symbol of the powers of evil; see note on Is 24, 10.
**27, 12:** The Euphrates and the Wadi of Egypt: the ideal borders of Israel; cf Gn 15, 18; 2 Kgs 24, 7.
**27, 13:** The triumph of God's people is described in eschatological language; they will gather in Jerusalem from Assyria and Egypt.
**28, 1:** Ephraim: the northern kingdom. Its capital, Samaria, was built upon a hill, suggestive of a majestic garland adorning the head of the drunken kingdom.
**28, 2:** A strong one and a mighty: Assyria.

t Is 5, 1. u Is 5, 2ff; Ps 121, 4f. v Is 10, 17. w Jer 18, 17. x Is 37, 31; Rom 11, 12. y Is 6, 11. z Jer 4, 22. a Hos 11, 11. b Hos 7, 5; Am 6, 6. c Is 30, 30.

when a man sees it,
he picks and swallows it at once.
5 On that day the LORD of hosts
will be a glorious crown
And a brilliant diadem
to the remnant of his people,
6 A spirit of justice
to him who sits in judgment,
And strength to those
who turn back the battle at the gate.

### Against Judah

7 But these also stagger from wine
and stumble from strong drink:
Priest and prophet stagger from strong drink,
overpowered by wine;
Led astray by strong drink,
staggering in their visions,
tottering when giving judgment.[d]
8 Yes, all the tables
are covered with filthy vomit,
with no place left clean.
9 "To whom would he impart knowledge?*
To whom would he convey the message?
To those just weaned from milk,
those taken from the breast? 10 For he says,
'Command on command, command on command,
rule on rule, rule on rule,
here a little, there a little!' "
11 Yes, with stammering lips and in a strange language*
he will speak to this people[e]
12 to whom he said:
This is the resting place,
give rest to the weary;
Here is repose—
but they would not listen.
13 So for them the word of the LORD shall be:
"Command on command, command on command,
Rule on rule, rule on rule,
here a little, there a little!"
So that when they walk, they stumble backward,
broken, ensnared, and captured.

14 Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, you arrogant,
who rule this people in Jerusalem:
15 Because you say, "We have made a covenant with death,
and with the nether world* we have made a pact;
When the overwhelming scourge passes,
it will not reach us;
For we have made lies our refuge,
and in falsehood we have found a hiding place,"—[f]
16 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
See, I am laying a stone in Zion,*
a stone that has been tested,
A precious cornerstone as a sure foundation;
he who puts his faith in it shall not be shaken.[g]
17 I will make of right a measuring line,
of justice a level.—
Hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
and waters shall flood the hiding place.
18 Your covenant with death shall be canceled
and your pact with the nether world shall not stand.
When the overwhelming scourge passes,
you shall be trampled down by it.
19 Whenever it passes, it shall take you;

**28, 9f:** The words of those who ridicule Isaiah. The Hebrew of v 10, by its very sound, conveys the idea of mocking imitation of what the prophet says, as though he spoke like a stammering child: SAU LASAU, SAU LASAU, CAU LACAU, CAU LACAU, ZE'ER SHAM, ZE'ER SHAM. But in v 13 God repeats these words in deadly earnest, putting them in the mouth of the victorious pagan army.

**28, 11:** God will answer the mockers and defend Isaiah. Strange language: spoken by the invading army.

**28, 15. 18:** A covenant with death, and with the nether world: an alliance with foreign powers, such as Egypt and Babylon, to prevent death and destruction. Have made lies . . . a hiding place: this confidence in human aid proves to be false and deceitful, incapable of averting the dreaded disaster. Overwhelming scourge: the flood of the Assyrian invasion; cf Is 8, 7f.

**28, 16:** A stone in Zion: the true and sure foundation of salvation promised by God to the Davidic dynasty (cf Is 7, 13–16; 9, 1–6), which the Apostles saw fulfilled in Christ the universal Savior; cf 1 Pt 2, 6–8; Rom 9, 33; 10, 9ff. Cornerstone: the assurance of salvation rejected by Israel in the prophet's time, is reflected by the psalmist (Ps 118, 22) and fulfilled in the Person of Christ; cf Mt 21, 42; Lk 20, 17; Acts 4, 11; Rom 9. 33; 1 Pt 2, 7.

d Is 56, 10. 12. e Jer 5, 15; 1 Cor 14, 21; Dt 28, 49; Bar 4, 15. f Wis 1, 16; Jer 5, 12. g Ps 118, 22; Mt 21, 42; Acts 4, 11; Rom 9, 33; 1 Pt 2, 6.

morning after morning it shall pass,
By day and by night;
terror alone shall convey the message.
20 For the bed shall be too short to stretch out in,
and the cover too narrow to wrap in.
21 For the LORD shall rise up as on Mount Perazim,*
bestir himself as in the Valley of Gibeon,
To carry out his work, his singular work,
to perform his deed, his strange deed. [h]
22 Now, be arrogant no more
lest your bonds be tightened,
For I have heard from the Lord, the GOD of hosts,
the destruction decreed for the whole earth. [i]
23 Give ear and hear my voice,*
pay attention and listen to what I say:
24 Is the plowman forever plowing,
always loosening and harrowing his land for planting?
25 When he has leveled the surface,
does he not scatter gith and sow cumin,*
Put in wheat and barley,
with spelt as its border?
26 He has learned this rule,
instructed by his God.
27 Gith is not threshed with a sledge,
nor does a cartwheel roll over cumin.
But gith is beaten out with a staff,
and cumin crushed for food with a rod.
28 No, he does not thresh it unendingly,
nor does he crush it
with his noisy cartwheels and horses.
29 This too comes from the LORD of hosts;
wonderful is his counsel and great his wisdom.

## CHAPTER 29

Ch 28–35 See RG 294

### The Fall of Jerusalem

1 Woe to Ariel, Ariel,*
the city where David encamped!
Add year to year,
let the feasts come round. [j]
2 But I will bring distress upon Ariel,
with mourning and grief.
You shall be to me like Ariel, [k]
3 I will encamp like David against you;
I will encircle you with outposts
and set up siege works against you. [l]
4 Prostrate you shall speak from the earth,
and from the base dust your words shall come.
Your voice shall be like a ghost's from the earth,
and your words like chirping* from the dust.
5 The horde of your arrogant shall be like fine dust,
the horde of the tyrants like flying chaff.
Then suddenly, in an instant, [m]
6 you shall be visited by the LORD of hosts,
With thunder, earthquake, and great noise,
whirlwind, storm, and the flame of consuming fire.

7 Then like a dream,*
a vision in the night,
Shall be the horde of all the nations
who war against Ariel
with all the earthworks of her besiegers.
8 As when a hungry man dreams he is eating
and awakens with an empty stomach,
Or when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking
and awakens faint and dry,
So shall the horde of all the nations be,
who make war against Zion.

**28, 21:** Mount Perazim . . . Valley of Gibeon: where David defeated the Philistines; cf 2 Sm 5, 20. 25; 1 Chr 14, 11. 16.

**28, 23–29:** The practical variation of the farmer's work taught him by God reflects God's dealing with his people, wisely adapted to circumstances; he does not crush their weakness altogether; cf ch 29.

**28, 25:** Gith . . . cumin: herbs used in seasoning food. Spelt: a variety of wheat.

**29, 1f:** Ariel: variously interpreted to mean "lion of God" or "hearth (altar) of God," a poetic name for Jerusalem; or perhaps to be read as Uru-el, "foundation of God," an archaic name for the Jebusite city of Jerusalem; like that Ariel, against which David encamped, it will be besieged by God.

**29, 4:** Chirping: see note on Is 8, 19.

**29, 7f:** Just when the Assyrians think their capture of Jerusalem to be certain, the Lord will snatch victory from their hands and save his city.

h Jos 10, 10; 2 Sm 5, 20; 1 Chr 14, 11. i Is 10, 23. j 2 Sm 5, 9. k Is 33, 7. 1 2 Kgs 25, 1; Ez 4, 2. m Is 17, 13; Ps 18, 43; Jb 21, 18.

### Blindness and Perversity

9 Be irresolute, stupefied;*
blind yourselves and stay blind!
Be drunk, but not from wine,
stagger, but not from strong drink! [n]
10 For the LORD has poured out on you
a spirit of deep sleep.
He has shut your eyes [the prophets]
and covered your heads [the seers]. [o]

11 For you the revelation of all this has become like the words of a sealed scroll. When it is handed to one who can read, with the request, "Read this," he replies, "I cannot; it is sealed." [p]
12 When it is handed to one who cannot read, with the request, "Read this," he replies, "I cannot read."

13 The Lord said:
Since this people draws near with words only
and honors me with their lips alone,
though their hearts are far from me,
And their reverence for me has become
routine observance of the precepts of
men, [q]
14 Therefore I will again deal with this people
in surprising and wondrous fashion:
The wisdom of its wise men shall perish
and the understanding of its prudent men
be hid. [r]
15 Woe to those who would hide their plans
too deep for the LORD!
Who work in the dark, saying,
"Who sees us, or who knows us?" [s]
16 Your perversity is as though the potter
were taken to be the clay:
As though what is made should say of its
maker,
"He made me not!"
Or the vessel should say of the
potter,
"He does not understand." [t]

Ch 28–35
See RG
294

### Redemption*

17 But a very little while,
and Lebanon shall be changed into an
orchard,
and the orchard be regarded as a forest! [u]
18 On that day the deaf shall hear
the words of a book;
And out of gloom and darkness,
the eyes of the blind shall see. [v]
19 The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD,
and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of
Israel. [w]
20 For the tyrant will be no more
and the arrogant will have gone;
All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, [x]
21 those whose mere word condemns a man,
Who ensnare his defender at the gate,
and leave the just man with an empty
claim. [y]
22 Therefore thus says the LORD,
the God of the house of Jacob,
who redeemed Abraham:*
Now Jacob shall have nothing to be ashamed
of,
nor shall his face grow pale. [z]
23 When his children see
the work of my hands in his midst,
They shall keep my name holy;
they shall reverence the Holy One of Jacob,
and be in awe of the God of Israel.
24 Those who err in spirit shall acquire
understanding,
and those who find fault shall receive
instruction.

## CHAPTER 30

### Futile Alliance with Egypt

1 Woe to the rebellious children,
says the LORD,
Who carry out plans that are not
mine,

**29, 9–12:** Jerusalem in her blindness refuses to believe God's revelation that she will be saved.

**29, 17–24:** The prophet presents God's plan of redemption in terms of unheard-of natural phenomena as if such changes in nature took place, e. g., the change of the cedars of Lebanon into an orchard (v 17).

**29, 22:** Who redeemed Abraham: by freeing him from the idolatry of his native land.

n Is 19, 14; 28, 7f. o Is 6, 10; Rom 11, 8. p Dn 12, 4. q Ez 33, 31; Mt 15, 8f; Mk 7, 6f. r Jer 49, 7; 1 Cor 1, 19. s Is 30, 1; Ez 8, 12; Jn 3, 19f. t Is 45, 9; Jer 18, 6; Rom 9, 20. u Is 32, 15. v Is 35, 5; 42, 6f. w Is 61, 1. x Is 28, 22. y Am 5, 10. 12. z Is 45, 17.

who weave webs that are not inspired by
me,
adding sin upon sin. [a]
2 They go down to Egypt,
but my counsel they do not seek.
They find their strength in Pharaoh's
protection
and take refuge in Egypt's shadow; [b]
3 Pharaoh's protection shall be your shame,
and refuge in Egypt's shadow your
disgrace. [c]
4 When their princes are at Zoan
and their messengers reach Hanes, [d]
5 All shall be ashamed
of a people that gain them nothing,
Neither help nor benefit,
but only shame and reproach. [e]

6 [Oracle on the Beasts of the Negeb]

Through the distressed and troubled land
of the lioness and roaring lion,
of the viper and flying saraph,*
They carry their riches on the backs of asses
and their treasures on the humps of camels
To a people good for nothing,
7 to Egypt whose help is futile and vain.
Therefore I call her
"Rahab* quelled."
8 Now come, write it on a tablet they can keep,
inscribe it in a record;*
That it may be in future days
an eternal witness: [f]
9 This is a rebellious people,
deceitful children,
Children who refuse
to obey the law of the LORD. [g]
10 They say to the seers, "Have no visions";
to the prophets, "Do not descry for us what
is right;
speak flatteries to us, conjure up illusions. [h]
11 Out of the way! Out of our path!
Let us hear no more
of the Holy One of Israel." [i]
12 Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel:
Because you reject this word,
And put your trust in what is crooked and
devious,
and depend on it,
13 This guilt of yours shall be
like a descending rift
Bulging out in a high wall
whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant. [j]
14 It crashes like a potter's jar
smashed beyond rescue,
And among its fragments cannot be found
a sherd to scoop fire from the hearth
or dip water from the cistern. [k]

15 For thus said the Lord GOD,
the Holy One of Israel:
By waiting and by calm you shall be saved,
in quiet and in trust your strength lies.
But this you did not wish. [l]
16 "No," you said,
"Upon horses we will flee."
—Very well, flee!
"Upon swift steeds we will ride."
—Not so swift as your pursuers. [m]
17 A thousand shall tremble at the threat of one;
if five threaten you, you shall flee,
Until you are left like a flagstaff on the
mountaintop,
like a flag on the hill.
18 Yet the LORD is waiting to show you favor,
and he rises to pity you;
For the LORD is a God of justice:
blessed are all who wait for him! [n]

19 O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem,
no more will you weep;
He will be gracious to you when you cry out,
as soon as he hears he will answer you. [o]
20 The Lord will give you the bread you need

**30, 6:** Flying saraph: see note on Nm 21, 6.
**30, 7:** Rahab: Egypt, here as elsewhere (cf Ps 87, 4), is compared to the stormy, impetuous sea monster (cf Is 51, 9; Jb 26, 12; Ps 89, 11), which yet, when asked for aid by Judah, becomes silent, quelled.
**30, 8:** Isaiah will write down his condemnation of the people so that (vv 12–18) its fulfillment may afterward be admitted.

a Is 1, 4. b Is 31, 1; 36, 6. c Is 20, 5; Jer 2, 26f. d Is 19, 11. e 36, 6. f Is 8, 1. 16; Jer 36, 2; Heb 2, 2. g Is 1, 4; Jer 7, 28. h Jer 5, 31. i Jb 21, 14f. j Ez 13, 14. k Jer 19, 11. l Is 7, 4; Mi 7, 7. m Is 31, 3. n Ps 34, 9; Jer 17, 7. o Is 58, 9.

and the water for which you thirst.
No longer will your Teacher* hide himself,
but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher,
21 While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears:
"This is the way; walk in it,"
when you would turn to the right or to the left.[p]
22 And you shall consider unclean your silver-plated idols
and your gold-covered images;
You shall throw them away like filthy rags
to which you say, "Begone!"[q]

### Zion's Future Prosperity

23 He will give rain for the seed
that you sow in the ground,
And the wheat that the soil produces
will be rich and abundant.
On that day your cattle will graze
in spacious meadows;[r]
24 The oxen and the asses that till the ground
will eat silage tossed to them
with shovel and pitchfork.
25 Upon every high mountain and lofty hill
there will be streams of running water.
On the day of the great slaughter,
when the towers fall,[s]
26 The light of the moon will be like that of the sun
and the light of the sun will be seven times greater
[like the light of seven days].
On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people,
he will heal the bruises left by his blows.[t]

Ch 28–35
See RG
294

### Divine Judgment on Assyria*

27 See the name of the LORD coming from afar
in burning wrath, with lowering clouds!
His lips are filled with fury,
his tongue is like a consuming fire;
28 His breath, like a flood in a ravine
that reaches suddenly to the neck,
Will winnow the nations with a destructive winnowing,
and with repeated winnowings will he battle against them
[and a bridle on the jaws of the peoples to send them astray].
30 The LORD will make his glorious voice heard,
and let it be seen how his arm descends
In raging fury and flame of consuming fire,
in driving storm and hail.
31 When the LORD speaks, Assyria will be shattered,
as he strikes with the rod;
32 While at every sweep of the rod
which the LORD will bring down on him in punishment,
29 You will sing
as on a night when a feast is observed,
And be merry of heart,
as one marching along with a flute
Toward the mountain of the LORD,
toward the Rock of Israel,
accompanied by the timbrels and lyres.
33 For the pyre* has long been ready,
prepared for the king;
Broad and deep it is piled
with dry grass and wood in abundance,
And the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulphur,
will set it afire.

## CHAPTER 31

### Against the Egyptian Alliance

1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,
who depend upon horses;
Who put their trust in chariots because of their number,
and in horsemen because of their combined power,
But look not to the Holy One of Israel
nor seek the LORD![u]
2 Yet he too is wise and will bring disaster;

**30, 20:** Teacher: God, who in the past taught in a veiled manner through his prophets, will in future help them to understand his teaching clearly. This was eminently true when the Son of God became Man.

**30, 27–33:** God's punishment of Assyria. The name of the Lord: God himself; cf Ps 20, 2.

**30, 29–33:** Pyre: on which the corpse of the king of Assyria is burned. This is the occasion of festal rejoicing for the Israelites, who are now free from his yoke.

p Jer 31, 33f. q Is 31, 7. r Lv 26, 3. 5. s Jl 4, 18. t Jer 30, 17. u Is 30, 2; 36, 6.

he will not turn from what he has
threatened to do.
He will rise up against the house of the
wicked
and against those who help evildoers.
3 The Egyptians are men, not God,
their horses are flesh, not spirit;
When the LORD stretches forth his
hand,
the helper shall stumble, the one helped
shall fall,
and both of them shall perish together.[v]

4 Thus says the LORD to me:
As a lion or a lion cub
growling over its prey,
With a band of shepherds
assembled against it,
Is neither frightened by their shouts
nor disturbed by their noise,
So shall the LORD of hosts come down
to wage war upon the mountain and hill of
Zion.
5 Like hovering birds, so the LORD of hosts
shall shield Jerusalem,
To protect and deliver,
to spare and rescue it.[w]

6 Return, O children of Israel, to him whom you have utterly deserted.[x] 7 On that day each one of you shall spurn his sinful idols of silver and gold, which he made with his hands.[y]

### Downfall of Assyria

8 Assyria shall fall by a sword not wielded by
man,
no mortal sword shall devour him;
He shall flee before the sword,
and his young men shall be impressed as
laborers.[z]
9 He shall rush past his crag* in panic,
and his princes shall flee in terror from his
standard,
Says the LORD who has a fire in Zion
and a furnace in Jerusalem.

31, 9: Crag: the king as the rallying point of the princes.

v Ps 146, 3ff. w Ps 91, 4. x Jer 3, 12. y Is 30, 22. z Is 37,

## CHAPTER 32

Ch 28–35
See RG
294

### The Kingdom of Justice

1 See, a king will reign justly
and princes will rule rightly.[a]
2 Each of them will be a shelter from the wind,
a retreat from the rain.
They will be like streams of water in a dry
country,
like the shade of a great rock in a parched
land.[b]
3 The eyes of those who see will not be closed;
the ears of those who hear will be attentive.
4 The flighty will become wise and capable,
and the stutterers will speak fluently and
clearly.
5 No more will the fool be called noble,
nor the trickster be considered honorable.
6 For the fool speaks foolishly,
planning evil in his heart:
How to do wickedness,
to speak perversely against the LORD,
To let the hungry go empty
and the thirsty be without drink.[c]
7 And the trickster uses wicked trickery,
planning crimes:
How to ruin the poor with lies,
and the needy when they plead their case.
8 But the noble man plans noble things,
and by noble things he stands.

### The Women of Jerusalem

9 O complacent ladies, rise up and hear my
voice,
overconfident women, give heed to my
words.
10 In a little more than a year
you overconfident ones will be shaken;
The vintage will fail,
there will be no harvest.[d]
11 Tremble, you who are complacent!
Shudder, you who are overconfident!
Strip yourselves bare,
with only a loincloth to cover you.[e]
12 Beat your breasts

36. a Is 16, 5; Ps 72, 2ff; Jer 23, 5. b Is 4, 6; 25, 4. c Prv 10, 32; Eccl 10, 12f. d Zep 1, 13. e Jer 4, 8.

for the pleasant fields, the fruitful vine,
13 And the soil of my people,
overgrown with thorns and briers;
For all the joyful houses,
the wanton city.[f]
14 Yes, the castle* will be forsaken,
the noisy city deserted;[g]
19 Down it comes, as trees come down in the forest!
The city will be utterly laid low.
Hill and tower will become wasteland forever
for wild asses to frolic in, and flocks to pasture,
15 Until the spirit from on high*
is poured out on us.
Then will the desert become an orchard
and the orchard be regarded as a forest.[h]

16 Right will dwell in the desert
and justice abide in the orchard.
17 Justice will bring about peace;
right will produce calm and security.[i]
18 My people will live in peaceful country,
in secure dwellings and quiet resting places.[j]
20 Happy are you who sow beside every stream,
and let the ox and the ass go freely![k]

## CHAPTER 33

### Overthrow of Assyria

Ch 28–35 See RG 294

1 Woe, O destroyer never destroyed,
O traitor never betrayed!
When you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;
when wearied with betraying, you will be betrayed.
2 O LORD, have pity on us, for you we wait.
Be our strength every morning,
our salvation in time of trouble![l]
3 At the roaring sound, peoples flee;
when you rise in your majesty, nations are scattered.
4 Men gather spoil as caterpillars are gathered up;
they rush upon it like the onrush of locusts.[m]
5 The LORD is exalted, enthroned on high;
he fills Zion with right and justice.[n]
6 That which makes her seasons lasting,
the riches that save her, are wisdom and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is her treasure.[o]

7 See, the men of Ariel cry out in the streets,
the messengers of Shalem* weep bitterly.
8 The highways are desolate,
travelers have quit the paths,
Covenants are broken, their terms are spurned;
yet no man gives it a thought.[p]
9 The country languishes in mourning,
Lebanon withers with shame;
Sharon* is like the steppe,
Bashan and Carmel are stripped bare.[q]
10 Now will I rise up, says the LORD,
now will I be exalted, now be lifted up.
11 You conceive dry grass, bring forth stubble;
my spirit shall consume you like fire.
12 The peoples shall be as in a limekiln,
like brushwood cut down for burning in the fire.[r]
13 Hear, you who are far off, what I have done;
you who are near, acknowledge my might.
14 On Zion sinners are in dread,
trembling grips the impious:
"Who of us can live with the consuming fire?
who of us can live with the everlasting flames?"[s]
15 He who practices virtue and speaks honestly,
who spurns what is gained by oppression,
Brushing his hands free of contact with a bribe,
stopping his ears lest he hear of bloodshed,
closing his eyes lest he look on evil—[t]

**32, 14. 19:** The castle: the citadel of Jerusalem. Hill and tower: the fortified hill, in Hebrew Ophel, with its stronghold called "the great projecting tower" in Neh 3, 27.
**32, 15–18. 20:** Extraordinary peace and prosperity will come to Israel under just rulers.
**33, 7:** Ariel . . . Shalem: Jerusalem; cf Is 29, 1; Gn 14, 18.
**33, 9:** Sharon: the fertile plain near the Mediterranean.

f Is 7, 23; 34, 13. g Is 27, 10. h Is 35, 1; 44, 3. i Is 54, 13f; Ps 72, 7; Jas 3, 18. j Mi 4, 4. k Is 30, 23. l Is 25, 9. m 2 Chr 20, 25. n Is 1, 26. o Prv 9, 10. p Jgs 5, 6. q Na 1, 4. r Is 10, 17. s Na 1, 6. t Pss 15, 2–6; 24, 4f.

16 He shall dwell on the heights,
his stronghold shall be the rocky fastness,
his food and drink in steady supply.

### Restoration of Zion

17 Your eyes will see a king* in his splendor,
they will look upon a vast land.
18 Your mind will dwell on the terror:
"Where is he who counted, where is he
who weighed?
Where is he who counted the towers?"
19 To the people of alien tongue you will look no
more,
the people of obscure speech,
stammering in a language not understood.
20 Look to Zion, the city of our festivals;
let your eyes see Jerusalem
as a quiet abode, a tent not to be struck,
Whose pegs will never be pulled up,
nor any of its ropes severed.
22 Indeed the LORD will be there with us,
majestic;
yes, the LORD our judge, the LORD our
lawgiver,
the LORD our king, he it is who will save us.
21 In a place of rivers and wide streams
on which no boat is rowed,
where no majestic ship* passes,
23 The rigging hangs slack;
it cannot hold the mast in place,
nor keep the sail spread out.
Then the blind will divide great spoils
and the lame will carry off the loot.
24 No one who dwells there will say, "I am sick";
the people who live there will be forgiven
their guilt.

## VI: The Lord, Zion's Avenger

### CHAPTER 34

### Judgment upon Edom

1 Come near, O nations, and hear;
be attentive, O peoples!
Let the earth and what fills it listen,
the world and all it produces. [u]
2 The LORD is angry with all the nations
and is wrathful against all their host;
he has doomed them and given them over
to slaughter.
3 Their slain shall be cast out,
their corpses shall send up a stench;
The mountains shall run with their blood, [v]
4 and all the hills shall rot;
The heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll,
and all their host shall wither away,
As the leaf wilts on the vine,
or as the fig withers on the tree. [w]

5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the
heavens,
lo, it shall come down in judgment
upon Edom, a people I have doomed. [x]
6 The LORD has a sword filled with blood, [y]
greasy with fat,
With the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of rams' kidneys;
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
7 Wild oxen shall be struck down with fatlings,
and bullocks with bulls;
Their land shall be soaked with blood,
and their earth greasy with fat.
8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
a year of requital by Zion's defender. [z]
9 Edom's streams shall be changed into pitch
and her earth into sulphur,
and her land shall become burning pitch;
10 Night and day it shall not be quenched,
its smoke shall rise forever.
From generation to generation she shall lie
waste,
never again shall anyone pass through her.
11 But the desert owl and hoot owl shall possess
her,
the screech owl and raven shall dwell in
her.
The LORD will measure her with line and
plummet
to be an empty waste
for satyrs* to dwell in. [a]

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33, 17: King: the messianic King, or God; cf v 22.
33, 21. 23: Boat . . . majestic ship: of a foreign oppressor.
34, 11: Satyrs: see note on Is 13, 21; cf Is 34, 14.

u Dt 32, 1. v Ez 32, 4. 6. w Is 13, 10; Ez 32, 7f; 4, 15. x Jer 46, 10. y 6f: Jer 49, 12f. z Is 13, 9; 63, 4. a Is 14, 23; Zep 2, 14.

12 Her nobles shall be no more,
nor shall kings be proclaimed there;
all her princes are gone.[b]
13 Her castles shall be overgrown with thorns,
her fortresses with thistles and briers.
She shall become an abode for jackals
and a haunt for ostriches.[c]
14 Wildcats shall meet with desert beasts,
satyrs shall call to one another;
There shall the lilith* repose,
and find for herself a place to rest.
15 There the hoot owl shall nest and lay eggs,
hatch them out and gather them in her shadow;
There shall the kites assemble,
none shall be missing its mate.

16 Look in the book of the LORD* and read:
No one of these shall be lacking,
For the mouth of the LORD has ordered it,
and his spirit shall gather them there.[d]
17 It is he who casts the lot for them,
and with his hand he marks off their shares of her;
They shall possess her forever,
and dwell there from generation to generation.

## CHAPTER 35

Ch 28–35 See RG 294

### Israel's Deliverance*

1 The desert and the parched land will exult;
the steppe will rejoice and bloom.[e]
2 They will bloom with abundant flowers,
and rejoice with joyful song.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to them,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;
They will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendor of our God.[f]
3 Strengthen the hands that are feeble,
make firm the knees that are weak,[g]
4 Say to those whose hearts are frightened:
Be strong, fear not!
Here is your God,
he comes with vindication;
With divine recompense
he comes to save you.[h]
5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,
the ears of the deaf be cleared;[i]
6 Then will the lame leap like a stag,
then the tongue of the dumb will sing.[j]

Streams will burst forth in the desert,
and rivers in the steppe.
7 The burning sands will become pools,
and the thirsty ground, springs of water;
The abode where jackals lurk
will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus.
8 A highway will be there,
called the holy way;
No one unclean may pass over it,
nor fools go astray on it.
9 No lion will be there,
nor beast of prey go up to be met upon it.
It is for those with a journey to make,
and on it the redeemed will walk.[k]
10 Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return
and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy;
They will meet with joy and gladness,
sorrow and mourning will flee.[l]

# VII: Historical Appendix

## CHAPTER 36

Ch 36–39 See RG 294

**Invasion of Sennacherib*** 1 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went on an expedition against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.[m] 2 From Lachish the king of Assyria sent his commander with a great army to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. When he stopped at the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's

**34, 14:** Lilith: a female demon thought to roam about the desert.

**34, 16:** Book of the Lord: God's list of all his creatures; cf Ps 69, 29, "the book of the living"; Ps 139, 16, "your book."

**35, 1–10:** Similar to the description of the return from the Exile, as found in chaps. 40–55.

**36, 1—39, 8:** Except for 38, 9–20, this historical appendix describing the siege, etc., is paralleled in 2 Kgs 18, 13—20, 19, which, however, has certain details proper to itself. The events are also recorded in substantially the same way in the cuneiform inscriptions of Sennacherib.

b Ob 18. c Is 13, 21; Hos 9, 6. d Jos 18, 10; Ps 78, 55. e Is 55, 12f. f Is 60, 13; Ps 96, 12. g Jb 4, 3f; Heb 12, 12. h Is 41, 10; Zec 8, 13. i Is 29, 18; 32, 3. j Is 41, 18; 43, 10. 19. k Is 62, 10; Lv 26, 6. l Is 51, 11. m 2 Kgs 18, 13; 2 Chr 32, 1.

field, [3]there came out to him the master of the
palace, Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, and Shebna the
scribe, and the herald Joah, son of Asaph. [4]The
commander said to them, "Tell King Hezekiah:
Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, 'On
what do you base this confidence of yours? [5]Do
you think mere words substitute for strategy and
might in war? On whom, then, do you rely, that
you rebel against me? [6]This Egypt, the staff on
which you rely, is in fact a broken reed which
pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it. That
is what Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is to all who rely
on him.[n] [7]But if you say to me: "We rely on the
LORD, our God," is not he the one whose high
places and altars Hezekiah removed,* command-
ing Judah and Jerusalem to worship before this
altar?'[o]

[8]"Now, make a wager with my lord the king
of Assyria: 'I will give you two thousand horses,
if you can put riders on them.' [9]How then can
you repulse even one of the least servants of my
lord? And yet you rely on Egypt for chariots and
horsemen! [10]'Was it without the LORD's will that
I have come up to destroy this land? The LORD
said to me, "Go up and destroy that land!" ' "[p]

[11]Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to
the commander, "Please speak to your servants
in Aramaic; we understand it. Do not speak to
us in Judean within earshot of the people who
are on the wall."*

[12]But the commander replied, "Was it to you
and your master that my lord sent me to speak
these words? Was it not rather to the men sitting
on the wall, who, with you, will have to eat their
own excrement and drink their own urine?"
[13]Then the commander stepped forward and
cried out in a loud voice in Judean, "Listen to the
words of the great king, the king of Assyria.
[14]Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah
deceive you, since he cannot deliver you. [15]Let
not Hezekiah induce you to rely on the LORD,
saying, "The LORD will surely save us; this city
will not be handed over to the king of Assyria." '
[16]Do not listen to Hezekiah, for the king of
Assyria says: 'Make peace with me and surren-
der! Then each of you will eat of his own vine
and of his own fig tree, and drink the water of
his own cistern,[q] [17]until I come to take you to a
land like your own, a land of grain and wine, of
bread and vineyards. [18]Do not let Hezekiah
seduce you by saying, "The LORD will save us."
Has any of the gods of the nations ever rescued
his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?[r]
[19]Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?
Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Where are
the gods of Samaria? Have they saved Samaria
from my hand?[s] [20]Which of all the gods of these
lands ever rescued his land from my hand? Will
the LORD then save Jerusalem from my hand?' "
[21]But they remained silent and did not answer
him one word, for the king had ordered them
not to answer him.

[22]Then the master of the palace, Eliakim, son
of Hilkiah, Shebna the scribe, and the herald
Joah, son of Asaph, came to Hezekiah with their
garments torn, and reported to him what the
commander had said.

## CHAPTER 37

Ch 36–39
See RG
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[1]When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his
garments, wrapped himself in sackcloth, and
went into the temple of the LORD. [2]He sent
Eliakim, the master of the palace, and Shebna
the scribe, and the elders of the priests, wrapped
in sackcloth, to tell the prophet Isaiah, son of
Amoz: [3]"Thus says Hezekiah: 'This is a day of
distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace. Children are
at the point of birth, but there is no strength to
bring them forth.* [4]Perhaps the LORD, your
God, will hear the words of the commander,
whom his master, the king of Assyria, sent to
taunt the living God, and will rebuke him for the

**36, 7:** The Assyrians pretend that Hezekiah's removal of the high places and altars (illegal sanctuaries) was taken by the Lord as an insult. They declare to Jerusalem's emissaries that the city therefore no longer has a right to the Lord's protection and that they are the ones who truly carry out his will (cf v 10).

**36, 11:** The Jewish emissaries ask that the conversation be carried on in Aramaic, not in Judean, for they fear the effect of the Assyrian claims upon the morale of the people.

**37, 3:** A proverbial expression. In the Bible the pangs of childbirth often typify extreme anguish; cf Is 13, 8; Jer 6, 24; Mi 4, 9f. In this instance there is reference to the desperate situation of Hezekiah from which he was scarcely able to free himself.

n Is 30, 2. o 2 Kgs 18, 4. p Is 10, 5f. q 1 Kgs 4, 25; Zec 3, 10. r Is 37, 11. s Is 10, 9; 37, 13.

words which the LORD, your God, has heard.
Send up a prayer for the remnant that is here.' "
5When the servants of King Hezekiah had
come to Isaiah, 6he said to them: "Tell this to
your master: 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be
frightened by the words you have heard, with
which the servants of the king of Assyria have
blasphemed me.[t] 7I am about to put in him such
a spirit that, when he hears a certain report, he
will return to his own land, and there I will
cause him to fall by the sword.' "
8When the commander returned to Lachish
and heard that the king of Assyria had left there,
he found him besieging Libnah. 9The king of
Assyria heard a report that Tirhakah,* king of
Ethiopia, had come out to fight against him.
Again he sent envoys to Hezekiah with this
message: "Thus shall you say to Hezekiah, king
of Judah: 10'Do not let your God on whom you
rely deceive you by saying that Jerusalem will
not be handed over to the king of Assyria.[u]
11You yourself have heard what the kings of
Assyria have done to all the countries: They
doomed them! Will you, then, be saved? 12Did
the gods of the nations whom my fathers de-
stroyed save them? Gozen, Haran, Rezeph, and
the Edenites in Telassar? 13Where is the king of
Hamath, the king of Arpad, or a king of the cities
of Sepharvaim, Hena or Ivvah?' "
14Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of
the messengers and read it; then he went up to
the temple of the LORD, and spreading it out
before him, 15he prayed to the LORD: 16"O LORD
of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned upon the
cherubim! You alone are God over all the
kingdoms of the earth. You have made the
heavens and the earth.* 17Incline your ear, O
LORD, and listen! Open your eyes, O LORD, and
see! Hear all the words of the letter that Sennach-
erib sent to taunt the living God. 18Truly, O
LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the
nations and their lands, 19and cast their gods
into the fire; they destroyed them because they
were not gods but the work of human hands,
wood and stone.[v] 20Therefore, O LORD, our
God, save us from his hand, that all the king-
doms of the earth may know that you, O LORD,
alone are God."

**Punishment of Sennacherib** 21Then Isaiah,
son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah:
Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: In answer
to your prayer for help against Sennacherib, king
of Assyria, 22this is the word the LORD has
spoken concerning him:[w]

She despises you, laughs you to scorn,
the virgin daughter Zion;
Behind you she wags her head,
daughter Jerusalem.
23 Whom have you insulted and blasphemed,
against whom have you raised your voice
And lifted up your eyes on high?
Against the Holy One of Israel![x]
24 Through your servants you have insulted the
Lord:
You said, "With my many chariots
I climbed the mountain heights,
the recesses of Lebanon;
I cut down its lofty cedars,
its choice cypresses;
I reached the remotest heights,
its forest park.
25 I dug wells and drank water in foreign lands;
I dried up with the soles of my feet
all the rivers of Egypt."

26 Have you not heard?
Long ago I prepared it,
From days of old I planned it,
now I have brought it to pass:
That you should reduce fortified cities
into heaps of ruins,
27 While their inhabitants, shorn of power,
are dismayed and ashamed,
Becoming like the plants of the field,

**37, 9:** Tirhakah: may have been general of the Egyptian army in 701 B.C.; later he became king, one of the Ethiopian dynasty of Egyptian kings (c. 690–664 B.C.). Many consider that this account in Isaiah combines features of two originally distinct sieges of Jerusalem by Sennacherib.

**37, 16:** In contrast to the empty boasting of the Assyrians, Hezekiah proclaims the Lord as God over all the kingdoms of the earth.

t Is 41, 10–14; 51, 7. u Is 36, 14. v Jer 16, 20. w 2 Kgs 19, 21. x Is 1, 4.

like the green growth,
like the scorched grass on the housetops.
28 I am aware whether you stand or sit;
I know whether you come or go,
and also your rage against me.
29 Because of your rage against me
and your fury which has reached my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth,
and make you return the way you came.

30 This shall be a sign for you:*
this year you shall eat the aftergrowth,
next year, what grows of itself;
But in the third year, sow and reap,
plant vineyards and eat their fruit!
31 The remaining survivors of the house of Judah
shall again strike root below
and bear fruit above.[y]
32 For out of Jerusalem shall come a remnant,
and from Mount Zion, survivors.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

33 Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not reach this city, nor shoot an arrow at it, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast up siegeworks against it. 34 He shall return by the same way he came, without entering the city, says the LORD.[z] 35 I will shield and save this city for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.[a]

36 The angel of the LORD went forth and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp.[b] Early the next morning, there they were, all the corpses of the dead.* 37 So Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, broke camp and went back home to Nineveh.[c]

38 When he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer slew him with the sword and fled into the land of Ararat.* His son Esarhaddon reigned in his stead.

## CHAPTER 38

Ch 36–39
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**Sickness and Recovery of Hezekiah*** 1 In those days,* when Hezekiah was mortally ill, the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, came and said to him: "Thus says the LORD: Put your house in order, for you are about to die; you shall not recover."[d] 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD:

3 "O LORD, remember how faithfully and wholeheartedly I conducted myself in your presence, doing what was pleasing to you!" And Hezekiah wept bitterly.[e]

4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: 5 "Go, tell Hezekiah:* Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you: in three days you shall go up to the LORD's temple; I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will rescue you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; I will be a shield to this city."[f]

21 Isaiah then ordered a poultice of figs to be taken and applied to the boil, that he might recover. 22 Then Hezekiah asked, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the temple of the LORD?"

7 [Isaiah answered:] "This will be the sign for you from the LORD that he will do what he has promised: 8 See, I will make the shadow cast by the sun on the stairway to the terrace of Ahaz* go back the ten steps it has advanced." So the sun came back the ten steps it had advanced.[g]

**37, 30:** You: Hezekiah. A sign: it is difficult to know the nature of this sign. Either it is merely a proverbial expression to signify that prosperity follows adversity, or it indicates that after two years the normal conditions of life will be resumed.

**37, 36:** The destruction of Sennacherib's army is also recorded by Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C. It was probably due to the bubonic plague, but the sacred author attributes it to its ultimate cause, God through his angel.

**37, 38:** The violent death of Sennacherib (681 B.C.) is also mentioned in non-biblical sources. It occurred twenty years after his invasion of Judea.

**38, 1—39, 8:** The events of this section—sickness and recovery of Hezekiah, embassy of Merodach-baladan—point forward to Babylon (cc 40–66). They occurred prior to the events of Is 36, 1—37, 38, which point back to Assyria (Is 1, 1—35, 10).

**38, 1:** In those days: a time prior to the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

**38, 5:** Since Hezekiah died in 687 B.C. this sickness of his seems to have been in 702 B.C., that is, fifteen years before.

**38, 8:** Stairway to the terrace of Ahaz: this interpretation is based on a reading of the Hebrew text revised according to the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah; cf 2 Kgs 23, 12. Many translate the phrase as "steps of Ahaz" and understand this as referring to a sundial.

y Is 27, 6. z Is 37, 29. a 1 Kgs 15, 4f. b Is 10, 12; 17, 14. c 2 Kgs 19, 35f. d 2 Kgs 20, 1. e 2 Kgs 18, 5f. f Is 37, 35. g 2 Kgs 20, 9. 11.

**Hezekiah's Hymn of Thanksgiving** [9]The song of Hezekiah, king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his illness:

[10]Once I said,
"In the noontime of life* I must depart!
To the gates of the nether world I shall be consigned
for the rest of my years."[h]
[11]I said, "I shall see the LORD* no more
in the land of the living.
No longer shall I behold my fellow men
among those who dwell in the world."
[12]My dwelling, like a shepherd's tent,
is struck down and borne away from me;
You have folded up my life, like a weaver
who severs the last thread.*
Day and night you give me over to torment;[i]
[13] I cry out until the dawn.
Like a lion he breaks all my bones;
[day and night you give me over to torment].
[14]Like a swallow I utter shrill cries;
I moan like a dove.
My eyes grow weak, gazing heavenward:
O Lord, I am in straits; be my surety!

[15]What am I to say or tell him?*
He has done it!
I shall go on through all my years
despite the bitterness of my soul.
[16]Those live whom the LORD protects;
yours . . . the life of my spirit.*
You have given me health and life;
[17] thus is my bitterness transformed into peace.
You have preserved my life
from the pit of destruction,
When you cast behind your back
all my sins.*
[18]For it is not the nether world that gives you thanks,*
nor death that praises you;
Neither do those who go down into the pit
await your kindness.[j]
[19]The living, the living give you thanks,
as I do today.
Fathers declare to their sons,
O God, your faithfulness.
[20]The LORD is our savior;
we shall sing to stringed instruments
In the house of the LORD
all the days of our life.

Ch 36–39 See RG 294

## CHAPTER 39

**Embassy from Merodach-baladan** [1]At that time when Merodach-baladan,* son of Baladan, king of Babylon, heard that Hezekiah had recovered from his sickness, he sent letters and gifts to him.[k] [2]Hezekiah was pleased at this, and therefore showed the messengers his treasury, the silver and gold, the spices and fine oil, his whole armory, and everything that was in his storerooms; there was nothing in his house or in his whole realm that he did not show them.[l]

[3]Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say to you? Where did they come from?" Hezekiah answered, "They came to me from a distant land, from Babylon." [4]"What did they see in your house?" he asked. Hezekiah replied, "They saw everything in my house; there is nothing in my storerooms that I did not show them."

[5]Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: [6]Behold, the days

**38, 10:** In the noontime of life: long before the end of a full span of life; cf Pss 55, 24; 102, 25.

**38, 11:** See the Lord: go to the temple and take part in its service.

**38, 12:** These two metaphors emphasize the suddenness and finality of death.

**38, 15:** What am I to say or tell him?: a rhetorical question, as if the poet were at a loss in giving fitting expression to his gratitude; cf Ps 116, 12. He has done it: accomplished the cure. Despite the bitterness: even though the one praying was previously so dejected.

**38, 16:** Yours . . . the life of my spirit: the current Hebrew text is corrupt. The revised Latin psalter renders it: "You have revived my soul."

**38, 17:** You cast behind your back all my sins: figurative language to express the divine forgiveness of sins, as if God no longer saw or cared about them. This expression is ordinarily used of men forgetting God; cf 1 Kgs 14, 9; Ez 23, 35; Ps 50, 17.

**38, 18f:** See note on Ps 6, 6.

**39, 1:** Merodach-baladan: twice king of Babylon, probably from 721 to 710 B.C., and again for nine months, in 704–703. This visit of his messengers, certainly before 701, was in reality a political one. Babylon hoped to lead an anti-Assyrian confederation composed of neighboring states.

h Jb 17, 11; Ps 102, 25. i Jb 7, 6. j Pss 6, 6; 88, 11–13. k 1–8: 2 Kgs 20, 12. l 2 Chr 32, 25ff.

shall come when all that is in your house, and
everything that your fathers have stored up until
this day, shall be carried off to Babylon;* nothing
shall be left, says the LORD.[m] 7 Some of your own
bodily descendants shall be taken and made
servants in the palace of the king of Babylon."[n]
8 Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "The word of the
LORD which you have spoken is favorable."* For
he thought, "There will be peace and security in
my lifetime."[o]

B. THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

# I: The Lord's Glory in Israel's Liberation

## CHAPTER 40

### Promise of Salvation

1 Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her service* is at an end,
her guilt is expiated;
Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD
double for all her sins.[p]

3 A voice cries out:*
In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God![q]
4 Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all mankind shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

6 A voice says, "Cry out!"
I answer, "What shall I cry out?"
"All mankind is grass,
and all their glory like the flower of the field.[r]
7 The grass withers, the flower wilts,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it.
[So then, the people is the grass.]
8 Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
the word of our God stands forever."

9 Go up onto a high mountain,
Zion, herald of glad tidings;
Cry out at the top of your voice,
Jerusalem, herald of good news!
Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah:
Here is your God!
10 Here comes with power
the Lord GOD,
who rules by his strong arm;
Here is his reward with him,
his recompense before him.
11 Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;
in his arms he gathers the lambs,
Carrying them in his bosom,
and leading the ewes with care.[s]

Ch 40
See RG
295

### Power of the Creator To Save His People

12 Who has cupped in his hand the waters of the sea,
and marked off the heavens with a span?*
Who has held in a measure the dust of the earth,
weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?
13 Who has directed the spirit of the LORD,
or has instructed him as his counselor?[t]
14 Whom did he consult to gain knowledge?
Who taught him the path of judgment,
or showed him the way of understanding?

39, 6: Because Judah preferred to follow a pro-Babylonian policy, instead of trusting in God, it would later be exiled to Babylon.
39, 8: Favorable: for the Exile would not occur in his lifetime.
40, 2: Service: servitude and exile.
40, 3–5: The figurative language here describes the actual return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. It is the Lord who leads them; their road is made easy for them. Mt 3, 3 and parallels see in these verses a prophecy of the Baptizer and Christ.

40, 12: Span: the distance between the extended little finger and the thumb. Measure: literally, "third"; here a small container.

m 2 Kgs 24, 13; 25, 13ff. n 2 Chr 33, 11; Dn 1, 2f. o 2 Chr 32, 26. p Is 50, 21. q Mt 3, 3; Jn 1, 23. r Jb 8, 12; 14, 2; Ps 37, 2; Sir 14, 18; Jas 1, 10; 1 Pt 1, 24. s Is 49, 9f; 63, 11; Ez 34, 23; 37, 24; Jn 10, 11. t Wis 9, 13; Rom 11, 34; 1 Cor 2, 16; Jb 38, 1ff.

15 Behold, the nations count as a drop of the bucket,
as dust on the scales;
the coastlands weigh no more than powder.
16 Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,*
nor its animals be enough for holocausts.
17 Before him all the nations are as nought,
as nothing and void he accounts them.

18 To whom can you liken God? [u]
With what equal can you confront him?
19 An idol, cast by a craftsman,
which the smith plates with gold
and fits with silver chains? [v]
20 Mulberry wood, the choice portion
which a skilled craftsman picks out for himself,
Choosing timber that will not rot,
to set up an idol that will not be unsteady? [w]
6 One man helps another,*
one says to the other, "Keep on!"
7 The craftsman encourages the goldsmith,
the one who beats with the hammer, him who strikes on the anvil;
He says the soldering is good,
and he fastens it with nails to steady it.

21 Do you not know? Have you not heard?
Was it not foretold you from the beginning?
Have you not understood? Since the earth was founded
22 He sits enthroned above the vault of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
He stretches out the heavens like a veil,
spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. [x]
23 He brings princes to nought
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
24 Scarcely are they planted or sown,
scarcely is their stem rooted in the earth,
When he breathes upon them and they wither,
and the stormwind carries them away like straw.

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25 To whom can you liken me as an equal?
says the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high
and see who has created* these:
He leads out their army and numbers them,
calling them all by name.
By his great might and the strength of his power
not one of them is missing! [y]
27 Why, O Jacob, do you say,*
and declare, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God"?
28 Do you not know
or have you not heard?
The LORD is the eternal God,
creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint nor grow weary,
and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny.
29 He gives strength to the fainting;
for the weak he makes vigor abound.
30 Though young men faint and grow weary,
and youths stagger and fall,
31 They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength,
they will soar as with eagles' wings;
They will run and not grow weary,
walk and not grow faint.

## CHAPTER 41

### The Liberator of Israel

1 Keep silence before me, O coastlands;*
you peoples, wait for my words!
Let them draw near and speak;
let us come together for judgment.

2 Who has stirred up from the East the champion of justice,*

**40, 16:** Lebanon . . . fuel: the famed cedars would not be enough to keep the fires of sacrifice burning.

**40, 6–7:** These two verses have been transposed from chap. 41.

**40, 26:** Created: see note on Gn 1, 1. By name: for he is their Creator.

**40, 27f:** God's people, here called Jacob and Israel, must not give way to discouragement: their Lord is the eternal God.

**41, 1–4:** It is generally agreed that these verses describe the vocation and victory of Cyrus, whom the Lord used as his instrument to redeem Israel.

**41, 2:** Cyrus is the champion of justice and God's attendant.

u 18f: Acts 17, 29. v Ps 115, 4–7. w Is 44, 13. x Ps 104, 2. y Ps 147, 4f.

and summoned him to be his attendant?
To him he delivers the nations
and subdues the kings;
With his sword he reduces them to dust,
with his bow, to driven straw.
3 He pursues them, passing on without loss,
by a path his feet do not even tread.
4 Who has performed these deeds?
He who has called forth the generations
since the beginning.[z]

I, the LORD, am the first,
and with the last I will also be.
5 The coastlands see, and fear;
the ends of the earth tremble:
these things are near, they come to pass.
8 But you, Israel, my servant,[a]
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
offspring of Abraham my friend—
9 You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth
and summoned from its far-off places,
You whom I have called my servant,
whom I have chosen and will not cast off—
10 Fear not, I am with you;
be not dismayed; I am your God.
I will strengthen you, and help you,
and uphold you with my right hand of justice.

11 Yes, all shall be put to shame and disgrace
who vent their anger against you;
Those shall perish and come to nought
who offer resistance.
12 You shall seek out, but shall not find,
those who strive against you;
They shall be as nothing at all
who do battle with you.

13 For I am the LORD, your God,
who grasp your right hand;
It is I who say to you, "Fear not,
I will help you."
14 Fear not, O worm Jacob,
O maggot Israel;
I will help you, says the LORD;
your redeemer* is the Holy One of Israel.
15 I will make of you a threshing sledge,
sharp, new, and double-edged,
To thresh the mountains and crush them,
to make the hills like chaff.
16 When you winnow them, the wind shall carry them off
and the storm shall scatter them.
But you shall rejoice in the LORD,
and glory in the Holy One of Israel.
17 The afflicted and the needy seek water in vain,
their tongues are parched with thirst.
I, the LORD, will answer them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.
18 I will open up rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the broad valleys;
I will turn the desert into a marshland,
and the dry ground into springs of water.
19 I will plant in the desert the cedar,
acacia, myrtle, and olive;
I will set in the wasteland the cypress,
together with the plane tree and the pine,
20 That all may see and know,
observe and understand,
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

21 Present your case, says the LORD;*
bring forward your reasons, says the King of Jacob.
22 Let them come near and foretell to us
what it is that shall happen!
What are the things of long ago?
Tell us, that we may reflect on them
And know their outcome;
or declare to us the things to come!
23 Foretell the things that shall come afterward,
that we may know that you are gods!
Do something, good or evil,
that will put us in awe and in fear.
24 Why, you are nothing and your work is nought!
To choose you is an abomination.

**41, 14:** Redeemer: in Hebrew, goel, one who frees another from slavery and avenges his sufferings; cf Lv 25, 48; Dt 19, 6. 12.

**41, 21–24:** An indictment of idols.

z Is 44, 7; 46, 10. a 8f: Is 44, 1f. 21; 45, 4.

25 I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes;
from the east I summon him* by name;
He shall trample the rulers down like red earth,
as the potter treads the clay.
26 Who announced this from the beginning, that we might know;
beforehand, that we might say it is true?
Not one of you foretold it, not one spoke;
no one heard you say,
27 "The first news for Zion: they are coming now,"
or, "For Jerusalem I will pick out a bearer of the glad tidings."
28 When I look, there is not one,
no one of them to give counsel,
to make an answer when I question them.
29 Ah, all of them are nothing,
their works are nought,
their idols are empty wind!

## CHAPTER 42

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### The Servant of the Lord

1 Here is my servant* whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
Upon whom I have put my spirit;
he shall bring forth justice to the nations, [b]
2 Not crying out, not shouting,
not making his voice heard in the street.
3 A bruised reed he shall not break,
and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,*
4 Until he establishes justice on the earth;
the coastlands* will wait for his teaching.

5 Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spreads out the earth with its crops,
Who gives breath to its people
and spirit to those who walk on it:
6 I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations, [c]
7 To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.
8 I am the LORD, this is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
9 See, the earlier things have come to pass,
new ones I now foretell;
Before they spring into being,
I announce them to you.

### The Salvation of Israel despite Its Sins

10 Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth:
Let the sea and what fills it resound,
the coastlands, and those who dwell in them.
11 Let the steppe and its cities cry out,
the villages where Kedar* dwells;
Let the inhabitants of Sela exult,
and shout from the top of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory to the LORD,
and utter his praise in the coastlands.
13 The LORD goes forth like a hero,
like a warrior he stirs up his ardor;
He shouts out his battle cry,
against his enemies he shows his might: [d]
14 I have looked away, and kept silence,
I have said nothing, holding myself in;
But now, I cry out as a woman in labor,
gasping and panting.
15 I will lay waste mountains and hills,
all their herbage I will dry up;
I will turn the rivers into marshes,
and the marshes I will dry up. [e]

**41, 25:** I summon him: Cyrus.
**42, 1–4:** Servant: there are three other "Servant-of-the-Lord" oracles, Is 49, 1–7; 50, 4–11; 52, 13—53, 12. Many identifications have been proposed, e.g., historical Israel, ideal Israel, an Old Testament historical character before or during the lifetime of the prophet, the prophet himself. The New Testament and Christian tradition, however, have seen a fulfillment of these prophecies in Jesus Christ.

**42, 3:** A reference to the mercy of Christ.
**42, 4:** Coastlands: the lands of the Mediterranean. In the Old Testament the word often refers to the pagan lands of the west.
**42, 11:** Kedar: cf footnote to Is 21, 16. Sela: Petra, the capital of Edom.

b Is 45, 6; 49, 6. c Is 45, 13. d Ex 14, 3. e Ex 9, 25; 10, 15; 14, 21; Ps 105, 33ff.

16 I will lead the blind on their journey;
by paths unknown I will guide them.
I will turn darkness into light before them,
and make crooked ways straight.
These things I do for them,
and I will not forsake them.[f]
17 They shall be turned back in utter shame
who trust in idols;
Who say to molten images,
"You are our gods."
18 You who are deaf, listen,*
you who are blind, look and see!
19 Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf like the messenger I send?
20 You see many things without taking note;
your ears are open, but without hearing.
21 Though it pleased the LORD in his justice
to make his law great and glorious,
22 This is a people* despoiled and plundered,
all of them trapped in holes,
hidden away in prisons.
They are taken as booty, with no one to rescue them,
as spoil, with no one to demand their return.
23 Who of you gives ear to this?
Who listens and pays heed for the time to come?
24 Who was it that gave Jacob to be plundered,
Israel to the despoilers?*
Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned?
In his ways they refused to walk,
his law they disobeyed.
25 So he poured out wrath upon them,
his anger, and the fury of battle;
It blazed round about them, yet they did not realize,
it burned them, but they took it not to heart.

42, 18–20: Because of their unbelief, the Lord rebukes his people, whom he calls his servant, his messenger.
42, 22: A people: Israel in exile.
42, 24: Despoilers: the Assyrians and Babylonians.

## CHAPTER 43

Ch 41–48
See RG
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### Promises of Redemption and Restoration

1 But now, thus says the LORD,
who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel:
Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name: you are mine.
2 When you pass through the water, I will be with you;
in the rivers you shall not drown.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned;
the flames shall not consume you.
3 For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba* in return for you.
4 Because you are precious in my eyes
and glorious, and because I love you,
I give men in return for you
and peoples in exchange for your life.[g]
5 Fear not, for I am with you;
from the east I will bring back your descendants,
from the west I will gather you.
6 I will say to the north: Give them up!
and to the south: Hold not back!
Bring back my sons from afar,
and my daughters from the ends of the earth:[h]
7 Everyone who is named as mine,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.
8 Lead out the people who are blind though they have eyes,
who are deaf though they have ears.

9 Let all the nations gather together,
let the peoples assemble!
Who among them could have revealed this,
or foretold to us the earlier things?*

43, 3f: Egypt . . . Ethiopia and Seba: countries which God permitted the Persians to conquer in return for having given Israel its freedom.
43, 9: Only God can know and predict future events; cf Is 41, 1–5. 21–29.

f Ex 13, 21. g Dt 4, 37; Hos 11, 1. h Is 49, 22; Ez 16, 20.

Let them produce witnesses to prove
themselves right,
that one may hear and say, "It is true!"
10 You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
my servants whom I have chosen
To know and believe in me
and understand that it is I.
Before me no god was formed,
and after me there shall be none.

11 It is I, I the LORD;
there is no savior but me.
12 It is I who foretold, I who saved;
I made it known, not any strange god
among you;
You are my witnesses, says the LORD.
I am God, 13 yes, from eternity I am He;
There is none who can deliver from my hand:
who can countermand what I do? [i]

14 Thus says the LORD, your redeemer,*
the Holy One of Israel:
For your sakes I send to Babylon;
I will lower all the bars,
and the Chaldeans shall cry out in
lamentation.
15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,
the creator of Israel, your King.
16 Thus says the LORD,
who opens a way in the sea
and a path in the mighty waters, [j]
17 Who leads out chariots and horsemen,
a powerful army,
Till they lie prostrate together, never to rise,
snuffed out and quenched like a wick. [k]
18 Remember not the events of the past,
the things of long ago consider not;*
19 See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
In the desert I make a way,
in the wasteland, rivers.
20 Wild beasts honor me,
jackals and ostriches,
For I put water in the desert
and rivers in the wasteland
for my chosen people to drink,
21 The people whom I formed for myself,
that they might announce my praise.

22 Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob,*
for you grew weary of me, O Israel.
23 You did not bring me sheep for your
holocausts,
nor honor me with your sacrifices.
I did not exact from you the service of
offerings,
nor weary you for frankincense. [l]
24 You did not buy me sweet cane* for
money,
nor fill me with the fat of your sacrifices;
Instead, you burdened me with your sins,
and wearied me with your crimes.
25 It is I, I, who wipe out,
for my own sake, your offenses;
your sins I remember no more.
26 Would you have me remember, have us come
to trial?
Speak up, prove your innocence!
27 Your first father* sinned;
your spokesmen rebelled against me
28 Till I repudiated the holy gates,
put Jacob under the ban,
and exposed Israel to scorn.

## CHAPTER 44

1 Hear then, O Jacob, my servant,
Israel, whom I have chosen.
2 Thus says the LORD who made you,
your help, who formed you from the womb:
Fear not, O Jacob, my servant,
the darling* whom I have chosen.
3 I will pour out water upon the thirsty ground,
and streams upon the dry land;
I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring,
and my blessing upon your descendants.
4 They shall spring up amid the verdure

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**43, 14–17:** The destruction of Babylon.
**43, 18:** No need to think solely of the past wonders of the exodus from Egypt; equally great is the exodus from Babylon.
**43, 22–28:** The reason for the liberation of the Israelites is not their fidelity but rather God's mercy.
**43, 24:** Sweet cane: a fragrant substance used in making incense and the sacred anointing oil; cf Ex 30, 23; Jer 6, 20.
**43, 27:** First father: Adam or Jacob, or collectively "early ancestors." Spokesmen: leaders, priests, prophets.
**44, 2:** The darling: see note on Dt 32, 15; cf also Dt 33, 5. 26.

i Is 41, 4. j Is 51, 10f; Ex 14, 21. k Ex 15, 4. l Jer 6, 20.

like poplars beside the flowing waters.[m]
[5]One shall say, "I am the LORD's,"
another shall be named after Jacob,
And this one shall write on his hand,* "The LORD's,"
and Israel shall be his surname.[n]

### The True God and False Gods

[6]Thus says the LORD, Israel's King
and redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
there is no God but me.[o]
[7]Who is like me? Let him stand up and speak,
make it evident, and confront me with it.
Who of old announced future events?
Let them foretell to us the things to come.
[8]Fear not, be not troubled:
did I not announce and foretell it long ago?
You are my witnesses! Is there a God
or any Rock* besides me?[p]

[9]*Idol makers all amount to nothing, and their precious works are of no avail, as they themselves give witness. To their shame, they neither see nor know anything; and they are more deaf than men are.[q] [10]Indeed, all the associates of anyone who forms a god, or casts an idol to no purpose, will be put to shame; [11]they will all assemble and stand forth, to be reduced to fear and shame.

[12]The smith fashions an iron image, works it over the coals, shapes it with hammers, and forges it with his strong arm. He is hungry and weak, drinks no water and becomes exhausted.[r]

[13]The carpenter stretches a line and marks with a stylus the outline of an idol. He shapes it with a plane and measures it off with a compass, making it like a man in appearance and dignity, to occupy a shrine. [14]He cuts down cedars, takes a holm or an oak, and lays hold of other trees of the forest, which the Lord had planted and the rain made grow [15]to serve man for fuel. With a part of their wood he warms himself, or makes a fire for baking bread; but with another part he makes a god which he adores, an idol which he worships. [16]Half of it he burns in the fire, and on its embers he roasts his meat; he eats what he has roasted until he is full, and then warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I feel the fire." [17]Of what remains he makes a god, his idol, and prostrate before it in worship, he implores it, "Rescue me, for you are my god."

[18]The idols have neither knowledge nor reason; their eyes are coated so that they cannot see, and their hearts so that they cannot understand. [19]Yet he does not reflect, nor have the intelligence and sense to say, "Half of the wood I burned in the fire, and on its embers I baked bread and roasted meat which I ate. Shall I then make an abomination out of the rest, or worship a block of wood?" [20]He is chasing ashes*—a thing that cannot save itself when the flame consumes it; yet he does not say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?"

[21]Remember this, O Jacob,
you, O Israel, who are my servant!
I formed you to be a servant to me;
O Israel, by me you shall never be forgotten:
[22]I have brushed away your offenses like a cloud,
your sins like a mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.

[23]Raise a glad cry, you heavens: the LORD has done this;
shout, you depths of the earth.
Break forth, you mountains, into song,
you forest, with all your trees.
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
and shows his glory through Israel.

### Cyrus, Anointed of the Lord, Liberator of Israel

[24]Thus says the LORD, your redeemer,
who formed you from the womb:

**44, 5:** Write on his hand: an allusion to the Babylonian custom of tatooing the owner's name on the hand of his slave; cf also Rv 13, 16.
**44, 8:** Rock: place of refuge; said of God in Dt 32, 4. 18; 1 Sm 2, 2; etc.
**44, 9–20:** Satire on the makers and worshipers of idols.
**44, 20:** Chasing ashes: exerting efforts in vain; cf Hos 12, 2; Eccl 1, 14; 2, 11. 17.

m Is 54, 1ff. n Is 43, 7; 45, 14. o Is 41, 44; 43, 15; 45, 21; 48, 3. 12; 51, 15; 54, 5. p Is 43, 10. 12; Dt 32, 4. q Is 48, 5. 7. r Wis 13, 11ff.

I am the LORD, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens;
when I spread out the earth, who was with me?[s]
25 It is I who bring to nought the omens of liars,
who make fools of diviners;
I turn wise men back
and make their knowledge foolish.
26 It is I who confirm the words of my servants,
I carry out the plan announced by my messengers;
I say to Jerusalem: Be inhabited;
to the cities of Judah: Be rebuilt;
I will raise up their ruins.
27 It is I who said to the deep: Be dry;
I will dry up your wellsprings.[t]
28 I say of Cyrus:* My shepherd,
who fulfills my every wish;
He shall say of Jerusalem, "Let her be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."[u]

## CHAPTER 45

Ch 41–48 See RG 295

1 Thus says the LORD to his anointed,* Cyrus,
whose right hand I grasp,
Subduing nations before him,
and making kings run in his service,
Opening doors before him
and leaving the gates unbarred:
2 I will go before you
and level the mountains;
Bronze doors* I will shatter,
and iron bars I will snap.[v]
3 I will give you treasures out of the darkness,
and riches that have been hidden away,
That you may know that I am the LORD,
the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.
4 For the sake of Jacob, my servant,
of Israel my chosen one,
I have called you by your name,
giving you a title, though you knew me not.[w]
5 I am the LORD and there is no other,
there is no God besides me.
It is I who arm you, though you know me not,
6 so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun
men may know that there is none besides me.*

I am the LORD, there is no other;
7 I form the light, and create the darkness,
I make well-being and create woe;*
I, the LORD, do all these things.
8 Let justice descend, O heavens, like dew from above,
like gentle rain let the skies drop it down.
Let the earth open and salvation bud forth;
let justice also spring up!*
I, the LORD, have created this.[x]
9 Woe to him who contends with his Maker;[y]
a potsherd among potsherds of the earth!*
Dare the clay say to its modeler, "What are you doing?"
or, "What you are making has no hands"?
10 Woe to him who asks a father, "What are you begetting?"
or a woman, "What are you giving birth to?"
11 Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, his maker:

**44, 28:** Cyrus: king of Persia (559–529 B.C.) and conqueror of Babylon (538 B.C.), who liberated the Jews, permitting them to return to their native land and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

**45, 1:** Anointed: in Hebrew, meshiah, from which the word "Messiah" is derived; from its Greek translation, Christos, we have the name "Christ." Applied to kings, "anointed" originally referred only to those of Israel, but it is here given to Cyrus because he is the agent of the Lord.

**45, 2:** Bronze doors: of Babylon.

**45, 6:** The Gentiles will come to know the true God; cf also vv 20–25.

**45, 7:** Create woe: God permits evil for the sake of a greater good.

**45, 8:** The Vulgate rendering gives a more precise Messianic sense to this verse, using "just one" and "savior" in place of justice and salvation. The Advent liturgy uses the Vulgate form, Rorate coeli desuper . . . , to express the world's longing for the coming of Christ.

**45, 9:** No one may challenge God's freedom of action, exemplified here by the selection of Cyrus as his anointed.

s Is 40, 22; Jb 9, 8. t Is 42, 15; 51, 10. u Jer 3, 15; Ez 34, 23. v Ps 107, 16. w Is 40, 26. x Pss 72, 6; 85, 11. y Jer 18, 6; Rom 9, 20.

You question me about my children,
or prescribe the work of my hands for me!
12 It was I who made the earth
and created mankind upon it;
It was my hands that stretched out the heavens;
I gave the order to all their host.
13 It was I who stirred up one* for the triumph of justice;
all his ways I make level.
He shall rebuild my city
and let my exiles go free
Without price or ransom,
says the LORD of hosts.
14 Thus says the LORD:
The earnings of Egypt, the gain of Ethiopia,
and the Sabeans,* tall of stature,
Shall come over to you and belong to you;
they shall follow you, coming in chains.
Before you they shall fall prostrate,
saying in prayer:
"With you only is God, and nowhere else;
the gods are nought.[z]
15 Truly with you God is hidden,*
the God of Israel, the savior![a]
16 Those are put to shame and disgrace
who vent their anger against him;
Those go in disgrace
who carve images.
17 Israel, you are saved by the LORD,
saved forever!
You shall never be put to shame or disgrace
in future ages."
18 For thus says the LORD,
The creator of the heavens,
who is God,
The designer and maker of the earth
who established it,
Not creating it to be a waste,*
but designing it to be lived in:
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
19 I have not spoken from hiding
nor from some dark place of the earth,
And I have not said to the descendants of Jacob,
"Look for me in an empty waste."
I, the LORD, promise justice,
I foretell what is right.
20 Come and assemble, gather together,
you fugitives from among the gentiles!
They are without knowledge who bear wooden idols*
and pray to gods that cannot save.
21 Come here and declare
in counsel together:
Who announced this from the beginning
and foretold it from of old?
Was it not I, the LORD,
besides whom there is no other God?
There is no just and saving God but me.
22 Turn to me and be safe,
all you ends of the earth,
for I am God; there is no other!
23 By myself I swear,
uttering my just decree
and my unalterable word:
To me every knee shall bend;
by me every tongue shall swear,[b]
24 Saying, "Only in the LORD
are just deeds and power.
Before him in shame shall come
all who vent their anger against him.
25 In the LORD shall be the vindication and the glory
of all the descendants of Israel."

## CHAPTER 46

Ch 41–48
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295

### The Gods of Babylon

1 Bel bows down, Nebo* stoops,
their idols are upon beasts and cattle;
They must be borne up on shoulders,
carried as burdens by the weary.

**45, 13:** One: Cyrus, called by God for the deliverance and restoration of Israel.

**45, 14:** Egypt . . . Ethiopia . . . Sabeans: the Egyptians and their allies who, when conquered by Cyrus, are seen as acknowledging the God of Israel to be the one true God; cf Is 43, 3.

**45, 15:** God is hidden: he dwells invisibly in the holy of holies.

**45, 18:** Waste: an allusion to the beginning of creation, when the earth was waste and void (Gn 1, 2), the same Hebrew word, tohu, being used in both passages. The further reference here is to Palestine, which God wishes again to be inhabited by the returning exiles.

**45, 20:** Who bear wooden idols: in their religious processions. The gods of the pagans have feet but cannot walk; cf Ps 115, 7; Bar 6, 25.

**46, 1:** Bel . . . Nebo: gods of Babylon; their complete helplessness is here contrasted with God's omnipotence.

z Is 43, 3. a Is 55, 8; Prv 25, 2. b Rom 14, 11; Phil 2, 10.

2 They stoop and bow down together;
unable to save those who bear them,
they too go into captivity.

3 Hear me, O house of Jacob,
all who remain of the house of Israel,
My burden since your birth,
whom I have carried from your infancy.[c]

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4 Even to your old age I am the same,
even when your hair is gray I will bear you;
It is I who have done this, I who will continue,
and I who will carry you to safety.

5 Whom would you compare me with, as an equal,
or match me against, as though we were alike?
6 There are those who pour out gold from a purse
and weigh out silver on the scales;
Then they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god
before which they fall down in worship.
7 They lift it to their shoulders to carry;
when they set it in place again, it stays,
and does not move from the spot.
Although they cry out to it, it cannot answer;
it delivers no one from distress.

8 Remember this and be firm,
bear it well in mind, you rebels;
remember the former things, those long ago:
9 I am God, there is no other;
I am God, there is none like me.
10 At the beginning I foretell the outcome;
in advance, things not yet done.
I say that my plan shall stand,
I accomplish my every purpose.

11 I call from the east a bird of prey,*
from a distant land, one to carry out my plan.
Yes, I have spoken, I will accomplish it;
I have planned it, and I will do it.
12 Listen to me, you fainthearted,
you who seem far from the victory of justice:
13 I am bringing on my justice, it is not far off,
my salvation shall not tarry;
I will put salvation within Zion,
and give to Israel my glory.

## CHAPTER 47

### The Fall of Babylon*

1 Come down, sit in the dust,
O virgin daughter Babylon;
Sit on the ground, dethroned,
O daughter of the Chaldeans.
No longer shall you be called
dainty and delicate.
2 Take the millstone and grind flour,
remove your veil;
Strip off your train, bare your legs,
pass through the streams.
3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered
and your shame be seen;
I will take vengeance,
I will yield to no entreaty,
says our redeemer.
4 Whose name is the LORD of hosts,
the Holy One of Israel.

5 Go into darkness and sit in silence,
O daughter of the Chaldeans,
No longer shall you be called
sovereign mistress of kingdoms.
6 Angry at my people,
I profaned my inheritance,
And I gave them into your hand;
but you showed them no mercy,
And upon old men
you laid a very heavy yoke.
7 You said, "I shall remain always,
a sovereign mistress forever!"
But you did not lay these things to heart,
you disregarded their outcome.[d]
8 Now hear this, voluptuous one,
enthroned securely,
Saying to yourself,

46, 11: From the east a bird of prey: Cyrus; cf Is 41, 2–4.
47, 1–15: A taunt-song, mocking Babylon, once queen of the nations, now made a slave girl.

c Is 44, 2. d Is 14, 13f.

"I, and no one else!
I shall never be a widow,
or suffer the loss of my children"—[e]
9 Both these things shall come to you
suddenly, in a single day:
Complete bereavement and widowhood
shall come upon you
For your many sorceries
and the great number of your
spells;*
10 Because you felt secure in your
wickedness,
and said, "No one sees me."
Your wisdom and your knowledge
led you astray,
And you said to yourself,
"I, and no one else!"
11 But upon you shall come evil
you will not know how to predict;
Disaster shall befall you
which you cannot allay.
Suddenly there shall come upon you
ruin which you will not expect.
12 Keep up, now, your spells
and your many sorceries;
Perhaps you can make them avail,
perhaps you can strike terror!
13 You wearied yourself with many consultations,
at which you toiled from your youth;
Let the astrologers stand forth to save
you,
the stargazers who forecast at each new
moon
what would happen to you.
14 Lo, they are like stubble,
fire consumes them;
They cannot save themselves
from the spreading flames.
This is no warming ember,
no fire to sit before.
15 Thus do your wizards serve you
with whom you have toiled from your
youth;
Each wanders his own way,
with none to save you.

47, 9. 13. 15: Babylon was known for its sorcery and astrology.

## CHAPTER 48

Ch 41–48
See RG
295

### Exhortations to the Exiles

1 Hear this, O house of Jacob
called by the name Israel,
sprung from the stock of Judah,
You who swear by the name of the LORD
and invoke the God of Israel
without sincerity or justice,
2 Though you are named after the holy city
and rely on the God of Israel,
whose name is the LORD of hosts.
3 Things of the past I foretold long ago,
they went forth from my mouth, I let you
hear of them;
then suddenly I took action and they came
to be.
4 Because I know that you are stubborn
and that your neck is an iron sinew
and your forehead bronze,
5 I foretold them to you of old;
before they took place I let you hear of
them,
That you might not say, "My idol did them,
my statue, my molten image commanded
them."
6 Now that you have heard, look at all this;
must you not admit it?[f]

From now on I announce new things to you,
hidden events of which you knew not.
7 Now, not long ago, they are brought into
being,
and beforetime you did not hear of them,
so that you cannot claim to have known
them;
8 You neither heard nor knew,
they did not reach your ears beforehand.
Yes, I know you are utterly treacherous,
a rebel you were called from birth.[g]
9 For the sake of my name I restrain my anger,
for the sake of my renown I hold it back
from you,
lest I should destroy you.
10 See, I have refined you like silver,
tested you in the furnace of affliction.[h]

e Zep 2, 15; Rv 18, 7. f Is 42, 9. g Is 43, 22ff. h Is 1, 25; Jer 6, 29f; Zec 13, 9; Mal 3, 2.

11 For my sake, for my own sake, I do this;
why should I suffer profanation?
My glory I will not give to another.

12 Listen to me, Jacob,
Israel, whom I named!
I, it is I who am the first,
and also the last am I. [i]
13 Yes, my hand laid the foundations of the earth;
my right hand spread out the heavens.
When I call them,
they stand forth at once. [j]

Ch 49–55
See RG
295–296

14 All of you assemble and listen:
Who among you foretold these things?
The LORD's friend* shall do his will
against Babylon and the progeny of Chaldea.
15 I myself have spoken, I have called him,
I have brought him, and his way succeeds!
16 Come near to me and hear this!
Not from the beginning did I speak it in secret;
At the time it comes to pass, I am present:
"Now the Lord* GOD has sent me,
and his spirit."
17 Thus says the LORD, your redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel:
I, the LORD, your God,
teach you what is for your good,
and lead you on the way you should go.
18 If you would hearken to my commandments,
your prosperity would be like a river,
and your vindication like the waves of the sea;
19 Your descendants would be like the sand,
and those born of your stock like its grains,
Their name never cut off
or blotted out from my presence.
20 Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea!
With shouts of joy proclaim this, make it known;
Publish it to the ends of the earth, and say,
"The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob.
21 They did not thirst
when he led them through dry lands;
Water from the rock he set flowing for them;
he cleft the rock, and waters welled forth." [k]
22 [There is no peace for the wicked,
says the LORD.]

## II: Expiation of Sin, Spiritual Liberation of Israel

### CHAPTER 49

#### The Servant of the Lord*

1 Hear me, O coastlands,
listen, O distant peoples. [l]
The LORD called me from birth,
from my mother's womb he gave me my name.*
2 He made of me a sharp-edged sword
and concealed me in the shadow of his arm.
He made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me.*
3 You are my servant, he said to me,
Israel,* through whom I show my glory.

4 Though I thought I had toiled in vain,
and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength,
Yet my reward is with the LORD,
my recompense is with my God. [m]
5 For now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
That Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
And I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
6 It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant,

**48, 14:** The Lord's friend: Cyrus, who carries out God's plans.
**48, 16:** "Now the Lord . . . spirit": said by Cyrus; cf v 14.
**49, 1–7:** The second of the four "Servant-of-the-Lord" oracles.
**49, 1:** Gave me my name: designated me for a special office (cf Jer 1, 5), or perhaps, made me renowned (cf Ps 45, 18).
**49, 2:** The servant was made ready and fit for the preaching of God's word.
**49, 3:** Israel: the Servant is identified with the people of Israel as their ideal representative; however, since vv 5f seem to distinguish the Servant from Israel, some regard the word Israel here as a gloss.

i Is 41, 4; 44, 6; 48, 12; Rv 1, 8. 17. j Is 40, 22. 26; 45, 12. 18. k Ex 17, 6; Nm 20, 11. l Is 41, 9; 43, 1; 44, 2. 24; 46, 3. m Is 40, 27.

to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;[n]
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

7 Thus says the LORD,
the redeemer and the Holy One of Israel,
To the one despised, whom the nations abhor,
the slave of rulers:
When kings see you, they shall stand up,
and princes shall prostrate themselves
Because of the LORD who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you.[o]

**The Liberation and Restoration of Zion**

8 Thus says the LORD:
In a time of favor I answer you,
on the day of salvation I help you,
To restore the land
and allot the desolate heritages,[p]
9 Saying to the prisoners: Come out!
To those in darkness: Show yourselves!
Along the ways they shall find pasture,
on every bare height shall their pastures be.[q]
10 They shall not hunger or thirst,
nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them;
For he who pities them leads them
and guides them beside springs of water.[r]
11 I will cut a road through all my mountains,
and make my highways level.[s]
12 See, some shall come from afar,
others from the north and the west,
and some from the land of Syene.*

13 Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth,
break forth into song, you mountains.
For the LORD comforts his people
and shows mercy to his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me;
my Lord has forgotten me."[t]
15 Can a mother forget her infant,
be without tenderness for the child of her womb?
Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.[u]
16 See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name;*
your walls are ever before me.
17 Your rebuilders make haste,
as those who tore you down and laid you waste
go forth from you;
18 Look about and see,
they are all gathering and coming to you.
As I live, says the LORD,
you shall be arrayed with them all as with adornments,
like a bride you shall fasten them on you.

19 Though you were waste and desolate,
a land of ruins,
Now you shall be too small for your inhabitants,
while those who swallowed you up will be far away.
20 The children whom you had lost
shall yet say to you,
"This place is too small for me,
make room for me to live in."
21 You shall ask yourself:
"Who has borne me these?
I was bereft and barren
[exiled and repudiated];
who has reared them?
I was left all alone;
where then do these come from?"[v]

22 Thus says the Lord GOD:
See, I will lift up my hand to the nations,
and raise my signal to the peoples;
They shall bring your sons in their arms,
and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.[w]
23 Kings shall be your foster fathers,

**49, 6:** The Servant's vocation will be not only the restoration of Israel but the conversion of the world; cf Lk 2, 32.
**49, 12:** Syene: now called Aswan, at the first cataract of the Nile in southern Egypt.
**49, 16:** Upon the palms . . . name: for continual remembrance; cf Ex 13, 9. 16; Dt 6, 6–9.

n Is 42, 1–6; 44, 5; 45, 14; Lk 2, 32; Acts 13, 46f. o Is 49, 23; 55, 5. p 2 Cor 6, 2. q Is 42, 7. 18ff. r Is 51, 14; Rv 7, 16. s Is 40, 3f. t Is 40, 27. u Is 43, 4; 44, 21; 46, 3f. v Is 54, 1ff. w Is 5, 26; 13, 2.

their princesses your nurses;
Bowing to the ground, they shall worship you
and lick the dust at your feet.
Then you shall know that I am the LORD,
and those who hope in me shall never be
disappointed.

24 Thus says the LORD:
Can booty be taken from a warrior?
or captives be rescued from a tyrant?
25 Yes, captives can be taken from a warrior,
and booty be rescued from a tyrant;
Those who oppose you I will oppose,
and your sons I will save.
26 I will make your oppressors eat their own
flesh,
and they shall be drunk with their own
blood
as with the juice of the grape.
All mankind shall know
that I, the LORD, am your savior,
your redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.[x]

## CHAPTER 50

Ch 49–55
See RG
295–296

### Salvation Only through the Lord's Servant

1 Thus says the LORD:
Where is the bill of divorce
with which I dismissed your mother?*
Or to which of my creditors
have I sold you?
It was for your sins that you were sold,
for your crimes that your mother was
dismissed.[y]

2 Why was no one there when I came?
Why did no one answer when I called?*
Is my hand too short to ransom?
Have I not the strength to deliver?
Lo, with my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I turn rivers into a desert;
Their fish rot for lack of water,
and die of thirst.[z]
3 I clothe the heavens in mourning,
and make sackcloth their vesture.

4 The Lord GOD has given me*
a well-trained tongue,
That I might know how to speak to the weary
a word that will rouse them.
Morning after morning
he opens my ear that I may hear;
5 And I have not rebelled,
have not turned back.*
6 I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my
beard;*
My face I did not shield
from buffets and spitting.[a]

7 The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.[b]
8 He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me,
let us appear together.
Who disputes my right?
Let him confront me.
9 See, the Lord GOD is my help;
who will prove me wrong?
Lo, they will all wear out like cloth,
the moth will eat them up.[c]

10 Who among you fears the LORD,*
heeds his servant's voice,
And walks in darkness
without any light,
Trusting in the name of the LORD
and relying on his God?[d]
11 All of you kindle flames
and carry about you fiery darts;
Walk by the light of your own fire
and by the flares you have burnt!

**50, 1:** Responding to the people's complaint of utter abandonment by God, the prophet shows that their sins were responsible for their banishment. Since there was no bill of divorce, the bond between the Lord and his people still exists and he will ultimately save them.

**50, 2:** Israel's faith in God is weak; she does not answer his call, nor believe in his promises of deliverance.

**50, 4–11:** The third of the four "Servant-of-the-Lord" oracles; in vv 4–9 the Servant speaks; in vv 10f God reproves the people for not following the Servant.

**50, 5:** The Servant does not refuse the divine vocation.

**50, 6:** He willingly submits to insults and beatings. Plucked my beard: a grave insult.

**50, 10f:** Instead of trusting in the Lord and his Servant, the people rely on their own devices, to their own destruction.

x Is 19, 2; Ez 38, 21; Zec 14, 13. y Dt 24, 1–4; Mt 19, 3; Mk 10, 2ff; Is 54, 6ff. z Ex 7, 18; Ps 105, 29. a 2 Sm 10, 4ff; Mt 26, 67; 27, 30. b Ez 3, 9. c Is 51, 6–8; Ps 102, 27. d Is 43, 1f; 44, 1f.

This is your fate from my hand:
you shall lie down in a place of pain.

## CHAPTER 51

### Exhortation To Trust in the Lord

1 Listen to me, you who pursue justice,
who seek the LORD;
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
to the pit* from which you were quarried; [e]
2 Look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth;
When he was but one I called him,
I blessed him and made him many.[f]
3 Yes, the LORD shall comfort Zion
and have pity on all her ruins;
Her deserts he shall make like Eden,
her wasteland like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness shall be found in her,
thanksgiving and the sound of song.

4 Be attentive to me, my people;*
my folk, give ear to me.
For law shall go forth from my presence,
and my judgment, as the light of the
peoples.[g]
5 I will make my justice come speedily;
my salvation shall go forth
[and my arm shall judge the nations];
In me shall the coastlands hope,
and my arm they shall await.

6 Raise your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth below;
Though the heavens grow thin like smoke,
the earth wears out like a garment
and its inhabitants die like flies,
My salvation shall remain forever
and my justice shall never be dismayed.*
7 Hear me, you who know justice,
you people who have my teaching at heart:
Fear not the reproach of men,
be not dismayed at their revilings.
8 They shall be like a garment eaten by moths,
like wool consumed by grubs;
But my justice shall remain forever
and my salvation, for all generations.[h]

Ch 49–55
See RG
295–296

9 Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the LORD!
Awake as in the days of old,
in ages long ago!
Was it not you who crushed Rahab,*
you who pierced the dragon?[i]
10 Was it not you who dried up the sea,
the waters of the great deep,*
Who made the depths of the sea into a way
for the redeemed to pass over?
11 Those whom the LORD has ransomed will
return
and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy;
They will meet with joy and gladness,
sorrow and mourning will flee.
12 I, it is I who comfort you.
Can you then fear mortal man,
who is human only, to be looked upon as
grass,
13 And forget the LORD, your maker,
who stretched out the heavens
and laid the foundations of the earth?
All the day you are in constant dread
of the fury of the oppressor;
But when he sets himself to destroy,
what is there of the oppressor's fury?

14 The oppressed shall soon be released;
they shall not die and go down into the pit,
nor shall they want for bread.
15 For I am the LORD, your God,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
the LORD of hosts by name.[j]
16 I have put my words into your mouth
and shielded you in the shadow of my hand,
I, who stretched out the heavens,
who laid the foundations of the earth,
who say to Zion: You are my people.

51, 1: Rock . . . pit: your glorious ancestry.
51, 4f: The conversion of the Gentiles.
51, 6: God's salvation and justice are eternal, in contrast to the impermanence of the heavens and the earth: cf Mt 24, 35.
51, 9: Rahab: see note on Is 30, 7. The dragon: see notes on Is 27, 1; Ps 74, 13.
51, 10: Great deep: another reference to the primeval chaos of Gn 1, 2.

e Rom 9, 30f. f Ez 33, 24; Gn 12, 2ff; 22, 17. g Is 2, 3. h Is 50, 9. i Ex 15, 16; Jb 9, 13; 26, 12; Pss 74, 13; 89, 11. j Jer 31, 35.

### The Cup of the Lord

17 Awake, awake!
Arise, O Jerusalem,
You who drank at the LORD's hand
the cup of his wrath;
Who drained to the dregs
the bowl of staggering! [k]
18 She has no one to guide her
of all the sons she bore;
She has no one to grasp her by the hand,
of all the sons she reared!—
19 Your misfortunes are double;
who is there to condole with you?
Desolation and destruction, famine and sword!
Who is there to comfort you?
20 Your sons lie helpless
at every street corner
like antelopes in a net.
They are filled with the wrath of the LORD,
the rebuke of your God.

21 But now, hear this, O afflicted one,
drunk, but not with wine, [l]
22 Thus says the LORD, your Master,
your God, who defends his people:
See, I am taking from your hand
the cup of staggering;
The bowl of my wrath
you shall no longer drink.
23 I will put it into the hands of your tormentors,
those who ordered you
to bow down, that they might walk over you,
While you offered your back like the ground,
like the street for them to walk on.

## CHAPTER 52

Ch 49–55
See RG
295–296

### Let Zion Rejoice

1 Awake, awake!
Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your glorious garments,
O Jerusalem, holy city.
No longer shall the uncircumcised
or the unclean enter you.
2 Shake off the dust,
ascend to the throne, Jerusalem;
Loose the bonds from your neck,
O captive daughter Zion!
3 For thus says the LORD:
You were sold for nothing,
and without money you shall be redeemed.
4 Thus says the Lord GOD:
To Egypt in the beginning my people went down,
to sojourn there;
Assyria, too, oppressed them for nought.
5 But now, what am I to do here?
says the LORD.
My people have been taken away without redress;
their rulers make a boast of it, says the LORD;
all the day my name is constantly reviled.
6 Therefore on that day my people shall know my renown,
that it is I who have foretold it. Here I am!
7 How beautiful upon the mountains*
are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,
Announcing peace, bearing good news,
announcing salvation, and saying to Zion,
"Your God is King!" [m]
8 Hark! Your watchmen raise a cry,
together they shout for joy,
For they see directly, before their eyes,
the LORD restoring Zion. [n]
9 Break out together in song,
O ruins of Jerusalem!
For the LORD comforts his people,
he redeems Jerusalem.
10 The LORD has bared his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations;
All the ends of the earth will behold
the salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, come forth from there,
touch nothing unclean!

**52, 7–10:** God leads his people back from Babylon to Zion, from whose ruined walls watchmen . . . shout for joy; cf Rom 10, 15.

k Jer 25, 15ff; Ez 23, 32ff. l Is 29, 9. m Is 40, 9; Rom 10, 15. n 1 Is 62, 6.

Out from there!* Purify yourselves,
you who carry the vessels of the LORD.
12 Yet not in fearful haste will you come out,
nor leave in headlong flight,
For the LORD comes before you,
and your rear guard is the God of Israel. [o]

### Suffering and Triumph of the Servant of the Lord*

13 See, my servant shall prosper,
he shall be raised high and greatly exalted.
14 Even as many were amazed at him—
so marred was his look beyond that of man,
and his appearance beyond that of mortals— [p]
15 So shall he startle many nations,
because of him kings shall stand speechless;
For those who have not been told shall see,
those who have not heard shall ponder it. [q]

## CHAPTER 53

1 Who would believe what we have heard?
To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? [r]
2 He grew up like a sapling before him, [s]
like a shoot from the parched earth;
There was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him,
nor appearance that would attract us to him.*
3 He was spurned* and avoided by men,
a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity,
One of those from whom men hide their faces,
spurned, and we held him in no esteem. [t]

4 Yet it was our infirmities that he bore,*
our sufferings that he endured,
While we thought of him as stricken,
as one smitten by God and afflicted. [u]
5 But he was pierced for our offenses,
crushed for our sins,
Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed. [v]
6 We had all gone astray like sheep,
each following his own way;
But the LORD laid upon him
the guilt of us all. [w]
7 Though he was harshly treated, he submitted
and opened not his mouth;
Like a lamb led to the slaughter
or a sheep before the shearers,
he was silent and opened not his mouth. [x]
8 Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away,
and who would have thought any more of his destiny?
When he was cut off from the land of the living,
and smitten for the sin of his people,
9 A grave was assigned him among the wicked
and a burial place with evildoers,
Though he had done no wrong
nor spoken any falsehood. [y]
10 [But the LORD was pleased*
to crush him in infirmity.]

If he gives his life as an offering for sin,
he shall see his descendants in a long life,
and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him.
11 Because of his affliction
he shall see the light in fullness of days;
Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,
and their guilt he shall bear.
12 Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,

Ch 49–55
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295–296

52, 11: From there: from Babylon. Vessels of the Lord: taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, now carried back by the exiled priests returning in procession to Zion; cf Ezr 1, 7.

52, 13—53, 12: The last of the four "Servant-of-the-Lord" oracles. An extraordinary description of the sinless Servant, who by his voluntary suffering atones for the sins of his people, and saves them from just punishment at the hands of God. Only in Jesus Christ is the prophecy perfectly fulfilled.

53, 2: Only God appreciated his Servant's true greatness.

53, 3: Because he suffered, he was regarded as a sinner and therefore as one to be spurned.

53, 4ff: He did indeed suffer but it was for the sins of mankind, and through his sufferings men are healed.

53, 10ff: Because he fulfilled the divine will by suffering for the sins of others, the Servant will be rewarded by the Lord. See the light: enjoy happiness. This line may originally have read, "he shall drink and eat to the full"—at the thanksgiving sacrifice at which he shall divide the spoils (v 12).

o Ex 12, 11. p Ps 69, 8. q Mi 7, 16. r Is 52, 10; Jn 12, 38; Rom 10, 16. s Is 11, 1. t Jb 19, 18; Ps 31, 11ff; Mk 9, 11. u Jer 10, 19; Mt 8, 17. v 1 Cor 15, 3; 1 Pt 2, 24. w Lv 16, 21ff. x Mt 26, 63; Acts 8, 32. y 1 Pt 2, 22f; 1 Jn 3, 5.

and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
Because he surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked;
And he shall take away the sins of many,
and win pardon for their offenses.[z]

## CHAPTER 54

Ch 49-55
See RG
295-296

### The New Zion

1 Raise a glad cry, you barren one* who did not bear,
break forth in jubilant song, you who were not in labor,
For more numerous are the children of the deserted wife
than the children of her who has a husband,
says the LORD.[a]
2 Enlarge the space for your tent,
spread out your tent cloths unsparingly;
lengthen your ropes and make firm your stakes.[b]
3 For you shall spread abroad to the right and to the left;
your descendants shall dispossess the nations
and shall people the desolate cities.
4 Fear not, you shall not be put to shame;
you need not blush, for you shall not be disgraced.
The shame of your youth you shall forget,
the reproach of your widowhood no longer remember.
5 For he who has become your husband is your Maker;
his name is the LORD of hosts;
Your redeemer* is the Holy One of Israel,
called God of all the earth.
6 The LORD calls you back,
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
A wife married in youth and then cast off,
says your God.[c]
7 For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great tenderness I will take you back.
8 In an outburst of wrath, for a moment
I hid my face from you;
But with enduring love I take pity on you,
says the LORD, your redeemer.
9 This is for me like the days of Noah,
when I swore that the waters of Noah
should never again deluge the earth;
So I have sworn not to be angry with you,
or to rebuke you.[d]
10 Though the mountains leave their place
and the hills be shaken,
My love shall never leave you
nor my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the LORD, who has mercy on you.[e]
11 O afflicted one, storm-battered and unconsoled,*
I lay your pavements in carnelians,
and your foundations in sapphires;[f]
12 I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of carbuncles,
and all your walls of precious stones.
13 All your sons shall be taught by the LORD,
and great shall be the peace of your children.
14 In justice shall you be established,
far from the fear of oppression,
where destruction cannot come near you.
15 Should there be any attack, it shall not be of my making;
whoever attacks you shall fall before you.
16 Lo, I have created the craftsman
who blows on the burning coals
and forges weapons as his work;
It is I also who have created
the destroyer to work havoc.
17 No weapon fashioned against you shall prevail;
every tongue you shall prove false
that launches an accusation against you.

54, 1: Jerusalem, pictured as a wife who had been barren and deserted, now suddenly finds herself with innumerable children (the returning exiles); cf Gal 4, 27 for the application of this text to the church, the New Zion.
54, 5: Redeemer: cf note on Is 41, 14.
54, 11f: Cf Rv 21. Afflicted one: Jerusalem; carnelians: reddish quartz, hard and durable; carbuncles: another precious stone of red color.

z Mk 15, 28; Lk 22, 37. a Gal 4, 27. b Is 49, 20. c Mal 2, 14f. d Gn 9, 15. e Pss 76, 5; 46, 3. f Rv 21, 18–21.

This is the lot of the servants of the LORD,
their vindication from me, says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 55

### An Invitation to Grace

1 All you who are thirsty,*
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk! [g]
2 Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
3 Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David. [h]
4 As I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of nations,
5 So shall you summon a nation you knew not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
Because of the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you. [i]

6 Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.
7 Let the scoundrel forsake his way,
and the wicked man his thoughts;
Let him turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
9 As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.
10 For just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
And do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
Giving seed to him who sows
and bread to him who eats,
11 So shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

12 Yes, in joy you shall depart,
in peace you shall be brought back;
Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you,
and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands.
13 In place of the thornbush, the cypress shall grow,
instead of nettles,* the myrtle.
This shall be to the LORD's renown,
an everlasting imperishable sign.

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# III: Return of the First Captives

## CHAPTER 56

### The Lord's House Open to All*

1 Thus says the LORD:
Observe what is right, do what is just;
for my salvation is about to come,
my justice, about to be revealed.
2 Happy is the man who does this,
the son of man who holds to it;
Who keeps the sabbath free from profanation,
and his hand from any evildoing.
3 Let not the foreigner say,
when he would join himself to the LORD,
"The LORD will surely exclude me from his people";
Nor let the eunuch say,

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55, 1ff: God's salvation is freely extended to his people and to all nations; through him will the benefits assured to David be renewed; cf Is 12, 3; Jn 7, 37.

55, 13: Thornbush . . . nettles: suggestive of the desert and therefore symbolic of suffering and hardship; cypress, myrtle: suggestive of fertile land and therefore symbolic of joy and strength.

56, 1–8: Participation in the future messianic salvation is offered to all who believe in the Lord and keep his commandments, regardless of origin or social condition.

g Jn 4, 10ff; 6, 35; 7, 37ff; Rv 21, 6; 22, 17. h 2 Sm 7, 12–16. i Acts 13, 34.

"See, I am a dry tree."*
4 For thus says the LORD:
To the eunuchs who observe my sabbaths
and choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant,[j]
5 I will give, in my house
and within my walls, a monument and a name*
Better than sons and daughters;
an eternal, imperishable name will I give them.

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
ministering to him,
Loving the name of the LORD,
and becoming his servants—
All who keep the sabbath free from profanation
and hold to my covenant,
7 Them I will bring to my holy mountain
and make joyful in my house of prayer;
Their holocausts and sacrifices
will be acceptable on my altar,
For my house shall be called
a house of prayer for all peoples.[k]
8 Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the dispersed of Israel:
Others will I gather to him
besides those already gathered.

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See RG
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### Blind Leaders

9 *All you wild beasts* of the field,
come and eat,
all you beasts in the forest![l]
10 My watchmen are blind,
all of them unaware;
They are all dumb dogs,
they cannot bark;
Dreaming as they lie there,
loving their sleep.
11 They are relentless dogs,
they know not when they have enough.
These are the shepherds
who know no discretion;
Each of them goes his own way,
every one of them to his own gain:
12 "Come, I will fetch some wine;
let us carouse with strong drink,
And tomorrow will be like today,
or even greater."[m]

## CHAPTER 57

1 The just man perishes,
but no one takes it to heart;
Devout men are swept away,
with no one giving it a thought.
Though he is taken away from the presence of evil,
the just man 2 enters into peace;
There is rest on his couch
for the sincere, straightforward man.

### Faithless People

3 But you, draw near,
you sons of a sorceress,
adulterous, wanton race!
4 Of whom do you make sport,
at whom do you open wide your mouth,
and put out your tongue?
Are you not rebellious children,
a worthless race;
5 You who are in heat among the terebinths,
under every green tree;
You who immolate children in the wadies,
behind the crevices in the cliffs?[n]

6 Among the smooth stones* of the wadi is your portion,
these are your lot;

**56, 3:** Eunuchs had originally been excluded from the community of the Lord; cf Dt 23, 2; Wis 3, 14. Dry tree: unable to produce the fruit of offspring.

**56, 5:** A monument and a name: a memorial inscription to prevent oblivion for one who had no children; cf 2 Sm 18, 18; Neh 7, 15; 13, 14.

**56, 9—57, 13:** This section is apparently preexilic, written in the manner of the older prophets who condemned the pagan rites of Baal worship.

**56, 9:** Wild beasts: foreign nations, which are invited to come and ravage Israel.

**57, 6:** Smooth stones: the Hebrew word for this expression has the same consonants as the word for "portion"; instead of making the Lord their portion (cf Ps 16, 5), the people adored slabs of stone which they took from the streambeds in valleys and set up as idols; cf Jer 3, 9. Therefore, it is implied, they will be swept away as by a sudden torrent of waters carrying them down the rocky-bottomed gorge to destruction and death without burial.

j Wis 3, 14f. k 1 Kgs 8, 29f; Mt 21, 13. l Ez 34, 5. m Is 28, 7ff; Wis 2, 7. n Jer 7, 31; 19, 5; Ez 20, 28. 31.

To these you poured out libations,
and brought offerings.
Should I decide not to punish these things?
7 Upon a high and lofty mountain
you made your bed,
and there you went up to offer sacrifice.[o]
8 Behind the door and the doorpost
you placed your indecent symbol.
Deserting me, you spread out
your high, wide bed;
And of those whose embraces you love
you carved the symbol and gazed upon it
9 While you approached the king* with scented oil,
and multiplied your perfumes;
While you sent your ambassadors far away,
down even to the nether world.
10 Though worn out by your many misdeeds,
you never said, "It is hopeless";
New strength you found,
and so you did not weaken.

11 Of whom were you afraid? Whom did you fear,
that you became false
And did not remember me
or give me any thought?
Was I to remain silent and unseeing,
so that you would not have me to fear?
12 I will expose your justice*
and your works;
13 They shall not help you when you cry out,
nor save you in your distress.
All these* the wind shall carry off,
the breeze shall bear away;
But he who takes refuge in me shall inherit the land,
and possess my holy mountain.

### Comfort for the Afflicted

14 Build up, build up, prepare the way,
remove the stumbling blocks from my people's path.[p]
15 For thus says he who is high and exalted,
living eternally, whose name is the Holy One:
On high I dwell, and in holiness,
and with the crushed and dejected in spirit,
To revive the spirits of the dejected,
to revive the hearts of the crushed.[q]
16 I will not accuse forever,
nor always be angry;
For their spirits would faint before me,
the souls that I have made.
17 Because of their wicked avarice I was angry,
and struck them, hiding myself in wrath,
as they went their own rebellious way.[r]
18 I saw their ways,
but I will heal them and lead them;
I will give full comfort
to them and to those who mourn for them,
19 I, the Creator, who gave them life.

Peace, peace to the far and the near,
says the LORD; and I will heal them.
20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea
which cannot be calmed,
And its waters cast up mud and filth.
21 No peace for the wicked! says my God.[s]

## CHAPTER 58

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### True Fasting

1 Cry out full-throated and unsparingly,
lift up your voice like a trumpet blast;
Tell my people their wickedness,
and the house of Jacob their sins.*
2 They seek me day after day,*
and desire to know my ways,
Like a nation that has done what is just
and not abandoned the law of their God;
They ask me to declare what is due them,
pleased to gain access to God.
3 "Why do we fast, and you do not see it?
afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?"

Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits,

**57, 9:** The king: the pagan god Moloch. Ambassadors: children sent to him through a sacrificial death.
**57, 12:** Justice: here used ironically.
**57, 13:** All these: the wicked mentioned in Is 57, 3–10.
**58, 1:** This command is directed to the prophet.
**58, 2–14:** Merely external worship does not avail with God; it must be joined to internal sincerity.

o Hos 4, 13; Jer 2, 20; Ez 6, 13. p Is 40, 3f. q Is 61, 2f. r Is 56, 11. s Is 48, 21.

and drive all your laborers.
4 Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting,
striking with wicked claw.
Would that today you might fast
so as to make your voice heard on high!
5 Is this the manner of fasting I wish,
of keeping a day of penance:
That a man bow his head like a reed,
and lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Do you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD? [t]
6 This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;
7 Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own. [u]
8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
Your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!
If you remove from your midst oppression,
false accusation and malicious speech;
10 If you bestow your bread on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,
and the gloom shall become for you like midday;
11 Then the LORD will guide you always
and give you plenty even on the parched land.
He will renew your strength,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose water never fails. [v]
12 The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake,
and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up;
"Repairer of the breach," they shall call you,
"Restorer of ruined homesteads." [w]
13 If you hold back your foot on the sabbath
from following your own pursuits on my holy day;
If you call the sabbath a delight,
and the LORD's holy day honorable;
If you honor it by not following your ways,
seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice—
14 Then you shall delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

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## CHAPTER 59

### Sin and Confession

1 Lo, the hand of the LORD is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear. [x]
2 Rather, it is your crimes
that separate you from your God,
It is your sins that make him hide his face
so that he will not hear you.
3 For your hands are stained with blood,
your fingers with guilt;
Your lips speak falsehood,
and your tongue utters deceit. [y]
4 No one brings suit justly,
no one pleads truthfully;
They trust in emptiness* and tell lies;
they conceive mischief and bring forth malice.
5 They hatch adders' eggs,*
and weave spiders' webs:
Whoever eats their eggs will die,
if one of them is pressed, it will hatch as a viper; [z]
6 Their webs cannot serve as clothing,

59, 4: Emptiness: things having no value.
59, 5f: A proverb signifying evil works—adders' eggs—and useless devices—spiders' webs; the former do positive harm to oneself and others, the latter serve no useful purpose.

t Zec 7, 5. u Ez 18, 7. 16; Mt 25, 35. v Is 51, 3; Ps 24. w Is 61, 4. x Is 50, 2; Nm 11, 23. y Is 1, 15. z Jb 20, 12–16.

nor can they cover themselves with their
works.
Their works are evil works,
and deeds of violence come from their
hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
and they are quick to shed innocent blood;
Their thoughts are destructive thoughts,
plunder and ruin are on their highways.[a]
8 The way of peace they know not,
and there is nothing that is right in their
paths;
Their ways they have made crooked,
whoever treads them knows no peace.

9 That is why right is far from us*
and justice does not reach us.
We look for light, and lo, darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in gloom!
10 Like blind men we grope along the wall,
like people without eyes we feel our way.
We stumble at midday as at dusk,
in Stygian darkness, like the dead.
11 We all growl like bears,
like doves we moan without ceasing.
We look for right, but it is not there;
for salvation, and it is far from us.[b]
12 For our offenses before you are many,
our sins bear witness against us.
Yes, our offenses are present to us,
and our crimes we know:
13 Transgressing, and denying the LORD,
turning back from following our God,
Threatening outrage, and apostasy,
uttering words of falsehood the heart has
conceived.
14 Right is repelled,
and justice stands far off;
For truth stumbles in the public square,
uprightness cannot enter.
15 Honesty is lacking,
and the man who turns from evil is
despoiled.

### The Redeemer in Zion

The LORD saw this, and was aggrieved
that right did not exist.
16 He saw that there was no one,
and was appalled that there was none to
intervene;
So his own arm brought about the victory,
and his justice lent him its support.
17 He put on justice as his breastplate,
salvation, as the helmet on his head;
He clothed himself with garments of
vengeance,
wrapped himself in a mantle of zeal.[c]
18 He repays his enemies their deserts,
and requites his foes with wrath.
19 Those in the west shall fear the name of the
LORD,
and those in the east, his glory;
For it shall come like a pent-up river
which the breath of the LORD drives on.
20 He shall come to Zion a redeemer
to those of Jacob who turn from sin, says the
LORD.[d]
21 This is the covenant with them
which I myself have made, says the LORD:
My spirit which is upon you
and my words that I have put into your
mouth
Shall never leave your mouth,
nor the mouths of your children
Nor the mouths of your children's children
from now on and forever, says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 60

### Glory of the New Zion

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1 Rise up in splendor! Your light has come,*
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.
2 See, darkness covers the earth,
and thick clouds cover the peoples;
But upon you the LORD shines,
and over you appears his glory.
3 Nations shall walk by your light,

59, 9–15: Spoken by the people through the mouth of the prophet.
60, 1–6: The Church makes use of these verses for the first reading of the Mass on the feast of Epiphany, for she sees in them symbols of her universality.

a Rom 3, 15. b Is 38, 14. c Wis 5, 17ff; Eph 6, 14; 1 Thes 5, 8. d Rom 11, 26f.

and kings by your shining radiance.[e]
4 Raise your eyes and look about;
they all gather and come to you:
Your sons come from afar,
and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.[f]

5 Then you shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow,
For the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.
6 Caravans of camels shall fill you,
dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;
All from Sheba shall come
bearing gold and frankincense,
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered for you,
the rams of Nebaioth shall be your sacrifices;
They will be acceptable offerings on my altar,
and I will enhance the splendor of my house.

8 What are these that fly along like clouds,
like doves* to their cotes?
9 All the vessels of the sea are assembled,
with the ships of Tarshish in the lead,
To bring your children from afar
with their silver and gold,
In the name of the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

10 Foreigners shall rebuild your walls,
and their kings shall be your attendants;
Though I struck you in my wrath,
yet in my good will I have shown you mercy.
11 Your gates shall stand open constantly;
day and night they shall not be closed
But shall admit to you the wealth of nations,
and their kings, in the vanguard.[g]
12 For the people or kingdom shall perish
that does not serve you;
those nations shall be utterly destroyed.
13 The glory of Lebanon* shall come to you:
the cypress, the plane and the pine,
To bring beauty to my sanctuary,
and glory to the place where I set my feet.[h]
14 The children of your oppressors shall come,
bowing low before you;
All those who despised you
shall fall prostrate at your feet.
They shall call you "City of the LORD,"
"Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

15 Once you were forsaken,
hated and unvisited,
Now I will make you the pride of the ages,
a joy to generation after generation.[i]
16 You shall suck the milk of nations,
and be nursed at royal breasts;
You shall know that I, the LORD, am your savior,
your redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.
17 In place of bronze I will bring gold,
instead of iron, silver;
In place of wood, bronze,
instead of stones, iron;
I will appoint peace your governor,
and justice your ruler.
18 No longer shall violence be heard of in your land,
or plunder and ruin within your boundaries.
You shall call your walls "Salvation"
and your gates "Praise."
19 No longer shall the sun
be your light by day,
Nor the brightness of the moon
shine upon you at night;
The LORD shall be your light forever,
your God shall be your glory.[j]
20 No longer shall your sun go down,
or your moon withdraw,
For the LORD will be your light forever,

**60, 8f:** Like clouds, like doves: the white sails of the ships of Tarshish; cf note on Ps 48, 8.
**60, 13:** Glory of Lebanon: the cedars, together with the cypress, the plane and the pine, all precious, durable wood.

e Is 42. 6; 45, 14; 49, 6. f Is 49, 18. g Rv 21, 25. h Is 35, 2. i Ez 16. j Rv 21,23; 22, 5.

and the days of your mourning shall be at an end.
21 Your people shall all be just,
they shall always possess the land,
They, the bud of my planting,
my handiwork to show my glory.
22 The smallest shall become a thousand,
the youngest, a mighty nation;
I, the LORD, will swiftly accomplish these things
when their time comes. [k]

## CHAPTER 61

### The Mission to the Afflicted

1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,*
because the LORD has anointed me;
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly,
to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners, [l]
2 To announce a year of favor from the LORD
and a day of vindication by our God,
to comfort all who mourn; [m]
3 To place on those who mourn in Zion
a diadem instead of ashes,
To give them oil of gladness in place of mourning,
a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit.
They will be called oaks of justice,
planted by the LORD to show his glory.

### The Reward of Israel

4 They shall rebuild the ancient ruins,
the former wastes they shall raise up
And restore the ruined cities,
desolate now for generations. [n]
5 Strangers shall stand ready to pasture your flocks,
foreigners shall be your farmers and vinedressers.
6 You yourselves shall be named priests of the LORD,
ministers of our God you shall be called.
You shall eat the wealth of the nations
and boast of riches from them.

7 Since their shame was double
and disgrace and spittle were their portion,
They shall have a double inheritance in their land,
everlasting joy shall be theirs. [o]
8 For I, the LORD, love what is right,
I hate robbery and injustice;
I will give them their recompense faithfully,
a lasting covenant I will make with them. [p]
9 Their descendants shall be renowned among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
All who see them shall acknowledge them
as a race the LORD has blessed.

10 I rejoice heartily in the LORD,
in my God is the joy of my soul;
For he has clothed me with a robe of salvation,
and wrapped me in a mantle of justice,
Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem,
like a bride bedecked with her jewels.
11 As the earth brings forth its plants,
and a garden makes its growth spring up,
So will the Lord GOD make justice and praise
spring up before all the nations.

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## CHAPTER 62

### Jerusalem the Lord's Bride

1 For Zion's sake I will not be silent,
for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
Until her vindication shines forth like the dawn
and her victory like a burning torch.

2 Nations shall behold your vindication,
and all kings your glory;
You shall be called by a new name*
pronounced by the mouth of the LORD. [q]
3 You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD,
a royal diadem held by your God.
4 No more shall men call you "Forsaken,"

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61, 1f: This was spoken by the prophet in regard to the restoration of Zion, but quoted by Christ as referring to his mission; cf Lk 4, 18f. Year of favor . . . day of vindication: the time of God's salvation.

62, 2: New name: figurative expression for a new state of happiness; cf Rv 2, 17; 3, 12.

k Gn 12, 2; 17, 6. l Is 42, 1; 48, 16; Lk 4, 18f. m Mt 5, 5. n Is 58, 12. o Is 40, 2. p Is 55, 3; 59, 21. q Rv 2, 17; 3, 12.

or your land "Desolate,"
But you shall be called "My Delight,"
and your land "Espoused."
For the LORD delights in you,
and makes your land his spouse.[r]
5 As a young man marries a virgin,
your Builder shall marry you;
And as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride
so shall your God rejoice in you.

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See RG
297

### Restoration of Zion

6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have stationed watchmen;
Never, by day or by night,
shall they be silent.
O you who are to remind the LORD,*
take no rest
7 And give no rest to him,
until he re-establishes Jerusalem
And makes of it
the pride of the earth.

8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand
and by his mighty arm:
No more will I give your grain
as food to your enemies;
Nor shall foreigners drink your wine,
for which you toiled.[s]
9 But you who harvest the grain shall eat it,
and you shall praise the LORD;
You who gather the grapes shall drink the wine
in the courts of my sanctuary.[t]

10 Pass through, pass through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;[u]
Build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
raise up a standard over the nations.*
11 See, the LORD proclaims
to the ends of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
your savior comes!
Here is his reward with him,
his recompense before him.[v]
12 They shall be called the holy people,
the redeemed of the LORD,
And you shall be called "Frequented,"
a city that is not forsaken.[w]

## CHAPTER 63

### Punishment of Edom*

1 Who is this that comes from Edom,
in crimsoned garments, from Bozrah—
This one arrayed in majesty,
marching in the greatness of his strength?
"It is I, I who announce vindication,
I who am mighty to save."
2 Why is your apparel red,
and your garments like those of the wine presser?[x]

3 "The wine press I have trodden alone,
and of my people there was no one with me.
I trod them in my anger,
and trampled them down in my wrath;
Their blood spurted on my garments;
all my apparel I stained.
4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
my year for redeeming was at hand.[y]
5 I looked about, but there was no one to help,
I was appalled that there was no one to lend support;
So my own arm brought about the victory
and my own wrath lent me its support.[z]
6 I trampled down the peoples in my anger,
I crushed them in my wrath,
and I let their blood run out upon the ground."

### Prayer for the Return of God's Favor*

7 The favors of the LORD I will recall,
the glorious deeds of the LORD,

**62, 6f:** Remind the Lord . . . give no rest to him: figuratively, as though to make certain that the Lord will remember his pledge to Jerusalem. Cf Lk 11, 7f.

**62, 10:** The command is given to the workmen to begin the reconstruction of the city.

**63, 1–6:** In a dramatic dialogue between God and the prophet, the Lord is portrayed as the sole avenger of justice against his enemies.

**63, 7—64, 11:** A prayer probably composed toward the end of the exile, in which the prophet, after recalling God's blessings on Israel in its past history (63, 7–10), especially at the Exodus (11–14), begs the Lord to come once more to the aid of his people (63, 15—64, 3), who now humbly confess their sins (4–11).

r Is 49, 15f; 54, 1ff. s Is 52, 10. t Dt 12, 17f; 14, 23. u Is 58, 14. v Is 40, 10. w Is 62, 4. x Rv 19, 13. y Is 34, 8; 61, 2. z Is 59, 16.

Because of all he has done for us;
for he is good to the house of Israel,
He has favored us according to his mercy
and his great kindness.[a]

8 He said: They are indeed my people,
children who are not disloyal;
So he became their savior
9 in their every affliction.
It was not a messenger or an angel,
but he himself who saved them.
Because of his love and pity
he redeemed them himself,
Lifting them and carrying them
all the days of old.[b]
10 But they rebelled, and grieved
his holy spirit;
So he turned on them like an enemy,
and fought against them.

11 Then they remembered the days of old
and Moses, his servant;
Where is he who brought up out of the sea
the shepherd of his flock?
Where is he who put his holy spirit
in their midst;
12 Whose glorious arm
was the guide at Moses' right;
Who divided the waters before them,
winning for himself eternal renown;
13 Who led them without stumbling through the depths
like horses in the open country,
14 Like cattle going down into the plain,
the spirit of the LORD guiding them?
Thus you led your people,
bringing glory to your name.

15 Look down from heaven and regard us
from your holy and glorious palace!
Where is your zealous care and your might,
your surge of pity and your mercy?[c]
O Lord, hold not back,
16 for you are our father.
Were Abraham not to know us,
nor Israel to acknowledge us,
You, LORD, are our father,
our redeemer you are named forever.
17 Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways,
and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.
18 Why have the wicked invaded your holy place,
why have our enemies trampled your sanctuary?
19 Too long have we been like those you do not rule,
who do not bear your name.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
with the mountains quaking before you,

## CHAPTER 64

Ch 63–66
See RG
297

1 As when brushwood is set ablaze,
or fire makes the water boil!
Thus your name would be made known to your enemies
and the nations would tremble before you,
2 While you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for,
3 such as they had not heard of from of old.
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen,
any God but you
doing such deeds for those who wait for him.[d]
4 Would that you might meet us doing right,
that we were mindful of you in our ways!
Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;
5 all of us have become like unclean men,
all our good deeds are like polluted rags;
We have all withered like leaves,
and our guilt carries us away like the wind.
6 There is none who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to cling to you;
For you have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us up to our guilt.
7 Yet, O LORD, you are our father;
we are the clay and you the potter:
we are all the work of your hands.

a Is 26, 15. b Dt 4, 37f. c Dt 26, 15; Bar 2, 16. d 1 Cor 2, 9.

8 Be not so very angry, LORD,
keep not our guilt forever in mind;
look upon us, who are all your people.
9 Your holy cities have become a desert,
Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a waste.[e]
10 Our holy and glorious temple
in which our fathers praised you
Has been burned with fire;
all that was dear to us is laid waste.
11 Can you hold back, O LORD, after all this?
Can you remain silent, and afflict us so
severely?

## CHAPTER 65

Ch 63–66
See RG
297

### Necessity of Punishment

1 I was ready to respond to those who asked me
not,
to be found by those who sought me not.
I said: Here I am! Here I am!
To a nation that did not call upon my
name.[f]
2 I have stretched out my hands all the day
to a rebellious people,
Who walk in evil paths
and follow their own thoughts,[g]
3 People who provoke me
continually, to my face,
Offering sacrifices in the groves
and burning incense on bricks,
4 Living among the graves
and spending the night in caverns,
Eating swine's flesh,
with carrion broth in their dishes,
5 Crying out, "Hold back,
do not touch me; I am too sacred for you!"*

These things enkindle my wrath,
a fire that burns all the day.
6 Lo, before me it stands written;
I will not be quiet until I have paid in full
7 Your crimes and the crimes of your fathers as
well,
says the LORD.
Since they burned incense on the mountains,
and disgraced me on the hills,
I will at once pour out in full measure
their recompense into their laps.

### Fate of the Good and the Bad in Israel

8 Thus says the LORD:
When the juice is pressed from grapes,
men say, "Do not discard them,
for there is still good in them";
Thus will I do with my servants:
I will not discard them all;
9 From Jacob I will save offspring,
from Judah, those who are to inherit my
mountains;
My chosen ones shall inherit the land,
my servants shall dwell there.
10 Sharon shall be a pasture for the flocks
and the valley of Achor a resting place for
the cattle
of my people who have sought me.

11 But you who forsake the LORD,
forgetting my holy mountain,
You who spread a table for Fortune
and fill cups of blended wine for Destiny,*
12 You I will destine for the sword;
you shall all go down in slaughter.
Since I called and you did not answer,
I spoke and you did not listen,
But did what was evil in my sight
and preferred things which displease me,[h]
13 therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Lo, my servants shall eat,
but you shall go hungry;
My servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;
My servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;
14 My servants shall shout
for joy of heart,
But you shall cry out for grief of heart
and howl for anguish of spirit.
15 The Lord GOD shall slay you,
and the name you leave

**65, 5:** I am too sacred for you: the uncleanness of pork, obvious to a Semite, is what these people claim has made them sacred! The prophet ridicules them. Some translate: "I will render you sacred," and understand this as referring to the concept of sacredness as something contagious.

**65, 11f:** Destiny: the Hebrew also has a play on the words: Destiny and destine; meni and manithi.

e Ps 79, 1. f Rom 10, 20. g Rom 10, 21. h Is 66, 4; Prv 1, 24; Jer 7, 13.

Shall be used by my chosen ones for cursing;
but my servants shall be called by another name
16 By which he will be blessed
on whom a blessing is invoked in the land;
He who takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of truth;
For the hardships of the past shall be forgotten,
and hidden from my eyes.

### The World Renewed

17 Lo, I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
The things of the past shall not be remembered
or come to mind.[i]
18 Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness
in what I create;
For I create Jerusalem to be a joy
and its people to be a delight;
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and exult in my people.
No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there,
or the sound of crying;
20 No longer shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not round out his full lifetime;
He dies a mere youth who reaches but a hundred years,
and he who fails of a hundred shall be thought accursed.

21 They shall live in the houses they build,
and eat the fruit of the vineyards they plant;
22 They shall not build houses for others to live in,
or plant for others to eat.
As the years of a tree, so the years of my people;
and my chosen ones shall long enjoy
the produce of their hands.
23 They shall not toil in vain,
nor beget children for sudden destruction;
For a race blessed by the LORD
are they and their offspring.
24 Before they call, I will answer;
while they are yet speaking, I will hearken to them.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze alike,
and the lion shall eat hay like the ox
[but the serpent's food shall be dust].[j]
None shall hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.*

## CHAPTER 66

Ch 63–66
See RG
297

### True and False Worship

1 Thus says the LORD:
The heavens are my throne,
the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house can you build for me;
what is to be my resting place?[k]
2 My hand made all these things
when all of them came to be, says the LORD.
This is the one whom I approve:
the lowly and afflicted man who trembles at my word.

3 Merely slaughtering an ox is like slaying a man;
sacrificing a lamb, like breaking a dog's neck;
Bringing a cereal offering, like offering swine's blood;
burning incense, like paying homage to an idol.
Since these have chosen their own ways
and taken pleasure in their own abominations,[l]
4 I in turn will choose ruthless treatment for them*
and bring upon them what they fear.

Because, when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke, no one listened;
Because they did what was evil in my sight,
and chose what gave me displeasure,[m]
5 Hear the word of the LORD,

65, 25: See note on Is 11, 6–9.
66, 4f: Worship which is merely external is as evil as though it were idolatry.

i Is 66, 22; Rv 21, 1. j Is 11, 6–9. k 2 Sm 7, 4ff; 1 Kgs 8, 27; Acts 7, 49; 17, 24. l Lv 11, 7. m Is 65, 12; Prv 1, 24; Jer 7, 13.

you who tremble at his word:
Your brethren who, because of my name,
hate and reject you, say,
"Let the LORD show his glory
that we may see your joy";
but they shall be put to shame.
6 A sound of roaring from the city,
a sound from the temple,
The sound of the LORD
repaying his enemies their deserts! [n]

### Mother Zion

7 Before she comes to labor,*
she gives birth; [o]
Before the pains come upon her,
she safely delivers a male child.
8 Who ever heard of such a thing,
or saw the like?
Can a country be brought forth in one day,
or a nation be born in a single moment?
Yet Zion is scarcely in labor
when she gives birth to her children.
9 Shall I bring a mother to the point of birth,
and yet not let her child be born? says the LORD;
Or shall I who allow her to conceive,
yet close her womb? says your God.

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her,
all you who love her;
Exult, exult with her,
all you who were mourning over her!
11 Oh, that you may suck fully
of the milk of her comfort,
That you may nurse with delight
at her abundant breasts!
12 For thus says the LORD:
Lo, I will spread prosperity over her like a river,
and the wealth of the nations like
an overflowing torrent.
As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms,
and fondled in her lap;
13 As a mother comforts her son,
so will I comfort you;
in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.

14 When you see this, your heart shall rejoice,
and your bodies flourish like the grass;
The LORD's power shall be known to his servants,
but to his enemies, his wrath.

15 Lo, the LORD shall come in fire,
his chariots like the whirlwind,
To wreak his wrath with burning heat
and his punishment with fiery flames.
16 For the LORD shall judge all mankind
by fire and sword,
and many shall be slain by the LORD.

17 They who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the groves, as followers of one who stands within, they who eat swine's flesh, loathsome things and mice, shall all perish with their deeds and their thoughts, says the LORD. [p]

**Gathering of the Nations** 18 I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory.* 19 I will set a sign among them; from them I will send fugitives to the nations: to Tarshish, Put and Lud, Mosoch, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations. 20 They shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots, in carts, upon mules and dromedaries, to Jerusalem, my holy mountain, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their offering to the house of the LORD in clean vessels. 21 Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.

### Lasting Reward and Punishment

22 As the new heavens and the new earth
which I will make
Shall endure before me, says the LORD,
so shall your race and your name endure. [q]

66, 7–9: The absence of labor in Zion's childbearing is a symbol of the joyful begetting of the new people of God.

66, 18–21: God summons the neighboring nations to Zion and from among them will send some to far distant lands to proclaim his glory. All your brethren: Jews in exile.

n Jl 4, 16; Am 1, 2. o 7–9: Is 49, 18–21; 54, 1. p Lv 11, 29. q Is 65, 17; Rv 21, 1.

[23] From one new moon to another,
and from one sabbath to another,
All mankind shall come to worship
before me, says the LORD.
[24] They shall go out and see the corpses[r]
of the men who rebelled against me;
Their worm shall not die,
nor their fire be extinguished;
and they shall be abhorrent to all mankind.*

**66, 24:** God's enemies lie dead outside the walls of the New Jerusalem; just as in the past, corpses, filth and refuse lay in the Valley of Hinnom outside the city, where huge fires were constantly burning; cf Jos 15, 8; 2 Chr 28, 3; Mk 9, 45–48.

r Mk 9, 45.

# THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah
See RG
304–318

The Book of Jeremiah combines history, biography, and prophecy. It portrays a nation in crisis and introduces the reader to an extraordinary leader upon whom the Lord placed the heavy burden of the prophetic office. Jeremiah was born about 650 B.C. of a priestly family from the little village of Anathoth, near Jerusalem. While still very young he was called to his task in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (628), whose reform, begun with enthusiasm and hope, ended with his death on the battlefield of Megiddo (609) as he attempted to stop the northward march of the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco.

The prophet heartily supported the reform of the pious King Josiah, which began in 629 B.C. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell in 612, preparing the way for the new colossus, Babylon, which was soon to put an end to Judean independence.

After the death of Josiah the old idolatry returned. Jeremiah opposed it with all his strength. Arrest, imprisonment, and public disgrace were his lot. Jeremiah saw in the nation's impenitence the sealing of its doom. Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and carried King Jehoiachin into exile (22, 24).

During the years 598–587, Jeremiah attempted to counsel Zedekiah in the face of bitter opposition. The false prophet Hananiah proclaimed that the yoke of Babylon was broken and a strong pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem induced Zedekiah to revolt. Nebuchadnezzar took swift and terrible vengeance; Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 and its leading citizens sent into exile. About this time Jeremiah uttered the great oracle of the "New Covenant" (31, 31-34) sometimes called "The Gospel before the Gospel." This passage contains his most sublime teaching and is a landmark in Old Testament theology.

The prophet remained amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, but was later forced into Egyptian exile by a band of conspirators. There, according to an old tradition, he was murdered by his own countrymen. The influence of Jeremiah was greater after his death than before. The exiled community read and meditated the lessons of the prophet, and his influence can be seen in Ezekiel, certain of the psalms, and the second part of Isaiah. Shortly after the exile, the Book of Jeremiah as we have it today was published in a final edition.

It is divided as follows:

I. Oracles in the Days of Josiah (1, 1—6, 30).
II. Oracles Mostly in the Days of Jehoiakim (7, 1—20, 18).
III. Oracles in the Last Years of Jerusalem (21, 1—33, 26).
IV. Fall of Jerusalem (34, 1—45, 5).
V. Oracles against the Nations (46, 1—51, 64).
VI. Historical Appendix (52, 1-34).

## I: Oracles in the Days of Josiah

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1 See RG 310

1 The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, of a priestly family in Anathoth,* in the land of Benjamin. 2 The word of the LORD first came to him in the days of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign, [a] 3 and continued through the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the downfall* and exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah. [b]

#### Call of Jeremiah

4 The word of the LORD came to me thus:

5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,*
before you were born I dedicated you,
a prophet to the nations I appointed you. [c]
6 "Ah, Lord GOD!" I said,
"I know not how to speak; I am too young."*

7 But the LORD answered me,

Say not, "I am too young."
To whomever I send you, you shall go;
whatever I command you, you shall speak.
8 Have no fear before them,
because I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

9 Then the LORD extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying,

See, I place my words in your mouth! [d]
10 This day I set you
over nations and over kingdoms,
To root up and to tear down,
to destroy and to demolish,
to build and to plant.

11 The word of the LORD came to me with the question: What do you see, Jeremiah? "I see a branch of the watching-tree,"* I replied. 12 Then the LORD said to me: Well have you seen, for I am watching to fulfill my word. 13 [e] A second time the word of the LORD came to me with the question: What do you see? "I see a boiling cauldron," I replied, "that appears from the north."*

14 And from the north, said the LORD to me, evil will boil over upon all who dwell in the land. [f]

15 Lo, I am summoning
all the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD;
Each king shall come and set up his throne

1, 1: Anathoth: a village about three miles northeast of Jerusalem, where Solomon exiled Abiathar (1 Kgs 2, 26f); it is probable that Jeremiah belonged to the priestly family of Abiathar.

1, 3: Until the downfall: these words were originally prefixed as a title to a collection of Jeremiah's prophecies which lacked chapters 40–44. The new title in Jer 40, 1 and the oracles that follow clearly show that Jeremiah continued to prophesy after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

1, 5: Jeremiah was destined to the office of prophet before his birth; cf Is 49, 1. 5; Lk 1, 15; Gal 1, 15f. I knew you: I loved you and chose you. I dedicated you: I set you apart to be a prophet. Some Fathers and later theologians understand this to mean that Jeremiah was freed from original sin before his birth. The context does not justify this conclusion. The nations: the pagan neighbors of Judah, besides the great world powers—Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt—intimately associated with Judah's destiny.

1, 6: I am too young: Jeremiah's youth (he was less than thirty years old) must not be an obstacle to the responsibilities of the prophetic office; God will supply for his human defects (cf vv 7f).

1, 11: The watching-tree: the almond tree, which is the first to blossom in the springtime as though it had not slept. The Hebrew name contains a play on words with "I am watching."

1, 13: Boiling cauldron . . . the north: symbol of an invasion from the north; cf vv 14f.

a Jer 25, 3. b Jer 25, 1. c Jer 49, 1; Gal 1, 15f. d Is 6, 7. e Ez 11, 3. 7; 24, 3. f Jer 4, 6; 6, 1.

at the gateways of Jerusalem,
Opposite her walls all around
and opposite all the cities of Judah.[g]
16 I will pronounce my sentence against them
for all their wickedness in forsaking me,
And in burning incense to strange gods
and adoring their own handiwork.[h]

17 But do you gird your loins;
stand up and tell them
all that I command you.
Be not crushed on their account,
as though I would leave you crushed before them;
18 For it is I this day
who have made you a fortified city,
A pillar of iron, a wall of brass,
against the whole land:
Against Judah's kings and princes,
against its priests and people.[i]
19 They will fight against you, but not prevail over you,
for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 2

**Infidelity of Israel*** 1 This word of the LORD came to me: 2 Go, cry out this message for Jerusalem to hear!

I remember the devotion* of your youth,
how you loved me as a bride,
Following me in the desert,
in a land unsown.[j]
3 Sacred to the LORD was Israel,
the first fruits* of his harvest;
Should anyone presume to partake of them,
evil would befall him, says the LORD.[k]

4 Listen to the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob!
All you clans of the house of Israel,
5 thus says the LORD:
What fault did your fathers find in me
that they withdrew from me,
Went after empty idols,
and became empty themselves?[l]
6 They did not ask, "Where is the LORD
who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the desert,
through a land of wastes and gullies,
Through a land of drought and darkness,
through a land which no one crosses,
where no man dwells?"[m]

7 When I brought you into the garden land
to eat its goodly fruits,
You entered and defiled my land,
you made my heritage loathsome.[n]
8 The priests asked not,
"Where is the LORD?"
Those who dealt with the law* knew me not:
the shepherds rebelled against me.
The prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after useless idols.[o]
9 Therefore will I yet accuse you, says the LORD,
and even your children's children I will accuse.[p]
10 Pass over to the coast of the Kittim* and see,
send to Kedar and carefully inquire:
Where has the like of this been done?
11 Does any other nation change its gods?—
yet they are not gods at all!
But my people have changed their glory
for useless things.[q]
12 Be amazed at this, O heavens,
and shudder with sheer horror, says the LORD.
13 Two evils have my people done:
they have forsaken me, the source of living waters;
They have dug themselves cisterns,

Ch 2–6
See RG
310–311

**2, 1—3, 5:** These verses probably contain the earliest of Jeremiah's preachings. The covenant relationship, symbolized by the figure of a marriage, was frequently broken by Israel, seen here as an unfaithful wife unworthy of reconciliation with God (Jer 3, 1–5).
**2, 2:** Devotion: Israel's gratitude, fidelity, and love for God.
**2, 3:** First fruits: an offering to God which became his exclusive property, and could therefore not be put to profane use; cf Lv 22, 1.
**2, 8:** Those who dealt with the law: the priests. The shepherds: the kings and nobles.
**2, 10:** Kittim: a Phoenician colony in Cyprus. Kedar: a nomad tribe of the Syrian desert. These two names represent West and East.

g Jer 6, 22. h Is 2, 8. i Jer 6, 27; 15, 20; Ex 3, 8. j Dt 2, 7; 32, 9–12; Mi 6, 4. k Jer 12, 14; Ex 4, 22; Dt 7, 6; 14, 2. l Is 5, 4; Mi 6, 3. m Ex 20, 2f; Dt 8, 14; Is 63, 11ff. n Lv 18, 24f; Dt 8, 7–10; 32, 13f. o Jer 8, 8ff; 23, 1. 13. p Ex 20, 5. q Jer 16, 20; Ps 106, 20.

broken cisterns, that hold no water.[r]

14 Is Israel a slave, a bondman by birth?*
Why then has he become booty?
15 Against him lions roar
full-throated cries.
They have made his land a waste;
his cities are charred ruins, without
inhabitant.[s]
16 Yes, the people of Memphis* and Tahpanhes
shave the crown of your head.
17 Has not the forsaking of the LORD, your God,
done this to you?[t]
18 And now, why go to Egypt,*
to drink the waters of the Nile?
Why go to Assyria,
to drink the waters of the Euphrates?
19 Your own wickedness chastises you,
your own infidelities punish you.
Know then, and see, how evil and bitter
is your forsaking the LORD, your God,
And showing no fear of me,
says the Lord, the GOD of hosts.[u]

20 Long ago you broke your yoke,[v]
you tore off your bonds.
"I will not serve," you said.
On every high hill, under every green tree,
you gave yourself to harlotry.*
21 I had planted you, a choice vine
of fully tested stock;
How could you turn out obnoxious to me,
a spurious vine?[w]
22 Though you scour it with soap,
and use much lye,
The stain of your guilt is still before me,
says the Lord GOD.[x]
23 How can you say, "I am not defiled,
I have not gone after the Baals"?
Consider your conduct in the Valley,*
recall what you have done:
A frenzied she-camel, coursing near and far,
24 breaking away toward the desert,
Snuffing the wind in her ardor—
who can restrain her lust?
No beasts need tire themselves seeking her;
in her month they will meet her.

25 Stop wearing out your shoes
and parching your throat!
But you say, "No use! no!
I love these strangers,
and after them I must go."[y]
26 As the thief is shamed when caught,
so shall the house of Israel be shamed:
They, their kings and their princes,
their priests and their prophets;[z]
27 They who say to a piece of wood, "You are my
father,"
and to a stone, "You gave me birth."
They turn to me their backs, not their faces;
yet, in their time of trouble they cry out,
"Rise up and save us!"
28 Where are the gods you made for yourselves?
Let them rise up!
Will they save you in your time of trouble?
For as numerous as your cities
are your gods, O Judah!
And as many as the streets of Jerusalem
are the altars you have set up for Baal.[a]

29 How dare you still plead with me?
You have all rebelled against me, says the
LORD.
30 In vain I struck your children;
the correction they did not take.
Your sword devoured your prophets
like a ravening lion.[b]
31 You, of this generation,
take note of the word of the Lord:
Have I been a desert to Israel,
a land of darkness?

**2, 14:** Bondman by birth: a perpetual slave, different from the debt-slave, who was to be freed after six years; cf Ex 21, 2.

**2, 16:** Memphis: the capital of Lower Egypt. Tahpanhes: a frontier city of Egypt, east of the Delta. Shave the crown of your head: the spoliation of Judah at the hands of the Egyptians.

**2, 18:** Egypt and Assyria were the protecting foreign powers favored by rival parties within Judah. The desire for such foreign alliances is a further desertion of the Lord, the source of living waters (v 13), in favor of the above-named powers, symbolized by the Nile and the Euphrates rivers.

**2, 20:** Harlotry: idolatry (because Israel is the bride of God).

**2, 23:** The Valley: of Ben-hinnom, south of Jerusalem, site of the infamous sanctuary of Topheth where children were sacrificed to Molech; cf Jer 7, 31.

r Jer 17, 13; Ps 36, 9; Is 1, 4. s Jer 9, 11. t Jer 4, 18; 30, 15. u Prv 5, 22; Hos 5, 5. v Jer 3, 6. 13; Jgs 10, 6. w Ex 15, 17; Ps 80, 9; Is 5, 4. x Jb 9, 30. y Jer 18, 12. z Jer 48, 27; Rom 6, 21. a Jer 11, 13; Dt 32, 38; Jgs 10, 14. b Jer 5, 3; Neh 9, 26.

Why do my people say, "We have moved on,
we will come to you no more"?
32 Does a virgin forget her jewelry,
a bride her sash?
Yet my people have forgotten me
days without number.[c]

33 How well you pick your way
when seeking love!
You who, in your wickedness,
have gone by ways unclean!
34 You, on whose clothing there is
the life-blood of the innocent,
whom you found committing no burglary;
35 Yet withal you say, "I am innocent;
at least, his anger is turned away from me."
Behold, I will judge you
on that word of yours, "I have not sinned."
36 How very base you have become
in changing your course!
By Egypt will you be shamed,
as you were shamed by Assyria.[d]
37 From there also shall you go away
with hands upon your head;
For the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust,
with them you will have no success.[e]

## CHAPTER 3

1 If a man sends away his wife[f]
and, after leaving him,
she marries another man,
Does the first husband come back to her?
Would not the land be wholly defiled?
But you have sinned with many lovers,
and yet you would return to me! says the LORD.*

2 Lift your eyes to the heights, and see,
where have men not lain with you?
By the waysides you waited for them
like an Arab* in the desert.
You defiled the land
by your wicked harlotry.[g]

3 Therefore the showers were withheld,
the spring rain failed.
But because you have a harlot's brow,
you refused to blush.[h]

4 Even now do you not call me, "My father,
you who are the bridegroom of my youth"?
5 "Will he keep his wrath forever,
will he hold his grudge to the end?"
This is what you say; yet you do
all the evil you can.

**Judah and Israel** 6 The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: See now what rebellious Israel has done! She has gone up every high mountain, and under every green tree she has played the harlot.[i] 7 And I thought, after she has done all this she will return to me. But she did not return. Then, even though her traitor sister Judah saw 8 that for all the adulteries rebellious Israel had committed, I put her away and gave her a bill of divorce, nevertheless her traitor sister Judah was not frightened; she too went off and played the harlot.[j] 9 Eager to sin, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and wood.[k] 10 With all this, the traitor sister Judah did not return to me wholeheartedly, but insincerely, says the LORD.

**Restoration of Israel** 11 Then the LORD said to me: Rebel Israel is inwardly more just than traitorous Judah.[l] 12 Go, proclaim these words toward the north, and say:

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Return, rebel Israel, says the LORD,
I will not remain angry with you;
For I am merciful, says the LORD,
I will not continue my wrath forever.[m]
13 Only know your guilt:
how you rebelled against the LORD, your God,
How you ran hither and yon to strangers
[under every green tree]
and would not listen to my voice, says the LORD.[n]

3, 1: Such remarriage of divorced spouses was forbidden by Dt 24, 1–4. Under this figure the prophet sees the presumption of Judah, the unfaithful spouse, who thinks she can return to the Lord after uniting herself to other gods.

3, 2: An Arab: a marauding nomad who lay in wait for caravans.

c Jer 13, 25; Dt 32, 18. d 2 Chr 28, 16–21. e 2 Sm 13, 19. f Dt 24, 1–4. g Ex 16, 24f. h Jer 6, 15; 8, 12. i Jer 2, 20; Dt 12, 2. j 2 Kgs 17, 6. 18–23; Ez 23, 11. k Jer 2, 27. l Ez 16, 51; 23, 11. m Dt 4, 29ff. n Jer 2, 20. 25; Lv 26, 40.

[14] Return, rebellious children, says the LORD,*
for I am your Master;
I will take you, one from a city, two from a clan,
and bring you to Zion. [o]
[15] I will appoint over you shepherds after my own heart,
who will shepherd you wisely and prudently. [p]
[16] When you multiply and become fruitful in the land,
says the LORD,
They will in those days no longer say,
"The ark of the covenant of the LORD!"
They will no longer think of it, or remember it,
or miss it, or make another.

[17] At that time they will call Jerusalem the LORD's throne; there all nations will be gathered together to honor the name of the LORD at Jerusalem, and they will walk no longer in their hardhearted wickedness. [q] [18] In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel; together they will come from the land of the north to the land which I gave to your fathers as a heritage. [r]

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### Conditions for Forgiveness

[19] I had thought:
How I should like to treat you as sons,
And give you a pleasant land,
a heritage most beautiful among the nations!
You would call me, "My Father," I thought,
and never cease following me. [s]
[20] But like a woman faithless to her lover,
even so have you been faithless to me,
O house of Israel, says the LORD. [t]
[21] A cry is heard on the heights!
the plaintive weeping of Israel's children,
Because they have perverted their ways
and forgotten the LORD, their God.
[22] Return, rebellious children,
and I will cure you of your rebelling.
"Here we are, we now come to you
because you are the LORD, our God. [u]
[23] Deceptive indeed are the hills,
the thronging mountains;
In the LORD, our God, alone
is the salvation of Israel. [v]
[24] The shame-god* has devoured
our fathers' toil from our youth,
Their sheep and their cattle,
their sons and their daughters.
[25] Let us lie down in our shame,
let our disgrace cover us,
for we have sinned against the LORD, our God,
From our youth to this day, we and our fathers also;
we listened not to the voice of the LORD, our God." [w]

## CHAPTER 4

[1] If you wish to return, O Israel, says the LORD,
return to me.
If you put your detestable things out of my sight,
and do not stray, [x]
[2] Then you can swear, "As the LORD lives,"*
in truth, in judgment, and in justice;
Then shall the nations use his name in blessing,
and glory in him. [y]

[3] For to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, thus says the LORD:

Till your untilled ground,
sow not among thorns. [z]

**3, 14–18:** A remnant of Israel (14) will reunite with Judah (18). The elementary cult of the Lord represented by the ark of the covenant will now be replaced by a more deeply spiritual and universal alliance, symbolized by his throne in the ideal Jerusalem around which all nations will be gathered together (17).

**3, 24:** Shame-god: literally, shame, a term commonly substituted for Baal, the Canaanite god with many local shrines.

**4, 2:** As the Lord lives: this oath, made sincerely, implies Israel's return to God and loyal adherence to him. Thus the ancient promises are fulfilled; cf Gn 12, 3; 18, 18; 22, 18; 26, 4; Ps 72, 17.

o Jer 23, 3; Is 10, 21f. p Ez 34, 23; Jn 21, 15. q Is 2, 2. r Jer 30, 3; 31, 8. s Jer 31, 9. 20; Is 63, 16. t Jer 5, 11. u Hos 3, 5. v Jer 14, 8. w Jer 16, 11f; 22, 21. x Jer 25, 5. y Jer 12, 16; Dt 10, 20; Is 65, 16. z Hos 10, 12; Mt 13, 7. 22.

4 For the sake of the LORD, be circumcised,*
remove the foreskins of your hearts,
O men of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem;
Lest my anger break out like fire,
and burn till none can quench it,
because of your evil deeds. [a]

### The Invasion from the North

5 Proclaim it in Judah,
make it heard in Jerusalem;
Blow the trumpet through the land,
summon the recruits!
Say, "Fall in, let us march
to the fortified cities."
6 Bear the standard to Zion,
seek refuge without delay!
Evil I bring from the north,
and great destruction.
7 Up comes the lion from his lair,
the destroyer of nations has set out,
has left his place,
To turn your land into desolation,
till your cities lie waste and empty. [b]
8 So gird yourselves with sackcloth,
mourn and wail:
"The blazing wrath of the LORD
is not turned away from us." [c]

9 In that day, says the LORD,
The king will lose heart, and the princes;
the priests will be amazed,
and the prophets stunned.
10 "Alas! Lord GOD," they will say,
"You only deceived us*
When you said: Peace shall be yours;
for the sword touches our very soul." [d]
11 At that time it will be said
of this people and of Jerusalem,
"From the glaring heights through the desert
a wind comes toward the daughter of my
people."
Not to winnow, not to cleanse,
12 does this wind from the heights come at my
bidding;
And I myself now pronounce
sentence upon them. [e]

13 See! like storm clouds he advances,
like a hurricane his chariots;
Swifter than eagles are his steeds:
"Woe to us! we are ruined."
14 Cleanse your heart of evil, O Jerusalem,
that you may be saved.
How long must your pernicious thoughts
lodge within you?
15 Listen! They proclaim it from Dan,
from Mount Ephraim they announce
destruction:
16 "Make this known to the nations,
announce it to Jerusalem:
The besiegers are coming from the distant
land,
shouting their war cry against the cities of
Judah." [f]
17 Like watchmen of the fields they surround her,
for she has rebelled against me, says the
LORD. [g]
18 Your conduct, your misdeeds, have done this
to you;
how bitter is this disaster of yours,
how it reaches to your very heart! [h]

19 My breast! my breast! how I suffer!*
The walls of my heart!
My heart beats wildly,
I cannot be still;
For I have heard the sound of the trumpet,
the alarm of war.
20 Ruin after ruin is reported;
the whole earth is laid waste.
In an instant my tents are ravaged;
in a flash, my shelters. [i]
21 How long must I see that signal,
hear that trumpet sound!

22 Fools my people are,
they know me not;
Senseless children they are,

4, 4: The mere external rite of circumcision avails nothing unless accompanied by the removal of blindness and obstinacy of heart; cf Rm 2, 25. 29; 1 Cor 7, 19; Gal 5, 6; 6, 13. 15.

4, 10: You only deceived us: the false prophets blame their deception on God; cf Jer 14, 13–16.

4, 19ff: Probably the prophet's own anguish at the coming destruction of Judah.

a Jer 9, 24. b Jer 2, 15; 5, 6. c Jer 6, 26; Is 5, 25. d Jer 6, 14. e Jer 1, 16. f Jer 5, 15. g Jer 6, 3. h Jer 2, 17. 19. i Jer 10, 20.

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having no understanding;
They are wise in evil,
but know not how to do good.[j]
23 I looked at the earth, and it was waste and void;
at the heavens, and their light had gone out![k]
24 I looked at the mountains, and they were trembling,
and all the hills were crumbling!
25 I looked and behold, there was no man;
even the birds of the air had flown away!
26 I looked and behold, the garden land was a desert,
with all its cities destroyed
before the LORD, before his blazing wrath.[l]

27 For thus says the LORD:
Waste shall the whole land be;
I will [not] wholly destroy it.[m]
28 Because of this the earth shall mourn,
the heavens above shall darken;
I have spoken, I will not repent,
I have resolved, I will not turn back.[n]
29 At the shout of horseman and bowman
each city takes to flight;
They shrink into the thickets,
they scale the rocks:
All the cities are abandoned,
and no one dwells in them.
30 You now who are doomed, what do you mean
by putting on purple,
bedecking yourself with gold,
Shading your eyes with cosmetics,
beautifying yourself in vain?
Your lovers spurn you,
they seek your life.
31 Yes, I hear the moaning, as of a woman in travail,
like the anguish of a mother with her first child—
The cry of daughter Zion gasping,
as she stretches forth her hands:
"Ah, woe is me! I sink exhausted
before the slayers!"[o]

## CHAPTER 5

### Universal Corruption

1 Roam the streets of Jerusalem,
look about and observe,
Search through her public places,
to find even one
Who lives uprightly
and seeks to be faithful,
and I will pardon her!
2 Though they say, "As the LORD lives,"
they swear falsely.
3 O LORD, do your eyes not look for honesty?
You struck them, but they did not cringe;
you laid them low, but they refused correction;
They set their faces harder than stone,
and refused to return to you.[p]
4 It is only the lowly, I thought,
who are foolish;
For they know not the way of the LORD,
their duty to their God.[q]
5 I will go to the great ones
and speak with them;
For they know the way of the LORD,
their duty to their God.
But, one and all, they had broken the yoke,
torn off the harness.[r]
6 Therefore lions from the forest slay them,
wolves of the desert ravage them,
Leopards keep watch round their cities:
all who come out are torn to pieces
For their many crimes
and their numerous rebellions.

7 Why should I pardon you these things?
Your sons have forsaken me,
they swear by gods that are not.
I fed them, but they committed adultery;
to the harlot's house they throng.
8 Lustful stallions they are,
each neighs after another's wife.[s]
9 Shall I not punish them for these things?
says the LORD;
On a nation such as this shall I not take vengeance?

j Dt 32, 5f. 28. k Is 24, 1. 3. l Lv 26, 31. m Jer 5, 18. n Is 24, 4. o Jer 6, 24. p Jer 2, 30. q Jer 8, 7. r Jer 6, 13. s Jer 13, 27.

10 Climb to her terraces, and ravage them,
destroy them [not] wholly.
Tear away her tendrils,
they do not belong to the LORD.[t]
11 For they have openly rebelled against me,
both the house of Israel and the house of Judah,
says the LORD,[u]
12 They denied the LORD,*
saying, "Not he—
No evil shall befall us,
neither sword nor famine shall we see.[v]
13 The prophets have become wind,
and the word is not in them.
May their threats be carried out against themselves!"

14 Now, for this that you have said,
says the LORD, the God of hosts—
Behold, I make my words
in your mouth, a fire,
And this people is the wood
that it shall devour!—
15 Beware, I will bring against you
a nation from afar,
O house of Israel, says the LORD;
A long-lived nation, an ancient nation,
a people whose language you know not,
whose speech you cannot understand.[w]
16 Their quivers are like open graves;
all of them are warriors.
17 They will devour your harvest and your bread,
devour your sons and your daughters,
Devour your sheep and cattle,
devour your vines and fig trees;
They will beat flat with the sword
the fortified city in which you trust.[x]

18 Yet even in those days, says the LORD, I will not wholly destroy you.[y] 19 And when they ask, "Why has the LORD done all these things to us?" say to them, "As you have forsaken me to serve strange gods in your own land, so shall you serve strangers in a land not your own."

20 Announce this to the house of Jacob,
proclaim it in Judah:
21 Pay attention to this,
foolish and senseless people
Who have eyes and see not,
who have ears and hear not.[z]
22 Should you not fear me, says the LORD,
should you not tremble before me?
I made the sandy shore the sea's limit,
which by eternal decree it may not overstep.
Toss though it may, it is to no avail;
though its billows roar, they cannot pass.[a]
23 But this people's heart is stubborn and rebellious;
they turn and go away,
24 And say not in their hearts,
"Let us fear the LORD, our God,
Who gives us rain
early and late,* in its time;
Who watches for us
over the appointed weeks of harvest."[b]
25 Your crimes have prevented these things,
your sins have turned back these blessings from you.[c]
26 For there are among my people criminals;
like fowlers they set traps,
but it is men they catch.[d]
27 Their houses are as full of treachery
as a bird-cage is of birds;
Therefore they grow powerful and rich,
28 fat and sleek.
They go their wicked way;
justice they do not defend
By advancing the claim of the fatherless
or judging the cause of the poor.[e]
29 Shall I not punish these things? says the LORD;
on a nation such as this shall I not take vengeance?
30 A shocking, horrible thing
has happened in the land:
31 The prophets prophesy falsely,
and the priests teach as they wish;

5, 12: They denied the Lord: the people act as though God does not exist and will not interfere.

5, 24: Rain early and late: autumn and spring rains respectively. Appointed weeks of harvest: the seven weeks between the Passover (Dt 16, 9f) and Pentecost, during which it ordinarily did not rain.

t Jer 2, 21. u Jer 3, 20. v Jer 14, 13; Is 28, 15. w Dt 28, 49. x Dt 28, 31. y Jer 4, 27. z Is 6, 9. a Jb 38, 10f. b Gn 8, 22; Dt 11, 14. c Jer 2, 17. 19. d Prv 1, 11. e Jer 12, 1; Is 1, 23.

Yet my people will have it so;
what will you do when the end comes?[f]

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## CHAPTER 6

### The Enemy at the Gates

1 Flee, sons of Benjamin,
out of Jerusalem!
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,
raise a signal over Beth-haccherem;
For evil threatens from the north,
and mighty destruction.[g]
2 O lovely and delicate
daughter Zion, you are ruined!
3 Against her, shepherds come with their flocks;*
all around, they pitch their tents,
each one grazes his portion.[h]
4 "Prepare for war against her,
Up! let us rush upon her at midday!
Alas! the day is waning,
evening shadows lengthen;
5 Up! let us rush upon her by night,
destroy her palaces!"[i]

6 For thus says the LORD of hosts:
Hew down her trees,
throw up a siege mound against Jerusalem.
Woe to the city marked for punishment;
nought but oppression within her![j]
7 As the well gushes out its waters,
so she gushes out her wickedness.
Violence and destruction resound in her;
ever before me are wounds and blows.[k]
8 Be warned, O Jerusalem,
lest I be estranged from you;
Lest I turn you into a desert,
a land where no man dwells.

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Glean, glean like a vine
the remnant of Israel;
Pass your hand, like a vintager,
repeatedly over the tendrils.
10 To whom shall I speak?
whom shall I warn, and be heard?
See! their ears are uncircumcised,
they cannot give heed;
See, the word of the LORD has become for them
an object of scorn, which they will not have.[l]
11 Therefore my wrath brims up within me,
I am weary of holding it in;
I will pour it out upon the child in the street,
upon the young men gathered together.
Yes, all will be taken, husband and wife,
graybeard with ancient.[m]
12 Their houses will fall to strangers,
their fields and their wives as well;
For I will stretch forth my hand
against those who dwell in this land, says the LORD.[n]
13 Small and great alike, all are greedy for gain;
prophet and priest, all practice fraud.[o]
14 They would repair, as though it were nought,*
the injury to my people:
"Peace, peace!" they say,
though there is no peace.[p]
15 They are odious; they have done abominable things,
yet they are not at all ashamed,
they know not how to blush.
Hence they shall be among those who fall;
in their time of punishment they shall go down,
says the LORD.[q]

16 Thus says the LORD:
Stand beside the earliest roads,
ask the pathways of old*
Which is the way to good, and walk it;
thus you will find rest for your souls.
But they said, "We will not walk it."[r]
17 When I raised up watchmen* for them:

**6, 3:** Shepherds . . . with their flocks: foreign invaders with their armies.

**6, 14:** As though it were nought: the false assurance of well-being given by priest and prophet cannot reduce the harm which universal materialism and corruption have done to the people.

**6, 16:** Earliest roads . . . pathways of old: history and the lessons to be learned from it.

**6, 17:** Watchmen: the prophets who, like Jeremiah, had upheld God's moral law.

f Jer 14, 14; Mi 2, 11. g Jer 1, 14f. h Jer 4, 17. i 2 Chr 36, 19. j Jer 32, 24; Zep 3, 1–4. k Is 57, 20. l Jer 7, 26; 20, 8. m Ez 9, 6. n Jer 8, 10; Dt 28, 30ff. o Jer 8, 10; 23, 11. p Jer 8, 11. q Jer 3, 3; 8, 12. r Jer 7, 23f; 18, 15.

"Hearken to the sound of the trumpet!"
they said, "We will not hearken."
18 Therefore hear, O nations,
and know, O earth,
what I will do with them:
19 See, I bring evil upon this people,
the fruit of their own schemes,
Because they heeded not my words,
because they despised my law.[s]
20 Of what use to me incense that comes from Sheba,
or sweet cane from far-off lands?
Your holocausts find no favor with me,
your sacrifices please me not.[t]
21 Therefore, thus says the LORD:
See, I will place before this people
obstacles to bring them down;
Fathers and sons alike,
neighbors and friends shall perish.[u]
22 Thus says the LORD:
See, a people comes from the land of the north,
a great nation, roused from the ends of the earth.[v]
23 Bow and javelin they wield;
cruel and pitiless are they.
They sound like the roaring sea
as they ride forth on steeds,
Each in his place, for battle
against you, daughter Zion.
24 We hear the report of them;
helpless fall our hands,
Anguish takes hold of us,
throes like a mother's in childbirth.[w]
25 Go not forth into the field,
step not into the street,
Beware of the enemy's sword;
terror on every side!
26 O daughter of my people, gird on sackcloth,
roll in the ashes.
Mourn as for an only child
with bitter wailing,
For sudden upon us
comes the destroyer.[x]
27 A tester among my people I have appointed you,
to search and test their way.[y]
28 Arch-rebels are they all,
dealers in slander,
all of them corrupt.
29 The bellows roars,
the lead is consumed by the fire;
In vain has the smelter refined,
the wicked are not drawn off.
30 "Silver rejected" they shall be called,
for the LORD has rejected them.

## II: Oracles Mostly in the Days of Jehoiakim

### CHAPTER 7

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**The Temple Sermon*** 1 The following message came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Stand at the gate of the house of the LORD, and there proclaim this message: Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD! 3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Reform your ways and your deeds, so that I may remain with you in this place.[z] 4 Put not your trust in the deceitful words: "This is the temple of the LORD! The temple of the LORD! The temple of the LORD!"[a] 5 Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with his neighbor; 6 if you no longer oppress the resident alien,* the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place, or follow strange gods to your own harm,[b] 7 will I remain with you in this place, in the land which I gave your fathers long ago and forever.[c]

8 But here you are, putting your trust in deceitful words to your own loss! 9 Are you to steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal, go after strange gods that

7, 1–15: The temple of the Lord will not serve as a place of refuge for the Jews against their enemies if they fail to reform their evil ways.

7, 6: The resident alien: specially protected by law; cf Ex 20, 10; Nm 9, 14; 15, 14; Dt 5, 14; 28, 43.

s Prv 1, 31. t Is 1, 11; 43, 24. u Is 8, 14f. v Jer 1, 15; 5, 15. w Jer 4, 31. x Jer 25, 34; Am 8, 10. y Jer 1, 18. z Jer 18, 11; 26, 13. a Mi 3, 11. b Ex 22, 21–24. c Dt 4, 40.

you know not,[d] [10]and yet come to stand before
me in this house which bears my name, and say:
"We are safe; we can commit all these abomina-
tions again"?[e] [11]Has this house which bears my
name become in your eyes a den of thieves? I
too see what is being done, says the LORD.[f]
[12]You may go to Shiloh,* which I made the
dwelling place of my name in the beginning. See
what I did to it because of the wickedness of my
people Israel.[g] [13]And now, because you have
committed all these misdeeds, says the LORD,
because you did not listen, though I spoke to you
untiringly; because you did not answer, though I
called you, [14]I will do to this house named after
me, in which you trust, and to this place which I
gave to you and your fathers, just as I did to
Shiloh.[h] [15]I will cast you away from me, as I cast
away all your brethren, all the offspring of
Ephraim.[i]

**Abuses in Worship** [16]You, now, do not inter-
cede for this people; raise not in their behalf a
pleading prayer![j] Do not urge me, for I will not
listen to you. [17]Do you not see what they are
doing in the cities of Judah, in the streets of
Jerusalem? [18]The children gather wood, their
fathers light the fire, and the women knead
dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven,*
while libations are poured out to strange gods in
order to hurt me.[k] [19]Is it I whom they hurt, says
the LORD; is it not rather themselves, to their
own confusion?[l] [20]See now, says the Lord GOD,
my anger and my wrath will pour out upon this
place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the
field and the fruits of the earth; it will burn
without being quenched.[m]

[21]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: Heap your holocausts upon your sacri-
fices; eat up the flesh! [22]In speaking to your
fathers on the day I brought them out of the land
of Egypt, I gave them no command* concerning
holocaust or sacrifice. [23]This rather is what I
commanded them: Listen to my voice; then I
will be your God and you shall be my people.
Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that
you may prosper.[n]

[24]But they obeyed not, nor did they pay heed.
They walked in the hardness of their evil hearts
and turned their backs, not their faces, to me.[o]
[25]From the day that your fathers left the land of
Egypt even to this day, I have sent you untiringly
all my servants the prophets.[p] [26]Yet they have
not obeyed me nor paid heed; they have stiff-
ened their necks and done worse than their
fathers.[q] [27]When you speak all these words to
them, they will not listen to you either; when
you call to them, they will not answer you. [28]Say
to them: This is the nation which does not listen
to the voice of the LORD, its God, or take
correction. Faithfulness has disappeared; the
word itself is banished from their speech.

[29]Cut off your dedicated hair* and throw it
away!
on the heights intone an elegy;
For the LORD has rejected and cast off
the generation that draws down his wrath.[r]

[30]The people of Judah have done what is evil
in my eyes, says the LORD. They have defiled the
house which bears my name by setting up in it
their abominable idols.[s] [31]In the Valley of Ben-
hinnom they have built the high place of To-
pheth to immolate in fire their sons and their
daughters, such a thing as I never commanded
or had in mind. [32]Therefore, beware! days will
come, says the LORD, when Topheth and the
Valley of Ben-hinnom will no longer be called
such, but rather the Valley of Slaughter. For lack
of space, Topheth will be a burial place.[t] [33]The

**7, 12:** Shiloh: original place of worship from the time of Joshua to that of Samuel. The sanctuary was later rejected by God and destroyed by the Philistines; cf 1 Sm 1, 9; 4, 3f; Ps 78, 60. 68f.

**7, 18:** Queen of heaven: the Assyro-Babylonian Ishtar, goddess of fertility, whose worship was introduced under King Manasseh and was revived after Josiah's death. Cakes shaped like stars (Ishtar was identified with the planet Venus) were offered in her honor.

**7, 22:** I gave them no command: right conduct rather than mere external cult was God's will concerning his people (v 23).

**7, 29:** Dedicated hair: the unshorn hair of the nazirite, regarded as sacred because of a vow, temporary or permanent, to abstain from cutting or shaving the hair, from contact with a corpse, and from all products of the vine; cf Nm 6, 4–8. The cutting of this hair was a sign of extreme mourning.

d Jer 44, 17. e Jer 32, 34. f Mt 21, 13. g Jos 18, 1. h Jer 26, 9. i 1 Kgs 9, 7; 2 Kgs 17, 23. j Jer 11, 14; 14, 11. k Jer 44, 17. 19. l Jb 35, 6. m Jer 36, 29; 2 Kgs 22, 17. n Jer 11, 4; Lv 26, 3. 12. o Jer 17, 23. p 2 Chr 36, 15f; Bar 1, 19. q Jer 19, 15; 2 Chr 30, 8. r Jer 9, 17–21. s Jer 32, 34. t Jer 19, 6; 32, 35.

corpses of this people will be food for the birds of
the sky and for the beasts of the field, which no
one will drive away.[u] [34]In the cities of Judah and
in the streets of Jerusalem I will silence the cry of
joy, the cry of gladness, the voice of the bride-
groom and the voice of the bride; for the land
will be turned to rubble.[v]

## CHAPTER 8

[1]At that time, says the LORD, the bones of the
kings and princes of Judah, the bones of the
priests and the prophets, and the bones of the
citizens of Jerusalem will be emptied out of their
graves[w] [2]and spread out before the sun and the
moon and the whole army of heaven,* which
they loved and served, which they followed,
consulted, and worshiped. They will not be
gathered up for burial, but will lie like dung
upon the ground.[x] [3]Death will be preferred to
life by all the survivors of this wicked race who
remain in any of the places to which I banish
them, says the LORD of hosts.

### Israel's Conduct Incomprehensible

[4] Tell them: Thus says the LORD:
When someone falls, does he not rise again?
if he goes astray, does he not turn back?
[5]Why do these people rebel
with obstinate resistance?
Why do they cling to deceptive idols,
refuse to turn back?[y]
[6]I listen closely:
they speak what is not true;
No one repents of his wickedness,
saying "What have I done!"
Everyone keeps on running his course,
like a steed dashing into battle.[z]
[7]Even the stork in the air
knows its seasons;
Turtledove, swallow and thrush
observe their time of return,
But my people do not know
the ordinance of the LORD.[a]
[8]How can you say, "We are wise,[b]
we have the law of the LORD"?
Why, that has been changed into falsehood
by the lying pen of the scribes!*
[9]The wise are confounded,
dismayed and ensnared;
Since they have rejected the word of the LORD,
of what avail is their wisdom?[c]

### Shameless in Their Crimes

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See RG
311-312

[10]Therefore, I will give their wives to strangers,
their fields to spoilers.
Small and great alike, all are greedy for gain,
prophet and priest, all practice fraud.[d]
[11]They would repair, as though it were nought,
the injury to the daughter of my people:*
"Peace, peace!" they say,
though there is no peace.[e]
[12]They are odious; they have done abominable
things,
yet they are not at all ashamed,
they know not how to blush.
Hence they shall be among those who fall;
in their time of punishment they shall go
down,
says the LORD.[f]

### Threats of Punishment

[13]I will gather them all in, says the LORD:
no grapes on the vine,
No figs on the fig trees,
foliage withered!
[14]Why do we remain here?
Let us form ranks and enter the walled
cities,
to perish there;
For the LORD has wrought our destruction,
he has given us poison to drink,
because we have sinned against the LORD.[g]
[15]We wait for peace to no avail;
for a time of healing, but terror comes
instead.[h]
[16]From Dan is heard

**8, 2:** Army of heaven: the stars, worshiped by the pagan nations and even by the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon.

**8, 8f:** Lying pen of the scribes: because the interpretations and ordinances of the scribes ran counter to the word of the Lord.

**8, 11:** Daughter of my people: the people itself personified as a woman.

u Jer 16, 4; 34, 20. v Jer 16, 9. w Bar 2, 24. x Dt 4, 19. y Jer 5, 3; 7, 24. 26. z Jb 34, 31f. a Is 1, 3. b Mal 2, 8; Rom 2, 17–23. c 1 Cor 3, 20. d Jer 6, 13; Dt 28, 30. e Jer 6, 14. f Jer 6, 15. g Jer 9, 14; 23, 15. h Jer 14, 19.

the snorting of his steeds;
The neighing of his stallions
shakes the whole land.
They come devouring the land and all it contains,
the city and those who dwell in it.
17 Yes, I will send against you
poisonous snakes,
Against which no charm will work
when they bite you, says the LORD. [i]

### The Prophet's Grief over the People's Suffering

18 My grief is incurable,
my heart within me is faint.
19 Listen! the cry of the daughter of my people,
far and wide in the land!
Is the LORD no longer in Zion,
is her King no longer in her midst?
[Why do they provoke me with their idols,
with their foreign nonentities?] [j]
20 "The harvest has passed, the summer is at an end,
and yet we are not safe!"
21 I am broken by the ruin of the daughter of my people.
I am disconsolate; horror has seized me. [k]
22 Is there no balm in Gilead,*
no physician there?
Why grows not new flesh
over the wound of the daughter of my people? [l]
23 Oh, that my head were a spring of water,
my eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
over the slain of the daughter of my people!

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 7–20
See RG
311–312

### The Corruption of the People

1 Would that I had in the desert
a travelers' lodge!
That I might leave my people
and depart from them.
They are all adulterers,
a faithless band.
2 They ready their tongues like a drawn bow;
with lying, and not with truth,
they hold forth in the land.
They go from evil to evil,
but me they know not, says the LORD.
3 Be on your guard, everyone against his neighbor;
put no trust in any brother.
Every brother apes Jacob, the supplanter,*
every friend is guilty of slander.
4 Each one deceives the other,
no one speaks the truth.
They have accustomed their tongues to lying,
and are perverse, and cannot repent. [m]
5 Violence upon violence,
deceit upon deceit:
They refuse to recognize me,
says the LORD.

6 Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts:
I will smelt them and test them;
how else should I deal with their wickedness?
7 A murderous arrow is his tongue,
his mouth utters deceit;
He speaks cordially with his friends,
but in his heart he lays an ambush! [n]
8 For these things, says the LORD,
shall I not punish them?
On a nation such as this
shall I not take vengeance? [o]

### Dirge over the Ravaged Land

9 Over the mountains, break out in cries of lamentation,
over the pasture lands, intone a dirge:
They are scorched, and no man crosses them,
unheard is the bleat of the flock;
Birds of the air as well as beasts,
all have fled, and are gone. [p]
10 I will turn Jerusalem into a heap of ruins,
a haunt of jackals;

**8, 22:** Gilead: noted for its healing balm but unable to heal the moral wound of the people.
**9, 3:** Jacob, the supplanter: in Hebrew, a play on words. Jacob, as his name indicates ("he supplants"), deprived his brother Esau of his birthright; cf Gn 25, 26. 33.

i Dt 32, 24. j Dt 32, 21; Mi 4, 9. k Jer 14, 17. l Jer 46, 11. m Jer 12, 6. n Pss 28, 3; 62, 4. o Jer 5, 9. 29. p Jer 4, 25; 12, 4.

The cities of Judah I will make into a waste,
where no one dwells.[q]

11 Who is so wise that he can understand this?
Let him to whom the mouth of the LORD has
spoken make it known:

Why is the land ravaged,
scorched like a wasteland untraversed?[r]

12 The LORD answered: Because they have
abandoned my law, which I set before them, and
have not followed it or listened to my voice,
13 but followed rather the hardness of their hearts
and the Baals, as their fathers had taught them;[s]
14 therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel: See now, I will give them wormwood
to eat and poison to drink.[t] 15 I will scatter them
among nations whom neither they nor their
fathers have known; I will send the sword to
pursue them until I have completely destroyed
them.[u]

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Attention! tell the wailing women to come,
summon the best of them;
17 Let them come quickly
and intone a dirge for us,
That our eyes may be wet with weeping,
our cheeks run with tears.[v]
18 The dirge is heard from Zion:
Ruined we are, and greatly ashamed;
We must leave the land,
give up our homes!
19 Hear, you women, the word of the LORD,
let your ears receive his message.
Teach your daughters this dirge,
and each other this lament.
20 Death has come up through our windows,
has entered our palaces;
It cuts down the children in the street,
young people in the squares.[w]
21 The corpses of the slain
lie like dung on a field,
Like sheaves behind the harvester,
with no one to gather them.

**9, 25:** Desert dwellers . . . temples: Arab tribesmen who cut off their hair and shaved their temples in honor of the pagan god of Dushara. This was forbidden the Israelites (Lv 19, 27).

**10, 2:** Signs of the heavens: phenomena in the sky superstitiously regarded by the pagans as dire omens.

### True Glory

22 Thus says the LORD:
Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
nor the strong man glory in his strength,
nor the rich man glory in his riches;[x]
23 But rather, let him who glories, glory in this,
that in his prudence he knows me,
Knows that I, the LORD, bring about kindness,
justice and uprightness on the earth;
For with such am I pleased, says the LORD.

**Circumcision Worthless** 24 See, days are coming, says the LORD, when I will demand an account of all those circumcised in their flesh:[y]
25 Egypt and Judah, Edom and the Ammonites,
Moab and the desert dwellers who shave their
temples.* For all these nations, like the whole
house of Israel, are uncircumcised in heart.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 7–20
See RG
311–312

**The Folly of Idolatry** 1 Hear the word which
the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. 2 Thus
says the LORD:

Learn not the customs of the nations,
and have no fear of the signs of the
heavens,*
though the nations fear them.[z]
3 For the cult idols of the nations are nothing,
wood cut from the forest,
Wrought by craftsmen with the adze,[a]
4 adorned with silver and gold.
With nails and hammers they are fastened,
that they may not totter.[b]
5 Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they,
they cannot speak;
They must be carried about,
for they cannot walk.
Fear them not, they can do no harm,
neither is it in their power to do good.[c]
6 No one is like you, O LORD,
great are you,
great and mighty is your name.[d]
7 Who would not fear you,

q Is 13, 22. r Ps 107, 43; Hos 14, 10. s Jer 7, 24; 19, 4f. t Jer 23, 15. u Lv 26, 33; Dt 28, 36. 64. v Jer 14, 17. w Jer 14, 16. x Prv 21, 30. y Jer 4, 4. z Bar 6, 6. a Wis 13, 11; Is 44, 9. b Is 40, 19; 41, 7. c Ps 115, 4–8; Bar 6, 15. d Ps 86, 8ff.

King of the nations,
for it is your due!

Among all the wisest of the nations,
and in all their domain,
there is none like you.[e]

8 One and all they are dumb and senseless,
these idols they teach about are wooden:
9 Silver strips brought from Tarshish,
and gold from Ophir,
The work of the craftsman
and the handiwork of the smelter,
Clothed with violet and purple—
all of them the work of artisans.

11 Thus shall you say of them: Let the gods that did not make heaven and earth perish from the earth, and from beneath these heavens![f]

10 The LORD is true God,
he is the living God, the eternal King,
Before whose anger the earth quakes,
whose wrath the nations cannot endure:[g]
12 He who made the earth by his power,
established the world by his wisdom,
and stretched out the heavens by his skill.[h]
13 When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar,
and he brings up clouds from the end of the earth;
He makes the lightning flash in the rain,
and releases stormwinds from their chambers.
14 Every man is stupid, ignorant;
every artisan is put to shame by his idol:
He has molded a fraud,
without breath of life.[i]
15 Nothingness are they, a ridiculous work;
they will perish in their time of punishment.
16 Not like these is the portion of Jacob:
he is the creator of all things;
Israel is his very own tribe,
LORD of hosts is his name.[j]

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### Abandonment of Judah

17 Lift your bundle and leave the land,
O city living in a state of siege!
18 For thus says the LORD:
Behold, this time
I will sling away the inhabitants of the land;
I will hem them in,
that they may be taken.
19 Woe is me! I am undone,
my wound is incurable;
Yet I had thought:
if I make light of my wound, I can bear it.
20 My tent is ruined,
all its cords are severed.
My sons have left me, they are no more:
no one to pitch my tent,
no one to raise its curtains.[k]
21 Yes, the shepherds were stupid as cattle,
the LORD they sought not;
Therefore they had no success,
and all their flocks were scattered.[l]
22 Listen! a noise! it comes closer,
a great uproar from the northern land:
To turn the cities of Judah
into a desert haunt of jackals.

### Prayer of Jeremiah

23 You know, O LORD,
that man is not master of his way;
Man's course is not within his choice,
nor is it for him to direct his step.
24 Punish us, O LORD, but with equity,
not in anger, lest you have us dwindle away.
25 Pour out your wrath on the nations that know you not,
on the tribes that call not upon your name;
For they have devoured Jacob utterly,
and laid waste his dwelling.[m]

## CHAPTER 11

**Plea for Fidelity to the Covenant** 1 The following message came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Speak to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem, 3 saying to them: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not observe the terms of this covenant,[n] 4 which I enjoined upon your fathers the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that iron foundry, saying: Listen to my voice and

e Jer 5, 22; Ps 47, 2. 8. f Ps 96, 5. g Ps 10, 16. h Ps 104, 5. i Rom 1, 22f. j Jer 31, 35. k Jer 4, 20. l Jer 23, 1; Ez 34, 5f. m Ps 79, 6f. n Dt 27, 26.

do all that I command you. Then you shall be my
people, and I will be your God.[o] [5]Thus I will
fulfill the oath which I swore to your fathers, to
give them a land flowing with milk and honey:
the one you have today. "Amen, LORD," I
answered.

[6]Then the LORD said to me: Proclaim all these
words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of
Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and
obey them. [7]Urgently and constantly I warned
your fathers to obey my voice, from the day I
brought them up out of the land of Egypt even to
this day. [8]But they did not listen or give ear.
Each one followed the hardness of his evil heart,
till I brought upon them all the threats of this
covenant which they had failed to observe as I
commanded them.[p]

[9]A conspiracy has been found, the LORD said
to me, among the men of Judah and the citizens
of Jerusalem. [10]They have returned to the crimes
of their forefathers who refused to obey my
words. They also have followed and served
strange gods; the covenant which I had made
with their fathers, the house of Israel and the
house of Judah have broken.[q] [11]Therefore, thus
says the LORD: See, I bring upon them misfor-
tune which they cannot escape. Though they cry
out to me, I will not listen to them.[r] [12]Then the
cities of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem will
go and cry out to the gods to which they have
been offering incense. But these gods will give
them no help whatever when misfortune
strikes.[s]

[13]For as numerous as your cities
are your gods, O Judah!
And as many as the streets of Jerusalem
are the altars for offering sacrifice to Baal.[t]

[14]Do not intercede on behalf of this people, nor
utter a plea for them. I will not listen when they
call to me at the time of their misfortune.[u]

### Sacrifices of No Avail

[15]What right has my beloved in my house,
while she prepares her plots?
Can vows and sacred meat turn away
your misfortune from you?
Will you still be jubilant
[16] when you hear the great invasion?
A spreading olive tree, goodly to behold,
the LORD has named you;
Now he sets fire to it,
its branches burn.

[17]The LORD of hosts who planted you has
decreed misfortune for you because of the evil
done by the house of Israel and by the house of
Judah, who provoked me by sacrificing to Baal.[v]

**The Plot against Jeremiah** [18]I knew it be-
cause the LORD informed me; at that time you,
O LORD, showed me their doings.

## CHAPTER 12

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[1]You would be in the right, O LORD,
if I should dispute with you;
even so, I must discuss the case with you.
Why does the way of the godless prosper,
why live all the treacherous in
contentment?[w]
[2]You planted them; they have taken root,
they keep on growing and bearing fruit.
You are upon their lips,
but far from their inmost thoughts.[x]
[3]You, O Lord, know me, you see me,
you have found that at heart I am with
you.[y]
Pick them out like sheep for the slaughter,
set them apart for the day of carnage.*
[4]How long must the earth mourn,
the green of the whole countryside wither?
For the wickedness of those who dwell in it
beasts and birds disappear,
because they say, "God does not see our
ways."

[5]If running against men has wearied you,
how will you race against horses?
And if in a land of peace you fall headlong,

12, 3: Jeremiah does not seek private vengeance but the punishment of the wicked by the Lord; cf Jer 20, 12. Nevertheless, the prophet's reaction to persecution shows the difference between the spirit of the Old Testament and the New.

o Dt 4, 20; 1 Kgs 8, 51. p 2 Kgs 17, 14. q Dt 31, 16; Ez 20, 21–30. r Jer 14, 12; Mi 3, 4. s Dt 32, 37f. t Jer 2, 28; Hos 10, 1. u Jer 7, 16; 14, 11. v Is 5, 2. w Jb 21, 7; Mal 3, 15. x Is 29, 13. y Jer 17, 18; Jb 23, 10.

what will you do in the thickets of the
Jordan?

6 For even your own brothers, the members of
your father's house, betray you; they have
recruited a force against you. Do not believe
them, even if they are friendly to you in their
words.[z]

19 *Yet I, like a trusting lamb led to slaughter,
had not realized that they were hatching plots
against me: "Let us destroy the tree in its vigor;
let us cut him off from the land of the living, so
that his name will be spoken no more."[a]

20 But, you, O LORD of hosts, O just Judge,
searcher of mind and heart,
Let me witness the vengeance you take on
them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause![b]

21 Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning
the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying,
"Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD; else
you shall die by our hand."[c] 22 Therefore, thus
says the LORD of hosts: I am going to punish
them. The young men shall die by the sword;
their sons and daughters shall die by famine.[d]
23 None shall be spared among them, for I will
bring misfortune upon the men of Anathoth, the
year of their punishment.[e]

### The Lord's Complaint

7 I abandon my house,
cast off my heritage;
The beloved of my soul I deliver
into the hand of her foes.[f]
8 My heritage has turned on me
like a lion in the jungle;
Because she has roared against me,
I treat her as an enemy.[g]
9 My heritage is a prey for hyenas,
is surrounded by vultures;
Come, gather together, all you beasts of the
field,
come and eat![h]
10 Many shepherds have ravaged my vineyard,
have trodden my heritage underfoot;
The portion that delighted me they have
turned
into a desert waste.[i]
11 They have made it a mournful waste,
desolate it lies before me,
Desolate, all the land,
because no one takes it to heart.
12 Upon every desert height
brigands have come up.
The LORD has a sword which consumes
the land, from end to end:
no peace for all mankind.[j]
13 They have sown wheat and reaped thorns,
they have tired themselves out to no
purpose;
They recoil before their harvest,
the flaming anger of the LORD.

**Judah's Neighbors** 14 Thus says the LORD
against all my evil neighbors* who plunder the
heritage which I gave my people Israel as their
own: See, I will pluck them up from their land;
the house of Judah I will pluck up in their
midst.[k] 15 But after plucking them up, I will pity
them again and bring them back, each to his
heritage, each to his land.[l] 16 And if they care-
fully learn my people's custom of swearing by
my name, "As the LORD lives," they who for-
merly taught my people to swear by Baal shall be
built up in the midst of my people.[m] 17 But if they
do not obey, I will uproot and destroy that nation
entirely, says the LORD.[n]

## CHAPTER 13

**Judah's Corruption*** 1 The LORD said to me:
Go buy yourself a linen loincloth; wear it on your

Ch 7–20
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12, 19–23: These verses have been transposed from ch 11.
12, 14: My evil neighbors: nations surrounding Israel, the land belonging to the Lord; cf Is 8, 8.
13, 1–11: This is probably a vision of the prophet symbolizing the religious corruption of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians, represented here by the river Parath, the Euphrates; though a spring of the same name, northeast of Anathoth, may be directly meant.

z Jer 9, 4. a Jer 18, 18; 20, 10; Wis 2, 20. b Jer 15, 15. c Am 7, 13. 16. d Jer 18, 21f. e Jer 23, 12. f Ps 78, 62; Lam 2, 1f. g Ps 106, 40. h 2 Kgs 24, 2; Is 56, 9. i Jer 6, 3; Is 63, 18. j Is 42, 25; 57, 21. k 2 Kgs 24, 2. l Am 9, 14. m Dt 6, 13. n Is 60, 12.

loins, but do not put it in water. [2]I bought the
loincloth, as the LORD commanded, and put it
on. [3]A second time the word of the LORD came
to me thus: [4]Take the loincloth which you
bought and are wearing, and go now to the
Parath; there hide it in a cleft of the rock. [5]Obedi-
ent to the LORD's command, I went to the Parath
and buried the loincloth. [6]After a long interval,
he said to me: Go now to the Parath and fetch
the loincloth which I told you to hide there.
[7]Again I went to the Parath, sought out and took
the loincloth from the place where I had hid it.
But it was rotted, good for nothing! [8]Then the
message came to me from the LORD: [9]Thus says
the LORD: So also I will allow the pride of Judah
to rot, the great pride of Jerusalem.[o] [10]This
wicked people who refuse to obey my words,
who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts,
and follow strange gods to serve and adore them,
shall be like this loincloth which is good for noth-
ing.[p] [11]For, as close as the loincloth clings to a
man's loins, so had I made the whole house of
Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me,
says the LORD; to be my people, my renown, my
praise, my beauty. But they did not listen.[q]

**The Broken Wineflask** [12]Now speak to them
this word: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:
Every wineflask is meant to be filled with wine.
If they reply, "Do we not know that every
wineflask is meant to be filled with wine?" [13]say
to them: Thus says the LORD: Beware! I am
filling with drunkenness all the inhabitants of
this land, the kings who succeed to David's
throne, the priests and prophets, and all the
citizens of Jerusalem.[r] [14]I will dash them against
each other, fathers and sons together, says the
LORD; I will show no compassion, I will not
spare or pity, but will destroy them.[s]

### A Last Warning

[15]Give ear, listen humbly,
for the LORD speaks.
[16]Give glory to the LORD, your God,
before it grows dark;
Before your feet stumble
on darkening mountains;
Before the light you look for turns to darkness,
changes into black clouds.[t]
[17]If you do not listen to this in your pride,
I will weep in secret many tears;
My eyes will run with tears
for the LORD's flock, led away to exile.[u]

### Exile

[18]Say to the king and to the queen mother:
come down from your throne;
From your heads fall
your magnificent crowns.[v]
[19]The cities of the Negeb are besieged,
with no one to relieve them;
All Judah is banished
in universal exile.

### Jerusalem's Disgrace

[20]Lift up your eyes and see
men coming from the north.
Where is the flock entrusted to you,
the sheep that were your glory?[w]
[21]What will you say when they place as rulers
over you
those whom you taught to be your lovers?
Will not pangs seize you
like those of a woman giving birth?[x]
[22]If you ask in your heart
why these things befall you:
For your great guilt your skirts are stripped
away
and you are violated.[y]
[23]Can the Ethiopian change his skin?
the leopard his spots?
As easily would you be able to do good,
accustomed to evil as you are.[z]
[24]I will scatter them like chaff that flies
when the desert wind blows.[a]
[25]This is your lot, the portion measured out to
you
from me, says the LORD.
Because you have forgotten me,
and trusted in the lying idol,[b]
[26]I now will strip off your skirts from you,
so that your shame will appear.[c]

o Prv 16, 18. p Jer 2, 20; 7, 24; 16, 11. q Ex 19, 5; Dt 26, 18f. r Jer 25, 15–18; Is 51, 17. s Jer 19, 10f. t Prv 4, 18f; Is 5, 30; Am 8, 9. u Jer 14, 17; Ps 119, 136. v Jer 22, 26; 2 Kgs 24, 12. 15. w Jer 6, 22f. x 2 Kgs 16, 7. y Is 47, 2f. z Ps 55, 20. a Pss 1, 4; 83, 14. b Jb 20, 29. c Ez 16, 32.

27 Your adulteries, your neighings,
your shameless prostitutions:
On the hills in the highlands
I see these horrible crimes of yours.
Woe to you, Jerusalem, how long will it yet be
before you become clean! [d]

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 7–20
See RG
311–312

**The Great Drought** 1 The word of the LORD
that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: [e]

2 Judah mourns,
her gates are lifeless;
Her people sink down in mourning:
from Jerusalem ascends a cry of anguish. [f]
3 The nobles send their servants for water,
but when they come to the cisterns
They find no water
and return with empty jars. [g]
Ashamed, despairing, they cover their heads
4 because of the stricken soil;
Because there is no rain in the land
the farmers are ashamed, they cover their
heads. [h]
5 Even the hind in the field deserts her offspring
because there is no grass.
6 The wild asses stand on the bare heights,
gasping for breath like jackals;
Their eyes grow dim,
because there is no vegetation to be seen.
7 Even though our crimes bear witness against
us,
take action, O LORD, for the honor of your
name—
Even though our rebellions are many,
though we have sinned against you. [i]
8 O Hope of Israel, O LORD,
our savior in time of need!
Why should you be a stranger in this land,
like a traveler who has stopped but for a
night?
9 Why are you like a man dumbfounded,
a champion who cannot save?
You are in our midst, O LORD,
your name we bear:
do not forsake us! [j]

10 Thus says the LORD of this people:
They so love to wander
that they do not spare their feet.
The LORD has no pleasure in them;
now he remembers their guilt,
and will punish their sins. [k]

11 Then the LORD said to me: Do not intercede
for this people. [l] 12 If they fast, I will not listen to
their supplication. If they offer holocausts or
cereal offerings, I will not accept them. Rather, I
will destroy them with the sword, famine, and
pestilence. [m]
13 Ah! Lord GOD, I replied, it is the prophets
who say to them, "You shall not see the sword;
famine shall not befall you. Indeed, I will give
you lasting peace in this place." [n]
14 Lies these prophets utter in my name, the
LORD said to me. I did not send them; I gave
them no command nor did I speak to them.
Lying visions, foolish divination, dreams of their
own imagination, they prophesy to you. [o]
15 Therefore, thus says the LORD: Concerning the
prophets who prophesy in my name, though I
did not send them; who say, "Sword and famine
shall not befall this land": by the sword and
famine shall these prophets meet their end. [p]
16 The people to whom they prophesy shall be
cast out into the streets of Jerusalem by famine
and the sword. No one shall bury them, their
wives, their sons, or their daughters, for I will
pour out upon them their own wickedness. [q]
17 Speak to them this word:

Let my eyes stream with tears
day and night, without rest,
Over the great destruction which overwhelms
the virgin daughter of my people,
over her incurable wound. [r]
18 If I walk out into the field,
look! those slain by the sword;
If I enter the city,
look! those consumed by hunger.
Even the prophet and the priest
forage in a land they know not.

19 Have you cast Judah off completely?

d Jer 2, 20. e Lv 26, 19f. f Is 3, 26. g Am 4, 8. h Dt 28, 23. i Dn 9, 4–14. j Is 59, 1f; 63, 19. k Jer 2, 25. l Jer 11, 14; Ex 32, 10. m Jer 6, 20; Is 1, 11. 13. n Jer 4, 10; 5, 12. o Jer 5, 31; 23, 16. p Jer 5, 12f. q Jer 7, 33; 19, 7. r Jer 9, 17.

Is Zion loathsome to you?
Why have you struck us a blow
that cannot be healed?
We wait for peace, to no avail;
for a time of healing, but terror comes
instead.[s]
20 We recognize, O LORD, our wickedness,
the guilt of our fathers;
that we have sinned against you.[t]
21 For your name's sake spurn us not,
disgrace not the throne of your glory;
remember your covenant with us, and
break it not.[u]
22 Among the nations' idols is there any that
gives rain?
Or can the mere heavens send showers?
Is it not you alone, O LORD,
our God, to whom we look?
You alone have done all these things.[v]

## CHAPTER 15

1 The LORD said to me: Even if Moses and Samuel stood before me, my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them away from me.[w] 2 If they ask you where they should go, tell them, Thus says the LORD: Whoever is marked for death, to death; whoever is marked for the sword, to the sword; whoever is marked for famine, to famine; whoever is marked for captivity, to captivity.[x] 3 Four kinds of scourge I have decreed against them, says the LORD: the sword to slay them; dogs to drag them about; the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy them.[y] 4 And I will make them an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.[z]

### Scene of Tragedy

5 Who will pity you, Jerusalem,
who will console you?
Who will stop to ask
about your welfare?[a]
6 You have disowned me, says the LORD,
turned your back upon me;
And so I stretched out my hand to destroy you,
I was weary of sparing you.[b]
7 I winnowed them with the fan
in every city gate.
I destroyed my people through bereavement;
they returned not from their evil ways.[c]
8 Their widows were more numerous before me
than the sands of the sea.
I brought against the mother of youths
the spoiler at midday;
Suddenly I struck her
with anguish and terror.
9 The mother of seven swoons away,
gasping out her life;
Her sun sets in full day,
she is disgraced, despairing.
Their survivors I will give to the sword
before their enemies, says the LORD.[d]

### Jeremiah's Complaint

10 Woe to me, mother, that you gave me birth!
a man of strife and contention to all the
land!
I neither borrow nor lend,
yet all curse me.[e]
11 Tell me, LORD, have I not served you for their
good?
Have I not interceded with you
in the time of misfortune and anguish?[f] *
15 You know I have.
Remember me, LORD, visit me,
and avenge me on my persecutors.
Because of your long-suffering banish me not;
know that for you I have borne insult.[g]
16 When I found your words, I devoured them;
they became my joy and the happiness of
my heart,
Because I bore your name,
O LORD, God of hosts.
17 I did not sit celebrating
in the circle of merrymakers;
Under the weight of your hand I sat alone
because you filled me with indignation.[h]

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15, 12–14: These verses are omitted because v 12 is a dittography of 17, 1. Verses 13–14 are a dittography of 17, 3f.

s Jer 8, 15; 2 Chr 36, 16. t Ps 106, 6; Dn 9, 5. 8. u Jer 14, 7; Lv 26, 44; Ps 25, 11. v Jer 5, 24; Zec 10, 1. w Ps 99, 6; Ez 14, 14. 16. x Jer 14, 12; Ez 5, 12. y Ez 14, 21. z Jer 24, 9; 2 Kgs 21, 11–16; 23, 26; 24, 3f. a Is 51, 19. b Am 7, 8. c Is 41, 16. d 1 Sm 2, 5. e Jer 20, 14. f Jer 39, 11–14. g Jer 11, 20; 12, 3; Ps 69, 8. h Ps 25, 4.

18 Why is my pain continuous,
my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
You have indeed become for me a treacherous brook,*
whose waters do not abide! [i]
19 Thus the LORD answered me:
If you repent, so that I restore you,
in my presence you shall stand;
If you bring forth the precious without the vile,
you shall be my mouthpiece.
Then it shall be they who turn to you,
and you shall not turn to them;
20 And I will make you toward this people
a solid wall of brass.
Though they fight against you,
they shall not prevail,
For I am with you,
to deliver and rescue you, says the LORD. [j]
21 I will free you from the hand of the wicked,
and rescue you from the grasp of the violent.

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 7–20 See RG 311–312

**Jeremiah's Life a Warning** 1 This message came to me from the LORD: 2 Do not marry any woman; you shall not have sons or daughters in this place, 3 for thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who will be born in this place, the mothers who will give them birth, the fathers who will beget them in this land: 4 Of deadly disease they shall die. Unlamented and unburied they will lie like dung on the ground. Sword and famine will make an end of them, and their corpses will become food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field. [k]

5 Go not into a house of mourning, the LORD continued: go not there to lament or offer sympathy. For I have withdrawn my friendship from this people, says the LORD, my kindness and my pity. [l] 6 They shall die, the great and the lowly, in this land, and shall go unburied and unlamented.* No one will gash himself or shave his head for them. [m] 7 They will not break bread with the bereaved to console them in their bereavement; they will not give them the cup of consolation to drink over the death of father or mother. [n]

8 Enter not a house where people are celebrating, to sit with them eating and drinking. 9 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Before your very eyes and during your lifetime I will silence from this place the cry of joy and the cry of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. [o]

10 When you proclaim all these words to this people and they ask you: "Why has the LORD pronounced all these great evils against us? What is our crime? What sin have we committed against the LORD, our God?" [p] — 11 [q] you shall answer them: It is because your fathers have forsaken me, says the LORD, and followed strange gods, which they served and worshiped; but me they have forsaken, and my law they have not observed. 12 And you have done worse than your fathers. Here you are, every one of you, walking in the hardness of his evil heart instead of listening to me. [r] 13 I will cast you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known; there you can serve strange gods day and night, because I will not grant you my mercy.

**Return from Exile** 14 However, days will surely come, says the LORD, when it will no longer be said, "As the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt"; [s] 15 but rather, "As the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites out of the land of the north and out of all the countries to which he had banished them." I will bring them back to the land which I gave their fathers. [t]

**Double Punishment** 16 Look! I will send many fishermen, says the LORD, to catch them. After that, I will send many hunters to hunt them out from every mountain and hill and from the clefts of the rocks. [u] 17 For my eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor does their guilt escape my view. [v] 18 I will at once

15, 18: A treacherous brook: that dries up when its waters are needed. The prophet complains that he cannot rely on God with unfailing assurance of his assistance.

16, 6f: These verses refer to popular mourning practices, sometimes connected with pagan superstition; cf Dt 14, 1f.

i Jer 14, 19; 30, 15. j Jer 1, 18; 6, 27. k Jer 7, 33; 22, 18. l Ez 24, 16f. m Lv 19, 28; Dt 14, 1. n Ez 24, 17. o Jer 7, 34; 25, 10. p Jer 2, 35; 5, 19; 13, 22. q Jer 22, 9; Dt 29, 25. r Jer 7, 24ff. s Jer 23, 7f. t Jer 24, 6. u 2 Kgs 24, 2; Lam 4, 19. v Jer 32, 19; Jb 34, 21.

repay them double for their crime and their sin
of profaning my land with their detestable
corpses of idols, and filling my heritage with
their abominations.[w]

### Conversion of the Heathen

[19] O LORD, my strength, my fortress,
my refuge in the day of distress!
To you will the nations come
from the ends of the earth, and say,
"Mere frauds are the heritage of our fathers,
empty idols of no use."[x]
[20] Can man make for himself gods?
These are not gods.[y]
[21] Look, then: I will give them knowledge;
this time I will leave them in no doubt
Of my strength and my power:
they shall know that my name is LORD.[z]

## CHAPTER 17

### The Sin of Judah and Its Punishment

[1] The sin of Judah is written
with an iron stylus,
Engraved with a diamond point
upon the tablets of their hearts.[a]

[And the horns of their altars, [2]when their sons
remember their altars and their sacred poles,
beside the green trees, on the high hills, [3]the
peaks in the highland.]

Your wealth and all your treasures
I will give as spoil.
In recompense for all your sins
throughout your borders,
[4] You will relinquish your hold on your heritage
which I have given you.
I will enslave you to your enemies
in a land that you know not:
For a fire has been kindled by my wrath
that will burn forever.[b]

### True Wisdom

[5] Thus says the LORD:
Cursed is the man who trusts in human
beings,
who seeks his strength in flesh,
whose heart turns away from the LORD.[c]
[6] He is like a barren bush in the desert
that enjoys no change of season,
But stands in a lava waste,
a salt and empty earth.
[7] Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose hope is the LORD.[d]
[8] He is like a tree planted beside the waters
that stretches out its roots to the stream:
It fears not the heat when it comes,
its leaves stay green;
In the year of drought it shows no distress,
but still bears fruit.[e]
[9] More tortuous than all else is the human
heart,
beyond remedy; who can understand it?
[10] I, the LORD, alone probe the mind
and test the heart,
To reward everyone according to his ways,
according to the merit of his deeds.[f]
[11] A partridge that mothers a brood not her own
is the man who acquires wealth unjustly:
In midlife it will desert him;
in the end he is only a fool.[g]

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### The Source of Life

[12] A throne of glory, exalted from the beginning,
such is our holy place.[h]
[13] O hope of Israel, O LORD!
all who forsake you shall be in disgrace;
The rebels in the land shall be put to shame;
they have forsaken the source of living
waters
[the LORD].[i]

### Prayer for Vengeance

[14] Heal me, LORD, that I may be healed;
save me, that I may be saved,
for it is you whom I praise.
[15] See how they say to me,
"Where is the word of the LORD?
Let it come to pass!"[j]
[16] Yet I did not press you to send calamity;
the day without remedy I have not desired.
You know what passed my lips;
it is present before you.

w Is 40, 2. x Jer 2, 11; Is 2, 2f. y Jer 2, 11; Gal 4, 8. z Am 5, 8. a Jb 19, 24. b Jer 5, 19; Dt 32, 22. c Ps 146, 2f. d Ps 1, 3. e Is 58, 11. f Jer 32, 19; 1 Sm 16, 7; Eccl 12, 14. g Prv 13, 11; Lk 12, 20. h Jer 14, 21. i Jer 2, 13. j Is 5, 19; 2 Pt 3, 4.

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17 Do not be my ruin,
you, my refuge in the day of misfortune.[k]
18 Let my persecutors, not me, be confounded;
let them, not me, be broken.
Bring upon them the day of misfortune,
crush them with repeated destruction.[l]

**Observance of the Sabbath** 19 Thus said the LORD to me: Go, stand at the Gate of Benjamin,* where the kings of Judah enter and leave, and at the other gates of Jerusalem.[m] 20 There say to them: Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all you citizens of Jerusalem who enter these gates! 21 Thus says the LORD: As you love your lives, take care not to carry burdens on the sabbath day, to bring them in through the gates of Jerusalem.[n] 22 Bring no burden from your homes on the sabbath. Do no work whatever, but keep holy the sabbath, as I commanded your fathers,[o] 23 though they did not listen or give ear, but stiffened their necks so as not to hear or take correction.[p] 24 If you obey me wholeheartedly, says the LORD, and carry no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath, keeping the sabbath holy and abstaining from all work on it,[q] 25 then, through the gates of this city, kings who sit upon the throne of David will continue to enter, riding in their chariots or upon their horses, along with their princes, and the men of Judah, and the citizens of Jerusalem. This city will remain inhabited forever.[r] 26 To it people will come from the cities of Judah and the neighborhood of Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the foothills, from the hill country and the Negeb, to bring holocausts and sacrifices, cereal offerings and incense and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.[s] 27 But if you do not obey me and keep holy the sabbath, if you carry burdens and come through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath, I will set unquenchable fire to its gates, which will consume the palaces of Jerusalem.[t]

## CHAPTER 18

**The Potter's Vessel*** 1 This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Rise up, be off to the potter's house; there I will give you my message. 3 I went down to the potter's house and there he was, working at the wheel. 4 Whenever the object of clay which he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased.[u] 5 Then the word of the Lord came to me: 6 Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done? says the LORD. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel.[v] 7 [w]Sometimes I threaten to uproot and tear down and destroy a nation or a kingdom. 8 But if that nation which I have threatened turns from its evil, I also repent of the evil which I threatened to do.[x] 9 Sometimes, again, I promise to build up and plant a nation or a kingdom. 10 But if that nation does what is evil in my eyes, refusing to obey my voice, I repent of the good with which I promised to bless it.[y]

11 And now, tell this to the men of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Take care! I am fashioning evil against you and making a plan. Return, each of you, from his evil way; reform your ways and your deeds.[z] 12 But they will say, "No use! We will follow our own devices; each one of us will behave according to the stubbornness of his evil heart!"[a]

### Judah's Apostasy Unnatural

13 Therefore thus says the LORD:
Ask among the nations—
who has ever heard the like?
Truly horrible things
has virgin Israel done![b]
14 Does the snow of Lebanon*
desert the rocky heights?
Do the gushing waters dry up
that flow fresh down the mountains?

**17, 19:** The Gate of Benjamin: probably the northern gate of the temple area and city wall of Jerusalem; cf Jer 20, 2; 37, 12; 38, 7.

**18, 1–12:** The lesson of the potter is not that God deals arbitrarily with his people, but that he is almighty to destroy or restore, accordingly as they disobey him or fulfill his plans.

**18, 14:** Lebanon: here apparently including Mount Hermon, whose snow-capped peak can be seen from parts of Palestine all year round. The prophet contrasts the certainties of nature with Israel's unnatural desertion of the Lord for idols (v 15).

k Jer 16, 19. l Jer 15, 15; 18, 20–23; Ps 35, 5f. m Jer 7, 2. n Neh 13, 15–19. o Ex 20, 8; 23, 12. p Jer 5, 3; 7, 24. q Is 58, 14. r Jer 22, 4. s Jer 32, 44. t Ez 22, 8. u Rom 9, 20f. v Wis 15, 7; Is 45, 9. w Jer 1, 10. x Jer 26, 3; Is 55, 7; Ez 18, 21. 27. y Nm 14, 22f. z Jer 7, 3; 25, 5; 35, 15. a Jer 2, 25; 7, 24. b Jer 2, 10f; 5, 30.

[15] Yet my people have forgotten me:
they burn incense to a thing that does not exist.
They stumble out of their ways,
the paths of old,
To travel on bypaths,
not the beaten track.[c]
[16] Their land shall be turned into a desert,
an object of lasting ridicule:
All passers-by will be amazed,
will shake their heads.[d]
[17] Like the east wind, I will scatter them
before their enemies;
I will show them my back, not my face,
in their day of disaster.[e]

**Another Prayer for Vengeance** [18] "Come," they said, "let us contrive a plot against Jeremiah. It will not mean the loss of instruction from the priests, nor of counsel from the wise, nor of messages from the prophets. And so, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word."[f]

[19] Heed me, O LORD,
and listen to what my adversaries say.
[20] Must good be repaid with evil
that they should dig a pit to take my life?
Remember that I stood before you
to speak in their behalf,
to turn away your wrath from them.[g]
[21] So now, deliver their children to famine,[h]
do away with them by the sword.
Let their wives be made childless and widows;
let their men die of pestilence,
their young men be slain by the sword in battle.*
[22] May cries be heard from their homes,
when suddenly you send plunderers against them.
For they have dug a pit to capture me,
they have hid snares for my feet;
[23] But you, O LORD, know
all their plans to slay me.
Forgive not their crime,
blot not out their sin in your sight!
Let them go down before you,
proceed against them in the time of your anger.[i]

## CHAPTER 19

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**Symbol of the Potter's Flask** [1] Thus said the LORD: Go, buy a potter's earthen flask. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests, [2] and go out toward the Valley of Ben-hinnom, at the entrance of the Potsherd Gate;* there proclaim the words which I will speak to you: [3] Listen to the word of the LORD, kings of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to bring such evil upon this place that all who hear of it will feel their ears tingle. [4] This is because they have forsaken me and alienated this place by burning in it incense to strange gods which neither they nor their fathers knew; and the kings of Judah have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.[j] [5] They have built high places for Baal to immolate their sons in fire as holocausts to Baal: such a thing as I neither commanded nor spoke of, nor did it ever enter my mind.[k] [6] Therefore, days will come, says the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth, or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather, the Valley of Slaughter.[l] [7] In this place I will foil the plan of Judah and Jerusalem; I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, by the hand of those that seek their lives. Their corpses I will give as food to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.[m] [8] I will make this city an object of amazement and derision. Because of all its wounds, every passer-by will be amazed and will catch his breath. [9] I will have them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters; they shall eat one another's flesh during the strict siege by which their enemies and those who seek their lives will confine them.[n]

[10] And you shall break the flask in the sight of

**18, 21**: In the Old Testament a man's family was regarded as part of his personality, to be rewarded or punished along with him; cf Jos 7, 24ff.

**19, 2**: Potsherd Gate: in the south wall of Jerusalem, through which potsherds and other refuse were carried to the Valley of Ben-hinnom.

c Jer 2, 13. 32. d Jer 19, 8; Lv 26, 32; 1 Kgs 9, 8. e Prv 1, 24–31. f Jer 11, 19; Ps 35, 15f. g Ps 35, 12. h Ps 109, 9f. i Neh 4, 5; Pss 35, 4; 37, 32f. j Jer 1, 16; 2 Kgs 21, 16; 24, 4. k Jer 7, 31f; 32, 35. l Jer 7, 32. m Jer 7, 33. n Lv 26, 29.

the men who went with you, [11]and say to them:
Thus says the LORD of hosts: Thus will I smash
this people and this city, as one smashes a clay
pot so that it cannot be repaired. And Topheth
shall be a burial place, for lack of place to bury
elsewhere.[o] [12]Thus I will do to this place and to
its inhabitants, says the LORD; I will make this
city like Topheth.[p] [13]And the houses of Jerusa-
lem and the palaces of the kings of Judah shall be
defiled like the place of Topheth, all the houses
upon whose roofs they burnt incense to the
whole host of heaven and poured out libations to
strange gods.[q]

[14]When Jeremiah returned from Topheth,
where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, he
stood in the court of the house of God and said
to all the people:[r] [15]Thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel: I will surely bring upon this
city all the evil with which I threatened it,
because they have stiffened their necks and have
not obeyed my words.[s]

## CHAPTER 20

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[1]Jeremiah was heard prophesying these things
by the priest Pashhur,[t] son of Immer, chief
officer in the house of the LORD.* [2]So he had the
prophet scourged and placed in the stocks at the
upper Gate of Benjamin in the house of the
LORD.[u] [3]The next morning, after Pashhur had
released Jeremiah from the stocks, the prophet
said to him:[v] Instead of Pashhur, the LORD will
name you "Terror on every side."* [4]For thus
says the LORD: Indeed, I will deliver you to
terror, you and all your friends. Your own eyes
shall see them fall by the sword of their enemies.
All Judah I will deliver to the king of Babylon,*
who shall take them captive to Babylon or slay
them with the sword. [5]All the wealth of this city,
all it has toiled for and holds dear, all the
treasures of the kings of Judah, I will give as
plunder into the hands of their foes, who shall
seize it and carry it away to Babylon.[w] [6]You,
Pashhur, and all the members of your household
shall go into exile. To Babylon you shall go, you
and all your friends; there you shall die and be
buried, because you have prophesied lies to
them.[x]

### Jeremiah's Interior Crisis

[7]You duped me,* O LORD, and I let myself be
duped;
you were too strong for me, and you
triumphed.
All the day I am an object of laughter;
everyone mocks me.
[8]Whenever I speak, I must cry out,
violence and outrage is my message;
The word of the LORD has brought me
derision and reproach all the day.
[9]I say to myself, I will not mention him,
I will speak in his name no more.
But then it becomes like fire burning in my
heart,
imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in,
I cannot endure it.[y]
[10]Yes, I hear the whisperings of many:
"Terror on every side!
Denounce! let us denounce him!"
All those who were my friends
are on the watch for any misstep of mine.
"Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can
prevail,
and take our vengeance on him."[z]
[11]But the LORD is with me, like a mighty
champion:
my persecutors will stumble, they will not
triumph.
In their failure they will be put to utter shame,
to lasting, unforgettable confusion.[a]
[12]O LORD of hosts, you who test the just,
who probe mind and heart,

**20, 1:** Chief officer in the house of the Lord: head of the temple police; cf Jer 29, 26. By entering the temple court (Jer 19, 14), Jeremiah had put himself under Pashhur's jurisdiction.

**20, 3:** Terror on every side: Pashhur will share the fate of doomed Jerusalem and will experience personally all that the people as a whole have had to endure.

**20, 4:** Babylon: mentioned here for the first time as the land of exile. The prophecy probably dates from after 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt and made the Chaldean empire dominant in Syria and Palestine.

**20, 7:** You duped me: to be understood in the light of Jeremiah's intimate dealings with God; cf Jer 15, 18.

o Jer 7, 32. p 2 Kgs 23, 10. q Jer 32, 29. r Jer 26, 2. s Jer 7, 26; Prv 29, 1. t Jer 21, 1. u Jer 29, 26. v Jer 6, 25. w 2 Kgs 20, 17; 24, 12–16. x Jer 14, 13f; 28, 15. y Jer 6, 11; Jb 32, 18. z Jb 19, 19; Ps 31, 13; Lk 20, 20. a Jer 1, 8; 15, 20.

Let me witness the vengeance you take on them,
for to you I have entrusted my cause.[b]
13 Sing to the LORD,
praise the LORD,
For he has rescued the life of the poor
from the power of the wicked![c]

14 Cursed be the day*
on which I was born!
May the day my mother gave me birth
never be blessed![d]
15 Cursed be the man who brought the news
to my father, saying,
"A child, a son, has been born to you!"
filling him with great joy.
16 Let that man be like the cities
which the LORD relentlessly overthrew;
Let him hear war cries in the morning,
battle alarms at noonday,[e]
17 because he did not dispatch me in the
womb!
Then my mother would have been my grave,
her womb confining me forever.[f]
18 Why did I come forth from the womb,
to see sorrow and pain,
to end my days in shame?[g]

## III: Oracles in the Last Years of Jerusalem

### CHAPTER 21

**Fate of Zedekiah and Jerusalem** 1 The message which came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah* sent him Pashhur, son of Malchiah, and the priest Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah, with this request: 2 Inquire for us of the LORD, because Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is attacking us. Perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all his wonderful works, so that he will withdraw from us. 3 But Jeremiah answered them: This is what you shall report to Zedekiah: 4 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I will turn back in your hands the weapons with which you intend to fight the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who besiege you outside the walls. These weapons I will pile up in the midst of this city,[h] 5 and I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and mighty arm, in anger, and wrath, and great rage![i] 6 I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die in a great pestilence.[j] 7 After that, says the LORD, I will hand over Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his ministers and the people in this city who survive pestilence, sword, and famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, into the hands of their enemies and those who seek their lives. He shall strike them with the edge of the sword, without quarter, without pity or mercy.[k] 8 And to this people you shall say: Thus says the LORD: See, I am giving you a choice between life and death.[l] 9 Whoever remains in this city shall die by the sword or famine or pestilence. But whoever leaves and surrenders to the besieging Chaldeans shall live and have his life as booty. 10 For I have turned against this city, for its woe and not for its good, says the LORD. It shall be given into the power of the king of Babylon who shall burn it with fire.*

### Oracles regarding the Kings

11 To the royal house of Judah:*
Hear the word of the LORD, 12 O house of David!
Thus says the LORD:
Each morning dispense justice,
rescue the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor,
Lest my fury break out like fire
which burns without being quenched,

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**20, 14–18:** Deception, sorrow and terror have brought the prophet close to the point of despair; nevertheless he has expressed his utmost confidence in the triumph of God's will (vv 11ff); cf Jb 3, 3–12.

**21, 1:** Zedekiah: brother of Jehoiakim, appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar after he had carried Jehoiachin away to captivity (2 Kgs 24, 17). Passhur: different from the one in Jer 20, 1ff but also one of Jeremiah's enemies; cf Jer 38, 1. 4.

**21, 10:** Jeremiah consistently pointed out the uselessness of resistance to Babylon, since the Lord had delivered Judah to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27, 6). Because of this the prophet was denounced and imprisoned as a traitor (Jer 37, 13f).

**21, 11—23, 8:** This section contains an editor's collection of Jeremiah's oracles against the kings of Judah. They are placed in the chronological order of the kings, and are prefaced by the oracles against the kings of Judah in general (Jer 21, 11—22, 9).

b Jer 11, 20. c Pss 35, 9f; 109, 30f. d Jer 15, 10; Jb 3, 1–10; 10, 18. e Gn 19, 25; Is 13, 19. f Jb 3, 10f; 10, 19. g Jb 14, 1. h Jer 37, 8ff. i Is 63, 10; Lam 2, 4f. j Jer 16, 4. k Jer 24, 8ff; Dt 28, 49f. l Jer 21, 9; Dt 30, 15. 19.

because of the evil of your deeds. [m]
[13] Beware! I am against you, Valley-site,
Rock of the Plain,* says the LORD.
You who say, "Who will attack us,
who can penetrate our retreats?"
[14] I will punish you, says the LORD,
as your deeds deserve!
I will kindle a fire in its forest*
that shall devour all its surroundings. [n]

## CHAPTER 22

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[1] The LORD told me this: Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and there deliver this message: [2] You shall say: Listen to the word of the LORD, king of Judah, who sit on the throne of David, you, your ministers, and your people that enter by these gates! [o] [3] Thus says the LORD: Do what is right and just. Rescue the victim from the hand of his oppressor. Do not wrong or oppress the resident alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. [p] [4] If you carry out these commands, kings who succeed to the throne of David will continue to enter the gates of this palace, riding in chariots or mounted on horses, with their ministers, and their people. [5] But if you do not obey these commands, I swear by myself, says the LORD: this palace shall become rubble. [6] For thus says the LORD concerning the palace of the king of Judah:

Though you be to me like Gilead,
like the peak of Lebanon,*
I will turn you into a waste,
a city uninhabited.
[7] Against you I will send destroyers,
each with his axe:
They shall cut down your choice cedars,
and cast them into the fire. [q]

[8] Many people will pass by this city and ask one another: "Why has the LORD done this to so great a city?" [r] [9] And the answer will be given: "Because they have deserted their covenant with the LORD, their God, by worshiping and serving strange gods." [s]

### Jehoahaz

[10] Weep not for him who is dead,*
mourn not for him!
Weep rather for him who is going away;
never again will he see
the land of his birth. [t]

[11] Thus says the LORD concerning Shallum,* son of Josiah, king of Judah, who succeeded his father as king. He has left this place never to return. [12] Rather, he shall die in the place where they exiled him; this land he shall not see again.

### Jehoiakim

[13] Woe to him who builds his house on wrong,
his terraces on injustice;
Who works his neighbor without pay,*
and gives him no wages. [u]
[14] Who says, "I will build myself a spacious house,
with airy rooms,"
Who cuts out windows for it,
panels it with cedar,
and paints it with vermillion.
[15] Must you prove your rank among kings*
by competing with them in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink?
He did what was right and just,
and it went well with him. [v]

**21, 13:** Valley-site, Rock of the Plain: Mount Zion, surrounded by valleys, was regarded by the royal house as impregnable. Despite this natural fortification, God shows derisively that it is no more than a rock rising from the plain, undefendable against the attack of his fury.

**21, 14:** Its forest: probably the royal palace, built of cedar wood; cf Jer 22, 14; in 1 Kgs 7, 2 the armory of Solomon's palace is called "the house of the forest of Lebanon."

**22, 6:** Gilead . . . Lebanon: both were known for their trees; cf v 7.

**22, 10:** Him who is dead: Josiah. His successor, Jehoahaz, who is going away, was deported by Pharaoh Neco to Egypt, where he died (2 Kgs 23, 33f).

**22, 11:** Shallum: Jehoahaz is called this only here. Presumably it was his name at birth, while Jehoahaz was his royal name.

**22, 13:** Without pay: either by forced labor in public works, or in as much as workers were defrauded of their hire. Despite the impoverishment caused in Judah by the payment of foreign tribute, Jehoiakim embarked on a program of lavish building in Jerusalem (v 14). Social injustice is the cause of much of the prophetic condemnation of the kings (v 17).

**22, 15f:** Josiah, the reforming king, prospered materially without oppressing his people; he embodied all the ideals of kingship.

m Jer 4, 4; 22, 3; Zec 7, 9. n 2 Kgs 25, 9; 2 Chr 36, 19. o Jer 17, 20. p Jer 21, 12; Ex 22, 21–24; Dt 24, 17. q Jer 21, 14. r Dt 29, 24ff. s Jer 19, 4; 40, 2f. t 2 Chr 35, 23ff. u Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 14; Hb 2, 9. 12. v 2 Kgs 23, 25.

16 Because he dispensed justice to the weak and
the poor,
it went well with him.
Is this not true knowledge of me?
says the LORD.[w]
17 But your eyes and heart are set on nothing
except on your own gain,
On shedding innocent blood,
on practicing oppression and extortion.[x]

18 Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

They shall not lament him,
"Alas! my brother"; "Alas! sister."*
They shall not lament him,
"Alas, Lord! alas, Majesty!"[y]
19 The burial of an ass* shall he be given,
dragged forth and cast out
beyond the gates of Jerusalem.[z]

### Jeconiah

20 Scale Lebanon and cry out,*
in Bashan lift up your voice;
Cry out from Abarim,
for all your lovers are crushed.[a]
21 I spoke to you when you were secure,
but you answered, "I will not listen."
This has been your way from your youth,
not to listen to my voice.
22 The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds,
your lovers shall go into exile.
Surely then you shall be ashamed and
confounded
because of all your wickedness.
23 You who dwell on Lebanon,
who nest in the cedars,
How you shall groan when pains come upon
you,
like the pangs of a woman in travail!

24 As I live, says the LORD, if you, Coniah,* son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, are a signet ring on my right hand, I will snatch you from it. 25 I will deliver you into the hands of those who seek your life; the hands of those whom you fear; the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the Chaldeans.[b] 26 I will cast you out, you and the mother who bore you,* into a different land from the one you were born in; and there you shall die.[c] 27 Neither of them shall come back to the land for which they yearn.[d]

28 Is this man Coniah a vessel despised, to be
broken up,
an instrument that no one wants?
Why are he and his descendants cast out?
why thrown into a land they know not?
29 O land, land, land,
hear the word of the LORD—
30 Thus says the LORD:
[e]Write this man down as one
childless,*
who will never thrive in his lifetime!
No descendant of his shall achieve
a seat on the throne of David
as ruler again over Judah.

**22, 18:** "Alas! my brother"; "Alas! sister": customary cries of mourning.

**22, 19:** The burial of an ass: no burial at all, except to be cast outside the city as refuse. This prophecy regards the popular feeling toward Jehoiakim rather than the actual circumstances of his burial. According to 2 Kgs 24, 5 he was buried with his fathers in Jerusalem. However, his grave may have been profaned by Nebuchadnezzar.

**22, 20–23:** The prophet first apostrophizes Jerusalem, which is bidden to scale Lebanon, Bashan, and Abarim, i.e., the highest surrounding mountains to the north, northeast, and southeast, to gaze on the ruin of its lovers, i.e., the false leaders of Judah, called its shepherds (22); cf Jer 2, 8. The year is 597 B.C., after Nebuchadnezzar's deportation of Jehoiachin. Jerusalem still stands (23), apparently as secure as the heights of Lebanon, but destruction is to follow (cf v 6).

**22, 24:** Coniah: a shortened form of Jeconiah, the name which Jeremiah gives the king called elsewhere in the Bible Jehoiachin. A signet ring: the seal used by important men—in a sense, their most valuable possession—mounted in a ring worn constantly on the hand. The Lord says that even were Jehoiachin such a precious possession, he would reject him. The words in vv 24–30 date from the short three-month reign of Jehoiachin, before he was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar.

**22, 26:** You and the mother who bore you: the queen mother held a special position in the monarchy of Judah, and in the Books of Kings she is invariably mentioned by name along with the king (1 Kgs 15, 2; 2 Kgs 18, 2). Jehoiachin did indeed die in Babylon.

**22, 30:** Childless: Jehoiachin is so considered because none of his descendants will be king. From the Book of Ezekiel, who dates his oracles according to Jehoiachin's fictitious regnal years, it is evident that the people expected Jehoiachin to return. The above prophecy of Jeremiah was uttered to dispel this hope (Jer 28, 4). Of the seven sons born to Jehoiachin in exile, none became king. His grandson Zerubbabel presided for a time over the Jewish community after the return from exile, but not as king.

w Prv 31, 9. x Ez 22, 13. 27. y Jer 16, 4ff; 1 Kgs 13, 30. z Jer 36, 30. a Jer 30, 14f; Dt 32, 49. b Jer 21, 7; 34, 20. c 2 Kgs 24, 15. d Jer 44, 14. e Jer 36, 30; 1 Chr 3, 16f; Mt 1, 12.

## CHAPTER 23

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**Messianic Reign*** [1] [f]Woe to the shepherds
who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture,
says the LORD. [2]Therefore, thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel, against the shepherds who
shepherd my people: You have scattered my
sheep and driven them away. You have not cared
for them, but I will take care to punish your evil
deeds.[g] [3]I myself will gather the remnant of my
flock from all the lands to which I have driven
them and bring them back to their meadow;
there they shall increase and multiply.[h] [4]I will
appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd
them so that they need no longer fear and
tremble; and none shall be missing, says the
LORD.[i]

[5]Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD,
when I will raise up a righteous shoot to
David;
As king he shall reign and govern wisely,
he shall do what is just and right in the
land.[j]
[6]In his days Judah shall be saved,
Israel shall dwell in security.
This is the name they give him:
"The LORD our justice."[k]

[7] [l]Therefore, the days will come, says the
LORD, when they shall no longer say, "As the
LORD lives, who brought the Israelites out of the
land of Egypt"; [8]but rather, "As the LORD lives,
who brought the descendants of the house of
Israel up from the land of the north"—and from
all the lands to which I banished them; they
shall again live on their own land.

### The False Prophets*

[9] Concerning the prophets:
My heart within me is broken,
my bones all tremble;
I am like a man who is drunk,
overcome by wine,
Because of the LORD,
because of his holy words.
[10]With adulterers the land is filled;
on their account the land mourns,
the pasture ranges are seared.[m]
Theirs is an evil course,
theirs is unjust power.
[11]Both prophet and priest are godless!
In my very house I find their wickedness,
says the LORD.[n]
[12]Hence their way shall become for them
slippery ground.
In the darkness they shall lose their footing,
and fall headlong;
Evil I will bring upon them:
the year of their punishment, says the
LORD.[o]
[13]Among Samaria's prophets
I saw unseemly deeds:
They prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.[p]
[14]But among Jerusalem's prophets
I saw deeds still more shocking:
Adultery, living in lies,
siding with the wicked,
so that no one turns from evil;
To me they are all like Sodom,
its citizens like Gomorrah.[q]

[15]Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts
against the prophets:

Behold, I will give them wormwood to eat,
and poison to drink;
For from Jerusalem's prophets
ungodliness has gone forth into the whole
land.[r]
[16] Thus says the LORD of hosts:

**23, 1–8:** With the false rulers who have governed his people the Lord contrasts himself, the good shepherd, who will in the times of restoration appoint worthy rulers (1–4). A messianic King will arise from the line of David who will rule over Judah and Israel with the justice of the Lord, fulfilling all the kingly ideals (5f). "The Lord our justice" is probably an ironic wordplay on the name of the weak King Zedekiah ("The Lord is justice"); the messianic King will be in reality what Zedekiah's name falsely proclaims him. The final verses, 7–8, were probably added during the exile.

**23, 9–40:** After the collection of oracles against the kings, the editor of the book placed this collection of oracles against the false prophets. With them are associated the priests, for both have betrayed their trust as instructors in the religion of the Lord; cf Jer 2, 8; 4, 9; 6, 13f.

f Jer 22, 22. g Ez 34, 4ff; Zec 11, 16f. h Jer 29, 14; 32, 37. i Jer 3, 15; Ez 34, 11f. j Jer 33, 14ff; Is 4, 2; 9, 5f; 11, 1–5. k Dn 9, 24. l 7f: Jer 16, 14f. m Jer 4, 22; 5, 7f; 9, 2. 10. n Jer 6, 13. o Ps 35, 6. p 1 Kgs 18, 19. q Jer 29, 21ff; Is 1, 9f. r Jer 8, 14; 9, 14.

Listen not to the words of your prophets,
who fill you with emptiness;
Visions of their own fancy they speak,
not from the mouth of the LORD.[s]
17 They say to those who despise the word of the LORD,*
"Peace shall be yours";
And to everyone who walks in hardness of heart,
"No evil shall overtake you."[t]
18 Now, who has stood in the council of the LORD,
to see him and to hear his word?
Who has heeded his word, so as to announce it?[u]
19 See, the storm of the LORD!
His wrath breaks forth
In a whirling storm
that bursts upon the heads of the wicked.[v]
20 The anger of the LORD shall not abate
until he has done and fulfilled
what he has determined in his heart.
When the time comes,
you shall fully understand.
21 I did not send these prophets,
yet they ran;
I did not speak to them,
yet they prophesied.[w]
22 Had they stood in my council,
and did they but proclaim to my people my words,
They would have brought them back from evil ways
and from their wicked deeds.
23 Am I a God near at hand only, says the LORD,[x]
and not a God far off?*
24 Can a man hide in secret
without my seeing him? says the LORD.
Do I not fill
both heaven and earth? says the LORD.

25 I have heard the prophets who prophesy lies in my name say, "I had a dream! I had a dream!" 26 How long will this continue? Is my name in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy lies and their own deceitful fancies? 27 By their dreams which they recount to each other, they think to make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name for Baal.[y] 28 Let the prophet who has a dream recount his dream; let him who has my word speak my word truthfully!

What has straw to do with the wheat?*
says the LORD.[z]
29 Is not my word like fire, says the LORD,
like a hammer shattering rocks?

30 Therefore I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal my words from each other.[a] 31 Yes, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who borrow speeches to pronounce oracles. 32 Yes, I am against the prophets who prophesy lying dreams, says the LORD, and who lead my people astray by recounting their lies and by their empty boasting. From me they have no mission or command, and they do this people no good at all, says the LORD.[b]

33 *And when this people, or a prophet or a priest asks you, "What is the burden of the LORD?" you shall answer, "You are the burden, and I cast you off, says the LORD." 34 If a prophet or a priest or anyone else mentions "the burden of the LORD," I will punish that man and his house. 35 Thus you shall ask, when speaking to one another, "What answer did the LORD give?" or, "What did the LORD say?" 36 But the burden of the LORD you shall mention no more. For each

**23, 17–20:** Not only are the false prophets personally immoral, but they encourage immorality by prophesying good of those who do evil. The true prophet, on the other hand, sees the inevitable consequences of sin.

**23, 23:** Near at hand only . . . far off: God knows not merely the present but also the future.

**23, 28f:** Straw . . . wheat: such is the contrast between false and true prophecy. True prophecy is like fire (cf Jer 5, 14; 20, 9), producing violent results (v 29); Jeremiah's own life is a testimony of this.

**23, 33–40:** A wordplay on massa, which means both oracle (usually of woe) and burden. In 34ff it appears that the word massa itself is forbidden the people in the meaning of a divine oracle. Doubtless this was because of some association unknown to us. In Hos 2, 18 it is forbidden to call God "Baal" ("master"), because of the association of this title with the Canaanite god.

s Jer 14, 14. t Jer 5, 12; Ez 13, 10; Mi 3, 11; Zec 10, 2. u Jb 15, 8; Is 40, 13; 1 Cor 2, 16. v Jer 30, 23. w Jer 29, 9. x Jer 16, 17; Ps 139, 8. y Jgs 3, 7; 8, 33. z Nm 12, 6. a Dt 18, 20. b Jer 28, 15ff.

man his own word becomes the burden so that you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 37Thus shall you ask the prophet, "What answer did the LORD give?" or, "What did the LORD say?" 38But if you ask about "the burden of the LORD," then thus says the LORD: Because you use this phrase, "the burden of the LORD," though I forbade you to use it, 39therefore I will lift you on high and cast you from my presence, you and the city which I gave to you and your fathers. 40And I will bring upon you eternal reproach, eternal, unforgettable shame.[c]

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## CHAPTER 24

**The Two Baskets of Figs*** 1The LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD.[d] —This was after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had exiled from Jerusalem Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, the artisans and the skilled workers, and brought them to Babylon.— 2One basket contained excellent figs, the early-ripening kind. But the other basket contained very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten. 3Then the LORD said to me: What do you see, Jeremiah?[e] "Figs," I replied; "the good ones are very good, but the bad ones very bad, so bad they cannot be eaten." 4Thereupon this word of the LORD came to me: 5Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, even so will I regard with favor Judah's exiles whom I sent away from this place into the land of the Chaldeans.[f] 6I will look after them for their good, and bring them back to this land, to build them up, not to tear them down; to plant them, not to pluck them out.[g] 7I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the LORD. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.[h] 8And like the figs that are bad, so bad they cannot be eaten—yes, thus says the LORD—even so will I treat Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his princes, the remnant of Jerusalem remaining in this land and those who have settled in the land of Egypt.[i] 9I will make them an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all the places to which I will drive them.[j] 10I will send upon them the sword, famine, and pestilence, until they have disappeared from the land which I gave them and their fathers.[k]

## CHAPTER 25

**Seventy Years of Exile*** 1The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah (the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon).[l] 2This word the prophet Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem: 3Since the thirteenth year of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day—these three and twenty years—the word of the LORD has come to me and I spoke to you untiringly, but you would not listen.[m] 4Though you refused to listen or pay heed, the LORD has sent you without fail all his servants the prophets[n] 5with this message: Turn back, each of you, from your evil way and from your evil deeds; then you shall remain in the land which the LORD gave you and your fathers, from of old and forever. 6Do not follow strange gods to serve and adore them, lest you provoke me with your handiwork, and I bring evil upon you.[o] 7But you would not listen to me, says the LORD, and so you provoked me with your handiwork to your own harm.[p] 8Hence, thus says the LORD of hosts: Since you would not listen to my words, 9lo! I will send for and fetch all the tribes of the north, says the LORD (and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant); I will

**24, 1–10:** Jeremiah, like Ezekiel, saw that no good could be expected from the people who had been left in Judah under Zedekiah or who had fled into Egypt; good was to be hoped for only from those who would pass through the purifying experience of the exile to form the new Israel.

**25, 1–14:** The fourth year of Jehoiakim: 605 B.C. Officially, the first year of Nebuchadnezzar began the following year; but as early as his victory over Egypt at Carchemish in 605, Nebuchadnezzar was the dominant power in the Near East, in whom Jeremiah now saw the fulfillment of his prophecy of the enemy to come from the north (cf Jer 1, 13; 6, 22ff). In vv 11f occurs for the first time the prophecy of the seventy years' exile; cf Jer 29, 10. This Jeremiah intends as a round number, to signify that the present generation must die out.

c Jer 20, 11. d Am 8, 1f. e Jer 1, 11. f Jer 29, 11; Lv 26, 44f. g Jer 12, 15; Am 9, 15. h Jer 30, 22; 31, 1; 32, 37; Bar 2, 31. i Jer 29, 18. j Jer 15, 4; Dt 28, 37. k Jer 14, 12. l Jer 36, 1. m Jer 1, 2. n 2 Chr 36, 15. o Jer 7, 6f. p Jer 7, 17ff.

bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against all these neighboring nations. I will doom them, making them an object of horror, of ridicule, of everlasting reproach.[q] [10]Among them I will bring to an end the song of joy and the song of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstone and the light of the lamp. [11]This whole land shall be a ruin and a desert. Seventy years these nations shall be enslaved to the king of Babylon;[r] [12]but when the seventy years have elapsed, I will punish the king of Babylon and the nation and the land of the Chaldeans for their guilt, says the LORD. Their land I will turn into everlasting desert.[s] [13]Against that land I will fulfill all the words I have spoken against it [all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations]. [14]They also shall be enslaved to great nations and mighty kings, and thus I will repay them according to their own deeds and according to their own handiwork.[t]

**The Cup of Judgment on the Nations** [15]For thus said the LORD, the God of Israel, to me:* Take this cup of foaming wine from my hand, and have all the nations to whom I will send you drink it.[u] [16]They shall drink, and be convulsed, and go mad, because of the sword I will send among them.[v] [17]I took the cup from the hand of the LORD and gave drink to all the nations to which the LORD sent me: [18][Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, her kings and her princes, to make them a ruin and a desert, an object of ridicule and cursing, as they are today;] [19]Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and his servants, his princes, all the people under him, native [20]and foreign; all the kings of the land of Uz;* all the kings of the land of the Philistines: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; [21]Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; [22]all the kings of Tyre, of Sidon, and of the shores beyond the sea;* [23]Dedan and Tema and Buz,* all the desert dwellers who shave their temples; [24][all the kings of Arabia;] [25]all the kings of Zimri, of Elam, of the Medes; [26]all the kings of the north, near and far, one after the other; all the kingdoms upon the face of the earth [and after them the king of Sheshach* shall drink].

[27]Tell them: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink! become drunk and vomit; fall, never to rise, before the sword that I will send among you![w] [28]If they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, say to them: Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink![x] [29]For since with this city, which is called by my name, I begin to inflict evil, how can you possibly be spared? You shall not be spared! I will call down the sword upon all who inhabit the earth, says the LORD of hosts.

[30]Prophesy against them all these things and say to them:

The LORD roars from on high,
  from his holy dwelling he raises his voice;
Mightily he roars over the range,
  a shout like that of vintagers over the grapes.[y]
[31] To all who inhabit the earth to its very ends
  the uproar spreads;
For the LORD has an indictment against the nations,
  he is to pass judgment upon all mankind:
The godless shall be given to the sword,
  says the LORD.
[32] Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Lo! calamity stalks
  from nation to nation;
A great storm is unleashed
  from the ends of the earth.

[33]On that day, those whom the LORD has slain will be strewn from one end of the earth to the other. None will mourn them, none will gather

**25, 15ff:** Jeremiah is a prophet to the nations (cf 1, 5) as well as to his own people. All the nations mentioned here appear again in the more extensive collection of Jeremiah's oracles against the nations in chapters 46–51.

**25, 20:** Uz: the homeland of Job, in Edomite or Arabian territory.

**25, 22:** The shores beyond the sea: Phoenician commercial colonies planted throughout the Mediterranean world.

**25, 23:** Dedan and Tema and Buz: North Arabian tribes.

**25, 26:** Sheshach: Babylon. The word is formed from babel by substituting letters of the Hebrew alphabet in inverse order.

q Jer 1, 15; 43, 10. r Lv 26, 32–35. s Is 13, 20ff. t Jer 27, 7; 50, 9. 41f; 51, 6. 24. u Rv 14, 10. v Jer 51, 7. w Ob 1, 16. x Jer 49, 12. y Jer 51, 14.

them for burial; they shall lie like dung on the field.[z]

34 Howl, you shepherds, and wail!
roll in the dust, leaders of the flock!
The time for your slaughter has come;
like choice rams you shall fall.
35 There is no flight for the shepherds,
no escape for the leaders of the flock.[a]
36 Listen! Wailing from the shepherds,
howling by the leaders of the flock!
For the LORD lays waste their grazing place,
37 desolate lie the peaceful pastures;
38 The lion leaves his lair,
and their land is made desolate
By the sweeping sword,
by the burning wrath of the LORD.[b]

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 26–29
See RG
312

**Jeremiah Threatened with Death** 1 In the beginning of the reign* of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this message came from the LORD: 2 Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the house of the LORD and speak to the people of all the cities of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD; whatever I command you, tell them, and omit nothing.[c] 3 Perhaps they will listen and turn back, each from his evil way, so that I may repent of the evil I have planned to inflict upon them for their evil deeds.[d] 4 Say to them: Thus says the LORD: If you disobey me, not living according to the law I placed before you 5 and not listening to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send you constantly though you do not obey them,[e] 6 I will treat this house like Shiloh, and make this the city which all the nations of the earth shall refer to when cursing another.[f]

7 Now the priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the LORD. 8 When Jeremiah finished speaking all that the LORD bade him speak to all the people, the priests and prophets laid hold of him, crying, "You must be put to death! 9 Why do you prophesy in the name of the LORD: 'This house shall be like Shiloh,' and 'This city shall be desolate and deserted'?" And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10 When the princes of Judah were informed of these things, they came up from the king's palace to the house of the LORD and held court at the New Gate of the house of the LORD. 11 The priests and prophets said to the princes and to all the people, "This man deserves death; he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."[g] 12 Jeremiah gave this answer to the princes and all the people: "It was the LORD who sent me to prophesy against this house and city all that you have heard. 13 Now, therefore, reform your ways and your deeds; listen to the voice of the LORD your God, so that the LORD will repent of the evil with which he threatens you.[h] 14 As for me, I am in your hands; do with me what you think good and right. 15 But mark well: if you put me to death, it is innocent blood you bring on yourselves, on this city and its citizens. For in truth it was the LORD who sent me to you, to speak all these things for you to hear."

16 Thereupon the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve death; it is in the name of the LORD, our God, that he speaks to us." 17 At this, some of the elders of the land came forward and said to all the people assembled, 18 "Micah of Moresheth* used to prophesy in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and he told all the people of Judah: Thus says the LORD of hosts:

Zion shall become a plowed field,
Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
and the temple mount a forest ridge.[i]

19 Did Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all Judah condemn him to death? Did they not rather fear

**26, 1:** The beginning of the reign: a technical expression for the time between a king's accession to the throne and the beginning of his first official (calendar) year as king. Jehoiakim's first regnal year was 608 B.C.

**26, 18:** Micah of Moresheth: the prophet Micah, who appears among the canonical minor prophets (cf Mi 1, 1).

z Jer 8, 2; 16, 4. 6. a Jer 32, 4. b Jer 4, 7. c Jer 7, 2. d Jer 18, 3. e Jer 25, 4. f Jer 7, 12. 14. g Jer 38, 4. h Jer 7, 3. i Mi 1, 1; 3, 12.

the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, so that he repented of the evil with which he had threatened them? But we are on the point of committing this great evil to our own undoing."[j]

**The Fate of Uriah** 20There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah, son of Shemaiah, from Kiriath-jearim; he prophesied the same things against this city and land as Jeremiah did. 21When King Jehoiakim and all his officers and princes were informed of his words, the king sought to kill him. But Uriah heard of it and fled in fear to Egypt. 22Thereupon King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan, son of Achbor, and others with him into Egypt 23to bring Uriah back to the king, who had him slain by the sword and his corpse cast into the common grave. 24But Ahikam, son of Shaphan,* protected Jeremiah, so that he was not handed over to the people to be put to death.

## CHAPTER 27

**Serve Babylon or Perish*** 1[In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah,]* . . . this message came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2Thus said the LORD to me: Make for yourself bands and yoke bars and put them over your shoulders. 3Send to the kings of Edom, of Moab, of the Ammonites, of Tyre, and of Sidon, through the ambassadors who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah, king of Judah, 4and charge them thus: Tell your masters: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 5It was I who made the earth, and man and beast on the face of the earth, by my great power, with my outstretched arm; and I can give them to whomever I think fit.[k] 6Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant; even the beasts of the field I have given him for his use.[l] 7All nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his land, too, shall come. Then it in turn shall serve great nations and mighty kings.[m] 8Meanwhile, if any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, or will not bend its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with sword, famine, and pestilence, says the LORD, until I give them into his hand.[n]

9You, however, must not listen to your prophets,* to your diviners and dreamers, to your soothsayers and sorcerers, who say to you, "You need not serve the king of Babylon."[o] 10For they prophesy lies to you, in order to drive you far from your land, to make me banish you so that you will perish.[p] 11The people that submits its neck to the yoke of the king of Babylon to serve him I will leave in peace on its own land, says the LORD, to till it and dwell in it.[q]

12To Zedekiah, king of Judah, I spoke the same words: Submit your necks to the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, so that you may live.[r] 13Why should you and your people die by sword, famine, and pestilence, with which the LORD has threatened the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?[s] 14Do not listen to the words of those prophets who say, "You need not serve the king of Babylon," for they prophesy lies to you.[t] 15I did not send them, says the LORD, but they prophesy falsely in my name, with the result that I must banish you, and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.[u]

16[v]To the priests and to all the people I spoke as follows: Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you: "The vessels of the house of the LORD will be brought back from Babylon soon now," for they prophesy lies to you. 17Do not listen to them! Serve the king of Babylon that you may live; else this city will become a heap of ruins.

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**26, 24:** Ahikam, son of Shaphan: one of Josiah's officials (2 Kgs 22, 12) and father of Gedaliah, Jeremiah's friend, who was governor of Judah after Zedekiah's deportation (cf Jer 39, 14; 40, 5ff).

**27, 1—29, 32:** A special collection of Jeremiah's prophecies dealing with false prophets. From stylistic peculiarities, quite evident in the Hebrew, it is plain that these three chapters once existed independently of the other prophecies of Jeremiah.

**27, 1:** [In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim . . . Judah]: this gloss cannot be correct because according to Jer 28, 1 the time is the fourth year of Zedekiah, 594 B.C., the occasion of an embassy of the neighboring states (v 3), doubtless for the purpose of laying plans against Nebuchadnezzar.

**27, 9:** Your prophets: seers and diviners served the Gentile kings as the professional prophets served the kings of Judah.

j 2 Chr 32, 26. k Jer 32, 17. l Jer 25, 9; 43, 10; Ez 30, 21. 25. m Jer 25, 11; 2 Chr 36, 20. n Jer 25, 9; Bar 2, 22. o Jer 29, 8. p Jer 14, 13–16. q Bar 2, 21. r Jer 38, 17. s Jer 24, 8ff. t Jer 14, 14; 23, 21. u Jer 20, 6. v Jer 28, 3; 2 Chr 36, 7. 10. 18.

[18]If they were prophets, if the word of the LORD
were with them, they would intercede with the
LORD of hosts, that the vessels which remain in
the house of the LORD and in the palace of the
king of Judah and in Jerusalem might not be
taken to Babylon. [19]*For thus says the LORD of
hosts concerning the pillars, the bronze sea, the
stands, and the rest of the vessels that remain in
this city, [20]which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Baby-
lon, did not take when he exiled Jeconiah, son of
Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to
Babylon, along with all the nobles of Judah and
Jerusalem— [21]yes, thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that
remain in the house of the LORD, in the palace of
the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem:[w] [22]To
Babylon they shall be brought, and there they
shall remain, until the day I look for them, says
the LORD; then I will bring them back and
restore them to this place.

## CHAPTER 28

Ch 26–29
See RG
312

**The Two Yokes** [1]That same year, in [the
beginning of] the reign of Zedekiah, king of
Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, the
prophet Hananiah, son of Azzur, from Gibeon,
said to me in the house of the LORD in the
presence of the priests and all the people:
[2]"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.
[3]Within two years I will restore to this place all
the vessels of the temple of the LORD which
Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away
from this place to Babylon. [4]And I will bring
back to this place Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim,
king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who
went to Babylon,' says the LORD, 'for I will break
the yoke of the king of Babylon.' "

[5]The prophet Jeremiah answered the prophet
Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all
the people assembled in the house of the LORD,
[6]and said: Amen! thus may the LORD do! May he
fulfill the things you have prophesied by bringing
the vessels of the house of the LORD and all the
exiles back from Babylon to this place! [7]But
now, listen to what I am about to state in your
hearing and the hearing of all the people. [8]From
of old, the prophets who were before you and
me prophesied war, woe, and pestilence against
many lands and mighty kingdoms. [9]But the
prophet who prophesies peace is recognized as
truly sent by the LORD only when his prophetic
prediction is fulfilled.[x]

[10]Thereupon the prophet Hananiah took the
yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah,
broke it, [11]and said in the presence of all the
people: "Thus says the LORD: 'Even so, within
two years I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnez-
zar, king of Babylon, from off the neck of all the
nations.' " At that, the prophet Jeremiah went
away.

[12]Some time after the prophet Hananiah had
broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet
Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jere-
miah: [13]Go tell Hananiah this: Thus says the
LORD: By breaking a wooden yoke, you forge an
iron yoke! [14]For thus says the LORD of hosts, the
God of Israel: A yoke of iron I will place on the
necks of all these nations serving Nebuchadnez-
zar, king of Babylon, and they shall serve him;
even the beasts of the field I give him.[y]

[15]To the prophet Hananiah the prophet Jere-
miah said: Hear this, Hananiah! The LORD has
not sent you, and you have raised false confi-
dence in this people. [16]For this, says the LORD, I
will dispatch you from the face of the earth; this
very year you shall die, because you have
preached rebellion against the LORD.[z] [17]That
same year, in the seventh month, Hananiah the
prophet died.

## CHAPTER 29

**Letter to the Exiles in Babylon** [1]This is the
contents of the letter which the prophet Jere-
miah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining
elders among the exiles, to the priests, the
prophets, and all the people who were exiled by
Nebuchadnezzar from Jerusalem to Babylon.
[2]This was after King Jeconiah and the queen
mother, the courtiers, the princes of Judah and
Jerusalem, the artisans and the skilled workmen
had left Jerusalem.[a] [3]Delivered in Babylon by

**27, 19–22:** This prophecy was fulfilled after Zedekiah's disastrous defeat; cf 2 Kgs 25, 13ff.

w 21f: 2 Kgs 25, 13–17; 2 Chr 36, 18. 22. x Dt 18, 22. y Jer 27, 6f; Dt 28, 48. z Dt 13, 6. a 2 Kgs 24, 15.

Elasah,* son of Shaphan, and by Gemariah, son
of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah, king of Judah, sent
to the king of Babylon, the letter read:
[4]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel, to all the exiles whom I exiled from
Jerusalem to Babylon: [5]Build houses to dwell in;
plant gardens, and eat their fruits. [6]Take wives
and beget sons and daughters; find wives for
your sons and give your daughters husbands, so
that they may bear sons and daughters. There
you must increase in number, not decrease.
[7]Promote the welfare of the city to which I have
exiled you; pray for it to the LORD, for upon its
welfare depends your own.[b]
[10]Thus says the LORD: Only after seventy
years have elapsed for Babylon will I visit you
and fulfill for you my promise to bring you back
to this place.[c] [11]For I know well the plans I have
in mind for you, says the LORD, plans for your
welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future
full of hope. [12]When you call me, when you go
to pray to me, I will listen to you.[d] [13]When you
look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you
seek me with all your heart, [14]you will find me
with you, says the LORD, and I will change your
lot; I will gather you together from all the
nations and all the places to which I have
banished you, says the LORD, and bring you back
to the place from which I have exiled you.[e]
[16]Thus says the LORD concerning the king
who sits on David's throne, and all the people
who remain in this city, your brethren who did
not go with you into exile; [17]thus says the LORD
of hosts: I am sending against them sword,
famine and pestilence. I will make them like
rotten figs, too bad to be eaten. [18]I will pursue
them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and
make them an object of horror to all the king-
doms of the earth, of malediction, astonishment,
ridicule, and reproach to all the nations among
which I will banish them.[f] [19]For they did not
listen to my words, says the LORD, though I kept
sending them my servants the prophets, only to
have them go unheeded, says the LORD.[g]
[20]You, now, listen to the word of the LORD, all
you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to
Babylon. [15]As for your saying, "The LORD has
raised up for us prophets here in Babylon"—
[8]thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
Do not let yourselves be deceived by the proph-
ets and diviners who are among you; do not
listen to those among you who dream dreams.[h]
[9]For they prophesy lies to you in my name; I did
not send them, says the LORD.[i] [21]This is what
the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, has to say
about those who prophesy lies to you in my
name, Ahab, son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, son
of Maaseiah: I am handing them over to Nebu-
chadnezzar, king of Babylon, who will slay them
before your eyes.[j] [22]All the exiles of Judah in
Babylon will pattern a curse after them: "May
the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab,
whom the king of Babylon roasted in the
flames." [23]For they are criminals in Israel, com-
mitting adultery with their neighbors' wives, and
alleging in my name things I did not command. I
know, I am witness, says the LORD.[k]

**The False Prophet Shemaiah** [24]Say this to
Shemaiah, the Nehelamite: [25]Thus says the
LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you
sent letters on your own authority to all the
people of Jerusalem, to all the priests and to
Zephaniah, the priest, son of Maaseiah, with
this message: [26]*"The LORD has appointed you
priest in place of the priest Jehoiada, so that
there may be police officers in the house of the
LORD, to take action against all madmen and
those who pose as prophets, by putting them
into the stocks or the pillory. [27]Why, then, do
you not rebuke Jeremiah of Anathoth who
poses as a prophet among you? [28]For he sent us
in Babylon this message: It will be a long time;

**29, 3:** Elasah: possibly the brother of Ahikam (cf Jer 26, 24). Gemariah; perhaps the son of the high priest Hilkiah; cf 2 Kgs 22, 4. Zedekiah had dispatched these men to Nebuchadnezzar for some other purpose, possibly the payment of tribute, but Jeremiah took advantage of their mission to send his letter by them.

**29, 26–29:** The words of Jeremiah to the false prophet Shemaiah are not fully preserved in the current Hebrew text, as is seen in the incomplete sentence of this translation (vv 25–28). In his letter to Zephaniah Shemaiah reminds him of his authority, as Pashhur's successor, to imprison Jeremiah. Zephaniah, however, merely reads the letter to Jeremiah but does not imprison him.

b 1 Tm 2, 1f. c Jer 25, 11; 2 Chr 36, 21f; Ezr 1, 1; Dn 9, 2; Zec 1, 12; 7, 5. d Jer 33, 3. e Jer 23, 3. 8. f Jer 15, 4; 24, 9; 34, 17f. g Jer 25, 4. h Jer 27, 9. 14. i Jer 5, 31. j Jer 14, 14. k Jer 23, 14.

build houses to live in; plant gardens and eat
their fruits. . . ."
29 When the priest Zephaniah read this letter
to the prophet, 30 the word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah: 31 Send the message to all the exiles:
Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah, the
Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah prophesies to
you without a mission from me, and raises false
confidence, 32 says the LORD, I will therefore
punish Shemaiah, the Nehelamite, and his off-
spring. None of them shall survive among this
people to see the good I will do to this people,
says the LORD, because he preached rebellion
against the LORD.

## CHAPTER 30

Ch 30–33
See RG
312–313,
315–316

**The Restoration*** 1 The following message
came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel: Write all the words I
have spoken to you in a book.[l] 3 For behold, the
days will come, says the LORD, when I will
change the lot of my people (of Israel and Judah,
says the LORD), and bring them back to the land
which I gave to their fathers; they shall have it as
their possession.[m]
4 These are the words which the LORD spoke
to Israel and to Judah: 5 thus says the LORD:

A cry of dismay we hear;
fear reigns, not peace.
6 Inquire, and see:
since when do men bear children?
Why, then, do I see all these men,
with their hands on their loins
like women in childbirth?
Why have all their faces turned
deathly pale?[n]
7 How mighty is that day—
none like it!
A time of distress for Jacob,
though he shall be saved from it.[o]

8 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, "I will
break his yoke from off your necks and snap your
bonds." Strangers shall no longer enslave them;[p]
9 instead, they shall serve the LORD, their God,
and David, their king,* whom I will raise up for
them.[q]

10 But you, my servant Jacob, fear not, says the
LORD,
be not dismayed, O Israel!
Behold, I will deliver you from the far-off land,
your descendants, from their land of exile;
Jacob shall again find rest,
shall be tranquil and undisturbed,[r]
11 for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver
you.
I will make an end of all the nations
among which I have scattered you;
but of you I will not make an end.
I will chastise you as you deserve,
I will not let you go unpunished.[s]

12 For thus says the LORD:
Incurable is your wound,
grievous your bruise;[t]
13 There is none to plead your cause,
no remedy for your running sore,
no healing for you.
14 All your lovers have forgotten you,
they do not seek you.
I struck you as an enemy would strike,
punished you cruelly;[u]
15 Why cry out over your wound?
your pain is without relief.
Because of your great guilt,
your numerous sins,
I have done this to you.[v]
16 Yet all who devour you shall be devoured,
all your enemies shall go into exile.
All who plunder you shall be plundered,

30, 1—31, 40: These two chapters do not belong chronologically to those that precede or follow. They contain mainly oracles of salvation which Jeremiah originally uttered on behalf of the conquered remnants of the northern kingdom; then, after Judah began to share Samaria's fate, the oracles were extended to include Judah. Their composition is to be placed early in Jeremiah's ministry, probably after the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.), when Josiah assumed power over the North; cf 2 Kgs 23, 15ff.

30, 9: David, their king: the messianic King of the Davidic line, often called David by the prophets; cf Ez 34, 23f; 37, 24f; Hos 3, 5.

l Jer 36, 2; Hb 2, 2; Rv 1, 11. m Jer 29, 14; 31, 8. 10. 23; 32, 37. 44; Ez 39, 25; Am 9, 14. n Jer 6, 24; 50, 43. o Am 5, 18; Zep 1, 14f. p Is 14, 5f; Ez 34, 27. q Ez 34, 23; 37, 24; Hos 3, 5; Lk 1, 69. r Jer 46, 27; Is 43, 5. s Jer 46, 28; Ez 11, 16f; Am 9, 8f. t Jer 10, 19; 14, 17; 15, 18. u Jer 22, 22; Lam 1, 19. v Jer 15, 18.

all who pillage you I will hand over to
pillage.[w]
17 For I will restore you to health;
of your wounds I will heal you, says the
LORD.
"The outcast" they have called you,
"with no avenger."[x]
18 Thus says the LORD:
See! I will restore the tents of Jacob,
his dwellings I will pity;
City shall be rebuilt upon hill,
and palace restored as it was.[y]
19 From them will resound songs of praise,
the laughter of happy men.
I will make them not few, but many;
they will not be tiny, for I will glorify them.[z]
20 His sons shall be as of old,
his assembly before me shall stand firm;
I will punish all his oppressors.[a]
21 His leader* shall be one of his own,
and his rulers shall come from his kin.
When I summon him, he shall approach me;
how else should one take the deadly risk
of approaching me? says the LORD.
22 You shall be my people,
and I will be your God.[b]

23 See, the storm of the LORD!
His wrath breaks forth
In a whirling storm
that bursts upon the heads of the wicked.[c]
24 The anger of the LORD will not abate
until he has done and fulfilled
what he has determined in his heart.
When the time comes,
you will fully understand.[d]

## CHAPTER 31

### Good News of the Return

1 At that time, says the LORD,
I will be the God of all the tribes of Israel,
and they shall be my people.[e]
2 Thus says the LORD:
The people that escaped the sword*
have found favor in the desert.
As Israel comes forward to be given his rest,
3 the LORD appears to him from afar:
With age-old love I have loved you;
so I have kept my mercy toward you.[f]
4 Again I will restore you, and you shall be
rebuilt,
O virgin Israel;
Carrying your festive tambourines,
you shall go forth dancing with the
merrymakers.
5 Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria;
those who plant them shall enjoy the
fruits.[g]
6 Yes, a day will come when the watchmen
will call out on Mount Ephraim:
"Rise up, let us go to Zion,
to the LORD, our God."[h]

### The Road of Return

7 For thus says the LORD:
Shout with joy for Jacob,
exult at the head of the nations;
proclaim your praise and say:
The LORD has delivered his people,
the remnant of Israel.[i]
8 Behold, I will bring them back
from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world,
with the blind and the lame in their midst,
The mothers and those with child;
they shall return as an immense throng.[j]
9 They departed in tears,
but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
on a level road, so that none shall
stumble.

Ch 30–33
See RG
312–313,
315–316

**30, 21:** His leader: probably not the messianic King, but simply any one of the rulers of the restored Israel, who will no longer be foreigners, and with whom the Lord will be on terms of intimacy, as with the whole people. The deadly risk of approaching me: to approach God unsummoned brings death; cf Lv 16, 1f.

**31, 2:** The people that escaped the sword: the exiles who were not killed but deported; they have found favor in the desert, across which they were driven into captivity. The prophet alludes to the first desert wandering of Israel (Ex 16ff), in which the people found the Lord. His rest: the land of promise. The perfect fulfillment of this promised rest is found only in the New Testament (Heb chapters 3 and 4).

w Jer 2, 3. x Is 33, 6. y Jer 33, 7. 11; Ezr 6, 3–15; Ez 36, 10. z Is 35, 10; 51, 11. a Is 49, 26. b Jer 24, 7; 31, 1. 33; 32, 38; Lv 26, 12; Ez 11, 20; 36, 28. c Jer 23, 19. d Jer 23, 20. e Jer 30, 22. f Dt 7, 8; 10, 15; Is 43, 4; 63, 9; Hos 11, 1. 4. g Is 65, 21; Am 9, 14. h Is 2, 3; 27, 13; Mi 4, 2. i Is 12, 6. j Jer 3, 18; 23, 3. 8; Is 35, 5f.

For I am a father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first-born. [k]
10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
proclaim it on distant coasts, and say:
He who scattered Israel, now gathers them together,
he guards them as a shepherd his flock.
11 The LORD shall ransom Jacob,
he shall redeem him from the hand of his conqueror. [l]
12 Shouting, they shall mount the heights of Zion,
they shall come streaming to the LORD's blessings:
The grain, the wine, and the oil,
the sheep and the oxen;
They themselves shall be like watered gardens,
never again shall they languish. [m]
13 Then the virgins shall make merry and dance,
and young men and old as well.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will console and gladden them after their sorrows.
14 I will lavish choice portions upon the priests,
and my people shall be filled with my blessings,
says the LORD.

### End of Rachel's Mourning

15 Thus says the LORD:
In Ramah* is heard the sound of moaning,
of bitter weeping!
Rachel mourns her children,
she refuses to be consoled
because her children are no more. [n]
16 Thus says the LORD:
Cease your cries of mourning,
wipe the tears from your eyes.
The sorrow you have shown shall have its reward,
says the LORD,
they shall return from the enemy's land.
17 There is hope for your future, says the LORD;
your sons shall return to their own borders. [o]

18 I hear, I hear Ephraim pleading:
You chastised me, and I am chastened;
I was an untamed calf.
If you allow me, I will return,
for you are the LORD, my God. [p]
19 I turn in repentance;
I have come to myself, I strike my breast;
I blush with shame,
I bear the disgrace of my youth. [q]
20 Is Ephraim not my favored son,
the child in whom I delight?
Often as I threaten him,
I still remember him with favor;
My heart stirs for him,
I must show him mercy, says the LORD. [r]

### Summons To Return Home

21 Set up road markers,
put up guideposts;
Turn your attention to the highway,
the road by which you went.
Turn back, O virgin Israel,
turn back to these your cities.
22 How long will you continue to stray,
rebellious daughter?
The LORD has created a new thing upon the earth:
the woman must encompass the man* with devotion.

**31, 15:** Ramah: a village about five miles north of Jerusalem, where Rachel was buried (1 Sm 10, 2). Rachel: said to mourn for her children since she was the ancestress of Ephraim, the chief of the northern tribes. Mt 2, 18 applies this verse to the slaughter of the innocents by Herod.

**31, 22:** The woman must encompass the man: the words "with devotion," not in the Hebrew, are added for the sense. No fully satisfactory explanation has been given this text. Among the more probable are these: (a) Formerly the man (the Lord) encompassed the woman (Israel) with mercy and devotion; now in the spiritual religion of Israel which will follow on the restoration, this order will be reversed. (b) So secure will Israel be after the restoration that women will no longer need the natural protection of their husbands, but even weak women can protect men. (c) St. Jerome in his commentary on this verse understood it of Mary's virginal conception of Christ. "The Lord has created a new thing on earth; without seed of man, without carnal union and conception, 'a woman will encompass a man' within her womb—One who, though He will later appear to advance in wisdom and age through the stages of infancy and childhood, yet, while confined for the usual number of months in his mother's womb, will already be perfect man."

k Ex 4, 22. l Is 44, 23; 48, 20. m Is 58, 11. n Mt 2, 18. o Jer 29, 10–14. p Lv 26, 40ff. q Dt 30, 1ff. r Hos 11, 8.

23Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: When I change their lot in the land of
Judah and her cities, they shall again repeat this
greeting: "May the LORD bless you, holy moun-
tain, abode of justice!"[s] 24Judah and all her
cities, the farmers and those who lead the flock,
shall dwell there together. 25For I will refresh
the weary soul; every soul that languishes I will
replenish. 26Upon this I awoke and opened my
eyes; but my sleep was sweet to me.*

27The days are coming, says the LORD, when I
will seed the house of Israel and the house of
Judah with the seed of man and the seed of
beast. 28As I once watched over them to uproot
and pull down, to destroy, to ruin, and to harm,
so I will watch over them to build and to plant,
says the LORD.[t] 29In those days they shall no
longer say,

"The fathers ate unripe grapes,[u]
and the children's teeth are set on edge,"*

30but through his own fault only shall anyone
die: the teeth of him who eats the unripe grapes
shall be set on edge.

**The New Covenant*** 31The days are coming,
says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.[v]
32It will not be like the covenant I made with
their fathers the day I took them by the hand to
lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they
broke my covenant and I had to show myself
their master, says the LORD.[w] 33But this is the
covenant which I will make with the house of
Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place
my law within them, and write it upon their
hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my
people.[x] 34No longer will they have need to
teach their friends and kinsmen how to know
the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know
me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their
evildoing and remember their sin no more.[y]

### Certainty of God's Promise

35 Thus says the LORD,
He who gives the sun to light the day,
moon and stars to light the night;
Who stirs up the sea till its waves roar,
whose name is LORD of hosts:[z]
36If ever these natural laws give way
in spite of me, says the LORD,
Then shall the race of Israel cease
as a nation before me forever.[a]
37 Thus says the LORD:
If the heavens on high can be measured,
or the foundations below the earth be
sounded,
Then will I cast off the whole race of Israel
because of all they have done, says the
LORD.

**Rebuilding of Jerusalem** 38The days are coming, says the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt as the LORD's,[b] from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.* 39The measuring line shall be stretched from there straight to the hill Gareb and then turn to Goah. 40The whole valley of corpses and ashes,* all the slopes toward the Kidron Valley, as far as the corner of the Horse Gate at the east, shall be holy to the LORD. Never again shall the city be rooted up or thrown down.

## CHAPTER 32

**Pledge of Restoration*** 1This message came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of

Ch 30–33
See RG
312–313,
315–316

**31, 26:** I awoke . . . sweet to me: probably said by the prophet himself.

**31, 29:** "The fathers . . . on edge": a proverb used in Israel, expressing the idea that children suffer for the sins of their parents (cf Ez 18, 2). The Israel of the restoration will be characterized instead by personal responsibility and retribution for one's acts (v 30; cf vv 31–34).

**31, 31–34:** The new covenant to be made with Israel is a common theme of the prophets, beginning with Hosea. According to Jeremiah, the qualities of the new covenant that make it different from the old are: (a) It will not be broken, but will last forever; (b) Its law will be written in the heart; not merely on tablets of stone; (c) The knowledge of God will be so generally shown forth in the life of the people that it will no longer be necessary to put it into words of instruction. In the fullest sense, this prophecy was fulfilled only through the work of Jesus Christ; cf Lk 22, 20; 1 Cor 11, 25.

**31, 38:** From the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate: from the northeast to the northwest.

**31, 40:** Valley of corpses and ashes: the Valley of Ben-hinnom, which joins the Kidron at the southeast of ancient Jerusalem. The Horse Gate: in the eastern city wall, at the southeast corner of the temple area.

**32, 1–44:** This chapter recounts a prophecy "in action." At the Lord's command, Jeremiah fulfills his family duty to purchase the land of his cousin, carrying out all the legal forms, including records, to testify that Judah will be restored and that the life of the past will be resumed.

s Jer 30, 3; Ps 122, 8. t Jer 1, 10; 18, 7. u Dt 24, 16; Ez 18, 2. v Jer 32, 40; Heb 9, 15. w Ex 24, 7f; Dt 5, 2. x Jer 32, 40; Ez 37, 26; Heb 10, 16. y Is 54, 13. z Gn 1, 14–18. a Jer 33, 20f. b Neh 12, 38; Zec 14, 10f.

Zedekiah,* king of Judah, the eighteenth year of
Nebuchadnezzar. [2]At that time the army of the
king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and
the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned in the
quarters of the guard, at the king's palace.[c]
[3]Zedekiah, king of Judah, had imprisoned him
there, remonstrating: "How dare you prophesy:
Thus says the LORD: I am handing over this city
to the king of Babylon, who will capture it.[d]
[4]Neither shall Zedekiah, king of Judah, escape
the hands of the Chaldeans; rather shall he be
handed over to the king of Babylon. They shall
meet and speak face to face,[e] [5]and Zedekiah
shall be taken to Babylon. There he shall remain,
until I attend to him, says the LORD; in fighting
the Chaldeans, you cannot win!"[f]

[6]*This message came to me from the LORD,
said Jeremiah: [7]Hanamel, son of your uncle
Shallum, will come to you with the offer:[g] "Buy
for yourself my field in Anathoth, since you, as
nearest relative, have the first right of pur-
chase."* [8]Then, as the LORD foretold, Hanamel,
my uncle's son, came to me to the quarters of
the guard and said, "Please buy my field in
Anathoth, in the district of Benjamin; as nearest
relative, you have the first claim to possess it;
make it yours." I knew this was what the LORD
meant, [9]so I bought the field in Anathoth from
my cousin Hanamel, paying him the money,
seventeen silver shekels.

[10]When I had written and sealed the deed,
called witnesses and weighed out the silver on
the scales, [11]I accepted the deed of purchase,
both the sealed copy, containing title and condi-
tions, and the open one.* [12]This deed of pur-
chase I gave to Baruch, son of Neriah, son of
Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hana-
mel and of the witnesses who had signed the
deed, and before all the men of Judah who
happened to be in the quarters of the guard.[h]

[13]In their presence I gave Baruch this charge:
[14]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
Take these deeds, both the sealed and the open
deed of purchase, and put them in an earthen
jar,* so that they can be kept there a long time.
[15]For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall
again be bought in this land.

[16]After giving the deed of purchase to Baruch,
son of Neriah, I prayed thus to the LORD: [17]Ah,
Lord GOD, you have made heaven and earth by
your great might, with your outstretched arm;
nothing is impossible to you.[i] [18]You continue
your kindness through a thousand generations;
and you repay the fathers' guilt, even into the
lap of their sons who follow them. O God, great
and mighty, whose name is LORD of hosts,[j]
[19]great in counsel, mighty in deed, whose eyes
are open to all the ways of men, giving to each
according to his ways, according to the fruit of
his deeds:[k] [20]you have wrought signs and won-
ders in the land of Egypt and to this day, both in
Israel and among all other men, until now you
have gained renown.[l] [21]With strong hand and
outstretched arm you brought your people Israel
out of the land of Egypt amid signs and wonders
and great terror. [22]This land you gave them, as
you had promised their fathers under oath, a
land flowing with milk and honey.[m] [23]They
entered and took possession of it, but they did
not listen to your voice; by your law they did not
live, and what you commanded they failed to do.
Hence you let all these evils befall them.[n] [24]See,
the siegeworks have arrived at this city to breach

**32, 1:** The tenth year of Zedekiah: 588 B.C. The eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar: dating his reign from his victory at Carchemish; see note on Jer 25, 1–14.

**32, 6–9:** Jeremiah's imprisonment by the weak-willed Zedekiah was a technical custody that did not deprive him of all freedom of action. The siege maintained by the Chaldeans (v 2) was only now beginning (v 24), and could be bypassed by individual persons going to and fro between Jerusalem and nearby Anathoth.

**32, 7:** The first right of purchase: the obligation of the closest relative to redeem the property of one in economic distress, so that the ancestral land might remain within the family (Lv 25, 25–28); see note on Ru 2, 20.

**32, 11:** The sealed copy . . . and the open one: the legal deed of sale was written on a scroll, which was then rolled up and sealed; about it was rolled another scroll, left unsealed, containing a copy or a summary of the first.

**32, 14:** In an earthen jar: the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in such a jar.

c Jer 33, 1; 37, 20; 38, 6; 39, 14. d Jer 26, 9; 34, 2; 37, 6–10. e Jer 34, 3; 38, 18. 23; 39, 4–7. f Jer 39, 7; 52, 11. g Lv 25, 24–34; Ru 4, 4. h Jer 36, 4. i 2 Kgs 19, 15; Jb 42, 2. j Ex 20, 5f; Dt 5, 9. k Jb 34, 21; Ps 33, 13ff. l Ex 6, 6; Dt 4, 34; Ps 135, 9. m Jer 11, 5; Gn 15, 18; 17, 8; 26, 3. n Jer 7, 24ff; Dn 9, 10–14.

it; the city will be handed over to the Chaldeans
who are attacking it, amid sword, famine, and
pestilence. What you threatened has happened,
you see it yourself;[o] 25and yet you tell me, O
Lord God: Buy the field with money, call in
witnesses. But the city has already been handed
over to the Chaldeans!

26Then this word of the Lord came to Jere-
miah: 27I am the Lord, the God of all mankind!
Is anything impossible to me? 28This now is
what the Lord says: I will hand over this city to
the Chaldeans, for Nebuchadnezzar, king of
Babylon, to take. 29The Chaldeans who are
attacking it shall enter this city and set fire to it,
burning it and its houses, on the roofs of which
incense was burned to Baal and libations were
poured out to strange gods as a provocation to
me.[p] 30The Israelites and the Judeans from their
youth have done only what is evil in my eyes;
the Israelites did nothing but provoke me with
the works of their hands, says the Lord.[q]
31From the day it was built to this day, this city
has excited my anger and wrath, 32so that I must
put it out of my sight for all the wickedness the
Israelites and Judeans, with their kings and their
princes, their priests and their prophets, the men
of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem, have
done to provoke me.[r] 33They turned their backs
to me, not their faces; though I kept teaching
them, they would not listen to my correction.[s]
34They defiled the house named after me by the
horrid idols they set up in it.[t] 35They built high
places to Baal in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, and
immolated their sons and daughters to Molech,*
bringing sin upon Judah; this I never com-
manded them, nor did it even enter my mind
that they should practice such abominations.[u]

36Now, therefore, thus says the Lord, the
God of Israel, concerning this city, which as you
say is handed over to the king of Babylon amid
sword, famine, and pestilence: 37Behold, I will
gather them together from all the lands to which
in anger, wrath, and great rage I banish them; I
will bring them back to this place and settle
them here in safety.[v] 38They shall be my people,
and I will be their God.[w] 39One heart and one
way I will give them, that they may fear me
always, to their own good and that of their
children after them. 40I will make with them an
eternal covenant, never to cease doing good to
them; into their hearts I will put the fear of me,
that they may never depart from me.[x] 41I will
take delight in doing good to them: I will replant
them firmly in this land, with all my heart and
soul.[y]

42For thus says the Lord: Just as I brought
upon this people all this great evil, so I will bring
upon them all the good I promise them.[z]
43Fields shall again be bought in this land, which
you call a desert, without man or beast, handed
over to the Chaldeans.[a] 44Fields shall be bought
with money, deeds written and sealed, and
witnesses shall be used in the land of Benjamin,
in the suburbs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah
and of the hill country, in the cities of the
foothills and of the Negeb, when I change their
lot, says the Lord.[b]

## CHAPTER 33

Ch 30–33
See RG
312–313,
315–316

**Restoration of Jerusalem** 1The word of the
Lord came to Jeremiah a second time while he
was still imprisoned in the quarters of the guard:
2Thus says the Lord who made the earth and
gave it form and firmness, whose name is Lord:
3Call to me, and I will answer you; I will tell to
you things great beyond reach of your knowl-
edge.[c] 4Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel,
concerning the houses of this city and the
palaces of Judah's kings, which are being de-
stroyed in the face of siegeworks and the
sword:[d] 5men come to battle the Chaldeans,
and these houses will be filled with the corpses
of those whom I slay in my anger and wrath,

**32, 35:** Molech: the god to whom human sacrifice was offered in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. Here, as in Jer 19, 5, he is given the name Baal; see note on Lv 18, 21.

o Jer 21, 5; 33, 4. p Jer 21, 10; 37, 8ff. q Jer 3, 25; 44, 8. r Jer 2, 26; Is 3, 8. s Jer 7, 24. t Jer 7, 30; 2 Kgs 21, 4f. u Jer 7, 31; 19, 5; Ps 106, 37f. v Jer 23, 3; 29, 14; Is 11, 12; Ez 11, 17. w Jer 24, 7; 31, 33. x Jer 31, 31ff. y Dt 30, 9. z Jer 33, 10–14; Zec 8, 13. a Jer 33, 10. b Jer 17, 26; 33, 7. c Is 48, 6. d Jer 32, 24.

when I hide my face from this city for all their wickedness.[e]

[6]Behold, I will treat and assuage the city's wounds; I will heal them, and reveal to them an abundance of lasting peace.[f] [7]I will change the lot of Judah and the lot of Israel, and rebuild them as of old.[g] [8]I will cleanse them of all the guilt they incurred by sinning against me; all their offenses by which they sinned and rebelled against me, I will forgive.[h] [9]Then Jerusalem shall be my joy, my praise, my glory, before all the nations of the earth, as they hear of all the good I will do among them. They shall be in fear and trembling over all the peaceful benefits I will give her.

[10]Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, "How desolate it is, without man, without beast!" and in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are now deserted, without man, without citizen, without beast, there shall yet be heard[i] [11]the cry of joy, the cry of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride, the sound of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, singing, "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good; his mercy endures forever." For I will restore this country as of old, says the LORD.[j]

[12]Thus says the LORD of hosts: In this place, now desolate, without man or beast, and in all its cities there shall again be sheepfolds for the shepherds to couch their flocks. [13]In the cities of the hill country, of the foothills, and of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin and the suburbs of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD.

Ch 34–45
See RG
312

[14]*The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. [15]In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land.[k] [16]In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice." [17]For thus says the LORD: Never shall David lack a successor on the throne of the house of Israel,[l] [18]nor shall priests of Levi ever be lacking, to offer holocausts before me, to burn cereal offerings, and to sacrifice victims.[m]

This word of the LORD also came to Jeremiah: [19]Thus says the LORD: [20]If you can break my covenant with day,[n] and my covenant with night, so that day and night no longer alternate in sequence, [21]then can my covenant with my servant David also be broken, so that he will not have a son to be king upon his throne, and my covenant with the priests of Levi who minister to me. [22]Like the host of heaven which cannot be numbered, and the sands of the sea which cannot be counted, I will multiply the descendants of my servant David and the Levites who minister to me.

[23]This word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [24]Have you not noticed what these people are saying: "The LORD has rejected the two tribes which he had chosen"? They spurn my people as if it were no longer a nation in their eyes.[o] [25][p]Thus says the LORD: When I have no covenant with day and night, and have given no laws to heaven and earth, [26]then too will I reject the descendants of Jacob and of my servant David, so as not to take from his descendants rulers for the race of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will change their lot and show them mercy.

## IV: Fall of Jerusalem

### CHAPTER 34

**Fate of Zedekiah** [1]This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD while Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his armies and the earth's kingdoms

**33, 14–26:** This is the longest continuous passage in the Book of Jeremiah that is lacking in the Greek. It appears to be the postexilic composition of an inspired writer who used parts of the prophecies of Jeremiah—often, however, in a sense different from the prophet's. The prediction of an eternal Davidic dynasty (14–17) to fulfill the prophecy of Nathan (2 Sm 7, 11–16), and of a perpetual priesthood and sacrifice (18), was not to be realized in the restoration of the Jewish nation. It finds its fulfillment only in Jesus of Nazareth, who combined with his messianic Davidic kingship an eternal priesthood; cf Heb 6, 20; 7, 24f.

e Jer 21, 4ff. f Is 57, 18. g Jer 30, 3; 32, 44. h Ez 36, 25. i Jer 32, 43. j 1 Chr 16, 34; Ezr 3, 11; Ps 136, 1. k Jer 23, 5; Ps 72, 1–4. 12ff; Is 11.1. l 2 Sm 7, 16; 1 Kgs 2, 4; Ps 89, 4f. 29. 36f. m Ez 44, 15f. n 20f: Jer 31, 36f; Ps 89, 37f. o Rom 11, 1f. p 25f: Jer 31, 36f; 32, 44.

subject to him, as well as the other peoples, were
all attacking Jerusalem and all her cities:[q] 2Thus
says the LORD, the God of Israel: Go to Zedekiah,
king of Judah, and tell him: Thus says the LORD: I
am handing this city over to the king of Babylon;
he will destroy it with fire.[r] 3Neither shall you
escape his hand; rather you will be captured and
fall into his hands. You shall see the king of Baby-
lon and speak to him face to face. Then you shall
be taken to Babylon.[s]

4But if you obey the word of the LORD,
Zedekiah, king of Judah, then, says the LORD to
you, you shall not die by the sword. 5You shall
die in peace, and they will lament you as their
lord, and burn spices for your burial as they did
for your fathers, the kings who preceded you
from the first; it is I who make this promise, says
the LORD.

6The prophet Jeremiah told all these things to
Zedekiah, king of Judah, in Jerusalem, 7while the
armies of the king of Babylon were attacking
Jerusalem and the remaining cities of Judah,
Lachish, and Azekah,* since these alone were
left of the fortified cities of Judah.

**The Pact Broken*** 8This is the word that came
to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah
had made an agreement with all the people in
Jerusalem to issue an edict of emancipation.
9Everyone was to free his Hebrew slaves, male
and female, so that no one should hold a man of
Judah, his brother, in slavery.[t] 10All the princes
and the others who entered the agreement
consented to set free their male and female
servants, so that they should be slaves no longer.
But though they agreed and freed them, 11after-
ward they took back their male and female
slaves whom they had set free and again forced
them into service.

12Then this word of the LORD came to Jere-
miah: 13Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:
The day I brought your fathers out of the land of
Egypt, out of the place where they were slaves, I
made this covenant with them: 14Every seventh
year each of you shall set free his Hebrew
brother who has sold himself to you; six years he
shall serve you, but then you shall let him go
free. Your fathers, however, did not heed me or
obey me. 15Today you indeed repented and did
what is right in my eyes by proclaiming the
emancipation of your brethren and making an
agreement before me in the house that is named
after me. 16But then you changed your mind and
profaned my name by taking back your male and
female slaves to whom you had given their
freedom; you forced them once more into slav-
ery.[u] 17Therefore, thus says the LORD: You did
not obey me by proclaiming your neighbors and
kinsmen free. I now proclaim you free, says the
LORD, for the sword, famine, and pestilence. I
will make you an object of horror to all the
kingdoms of the earth. 18*The men who violated
my covenant and did not observe the terms of
the agreement which they made before me, I
will make like the calf which they cut in two,
between whose two parts they passed. 19The
princes of Judah and of Jerusalem, the courtiers,
the priests, and the common people, who passed
between the parts of the calf, 20I will hand over,
all of them, to their enemies, to those who seek
their lives: their corpses shall be food for the
birds of the air and the beasts of the field.[v]

21Zedekiah, too, king of Judah, and his
princes, I will hand over to their enemies, to
those who seek their lives, to the soldiers of the
king of Babylon who have at present withdrawn
from you.[w] 22I will give the command, says the

**34, 7:** Lachish and Azekah: fortress towns to the southwest of Jerusalem which Nebuchadnezzar besieged to prevent help coming to Jerusalem from Egypt. Between 1935 and 1938, archaeologists found at Lachish several letters written on pottery fragments which date from 598 or 588 B.C., and which mention both Lachish and Azekah.

**34, 8–22:** While the Chaldean siege of Jerusalem was in progress, the citizens of Jerusalem made a covenant at Zedekiah's instigation to free their brother Judeans who were in slavery. Doubtless this was both to provide additional free defenders for the city and to offer reparation for past violations of the law, according to which Hebrew slaves were to serve no longer than six years (Dt 15, 12–15). But when the siege was temporarily lifted, probably because of the help promised by Pharaoh Hophra (cf Jer 37, 5), the inhabitants of Jerusalem broke the covenant and once more pressed their brethren into slavery (v 11).

**34, 18f:** As the Bible (Gn 15, 10–17) and also contemporary inscriptions make clear, agreements were sometimes ratified by walking between the divided pieces of animals while the contracting parties invoked on themselves a fate similar to that of the slaughtered beast if they should fail to keep their word. The agreement: that mentioned in vv 10. 15.

q Jer 52, 4; 2 Kgs 25, 1. r Jer 21, 10; 32, 3. 28. s Jer 32, 4; 52, 11. t Ex 21, 2ff; Lv 25, 39. 46; Dt 15, 12–15. u Lv 19, 12. v Jer 7, 33; 16, 4; 19, 7. w Jer 37, 5. 11.

LORD, and bring them back to this city. They shall attack and capture it, and destroy it with fire; the cities of Judah I will turn into a desert where no man dwells.[x]

## CHAPTER 35

Ch 34–45 See RG 312

**The Faithful Rechabites** [1]This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah: [2]Approach the Rechabites* and speak to them; bring them into the house of the LORD, to one of the rooms, and give them wine to drink. [3]So I went and brought Jaazaniah, son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, his brothers and all his sons, the whole company of the Rechabites, [4]into the house of the LORD, to the room of the sons of Hanan,* son of Igdaliah, the man of God, next to the princes' room, above the room of Maaseiah, son of Shallum, keeper of the doorway. [5]I set before these Rechabite men bowls full of wine and offered them cups to drink the wine.

[6]"We do not drink wine," they said to me: "Jonadab,* Rechab's son, our father, forbade us in these words: 'Neither you nor your children shall ever drink wine. [7]Build no house and sow no seed; neither plant nor own a vineyard. You shall dwell in tents all your life, so that you may live long on the earth where you are wayfarers.' [8]Now we have heeded Jonadab, Rechab's son, our father, in all his prohibitions. All our lives we have not drunk wine, neither we, nor our wives, nor our sons, nor our daughters. [9]We build no houses to live in; we own no vineyards or fields or crops, [10]and we live in tents; we obediently do everything our father Jonadab commanded us. [11]But when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded this land, we decided to come into Jerusalem to escape the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram;* that is why we are now living in Jerusalem."

[12]Then this word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [13]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go, say to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem: Will you not take correction and obey my words? says the LORD.[y] [14]The advice of Jonadab, Rechab's son, by which he forbade his children to drink wine, has been followed: to this day they have not drunk it; they obeyed their father's command. Me, however, you have not obeyed, although I spoke to you untiringly and insistently.[z] [15]I kept sending you all my servants the prophets, telling you to turn back, all of you, from your evil way; to reform your conduct, and not follow strange gods or serve them, if you would remain on the land which I gave you and your fathers; but you did not heed me or obey me.[a] [16]Yes, the children of Jonadab, Rechab's son, observed the command which their father laid on them; but this people does not obey me! [17]Now, therefore, says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: I will bring upon Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem every evil that I threatened; because when I spoke they did not obey, when I called they did not answer.[b]

[18]But to the company of the Rechabites Jeremiah said: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Since you have obeyed the command of Jonadab, your father, kept all his commands and done everything he commanded you, [19]thus therefore says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Never shall there fail to be a descendant of Jonadab, Rechab's son, standing in my service.

## CHAPTER 36

**Baruch Writes the Prophecies of Jeremiah** [1]In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: [2]Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you against Israel, Judah, and all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, in the days of Josiah, until today. [3]Perhaps, when the house of Judah hears all the evil I have in mind to do to them, they will turn back each

**35, 2:** The Rechabites: reactionaries who believed that the Lord could not be well served except by maintaining the original nomadic conditions of Israel's life. Without sharing their convictions, the prophet holds up their fidelity to their ideals as an example to put to shame his faithless countrymen. In the days of Jehoiakim: probably in 599 or 598 B.C.

**35, 4:** The sons of Hanan: probably the disciples of this man of God or prophet. Maaseiah: possibly the father of the priest Zephaniah (Jer 29, 25; 37, 3). Keeper of the doorway: a priestly function of responsibility; cf Jer 52, 24.

**35, 6:** Jonadab: a contemporary of King Jehu; cf 2 Kgs 10, 15ff.

**35, 11:** The army of Aram; Nebuchadnezzar enlisted the help of Judah's foreign neighbors in his assault on Jerusalem.

x Jer 37, 8; 52, 7–13; 2 Chr 36, 17. 19. y Jer 32, 33. z Jer 7, 13; 25, 3; 2 Chr 36, 15f. a Jer 25, 4f. 7. b Jer 11, 8f.

from his evil way, so that I may forgive their
wickedness and their sin.[c] [4]So Jeremiah called
Baruch, son of Neriah, who wrote down on a
scroll, as Jeremiah dictated, all the words which
the LORD had spoken to him.

[9]In the ninth month, in the fifth year of
Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, a fast to
placate the LORD was proclaimed for all the
people of Jerusalem and all who came from
Judah's cities to Jerusalem. [5]Then Jeremiah
charged Baruch: I cannot go to the house of the
LORD; I am prevented* from doing so. [6]Do you
go on the fast day and read publicly in the
LORD's house the LORD's words from the scroll
you wrote at my dictation; read them also to all
the men of Judah who come up from their cities.
[7]Perhaps they will lay their supplication before
the LORD and will all turn back from their evil
way; for great is the fury of anger with which the
LORD has threatened this people.[d]

[8]Baruch, son of Neriah, did everything the
prophet Jeremiah commanded; from the book-
scroll he read the LORD's words in the LORD's
house. [10]It was in the room of Gemariah,* son of
the scribe Shaphan, in the upper court of the
LORD's house, at the entrance of the New
Temple-Gate, that Baruch publicly read the
words of Jeremiah from his book.

[11]Now Micaiah, son of Gemariah, son of
Shaphan, heard all the words of the LORD read
from the book. [12]So he went down to the king's
palace, into the scribe's chamber,* where the
princes were just then in session: Elishama, the
scribe, Delaiah, son of Shemaiah, Elnathan, son
of Achbor, Gemariah, son of Shaphan, Zedekiah,
son of Hananiah, and the other princes. [13]To
them Micaiah reported all that he had heard
Baruch read publicly from his book. [14]There-
upon the princes sent Jehudi, son of Nethaniah,
son of Shelemiah, son of Cushi, to Baruch with
the order: "Come, and bring with you the scroll
you read publicly to the people." Scroll in hand,
Baruch, son of Neriah, went to them. [15]"Sit
down," they said to him, "and read it to us."
Baruch read it to them, [16]and when they heard
all its words, they were frightened and said to
one another, "We must certainly tell the king all
these things." [17]Then they asked Baruch: "Tell
us, please, how you came to write down all
these words." [18]"Jeremiah dictated all these
words to me," Baruch answered them, "and I
wrote them down with ink in the book." [19]At
this the princes said to Baruch, "Go into hiding,
you and Jeremiah; let no one know where you
are."

[20]Leaving the scroll in safekeeping in the
room of Elishama the scribe, they entered the
room where the king was. When they told him
everything that had happened, [21]he sent Jehudi
to fetch the scroll. Jehudi brought it from the
room of Elishama the scribe, and read it to the
king and to all the princes who were in atten-
dance on the king. [22]Now the king was sitting in
his winter house, since it was the ninth month,
and fire was burning in a brazier before him.
[23]Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four
columns, the king would cut off the piece with a
scribe's knife* and cast it into the fire in the
brazier, until the entire roll was consumed in the
fire. [24]Hearing all these words did not frighten
the king and his ministers or cause them to rend
their garments. [25]And though Elnathan, Delaiah,
and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the
scroll, he would not listen to them, [26]but com-
manded Jerahmeel, a royal prince, and Seraiah,
son of Azriel, and Shelemiah, son of Abdeel, to
arrest Baruch, the secretary, and the prophet
Jeremiah. But the LORD kept them concealed.

[27]This word of the LORD came to Jeremiah,
after the king burned the scroll with the text
Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch: [28]Take another
scroll, and write on it everything that the first
scroll contained, which Jehoiakim, king of Ju-
dah, burned up. [29]And against Jehoiakim, king of

**36, 5:** I am prevented: probably because of his temple sermon (Jer 7, 1–15), or because of temporary ritual uncleanness.

**36, 10:** Gemariah: member of a family friendly to Jeremiah, which had rights to a room in the fortress of the temple gateway overlooking the court of the temple; from a window in this room Baruch read Jeremiah's prophetic sermon to the people.

**36, 12:** The scribe's chamber: the office of the royal secretary.

**36, 23:** A scribe's knife: used to sharpen the reeds which were employed as pens.

c Jer 26, 3; Is 55, 6f. d 2 Kgs 22, 13.

Judah, say this: Thus says the LORD: You burned that scroll, saying, "Why did you write on it: Babylon's king shall surely come and lay waste this land and empty it of man and beast?" 30The LORD now says of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: [e] No descendant of his shall succeed to David's throne; his corpse shall be cast out, exposed to the heat of day, to the cold of night.* 31I will punish him and his descendants and his ministers for their wickedness; against them and the citizens of Jerusalem and the men of Judah I will fulfill all the threats of evil which went unheeded.

32Jeremiah took another scroll, and gave it to his secretary, Baruch, son of Neriah; he wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words contained in the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire, and many others of the same kind in addition.

## CHAPTER 37

Ch 34–45 See RG 312

**Jeremiah in the Dungeon** 1Coniah, son of Jehoiakim, was succeeded by King Zedekiah, son of Josiah; he was made king over the land of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.[f] 2Neither he, nor his ministers, nor the people of the land would listen to the words of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. 3Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah with this request: "Pray to the LORD, our God, for us."[g] 4At this time Jeremiah had not yet been put into prison;* he still came and went freely among the people. 5Also, Pharaoh's army* had set out from Egypt, and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard this report they marched away from the city.[h]

6This word of the LORD then came to the prophet Jeremiah: 7Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Give this answer to the king of Judah who sent you to me to consult me: Pharaoh's army which has set out to help you will return to its own land, Egypt.[i] 8The Chaldeans shall return to the fight against this city; they shall capture it and destroy it with fire.[j]

9Thus says the LORD: Do not deceive yourselves with the thought that the Chaldeans will leave you for good, because they shall not leave! 10Even if you were to defeat the whole Chaldean army now attacking you, and only the wounded remained, each in his tent, these would rise up and destroy the city with fire.[k]

11When the Chaldean army lifted the siege of Jerusalem at the threat of the army of Pharaoh,[l] 12Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem for the district of Benjamin, to take part with his family in the division of an inheritance. 13But when he reached the Gate of Benjamin, he met the captain of the guard, a man named Irijah, son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah; he seized the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "You are deserting to the Chaldeans!" 14"That is a lie!" Jeremiah answered, "I am not deserting to the Chaldeans." Without listening, Irijah kept Jeremiah in custody and brought him to the princes.

15The princes were enraged, and had Jeremiah beaten and thrown into prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which they were using as a jail.[m] 16And so Jeremiah entered the vaulted dungeon, where he remained a long time.

17Once King Zedekiah had him brought to his palace and he asked him secretly whether there was any message from the LORD. Yes! Jeremiah answered: you shall be handed over to the king of Babylon.[n] 18Jeremiah then asked King Zedekiah: In what have I wronged you, or your ministers, or this people, that you should put me in prison?[o] 19And where are your own prophets now, 20who prophesied to you that the king of Babylon would not attack you or this land? Hear now, my lord king, and grant my petition: do not

**36, 30:** Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin was named king, but reigned only three months; he was known better for his thirty-seven-year exile in Babylon. His corpse shall be cast out: see note on Jer 22, 19.

**37, 4:** Put into prison: as described in Jer 32, 1ff. Chronologically, the present episode follows Jer 34, 1–7.

**37, 5:** Pharaoh's army: the force sent by Pharaoh Hophra which caused the Chaldeans momentarily to lift the siege of Jerusalem (cf Jer 34, 21).

e Jer 22, 19. f Jer 52, 1; 2 Kgs 24, 17; 2 Chr 36, 10. g Jer 21, 1. h Ez 17, 15; 29, 6f. i Ez 17, 17. j Jer 34, 22. k Jer 21, 4. l Zec 14, 10. m Jer 38, 6–13. n Jer 21, 7; 32, 3; 34, 21. o Jer 26, 19.

send me back into the house of Jonathan the scribe, or I shall die there.

21 King Zedekiah ordered that Jeremiah be confined in the quarters of the guard, and given a loaf of bread each day from the bakers' shop until all the bread in the city was eaten up. Thus Jeremiah remained in the quarters of the guard.[p]

## CHAPTER 38

**Jeremiah in the Miry Cistern** 1 Shephatiah, son of Mattan, Gedaliah, son of Pashhur, Jucal, son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur, son of Malchiah, heard Jeremiah speaking these words to all the people:* 2 Thus says the LORD: He who remains in this city shall die by sword, or famine, or pestilence; but he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be spared him as booty, and he shall live.[q] 3 Thus says the LORD: This city shall certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon; he shall capture it.

4 "This man ought to be put to death," the princes said to the king; "he demoralizes the soldiers* who are left in this city, and all the people, by speaking such things to them; he is not interested in the welfare of our people, but in their ruin."[r] 5 King Zedekiah answered: "He is in your power"; for the king could do nothing with them. 6 And so they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Prince Malchiah, which was in the quarters of the guard, letting him down with ropes. There was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.[s]

7 Now Ebed-melech, a Cushite,* a courtier in the king's palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. The king happened just then to be at the Gate of Benjamin, 8 and Ebed-melech went there from the palace and said to him, 9 "My lord king, these men have been at fault in all they have done to the prophet Jeremiah, casting him into the cistern. He will die of famine on the spot, for there is no more food in the city."[t] 10 Then the king ordered Ebed-melech the Cushite to take three men along with him, and draw the prophet Jeremiah out of the cistern before he should die. 11 Ebed-melech took the men along with him, and went first to the linen closet in the palace, from which he took some old, tattered rags; these he sent down to Jeremiah in the cistern, with ropes. 12 Then he said to Jeremiah, "Put the old, tattered rags between your armpits and the ropes." Jeremiah did so, 13 and they drew him up with the ropes out of the cistern. But Jeremiah remained in the quarters of the guard.

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14 Once King Zedekiah summoned the prophet Jeremiah to come to him at the third entrance to the house of the LORD. "I have a question to ask you," the king said to Jeremiah; "hide nothing from me."[u] Jeremiah answered Zedekiah: 15 If I tell you anything, you will have me killed, will you not? If I counsel you, you will not listen to me![v] 16 But King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah secretly: "As the LORD lives who gave us the breath of life, I will not kill you; nor will I hand you over to these men who seek your life."

17 Thereupon Jeremiah said to Zedekiah: Thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: If you surrender to the princes of Babylon's king, you shall save your life; this city shall not be destroyed with fire, and you and your family shall live.[w] 18 But if you do not surrender to the princes of Babylon's king, this city shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall destroy it with fire, and you shall not escape their hands.[x]

19 King Zedekiah, however, said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the men of Judah who have deserted to the Chaldeans; I may be handed over to them, and they will mistreat me."[y] 20 You will not be handed over, Jeremiah answered. Please obey the voice of the LORD and do as I tell you; then it shall go well with you, and your life will be spared.[z] 21 But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD shows me: 22 All the

**38, 1:** Jeremiah enjoyed sufficient liberty in the quarters of the guard (Jer 37, 21) to speak to the people; cf Jer 32, 6–9. Gedaliah, son of Pashhur: the latter is possibly the Pashhur of Jer 20, 1. Pashhur, son of Malchiah: mentioned in Jer 21, 1.

**38, 4:** He demoralizes the soldiers: literally, "he weakens their hands." One of the Lachish ostraca (see note on Jer 34, 7) uses the same expression of the princes in Jerusalem.

**38, 7:** A Cushite: an Ethiopian. Ebed-melech evidently held a position of some authority at court.

p Jer 32, 2; 38, 28. q Jer 21, 9f; 39, 18; 45, 5. r Jer 26, 11. s Jer 37, 14f. t Jer 52, 6. u Jer 37, 16. v Lk 22, 67f. w Jer 27, 12f; 2 Kgs 24, 12. x Jer 32, 4. y 1 Sm 31, 4. z 2 Chr 20, 20.

women left in the house of Judah's king shall be
brought out to the princes of Babylon's king, and
they shall taunt you thus:

"They betrayed you, outdid you,
your good friends!
Now that your feet are stuck in the mud,
they slink away." [a]

23 All your wives and sons shall be led forth to
the Chaldeans, and you shall not escape their
hands; you shall be handed over to the king of
Babylon, and this city shall be destroyed with
fire. [b]

24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no
one know about this conversation, or you shall
die. 25 If the princes hear I spoke to you, if they
come and ask you, 'Tell us what you said to the
king; do not hide it from us, or we will kill you,'
or, 'What did the king say to you?' 26 give them
this answer: 'I petitioned the king not to send
me back to Jonathan's house to die there.' "
27 When all the princes came to Jeremiah, they
questioned him, and he answered them in the
very words the king had commanded. They said
no more to him, for nothing had been heard of
the earlier conversation. 28 Thus Jeremiah stayed
in the quarters of the guard till the day Jerusalem
was taken. [c]

## CHAPTER 39

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**Jeremiah and Gedaliah** When Jerusalem was
taken . . . . 1 In the tenth month of the ninth
year* of Zedekiah, [d] king of Judah, Nebuchadnez-
zar, king of Babylon, and all his army marched
against Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 On the ninth
day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year* of
Zedekiah, a breach was made in the city's
defenses. 3 All the princes of the king of Babylon
came and occupied the middle gate: Nergal-
sharezer, of Simmagir, the chief officer, Nebu-
shazban, the high dignitary, and all the other
princes of the king of Babylon . . . . 4 When
Zedekiah, king of Judah, saw them, he and all his
warriors fled by night, leaving the city on the
Royal Garden Road* through the gate between
the two walls. He went in the direction of the
Arabah, [e] 5 but the Chaldean army pursued them,
and overtook and captured Zedekiah in the
desert near Jericho. He was brought to Riblah,*
in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar,
king of Babylon, pronounced sentence upon
him. [f] 6 As Zedekiah looked on, his sons were
slain at Riblah by order of the king of Babylon,
who slew also all the nobles of Judah. [g] 7 He then
blinded Zedekiah and bound him in chains to
bring him to Babylon. [h]

8 The Chaldeans set fire to the king's palace
and the houses of the people, and demolished
the walls of Jerusalem. [i] 9 Nebuzaradan, chief of
the bodyguard, deported to Babylon the rest of
the people left in the city, those who had
deserted to him, and the rest of the workmen. [j]
10 But some of the poor who had no property
were left in the land of Judah by Nebuzaradan,
chief of the bodyguard, and were given at the
same time vineyards and farms. [k]

11 Concerning Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar,
king of Babylon, gave the following orders
through Nebuzaradan, chief of the bodyguard:
12 "Take him and look after him; let no harm
befall him, but treat him as he himself re-
quests." [l] 13 Thereupon Nebuzaradan, chief of
the bodyguard, and Nebushazban, the high digni-
tary, and Nergal-sharezer, the chief officer, and
all the nobles of the king of Babylon, 14 had
Jeremiah taken out of the quarters of the guard,
and entrusted to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of
Shaphan, to be brought home. And so he re-
mained among the people. [m]

**39, 1:** The tenth month of the ninth year: the month Tebet (mid-December to mid-January) of the year 589/8 B.C.

**39, 2:** The ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year: in July of 587 B.C.

**39, 4:** The Royal Garden Road: along the southeast side of the city; the royal garden was in the Kidron Valley. The gate between the two walls: the southernmost city gate, at the end of the Tyropoean Valley. The Arabah: the Jordan Valley. Zedekiah was attempting to escape across the Jordan when he was captured near Jericho.

**39, 5:** Riblah: Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters in Syria, which had also been used by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23, 33).

a Jb 6, 15; 19, 13f. 19. b Jer 41, 10. c Jer 39, 14. d 1f: Jer 52, 4–16; 2 Kgs 25, 1–12; Ez 24, 1. e Jer 52, 7. f Jer 32, 4f; 38, 18. g Jer 34, 21. h Jer 32, 4f; Ez 12, 13. i Jer 21, 10; 34, 2; 52, 13. j 2 Kgs 25, 11. k 2 Kgs 25, 12. 22. l Jer 40, 4. m Jer 26, 24; 38, 28.

**A Word of Comfort for Ebed-melech**
15While Jeremiah was still imprisoned in the
quarters of the guard, the word of the LORD
came to him: 16Go, tell this to Ebed-melech the
Cushite: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: Behold, I am now fulfilling the words I
spoke against this city, for evil and not for good;
and this before your very eyes.[n] 17But on that
day I will rescue you, says the LORD; you shall
not be handed over to the men of whom you are
afraid. 18I will make certain that you escape and
do not fall by the sword. Your life shall be spared
as booty, because you trusted in me, says the
LORD.[o]

## CHAPTER 40

**Jeremiah Still in Judah** 1This word* came to
Jeremiah from the LORD, after Nebuzaradan, cap-
tain of the bodyguard, had released him in Ra-
mah, where he had found him a prisoner in
chains, among the captives of Jerusalem and Ju-
dah who were being exiled to Babylon.[p] 2When
the captain of the bodyguard took charge of Jere-
miah, he said to him, "The LORD, your God, fore-
told the ruin of this place. 3Now he has brought
about in deed what he threatened; because you
sinned against the LORD and did not obey his
voice, this fate has befallen you. 4And now, I am
freeing you today from the fetters that bind your
hands; if it seems good to you to come with me to
Babylon, you may come: I will look after you
well. But if it does not please you to come to
Babylon, you need not come. See, the whole land
is before you; go wherever you think good and
proper";[q] 5and then, before he left—"or go to
Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom
the king of Babylon has appointed ruler over the
cities of Judah; stay with him among the people,
or go wherever you please." The captain of the
bodyguard gave him food and gifts and let him
go.[r] 6Jeremiah went to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam,
in Mizpah,* and stayed with him among the peo-
ple left in the land.[s]

7When the army leaders who were still in the
field with all their men heard that the king of
Babylon had given Gedaliah, son of Ahikam,
charge of the land, of men, women, and chil-
dren, and of those poor who had not been led
captive to Babylon, 8they came with their men
to Gedaliah in Mizpah: Ishmael, son of Netha-
niah; Johanan, son of Kareah; Seraiah, son of
Tanhumeth; the sons of Ephai of Netophah; and
Jezaniah* of Beth-maacah. 9Gedaliah, son of
Ahikam, son of Shaphan, adjured them and their
men not to be afraid to serve the Chaldeans: to
stay in the land and submit to the king of
Babylon, for their own welfare,[t] 10saying that he
himself would remain in Mizpah, as their inter-
mediary with the Chaldeans who should come
to them. They were to collect the wine, the fruit,
and the oil, to store them in jars, and to settle in
the cities they occupied. 11When the people of
Judah in Moab, those among the Ammonites,
those in Edom, and those in all other lands heard
that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in
Judah, and had appointed over them Gedaliah,
son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, 12they all
returned to the land of Judah from the places to
which they had scattered. They went to Geda-
liah at Mizpah and had a rich harvest of wine
and fruit.

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**Assassination of Gedaliah** 13Now Johanan,
son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the armies in
the field came to Gedaliah in Mizpah 14and
asked him whether he did not know that Baalis,
the king of the Ammonites,* had sent Ishmael,
son of Nethaniah, to assassinate him.[u] 15But
Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, would not believe
them. Then Johanan, son of Kareah, said secretly

40, 1: This word: actually, no further word of the Lord is recorded until Jer 42, 7ff. This is a title affixed to the following chapters after they were attached to an earlier form of the book ending with chapter 39.

40, 6: Mizpah: some five miles northwest of Jerusalem, where Israel chose its first king (1 Sm 10, 17–24). Presumably Jerusalem had been damaged too much by the Chaldean conquest to remain a seat of government.

40, 8: Jezaniah: the seal ring of a high official of this name was discovered in 1932 at the site usually identified with Mizpah, Tell en-Nasbe.

40, 14: The Ammonites: they resented the survival of their ancient enemy, Judah. Ishmael: their willing tool, who doubtless aspired to rule over Judah himself, as he was of the house of David; cf Jer 41, 1.

n Jer 21, 10; Dn 9, 12. o Jer 45, 5; Pss 25, 3; 36, 40. p Jer 39, 14. q Jer 39, 12. r Jer 39, 14; 2 Kgs 25, 22. s Jer 39, 14. t Jer 27, 12f; 2 Kgs 25, 24. u Jer 41, 1ff. 10.

to Gedaliah in Mizpah: "Let me go and kill Ishmael, son of Nethaniah; no one will know it. Why should he be allowed to kill you? All the Jews who have now rallied to you will be dispersed and the remnant of Judah will perish." [16]Nevertheless, Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, answered Johanan, son of Kareah, "You shall do nothing of the kind; you have lied about Ishmael."

## CHAPTER 41

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[1]In the seventh month Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of royal descent, one of the king's nobles, came with ten men to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, at Mizpah.[v] And while they were together at table in Mizpah, [2]Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, and the ten who were with him, rose up and attacked with swords Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon had made ruler over the land; and they killed him. [3]Ishmael also slew all the men of Judah of military age who were with Gedaliah and the Chaldean soldiers who were there.

[4]The second day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, [5]eighty men with beards shaved off, clothes in rags, and with gashes on their bodies came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, bringing food offerings and incense for the house of the LORD. [6]Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. [7]"Come to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam," he said as he met them. When they were once inside the city, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, and his men slew them and threw them into the cistern. [8]But there were ten among them who pleaded with Ishmael: "Do not kill us; we have stores buried in the field: wheat and barley, oil and honey." And so he spared them and did not kill them, as he had killed their companions. [9]The cistern into which Ishmael threw all the corpses of the men he had killed was the large one made by King Asa to defend himself against Baasha, king of Israel; this cistern Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, filled with the slain.[w]

[10]Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, led away the remnant of the people left in Mizpah and the princesses,* whom Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard, had confided to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam. With these captives, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, set out to make his way to the Ammonites.

**Flight to Egypt** [11]But when Johanan, son of Kareah, and the other army leaders with him heard of the crimes Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, had committed, [12]they took all their men and set out to attack Ishmael, son of Nethaniah. They overtook him at the Great Waters in Gibeon.* [13]At the sight of Johanan, son of Kareah, and the other army leaders, the people who were Ishmael's captives rejoiced. [14]All of those whom Ishmael had brought away from Mizpah went over to Johanan, son of Kareah. [15]But Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, escaped from Johanan and fled to the Ammonites with eight men. [16]Then Johanan, son of Kareah, and all his army leaders took charge of the remnant of the people, both the soldiers and the women and children with their guardians, whom Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, had brought away from Mizpah after he killed Gedaliah, son of Ahikim. From Gibeon, [17]they retreated to the lodging place of Chimham near Bethlehem, where they stopped, intending to flee into Egypt. [18]They were afraid of the Chaldeans, because Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, had slain Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made ruler in the land of Judah.

## CHAPTER 42

[1]Then all the army leaders, Johanan, son of Kareah, Azariah, son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, high and low, approached the prophet Jeremiah [2]and said, "Grant our petition; pray for us to the LORD, your God, for all this remnant. We are now few who once were many, as you

**41, 10:** The princesses: of the royal house of Judah. They had not been deported to Babylon with the men of this house.

**41, 12:** Gibeon: today called El-Jib; it is northwest of Jerusalem. The most recent excavations have revealed the extensive dimensions of the city spring and well, called here the Great Waters; cf 2 Sm 2, 12ff.

v Jer 40, 14ff; 2 Kgs 25, 25. w 1 Kgs 15, 16; 2 Chr 16, 6.

well see. [3]Let the LORD, your God, show us
what way we should take and what we should
do." [4]Very well! the prophet Jeremiah answered
them: I will pray to the LORD, your God, as you
desire; whatever the LORD answers you, I will
tell you; I will withhold nothing from you.[x]
[5]And they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be
our witness: we will truly and faithfully follow
all the instructions the LORD, your God, will
send us.[y] [6]Whether it is pleasant or difficult, we
will obey the command of the LORD, our God, to
whom we are sending you, so that it will go well
with us for obeying the command of the LORD,
our God."[z]

[7]Ten days passed before the word of the LORD
came to Jeremiah. [8]Then he called Johanan, son
of Kareah, his army leaders, and all the people,
high and low, [9]and said to them: Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to
offer your prayer: [10]If you remain quietly in this
land I will build you up, and not tear you down;
I will plant you, not uproot you; for I regret the
evil I have done you.[a] [11]Do not fear the king of
Babylon, before whom you are now afraid; do
not fear him, says the LORD, for I am with you to
save you, to rescue you from his power.[b] [12]I will
grant you mercy, so that he will be sorry for you
and let you return to your land.[c] [13]But if you
disobey the voice of the LORD, your God, and
decide not to remain in this land, [14]saying, "No,
we will go to Egypt, where we will see no more
of war, hear the trumpet alarm no longer, nor
hunger for bread; there we will live";[d] [15]then
listen to the word of the LORD, remnant of
Judah: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: If you are determined to go to Egypt,
when you arrive there to stay, [16]the sword you
fear shall reach you in the land of Egypt; the
hunger you dread shall cling to you no less in
Egypt, and there you shall die.[e] [17]All those men
who determine to go to Egypt to stay, shall die
by the sword, famine, and pestilence; not one
shall survive or escape the evil that I will bring
upon them.[f] [18]For thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel: Just as my furious anger was
poured out upon the citizens of Jerusalem, so
shall my anger be poured out on you when you
reach Egypt. You shall become an example of
malediction and horror, a curse and a reproach,
and you shall never see this place again.[g]

[19]It is the LORD who has spoken to you,
remnant of Judah; do not go to Egypt! You can
never say that I did not warn you this day. [20]At
the cost of your lives you have deceived me,
sending me to the LORD, your God, saying,
"Pray for us to the LORD, our God; make
known to us all that the LORD, our God, shall
say, and we will do it." [21]Today I proclaim his
message, but you obey the voice of the LORD,
your God, in nothing that he has commissioned
me to make known to you.[h] [22]Have no doubt
of this, you shall die by the sword, famine, and
pestilence in the place where you wish to go
and settle.[i]

## CHAPTER 43

Ch 34–45
See RG
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[1]When Jeremiah finished speaking to the
people all these words of the LORD, their God,
with which the LORD had sent him to them,
[2]Azariah, son of Hoshaiah, Johanan, son of
Kareah, and all the insolent men shouted to
Jeremiah: "You lie; it was not the LORD, our
God, who sent you to tell us not to go to Egypt
to settle. [3]It is Baruch, son of Neriah, who stirs
you up against us, to hand us over to the
Chaldeans to be killed or exiled to Babylon."[j]

[4]Johanan, son of Kareah, and the rest of the
leaders and the people did not obey the LORD's
command to stay in the land of Judah.[k] [5]Instead,
Johanan, son of Kareah, and all the army leaders
took along the whole remnant of Judah that had
been dispersed among the nations and had
returned thence to dwell again in the land of
Judah: [6]men, women, and children, the prin-
cesses and everyone whom Nebuzaradan, cap-
tain of the bodyguard, had entrusted to Geda-
liah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also

x 1 Sm 3, 18. y Jgs 11, 10. z Jer 7, 23; Dt 5, 33; 6, 3. a Jer 31, 28; 32, 41. b Jer 30, 10f. c Ps 106, 45f; Prv 16, 7. d Dt 28, 68. e Jer 44, 13f. 27. f Jer 29, 17f; 44, 14. 28. g Jer 44, 12. h Zec 7, 11f. i Jer 44, 12; Hos 9, 6. j Jer 38, 4. k Jer 41, 16.

Jeremiah, the prophet, and Baruch, son of Neriah.[l] [7]Against the LORD's command they went to Egypt, and arrived at Tahpanhes . . . .[m]

**Jeremiah in Egypt** [8]This word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: [9]Take with you large stones and sink them in mortar in the brickyard at the entrance to the royal building* in Tahpanhes, while the men of Judah look on, [10]and then say to them: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I will send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and bring him here. He will set his throne upon these stones which I, Jeremiah, have sunk, and stretch his canopy over them.[n] [11]He shall come and strike the land of Egypt: with death, whoever is marked for death; with exile, everyone destined for exile; with the sword, all who are intended for the sword.[o] [12]He shall set fire to the temples of Egypt's gods, and burn the gods or carry them off. As a shepherd delouses his cloak, he shall delouse the land of Egypt and depart victorious.[p] [13]He shall smash the obelisks of the temple of the sun in the land of Egypt and destroy with fire the temples of the Egyptian gods.

## CHAPTER 44

Ch 34–45 See RG 312

[1]This word came to Jeremiah for all the people of Judah who were living in Egypt, at Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis, and in Upper Egypt: [2]*Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the evil I brought on Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah. Today they are ruins and uninhabited,[q] [3]because of the evil they did to provoke me, going after strange gods, serving them and sacrificing to them, gods which neither they, nor you, nor your fathers knew.[r] [4]Though I kept sending to you all my servants the prophets, with the plea not to commit this horrible deed which I hate, [5]they would not listen or accept the warning to turn away from the evil of sacrificing to strange gods.[s] [6]Therefore the fury of my anger poured forth in flame over the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, so that they became the ruinous waste they are today.

[7]Now thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why do you inflict so great an evil upon yourselves? Will you root out from Judah man and wife, child and nursling, and not leave yourselves even a remnant? [8]Will you go on provoking me by the works of your hands, by sacrificing to strange gods here in the land of Egypt where you have come to live? Will you be rooted out and become a curse and a disgrace among all the nations of the earth?[t] [9]Have you forgotten the evil deeds which your fathers, and the kings of Judah and their wives, and you yourselves and your wives have done in the land of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem?[u] [10]To this day they have not been crushed; they do not fear or follow the law and the statutes which I set before you and your fathers.[v]

[11]Hence, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have determined evil against you; and I will uproot all Judah. [12]I will take away the remnant of Judah who insisted on coming to dwell in Egypt, so that they shall be wholly destroyed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall by the sword or be consumed by hunger. High and low, they shall die by the sword, or by hunger, and become an example of malediction, a horror, a curse and a reproach.[w] [13]Thus will I punish those who live in Egypt, just as I punished Jerusalem with sword, hunger, and pestilence. None of the remnant of Judah that have come to settle in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive.[x] [14]None shall return to the land of Judah, though they yearn to return and live there. Only scattered refugees shall return.

[15]From all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to strange gods, from all the women who were present in the immense crowd, and from all the people who lived in Lower and Upper Egypt, Jeremiah re-

43, 9: The royal building: residence of the Egyptian governor.
44, 2–30: Chronologically, this is the last of Jeremiah's prophecies to his countrymen. The narrative leaves him an old man nearing seventy, rejected by his people. According to tradition, he was murdered in Egypt by fellow Judeans.

l Jer 41, 10. m Jer 42, 13f; 44, 1. n Jer 27, 6; Ez 29, 19. o Jer 46, 13; Ez 30, 10. p Jer 46, 25; Ez 30, 13f. q Jer 34, 22; Lv 26, 32f. r Jer 11, 17; Dt 32, 17. s Jer 7, 24. 26; 19, 4. t Jer 25, 6f. u 1 Kgs 11, 1. 8; Ezr 9, 7. 14. v Jer 7, 24. w Jer 42, 15. 18. 22. x Jer 43, 11.

ceived this answer: [16]"We will not listen to what you say in the name of the LORD.[y] [17]Rather will we continue doing what we had proposed; we will burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, as we and our fathers, our kings and princes have done in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. Then we had enough food to eat and we were well off; we suffered no misfortune.[z] [18]But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we are in need of everything and are being destroyed by the sword and by hunger. [19]And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out libations to her, was it without our husbands' consent that we baked for her cakes in her image and poured out libations to her?"[a]

[20]To all the people, men and women, who gave him this answer, Jeremiah said: [21]Was it not this that the LORD remembered and brought to mind, that you burned incense in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem: you, your fathers, your kings and princes, and the people generally?[b] [22]The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds, the horrible things which you were doing; and so your land became a waste, a desert, a thing accursed and without inhabitants, as it is today.[c] [23]Because you burned incense and sinned against the LORD, not obeying the voice of the LORD, not living by his law, his statutes, and his decrees, this evil has befallen you at the present day.[d]

[24]Jeremiah said further to all the people, including the women: Hear the word of the LORD, all you Judeans in the land of Egypt: [25]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You and your wives have stated your intentions, and kept them in fact: "We will continue to fulfill the vows we have made to burn incense to the queen of heaven and to pour out libations to her." Very well! keep your vows, carry out your resolutions! [26]But listen then to the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who live in Egypt; I swear by my own great name, says the LORD, in the whole land of Egypt no man of Judah shall henceforth pronounce my name, saying, "As the Lord GOD lives." [27]I am watching over them to do evil, not good. All the men of Judah in Egypt shall perish by the sword or famine until they are utterly destroyed.[e] [28]Those who escape the sword to return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah shall be few in number. The whole remnant of Judah who came to settle in Egypt shall know whose word stands, mine or theirs.[f]

[29]That you may know how surely my threats of punishment for you shall be fulfilled, this shall be a sign to you, says the LORD, that I will punish you in this place. [30]Thus says the LORD: See! I will hand over Pharaoh Hophra,* king of Egypt, to his enemies, to those who seek his life, just as I handed over Zedekiah, king of Judah, to his enemy and mortal foe, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.[g]

## CHAPTER 45

Ch 34–45
See RG
312

**A Message to Baruch*** [1]This is the message that the prophet Jeremiah gave to Baruch, son of Neriah, when he wrote in a book the prophecies that Jeremiah dictated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:[h] [2]Thus says the LORD, God of Israel, to you, Baruch, [3]because you said, "Alas! the LORD adds grief to my pain;[i] I am weary from groaning, and can find no rest": [4]say this to him, says the LORD: What I have built, I am tearing down; what I have planted, I am uprooting: even the whole land.[j] [5]And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not! I am bringing evil on all mankind, says the LORD, but your life I will leave you as booty, wherever you may go.[k]

**44, 30:** Hophra: killed by his own people. The ruler of Egypt at the time of its conquest by Nebuchadnezzar was Hophra's successor Amasis, who was also slain by his enemies.

**45, 1–5:** At the conclusion of his narrative, Baruch appends a prophecy given him personally by Jeremiah when he first wrote down Jeremiah's words (cf chap. 36). The future revealed by the prophet had depressed Baruch; this prophecy was to assure him of his personal safety, while repeating the Lord's determination to destroy Judah.

y Jer 6, 16f. z Jer 5, 3; 7, 18. a Jer 7, 18. b Jer 11, 13. c Jer 15, 6. d 2 Kgs 17, 15; Dn 9, 11f. e Ez 7, 3–7. f Dt 28, 62; Is 10, 22. g Jer 39, 5ff; 46, 25f; Ez 29, 3f; 30, 21. h Jer 36, 4. 18. 32. i Lam 1, 3; 5, 5. j Jer 18, 7; Is 5, 5f. k Jer 25, 26–29.

## V: Oracles against the Nations*

### CHAPTER 46

Ch 46–51
See RG
313

1 This is the word of the LORD that came to the prophet Jeremiah against the nations.

**Against Egypt** 2 Concerning Egypt. Against the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates* by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

3 Prepare shield and buckler!
  march to battle!
4 Harness the horses,
  mount, charioteers
 Fall in with your helmets;
  polish your spears, put on your breastplates.
5 What do I see?
  With broken ranks
 They fall back;
  their heroes are routed,
 They flee headlong
  without making a stand.
 Terror on every side,
  says the LORD! [l]
6 The swift cannot flee,
  nor the hero escape:
 There in the north, on the Euphrates' bank,
  they stumble and fall.

7 Who is this that surges forward like the Nile,
  like rivers of billowing waters?
8 Egypt surges like the Nile,
  like rivers of billowing waters.
 "I will surge forward," he says, "and cover the earth,
  destroying the city and its people. [m]
9 Forward, horses!
  drive madly, chariots!
 Set out, warriors,
  Cush and Put, bearing your shields,
  Men of Lud, stretching your bows!"
10 But this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts,
  a day of vengeance, vengeance on his foes!
 The sword devours, is sated, drunk with their blood:
  for the Lord GOD of hosts holds a slaughter feast
  in the northland, on the Euphrates. [n]

11 Go up to Gilead, and take balm,
  O virgin daughter Egypt!
 No use to multiply remedies;
  for you there is no cure. [o]
12 The nations hear of your shame,
  your cries fill the earth.
 Warrior trips over warrior,
  both fall together. [p]

13 [q] The message which the LORD gave to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the advance of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to attack the land of Egypt:*

14 Announce it in Egypt, publish it in Migdol,
  proclaim it in Memphis and Tahpanhes!
 Say: Take your stand, prepare yourselves,
  the sword has already devoured your neighbors. [r]
15 Why has Apis* fled,
  your mighty one failed to stand?
 The LORD thrust him down;
16  he stumbled repeatedly, and fell.
 They said one to another,
  "Up! let us return to our own people,
 To the land of our birth,
  away from the destroying sword." [s]

17 Call Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by the name
  "The noise that let its time go by."*
18 As I live, says the King

**46—51:** In these chapters most of Jeremiah's oracles against the foreign nations have been gathered together and placed at the end of his book; in the Greek text they appear with the other oracles against the nations, in chap. 25. In general, they are in chronological order: 46, 1—49, 33, from the fourth year of Jehoiakim; 49, 34–39, at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; 50, 1—51, 64, from the fourth year of Zedekiah.

**46, 2:** Carchemish on the Euphrates: the western terminus of the Mesopotamian trade route, where Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco in 605 B.C., thus gaining undisputed control of Syria and Palestine.

**46, 13:** In 601 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Egypt and even entered the country, but finally had to withdraw to Syria.

**46, 15:** Apis: the chief god of Memphis, venerated in the form of a black bull.

**46, 17:** "The noise . . . go by": in Hebrew there is wordplay here on the name Hophra, who still made a pretense of power though his career was at an end.

l Jer 6, 25; 49, 29. m Ez 29, 3; 32, 2. n Dt 32, 42; Is 13, 9; Ez 39, 17–20. o Jer 8, 22; 51, 8; Ez 30, 21f. p Ez 32, 9–12. q Jer 43, 10f; 44, 30; Is 19, 1. r Jer 44, 1. s Lv 26, 37.

whose name is LORD of hosts,
Like Tabor among the mountains he shall come,
like Carmel* above the sea.
19 Pack your baggage for exile,
capital city of daughter Egypt;
Memphis shall become a desert,
an empty ruin.
20 Egypt is a pretty heifer,
from the north a horsefly lights upon her.
21 The mercenaries in her ranks
are like fatted calves;
They too turn and flee together,
stand not their ground,
When the day of their ruin comes upon them,
the time of their punishment.
22 She sounds like a retreating reptile!
Yes, they come in force;
like woodchoppers, they attack her with axes.
23 They cut down her forest, says the LORD,
impenetrable though it be;
More numerous than locusts,
they cannot be counted.
24 Disgraced is daughter Egypt,
handed over to the people of the north.

25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, has said: See! I will punish Amon* of Thebes, and Egypt, her gods and her kings, Pharaoh, and those who trust in him. [t] 26 I will hand them over to those who seek their lives, to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his ministers. But later on Egypt shall be inhabited again, as in times past, says the LORD. [u]

27 But you, my servant Jacob, fear not;
be not dismayed, O Israel.
Behold, I will deliver you from the far-off land,
your descendants, from their land of exile.
Jacob shall again find rest,
shall be tranquil and undisturbed. [v]
28 You, my servant Jacob, never fear, says the LORD,
for I am with you;
I will make an end of all the nations
to which I have driven you,
But of you I will not make an end:
I will chastise you as you deserve,
I will not let you go unpunished. [w]

## CHAPTER 47

Ch 46–51
See RG
313

**Against the Philistines** 1 This is the word that came from the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza: [x] 2 Thus says the LORD:

*Behold: waters are rising from the north,
a torrent in flood;
It shall flood the land and all that is in it,
the cities and their people.
All the people of the land
set up a wailing cry.
3 They hear the stamping hooves of his steeds,
the rattling chariots, the rumbling wheels.
Fathers turn not to save their children;
their hands fall helpless
4 Because of the day which has come
to ruin all the Philistines,
And cut off from Tyre and Sidon*
the last of their allies.
Yes, the LORD is destroying the Philistines,
the remnant from the coasts of Caphtor. [y]
5 Gaza is shaved bald, [z]
Ashkelon is reduced to silence;
Ashdod, the remnant of their strength,
how long will you gash yourself?*
6 Alas, sword of the LORD!
how long till you find rest?
Return into your scabbard;
stop, be still!*
7 How can it find rest

**46, 18:** Tabor . . . Carmel: outstanding mountains of Palestine, symbols of strength, to which Nebuchadnezzar is compared.
**46, 25:** Amon: the sun-god worshiped at Thebes, in Upper Egypt.
**47, 2–7:** This prophecy was fulfilled in 605/4 B.C.
**47, 4:** Tyre and Sidon: Phoenician cities associated commercially with the Philistines, and enemies of Nebuchadnezzar; cf Jer 27, 1–4. Nebuchadnezzar carried out a thirteen-year siege of Tyre which was only partially successful. Caphtor: probably the island of Crete, the traditional place of origin of the Philistines; cf Am 9, 7.

**47, 5:** Of the ancient Philistine cities, neither Gath nor Ekron (Jer 25, 20) is mentioned in this period of waning independence of the seacoast.
**47, 6:** Words of the Philistines.

t Ez 30, 15f. u Jer 44, 30; Ez 30, 4; 32, 11f. v Jer 30, 10; 43, 5. w Jer 30, 11. x Ez 25, 15f; Zep 2, 4. y Jer 25, 22; Ez 25, 16f; Am 1, 8; 9, 7. z Am 1, 7.

when the LORD has commanded it?
Against Ashkelon and the seashore
he has appointed it.[a]

## CHAPTER 48

Ch 46–51 See RG 313

**Against Moab*** 1 Concerning Moab, thus says
the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

Woe to Nebo, it is laid waste;
Kiriathaim is disgraced and captured,
Disgraced and overthrown is the stronghold:
2 Moab's glory is no more.
Evil they plan against Heshbon:
"Come, let us put an end to her as a people."
You, too, Madmen, shall be reduced to silence;
behind you stalks the sword.
3 Listen! a cry from Horonaim[b]
of ruin and great destruction!
4 Moab is crushed,
their outcry is heard in Zoar.
5 The ascent of Luhith
they climb weeping;
On the descent to Horonaim
the cry of destruction is heard.
6 "Flee, save your lives,
to survive like the wild ass in the desert!"
7 Because you trusted in your works and your treasures,
you also shall be captured.
Chemosh* shall go into exile,
his priests and princes with him.[c]
8 The destroyer comes upon every city,
not a city escapes;
Ruined is the valley,
wasted the plain, as the LORD has said.
9 Set up a memorial for Moab,
for it is an utter wasteland;
Its cities are turned into ruins
where no one dwells.
10 [Cursed be he who does the LORD's work remissly,
cursed he who holds back his sword from blood.]
11 Moab has been tranquil from his youth,
has rested upon his lees;
He was not poured from one flask to another,
he went not into exile.
Thus he kept his taste,
and his scent was not lost.[d]

12 Hence, the days shall come, says the LORD,
when I will send him coopers to turn him over;
they shall empty his flasks and break his jars.
13 Chemosh shall disappoint Moab, as Israel was
disappointed by Bethel in which they trusted.[e]

14 How can you say, "We are heroes,
men valiant in war"?
15 The ravager of Moab and his cities advances,
the flower of his youth goes down to be slaughtered,
says the King, the LORD of hosts by name.
16 Near at hand is Moab's ruin,
his disaster hastens apace.
17 Mourn for him, all you his neighbors,
all you who knew him well!
Say: How the strong staff is broken,
the glorious rod!
18 Come down from glory, sit on the ground,
you that dwell in Dibon;
Moab's ravager has come up against you,
he has ruined your strongholds.[f]
19 Stand by the wayside, watch closely,
you that dwell in Aroer;
Ask the man who flees, the woman who tries to escape:
say to them, "What has happened?"[g]
20 Moab is disgraced, yes, destroyed,
howl and cry out;
Publish it at the Arnon,
Moab is ruined![h]
21 For judgment has come on the land of the
plateau: on Holon, Jahzah, and Mephaath,[i] 22 on
Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, 23 on Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, 24 on Kerioth
and on Bozrah: on all the cities of Moab, far and
near.

**48, 1–47:** Moab was one of the Israelites' bitterest enemies. According to Flavius Josephus, Moab and Ammon were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in his twenty-third year, 582 B.C., five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

**48, 7:** Chemosh: chief god of the Moabites.

a Zep 2, 5f. b 3ff: Is 15, 5. c Nm 21, 29. d Zep 1, 12. e Is 16, 12. f Nm 21, 30. g Dt 2, 36. h Is 16, 7. i Is 15, 4.

25 Moab's strength is broken,
his might is shattered, says the LORD.

26 Because he boasted against the LORD, make
Moab drunk so that he retches and vomits, and
he too becomes a laughingstock. 27 Is Israel a
laughingstock to you? Was she caught among
thieves, that you shake your head whenever you
speak of her?[j]

28 Leave the cities, dwell in the crags,
you that dwell in Moab.
Be like a dove that nests
out of reach on the edge of a chasm.
29 We have heard of the pride of Moab,[k]
pride beyond bounds:
His loftiness, his pride, his scorn,
his insolence of heart.
30 I know, says the LORD, his arrogance;
liar in boast, liar in deed.
31 And so I wail over Moab,
over all Moab I cry,
over the men of Kir-heres I moan.[l]
32 More than for Jazer I weep over you,
vineyard of Sibmah.
Your tendrils trailed down to the sea,
as far as Jazer they stretched.
Upon your harvest, upon your vintage,
the ravager has fallen.[m]
33 Joy and jubilation are at an end
in the fruit gardens of the land of Moab.
I drain the wine from the wine vats,
the treader treads no more,
the vintage shout is stilled.

34 The cry of Heshbon and Elealeh is heard as
far as Jahaz; they call from Zoar to Horonaim,
and to Eglath-shelishiyah, for even the waters of
Nimrim turn into a desert.[n] 35 I will leave no one
in Moab, says the LORD, to offer a holocaust on
the high place, or to burn incense to his gods.
36 Hence the wail of flutes for Moab is in my
heart; for the men of Kir-heres the wail of flutes
is in my heart: the wealth they acquired has
perished.[o] 37 Every head has been made bald,
every beard shaved; every hand is gashed, and
the loins of all are clothed in sackcloth.[p] 38 On
every roof of Moab and in all his squares there is
mourning; I have shattered Moab like a pot that
no one wants, says the LORD. 39 How terror
seizes Moab, and wailing! How he turns his back
in shame! Moab has become a laughingstock and
a horror to all his neighbors! 40 For thus says the
LORD:

Behold, like an eagle he soars,
spreads his wings over Moab.[q]
41 Cities are taken,
strongholds seized:
On that day the hearts of Moab's heroes
are like the heart of a woman in travail.[r]
42 Moab shall be destroyed, no more a people,
because he boasted against the LORD.[s]
43 Terror, pit, and trap be upon you,
people of Moab, says the LORD.[t]
44 He who flees from the terror
falls into the pit;
He who climbs from the pit
is caught in the trap;
For I will bring these things upon Moab
in the year of their punishment, says the
LORD.
45 In Heshbon's shadow stop short
the exhausted refugees;
For fire breaks forth from Heshbon,
and a blaze from the house of Sihon:
It consumes the brow of Moab,
the skull of the noisemakers.[u]
46 Woe to you, O Moab,
you are ruined, O people of Chemosh!
Your sons are taken into exile,
your daughters into captivity.
47 But I will change the lot of Moab
in the days to come, says the LORD.[v]
Thus far the judgment of Moab.

## CHAPTER 49

**Against the Ammonites** 1 Concerning the Ammonites, thus says the LORD:

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Has Israel no sons?
has he no heir?

j Zep 2, 8ff. k 29f: Is 16, 6. l Is 16, 7. m Is 16, 8f. n Is 15, 4f. o Is 16, 11. p Jer 47, 5; Is 15, 2f; Ez 7, 18. q Jer 49, 22. r Jer 6, 24; 30, 6. s Zep 2, 9f. t Is 24, 17f. u Nm 21, 28f. v Jer 49, 39.

Why then has Milcom* disinherited Gad,
why have his people settled in Gad's cities?
[2] But the days are coming, says the LORD,
when against Rabbah of the Ammonites*
I will sound the battle alarm;
She shall become a mound of ruins,
and her daughter cities shall be destroyed by fire.
Israel shall inherit those who disinherited her,
says the LORD.[w]
[3] Howl, Heshbon, for the ravager approaches,
shriek, daughters of Rabbah!
Put on sackcloth and mourn,
run to and fro, gashing yourselves;
For Milcom goes into exile
along with his priests and captains.[x]
[4] Why do you glory in your strength,
your ebbing strength, rebellious daughter?
You who trust in your treasures, saying,
"Who can come against me?"
[5] I am bringing terror upon you,
says the Lord GOD of hosts,
from all round about you;
You shall be scattered, each man in headlong flight,
with no one to rally the fugitives.[y]
[6] But afterward I will change the lot
of the Ammonites, says the LORD.

**Against Edom*** [7] Concerning Edom, thus says the LORD of hosts:

Is there no more wisdom in Teman,*
has counsel perished from the prudent,
has their wisdom become corrupt?
[8] Flee, retreat, hide in deep holes,
you who live in Dedan:
For I will bring destruction upon Esau*
when I come to punish him.[z]
[9] If vintagers came upon you,
they would leave no gleanings;
If thieves by night,
they would destroy as they pleased.[a]
[10] So I myself will strip Esau;
I will uncover his retreats so that he cannot hide.
He is ruined: sons, and brothers,
and neighbors, so that he is no more.[b]
[11] Leave your orphans behind, I will keep them alive;
your widows, let them trust in me.[c]

[12] For thus says the LORD: Even those not sentenced to drink the cup must drink it! Shall you then go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished; you shall surely drink it.[d] [13] By my own self I have sworn, says the LORD: Bozrah* shall become an object of horror and a disgrace, a desolation and a curse; she and all her cities shall become ruins forever.[e]

[14] I have heard a report from the LORD,
a herald has been sent among the nations:
Gather together, move against her,
rise up for battle.
[15] Small will I make you among the nations,
despised among men![f]
[16] The terror you spread beguiled you,
and your presumption of heart;
You that live in rocky crags,
that hold the heights of the hill:
Though you build your nest high as the eagle,
from there I will drag you down, says the LORD.[g]

[17] Edom shall become an object of horror. Every passer-by shall be appalled and catch his breath at all her wounds. [18] As when Sodom, Gomorrah, and their neighbors were overthrown, says the LORD, not a man shall dwell there: no one shall visit there.[h]

**49, 1:** Milcom: chief god of the Ammonites. The Transjordan tribe of Gad bordered on Ammon, and after the collapse of the northern kingdom the Ammonites occupied its territory.

**49, 2:** Rabbah of the Ammonites: or Rabbath-Ammon, capital of the Ammonite kingdom. The modern Amman is the capital of the kingdom of Jordan.

**49, 7–22:** Edom: this implacable enemy from ancient times profited from Judah's downfall; cf Ob 11f.

**49, 7:** Teman: a district of Edom, used here for the whole country; it was famous for its wise men; cf Jb 2, 11.

**49, 8:** Esau: Jacob's brother, the traditional ancestor of the Edomites; cf Gn 36.

**49, 13:** Bozrah: capital of Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea.

w Am 1, 14. x Is 15, 2ff. y Jer 48, 47. z Ez 25, 13. a Ob 5. b Mal 1, 3. c Dt 10, 18; Ps 68, 6. d Jer 25, 15. 28; Lam 4, 21f. e Is 34, 6; Ez 35, 3–9; Ob 16. f Ob 2. g Jer 48, 29f. h Jer 50, 40; Dt 29, 23.

[19] As when a lion comes up from the thicket of Jordan
to the permanent feeding grounds,
So I, in an instant, will drive men off;
and whom I choose I will establish there!
For who is like me? who can call me to account?
What shepherd can stand against me? [i]
[20] Therefore, hear the counsel of the LORD,
which he has taken against Edom;
Hear the plans he has made
against those that live in Teman:
They shall be dragged away, even the smallest sheep,
their own pasture shall be aghast because of them.
[21] At the noise of their fall the earth quakes,
to the Red Sea the outcry is heard!
[22] See! like an eagle he soars aloft,
and spreads his wings over Bozrah;
On that day the hearts of Edom's heroes shall be
like the heart of a woman in travail. [j]

**Against Damascus** Concerning Damascus:

[23] Hamath and Arpad* are covered with shame,
they have heard bad news;
Worried, they toss like the sea
which cannot rest. [k]
[24] Damascus is weakened, she turns to flee,
panic has seized her.
Distress and pangs take hold of her,
like those of a woman in travail.
[25] How can the city of glory be forsaken,
the town of delight!
[26] But now her young men shall fall in her streets,
and all her warriors shall be stilled.
On that day, says the LORD of hosts,
[27] I will set fire to the wall of Damascus,
and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.*

**Against Arabia** [28] Of Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, thus says the LORD:

Rise up, attack Kedar,
ravage the Easterners. [l]
[29] Their tents and herds shall be taken away,
their tent curtains and all their goods;
Their camels they shall carry off for themselves,
and shout from upon them, "Terror on every side!" [m]
[30] Flee! leave your homes, hide in deep holes,
you that live in Hazor, says the LORD;
For counsel has been taken against you,
a plan has been formed against you
[Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon].
[31] Rise up! set out against a nation that is at peace,
that lives secure, says the LORD,
That has no gates or bars,
and dwells alone.
[32] Their camels shall be your booty,
their many herds your spoil;
I will scatter to the winds those who shave their temples,
from all sides I will bring ruin upon them,
says the LORD. [n]
[33] Hazor shall become a haunt of jackals,
a desert forever,
Where no man lives,
no human being stays.

**Against Elam** [34] The following word of the LORD against Elam* came to the prophet Jeremiah at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah: [35] Thus says the LORD of hosts:

Behold, I will break the bow of Elam,
the mainstay of their might.
[36] I will bring upon Elam the four winds
from the four ends of the heavens:
I will scatter them to all these winds, till there is no nation

**49, 23:** Hamath and Arpad: independent Aramean states to the north of Damascus; the invasion is conceived as coming from the north. The situation is of the eighth century B.C. Cf Is 10, 9ff.
**49, 27:** The palaces of Ben-hadad: the royal palaces in Damascus where at least three kings bore this name; cf 1 Kgs 15, 18; 20.
**49, 34:** Elam: the ancient kingdom to the east of Babylonia.

i Jer 12, 5; 25, 9; 50, 44f. j Jer 4, 13. k Is 36, 19; 37, 13. l Is 21, 16. m Jer 4, 20. n Jer 9, 25.

to which the outcasts of Elam shall not
come.
37 I will break Elam before their foes,
before those who seek their life;
I will bring evil upon them,
my burning wrath, says the LORD.
I will send the sword to pursue them
until I have completely made an end of
them;
38 My throne I will set up in Elam
and destroy from there king and princes,
says the LORD.
39 But in the days to come I will change
the lot of Elam, says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 50

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**The First Prophecy against Babylon** 1 The word which the LORD spoke against Babylon,* against the land of the Chaldeans, through the prophet Jeremiah: [o]

2 Announce and publish it among the nations;
publish it, hide it not, but say:
Babylon is taken, Bel* confounded, Merodach
shattered;
her images are put to shame, her idols
shattered.
3 A people from the north advances against her
to turn her land into a desert,
So that no one shall live there,
because man and beast have fled away. [p]
4 In those days, at that time, says the LORD,
the men of Israel and of Judah shall come,
Weeping as they come, to seek the
LORD, their God; [q]
5 to their goal in Zion they shall ask the way.
"Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD
with covenant everlasting, never to be
forgotten." [r]
6 Lost sheep were my people,
their shepherds misled them,
straggling on the mountains;
From mountain to hill they wandered,
losing the way to their fold. [s]
7 Whoever came upon them devoured them,
and their enemies said, "We incur no guilt,
Because they sinned against the LORD,
the hope of their fathers, their abode of
justice." [t]

8 Flee from Babylon, leave the land of the
Chaldeans,
be like the rams at the head of the flock. [u]
9 See, I am stirring up against Babylon
a band of great nations from the north;
from there they advance, and she shall be
taken.
Their arrows are arrows of the skilled
warrior;
none shall return without effect. [v]
10 Chaldea shall be their plunder,
and all her plunderers shall be enriched,
says the LORD.
11 Yes, rejoice and exult,
you that plunder my portion;
Frisk like calves on the green,
snort like stallions!
12 Your mother shall be sorely put to shame,
she that bore you shall be abashed;
See, the last of the nations,
a desert, dry and waste. [w]
13 Because of the LORD's wrath she shall be
empty,
and become a total desert;
Everyone who passes by Babylon will be
appalled
and catch his breath, at all her wounds. [x]
14 Take your posts encircling Babylon,
you who bend the bow;
Shoot at her, spare not your arrows, [y]
15 raise the war cry against her on all sides.
She surrenders, her bastions fall,

**50, 1—51, 58:** A collection of miscellaneous prophecies against Babylon which now stands as the introduction to the story in Jer 51, 59–64. The Greek text of Jer 50, 1 omits through the prophet Jeremiah, and it is in fact likely that these oracles are not Jeremiah's, but were composed by other inspired writers after the fall of Jerusalem, who may have used some of Jeremiah's texts. Babylon fell to the Persians in 538 B.C.

**50, 2:** Bel: originally the name of the god of Nippur in Mesopotamia, then identified with Merodach (Marduk), chief god of Babylon.

o Jer 51, 1; Is 13, 1–14; 21, 1–10. p Jer 51, 48; Is 13, 17. q Jer 3, 18; Ps 126, 6. r Jer 31, 31; 32, 40. s Is 53, 6; I Pt 2, 25. t Jer 31, 23. u Jer 51, 6. 45; Is 48, 20. v Jer 51, 27. w Jer 51, 43; Is 13, 20ff. x Jer 25, 12. y Jer 51, 11; Is 21, 2.

her walls are torn down:*
Vengeance of the LORD is this! Take revenge on her,
as she has done, do to her;
for she sinned against the LORD.[z]
16 Cut off from Babylon the sower
and him who wields the sickle in harvest time!
Before the destroying sword,
each of them turns to his own people,
everyone flees to his own land.[a]
17 A stray sheep was Israel
that lions pursued;
Formerly the king of Assyria devoured her,
now Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon gnaws her bones.[b]
18 Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

I will punish the king of Babylon and his land,
as once I punished the king of Assyria;[c]
19 But I will bring back Israel to her fold,
to feed on Carmel and Bashan,
And on Mount Ephraim and Gilead,
till she has her fill.[d]

20 In those days, at that time, says the LORD:

They shall seek Israel's guilt, but it shall be no more,
and Judah's sins, but these shall no longer be found;
for I will forgive the remnant I preserve.[e]

21 Attack the land of Merathaim,*
and those who live in Pekod;
Slaughter and doom them, says the LORD,
do all I have commanded you.
22 Battle alarm in the land,
dire destruction!
23 How has the hammer of the whole earth
been broken and shattered!
What an object of horror
Babylon has become among the nations.[f]
24 You ensnared yourself, and were caught,
O Babylon, before you knew it!
You were discovered and seized,
because you challenged the LORD.[g]
25 The LORD opens his armory
and brings forth the weapons of his wrath;
For the Lord GOD of hosts has work to do
in the land of the Chaldeans.[h]

26 Come upon her from every side,
open her granaries,
Pile up her goods in heaps and doom it,
leave not a remnant.
27 Slay all her oxen,
let them go down to the slaughter;
Woe to them! their day has come,
the time of their punishment.
28 Listen! the fugitives, the escaped
from the land of Babylon:
They announce in Zion
the vengeance of the LORD, our God.[i]
29 Call up against Babylon archers,
all who bend the bow;
Encamp around her,
let no one escape.
Repay her for her deeds;
as she has done, do to her,
For she insulted the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel.[j]
30 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets,
all her warriors shall perish on that day,
says the LORD.[k]

31 I am against you, man of insolence,
says the Lord GOD of hosts;
For your day has come,
the time for me to punish you.
32 Insolence stumbles and falls;
there is no one to raise him up.
I will kindle in his cities a fire
that shall devour everything around him.
33 Thus says the LORD of hosts:

50, 15: Her walls are torn down: the prophet is not predicting the details of Babylon's downfall, but describing such a downfall in conventional language. Actually, Babylon was surrendered peaceably, without destruction.

50, 21: Merathaim, "twice bitter," and Pekod, "punishment," are here symbolic terms for Babylonia, though probably they suggest also the names of regions in that country.

z Jer 51, 11. 44, 58; Ps 137, 8. a Is 13, 14. b 2 Kgs 17, 24; 18, 14. c Is 10, 12; 14, 24f. d Jer 23, 3; Ez 34, 13f. e Jer 31, 34; Is 43, 25; Mi 7, 19. f Jer 51, 20; Is 14, 6. g Jer 51, 57. h Jer 51, 11; Is 13, 5. i Jer 51, 10f. j Jer 51, 56. k Jer 49, 26; 51, 4.

Oppressed are the men of Israel,
and with them the men of Judah;
All their captors hold them fast
and refuse to let them go.
34 Strong is their avenger,
whose name is LORD of hosts;
He will defend their cause with success,
and give rest to the earth,
but unrest to those who live in Babylon. [l]

35 A sword upon the Chaldeans, says the LORD,
upon Babylon's people, her princes and wise men!
36 A sword upon the soothsayers,
that they may become fools!
A sword upon her warriors,
that they may tremble;
37 A sword upon her motley throng,
that they may become women!
A sword upon her treasures,
that they may be plundered; [m]
38 A sword upon her waters,
that they may dry up!
For it is a land of idols,
and they shall be made frantic by fearful things. [n]

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39 Hence, wildcats and desert beasts shall dwell there,
and ostriches shall occupy it;
Never again shall it be peopled, or lived in,
from age to age. [o]
40 As when God overturned Sodom
and Gomorrah, with their neighbors, says the LORD,
Not a man shall dwell there,
no human being shall tarry there. [p]
41 See! a people comes from the north,
a great nation, and mighty kings
roused from the ends of the earth. [q]
42 Bow and javelin they wield,
cruel and pitiless are they;
They sound like the roaring sea,
as they ride forth on steeds,
Each in his place for battle
against you, daughter Babylon.
43 The king of Babylon hears news of them,
and helpless fall his hands;
Anguish seizes him,
throes like a mother's in childbirth. [r]
44 As when a lion comes up from the Jordan's thicket
to the permanent feeding grounds,
So I, in one instant, will drive them off,
and whom I choose I will establish there;
For who is like me? who calls me to account?
what shepherd can stand against me? [s]
45 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD
which he has taken against Babylon;
Hear the plans he has made
against the land of the Chaldeans:
They shall be dragged away, even the smallest sheep;
their own pasture shall be aghast because of them. [t]
46 At the cry "Babylon is captured!" the earth quakes;
the outcry is heard among the nations. [u]

## CHAPTER 51

### The Second Prophecy against Babylon

1 Thus says the LORD:
See! I rouse against Babylon,
and against those who live in Chaldea,
a destroying wind.
2 Against Babylon I will send winnowers
to winnow her and lay waste her land;
They shall besiege her from all sides
on the day of affliction. [v]
3 Let the bowman draw his bow,
and flaunt his coat of mail;
Spare not her young men,
doom her entire army. [w]
4 The slain shall fall in the land of Chaldea,
the transfixed, in her streets; [x]
5 For Israel and Judah are not widowed
of their God, the LORD of hosts,
And the Chaldean land is full of guilt
to be punished by the Holy One of Israel.

l Jer 51, 36. m Jer 51, 30; Na 3, 13. n Jer 51, 32. 36. o Jer 51, 37; Is 13, 21f. p Jer 51, 43. q Jer 51, 27f. r Is 13, 7. s Jer 49, 19. t Jer 51, 12. 29. u Jer 51, 29. v Jer 15, 7; Is 41, 16. w Jer 50, 14. 29. x Jer 50, 30.

6 Flee out of Babylon;
let each one save his life,
perish not for her guilt;
This is a time of vengeance for the LORD,
he pays her her due.[y]
7 Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the LORD
which made the whole earth drunk;
The nations drank its wine,
with this they have become mad.[z]
8 Babylon suddenly falls and is crushed:
howl over her!
Bring balm for her wounds,
in case she can be healed.[a]
9 "We have tried to heal Babylon,
but she cannot be healed.
Leave her, let us go, each to his own land."
Her judgment reaches heaven,
it touches the clouds.[b]
10 The LORD has brought to light our just cause;
come, let us tell in Zion
what the LORD, our God, has done.[c]

11 Sharpen the arrows,
fill the quivers;
The LORD has stirred up the spirit of Media's kings;*
Babylon he is resolved to destroy.
Yes, it is the vengeance of the LORD,
vengeance for his temple.[d]
12 Against the walls of Babylon raise a signal,
make strong the watch;
Post sentries,
arrange ambushes!
For the LORD has planned and he will carry out
his threat against the inhabitants of Babylon.
13 You who dwell by mighty waters,
rich in treasure,
Your end has come,
the term at which you shall be cut off![e]
14 The LORD of hosts has sworn by himself:
I will fill you with men as numerous as locusts,
who shall raise over you the vintage shout!
15 He has sworn who made the earth by his power,
and established the world by his wisdom,
and stretched out the heavens by his skill.[f]
16 When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar,
and he brings up clouds from the end of the earth;
He makes the lightning flash in the rain,
and releases stormwinds from their chambers.
17 Every man is stupid, ignorant;
every artisan is put to shame by his idol:
He molded a fraud,
without breath of life.
18 Nothingness are they, a ridiculous work,
that will perish in their time of punishment.
19 Not like these is the portion of Jacob,
he is the creator of all things;
Israel is his very own tribe,
LORD of hosts is his name.

20 You are my hammer,
my weapon for war;
With you I shatter nations,
with you I destroy kingdoms.
21 With you I shatter horse and rider,
with you I shatter chariot and driver.[g]
22 With you I shatter man and wife,
with you I shatter old and young,
with you I shatter youth and maiden.[h]
23 With you I shatter the shepherd and his flock,
with you I shatter the farmer and his team,
with you I shatter satraps and prefects.
24 Thus will I repay Babylon,
and all who live in Chaldea
All the evil they did to Zion,
as you shall see with your own eyes, says the LORD.[i]
25 Beware! I am against you,
destroying mountain,
destroyer of the entire earth, says the LORD;
I will stretch forth my hand against you,

**51, 11:** Media's kings: the Medes dwelt with the Persians in the land now known as Iran. At the time these words were written the Medes were the dominant people of the two, but within a short time the Persians had gained the ascendancy.

y Jer 50, 8. 15. 29; Is 48, 20. z Rv 14, 8; 17, 4. a Rv 18, 9–18. b Is 13, 14; Rv 18, 5. c Jer 50, 28. d 2 Kgs 17, 6; Is 13, 17. e Na 2, 1. f Jer 10, 12. g Dn 7, 7. 19. 23. h Is 13, 16. 18. i Jer 25, 14; 50, 29; Ps 137, 8.

roll you down over the cliffs,
and make you a burnt mountain:[j]
26 They will not take from you a cornerstone,
or a foundation stone;
Ruins forever shall you be,
says the LORD.[k]

27 Raise a signal on the earth,
blow the trumpet among the nations;
Dedicate peoples to war against her,
summon against her the kingdoms,
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz;*
Appoint recruiting officers against her,
send up horses like bristling locusts.[l]
28 Dedicate peoples to war against her:
the king of Media,
Its governors and all its prefects,
every land in his domain.
29 The earth quakes and writhes,
the LORD's plan against Babylon is carried out,
Turning the land of Babylon
into a desert where no one lives.
30 Babylon's warriors have ceased to fight,
they remain in their strongholds;
Dried up is their strength,
they have become women.
Burned are their homes,
and broken their bars.
31 One runner meets another,
herald meets herald,
Telling the king of Babylon
that all his city is taken.[m]
32 The fords have been seized,
and the fortresses set on fire,
while warriors are in panic.
33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor
at the time it is trodden;
Yet a little while,
and the harvest time will come for her.[n]
34 He has consumed me,* routed me,
[Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,]
he has left me as an empty vessel;
He has swallowed me like a dragon:
filled his belly with my delights, and cast me out.
35 My torn flesh be upon Babylon,
says the city on Zion;
My blood upon the people of Chaldea,
says Jerusalem.
36 But now, thus says the LORD:
Surely I will defend your cause,
I will avenge you;
I will dry up her sea,
and drain her fountain.
37 Babylon shall become a heap of ruins,
a haunt of jackals;
A place of horror and ridicule,
where no one lives.[o]
38 They all roar like lions,
growl like lion cubs.[p]
39 When they are parched, I will set a drink before them
to make them drunk, that they may be overcome
with perpetual sleep, never to awaken,
says the LORD.

40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter,
like rams and goats.
41 How has she been seized, made captive,
the glory of the whole world!
What a horror has Babylon become among nations:[q]
42 against Babylon the sea rises,
she is overwhelmed by the roaring waves!
43 Her cities have become a desert,
parched and arid land
Where no man lives,
and no one passes through.
44 I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and make him disgorge what he swallowed;
peoples shall stream to him no more.
The wall of Babylon falls!

**51, 27:** Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz: regions or people in what is now Armenia, subject at this time to Media.
**51, 34:** Me, my: refers to Jerusalem.

j Rv 8, 7; 18, 8f. k Jer 25, 12; Ps 118, 22. l Na 3, 17. m 2 Chr 30, 6; Jb 1, 14–18. n Rv 14, 15. o Is 25, 2. p Na 2, 11f. q Is 13, 19.

45 Leave her, my people, let each one save
himself
from the burning wrath of the
LORD.
46 Be not discouraged for fear of rumors spread
in the land; this year the rumor comes, then
violence in the land, tyrant against tyrant. [r] 47 But
behold, the days are coming when I will punish
the idols of Babylon; her whole land shall be put
to shame, and all her slain shall lie fallen within
her. 48 Then heaven, and earth, and everything
in them shall shout over Babylon with joy, when
the destroyers come against her from the north,
says the LORD. [s] 49 Babylon, too, must fall, O slain
of Israel, as at the hands of Babylon have fallen
the slain of all the earth.

50 You who have escaped the sword,
go on, stand not still;
Remember the LORD from afar,
let Jerusalem come to your minds.
51 We are ashamed because we have heard
taunts,
confusion covers our faces; strangers have
entered
the holy places of the house of the
LORD. [t]
52 But behold, the days are coming, says the
LORD,
when I will punish her idols,
and in her whole land the wounded will
groan.
53 Though Babylon scale the heavens,
and make her strong heights inaccessible,
destroyers from me shall reach her, says the
LORD. [u]
54 Hear! loud cries from Babylon,
dire destruction from the land of the
Chaldeans;
55 For the LORD lays Babylon waste,
stills her loud cry,
Though her waves were roaring like mighty
waters,
and their clamor was heard afar.
56 For the destroyer comes upon her, [Babylon,]
her heroes are captured, their bows
broken;
The LORD is a God who requites,
he will surely repay. [v]

57 I will make her princes and her wise men
drunk, her governors, her prefects, and her
warriors, so that they sleep an eternal sleep,
never to awaken, says the King, whose name is
the LORD of hosts. 58 Thus says the LORD of
hosts:

The walls of spacious Babylon shall be leveled
utterly;
her lofty gates shall be destroyed by fire.
The toil of the nations is for nothing;
for the flames the peoples weary
themselves. [w]

**The Prophecy Sent to Babylon** 59 This was
the errand given by the prophet Jeremiah to
Seraiah,* son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, when
he went to Babylon for the king in the fourth
year of the reign of Zedekiah; Seraiah was chief
quartermaster. 60 Jeremiah had written all the
misfortune that was to befall Babylon in a single
book:* all these words that were written
against Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Sera-
iah: When you reach Babylon, see that you
read aloud all these words, [x] 62 and then say: O
LORD, you yourself threatened to destroy this
place, so that neither man nor beast should
dwell in it, since it would remain an everlasting
desert. 63 When you have finished reading this
book, tie a stone to it and throw it in the
Euphrates, [y] 64 and say: Thus shall Babylon sink.
Never shall she rise, because of the evil I am
bringing upon her. [To "weary themselves" are
the words of Jeremiah.]*

51, 59: Seraiah: the brother of Baruch; cf Jer 32, 12. The king: Zedekiah. Perhaps Seraiah went to Babylon to explain away the presence of foreign ambassadors in Jerusalem that same year; cf Jer 27, 3.

51, 60: Jeremiah prophesied against Babylon, even as he foretold Judah's release from Babylon's power (Jer 3, 14–18; 32, 15; 33, 6–9. 12f); but his book against Babylon was thrown in the Euphrates (v 63). The preceding oracles were composed by later writers; see note on Jer 50, 1—51, 58.

51, 64: To "weary themselves" are the words of Jeremiah: an editorial remark concerning the end of v 58.

r Mt 24, 6f. s Rv 18, 20. t Pss 44, 16f; 78, 1–4. u Is 14, 13. v Na 1, 2. w Hb 2, 13. x Jer 50, 1–51. y Rv 18, 21.

# VI: Historical Appendix*

## CHAPTER 52

Ch 52
See RG
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**Capture of Jerusalem** [1]Zedekiah was twenty-
one years old when he became king, and he
reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.[z] His mother's
name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of
Libnah. [2]He did what was evil in the eyes of the
LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. [3]Indeed, what
was done in Jerusalem and in Judah so angered
the LORD that he cast them out from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.
[4][a]In the tenth month of the ninth year of his
reign, on the tenth day of the month,* Nebu-
chadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his whole
army advanced against Jerusalem, encamped
around it, and built siege walls on every side.
[5]The siege of the city continued until the eleven-
th year of King Zedekiah.

[6]On the ninth day of the fourth month, when
famine had gripped the city and the people had
no more bread, [7]the city walls were breached.
Then all the soldiers took to flight and left the
city by night through the gate between the two
walls which was near the king's garden. With
the Chaldeans surrounding the city, they went in
the direction of the Arabah. [8]But the Chaldean
army pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in
the desert near Jericho, while his whole army
fled from him.

[9]The king, therefore, was arrested and
brought to Riblah, in the land of Hamath, to the
king of Babylon, who pronounced sentence on
him. [10]As Zedekiah looked on, the king of
Babylon slew his sons as well as all the princes of
Judah at Riblah. [11]Then he blinded Zedekiah,
bound him with fetters, and had him brought to
Babylon and kept in prison until the day of his
death.

**Destruction of Jerusalem** [12]On the tenth day
of the fifth month (this was in the nineteenth
year* of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon),
Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard, came to
Jerusalem as the representative of the king of
Babylon. [13]He burned the house of the LORD,
the palace of the king, and all the houses of
Jerusalem; every large building he destroyed
with fire. [14]And the Chaldean troops who were
with the captain of the guard tore down all the
walls that surrounded Jerusalem.

[15]Then Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard,
led into exile the rest of the people left in the
city, and those who had deserted to the king of
Babylon, and the rest of the artisans. [16]But some
of the country's poor, Nebuzaradan, captain of
the guard, left behind as vinedressers and farm-
ers.

[17]The bronze pillars that belonged to the
house of the LORD, and the wheeled carts and
the bronze sea in the house of the LORD, the
Chaldeans broke into pieces; they carried away
all the bronze to Babylon. [18]They took also the
pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the bowls, the
pans, and all the bronze vessels used for service.
[19]The basins also, the fire holders, the bowls, the
pots, the lampstands, the pans, the sacrificial
bowls which were of gold or silver, these too the
captain of the guard carried off, [20]as well as the
two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve oxen of
bronze under the sea, and the wheeled carts
which King Solomon had made for the house of
the LORD. The bronze of all these furnishings
could not be weighed.

[21]Each of the pillars was eighteen cubits high
and twelve cubits in diameter; each was four
fingers thick, and hollow inside. [22]A bronze
capital five cubits high surmounted the one
pillar, and a network with pomegranates encir-
cled the capital, all of brass; and so for the other
pillar. The pomegranates . . . [23]there were
ninety-six pomegranates. There were a hundred
pomegranates, all around the network.

[24]The captain of the guard also took Seraiah,
the high priest, Zephaniah, the second priest,

52, 1–34: This supplement to the Book of Jeremiah was taken by the final editor from 2 Kgs 24, 18—25, 30 and placed here in order to show the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies. In part this repeats the history given in Jer 39—41; the history of Gedaliah in 2 Kgs 25, 22–26, however, has not been reproduced here.

52, 4: In the tenth month of the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the month: January 15, 588 B.C. Cf Jer 39, 1.

52, 12: On the tenth day of the fifth month . . . nineteenth year: the tenth of Ab—July/August in 587 B.C.

z 1–27: 2 Kgs 24, 18—25, 21. a 4–16: Jer 39, 1–10.

and the three keepers of the entry. [25]And from the city he took one courtier, a commander of soldiers, and seven men in the personal service of the king who were present in the city, and the scribe of the army commander who mustered the people of the land, and sixty of the common people who were in the city. [26]The captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan, arrested these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah, [27]who had them struck down and put to death in Riblah, in the land of Hamath.

Thus was Judah exiled from her land. [28]*This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar led away captive: in his seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three people of Judah; [29]in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, eight hundred and thirty-two persons from Jerusalem; [30]in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, exiled seven hundred and forty-five people of Judah: four thousand six hundred persons in all.

**Favor Shown to Jehoiachin*** [31] [b]In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, in the inaugural year of his reign, took up the case of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, and released him from prison. [32]He spoke kindly to him and gave him a throne higher than that of the other kings* who were with him in Babylon. [33]Jehoiachin took off his prison garb and ate at the king's table as long as he lived. [34]The allowance given him by the king of Babylon was a perpetual allowance, in fixed daily amounts, all the days of his life until the day of his death.

**52, 28–30:** These verses are missing in the Greek text and have not been taken from 2 Kgs 25, but from some other source using a different system of chronology. Besides the deportations of 598 and 587 B.C., mention is made here of a final one that took place in the year 582/1, possibly as a sequel to the murder of Gedaliah; cf Jer 41, 2.

**52, 31–34:** In the year 561/0 B.C., Jehoiachin was released from prison by Nebuchadnezzar's successor Awel-Marduk (Evil-merodach), who reigned only two years. Babylonian records confirm the fact that Jehoiachin and his family were supported at public expense.

**52, 32:** The other kings: who had also been brought as captives to Babylon.

b 31–34: 2 Kgs 25, 27–30.

# THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations
See RG
318–322

The sixth century B.C. was an age of crisis, a turning point in the history of Israel. With the destruction of the temple and the interruption of its ritual, the exile of the leaders and loss of national sovereignty, an era came to an end. Not long after the fall of Jerusalem (587) an eyewitness of the national humiliation composed these five laments. They combine confession of sin, grief over the suffering and humiliation of Zion, submission to merited chastisement, and strong faith in the constancy of Yahweh's love and power to restore. The union of poignant grief and unquenchable hope reflects the constant prophetic vision of the weakness of man and the strength of God's love; it also shows how Israel's faith in Yahweh could survive the shattering experience of national ruin.

As a literary work, the Book of Lamentations is carefully constructed according to a familiar structural device. The first four poems are acrostics in which the separate stanzas begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet from the first to the last. Far from destroying the spontaneous pathos of the songs, this literary feature permits a symbolic and disciplined expression of the profound grief, the sinful responsibility, and the enduring hope of the suffering community. The figure of Israel as the bride of Yahweh, familiar from the prophets, appears here again; but now Zion is a desolate widow, the *Judaea Capta* of Titus' memorial coins, sustained only by the faith that God's chastisement will eventually give place to his infinite compassion.

Lam
See RG
318–322

## CHAPTER 1

### Jerusalem Abandoned and Disgraced*

1 How lonely she is now,
the once crowded city!
Widowed is she
who was mistress over nations;
The princess among the provinces
has been made a toiling slave.

2 Bitterly she weeps at night,
tears upon her cheeks,
With not one to console her
of all her dear ones;
Her friends have all betrayed her
and become her enemies. [a]

3 Judah has fled into exile
from oppression and cruel slavery;
Yet where she lives among the nations
she finds no place to rest:
All her persecutors come upon her
where she is narrowly confined. [b]

4 The roads to Zion mourn
for lack of pilgrims going to her feasts;
All her gateways are deserted,
her priests groan,
Her virgins sigh;
she is in bitter grief. [c]

5 Her foes are uppermost,
her enemies are at ease;
The LORD has punished her
for her many sins.
Her little ones have gone away,
captive before the foe.

6 Gone from daughter Zion
is all her glory:
Her princes, like rams
that find no pasture,
Have gone off without strength
before their captors.

7 Jerusalem is mindful of the days
of her wretched homelessness,
When her people fell into enemy hands,
and she had no one to help her;
When her foes gloated over her,
laughed at her ruin.

8 Through the sin of which she is guilty,
Jerusalem is defiled;
All who esteemed her think her vile
now that they see her nakedness;
She herself groans
and turns away. [d]

9 Her filth is on her skirt;
she gave no thought how she would end.
Astounding is her downfall,
with no one to console her.
Look, O LORD, upon her misery,
for the enemy has triumphed!

10 The foe stretched out his hand
to all her treasures;
She has seen those nations
enter her sanctuary
Whom you forbade to come
into your assembly. [e]

11 All her people groan,
searching for bread;
They give their treasures for food,
to retain the breath of life.
"Look, O LORD, and see
how worthless I have become! [f]

12 "Come, all you who pass by the way,
look and see
Whether there is any suffering like my
suffering,
which has been dealt me
When the LORD afflicted me
on the day of his blazing wrath.

13 "From on high he sent fire
down into my very frame;
He spread a net for my feet,
and overthrew me.

1, 1–22: In this poem the poet first describes Jerusalem's miserable state after the destruction wrought by the Chaldeans (vv 1–11a); in v 11b the city itself takes up the lament.

a Jer 30, 14; Ez 16, 37. b Dt 28, 65; Jer 45, 3. c Jer 14, 2. d Is 47, 2; Jer 13, 22. 26. e Jer 51, 51. f Jer 52, 6.

He left me desolate,
in pain all the day.[g]

14 "He has kept watch over my sins;
by his hand they have been plaited:
They have settled about my neck,*
he has brought my strength to its knees;
The Lord has delivered me into their grip,
I am unable to rise.

15 "All the mighty ones in my midst
the Lord has cast away;
He summoned an army against me
to crush my young men;
The LORD has trodden in the wine press
virgin daughter Judah.[h]

16 "At this I weep,
my eyes run with tears:
Far from me are all who could console me,
any who might revive me;
My sons were reduced to silence
when the enemy prevailed."[i]

17 Zion stretched out her hands,
but there was no one to console her;
The LORD gave orders against Jacob
for his neighbors to be his foes;
Jerusalem has become in their midst
a thing unclean.[j]

18 "The LORD is just;
I had defied his command.
Listen, all you peoples,
and behold my suffering:
My maidens and my youths
have gone into captivity.[k]

19 "I cried out to my lovers,*
but they failed me.
My priests and my elders
perished in the city;
Where they sought food for themselves,
they found it not.[l]

20 "Look, O LORD, upon my distress:
all within me is in ferment,
My heart recoils within me
from my monstrous rebellion.
In the streets the sword bereaves,
at home death stalks.[m]

21 "Give heed to my groaning;
there is no one to console me.
All my enemies rejoice at my misfortune:
it is you who have wrought it.
Bring on the day you have proclaimed,
that they may be even as I.

22 "Let all their evil come before you;*
deal with them
As you have dealt with me
for all my sins;
My groans are many,
and I am sick at heart."[n]

## CHAPTER 2

Lam
See RG
318–322

### The Lord's Wrath against Zion

1 How the Lord in his wrath
has detested daughter Zion!
He has cast down from heaven to earth
the glory of Israel,*
Unmindful of his footstool
on the day of his wrath.

2 The Lord has consumed without pity
all the dwellings of Jacob;
He has torn down in his anger
the fortresses of daughter Judah;
He has brought to the ground in dishonor
her king and her princes.

3 He broke off, in fiery wrath,
the horn* that was Israel's whole strength;
He withheld the support of his right hand
when the enemy approached;
He blazed up in Jacob like a flaming fire
devouring all about it.[o]

**1, 14:** They have been plaited . . . my neck: the sins of the people have been bound together and laid as a yoke on their back; cf Mt 23, 4.

**1, 19:** My lovers: Zion's foreign allies, who failed to help her, as the prophets had warned.

**1, 22:** Zion fully acknowledges her guilt and the justness of divine punishment; nevertheless, she pleads that her enemies also be punished for their guilt.

**2, 1:** The glory of Israel: the temple. His footstool: the ark of the covenant (1 Chr 28, 2; Pss 99, 5; 132, 7); or again, the temple (Ez 43, 7).

**2, 3:** Horn: symbol of power and strength; cf Lam 2, 17; 1 Sm 2, 10; Lk 1, 69; etc.

g Ez 12, 13. h Jer 8, 16. i Jer 13, 17; 14, 17. j Ps 74, 7. k Dt 28, 41. l Jer 30, 14. m Lam 2, 11. n Lam 3, 64. o Lam 1, 12.

4 Like an enemy he made taut his bow;
with his arrows in his right hand
He took his stand as a foe, and slew
all on whom the eye doted;
Over the tent of daughter Zion
he poured out his wrath like fire.[p]

5 The Lord has become an enemy,
he has consumed Israel:
Consumed all her castles
and destroyed her fortresses;
For daughter Judah he has multiplied
moaning and groaning.

6 He has demolished his shelter like a garden
booth,
he has destroyed his dwelling;
In Zion the LORD has made
feast and sabbath to be forgotten;
He has scorned in fierce wrath
both king and priest.[q]

7 The Lord has disowned his altar,
rejected his sanctuary;
The walls of her towers
he has handed over to the enemy,
Who shout in the house of the LORD
as on a feast day.[r]

8 The LORD marked for destruction
the wall of daughter Zion:
He stretched out the measuring line;*
his hand brought ruin, yet he did not
relent—
He brought grief on wall and rampart
till both succumbed.[s]

9 Sunk into the ground are her gates;
he has removed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes are among the
pagans;
priestly instruction is wanting,
And her prophets have not received
any vision from the LORD.[t]

10 On the ground in silence sit
the old men of daughter Zion;
They strew dust* on their heads
and gird themselves with sackcloth;
The maidens of Jerusalem
bow their heads to the ground.[u]

11 Worn out from weeping are my eyes,
within me all is in ferment;
My gall is poured out on the ground*
because of the downfall of the daughter of
my people,
As child and infant faint away
in the open spaces of the town.[v]

12 They ask their mothers,
"Where is the cereal?"—in vain,
As they faint away like the wounded
in the streets of the city,
And breathe their last
in their mothers' arms.[w]

13 To what can I liken or compare you,
O daughter Jerusalem?
What example can I show you for your
comfort,
virgin daughter Zion?
For great as the sea is your downfall;
who can heal you?[x]

14 Your prophets had for you
false and specious visions;
They did not lay bare your guilt,
to avert your fate;
They beheld for you in vision
false and misleading portents.[y]

15 All who pass by
clap their hands at you;
They hiss and wag their heads
over daughter Jerusalem:
"Is this the all-beautiful city,
the joy of the whole earth?"[z]

16 All your enemies
open their mouths against you;
They hiss and gnash their teeth.

**2, 8:** The measuring line: used not only in building, but in deciding what must be destroyed; cf Is 34, 11; 2 Kgs 21, 13.
**2, 10:** They strew dust: as a sign of penance; cf Jb 2, 12.
**2, 11:** My gall is poured out on the ground: I am afflicted with bitter sorrow; cf Jb 16, 13.

p Jer 30, 14. q Lam 1, 4; Is 1, 13; 5, 5. r Ez 24, 21. s Jer 52, 13. t Dt 28, 36. u Is 3, 26. v Lam 3, 48. w Lam 1, 11. x Lam 1, 12. y Is 58, 1; Jer 2, 8; 23, 16. z Jer 18, 16.

They say, "We have devoured her.
This at last is the day we hoped for;
we have lived to see it!" [a]

17 The LORD has done as he decreed:
he has fulfilled the threat
He set forth from days of old;
he has destroyed and had no pity,
Letting the enemy gloat over you
and exalting the horn of your foes. [b]

18 Cry out to the Lord;
moan, O daughter Zion!
Let your tears flow like a torrent
day and night;
Let there be no respite for you,
no repose for your eyes.

19 Rise up, shrill in the night,
at the beginning of every watch;
Pour out your heart like water
in the presence of the Lord;
Lift up your hands to him
for the lives of your little ones
[Who faint from hunger
at the corner of every street].

20 "Look, O LORD, and consider:
whom have you ever treated thus?
Must women eat their offspring,*
their well-formed children?
Are priest and prophet to be slain
in the sanctuary of the LORD? [c]

21 "Dead in the dust of the streets
lie young and old;
My maidens and young men
have fallen by the sword;
You have slain on the day of your
wrath,
slaughtered without pity. [d]

22 "You summoned as for a feast day
terrors against me from all sides;
There was not, on the day of your wrath,
either fugitive or survivor;
Those whom I bore and reared
my enemy has utterly destroyed." [e]

## CHAPTER 3

Lam
See RG
318–322

### Sufferings of the Prophet and His People

1 I am a man who knows affliction*
from the rod of his anger, [f]
2 One whom he has led and forced to walk
in darkness, not in the light;
3 Against me alone he brings back his hand
again and again all the day.
4 He has worn away my flesh and my skin,
he has broken my bones; [g]
5 He has beset me round about
with poverty and weariness;
6 He has left me to dwell in the dark
like those long dead. [h]

7 He has hemmed me in with no escape
and weighed me down with chains;
8 Even when I cry out for help,
he stops my prayer; [i]
9 He has blocked my ways with fitted stones,
and turned my paths aside.

10 A lurking bear he has been to me,
a lion in ambush! [j]
11 He deranged my ways, set me astray,
left me desolate. [k]
12 He bent his bow, and set me up
as the target for his arrow. [l]

13 He pierces my sides
with shafts from his quiver. [m]
14 I have become a laughingstock for all nations,
their taunt all the day long; [n]
15 He has sated me with bitter food,
made me drink my fill of wormwood. [o]

16 He has broken my teeth with gravel,
pressed my face in the dust;
17 My soul is deprived of peace,
I have forgotten what happiness is;
18 I tell myself my future is lost,
all that I hoped for from the LORD.

**2, 20:** Must women eat their offspring: extreme famine in a besieged city sometimes led to this form of cannibalism; cf Lam 4, 10; 2 Kgs 6, 28f; Bar 2, 3; Ez 5, 10.
**3, 1–21:** The author identifies Zion's sufferings with his own.

a Lam 3, 46. b Dt 28, 15. c Lam 4, 10. d Lam 3, 43; 2 Chr 36, 17; Jer 6, 11. e Jer 42, 17. f Jer 20, 18. g Jb 30, 30; Is 38, 13. h Ps 143, 3. i Ps 22, 2. j Jb 10, 16; Hos 13, 8. k Lam 1, 13. l Lam 2, 4; Jb 16, 12. m Jb 6, 4; Ps 38, 3. n Jb 30, 9; Ps 69, 13. o Jer 9, 14; 23, 15.

19 The thought of my homeless poverty
is wormwood and gall;
20 Remembering it over and over
leaves my soul downcast within me.
21 But I will call this to mind,
as my reason to have hope:

22 The favors of the LORD are not exhausted,
his mercies are not spent; [p]
23 They are renewed each morning,
so great is his faithfulness.
24 My portion is the LORD, says my soul;
therefore will I hope in him. [q]

25 Good is the LORD to one who waits for him,
to the soul that seeks him; [r]
26 It is good to hope in silence
for the saving help of the LORD.
27 It is good for a man to bear
the yoke* from his youth.

28 Let him sit alone and in silence,
when it is laid upon him.
29 Let him put his mouth to the dust;*
there may yet be hope. [s]
30 Let him offer his cheek to be struck,
let him be filled with disgrace. [t]

31 For the Lord's rejection
does not last forever; [u]
32 Though he punishes, he takes pity,
in the abundance of his mercies; [v]
33 He has no joy in afflicting
or grieving the sons of men. [w]

34 When anyone tramples underfoot
all the prisoners in the land,
35 When he distorts men's rights
in the very sight of the Most High,
36 When he presses a crooked claim,
the Lord does not look on unconcerned.

37 Who commands, so that it comes to pass,
except the Lord ordains it;
38 Except it proceeds from the mouth of the Most High,
whether the thing be good or bad! [x]
39 Why should any living man complain,
any mortal, in the face of his sins? [y]

40 Let us search and examine our ways
that we may return to the LORD! [z]
41 Let us reach out our hearts
toward God in heaven!
42 We have sinned and rebelled;
you have not forgiven us.

43 You veiled yourself in wrath and pursued us,
you slew us and took no pity; [a]
44 You wrapped yourself in a cloud
which prayer could not pierce.
45 You have made us offscourings and refuse
among the nations. [b]

46 All our enemies
have opened their mouths against us;
47 Terror and the pit have been our lot,
desolation and destruction; [c]
48 My eyes run with streams of water
over the downfall of the daughter of my people. [d]

49 My eyes flow without ceasing,
there is no respite,
50 Till the LORD from heaven
looks down and sees.
51 My eyes torment my soul
at the sight of all the daughters of my city.

52 Those who were my enemies without cause
hunted me down like a bird;
53 They struck me down alive in the pit,
and sealed me in with a stone. [e]
54 The waters flowed over my head,
and I said, "I am lost!"

55 I called upon your name, O LORD, [f]
from the bottom of the pit;
56 You heard me call, "Let not your ear
be deaf to my cry for help!"
57 You came to my aid when I called to you;
you said, "Have no fear!"

**3, 27**: To bear the yoke: to do God's will; cf Jer 2, 20.
**3, 29**: Let him put his mouth to the dust: in humble submission; cf Ps 72, 9.

p Neh 9, 31. q Pss 16, 5; 73, 26. r Ps 130, 6; Is 30, 18. s Jb 42, 6. t Is 50, 6; Mt 5, 39. u Ps 103, 9. v Is 54, 8f. w Heb 12, 10f. x Is 45, 7. y Prv 19, 3. z Jl 2, 12f. a Lam 2, 21. b 1 Cor 4, 13. c Is 24, 17; Jer 48, 43. d Ps 119, 136. e Jer 37, 16; 38, 6–9. f 55f: Ps 130, 1f.

58 You defended me in mortal danger,
you redeemed my life.
59 You see, O LORD, how I am wronged;
do me justice! [g]
60 You see all their vindictiveness,
all their plots against me.

61 You hear their insults, O LORD,
[all their plots against me],
62 The whispered murmurings of my foes,
against me all the day;
63 Whether they sit or stand,
see, I am their taunt song.

64 Requite them as they deserve, O LORD,
according to their deeds;
65 Give them hardness of heart,
as your curse upon them; [h]
66 Pursue them in wrath and destroy them
from under your heavens!

## CHAPTER 4

### Miseries of the Besieged City

1 How tarnished is the gold,
how changed the noble metal;
How the sacred stones lie strewn
at every street corner!

2 Zion's precious sons,
fine gold their counterpart,
Now worth no more than earthen jars
made by the hands of a potter! [i]

3 Even the jackals bare their breasts
and suckle their young;
The daughter of my people has become as cruel
as the ostrich* in the desert. [j]

4 The tongue of the suckling cleaves
to the roof of its mouth in thirst;
The babes cry for food,
but there is no one to give it to them.

5 Those accustomed to dainty food
perish in the streets;
Those brought up in purple
now cling to the ash heaps. [k]

6 The punishment of the daughter of my people
is greater than the penalty of Sodom,
Which was overthrown in an instant
without the turning of a hand. [l]

7 Brighter than snow were her princes,
whiter than milk,
More ruddy than coral,
more precious than sapphire.

8 Now their appearance is blacker than soot,
they are unrecognized on the streets;
Their skin shrinks on their bones,
as dry as wood. [m]

9 Better for those who perish by the sword
than for those who die of hunger,
Who waste away, as though pierced through,
lacking the fruits of the field!

10 The hands of compassionate women
boiled their own children,
To serve them as mourners' food
in the downfall of the daughter of my people. [n]

11 The LORD has spent his anger,
poured out his blazing wrath;
He has kindled a fire in Zion
that has consumed her foundations. [o]

12 The kings of the earth did not believe,
nor any of the world's inhabitants,
That enemy or foe could enter
the gates of Jerusalem.

13 Because of the sins of her prophets*
and the crimes of her priests,
Who shed in her midst
the blood of the just!— [p]

14 They staggered blindly in the streets,
soiled with blood,

Lam
See RG
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**4, 3:** Cruel as the ostrich: see note on Jb 39, 14ff. Jerusalem, in her distress, had abandoned her children.

**4, 13ff:** The priests and the false prophets lulled the people into an illusory security (Jer 2, 8; 5, 31; 6, 13; etc.), condoning and entering into their crimes so that they themselves became unclean.

g Ps 35, 23. h Jer 11, 20; 2 Tm 4, 14. i Jer 19, 11. j Jb 39, 16. k Dt 28, 56. l Gn 19, 23–29; 2 Pt 2, 6; Jude 1, 7. m Lam 3, 4. n Lam 2, 20; Dt 28, 56f; 2 Kgs 6, 29. o Jer 7, 20; Ez 5, 13. p Jer 6, 13.

So that people could not touch
even their garments: [q]

15 "Away, you unclean!" they cried to them,
"Away, away, do not draw near!"
If they left and wandered among the nations,
nowhere could they remain.

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See RG
318–322

16 The LORD himself has dispersed them,
he regards them no more;
He does not receive the priests with favor,
nor show kindness to the elders.

17 Our eyes ever wasted away,
looking in vain for aid;
From our watchtower we watched
for a nation* that could not save us.

18 Men dogged our steps
so that we could not walk in our streets;
Our end drew near, and came;
our time had expired.

19 Our pursuers were swifter
than eagles in the air,
They harassed us on the mountains
and waylaid us in the desert. [r]

20 The anointed one of the LORD, our breath of life,*
was caught in their snares,
He in whose shadow we thought
we could live on among the nations. [s]

21 Though you rejoice and are glad, O daughter Edom,
you who dwell in the land of Uz,*
To you also shall the cup be passed;
you shall become drunk and naked. [t]

22 Your chastisement is completed, O daughter Zion,
he will not prolong your exile;
But your wickedness, O daughter Edom, he will punish,
he will lay bare your sins. [u]

## CHAPTER 5

### The Prophet's Lament and Supplication

1 Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us,
look, and see our disgrace:
2 Our inherited lands have been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners. [v]
3 We have become orphans, fatherless;
widowed are our mothers.
4 The water we drink we must buy,
for our own wood we must pay.
5 On our necks is the yoke of those who drive us;
we are worn out, but allowed no rest.

6 To Egypt we submitted,
and to Assyria, to fill our need of bread.*
7 Our fathers,* who sinned, are no more;
but we bear their guilt.
8 Slaves rule over us;
there is no one to rescue us from their hands.*
9 At the peril of our lives we bring in our sustenance,
in the face of the desert heat; [w]
10 Our skin is shriveled up, as though by a furnace,
with the searing blasts of famine. [x]

11 The wives in Zion were ravished by the enemy,
the maidens in the cities of Judah; [y]
12 Princes were gibbeted by them,
elders shown no respect. [z]

**4, 17:** A nation: Egypt, which failed to give effective aid against Babylon.

**4, 20:** Our breath of life: the king. This is a royal epithet borrowed from Egyptian usage, while the anointed one of the Lord is Israelite. After the disaster of 598 B.C. (2 Kgs 24, 1–17), Jerusalem could have hoped to live in peace amidst her neighbors; but they (vv 21f) as well as Babylon turned against her to ensure her total devastation in 587 B.C.

**4, 21:** Uz: see note on Jer 25, 20.

**5, 6:** In its state of abjection, Judah was forced to depend on its traditional enemies to the west and the east for subsistence. Mesopotamia is here called by the name it had long borne, Assyria, though in these times the power of the Assyrians had been superseded by that of the Chaldeans.

**5, 7:** Our fathers: collective responsibility, for good and for evil, was recognized in the Old Testament; cf Jer 31, 29. But the present generation is also personally guilty of sin (v 16).

**5, 8:** Administrations imposed by foreign powers were notoriously corrupt and inept. The Hebrew word for "slave" is the same as that used for an official (servant of the ruler); the author doubtless intends the double meaning here.

q Is 59, 10. r Jer 4, 13; Hb 1, 8. s Lam 2, 9; Ez 19, 4. 8. t Lam 1, 21; Jer 25, 15. u Is 40, 2. v Ps 79, 1. w Jer 6, 25. x Lam 4, 8. y Zec 14, 2. z Lam 4, 16.

13 The youths carry the millstones,
boys stagger under their loads of
wood;
14 The old men have abandoned the gate,*
the young men their music.

15 The joy of our hearts has ceased,
our dance has turned into
mourning; [a]
16 The garlands have fallen from our heads:
woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 Over this our hearts are sick,
at this our eyes grow dim:
18 That Mount Zion should be desolate,
with jackals roaming there!

19 You, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
your throne stands from age to age. [b]
20 Why, then, should you forget us,
abandon us so long a time? [c]
21 Lead us back to you, O LORD, that we may be
restored:
give us anew such days as we had of old. [d]
22 For now you have indeed rejected us,
and in full measure turned your wrath
against us. [e]

5, 14: The gate: the place of assembly, where city decisions were made and judgment given by the elders and other notables; see note on Ru 4, 1.

a Jer 16, 9; 25, 10; Am 8, 10. b Pss 9, 8; 45, 7; 102, 13. 27. c Pss 13, 1; 42, 10. d Ps 80, 19f. e Jer 14, 19.

# THE BOOK OF BARUCH

Baruch
See RG
322-327

The opening verses of this book ascribe it, or at least its first part, to Baruch, the well-known secretary of the prophet Jeremiah. It contains five very different compositions, the first and the last in prose, the others in poetic form. The prose sections were certainly composed in Hebrew, though the earliest known form of the book is in Greek.

An observance of the feast of Booths with a public prayer of penitence and petition (1, 15—3, 8), such as is supposed by the introduction (1, 1-14), would not have been possible during the lifetime of Baruch after the fall of Jerusalem; this indeed is suggested in the prayer itself (2, 26). The prayer is therefore to be understood as the pious reflection of a later Jewish writer upon the circumstances of the exiles in Babylon as he knew them from the Book of Jeremiah. He expresses in their name sentiments called for by the prophet, and ascribes the wording of these sentiments to the person most intimately acquainted with Jeremiah's teaching, namely, Baruch. The purpose of this literary device is to portray for his own and later generations the spirit of repentance which prompted God to bring the Exile to an end.

The lesson thus gained is followed by a hymn in praise of Wisdom (3, 9—4, 4), exalting the law of Moses as the unique gift of God to Israel, the observance of which is the way to life and peace. The ideal city of Jerusalem is then represented (4, 5-29) as the solicitous mother of all exiles, who is assured in the name of God that all her children will be restored to her (4, 30—5, 9).

The final chapter is really a separate work, with a title of its own (6, 1). It is patterned after the earlier letter of Jeremiah (Jer 29), in the spirit of the warnings against idolatry contained in Jer 10 and Is 44. Its earnestness is impressive, but in restating previous inspired teachings at a later day, it does so with no special literary grace.

Thus the principal divisions of the book are seen to be:

I. Prayer of the Exiles (1, 1—3, 8).
II. Praise of Wisdom in the Law of Moses (3, 9—4, 4).
III. Jerusalem Bewails and Consoles Her Captive Children (4, 5-29).
IV. Jerusalem Consoled: The Captivity about To End (4, 30—5, 9).
V. The Letter of Jeremiah against Idolatry (6, 1-72).

## I: Prayer of the Exiles

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
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**Meeting in Babylon** [1]Now these are the words of the scroll which Baruch, son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, son of Zedekiah, son of Hasadiah, son of Hilkiah, wrote in Babylon,[a] [2]in the fifth year [on the seventh day of the month,* at the time when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem and burnt it with fire].[b] [3]c And Baruch read the words of this scroll for Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to hear it, as well as all the people who came to the reading:[d] [4]the nobles, the kings' sons, the elders, and the whole people, small and great alike—all who lived in Babylon by the river Sud.*

[5]They wept and fasted and prayed before the LORD, [6]and collected such funds as each could furnish.[e] [7]These they sent to Jerusalem, to Jehoiakim, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, the priest, and to the priests and the whole people who were with him in Jerusalem. [8][This was when he* received the vessels of the house of the LORD that had been removed from the temple, to restore them to the land of Judah, on the tenth of Sivan. These silver vessels Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, had had made [9]after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, carried off Jeconiah, and the princes, and the skilled workers, and the nobles, and the people of the land from Jerusalem, as captives, and brought them to Babylon.]

[10]Their message was: "We send you funds, with which you are to procure holocausts, sin offerings, and frankincense, and to prepare cereal offerings; offer these on the altar of the LORD our God,[f] [11]and pray for the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that of Belshazzar, his son,* that their lifetimes may equal the duration of the heavens above the earth;[g] [12]and that the LORD may give us strength, and light to our eyes, that we may live under the protective shadow of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that of Belshazzar, his son, and serve them long, finding favor in their sight.

**Confession of Guilt** [13]"Pray for us also to the LORD, our God; for we have sinned against the LORD, our God, and the wrath and anger of the LORD have not yet been withdrawn from us at the present day. [14]And read out publicly this scroll which we send you, in the house of the LORD, on the feast day and during the days of assembly:[h]

[15]"Justice is with the LORD, our God; and we today are flushed with shame, we men of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem,[i] [16]that we, with our kings and rulers and priests and prophets, and with our fathers, [17]have sinned in the LORD's sight [18]and disobeyed him. We have neither heeded the voice of the LORD, our God, nor

**1, 2:** In the fifth year on the seventh day of the month: Jerusalem fell on the seventh day of the fifth month; cf 2 Kgs 25, 8; Jer 52, 12. Either the text read originally "the fifth month," or it refers to the observance of an anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

**1, 4:** The river Sud: one of the Babylonian canals, not otherwise identified. In ancient non-Biblical Hebrew fragments discovered in 1952, there is reference to a river "Sur" in a similar context.

**1, 8f:** He: possibly Baruch; less likely Jehoiakim . . . the priest (v 7), a member of the high-priestly family not mentioned elsewhere. The silver vessels here described are distinct from the vessels referred to in 2 Kgs 25, 14 and Ezr 1, 7ff. The author of this note may have thought of the fifth year (v 1) of Zedekiah, in view of Jer 28, 1; 29, 1ff. A "fifth year," again with no month mentioned, is given in Ez 1, 2 for the inaugural vision of Ezekiel's prophetic career.

**1, 11:** Nebuchadnezzar . . . Belshazzar, his son: as in Dn 5, 1f. Later Jewish tradition seems to have simplified the history of the past by making the last Chaldean ruler of Babylon the son of the conqueror of Jerusalem.

a Jer 32, 12; 36, 4; 45, 1–5. b 2 Kgs 25, 8ff. c 2 Kgs 24, 8–17; Jer 22, 24–30; 51, 59–64. d 3–4; 2 Kgs 23, 1–2. e Dt 16, 17. f Jer 17, 26. g Dt 11, 21; Jer 29, 7; Dn 5, 1–2; 1 Tm 2, 1f. h Ex 23, 14ff; Lv 23, 35f; Hos 9, 5; Sir 50, 6. i Bar 2, 6; 3, 8; Neh 9, 6–37; Ezr 9, 6–15; Dn 9, 4–19.

followed the precepts which the LORD set before us. [19]From the time the LORD led our fathers out of the land of Egypt until the present day, we have been disobedient to the LORD, our God, and only too ready to disregard his voice. [20]And the evils and the curse which the LORD enjoined upon Moses, his servant, at the time he led our fathers forth from the land of Egypt to give us the land flowing with milk and honey, cling to us even today.[j] [21]For we did not heed the voice of the LORD, our God, in all the words of the prophets whom he sent us, [22]but each one of us went off after the devices of our own wicked hearts, served other gods, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, our God.

## CHAPTER 2

[1]"And the LORD fulfilled the warning he had uttered against us: against our judges, who governed Israel, against our kings and princes, and against the men of Israel and Judah. [2]He brought down upon us evils so great that there has not been done anywhere under heaven what has been done in Jerusalem, as was written in the law of Moses:[k] [3]that one after another of us should eat* the flesh of his son or of his daughter. [4]He has made us subject to all the kingdoms round about us, a reproach and a horror among all the nations round about to which the LORD has scattered us.[l] [5]We are brought low, not raised up, because we sinned against the LORD, our God, not heeding his voice.

[6]"Justice is with the LORD, our God; and we, like our fathers, are flushed with shame even today.[m] [7]All the evils of which the LORD had warned us have come upon us; [8]and we did not plead before the LORD, or turn, each from the figments of his evil heart. [9]And the LORD kept watch over the evils, and brought them home to us; for the LORD is just in all the works he commanded us to do,[n] [10]but we did not heed his voice, or follow the precepts of the LORD which he set before us.

**Prayer for Deliverance** [11]"And now, LORD, God of Israel, you who led your people out of the land of Egypt with your mighty hand, with signs and wonders and great might, and with your upraised arm, so that you have made for yourself a name till the present day:[o] [12]we have sinned, been impious, and violated, O LORD, our God, all your statutes.[p] [13]Let your anger be withdrawn from us, for we are left few in number among the nations to which you scattered us. [14]Hear, O LORD, our prayer of supplication, and deliver us for your own sake: grant us favor in the presence of our captors, [15]that the whole earth may know that you are the LORD, our God, and that Israel and his descendants bear your name.[q] [16]O LORD, look down from your holy dwelling and take thought of us; turn, O LORD, your ear to hear us.[r] [17]Look directly at us, and behold: it is not the dead in the nether world, whose spirits have been taken from within them, who will give glory and vindication to the LORD.[s] [18]He whose soul is deeply grieved, who walks bowed and feeble, with failing eyes and famished soul, will declare your glory and justice, LORD![t]

Ch 1–3
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324–325

[19]"Not on the just deeds of our fathers and our kings do we base our plea for mercy in your sight, O LORD, our God. [20]You have brought your wrath and anger down upon us, as you had warned us through your servants the prophets: [21]'Thus says the LORD: Bend your shoulders to the service of the king of Babylon, that you may continue in the land I gave your fathers:[u] [22]for if you do not hear the LORD's voice so as to serve the king of Babylon,

[23]I will make to cease from the cities of Judah
and from the streets of Jerusalem
The sounds of joy and the sounds of gladness,
the voice of the bridegroom
and the voice of the bride;
And all the land shall be deserted,
without inhabitants.'[v]

[24]But we did not heed your voice, or serve the

2, 3: One after another of us should eat: see note on Lam 2, 20.

j Lv 26, 14–39; Dt 28, 15–68. k 2f: 2 Kgs 6, 28f; Jer 19, 9; Lam 2, 20; 4, 10; Ez 5, 10. l Jer 29, 18. m Bar 1, 15. n Jer 1, 12; 31, 28; 44, 27. o Dt 6, 21–22. p Ps 106, 6. q Sir 36, 11; Jer 14, 9. r Dt 26, 15. s Ps 6, 6; Is 38, 18. t Zep 2, 3. u Jer 27, 12. v Jer 7, 34.

king of Babylon, and you fulfilled the threats you
had made through your servants the prophets, to
have the bones of our kings and the bones of our
fathers brought out from their burial places.[w]
25And indeed, they lie exposed* to the heat of
day and the frost of night. They died in dire an-
guish, by hunger and the sword and plague.[x]
26And you reduced the house which bears your
name* to what it is today, for the wickedness of
the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.[y]
**God's Promises Recalled** 27"But with us, O
Lord, our God, you have dealt in all your clem-
ency and in all your great mercy. 28This was your
warning through your servant Moses, the day
you ordered him to write down your law in the
presence of the Israelites: 29If you do not heed
my voice, surely this great and numerous throng
will dwindle away among the nations to which I
will scatter them. 30For I know they will not
heed me, because they are a stiff-necked people.
But in the land of their captivity they shall have a
change of heart;[z] 31they shall know that I, the
LORD, am their God. I will give them hearts, and
heedful ears;[a] 32and they shall praise me in the
land of their captivity, and shall invoke my
name.[b] 33Then they shall turn back from their
stiff-necked stubbornness, and from their evil
deeds, because they shall remember the fate of
their fathers who sinned against the LORD.[c]
34And I will bring them back to the land which
with my oath I promised to their fathers, to Abra-
ham, Isaac and Jacob; and they shall rule it. I will
make them increase; they shall not then dimin-
ish. 35And I will establish for them, as an eternal
covenant, that I will be their God, and they shall
be my people; and I will not again remove my
people Israel from the land I gave them.[d]

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3–4
See RG
325

1"LORD Almighty, God of Israel, afflicted souls
and dismayed spirits call to you. 2Hear, O LORD,
for you are a God of mercy; and have mercy on
us, who have sinned against you: 3for you are
enthroned forever, while we are perishing for-
ever.[e] 4LORD Almighty, God of Israel, hear the
prayer of Israel's few, the sons of those who
sinned against you; they did not heed the voice
of the LORD, their God, and the evils cling to us.
5Remember at this time not the misdeeds of our
fathers, but your own hand and name: 6for you
are the LORD our God; and you, O LORD, we will
praise! 7For this, you put into our hearts the fear
of you: that we may call upon your name, and
praise you in our captivity, when we have
removed from our hearts all the wickedness of
our fathers who sinned against you.[f] 8Behold us
today in our captivity, where you scattered us, a
reproach, a curse, and a requital for all the
misdeeds of our fathers, who withdrew from the
LORD, our God."

## II: Praise of Wisdom in the Law of Moses

9Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life:
listen, and know prudence![g]
10How is it, Israel,
that you are in the land of your foes,
grown old in a foreign land,
Defiled with the dead,
11 accounted with those destined for the
nether world?[h]
12You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom![i]
13 Had you walked in the way of God,
you would have dwelt in enduring peace.[j]
14Learn where prudence is,
where strength, where understanding;
That you may know also
where are length of days, and life,
where light of the eyes, and peace.[k]

15Who has found the place of wisdom,[l]
who has entered into her treasuries?
16Where are the rulers of the nations,
they who lorded it over the wild beasts of
the earth,[m]

**2, 25**: They lie exposed: probably an allusion to Jer 36, 30; see note on Jer 22, 19.
**2, 26**: The house which bears your name: the temple of Jerusalem. What it is today: during the exile it lay in ruins.

w Jer 8, 1f. x Jer 7, 34; 14,12; 31, 30. y Jer 7, 10–15. z Dt 30, 1f; 31, 27. a Jer 24, 7; Ez 36, 26; Ps 40, 7. b Tb 13, 7. c 33ff: Dt 30, 1–10. d Jer 31, 31; Lam 4, 22. e Pss 29, 10; 102, 12f. f Jer 31, 33. g Prv 4, 20ff. h Ps 88, 5. i Jer 2, 13; Jn 4, 10. 14. j Is 48, 18. k Prv 3, 2; 8, 14. l 15ff: Jb 28, 1–28. m Jer 27, 6.

17 and made sport of the birds of the heavens:
They who heaped up the silver
and the gold in which men trust;
of whose possessions there was no end?
18 They schemed anxiously for money,
but there is no trace of their work:
19 They have vanished down into the nether world,
and others have risen up in their stead.

20 Later generations have seen the light,
have dwelt in the land,
But the way to understanding they have not known,
21 they have not perceived her paths, or reached her;
their offspring were far from the way to her.
22 She has not been heard of in Canaan,*
nor seen in Teman.[n]
23 The sons of Hagar who seek knowledge on earth,
the merchants of Midian and Teman,
the phrasemakers seeking knowledge,
These have not known the way to wisdom,
nor have they her paths in mind.

24 O Israel, how vast is the house of God,*
how broad the scope of his dominion:
25 Vast and endless,
high and immeasurable!
26 In it were born the giants,
renowned at the first,
stalwarts, skilled in war.[o]
27 Not these did God choose,
nor did he give them the way of understanding;[p]
28 They perished for lack of prudence,
perished through their folly.[q]
29 Who has gone up to the heavens and taken her,
or brought her down from the clouds?[r]
30 Who has crossed the sea and found her,
bearing her away rather than choice gold?
31 None knows the way to her,
nor has any understood her paths.

32 Yet he who knows all things knows her;
he has probed her by his knowledge—
He who established the earth for all time,
and filled it with four-footed beasts;
33 He who dismisses the light, and it departs,
calls it, and it obeys him trembling;
34 Before whom the stars at their posts
shine and rejoice;
35 When he calls them, they answer, "Here we are!"
shining with joy for their Maker.[s]
36 Such is our God;
no other is to be compared to him:
37 He has traced out all the way of understanding,
and has given her to Jacob, his servant,
to Israel, his beloved son.[t]

38 Since then she has appeared on earth,
and moved among men.[u]

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4–5
See RG
325

1 She is the book of the precepts of God,
the law that endures forever;
All who cling to her will live,
but those will die who forsake her.[v]
2 Turn, O Jacob, and receive her:
walk by her light toward splendor.[w]
3 Give not your glory to another,
your privileges to an alien race.
4 Blessed are we, O Israel;
for what pleases God is known to us![x]

## III: Jerusalem Bewails and Consoles Her Captive Children

5 Fear not, my people!
Remember, Israel,
6 You were sold to the nations
not for your destruction;

3, 22f: Despite the renown for wisdom of the peoples of Canaan or Phoenicia (Ez 28, 3f), of Teman (Jer 49, 7), of the sons of Hagar or the Arabians, they did not possess true wisdom, which is found only in the law of God.
3, 24: The house of God: here, the created universe.

n Jer 49, 7; Ez 28, 4–5; Zec 9, 2; Jb 2, 11. o Gn 6, 4; Wis 14, 6. p 1 Sm 16, 7–10. q Sir 10, 8. r Dt 30, 12f; Sir 24, 4; Rom 10, 6f. s Jb 38, 7; Ps 147, 4; Is 40, 26. t Ps 147, 19; Sir 24, 8–12. u Wis 9, 18; Jn 1, 14. v Dt 4, 6–8; Prv 8, 35f; Sir 24, 22. w Prv 4, 13. 19. x Dt 4, 32–37; 33, 29.

It was because you angered God
that you were handed over to your foes.[y]
7 For you provoked your Maker[z]
with sacrifices to demons, to no-gods;
8 You forsook the Eternal God who nourished you,
and you grieved Jerusalem who fostered you.
9 She indeed saw coming upon you
the anger of God; and she said:

"Hear, you neighbors of Zion!
God has brought great mourning upon me,
10 For I have seen the captivity
that the Eternal God has brought
upon my sons and daughters.
11 With joy I fostered them;
but with mourning and lament I let them go.
12 Let no one gloat over me, a widow,
bereft of many:
For the sins of my children I am left desolate,
because they turned from the law of God,[a]
13 and did not acknowledge his statutes;
In the ways of God's commandments they did not walk,
nor did they tread the disciplined paths of his justice.

14 "Let Zion's neighbors come,
to take note of the captivity of my sons and daughters,
brought upon them by the Eternal God.
15 He has brought against them a nation from afar,
a nation ruthless and of alien speech,
That has neither reverence for age
nor tenderness for childhood;[b]
16 They have led away this widow's cherished sons,
have left me solitary, without daughters.
17 What can I do to help you?
18 He who has brought this evil upon you
must himself deliver you from your enemies' hands.[c]
19 Farewell, my children, farewell:
I am left desolate.
20 I have taken off the garment of peace,
have put on sackcloth for my prayer of supplication,
and while I live I will cry out to the Eternal God.[d]

21 "Fear not, my children; call upon God,
who will deliver you from oppression at enemy hands.[e]
22 I have trusted in the Eternal God for your welfare,
and joy has come to me from the Holy One
Because of the mercy that will swiftly reach you
from your eternal savior.
23 With mourning and lament I sent you forth,
but God will give you back to me
with enduring gladness and joy.[f]
24 As Zion's neighbors lately saw you taken captive,
so shall they soon see God's salvation come to you,
with great glory and the splendor of the Eternal God.[g]

25 "My children, bear patiently the anger[h]
that has come from God upon you;
Your enemies have persecuted you,
and you will soon see their destruction
and trample upon their necks.*
26 My pampered children have trodden rough roads,
carried off by their enemies like sheep in a raid.[i]
27 Fear not, my children; call out to God!
He who brought this upon you will remember you.[j]
28 As your hearts have been disposed to stray from God,
turn now ten times the more to seek him;
29 For he who has brought disaster upon you

**4, 25:** Trample upon their necks: love of enemies was not an Old Testament ideal. The Babylonians are considered here, however, to be God's enemies as well as Israel's.

y Jgs 2, 14; Is 50, 1; 52, 3. z 7–8: Dt 32, 13–18; 1 Cor 10, 20. a Lam 1, 1. 2. 7. b Dt 28, 49f; Jer 5, 15; 6, 22f. c Jer 32, 42. d Jdt 9, 1; Est 4, 16. e Jer 51, 5. f Jer 31, 12f. g Is 60, 1ff. h Is 51, 23. i Lam 2, 22. j Is 40, 1.

will, in saving you, bring you back enduring
joy." [k]

## IV: Jerusalem Consoled: The Captivity About to End

30 Fear not, Jerusalem!
He who gave you your name is your
encouragement. [l]
31 Fearful are those who harmed you,
who rejoiced at your downfall;
32 Fearful are the cities where your children were
enslaved,
fearful the city that took your sons. [m]
33 As that city rejoiced at your collapse, [n]
and made merry at your downfall,
so shall she grieve over her own desolation.
34 I will take from her the joyous throngs,
and her exultation shall be turned to
mourning:
35 For fire shall come upon her [o]
from the Eternal God, for a long time,
and demons shall dwell in her from that
time on.*

36 Look to the east, Jerusalem!
behold the joy that comes to you from
God. [p]
37 Here come your sons whom you once let go,
gathered in from the east and from the west
By the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing in the glory of God.

### CHAPTER 5

1 Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and
misery;
put on the splendor of glory from God
forever: [q]
2 Wrapped in the cloak of justice from God,
bear on your head the mitre
that displays the glory of the eternal name. [r]
3 For God will show all the earth your splendor:
4 you will be named by God forever
the peace of justice, the glory of God's
worship. [s]

5 Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights;
look to the east and see your children
Gathered from the east and the west
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that they are remembered by God.
6 Led away on foot by their enemies they left
you:
but God will bring them back to you
borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. [t]
7 For God has commanded
that every lofty mountain be made low,
And that the age-old depths and gorges
be filled to level ground,
that Israel may advance secure in the glory
of God. [u]
8 The forests and every fragrant kind of tree
have overshadowed Israel at God's
command; [v]
9 For God is leading Israel in joy
by the light of his glory,
with his mercy and justice for company.

## V: The Letter of Jeremiah Against Idolatry

### CHAPTER 6

Ch 6
See RG
325–326

1 A copy of the letter which Jeremiah sent to those who were being led captive to Babylon by the king of the Babylonians, to convey to them what God had commanded him: [w]

Ch 4–5
See RG
325

For the sins you committed before God, you are being led captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians. 2 When you reach Babylon you will be there many years, a period seven generations* long; after which I will bring you back from there in peace. 3 And now in Babylon you will see borne upon men's shoulders gods of silver and gold and wood, which cast fear upon the pagans. [x] 4 Take care

**4, 35:** Deserts and desolate places were looked upon as the special habitations of demons; Tb 8, 3; Lk 11, 24.

**6, 2:** Seven generations: possibly an indication of the date of this composition by an author writing for his contemporaries for whom the conditions of the exile were still realities. He has multiplied the seventy years of Jer 29, 10 by three or four.

k Is 35, 10. l Ps 46, 5; Is 60, 14. m Jer 51, 43. n 33f: Is 13, 20ff; 47, 1–11; Jer 50, 13. o Is 34, 9–14. p Is 60, 4f. q Is 52, 1. r Ex 39, 30; Wis 18, 24; Is 61. 10; 62, 3. s Is 1, 26; 32, 17; Jer 33, 16. t Is 49, 22. u Is 40, 3f. v Is 41, 19. w Jer 29, 1. x Is 46, 7; Jer 10, 1–16.

that you yourselves do not imitate their alien
example and stand in fear of them, [5]when you
see the crowd before them and behind worship-
ing them. Rather, say in your hearts, "You, O
LORD, are to be worshiped!"; [6]for my angel is
with you, and he is the custodian of your lives.[y]

[7]Their tongues are smoothed by woodwork-
ers; they are covered with gold and silver—but
they are a fraud, and cannot speak.[z] [8]People
bring gold, as to a maiden in love with orna-
ment, [9]and furnish crowns for the heads of their
gods. Then sometimes the priests take the silver
and gold from their gods and spend it on
themselves, [10]or give part of it to the harlots on
the terrace.* They trick them out in garments
like men, these gods of silver and gold and
wood; [11]but though they are wrapped in purple
clothing, they are not safe from corrosion or
insects. [12]They wipe their faces clean of the
house dust which is thick upon them. [13]Each
has a scepter, like the human ruler of a district;
but none does away with those that offend
against it. [14]Each has in its right hand an axe or
dagger, but it cannot save itself from war or
pillage. Thus it is known they are not gods; do
not fear them.

[15]As useless as one's broken tools [16]are their
gods, set up in their houses; their eyes are full of
dust from the feet of those who enter. [17]Their
courtyards are walled in like those of a man
brought to execution for a crime against the king;
the priests reinforce their houses with gates and
bars and bolts, lest they be carried off by robbers.
[18]They light more lamps for them than for them-
selves, yet not one of these can they see. [19]They
are like any beam in the house; it is said their
hearts are eaten away. Though the insects out of
the ground consume them and their garments,
they do not feel it. [20]Their faces are blackened by
the smoke of the house. [21]Bats and swallows
alight on their bodies and on their heads; and cats
as well as birds. [22]Know, therefore, that they are
not gods, and do not fear them.

[23]Despite the gold that covers them for adorn-
ment, unless someone wipes away the corro-
sion, they do not shine; nor did they feel
anything when they were molded. [24]They are
bought at any price, and there is no spirit in
them. [25]Having no feet, they are carried on
men's shoulders, displaying their shame to all;
and those who worship them are put to confu-
sion[a] [26]because, if they fall to the ground, the
worshipers must raise them up. They neither
move of themselves if one sets them upright, nor
come upright if they fall; but one puts gifts
beside them as beside the dead. [27]*Their priests
resell their sacrifices for their own advantage.
Even their wives cure parts of the meat, but do
not share it with the poor and the weak;[b] [28]the
menstruous and women in childbed handle their
sacrifices. Knowing from this that they are not
gods, do not fear them.

[29]How can they be called gods? For women
bring the offerings to these gods of silver and
gold and wood; [30]and in their temples the
priests squat with torn tunic and with shaven
hair and beard, and with their heads un-
covered.[c] [31]They shout and wail before their
gods as others do at a funeral banquet. [32]The
priests take some of their clothing and put it on
their wives and children. [33]*Whether they are
treated well or ill by anyone, they cannot require
it; they can neither set up a king nor remove
him.[d] [34]Similarly, they cannot give anyone
riches or coppers; if one fails to fulfill a vow to
them, they cannot exact it of him. [35]They
neither save a man from death, nor deliver the
weak from the strong.[e] [36]To no blind man do
they restore his sight, nor do they save any man
in an emergency. [37]They neither pity the widow
nor benefit the orphan. [38]These gilded and
silvered wooden statues are like stones from the
mountains; and their worshipers will be put to
shame. [39]How then can it be thought or claimed
that they are gods?

**6, 10:** Harlots on the terrace: cult prostitutes, common in the idolatrous religions of the Gentiles.

**6, 27–31:** From the point of view of Jewish ritual law, the practices named here were grotesque and depraved; cf Lv 12, 2ff; 15, 19–23.

**6, 33–39:** All that the gods cannot do, the true God does; cf 1 Sm 2, 7; Dt 23, 22; Pss 68, 6; 146, 7–9; Is 35, 4f.

y Ex 23, 20. z Ps 135, 16. a Wis 13, 16. b Lv 12. 4; 15, 19f; Dt 14, 28f. c Lv 10, 6; 21, 5. 10. d Dn 2, 21. e Pss 68, 6; 146, 7ff.

[40]Even the Chaldeans themselves have no
respect for them; for when they see a deaf mute,
incapable of speech, they bring forward Bel* and
ask the god to make noise, as though the man
could understand; [41]and they are themselves
unable to reflect and abandon these gods, for
they have no sense. [42]*And their women, girt
with cords, sit by the roads, burning chaff for
incense;[f] [43]and whenever one of them is drawn
aside by some passerby who lies with her, she
mocks her neighbor who has not been dignified
as she has, and has not had her cord broken.
[44]All that takes place around these gods is a
fraud: how then can it be thought or claimed
that they are gods?

[45]They are produced by woodworkers and
goldsmiths, and they are nothing else than what
these craftsmen wish them to be. [46]Even those
who produce them are not long-lived; [47]how
then can what they have produced be gods?
They have left frauds and opprobrium to their
successors. [48]For when war or disaster comes
upon them, the priests deliberate among themselves where they can hide with them. [49]How
then can one not know that these are no-gods,
which do not save themselves either from war or
from disaster? [50]They are wooden, gilded and
silvered; they will later be known for frauds. To
all peoples and kings it will be clear that they are
not gods, but human handiwork; and that God's
work is not in them.

[51]Who does not know that they are not gods?
[52]They set no king over the land, nor do they
give men rain. [53]They neither vindicate their
own rights, nor do they recover what is unjustly
taken, for they are unable; [54]they are like crows
between heaven and earth. For when fire breaks
out in the temple of these wooden or gilded or
silvered gods, though the priests flee and are
safe, they themselves are burnt up in the fire like
beams. [55]They cannot resist a king, or enemy
forces. [56]How then can it be admitted or thought
that they are gods?

They are safe from neither thieves nor bandits, these wooden and silvered and gilded gods;
[57]those who seize them strip off the gold and the
silver, and go away with the clothing that was on
them, and they cannot help themselves. [58]How
much better to be a king displaying his valor, or a
handy tool in a house, the joy of its owner, than
these false gods; or the door of a house, that
keeps safe those who are within, rather than
these false gods; or a wooden post in a palace,
rather than these false gods![g] [59]The sun and
moon and stars are bright, and obedient in the
service for which they are sent. [60]Likewise the
lightning, when it flashes, is a goodly sight; and
the same wind blows over all the land. [61]The
clouds, too, when commanded by God to proceed across the whole world, fulfill the order;
[62]and fire, sent from on high to burn up the
mountains and the forests, does what has been
commanded. But these false gods are not their
equal, whether in beauty or in power; [63]so that
it is unthinkable, and cannot be claimed, that
they are gods. They can neither execute judgment, nor benefit man. [64]Know, therefore, that
they are not gods, and do not fear them.

[65]Kings they neither curse nor bless. [66]They
show the nations no signs in the heavens, nor
are they brilliant like the sun, nor shining like
the moon. [67]The beasts which can help themselves by fleeing to shelter are better than they
are. [68]Thus in no way is it clear to us that they
are gods; so do not fear them. [69]For like a
scarecrow in a cucumber patch, that is no
protection, are their wooden, gilded, silvered
gods. [70]Just like a thornbush in a garden on
which perches every kind of bird, or like a
corpse hurled into darkness, are their silvered
and gilded wooden gods. [71]From the rotting of
the purple and the linen upon them, it can be
known that they are not gods; they themselves
will in the end be consumed, and be a disgrace
in the land. [72]The better for the just man who
has no idols: he shall be far from disgrace!

6, 40: Bel: cf note on Jer 50, 2.

6, 42f: This seems to refer to the obligation of Babylonian women to serve once in their lives as cult prostitutes. The unbroken cord was a sign that this duty had not yet been fulfilled. Chaff: burnt as an aphrodisiac or for use in erotic rites.

f 42–43: Jer 3, 2. g Wis 13, 10–15; 15, 7ff.

# THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Ezekiel
See RG
327-341

Ezekiel's complex character makes him one of the most interesting figures in Israelite prophecy. In many ways he resembles the more primitive type of prophet represented by Elijah and Elisha; yet he clearly depends on all his predecessors in prophecy, and his teaching is a development of theirs. His unique contribution to the history of prophetism lies in his manifest interest in the temple and the liturgy, an interest paralleled in no other prophet—not even Jeremiah who, like Ezekiel, was also a priest. Particularly because of this interest, Ezekiel's influence on postexilic religion was enormous, and not without reason has he been called "the father of Judaism." This has resulted in his prophecies reaching us with the evident marks of editing and addition by the postexilic circles that shared his intense interest. However, we may be sure that in this book we have throughout what is in substance the prophet's own work.

Ezekiel became a prophet in Babylon—the first prophet to receive the call to prophesy outside the Holy Land. As one of the exiles deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 597, his first task was to prepare his fellow countrymen in Babylon for the final destruction of Jerusalem, which they believed to be inviolable. Accordingly, the first part of his book consists of reproaches for Israel's past and present sins and the confident prediction of yet a further devastation of the land of promise and a more general exile. In 587, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, Ezekiel was vindicated before his unbelieving compatriots.

After this time, Ezekiel's message changes. From now on his prophecy is characterized by the promise of salvation in a new covenant, and he is anxious to lay down the conditions necessary to obtain it. Even as Jeremiah had believed, Ezekiel thought that the exiles were the hope of Israel's restoration, once God's allotted time for the exile had been accomplished. His final eight chapters are an utopian vision of the Israel of the future, rid of its past evils and re-established firmly under the rule of the Lord. The famous vision of the dry bones in chapter 37 expresses his firm belief in a forthcoming restoration, Israel rising to new life from the graveyard of Babylon. But Ezekiel's new covenant, like Jeremiah's, was to see its true fulfillment only in the New Testament.

Perhaps no other prophet has stressed the absolute majesty of God as Ezekiel does. This appears not only in the tremendous vision by the river Chebar with which his prophecy opens, but throughout the book. Ultimately, says Ezekiel, whatever God does to or for man is motivated by zeal for his own holy name. The new heart and the new spirit which must exist under the new covenant cannot be the work of man; they too must be the work of God. By such teachings he helped prepare for the New Testament doctrine of salvation through grace.

The Book of Ezekiel is divided as follows:

I. Call of the Prophet (1, 1—3, 27).
II. Before the Siege of Jerusalem (4, 1—24, 27).
III. Prophecies against Foreign Nations (25, 1—32, 32).
IV. Salvation for Israel (33, 1—39, 29).
V. The New Israel (40, 1—48, 35).

# I: Call of the Prophet

## CHAPTER 1

**The Vision: God on the Cherubim** [1]In the thirtieth year,* on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens opened, and I saw divine visions.[a] — [2]On the fifth day of the month, the fifth year,* that is, of King Jehoiachin's exile, [3]the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar.—There the hand of the LORD came upon me.

[4]As I looked, a stormwind came from the North,* a huge cloud with flashing fire [enveloped in brightness], from the midst of which [the midst of the fire] something gleamed like electrum. [5]Within it were figures resembling four living creatures* that looked like this: their form was human, [6]but each had four faces and four wings, [7]and their legs went straight down; the soles of their feet were round. They sparkled with a gleam like burnished bronze.

[10]*Their faces were like this:[b] each of the four had the face of a man, but on the right side was the face of a lion, and on the left side the face of an ox, and finally each had the face of an eagle. [9]Their faces [and their wings] looked out on all their four sides; they did not turn when they moved, but each went straight forward. [12][Each went straight forward; wherever the spirit wished to go, there they went; they did not turn when they moved.]

[8]Human hands were under their wings, and the wings of one touched those of another. [11]Each had two wings spread out above so that they touched one another's, while the other two wings of each covered his body. [13]In among the living creatures something like burning coals of fire could be seen; they seemed like torches, moving to and fro among the living creatures. The fire gleamed, and from it came forth flashes of lightning.

Ch 1–3
See RG
331–332

[15]As I looked at the living creatures, I saw wheels on the ground, one beside each of the four living creatures. [16]The wheels had the sparkling appearance of chrysolite, and all four of them looked the same: they were constructed as though one wheel were within another. [17]They could move in any of the four directions they faced, without veering as they moved. [18][c]The four of them had rims, and I saw that their rims were full of eyes all around. [19]When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved with them; and when the living creatures were raised from the ground, the wheels also were raised. [20]Wherever the spirit wished to go, there the wheels went, and they were raised together with the living creatures; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

[22]*Over the heads of the living creatures, something like a firmament could be seen, seeming like glittering crystal, stretched straight out above their heads. [23]Beneath the firmament their wings were stretched out, one toward the other. [Each of them had two covering his body.] [24]Then I heard the sound of their wings, like the roaring of mighty waters, like the voice of the Almighty. When they moved, the sound of the tumult was like the din of an army. [And when they stood still, they lowered their wings.]

[26]Above the firmament over their heads something like a throne could be seen, looking like sapphire. Upon it was seated, up above, one who had the appearance of a man.* [27]Upward from what resembled his waist I saw what gleamed like electrum; downward from what resembled his waist I saw what looked like fire; he was surrounded with splendor. [28]Like the bow

**1, 1:** The thirtieth year, which corresponds to the fifth year of exile (v 2), has never been satisfactorily explained; possibly it refers to the prophet's age. The river Chebar: probably a canal near Nippur, southeast of Babylon, one of the sites on which the Jewish exiles were settled.

**1, 2:** The fifth day of the fourth month, the fifth year: July 31, 593 B.C.; cf v 1.

**1, 4:** The North: the abode of God; see notes on Jb 37, 22; Ps 48, 3. Electrum: an alloy of gold and silver, used here for some undetermined bright metal.

**1, 5:** Four living creatures: identified as cherubim in Ez 10, 20f.

**1, 10–22:** Note the changed order of the verses and the omission of the textually uncertain verses 14 and 21. Such changes also occur elsewhere in this book.

**1, 22f. 26:** This symbolic description of God's throne is similar to that in Ex 24, 9f.

**1, 26:** One who had the appearance of a man: God appearing in human form (v 28); cf Ex 33, 18–23.

a Ez 3, 23; 10, 20; 43, 3. b Rv 4, 6f. c Ez 10, 12; Rv 4, 6. 8.

which appears in the clouds on a rainy day was the splendor that surrounded him. Such was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1–3
See RG
331–332

**Eating of the Scroll** When I had seen it, I fell upon my face and heard a voice that said to me: [1]Son of man,* stand up! I wish to speak with you. [2]As he spoke to me, spirit* entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking [3]say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have revolted against me to this very day. [4]Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD! [5]And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them. [6]But as for you, son of man, fear neither them nor their words when they contradict you and reject you, and when you sit on scorpions.* Neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. [7][But speak my words to them, whether they heed or resist, for they are rebellious.] [8]As for you, son of man, obey me when I speak to you: be not rebellious like this house of rebellion, but open your mouth and eat what I shall give you.

[9] [d]It was then I saw a hand stretched out to me, in which was a written scroll [10]which he unrolled before me. It was covered with writing front and back, and written on it was: Lamentation and wailing and woe!

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–3
See RG
331–332

[1]He said to me: Son of man, eat what is before you; eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel. [2]So I opened my mouth and he gave me the scroll to eat. [3] [e]Son of man, he then said to me, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll I am giving you. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey* in my mouth. He said: [4]Son of man, go now to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them.

[5]Not to a people with difficult speech and barbarous language am I sending you, [6]nor to the many peoples [with difficult speech and barbarous language] whose words you cannot understand. If I were to send you to these, they would listen to you; [7]but the house of Israel will refuse to listen to you, since they will not listen to me. For the whole house of Israel is stubborn of brow and obstinate in heart. [8]But I will make your face as hard as theirs, and your brow as stubborn as theirs, [9]like diamond, harder than flint. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.

[10]Son of man, he said to me, take into your heart all my words that I speak to you; hear them well. [11]Now go to the exiles, to your countrymen, and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD!—whether they heed or resist!

[12]Then spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the noise of a loud rumbling as the glory of the LORD* rose from its place: [13]the noise made by the wings of the living creatures striking one another, and by the wheels alongside them, a loud rumbling. [14]The spirit which had lifted me up seized me, and I went off spiritually stirred, while the hand of the LORD rested heavily upon me. [15]Thus I came to the exiles who lived at Tel-abib* by the river Chebar, and for seven days I sat among them distraught.

**The Prophet as Watchman*** [17]Thus the word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel.[f] When you hear a word from my mouth, you shall warn them for me.

[18]If I say to the wicked man, You shall surely die; and you do not warn him or speak out to

**2, 1:** Son of man: a formal way of saying simply "man"; God's habitual way of addressing the prophet throughout this book. Probably the title is used to emphasize the separation of the divine and the human.

**2, 2:** Spirit: vital power, coming from God, which enables the prophet to hear the word of God; cf Ez 8, 3; 9, 24; 11, 1.

**2, 6:** When you sit on scorpions: the prophet must be prepared for the bitterest opposition.

**3, 3:** As sweet as honey: though the prophet must foretell terrible things, the word of God is sweet to him who receives it.

**3, 12:** The glory of the Lord: the divine presence, manifested here in visible form.

**3, 15:** Tel-abib: one of the sites where the exiles were settled, probably near Nippur.

**3, 17–21:** This passage refers to one of the prophet's most characteristic qualities. It was placed here by an editor, though it properly belongs to a later stage in Ezekiel's ministry; cf chapter 33.

d Rv 5, 1. e Rv 10, 9f. f Ez 33, 7.

dissuade him from his wicked conduct so that he may live: that wicked man shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. [19]If, on the other hand, you have warned the wicked man, yet he has not turned away from his evil nor from his wicked conduct, then he shall die for his sin, but you shall save your life.

[20]If a virtuous man turns away from virtue and does wrong when I place a stumbling block before him, he shall die. He shall die for his sin, and his virtuous deeds shall not be remembered; but I will hold you responsible for his death if you did not warn him. [21]When, on the other hand, you have warned a virtuous man not to sin, and he has in fact not sinned, he shall surely live because of the warning, and you shall save your own life.

**Ezekiel's Dumbness*** [22]The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he said to me: Get up and go out into the plain, where I will speak with you. [23]*g*So I got up and went out into the plain, and I saw that the glory of the LORD was in that place, like the glory I had seen by the river Chebar. I fell prone, [24]but then spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me.

He said to me: Go shut yourself up in your house. [25][As for you, son of man, they will put cords upon you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them.] [26]I will make your tongue stick to your palate so that you will be dumb* and unable to rebuke them for being a rebellious house. [27]Only when I speak with you and open your mouth, shall you say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD! Let him heed who will, and let him resist who will, for they are a rebellious house.

# II: Before the Siege of Jerusalem

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4–12
See RG
332–333

**Acts Symbolic of Siege and Exile** [16]At the end of seven days . . . :* [1]As for you, son of man, take a clay tablet; lay it in front of you, and draw on it a city [Jerusalem]. [2]Raise a siege against it: build a tower, lay out a ramp, pitch camps, and set up battering rams all around. [3]Then take an iron griddle and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city. Fix your gaze on it: it shall be in the state of siege, and you shall besiege it. This shall be a sign for the house of Israel. [4]Then you shall lie on your left side, while I place the sins of the house of Israel upon you. As many days as you lie thus, you shall bear their sins. [5]For the years of their sins I allot you the same number of days, three hundred and ninety, during which you will bear the sins of the house of Israel. [6]When you finish this, you are to lie down again, but on your right side, and bear the sins of the house of Judah forty days;* one day for each year I have allotted you. [7]Fixing your gaze on the siege of Jerusalem, with bared arm* you shall prophesy against it. [8]See, I will bind you with cords so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.

[9]*Again, take wheat and barley, and beans and lentils, and millet and spelt; put them in a single vessel and make bread out of them. Eat it for as many days as you lie upon your side, three hundred and ninety. [10]The food you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; each day the same. [11]And the water you drink shall be the sixth of a hin by measure; each day the same. [16]*h*Then he said to me: Son of man, I am breaking the staff of bread* in Jerusalem. They

**3, 22–27:** This passage also belongs to a later period, with Ez 24, 25ff and 33, 21f, during the time of the final siege of Jerusalem, when Ezekiel's prophecies consisted mainly of symbolic actions rather than words.

**3, 26:** Dumb: unwilling to speak to the people in exile while Jerusalem was being besieged; cf Ez 24, 27.

**3, 16:** At the end of seven days . . . : the incomplete sentence probably contained some such words as "the word of the Lord came to me." For seven days, see v 15. (This verse has been transposed from ch 3.)

**4, 5f:** Three hundred and ninety days . . . forty days: symbolically representing the respective lengths of the periods of exile of northern Israelites and Judahites. Northern Israel had already fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C. The letters in the Hebrew phrase for the days of your siege (v 8), each of which has its own numerical value, add up to three hundred and ninety. Forty years represent one generation.

**4, 7:** Bared arm: a symbol of unrestrained power.

**4, 9–17:** This action represents the scarcity of food during the siege of Jerusalem, and the consequent need to eat whatever is at hand. Twenty shekels: about nine ounces. The sixth of a hin: about one quart.

**4, 16:** Breaking the staff of bread: reducing the supply of bread which sustains the life of man as the walking staff sustains the traveler on his journey; cf Ez 5, 16; 14, 13; Lv 26, 26; Ps 105, 16; Is 3, 1.

g Ez 1, 3; 10, 15. 20. 22; 43, 3. h Ez 5, 16; 14, 13.

shall eat bread which they have weighed out
anxiously, and they shall drink water which they
have measured out fearfully, [17]so that, owing to
the scarcity of bread and water, everyone shall
be filled with terror and waste away because of
his sins.

[12]For your food you must bake barley loaves
over human excrement in their sight, said the
LORD. [13]Thus the Israelites shall eat their food
unclean among the nations where I scatter
them.[i] [14]"Oh no, Lord GOD!" I protested.
"Never have I been made unclean, and from my
youth till now, never have I eaten carrion flesh
or that torn by wild beasts: never has any
unclean meat entered my mouth." [15]Very well,
he replied, I allow you cow's dung in place of
human excrement; bake your bread on that.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 4–12
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332–333

[1]As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword
and use it like a barber's razor, passing it over
your head and beard. Then take a set of scales
and divide the hair you have cut. [2]Burn a third
in the fire, within the city,* when the days of
your siege are completed; place another third
around the city and strike it with the sword; the
final third strew in the wind, and pursue it with
the sword. [3][But of the last take a small number
and tie them in the hem of your garment. [4]Then
take some of these and throw them in the midst
of the fire and burn them.]

Say to the whole house of Israel: [5]Thus says
the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem! In the midst of
the nations I placed her, surrounded by foreign
countries. [6]But she rebelled against my ordi-
nances more wickedly than the nations, and
against my statutes more than the foreign coun-
tries surrounding her; she has spurned my
ordinances and has not lived by my statutes.

Ch 4–12
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[7]Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you
have been more rebellious than the nations
surrounding you, not living by my statutes nor
fulfilling my ordinances, but acting according to
the ordinances of the surrounding nations;
[8]therefore thus says the Lord GOD: See, I am
coming at you!* I will inflict punishments in
your midst while the nations look on. [9]Because
of all your abominations I will do with you what
I have never done before, the like of which I will
never do again. [10]This means that fathers within
you shall eat sons, and sons shall eat fathers.*
I will inflict punishments upon you and scatter all
that remain of your people in every direction.

[11]Therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD,
because you have defiled my sanctuary with all
your detestable abominations, I swear to cut you
down. I will not look upon you with pity nor
have mercy. [12]A third of your people shall die of
pestilence and perish of hunger within you;
another third shall fall by the sword all around
you; and a third I will scatter in every direction,
and I will pursue them with the sword. [16]/When
I loose against you the cruel, destructive arrows
of hunger, I will break your staff of bread; [17]I
will send famine against you, and wild beasts
that shall rob you of your children. Pestilence
and bloodshed shall stalk through you, and I will
bring the sword upon you. I, the LORD, have
spoken!

[13]Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will
wreak my fury upon them till I am appeased;
they shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken in
my jealousy when I spend my fury upon them.
[14]I will make you a waste and a reproach among
the nations that surround you, which every
passer-by may see. [15]When I execute judgment
upon you in anger and fury and with furious
chastisements, you shall be a reproach and an
object of scorn, a terrible warning to the nations
that surround you. I, the LORD, have spoken!

## CHAPTER 6

**Against the Mountains of Israel** [1]Thus the
word of the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man,
turn toward the mountains of Israel, and proph-
esy against them: [3]Mountains of Israel, hear the
word of the Lord GOD. Thus says the Lord GOD
[to the mountains and hills, the ravines and

**5, 2:** The city: the one drawn on the tablet.

**5, 8:** I am coming at you: an expression borrowed from the language of warfare in which enemies attacked one another with the sword. You in vv 8–17 is Jerusalem.

**5, 10:** Fathers . . . shall eat sons, and sons . . . fathers: see note on Lam 2, 20.

i Hos 9, 4. j Ez 4, 16; 14, 13.

valleys]: [k] See, I am bringing a sword against you,
and I will destroy your high places.* [4]Your altars
shall be laid waste, your incense stands shall be
broken, and I will cast down your slain ones
before your idols; [5]I will scatter their bones all
around your altars.* [6]In all your dwelling places
cities shall be made desolate and high places laid
waste, so that your altars will be made desolate
and laid waste, your idols broken and removed,
and your incense stands smashed to bits. [7][The
slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know
that I am the LORD. [8]I have warned you.]

When some of your people have escaped to
other nations from the sword, and have been
scattered over the foreign lands, [9]then those
who have escaped will remember me among the
nations to which they have been exiled, after I
have broken their adulterous hearts that turned
away from me [and their eyes which lusted after
idols]. They shall loathe themselves because of
their evil deeds, all their abominations. [10]Then
they shall know that it was not in vain that I, the
LORD, threatened to inflict this calamity upon
them.

[11]Thus says the Lord GOD: Clap your hands,
stamp your feet,* and cry "Alas!" because of all
the abominations of the house of Israel, for
which they shall fall by the sword, by famine,
and by pestilence. [12]He that is far off shall die of
pestilence, he that is near shall fall by the sword,
and he that is besieged shall perish by famine; so
will I spend my fury upon them. [13]Then shall
they know that I am the LORD, when their slain
shall lie amid their idols, all about their altars, on
every high hill and mountaintop, beneath every
green tree and leafy oak,* wherever they offered
appeasing odors to any of their gods. [14]I will
stretch out my hand against them, and wherever
they live I will make the land a desolate waste,
from the desert to Riblah;* thus shall they know
that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 4-12
See RG
332-333

**The End Has Come** [1]Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, now say: Thus
says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel: An end!
The end has come upon the four corners of the
land! [3]Now the end is upon you; I will unleash
my anger against you and judge you according to
your conduct and lay upon you the conse-
quences of all your abominations. [4]I will not
look upon you with pity nor have mercy; I will
bring your conduct down upon you, and the
consequences of your abominations shall be in
your midst; then shall you know that I am the
LORD.

[5]Thus says the Lord GOD: Disaster upon
disaster! See it coming! [6]An end is coming, the
end is coming upon you! See it coming! [7]The
climax has come for you who dwell in the land!
The time has come, near is the day: a time of
consternation, not of rejoicing. [8]Soon now I will
pour out my fury upon you and spend my anger
upon you; I will judge you according to your
conduct and lay upon you the consequences of
all your abominations. [9]I will not look upon you
with pity nor have mercy; I will deal with you
according to your conduct, and the conse-
quences of your abominations shall be in your
midst; then shall you know that it is I, the LORD,
who strike.

[10]See, the day of the LORD! See, the end is
coming! Lawlessness is in full bloom, insolence
flourishes, [11]violence has risen to support wick-
edness. It shall not be long in coming, nor shall it
delay. [12]*The time has come, the day dawns. Let
not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn, for
wrath shall be upon all the throng. [13]The seller
shall not regain what he sold as long as he lives,
for wrath shall be upon all the throng. Because
of his sins, no one shall preserve his life. [14]They
shall sound the trumpet and make everything

6, 3: High places: the sanctuaries on the mountaintops where illegal worship, whether of the Lord or of Canaanite deities, was performed.

6, 5: Scatter their bones . . . altars: dead men's bones defiled a place; cf 2 Kgs 23, 14.

6, 11: Clap your hands, stamp your feet: here evidently signs of mourning; in Ez 25, 6, signs of joy.

6, 13: Every green tree and leafy oak: sacred groves had a long history in Palestine as places of worship; cf Dt 12, 2; note on Gn 12, 6.

6, 14: From the desert to Riblah: the whole land, from the far south to the far north.

7, 12f: Mundane affairs will cease to have any meaning in view of the disaster that is to come.

k Ez 36, 1.

ready, yet no one shall go to war, for my wrath is upon all the throng.

[15]The sword is outside; pestilence and hunger are within. He that is in the country shall die by the sword; pestilence and famine shall devour those in the city. [16]Even those who escape and flee to the mountains like the doves of the valleys—I will put them all to death, each one for his own sins. [17]All their hands shall be limp, and all their knees shall run with water. [18]They shall put on sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; shame shall be on all their faces and baldness* on all their heads. [19]They shall fling their silver into the streets, and their gold shall be considered refuse.[m] Their silver and gold cannot save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. They shall not be allowed to satisfy their craving or fill their bellies, for this has been the occasion of their sin. [20]In the beauty of their ornaments they put their pride: they made of them their abominable images [their idols]. For this reason I make them refuse. [21]I will hand them over as booty to foreigners, to be spoiled and defiled by the wicked of the earth. [22]I will turn away my face from them, and my treasure* shall be profaned: robbers shall enter and profane it.

Ch 4–12 See RG 332–333

[23]They shall wreak slaughter, for the land is filled with bloodshed and the city full of violence. [24]I will bring in the worst of the nations, who shall take possession of their houses. I will put an end to their proud strength, and their sanctuaries shall be profaned. [25]When anguish comes they shall seek peace, but there will be none. [26]There shall be disaster after disaster, rumor after rumor. Prophetic vision shall fade; instruction shall be lacking to the priest, and counsel to the elders, [27]while the prince shall be enveloped in terror, and the hands of the common people shall tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and according to their judgments I will judge them; thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 8

### Vision of Abominations in the Temple

[3]Spirit lifted me up in the air and brought me in divine visions to Jerusalem,[n] to the entrance of the north gate, where stood the statue of jealousy which stirs up jealousy.* [5]He* said to me: Son of man, look toward the north! I looked toward the north and saw northward of the gate the altar of the statue of jealousy. [6]Son of man, he asked me, do you see what they are doing? Do you see the great abominations that the house of Israel is practicing here, so that I must depart from my sanctuary? But you shall see still greater abominations!

[7]Then he brought me to the entrance of the court, where I saw there was a hole in the wall. [8]Son of man, he ordered, dig through the wall. I dug through the wall and saw a door. [9]Enter, he said to me, and see the abominable evils which they are doing here. [10]I entered and saw that all around upon the wall were pictured the figures of all kinds of creeping things and loathsome beasts* [all the idols of the house of Israel]. [11]Before these stood seventy of the elders of the house of Israel, among whom stood Jaazaniah, son of Shaphan, each of them with his censer in his hand, and the fragrance of the incense was rising upward. [12]Then he said to me: Do you see, son of man, what each of these elders of the house of Israel is doing in his idol room? They think: "The LORD cannot see us; the LORD has forsaken the land." [13]He continued: You shall see still greater abominations that they are practicing.

[14]Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the temple, and I saw sitting there

**7, 18:** Baldness: shaving the head was a sign of mourning.

**7, 22:** My treasure: the temple of Jerusalem.

**8, 3:** The statue of jealousy which stirs up jealousy: the statue which provokes the Lord's jealousy for his honor. This was probably the statue of the goddess Asherah erected by the wicked King Manasseh (cf 2 Kgs 21, 7; 2 Chr 33, 7. 15). Though it had been removed by King Josiah (2 Kgs 23, 6), it had no doubt been set up again in the repaganizing of Jerusalem that followed on Josiah's death.

**8, 5:** He: an angel accompanies Ezekiel in these visions and represents the voice of the Lord; cf Ez 40, 3f.

**8, 10:** Creeping things and loathsome beasts: probably Egyptian deities, which were represented in animal form. During the last days of Jerusalem King Zedekiah was allied with Egypt, trusting in it for protection against the Chaldeans.

l Is 15, 2; Jer 48, 37. m Prv 11, 4; Sir 5, 10; Zep 1, 18. n Dn 14, 6.

the women who were weeping for Tammuz.*
15Then he said to me: Do you see this, son of
man? You shall see other abominations, greater
than these!

16Then he brought me into the inner court of
the LORD's house, and there at the door of the
LORD's temple, between the vestibule and the
altar, were about twenty-five men with their
backs to the LORD's temple and their faces
toward the east; they were bowing down to the
sun.* 17Do you see, son of man? he asked me. Is
it such a trivial matter for the house of Judah to
do the abominable things they have done here—
for they have filled the land with violence, and
again and again they have provoked me—that
now they must also put the branch to my nose?*
18Therefore I in turn will act furiously: I will not
look upon them with pity nor will I show mercy.

## CHAPTER 9

**Slaughter of the Idolaters** 1Then he cried
loud for me to hear: Come, you scourges of the
city! 2With that I saw six men coming from the
direction of the upper gate which faces the
north, each with a destroying weapon in his
hand. In their midst was a man dressed in linen,
with a writer's case at his waist. They entered
and stood beside the bronze altar. 3Then he
called to the man dressed in linen with the
writer's case at his waist, 4 *o*saying to him:* Pass
through the city [through Jerusalem] and mark
an X on the foreheads of those who moan and
groan over all the abominations that are prac-
ticed within it. 5To the others I heard him say:
Pass through the city after him and strike! Do
not look on them with pity nor show any mercy!
6Old men, youths and maidens, women and
children—wipe them out! But do not touch any
marked with the X; begin at my sanctuary. So
they began with the men [the elders] who were
in front of the temple. 7Defile the temple, he said
to them, and fill the courts with the slain; then
go out and strike in the city.

8As they began to strike, I was left alone. I fell
prone, crying out, "Alas, Lord GOD! Will you
destroy all that is left of Israel when you pour out
your fury on Jerusalem?" 9He answered me: The
sins of the house of Israel are great beyond
measure; the land is filled with bloodshed, the
city with lawlessness. They think that the LORD
has forsaken the land, that he does not see them.
10I, however, will not look upon them with pity,
nor show any mercy. I will bring down their
conduct upon their heads.

11Then I saw the man dressed in linen with
the writing case at his waist make his report: "I
have done as you ordered."

24*Spirit lifted me up and brought me back to
the exiles in Chaldea [in a vision, by God's spirit].
Then the vision I had seen left me, 25and I told the
exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

Ch 4–12
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## CHAPTER 10

**God's Glory Leaves Jerusalem** 1*On the fifth
day of the sixth month, in the sixth year,* as I
was sitting in my house, and the elders of Judah
sat before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell
upon me there. 2I looked up and saw a form that
looked like a man. Downward from what
seemed to be his waist, there was fire; from his
waist upward there seemed to be a brightness
like the sheen of electrum. He stretched out
what appeared to be a hand and seized me by
the hair of my head . . . . *

Ch 4–12
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**8, 14:** Weeping for Tammuz: the withering of trees and plants in autumn was thought to be due to the descent of Tammuz, the Babylonian god of fertility, to the nether world of the dead; this descent was bewailed by the women.

**8, 16:** Bowing down to the sun: sun worship had been made an important part of Judahite idolatry by the impious kings; cf 2 Kgs 23, 11.

**8, 17:** Put the branch to my nose: the meaning is uncertain. Perhaps it refers to an Egyptian practice imported into Judah; the Egyptian sun god Re is pictured with a vine branch at his nose, signifying the transfer of creative power (divine breath) to living things. Such rites were abominable to the Lord.

**9, 4:** Ezekiel is preeminently the prophet of personal retribution; the innocent inhabitants of Jerusalem are to be spared when the idolatrous are punished. An X: literally, the Hebrew letter taw, which had the form of a cross.

**9, 24f:** These verses have been transposed from ch 11.

**10, 1:** In chapters 8, 1—11, 25 of the current Hebrew text, several visions involving the temple of Jerusalem were combined to form a single continuous vision. The redistribution of verses in this translation is an attempt to separate the original visions. (10, 1. 2. 4. have been transposed from ch 8.)

**10, 1:** The fifth day of the sixth month, in the sixth year: September 17, 592 B.C.

**10, 2:** The dots suppose the omission of some words describing the prophet's being transported in his visions to the court of the temple.

o Ex 12, 7; Rv 7, 3.

[4]I saw there the glory of the God of Israel, like
the vision I had seen in the plain. The cherubim
were stationed to the right of the temple; [20]these
were the living creatures I had seen beneath the
God of Israel by the river Chebar,[p] whom I now
recognized to be cherubim. [21]Each had four faces
and four wings; something like human hands
were under their wings. [22]Their faces looked just
like those I had seen by the river Chebar; each
one went straight forward. [14 q]Each had four
faces: the first face was that of an ox, the second
that of a man, the third that of a lion, and the
fourth that of an eagle. [15]Such were the living
creatures I had seen by the river Chebar.

[9 r]I also saw four wheels beside them, one
wheel beside each cherub; the wheels appeared
to have the luster of chrysolite stone. [10]All four
of them seemed to be made the same, as though
there were a wheel within a wheel. [11]When
they moved, they went in any one of their four
directions without veering as they moved; for in
whichever direction they were faced, they went
straight towards it without veering as they
moved. [12 s]The rims of the four wheels were full
of eyes all around. [13]I heard the wheels given
the name "wheelwork." [16 t]When the cherubim
moved, the wheels went beside them; when the
cherubim lifted their wings to rise from the
earth, even then the wheels did not leave their
sides. [17]When they stood still, the wheels stood
still; when they rose, the wheels rose with
them; for the living creatures' spirit was in them.

Ch 4–12
See RG
332–333

[1]I looked and saw in the firmament above the
cherubim what appeared to be sapphire stone;
something like a throne could be seen upon it.
[2]He said to the man dressed in linen: Go within
the wheelwork under the cherubim; fill both
your hands with burning coals* from among the
cherubim, then scatter them over the city. As I
looked on, he entered.

The glory of the God of Israel had gone up
from the cherubim, upon which it had been, to
the threshold of the temple. [3]As the man entered, the cloud filled the inner court, [4]and the
glory of the LORD rose from over the cherubim to
the threshold of the temple; the temple was
filled with the cloud, and all the court was bright
with the glory of the LORD. [5]The noise of the
wings of the cherubim could be heard as far as
the outer court; it was like the voice of God the
Almighty when he speaks.

[6]When he had commanded the man dressed
in linen to take fire from within the wheelwork,
among the cherubim, the man entered and stood
by one of the wheels. [7]Thereupon its cherub
stretched out his hand toward the fire that was
among the cherubim. He took up some of it and
put it in the hands of the one dressed in linen,
who took it and came out. [8][Something like
human hands could be seen under the wings of
the cherubim.]

[18]Then the glory of the LORD left the threshold of the temple and rested upon the cherubim.
[19]These lifted their wings, and I saw them rise
from the earth, the wheels rising along with
them. They stood at the entrance of the eastern
gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God
of Israel was up above them. [22]*Then the
cherubim lifted their wings, and the wheels went
along with them, while up above them was the
glory of the God of Israel. [23]And the glory of the
LORD rose from the city and took a stand on the
mountain which is to the east of the city.

## CHAPTER 11

**Judgment of the Princes** [1]Spirit lifted me up
and brought me to the east gate of the temple. At
the entrance of the gate I saw twenty-five men,
among whom were Jaazaniah, son of Azzur, and
Pelatiah, son of Benaiah, princes of the people.
[2]The LORD said to me: Son of man, these are the
men who are planning evil and giving wicked
counsel in this city. [3]"Shall we not," they say,
"be building houses soon? The city is the kettle,
and we are the meat."* [4]Therefore prophesy
against them, son of man, prophesy! [5]Then the

10, 2: The burning coals within the wheelwork under God's throne, a sign of the divine presence (cf Ez 28, 14; Ps 18, 13), symbolize the judgment to be visited on the city.

10, 22f: These verses have been transposed from ch 11.

11, 3: These words reflect the false confidence of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the face of the Chaldean invasion. Jerusalem, they think, is like an iron kettle protecting the meat within it from harm; but cf Ez 24, 3–6.

p Ez 1, 1. 3. q Ez 1, 10. r Ez 1, 15f. s Ez 1, 18. t Ez 1, 19.

spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he told me
to say: Thus says the LORD: This is the way you
talk, house of Israel, and what you are plotting I
well know. [6]You have slain many in this city and
have filled its streets with your slain. [7]Therefore
thus says the Lord GOD: Your slain whom you
have placed within it, they are the meat, and the
city is the kettle; but you I will take out of it.
[8]You fear the sword, but the sword I will bring
upon you, says the Lord GOD. [9]I will bring you
out of the city, and hand you over to foreigners,
and inflict punishments upon you. [10]By the
sword you shall fall; at the boundaries of Israel I
will judge you; thus you shall know that I am
the LORD. [11]The city shall not be a kettle for you,
nor shall you be the meat within it. At the
boundaries of Israel I will judge you, [12]and you
shall know that I am the LORD, by whose
statutes you have not lived, and whose ordinances you have not kept; rather, you have
acted according to the ordinances of the nations
around you.

[13]While I was prophesying, Pelatiah, the son
of Benaiah, died. I fell prone and cried out in a
loud voice: "Alas, Lord GOD! will you utterly
wipe out what remains of Israel?"

**Restoration of the Exiles** [14]Thus the word of
the LORD came to me: [15]*Son of man, it is about
your kinsmen, your fellow exiles, and the whole
house of Israel that the inhabitants of Jerusalem
say, "They are far away from the LORD; to us the
land of Israel has been given as our possession."
[16]Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD:
Though I have removed them far among the
nations and scattered them over foreign
countries—and was for a while their only sanctuary in the countries to which they had gone— [17]I
will gather you from the nations and assemble
you from the countries over which you have been
scattered, and I will restore to you the land of
Israel. [18]They shall return to it and remove from it
all its detestable abominations. [19] [u]I will give
them a new heart and put a new spirit within
them; I will remove the stony heart from their
bodies, and replace it with a natural heart, [20]so
that they will live according to my statutes, and
observe and carry out my ordinances; thus they
shall be my people and I will be their God. [21]But
as for those whose hearts are devoted to their
detestable abominations, I will bring down their
conduct upon their heads, says the Lord GOD.

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 4–12
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332–333

**Acts Symbolic of the Exile** [1]Thus the word of
the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, you live in
the midst of a rebellious house; they have eyes
to see but do not see, and ears to hear but do not
hear, for they are a rebellious house. [3]Now, son
of man, during the day while they are looking
on, prepare your baggage as though for exile,
and again while they are looking on, migrate
from where you live to another place; perhaps
they will see that they are a rebellious house.
[4]You shall bring out your baggage like an exile in
the daytime while they are looking on; in the
evening, again while they are looking on, you
shall go out like one of those driven into exile;
[5]while they look on, dig a hole in the wall* and
pass through it; [6]while they look on, shoulder
the burden and set out in the darkness; cover
your face that you may not see the land, for I
have made you a sign for the house of Israel.

[7]I did as I was told. During the day I brought
out my baggage as though it were that of an
exile, and at evening I dug a hole through the
wall with my hand and, while they looked on,
set out in the darkness, shouldering my burden.

[8]Then, in the morning, the word of the LORD
came to me: [9]Son of man, did not the house of
Israel, that rebellious house, ask you what you
were doing? [10]Tell them: Thus says the Lord
GOD: This oracle concerns Jerusalem and the
whole house of Israel within it. [11]I am a sign for
you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them;
as captives they shall go into exile. [12]The prince
who is among them shall shoulder his burden

**11, 15–21**: Like Jeremiah (cf chapter 29), Ezekiel knows that no reform is to be expected from the men of Judah who remained in Palestine; but the exiles will be the ones to form the new Israel. The new, spiritual covenant will replace the former covenant; cf Jer 24, 7.

**12, 5**: Dig a hole in the wall: the exiles are to leave Jerusalem through the broken walls of the ruined city.

u Ez 36, 26; Jer 31, 33.

and set out in darkness, going through a hole
that he has dug in the wall, and covering his face
lest he be seen by anyone. 13 [v]But I will spread
my net over him, and he shall be taken in my
snare. I will bring him to Babylon, into the land
of the Chaldeans—but he shall not see it*—and
there he shall die. 14All his retinue, his aides,
and his troops I will scatter in every direction,
and pursue them with the sword. 15Then shall
they know that I am the LORD, when I disperse
them among the nations and scatter them over
foreign lands. 16Yet I will leave a few of them to
escape the sword, famine and pestilence, so that
they may tell of all their abominations among the
nations to which they will come; thus they shall
know that I am the LORD.

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17Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
18Son of man, eat your bread trembling, and
drink your water shaking with anxiety. 19Then
say to the people of the land: Thus says the Lord
GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem [to the land
of Israel]: They shall eat their bread in anxiety
and drink their water in horror, that their land
may be emptied of the violence of all its inhabit-
ants that now fills it. 20Inhabited cities shall be in
ruins, and the land shall be a waste; thus you
shall know that I am the LORD.

**Prophecy Ridiculed** 21Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: 22Son of man, what is this
proverb that you have in the land of Israel: "The
days drag on, and no vision ever comes to
anything"?* 23Say to them therefore: Thus says
the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb;
they shall never quote it again in Israel. Rather,
say to them: The days are at hand, and also the
fulfillment of every vision. 25Whatever I speak is
final, and it shall be done without further delay.
In your days, rebellious house, whatever I speak
I will bring about, says the Lord GOD.

24There shall no longer be any false visions or
deceitful divinations within the house of Israel,
because it is I, the LORD, who will speak.

26Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
27Son of man, listen to the house of Israel saying,
"The vision he sees is a long way off; he
prophesies of the distant future!" 28Say to them
therefore: Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my
words shall be delayed any longer; whatever I
speak is final, and it shall be done, says the Lord
GOD.

## CHAPTER 13

**Against the Prophets of Peace** 1Thus the
word of the LORD came to me: 2Son of man,
prophesy against the prophets of Israel, proph-
esy! Say to those who prophesy their own
thought: Hear the word of the LORD:* 5You did
not step into the breach, nor did you build a wall
about the house of Israel that would stand firm
against attack on the day of the LORD. 7Was not
the vision you saw false, and your divination
lying? 8Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have spoken falsehood and have
seen lying visions, therefore see! I am coming at
you, says the Lord GOD.

10For the very reason that they led my people
astray, saying, "Peace!" when there was no
peace, and that, as one built a wall, they would
cover it with whitewash,* 11say then to the
whitewashers: I will bring down a flooding rain;
hailstones shall fall, and a stormwind shall break
out. 12And when the wall has fallen, will you not
be asked: Where is the whitewash you spread
on?

13Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: In my
fury I will let loose stormwinds; because of my
anger there shall be a flooding rain, and hail-
stones shall fall with destructive wrath. 14I will
tear down the wall that you have whitewashed
and level it to the ground, laying bare its
foundations. When it falls, you shall be crushed
beneath it; thus you shall know that I am the
LORD. 15When I have spent my fury on the wall
and its whitewashers, I tell you there shall be no

12, 13: But he shall not see it: Zedekiah was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar before being deported to Babylonia; cf 2 Kgs 25, 7.

12, 22. 27: These words were used against Ezekiel because of the apparent failure of his prophecies; cf Jer 20, 7ff.

13, 3–23: These verses have been transposed according to the following order: 7–8. 10–16. 3–4. 6.9.17. 22–23. 18–21.

13, 10: To the confidence which the people had in their defenses against the Chaldeans, the false prophets contributed the illusion of security by predictions of peace, like men who whitewash a wall rather than allow its defects to be seen.

v Ez 17, 20; 32, 3.

wall, nor shall there be whitewashers— [16]those
prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem
and saw for it visions of peace when there was
no peace, says the Lord God.

**Against False Prophets in Chaldea** [3] [w]Thus
says the Lord God: Woe to those prophets who
are fools, who follow their own spirit and have
seen no vision. [4]Like foxes among ruins are your
prophets, O Israel! [6]Their visions are false and
their divination lying. They say, "Thus says the
Lord!" though the Lord did not send them;
then they wait for him to fulfill their word! [9]But
I will stretch out my hand against the prophets
who have false visions and who foretell lies.
They shall not belong to the community of my
people, nor be recorded in the register of the
house of Israel, nor enter the land of Israel; thus
you shall know that I am the Lord.

**Against False Prophetesses** [17]Now, son of
man, turn toward the daughters of your people
who prophesy their own thoughts; against these,
prophesy: Thus says the Lord God: [22]Because
you have disheartened the upright man with lies
when I did not wish him grieved, and have
encouraged the wicked man not to turn from his
evil conduct and save his life; [23]therefore you
shall no longer see false visions and practice
divination, but I will rescue my people from your
power. Thus you shall know that I am the Lord.

**Against Sorceresses** [18]Woe to those who sew
bands for everyone's wrists and make veils* for
every size of head so as to entrap their owners.
Do you think to entrap the lives of my people,
yet keep yourselves alive? [19]You dishonor me
before my people with handfuls of barley and
crumbs of bread,* killing those who should not
die and keeping alive those who should not live,
lying to my people who willingly hear lies.
[20]Therefore thus says the Lord God: See! I am
coming at those bands of yours in which you
entrap men's lives: I will tear them from their
arms and set free those you have caught. [21]I will
tear off your veils and rescue my people from
your power, so that they shall no longer be prey
to your hands. Thus you shall know that I am
the Lord.

## CHAPTER 14

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**Prophecy Useless for Idolaters** [1]When certain elders of Israel came and sat down before
me, [2]the word of the Lord came to me: [3]Son of
man, these men have the memory of their idols
fresh in their hearts, and they keep the occasion
of their sin before them. Why should I allow
myself to be consulted by them? [4]Therefore
speak with them, and say to them: Thus says the
Lord God: If anyone of the house of Israel,
holding the memory of his idols in his heart and
keeping the occasion of his sin before him, has
recourse to a prophet, I, the Lord, will be his
answer in person because of his many idols.
[5]Thus would I bring back to their senses the
house of Israel, who have become estranged
from me through all their idols.

[6]Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus
says the Lord God: Return and be converted
from your idols; turn yourselves away from all
your abominations. [7]For if anyone of the house
of Israel or any alien resident in Israel is estranged from me, and holds the memory of his
idols in his heart and keeps the occasion of his
sin before him, yet asks a prophet to consult me
for him, I, the Lord, will be his answer in
person. [8]I will turn against that man, and make
of him an example and a byword. I will cut him
off from the midst of my people. Thus you shall
know that I am the Lord.

[9] [x]As for the prophet, if he is beguiled into
speaking a word, I, the Lord, shall have beguiled
that prophet;* I will stretch out my hand against
him and root him out of my people Israel. [10]Each
shall receive punishment for his sin, the inquirer
and the prophet shall be punished alike, [11]so
that the house of Israel may no longer stray from

**13, 18:** Sew bands . . . make veils: magical practices believed to give to the sorceresses power over those on whom they placed these objects.

**13, 19:** Handfuls of barley and crumbs of bread: used in divination and forecasting the future.

**14, 9:** I, the Lord, shall have beguiled that prophet: the ancient Israelites attributed to God every action, good or evil; cf 1 Sm 18, 10; 2 Sm 24, 1ff. We would say, rather, that God permitted this deceit.

w Ez 14, 9; 34, 2; Jer 23, 1. x 1 Kgs 22, 23.

me and may no longer be defiled by all their sins.
Thus they shall be my people, and I will be their
God, says the Lord GOD.

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**Personal Responsibility*** [12]Thus the word of
the LORD came to me: [13]*y*Son of man, when a
land sins against me by breaking faith, I stretch
out my hand against it and break its staff of
bread, I let famine loose upon it and cut off from
it both man and beast; [14]and even if these three
men were in it, Noah, Daniel, and Job,* they
could save only themselves by their virtue, says
the Lord GOD. [15]If I were to cause wild beasts to
prowl the land, depopulating it so that it became
a waste, traversed by none because of the wild
beasts, [16]and these three men were in it, as I
live, says the Lord GOD, I swear they could save
neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be
saved, and the land would be a waste. [17]Or if I
brought the sword upon this country, command-
ing the sword to pass through the land cutting
off from it man and beast, [18]and these three men
were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they
would be unable to save either sons or daugh-
ters; they alone would be saved. [19]Or if I were to
send pestilence into this land, pouring out upon
it my bloodthirsty fury, cutting off from it man
and beast, [20]even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were
in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I swear that
they could save neither son nor daughter; they
would save only themselves by their virtue.

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[21]Thus says the Lord GOD: Even though I
send Jerusalem my four cruel punishments, the
sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to
cut off from it man and beast, [22]still some
survivors shall be left in it who will bring out
sons and daughters; when they come out to you,
you shall see their conduct and their actions and
be consoled regarding the evil I have brought on
Jerusalem [all that I have brought upon it].
[23]They shall console you when you see their
conduct and actions, for you shall then know
that it was not without reason that I did to it
what I did, says the Lord GOD.

## CHAPTER 15

**Parable of the Vine** [1]Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, what makes the
wood of the vine better than any other wood?
That branch among the trees of the forest! [3]Can
you use its wood to make anything worthwhile?
Can you make even a peg from it, to hang on it
any kind of vessel? [4]If you throw it on the fire as
fuel and the fire devours both ends and even the
middle is scorched, is it still good for anything?
[5]Why, even when it was whole it was good for
nothing; how much less, when the fire has
devoured and scorched it, can it be used for
anything! [6]Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the
forest, which I have destined as fuel for the fire,
do I make the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [7]I will
set my face against them; they have escaped
from the fire, but the fire shall devour them.
Thus you shall know that I am the LORD, when I
turn my face against them. [8]I will make the land
a waste, because they have broken faith, says the
Lord God.

## CHAPTER 16

**The Faithless Spouse** [1]Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, make known to
Jerusalem her abominations. [3]Thus says the Lord
GOD to Jerusalem: By origin and birth you are of
the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite
and your mother a Hittite.* [4]As for your birth,
the day you were born your navel cord was not
cut; you were neither washed with water nor
anointed, nor were you rubbed with salt, nor
swathed in swaddling clothes. [5]No one looked
on you with pity or compassion to do any of
these things for you. Rather, you were thrown
out on the ground as something loathsome, the
day you were born.

**14, 12–23:** The doctrine of personal responsibility before God was not new (cf Ez 3, 16–21; 18; 33, 1–20); but it had not been emphasized by the prophets before the Exile, who mostly predicted national retribution and called for national repentance.

**14, 14:** Noah, Daniel, and Job: proverbially virtuous men. The Daniel named here may be the traditional just judge of the ancient past, celebrated in Canaanite literature, who is possibly reflected in Dn 13, but is not the hero of Dn 1–12.

**16, 3f:** By origin and birth . . . Canaan . . . Amorite . . . Hittite: the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah absorbed not only pre-Israelite racial strains, but also many elements of the country's pagan cult and customs.

y Ez 4, 16.

[6]Then I passed by and saw you weltering in
your blood. I said to you: Live in your blood
[7]and grow like a plant in the field. You grew and
developed, you came to the age of puberty; your
breasts were formed, your hair had grown, but
you were still stark naked. [8]Again I passed by
you and saw that you were now old enough for
love. So I spread the corner of my cloak over you
to cover your nakedness;* I swore an oath to
you and entered into a covenant with you; you
became mine, says the Lord GOD. [9]Then I
bathed you with water, washed away your
blood, and anointed you with oil. [10]I clothed you
with an embroidered gown, put sandals of fine
leather on your feet; I gave you a fine linen sash
and silk robes to wear. [11]I adorned you with
jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms, a necklace
about your neck, [12]a ring in your nose, pendants
in your ears, and a glorious diadem upon your
head. [13]Thus you were adorned with gold and
silver; your garments were of fine linen, silk, and
embroidered cloth. Fine flour, honey, and oil
were your food. You were exceedingly beautiful,
with the dignity of a queen. [14]You were renowned among the nations for your beauty,
perfect as it was, because of my splendor which I
had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.

[15]But you were captivated by your own
beauty, you used your renown to make yourself
a harlot, and you lavished your harlotry on every
passer-by, whose own you became. [16]*You took
some of your gowns and made for yourself gaudy
high places, where you played the harlot . . . .
[17]You took the splendid gold and silver ornaments that I had given you and made for yourself
male images, with which also you played the
harlot. [18]You took your embroidered gowns to
cover them; my oil and my incense you set
before them; [19]the food that I had given you, the
fine flour, the oil, and the honey with which I
fed you, you set before them as an appeasing
odor, says the Lord GOD. [20]*z*The sons and
daughters you had borne me you took and
offered as sacrifices* to be devoured by them!
Was it not enough that you had become a harlot?
[21]*a*You slaughtered and immolated my children
to them, making them pass through fire. [22]And
through all your abominations and harlotries you
remembered nothing of when you were a girl,
stark naked and weltering in your blood.

[23]Then after all your evildoing—woe, woe to
you! says the Lord GOD— [24]you raised for
yourself a platform and a dais* in every public
place. [25]*b*At every street corner you built a dais
for yourself to use your beauty obscenely, spreading your legs for every passer-by, playing the
harlot countless times. [26]You played the harlot
with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, so
many times that I was provoked to anger.
[27]Therefore I stretched out my hand against you,
I diminished your allowance and delivered you
over to the will of your enemies, the Philistines,
who revolted at your lewd conduct. [28]You also
played the harlot with the Assyrians, because
you were not satisfied; and after playing the
harlot with them, you were still not satisfied.
[29]Again and again you played the harlot, now
going to Chaldea, the land of the traders; but
despite this, you were still not satisfied.

[30]How wild your lust! says the Lord GOD, that
you did all these things, acting like a shameless
prostitute, [31]building your platform at every
street corner and erecting your dais in every
public place! Yet you were unlike a prostitute,
since you disdained payment. [32]The adulterous
wife receives, instead of her husband, payment.
[33]All harlots receive gifts. But you rather bestowed your gifts on all your lovers, bribing them
to come to you from all sides for your harlotry.
[34]Thus in your harlotry you were different from
all other women. No one sought you out for
prostitution. Since you gave payment instead of
receiving it, how different you were!

**16, 8:** I spread the corner of my cloak over you to cover your nakedness: and also to signify the intention of marriage; cf Ru 3, 9.

**16, 16:** Fine robes were used to cover a couch for harlotry; cf Prv 7, 16f. In the allegory of this chapter the viewpoint often shifts from the figure (harlotry) to the reality (idolatry).

**16, 20f:** Human sacrifice was introduced under Judah's impious kings; cf 2 Kgs 16, 3; 17, 17; Jer 7, 31.

**16, 24:** A platform and a dais: associated with ritual prostitution, which the Israelites borrowed from Canaanite practice.

*z* Ez 20, 26. 31; 23, 37ff; Lv 18, 21; 20, 2; Dt 12, 31; 18, 10; 2 Kgs 21, 6; 23, 10; 24. 4; Jer 7, 31; 19, 5; 32, 34; Mi 6, 7. *a* 2 Kgs 16, 3; 17, 17; 21, 6; 23, 10. *b* Ez 23, 8; Is 57, 7; Jer 2, 20; 3, 2; 5, 7; 13, 27; Hos 2, 4; 4, 13.

35Therefore, harlot, hear the word of the
LORD! 36Thus says the Lord GOD: Because you
poured out your lust and revealed your naked-
ness in your harlotry with your lovers and
abominable idols, and because you sacrificed the
life-blood of your children to them, 37 [c]I will now
gather together all your lovers whom you tried
to please, whether you loved them or loved
them not; I will gather them against you from all
sides and expose you naked for them to see. 38I
will inflict on you the sentence of adulteresses
and murderesses; I will wreak fury and jealousy
upon you. 39I will hand you over to them to tear
down your platform and demolish your dais;
they shall strip you of your garments and take
away your splendid ornaments, leaving you stark
naked. 40They shall lead an assembly against you
to stone you and hack you with their swords.
41 [d]They shall burn your apartments with fire
and inflict punishments on you while many
women look on. Thus I will put an end to your
harlotry, and you shall never again give pay-
ment. 42When I have wreaked my fury upon
you I will cease to be jealous of you, I will be
quiet and no longer vexed. 43Because you did
not remember what happened when you were a
girl, but enraged me with all these things,
therefore in return I am bringing down your
conduct upon your head, says the Lord GOD. For
did you not add lewdness to the rest of your
abominable deeds?

44See, everyone who is fond of proverbs will
say of you, 'Like mother, like daughter.' 45Yes,
you are the true daughter of the mother* who
spurned her husband and children, and you are a
true sister to those who spurned their husbands
and children—your mother was a Hittite and
your father an Amorite. 46Your elder sister was
Samaria* with her daughters, living to the north
of you; and your younger sister, living to the
south of you, was Sodom with her daughters.
47Yet not only in their ways did you walk, and
act as abominably as they did; in a very short
time you became more corrupt in all your ways
than they. 48As I live, says the Lord GOD, I swear
that your sister Sodom, with her daughters, has
not done as you and your daughters have done!
49 [e]And look at the guilt of your sister Sodom:
she and her daughters were proud, sated with
food, complacent in their prosperity, and they
gave no help to the poor and needy. 50Rather,
they became haughty and committed abomina-
ble crimes in my presence; then, as you have
seen, I removed them. 51Samaria did not commit
half your sins! You have done more abominable
things than they, and have even made your
sisters appear just, with all the abominable deeds
you have done. 52You, then, bear your shame;
you are an argument in favor of your sisters! In
view of your sinful deeds, more abominable than
theirs, they appear just in comparison with you.
Blush for shame, and bear the shame of having
made your sisters appear just.

53I will restore their fortunes, the fortune of
Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and
her daughters [and I will restore your fortune
along with them], 54that you may bear your
shame and be disgraced for all the comfort you
brought them. 55Yes, your sisters, Sodom and
her daughters, Samaria and her daughters, shall
return to their former state [you and your
daughters shall return to your former state].
56Was not your sister Sodom kept in bad repute
by you while you felt proud of yourself, 57before
your wickedness became evident? Now you are
like her, reproached by the Edomites and all
your neighbors, despised on all sides by the
Philistines. 58The penalty of your lewdness and
your abominations—you must bear it all, says
the LORD.

59For thus speaks the Lord GOD: I will deal
with you according to what you have done, you
who despised your oath, breaking a covenant.
60Yet I will remember the covenant I made with
you when you were a girl, and I will set up an
everlasting covenant with you. 61Then you shall

**16, 45:** True daughter of the mother: Jerusalem has followed in the footsteps of its heathen forebears; cf v 3.

**16, 46:** Your elder sister was Samaria: Samaria can be called an elder sister in view of the relatively greater importance of the northern kingdom, Israel, during most of Old Testament history. Also, the relatively insignificant Sodom of ancient history can be called your younger sister.

c Ez 23, 10. d 2 Kgs 25, 9. e Gn 19, 24.

remember your conduct and be ashamed when I
take your sisters, those older and younger than
you, and give them to you as daughters, even
though I am not bound by my covenant with
you. [62]For I will re-establish my covenant with
you, that you may know that I am the LORD,
[63]that you may remember and be covered with
confusion, and that you may be utterly silenced
for shame when I pardon you for all you have
done, says the Lord GOD.

## CHAPTER 17

**The Eagles and the Vine** [1]Thus the word of
the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, propose a
riddle, and speak this proverb to the house of
Israel: [3]Thus speaks the Lord GOD:

The great eagle, with great wings, with long
pinions,
with thick plumage, many-hued, came to
Lebanon.
He took the crest of the cedar,
[4] tearing off its topmost branch,
And brought it to a land of tradesmen,
set it in a city of merchants.
[5]Then he took some seed of the land,
and planted it in a seedbed;
A shoot by plentiful waters,
like a willow he placed it,
[6]To sprout and grow up a vine,
dense and low-lying,
Its branches turned toward him,
its roots lying under him.
Thus it became a vine, produced branches
and put forth shoots.
[7]But there was another great eagle,
great of wing, rich in plumage;
To him this vine bent its roots,
sent out its branches,
That he might water it more freely
than the bed where it was planted.
[8]In a fertile field by plentiful waters it was
planted,
to grow branches, bear fruit,
and become a majestic vine.

[9]Say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Can it pros-
per? Will he not rather tear it out by the roots
and strip off its fruit, so that all its green growth
will wither when he pulls it up by the roots? [No
need of a mighty arm or many people to do this.]
[10]True, it is planted, but will it prosper? Will it
not rather wither, when touched by the east
wind, in the bed where it grew?

[11]*Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
[12]Son of man, say now to the rebellious house:
Do you not understand what this means? It is
this: The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and
took away its king and princes with him to
Babylon. [13]Then he selected a man of the royal
line with whom he made a covenant, binding him
under oath, while removing the nobles of the
land, [14]so that the kingdom would remain a
modest one, without aspirations, and would keep
his covenant and obey him. [15]But this man
rebelled against him, sending envoys to Egypt to
obtain horses and a great army. Can he prosper?
Can he who does such things escape? Can he
break a covenant and still go free? [16]As I live, says
the Lord GOD, in the home of the king who set
him up to rule, whose oath he spurned, whose
covenant with him he broke, there in Babylon I
swear he shall die! [17]When ramps are cast up and
siege towers are built for the destruction of many
lives, he shall not be saved in the conflict by
Pharaoh with a great army and numerous troops.
[18]He spurned his oath, breaking his covenant.
Though he gave his hand in pledge, he did all
these things. He shall not escape!

[19]Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: As I
live, my oath which he spurned, my covenant
which he broke, I swear to bring down upon his
head. [20]*f*I will spread my net over him, and he
shall be taken in my snare. I will bring him to
Babylon and enter into judgment with him there
over his breaking faith with me. [21]All the crack
troops among his forces shall fall by the sword,
and the survivors shall be scattered in every
direction. Thus you shall know that I, the LORD,
have spoken.

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17, 11–21: These verses explain the foregoing allegory. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar removed King Jehoiachin and took him into exile; in his place he set Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, on the throne and received from him the oath of loyalty. But Zedekiah was beguiled into rebellion by Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt, and thereby merited punishment; cf 2 Kgs 24, 10—25, 7.

f Ez 12, 13; 32, 3.

22 Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God:

I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar,
from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot,
And plant it on a high and lofty mountain;
23 on the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it.*
It shall put forth branches and bear fruit,
and become a majestic cedar.
Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it,
every winged thing in the shade of its boughs.
24 And all the trees of the field shall know
that I, the Lord,
Bring low the high tree,
lift high the lowly tree,
Wither up the green tree,
and make the withered tree bloom.

As I, the Lord, have spoken, so will I do.

## CHAPTER 18

Ch 13–24
See RG
333–334

**Personal Responsibility** 1 Thus the word of the Lord came to me: Son of man, 2 what is the meaning of this proverb that you recite in the land of Israel:

"Fathers have eaten green grapes,[g]
thus their children's teeth are on edge"?*

3 As I live, says the Lord God: I swear that there shall no longer be anyone among you who will repeat this proverb in Israel. 4 For all lives are mine; the life of the father is like the life of the son, both are mine; only the one who sins shall die.

5 If a man is virtuous—if he does what is right and just, 6 if he does not eat on the mountains,* nor raise his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel; if he does not defile his neighbor's wife, nor have relations with a woman in her menstrual period; 7 [h] if he oppresses no one, gives back the pledge received for a debt, commits no robbery; if he gives food to the hungry and clothes the naked; 8 if he does not lend at interest nor exact usury; if he holds off from evildoing, judges fairly between a man and his opponent; 9 if he lives by my statutes and is careful to observe my ordinances, that man is virtuous—he shall surely live, says the Lord God.

10 But if he begets a son who is a thief, a murderer, or who does any of these things 11 (though the father does none of them), a son who eats on the mountains, defiles the wife of his neighbor, 12 oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not give back a pledge, raises his eyes to idols, does abominable things, 13 lends at interest and exacts usury—this son certainly shall not live. Because he practiced all these abominations, he shall surely die; his death shall be his own fault.

14 On the other hand, if a man begets a son who, seeing all the sins his father commits, yet fears and does not imitate him; 15 a son who does not eat on the mountains, or raise his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife; 16 who does not oppress anyone, or exact a pledge, or commit robbery; who gives his food to the hungry and clothes the naked; 17 who holds off from evildoing, accepts no interest or usury, but keeps my ordinances and lives by my statutes—this one shall not die for the sins of his father, but shall surely live. 18 Only the father, since he violated rights, and robbed, and did what was not good among his people, shall in truth die for his sins. 19 You ask: "Why is not the son charged with the guilt of his father?" Because the son has done what is right and just, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. 20 [i] Only the one who sins shall die. The son shall not be charged with the guilt of his father, nor shall the father be charged with the guilt of his son. The virtuous man's virtue shall be his own, as the wicked man's wickedness shall be his.

17, 22f: I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar . . . plant it: the Lord will restore Israel under a messianic King from the same Davidic dynasty.

18, 2: Fathers . . . on edge: a proverb by which the people claimed that they were being punished for their ancestors' sins rather than for their own; cf Jer 31, 29.

18, 6: Eat on the mountains: partake of ritual meals at the heathen high places.

g Jer 13, 29. h Is 58, 7; Mt 25, 35. i Dt 24, 16; 2 Kgs 14, 6; 2 Chr 25, 4.

21 But if the wicked man turns away from all
the sins he committed, if he keeps all my statutes
and does what is right and just, he shall surely
live, he shall not die. 22 None of the crimes he
committed shall be remembered against him; he
shall live because of the virtue he has practiced.
23 [j] Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the
death of the wicked? says the Lord God. Do I
not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil
way that he may live?

24 And if the virtuous man turns from the path
of virtue to do evil, the same kind of abominable
things that the wicked man does, can he do this
and still live? None of his virtuous deeds shall be
remembered, because he has broken faith and
committed sin; because of this, he shall die.
25 [k] You say, "The Lord's way is not fair!" Hear
now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair,
or rather, are not your ways unfair? 26 When a
virtuous man turns away from virtue to commit
iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he
committed that he must die. 27 But if a wicked
man, turning from the wickedness he has com-
mitted, does what is right and just, he shall
preserve his life; 28 since he has turned away
from all the sins which he committed, he shall
surely live, he shall not die. 29 And yet the house
of Israel says, "The Lord's way is not fair!" Is it
my way that is not fair, house of Israel, or rather,
is it not that your ways are not fair?

30 [l] Therefore I will judge you, house of Israel,
each one according to his ways, says the Lord
God. Turn and be converted from all your
crimes, that they may be no cause of guilt for
you. 31 Cast away from you all the crimes you
have committed, and make for yourselves a new
heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, O
house of Israel? 32 [m] For I have no pleasure in the
death of anyone who dies, says the Lord God.
Return and live!

## CHAPTER 19

1 As for you, son of man, raise a lamentation
over the prince of Israel:

### Allegory of the Lions*

2 What a lioness was your mother,
a lion of lions!
Among young lions she couched
to rear her whelps.
3 One whelp she raised up,
a young lion he became;
He learned to seize prey,
men he devoured.
4 Then nations raised cries against him,
in their pit he was caught;
They took him away with hooks
to the land of Egypt.
5 Then she saw that in vain she had waited,
her hope was destroyed.
She took another of her whelps,
him she made a young lion.
6 He prowled among the lions,
a young lion he became;
He learned to seize prey,
men he devoured;
7 He ravaged their strongholds,
their cities he wasted.
The land and all in it were appalled
at the noise of his roar.
8 Nations laid out against him
snares all about him;
They spread their net to take him,
in their pit he was caught.
9 They put him in a cage and took him away
to the king of Babylon,
So that his voice would not be heard
on the mountains of Israel.

### Allegory of the Vine Branch

10 Your mother was like a vine*
planted by the water;
Fruitful and branchy was she
because of the abundant water.
11 One strong branch she put out
as a royal scepter.
Stately was her height
amid the dense foliage;
Notably tall was she

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**19, 2–9:** The meaning of this allegory is uncertain. Probably the two young lions are Jehoahaz and Zedekiah, sons of the same mother, who were deported to Egypt and Babylonia respectively. Cf 2 Kgs 23, 31–34; 24, 18ff.

**19, 10–14:** A vine: Judah. One strong branch: the Davidic king.

j Ez 33, 11; 2 Pt 3, 9. k Ez 33, 20. l Mt 3, 2; Lk 3, 3. m Ez 18, 23; 33, 11; 2 Pt 3, 9.

with her many clusters.
12 But she was torn up in fury
and flung to the ground;
The east wind withered her up,
her fruit was torn off;
Then her strong branch withered up,
fire devoured it. [n]
13 So now she is planted in the desert,
in a land dry and parched,
14 For fire came out of the branch
and devoured her shoots;
She is now without a strong branch,
a ruler's scepter.

This is a lamentation and serves as a lamentation.

## CHAPTER 20

Ch 13–24
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333–334

**Israel's History of Infidelity** 1 In the seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month,* some of the elders of Israel came to consult the LORD and sat down before me. 2 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 3 Son of man, speak with the elders of Israel and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Have you come to consult me? As I live! I swear I will not allow myself to be consulted by you, says the Lord GOD.

4 Will you judge them? Will you judge, son of man? Make known to them the abominations of their ancestors 5 in these words: Thus speaks the Lord GOD: The day I chose Israel, I swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob; in the land of Egypt I revealed myself to them and swore: I am the LORD, your God. 6 That day I swore to bring them out of the land of Egypt to the land I had scouted for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, a jewel among all lands. 7 Then I said to them: Throw away, each of you, the detestable things that have held your eyes; do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD, your God.

8 But they rebelled against me and refused to listen to me; none of them threw away the detestable things that had held their eyes, they did not abandon the idols of Egypt. Then I thought of pouring out my fury on them and spending my anger on them there in the land of Egypt; 9 but I acted for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they were, in whose presence I had made myself known to them, revealing that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt. 10 Therefore I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the desert. 11 [o] Then I gave them my statutes and made known to them my ordinances, which everyone must keep, to have life through them. 12 [p] I also gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, to show that it was I, the LORD, who made them holy.

13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not observe my statutes, and they despised my ordinances that bring life to those who keep them. My sabbaths, too, they desecrated grievously. Then I thought of pouring out my fury on them in the desert to put an end to them, 14 but I acted for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in whose presence I had brought them out. 15 Nevertheless I swore to them in the desert not to bring them to the land I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, a jewel among all lands. 16 So much were their hearts devoted to their idols, they had not lived by my statutes, but despised my ordinances and desecrated my sabbaths. 17 But I looked on them with pity, not wanting to destroy them, so I did not put an end to them in the desert.

18 Then I said to their children in the desert: Do not observe the statutes of your parents or keep their ordinances; do not defile yourselves with their idols. 19 I am the LORD, your God: observe my statutes and be careful to keep my ordinances; 20 keep holy my sabbaths, as a sign between me and you to show that I am the LORD, your God. 21 But their children rebelled against me: they did not observe my statutes or keep my ordinances that bring life to those who observe them, and my sabbaths they desecrated. Then I thought of pouring out my fury on them, of spending my anger on them in the desert;

20, 1: The seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month: August 14, 591 B.C.

n Hos 13, 15. o Lv 18, 5; Rom 10, 5. p Ex 20, 8; 31, 13; Dt 5, 12.

22but I stayed my hand, acting for my name's
sake, lest it be profaned in the sight of the
nations in whose presence I brought them out.
23Nevertheless I swore to them in the desert that
I would disperse them among the nations and
scatter them over foreign lands; 24for they did
not keep my ordinances, but despised my stat-
utes and desecrated my sabbaths, with eyes only
for the idols of their fathers. 25Therefore I gave
them statutes that were not good,* and ordi-
nances through which they could not live. 26I let
them become defiled by their gifts, by their
immolation of every first-born, so as to make
them an object of horror.

27Therefore speak to the house of Israel, son
of man, and tell them: Thus says the Lord God:
In this way also your fathers blasphemed me,
breaking faith with me: 28when I had brought
them to the land I had sworn to give them, and
they saw all its high hills and leafy trees, there
they offered their sacrifices [there they brought
their offensive offerings], there they sent up
appeasing odors, and there they poured out their
libations. 29I asked them: To what sort of high
place do you betake yourselves?—and so they
call it a high place even to the present day.
30Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus says
the Lord God: Will you defile yourselves like
your fathers? Will you lust after their detestable
idols? 31By offering your gifts, by making your
children pass through the fire, you defile your-
selves with all your idols even to this day. Shall I
let myself be consulted by you, house of Israel?
As I live! says the Lord God: I swear I will not
let myself be consulted by you.

32What you are thinking of shall never hap-
pen: "We shall be like the nations, like the
peoples of foreign lands, serving wood and
stone." 33As I live, says the Lord God, with a
mighty hand and outstretched arm, with poured-
out wrath, I swear I will be king over you!
34With a mighty hand and outstretched arm,
with poured-out wrath, I will bring you out from
the nations and gather you from the countries
over which you are scattered; 35*then I will lead
you to the desert of the peoples, where I will
enter into judgment with you face to face. 36Just
as I entered into judgment with your fathers in
the desert of the land of Egypt, so will I enter
into judgment with you, says the Lord God. 37I
will count you with the staff and bring back but
a small number. 38I will separate from you those
who have rebelled and transgressed against me;
from the land where they sojourned as aliens I
will bring them out, but they shall not return to
the land of Israel. Thus you shall know that I am
the Lord.

39As for you, house of Israel, thus says the
Lord God: Come, each one of you, destroy your
idols! Then listen to me, and never again profane
my holy name with your gifts and your idols.
40For on my holy mountain, on the mountain
height of Israel, says the Lord God, there the
whole house of Israel without exception shall
worship me; there I will accept them, and there
I will claim your tributes and the first fruits of
your offerings, and all that you dedicate. 41As a
pleasing odor I will accept you, when I have
brought you from among the nations and gath-
ered you out of the countries over which you
were scattered; and by means of you I will
manifest my holiness in the sight of the nations.
42Thus you shall know that I am the Lord, when
I bring you back to the land of Israel, the land
which I swore to give to your fathers. 43There
you shall recall your conduct and all the deeds
by which you defiled yourselves; and you shall
loathe yourselves because of all the evil things
you did. 44And you shall know that I am the
Lord when I deal with you thus, for my name's
sake, and not according to your evil conduct and
corrupt actions, O house of Israel, says the Lord
God.

## CHAPTER 21

**The Sword of the Lord** 1Thus the word of the
Lord came to me: 2*Son of man, look south-

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20, 25f: I gave them statutes that were not good: the Lord permitted them to adopt pagan practices, including the abominable sacrifice of their newborn infants, which could only merit their destruction. See note on Ez 14, 9.

20, 35–38: Exile in the pagan lands will serve the same purpose as the desert journey after the Exodus from Egypt: the rebellious will be eliminated, and only a remnant will survive.

21, 2ff: The southern kingdom, Judah, is likened to a forest

ward, preach toward the south, and prophesy
against the forest of the southern land. [3]Hear the
word of the LORD! you shall say to the southern
forest. Thus says the Lord GOD: See! I am
kindling a fire in you that shall devour all trees,
the green as well as the dry. The blazing flame
shall not be quenched, but from south to north
every face shall be scorched by it. [4]Everyone
shall see that I, the LORD, have kindled it, and it
shall not be quenched.

[5]But I said, "Alas! Lord GOD, they say to me,
'Is not this the one who is forever spinning
parables?' " [6]Then the word of the LORD came
to me: [7]Son of man, look toward Jerusalem,
preach against their sanctuary, and prophesy
against the land of Israel, [8]saying to the land of
Israel: Thus says the LORD: See! I am coming at
you; I will draw my sword from its sheath and
cut off from you the virtuous and the wicked.*
[9]Thus my sword shall leave its sheath against
everyone from south to north, [10]and everyone
shall know that I, the LORD, have drawn my
sword from its sheath, and it shall not be
sheathed again.

**Act Symbolic of the City's Fall** [11]As for you,
son of man, groan! with shattered strength groan
bitterly while they look on. [12]And when they ask
you, "Why are you groaning?", you shall say:
Because of a report;* when it comes every heart
shall fail, every hand shall fall helpless, every
spirit shall be daunted, and every knee shall run
with water. See, it is coming, it is here! says the
Lord GOD.

**Song of the Sword** [13]Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [14]Son of man, prophesy! say:
Thus says the LORD:

A sword, a sword has been sharpened,
a sword, a sword has been burnished:
[15]To work slaughter has it been sharpened,
to flash lightning has it been burnished.
Why should I now withdraw it?
You have spurned the rod and every
judgment!
[16]I have given it over to the burnisher
that he might hold it in his hand,
A sword sharpened and burnished
to be put in the hand of a slayer.
[17]Cry out and wail, son of man,
for it is destined for my people;
It is for all the princes of Israel,
victims of the sword with my people.

Therefore, slap your thigh,* [18]for the sword has
been tested; and why should it not be so? says
the Lord GOD, since you have spurned the rod.

[19]As for you, son of man, prophesy,
brushing one hand against the other:
While the sword is doubled and tripled,
this sword of slaughter,
This great sword of slaughter
which threatens all around,
[20]That every heart may tremble;
for many will be the fallen.
At all their gates
I have appointed the sword for slaughter,
Fashioned to flash lightning,
burnished for slaughter.
[21]Cleave to the right! destroy!
to the left! wherever your edge is turned.

[22]Then I, too, shall brush one hand against the
other* and wreak my fury. I, the LORD, have
spoken.

**Nebuchadnezzar at the Crossroads** [23]Thus
the word of the LORD came to me: [24]Son of man,
make for yourself two roads over which the
sword of the king of Babylon can come. Both
roads shall lead out from the same land. Then
put a signpost at the head of each road, [25]so that
the sword can come to Rabbah of the Ammon-
ites or to Judah's capital, Jerusalem. [26]For at the
fork where the two roads divide stands the king
of Babylon, divining;* he has shaken the arrows,

about to be burned; cf Jer 21, 14.

**21, 8:** Cut off from you the virtuous and the wicked: a more complete devastation of Jerusalem than that described in Ez 9, 6.

**21, 12:** A report: the news of the fall of Jerusalem; cf Ez 33, 21f.

**21, 17:** Slap your thigh: a gesture signifying grief and dread.

**21, 22:** Brush one hand against the other: a gesture signifying the rejection of responsibility; cf Ez 22, 13; Nm 24, 10.

**21, 26:** Three forms of divination are mentioned: arrow divination, consisting in the use of differently marked arrows extracted or shaken from a case at random; the consultation of the teraphim or household idols; and liver divination, scrutiny of the configurations of the livers of newly slaughtered animals, a common form of divination in Mesopotamia.

inquired of the teraphim, inspected the liver.
[27]In his right hand is the divining arrow marked
"Jerusalem,"* bidding him to give the order for
slaying, to raise his voice in the battle cry, to post
battering rams at the gates, to cast up a ramp, to
build a siege tower. [28]In their eyes this is but a
lying oracle; yet they are bound by the oaths
they have sworn, and the arrow taken in hand
marks their guilt.

[29]Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because
you have drawn attention to your guilt, with
your crimes laid bare and your sinfulness in all
your wicked deeds revealed (because attention
has been drawn to you), you shall be taken in
hand. [30]And as for you, depraved and wicked
prince of Israel, whose day is coming when your
life of crime will be ended, [31]thus says the Lord
GOD: Off with the turban and away with the
crown! Nothing shall be as it was! Up with the
low and down with the high! [32]Twisted, twisted,
twisted will I leave it; it shall not be the same
until he comes who has the claim against the
city; and to him I will hand it over.

**Against the Ammonites*** [33]As for you, son of
man, prophesy: Thus says the Lord GOD against
the Ammonities and their insults: A sword, a
sword is drawn for slaughter, burnished to
consume and to flash lightning, [34]because you
planned with false visions and lying divinations
to lay it on the necks of depraved and wicked
men whose day has come when their crimes are
at an end. [35]Return it to its sheath! In the place
where you were created, in the land of your
origin, I will judge you. [36]I will pour out my
indignation upon you, breathing my fiery wrath
upon you; I will hand you over to ravaging men,
artisans of destruction. [37]You shall be fuel for the
fire, your blood shall flow throughout the land.
You shall not be remembered, for I, the LORD,
have spoken.

## CHAPTER 22

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**Crimes of Jerusalem** [1]Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [2]You, son of man, would you
judge, would you judge the bloody city? Then
make known all her abominations, [3]and say:
Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the city which
sheds blood within herself so that her time has
come, and which has made idols for her own
defilement. [4]By the blood which you shed you
have been made guilty, and with the idols you
made you have become defiled; you have
brought on your day, so that the end of your
years has come. Therefore I make you an object
of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all
foreign lands. [5]Those near you and those far off
shall deride you because of your foul reputation
and your great perversity. [6]See! the princes of
Israel, family by family, are in you only for
bloodshed. [7]Within you, father and mother are
despised; in your midst, they extort from the
resident alien; within you, they oppress orphans
and widows. [8]What is holy to me you have
spurned, and my sabbaths you have desecrated.
[9]There are those in you who slander to cause
bloodshed; within you are those who feast on
the mountains; in your midst are those who do
lewd things. [10]In you are those who uncover the
nakedness of their fathers, and in you those who
coerce women in their menstrual period.
[11] [q]There are those in you who do abominable
things with the wives of their neighbors, men
who defile their daughters-in-law by incest, men
who coerce their sisters, the daughters of their
own fathers. [12]There are those in you who take
bribes to shed blood. You exact interest and
usury; you despoil your neighbors violently; and
me you have forgotten, says the Lord GOD.

[13]See, I am brushing one hand against the
other because of the unjust profits you have
made and because of the bloodshed in your
midst. [14]Can your heart remain firm, will your
hands be strong, in the days when I deal with

21, 27f: An arrow marked "Jerusalem" is picked out, which marks the guilt of the city's inhabitants for having broken their oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar.

21, 33–37: In the preceding section Nebuchadnezzar is represented as deciding whether to attack Jerusalem or Rabbath-Ammon. As it happened, Jerusalem was chosen for attack; later, however, the Chaldeans also invaded Ammon. The present oracle against Ammon is inserted here, rather than in chapters 25–32, in order to complement the oracle against Jerusalem.

q Jer 5, 7f.

you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will act. [15]I
will disperse you among the nations and scatter
you over foreign lands, so that I may purge your
uncleanness. [16]In you I will allow myself to be
profaned in the eyes of the nations; thus you
shall know that I am the LORD.

[17]Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
[18]Son of man, the house of Israel has become
dross for me. All of them are bronze and tin, iron
and lead [in the midst of a furnace]: dross from
silver have they become. [19]Therefore thus says
the Lord GOD: Because all of you have become
dross, therefore I must gather you together
within Jerusalem. [20]Just as silver, bronze, iron,
lead, and tin are gathered into a furnace and
smelted in the roaring flames, so I will gather
you together in my furious wrath, put you in,
and smelt you. [21]When I have assembled you, I
will blast you with the fire of my anger and smelt
you with it. [22]You shall be smelted by it just as
silver is smelted in a furnace. Thus you shall
know that I, the Lord, have poured out my fury
on you.

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[23]Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
[24]Son of man, say to her: You are a land
unrained on [that is, not rained on] at the time of
my fury. [25]Her princes are like roaring lions that
tear prey; they devour people, seizing their
wealth and precious things, and make widows of
many within her. [26]Her priests violate my law
and profane what is holy to me; they do not
distinguish between the sacred and the profane,
nor teach the difference between the unclean
and the clean; they pay no attention to my
sabbaths, so that I have been profaned in their
midst. [27] [r]Her nobles within her are like wolves
that tear prey, shedding blood and destroying
lives to get unjust gain. [28]Her prophets cover
them with whitewash, pretending to visions that
are false and performing lying divinations, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD," although the
LORD has not spoken. [29]The people of the land
practice extortion and commit robbery; they
afflict the poor and the needy, and oppress the
resident alien without justice. [30]Thus I have
searched among them for someone who could
build a wall or stand in the breach before me to
keep me from destroying the land; but I found
no one. [31]Therefore I have poured out my fury
upon them; with my fiery wrath I have consumed them; I have brought down their conduct
upon their heads, says the Lord GOD.

## CHAPTER 23

**The Two Sisters** [1]Thus the word of the LORD
came to me: [2]Son of man, there were two
women, daughters of the same mother, [3]who
even as young girls played the harlot in Egypt.
There the Egyptians caressed their bosoms and
fondled their virginal breasts. [4]Oholah was the
name of the elder, and the name of her sister
was Oholibah.* They became mine and bore
sons and daughters. [As for their names: Samaria
is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah.] [5]Oholah
became a harlot faithless to me; she lusted after
her lovers, the Assyrians, warriors [6]dressed in
purple, governors and officers, all of them attractive young men, knights mounted on horses.
[7]Thus she gave herself as a harlot to them, to all
the elite of the Assyrians, and she defiled herself
with all those for whom she lusted [with all their
idols]. [8]She did not give up the harlotry which
she had begun in Egypt, when they had lain
with her as a young girl, fondling her virginal
breasts and pouring out their impurities on her.
[9]Therefore I handed her over to her lovers, the
Assyrians for whom she had lusted. [10] [s]They
exposed her nakedness, her sons and daughters
they took away, and herself they slew with the
sword. Thus she became a byword for women,
for they punished her grievously.

[11]Though her sister Oholibah saw all this, her
lust was more depraved than her sister's, and
she outdid her in harlotry. [12]She too lusted after
the Assyrians, governors and officers, warriors
impeccably clothed, knights mounted on horses,
all of them attractive young men. [13]I saw that
she had defiled herself. Both had gone down the

23, 4: Oholah . . . Oholibah: symbolic names. The first, standing for Samaria, may be read to mean "her own tent"; the latter, standing for Jerusalem, means "my tent is in her." The references seem to be to the schismatic temple and cult of the Lord in Samaria, as opposed to their authentic counterpart in Jerusalem.

r Mi 3, 11; Zep 3, 3. s Ez 16, 37.

same path, [14]yet she went further in her harlotry. When she saw men drawn on the wall, the images of Chaldeans drawn with vermillion, [15]with sashes girded about their waists, flowing turbans on their heads, all looking like chariot warriors, the portraits of Babylonians, natives of Chaldea, [16]she lusted for them; no sooner had she set eyes on them than she sent messengers to them in Chaldea. [17]Then the Babylonians came to her, to the love couch, and defiled her with their intercourse. As soon as she was defiled by them, she became disgusted with them. [18]Her harlotry was discovered and her shame was revealed, and I became disgusted with her as I had become disgusted with her sister. [19]But she played the harlot all the more, recalling the days of her girlhood, when she had been a harlot in the land of Egypt. [20]She lusted for the lechers of Egypt, whose members are like that of an ass, and whose heat is like those of stallions.

[21]You yearned for the lewdness of your girlhood, when the Egyptians fondled your breasts, caressing your bosom. [22]Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord God: I will now stir up your lovers against you, those with whom you are disgusted, and I will bring them against you from every side: [23]the men of Babylon and all of Chaldea, Pekod, Shoa and Koa,* along with all those of Assyria, attractive young men, all of them governors and officers, charioteers and warriors, all of them horsemen. [24]They shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and many peoples. Shields, bucklers, and helmets they shall array against you everywhere. [25]I will leave it to them to judge, and they will judge you by their own ordinances. I will let loose my jealousy against you, so that they shall deal with you in fury, cutting off your nose and ears; and what is left of you shall fall by the sword. They shall take away your sons and daughters, and what is left of you shall be devoured by fire. [26]They shall strip off your clothes and seize your splendid ornaments. [27]I will put an end to your lewdness and to the harlotry you began in Egypt; you shall no longer look toward it, nor shall you remember Egypt again.

[28]For thus says the Lord God: I am now handing you over to those whom you hate, to those who fill you with disgust. [29]They shall deal with you in hatred, seizing all that you have worked for and leaving you stark naked, so that your indecent nakedness is exposed. Your lewdness and harlotry [30]have brought these things upon you, because you played the harlot with the nations by defiling yourself with their idols.

[31]Because you followed in the path of your sister, I will hand you her cup. [32]Thus says the Lord God:

The cup of your sister you shall drink,
so wide and deep, which holds so much,
[33]Filled with destruction and grief,
a cup of dismay, the cup of your sister.

[34]You shall drain it dry, and gnaw at the very sherds of the cup, and you shall tear out your breasts; for I have spoken, says the Lord God. [35]Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, it is for you to bear the penalty of your lewdness and harlotry.

[36]Then the Lord said to me: Son of man, would you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then make known to them their abominations. [37]For they committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; to feed them they immolated the children they had borne me. [38][This, too, they did to me: they defiled my sanctuary and desecrated my sabbaths. [39]On the very day they slew their children for their idols, they entered my sanctuary to desecrate it. Thus they acted within my house.] [40]Moreover, they sent for men who had to come from afar,* to whom messengers were sent. And so they came—and for them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and put on ornaments. [41]You sat on a couch prepared for

**23, 23:** Pekod, Shoa and Koa: peoples living about the Tigris, part of "greater Babylonia."

**23, 40:** Men who had to come from afar: ambassadors from Assyria and Babylon. Alliances with these countries aided in the corruption of both Israel and Judah.

them, with a table spread before it, on which
you had set my incense and oil. 42Then was
heard the shout of a carefree mob in the city, and
these were men brought in from the desert, who
put bracelets on the women's arms and splendid
diadems on their heads. 43So I said: "Oh, this
woman jaded with adulteries! Now they will
commit whoredom with her, and as for her
. . . . " 44And indeed they did come to her as
men come to a harlot. Thus they came to
Oholah and Oholibah, the lewd women. 45But
just men shall punish them with the sentence
meted out to adulteresses and murderesses, for
they have committed adultery, and blood is on
their hands.

46Thus says the Lord GOD: Summon an assembly against them, and deliver them over to terror and plunder. 47The assembly shall stone them and hack them to pieces with their swords. They shall slay their sons and daughters, and burn their houses with fire. 48Thus I will put an end to lewdness in the land, and all the women will be warned not to imitate your lewdness. 49They shall inflict on you the penalty of your lewdness, and you shall pay for your sins of idolatry. Thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 13–24
See RG
333–334

**Allegory of the Pot** 1On the tenth day of the tenth month, in the ninth year,* the word of the LORD came to me: 2Son of man, write down this date today, for this very day the king of Babylon has invested Jerusalem. 3Propose this parable to the rebellious house: Thus says the Lord GOD:

*Set up the pot, set it up,
then pour in some water.
4Put in it pieces of meat,
all good pieces: thigh and shoulder;
Fill it with the choicest joints
5 taken from the pick of the flock.
Then pile the wood beneath it;
bring to a boil these pieces
and the joints that are in it.
6Take out its pieces, one by one,
without casting lots for it.

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city,[t] a pot containing rust, whose rust has not been removed. 7For the blood she shed is in her midst; she poured it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the earth, to be covered with dust.* 8To work up my wrath, to excite my vengeance, she put her blood on the bare rock, not to be covered. 9Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:

I, too, will heap up a great bonfire,
10 piling on wood and kindling the fire,
Till the meat has been cooked,
till the broth has boiled.

11Then I will set the pot empty on the coals till its metal glows red hot, till the impurities in it melt, and its rust disappears. 12Yet not even with fire will its great rust be removed. 13Because you have sullied yourself with lewdness when I would have purified you, and you refused to be purified of your uncleanness, therefore you shall not be purified until I wreak my fury on you. 14I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming, for I will bring it about without fail. I will not have pity nor repent. By your conduct and your deeds you shall be judged, says the Lord GOD.

**Symbol of the Destruction of the Temple** 15Thus the word of the LORD came to me: 16Son of man, by a sudden blow I am taking away from you the delight of your eyes, but do not mourn or weep or shed any tears. 17Groan in silence, make no lament for the dead, bind on your turban, put your sandals on your feet, do not cover your beard, and do not eat the customary bread.* 18That evening my wife died, and the next morning I did as I had been commanded. 19Then the people asked me, "Will you not tell us what all these things that you are doing mean

**24, 1:** The tenth day of the tenth month, in the ninth year: January 15, 588 B.C. The same date is given in Jer 52, 4.

**24, 3ff:** This present comparison of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to meat boiled in a pot symbolizes their punishment rather than their supposed protection as in Ez 11, 3.

**24, 7:** Blood . . . to be covered with dust: since blood was sacred to God, it had to be covered with earth (Lv 17, 13); the blood of a murdered man that was left uncovered cried to heaven for vengeance; cf Jb 16, 18; Gn 4, 10.

**24, 17:** The customary bread: eaten as a mourning observance; cf Jer 16, 7. The other gestures here forbidden were also popular mourning customs.

t Na 3, 1; Hb 2, 12.

for us?" I therefore spoke to the people that
morning, [20]saying to them: Thus the word of the
LORD came to me: [21]Say to the house of Israel:
Thus says the Lord GOD: I will now desecrate
my sanctuary, the stronghold of your pride, the
delight of your eyes, the desire of your soul. The
sons and daughters you left behind shall fall by
the sword. [24]Ezekiel shall be a sign for you: all
that he did you shall do when it happens. Thus
you shall know that I am the LORD. [22]*You shall
do as I have done, not covering your beards nor
eating the customary bread. [23]Your turbans shall
remain on your heads, your sandals on your feet.
You shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot
away because of your sins and groan one to
another.

**End of Ezekiel's Dumbness** [25] [u]As for you,
son of man, truly, on the day I take away from
them their bulwark, their glorious joy, the de-
light of their eyes, the desire of their soul, and
the pride of their hearts, their sons and daugh-
ters, [26]that day the fugitive will come to you,
that you may hear it for yourself; [27]that day your
mouth shall be opened and you shall be dumb
no longer. Thus you shall be a sign to them, and
they shall know that I am the LORD.

## III: Prophecies Against Foreign Nations

### CHAPTER 25

**Against Ammon** [1]Thus the word of the LORD
came to me: [2]Son of man, turn toward the
Ammonites and prophesy against them. [3] [v]Say to
the Ammonites: Hear the word of the LORD!
Thus says the Lord GOD: Because you cried out
your joy over the desecration of my sanctuary,
the devastation of the land of Israel, and the
exile of the house of Judah, [4]therefore I will
deliver you into the possession of the Easter-
ners.* They shall set up their encampments
among you and pitch their tents; they shall eat
your fruits and drink your milk. [5]I will make
Rabbah a pasture for camels, and the villages of
the Ammonites a resting place for flocks. Thus
you shall know that I am the LORD.

[6]For thus says the Lord GOD: Because you
clapped your hands and stamped your feet,
rejoicing most maliciously in your heart over the
land of Israel, [7]therefore I will stretch out my
hand against you. I will make you plunder for the
nations, I will cut you off from the peoples, and
remove you from the lands. I will destroy you,
and thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

**Against Moab** [8] [w]Thus says the Lord GOD:
Because Moab said, "See! the house of Judah is
like all other nations," [9]therefore I will clear the
shoulder of Moab* totally of its cities, the jewels
of the land: Beth-jesimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiria-
thaim. [10]I will hand her over, along with the
Ammonites, into the possession of the Easter-
ners, that she may not be remembered among the
peoples. [11]Thus I will execute judgment upon
Moab, that they may know that I am the LORD.

**Against Edom** [12] [x]Thus says the Lord GOD:
Because Edom has taken vengeance on the
house of Judah and has made itself grievously
guilty by taking vengeance on them, [13]therefore
thus says the Lord GOD: I will stretch out my
hand against Edom and cut off from it man and
beast. I will make it a waste from Teman to
Dedan; they shall fall by the sword. [14]My
vengeance upon Edom I will entrust to my
people Israel, who will deal with Edom in
accordance with my anger and my fury; thus
they shall know my vengeance, says the Lord
GOD.

Ch 25–32
See RG
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**Against the Philistines** [15]Thus says the Lord
GOD: Because the Philistines have acted revenge-
fully, and have taken vengeance with destructive
malice in their hearts, with an undying enmity,
[16]therefore thus says the Lord GOD: See! I am
stretching out my hand against the Philistines; I
will cut off the Cherethites* and wipe out the

24, 22f: The fall of the city will be so sudden and final that the exiles will have no time to go into mourning.
25, 4: The Easterners: nomadic tribes to the east of Ammon and Moab.
25, 9: The shoulder of Moab: the edge of the Moabite plateau.
25, 16: Cherethites: a people forming part of the Philistine nation; cf Zep 2, 5.

u 25ff: Ez 3, 22–27. v Jer 40, 14; 41, 10: 49, 2; Am 1, 13ff: Zep 2, 8ff. w Sir 50, 26; Is 15, 1–9; 16, 1–14; Jer 48, 1–47; Am 2, 1ff; Zep 2, 8f. x 12ff: Ez 35, 1ff; Is 34, 5; Jer 49, 7–22; Jl 4, 19; Am 1, 11f; Ob 1, 1–21.

remnant on the seacoast. [17]I will execute great acts of vengeance on them, punishing them furiously. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD, when I wreak my vengeance on them.

## CHAPTER 26

Ch 25–32 See RG 334

**Against the City of Tyre** [1]On the first day of the . . . month in the eleventh year, the word of the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, because of what Tyre said of Jerusalem:

"Aha! it is broken, the gateway to the peoples;
now that it is ruined, its wealth reverts to me!"
[3] therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
See! I am coming at you, Tyre;
I will churn up against you many nations,
even as the sea churns up its waves;[y]
[4]They shall destroy the walls of Tyre
and raze her towers.
I will scrape the ground from her
and leave her a bare rock;*
[5]She shall be a drying place for nets
in the midst of the sea.

I have spoken, says the Lord GOD: and she shall be booty for the nations. [6]And her daughters* on the mainland shall be slaughtered by the sword; thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

[7]For thus says the Lord GOD: I am now bringing up against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the king of kings, with horses and chariots, with cavalry and a great and mighty army.

[8]Your daughters on the mainland
he shall slay with the sword;
He shall place a siege tower against you,
cast up a ramp about you,
and raise his shields against you.
[9]He shall pound your walls with battering-rams
and break down your towers with his weapons.
[10]The surge of his horses shall cover you with dust,
amid the noise of steeds, of wheels and of chariots.
Your walls shall shake as he enters your gates,
even as one enters a city that is breached.
[11]With the hoofs of his horses
he shall trample all your streets;
Your people he shall slay by the sword;
your mighty pillars he shall pull to the ground.
[12]Your wealth shall be plundered,
your merchandise pillaged;
Your walls shall be torn down,
your precious houses demolished;
Your stones, your timber, and your clay
shall be cast into the sea.
[13]I will put an end to the noise of your songs,
and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more.
[14]I will make you a bare rock;
a drying place for nets shall you be.

Never shall you be rebuilt, for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD.

[15]Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: At the noise of your fall, at the groaning of the wounded, when the sword slays in your midst, shall not the isles quake? [16]All the princes of the sea* shall step down from their thrones, lay aside their robes, and strip off their embroidered garments. They shall be clothed in mourning and, sitting on the ground, they shall tremble at every moment and be horrified at you. [17]Then they shall utter a lament over you:

How have you perished, gone from the seas,
city most prized!
Once she was mighty on the sea,
she and her dwellers,
Who spread terror into all
that dwelt by the sea.

**26, 4f:** A bare rock: the Tyre of Ezekiel's time was situated on a rocky island just off the Phoenician coast; it was not until the time of Alexander the Great that it was connected by a causeway to the mainland.

**26, 6:** Her daughters: tributary towns and villages on the mainland.

**26, 16:** The princes of the sea: the rulers of the islands and coastal cities leagued commercially with Tyre.

y Is 26, 1–21: 47, 4; Jl 4, 4f; Zec 9, 2ff.

[18] On this, the day of your fall,
the islands quake!

The isles in the sea are terrified at your passing.

[19] For thus says the Lord God: When I make you a city desolate like cities that are no longer inhabited, when I churn up the abyss against you, and its mighty waters cover you, [20] then I will thrust you down with those who descend into the pit,* those of the bygone age; and I will make you dwell in the nether lands, in the everlasting ruins, with those who go down to the pit, so that you may never return to take your place in the land of the living. [21] I will make you a devastation, and you shall be no more; you shall be sought, but never again found, says the Lord God.

## CHAPTER 27

**The Ship Tyre** [1] Thus the word of the Lord came to me: [2] As for you, son of man, utter a lament over Tyre, [3] and say to Tyre that is situated at the approaches of the sea, that brought the trade of the peoples to many a coastland: Thus says the Lord God:

Tyre, you said, "I am a ship,
perfect in beauty."
[4] In the midst of the sea your builders placed you,
perfected your beauty.
[5] With cypress from Senir* they built for you
all of your decks;
Cedar from Lebanon they took
to make you a mast;
[6] From the highest oaks of Bashan*
they made your oars;
Your bridge they made of cypress wood
from the coasts of Kittim.
[7] Fine embroidered linen from Egypt
became your sail [to serve you as a banner].
Purple and scarlet from the coasts of Elishah*
covered your cabin.
[8] Citizens of Sidon and Arvad
served as your oarsmen;
Skilled men of Zemer were in you
to be your mariners;
[9] The elders and experts of Gebal* were in you
to caulk your seams.

Every ship and sailor on the sea came to you to carry trade. [10] Persia and Lud and Put were in your army as warriors; shield and helmet they hung upon you, increasing your splendor. [11] The men of Arvad were all about your walls, and the Gamadites were in your towers; they hung their bucklers all around on your walls, and made perfect your beauty. [12] Tarshish traded with you, so great was your wealth, exchanging silver, iron, tin, and lead for your wares. [13] Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were also traders with you, exchanging slaves and articles of bronze for your goods. [14] From Beth-togarmah horses, steeds, and mules were exchanged for your wares. [15] The Rhodanites trafficked with you; many coastlands traded with you; ivory tusks and ebony wood they gave you for payment. [16] Edom traded with you, so many were your products, exchanging garnets, purple, embroidered cloth, fine linen, coral, and rubies for your wares. [17] Judah and the land of Israel trafficked with you, exchanging Minnith wheat, figs, honey, oil, and balm for your goods. [18] Damascus traded with you, so great was your wealth, exchanging Helbon wine and Zahar wool. [19] Javan exchanged wrought iron, cassia, and aromatic cane from Uzal for your wares. [20] Dedan traded with you for riding gear. [21] The trade of Arabia and of all the sheikhs of Kedar belonged to you; they dealt in lambs, rams, and goats. [22] The merchants of Sheba and Raamah also traded with you, exchanging for your wares the very choicest spices, all kinds of precious stones, and gold. [23] Haran, Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad [24] traded with you, marketing with you rich garments, violet mantles, embroidered cloth, varicolored carpets, and firmly woven cords. [25] Ships of Tarshish journeyed for you in your merchandising.

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**26, 20:** Those who descend into the pit: the dead, pictured as dwelling in a place or cave of darkness.
**27, 5:** Senir: another name for Mount Hermon; cf Dt 3, 9.
**27, 6:** Bashan: northern Transjordan, which, like Lebanon, was noted for its great forests. Kittim: probably Cyprus.
**27, 7:** Elishah: probably another term for Cyprus.
**27, 8f:** Sidon . . . Arvad . . . Zemer . . . Gebal: Phoenician cities in Tyre's orbit of influence; the last-named is the classical Byblos.

You were full and heavily laden
in the heart of the sea.
26 Through the deep waters your oarsmen
brought you home,
But the east wind smashed you
in the heart of the sea.
27 Your wealth, your goods, your wares,
your sailors, and your crew,

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[the caulkers of your seams, those who traded for your goods, all your warriors who were in you, and all the great crowd within you]

Sank into the heart of the sea
on the day of your shipwreck.
28 Hearing the shouts of your mariners,
the shores begin to quake.
29 Down from their ships
come all who ply the oar;
The sailors, all the mariners of the sea,
stand on the shore,
30 Making their voice heard on your behalf,
shouting bitter cries,
Strewing dust on their heads,
rolling in the ashes.
31 For you they shave their heads
and put on sackcloth,
For you they weep in anguish,
with bitter lament.
32 In their mourning they utter a lament over you;
thus they wail over you:
Who was ever destroyed like Tyre
in the midst of the sea?
33 With your goods which you drew from the seas
you filled many peoples;
With your great wealth and merchandise
you enriched the kings of the earth.
34 Now you are wrecked in the sea,
in the watery depths;
Your wares and all your crew
have gone down with you.
35 All who dwell on the coastlands
are aghast over you,
Their kings are terrified,
their faces convulsed.
36 The traders among the peoples
now hiss at you;
You have become a horror,
and you shall be no more.

## CHAPTER 28

**The Prince of Tyre** 1 Thus the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre: Thus says the Lord GOD:

Because you are haughty of heart,
you say, "A god am I!
I occupy a godly throne
in the heart of the sea!"—
And yet you are a man, and not a god,
however you may think yourself like a god.
3 Oh yes, you are wiser than Daniel,*
there is no secret that is beyond you.
4 By your wisdom and your intelligence
you have made riches for yourself;
You have put gold and silver
into your treasuries.
5 By your great wisdom applied to your trading
you have heaped up your riches;
your heart has grown haughty from your riches—
6 therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have thought yourself
to have the mind of a god,
7 Therefore I will bring against you
foreigners, the most barbarous of nations.
They shall draw their swords
against your beauteous wisdom,
they shall run them through your splendid apparel.
8 They shall thrust you down to the pit, there to die
a bloodied corpse, in the heart of the sea.
9 Will you then say, "I am a god!"
when you face your murderers?
No, you are a man, not a god,
handed over to those who will slay you.
10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
at the hands of foreigners,
for I have spoken,
says the Lord GOD.

28, 3: Wiser than Daniel: see note on Ez 14, 14.

11 Thus the word of the LORD came to me:
12 Son of man, utter a lament over the king of
Tyre, saying to him: Thus says the Lord GOD:

*You were stamped with the seal of
perfection,
of complete wisdom and perfect beauty.
13 In Eden, the garden of God, you were,
and every precious stone was your covering

[carnelian, topaz, and beryl, chrysolite, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, garnet, and emerald];

Of gold your pendants and jewels
were made, on the day you were created.
14 With the Cherub I placed you;
you were on the holy mountain of God,*
walking among the fiery stones.
15 Blameless you were in your conduct
from the day you were created,
Until evil was found in you,
16 the result of your far-flung trade;
violence was your business, and you sinned.
Then I banned you from the mountain of
God;*
the Cherub drove you from among the fiery
stones.
17 You became haughty of heart because of your
beauty;
for the sake of splendor you debased your
wisdom.
I cast you to the earth, so great was your guilt;
I made you a spectacle in the sight of kings.
18 Because of your guilt, your sinful trade,
I have profaned your sanctuaries,
And I have brought out fire from your midst
which will devour you.
I have reduced you to dust on the earth
in the sight of all who should see you.
19 Among the peoples, all who knew you
stand aghast at you;
You have become a horror,
you shall be no more.

**Against Sidon** 20 [z] Thus the word of the LORD
came to me: Son of man, look toward Sidon,
21 [a] and prophesy against it: 22 Thus says the Lord
GOD: [b] See! I am coming at you, Sidon; I will be
glorified in your midst. Then they shall know
that I am the LORD, when I inflict punishments
upon it and use it to manifest my holiness.

23 Into it I will send pestilence,
and blood shall flow in its streets.
Within it shall fall those slain
by the sword that comes against it from
every side.

Thus they shall know that I am the LORD.
24 Sidon shall no longer be a tearing thorn for the
house of Israel, a brier that scratches them more
than all the others about them who despise
them; thus they shall know that I am the LORD.
25 Thus says the Lord GOD: When I gather the
house of Israel from the peoples among whom
they are scattered, then I will manifest my
holiness through them in the sight of the nations. Then they shall live on their land which I
gave to my servant Jacob; 26 they shall live on it
in security, building houses and planting vineyards. They shall dwell secure while I inflict
punishments on all their neighbors who despised
them; thus they shall know that I, the LORD, am
their God.

## CHAPTER 29

Ch 25–32
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**Egypt the Crocodile** 1 On the twelfth day of
the tenth month in the tenth year,* the word of
the LORD came to me: 2 Son of man, set your face
against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and prophesy
against him and against all Egypt.* 3 Say this to
him: Thus says the Lord GOD:

See! I am coming at you, Pharaoh,
king of Egypt,
Great crouching monster
amidst your Niles:*

**28, 12–19:** This picture of Tyre and its fall recalls images of the earthly paradise portraying the creation of man in perfection and his fall (Gn, chapters 2–3).

**28, 14:** The holy mountain of God: the residence of God was sometimes designated as a mountain; cf Is 14, 13. The fiery stones: associated with the divine presence; cf Ez 1, 13; Ps 18, 13.

**29, 1:** The twelfth day of the tenth month in the tenth year: January 7, 587 B.C. The siege of Jerusalem had begun a year earlier; cf Ez 24, 1.

**29, 2:** Egypt was allied with Judah against the Chaldeans.

**29, 3:** Niles: the many rivulets of the Nile as it branches out into the Delta.

z Is 23, 1–18. a Jer 47, 4. b Jl 4, 4; Zec 9, 2ff.

Who say, "The Niles are mine;
it is I who made them!"

[4]I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish
of your Niles stick to your scales, then draw you
up from the midst of your Niles along with all
the fish of your Niles sticking to your scales.

[5]I will cast you into the desert,
you and all the fish of your Niles;
You shall fall upon the open field,
you shall not be taken up or buried;
To the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air
I give you as food,
[6]That all who dwell in Egypt may know
that I am the LORD.
Because you have been a reed staff
for the house of Israel: [c]
[7]When they held you in hand, you splintered,
throwing every shoulder out of joint;
When they leaned on you, you broke,
bringing each one of them down headlong;

[8]therefore thus says the Lord GOD: See! I will
bring the sword against you, and cut off from
you both man and beast. [9]The land of Egypt
shall become a desolate waste; thus they shall
know that I am the LORD.

Because you said, "The Niles are mine; it is I
who made them," [10]therefore see! I am coming
at you and against your Niles; I will make the
land of Egypt a waste and a desolation from
Migdol to Syene,* and even to the frontier of
Ethiopia. [11]No foot of man or beast shall pass
through it; they shall not pass through it, and it
will be uninhabited for forty years. [12]I will make
the land of Egypt the most desolate of lands, and
its cities shall be the most deserted of cities for
forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians
among the nations and strew them over foreign
lands. [13]Yet thus says the Lord GOD: At the end
of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the
peoples among whom they are scattered, [14]and I
will restore Egypt's fortune, bringing them back
to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin,*
where it will be the lowliest [15]of kingdoms,
never more to set itself above the nations. I will
make them few, that they may not dominate the
nations. [16]No longer shall they be for the house
of Israel to trust in, but the living reminder of its
guilt for having turned to follow after them.
Thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

Ch 25–32
See RG
334

**The Wages of Nebuchadnezzar** [17]On the
first day of the first month in the twenty-seventh
year,* the word of the LORD came to me: [18]Son
of man, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon,
has led his army in an exhausting campaign
against Tyre.* Their heads became bald and
their shoulders were galled; but neither he nor
his army received any wages from Tyre for the
campaign he led against it. [19]Therefore thus says
the Lord GOD: [d] I am now giving the land of
Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He
shall carry off its riches, plundering and pillaging
it for the wages of his soldiers, who did it for me;
[20]as payment for his toil I have given him the
land of Egypt, says the Lord GOD.

[21]On that day I will make a horn sprout for
the house of Israel, and I will cause you to speak
out in their midst; thus they shall know that I
am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 30

**The Day of the Lord against Egypt** [1]Thus the
word of the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man,
speak this prophecy: Thus says the Lord GOD:
Cry, Oh, the day! [3]for near is the day, near is the
day of the Lord; a day of clouds, doomsday for
the nations shall it be. [4]Then a sword shall come
upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Ethiopia,
when the slain fall in Egypt, when her riches are
seized and her foundations are overthrown.

**29, 10:** From Migdol to Syene: from the northern to the southern extremity of Egypt. Syene is the modern Assuan.

**29, 14:** Pathros, the land of their origin: upper Egypt, that is, southern Egypt, where the Egyptians were thought to have originated; Is 11, 11; Jer 44, 1. 15.

**29, 17:** The first day of the first month in the twenty-seventh year: April 26, 571 B.C. This is the latest date attached to any prophecy in Ezekiel.

**29, 18f:** The fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre (chapters 26–28) was a thirteen-year siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar (587–574 B.C.). Tyre seems to have been taken, but its resources were exhausted and the booty was small. Therefore Ezekiel now prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar will collect his wages as God's instrument in the punishment of Tyre, by plundering Egypt.

c Is 36, 6. d Jer 46, 2.

[5]Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya, and people
of the allied territory shall fall by the sword with
them. [6]Those who support Egypt shall fall, and
down shall come her proud strength; from
Migdol to Syene they shall fall there by the
sword, says the Lord GOD. [7]She shall be the
most devastated of lands, and her cities shall be
the most desolate of all. [8]Then they shall know
that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and
when all who help her are broken. [9]On that day
messengers shall hasten forth at my command to
terrify unsuspecting Ethiopia; they shall be in
anguish on the day of Egypt, which is surely
coming.

[10]Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to
the throngs of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchad-
nezzar, king of Babylon. [11]He and his people
with him, the most ruthless of nations, shall be
brought in to devastate the land. They shall draw
their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with
the slain. [12]I will turn the Niles into dry land and
sell the land over to the power of the wicked.
The land and everything in it I will hand over to
foreigners to devastate. I, the LORD, have
spoken.

[13] *e*Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end
to the great ones of Memphis and the princes of
the land of Egypt, that they may be no more. I
will cast fear into the land of Egypt, and devas-
tate Pathros. [14]I will set fire to Zoan, and inflict
punishments on Thebes. [15]I will pour out my
wrath on Pelusium, Egypt's stronghold, and cut
down the crowds in Memphis. [16]I will set fire to
Egypt; Syene shall writhe in anguish; Thebes
shall be breached and its walls shall be demol-
ished. [17]The young men of On and of Pibeseth
shall fall by the sword, and the cities themselves
shall go into captivity. [18]In Tehaphnehes the day
shall be darkened when I break the scepter of
Egypt. Her haughty pride shall cease from her,
clouds shall cover her, and her daughters shall
go into captivity. [19]Thus will I inflict punish-
ments on Egypt, that they may know that I am
the LORD.

**Pharaoh's Broken Arm** [20]On the seventh day
of the first month in the eleventh year,* the
word of the LORD came to me: [21]*Son of man, I
have broken the arm of Pharaoh, the king of
Egypt, and see, it has not been bound up with
bandages and healing remedies that it may be
strong enough to hold the sword. [22]Therefore
thus says the Lord GOD: See! I am coming at
Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. I will break his
strong arm, so that the sword drops from his
hand. [23]I will scatter the Egyptians among the
nations and strew them over foreign lands. [24]But
I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon,
and put my sword in his hand, which he will
bring against Egypt so as to plunder and pillage
it. [25][I will make the arms of the king of Babylon
strong, but the arms of Pharaoh shall drop.] Then
they shall know that I am the LORD, when I put
my sword in the hand of the king of Babylon for
him to wield against the land of Egypt. [26][I will
scatter the Egyptians among the nations and
strew them over foreign lands.] Thus they shall
know that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 31

Ch 25–32
See RG
334

**Allegory of the Cypress** [1]On the first day of
the third month in the eleventh year,* the word
of the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, say to
Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and to his hordes:
What are you like in your greatness?

[3]Behold, a cypress [cedar] in Lebanon,
beautiful of branch, lofty of stature,
amid the very clouds lifted its crest.
[4]Waters made it grow, the abyss made it
flourish,
sending its rivers round where it was
planted,
turning its streams to all the trees of the
field.

**30, 20:** The seventh day of the first month in the eleventh year: April 29, 587 B.C.

**30, 21–26:** This oracle was uttered during the siege of Jerusalem, which had now lasted more than a year (Ez 24, 1). Pharaoh Hophra went to the aid of Jerusalem, causing the Chaldeans to lift the siege temporarily; cf Jer 34, 21; 37, 6f. In the prophet's eyes, this was interfering with the divine punishment of Judah that was to be inflicted by the Chaldeans. The Egyptians were routed by the Chaldeans, and were able to offer no more help to Jerusalem; cf chapter 31.

**31, 1:** The first day of the third month in the eleventh year: June 21, 587 B.C.

*e* Zec 13, 2.

5 Thus it grew taller than every other tree of the field,
and longer of branch because of the abundant water.
6 In its boughs nested all the birds of the air,
under its branches all beasts of the field gave birth,
in its shade dwelt numerous peoples of every race.
7 It became beautiful and stately in its spread of foliage,
for its roots were turned toward abundant water.
8 The cedars in the garden of God were not its equal,
nor could the fir trees match its boughs,
Neither were the plane trees like it for branches;
no tree in the garden of God matched its beauty.
9 I made it beautiful, with much foliage,
the envy of all Eden's trees in the garden of God.

Ch 25–32 See RG 334

10 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because it became lofty in stature, raising its crest among the clouds, and because it became proud in heart at its height, 11 I have handed it over to the mightiest of the nations, which has dealt with it in keeping with its wickedness. I humiliated it. 12 Foreigners, the most ruthless of the nations, cut it down and left it on the mountains. Its foliage was brought low in all the valleys, its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land, and all the peoples of the land withdrew from its shade, abandoning it.

13 On its fallen trunk rested all the birds of the air,
and by its branches were all the beasts of the field.

14 Thus no tree may grow lofty in stature or raise its crest among the clouds; no tree fed by water may stand by itself in its loftiness.

For all of them are destined for death,
for the land below,
For the company of mortals,
those who go down into the pit.

15 Thus says the Lord God: On the day he went down to the nether world I made the abyss close up over him; I stopped its streams so that the deep waters were held back. I cast gloom over Lebanon because of him, so that all the trees in the land drooped on his account. 16 At the crash of his fall I made the nations rock, when I cast him down to the nether world with those who go down into the pit. In the land below, all Eden's trees were consoled, Lebanon's choice and best, all that were fed by water. 17 They too have come down with him to the nether world, to those slain by the sword; those who dwelt in his shade are dispersed among the nations. 18 Which was your equal in glory or size among the trees of Eden? Yet you have been brought down with the trees of Eden to the land below. You shall lie with the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword. Such are Pharaoh and all his hordes, says the Lord God.

## CHAPTER 32

**Dirge over Pharaoh** 1 On the first day of the twelfth month in the twelfth year,* the word of the Lord came to me: 2 Son of man, utter a lament over Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, saying to him: Lion of the nations, you are destroyed.

You were like a monster in the sea,
spouting in your streams,
Stirring the water with your feet
and churning its streams.
3 Thus says the Lord God:
I will spread my net over you
[with a host of many nations],
and draw you up in my seine.[f]
4 I will leave you on the land;
on the open field I will cast you.
I will have all the birds of the air alight on you,
and all the beasts of the earth eat their fill of you.
5 I will leave your flesh on the mountains,
and fill the valleys with your carcass.

32, 1: The first day of the twelfth month in the twelfth year: March 3, 585 B.C.

f Ez 12, 13; 17, 20.

[6]I will water the land with what flows from you,
and the river beds shall be filled with your blood.
[7]When I snuff you out I will cover the heavens,
and all their stars I will darken;
The sun I will cover with clouds,
and the moon shall not give its light.[g]
[8]All the shining lights in the heavens
I will darken on your account,
And I will spread darkness over your land,
says the Lord God.

[9]I will grieve the hearts of many peoples when I lead you captive among the nations, to lands which you do not know. [10]Many peoples shall be appalled at you, and their kings shall shudder over you in horror when they see me brandish my sword, and on the day of your downfall every one of them shall continuously tremble for his own life. [11]For thus says the Lord God: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you.

[12]I will cut down your horde with the blades of warriors,
all of them the most ruthless of the nations;
They shall lay waste the glory of Egypt,
and all her hordes shall be destroyed.
[13]I will have all of her animals perish
beside her abundant waters;
The foot of man shall stir them no longer,
nor shall the hoof of beast disturb them.
[14]Then will I make their waters clear,
and their streams flow like oil,
says the Lord God.

[15]When I turn Egypt into a waste, the land shall be devastated of all that is in it; when I strike all who live there, they shall know that I am the Lord. [16]This is a dirge, and it shall be sung: the daughters of the nations shall chant it; over Egypt and all its hordes shall they chant it, says the Lord God.

**Dirge over Egypt** [17]On the fifteenth day of the first month in the twelfth year, the word of the Lord came to me: [18]Son of man, lament over the throngs of Egypt, for the mighty nations have thrust them down to the bottom of the earth, with those who go down into the pit. [20]In the midst of those slain by the sword shall they fall, and place shall be made with them for all their hordes. Then from the midst of the nether world, the mighty warriors shall speak to Egypt: [19]"Whom do you excel in beauty? [21]Come down, you and your allies, lie with the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword."

[22]There is Assyria with all her company, all of them slain, [23]whose graves have been made in the recesses of the pit; her company is around Egypt's grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living. [24]There is Elam with all her throng about Egypt's grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword: they have gone down uncircumcised to the bottom of the earth, who spread their terror in the land of the living, and they bear their disgrace with those who go down into the pit; [25]in the midst of the slain they are placed. [26]There are Meshech and Tubal and all their throng about her grave, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, for they spread their terror in the land of the living.

[27]They do not lie with the mighty men fallen of old,* who went down to the nether world with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads and whose shields were laid over their bones, though the mighty men caused terror in the land of the living. [28]But in the midst of the uncircumcised shall you lie, with those slain by the sword.

[29]There are Edom, her kings, and all her princes, who despite their might have been placed with those slain by the sword; with the uncircumcised they lie, and with those who go down into the pit. [30]There are all the princes of the north and all the Sidonians, who have gone down with the slain, because of the terror their might inspired; they lie uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and bear their disgrace

**32, 27:** The mighty men fallen of old: the semilegendary heroes of the prehistoric past, who were thought to have once dominated the world; cf Is 14, 9.

g Is 13, 10; Jl 2, 10; 4, 15; Mt 24, 29.

with those who go down to the pit. [31]When Pharaoh sees these, he shall be comforted for all his hordes slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his army, says the Lord GOD. [32]Since he spread his terror in the land of the living, therefore is he laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his hordes, says the Lord GOD.

## IV: Salvation for Israel

### CHAPTER 33

Ch 33–37
See RG
334–335

**The Prophet a Watchman** [1]Thus the word of the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, speak thus to your countrymen: When I bring the sword against a country, and the people of this country select one of their number to be their watchman, [3]and the watchman, seeing the sword coming against the country, blows the trumpet to warn the people, [4]anyone hearing but not heeding the warning of the trumpet and therefore slain by the sword that comes against him, shall be responsible for his own death. [5]He heard the trumpet blast yet refused to take warning; he is responsible for his own death, for had he taken warning he would have escaped with his life. [6]But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the warning trumpet, so that the sword comes and takes anyone, I will hold the watchman responsible for that person's death, even though that person is taken because of his own sin.

[7] [h]You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. [8]If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he [the wicked man] shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. [9]But if you warn the wicked man, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.

**Individual Retribution** [10]As for you, son of man, speak to the house of Israel: You people say, "Our crimes and our sins weigh us down; we are rotting away because of them. How can we survive?" [11] [i]Answer them: As I live, says the Lord GOD, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man's conversion, that he may live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! Why should you die, O house of Israel?

[12]As for you, son of man, tell your countrymen: The virtue which a man has practiced will not save him on the day that he sins; neither will the wickedness that a man has done bring about his downfall on the day that he turns from his wickedness [nor can the virtuous man, when he sins, remain alive]. [13]Though I say to the virtuous man that he shall surely live, if he then presumes on his virtue and does wrong, none of his virtuous deeds shall be remembered; because of the wrong he has done, he shall die. [14]And though I say to the wicked man that he shall surely die, if he turns away from his sin and does what is right and just, [15]giving back pledges, restoring stolen goods, living by the statutes that bring life, and doing no wrong, he shall surely live, he shall not die. [16]None of the sins he committed shall be held against him; he has done what is right and just, he shall surely live.

[17]Yet your countrymen say, "The way of the LORD is not fair!"; but it is their way that is not fair. [18]When a virtuous man turns away from what is right and does wrong, he shall die for it. [19]But when a wicked man turns away from wickedness and does what is right and just, because of this he shall live. [20] [j]And still you say, "The way of the LORD is not fair!"? I will judge every one of you according to his ways, O house of Israel.

**The Fugitive from Jerusalem*** [21]On the fifth day of the tenth month, in the twelfth year of our exile, the fugitive came to me from Jerusalem and said, "The city is taken!" [22]The hand of

33, 21f: January 8, 585 B.C. According to Jeremiah (39, 2), Jerusalem was taken in July, 587. Some MSS read "eleventh" for twelfth year (January, 586); even so, there was ample time between the fall of Jerusalem and the arrival of the fugitive from that city to journey to Babylon. However, this is the fugitive sent to fulfill the promise of Ez 24, 25. 27, the eyewitness who would release Ezekiel from his dumbness; cf Ez, 2, 26f.

h Ez 3, 17. i Ez 18, 23–32. j Ez 18, 25.

the LORD had come upon me the evening before
the fugitive arrived, and he opened my mouth
when the fugitive reached me in the morning.
My mouth was opened, and I was dumb no
longer.

**The Survivors in Judah*** [23]Thus the word of
the Lord came to me: [24]Son of man, they who
live in the ruins on the land of Israel reason thus:
"Abraham, though but a single individual, re-
ceived possession of the land; we, therefore,
being many, have as permanent possession the
land that has been given to us." [25]Give them this
answer: Thus says the Lord GOD: You eat on the
mountains, you raise your eyes to your idols, you
shed blood—yet you would keep possession of
the land? [26]You rely on your sword, you do
abominable things, each one of you defiles his
neighbor's wife—yet you would keep possession
of the land? [27]Tell them this: Thus says the Lord
GOD: As I live, those who are in the ruins I
swear shall fall by the sword; those who are in
the open field I have given to the wild beasts for
food; and those who are in fastnesses and in
caves shall die by the plague. [28]I will make the
land a desolate waste, so that its proud strength
will come to an end, and the mountains of Israel
shall be so desolate that no one will cross them.
[29]Thus they shall know that I am the LORD,
when I make the land a desolate waste because
of all the abominable things they have done.

**The Prophet's False Popularity** [30]As for you,
son of man, your countrymen are talking about
you along the walls and in the doorways of
houses. They say to one another, "Come and
hear the latest word that comes from the
LORD."* [31]My people come to you as people
always do; they sit down before you and hear
your words, but they will not obey them, for lies
are on their lips and their desires are fixed on
dishonest gain. [32]For them you are only a ballad
singer, with a pleasant voice and a clever touch.
They listen to your words, but they will not obey
them. [33]But when it comes—and it is surely
coming!—they shall know that there was a
prophet among them.

## CHAPTER 34

Ch 33–37
See RG
334–335

**Parable of the Shepherds** [1]Thus the word of
the LORD came to me: [2]Son of man, prophesy
against the shepherds of Israel,* in these words
prophesy to them [to the shepherds]: Thus says
the Lord GOD: Woe to the shepherds of Israel
who have been pasturing themselves![k] Should
not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? [3]You have
fed off their milk, worn their wool, and slaugh-
tered the fatlings, but the sheep you have not
pastured. [4]You did not strengthen the weak nor
heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not
bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you
lorded it over them harshly and brutally. [5]So
they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and
became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep
were scattered [6]and wandered over all the
mountains and high hills; my sheep were scat-
tered over the whole earth, with no one to look
after them or to search for them.

[7]Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the
LORD: [8]As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my
sheep have been given over to pillage, and
because my sheep have become food for every
wild beast, for lack of a shepherd; because my
shepherds did not look after my sheep, but
pastured themselves and did not pasture my
sheep; [9]because of this, shepherds, hear the
word of the LORD: [10]Thus says the Lord GOD: I
swear I am coming against these shepherds. I
will claim my sheep from them and put a stop to
their shepherding my sheep so that they may no
longer pasture themselves. I will save my sheep,
that they may no longer be food for their
mouths.

[11]For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will
look after and tend my sheep. [12]As a shepherd
tends his flock when he finds himself among his

**33, 23–29:** News brought by the fugitive furnished the occasion of this prophecy. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel rejects the idea that the survivors in Judah have any claim to the land. The new Israel is to be formed from the exiles.

**33, 30:** The fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies about Jerusalem was responsible for this temporary enthusiasm among the unstable people.

**34, 2:** The shepherds of Israel: the leaders of the people.

k Ez 13, 3; Jer 23, 1.

scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will
rescue them from every place where they were
scattered when it was cloudy and dark. [13]I will
lead them out from among the peoples and
gather them from the foreign lands; I will bring
them back to their own country and pasture
them upon the mountains of Israel [in the land's
ravines and all its inhabited places]. [14]In good
pastures will I pasture them, and on the moun-
tain heights of Israel shall be their grazing
ground. There they shall lie down on good
grazing ground, and in rich pastures shall they
be pastured on the mountains of Israel. [15]I
myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give
them rest, says the Lord God. [16]The lost I will
seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the
injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal [but the
sleek and the strong I will destroy], shepherding
them rightly.

**Separation of the Sheep** [17]As for you, my
sheep, says the Lord God, I will judge between
one sheep and another, between rams and goats.
[18]Was it not enough for you to graze on the best
pasture, that you had to trample the rest of your
pastures with your feet? Was it not enough for
you to drink the clearest water, that you had to
foul the remainder with your feet? [19]Thus my
sheep had to graze on what your feet had
trampled and drink what your feet had fouled.
[20]Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now will I
judge between the fat and the lean sheep.
[21]Because you push with side and shoulder, and
butt all the weak sheep with your horns until
you have driven them out, [22]I will save my
sheep so that they may no longer be despoiled,
and I will judge between one sheep and another.
[23] *l*I will appoint one shepherd over them to
pasture them, my servant David;* he shall
pasture them and be their shepherd. [24]I, the
Lord, will be their God, and my servant David
shall be prince among them. I, the Lord, have
spoken.

Ch 33–37
See RG
334–335

[25]I will make a covenant of peace with them,
and rid the country of ravenous beasts, that they
may dwell securely in the desert and sleep in the
forests. [26]I will place them about my hill, send-
ing rain in due season, rains that shall be a
blessing to them. [27]The trees of the field shall
bear their fruits, and the land its crops, and they
shall dwell securely on their own soil. Thus they
shall know that I am the Lord when I break the
bonds of their yoke and free them from the
power of those who enslaved them. [28]They shall
no longer be despoiled by the nations or de-
voured by beasts of the earth, but shall dwell
secure, with no one to frighten them. [29]I will
prepare for them peaceful fields for planting;
they shall no longer be carried off by famine in
the land, or bear the reproaches of the nations.
[30]Thus they shall know that I, the Lord, am
their God, and they are my people, the house of
Israel, says the Lord God. [31][You, my sheep, you
are the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God,
says the Lord God.]

## CHAPTER 35

**Against Edom*** [1]Thus the word of the Lord
came to me: *m* [2]Son of man, set your face against
Mount Seir, and prophesy against it. [3]Say to it:
Thus says the Lord God: See! I am coming at
you, Mount Seir. I will stretch out my hand
against you and make you a desolate waste.
[4]Your cities I will turn into ruins, and you shall
be a waste; thus you shall know that I am the
Lord.

[5]Because you never let die your hatred for the
Israelites, whom you delivered over to the
power of the sword at the time of their trouble,
when their crimes came to an end, [6]therefore, as
I live, says the Lord God, you have been guilty of
blood, and blood, I swear, shall pursue you. [7]I
will make Mount Seir a desolate waste, and cut
off from it any traveler. [8]With the slain I will fill
your hills, your valleys, and all your ravines [in
them the slain shall fall by the sword]: [9]desolate
will I make you forever, and leave your cities

**34, 23:** One shepherd . . . my servant David: a messianic Davidic King who will rule over the restored Israel (vv 25–31) in the name of the Lord.

**35, 1–15:** After the fall of Jerusalem, Edom assisted the Chaldeans in devastating the land and subduing the population, and ended by occupying part of Judah's former territory. For this reason these oracles against Edom are found in the context of the city's fall.

1 Is 40, 21; Hos 3, 5; Jn 10, 11. 14. m 1ff: Ez 25, 12ff.

without inhabitants; thus you shall know that I
am the LORD.
[10]Because you said: The two nations and the
two lands* have become mine; we shall possess
them—although the LORD was there— [11]there-
fore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will deal with
you according to your anger and your envy
which you have exercised [in your hatred]
against them. I will make myself known among
you when I judge you, [12]and you shall know that
I am the LORD.
I have heard all the contemptuous things you
have uttered against the mountains of Israel:
"They are desolate, they have been given us to
devour." [13]I have heard the insolent and wild
words you have spoken against me. [14]Thus says
the Lord GOD: Just as you rejoiced over my land
because it was desolate, so will I do to you. [15]In
keeping with your glee over the devastation of
the inheritance of the house of Israel, so will I
treat you. A waste shall you be, Mount Seir, you
and the whole of Edom. Thus they shall know
that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 36

**Regeneration of the Land** [1]As for you, son of
man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel: Moun-
tains of Israel,[n] hear the word of the LORD!
[2]Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy
has said of you, "Ha! the everlasting heights
have become our possession" [3][therefore proph-
esy in these words: Thus says the Lord GOD:];
because you have been ridiculed and despised
on all sides for having become a possession for
the rest of the nations, and have become a
byword and a popular jeer; [4]therefore, moun-
tains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD: [Thus
says the Lord GOD to the mountains and hills,
the ravines and valleys, the desolate ruins and
abandoned cities, which have been given over to
the pillage and mockery of the remaining nations
round about; [5]therefore thus says the Lord
GOD:] Truly, with burning jealousy I speak
against the rest of the nations [and against all of
Edom] who with wholehearted joy and utter
contempt have considered my land their posses-
sion to be delivered over to plunder. [6][Therefore,
prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say
to the mountains and hills, the ravines and
valleys: Thus says the Lord GOD:] With jealous
fury I speak, because you have borne the re-
proach of the nations. [7]Therefore do I solemnly
swear that your neighboring nations shall bear
their own reproach.
[8]As for you, mountains of Israel, you shall
grow branches and bear fruit for my people Israel,
for they shall soon return. [9]See, I come to you, it is
to you that I turn; you will be tilled and sown,
[10]and I will settle crowds of men upon you, the
whole house of Israel; cities shall be repeopled,
and ruins rebuilt. [11]I will settle crowds of men
and beasts upon you, to multiply and be fruitful. I
will repeople you as in the past, and be more
generous to you than in the beginning; thus you
shall know that I am the LORD.
[12][My people Israel are the ones whom I will
have walk upon you; they shall take possession
of you, and you shall be their heritage. Never
again shall you rob them of their children.]
[13]Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they have
said of you, "You are a land that devours men,*
and you rob your people of their children";
[14]therefore, never again shall you devour men or
rob your people of their children, says the Lord
GOD. [15]No more will I permit you to hear the
reproach of nations, or bear insults from peoples,
or rob your people of their children, says the
Lord GOD.

Ch 33–37
See RG
334–335

**Regeneration of the People** [16]Thus the word
of the LORD came to me: [17]Son of man, when
the house of Israel lived in their land, they
defiled it by their conduct and deeds. In my sight
their conduct was like the defilement of a
menstruous woman. [18]Therefore I poured out
my fury upon them [because of the blood which
they poured out on the ground, and because
they defiled it with idols]. [19]I scattered them
among the nations, dispersing them over foreign

35, 10: The two nations and the two lands: the superseded kingdoms of Israel and Judah and their territories.
36, 13: A land that devours men: destroys its own population, as could be seen in its disastrous political history.

n Ez 6, 3.

lands; according to their conduct and deeds I judged them. 20 [o]But when they came among the nations [wherever they came], they served to profane my holy name, because it was said of them: "These are the people of the LORD, yet they had to leave their land." 21 So I have relented because of my holy name which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they came. 22 Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord GOD: Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations, in whose midst you have profaned it. Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when in their sight I prove my holiness through you. 24 For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. 25 [p]I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 [q]I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. 27 [r]I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. 28 You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your impurities; I will order the grain to be abundant, and I will not send famine against you. 30 I will increase the fruit on your trees and the crops in your fields; thus you shall no longer bear among the nations the reproach of famine. 31 Then you shall remember your evil conduct, and that your deeds were not good; you shall loathe yourselves for your sins and your abominations. 32 Not for your sakes do I act, says the Lord GOD—let this be known to you! Be ashamed and abashed because of your conduct, O house of Israel.

Ch 33–37 See RG 334–335

33 Thus says the Lord GOD: When I purify you from all your crimes, I will repeople the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt; 34 the desolate land shall be tilled, which was formerly a wasteland exposed to the gaze of every passer-by. 35 "This desolate land has been made into a garden of Eden," they shall say. "The cities that were in ruins, laid waste, and destroyed are now repeopled and fortified." 36 Thus the neighboring nations that remain shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt what was destroyed and replanted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have promised, and I will do it.

37 Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will be persuaded to do for the house of Israel: to multiply them like sheep. 38 As with sacrificial sheep, the sheep of Jerusalem on its feast days, the cities which were in ruins shall be filled with flocks of men; thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

## CHAPTER 37

**Vision of the Dry Bones*** 1 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he led me out in the spirit of the LORD and set me in the center of the plain, which was now filled with bones. 2 He made me walk among them in every direction so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain. How dry they were! 3 He asked me: Son of man, can these bones come to life? "Lord GOD," I answered, "you alone know that." 4 Then he said to me: Prophesy over these bones, and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life. 6 I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life and know that I am the LORD. 7 I prophesied as I had been told, and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. 8 I saw the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and the skin cover them, but there was no spirit in them. 9 Then he said to me: Prophesy to the spirit, prophesy, son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus

37, 1–14: This vision is a prediction of the restoration of Israel under the figure of a resurrection from the dead; it is not concerned with the doctrine of resurrection itself.

o Is 52, 5; Rom 2, 24. p Ps 51, 4; Zec 13, 1; Hb 10, 22; Jn 3, 5. q Jer 31, 33. r Ez 37, 14; 39, 29; Is 42, 1; 44, 3; 59, 21; Hg 2, 5; Jl 3, 1f.

says the Lord God: From the four winds come,
O spirit, and breathe into these slain that they
may come to life. [10]I prophesied as he told me,
and the spirit came into them; they came alive
and stood upright, a vast army. [11]Then he said to
me: Son of man, these bones are the whole
house of Israel. They have been saying, "Our
bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are
cut off." [12]Therefore, prophesy and say to them:
Thus says the Lord God: O my people, I will
open your graves and have you rise from them,
and bring you back to the land of Israel. [13]Then
you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open
your graves and have you rise from them, O my
people! [14]I will put my spirit in you that you may
live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus
you shall know that I am the Lord. I have
promised, and I will do it, says the Lord.

**The Two Sticks** [15]*Thus the word of the Lord
came to me: [16]Now, son of man, take a single
stick, and write on it: Judah and those Israelites
who are associated with him. Then take another
stick and write on it: Joseph [the stick of
Ephraim] and all the house of Israel associated
with him. [17]Then join the two sticks together, so
that they form one stick in your hand. [18]When
your countrymen ask you, "Will you not tell us
what you mean by all this?", [19]answer them:
Thus says the Lord God: [I will take the stick of
Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and of
the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will
join to it the stick of Judah, making them a single
stick; they shall be one in my hand. [20]The sticks
on which you write you shall hold up before
them to see. [21]Tell them: Thus speaks the Lord
God:] I will take the Israelites from among the
nations to which they have come, and gather
them from all sides to bring them back to their
land. [22]I will make them one nation upon the
land, in the mountains of Israel, and there shall
be one prince for them all. Never again shall they
be two nations, and never again shall they be
divided into two kingdoms.
[23]No longer shall they defile themselves with
their idols, their abominations, and all their
transgressions. I will deliver them from all their
sins of apostasy, and cleanse them so that they
may be my people and I may be their God.
[24] [s]My servant David shall be prince over them,
and there shall be one shepherd for them all;
they shall live by my statutes and carefully
observe my decrees. [25]They shall live on the
land which I gave to my servant Jacob, the land
where their fathers lived; they shall live on it
forever, they, and their children, and their children's children, with my servant David their
prince forever. [26] [t]I will make with them a
covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting
covenant with them, and I will multiply them,
and put my sanctuary among them forever. [27]My
dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God,
and they shall be my people. [28]Thus the nations
shall know that it is I, the Lord, who make Israel
holy, when my sanctuary shall be set up among
them forever.

## CHAPTER 38

Ch 38–39
See RG
335–336

**First Prophecy against Gog** [1]Thus the word
of the Lord came to me:* [2]Son of man, turn
toward Gog* [the land of Magog], [u] the chief
prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy
against him: [3]Thus says the Lord God: See! I am
coming at you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech
and Tubal. [4]I will lead you forth with all your
army, horses and riders all handsomely outfitted,
a great horde with bucklers and shields, all of
them carrying swords: [5]Persia, Cush, and Put
with them [all with shields and helmets], [6]Gomer with all its troops, Beth-togarmah from the
recesses of the north with all its troops, many

**37, 15–22:** The symbolic action of joining two sticks into one signifies the future union of Israel and Judah under one messianic King.

**38, 1—39, 20:** These three oracles against Gog may refer either to a specific foreign invasion in the future, or to the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil at the end of time. By some they are ascribed to a later author than Ezekiel, who lived after the exile and the return to Palestine.

**38, 2:** Gog: the name is almost certainly a symbolic one taken from that of Gyges, king of Lydia, whether or not the prophet has a specific person in mind. The gloss Magog may be an Akkadian expression, mat-Gog, "the land of Gog." Meshech and Tubal, as well as Gomer and Beth-togarmah (v 6), were countries around the Black Sea, the northernmost countries known to the Hebrews: the north (cf also v 15) was the traditional direction from which invasion was expected; cf Jer 1, 13ff.

s Ez 34, 23; Jer 23, 5; 33, 15. t Ps 110, 4. u Rv 20, 7f.

peoples with you. [7]Prepare yourself, be ready,
you and all your horde assembled about you, and
be at my disposal. [8]After many days you will be
mustered [in the last years you will come] against
a nation which has survived the sword, which
has been assembled from many peoples [on the
mountains of Israel which were long a ruin],
which has been brought forth from among the
peoples and all of whom now dwell in security.
[9]You shall come up like a sudden storm, advancing like a cloud to cover the earth, you and all
your troops and the many peoples with you.

[10]Thus says the Lord God: At that time
thoughts shall arise in your mind, and you shall
devise an evil scheme: [11]"I will go up against a
land of open villages and attack the peaceful
people who are living in security, all of them
living without walls, having neither bars nor
gates, [12]to plunder and pillage, turning my hand
against the ruins that were repeopled and against
a people gathered from the nations, a people
concerned with cattle and goods, who dwell at
the navel of the earth."* [13]Sheba and Dedan,
the merchants of Tarshish and all her young lions
shall ask you: "Is it for plunder that you have
come? Is it for pillage that you have summoned
your horde, to carry off silver and gold, to take
away cattle and goods, to seize much plunder?"

Ch 38–39
See RG
335–336

[17]Thus says the Lord God: It is of you that I
spoke in ancient times through my servants, the
prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days
that I would bring you against them. [18]But on
that day, the day when Gog invades the land of
Israel, says the Lord God, my fury shall be
aroused. In my anger [19]and in my jealousy, in my
fiery wrath, I swear: On that day there shall be a
great shaking upon the land of Israel. [20]Before
me shall tremble the fish of the sea and the birds
of the air, the beasts of the field and all the
reptiles that crawl upon the ground, and all men
who are on the land. Mountains shall be overturned, and cliffs shall tumble, and every wall
shall fall to the ground. [21]Against him I will
summon every terror, says the Lord God, every
man's sword against his brother. I will hold
judgment with him in pestilence and bloodshed;
[22]flooding rain and hailstones, fire and brimstone, I will rain upon him, upon his troops, and
upon the many peoples with him. [23]I will prove
my greatness and holiness and make myself
known in the sight of many nations; thus they
shall know that I am the Lord.

**Second Prophecy against Gog** [14]Therefore
prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog: Thus says
the Lord God: When my people Israel are
dwelling in security, will you not bestir yourself
[15]and come from your home in the recesses of
the north, you and many peoples with you, all
mounted on horses, a great horde and a mighty
army? [16]You shall come up against my people
Israel like a cloud covering the land. In the last
days I will bring you against my land, that the
nations may know of me, when in their sight I
prove my holiness through you, O Gog.

## CHAPTER 39

**Third Prophecy against Gog** [1]Now, son of
man, prophesy against Gog in these words: Thus
says the Lord God: See! I am coming at you,
Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. [2]I will
turn you about, I will urge you on, and I will
make you come up from the recesses of the
north; I will lead you against the mountains of
Israel. [3]Then I will strike the bow from your left
hand, and make the arrows drop from your
right. [4]Upon the mountains of Israel you shall
fall, you and all your troops and the peoples who
are with you. To birds of prey of every kind and
to the wild beasts I am giving you to be eaten.
[5]On the open field you shall fall, for I have
decreed it, says the Lord God.

[6]I will send fire upon Magog and upon those
who live securely in the coastlands; thus they
shall know that I am the Lord. [7]I will make my
holy name known among my people Israel; I will
no longer allow my holy name to be profaned.
Thus the nations shall know that I am the Lord,
the Holy One in Israel. [8]Yes, it is coming and
shall be fulfilled, says the Lord God. This is the
day I have decreed.

**38, 12:** Who dwell at the navel of the earth: the people of Israel (cf v 18; also Ez 5, 5). Many ancient peoples spoke of their own homelands as "the navel," that is, the center of the earth.

[9]Then shall those who live in the cities of
Israel go out and burn weapons: [shields and
bucklers,] bows and arrows, clubs and lances;
for seven years they shall make fires with them.
[10]They shall not have to bring in wood from the
fields or cut it down in the forests, for they shall
make fires with the weapons. Thus they shall
plunder those who plundered them and pillage
those who pillaged them, says the Lord GOD.

[11]On that day I will give Gog for his tomb a
well-known place in Israel, the Valley of Aba-
rim* east of the sea [it is blocked to travelers].
Gog shall be buried there with all his horde, and
it shall be named "Valley of Hamon-gog." [12]To
purify the land, the house of Israel shall need
seven months to bury them. [13]All the people of
the land shall bury them and gain renown for it,
when I reveal my glory, says the Lord GOD.
[14]Men shall be permanently employed to pass
through the land burying those who lie unbur-
ied, so as to purify the land. For seven months
they shall keep searching. [15]When they pass
through, should they see a human bone, let
them put up a marker beside it, until others have
buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog. [16][Also the
name of the city shall be Hamonah.] Thus the
land shall be purified.

[17]As for you, son of man, says the Lord GOD,
say to birds of every kind and to all the wild
beasts: Come together, from all sides gather for
the slaughter I am about to provide for you, a
great slaughter on the mountains of Israel: you
shall have flesh to eat and blood to drink. [18]You
shall eat the flesh of warriors and drink the blood
of the princes of the land [rams, lambs, and
goats, bullocks, fatlings of Bashan, all of them].
[19]From the slaughter which I will provide for
you, you shall eat fat until you are filled and
drink blood until you are drunk. [20]You shall be
filled at my table with horses and riders, with
warriors and soldiers of every kind, says the Lord
GOD.

**Israel's Return** [21]Thus I will display my glory
among the nations, and all the nations shall see
the judgment I have executed and the hand I
have laid upon them. [22]From that day forward
the house of Israel shall know that I am the
LORD, their God. [23]The nations shall know that
because of its sins the house of Israel went into
exile; for they transgressed against me, and I hid
my face from them and handed them over to
their foes, so that all of them fell by the sword.
[24]According to their uncleanness and their trans-
gressions I dealt with them, hiding my face from
them.

[25]Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: Now I
will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have pity
on the whole house of Israel, and I will be
jealous for my holy name. [26]They shall forget
their disgrace and all the times they broke faith
with me, when they live in security on their land
with no one to frighten them. [27]When I bring
them back from among the peoples, I will gather
them from the lands of their enemies, and will
prove my holiness through them in the sight of
many nations. [28] [v]Thus they shall know that I,
the LORD, am their God, since I who exiled them
among the nations, will gather them back on
their land, not leaving any of them behind. [29]No
longer will I hide my face from them, for I have
poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel,
says the Lord GOD.

## V: The New Israel*

### The New Temple

### CHAPTER 40

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

**The Man with a Measure** [1]On the tenth day
of the month beginning the twenty-fifth year of
our exile, fourteen years after the city was taken,
that very day the hand of the LORD came upon
me and brought me [2]in divine visions to the land
of Israel, where he set me down on a very high
mountain. On it there seemed to be a city being

39, 11: The Valley of Abarim: in the Abarim mountains, east of the Jordan. Hamon-gog: means "the horde of Gog."

40, 1—48, 35: This lengthy vision of the new Israel is dated (Ez 40, 1) April 28, 573 B.C. It is largely concerned with the new temple and the prescriptions to govern it, but other details of the restored commonwealth are included, forming a kind of program for the future. The literary form of the vision has been aptly termed "utopian": it is plain that the prophet did not expect a literal fulfillment of much of what he described. The passage doubtless underwent successive additions, both from the prophet and from later inspired writers.

v Ez 36, 23.

built before me. [3]When he had brought me
there, all at once I saw a man whose appearance
was that of bronze; he was standing in the gate,
holding a linen cord and a measuring rod. [4]The
man said to me, "Son of man, look carefully and
listen intently, and pay strict attention to all that
I will show you, for you have been brought here
so that I might show it to you. Tell the house of
Israel all that you see." [5][Then I saw an outer
wall that completely surrounded the temple.
The man was holding a measuring rod six cubits
long, each cubit being a cubit and a
handbreadth;* he measured the width and the
height of the structure, each of which was found
to be one rod.]

**The East Gate*** [6]Then he went to the gate
which faced the east, climbed its steps, and
measured the gate's threshold, which was found
to be a rod wide. [7]The cells were a rod long and
a rod wide, and the pilasters between the cells
measured five cubits. The threshold of the gate
adjoining the vestibule of the gate toward the
inside measured one rod. [8]He measured the
vestibule of the gate, [9]which was eight cubits,
and its pilasters, which were two cubits. The
vestibule of the gate was toward the inside.
[10]The cells of the east gate were three on either
side, of equal size, and the pilasters on either
side were also of equal size. [11]He measured the
gate's entrance, which was ten cubits wide,
while the width of the gate's passage itself was
thirteen cubits. [12]The border before each of the
cells on both sides was one cubit; the cells
themselves were six cubits on either side, from
opening to opening. [13]He measured the gate
from the back wall of one cell to the back wall of
the cell on the opposite side: the width was
twenty-five cubits. [14]He measured the vestibule,
which was twenty-five cubits. The pilasters adjoining the court on either side were six cubits.
[15]The length of the gate from the front entrance
to the front of the vestibule on the inside was
fifty cubits. [16]Within the gateway on both sides
there were splayed windows let into the cells
[and into their pilasters]; likewise, within the
vestibule on both sides there were windows.
The pilasters were decorated with palms.

**The Outer Court** [17]Then he brought me to the
outer court,* where there were chambers and a
pavement. The pavement was laid all around the
court, and the chambers, which were on the
pavement, were thirty in number. [18]The pavement lay alongside the gates, as wide as the gates
were long; this was the lower pavement. [19]He
measured the width of the court from the front
of the lower gate to the front of the inner gate; it
was one hundred cubits between them.

**The North Gate** Then he proceeded north,
[20]where, on the outer court, there was a gate
facing north, whose length and width he measured. [21]Its cells, three on either side, its pilasters, and its vestibule had the same measurements as those of the first gate; it was fifty cubits
long and twenty-five cubits wide. [22]Its windows,
the windows of its vestibule, and its palm
decorations were of the same proportions as
those of the gate facing the east. Seven steps led
up to it, and its vestibule was toward the inside.
[23]The inner court had a gate opposite the north
gate, just as at the east gate; he measured one
hundred cubits from one gate to the other.

**The South Gate** [24]Then he led me south, to
where there was a southern gate, whose cells,
pilasters, and vestibule he measured; they were
the same size as the others. [25]The gate and its
vestibule had windows on both sides, like the
other windows. It was fifty cubits long and
twenty-five cubits wide. [26]It was ascended by
seven steps; its vestibule was toward the inside;
and it was decorated with palms here and there
on its pilasters. [27]The inner court also had a
southern gate; from gate to gate he measured
one hundred cubits.

**40, 5:** A cubit and a handbreadth: the ordinary cubit consisted of six handbreadths; the great cubit, of seven. In measuring the temple, a rod six great cubits long was used. The ordinary cubit was about one and a half feet, or, more exactly, 17.5 inches; the large cubit, 20.4 inches.

**40, 6–16:** The east gate, leading into the outer court of the temple, is described more fully than the north and south gates, which, however, were of the same dimensions. On the west side of the outer court there was a large building instead of a gate (Ez 41, 12).

**40, 17:** The outer court: the court outside the temple area proper, which had its own inner court (vv 28–37).

**Gates of the Inner Court*** [28]Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate, where he measured the south gate. Its dimensions were the same as the others; [29]its cells, its pilasters, and its vestibule were the same size as the others. The gate and its vestibule had windows on both sides; and it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. [31]But its vestibule was toward the outer court; palms were on its pilasters, and it had a stairway of eight steps. [32]Then he brought me to the gate facing the east, where he measured the gate, whose dimensions were found to be the same. [33]Its cells, its pilasters, and its vestibule were the same size as the others; the gate and its vestibule had windows on both sides; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. [34]But its vestibule was toward the outer court; palms were on its pilasters here and there, and it had a stairway of eight steps. [35]Then he brought me to the north gate, where he measured the dimensions [36]of its cells, its pilasters, and its vestibule, and found them the same. The gate and its vestibule had windows on both sides; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. [37]Its vestibule was toward the outer court; palms were on its pilasters here and there, and it had a stairway of eight steps.

**Side Rooms** [38]There was a chamber opening off the vestibule of the gate, where the holocausts were rinsed. [39]In the vestibule of the gate there were two tables on either side, on which were slaughtered the sin offerings and guilt offerings. [40]Along the wall of the vestibule, but outside, near the entrance of the north gate, were two tables, and on the other side of the vestibule of the gate there were two tables. [41]There were four tables on either side of the gate [eight tables], on which the sacrifices were slaughtered. [42]There were four tables for holocausts, made of cut stone, one and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one cubit high. [43]The ledges, a handbreadth wide, were set on the inside all around, and on them were laid the instruments with which the holocausts were slaughtered. On the tables themselves the flesh was laid. [44]He then led me to the inner court where there were two chambers, one beside the north gate, facing south, and the other beside the south gate, facing north. [45]He said to me, "This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, [46]and the chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the Zadokites,* the only Levites who may come near to minister to the LORD." [47]Then he measured the court, which was a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide, a perfect square. The altar stood in front of the temple.

**The Temple Building*** [48]Then he brought me into the vestibule of the temple and measured the pilasters on each side, which were five cubits. The width of the doorway was fourteen cubits, and the side walls on either side of the door measured three cubits. [49]The vestibule was twenty cubits wide and twelve cubits deep; ten steps led up to it, and there were columns by the pilasters, one on either side.

## CHAPTER 41

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

[1]Then he brought me to the nave and measured the pilasters, which were six cubits thick on either side. [2]The width of the entrance was ten cubits, and the walls at either side of it measured five cubits each. He measured the length of the nave, which was found to be forty cubits, while its width was twenty.

[3]Then he went in beyond and measured the pilasters flanking that entrance, which were two cubits; the width of the entrance was six cubits, and the walls at either side of it extended seven cubits each. [4]He measured the space beyond the nave, twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide, and said to me, "This is the holy of holies."*

**40, 28–37:** The gates leading into the inner court of the temple area correspond to the gates leading into the outer court, with the exception that their vestibules are on the outer rather than the inner side. (Verse 30, a dittography of v 29, is omitted.)

**40, 46:** The Zadokites: descendants of the priestly line of Zadok; cf 2 Sm 15, 24–29; 1 Kgs 1, 32ff; 2, 35.

**40, 48—41, 15:** The description of Ezekiel's visionary temple closely follows the description of the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 6).

**40, 49—41, 4:** Vestibule . . . nave . . . holy of holies: the three divisions of the temple building in progressing order of sanctity. The last is called "the inner sanctuary" in 1 Kgs 6.

[5]Then he measured the wall of the temple, which was six cubits thick; the side chambers, which extended all the way around the temple, had a width of four cubits. [6]There were thirty side chambers built one above the other in three stories, and there were offsets in the outside wall of the temple that enclosed the side chambers; these served as supports, so that there were no supports in the temple wall proper. [7]There was a broad circular passageway that led upward to the side chambers, for the temple was enclosed all the way around and all the way upward; therefore the temple had a broad way running upward so that one could pass from the lowest to the middle and the highest story. [8]About the temple was a raised pavement completely enclosing it—the foundations of the side chambers—a full rod of six cubits in extent. [9]The width of the outside wall which enclosed the side chambers was five cubits. Between the side chambers of the temple [10]and the chambers of the court was an open space twenty cubits wide going all around the temple. [11]The side chambers had entrances to the open space, one entrance on the north and another on the south. The width of the wall surrounding the open space was five cubits. [12]The building* fronting the free area on the west side was seventy cubits front to back; the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and it measured ninety cubits from side to side. [13]He measured the temple, which was one hundred cubits long. The free area, together with the building and its walls, was a hundred cubits in length. [14]The façade of the temple, along with the free area, on the east side, was one hundred cubits wide. [15]He measured the building which lay the length of the free area and behind it, and together with its walls on both sides it was one hundred cubits.

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

**Interior of the Temple** The inner nave and the outer vestibule [16]were paneled with precious wood all around, covered from the ground to the windows. There were splayed windows with trellises about them [facing the threshold]. [17]As high as the lintel of the door, even into the interior part of the temple as well as outside, on every wall on every side in both the inner and outer rooms were carved [18]the figures of cherubim and palmtrees: a palmtree between every two cherubim. Each cherub had two faces: [19]a man's face looking at a palmtree on one side, and a lion's face looking at a palmtree on the other; thus they were figured on every side throughout the whole temple. [20]From the ground to the lintel of the door the cherubim and palmtrees were carved on the walls. [21]The way into the nave was a square doorframe. In front of the holy place was something that looked like [22]a wooden altar,* three cubits in height, two cubits long, and two cubits wide. It had corners, and its base and sides were of wood. He said to me, "This is the table which is before the LORD." [23]The nave had a double door, and also the holy place had [24]a double door. Each door had two movable leaves; two leaves were on one doorjamb and two on the other. [25]Carved upon them [on the doors of the nave] were cherubim and palmtrees, like those carved on the walls. Before the vestibule outside was a wooden lattice. [26]There were splayed windows [and palmtrees] on both side walls of the vestibule, and the side chambers of the temple . . . .

## CHAPTER 42

**Other Structures** [1]Then he led me north to the outer court, bringing me to some chambers on the north that lay across the free area and which were also across from the building. [2]Their length was a hundred cubits on the north side, and they were fifty cubits wide. [3]Across the twenty cubits of the inner court and the pavement of the outer court, there were three parallel rows of them on different levels. [4]In front of the chambers, to the inside, was a walk ten cubits broad and a wall of one cubit; but the entrances of the chambers were on the north. [5]The outermost chambers were the lowest, for the system of levels set them at a level lower than the closest chambers and those in be-

**41, 12:** The building: the function of this structure lying behind the temple is never specified.

**41, 22:** A wooden altar: the altar of incense, standing in the nave at the entrance to the holy of holies.

tween;* [6]for they were in three rows and had
no foundations to conform with the foundations
of the courts, therefore they were on a lower
terrace of the ground than the closest and the
middle chambers. [7]On the far side there was a
wall running parallel to the chambers along the
outer court; its length before these chambers
was fifty cubits, [8]for the length of the chambers
belonging to the outer court was fifty cubits, but
along its entire length the wall measured one
hundred cubits. [9]Below these chambers there
was the way in from the east, so that one could
enter from the outer court [10]where the wall of
the court began.

To the south along the side of the free area
and the building there were also chambers,
[11]before which was a passage. These looked like
the chambers to the north, just as long and just
as wide, with the same exits and plan and
entrances. [12]Below the chambers to the south
there was an entrance at the beginning of the
way which led to the back wall, by which one
could enter from the east. [13]He said to me, "The
north and south chambers which border on the
free area are the sanctuary chambers; here the
priests who draw near to the LORD shall eat the
most sacred meals, and here they shall keep the
most sacred offerings: cereal offerings, sin offer-
ings, and guilt offerings; for it is a holy place.*
[14]When the priests have once entered, they shall
not leave the holy place for the outer court until
they have left here the clothing in which they
ministered, for it is holy. They shall put on other
garments, and then approach the place destined
for the people."

**Measuring the Outer Court** [15]When he had
finished measuring the inner temple area, he
brought me out by way of the gate which faces
east and measured all the limits of the court.
[16]He measured the east side: five hundred cubits
by his measuring rod. Then he turned [17]and
measured the north side: five hundred cubits by
the measuring rod. He turned [18]to the south and
measured five hundred cubits by the measuring
rod. [19]Then he turned to the west and measured
five hundred cubits by the measuring rod.
[20]Thus he measured it in the four directions, five
hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits
wide. It was surrounded by a wall, to separate
the sacred from the profane.

## Restoration of the Temple

### CHAPTER 43

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

**The Return of the Lord** [1]Then he led me to
the gate which faces the east, [2]and there I saw
the glory of the God of Israel coming from the
east. I heard a sound like the roaring of many
waters, and the earth shone with his glory.
[3] [w]The vision was like that which I had seen
when he came to destroy the city, and like that
which I had seen by the river Chebar. I fell prone
[4]as the glory of the LORD entered the temple by
way of the gate which faces the east, [5]but spirit
lifted me up and brought me to the inner court.
And I saw that the temple was filled with the
glory of the LORD. [6]Then I heard someone
speaking to me from the temple, while the man
stood beside me. [7]The voice said to me: Son of
man, this is where my throne shall be, this is
where I will set the soles of my feet; here I will
dwell among the Israelites forever. Never again
shall they and their kings profane my holy name
with their harlotries and with the corpses of
their kings [their high places]. [8]When they
placed their threshold against my threshold* and
their doorpost next to mine, so that only a wall
was between us, they profaned my holy name by
their abominable deeds; therefore I consumed
them in my wrath. [9]From now on they shall put
far from me their harlotry and the corpses of
their kings, and I will dwell in their midst
forever.

**The Law of the Temple** [10]As for you, son of
man, describe the temple to the house of Israel

**42, 5f:** The three rows of identical chambers, since they rested on different ground levels, necessarily had roofs on correspondingly different levels.

**42, 13:** The function of these chambers is explained again in Ez 46, 19f.

**43, 8:** They placed their threshold against my threshold: the preexilic temple and the royal palace belonged to the same complex of buildings, and this physical proximity was reflected in the use made of the temple by kings like Ahaz and Manasseh, who treated it as their private chapel for pagan rites. In the new Israel the temple is free, even physically, from civil jurisdiction; cf Ez 45, 7f.

w Ez 1, 1.

[that they may be ashamed of their sins], both its measurements and its design; [11][and if they are ashamed of all that they have done,] make known to them the form and design of the temple, its exits and entrances, all its statutes and laws; write these down for them to see, that they may carefully observe all its laws and statutes. [12]This is the law of the temple: its whole surrounding area on the mountain top shall be most sacred.

**The Altar** [13]These were the measurements of the altar* in cubits of one cubit plus a handbreadth. Its base was one cubit high and one cubit deep, with a rim around its edge of one span. The height of the altar itself was as follows: [14]from its base at the bottom up to the lower ledge it was two cubits high, and this ledge was one cubit deep; from the lower to the upper ledge it was four cubits high, and this ledge also was one cubit deep; [15]the hearth of the altar was four cubits high, and extending from the top of the hearth were the four horns of the altar. [16]The hearth was a square: twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide. [17]The upper ledge was also a square: fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. The lower ledge, likewise a square, was sixteen cubits long and sixteen cubits wide, with a half-cubit rim surrounding it. And there was a base of one cubit all around. The steps of the altar face the east.

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

[18]Then he said to me: Son of man, thus says the Lord God: These are the statutes for the altar when it is set up for the offering of holocausts upon it and for the sprinkling of blood against it. [19]Give a young bull as a sin offering to the priests, the Levites who are of the line of Zadok, who draw near me to minister to me, says the Lord God. [20]Take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, and on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim all around. Thus you shall purify it and make atonement for it. [21]Then take the bull of the sin offering, which is to be burnt in a designated part of the temple, outside the sanctuary. [22]On the second day present an unblemished he-goat as a sin offering, to purify the altar as was done with the bull. [23]When you have finished the purification, bring an unblemished young bull and an unblemished ram from the flock, [24]and present them before the Lord; the priests shall strew salt on them and offer them to the Lord as holocausts. [25]Daily for seven days you shall offer a he-goat as a sin offering, and a young bull and a ram from the flock, all unblemished, shall be offered [26]for seven days. Thus atonement shall be made for the altar, and it shall be purified and dedicated. [27]And when these days are over, from the eighth day on, the priests shall offer your holocausts and peace offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, says the Lord God.

## CHAPTER 44

**The Closed Gate** [1]Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, facing the east; but it was closed. [2]He said to me: This gate is to remain closed; it is not to be opened for anyone to enter by it; since the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it, it shall remain closed. [3]Only the prince may sit down in it to eat his meal in the presence of the Lord. He must enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and leave by the same way.*

### The New Law

**Admission to the Temple** [4]Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the façade of the temple, and when I looked I saw the glory of the Lord filling the Lord's temple, and I fell prone. [5]Then he said to me: Son of man, pay strict attention, look carefully, and listen intently to all that I will tell you about the statutes and laws of the Lord's temple; be attentive in regard to those who are to be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary. [6]Say to that rebellious house, the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord God: Enough of all these abominations of yours, O house of Israel! [7]You have admitted foreigners, uncircumcised both in heart and flesh, to my

43, 13: The altar: of holocausts, standing in the inner court of the temple area; cf Ez 40, 47.

44, 3: The prince stands at the eastern gate of the inner court while his sacrifice is offered up (Ez 46, 2); he then goes to the vestibule of the outer court, there to partake of his sacrificial meal. The closed outer gate on the eastern side signifies that the Lord has entered the temple permanently, not to depart again.

sanctuary to profane it when you offered me
food, fat, and blood;* thus you have broken my
covenant by all your abominations. [8]Instead of
caring for the service of my temple, you have
appointed such as these to serve me in my
sanctuary in your stead. [9]Thus says the Lord
GOD: No foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and
in flesh, shall ever enter my sanctuary; none of
the foreigners who live among the Israelites.

**Levites*** [10]But as for the Levites who departed
from me when Israel strayed from me to pursue
their idols, they shall bear the consequences of
their sin. [11]They shall serve in my sanctuary as
gatekeepers and temple servants; they shall
slaughter the holocausts and the sacrifices for the
people, and they shall stand before the people to
minister for them. [12]Because they used to minis-
ter for them before their idols, and became an
occasion of sin to the house of Israel, therefore I
have sworn an oath against them, says the Lord
GOD: they shall bear the consequences of their
sin. [13]They shall no longer draw near me to serve
as my priests, nor shall they touch any of my
sacred things, or the most sacred things. Thus
they shall bear their disgrace because of all their
abominable deeds. [14]But I will set them to the
service of the temple, for all its work and for
everything that is to be done in it.

**Priests** [15]As for the levitical priests, however,
the Zadokites who cared for my sanctuary when
the Israelites strayed from me, they shall draw
near me to minister to me, and they shall stand
before me to offer me fat and blood, says the
Lord GOD. [16]It is they who shall enter my
sanctuary, they who shall approach my table to
minister to me, and they who shall carry out my
service. [17]Whenever they enter the gates of the
inner court, they shall wear linen garments; they
shall not put on anything woolen when they
minister at the gates of the inner court or within
the temple. [18]*x*They shall have linen turbans on
their heads and linen drawers on their loins;
they shall not gird themselves with anything that
causes sweat. [19]*y*When they are to go out to the
people in the outer court, they shall take off the
garments in which they ministered and leave
them in the chambers of the sanctuary, putting
on other garments; thus they will not transmit
holiness to the people* with their garments.

[20]*z*They shall not shave their heads nor let
their hair hang loose, but they shall keep their
hair carefully trimmed. [21]*a*No priest shall drink
wine when he is to enter the inner court.
[22]*b*They shall not take for their wives either
widows or divorced women, but only virgins of
the race of Israel; however, they may marry
women who are the widows of priests. [23]They
shall teach my people to distinguish between the
sacred and the profane, and make known to
them the difference between the clean and the
unclean. [24]*c*In capital cases they shall stand as
judges, judging them according to my decrees.
They shall observe my laws and statutes on all
my festivals, and keep my sabbaths holy.

[25]*d*They shall not make themselves unclean
by coming near any dead person, unless it be
their father, mother, son, daughter, brother, or
maiden sister; for these they may make them-
selves unclean. [26]After a priest has been
cleansed, he must wait an additional seven days,
[27]and on the day he enters the inner court to
minister in the sanctuary, he shall present his sin
offering, says the Lord GOD. [28]*e*They shall have
no inheritance, for I am their inheritance; you
shall give them no property in Israel, for I am
their property. [29]*f*They shall eat the cereal offer-
ing, the sin offering, and the guilt offering;
whatever is under the ban* in Israel shall be

**44, 7ff:** In the preexilic temple various menial services had been performed by foreigners; cf Jos 9, 22–27. In the new temple the Levites will perform these services (vv 10–14).

**44, 10–14:** Levites other than the Zadokite priesthood of Jerusalem had performed priestly functions at the various sanctuaries and high places in Israel and Judah, where the worship of the Lord had often been corrupted with pagan elements. The demotion of the Levites to menial service in the temple was enforced in the actual restoration after the exile, and explains why relatively few Levites were willing to return; cf 1 Ezr 8, 15ff.

**44, 19:** Thus they will not transmit holiness to the people: holiness was thought of as something physical, as though it were communicable, and therefore not to be brought in contact with unconsecrated persons.

**44, 29:** Under the ban: dedicated to the Lord, withdrawn from profane use.

x Ex 28, 40. 42; 29, 9; 38, 28; Lv 6, 3. y Ez 42, 13. 14. z Lv 21, 5. a Lv 10, 9. b Lv 21, 7. 14. c Dt 17, 9; 19, 17. d Lv 21, 1ff. 11. e Nm 18, 20; Dt 18, 1. f Lv 2, 3. 10; 6, 9. 22; 7, 9; 10, 12; Nm 18, 9; 18, 14.

theirs. 30 [g]All the choicest first fruits of every kind, and all the best of your offerings of every kind, shall belong to the priests; likewise the best of your dough you shall give to the priests to bring a blessing down upon your house. 31 [h]The priests shall not eat anything, whether flesh or fowl, that has died of itself or has been killed by wild beasts.

## CHAPTER 45

Ch 40–48 See RG 336–337

**The Sacred Tract** 1When you apportion the land into inheritances, you shall set apart a sacred tract of land for the LORD, twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty thousand wide; its whole area shall be sacred. 2Of this land a square plot, five hundred by five hundred cubits, surrounded by a free space of fifty cubits, shall be assigned to the sanctuary. 3Also from this sector measure off a strip, twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide, within which shall be the sanctuary, the holy of holies. 4This shall be the sacred part of the land belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who draw near to minister to the LORD; it shall be a place for their homes and pasture land for their cattle. 5Also there shall be a strip twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide as property for the Levites, the ministers of the temple, that they may have cities to live in. 6As property of the City you shall designate a strip five thousand cubits wide and twenty-five thousand long, parallel to the sacred tract; this shall belong to the whole house of Israel. 7The prince shall have a section bordering on both sides of the combined sacred tract and City property, extending westward on the western side and eastward on the eastern side, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions from the western boundary to the eastern boundary 8of the land. This shall be his property in Israel, so that the princes of Israel will no longer oppress my people, but will leave the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

**Weights and Measures*** 9Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, you princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is right and just! Stop evicting my people! says the Lord GOD. 10 [i]You shall have honest scales, an honest ephah, and an honest liquid measure. 11The ephah and the liquid measure shall be of the same size: the liquid measure equal to a tenth of a homer, and the ephah equal to a tenth of a homer; by the homer they shall be determined. 12 [j]The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, plus fifteen shekels shall be your mina.

**Offerings** 13These are the offerings you shall make: one sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat, and one sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley. 14The regulation for oil: for every measure of oil, a tenth of a measure, computed by the kor* of ten liquid measures [or a homer, for ten liquid measures make a homer]. 15One sheep from the flock for every two hundred from the pasturage of Israel, for sacrifice—holocausts and peace offerings and atonement sacrifices, says the Lord GOD. 16All the people of the land shall be bound to this offering [for the prince in Israel]. 17It shall be the duty of the prince to provide the holocausts, cereal offerings, and libations on the feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, on all the festivals of the house of Israel. He shall offer the sin offerings, cereal offerings, holocausts, and peace offerings, to make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel.

**The Passover** 18Thus says the Lord GOD: On the first day of the first month you shall use an unblemished young bull as a sacrifice to purify the sanctuary. 19Then the priest shall take some

**45, 9–12:** Besides the land monopoly fostered by royal greed and collusion with the wealthy (Mi 2, 2; Is 3, 12–15; 5, 8–10), one grave social evil of preexilic Israel was dishonesty in business; cf Hos 12, 8; Am 8, 5. Ephah: a dry measure; liquid measure: in Hebrew, a "bath," standardized according to the homer (a dry measure of about 10 bushels, or 80 gallons). In v 12 reference is made to the change in value of the mina: before the exile it was valued at 50 shekels, but afterward, in imitation of Babylonian practice, the 60-shekel mina was adopted. The shekel was a unit of weight slightly less than half an ounce. As a monetary unit, the value obviously differed greatly, depending on whether it was a gold or a silver shekel.

**45, 14:** Kor: both a liquid and a dry measure, corresponding to the homer.

g Ex 34, 26; Dt 18, 4. h Lv 22, 8. i Lv 19, 35; Dt 25, 13–16; Hos 12, 8; Am 8, 5; Mi 6, 10f. j Ex 30, 13; Lv 27, 25; Nm 3, 47; 18, 16.

of the blood from the sin offering and put it on
the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners
of the ledge of the altar, and on the doorposts of
the gates of the inner court. 20You shall repeat
this on the first day of the seventh month for
those who have sinned through inadvertence or
ignorance; thus you shall make atonement for
the temple. 21 [k]On the fourteenth day of the first
month you shall observe the feast of the Pass-
over; for seven days unleavened bread is to be
eaten. 22On that day the prince shall offer on his
own behalf, and on behalf of all the people of the
land, a bull as a sin offering. 23On each of the
seven days of the feast he shall offer as a
holocaust to the Lord seven bulls and seven rams
without blemish, and as a sin offering he shall
offer one male goat each day. 24As a cereal
offering he shall offer one ephah for each bull
and one ephah for each ram; and he shall offer
one hin* of oil for each ephah.

**The Feast of Booths** 25On the fifteenth day of
the seventh month, the feast day, and for seven
days, he shall perform the same rites, making the
same sin offerings, the same holocausts, the
same cereal offerings and offerings of oil.

## CHAPTER 46

**Sabbaths** 1Thus says the Lord God: The gate
toward the east of the inner court shall remain
closed throughout the six working days, but on
the sabbath and on the day of the new moon it
shall be open. 2The prince shall enter from
outside by way of the vestibule of the gate and
remain standing at the doorpost of the gate; then
while the priests offer his holocausts and peace
offerings, he shall worship at the threshold of the
gate and then leave; the gate shall not be closed
until evening. 3The people of the land shall
worship before the Lord at the door of this gate
on the sabbaths and new moons. 4 [l]The holo-
causts which the prince presents to the Lord on
the sabbath shall consist of six unblemished
lambs and an unblemished ram, 5together with a
cereal offering of one ephah for the ram, what-
ever he pleases for the lambs, and a hin of oil for
each ephah. 6 [m]On the day of the new moon he
shall provide an unblemished young bull, also six
lambs and a ram without blemish, 7with a cereal
offering of one ephah for the bull and one for the
ram, for the lambs as much as he has at hand,
and for each ephah a hin of oil.

**Ritual Laws** 8The prince shall always enter and
depart by the vestibule of the gate. 9 [n]When the
people of the land enter the presence of the
Lord to worship on the festivals, if they enter by
the north gate they shall leave by the south gate,
and if they enter by the south gate they shall
leave by the north gate; no one shall return by
the gate through which he has entered, but he
shall leave by the opposite gate. 10The prince
shall be in their midst when they enter, and he
shall also leave with them. 11On the feasts and
festivals the cereal offering shall be an ephah for
a bull, an ephah for a ram, but for the lambs as
much as one pleases, and a hin of oil with each
ephah. 12When the prince makes a freewill
offering to the Lord, whether holocausts or
peace offerings, the eastern gate shall be opened
for him, and he shall offer his holocausts or his
peace offerings as on the sabbath; then he shall
leave, and the gate shall be closed after his
departure. 13 [o]He shall offer as a daily holocaust
to the Lord an unblemished yearling lamb; this
he shall offer every morning. 14With it every
morning he shall provide as a cereal offering one
sixth of an ephah, with a third of a hin of oil to
moisten the fine flour. This cereal offering to the
Lord is mandatory with the established holo-
caust. 15 [p]The lamb, the cereal offering, and the
oil are to be offered every morning as an
established holocaust.

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336–337

**The Prince and the Land** 16Thus says the
Lord God: If the prince makes a gift of part of his
inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to
his sons; that property is theirs by inheritance.
17But if he makes a gift of part of his inheritance
to one of his servants, it shall belong to the latter
only until the year of release,* when it shall
revert to the prince. Only the inheritance given

45, 24: Hin: a sixth part of the liquid measure called a bath.
46, 17: The year of release: the jubilee year; cf Lv 25, 23–55.

k Ex 12, 6; Lv 23, 5; Nm 28, 16. l Nm 28, 9f. m Nm 28, 11–15. n Ex 23, 17; 34, 23; Dt 16, 16. o Ex 29, 38–42; Nm 28, 3–8. p Ex 29, 42.

to his sons is permanent. [18]The prince shall not seize any part of the inheritance of the people by evicting them from their property. He shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of my people will be driven from their property.

**The Temple Kitchens** [19]Then he brought me by the entrance which is on the side of the gate to the chambers [of the sanctuary, reserved to the priests] which face the north. There, at their west end, I saw a place, [20]concerning which he said to me, "Here the priests cook the guilt offerings and the sin offerings, and bake the cereal offerings, so that they do not have to take them into the outer court at the risk of transmitting holiness to the people." [21]Then he led me into the outer court and had me pass around the four corners of the court, and I saw that in each corner there was another court: [22]in the four corners of the court, minor courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide, all four of them the same size. [23]A wall of stones surrounded each of the four, and hearths were built beneath the stones all the way around. [24]He said to me, "These are the kitchens where the temple ministers cook the sacrifices of the people."

## CHAPTER 47

Ch 40–48
See RG
336–337

**The Wonderful Stream*** [1]Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the façade of the temple was toward the east; the water flowed down from the southern side of the temple, south of the altar.[q] [2]He led me outside by the north gate, and around to the outer gate facing the east, where I saw water trickling from the southern side. [3]Then when he had walked off to the east with a measuring cord in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and had me wade through the water, which was ankle-deep. [4]He measured off another thousand and once more had me wade through the water, which was now knee-deep. Again he measured off a thousand and had me wade; the water was up to my waist. [5]Once more he measured off a thousand, but there was now a river through which I could not wade; for the water had risen so high it had become a river that could not be crossed except by swimming. [6]He asked me, "Have you seen this, son of man?" Then he brought me to the bank of the river, where he had me sit. [7]Along the bank of the river I saw very many trees on both sides. [8]He said to me, "This water flows into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh. [9]Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh. [10]Fishermen shall be standing along it from En-gedi to En-eglaim,* spreading their nets there. Its kinds of fish shall be like those of the Great Sea, very numerous. [11]Only its marshes and swamps shall not be made fresh; they shall be left for salt. [12]Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind shall grow; their leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit fail. Every month they shall bear fresh fruit, for they shall be watered by the flow from the sanctuary. Their fruit shall serve for food, and their leaves for medicine."

### The New Israel

**Boundaries of the Land*** [13]Thus says the Lord God: These are the boundaries within which you shall apportion the land among the twelve tribes of Israel [Joseph having two portions]. [14]All of you shall have a like portion in this land which I swore to give to your fathers, that it might fall to you as your inheritance. [15]r This is the boundary of the land on the north side: from the Great Sea in the direction of Hethlon, past Labo of Hamath, to Zedad, [16]Bero-

**47, 1–12:** The wonderful and superabundant stream flowing from the temple, restoring to fertility traditionally arid ground, is symbolic of the return of the conditions of primeval paradise; cf Gn 2, 10–14. Water signifies great blessings, just as dryness signifies a curse; cf Ez 26, 5. 14.

**47, 10:** From En-gedi to En-eglaim: the former was about halfway down the western shore of the Dead Sea, the latter may have been at its northern extremity.

**47, 13–20:** These boundaries of the restored Israel correspond to those of the Davidic kingdom at its fullest extent, the so-called "ideal boundaries" of the promised land; cf Nm 34, 3–12.

q Sir 24, 28f; Jl 4, 18; Zec 13, 1; Rv 22, 1f. r Nm 34, 7ff.

thah, and Sibraim, along the frontiers of Hamath
and Damascus, to Hazar-enon which is on the
border of the Hauran. [17]Thus the border shall
extend from the sea to Hazar-enon, with the
frontier of Hamath and Damascus to the north.
This is the northern boundary. [18]The eastern
boundary: between the Hauran—toward
Damascus—and Gilead on the one side, and the
land of Israel on the other side, the Jordan shall
form the boundary down to the eastern sea as far
as Tamar. This is the eastern boundary. [19]The
southern boundary: from Tamar to the waters of
Meribath-kadesh, thence to the Wadi of Egypt,
and on to the Great Sea. This is the southern
boundary. [20]The western boundary: the Great
Sea forms the boundary up to a point parallel to
Labo of Hamath. This is the western boundary.

**The Northern Portions** [21]You shall distribute
this land among yourselves according to the
tribes of Israel. [22] [s]You shall allot it as inheri-
tances for yourselves and for the aliens resident
in your midst who have bred children among
you. The latter shall be to you like native
Israelites; along with you they shall receive
inheritances among the tribes of Israel. [23]In
whatever tribe the alien may be resident, there
you shall assign him his inheritance, says the
Lord GOD.

## CHAPTER 48

[1]This is the list* of the tribes.[t] Dan: at the
northern extremity, adjoining Hamath, all along
from the approaches to Hethlon through Labo of
Hamath to Hazar-enon, on the northerly border
with Damascus, with his possession reaching
from the eastern to the western boundary. [2]Ash-
er: on the frontier of Dan, from the eastern to
the western boundary. [3]Naphtali: on the frontier
of Asher, from the eastern to the western bound-
ary. [4]Manasseh: on the frontier of Naphtali, from
the eastern to the western boundary. [5]Ephraim:
on the frontier of Manasseh, from the eastern to
the western boundary. [6]Reuben: on the frontier
of Ephraim, from the eastern to the western
boundary. [7]Judah: on the frontier of Reuben,
from the eastern to the western boundary.

**The Sacred Tract** [8]On the frontier of Judah,
from the eastern to the western boundary there
shall be the tract which you shall set apart,
twenty-five thousand cubits from north to south,
and as wide as one of the tribal portions from the
eastern to the western boundary. In the center of
the tract shall be the sanctuary. [9]The tract that
you set aside for the LORD shall be twenty-five
thousand cubits across by twenty thousand
north and south. [10]In this sacred tract the priests
shall have twenty-five thousand cubits on the
north, ten thousand on the west, ten thousand
on the east, and twenty-five thousand on the
south; and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in
its center. [11]The consecrated priests, the Za-
dokites, who fulfilled my service and did not
stray along with the Israelites as the Levites did,
[12]shall have within this tract of land their own
most sacred domain, next to the territory of the
Levites. [13]The Levites shall have a territory
corresponding to that of the priests, twenty-five
thousand cubits by ten thousand. The whole
tract shall be twenty-five thousand cubits across
and twenty thousand north and south. [14]They
may not sell or exchange or alienate this, the
best part of the land, for it is sacred to the LORD.
[15]The remaining five thousand cubits along the
twenty-five-thousand-cubit line are profane land,
assigned to the City for dwellings and pasture;
the City shall be at their center. [16]These are the
dimensions of the City: the north side, forty-five
hundred cubits; the south side, forty-five hun-
dred cubits; the east side, forty-five hundred
cubits; and the west side, forty-five hundred
cubits. [17]The pasture lands of the City shall
extend north two hundred and fifty cubits, south
two hundred and fifty cubits, east two hundred
and fifty cubits, and west two hundred and fifty
cubits. [18]There shall remain an area along the
sacred tract, ten thousand cubits to the east and
ten thousand to the west, whose produce shall
provide food for the workers of the City. [19]The

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**48, 1–29:** This distribution of the land among the tribes does not correspond to the geographical realities of Palestine. It is a description of the ideal order, like that in Ez 47, 1–12.

s Ex 12, 48; Lv 19, 34; 24, 22; Nm 9, 14; Jos 8, 33. t Ez 47, 15ff.

workers in the City shall be taken from all the
tribes of Israel. [20]The entire tract shall be
twenty-five thousand by twenty-five thousand
cubits; as a perfect square you shall set apart the
sacred tract together with the City property.

[21]The remainder shall belong to the prince:
the land on both sides of the sacred tract and the
City property, extending along the twenty-five-
thousand-cubit line eastward to the eastern
boundary, and westward along the twenty-five-
thousand-cubit line to the western boundary, a
territory parallel with the tribal portions for the
prince. The sacred tract and the sanctuary of the
temple shall be in the middle. [22]Thus, except for
the property of the Levites and the City property,
which lie in the midst of the prince's property,
the territory between the portions of Judah and
of Benjamin shall belong to the prince.

**The Southern Portions** [23]These are the re-
maining tribes. Benjamin: from the eastern to
the western boundary. [24]Simeon: on the frontier
of Benjamin, from the eastern to the western
boundary. [25]Issachar: on the frontier of Simeon,
from the eastern to the western boundary.
[26]Zebulun: on the frontier of Issachar, from the
eastern to the western boundary. [27]Gad: on the
frontier of Zebulun, from the eastern to the
western boundary. [28]Along the frontier of Gad
shall be the southern boundary, which shall
extend from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-
kadesh, and from there to the Wadi of Egypt,
and on to the Great Sea. [29]Such is the land
which you shall apportion as inheritances among
the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions,
says the Lord God.

**The Gates of the City** [30]These are the exits of
the City, the gates of which are named after the
tribes of Israel. On the north side, measuring
forty-five hundred cubits, [31]there shall be three
gates: the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and
the gate of Levi. [32]On the east side, measuring
forty-five hundred cubits, there shall be three
gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin,
and the gate of Dan. [33]On the south side,
measuring forty-five hundred cubits, there shall
be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of
Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. [34]On the west
side, measuring forty-five hundred cubits, there
shall be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of
Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. [35]The perimeter
of the City is eighteen thousand cubits. The
name of the City shall henceforth be "The Lord
is here."

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# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel
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342–352

This Book takes its name, not from the author, who is actually unknown, but from its hero, a young Jew taken early to Babylon, where he lived at least until 538 B.C. Strictly speaking, the book does not belong to the prophetic writings but rather to a distinctive type of literature known as "apocalyptic," of which it is an early specimen. Apocalyptic writing enjoyed its greatest popularity from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D., a time of distress and persecution for Jews, and later, for Christians. Though subsequent in time to the prophetic, apocalyptic literature has its roots in the teaching of the prophets, who often pointed ahead to the day of the Lord, the consummation of history. For both prophet and apocalyptist Yahweh was the Lord of history, and he would ultimately vindicate his people.

This work was composed during the bitter persecution carried on by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167–164) and was written to strengthen and comfort the Jewish people in their ordeal.

The Book contains stories originating in and transmitted by popular traditions which tell of the trials and triumphs of the wise Daniel and his three companions. The moral is that men of

faith can resist temptation and conquer adversity. The characters are not purely legendary but rest on older historical tradition. What is more important than the question of historicity, and closer to the intention of the author, is the fact that a persecuted Jew of the second century B.C. would quickly see the application of these stories to his own plight.

There follows a series of visions promising deliverance and glory to the Jews in the days to come. The great nations of the ancient world have risen in vain against Yahweh; his kingdom shall overthrow existing powers and last forever. Under this apocalyptic imagery are contained some of the best elements of prophetic teaching: the insistence on right conduct, the divine control over events, the certainty that the kingdom of God will ultimately triumph. The arrival of the kingdom is a central theme of the synoptic gospels, and Jesus, in calling himself the "Son of Man," reminds us that he fulfills the destiny of this mysterious figure in the seventh chapter of Daniel.

The added episodes of Susanna, Bel, and the Dragon, found only in the Greek version, are edifying short stories with a didactic purpose.

These three sections constitute the divisions of the Book of Daniel:

I. Daniel and the Kings of Babylon (1, 1—6, 29).
II. Daniel's Visions (7, 1—12, 13).
III. Appendix (13, 1—14, 42).

## I: Daniel and the Kings of Babylon

### CHAPTER 1

**The Food Test** [1]In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came and laid siege to Jerusalem.[a] [2]*b*The Lord handed over to him Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and some of the vessels of the temple of God, which he carried off to the land of Shinar,* and placed in the temple treasury of his god.

[3]The king told Ashpenaz, his chief chamberlain, to bring in some of the Israelites of royal blood and of the nobility, [4]young men without any defect, handsome, intelligent and wise, quick to learn, and prudent in judgment, such as could take their place in the king's palace; they were to be taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans; [5]after three years' training they were to enter the king's service. The king allotted them a daily portion of food and wine from the royal table. [6]Among these were men of Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. [7]The chief chamberlain changed their names: Daniel to Belteshazzar, Hananiah to Shadrach, Mishael to Meshach, and Azariah to Abednego.*

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[8]But Daniel was resolved not to defile himself with the king's food or wine; so he begged the chief chamberlain to spare him this defilement.* [9]Though God had given Daniel the favor and sympathy of the chief chamberlain, [10]he nevertheless said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; it is he who allotted your food and drink. If he sees that you look wretched by comparison with the other young men of your age, you will endanger my life with the king." [11]Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief chamberlain had put in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, [12]"Please test your servants for ten days. Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. [13]Then see how we look in comparison with the other young men who eat from the royal table, and treat your servants according to

1, 2: Shinar: ancient name for Babylonia, a deliberate archaism in this text: cf Gn 10, 10; 11, 2.

1, 7: The young men are given Babylonian names as a sign of their adoption by the king.

1, 8: This defilement: the bread, meat, and wine of the Gentiles, which were unclean (Hos 9, 3; Tb 1, 12; Jdt 10, 5; 12, 1f) because they might have been offered to idols or prepared over firewood taken from a sacred grove. Only raw vegetables and water were safe from this danger (v 12).

a 2 Kgs 24, 1; 2 Chr 36, 6; Jer 25, 1. b Dn 5, 2; Gn 10, 10; 2 Kgs 24, 2; 2 Chr 36, 7.

what you see." [14]He acceded to this request,
and tested them for ten days; [15]after ten days
they looked healthier and better fed than any of
the young men who ate from the royal table.
[16]So the steward continued to take away the
food and wine they were to receive, and gave
them vegetables.

[17]To these four young men God gave knowledge and proficiency in all literature and science,
and to Daniel the understanding of all visions
and dreams. [18]At the end of the time the king
had specified for their preparation, the chief
chamberlain brought them before Nebuchadnezzar. [19]When the king had spoken with all of
them, none was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and so they entered
the king's service. [20]In any question of wisdom
or prudence which the king put to them, he
found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom. [21] [c]Daniel
remained there until the first year of King
Cyrus.*

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1–6
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342–344

**The King's Dream*** [1]In the second year of his
reign, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which
left his spirit no rest and robbed him of his sleep.
[2]So he ordered that the magicians, enchanters,
sorcerers, and Chaldeans* be summoned to
interpret the dream for him. When they came
and presented themselves to the king, [3]he said
to them, "I had a dream which will allow my
spirit no rest until I know what it means." [4]The
Chaldeans answered the king [Aramaic]:* "O
king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream
and we will give its meaning." [5]The king answered the Chaldeans, "This is what I have
decided: unless you tell me the dream and its
meaning, you shall be cut to pieces and your
houses destroyed. [6]But if you tell me the dream
and its meaning, you shall receive from me gifts
and presents and great honors. Now tell me the
dream and its meaning."

[7]Again they answered, "Let the king tell his
servants the dream and we will give its meaning." [8]But the king replied: "I know for certain
that you are bargaining for time, since you know
what I have decided. [9]If you do not tell me the
dream, there can be but one decree for you. You
have framed a false and deceitful interpretation
to present me with till the crisis is past. Tell me
the dream, therefore, that I may be sure that you
can also give its correct interpretation."

[10]The Chaldeans answered the king: "There
is not a man on earth who can do what you ask,
O king; never has any king, however great and
mighty, asked such a thing of any magician,
enchanter, or Chaldean. [11]What you demand, O
king, is too difficult; there is no one who can tell
it to the king except the gods who do not dwell
among men." [12]At this the king became violently angry and ordered all the wise men of
Babylon to be put to death. [13]When the decree
was issued that the wise men should be slain,
Daniel and his companions were also sought
out.

[14]Then Daniel prudently took counsel with
Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had
set out to kill the wise men of Babylon: [15]"O
officer of the king," he asked, "what is the
reason for this harsh order from the king?"
When Arioch told him, [16]Daniel went and asked
for time from the king, that he might give him
the interpretation.

[17]Daniel went home and informed his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, [18]that
they might implore the mercy of the God of
heaven in regard to this mystery, so that Daniel
and his companions might not perish with the
rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19]During the
night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a
vision, and he blessed the God of heaven:

**1, 21**: The first year of King Cyrus: the year of this Persian king's conquest of Babylon, 539/8 B.C.

**2, 1–49**: The chronology of v 1 is in conflict with that of Dn 1, 5. 18, and in v 25 Daniel appears to be introduced to the king for the first time. It seems that the story of this chapter was originally entirely independent of chapter 1, and later retouched slightly to fit its present setting.

**2, 2**: Chaldeans: here probably astrologers, who were so associated with the Chaldeans in the Hebrew mind that in the later language they are sometimes simply called by the name of that people.

**2, 4**: Aramaic: from Dn 2, 4 to 7, 28 the text of Daniel is in Aramaic, not Hebrew, as indicated by this gloss.

c Dn 6, 28.

[20] "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
for wisdom and power are his.
[21] He causes the changes of the times and seasons,
makes kings and unmakes them.
He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who understand.
[22] He reveals deep and hidden things
and knows what is in the darkness,
for the light dwells with him.[d]
[23] To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
because you have given me wisdom and power.
Now you have shown me what we asked of you,
you have made known to us the king's dream."

[24] So Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not put the wise men of Babylon to death. Bring me before the king, and I will tell him the interpretation of the dream." Arioch quickly brought Daniel to the king and said, [25] "I have found a man among the Judean captives who can give the interpretation to the king." [26] The king asked Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Can you tell me the dream that I had, and its meaning?" [27] In the king's presence Daniel made this reply:

"The mystery about which the king has inquired, the wise men, enchanters, magicians, and astrologers could not explain to the king. [28] But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what is to happen in days to come; this was the dream you saw as you lay in bed. [29] To you in your bed there came thoughts about what should happen in the future, and he who reveals mysteries showed you what is to be. [30] To me also this mystery has been revealed; not that I am wiser than any other living person, but in order that its meaning may be made known to the king, that you may understand the thoughts in your own mind.

[31] "In your vision, O king, you saw a statue, very large and exceedingly bright, terrifying in appearance as it stood before you. [32] The head of the statue was pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs bronze, [33] the legs iron, its feet partly iron and partly tile.* [34] While you looked at the statue, a stone which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it, struck its iron and tile feet, breaking them in pieces. [35] The iron, tile, bronze, silver, and gold all crumbled at once, fine as the chaff on the threshing floor in summer, and the wind blew them away without leaving a trace. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

[36]* "This was the dream; the interpretation we shall also give in the king's presence. [37] You, O king, are the king of kings; to you the God of heaven has given dominion and strength, power and glory; [38] men, wild beasts, and birds of the air, wherever they may dwell, he has handed over to you, making you ruler over them all; you are the head of gold. [39] Another kingdom shall take your place, inferior to yours, then a third kingdom, of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. [40] There shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; it shall break in pieces and subdue all these others, just as iron breaks in pieces and crushes everything else. [41] The feet and toes you saw, partly of potter's tile and partly of iron, mean that it shall be a divided kingdom, but yet have some of the hardness of iron. As you saw the iron mixed with clay tile, [42] and the toes partly iron and partly tile, the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. [43] The iron mixed with clay tile means that they shall seal their alliances by intermarriage, but they shall not stay

**2, 33:** Partly tile: terra cotta tile was much in use among the Babylonians for decoration and for actual construction.

**2, 36–45:** The four successive kingdoms in this apocalyptic perspective are the Babylonian (gold), the Median (silver), the Persian (bronze), and the Hellenistic (iron). The last, after Alexander's death, was divided among his generals (vv 41f). The two resulting kingdoms, which most affected the Jews, were the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt and that of the Seleucids in Syria, who tried in vain, by war and through intermarriage, to restore the unity of Alexander's empire (v 43). The stone hewn from the mountain is the messianic kingdom awaited by the Jews (vv 44f). Our Lord made this image personal to himself; cf Lk 20, 17f.

d Jn 1, 9; 8, 12; 1 Cor 4, 5; 1 Jn 1, 6.

united, any more than iron mixes with clay.
44 [e]In the lifetime of those kings the God of
heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be
destroyed or delivered up to another people;
rather, it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms
and put an end to them, and it shall stand
forever. 45That is the meaning of the stone you
saw hewn from the mountain without a hand
being put to it, which broke in pieces the tile,
iron, bronze, silver, and gold. The great God has
revealed to the king what shall be in the future;
this is exactly what you dreamed, and its mean-
ing is sure."

46Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell down and
worshiped Daniel and ordered sacrifice and
incense offered to him. 47To Daniel the king
said, "Truly your God is the God of gods and
Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries; that is
why you were able to reveal this mystery." 48He
advanced Daniel to a high post, gave him many
generous presents, made him ruler of the whole
province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the
wise men of Babylon. 49At Daniel's request the
king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
administrators of the province of Babylon, while
Daniel himself remained at the king's court.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–6
See RG
342–344

**The Fiery Furnace** 1King Nebuchadnezzar
had a golden statue made, sixty cubits high and
six cubits wide, which he set up in the plain of
Dura* in the province of Babylon. 2He then
ordered the satraps,* prefects, and governors,
the counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates
and all the officials of the provinces to be
summoned to the dedication of the statue which
he had set up. 3The satraps, prefects, and
governors, the counselors, treasurers, judges,
and magistrates and all the officials of the
provinces, all these came together for the dedica-
tion and stood before the statue which King
Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4A herald cried out:
"Nations and peoples of every language, when
you hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, lyre,
harp, psaltery,* bagpipe, and all the other musi-
cal instruments, 5you are ordered to fall down
and worship the golden statue which King
Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6Whoever does not
fall down and worship shall be instantly cast into
a white-hot furnace."* 7Therefore, as soon as
they heard the sound of the trumpet, flute, lyre,
harp, psaltery, bagpipe, and all the other musical
instruments, the nations and peoples of every
language all fell down and worshiped the golden
statue which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8At that point, some of the Chaldeans came
and accused the Jews 9to King Nebuchadnezzar:
"O king, live forever! 10O king, you issued a
decree that everyone who heard the sound of
the trumpet, flute, lyre, harp, psaltery, bagpipe,
and all the other musical instruments should fall
down and worship the golden statue; 11whoever
did not was to be cast into a white-hot furnace.
12There are certain Jews whom you have made
administrators of the province of Babylon: Sha-
drach, Meshach, Abednego; these men, O king,
have paid no attention to you; they will not
serve your god or worship the golden statue
which you set up."

13Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and sent
for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who
were promptly brought before the king. 14King
Nebuchadnezzar questioned them: "Is it true,
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you
will not serve my god, or worship the golden
statue that I set up? 15Be ready now to fall down
and worship the statue I had made, whenever
you hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, lyre,
harp, psaltery, bagpipe, and all the other musical
instruments; otherwise, you shall be instantly
cast into the white-hot furnace; and who is the
God that can deliver you out of my hands?"
16Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered
King Nebuchadnezzar, "There is no need for us
to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

3, 1: Dura: several places in Babylonia bore this name. Probably the present reference is to one a few miles south of Babylon. Colossi of the type mentioned here were not uncommon in antiquity; a cubit was seventeen and a half inches.

3, 2: Satraps: the Persian major governors.

3, 4: Psaltery: a harplike instrument.

3, 6: Death by fire was not unknown as a punishment in Babylonia; cf Jer 29, 22.

e Mt 21, 44; Lk 20, 18.

[17]If our God, whom we serve, can save us* from
the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O
king, may he save us! [18]But even if he will not,
know, O king, that we will not serve your god or
worship the golden statue which you set up."
[19]Nebuchadnezzar's face became livid with
utter rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-
nego. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven
times more than usual [20]and had some of the
strongest men in his army bind Shadrach, Me-
shach, and Abednego and cast them into the
white-hot furnace. [21]They were bound and cast
into the white-hot furnace with their coats, hats,
shoes and other garments, [22]for the king's order
was urgent. So huge a fire was kindled in the
furnace that the flames devoured the men who
threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into
it. [23]But these three fell, bound, into the midst of
the white-hot furnace.
[24]*They walked about in the flames, singing
to God and blessing the Lord. [25]In the fire
Azariah stood up and prayed aloud:

[26]"Blessed are you, and praiseworthy,
O Lord, the God of our fathers,
and glorious forever is your name.
[27]For you are just in all you have done;
all your deeds are faultless, all your ways
right,
and all your judgments proper.
[28]You have executed proper judgments
in all that you have brought upon us
and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our
fathers.
By a proper judgment you have done all this
because of our sins;
[29]For we have sinned and transgressed
by departing from you,
and we have done every kind of evil.
[30]Your commandments we have not heeded or
observed,
nor have we done as you ordered us for our
good.
[31]Therefore all you have brought upon us,
all you have done to us,
you have done by a proper judgment.
[32]You have handed us over to our enemies,
lawless and hateful rebels;
to an unjust king, the worst in all the world.
[33]Now we cannot open our mouths;
we, your servants, who revere you,
have become a shame and a reproach.
[34]For your name's sake, do not deliver us up
forever,
or make void your covenant.
[35]Do not take away your mercy from us,
for the sake of Abraham, your beloved,
Isaac your servant, and Israel your holy one,
[36]To whom you promised to multiply their
offspring
like the stars of heaven,
or the sand on the shore of the sea.
[37]For we are reduced, O Lord, beyond any other
nation,
brought low everywhere in the world this
day
because of our sins.
[38]We have in our day no prince, prophet, or
leader,
no holocaust, sacrifice, oblation, or incense,
no place to offer first fruits, to find favor
with you.
[39]But with contrite heart and humble spirit
let us be received;
[40]As though it were holocausts of rams and
bullocks,
or thousands of fat lambs,
So let our sacrifice be in your presence today
as we follow you unreservedly;
for those who trust in you cannot be put to
shame.
[41]And now we follow you with our whole heart,
we fear you and we pray to you.
[42]Do not let us be put to shame,
but deal with us in your kindness and great
mercy.
[43]Deliver us by your wonders,
and bring glory to your name, O Lord:

**3, 17:** If our God . . . can save us: the youths do not question the efficacy of the divine power, but whether it will be exercised (v 18).

**3, 24–90:** These verses are inspired additions to the Aramaic text of Daniel, translated from the Greek form of the book. They were originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, which has not been preserved. The church has always regarded them as part of the canonical Scriptures.

44 Let all those be routed
who inflict evils on your servants;
Let them be shamed and powerless,
and their strength broken;
45 Let them know that you alone are the Lord God,
glorious over the whole world."

46 Now the king's men who had thrown them in continued to stoke the furnace with brimstone, pitch, tow, and faggots. 47 The flames rose forty-nine cubits above the furnace, 48 and spread out, burning the Chaldeans nearby. 49 But the angel of the Lord went down into the furnace with Azariah and his companions, drove the fiery flames out of the furnace, 50 and made the inside of the furnace as though a dew-laden breeze were blowing through it. The fire in no way touched them or caused them pain or harm. 51 Then these three in the furnace with one voice sang, glorifying and blessing God:

52 "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.
53 Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory,
praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.
54 Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.
55 Blessed are you who look into the depths
from your throne upon the cherubim,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.
56 Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven,
praiseworthy and glorious forever.
57 Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord,
praise and exalt him above all forever.
58 Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord,
praise and exalt him above all forever.
59 You heavens, bless the Lord,
praise and exalt him above all forever.[f]
60 All you waters above the heavens, bless the Lord,
praise and exalt him above all forever.
61 All you hosts of the Lord, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
62 Sun and moon, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
63 Stars of heaven, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
64 Every shower and dew, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
65 All you winds, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
66 Fire and heat, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
67 [Cold and chill, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
68 Dew and rain, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.]
69 Frost and chill, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
70 Ice and snow, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
71 Nights and days, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
72 Light and darkness, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
73 Lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
74 Let the earth bless the Lord,
praise and exalt him above all forever.
75 Mountains and hills, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
76 Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
77 You springs, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
78 Seas and rivers, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
79 You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
80 All you birds of the air, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
81 All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
82 You sons of men, bless the Lord;

f 59f: Ps 148, 4.

praise and exalt him above all forever.
[83] O Israel, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
[84] Priests of the Lord, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
[85] Servants of the Lord, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
[86] Spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
[87] Holy men of humble heart, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
[88] Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, bless the Lord;
praise and exalt him above all forever.
For he has delivered us from the nether world,
and saved us from the power of death;
He has freed us from the raging flame
and delivered us from the fire.
[89] Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.
[90] Bless the God of gods, all you who fear the Lord;
praise him and give him thanks,
because his mercy endures forever."

Hearing them sing, and astonished at seeing them alive, [91] King Nebuchadnezzar rose in haste and asked his nobles, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" "Assuredly, O king," they answered. [92] "But," he replied, "I see four men unfettered and unhurt, walking in the fire, and the fourth looks like a son of God."* [93] Then Nebuchadnezzar came to the opening of the white-hot furnace and called to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: "Servants of the most high God, come out." Thereupon Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. [94] When the satraps, prefects, governors, and nobles of the king came together, they saw that the fire had had no power over the bodies of these men; not a hair of their heads had been singed, nor were their garments altered; there was not even a smell of fire about them. [95] Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel to deliver the servants that trusted in him; they disobeyed the royal command and yielded their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. [96] Therefore I decree for nations and peoples of every language that whoever blasphemes the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut to pieces and his house destroyed. For there is no other God who can rescue like this." [97] Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

**Vision of the Great Tree*** [98] King Nebuchadnezzar to the nations and peoples of every language, wherever they dwell on earth: abundant peace! [99] It has seemed good to me to publish the signs and wonders which the most high God* has accomplished in my regard.

[100] How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders;
his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures through all generations.[g]

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 1–6
See RG
342–344

[1] I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, content and prosperous. [2] I had a terrifying dream as I lay in bed, and the images and the visions of my mind frightened me. [3] So I issued a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me to give the interpretation of the dream. [4] When the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers had come in, I related the dream before them; but none of them could tell me its meaning. [5] [h] Finally there came before me Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god,* and in whom is the spirit of the holy God. I repeated the dream to

3, 92: A son of God: an angel; cf Jb 1, 6.

3, 98—4, 34: This section has the form of a letter written by Nebuchadnezzar to his subjects.

3, 99: The most high God: the Jews, especially in the diaspora, used this title to distinguish their God from those of the pagans. On the lips of a polytheist (so also in v 93) it was merely the title of another god. It was an ancient divine name used in Canaan; cf Gn 14, 18.

4, 5: After the name of my god: Belteshazzar, the Babylonian name given to Daniel at the king's orders (Dn 1, 7), is Balatsu-ussur, "protect his life." In the king's intention, this would be an abbreviation for Bel-balatsu-ussur. It would thus include an appeal to the god Bel, originally the name of the city god of Nippur, and later identified with Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. Daniel's use of the name would refer the prayer rather to the true God.

g Dn 4, 31; 7, 14. h Gn 41, 38.

him: [6]"Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I
know that the spirit of the holy God is in you and
no mystery is too difficult for you; tell me the
meaning of the visions that I saw in my dream.
[7]"These were the visions I saw while in bed: I
saw a tree of great height at the center of the
world. [8]It was large and strong, with its top
touching the heavens, and it could be seen to the
ends of the earth. [9]Its leaves were beautiful and
its fruit abundant, providing food for all. Under it
the wild beasts found shade, in its branches the
birds of the air nested; all men ate of it. [10]In the
vision I saw while in bed, a holy sentinel* came
down from heaven, [11]and cried out:

*" 'Cut down the tree and lop off its branches,
strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit;
let the beasts flee its shade, and the birds its
branches.
[12]But leave in the earth its stump and roots,
fettered with iron and bronze, in the grass
of the field.
Let him be bathed with the dew of heaven;
his lot be to eat, among beasts, the grass of
the earth.
[13]Let his mind be changed from the human;
let him be given the sense of a beast,
till seven years pass over him.
[14]By decree of the sentinels is this decided,
by order of the holy ones, this sentence;
That all who live may know
that the Most High rules over the kingdom
of men:
He can give it to whom he will,
or set over it the lowliest of men.' [i]

[15]"This is the dream that I, King Nebuchad-
nezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me its
meaning. Although none of the wise men in my
kingdom can tell me the meaning, you can,
because the spirit of the holy God is in you."
[16]Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshaz-
zar, was appalled for a while, terrified by his
thoughts. "Belteshazzar," the king said to him,
"let not the dream or its meaning terrify you."
[17]"My lord," Belteshazzar replied, "this dream
should be for your enemies, and its meaning for
your foes.* The large, strong tree that you saw,
with its top touching the heavens, that could be
seen by the whole earth, [18]which had beautiful
foliage and abundant fruit, providing food for all,
under which the wild beasts lived, and in whose
branches the birds of the air dwelt— [19]you are
that tree, O king, large and strong! Your majesty
has become so great as to touch the heavens,
and your rule extends over the whole earth.
[20]As for the king's vision of a holy sentinel that
came down from heaven and proclaimed: 'Cut
down the tree and destroy it, but leave in the
earth its stump and roots, fettered with iron and
bronze in the grass of the field; let him be bathed
with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be among
wild beasts till seven years pass over him'—
[21]this is its meaning, O king; this is the sentence
which the Most High has passed upon my lord
king: [22]*j*You shall be cast out from among men
and dwell with wild beasts; you shall be given
grass to eat like an ox and be bathed with the
dew of heaven;* seven years shall pass over you,
until you know that the Most High rules over
the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he
will. [23]The command that the stump and roots
of the tree are to be left means that your
kingdom shall be preserved for you, once you
have learned it is heaven that rules.
[24]*k*Therefore, O king, take my advice; atone for
your sins by good deeds, and for your misdeeds
by kindness to the poor; then your prosperity
will be long."*
[25]All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.
[26]Twelve months later, as he was walking on the
roof of the royal palace in Babylon, [27]the king
said, "Babylon the great! Was it not I, with my
great strength, who built it as a royal residence
for my splendor and majesty?"* [28]While these

**4, 10:** A holy sentinel: an angel. This term is found in the Bible only in this chapter of Daniel, but it is common in later Jewish literature.

**4, 11ff:** As the tree is Nebuchadnezzar (v 19), the description passes from metaphor to the reality.

**4, 17:** "This dream . . . for your foes": Daniel speaks as a courtier.

**4, 22:** The description is of a form of insanity called lycanthropy, in which the patient acts like a wolf.

**4, 24:** A classic Scriptural text for the efficacy of good works.

**4, 27:** The words attributed to the king are similar to the boastings in the royal inscriptions by which the Mesopotamian

i 1 Sm 2, 8; 16, 11; Is 62, 6. j Dn 5, 21. k Sir 3, 30; 4, 8.

words were still on the king's lips, a voice spoke
from heaven, "It has been decreed for you, King
Nebuchadnezzar, that your kingdom is taken
from you! [29]You shall be cast out from among
men, and shall dwell with wild beasts; you shall
be given grass to eat like an ox, and seven years
shall pass over you, until you learn that the Most
High rules over the kingdom of men and gives it
to whom he will." [30]*At once this was fulfilled.
Nebuchadnezzar was cast out from among men,
he ate grass like an ox, and his body was bathed
with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like
the feathers of an eagle, and his nails like the
claws of a bird.

[31] *l*When this period was over, I, Nebuchad-
nezzar, raised my eyes to heaven; my reason
was restored to me, and I blessed the Most High,
I praised and glorified him who lives forever:

His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom endures through all
generations.
[32]All who live on the earth are counted as
nothing;
he does as he pleases with the powers of
heaven
as well as with those who live on the earth.
There is no one who can stay his hand
or say to him, "What have you done?"

[33]At the same time my reason returned to me,
and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty
and my splendor returned to me. My nobles and
lords sought me out; I was restored to my
kingdom, and became much greater than before.
[34]Therefore, I, Nebuchadnezzar, now praise and
exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because all
his works are right and his ways just; and those
who walk in pride he is able to humble.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 1–6
See RG
342–344

**The Writing on the Wall** [1]King Belshazzar*
gave a great banquet for a thousand of his lords,
with whom he drank. [2]Under the influence of
the wine, he ordered the gold and silver vessels
which Nebuchadnezzar, his father,* had taken
from the temple in Jerusalem, to be brought in so
that the king, his lords, his wives and his
entertainers might drink from them. [3]When the
gold and silver vessels taken from the house of
God in Jerusalem had been brought in, and
while the king, his lords, his wives and his
entertainers were drinking [4]wine from them,
they praised their gods of gold and silver, bronze
and iron, wood and stone.

[5]Suddenly, opposite the lampstand, the fingers
of a human hand appeared, writing on the
plaster of the wall in the king's palace. When the
king saw the wrist and hand that wrote, [6]his face
blanched; his thoughts terrified him, his hip
joints shook, and his knees knocked. [7]The king
shouted for the enchanters, Chaldeans, and
astrologers to be brought in. "Whoever reads
this writing and tells me what it means," he said
to the wise men of Babylon, "shall be clothed in
purple, wear a golden collar about his neck, and
be third in the government of the kingdom."
[8]But though all the king's wise men came in,
none of them could either read the writing or tell
the king what it meant. [9]Then King Belshazzar
was greatly terrified; his face went ashen, and
his lords were thrown into confusion.

[10]When the queen heard of the discussion
between the king and his lords, she entered the
banquet hall and said, "O king, live forever! Be
not troubled in mind, nor look so pale! [11]There
is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of
the holy God; during the lifetime of your father
he was seen to have brilliant knowledge and
god-like wisdom. In fact, King Nebuchadnezzar,

kings testified to their mighty works.

**4, 30ff:** There is no certainty of any such thing happening to Nebuchadnezzar as is described here. Some scholars think that the Nebuchadnezzar of this chapter is actually Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, who was mysteriously absent from Babylon for a number of years. The Biblical author's chief interest was not in the historicity of this popular tale, but in the object lesson it contained for the proud "divine" kings of the Seleucid dynasty.

**5, 1:** King Belshazzar: Belshazzar was actually the crown prince, but he had been given royal authority in Babylon by his father Nabonidus.

**5, 2:** Nebuchadnezzar, his father: several kings of Babylon intervened between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Either the term father is used here in the broad sense of "remote predecessor," or the name Nebuchadnezzar is used for "Nabonidus."

l Dn 3, 100; 7, 14.

your father, made him chief of the magicians,
enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, [12]be-
cause of the extraordinary mind possessed by
this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar.
He knew and understood how to interpret
dreams, explain enigmas, and solve difficulties.
Now therefore, summon Daniel to tell you what
this means."

[13]Then Daniel was brought into the presence
of the king. The king asked him, "Are you the
Daniel, the Jewish exile, whom my father, the
king, brought from Judah? [14]I have heard that
the spirit of God is in you, that you possess
brilliant knowledge and extraordinary wisdom.
[15]Now, the wise men and enchanters were
brought in to me to read this writing and tell me
its meaning, but they could not say what the
words meant. [16]But I have heard that you can
interpret dreams and solve difficulties; if you are
able to read the writing and tell me what it
means, you shall be clothed in purple, wear a
gold collar about your neck, and be third in the
government of the kingdom."

[17]Daniel answered the king: "You may keep
your gifts, or give your presents to someone else;
but the writing I will read for you, O king, and
tell you what it means. [18]The Most High God
gave your father Nebuchadnezzar a great king-
dom and glorious majesty. [19]Because he made
him so great, the nations and peoples of every
language dreaded and feared him. Whomever he
wished, he killed or let live; whomever he
wished, he exalted or humbled. [20]But when his
heart became proud and his spirit hardened by
insolence, he was put down from his royal
throne and deprived of his glory; [21] [m]he was cast
out from among men and was made insensate as
a beast; he lived with wild asses, and ate grass
like an ox; his body was bathed with the dew of
heaven, until he learned that the Most High God
rules over the kingdom of men and appoints
over it whom he will. [22]You, his son, Belshazzar,
have not humbled your heart, though you knew
all this; [23]you have rebelled against the Lord of
heaven. You had the vessels of his temple
brought before you, so that you and your nobles,
your wives and your entertainers, might drink
wine from them; and you praised the gods of
silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and
stone, that neither see nor hear nor have intelli-
gence. But the God in whose hand is your life
breath and the whole course of your life, you did
not glorify. [24]By him were the wrist and hand
sent, and the writing set down.

[25]"This is the writing that was inscribed:
MENE, TEKEL, and PERES.* These words mean:
[26]*MENE, God has numbered your kingdom and
put an end to it; [27]TEKEL, you have been
weighed on the scales and found wanting;
[28]PERES, your kingdom has been divided and
given to the Medes and Persians."

[29]Then by order of Belshazzar they clothed
Daniel in purple, with a gold collar about his
neck, and proclaimed him third in the govern-
ment of the kingdom. [30]The same night Belshaz-
zar, the Chaldean king, was slain:

## CHAPTER 6

[1]And Darius the Mede* succeeded to the king-
dom at the age of sixty-two.

Ch 1–6
See RG
342–344

**In the Lions' Den** [2]Darius decided to appoint
over his entire kingdom one hundred and
twenty satraps, to safeguard his interests; [3]these
were accountable to three supervisors, one of
whom was Daniel. [4]Daniel outshone all the
supervisors and satraps because an extraordinary
spirit was in him, and the king thought of giving
him authority over the entire kingdom. [5]There-
fore the supervisors and satraps tried to find
grounds for accusation against Daniel as regards

**5, 25:** Mene, Tekel, and Peres: these seem to be the Aramaic names of weights and monetary values: the mina, the shekel (the sixtieth part of a mina), and the parsu (a half-mina).

**5, 26ff:** Daniel interprets these three terms by a play on the words: Mene, connected with the verb meaning to number; Tekel, with the verb meaning to weigh; Peres, with the verb meaning to divide. There is also a play on the last term with the word for Persians.

**6, 1:** Darius the Mede: unknown in profane history. The Median kingdom had already been conquered by Cyrus the Persian, and it was Cyrus who captured Babylon. Evidently the author of Daniel has deliberately adopted an apocalyptic view of history, derived from prophecy (cf Is 13, 17ff; Jer 51, 11. 28ff), according to which the Medes formed the second of four world kingdoms preceding the messianic times; see note on Dn 2, 36–45. The character of Darius the Mede has probably been modeled on that of the Persian King Darius the Great (522–486 B.C.), the second successor of Cyrus.

m Dn 4, 22.

the administration. But they could accuse him of
no wrongdoing; because he was trustworthy, no
fault of neglect or misconduct was to be found in
him. 6Then these men said to themselves, "We
shall find no grounds for accusation against this
Daniel unless by way of the law of his God." 7So
these supervisors and satraps went thronging to
the king and said to him, "King Darius, live
forever! 8 nAll the supervisors of the kingdom,
the prefects, satraps, nobles, and governors are
agreed that the following prohibition ought to be
put in force by royal decree: no one is to address
any petition to god or man for thirty days, except
to you, O king; otherwise he shall be cast into a
den of lions. 9Now, O king, issue the prohibition
over your signature, immutable and irrevocable*
under Mede and Persian law." 10So King Darius
signed the prohibition and made it law.

11Even after Daniel heard that this law had
been signed, he continued his custom of going
home to kneel in prayer and give thanks to his
God in the upper chamber three times a day,
with the windows open toward Jerusalem. 12So
these men rushed in and found Daniel praying
and pleading before his God. 13Then they went
to remind the king about the prohibition: "Did
you not decree, O king, that no one is to address
a petition to god or man for thirty days, except to
you, O king; otherwise he shall be cast into a
den of lions?" The king answered them, "The
decree is absolute, irrevocable under the Mede
and Persian law." 14To this they replied, "Daniel,
the Jewish exile, has paid no attention to you, O
king, or to the decree you issued; three times a
day he offers his prayer." 15The king was deeply
grieved at this news and he made up his mind to
save Daniel; he worked till sunset to rescue him.
16But these men insisted. "Keep in mind, O
king," they said, "that under the Mede and
Persian law every royal prohibition or decree is
irrevocable." 17So the king ordered Daniel to be
brought and cast into the lions' den.* To Daniel
he said, "May your God, whom you serve so
constantly, save you." 18To forestall any tamper-
ing, the king sealed with his own ring and the
rings of the lords the stone that had been
brought to block the opening of the den.

19Then the king returned to his palace for the
night; he refused to eat and he dismissed the
entertainers. Since sleep was impossible for him,
20the king rose very early the next morning and
hastened to the lions' den. 21As he drew near, he
cried out to Daniel sorrowfully, "O Daniel,
servant of the living God, has the God whom
you serve so constantly been able to save you
from the lions?" 22 oDaniel answered the king:
"O king, live forever! 23My God has sent his
angel and closed the lions' mouths so that they
have not hurt me. For I have been found
innocent before him; neither to you have I done
any harm, O king!" 24This gave the king great
joy. At his order Daniel was removed from the
den, unhurt because he trusted in his God.
25The king then ordered the men who had
accused Daniel, along with their children and
their wives, to be cast into the lions' den. Before
they reached the bottom of the den, the lions
overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

26Then King Darius wrote to the nations and
peoples of every language, wherever they dwell
on the earth: "All peace to you! 27I decree that
throughout my royal domain the God of Daniel
is to be reverenced and feared:

"For he is the living God, enduring forever;
his kingdom shall not be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be without end.
28He is a deliverer and savior,
working signs and wonders in heaven and
on earth,
and he delivered Daniel from the lions'
power." p

29So Daniel fared well during the reign of
Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

6, 9: Immutable and irrevocable: the passages in Est 1, 19 and 8, 8 also refer to the immutability of Medo-Persian laws. The historian Diodorus Siculus indicates that such a concept existed in the time of Darius III (335–331 B.C.), the last of the Persian kings. Cf vv 13. 16.

6, 17: The lions' den: a pit too deep to be easily scaled; its opening was blocked with a stone (v 18).

n Est 1, 19. o 1 Mc 2, 60. p Dn 1, 21.

# II: Daniel's Visions

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7-12 See RG 344-347, 348

**Vision of the Four Beasts*** [1]In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream as he lay in bed, and was terrified by the visions of his mind. Then he wrote down the dream; the account began: [2]In the vision I saw during the night, suddenly the four winds of heaven stirred up the great sea,* [3]from which emerged four immense beasts, each different from the others. [4]The first was like a lion, but with eagle's wings.* While I watched, the wings were plucked; it was raised from the ground to stand on two feet like a man, and given a human mind. [5]The second was like a bear;* it was raised up on one side, and among the teeth in its mouth were three tusks. It was given the order, "Up, devour much flesh." [6]After this I looked and saw another beast, like a leopard;* on its back were four wings like those of a bird, and it had four heads. To this beast dominion was given. [7]After this, in the visions of the night I saw the fourth beast,* different from all the others, terrifying, horrible, and of extraordinary strength; it had great iron teeth with which it devoured and crushed, and what was left it trampled with its feet. [8]I was considering the ten horns it had, when suddenly another, a little horn, sprang out of their midst, and three of the previous horns were torn away to make room for it. This horn had eyes like a man, and a mouth that spoke arrogantly. [9]*As I watched,

Thrones were set up
and the Ancient One took his throne.
His clothing was snow bright,
and the hair on his head as white as wool;
His throne was flames of fire,
with wheels of burning fire.
[10]A surging stream of fire
flowed out from where he sat;
Thousands upon thousands were ministering to him,
and myriads upon myriads attended him.[q]

The court was convened, and the books were opened. [11]I watched, then, from the first of the arrogant words which the horn spoke, until the beast was slain and its body thrown into the fire to be burnt up. [12]The other beasts, which also lost their dominion, were granted a prolongation of life for a time and a season. [13]As the visions during the night continued, I saw

One like a son of man* coming,
on the clouds of heaven;
When he reached the Ancient One
and was presented before him,
[14]He received dominion, glory, and kingship;
nations and peoples of every language serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.[r]

**7, 1–27:** The significance of this vision is the same as that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2; see note on Dn 2, 36–45. To the four succeeding world kingdoms, Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek, is opposed and messianic kingdom of the people of God. The imagery of this chapter has been used extensively in the Revelation of St. John, where it is applied to the Roman empire, the persecutor of the church.

**7, 2:** The great sea: the primordial ocean beneath the earth, according to primitive cosmology (Gn 7, 11; 49, 25). This was thought to contain various monsters (Is 27, 1; Jb 7, 12), and in particular mythological monsters symbolizing the chaos which God had vanquished in ancient times (Jb 9, 13; 26, 13; etc.).

**7, 4:** The representation of the Babylonian empire as a winged lion, a common motif in Babylonian art, symbolizes the bestial power hostile to God. The two wings that were plucked represent Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. On two feet like a man . . . a human mind: contrasts with what is said in Dn 4, 13. 30.

**7, 5:** A bear: represents the Median empire, its three tusks symbolizing its destructive nature; hence, the command: "Up, devour much flesh."

**7, 6:** A leopard: used to symbolize the swiftness with which Cyrus the Persian established his kingdom. Four heads: corresponding to the four Persian kings of Dn 11, 2.

**7, 7f:** Alexander's empire was different from all the others in that it was Western rather than Oriental in inspiration. The ten horns represent the kings of the Seleucid dynasty, the only part of the Hellenistic empire that concerned the author. The little horn is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.), the worst of the Seleucid kings, who usurped the throne.

**7, 9f:** A vision of the heavenly throne of God (the Ancient One), who sits in judgment (symbolized by fire) over the nations. Some of the details of the vision, depicting the divine majesty and omnipotence, are to be found in Ez 1.

**7, 13f:** One like a son of man: in contrast to the wordly kingdoms opposed to God, which appear as beasts, the glorified people of God that will form his kingdom on earth is represented in human form (v 18). Just as our Lord applied the figure of the stone hewn from the mountain to himself (Dn 2, 36–45), he also made the title, "Son of Man" his most characteristic way of referring to himself, as the One in whom and through whom the salvation of God's people came to be realized.

q Rv 5, 11. r Dn 3, 100; 4, 31; Mi 4, 7; Lk 1, 32.

[15]I, Daniel, found my spirit anguished within
its sheath of flesh, and I was terrified by the
visions of my mind. [16]I approached one of those
present and asked him what all this meant in
truth; in answer, he made known to me the
meaning of the things: [17]"These four great
beasts stand for four kingdoms which shall arise
on the earth. [18]But the holy ones of the Most
High shall receive the kingship, to possess it
forever and ever."

[19]But I wished to make certain about the
fourth beast, so very terrible and different from
the others, devouring and crushing with its iron
teeth and bronze claws, and trampling with its
feet what was left; [20]about the ten horns on its
head, and the other one that sprang up, before
which three horns fell; about the horn with the
eyes and the mouth that spoke arrogantly, which
appeared greater than its fellows. [21]For, as I
watched, that horn made war against the holy
ones and was victorious [22]until the Ancient One
arrived; judgment was pronounced in favor of
the holy ones of the Most High, and the time
came when the holy ones possessed the king-
dom. [23]He answered me thus:

"The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on
earth,
different from all the others;
It shall devour the whole earth,
beat it down, and crush it.
[24]The ten horns shall be ten kings
rising out of that kingdom;
another shall rise up after them,
Different from those before him,
who shall lay low three kings.
[25]He shall speak against the Most High
and oppress the holy ones of the Most High,
thinking to change the feast days and the
law.*
They shall be handed over to him
for a year, two years, and a half-year.
[26]But when the court is convened,
and his power is taken away
by final and absolute destruction,
[27]Then the kingship and dominion and majesty
of all the kingdoms under the heavens
shall be given to the holy people of the Most
High,
Whose kingdom shall be everlasting:
all dominions shall serve and obey him."

[28]The report concluded: I, Daniel, was greatly
terrified by my thoughts, and my face blanched,
but I kept the matter to myself.*

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 7–12
See RG
344–347,
348

**Vision of the Ram and He-goat*** [1]After this
first vision, I, Daniel, had another, in the third
year of the reign of King Belshazzar. [2]In my
vision I saw myself in the fortress of Susa* in the
province of Elam; I was beside the river Ulai. [3]I
looked up and saw standing by the river a ram
with two great horns, the one larger and newer
than the other. [4]I saw the ram butting toward
the west, north, and south. No beast could
withstand it or be rescued from its power; it did
what it pleased and became very powerful.

[5]As I was reflecting, a he-goat with a promi-
nent horn on its forehead suddenly came from
the west across the whole earth without touch-
ing the ground. [6]It approached the two-horned
ram I had seen standing by the river, and rushed
toward it with savage force. [7]I saw it attack the
ram with furious blows when they met, and
break both its horns. It threw the ram, which
had not the force to withstand it, to the ground,
and trampled upon it; and no one could rescue it
from its power.

[8]The he-goat became very powerful, but at
the height of its power the great horn was
shattered, and in its place came up four others,

**7, 25:** The reference is to the persecutions of Antiochus IV and his attempt to force the Jews to give up their customs and to adopt Hellenistic ways (1 Mc 1, 33f). A year, two years, and a half-year: an indefinite, evil period of time. As seven is the Jewish "perfect" number, half of it signifies great imperfection. Actually, this corresponds fairly accurately to the duration of Antiochus' persecution.

**7, 28:** This verse ends the Aramaic part of the Book of Daniel.

**8, 1–27:** This vision repeats the major part of the preceding one, though in a more explicit fashion. As explained in vv 20ff, the two-horned ram represents the combined kingdom of the Medes and Persians, destroyed by Alexander's Hellenistic empire originating in the west. Once again the author is interested only in the Seleucid dynasty, which emerged from the dissolution of Alexander's empire after his death in 323 B.C.

**8, 2:** The fortress of Susa: the royal palace of the Persian kings in the ancient territory of Elam, east of Babylonia. The river Ulai: a canal along the northern side of Susa.

facing the four winds of heaven. [9]Out of one of
them came a little horn* which kept growing
toward the south, the east, and the glorious
country. [10]Its power extended to the host of
heaven,* so that it cast down to earth some of
the host and some of the stars and trampled on
them. [11]It boasted even against the prince of the
host, from whom it removed the daily sacrifice,
and whose sanctuary it cast down, [12]as well as
the host, while sin replaced the daily sacrifice. It
cast truth to the ground, and was succeeding in
its undertaking.

[13]I heard a holy one speaking, and another
said to whichever one it was that spoke, "How
long shall the events of this vision last concern-
ing the daily sacrifice, the desolating sin* which
is placed there, the sanctuary, and the trampled
host?" [14]He answered him, "For two thousand
three hundred evenings and mornings; then the
sanctuary shall be purified."

[15]While I, Daniel, sought the meaning of the
vision I had seen, a manlike figure stood before
me, [16]and on the Ulai I heard a human voice
that cried out, "Gabriel,* explain the vision to
this man." [17]When he came near where I was
standing, I fell prostrate in terror. But he said to
me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision
refers to the end time."* [18]As he spoke to me, I
fell forward in a faint; he touched me and made
me stand up. [19]"I will show you," he said, "what
is to happen later in the period of wrath; for at
the appointed time, there will be an end.

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[20]"The two-horned ram you saw represents
the kings of the Medes and Persians. [21]The he-
goat is the king of the Greeks, and the great horn
on its forehead is the first king. [22]The four that
rose in its place when it was broken are four
kingdoms that will issue from his nation, but
without his strength.

[23]"After their reign,
when sinners have reached their measure,
There shall arise a king, impudent
and skilled in intrigue.
[24]He shall be strong and powerful,
bring about fearful ruin,
and succeed in his undertaking.
He shall destroy powerful peoples;
[25] his cunning shall be against the holy ones,
his treacherous conduct shall succeed.
He shall be proud of heart
and destroy many by stealth.
But when he rises against the prince of
princes,
he shall be broken without a hand being
raised.
[26]The vision of the evenings and the mornings
is true, as spoken;
Do you, however, keep this vision
undisclosed,
because the days are to be many."

[27]I, Daniel, was weak and ill for some days;
then I arose and took care of the king's affairs.
But I was appalled at the vision, which I could
not understand.

## CHAPTER 9

**Gabriel and the Seventy Weeks** [1]It was the
first year that Darius,* son of Ahasuerus, of the
race of the Medes, reigned over the kingdom of
the Chaldeans; [2] [s]in the first year of his reign I,
Daniel, tried to understand in the Scriptures the
counting of the years of which the LORD spoke to
the prophet Jeremiah: that for the ruins of
Jerusalem seventy years* must be fulfilled.

[3]I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest
prayer, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. [4] [t]I
prayed to the LORD, my God, and confessed,

**8, 9:** The little horn, as in chapter 7, is Antiochus IV. The glorious country: Palestine.

**8, 10ff:** The host of heaven: ordinarily meaning the stars, here refers to the people of God; cf Dn 12, 3. The prince of the host: God himself, with whose holy religion Antiochus interfered (1 Mc 1, 45).

**8, 13:** The desolating sin: the Hebrew contains a wordplay (shomem) on the name Baal Shamem ("lord of the heavens," the Greek Zeus Olympios), referring to the statue with which Antiochus profaned the temple of Jerusalem (2 Mc 6, 2).

**8, 16:** The angel Gabriel is mentioned here for the first time in the Bible. There is wordplay in the preceding verse on geber—manlike figure.

**8, 17:** The end time: the day of the Lord, when God sits in judgment on his enemies (v 19).

**9, 1:** Darius: see the note on Dn 6, 1.

**9, 2:** Seventy years: the prophet Jeremiah (25, 11; 29, 10) prophesied a Babylonian captivity of seventy years, a round number signifying the complete passing away of the existing generation. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus and the subsequent return of the Jews to Palestine.

s 2f: Jer 25, 11; 29, 10. t Neh 1, 5.

"Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, you who
keep your merciful covenant toward those who
love you and observe your commandments!
5 [u]We have sinned, been wicked and done evil;
we have rebelled and departed from your com-
mandments and your laws. 6We have not
obeyed your servants the prophets, who spoke
in your name to our kings, our princes, our
fathers, and all the people of the land. 7Justice,
O Lord, is on your side; we are shamefaced
even to this day: the men of Judah, the resi-
dents of Jerusalem, and all Israel, near and far,
in all the countries to which you have scattered
them because of their treachery toward you. 8O
LORD, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our
princes, and our fathers, for having sinned
against you. 9But yours, O Lord, our God, are
compassion and forgiveness! Yet we rebelled
against you 10and paid no heed to your com-
mand, O LORD, our God, to live by the law you
gave us through your servants the prophets.
11 [v]Because all Israel transgressed your law and
went astray, not heeding your voice, the sworn
malediction, recorded in the law of Moses, the
servant of God, was poured out over us for our
sins. 12You carried out the threats you spoke
against us and against those who governed us,
by bringing upon us in Jerusalem the greatest
calamity that has ever occurred under heaven.
13As it is written* in the law of Moses, this
calamity came full upon us. As we did not
appease the LORD, our God, by turning back
from our wickedness and recognizing his con-
stancy, 14so the Lord kept watch over the
calamity and brought it upon us. You, O LORD,
our God, are just in all that you have done, for
we did not listen to your voice.

15 [w]"Now, O Lord, our God, who led your
people out of the land of Egypt with a strong
hand, and made a name for yourself even to this
day, we have sinned, we are guilty. 16O Lord, in
keeping with all your just deeds, let your anger
and your wrath be turned away from your city
Jerusalem, your holy mountain. On account of
our sins and the crimes of our fathers, Jerusalem
and your people have become the reproach of all
our neighbors. 17Hear, therefore, O God, the
prayer and petition of your servant; and for your
own sake, O Lord, let your face shine upon your
desolate sanctuary. 18 [x]Give ear, O my God, and
listen; open your eyes and see our ruins and the
city which bears your name. When we present
our petition before you, we rely not on our just
deeds, but on your great mercy. 19O Lord, hear!
O Lord, pardon! O Lord, be attentive and act
without delay, for your own sake, O my God,
because this city and your people bear your
name!"

20I was still occupied with my prayer, confess-
ing my sin and the sin of my people Israel,
presenting my petition to the LORD, my God, on
behalf of his holy mountain— 21 [y]I was still
occupied with this prayer, when Gabriel, the one
whom I had seen before in vision, came to me in
rapid flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.*
22He instructed me in these words: "Daniel, I
have now come to give you understanding.
23When you began your petition, an answer was
given which I have come to announce, because
you are beloved. Therefore, mark the answer
and understand the vision.

24 "Seventy weeks* are decreed
for your people and for your holy city:

However, the author of Daniel, living during the persecution of Antiochus, sees the conditions of the exile still existing; therefore in his mediation he extends Jeremiah's number to seventy weeks of years (v 24), i.e., seven times seventy years, to characterize the Jewish victory over the Seleucids as the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy.

**9, 13:** As it is written: the first time that this formula of Scriptural citation is used in the Bible. The reference (v 11) is to the sanctions of Lv 26, 14ff; Dt 28, 15ff.

**9, 21:** At the time of the evening sacrifice: between three and four in the afternoon.

**9, 24:** Seventy weeks: i. e., of years. Just as Jeremiah's seventy years was an approximation (see note on v 2), the four hundred and ninety years here is not to be taken literally. Similarly, the distribution of the "weeks" in the following verses indicates only relative proportions of the total figure. A most holy: an expression used almost always of an object, the altar or the temple, but once (1 Chr 23, 13) of Aaron the high priest. The author sees the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God, realized in the reconsecration of the temple after Antiochus' desecration, or personified in the holy community (like the Son of Man of chapter 7). The Fathers of the church almost unanimously understood the reference to be to Christ, the final realization of the prophecy.

u Bar 1, 17. v Dt 27, 15. w Bar 2, 11; Ex 14, 22. x Jer 25, 29. y Dn 8, 16.

Then transgression will stop and sin will end,
guilt will be expiated,
Everlasting justice will be introduced,
vision and prophecy ratified,
and a most holy will be anointed.
25 Know and understand this:
From the utterance of the word
that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt*
Until one who is anointed and a leader,
there shall be seven weeks.
During sixty-two weeks
it shall be rebuilt,
With streets and trenches,
in time of affliction.
26 After the sixty-two weeks
an anointed* shall be cut down
when he does not possess the city;
And the people of a leader who will come
shall destroy the sanctuary.
Then the end shall come like a torrent;
until the end there shall be war,
the desolation that is decreed.
27 For one week* he shall make
a firm compact with the many;
Half the week
he shall abolish sacrifice and oblation;
On the temple wing shall be the horrible
abomination
until the ruin that is decreed
is poured out upon the horror." [z]

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 7–12
See RG
344–347,
349–350

**Vision of the Hellenistic Wars*** 1 In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel, who had been named Belteshazzar. The revelation was certain: a great war; he understood it from the vision. 2 In those days, I, Daniel, mourned* three full weeks. 3 I ate no savory food, I took no meat or wine, and I did not anoint myself at all until the end of the three weeks.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month* I was on the bank of the great river, the Tigris. 5 As I looked up, I saw a man* dressed in linen with a belt of fine gold around his waist. 6 His body was like chrysolite, his face shone like lightning, his eyes were like fiery torches, his arms and feet looked like burnished bronze, and his voice sounded like the roar of a multitude. 7 I alone, Daniel, saw the vision; but great fear seized the men who were with me; they fled and hid themselves, although they did not see the vision. 8 So I was left alone, seeing this great vision. No strength remained in me; I turned the color of death and was powerless. 9 When I heard the sound of his voice, I fell face forward in a faint.

10 But then a hand touched me, raising me to my hands and knees. 11 "Daniel, beloved," he said to me, "understand the words which I am speaking to you; stand up, for my mission now is to you." When he said this to me, I stood up trembling. 12 "Fear not, Daniel," he continued; "from the first day you made up your mind to acquire understanding and humble yourself before God, your prayer was heard. Because of it I started out, 13 but the prince of the kingdom of Persia* stood in my way for twenty-one days,

**9, 25:** From the utterance . . . to be rebuilt: from the time of Jeremiah's prophecy. One . . . anointed and a leader: either Cyrus, who was called the anointed of the Lord to end the exile (Is 45, 1), or the high priest Joshua, who presided over the rebuilding of the altar of sacrifice after the exile (Ezr 3, 2). Seven weeks: forty-nine years, an approximation of the time of the exile. During sixty-two weeks . . . rebuilt: a period of 434 years, roughly approximating the interval between the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile and the beginning of the Seleucid persecution.

**9, 26:** An anointed: doubtless the high priest Onias III, murdered in 171 B.C., from which the author dates the beginning of the persecution. Onias was in exile when he was killed. A leader: Antiochus IV.

**9, 27:** One week: the final phase of the period in view, the time of Antiochus' persecution; he is Antiochus himself. The many: the faithless Jews who allied themselves with the heathen; cf 1 Mc 1, 11ff. Half the week: three and a half years; see note on Dn 7, 25. The temple was desecrated by Antiochus from 167 to 165 B.C. The temple wing: probably the main portal. The horrible abomination: see note on Dn 8, 13. Perhaps an inscription was placed on the portal of the temple dedicating it to the Olympian Zeus. Our Lord referred to this passage in his own prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24, 15).

**10, 1—12, 13:** This final vision repeats some of the material contained in the others. It is concerned with history of the worldly kingdoms from the time of Cyrus to the defeat of the tyrant Antiochus.

**10, 2:** Mourned: perhaps the author intends to recall the interruption in the rebuilding of the temple, which occurred during this time (Ezr 4, 1–4).

**10, 4:** The first month: the month Nisan (mid-March to mid-April).

**10, 5f:** The heavenly person of the vision is probably the angel Gabriel, as in Dn 9, 21. Chrysolite: or topaz, a yellowish precious stone.

**10, 13:** The prince of the kingdom of Persia: the guardian angel

z Mt 24, 15; 2 Mc 6, 2.

until finally Michael, one of the chief princes,
came to help me. I left him there with the prince
of the kings of Persia, [14]and came to make you
understand what shall happen to your people in
the days to come; for there is yet a vision
concerning those days."

[15]While he was speaking thus to me, I fell
forward and kept silent. [16]Then something like a
man's hand touched my lips; I opened my
mouth and said to the one facing me, "My lord, I
was seized with pangs at the vision and I was
powerless. [17]How can my lord's servant speak
with you, my lord? For now no strength or even
breath is left in me." [18]The one who looked like
a man touched me again and strengthened me,
saying, [19]"Fear not, beloved, you are safe; take
courage and be strong." [20]When he spoke to me,
I grew strong and said, "Speak, my lord, for you
have strengthened me." "Do you know," he
asked, "why I have come to you? Soon I must
fight the prince of Persia again. When I leave,
the prince of Greece will come; [21] [a]but I shall tell
you what is written in the truthful book. No one
supports me against all these except Michael,
your prince, [1]standing* as a reinforcement and a
bulwark for me. [2]Now I shall tell you the truth.

## CHAPTER 11

"Three kings of Persia* are yet to come; and a
fourth shall acquire the greatest riches of all.
Strengthened by his riches, he shall rouse all the
kingdom of Greece. [3]But a powerful king shall
appear and rule with great might, doing as he
pleases. [4]No sooner shall he appear than his
kingdom shall be broken and divided in the four
directions under heaven; but not among his
descendants or in keeping with his mighty rule,
for his kingdom shall be torn to pieces and
belong to others than they.

[5]*"The king of the south shall grow strong,
but one of his princes shall grow stronger still
and govern a domain greater than his. [6]After
some years they shall become allies: the daugh-
ter of the king of the south shall come to the king
of the north in the interest of peace. But her bid
for power shall fail: and her line shall not be
recognized, and she shall be given up, together
with those who brought her, her son and her
husband. But later [7]a descendant of her line shall
succeed to his rank, and shall come against the
rampart and enter the stronghold of the king of
the north, and conquer them. [8]Even their gods,
with their molten images and their precious
vessels of silver and gold, he shall carry away as
booty into Egypt. For years he shall have nothing
to do with the king of the north. [9]Then the latter
shall invade the land of the king of the south,
and return to his own country.

[10]"But his sons shall prepare and assemble a
great armed host, which shall advance like a
flood, then withdraw. When it returns and
surges around the stronghold, [11]the king of the
south, provoked, shall go out to fight against the
king of the north, whose great host shall make a
stand but shall be given into his hand [12]and be
carried off. In the pride of his heart, he shall lay
low tens of thousands, but he shall not triumph.
[13]For the king of the north shall raise another
army, greater than before; after some years he
shall attack with this large army and great
resources. [14] [b]In those times many shall resist the
king of the south, and outlaws of your people
shall rise up in fulfillment of vision, but they
shall fail. [15]When the king of the north comes,
he shall set up siegeworks and take the fortified
city by storm. The power of the south shall not
withstand him, and not even his picked troops
shall have the strength to resist. [16]He shall attack

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of Persia. The later Judaism ascribed protecting angels to various groups of human society, often as little more than personifications. Michael: the angel who is the protector of God's people (v 21).

**10, 1f:** Standing . . . truth: these are the first two verses of ch 11.

**11, 2–4:** The three kings of Persia who follow Cyrus are uncertain, since there were more than three Persian kings between Cyrus and the dissolution of the kingdom. The fourth is doubtless Xerxes I (486–465 B.C.), the great campaigner against Greece. The powerful king is Alexander the Great, who ended the Persian empire by his victory at Issus in 333 B.C.

**11, 5–45:** These verses describe the dynastic histories of the Ptolemies in Egypt (the king of the south) and the Seleucids in Syria (the king of the north), the two divisions of the Hellenistic empire that were of interest to the author (v 6). In vv 10–20 is described the struggle between the two kingdoms for the control of Palestine, in which the Seleucids were eventually victorious. The reference in v 20 is to Seleucus IV, who sent Heliodorus to plunder the temple treasure in Jerusalem (2 Mc 3). Finally, vv 21–45 describe the career of Antiochus IV and his persecution, in details that have been seen above.

a Rv 12, 7. b Is 19, 1.

him and do as he pleases, with no one to
withstand him. He shall stop in the glorious
land, dealing destruction. [17]He shall set himself
to penetrate the entire strength of his kingdom.
He shall conclude an agreement with him and
give him a daughter in marriage in order to
destroy the kingdom, but this shall not succeed
in his favor. [18]He shall turn to the coastland and
take many, but a leader shall put an end to his
shameful conduct, so that he cannot renew it
against him. [19]He shall turn to the strongholds of
his own land, but shall stumble and fall, to be
found no more. [20]In his stead one shall arise
who will send a tax collector through the
glorious kingdom, but he shall soon be de-
stroyed, though not in conflict or in battle.

[21]"There shall rise in his place a despicable
person, to whom the royal insignia shall not be
given. By stealth and fraud he shall seize the
kingdom. [22]Armed might shall be completely
overwhelmed by him and crushed, and even the
prince of the covenant. [23]After allying with him,
he shall treacherously rise to power with a small
party. [24]By stealth he shall enter prosperous
provinces and do that which his fathers or
grandfathers never did; he shall distribute spoil,
booty, and riches among them and devise plots
against their strongholds; but only for a time.
[25]He shall call on his strength and cleverness to
meet the king of the south with a great army;
the king of the south shall prepare for battle with
a very large and strong army, but he shall not
succeed because of the plots devised against
him. [26]Even his table companions shall seek to
destroy him, his army shall be overwhelmed,
and many shall fall slain. [27]The two kings,
resolved on evil, shall sit at table together and
exchange lies, but they shall have no success,
because the appointed end is not yet.

[28]"He shall turn back toward his land with
great riches, his mind set against the holy
covenant; he shall arrange matters and return to
his land. [29]At the time appointed he shall come
again to the south, but this time it shall not be as
before. [30]When ships of the Kittim* confront
him, he shall lose heart and retreat. Then he
shall direct his rage and energy against the holy
covenant; those who forsake it he shall once
more single out. [31]Armed forces shall move at
his command and defile the sanctuary strong-
hold, abolishing the daily sacrifice and setting up
the horrible abomination. [32]By his deceit he shall
make some who were disloyal to the covenant
apostatize; but those who remain loyal to their
God shall take strong action. [33]The nation's wise
men shall instruct the many; though for a time
they will become victims of the sword, of flames,
exile, and plunder. [34]When they fall, few people
shall help them, but many shall join them out of
treachery. [35]Of the wise men, some shall fall, so
that the rest may be tested, refined, and purified,
until the end time which is still appointed to
come.

[36]*"The king shall do as he pleases, exalting
himself and making himself greater than any
god; he shall utter dreadful blasphemies against
the God of gods. He shall prosper only till divine
wrath is ready, for what is determined must take
place. [37]He shall have no regard for the gods of
his ancestors or for the one in whom women
delight; for no god shall he have regard, because
he shall make himself greater than all. [38]Instead,
he shall give glory to the god of strongholds; a
god unknown to his fathers he shall glorify with
gold, silver, precious stones, and other treasures.
[39]To defend the strongholds he shall station a
people of a foreign god. Whoever acknowledges
him he shall provide with abundant honor; he
shall make them rule over the many and distrib-
ute the land as a reward.

[40]"At the appointed time the king of the south
shall come to grips with him, but the king of the
north shall overwhelm him with chariots and
horsemen and a great fleet, passing through the
countries like a flood. [41]He shall enter the
glorious land and many shall fall, except Edom,
Moab, and the chief part of Ammon, which shall
escape from his power. [42]He shall extend his

11, 30: Kittim: originally this word meant Cypriots or other island dwellers. Here it means the Romans, who forced Antiochus to withdraw from Egypt during his second campaign there.

11, 36–39: Instead of venerating Apollo, one of the gods of his ancestors, Antiochus venerated, and even identified himself with, Zeus Olympios, whom the Romans equated with the god of their fortress in Rome, Jupiter Capitolinus, the god of strongholds.

power over the countries, and not even the land
of Egypt shall escape. [43]He shall control the
riches of gold and silver and all the treasures of
Egypt; Libya and Ethiopia shall be in his train.
[44]When news from the east and the north
terrifies him, he shall set out with great fury to
slay and to doom many. [45]He shall pitch the
tents of his royal pavilion between the sea and
the glorious holy mountain, but he shall come to
his end with none to help him.

## CHAPTER 12

[1] "At that time there shall arise
Michael, the great prince,
guardian of your people; [c]
It shall be a time unsurpassed in distress
since nations began until that time.
At that time your people shall escape,
everyone who is found written in the
book.*
[2]Many of those who sleep
in the dust of the earth shall awake;*
Some shall live forever,
others shall be an everlasting horror and
disgrace. [d]
[3]But the wise shall shine brightly
like the splendor of the firmament,
And those who lead the many to justice
shall be like the stars forever. [e]

[4]"As for you, Daniel, keep secret the message
and seal the book until the end time; many shall
fall away and evil shall increase."
[5]I, Daniel, looked and saw two others, one
standing on either bank of the river. [6]One of
them said to the man clothed in linen, who was
upstream, "How long shall it be to the end of
these appalling things?" [7]*f*The man clothed in
linen, who was upstream, lifted his right and left
hands to heaven; and I heard him swear by him
who lives forever that it should be for a year, two
years, a half-year;* and that, when the power of
the destroyer of the holy people was brought to
an end, all these things should end. [8]I heard, but
I did not understand; so I asked, "My lord, what
follows this?" [9]"Go, Daniel," he said, "because
the words are to be kept secret and sealed until
the end time. [10]Many shall be refined, purified,
and tested, but the wicked shall prove wicked;
none of them shall have understanding, but the
wise shall have it. [11]From the time that the daily
sacrifice is abolished and the horrible abomination is set up, there shall be one thousand two
hundred and ninety days. [12]Blessed is the man
who has patience and perseveres until the one
thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.
[13]Go, take your rest, you shall rise for your
reward at the end of days."

Ch 7–12
See RG
344–347,
349–350

# III: Appendix*

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 13
See RG
350

**Susanna's Virtue** [1]In Babylon there lived a
man named Joakim, [2]who married a very beautiful and God-fearing woman, Susanna, the daughter of Hilkiah; [3]her pious parents had trained
their daughter according to the law of Moses.
[4]Joakim was very rich; he had a garden near his
house, and the Jews had recourse to him often
because he was the most respected of them all.
[5]That year, two elders of the people were
appointed judges, of whom the Lord said, "Wickedness has come out of Babylon: from the elders
who were to govern the people as judges."
[6]These men, to whom all brought their cases,
frequented the house of Joakim. [7]When the
people left at noon, Susanna used to enter her
husband's garden for a walk. [8]When the old
men saw her enter every day for her walk, they
began to lust for her. [9]They suppressed their
consciences; they would not allow their eyes to
look to heaven, and did not keep in mind just
judgments. [10]Though both were enamored of
her, they did not tell each other their trouble,

**12, 1:** Written in the book: the book of God's predestination.
**12, 2:** The first Israelites who have fallen (Dn 11, 33ff) shall awake, that is, rise to live forever. A resurrection of the wicked as in later, Christian teaching (Jn 5, 28f) is implied here if the others are included in the many; but cf Is 66, 24.
**12, 7:** A year, two years, a half-year: see note on Dn 7, 25. The author's perspective is the end of Antiochus, and beyond, the final consummation of all things.

**13, 1—14, 42:** The short stories in these two chapters may have originally been about some other Daniel or Daniels than the hero of the main part of the book. They exist now only in Greek, but probably were first composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. They are excluded from the Jewish canon of Scripture, but the church has always included them among the inspired writings.

c Rv 12, 7. d Mt 25, 46; Jn 5, 29. e Wis 3, 7. f Rv 10, 5f.

[11]for they were ashamed to reveal their lustful
desire to have her. [12]Day by day they watched
eagerly for her. [13]One day they said to each
other, "Let us be off for home, it is time for
lunch." So they went out and parted; [14]but both
turned back, and when they met again, they
asked each other the reason. They admitted their
lust, and then they agreed to look for an
occasion when they could meet her alone.

[15]One day, while they were waiting for the
right moment, she entered the garden as usual,
with two maids only. She decided to bathe, for
the weather was warm. [16]Nobody else was there
except the two elders, who had hidden them-
selves and were watching her. [17]"Bring me oil
and soap," she said to the maids, "and shut the
garden doors while I bathe." [18]They did as she
said; they shut the garden doors and left by the
side gate to fetch what she had ordered, un-
aware that the elders were hidden inside.

[19]As soon as the maids had left, the two old
men got up and hurried to her. [20]"Look," they
said, "the garden doors are shut, and no one can
see us; give in to our desire, and lie with us. [21]If
you refuse, we will testify against you that you
dismissed your maids because a young man was
here with you."

[22]"I am completely trapped," Susanna
groaned. "If I yield, it will be my death; if I
refuse, I cannot escape your power. [23]Yet it is
better for me to fall into your power without
guilt than to sin before the Lord." [24]Then
Susanna shrieked, and the old men also shouted
at her, [25]as one of them ran to open the garden
doors. [26]When the people in the house heard the
cries from the garden, they rushed in by the side
gate to see what had happened to her. [27]At the
accusations by the old men, the servants felt
very much ashamed, for never had any such
thing been said about Susanna.

[28]When the people came to her husband
Joakim the next day, the two wicked elders also
came, fully determined to put Susanna to death.
Before all the people they ordered: [29]"Send for
Susanna, the daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of
Joakim." When she was sent for, [30]she came
with her parents, children and all her relatives.
[31]Susanna, very delicate and beautiful, [32]was
veiled; but those wicked men ordered her to
uncover her face so as to sate themselves with
her beauty. [33]All her relatives and the onlookers
were weeping.

[34]In the midst of the people the two elders
rose up and laid their hands on her head.
[35]Through her tears she looked up to heaven, for
she trusted in the Lord wholeheartedly. [36]The
elders made this accusation: "As we were walk-
ing in the garden alone, this woman entered
with two girls and shut the doors of the garden,
dismissing the girls. [37]A young man, who was
hidden there, came and lay with her. [38]When
we, in a corner of the garden, saw this crime, we
ran toward them. [39]We saw them lying together,
but the man we could not hold, because he was
stronger than we; he opened the doors and ran
off. [40]Then we seized this one and asked who
the young man was, [41]but she refused to tell us.
We testify to this." The assembly believed them,
since they were elders and judges of the people,
and they condemned her to death.

[42]But Susanna cried aloud: "O eternal God,
you know what is hidden and are aware of all
things before they come to be: [43]you know that
they have testified falsely against me. Here I am
about to die, though I have done none of the
things with which these wicked men have
charged me."

[44]The Lord heard her prayer. [45]As she was
being led to execution, God stirred up the holy
spirit of a young boy named Daniel, [46]and he
cried aloud: "I will have no part in the death of
this woman." [47]All the people turned and asked
him, "What is this you are saying?" [48]He stood
in their midst and continued, "Are you such
fools, O Israelites! To condemn a woman of
Israel without examination and without clear
evidence? [49]Return to court, for they have
testified falsely against her."

[50]Then all the people returned in haste. To
Daniel the elders said, "Come, sit with us and
inform us, since God has given you the prestige
of old age." [51]But he replied, "Separate these
two far from one another that I may examine
them."

52 After they were separated one from the
other, he called one of them and said: "How you
have grown evil with age! Now have your past
sins come to term: 53 *g* passing unjust sentences,
condemning the innocent, and freeing the guilty,
although the Lord says, 'The innocent and the
just you shall not put to death.' 54 Now, then, if
you were a witness, tell me under what tree you
saw them together." 55 "Under a mastic tree,"*
he answered. "Your fine lie has cost you your
head," said Daniel; "for the angel of God shall
receive the sentence from him and split you in
two." 56 Putting him to one side, he ordered the
other one to be brought. "Offspring of Canaan,
not of Judah," Daniel said to him, "beauty has
seduced you, lust has subverted your con-
science. 57 This is how you acted with the
daughters of Israel, and in their fear they yielded
to you; but a daughter of Judah did not tolerate
your wickedness.* 58 Now then, tell me under
what tree you surprised them together." 59 "Un-
der an oak," he said. "Your fine lie has cost you
also your head," said Daniel; "for the angel of
God waits with a sword to cut you in two so as
to make an end of you both."

60 The whole assembly cried aloud, blessing
God who saves those that hope in him. 61 *h* They
rose up against the two elders, for by their own
words Daniel had convicted them of perjury.
According to the law of Moses, they inflicted on
them the penalty they had plotted to impose on
their neighbor: 62 they put them to death. Thus
was innocent blood spared that day.

63 Hilkiah and his wife praised God for their
daughter Susanna, as did Joakim her husband
and all her relatives, because she was found
innocent of any shameful deed. 64 And from that
day onward Daniel was greatly esteemed by the
people.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 14
See RG
351

**Bel and the Dragon** 1 After King Astyages* was
laid with his fathers, Cyrus the Persian suc-
ceeded to his kingdom. 2 Daniel was the king's
favorite and was held in higher esteem than any
of the friends of the king.* 3 The Babylonians had
an idol called Bel,* and every day they provided
for it six barrels of fine flour, forty sheep, and six
measures of wine. 4 The king worshiped it and
went every day to adore it; but Daniel adored
only his God. 5 When the king asked him, "Why
do you not adore Bel?" Daniel replied, "Because
I worship not idols made with hands, but only
the living God who made heaven and earth and
has dominion over all mankind." 6 Then the king
continued, "You do not think Bel is a living god?
Do you not see how much he eats and drinks
every day?" 7 Daniel began to laugh. "Do not be
deceived, O king," he said; "it is only clay inside
and bronze outside; it has never taken any food
or drink." 8 Enraged, the king called his priests
and said to them, "Unless you tell me who it is
that consumes these provisions, you shall die.
9 But if you can show that Bel consumes them,
Daniel shall die for blaspheming Bel." Daniel
said to the king, "Let it be as you say!" 10 There
were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives
and children.

When the king went with Daniel into the
temple of Bel, 11 the priests of Bel said, "See, we
are going to leave. Do you, O king, set out the
food and prepare the wine; then shut the door
and seal it with your ring. 12 If you do not find
that Bel has eaten it all when you return in the
morning, we are to die; otherwise Daniel shall
die for his lies against us." 13 They were not
perturbed, because under the table they had
made a secret entrance through which they
always came in to consume the food. 14 After
they departed the king set the food before Bel,

13, 55–59: The contrast between the mastic tree, which is small, and the majestic oak emphasizes the contradiction between the statements of the two elders. In the Greek text there is a play on words between the names of these two trees and the mortal punishment decreed by Daniel for the elders.

13, 57: Besides the evident moral intent of this story, it appears to have served the purpose of contrasting the northern and the southern kingdom, Israel and Judah, in favor of the latter.

14, 1: King Astyages: the last of the Median kings, defeated by Cyrus in 550 B.C. This story preserves the fiction of a successive Median and Persian rule of Babylon.

14, 2: This verse in the Septuagint Greek text reads: "There was once a priest, Daniel by name, the son of Abal, a favorite of the king of Babylon." This may represent an earlier form of the story, before it was attached to the Book of Daniel.

14, 3: Bel: see the note on Dn 4, 5.

g Ex 23, 7. h 61f: Dt 19, 18. 19.

while Daniel ordered his servants to bring some
ashes, which they scattered through the whole
temple; the king alone was present. Then they
went outside, sealed the closed door with the
king's ring, and departed. [15]The priests entered
that night as usual, with their wives and chil-
dren, and they ate and drank everything.

[16]Early the next morning, the king came with
Daniel. [17]"Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" he
asked. And Daniel answered, "They are unbro-
ken, O king." [18]As soon as he had opened the
door, the king looked at the table and cried
aloud, "Great you are, O Bel; there is no trickery
in you." [19]But Daniel laughed and kept the king
from entering. "Look at the floor," he said;
"whose footprints are these?" [20]"I see the foot-
prints of men, women, and children!" said the
king. [21]The angry king arrested the priests, their
wives, and their children. They showed him the
secret door by which they used to enter to
consume what was on the table. [22]He put them
to death, and handed Bel over to Daniel, who
destroyed it and its temple.

[23]There was a great dragon which the Babylo-
nians worshiped. [24]"Look!" said the king to
Daniel, "you cannot deny that this is a living
god, so adore it." [25]But Daniel answered, "I
adore the Lord, my God, for he is the living God.
[26]Give me permission, O king, and I will kill this
dragon without sword or club." "I give you
permission," the king said. [27]Then Daniel took
some pitch, fat, and hair; these he boiled to-
gether and made into cakes. He put them into
the mouth of the dragon, and when the dragon
ate them, he burst asunder. "This," he said, "is
what you worshiped."

[28]When the Babylonians heard this, they were
angry and turned against the king. "The king has
become a Jew," they said; "he has destroyed Bel,
killed the dragon, and put the priests to death."
[29]They went to the king and demanded: "Hand
Daniel over to us, or we will kill you and your
family." [30]When he saw himself threatened with
violence, the king was forced to hand Daniel
over to them. [31]They threw Daniel into a lions'
den, where he remained six days. [32]In the den
were seven lions, and two carcasses and two
sheep had been given to them daily. But now
they were given nothing, so that they would
devour Daniel.

[33]In Judea there was a prophet, Habakkuk; he
mixed some bread in a bowl with the stew he
had boiled, and was going to bring it to the
reapers in the field, [34]when an angel of the Lord
told him, "Take the lunch you have to Daniel in
the lions' den at Babylon." [35]But Habakkuk
answered, "Babylon, sir, I have never seen, and I
do not know the den!" [36] [i]The angel of the Lord
seized him by the crown of his head and carried
him by the hair; with the speed of the wind, he
set him down in Babylon above the den. [37]"Dan-
iel, Daniel," cried Habakkuk, "take the lunch
God has sent you." [38]"You have remembered
me, O God," said Daniel; "you have not for-
saken those who love you." [39]While Daniel
began to eat, the angel of the Lord at once
brought Habakkuk back to his own place.

[40]On the seventh day the king came to mourn
for Daniel. As he came to the den and looked in,
there was Daniel, sitting there! [41]The king cried
aloud, "You are great, O Lord, the God of
Daniel, and there is no other besides you!"
[42]Daniel he took out, but those who had tried to
destroy him he threw into the den, and they
were devoured in a moment before his eyes.

i Ez 8, 3.

# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Hosea
See RG
354–358

Hosea belonged to the northern kingdom and began his prophetic career in the last years of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.). Some believe that he was a priest, others that he was a cult prophet; the prophecy, our only source of information concerning his life, gives us no certain answer in the matter. The collected oracles reveal a very sensitive, emotional man who could pass quickly from violent anger to the deepest tenderness. The prophecy pivots around his own unfortunate marriage to Gomer, a personal tragedy which profoundly influenced his teaching. In fact, his own prophetic vocation and message were immeasurably deepened by the painful experience he underwent in his married life.

Gomer, the adulteress, symbolized faithless Israel. And just as Hosea could not give up his wife forever even when she played the harlot, so Yahweh could not renounce Israel, who had been betrothed to him. God would chastise, but it would be the chastisement of the jealous lover, longing to bring back the beloved to the fresh and pure joy of their first love.

Israel's infidelity took the form of idolatry and ruthless oppression of the poor. No amount of mechanically offered sacrifices could atone for her serious sins. Chastisement alone remained; God would have to strip her of the rich ornaments bestowed by her false lovers and thus bring her back to the true lover. A humiliated Israel would again seek Yahweh. The eleventh chapter of Hosea is one of the summits of Old Testament theology; God's love for his people has never been expressed more tenderly. Hosea began the tradition of describing the relation between Yahweh and Israel in terms of marriage. This symbolism appears later on in the Old Testament; and, in the New, both St. John and St. Paul express in the same imagery the union between Christ and his church.

The Book of Hosea is divided as follows:

I. The Prophet's Marriage and Its Lesson (1, 1—3, 5).
II. Israel's Guilt and Punishment (4, 1—14, 10).

## I: The Prophet's Marriage and Its Lesson*

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–3
See RG
355–357

**Marriage with an Unfaithful Wife** [1]The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. [2]In the beginning of the LORD's speaking to Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea:

Go, take a harlot wife* and harlot's children,
for the land gives itself to harlotry,
turning away from the LORD.

[3]So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived and bore him a son. [4]Then the LORD said to him:

1—3: This section is ordinarily thought to be biographical, the prophet's personal tragedy figuring as the relation of God to his people Israel. Hosea's marriage to a harlot wife represents Israel's infidelity to her Lord; hence the symbolic names of the children (Hos 1, 4–9). In Hos 2, 4–25 the Lord protests this infidelity and decrees its consequences, but promises restoration in return for amendment; his punishments are medicinal. In chapter 3 Hosea once more takes back his wife, but only conditionally, signifying God's long-suffering love for Israel and hope for her return.

1, 2: A harlot wife: this does not necessarily mean that Gomer was a harlot when Hosea married her; the verse describes the event in its final consequences.

Give him the name Jezreel,*
for in a little while
I will punish the house of Jehu
for the bloodshed at Jezreel
And bring to an end the kingdom
of the house of Israel;
5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel
in the valley of Jezreel.

6 When she conceived again and bore a daughter, the LORD said to him:

Give her the name Lo-ruhama;*
I no longer feel pity for the house of Israel:
rather, I abhor them utterly.
7 Yet for the house of Judah I feel pity;
I will save them by the LORD, their God;
But I will not save them by war,
by sword or bow, by horses or horsemen.*

8 After she weaned Lo-ruhama, she conceived and bore a son. 9 Then the LORD said:

Give him the name Lo-ammi,*
for you are not my people,
and I will not be your God.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1–3
See RG
355–357

### Israel's Punishment and Restoration

4 Protest against your mother, protest!*
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband.
Let her remove her harlotry from before her,
her adultery from between her breasts,
5 Or I will strip her naked,*
leaving her as on the day of her birth;
I will make her like the desert,
reduce her to an arid land,
and slay her with thirst.
6 I will have no pity on her children,
for they are the children of harlotry.
7 Yes, their mother has played the harlot;
she that conceived them has acted
shamefully.
"I will go after my lovers,"* she said,
"who give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."

10 Since she has not known
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the wine, and the oil,
And her abundance of silver,
and of gold, which they used for Baal,
11 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time,
and my wine in its season;
I will snatch away my wool and my flax,
with which she covers her nakedness.
12 So now I will lay bare her shame
before the eyes of her lovers,
and no one can deliver her out of my hand.
13 I will bring an end to all her joy,
her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths,
and all her solemnities.
14 I will lay waste her vines and fig trees,
of which she said, "These are the hire
my lovers have given me";
I will turn them into rank growth
and wild beasts shall devour them.
15 I will punish her for the days of the Baals,*
for whom she burnt incense
While she decked herself out with her rings
and her jewels,
and, in going after her lovers,
forgot me, says the LORD.

**1, 4:** Jezreel: the strategic valley in northern Israel where Jehu brought the dynasty of Omri to an end through bloodshed (2 Kgs 9–10). Jeroboam II was the last king but one of the house of Jehu; the prophecy in this verse was fulfilled by the murder of his son, who reigned only six months (2 Kgs 15, 8–10).

**1, 6:** Lo-ruhama: "she is not pitied." The "pity" that is here withheld from Israel is God's gratuitous love which inspires his beneficent acts.

**1, 7:** The terrible punishments announced by the prophets were so fully realized that later generations made a point of recalling the same prophets' messages of consolation also, even though it meant taking these from another context. Thus, an editor placed the words of Hos 2, 1ff after the repudiation of Israel in Hos 1, 9; here the more natural order has been restored. The present verse is another example of the same thing. In addition, it may be the work of a later hand, dating from a time when the prophecies of Hosea were circulated in the south, after the dissolution of the northern kingdom that he had prophesied. The second part of the verse emphasizes the power of the Lord, who needs no human agents to fulfill his will. It may refer to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib (2 Kgs 19, 35ff).

**1, 9:** Lo-ammi: "not my people."

**2, 4:** The Lord speaks of Israel, still using the example of Hosea's wife.

**2, 5:** I will strip her naked: contemporary documents indicate that this was a conventional punishment for adultery.

**2, 7:** My lovers: the local fertility deities to whom, rather than to the Lord (v 10), the unfaithful Israelites attributed the produce of the land.

**2, 15:** The days of the Baals: ritual observances held in various local shrines in honor of Baal.

8 Therefore, I will hedge in her way with
thorns*
and erect a wall against her,
so that she cannot find her paths.
9 If she runs after her lovers, she shall not
overtake them;
if she looks for them she shall not find them.
Then she shall say,
"I will go back to my first husband,
for it was better with me then than now."

16 So I will allure her;*
I will lead her into the desert
and speak to her heart.
17 From there I will give her the vineyards she
had,
and the valley of Achor as a door of hope.
She shall respond there as in the days of her
youth,
when she came up from the land of Egypt.

18 On that day, says the LORD,
She shall call me "My husband,"
and never again "My baal."*
19 Then will I remove from her mouth the names
of the Baals,
so that they shall no longer be invoked.
20 I will make a covenant for them on that day,
with the beasts of the field,
With the birds of the air,
and with the things that crawl on the
ground.
Bow and sword and war
I will destroy from the land,
and I will let them take their rest in security.

21 I will espouse you to me forever:*
I will espouse you in right and in justice,
in love and in mercy;
22 I will espouse you in fidelity,
and you shall know the LORD.
23 On that day I will respond, says the LORD;
I will respond to the heavens,
and they shall respond to the earth;
24 The earth shall respond to the grain, and wine,
and oil,
and these shall respond to Jezreel.
25 I will sow him for myself in the land,
and I will have pity on Lo-ruhama.
I will say to Lo-ammi, "You are my people,"
and he shall say, "My God!" [a]

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–3
See RG
355–357

### Triumph of Love

1 *Again the LORD said to me:
Give your love to a woman
beloved of a paramour, an adulteress;
Even as the LORD loves the people of Israel,
though they turn to other gods
and are fond of raisin cakes.*

2 So I bought her for fifteen pieces of silver and
a homer* and a lethech of barley. 3 Then I said to
her:

"Many days you shall wait for me;
you shall not play the harlot
Or belong to any man;

**2, 8f:** The crop failures, blight, etc., sent by the Lord (vv 11–14) have as their purpose to make Israel see the folly of her ways.

**2, 16f:** Israel's journey in the desert represents for Hosea the time of Israel's fidelity, before it was corrupted by the ways of Canaan; cf Jer 2, 2–7; Am 5, 25. Thus, he pictures a restoration in terms of a new entry into the promised land.

**2, 18:** My baal: the word means "lord, master." It was commonly used by women of their husbands, but it is to be shunned as a title for the Lord because of its association with the pagan god Baal. Probably it had been so used by many Israelites, who saw little if any difference between the worship of the Lord and the worship of Baal.

**2, 21f:** The Lord will once more espouse Israel; the qualities ascribed to the renewed people are the bridal gift (cf Gn 24, 53) with which he will endow it. In right and in justice: two terms dear to Hosea, used by him especially to condemn the popular social injustice and corruption of the legal processes. Here they mean right conduct in general. Love: one of the most characteristic words of Hosea's prophecy. It means a dutiful love, based on a social relation; here it refers to the covenant between God and his people. It is a love fulfilled by the performance of mutual obligations. Mercy: from the same root as the word translated pity in Hos 1, 6; cf v 25. And you shall know the Lord: another characteristic expression of Hosea; cf Hos 4, 1; 5, 4; 6, 3. 6. It means not an abstract but a practical knowledge, i.e., acknowledgment of his will, obedience to his law.

**3, 1–5:** Hosea is instructed to take Gomer back, redeeming her from her paramours. On condition of her amendment, she will be restored to her former position of wife. This in turn signifies God's enduring love for his people. He will put the people through a period of trial—the dissolution of the kingdom—in order that they may return to him wholeheartedly.

**3, 1:** Raisin cakes: offerings to the fertility goddess Ashera, the female counterpart of Baal; cf Jer 7, 18; 44, 19.

**3, 2:** Homer: about ten bushels. Lethech: a half-homer.

a Rom 9, 25; 1 Pt 2, 10.

I in turn will wait for you."
4 For the people of Israel shall remain many days
without king or prince,
Without sacrifice or sacred pillar,*
without ephod or household idols.
5 Then the people of Israel shall turn back
and seek the LORD, their God,
and David, their king;*
They shall come trembling to the LORD
and to his bounty, in the last days. [b]
1 *The number of the Israelites
shall be like the sand of the sea,
which can be neither measured nor
counted.
Whereas they were called,
"Lo-ammi,"
They shall be called,
"Children of the living God." [c]
2 Then the people of Judah and of Israel
shall be gathered together;
They shall appoint for themselves one head
and come up from other lands,
for great shall be the day of Jezreel.
3 Say to your brothers, "Ammi,"
and to your sisters, "Ruhama."

# II: Israel's Guilt and Punishment

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

### Crimes of Israel

1 Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel,
for the LORD has a grievance
against the inhabitants of the land:
There is no fidelity, no mercy,
no knowledge of God in the land.
2 False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and
adultery!
in their lawlessness, bloodshed follows
bloodshed. [d]
3 Therefore the land mourns,
and everything that dwells in it languishes:
The beasts of the field,
the birds of the air,
and even the fish of the sea perish.

### Guilt of the Priests

4 But let no one protest, let no one complain;
with you is my grievance, O priests!*
5 You shall stumble in the day,
and the prophets shall stumble with you at
night;
I will destroy your mother.
6 My people perish for want of knowledge!
Since you have rejected knowledge,
I will reject you from my priesthood;
Since you have ignored the law of your God,
I will also ignore your sons.
7 One and all they sin against me,
exchanging their glory for shame.
8 They feed on the sin of my people,
and are greedy for their guilt.
9 The priests shall fare no better than the
people:
I will punish them for their ways,
and repay them for their deeds. [e]
10 They shall eat but not be satisfied,
they shall play the harlot but not increase,
Because they have abandoned the LORD
11 to practice harlotry.
Old wine and new
deprive my people of understanding.
12 They consult their piece of wood,
and their wand* makes pronouncements
for them,
For the spirit of harlotry has led them astray;
they commit harlotry, forsaking their God.
13 On the mountaintops they offer sacrifice
and on the hills they burn incense,

**3, 4:** Sacred pillar: the stone massebah, originally perhaps a phallic symbol, representing Baal. These were also used, with another signification, in Israelite worship; see notes on Gn 28, 18; Ex 34, 13. Ephod: an instrument used in consulting the deity; cf 1 Sm 23, 6–12; 30, 7; see notes on Ex 28, 6. 15–30. Household idols: images regarded as the tutelary deities of the household; cf Gn 31, 19; Jgs 17, 5; 18, 14. 17f.

**3, 5:** David, their king: the messianic King of the Davidic line who will restore the kingdom of God's people; cf Jer 23, 5; Ez 34, 23f. The last days: the messianic age.

**3, 1–3:** These verses (The number . . . Ruhama) (transposed from ch 2) continue the conditional promise of restoration made in Hos 3, 1–5, reversing the dire predictions of chapter 1; the symbolic names now become names of honor: Jezreel, "God sows"; Ammi, "my people"; Ruhama, "she is pitied."

**4, 4ff:** Hosea is particularly severe with the priests in the northern kingdom, who had led the way in the general apostasy from God's law. The prophets here associated with the priests (v 5) were doubtless cult prophets, who were often unworthy of their pretended calling; cf Jer 2, 8; 4, 9f; 6, 13f; 23, 9–40.

**4, 12:** Wood . . . wand: an idol used in divination.

b Ez 34, 23. c Rom 9, 26. d Ex 20, 13–17. e Is 24, 2.

Beneath oak and poplar and terebinth,
because of their pleasant shade.
That is why your daughters play the harlot,
and your daughters-in-law are adulteresses.
14 Am I then to punish your daughters for their harlotry,
your daughters-in-law for their adultery?
You yourselves consort with harlots,
and with prostitutes you offer sacrifice!*
So must a people without understanding come to ruin.
15 Though you play the harlot, O Israel,
let not Judah become guilty!
Come not to Gilgal,*
nor up to Beth-aven,
to swear, "As the Lord lives!"
16 For Israel is as stubborn as a heifer;
will the LORD now give them broad pastures
as though they were lambs?
17 Ephraim* is an associate of idols,
let him alone!
18 When their carousing is over,
they give themselves to harlotry;
in their arrogance they love shame.
19 The wind has bound them up in its pinions;*
they shall have only shame from their altars.

## CHAPTER 5

### Guilt of the Leaders

1 Hear this, O priests,
Pay attention, O house of Israel,
O household of the king, give ear!
It is you who are called to judgment.[f]
For you have become a snare at Mizpah,*
and a net spread upon Tabor.
2 In their perversity they have sunk into wickedness,
and I am rejected by them all.
3 I know Ephraim,
and Israel is not hidden from me;
Now Ephraim has played the harlot,
Israel is defiled.
4 Their deeds do not allow them
to return to their God;
For the spirit of harlotry is in them,
and they do not recognize the LORD.

5 The arrogance of Israel bears witness against him;
Ephraim stumbles in his guilt,
and Judah stumbles with them.
6 With their flocks and their herds they shall go
to seek the LORD, but they shall not find him:
he has withdrawn himself from them.
7 They have been untrue to the LORD,
for they have begotten illegitimate children;
Now shall the new moon devour them
together with their fields.

### Political Upheavals*

8 Blow the horn in Gibeah,
the trumpet in Ramah!
Sound the alarm in Beth-aven:
"Look behind you, O Benjamin!"*
9 Ephraim shall become a waste
on the day of chastisement:
Against the tribes of Israel
I announce what is sure to be.
10 The princes of Judah have become

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

**4, 14:** With prostitutes you offer sacrifice: the ritual prostitution practiced at the Canaanite shrines was introduced even into sanctuaries dedicated to the Lord. In comparison, the adultery that had become common in Israel was a far less reprehensible crime.

**4, 15:** Gilgal: not the Gilgal of the south (Jos 4, 19f), but a sanctuary north of Bethel where there was an association of cult prophets (2 Kgs 2, 1ff; 4, 38). Beth-aven: literally, "house of iniquity," Hosea's nickname for Bethel, or a scribal substitute for Bethel, "house of god," in this context. Bethel was one of the royal shrines of Israel, where there was a schismatic public worhsip of the Lord; cf 1 Kgs 12, 26–30.

**4, 17:** Ephraim: the heartland of the northern kingdom. During the latter part of Hosea's prophetic career, Ephraim was all that remained of Israel after the Assyrians had overrun Transjordan and Galilee.

**4, 19:** The Israelites shall be carried from their country as by a whirlwind. To this their idolatry has brought them.

**5, 1:** Mizpah: probably the Mizpah in Transjordan is meant; cf Jos 11, 8. Tabor: the mountain that dominates the valley of Jezreel.

**5, 8–14:** This passage refers to the Syro-Ephraimite war of 735–734 B.C., when a coalition of Arameans and Israelites attempted to dethrone the king of Judah. Judah repulsed the attempt with the aid of Assyria, and the latter devastated both Aram and Israel; cf 2 Kgs 16, 5–9. Hosea condemns both Israel and Judah for the war.

**5, 8:** A vision of invasion, from Gibeah and Ramah in northern Judah, into Israel.

f Mi 3, 1.

like those that move a boundary line;*
Upon them I will pour out
my wrath like water.[g]

11 Is Ephraim maltreated, his rights violated?
No, he has willingly gone after filth!*
12 I am like a moth for Ephraim,
like maggots* for the house of Judah.
13 When Ephraim saw his infirmity,
and Judah his sore,
Ephraim went to Assyria,
and Judah sent to the great king.*
But he cannot heal you
nor take away your sore.
14 For I am like a lion to Ephraim,
like a young lion to the house of Judah;
It is I who rend the prey and depart,
I carry it away and no one can save it from me.

### Insincere Conversion

15 I will go back to my place
until they pay for their guilt
and seek my presence.*

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 4-14
See RG
357-358

*In their affliction, they shall look for me:
1 "Come, let us return to the LORD,
For it is he who has rent, but he will heal us;
he has struck us, but he will bind our wounds.
2 He will revive us after two days;*
on the third day he will raise us up,
to live in his presence.[h]
3 Let us know, let us strive to know the LORD;
as certain as the dawn is his coming,
and his judgment shines forth like the light of day!
He will come to us like the rain,
like spring rain that waters the earth."

4 What can I do with you, Ephraim?
What can I do with you, Judah?
Your piety* is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that early passes away.
5 For this reason I smote them through the prophets,
I slew them by the words of my mouth;
6 For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice,
and knowledge of God rather than holocausts.[i]
7 But they, in their land, violated the covenant;
there they were untrue to me.
8 Gilead is a city of evildoers,
tracked with blood.
9 As brigands ambush a man,
a band of priests slay on the way to Shechem,
committing monstrous crime.
10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing:
there harlotry is found in Ephraim,
Israel is defiled.
11 For you also, O Judah,
a harvest* has been appointed.

## CHAPTER 7

1 When I would bring about the restoration of my people,
when I would heal Israel,
The guilt of Ephraim stands out,
the wickedness of Samaria;
They practice falsehood,
thieves break in, bandits plunder abroad.
2 Yet they do not remind themselves
that I remember all their wickedness.
Even now their crimes surround them,
present to my sight.

**5, 10:** Like those that move a boundary line: comparison of the invaders to a classic case of social injustice; cf Dt 19, 14; 27, 17; Prv 23, 10f.

**5, 11:** Gone after filth: by allying himself with Aram.

**5, 12:** Moth . . . maggots: internal corruption will work the Lord's punishment on both Israel and Judah.

**5, 13:** Ephraim went . . . the great king: in 738 B.C. the Israelite king Manahem had to pay tribute to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, whose vassal he became (2 Kgs 15, 19f). Under the threat of the Syro-Ephraimite invasion King Ahaz of Judah also submitted himself and his country to Tiglath-pileser (2 Kgs 16, 7–9). "The great king" was the title used by the Assyrian kings.

**5, 15:** The Lord withdraws himself from Israel, hoping for its repentance.

**6, 1:** In . . . me: this is the last line of ch 5.

**6, 2:** After two days; on the third day: after a short lapse of time.

**6, 4:** Piety: the word is translated "love" in Hos 2, 21 and in v 6 below.

**6, 11:** Harvest: when the land will reap the consequences of its sins.

g Dt 19, 14; 27, 17. h 1 Cor 15, 4. i 1 Sm 15, 22; Eccl 4, 17; Mt 9, 13; 12, 7.

### Failure of the Monarchy*

3 In their wickedness they regale the king,
the princes too, with their deceits.
4 They are all kindled to wrath
like a blazing oven,
Whose fire the baker desists from stirring
once the dough is kneaded until it has risen.
5 On the day of our king,
the princes are overcome with the heat of wine.
He extends his hand among dissemblers;
6 the plotters approach with hearts like ovens.
All the night their anger sleeps;
in the morning it flares like a blazing fire.
7 They are all heated like ovens,
and consume their rulers.
All their kings have fallen;
none of them calls upon me.

### Foreign Alliances

8 Ephraim mingles with the nations,
Ephraim is a hearth cake unturned.*
9 Strangers have sapped his strength,
but he takes no notice of it;
Of gray hairs, too, there is a sprinkling,
but he takes no notice of it.
10 The arrogance of Israel bears witness against him;
yet they do not return to the LORD, their God,
nor seek him, for all that.
11 Ephraim is like a dove,
silly and senseless;
They call upon Egypt,
they go to Assyria.
12 Even as they go I will spread my net around them,
like birds in the air I will bring them down.
In an instant I will send them captive from their land.

### Perversity of Israel

13 Woe to them, they have strayed from me!
Ruin to them, they have sinned against me!
Though I wished to redeem them,
they spoke lies against me.
14 They have not cried to me from their hearts
when they wailed upon their beds;
For wheat and wine they lacerated themselves,*
while they rebelled against me.
15 Though I trained and strengthened their arms,
yet they devised evil against me.
16 They have again become useless,
like a treacherous bow.
Their princes shall fall by the sword
because of the insolence of their tongues;
thus they shall be mocked in the land of Egypt.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

1 A trumpet to your lips,
You who watch over the house of the LORD!
Since they have violated my covenant,
and sinned against my law,
2 While to me they cry out,
"O God of Israel, we know you!"
3 The men of Israel have thrown away what is good;
the enemy shall pursue them.
4 *They made kings, but not by my authority;
they established princes, but without my approval.
With their silver and gold they made
idols for themselves, to their own destruction.

**7, 3–7:** This passage refers to the dynastic upheavals of Israel's declining days. Between the death of Jeroboam II and the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians, a matter of some twenty-five years, there were four separate dynasties on the throne and as many murdered kings. The prophet compares the Israelite nobles who were inflamed with passion to an overheated oven that consumes what it is supposed to bake; thus the land consumes its kings. Regale: with wine (v 3). Like fire smoldering through the night and blazing up in the morning, the sleeping anger of plotters soon breaks out in open rebellion; the succession of night and morning suggests the short reigns of the various kings of this troubled period.

**7, 8:** A hearth cake unturned: burnt on one side, half baked on the other, and therefore useless. Israel's decline in power is ascribed to its disastrous meddling in the power politics of the neighboring nations.

**7, 14:** They lacerated themselves: a common oriental practice in prayers of earnest impetration (1 Kgs 18, 28); the practice was forbidden in Israelite religion (Lv 19, 28; Dt 14, 1).

**8, 4–6:** Israel's monarchy and separate sanctuary are here associated, as in 1 Kgs 12, 20–33; both were the result of rebellion against the divinely approved Davidic dynasty and the Jerusalem temple with the ark of the covenant. The calf image set up by Jeroboam I in the royal shrines prevented Israel from attaining innocence (vv 5f).

Ch 4-14
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357-358

5 Cast away your calf, O Samaria!
my wrath is kindled against them;
How long will they be unable to attain
innocence in Israel?
6 The work of an artisan,
no god at all,
Destined for the flames—
such is the calf of Samaria!

7 When they sow the wind,
they shall reap the whirlwind;
The stalk of grain that forms no ear
can yield no flour;
Even if it could,
strangers would swallow it.
8 Israel is swallowed up;
he is now among the nations
a thing of no value.
9 They went up to Assyria—
a wild ass off on its own—
Ephraim bargained for lovers.
10 Even though they bargain with the nations,
I will now gather an army;
King and princes shall shortly
succumb under the burden.

11 When Ephraim made many altars to expiate sin,
his altars became occasions of sin.*
12 Though I write for him my many ordinances,
they are considered as a stranger's.
13 Though they offer sacrifice,
immolate flesh and eat it,
the LORD is not pleased with them.
He shall still remember their guilt
and punish their sins;
they shall return to Egypt.
14 Israel has forgotten his maker
and built palaces.
Judah, too, has fortified many cities;
but I will send fire upon his cities,
to devour their castles.[j]

## CHAPTER 9

### Exile without Worship

1 Rejoice not, O Israel,
exult not like the nations!
For you have been unfaithful to your God,
loving a harlot's hire
upon every threshing floor.*
2 Threshing floor and wine press shall not nourish them,
the new wine shall fail them.

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land;
Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
and in Assyria they shall eat unclean food.
4 They shall not pour libations of wine to the LORD,
or proffer their sacrifices before him.
Theirs will be like mourners' bread,*
that makes unclean all who eat of it;
Such food as they have shall be for themselves;
it cannot enter the house of the LORD.

5 What will you do on the festival day,
the day of the LORD's feast?*
6 When they go from the ruins,
Egypt shall gather them in, Memphis shall bury them.
Weeds shall overgrow their silver treasures,
and thorns invade their tents.

### The Prophet Ridiculed

7 They have come, the days of punishment!
they have come, the days of recompense!
Let Israel know it!
"The prophet is a fool,
the man of the spirit is mad!"
Because your iniquity is great,
great, too, is your hostility.
8 A prophet is Ephraim's watchman with God,
yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways,

8, 11: The very multiplicity of sanctuaries throughout the land was a danger to the purity of worship. The local shrines were speedily assimilated to the cult places used by the Canaanites, and the Lord was identified with the god Baal worshiped there. Thus the Deuteronomic writers, influenced by prophetic ideas, ended by restricting sacrificial worship to the one temple in Jerusalem.

9, 1f: Upon every threshing floor: an allusion to harvest festivals in honor of Baal, to whom the Israelites had attributed the fertility of the land; cf Hos 2, 7.

9, 4: Mourners' bread: bread eaten at funeral rites; cf Dt 26, 13f. Contact with a corpse made a person ritually unclean, together with everything he touched. Such bread could not be offered to the Lord.

9, 5: The Lord's feast: doubtless the autumn feast of Booths, the most important of the Israelite public celebrations; cf Lv 23, 34.

j Am 2, 5.

hostility in the house of his God.
9 They have sunk to the depths of corruption,
as in the days of Gibeah;*
He shall remember their iniquity
and punish their sins.

### Crime of Baal-peor

10 Like grapes in the desert,
I found Israel;
Like the first fruits of the fig tree in its prime,
I considered your fathers.
When they came to Baal-peor*
and consecrated themselves to the Shame,
they became as abhorrent as the thing they loved.
11 The glory of Ephraim flies away like a bird:
no birth, no carrying in the womb, no conception.
Were they to bear children,
I would slay the darlings of their womb.
12 Even though they bring up their children,
I will make them childless, till not one is left.
Woe to them
when I turn away from them!
13 Ephraim, as I saw, was like Tyre,
planted in a beauteous spot;
But Ephraim shall bring out
his children to the slayer.
14 Give them, O LORD!
give them what?
Give them an unfruitful womb,*
and dry breasts!

### Crime of Gilgal

15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal;*
yes, there they incurred my hatred.
Because of their wicked deeds
I will drive them out of my house.
I will love them no longer;
all their princes are rebels.[k]
16 Ephraim is stricken,
their root is dried up;
they shall bear no fruit.

17 My God will disown them
because they have not listened to him;
they shall be wanderers among the nations.

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

### Punishment of Idolatry

1 Israel is a luxuriant vine
whose fruit matches its growth.
The more abundant his fruit,
the more altars he built;
The more productive his land,
the more sacred pillars* he set up.
2 Their heart is false,
now they pay for their guilt;
God shall break down their altars
and destroy their sacred pillars.
3 If they would say,
"We have no king"—
Since they do not fear the LORD,
what can the king do for them?
4 Nothing but make promises,
swear false oaths, and make alliances,
While justice grows wild
like wormwood* in a plowed field!
5 The inhabitants of Samaria fear
for the calf of Beth-aven;*
The people mourn for it
and its priests wail over it,
because the glory has departed from it.
6 It too shall be carried to Assyria,
as an offering to the great king.
Ephraim shall be taken into captivity,
Israel be shamed by his schemes.

7 The king of Samaria shall disappear,
like foam upon the waters.
8 The high places of Aven shall be destroyed,

9, 9: The days of Gibeah: a reference to the outrage committed at Gibeah in the days of the Judges (Jgs 19, 22–30).
9, 10: At Baal-peor (Nm 25, 1–5) the Israelites consecrated themselves to Baal, here called the Shame.
9, 14: An unfruitful womb: this appears to be a reversal of the ancient blessing of Joseph contained in Gn 49, 25f, in which the increase, hence fruitfulness, promised to the patriarch is even signified by the name of his son Ephraim, on whose descendants the prophet now invokes the curse of extinction.

9, 15: Gilgal: see note on Hos 4, 15.
10, 1: Sacred pillars: see note on Hos 3, 4.
10, 4: Justice . . . like wormwood: the administration of justice, which should have been the mainstay of the people, has in corrupt hands become another instrument of oppression; cf Am 6, 13.
10, 5: The calf of Beth-aven: see notes on Hos 4, 15; 8, 4ff.

k 1 Sm 8, 5.

the sin of Israel;
thorns and thistles shall overgrow their altars.
Then they shall cry out to the mountains, "Cover us!"
and to the hills, "Fall upon us!" [l]

Ch 4-14
See RG
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9 Since the days of Gibeah
you have sinned, O Israel.
There they took their stand;
war was not to reach them in Gibeah. [m]
10 Against the wanton people I came
and I chastised them; [n]
I gathered troops against them
when I chastised them for their two crimes.*

### Time To Seek the Lord

11 Ephraim was a trained heifer,
willing to thresh;
I myself laid a yoke
upon her fair neck;
Ephraim was to be harnessed, Judah was to plow,
Jacob was to break his furrows:
12 "Sow for yourselves justice,
reap the fruit of piety;
Break up for yourselves a new field,
for it is time to seek the LORD,
till he come and rain down justice upon you." [o]
13 But you have cultivated wickedness,
reaped perversity,
and eaten the fruit of falsehood.

Because you have trusted in your chariots,
and in your many warriors,
14 Turmoil shall break out among your tribes
and all your fortresses shall be ravaged
As Salman ravaged Beth-arbel* in time of war,
smashing mothers and their children. [p]
15 So shall it be done to you, Bethel,
because of your utter wickedness:
At dawn the king of Israel
shall perish utterly.

## CHAPTER 11

### When Israel Was a Child

1 When Israel was a child I loved him,
out of Egypt* I called my son. [q]
2 The more I called them,
the farther they went from me,
Sacrificing to the Baals
and burning incense to idols.
3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
who took them in my arms;
4 I drew them with human cords,
with bands of love;*
I fostered them like one
who raises an infant to his cheeks;
Yet, though I stooped to feed my child,
they did not know that I was their healer.

5 He shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be his king;
6 The sword shall begin with his cities
and end by consuming his solitudes.
Because they refused to repent,
their own counsels shall devour them.
7 His people are in suspense about returning to him;
and God, though in unison they cry out to him,
shall not raise them up.

### End of the Exile

8 How could I give you up, O Ephraim,
or deliver you up, O Israel?
How could I treat you as Admah,
or make you like Zeboiim?*
My heart is overwhelmed,

**10, 10:** Their two crimes: possibly the outrage described in Jgs 19 is conceived as a double crime, of adultery and murder. Or the prophet regards the proclamation of the monarchy (cf 1 Sm 10, 23f) as a crime.

**10, 14:** As Salman ravaged Beth-arbel: allusion to an invasion not otherwise mentioned in the Bible. Salman may have been the Moabite king of this name mentioned in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III. There were several Beth-arbels in Palestine; this one was probably in Transjordan.

**11, 1:** Out of Egypt: Hosea, like most of the prophets, dates the real beginning of Israel from the time of Moses and the Exodus. Mt 2, 15 applies this text to the return of the Christ Child from Egypt.

**11, 4:** I drew them . . . with bands of love: not forcing them like draft animals, but drawing them with kindness and affection.

**11, 8:** Admah . . . Zeboiim: cities destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Dt 29, 22).

l Is 2, 19; Lk 23, 30; Rv 6, 16. m Jgs 20, 1. n Jer 4, 3. o Is 45, 8. p Jgs 8, 10ff. q Mt 2, 15.

my pity is stirred.[r]
9 I will not give vent to my blazing anger,
I will not destroy Ephraim again;
For I am God and not man,
the Holy One present among you;
I will not let the flames consume you.

10 They shall follow the LORD,
who roars like a lion;
When he roars,
his sons shall come frightened from the west,
11 Out of Egypt they shall come trembling, like sparrows,
from the land of Assyria, like doves;
And I will resettle them in their homes,
says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 12

### Infidelity of Israel

1 Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,
the house of Israel, with deceit;
Judah is still rebellious against God,
against the Holy One, who is faithful.
2 Ephraim chases the wind,
ever pursuing the gale.
His lies and falsehoods are many:
he comes to terms with Assyria,
and carries oil to Egypt.*
3 *The LORD has a grievance against Israel:
he shall punish Jacob for his conduct,
for his deeds he shall repay him.
4 In the womb he supplanted his brother,
and as a man he contended with God;[s]
5 He contended with the angel and triumphed,
entreating him with tears.
At Bethel he met God
and there he spoke with him:
6 The LORD, the God of hosts,
the LORD is his name!
7 You shall return by the help of your God,
if you remain loyal and do right
and always hope in your God.

8 A merchant who holds a false balance,
who loves to defraud!
9 Though Ephraim says,
"How rich I have become;
I have made a fortune!"
All his gain shall not suffice him
for the guilt of his sin.
10 I am the LORD, your God,
since the land of Egypt;
I will again have you live in tents,
as in that appointed time.
11 I granted many visions
and spoke to the prophets,
through whom I set forth examples.
12 In Gilead is falsehood, they have come to nought,
in Gilgal they sacrifice to bullocks;
Their altars are like heaps of stones
in the furrows of the field.

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

13 When Jacob fled to the land of Aram,
he served for a wife;
for a wife Israel tended sheep.[t]
14 By a prophet* the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt,
and by a prophet they were protected.[u]
15 Ephraim has exasperated his lord;
therefore he shall cast his bloodguilt upon him
and repay him for his outrage.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

### Furrows of the Field

1 Ephraim's word caused fear,
for he was exalted in Israel;
but he sinned through Baal and died.

### Punishment for Ingratitude

2 Now they continue to sin,
making for themselves molten images,
Silver idols according to their fancy,

**12, 2:** He comes . . . Egypt: allusion to the commercial and military pacts with the great powers, consistently condemned by the prophets as derogatory of the Lord's claim on his people.

**12, 3–7:** Contemporary Israel and the Israel represented by its ancestor Jacob (Israel) are here alternated, a splendid example of the Hebrew concept of "corporate personality" or easy transition from the individual to the community of which he is part. Hosea recalls the history of Jacob as it now appears in Genesis, but with some differences of detail and order.

**12, 14:** A prophet: Moses.

r Gn 19, 24f. s Gn 25, 26; 32, 25. t Gn 28, 5; 29, 20. u Ex 14, 21f.

all of them the work of artisans.
"To these," they say, "offer sacrifice."
Men kiss calves!
3 Therefore, they shall be like a morning cloud
or like the dew that early passes away,
Like chaff storm-driven from the threshing floor
or like smoke out of the window.

4 I am the LORD, your God,
since the land of Egypt;
You know no God besides me,
and there is no savior but me.[v]
5 I fed you in the desert,
in the torrid land.
6 They ate their fill;
when filled, they became proud of heart
and forgot me.

Ch 4–14
See RG
357–358

7 Therefore, I will be like a lion to them,
like a panther by the road I will keep watch.
8 I will attack them like a bear robbed of its young,
and tear their hearts from their breasts;
I will devour them on the spot like a lion,
as though a wild beast were to rend them.

9 Your destruction, O Israel!
who is there to help you?
10 Where now is your king,
that he may rescue you in all your cities?
And your rulers, of whom you said,
"Give me a king and princes"?[w]
11 I give you a king in my anger,
and I take him away in my wrath.*

12 The guilt of Israel is wrapped up,
his sin is stored away.

13 The birth pangs shall come for him,
but he shall be an unwise child;
For when it is time he shall not present himself
where children break forth.*

14 Shall I deliver them from the power of the nether world?*
shall I redeem them from death?[x]
Where are your plagues, O death!
where is your sting, O nether world!
My eyes are closed to compassion.

15 Though he be fruitful among his fellows,
an east wind shall come, a wind from the LORD,
rising from the desert,
That shall dry up his spring,
and leave his fountain dry.
It shall loot his land
of every precious thing.[y]

## CHAPTER 14

1 Samaria shall expiate her guilt,
for she has rebelled against her God.
They shall fall by the sword,
their little ones shall be dashed to pieces,
their expectant mothers shall be ripped open.

### Sincere Conversion

2 Return, O Israel, to the LORD, your God;
you have collapsed through your guilt.
3 Take with you words,
and return to the LORD;
Say to him, "Forgive all iniquity,
and receive what is good, that we may render
as offerings the bullocks from our stalls.
4 Assyria will not save us,
nor shall we have horses to mount;
We shall say no more, 'Our god,'
to the work of our hands;
for in you the orphan finds compassion."

5 I will heal their defection,
I will love them freely;
for my wrath is turned away from them.

**13, 11:** I give you a king . . . in my wrath: the Lord punishes the people of the northern kingdom by giving them incompetent kings who are soon deposed.

**13, 13:** Israel's sin is such as to warrant its destruction (v 12), because it refuses to do penance. It will therefore perish as surely as the unborn child which dies in its mother's body because it does not properly employ the only way to safety.

**13, 14:** Shall . . . nether world: a vigorous affirmation of the Lord's determination to destroy Israel. St. Paul cites these words in a different sense (1 Cor 15, 54f), that of the ultimate victory of life over death in the resurrection of the body on the last day, wrought through the merits of Christ's passion and resurrection.

v Is 43, 11. w 1 Sm 8, 5. x 1 Cor 15, 54. y Ex 19, 12.

[6] I will be like the dew for Israel:
he shall blossom like the lily;
He shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar,
[7] and put forth his shoots.
His splendor shall be like the olive tree
and his fragrance like the Lebanon cedar.
[8] Again they shall dwell in his shade
and raise grain;
They shall blossom like the vine,
and his fame shall be like the wine of
Lebanon.

[9] Ephraim! What more has he to do with idols?
I have humbled him, but I will prosper him.
"I am like a verdant cypress tree"—
Because of me you bear fruit!

* * *

[10] Let him who is wise understand these things;
let him who is prudent know them.
Straight are the paths of the LORD,
in them the just walk,
but sinners stumble in them.*

14, 10: A later addition in the style of the wisdom literature.

# THE BOOK OF JOEL

Joel
See RG
358–361

This prophecy is rich in apocalyptic imagery and strongly eschatological in tone. It was composed about 400 B.C. Its prevailing theme is the day of the Lord.

A terrible invasion of locusts ravaged Judah. So frightful was the scourge that the prophet visualized it as a symbol of the coming day of the Lord. In the face of this threatening catastrophe, the prophet summoned the people to repent, to turn to the Lord with fasting and weeping. They were ordered to convoke a solemn assembly in which the priests would pray for deliverance. The Lord answered their prayer and promised to drive away the locusts and bless the land with peace and prosperity. To these material blessings would be added an outpouring of the spirit on all flesh. St. Peter, in his first discourse before the people at Pentecost (Acts 2, 16-21), sees in the coming of the Holy Spirit the fulfillment of this promise (1, 1—3, 5).

The concluding poem pictures the nations gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where the Lord is about to pass judgment. Israel's enemies are summoned to hear the solemn indictment; their evil deeds are at last requited. The tumultuous throng assembled in the valley of decision is made up of the enemies of God and they face inevitable destruction. The oracle changes abruptly from the terrifying image of judgment to a vision of Israel restored and forever secure from her enemies. God is both the vindicator of his people and the source of their blessing (4, 1-21).

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
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**The Land Invaded** [1] The word of the LORD which came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

[2] Hear this, you elders!
Pay attention, all you who dwell in the
land!
Has the like of this happened in your days,
or in the days of your fathers?

[3] Tell it to your children,
and your children to their children,
and their children to the next generation.
[4] What the cutter left,
the locust swarm has eaten;
What the locust swarm left,
the grasshopper has eaten;
And what the grasshopper left,
the devourer* has eaten.

1, 4: Cutter . . . locust . . . grasshopper . . . devourer: these names refer to various species of locusts: they can only be approximate.

5 Wake up, you drunkards, and weep;
wail, all you drinkers of wine,
Because the juice of the grape
will be withheld from your mouths.
6 For a people* has invaded my land,
mighty and without number;
His teeth are the teeth of a lion,
and his molars those of a lioness.
7 He has laid waste my vine,
and blighted my fig tree;
He has stripped it, sheared off its bark;
its branches are made white.
8 Lament like a virgin girt with sackcloth
for the spouse of her youth.
9 Abolished are offering and libation
from the house of the LORD;
In mourning are the priests,
the ministers of the LORD.
10 The field is ravaged,
the earth mourns,
Because the grain is ravaged,
the must has failed,
the oil languishes.

11 Be appalled, you husbandmen!
wail, you vinedressers!
Over the wheat and the barley,
because the harvest of the field has perished.
12 The vine has dried up,
the fig tree is withered;
The pomegranate, the date palm also, and the apple,
all the trees of the field are dried up;
Yes, joy has withered away
from among mankind.

Ch 2
See RG
359–360

### Call to Penance

13 Gird yourselves and weep, O priests!
wail, O ministers of the altar!
Come, spend the night in sackcloth,
O ministers of my God!
The house of your God is deprived
of offering and libation.
14 Proclaim a fast,
call an assembly;
Gather the elders,
all who dwell in the land,
Into the house of the LORD, your God,
and cry to the LORD! [a]

15 Alas, the day!
for near is the day of the LORD,
and it comes as ruin from the Almighty.
16 From before our very eyes
has not the food been cut off;
And from the house of our God,
joy and gladness?
17 The seed lies shriveled under its clods;
the stores are destroyed,
The barns are broken down,
for the grain has failed.
18 How the beasts groan!
The herds of cattle are bewildered!
Because they have no pasturage,
even the flocks of sheep have perished.

19 To you, O LORD, I cry!
for fire has devoured the pastures of the plain,
and flame has enkindled all the trees of the field.
20 Even the beasts of the field
cry out to you;
For the streams of water are dried up,
and fire has devoured the pastures of the plain.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Day of the Lord

1 Blow the trumpet in Zion,
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all who dwell in the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming;
2 Yes, it is near, a day of darkness and of gloom,
a day of clouds and somberness!
Like dawn spreading over the mountains,
a people numerous and mighty!
Their like has not been from of old,
nor will it be after them,
even to the years of distant generations.
3 Before them a fire devours,
and after them a flame enkindles;

1, 6: A people: the locusts compared to an invading army.

a Jl 2, 15.

Like the garden of Eden is the land before them,
and after them a desert waste;
from them there is no escape.

4 Their appearance is that of horses;
like steeds they run.
5 As with the rumble of chariots
they leap on the mountaintops;
As with the crackling of a fiery flame
devouring stubble;
Like a mighty people
arrayed for battle.
6 Before them peoples are in torment,
every face blanches.

7 Like warriors they run,
like soldiers they scale the wall;
They advance, each in his own lane,
without swerving from their paths.
8 No one crowds another,
each advances in his own track;
Though they fall into the ditches,
they are not checked.

9 They assault the city,
they run upon the wall,
they climb into the houses;
In at the windows
they come like thieves.
10 Before them the earth trembles,
the heavens shake;
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withhold their brightness. [b]

11 The LORD raises his voice
at the head of his army;
For immense indeed is his camp,
yes, mighty, and it does his bidding.
For great is the day of the LORD,
and exceedingly terrible; who can bear it? [c]
12 Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;
13 Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.
For gracious and merciful is he,
slow to anger, rich in kindness,
and relenting in punishment. [d]
14 Perhaps he will again relent
and leave behind him a blessing,
Offerings and libations
for the LORD, your God. [e]
15 Blow the trumpet in Zion!
proclaim a fast,
call an assembly;[f]
16 Gather the people,
notify the congregation;
Assemble the elders,
gather the children
and the infants at the breast;
Let the bridegroom quit his room,
and the bride her chamber.
17 Between the porch and the altar*
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD,
weep,
And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people,
and make not your heritage a reproach,
with the nations ruling over them!
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?' "

**Blessings for God's People** 18 Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people. 19 The LORD answered and said to his people:

See, I will send you
grain, and wine, and oil,
and you shall be filled with them;
No more will I make you
a reproach among the nations.
20 No, the northerner* I will remove far from you,
and drive him out into a land arid and waste,
With his van toward the eastern sea,
and his rear toward the western sea;

**2, 17**: The priests stood in the open space between the outdoor altar of holocausts and the temple building, facing the latter in order thereby to look toward God present in the holy of holies.
**2, 20**: The northerner: the locusts, that are compared to an invading army, which in Palestine came from the north; cf Jer 1, 14f; 4, 6; Ez 26, 7; 38, 6. 15.

b Jl 4, 15; Is 13, 10; Ez 32, 7f; Mt 24, 29; Mk 13, 24; Lk 21, 25f. c Jer 30, 7; Am 5, 18; Zep 1, 15. d Ps 86, 5; Jon 4, 2. e Jon 3, 9. f Jl 1, 14.

And his foulness shall go up,
and his stench shall go up.

21 Fear not, O land!
exult and rejoice!
for the LORD has done great things.
22 Fear not, beasts of the field!
for the pastures of the plain are green;
The tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and the vine give their yield.
23 And do you, O children of Zion, exult
and rejoice in the LORD, your God!
He has given you the teacher of justice:*
he has made the rain come down for you,
the early and the late rain as before.[g]
24 The threshing floors shall be full of grain
and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
25 And I will repay you for the years
which the locust has eaten,
The grasshopper, the devourer, and the cutter,
my great army which I sent among you.
26 You shall eat and be filled,
and shall praise the name of the LORD, your God,
Because he has dealt wondrously with you;
my people shall nevermore be put to shame.
27 And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel;
I am the LORD, your God, and there is no other;
my people shall nevermore be put to shame.

Ch 4 See RG 360

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3 See RG 360

1 Then afterward I will pour out[h]
my spirit* upon all mankind.
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
your young men shall see visions;
2 Even upon the servants and the handmaids,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.
3 And I will work wonders in the heavens and on the earth,
blood, fire, and columns of smoke;
4 The sun will be turned to darkness,
and the moon to blood,
At the coming of the day of the LORD,
the great and terrible day.[i]
5 Then everyone shall be rescued
who calls on the name of the LORD;
For on Mount Zion there shall be a remnant,
as the LORD has said,
And in Jerusalem survivors
whom the LORD shall call.[j]

## CHAPTER 4

### Judgment upon the Nations

1 Yes, in those days, and at that time,
when I would restore the fortunes
of Judah and Jerusalem,
2 I will assemble all the nations
and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,*
And I will enter into judgment with them there
on behalf of my people and my inheritance, Israel;
Because they have scattered them among the nations,
and divided my land.
3 Over my people they have cast lots;
they gave a boy for a harlot,
and sold a girl for the wine they drank.

4 Moreover, what are you to me, Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Would you take vengeance upon me by some action? But if you do take action against me, swiftly, speedily, I will return your deed upon your own head. 5 You took my silver and my gold, and brought my precious treasures into your temples! 6 You sold

**2, 23:** The teacher of justice: the rain sent by God to show his fidelity to his promises, and to teach his people to be faithful to his commandments; cf Dt 11, 14. There is also a play on words here between the Hebrew word moreh (teacher) and the Hebrew word yoreh (the early rain). The expression likewise has a messianic connotation; cf Is 30, 20. The founder of the Essene sect of Qumran (second century B.C.) was known as "The Teacher of Justice."

**3, 1f:** I will pour out my spirit: in the Old Testament the spirit is the gift of God bestowed on those acting as his agents. The promise of the spirit is quoted by St. Peter in Acts 2, 17–21 as fulfilled in an eminent way by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, bestowed on the Apostles.

**4, 2:** Valley of Jehoshaphat: a symbolic name of the place of final judgment (v 14). The name Jehoshaphat signifies "Yahweh judges." This place has been popularly identified with the Kidron Valley.

g Hos 10, 12. h 1–5: Is 44, 3; Acts 2, 17–21. i Jl 2, 10. j Rom 10, 13.

the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks,
removing them far from their own country!
7 See, I will rouse them from the place into
which you have sold them, and I will return
your deed upon your own head. 8 I will sell your
sons and your daughters to the people of Judah,
who shall sell them to the Sabeans,* a nation far
off. Indeed, the LORD has spoken.

9 Declare this among the nations:
proclaim a war,
rouse the warriors to arms!
Let all the soldiers
report and march!
10 Beat your plowshares into swords,
and your pruning hooks into spears;
let the weak man say, "I am a warrior!"*

11 Hasten and come, all you neighboring peoples,
assemble there!
[Bring down, O Lord, your warriors!*]
12 Let the nations bestir themselves and come up
to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
For there will I sit in judgment
upon all the neighboring nations.

13 Apply the sickle, [k]
for the harvest is ripe;
Come and tread,
for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow,
for great is their malice.*
14 Crowd upon crowd
in the valley of decision;
For near is the day of the LORD
in the valley of decision.
15 Sun and moon are darkened,
and the stars withhold their brightness. [l]
16 The LORD roars from Zion,
and from Jerusalem raises his voice;
The heavens and the earth quake,
but the LORD is a refuge to his people,
a stronghold to the men of Israel. [m]

### Salvation for God's Elect

17 Then shall you know that I, the LORD, am your
God,
dwelling on Zion, my holy mountain;
Jerusalem shall be holy,
and strangers shall pass through her no
more.
18 And then, on that day, [n]
the mountains shall drip new wine,
and the hills shall flow with milk;
And the channels of Judah
shall flow with water:
A fountain shall issue from the house of the
LORD,
to water the Valley of Shittim.*
19 Egypt shall be a waste,
and Edom a desert waste,
Because of violence done to the people of
Judah,
because they shed innocent blood in their
land.
20 But Judah shall abide forever,
and Jerusalem for all generations.
21 I will avenge their blood,
and not leave it unpunished.
The LORD dwells in Zion.

**4, 8:** Sabeans: a south Arabian people known for their commerce.

**4, 10:** This imagery is used in the reverse sense in Is 2, 4; Mi 4, 3. Here the warlike weapons are made in response to God's summons to armies which he selected to expel forever the unlawful invaders from the land of his chosen people.

**4, 11:** Warriors: the angels; cf Zec 14, 5.

**4, 13:** Because of their numerous crimes, the nations are ripe for punishment. The use of warlike weapons against them is likened to the onslaught on the fields and vines at harvest time.

**4, 18:** The Valley of Shittim, or "the ravine of the acacia trees": perhaps a part of the Kidron Valley southeast of Jerusalem; the prophetic picture of a stream of water flowing from a fountain in the temple of Jerusalem is to be found in Ez 47, 1. The Shittim east of the Jordan (see note on Nm 25, 1) is hardly referred to here.

k Rv 14, 15. l Jl 2, 10; 3, 4. m Jer 25, 30; Am 1, 2. n Am 9, 13; Ez 47, 1–12; Zec 14, 8.

# THE BOOK OF AMOS

Amos
See RG
361-367

Amos was a shepherd of Tekoa in Judah, who exercised his ministry during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.). He prophesied in Israel at the great cult center of Bethel, from which he was finally expelled by the priest in charge of this royal sanctuary. The poetry of Amos, who denounces the hollow prosperity of the northern kingdom, is filled with imagery and language taken from his own pastoral background. The book is an anthology of his oracles and was compiled either by the prophet or by some of his disciples.

The prophecy begins with a sweeping indictment of Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, and Edom; but the forthright herdsman saves his climactic denunciation for Israel, whose injustice and idolatry are sins against the light granted to her. Israel could indeed expect the day of Yahweh, but it would be a day of darkness and not light. When Amos prophesied the overthrow of the sanctuary, the fall of the royal house, and the captivity of the people, it was more than Israelite officialdom could bear. The priest of Bethel drove Amos from the shrine—but not before hearing a terrible sentence pronounced upon himself.

Amos is a prophet of divine judgment, and the sovereignty of Yahweh in nature and history dominates his thought. But he was no innovator; his conservatism was in keeping with the whole prophetic tradition calling the people back to the high moral and religious demands of Yahweh's revelation. In common with the other prophets, Amos knew that divine punishment is never completely destructive; it is part of the hidden plan of God to bring salvation to men. The perversity of the human will may retard, but it cannot totally frustrate, this design of a loving God. The last oracle opens up a perspective of restoration under a Davidic king.

The Book of Amos may be divided as follows:

I. Judgment of the Nations (1, 1—2, 16).
II. Words and Woes for Israel (3, 1—6, 14).
III. Symbolic Visions: Threats and Promises (7, 1—9, 8b);
Epilogue: Messianic Perspective (9, 8c-15).

## I: Judgment of the Nations

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
362

1 The words of Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa,[a] which he received in vision concerning
Israel, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and
in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of
Israel, two years before the earthquake:*

2 The LORD will roar from Zion,
and from Jerusalem raise his voice:
The pastures of the shepherds will languish,
and the summit of Carmel wither.[b]

**Aram**

3 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Damascus, and for four,*
I will not revoke my word;
Because they threshed Gilead
with sledges of iron,

1, 1: The earthquake: which according to Hebrew tradition marked the crime of Uzziah when he attempted to offer incense in the temple (2 Chr 26, 16–21). Zechariah mentions it several centuries later (Zec 14, 5).

1, 3: For three crimes . . . four: crime after crime, an indefinite number; cf Am 1, 6. The series of judgments on the foreign nations shows that the Lord demands the observance of the moral order everywhere; Israel and Judah, despite their privileged position, are no exception. I will not revoke my word: God will not withdraw his threat of punishment against each of these nations. They threshed Gilead: the people of Aram under King Hazael had devastated Gilead; cf 2 Kgs 10, 32f.

a Zec 14, 5. b Jer 25, 30; Jl 3, 16.

4 I will send fire* upon the house of Hazael,
to devour the castles of Ben-hadad.
5 I will break the bar of Damascus;*
I will root out those who live in the Valley of Aven,
And the sceptered ruler of Beth-eden;
the people of Aram shall be exiled to Kir,
says the LORD.

### Philistia

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Gaza, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because they took captive whole groups
to hand over to Edom,
7 I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza,
to devour her castles;
8 I will root out those who live in Ashdod,
and the sceptered ruler of Ashkelon;
I will turn my hand against Ekron,
and the last of the Philistines shall perish,
says the Lord God.

### Tyre

9 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Tyre, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because they delivered whole groups captive to Edom,
and did not remember the pact of brotherhood,*
10 I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre,
to devour her castles.

### Edom

11 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Edom, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because he pursued his brother* with the sword,
choking up all pity;
Because he persisted in his anger
and kept his wrath to the end,
12 I will send fire upon Teman,
and it will devour the castles of Bozrah.*

### Ammon

13 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of the Ammonites, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because they ripped open expectant mothers in Gilead,
while extending their territory,
14 I will kindle a fire upon the wall of Rabbah,*
and it will devour her castles
Amid clamor on the day of battle
and stormwind in a time of tempest.
15 Their king shall go into captivity,
he and his princes with him, says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
362-363

### Moab

1 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Moab, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because he burned to ashes
the bones of Edom's king,*
2 I will send fire upon Moab,
to devour the castles of Kerioth;
Moab shall meet death amid uproar
and shouts and trumpet blasts.
3 I will root out the judge from her midst,
and her princes I will slay with him, says the LORD.

### Judah

4 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Judah, and for four,
I will not revoke my word;
Because they spurned the law of the LORD,

**1, 4:** Fire: devastation caused by the Assyrians (Am 1, 7. 10. 12. 14; 2, 2. 5); cf 1 Sm 15, 18. Hazael and Ben-hadad: kings of the Arameans whose capital was Damascus (v 5); they fought against Israel (2 Kgs 13, 3), and had long occupied the region of Gilead (v 3) in Transjordan.

**1, 5:** Bar of Damascus: the beam securing the main gate of the city against invaders, symbol of its defenses. Valley of Aven ("vale of wickedness") and Beth-eden ("house of pleasure"): Aramean territory from southwest to northeast.

**1, 9:** Pact of brotherhood: Hiram of Tyre had made a pact with Solomon and called him brother (1 Kgs 5, 12; 9, 13).

**1, 11:** Pursued his brother: the Edomites were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Gn 25—27); nevertheless they constantly nourished enmity against Jacob's descendants, the Israelites.

**1, 12:** Teman and Bozrah: two of the chief cities of Edom; cf Jer 49, 20.

**1, 14:** Rabbah: now called Amman, the modern capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

**2, 1:** Here the prophet stresses the gravity of Moab's violation of the Semitic custom of providing honorable burial for the dead.

and did not keep his statutes;
Because the lies* which their fathers followed
have led them astray,
5 I will send fire upon Judah,
to devour the castles of Jerusalem.

### Israel

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Israel, and for four,*
I will not revoke my word;
Because they sell the just man for silver,
and the poor man for a pair of sandals.*
7 They trample the heads of the weak
into the dust of the earth,
and force the lowly out of the way.
Son and father go to the same prostitute,
profaning my holy name.
Ch 3 See RG 363, 364
8 Upon garments taken in pledge
they recline beside any altar;*
And the wine of those who have been fined
they drink in the house of their god.

9 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorites before them,
who were as tall as the cedars,
and as strong as the oak trees.
I destroyed their fruit above,
and their roots beneath. [c]
10 It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and who led you through the desert for forty years,
to occupy the land of the Amorites: [d]
11 I who raised up prophets among your sons,
and nazirites* among your young men.
Is this not so, O men of Israel?
says the LORD.
12 But you gave the nazirites wine to drink,
and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.
13 Beware, I will crush you into the ground
as a wagon crushes when laden with sheaves.
14 Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong man shall not retain his strength;
The warrior shall not save his life,
15 nor the bowman stand his ground;
The swift of foot shall not escape,
nor the horseman save his life.
16 And the most stouthearted of warriors
shall flee naked on that day, says the LORD.

## II: Words and Woes for Israel

### CHAPTER 3

**First Word** 1 Hear this word, O men of Israel, that the LORD pronounces over you, over the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt:

2 You alone have I favored,
more than all the families of the earth;
Therefore I will punish you
for all your crimes.*

3 Do two walk together
unless they have agreed?
4 Does a lion roar in the forest
when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from its den
unless it has seized something?
5 Is a bird brought to earth by a snare
when there is no lure for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground
without catching anything?
6 If the trumpet sounds in a city,
will the people not be frightened?
If evil befalls a city,
has not the LORD caused it?*
7 Indeed, the Lord GOD does nothing

**2, 4:** The lies: false gods, who exist only in the minds of their worshipers. The crimes of Judah are infidelity and idolatry, in contrast to the sins for which the surrounding nations are judged.
**2, 6–13:** The detailed crimes of Israel are placed in strong contrast with the benefits with which the Lord favored his people.
**2, 6:** A pair of sandals: indicating how cheaply the rich regarded the poor.
**2, 8:** Upon garments . . . any altar: usurers kept the garments taken as pledges from the poor; but instead of restoring them to their owners before nightfall (Ex 22, 25; Dt 24, 12), they used them in idolatrous worship. Wine . . . their god: under the guise of a religious ceremony they drink the wine obtained through unjust fines.
**2, 11:** Nazirites: see note on Nm 6, 1ff.
**3, 2:** God's choice of Israel brought its own responsibility.
**3, 6:** The sufferings which sinful man experiences through the permissive will of God are presented here, as elsewhere in the Old Testament, simply as caused by the Lord.

c Nm 21, 24; Dt 2, 24. d Ex 14, 21; Dt 8, 2. 14.

without revealing his plan
to his servants, the prophets.

8 The lion roars—
who will not be afraid!
The Lord GOD speaks—
who will not prophesy!

9 Proclaim this in the castles of Ashdod,
in the castles of the land of Egypt:
"Gather about the mountain of Samaria,
and see the great disorders within her,
the oppression in her midst."*
10 For they know not how to do what is right,
says the LORD,
Storing up in their castles
what they have extorted and robbed.
11 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
An enemy shall surround the land,
and strip you of your strength,
and pillage your castles.

12 Thus says the LORD:
As the shepherd snatches from the mouth of the lion
a pair of legs or the tip of an ear of his sheep,
So the Israelites who dwell in Samaria shall escape
with the corner of a couch or a piece of a cot.

13 Hear and bear witness against the house of Jacob, says the Lord GOD, the God of hosts:

14 On the day when I punish Israel for his crimes,
I will visit also the altars of Bethel:
The horns of the altar shall be broken off
and fall to the ground.
15 Then will I strike the winter house
and the summer house;
The ivory apartments* shall be ruined,
and their many rooms shall be no more,
says the LORD.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
364

### Second Word

1 Hear this word, women of the mountain of Samaria,
you cows of Bashan,*
You who oppress the weak
and abuse the needy;
Who say to your lords,
"Bring drink for us!"
2 The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness:
Truly the days are coming upon you
When they shall drag you away with hooks,
the last of you with fishhooks;
3 You shall go out through the breached walls
each by the most direct way,
And you shall be cast into the mire,
says the LORD.

4 Come to Bethel and sin,
to Gilgal, and sin the more;*
Each morning bring your sacrifices,
every third day, your tithes;
5 Burn leavened food as a thanksgiving sacrifice,
proclaim publicly your freewill offerings,
For so you love to do, O men of Israel,
says the Lord GOD.

6 Though I have made your teeth
clean of food in all your cities,
and have made bread scarce in all your dwellings,
Yet you returned not to me,
says the LORD.

7 Though I also withheld the rain from you
when the harvest was still three months away;
I sent rain upon one city
but not upon another;
One field was watered by rain,
but another without rain dried up;
8 Though two or three cities staggered to one city

**3, 9:** Israel's southern neighbors, beyond Judah, are invited by the prophetic orator to witness the moral disorders of God's people.

**3, 15:** Ivory apartments: rooms containing furniture inlaid in ivory, similar to the pieces discovered in the excavations at Samaria.

**4, 1:** Bashan: the region east of the Sea of Galilee, famous for its rich pasture and fattened herds, to which Amos likens the indolent women of Samaria.

**4, 4f:** This invitation to the sanctuaries of the northern kingdom is ironical. Pilgrimages to the shrines of Bethel and Gilgal were the more displeasing to God because they were contrary to his will and ineffective toward improvement of morals.

for water that did not quench their thirst;
Yet you returned not to me,
says the LORD.

9 I struck you with blight and searing wind;
your many gardens and vineyards,
your fig trees and olive trees the locust devoured;
Yet you returned not to me,
says the LORD.[e]

10 I sent upon you a pestilence like that of Egypt,*
and with the sword I slew your young men;
Your horses I let be captured,
to your nostrils I brought the stench of your camps;
Yet you returned not to me,
says the LORD.

11 I brought upon you such upheaval
as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah:
you were like a brand plucked from the fire;
Yet you returned not to me,
says the LORD.[f]

12 So now I will deal with you in my own way, O Israel!
and since I will deal thus with you,
prepare to meet your God, O Israel:
13 Him who formed the mountains, and created the wind,
and declares to man his thoughts;
Who made the dawn and the darkness,
and strides upon the heights of the earth:
The LORD, the God of hosts by name.

## CHAPTER 5

### Third Word

Ch 5
See RG
364

1 Hear this word which I utter over you,
a lament, O house of Israel:
2 She is fallen, to rise no more,
the virgin Israel;
She lies abandoned upon her land,
with no one to raise her up.

3 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The city that marched out with a thousand
shall be left with a hundred,
Another that marched out with a hundred
shall be left with ten,
of the house of Israel.

4 For thus says the LORD
to the house of Israel:
Seek me, that you may live,
5 but do not seek Bethel;
Do not come to Gilgal,
and do not cross to Beer-sheba.
For Gilgal shall be led into exile,
and Bethel shall become nought.
6 Seek the LORD, that you may live,
lest he come upon the house of Joseph* like a fire
That shall consume, with none to quench it
for the house of Israel:
8 He who made the Pleiades and Orion,
who turns darkness into dawn,
and darkens day into night;
Who summons the waters of the sea,
and pours them out upon the surface of the earth;[g]
9 Who flashes destruction upon the strong,
and brings ruin upon the fortress;
whose name is LORD.

### First Woe

7 Woe to those who turn judgment to wormwood
and cast justice to the ground!
10 They hate him who reproves at the gate*
and abhor him who speaks the truth.
11 Therefore, because you have trampled upon the weak
and exacted of them levies of grain,
Though you have built houses of hewn stone,
you shall not live in them!

**4, 10:** Pestilence like that of Egypt: plagues were well known in Egypt; cf Dt 7, 15; 28, 27. 60. Stench of your camps: caused by the unburied bodies.

**5, 6:** House of Joseph: the kingdom of Israel or northern kingdom, the chief tribes of which were descended from Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph; cf Am 5, 15; 6, 6.

**5, 10:** At the gate: see note on Ps 127, 5.

e Hg 2, 17. f Gn 19, 24. g Am 9, 6.

Though you have planted choice vineyards,
you shall not drink their wine! [h]

12 Yes, I know how many are your crimes,
how grievous your sins:
Oppressing the just, accepting bribes,
repelling the needy at the gate!
13 Therefore the prudent man is silent at this time,
for it is an evil time.
14 Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
Then truly will the LORD, the God of hosts,
be with you as you claim!
15 Hate evil and love good,
and let justice prevail at the gate;
Then it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
will have pity on the remnant of Joseph. [i]

16 Therefore, thus says the LORD,
the God of hosts, the Lord:
In every square there shall be lamentation,
and in every street they shall cry, Alas! Alas!
They shall summon the farmers to wail
and professional mourners to lament,
17 And in every vineyard there shall be lamentation
when I pass through your midst, says the LORD.

### Second Woe

18 Woe to those who yearn for the day of the LORD!*
What will this day of the LORD mean for you?
Darkness and not light! [j]
19 As if a man were to flee from a lion,
and a bear should meet him;
Or as if on entering his house
he were to rest his hand against the wall,
and a snake should bite him.
20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness and not light,
gloom without any brightness?

21 *I hate, I spurn your feasts,
I take no pleasure in your solemnities; [k]
22 Your cereal offerings I will not accept,
nor consider your stall-fed peace offerings.
23 Away with your noisy songs!
I will not listen to the melodies of your harps.
But if you would offer me holocausts,
24 then let justice surge like water,
and goodness like an unfailing stream.
25 Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings [l]
for forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?*
26 You will carry away Sakkuth, your king,
and Kaiwan, your star god,*
the images that you have made for yourselves;
27 For I will exile you beyond Damascus,
say I, the LORD, the God of hosts by name.

## CHAPTER 6

### Third Woe

Ch 6
See RG
365

1 *Woe to the complacent in Zion,
to the overconfident on the mount of Samaria,*

**5, 18:** Day of the Lord: a technical expression which in earliest times referred to God's special intervention in human affairs. Through it his power and justice triumphed in his people. The present passage is the first instance in which it means a day of punishment of sinners. During the exile it assumed the meaning of a time when God would avenge Israel against her oppressors and bring about her restoration (Jer 50, 27; Ez 30, 3ff). Still later it came to mean the day of final judgment of the world when the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished (Mal 3, 19ff; Jl 2, 1ff; Zep 1, 14ff).

**5, 21–27:** The Lord condemns, not ritual worship in itself, but the cult whose exterior rites and solemnity have no relation to interior morality and justice. The Israelites falsely worshiped him as neighboring nations adored Baal or Chamos, deities which were thought to protect their respective peoples against their enemies in return for ritual observances, without any relation to right conduct.

**5, 25:** The meaning is not certain; according to some, the idea is that during the forty years' wandering in the desert the simple, rudimentary worship of God was accompanied by the practice of justice, in contrast to the elaborate ritual unaccompanied by works of justice in the prophet's time.

**5, 26:** Sakkuth . . . star god: although the text is uncertain, it seems quite probable that reference is made to the Assyrian deities, Sakkuth, god of war and light, and Kaiwan, the planet Saturn. The people will go into exile, from which these gods have been unable to save them.

**6, 1–7:** The luxury of the people in Samaria will be punished by exile. They failed to learn the lesson from Calneh, Hamath and Gath at the approach of the powerful and warlike Assyrians.

**6, 1:** The complacent in Zion . . . the overconfident . . . of Samaria: the proud and self-interested rulers of Judah and Israel.

h Zep 1, 13. i Ps 97, 10; Rom 12, 9. j Jer 30, 7; Jl 2, 11; Zep 1, 15. k Is 1, 11; Jer 6, 20; Mal 1, 12. l Acts 7, 42.

Leaders of a nation favored from the first,
to whom the people of Israel have
recourse! [m]
2 Pass over to Calneh and see,
go from there to Hamath the great,
and down to Gath of the Philistines!
Are you better than these kingdoms,
or is your territory wider than theirs?
3 You would put off the evil day,
yet you hasten the reign of violence!

4 Lying upon beds of ivory,
stretched comfortably on their couches,
They eat lambs taken from the flock,
and calves from the stall!
5 Improvising to the music of the harp,
like David, they devise their own
accompaniment.
6 They drink wine from bowls
and anoint themselves with the best oils;
yet they are not made ill by the collapse of
Joseph!
7 Therefore, now they shall be the first to go
into exile,
and their wanton revelry shall be done
away with.

Ch 7
See RG
361–362,
365

8 The Lord God has sworn by his very self,
say I, the Lord, the God of hosts:
I abhor the pride of Jacob,
I hate his castles,
and I give over the city with everything in
it; [n]
9 Should there remain ten men
in a single house, these shall die.
10 Only a few shall be left
to carry the dead out of the houses;
If one says to a man inside a house,
"Is anyone with you?" and he answers, "No
one,"
Then he shall say, "Silence!"
for no one must mention the name of the
Lord.

11 Indeed, the Lord has given the command
to shatter the great house to bits,
and reduce the small house to rubble.

12 Can horses run across a cliff?
or can one plow the sea with oxen?*
Yet you have turned judgment into gall,
and the fruit of justice into wormwood.
13 You rejoice in Lodebar,
and say, "Have we not, by our own
strength,
seized for ourselves Karnaim?"*
14 Beware, I am raising up against you, O house
of Israel,
say I, the Lord, the God of hosts,
A nation* that shall oppress you
from Labo of Hamath even to the Wadi
Arabah.

## III: Symbolic Visions: Threats and Promises

### CHAPTER 7

**Vision of Locusts** 1 This is what the Lord God showed me: He was forming a locust swarm when the late growth began to come up (the late growth after the king's mowing*). 2 While they were eating all the grass in the land, I said:

Forgive, O Lord God!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!

3 And the Lord repented of this. "It shall not be," said the Lord God.

**Vision of Fire** 4 Then the Lord God showed me this: he called for a judgment by fire.* It had devoured the great abyss, and was consuming the land, 5 when I said:

Cease, O Lord God!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!

6, 12: Can horses . . . oxen?: one cannot change the course of nature, as the Israelites attempted to do by their sins of injustice.
6, 13: Lodebar . . . Karnaim: in Transjordan; they had been captured by the Israelites. Perhaps it is in irony that reference is made to these two cities, for the root of the first suggests "nothing" and that of the second, "horns" or "strength."

6, 14: A nation: Assyria.
7, 1: The king's mowing: the first mowing, a portion of which was payable to the king as a tax.
7, 4: Fire: understood by many as a burning drought.

m Lk 6, 24. n Jer 51, 14.

[6]The LORD repented of this. "This also shall
not be," said the Lord GOD.

**Vision of the Plummet** [7]Then the Lord GOD
showed me this: he was standing by a wall,
plummet in hand.* [8]The LORD asked me, "What
do you see, Amos?" And when I answered, "A
plummet," the LORD said:

See, I will lay the plummet
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will forgive them no longer.
[9]The high places of Isaac shall be laid waste,
and the sanctuaries of Israel made desolate;
I will attack the house of Jeroboam with the
sword.

**Amos and Amaziah** [10]Amaziah, the priest of
Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam, king of Israel:
"Amos has conspired against you here within
Israel; the country cannot endure all his words.
[11]For this is what Amos says:

Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel shall surely be exiled from its
land."

[12]To Amos, Amaziah said: "Off with you,
visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn
your bread by prophesying, [13]but never again
prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary
and a royal temple." [14]Amos answered Amaziah,
"I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a
company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a
dresser of sycamores.* [15]The LORD took me
from following the flock, and said to me, Go,
prophesy to my people Israel. [16]Now hear the
word of the LORD!"

You say: prophesy not against Israel,
preach not against the house of Isaac.
17 Now thus says the LORD:
Your wife shall be made a harlot in the city,
and your sons and daughters shall fall by the
sword;
Your land shall be divided by measuring line,
and you yourself shall die in an unclean
land;
Israel shall be exiled far from its land.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 8
See RG
365

**Vision of the Fruit Basket** [1]This is what the
Lord GOD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit.
[2]"What do you see, Amos?" he asked. I answered, "A basket of ripe fruit." Then the LORD
said to me:

The time is ripe to have done with my people
Israel;
I will forgive them no longer.
[3]The temple songs shall become wailings on
that day,
says the Lord GOD.
Many shall be the corpses,
strewn everywhere.—Silence!

### Against Greed

[4]Hear this, you who trample upon the needy
and destroy the poor of the land!
[5]"When will the new moon be over," you ask,
"that we may sell our grain,
and the sabbath, that we may display the
wheat?
We will diminish the ephah,*
add to the shekel,
and fix our scales for cheating!
[6]We will buy the lowly man for silver,
and the poor man for a pair of sandals;
even the refuse of the wheat we will sell!"
[7]The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:*
Never will I forget a thing they have done!
[8]Shall not the land tremble because of this,
and all who dwell in it mourn,
While it rises up and tosses like the Nile,
and settles back like the river of Egypt?*

[9]On that day, says the Lord GOD,
I will make the sun set at midday
and cover the earth with darkness in broad
daylight.

**7, 7:** Plummet in hand: signifying that God is about to withdraw his mercy from his people and that the nation is to be measured for destruction.

**7, 14f:** Amos denies that he belonged to the class of professional prophets; his vocation is due to the personal intervention of the Lord.

**8, 5:** Ephah: a standard of measure; a little more than a bushel.

**8, 7:** The pride of Jacob: the sinful pride detested by God (Am 6, 8), in contrast to God himself, who is the true Pride of Jacob.

**8, 8:** The figure is based on the annual flooding of the river Nile.

10 I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentations.
I will cover the loins of all with sackcloth
and make every head bald.
I will make them mourn as for an only son,
and bring their day to bitter end.[o]

11 Yes, days are coming, says the Lord God,
when I will send famine upon the land:
Not a famine of bread, or thirst for water,
but for hearing the word of the Lord.
12 Then shall they wander from sea to sea
and rove from the north to the east
In search of the word of the Lord,
but they shall not find it.

13 On that day, fair virgins and young men
shall faint from thirst;
14 Those who swear by the shameful idol of Samaria,
"By the life of your god, O Dan!"
"By the life of your love, O Beer-sheba!"
those shall fall, never to rise again.*

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9
See RG
363–364,
365–366

**Vision of the Altar*** 1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said:

Strike the bases, so that the doorjambs totter
till you break them off on the heads of them all!
Those who are left I will slay with the sword;
not one shall flee,
no survivor shall escape.
2 Though they break through to the nether world,
even from there my hand shall bring them out;
Though they climb to the heavens,
I will bring them down;[p]
3 Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,
there too I will hunt them out and take them away;
Though they hide from my gaze
in the bottom of the sea,
I will command the serpent* there to bite them;
4 Though they are led into captivity by their enemies,
there will I command the sword to slay them.
I will fix my gaze upon them
for evil, and not for good,[q]
5 I, the Lord God of hosts.
I melt the earth with my touch,
so that all who dwell on it mourn,
While it all rises up like the Nile,
and settles back like the river of Egypt;
6 I have built heaven, my upper chamber,
and established my vault over the earth;
I summon the waters of the sea
and pour them out upon the surface of the earth,
I, the Lord by name.[r]

7 Are you not like the Ethiopians to me,
O men of Israel, says the Lord?
Did I not bring the Israelites from the land of Egypt
As I brought the Philistines from Caphtor
and the Arameans* from Kir?[s]
8 The eyes of the Lord God are on this sinful kingdom:
I will destroy it from off the face of the earth.

### Epilogue: Messianic Perspective

But I will not destroy the house of Jacob completely,
says the Lord.
9 For see, I have given the command
to sift the house of Israel among all the nations,
As one sifts with a sieve,
letting no pebble fall to the ground.

8, 14: Dan and Beer-sheba, the extreme northern and southern limits of the country, where idolatrous worship was offered.

9, 1–8: There will be no escape from God's punishment, symbolized here by the destruction of a building, probably the schismatic temple at Bethel.

9, 3: Serpent: the sea monster of familiar legend, subdued by God at the time of creation and lurking still in the ocean depths; cf Ps 89, 10f.

9, 7: The Ethiopians . . . the Philistines . . . the Arameans: by nature Israel is not different from any other nation. It was not because of any merit on Israel's part that God delivered them from Egypt. Caphtor: the island of Crete.

o Tb 2, 6; 1 Mc 1, 41. p Ps 139, 8. q Jer 44, 11. r Am 5, 8. s Dt 2, 23; Jer 47, 4.

[10] By the sword shall all sinners among my
people die,
those who say, "Evil will not reach or
overtake us."
[11] *On that day I will raise up
the fallen hut of David;
I will wall up its breaches,
raise up its ruins,
and rebuild it as in the days of old, [t]
[12] That they may conquer what is left of Edom
and all the nations that shall bear my name,
say I, the LORD, who will do this.
[13] Yes, days are coming,
says the LORD,
When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
and the vintager, him who sows the seed;
The juice of grapes shall drip down the
mountains,
and all the hills shall run with it. [u]
[14] I will bring about the restoration of my people
Israel;
they shall rebuild and inhabit their ruined
cities,
Plant vineyards and drink the wine,
set out gardens and eat the fruits.
[15] I will plant them upon their own ground;
never again shall they be plucked
From the land I have given them,
say I, the LORD, your God.

9, 11f: In Acts 15, 15ff St. James interprets this passage in a messianic sense. Fallen hut: the kingdom. The nations that shall bear my name: the Gentile peoples who shall be converted to the Lord, that is, conquered by him, and therefore shall bear his name.

t Acts 15, 16. u Jl 3, 18.

# THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Obadiah
See RG
367–368

The twenty-one verses of this book contain the shortest and sternest prophecy in the Old Testament. Nothing is known of the author, although his oracle against Edom, a long-standing enemy of Israel, indicates a date of composition sometime in the fifth century B.C. During this period the Edomites had been forced to abandon their ancient home near the Gulf of Aqaba and had settled in southern Judah, where they appear among the adversaries of the Jews returning from exile.

The prophecy is a bitter cry for vengeance against Edom for its heinous crimes. The mountain of Esau will be occupied and ravaged by the enemy but Zion shall remain inviolate. Judah and Israel shall again form one nation; and that triumphant refrain of Israelite eschatology will be heard once more: "The Kingdom is the Lord's!" Many of the verses in this prophecy can be paralleled in Jer 49, 7-22, but it is difficult to determine the precise relationship between these similar passages.

### Title and Theme

[1] The vision of Obadiah.
[Thus says the LORD God:]
Of Edom we have heard a message from the
LORD,
and a herald has been sent among the
nations:
"Up! let us go to war against him!" [a]

### Edom Shall Perish

[2] See, I make you small among the nations; [b]
you are held in dire contempt.
[3] The pride of your heart has deceived you:
you who dwell in the clefts of the rock,
whose abode is in the heights,
Who say in your heart,
"Who will bring me down to earth?"

a Jer 49, 14. b 2ff: Jer 49, 15f.

[4] Though you go as high as the eagle,
and your nest be set among the stars,
From there will I bring you down,
says the LORD.
[5] If thieves came to you, if robbers by night,[c]
how could you be thus destroyed:
would they not steal merely till they had enough?
If vintagers came to you,
would they not leave some gleanings?*
[6] How they search Esau,
seek out his hiding places!
[7] To the border they drive you—
all your allies;
They deceive you, they overpower you—
those at peace with you;
Those who eat your bread
lay snares beneath you:
There is no understanding in him!*
[8] Shall I not, says the LORD, on that day
make the wise men* disappear from Edom,
and understanding from the mount of Esau?[d]
[9] Your warriors, O Teman,* shall be crushed,
till all on Mount Esau are destroyed.

### The Cause

[10] Because of violence to your brother Jacob,*
disgrace shall cover you
and you shall be destroyed forever.[e]
[11] On the day when you stood by,
on the day when aliens carried off his possessions,
And strangers entered his gates
and cast lots over Jerusalem,
you too were one of them.*
[12] Gaze not upon the day of your brother,
the day of his disaster;
Exult not over the children of Judah
on the day of their ruin;
Speak not haughtily
on the day of distress!
[13] Enter not the gate of my people
on the day of their calamity;
Gaze not, you at least, upon his misfortune
on the day of his calamity;
Lay not hands upon his possessions
on the day of his calamity!
[14] Stand not at the crossroads
to slay his refugees;
Betray not his fugitives
on the day of distress!

### Judgment upon the Nations

[15] For near is the day of the LORD[f]
for all the nations!
As you have done, so shall it be done to you,
your deed shall come back upon your own head;
[16] As you have drunk* upon my holy mountain,
so shall all the nations drink continually.
Yes, they shall drink and swallow,
and shall become as though they had not been.

### Judah Shall Be Restored

[17] But on Mount Zion there shall be a portion saved;*
the mountain shall be holy,
And the house of Jacob shall take possession
of those that dispossessed them.
[18] The house of Jacob shall be a fire,
and the house of Joseph a flame;
The house of Esau shall be stubble,
and they shall set them ablaze and devour them;

5: Something of value may escape the robber, and the vintager always leaves something for the gleaners, but God's devastation of Edom will be complete.

7: There is no understanding in him: Edom's faithless allies assure one another that he does not have sense enough to be able to defend himself.

8: The wise men: Edom was proverbial for its wise men; cf Jer 49, 7.

9: Teman: one of the names used for the land southeast of Palestine, here synonymous with Edom. Esau: here used as the name of the land.

10: Your brother Jacob: Esau, also called Edom, and Jacob, the father of Judah, were the sons of Isaac (Gn 25, 24ff).

11: After the devastation of Judah, Edom occupied the southern part of its territory. Edomites also joined the invading Chaldean forces (13) and assisted them in capturing the people of Judah (14).

16: As you have drunk: the Lord addresses the people of Judah. As the people of Jerusalem have drunk the cup of retribution, so shall the nations, and especially Edom (18), suffer punishment. This metaphorical use of drinking the cup of God's wrath is common in the Bible; cf Jb 21, 20; Is 19, 14; Jer 25, 15f.

17ff: The Israelites shall be restored and shall occupy the lands of those who oppressed them. The survivors of Judah shall be rejoined by the returned exiles from northern Israel.

c Jer 49, 9. d Is 29, 14; 1 Cor 1, 19. e Gn 27, 41f. f 15f: Ps 137, 7ff.

Then none shall survive of the house of Esau,
for the LORD has spoken.
19 They shall occupy the Negeb, the mount of Esau,
and the foothills of the Philistines;
And they shall occupy the lands of Ephraim
and the lands of Samaria,
and Benjamin shall occupy Gilead.
20 The captives of this host of the children of Israel
shall occupy the Canaanite land as far as Zarephath,*
And the captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
shall occupy the cities of the Negeb.
21 And saviors* shall ascend Mount Zion
to rule the mount of Esau,
and the kingship shall be the LORD's.

20: Zarephath: a town in Phoenicia, north of Tyre; cf 1 Kgs 17, 10. Ezekiel's ideal boundaries of the new Israel (Ez 47, 13ff) extend farther north. Sepharad: probably Sardis in western Asia Minor. The later rabbis thought it to be Spain.

21: Saviors: the victorious Israelites who will rule over their enemies after the fashion of the ancient Judges; cf Jgs 3, 9. 15. 31; 10, 1.

# THE BOOK OF JONAH

Jonah
See RG
368–371

Written in the postexilic era, probably in the fifth century B.C., this book is a didactic story with an important theological message. It concerns a disobedient prophet who attempted to run away from his divine commission, was cast overboard and swallowed by a great fish, rescued in a marvelous manner, and sent on his way to Nineveh, the traditional enemy of Israel. To the surprise of Jonah, the wicked city listened to his message of doom and repented immediately. All, from king to lowliest subject, humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes. Seeing their repentance, God did not carry out the punishment he had planned for them. Whereupon Jonah complained to God about the unexpected success of his mission; he was bitter because Yahweh, instead of destroying had led the people to repentance and then spared them.

From this partly humorous story, a very sublime lesson may be drawn. Jonah stands for a narrow and vindictive mentality, all too common among the Jews of that period. Because they were the chosen people, a good many of them cultivated an intolerant nationalism which limited the mercy of God to their nation. It was abhorrent to their way of thinking that nations as wicked as Assyria should escape his wrath.

The prophecy, which is both instructive and entertaining, strikes directly at this viewpoint. It is a parable of mercy, showing that God's threatened punishments are but the expression of a merciful will which moves all men to repent and seek forgiveness. The universality of the story contrasts sharply with the particularistic spirit of many in the postexilic community. The book has also prepared the way for the gospel with its message of redemption for all, both Jew and Gentile.

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
369

**The First Mission** 1 This is the word of the LORD that came to Jonah,[a] son of Amittai:* 2 "Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and preach against it; their wickedness has come up before me."[b] 3 But Jonah made ready to flee to Tarshish* away from the LORD. He went down to Joppa, found a ship going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went aboard to journey with them to Tarshish, away from the LORD.

1, 1: Jonah, son of Amittai: a prophet of this name lived at the time of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.).

1, 3: Tarshish: identified by many with Tartessus, an ancient Phoenician colony in southwest Spain; precise identification with any particular Phoenician center in the western Mediterranean is uncertain. To the Hebrews it stood for the far west.

a 2 Kgs 14, 25. b Jon 3, 3; 4, 11.

Ch 2
See RG
368

4 The LORD, however, hurled a violent wind
upon the sea, and in the furious tempest that
arose the ship was on the point of breaking up.
5 Then the mariners became frightened and each
one cried to his god. To lighten the ship for
themselves, they threw its cargo into the sea.
Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down into the hold
of the ship, and lay there fast asleep. 6 The
captain came to him and said, "What are you
doing asleep? Rise up, call upon your God!
Perhaps God will be mindful of us so that we
may not perish."
7 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us
cast lots to find out on whose account we have
met with this misfortune." So they cast lots, and
thus singled out Jonah. 8 "Tell us," they said,
"what is your business? Where do you come
from? What is your country, and to what people
do you belong?" 9 "I am a Hebrew," Jonah
answered them; "I worship the LORD, the God
of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."
10 Now the men were seized with great fear
and said to him, "How could you do such a
thing!"—They knew that he was fleeing from
the LORD, because he had told them.— 11 "What
shall we do with you," they asked, "that the sea
may quiet down for us?" For the sea was
growing more and more turbulent. 12 Jonah said
to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea,
that it may quiet down for you; since I know it is
because of me that this violent storm has come
upon you."
13 Still the men rowed hard to regain the land,
but they could not, for the sea grew ever more
turbulent. 14 Then they cried to the LORD: "We
beseech you, O LORD, let us not perish for taking
this man's life; do not charge us with shedding
innocent blood, for you, LORD, have done as you
saw fit."* 15 Then they took Jonah and threw
him into the sea, and the sea's raging abated.
16 Struck with great fear of the LORD, the men
offered sacrifice and made vows to him.

## CHAPTER 2

1 But the LORD sent a large fish, that swal-
lowed Jonah; and he remained in the belly of the
fish three days and three nights.[c] 2 From the
belly of the fish Jonah said this prayer to the
LORD, his God:

### Psalm of Thanksgiving

3 Out of my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me;
From the midst of the nether world I cried for
help,
and you heard my voice.[d]
4 For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of
the sea,
and the flood enveloped me;
All your breakers and your billows
passed over me.[e]
5 Then I said, "I am banished from your sight!
yet would I again look upon your holy
temple."[f]
6 The waters swirled about me, threatening my
life;
the abyss enveloped me;
seaweed clung about my head.[g]
7 Down I went to the roots of the mountains;
the bars of the nether world
were closing behind me forever,
But you brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD, my God.[h]
8 When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
My prayer reached you
in your holy temple.[i]
9 Those who worship vain idols
forsake their source of mercy.[j]
10 But I, with resounding praise,
will sacrifice to you;
What I have vowed I will pay:
deliverance is from the LORD.[k]

11 Then the LORD commanded the fish to spew
Jonah upon the shore.

1, 14: Since it has pleased the Lord to punish Jonah, the mariners ask that in ridding themselves of him they be not charged with the crime of murder.

c Mt 12, 40; 16, 4; Lk 11, 30; 1 Cor 15, 4. d Pss 18, 7; 120, 1. e Ps 42, 8. f Ps 31, 23; Is 38, 11. g Pss 18, 5; 69, 2. h Pss 16, 10; 30, 4. i Pss 5, 8; 18, 7; 88, 3. j Ps 31, 7. k Ps 50, 14.

## CHAPTER 3

**Conversion of Nineveh** [1]The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: [2]"Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you." [3]So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, according to the LORD's bidding. Now Nineveh was an enormously large city; it took three days to go through it. [4]Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day's walk announcing, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"* [5]when the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.[l]

[6]When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. [7]Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles: "Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. [8]Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth* and call loudly to God; every man shall turn from his evil way and from the violence he has in hand. [9]Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withold his blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish."[m] [10]When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.

## CHAPTER 4

**Jonah's Anger: God's Reproof** [1]But this was greatly displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.* [2]"I beseech you, LORD," he prayed, "is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? This is why I fled at first to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, rich in clemency, loathe to punish.[n] [3]And now, LORD, please take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."[o] [4]But the LORD asked, "Have you reason to be angry?"

Ch 3 See RG 369

[5]Jonah then left the city for a place to the east of it, where he built himself a hut and waited under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city. [6]And when the LORD God provided a gourd plant,* that grew up over Jonah's head, giving shade that relieved him of any discomfort, Jonah was very happy over the plant. [7]But the next morning at dawn God sent a worm which attacked the plant, so that it withered. [8]And when the sun arose, God sent a burning east wind; and the sun beat upon Jonah's head till he became faint. Then he asked for death, saying, "I would be better off dead than alive."

[9]But God said to Jonah, "Have you reason to be angry over the plant?" "I have reason to be angry," Jonah answered, "angry enough to die." [10]Then the LORD said, "You are concerned over the plant which cost you no labor and which you did not raise; it came up in one night and in one night it perished.* [11]And should I not be concerned over Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left, not to mention the many cattle?"

Ch 4 See RG 370

**3, 4:** Shall be destroyed: the Hebrew expression reminds the reader of the "overthrowing" of the wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, by a special act of God.

**3, 8:** Beast . . . sackcloth: the animals carried the signs of this repentance, as on occasions of joy they bore garlands.

**4, 1:** He became angry: because of his narrowly nationalistic vindictiveness, Jonah did not wish the Lord to forgive the Ninevites.

**4, 6:** Gourd plant: the Hebrew word, kikayon, means here a wide-leafed plant of the cucumber or castor-bean variety.

**4, 10f:** Jonah is selfish in bemoaning his personal loss of a shady gourd plant without any concern over the threat of loss of life to the Ninevites through the destruction of their city. If God in his kindness provided the plant for his prophet without the latter's effort or merit, how much more is he disposed to show love and mercy toward all men, Jew and Gentile, when they repent of their sins and implore his pardon! God's providence is also shown here to extend even to animals.

l Mt 12, 41; Lk 11, 32. m Jl 2, 14. n Ps 86, 5; Jl 2, 13. o 1 Kgs 19, 4.

# THE BOOK OF MICAH

Micah
See RG
371-373

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. Of his personal life and call we know nothing except that he came from the obscure village of Moresheth in the foothills. His were the broad vistas of the Judean lowland and the distant sea on the western horizon. With burning eloquence he attacked the rich exploiters of the poor, fraudulent merchants, venal judges, corrupt priests and prophets. To the man of the countryside the vices of the nation seemed centered in its capitals, for both Samaria and Jerusalem are singled out for judgment. An interesting notice in Jer 26, 17f informs us that the reform of Hezekiah was influenced by the preaching of Micah.

The prophecy may be divided into three parts: I. The impending judgment of the Lord, followed by an exposition of its causes, Israel's sins. Censure of Judah's leaders for betrayal of their responsibility (1, 1—3, 12). II. The glory of the restored Zion. A prince of David's house will rule over a reunited Israel. (St. Matthew's Nativity narrative points to Christ's birth in Bethlehem as the fulfillment of this prophecy.) A remnant shall survive the chastisement of Judah and her adversaries shall be destroyed (4, 1—5, 14). III. The case against Israel, in which the Lord is portrayed as the plaintiff who has maintained fidelity to the covenant. The somber picture closes with a prayer for national restoration and a beautiful expression of trust in God's pardoning mercy (6, 1—7, 20).

It should be noted that each of these three divisions begins with reproach and the threat of punishment, and ends on a note of hope and promise.

## I: Punishment of Israel's Sins

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
371

**Divine Judgment** [1]The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah: that is, the vision he received concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

[2]Hear, O peoples, all of you,
give heed, O earth, and all that fills you! [a]
Let the Lord GOD be witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple!*
[3]For see, the LORD comes forth from his place, [b]
he descends and treads upon the heights of the earth.
[4]The mountains melt under him
and the valleys split open,
Like wax before the fire,
like water poured down a slope.

[5]For the crime of Jacob all this comes to pass,
and for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the crime of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what is the sin of the house of Judah?
Is it not Jerusalem?
[6]I will make Samaria a stone heap in the field,
a place to plant for vineyards;
I will throw down into the valley her stones,
and lay bare her foundations.
[7]All her idols shall be broken to pieces, [c]
all her wages shall be burned in the fire,
and all her statues I will destroy.
As the wages of a harlot they were gathered,
and to the wages of a harlot shall they return.*

[8]For this reason I lament and wail,
I go barefoot and naked;
I utter lamentation like the jackals,
and mourning like the ostriches. [d]
[9]There is no remedy for the blow she has been struck;
rather, it has come even to Judah,

**1, 2:** His holy temple: God's heavenly temple; the prophet pictures a theophany (3f).

**1, 7:** The comparison of the unfaithful people with a prostitute, first found in Hosea, is frequent with the prophets; probably ritual prostitution is meant; cf Am 2, 7f; Hos 4, 14.

a Dt 32, 1; Is 1, 2. b 3f: Is 26, 21; Na 1, 5; Hb 3, 10. c Hos 9, 1. d Jb 30, 29.

It reaches to the gate of my people,
even to Jerusalem.
10 Publish it not in Gath,*
weep not at all;
In Beth-leaphrah
roll in the dust.[e]
11 Pass by,
you who dwell in Shaphir!
The inhabitants of Zaanan
come not forth from their city.
The lamentation of Beth-ezel
finds in you its grounds.
12 How can the inhabitants of Maroth
hope for good?
For evil has come down from the LORD
to the gate of Jerusalem.
13 Harness steeds to the chariots,
O inhabitants of Lachish;
Lachish, the beginning of sin
for daughter Zion,
Because there were in you
the crimes of Israel.
14 Therefore you shall give parting gifts
to Moresheth-gath;
Beth-achzib is a deception
to the kings of Israel.
15 Yet must I bring to you the conqueror,
O inhabitants of Mareshah;
Even to Adullam shall go
the glory of Israel.

16 Make yourself bald, pluck out your hair,
for the children whom you cherish;
Let your baldness be as the eagle's,
because they are exiled from you.*

## CHAPTER 2

### Social Evils

1 Woe to those who plan iniquity,
and work out evil on their couches;
In the morning light they accomplish it
when it lies within their power.
2 They covet fields, and seize them;
houses, and they take them;
They cheat an owner of his house,
a man of his inheritance.*
3 Therefore thus says the LORD:
Behold, I am planning against this race an evil
from which you shall not withdraw your
necks;
Nor shall you walk with head high,
for it will be a time of evil.

4 On that day a satire shall be sung over you,
and there shall be a plaintive chant:
"Our ruin is complete,
our fields are portioned out among our
captors,
The fields of my people are measured out,
and no one can get them back!"
5 Thus you shall have no one
to mark out boundaries by lot*
in the assembly of the LORD.

6 "Preach not," they preach,
"let them not preach of these things!"*
The shame will not withdraw.
7 How can it be said, O house of Jacob,
"Is the LORD short of patience,
or are such his deeds?"
Do not my words promise good
to him who walks uprightly?

8 But of late my people has risen up as an
enemy:
you have stripped off the mantle covering
the tunic
Of those who go their way in confidence,
as though it were spoils of war.
9 The women of my people you drive out
from their pleasant houses;

Ch 2
See RG
371

**1, 10–15:** The Judean cities here named were in the vicinity of Moresheth, the region with which Micah was most familiar. They were to experience divine chastisement. In the Hebrew, wordplays on the names of these cities abound. The text is partly obscure.

**1, 16:** Shaving the head was a sign of mourning; cf Is 3, 24; Am 8, 10.

**2, 2:** Land monopoly, also denounced by Isaiah, was a chronic vice in Judah. To protect the poor against it, a man's inheritance, his ancestral property, was supposed to be inviolate; cf 1 Kgs 21, 1–4; but the wealthy in their greed were enslaving men for their debts and depriving them of their land.

**2, 5:** To mark out boundaries by lot: an allusion to the initial distribution of the land of Palestine among the Israelites; cf Jos 13–21. The appropriate punishment of those greedy for land will be the loss of their land to their enemies (v 4), a loss that will be irrevocable.

**2, 6f:** The words in quotation marks are the protestations of the people against the prophet's predictions of doom.

e 2 Sm 1, 20.

From their children you take away
forever the honor I gave them.*
10 "Up! Be off,
this is no place to rest";
For any trifle you exact
a crippling pledge.*

11 If one, acting on impulse, should make the
futile claim:
"I pour you wine and strong drink as my
prophecy,"
then he would be the prophet of this
people.
12 I will gather you, O Jacob, each and every
one,*
I will assemble all the remnant of Israel;
I will group them like a flock in the fold,
like a herd in the midst of its corral;
they shall not be thrown into panic by men.
13 With a leader to break the path
they shall burst open the gate and go out
through it;
Their king shall go through before them,
and the LORD at their head.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
371–372

### Downfall of Present Leaders

1 And I said:
Hear, you leaders of Jacob,
rulers of the house of Israel!
Is it not your duty to know what is right,
2 you who hate what is good, and love evil?
You who tear their skin from them,
and their flesh from their bones![f]
3 They eat the flesh of my people,
and flay their skin from them,
and break their bones.
They chop them in pieces like flesh in a kettle,
and like meat in a caldron.
4 When they cry to the LORD,
he shall not answer them;
Rather shall he hide his face from them at that
time,
because of the evil they have done.

5 Thus says the LORD regarding the prophets*
who lead my people astray;
Who, when their teeth have something to
bite,
announce peace,
But when one fails to put something in their
mouth,
proclaim war against him.[g]
6 Therefore you shall have night, not vision,
darkness, not divination;
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
and the day shall be dark for them.[h]
7 Then shall the seers be put to shame,
and the diviners confounded;
They shall cover their lips, all of them,
because there is no answer from God.
8 But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the spirit of the LORD,
with authority and with might;
To declare to Jacob his crimes
and to Israel his sins.
9 Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob,
you rulers of the house of Israel!
You who abhor what is just,
and pervert all that is right;
10 Who build up Zion with bloodshed,
and Jerusalem with wickedness!
11 Her leaders render judgment for a bribe,
her priests give decisions for a salary,
her prophets divine for money,
While they rely on the LORD, saying,
"Is not the LORD in the midst of us?
No evil can come upon us!"[i]
12 Therefore, because of you,
Zion shall be plowed like a field,
and Jerusalem reduced to rubble,
And the mount of the temple
to a forest ridge.[j]

**2, 9:** The honor I gave them: their dignity as free Israelites.
**2, 10:** A crippling pledge: Israelite law forbade exacting pledges for loans that would work hardship on the borrower (Ex 22, 25f; Dt 24, 6. 10–13. 17); but the law was habitually violated.
**2, 12f:** This messianic passage concerning the restoration after the Babylonian exile seems out of place here and is probably a later addition.
**3, 5–8:** Almost all the prophetic books contain oracles against the false prophets. Here Micah accuses them of prophesying for venal motives and determining the prophecy by the price that is paid them; he contrasts his own disinterested preaching of the word of God.

f Am 2, 7. g Ez 13, 10. h Jer 15, 9; Am 8, 9; Zec 13, 3. i Ez 22, 27; Zep 3, 3. j Jer 26, 18.

# II: The New Israel

## CHAPTER 4

### The People To Be Restored

1 In days to come*
the mount of the LORD's house
Shall be established higher than the mountains;
it shall rise high above the hills,
And peoples shall stream to it: [k]
2 Many nations shall come, and say,
"Come, let us climb the mount of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
That he may instruct us in his ways,
that we may walk in his paths."
For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples
and impose terms on strong and distant nations;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
One nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again.
4 Every man shall sit under his own vine
or under his own fig tree, undisturbed;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. [l]
5 For all the peoples walk
each in the name of its god,
But we will walk in the name of the LORD,
our God, forever and ever.
6 On that day, says the LORD,
I will gather the lame,
And I will assemble the outcasts,
and those whom I have afflicted.
7 I will make of the lame a remnant,
and of those driven far off a strong nation;
And the LORD shall be king over them on Mount Zion,
from now on forever. [m]
8 And you, O Magdal-eder,*
hillock of daughter Zion!
Unto you shall it come:
the former dominion shall be restored,
the kingdom of daughter Jerusalem.

Ch 4–5
See RG
373

9 Now why do you cry out so?
Are you without a king?
Or has your counselor perished,
That you are seized with pains
like a woman in travail?
10 Writhe in pain, grow faint,
O daughter Zion,
like a woman in travail;
For now shall you go forth from the city
and dwell in the fields;
To Babylon shall you go,
there shall you be rescued.
There shall the LORD redeem you
from the hand of your enemies.*
11 How many nations are gathered against you!
They say, "Let her be profaned,
let our eyes see Zion's downfall!"
12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD,
nor understand his counsel,
When he has gathered them
like sheaves on the threshing floor.
13 Arise and thresh, O daughter Zion;
your horn I will make iron
And your hoofs bronze,
that you may crush many peoples;
You shall devote their spoils to the LORD,
and their riches to the Lord of the whole earth. [n]

### Restoration through the Messiah

14 Now fence yourself in, Bat-gader!*
"They have laid siege against us!"
With the rod they strike on the cheek
the ruler of Israel.

**4, 1ff:** See note on Is 2, 2ff.
**4, 8:** Magdal-eder: "tower of the flock," an ancient place name (cf Gn 35, 21), here used symbolically of Jerusalem.
**4, 10:** For now . . . your enemies: probably a later addition to the text, when the prediction of exile had been fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity. The prophet sees the exile as the means whereby God will purify and restore his people.
**4, 14:** Bat-gader: "fenced-in maiden," another symbolic name for Jerusalem, then under siege from the Assyrians.

k 1ff: Is 2, 2ff. l Hos 14, 8; Am 9, 14. m Is 6, 13; Dn 7, 14; Zep 3, 19; Lk 1, 32. n Is 41, 15; Hos 10, 11.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 4–5
See RG
373

1 But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, [o]
too small to be among the clans of Judah,
From you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.*
2 (Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
when she who is to give birth* has borne,
And the rest of his brethren shall return
to the children of Israel.) [p]
3 He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock
by the strength of the LORD,
in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;
And they shall remain, for now his greatness
shall reach to the ends of the earth;
4 he shall be peace.

If Assyria invades our country*
and treads upon our land,
We shall raise against it seven shepherds,
eight men of royal rank;
5 And they shall tend the land of Assyria with the sword,
and the land of Nimrod* with the drawn sword;
And we shall be delivered from Assyria,
if it invades our land
and treads upon our borders.

Ch 6
See RG
372

6 The remnant of Jacob shall be
in the midst of many peoples,
Like dew coming from the LORD,
like raindrops on the grass,
Which wait for no man,
nor tarry for the sons of men.
7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations,
in the midst of many peoples,
Like a lion among beasts of the forest,
like a young lion among flocks of sheep;
When it passes through, it tramples
and tears, and there is none to deliver.
8 Your hand shall be lifted above your foes,
and all your enemies shall be destroyed.

9 On that day, says the LORD,*
I will destroy the horses from your midst
and ruin your chariots;
10 I will demolish the cities of your land
and tear down all your fortresses.
11 I will abolish the means of divination from your use,
and there shall no longer be soothsayers among you.
12 I will abolish your carved images
and the sacred pillars from your midst;
And you shall no longer adore
the works of your hands. [q]
13 I will tear out the sacred poles* from your midst,
and destroy your cities.
14 I will wreak vengeance in anger and wrath
upon the nations that have not hearkened.

# III: Admonition

## CHAPTER 6

### Accusation and Answer

1 Hear, then, what the LORD says:
Arise, present your plea before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice! [r]
2 Hear, O mountains, the plea of the LORD,
pay attention, O foundations of the earth!
For the LORD has a plea against his people,
and he enters into trial with Israel.

**5, 1:** In contrast to Bat-gader (Mi 4, 14), where the ruler of Israel, the reigning king, is in peril of his life from the Assyrians, is the tiny city and clan of Bethlehem-Ephrathah, from which comes the ancient Davidic dynasty (whose origin is from of old, from ancient times) with its messianic King, one who is to be ruler in Israel.

**5, 2:** She who is to give birth: the mother of the Messiah: cf Is 7, 14.

**5, 4f:** This passage, expressing confidence in Judah's ability to deliver itself from Assyria, is in contrast with the preceding messianic oracle, which ascribes deliverance to the Lord and his agent. Some believe that here the prophet is quoting the words of the defiant men of Judah. The shepherds and men of royal rank are one and the same: warriors capable of routing Assyria. The same kind of numerical progression is used by Amos (1, 3), and elsewhere in the Bible.

**5, 5:** Nimrod: the legendary ancestor of the Mesopotamians; cf Gn 10, 10ff.

**5, 9–13:** Part of the messianic restoration will consist in the removal of everything that has drawn Israel away from the Lord; this includes not only the objects of false worship, but also the armaments in which the idolators had trusted.

**5, 12f:** Sacred pillars . . . sacred poles: see note on Ex 34, 13.

o Ru 1, 2; 1 Sm 17, 12; Mt 2, 6; Jn 7, 42. p 2f: Is 7, 14; 11, 1f. q Hos 3, 4; 10, 1f. r Is 6, 2; Ob 1.

3 O my people, what have I done to you,
or how have I wearied you? Answer me! [s]
4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
from the place of slavery I released you;
And I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam. [t]
5 My people, remember what Moab's King
Balak planned,
and how Balaam, the son of Beor, answered
him
. . . from Shittim to Gilgal,*
that you may know the just deeds of the
LORD. [u]
6 With what shall I come before the LORD,*
and bow before God most high?
Shall I come before him with holocausts,
with calves a year old? [v]
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of
rams,
with myriad streams of oil?
Shall I give my first-born* for my crime,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 You have been told, O man, what is good,
and what the LORD requires of you:
Only to do the right and to love goodness,
and to walk humbly with your God. [w]

9 Hark! the LORD cries to the city.*
[It is wisdom to fear your name!]
Hear, O tribe and city council,
12 You whose rich men are full of violence,
whose inhabitants speak falsehood
with deceitful tongues in their heads!
10 Am I to bear any longer criminal hoarding
and the meager ephah that is accursed?
11 Shall I acquit criminal balances,
bags of false weights?
13 Rather I will begin to strike you
with devastation because of your sins.
15 You shall sow, yet not reap,
tread out the olive, yet pour no oil,
and the grapes, yet drink no wine. [x]
14 You shall eat, without being satisfied,
food that will leave you empty;
What you acquire, you cannot save;
what you do save, I will deliver up to the
sword. [y]
16 You have kept the decrees of Omri,
and all the works of the house of Ahab,
and you have walked in their counsels;
Therefore I will deliver you up to ruin,
and your citizens to derision;
and you shall bear the reproach of the
nations.*

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7
See RG
372–373

### Condemnation and Prayer

1 Alas! I am as when the fruit is gathered,
as when the vines have been gleaned;
There is no cluster to eat,
no early fig that I crave.
2 The faithful are gone from the earth,
among men the upright are no more!
They all lie in wait to shed blood,
each one ensnares the other. [z]
3 Their hands succeed at evil;
the prince makes demands,
The judge is had for a price,
the great man speaks as he pleases, [a]
4 The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright like a thorn hedge.
The day announced by your watchmen!
your punishment has come;
now is the time of your confusion.

**6, 5:** From Shittim to Gilgal: from the east to the west side of the Jordan; the events described in Jos 3—5 are meant. The text is defective; however, it is evident that this verse continues the remembrance of God's deeds of mercy to Israel, beginning with the Exodus (v 4) and extending to the conquest, deeds which have provoked so little response from his people.

**6, 6ff:** The people ask how they shall worship the Lord, proposing the various forms of sacrifice. The prophet replies that sacrifice avails nothing without the true spirit of religion. This is one of the best expressions of the prophetic teaching on religion, the preparation for such New Testament passages as Jas 1, 27.

**6, 7:** Shall I give my first-born: through Canaanite influence the abominable practice of human sacrifice had been introduced under impious kings (cf 2 Kgs 16, 3; 21, 6).

**6, 9:** The city: Jerusalem as the embodiment of the crimes of the entire land.

**6, 16:** Judah has followed the example of the northern kingdom epitomized in the semipaganism of Omri and his son Ahab (1 Kgs 16, 25–34), copying both the corrupted worship and the social injustice of their reigns.

s Jer 2, 5. t Ex 15, 20. u Nm 22, 23. v 6f: Hos 6, 6; 8, 13; Am 5, 21. w Dt 26, 16; Zec 7, 9; Mt 23, 23. x Dt 28, 38; Am 5, 11; Hg 1, 6. y Hos 4, 10. z Is 1, 21; Hos 4, 2. a Is 1, 23.

5 Put no trust in a friend,*
have no confidence in a companion;
Against her who lies in your bosom
guard the portals of your mouth. [b]
6 For the son dishonors his father,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
The daughter-in-law against her
mother-in-law,
and a man's enemies are those of his
household. [c]
7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD,
I will put my trust in God my savior;
my God will hear me! [d]

8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy!*
though I have fallen, I will arise;
though I sit in darkness, the LORD is my
light.
9 The wrath of the LORD I will endure
because I have sinned against him,
Until he takes up my cause,
and establishes my right.
He will bring me forth to the light;
I will see his justice.
10 When my enemy sees this,
shame shall cover her:
She who said to me,
"Where is the LORD, thy God?"
My eyes shall see her downfall;
now shall she be trampled underfoot,
like the mire in the streets.

11 It is the day for building your walls;*
on that day the boundary shall be taken
away.
12 It is the day; and they shall come to you
from Assyria and from Egypt,
From Tyre even to the River,
from sea to sea, and from mountain to
mountain; [e]
13 And the land shall be a waste
because of its citizens,
as a result of their deeds.

14 Shepherd your people with your staff,*
the flock of your inheritance,
That dwells apart in a woodland,
in the midst of Carmel.
Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead,
as in the days of old;
15 As in the days when you came from the land
of Egypt,
show us wonderful signs.

16 The nations shall behold and be put to shame,
in spite of all their strength;
They shall put their hands over their mouths;
their ears shall become deaf.
17 They shall lick the dust like the serpent,
like reptiles on the ground;
They shall come quaking from their fastnesses,
trembling in fear of you [the LORD, our
God].

18 Who is there like you, the God who removes
guilt
and pardons sin for the remnant of his
inheritance;
Who does not persist in anger forever,
but delights rather in clemency, [f]
19 And will again have compassion on us,
treading underfoot our guilt?
You will cast into the depths of the sea
all our sins;
20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob,
and grace to Abraham,
As you have sworn to our fathers
from days of old. [g]

**7, 5f:** Corresponding to the widespread civil corruption and apostasy from religion is the breakdown of normal human and family relations.

**7, 8ff:** The unnamed enemy of Judah mentioned in these verses may be Assyria or one of the neighboring countries, such as Edom, which stood by to profit at Judah's downfall.

**7, 11ff:** This prophecy of restoration and repopulation of the promised land by the Jews now in exile appears to be from the period after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (587 B.C.).

**7, 14–17:** This prayer appears to be from the time after the return from exile (537 B.C.), when the people, few in number, possessed only a fragment of their former land, and were surrounded by hostile nations.

b Jer 9, 3. c Mt 10, 35f. d Is 8, 17. e Zec 14, 16. f Jer 10, 6; Acts 10, 43. g Ps 105, 6; Is 41, 8; 63, 16.

# THE BOOK OF NAHUM

Nahum
See RG
373–374

Shortly before the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., Nahum uttered his prophecy against the hated city. To understand the prophet's exultant outburst of joy over the impending destruction it is necessary to recall the savage cruelty of Assyria, which had made it the scourge of the ancient Near East for almost three centuries. The royal inscriptions of Assyria afford the best commentary on the burning denunciation of "the bloody city." In the wake of their conquests, mounds of heads, impaled bodies, enslaved citizens, and avaricious looters testified to the ruthlessness of the Assyrians. Little wonder that Judah joined in the general outburst of joy over the destruction of Nineveh!

But Nahum is not a prophet of unrestrained revenge. God's moral government of the world is asserted. Yahweh is the avenger but he is also merciful, a citadel in the day of distress. Nineveh's doom was a judgment on the wicked city. Before many years passed, Jerusalem too was to learn the meaning of such a judgment.

The book is divided as follows: The Lord's Coming in Judgment (1, 2—2, 1.3). The Fall of Nineveh (2, 2—3, 19).

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–3
See RG
374

1 Oracle about Nineveh. The book of the
vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

### The Lord's Coming in Judgment

2 *A jealous and avenging God* is the LORD,
an avenger is the LORD, and angry;
The LORD brings vengeance on his adversaries,
and lays up wrath for his enemies;
3 The LORD is slow to anger, yet great in power,
and the LORD never leaves the guilty
unpunished.
In hurricane and tempest is his path,
and clouds are the dust at his feet; [a]
4 He rebukes the sea and leaves it dry,
and all the rivers he dries up. [b]
Withered are Bashan and Carmel,
and the bloom of Lebanon fades;*
5 The mountains quake before him,
and the hills dissolve;
The earth is laid waste before him,
the world and all who dwell in it.
6 Before his wrath, who can stand firm, [c]
and who can face his blazing anger?
His fury is poured out like fire,
and the rocks are rent asunder before him.*
7 The LORD is good,
a refuge on the day of distress;
He takes care of those who have recourse to
him,
8 when the flood rages;
He makes an end of his opponents,
and his enemies he pursues with darkness.
9 What are you imputing to the LORD?*
It is he who will make an end!
The enemy shall not rise a second time;
10 As when a tangle of thornbushes is set aflame,
like dry stubble, they shall be utterly
consumed.
12 For, says the LORD,
be they* ever so many and so vigorous,
still they shall be mown down and disap-
pear.

1, 2–8: A poem written in the style of the alphabetic psalms; cf Pss 9A; 25; 111; 119. Here, however, most of the verses beginning with the letters of the second half of the alphabet are not preserved.

1, 2: A jealous . . . God: see note on Ex 20, 5.

1, 4: Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon were famous for their forests.

1, 6f: The coming of God in judgment has two aspects: to those who oppose him it will be unbearable; to those who have recourse to him it will bring strength and consolation.

1, 9: What are you imputing to the Lord?: the people of Judah are asked what they think God has in mind.

1, 12f: They: the enemies of Judah. You: Judah. His yoke: the dominion of the Assyrian king over Judah.

a Ex 19, 16ff. b Is 33, 9; Hb 3, 6ff. c Zep 1, 15; 2, 3.

Though I have humbled you,
I will humble you no more.
13 Now will I break his yoke from off you,
and burst asunder your bonds.[d]
11 From you he came
who devised evil against the LORD,
the scoundrel planner.*
14 The LORD has commanded regarding you:*
no descendant shall come to bear your name;
From your temple I will abolish
the carved and the molten image;
I will make your grave a mockery.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 1-3
See RG
374

1 See, upon the mountains there advances
the bearer of good news, announcing peace!
Celebrate your feasts, O Judah,
fulfill your vows!
For nevermore shall you be invaded
by the scoundrel; he is completely destroyed.[e]
3 The LORD will restore the vine of Jacob,
the pride of Israel,
Though ravagers have ravaged them
and ruined the tendrils.

### The Fall of Nineveh

2 The hammer comes up against you;*
guard the rampart,
Keep watch on the road, gird your loins,
marshal all your strength!
4 The shields of his warriors are crimsoned,
the soldiers colored in scarlet;
Fiery steel are the chariots
on the day of his mustering.
The horses are frenzied;
5 the chariots dash madly through the streets
And wheel in the squares,
looking like firebrands,
flashing like lightning bolts.

Ch 1-3
See RG
374

6 His picked troops are called,
ranks break at their charge;
To the wall they rush,
the mantelet* is set up.
7 The river gates are opened,
the palace shudders,
8 Its mistress is led forth captive,
and her handmaids,* under guard,
Moaning like doves,
beating their breasts.
9 Nineveh is like a pool
whose waters escape;
"Stop! Stop!"
but none turns back.
10 "Plunder the silver, plunder the gold!"
There is no end to the treasure,
to their wealth in precious things of every kind!

11 Emptiness, desolation, waste;
melting hearts and trembling knees,
Writhing in every frame,
every face blanched![f]
12 Where is the lions' cave,
the young lions' den,
Where the lion* went in and out,
and the cub, with no one to disturb them?
13 The lion snatched enough for his cubs,
and strangled for his lionesses;
He filled his dens with prey,
and his caves with plunder.
14 I come against you,
says the LORD of hosts;
I will consume in smoke your chariots,
and the sword shall devour your young lions;
Your preying on the land I will bring to an end,
the cry of your lionesses shall be heard no more.

## CHAPTER 3

### Ruin Imminent and Inevitable

1 Woe to the bloody city, all lies,
full of plunder, whose looting never stops![g]

**1, 11:** From you . . . the scoundrel planner: addressed to Nineveh, the capital city of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who besieged Jerusalem c. 700 B.C.
**1, 14:** You: the king of Assyria.
**2, 2:** The hammer comes up against you: the enemy is about to crush Nineveh.
**2, 6:** Mantelet: a movable shelter protecting the besiegers.
**2, 8:** Mistress . . . and her handmaids: either the queen of Nineveh with the ladies of her court, or the statute of Ishtar, Nineveh's chief goddess, with her temple prostitutes.
**2, 12:** The lion: the king of Assyria.

d Is 9, 4; 10, 27. e Is 52, 7; Rom 10, 15. f Jl 2, 6. g Hb 2, 12.

[2] The crack of the whip, the rumbling sounds of wheels;
horses a-gallop, chariots bounding,
[3] Cavalry charging,
The flame of the sword, the flash of the spear,
the many slain, the heaping corpses,
the endless bodies to stumble upon!
[4] For the many debaucheries of the harlot,
fair and charming, a mistress of witchcraft,
Who enslaved nations with her harlotries,
and peoples by her witchcraft: [h]
[5] I am come against you, [i]
and I will strip your skirt from you;
I will show your nakedness to the nations,
to the kingdoms your shame!*
[6] I will cast filth upon you,
disgrace you and put you to shame;
[7] Till everyone who sees you runs from you, saying,
"Nineveh is destroyed; who can pity her?
Where can one find any to console her?"

[8] Are you better than No-amon*
that was set among the streams,
Surrounded by waters,
with the flood for her rampart
and water her wall? [j]
[9] Ethiopia was her strength, and Egypt,
and others without end;
Put and the Libyans were her auxiliaries.
[10] Yet even she went captive into exile,
even her little ones were dashed to pieces
at the corner of every street;
For her nobles they cast lots,
and all her great men were put into chains.
[11] You, too, shall drink of this till you faint away;
you, too, shall seek a refuge from the foe. [k]

[12] All your fortresses are but fig trees,
bearing early figs
That fall, when shaken,
into the hungry mouth.
[13] See, the troops are women in your midst;
to your foes the gates of your land are open wide,
fire has consumed their bars. [l]
[14] Draw water for the siege,*
strengthen your fortresses;
Go down into the mud and tread the clay,
take hold of the brick mold!
[15] There the fire shall consume you,
the sword shall cut you down.
Multiply like the grasshoppers,
multiply like the locusts!
[16] Make your couriers more numerous than the stars,
[17] your garrisons as many as grasshoppers,
And your scribes as locust swarms
gathered on the rubble fences on a cold day!
Yet when the sun warms them,
the grasshoppers will spread their wings and fly,
and vanish, no one knows where.
[18] Alas! how your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria,
your nobles have gone to rest;
Your people are scattered upon the mountains,
with none to gather them.
[19] There is no healing for your hurt,
your wound is mortal.
All who hear this news of you
clap their hands over you;
For who has not been overwhelmed,
steadily, by your malice?

**3, 5f:** The punishment of adulteresses.
**3, 8:** No-amon: No was the Egyptian name of the capital of Upper Egypt, called Thebes by the Greeks; its tutelary deity was Amon. This great city was destroyed by the Assyrians in 663 B.C.
**3, 14:** An ironic exhortation to prepare the city for a futile defense. Go down . . . brick mold: make bricks for the city walls.

h Mi 1, 7; Rv 17, 1f. i Is 47, 3; Jer 13, 26; Hos 2, 12. j Jer 46, 25. k Mi 2, 11. l Jer 51, 30.

# THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

Habakkuk
See RG
374–376

This prophecy dates from the years 605–597 B.C., or between the great Babylonian victory at Carchemish and Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem. The situation of Judah was desperate at this time, with political intrigue and idolatry widespread in the small kingdom. The first two chapters consist of a dialogue between the prophet and the Lord. For what may be the first time in Israelite literature, a man questions the ways of God, as Habukkuk calls him to account for his government of the world. To this question God replies that he has prepared a chastising rod, Babylon, which will be the avenging instrument in his hand. There is added the divine assurance that the just Israelite will not perish in the calamities about to be visited on the nation.

The third chapter is a magnificent religious lyric, filled with reminiscences of Israel's past and rich in literary borrowings from the poetry of ancient Canaan, though still expressing authentic Israelite faith. God appears in all his majestic splendor and executes vengeance on Judah's enemies. The prophecy ends with a joyous profession of confidence in the Lord, the Savior.

Ch 1
See RG
375

## CHAPTER 1

1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet received in vision.

### The Prophet's Complaint and Its Answer

2 How long, O LORD? I cry for help*
but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
3 Why do you let me see ruin;
why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and clamorous discord.
4 This is why the law is benumbed,
and judgment is never rendered:
Because the wicked circumvent the just;
this is why judgment comes forth perverted.

5 Look over the nations and see,*
and be utterly amazed!
For a work is being done in your days
that you would not have believed, were it
told.[a]
6 For see, I am raising up Chaldea,
that bitter and unruly people,
That marches the breadth of the land
to take dwellings not his own.
7 Terrible and dreadful is he,
from himself derive his law and his majesty.
8 Swifter than leopards are his horses,
and keener than wolves at evening.*
His horses prance,
his horsemen come from afar:
They fly like the eagle hastening to devour;
9 each comes for the rapine,
Their combined onset is that of a stormwind
that heaps up captives like sand.
10 He scoffs at kings,
and princes are his laughingstock;
He laughs at any fortress,
heaps up a ramp, and conquers it.

**1, 2–4:** Traditionally, these verses have been taken as the prophet's complaint against the internal evils of Judah; the language used is that employed by Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to condemn the social abuses of their day. In vv 5ff the Lord answers this complaint by indicating the Chaldean empire as his instrument for punishing his people for these sins.

**1, 5:** Look over the nations and see: after Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt in 605 B.C., there could be little doubt that it was the Chaldean ambition to dominate the entire Near East.

**1, 8:** Wolves at evening: the wolf is apparently thought of as more rabid and vicious in the evening when setting out for prey (Jer 5, 6; Zep 3, 3).

a Acts 13, 41.

[11] Then he veers like the wind* and is gone—
this culprit who makes his own strength his god!

[12] Are you not from eternity, O LORD,*
my holy God, immortal?
O LORD, you have marked him for judgment,
O Rock,* you have readied him for punishment!
[13] Too pure are your eyes to look upon evil,
and the sight of misery you cannot endure.
Why, then, do you gaze on the faithless in silence
while the wicked man devours
one more just than himself?
[14] You have made man like the fish of the sea,
like creeping things without a ruler.
[15] He* brings them all up with his hook,
he hauls them away with his net,
He gathers them in his seine;
and so he rejoices and exults.
[16] Therefore he sacrifices to his net,*
and burns incense to his seine;
For thanks to them his portion is generous,
and his repast sumptuous.
[17] Shall he, then, keep on brandishing his sword
to slay peoples without mercy?

## CHAPTER 2

[1] I will stand at my guard post,
and station myself upon the rampart,
And keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what answer he will give to my complaint.[b]

[2] Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write down the vision
Clearly upon the tablets,
so that one can read it readily.
[3] For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
If it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not be late.
[4] The rash man has no integrity;[c]
but the just man, because of his faith, shall live.*
Wealth, too, is treacherous:
the proud, unstable man—
[5] He who opens wide his throat like the nether world,
and is insatiable as death,
Who gathers to himself all the nations,
and rallies to himself all the peoples—
[6] Shall not all these take up a taunt against him,
satire and epigrams about him, to say:

Woe to him who stores up what is not his:
how long can it last!
he loads himself down with debts.
[7] Shall not your creditors rise suddenly?
Shall not they who make you tremble awake?
You shall become their spoil!
[8] Because you despoiled many peoples
all the rest of the nations shall despoil you;
Because of men's blood shed,
and violence done to the land,
to the city and to all who dwell in it.

Ch 2
See RG
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[9] Woe to him who pursues evil gain for his household,
setting his nest on high
to escape the reach of misfortune!
[10] You have devised shame for your household,

1, 11: Veers like the wind: the conquests of the ancient Near East were mainly raiding expeditions to collect tribute. As far as administration of conquered territories was concerned, both the Assyrians and Chaldeans were usually content to install friendly rulers and then depart. This culprit: though the Chaldeans were used by God as the agents of his punishment, this did not diminish their own guilt as ruthless marauders.

1, 12—2, 1: It is generally thought that this complaint is directed against the Chaldeans and their terrible destruction. But it may well be a continuation of Hb 1, 2–4, against the wicked Judahites who have merited God's punishment.

1, 12: O Rock: an ancient title celebrating the Lord's power; cf Ps 18, 32.

1, 15: The he of this and the following verses, to whom is attributed such extensive evil and the destruction of many peoples, may be the wicked of Judah embodied in King Jehoiakim, ally of the powerful Pharaoh Neco of Egypt; the devastation wrought by Jehoiakim and Neco together is condemned.

1, 16: He sacrifices to his net: in v 15 the wicked ruler in question is represented as catching men in a net. This verse alludes to some rite involving the sacrificial veneration of the weapons of war.

2, 4: The just man, because of his faith, shall live: the faith which here enables the virtuous man to survive the impending doom is both a confident belief in God's justice, and patience in awaiting its execution. St. Paul quotes these words (Rom 1, 17; Gal 3, 11; Heb 10, 38) to confirm his teaching that man receives justification and supernatural life through faith in Christ.

b Ps 85, 9. c Rom 1, 17; Gal 3, 11; Heb 10, 38.

cutting off many peoples, forfeiting your
own life:
11 For the stone in the wall shall cry out,*
and the beam in the woodwork shall
answer it!

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12 Woe to him who builds a city by bloodshed,
and establishes a town by wickedness! [d]

13 Is not this from the LORD of hosts:
peoples toil for the flames,*
and nations grow weary for nought! [e]
14 But the earth shall be filled
with the knowledge of the LORD's glory
as water covers the sea.[f]
15 Woe to you who give your neighbors
a flood of your wrath to drink,
and make them drunk, till their nakedness
is seen!
16 You are filled with shame instead of glory;
drink, you too, and stagger!
On you shall revert the cup from the LORD's
right hand,
and utter shame on your glory.
17 For the violence done to Lebanon* shall cover
you,
and the destruction of the beasts shall terrify
you;
Because of men's blood shed,
and violence done to the land,
to the city and to all who dwell in it.
19 Woe to him who says to wood, "Awake!"
to dumb stone, "Arise!"
Can such a thing give oracles?
See, it is overlaid with gold and silver,
but there is no life breath in it.
18 Of what avail is the carved image,*
that its maker should carve it?
Or the molten image and lying oracle,
that its very maker should trust in it,
and make dumb idols?
20 But the LORD is in his holy temple;
silence before him, all the earth! [g]

## CHAPTER 3

### Canticle

1 **Prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet. To a plaintive tune.***

2 O LORD, I have heard your renown,
and feared, O LORD, your work.
In the course of the years revive it,*
in the course of the years make it known;
in your wrath remember compassion!

3 *God comes from Teman,*
the Holy One from Mount Paran.
Covered are the heavens with his glory,
and with his praise the earth is filled.
4 His splendor spreads like the light;
rays shine forth from beside him,
where his power is concealed.
5 Before him goes pestilence,
and the plague follows in his steps.
6 He pauses to survey the earth;
his look makes the nations tremble.
The eternal mountains are shattered,
the age-old hills bow low
along his ancient ways.
7 I see the tents of Cushan collapse;
trembling are the pavilions of the land of
Midian.
8 Is your anger against the streams, O LORD?
Is your wrath against the streams,
your rage against the sea,
That you drive the steeds
of your victorious chariot?
9 Bared and ready is your bow,

**2, 11f:** The palaces, built at the expense of gross injustice (vv 6–10), call down vengeance on their builders. This is typical prophetic language for the condemnation of social crimes within Israel and Judah.

**2, 13:** Peoples toil for the flames: they build only to have fire consume their work, when they build contrary to God's will.

**2, 17:** The violence done to Lebanon: the spoliation of the cedar forests of Lebanon, used in lavish building projects by the great conquerors; cf Is 14, 8; 37, 24. The destruction of the beasts: the killing-off of the wild animals through excessive hunting by the same conquerors; cf Bar 3, 16.

**2, 18–20:** Idolatrous worship is here shown to be folly by contrasting man-made idols with the majesty of the one true God.

**3, 1:** A later liturgical rubric. So also the end of v 19.

**3, 2:** In the course of the years revive it: renew today your wondrous deeds of the past.

**3, 3–15:** Cf the theophanies in Dt 33, 2f; Jgs 5, 4f; Pss 18, 8–16; 68, 8f; 77, 17–21; 97, 1–5; Na 1, 3–6, etc. Conventional language is employed to describe the appearance of the Lord, as in Ex 19, 16–19.

**3, 3:** Teman: a region in Edom. Mount Paran: in the territory of Edom, or the northern part of the Sinaitic peninsula. The Lord is represented as coming from Sinai, where he had appeared to Moses and given Israel the covenant and the law.

d Ez 24, 9; Na 3, 1. e Jer 51, 58. f Is 11, 9. g Ps 11, 4.

filled with arrows is your quiver.
Into streams you split the earth;
10 at sight of you the mountains tremble.
A torrent of rain descends;
the ocean gives forth its roar.
The sun forgets to rise,
11 the moon remains in its shelter,
At the light of your flying arrows,
at the gleam of your flashing spear.[h]

12 In wrath you bestride the earth,
in fury you trample the nations.
13 You come forth to save your people,
to save your anointed one.*
You crush the heads of the wicked,
you lay bare their bases at the neck.[i]
14 You pierce with your shafts the heads of their princes
whose boast would be of devouring
the wretched in their lair.
15 You tread the sea with your steeds
amid the churning of the deep waters.

16 I hear, and my body trembles;
at the sound, my lips quiver.
Decay invades my bones,
my legs tremble beneath me.
I await the day of distress
that will come upon the people who attack us.
17 For though the fig tree blossom not
nor fruit be on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive fail
and the terraces produce no nourishment,
Though the flocks disappear from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
18 Yet will I rejoice in the LORD[j]
and exult in my saving God.
19 GOD, my Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet swift as those of hinds
and enables me to go upon the heights.

**For the leader; with stringed instruments.**

3, 13: Your anointed one: the theocratic king, the head of God's people.

h Jos 10, 12. i Is 51, 9ff. j 18f: Ps 18, 32f; Mi 7, 7.

# THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah
See RG
376–377

The title of the prophecy informs us that the ministry of Zephaniah took place during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.). The protest against the worship of false gods, and the condemnation of the pro-Assyrian court ministers who served as regents during Josiah's minority, allow us to place the work in the first decade of the reign. Accordingly, the prophecy of Zephaniah comes rightly before that of Jeremiah, who was probably influenced by it in both language and ideas.

The age of Zephaniah was a time of religious degradation, when the old idolatries reappeared and men worshiped sun, moon, and stars. Rites completely alien to the pure monotheism taught by Moses flourished in Jerusalem. To the corrupt city Zephaniah announced the impending judgment, the day of the Lord. The prophecy may be divided into three sections, corresponding to the three chapters of the book:

The Day of the Lord: A day of doom. The last few verses of this oracle give the classic description of the Day of the Lord as an overwhelming disaster. The Christian hymn *Dies Irae* is based on this passage (1, 2-18).

The Day of the Lord: A day of judgment of the nations, traditional enemies of God's people (2, 1-15).

Reproach and Promise for Jerusalem: Despite Judah's infidelities, the Lord in his mercy will spare a holy remnant, which will finally enjoy peace. The prophecy closes with a hymn of joy sung by the remnant restored to Zion (3, 1-20).

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## CHAPTER 1

1 The word of the LORD which came to
Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in
the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of
Judah.

### The Day of the Lord: A Day of Doom

2 I will completely sweep away all things
from the face of the earth, says the LORD.
3 I will sweep away man and beast,
I will sweep away the birds of the sky,
and the fishes of the sea.
I will overthrow the wicked;
I will destroy mankind
from the face of the earth, says the LORD.[a]
4 I will stretch out my hand against Judah,
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
I will destroy from this place the last vestige of Baal,
the very names of his priests,
5 And those who adore the host of heaven* on the roofs,
with those who adore the LORD
but swear by Milcom;[b]
6 And those who have fallen away from the LORD,
and those who do not seek the LORD.
7 Silence in the presence of the Lord GOD!
for near is the day of the LORD,
Yes, the LORD has prepared a slaughter feast,
he has consecrated his guests.*
8 On the day of the LORD's slaughter feast
I will punish the princes, and the king's sons,
and all that dress in foreign apparel.
9 I will punish, on that day,
all who leap over the threshold,*
Who fill the house of their master
with violence and deceit.
10 On that day, says the LORD,
A cry will be heard from the Fish Gate,
a wail from the New Quarter,
loud crashing from the hills.
11 Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar!*
for all the merchants will be destroyed,
all who weigh out silver, done away with.
12 At that time I will explore Jerusalem with lamps;
I will punish the men who thicken on their lees,*
Who say in their hearts,
"Neither good nor evil can the LORD do."
13 Their wealth shall be given to pillage
and their houses to devastation;
They will build houses, but shall not dwell in them,
plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.[c]
14 Near is the great day of the LORD,
near and very swiftly coming;
Hark, the day of the LORD!
bitter, then, the warrior's cry.
15 A day of wrath is that day,[d]
a day of anguish and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
A day of thick black clouds,
16 a day of trumpet blasts and battle alarm
Against fortified cities,
against battlements on high.[e]
17 I will hem men in
till they walk like the blind,
because they have sinned against the LORD;
And their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their brains like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold
shall be able to save them
on the day of the LORD's wrath,
When in the fire of his jealousy
all the earth shall be consumed.

**1, 5:** The host of heaven: the stars, the worship of which was introduced into Judah by the Assyrians. Milcom: the god of the Ammonites; cf 1 Kgs 11, 5. 7. 33; 2 Kgs 23, 13.

**1, 7:** He has consecrated his guests: God has prepared those whom he has invited to share as soldiers in the booty, or as beast and bird scavengers of carrion, on the day of slaughter. Cf Jer 46, 10; Ez 39, 17.

**1, 9:** Leap over the threshold: the reference is to a superstitious custom of the pagans, witnessed to at least in regard to the worship of Dagon (1 Sm 5, 5).

**1, 10f:** The New Quarter . . . the Mortar: sections of Jerusalem (cf 2 Kgs 22, 14).

**1, 12:** The men who thicken on their lees: those who are overconfident because, like bottles of wine in which the sediment has settled to the bottom, they have remained at peace and undisturbed for a long time.

a Hos 4, 3. b Jer 8, 2; 19, 13. c Am 5, 11. d Jer 30, 7; Jl 2, 11; Am 5, 18. e Am 2, 2.

For he shall make an end, yes, a sudden end,
of all who live on the earth.[f]

## CHAPTER 2

### The Day of the Lord: A Day of Judgment

1 Gather, gather yourselves together,
O nation without shame!*
2 Before you are driven away,
like chaff that passes on;
Before there comes upon you
the blazing anger of the LORD;
Before there comes upon you
the day of the LORD's anger.
3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth,
who have observed his law;
Seek justice, seek humility;
perhaps you may be sheltered
on the day of the LORD's anger.
4 For Gaza shall be forsaken,
and Ashkelon shall be a waste,
Ashdod they shall drive out at midday,
and Ekron* shall be uprooted.[g]
5 Woe to you who dwell by the seacoast,
to the Cretan folk!*
The word of the LORD is against you,
I will humble you, land of the Philistines,
and leave you to perish without an
inhabitant!
6 The coastland of the Cretans shall become
fields for shepherds, and folds for flocks.
7 The coast shall belong
to the remnant of the house of Judah;
by the sea they shall pasture.
In the houses of Ashkelon at evening
they shall couch their flocks,
For the LORD their God shall visit them,
and bring about their restoration.

8 I have heard the revilings uttered by Moab,
and the insults of the Ammonites,
When they reviled my people
and made boasts against their territory.
9 Therefore, as I live, says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel,
Moab shall become like Sodom,
the land of Ammon like Gomorrah:
A field of nettles and a salt pit
and a waste forever.
The remnant of my people shall plunder them,
the survivors of my nation dispossess them.
10 Such shall be the requital of their pride,
because they reviled and boasted against
the people of the LORD of hosts.
11 The LORD shall inspire them with fear
when he makes all the gods of earth to
waste away;
Then, each from its own place,
all the coastlands of the nations shall adore
him.

12 You too, O Cushites,*
shall be slain by the sword of the LORD.
13 He will stretch out his hand against the north,
to destroy Assyria;
He will make Nineveh a waste,
dry as the desert.
14 In her midst shall settle in droves
all the wild life of the hollows;
The screech owl and the desert owl
shall roost in her columns;
Their call shall resound from the window,
the raven's croak from the doorway.[h]
15 Is this the exultant city*
that dwelt secure;
That told herself,
"There is no other than I!"
How has she become a waste,
a lair for wild beasts?
Whoever passes by her
hisses, and shakes his fist!

## CHAPTER 3

### Reproach and Promise for Jerusalem

1 Woe to the city, rebellious and polluted,
to the tyrannical city!

Ch 2
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376–377

Ch 3
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377

**2, 1:** Nation without shame: Judah.
**2, 4:** Gaza . . . Ashkelon . . . Ashdod . . . Ekron: four of the five cities of the Philistine confederation. The fifth city, Gath, is not mentioned, perhaps because it was already destroyed.
**2, 5:** Cretan folk: the Philistines, who came from Crete; see note on Dt 2, 23.
**2, 12:** Cushites: the Egyptians, at this time under a Cushite or Ethiopian dynasty.
**2, 15:** The exultant city: Nineveh.

f Zep 3, 8; Ez 7, 19. g Am 1, 6ff, Zec 9, 5. h Is 34, 11.

2 She hears no voice,
accepts no correction;
In the LORD she has not trusted,
to her God she has not drawn near.[i]
3 Her princes in her midst
are roaring lions;
Her judges are wolves of the night
that have had no bones to gnaw by
morning.[j]
4 Her prophets are insolent,
treacherous men;
Her priests profane what is holy,
and do violence to the law.[k]
5 The LORD within her is just,
who does no wrong;
Morning after morning he renders judgment
unfailingly, at dawn.

6 I have destroyed nations,
their battlements are laid waste;
I have made their streets deserted,
with no one passing through;
Their cities are devastated,
with no man dwelling in them.[l]
7 I said, "Surely now you will fear me,
you will accept correction";
She should not fail to see
all I have visited upon her.
Yet all the more eagerly have they done
all their corrupt deeds.
8 Therefore, wait for me, says the LORD,
against the day when I arise as accuser;
For it is my decision to gather together the
nations,
to assemble the kingdoms,
In order to pour out upon them my wrath,
all my blazing anger;
For in the fire of my jealousy
shall all the earth be consumed.[m]
9 For then I will change and purify
the lips of the peoples,
That they all may call upon the name of the
LORD,
to serve him with one accord;
10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
and as far as the recesses of the North,
they shall bring me offerings.

11 On that day
You need not be ashamed
of all your deeds,
your rebellious actions against me;
For then will I remove from your midst
the proud braggarts,
And you shall no longer exalt yourself
on my holy mountain.
12 But I will leave as a remnant in your midst
a people humble and lowly,
Who shall take refuge in the name of the
Lord:[n]
13 the remnant of Israel.
They shall do no wrong
and speak no lies;
Nor shall there be found in their mouths
a deceitful tongue;
They shall pasture and couch their flocks
with none to disturb them.[o]

14 Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!
sing joyfully, O Israel!
Be glad and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem![p]
15 The LORD has removed the judgment against
you,
he has turned away your enemies;
The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.
16 On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged![q]
17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
He will sing joyfully because of you,
18 as one sings at festivals.
I will remove disaster from among you,
so that none may recount your disgrace.
19 Yes, at that time I will deal
with all who oppress you:
I will save the lame,
and assemble the outcasts;

i Jer 2, 30; 7, 28. j Ez 22, 27; Mi 3, 11. k Jer 23, 32. l Jer 2, 15. m Zep 1, 18. n Hos 14, 4. o Mi 4, 4. p Zec 9, 9. q Mt 14, 27.

I will give them praise and renown
in all the earth, when I bring about their
restoration.[r]
[20]At that time I will bring you home,
and at that time I will gather you;
For I will give you renown and praise,
among all the peoples of the earth,
When I bring about your restoration
before your very eyes, says the LORD.

r Mi 4, 6.

# THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

Haggai
See RG
377–379

Postexilic prophecy begins with Haggai, who received the word of the Lord in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.). The Jews who returned from the Exile in Babylonia had encountered formidable obstacles in their efforts to re-establish Jewish life in Judah. The Samaritans had succeeded in blocking the rebuilding of the temple; but after Darius acceded to the throne (522), permission was given to resume the work. At this critical moment, when defeatism and a certain lethargy had overtaken his repatriated countrymen, Haggai came forward with his exhortations to them to complete the great task. The first oracle, an appeal to the Jews, is contained in chapter 1. To this appeal Haggai added a short oracle of encouragement (2, 1-9) for the sake of those who gloomily contrasted the former magnificence of Solomon's temple with the second temple: the Lord would be present in this new abode, and its glory, enhanced by the offerings of the Gentiles, would surpass the ancient splendor.

The prophecy may be divided into five oracles:

The call to rebuild the temple. The economic distress so apparent in Judah is due to the Jews' neglect of the Lord while they provide for their own needs (1, 1-15).

The future glory of the new temple, surpassing that of the old (2, 1-9).

Unworthiness of a people, who may be the Samaritans, to offer sacrifice at the newly restored altar. This oracle is cast in the literary form of a *torah,* an instruction given the people by a priest (2, 10-14).

A promise of immediate blessings, which follows upon the undertaking (chapter 1) to rebuild the temple (2, 15-19).

A pledge to Zerubbabel, descendant of David, repository of the Messianic hopes (2, 20-23).

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
377–378

**Exhortation To Rebuild the Temple of the Lord** [1]On the first day of the sixth month in the second year* of King Darius, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak:[a]
[2]Thus says the LORD of hosts: This people says: "Not now has the time come to rebuild the house of the LORD." [3](Then this word of the LORD came through Haggai, the prophet:) [4]Is it time for you to dwell in your own paneled houses,[b] while this house lies in ruins?*
[5]Now thus says the LORD of hosts:
Consider your ways!
[6]You have sown much, but have brought in
little;

1, 1: The sixth month in the second year: August/September in 520 B.C.
1, 4: The luxury of the homes of the wealthy with their paneled houses contrasts sadly with the ruined state of the Lord's house.

a Ezr 4, 24; 5, 1; 6, 14. b 2 Sm 7, 2.

you have eaten, but have not been satisfied;
You have drunk, but have not been
exhilarated;
have clothed yourselves, but not been
warmed;
And he who earned wages
earned them for a bag with holes in it.[c]

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7 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Consider your ways!
8 Go up into the hill country;
bring timber, and build the house
That I may take pleasure in it
and receive my glory, says the LORD.
9 You expected much, but it came to little;
and what you brought home, I blew away.
For what cause? says the LORD of hosts.
Because my house lies in ruins,
while each of you hurries to his own
house.[d]
10 Therefore the heavens withheld from you
their dew,
and the earth her crops.[e]
11 And I called for a drought
upon the land and upon the mountains;
Upon the grain, and upon the wine, and upon
the oil,
and upon all that the ground brings forth;
Upon men and upon beasts,
and upon all that is produced by hand.

12 Then Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and all the remnant of the people* listened to the voice of the LORD, their God, and to the words of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD, their God, had sent him, and the people feared because of the LORD. 13 And the LORD's messenger, Haggai, proclaimed to the people as the message of the LORD: I am with you, says the LORD.

14 Then the LORD stirred up the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, so that they came and set to work on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

## CHAPTER 2

**Future Glory of the New Temple** In the second year of King Darius,[1] on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 2 Tell this to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and to the remnant of the people:

3 Who is left among you
that saw this house in its former glory?
And how do you see it now?
Does it not seem like nothing in your eyes?
4 But now take courage, Zerubbabel, says the
LORD,
and take courage, Joshua, high priest, son of
Jehozadak,
And take courage, all you people of the land,
says the LORD, and work!
For I am with you, says the LORD of hosts.[f]
5 This is the pact that I made with you
when you came out of Egypt,
And my spirit continues in your midst;
do not fear![g]

6 For thus says the LORD of hosts:*
One moment yet, a little while,
and I will shake the heavens and the earth,
the sea and the dry land.[h]
7 I will shake all the nations,
and the treasures of all the nations will
come in,
And I will fill this house with glory,
says the LORD of hosts.[i]
8 Mine is the silver and mine the gold,
says the LORD of hosts.
9 Greater will be the future glory of this house
than the former, says the LORD of hosts;

1, 12: The remnant of the people: a technical term in Haggai and Zechariah for the returned exiles.

2, 6–9: From the later period of Ezekiel's preaching onward, the temple became, as here, one of the dominant messianic themes. Greater will be the future glory of this house than the former: because Christ will enter it.

c Dt 28, 38ff; Mi 6, 15. d 2 Kgs 25, 9. e Gn 27, 28; Am 4, 6–9. f Zec 8, 9. g Ex 29, 45; Lv 26, 45. h Heb 12, 26. i Gn 49, 10; Is 60, 5. 9. 11; Mal 3, 1; Rv 21, 26.

And in this place I will give peace,
says the LORD of hosts![j]

**Offerings of the Unclean Rejected** [10]On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Haggai: [11]Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests for a decision:[k] [12]If a man carries sanctified flesh in the fold of his garment and the fold touches bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any other food, do they become sanctified? "No," the priests answered.* [13]Then Haggai said: If a person unclean from contact with a corpse touches any of these, do they become unclean? The priests answered, "They become unclean."[l] [14]Then Haggai continued:

So is this people, and so is this nation
in my sight, says the LORD:
And so are all the works of their hands;
and what they offer there is unclean.

**Promise of Immediate Blessings*** [15]But now, consider from this day forward. Before there was a stone laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD, [16]how did you fare?

When one went to a heap of grain for twenty measures,
it would yield but ten;
When another went to the vat to draw fifty measures,
there would be but twenty.[m]
[17]I struck you in all the works of your hands
with blight, searing wind, and hail,
yet you did not return to me, says the LORD.

[18][Consider from this day forward: from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month.* From the day on which the temple of the LORD was founded, consider!]

[19]Indeed, the seed has not sprouted,
nor have the vine, the fig, the pomegranate
and the olive tree yet borne.
From this day, I will bless!

**Pledge to Zerubbabel** [20]The message of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month:* [21]Tell this to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah:

I will shake the heavens and the earth;
22 I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms,
destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations.
I will overthrow the chariots and their riders,
and the riders with their horses
shall go down by one another's sword.[n]
23 On that day, says the LORD of hosts,[o]
I will take you, Zerubbabel,
son of Shealtiel, my servant, says the LORD,
And I will set you as a signet ring;
for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts.*

**2, 12ff:** According to the ritual concepts of the Jews, uncleanness was more contagious than sacredness. Inasmuch as the people were unclean, their offerings became unclean (Nm 19, 22).

**2, 15–19:** This prophecy is intimately linked with chapter 1, and should be read with it.

**2, 18:** The ninth month: the ordinal ninth has been copied incorrectly from Hg 2, 10. This note clearly concerns the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, on which the temple of the Lord was founded (Hg 1, 15).

**2, 20:** The month: probably again the sixth month, as in Hg 1, 15 and 2, 18; see note on the latter.

**2, 23:** This promise to Zerubbabel, reversing the punishment of his grandfather (Jer 22, 24), is a continuation of the messianic hope; cf Zec 6, 11f.

j Is 2, 2ff; Zec 6, 13. k Dt 17, 8–13; Zec 7, 3. l Nm 19, 11. 13, 22. m Is 5, 10. n Ez 38, 21; Dn 2, 44; Zec 14, 13; Lk 1, 52. o Song 8, 6; Sir 49, 11; Is 42, 1; 44, 1f.

# THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah
See RG
379–383

Zechariah's initial prophecy is dated to 520 B.C., the same year as that in which Haggai received the prophetic call. The first eight chapters of the Book of Zechariah contain oracles which certainly belong to him while the last six (sometimes called "Deutero-Zechariah") represent the

work of one or more unknown authors. In the prophecies proper to Zechariah eight symbolic visions are recorded, all meant to promote the work of rebuilding the temple and to encourage the returned exiles, especially their leaders, Joshua and Zerubbabel. In the final chapter of this first division Zechariah portrays the messianic future under the figure of a prosperous land to which the nations come in pilgrimage, eager to follow the God of Israel.

The second part of Zechariah is divided into two sections, each with its own introductory title. The first (9—11) consists of oracles whose historical background, date and authorship are extremely difficult to determine. With 9, 9 begins the messianic vision of the coming of the Prince of Peace. The verses describing the triumphant appearance of the humble king are taken up by the four Evangelists to describe the entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Chapter 12 is introduced by an oracle proclaiming the victory of God's people over the heathen. The prophecy closes by describing, in apocalyptic imagery, the final assault of the enemy on Jerusalem, after which the messianic age begins.

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1 See RG 379

**Necessity of Conversion** [1]In the second year of Darius, in the eighth month,* the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo:[a] [2]The LORD was indeed angry with your fathers . . . . [3]and say to them: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. [4]Be not like your fathers whom the former prophets warned: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Turn from your evil ways and from your wicked deeds. But they would not listen or pay attention to me, says the LORD.[b] [5]Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, can they live forever? [6]But my words and my decrees, which I entrusted to my servants the prophets, did not these overtake your fathers? Then they repented and admitted: "The LORD of hosts has treated us according to our ways and deeds, just as he had determined he would."[c]

**The Four Horsemen** [7]In the second year of Darius, on the twenty-fourth day of Shebat, the eleventh month,* the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, in the following way: [8]I had a vision during the night. There appeared the driver of a red horse,* standing among myrtle trees in a shady place, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.[d] [9]Then I asked, "What are these, my lord?"; and the angel who spoke with me answered me, "I will show you what these are." [10]The man who was standing among the myrtle trees spoke up and said, "These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth."[e] [11]And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, "We have patrolled the earth; see, the whole earth is tranquil and at rest!"

[12]*f*Then the angel of the Lord spoke out and said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will you be without mercy for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah that have felt your anger these seventy years?"* [13]To the angel who spoke with me, the LORD replied with comforting words.[g]

[14]And the angel who spoke with me said to me, Proclaim: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am deeply moved for the sake of Jerusalem and Zion,[h] [15]and I am exceedingly angry with the complacent nations;* whereas I was but a little angry, they added to the harm.[i] [16]Therefore, says the LORD: I will turn to Jerusalem in mercy; my house shall be built in it, says the LORD of

**1, 1:** The second year . . . eighth month: October/November, 520 B.C.

**1, 7:** The second year . . . eleventh month: January/February, 519 B.C.

**1, 8–11:** The driver of a red horse: apparently distinct from the man, or angel of the Lord . . . standing among the myrtle trees, who spoke with the prophet. The four horsemen are sent by God to the four corners of the earth (Zec 2, 10), to see if the whole earth is at peace.

**1, 12:** These seventy years: see note on Jer 25, 1–14.

**1, 15:** The complacent nations: the neighbors of Judah, especially Edom, which enjoyed their present prosperity and security at Judah's expense.

a Ezr 4, 24; 5, 1; 6, 14. b Jer 25, 5; 35, 15; Mal 3, 7. c Lam 2, 17; Lv 26, 14ff; Dt 28, 15. d Rv 6, 4. e Zec 6, 7. f Zec 7, 5; Jer 25, 11; Dn 9, 2. g Jer 29, 10. h Zec 8, 2; Jl 2, 18. i Is 47, 6; Ob 10–14.

hosts, and a measuring line* shall be stretched
over Jerusalem.[j] [17]Proclaim further: Thus says
the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow
with prosperity; the LORD will again comfort
Zion, and again choose Jerusalem.[k]

## CHAPTER 2

**Four Horns and Four Blacksmiths** [1]I raised
my eyes and looked: there were four horns.*
[2]Then I asked the angel who spoke with me
what these were. He answered me, "These are
the horns that scattered Judah and Israel and
Jerusalem."

[3]Then the LORD showed me four blacksmiths.
And I asked, "What are these coming to do?"
[4]And he said, "Here are the horns that scattered
Judah, so that no man raised his head any more;
but these have come to terrify them: to cast
down the horns of the nations that raised their
horns to scatter the land of Judah."

**The New Jerusalem** [5]Again I raised my eyes
and looked: there was a man with a measuring
line in his hand.[l] [6]"Where are you going?" I
asked. "To measure Jerusalem," he answered;
"to see how great is its width and how great its
length."[m]

[7]Then the angel who spoke with me advanced, and another angel came out to meet him
[8]and said to him, "Run, tell this to that young
man:* People will live in Jerusalem as though in
open country, because of the multitude of men
and beasts in her midst.[n] [9]But I will be for her
an encircling wall of fire, says the LORD, and I
will be the glory in her midst."

[10]Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,*
says the LORD; for I scatter you to the four winds
of heaven, says the LORD. [11]Up, escape to Zion!
you who dwell in daughter Babylon. [12]For thus
said the LORD of hosts (after he had already sent
me) concerning the nations that have plundered
you: Whoever touches you touches the apple of
my eye.[o] [13]See, I wave my hand over them;
they become plunder for their slaves. Thus you
shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.

[14]Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! See, I am
coming to dwell among you, says the LORD.[p]
[15]Many nations shall join themselves to the
LORD on that day, and they shall be his people,
and he will dwell among you, and you shall
know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.
[16]The LORD will possess Judah as his portion in
the holy land, and he will again choose Jerusalem. [17]Silence, all mankind, in the presence of
the LORD! for he stirs forth from his holy
dwelling.

Ch 2
See RG
379

## CHAPTER 3

**Joshua the High Priest** [1]Then he showed me
Joshua the high priest standing before the angel
of the LORD, while Satan stood at his right hand
to accuse him.[q] [2]And the angel of the LORD said
to Satan, "May the LORD rebuke you, Satan; may
the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!
Is not this man a brand snatched from the fire?"[r]

[3]Now Joshua was standing before the angel,
clad in filthy garments.* [4]He spoke and said to
those who were standing before him, "Take off
his filthy garments, and clothe him in festal
garments."[s] [5]He also said, "Put a clean miter on
his head." And they put a clean miter on his
head and clothed him with the garments. Then
the angel of the LORD, standing, said, "See, I
have taken away your guilt."

[6]The angel of the LORD then gave Joshua this
assurance: [7]"Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you
walk in my ways and heed my charge, you shall
judge my house and keep my courts, and I will
give you access among these standing here.
[8]Listen, O Joshua, high priest! You and your
associates who sit before you are men of good
omen.* Yes, I will bring my servant the Shoot.[t]

Ch 3
See RG
379–380

1, 16: Measuring line: not for devastation, as in Is 34, 11, but for reconstruction.

2, 1–4: Four horns: symbolic of the hostile forces which, from the four corners of the earth, invaded and devastated the land of Judah. Four blacksmiths: the powers used by God to destroy these enemies of his people.

2, 8: That young man: the angel or man with a measuring line of v 5.

2, 10: The land of the north: Babylonia (v 11).

3, 3: Filthy garments: symbolic of mourning for the dead, or of national catastrophe, and implying acknowledgment of guilt (v 5).

3, 8: Men of good omen: the restoration of the priesthood is a

j Zec 8, 3; Ezr 6, 14. k Is 51, 3. l Rv 11, 1. m Dt 28, 64. n Ez 36, 11. o Dt 32, 10; Ps 17, 8. p Ez 37, 26. q Hg 1, 1; 1 Chr 21, 1. r Rom 8, 33; Jude 9. s Lk 15, 22. t Is 4, 2; 11, 1; Jer 23, 5; 33, 15.

[9]Look at the stone that I have placed before
Joshua, one stone with seven facets.* I will
engrave its inscription, says the LORD of hosts,
and I will take away the guilt of the land in one
day.[u] [10]On that day, says the LORD of hosts, you
will invite one another under your vines and fig
trees."[v]

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4 See RG 380

[4]Then I said to the angel who spoke with me,
"What are these things, my lord?" [5]And the
angel who spoke with me replied, "Do you not
know what these things are?" "No, my lord," I
answered. [6]Then he said to me, "This is the
LORD's message to Zerubbabel: Not by an army,
nor by might, but by my spirit, says the LORD of
hosts. [7]What are you, O great mountain?*
Before Zerubbabel you are but a plain. He shall
bring out the capstone amid exclamations of
'Hail, Hail' to it."[w]

Ch 5 See RG 380

[8]This word of the LORD then came to me:
[9]The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the founda-
tions of this house,[x] and his hands shall finish it;
then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has
sent me to you. [10][y]For even they who were
scornful on that day of small beginnings shall
rejoice to see the select stone in the hands of
Zerubbabel. These seven facets are the eyes of
the LORD that range over the whole earth.

**The Lampstand** [1]Then the angel who spoke
with me returned and awakened me, like a man
awakened from his sleep. [2]"What do you see?"
he asked me. "I see a lampstand all of gold, with
a bowl at the top," I replied; "on it are seven
lamps with their tubes,[z] [3]and beside it are two
olive trees, one on the right and the other on the
left."[a] [11]I then asked him, "What are these two
olive trees at each side of the lampstand?" [12]And
again I asked, "What are the two olive tufts
which freely pour out fresh oil through the two
golden channels?" [13]"Do you not know what
these are?" he said to me. "No, my lord," I
answered him. [14]He said, "These are the two
anointed* who stand by the LORD of the whole
earth."

## CHAPTER 5

**The Flying Scroll*** [1]Then I raised my eyes
again and saw a scroll flying.[b] [2]"What do you
see?" he asked me. I answered, "I see a scroll
flying; it is twenty cubits long and ten cubits
wide." [3]Then he said to me: "This is the curse
which is to go forth over the whole earth; in
accordance with it shall every thief be swept
away, and in accordance with it shall every
perjurer be expelled from here. [4]I will send it
forth, says the LORD of hosts, and it shall come
into the house of the thief, or into the house of
him who perjures himself with my name; it shall
lodge within his house, consuming it, timber
and stones."[c]

**The Flying Bushel*** [5]Then the angel who
spoke with me came forward and said to me,
"Raise your eyes and see what this is that comes
forth." [6]"What is it?" I asked. And he answered,
"This is a bushel container coming. This is their
guilt in all the land." [7]Then a leaden cover was
lifted, and there was a woman sitting inside the
bushel. [8]"This is Wickedness," he said; and he
thrust her inside the bushel, pushing the leaden

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sign of the coming of the messianic times. My servant the Shoot: identified, in the earliest form of Zec 6, 11f as the prophet composed it, with Zerubbabel, direct descendant of King David and rebuilder of the temple; and, as such, a type of the Messiah; cf Jer 23, 5.

**3, 9:** One stone with seven facets: apparently the same as the select stone of Zec 4, 10, which seems to be a precious gem. The seven facets are explained in Zec 4, 10 as signifying the Lord's vigilance over the world. I will engrave its inscription: the same Hebrew verb for engrave is used in Ex 28, 9. 11 in regard to the inscriptions on the twelve precious stones of the priestly breastpiece.

**4, 7:** Great mountain: figure of the obstacles confronting Zerubbabel in building the temple. A plain: figure of the ease with which he will overcome these obstacles.

**4, 1ff. 11–14:** The two anointed: literally, "the two sons of oil," Joshua, the anointed high priest, and Zerubbabel, the anointed prince. Just as the two olive trees in this imagery supply the sacred seven-branched lampstand (Ex 25, 31–40) with oil (v 12), so these two men, in ministering to the community, stand by (serve) the Lord.

**5, 1–4:** The enormous scroll, thirty feet by fifteen (the dimensions in length and breadth of the portico of Solomon's temple, 1 Kgs 6, 3), contains a list of maledictions on sinners, similar to that in Dt 27, 15–26. The thief and the perjurer represent all sinners, who are expelled from the holy community.

**5, 5–11:** The woman sealed in the bushel container is a figure of the general corruption of the people of Judah. She is removed from the Holy Land and transported to Shinar, that is, Babylonia, where a dwelling is being prepared for her; that is a symbol of the reign of Wickedness in pagan lands, contrasted with the reign of holiness in the Lord's dwelling on Mount Zion.

u Zec 4, 10. v 1 Kgs 4, 25. w Ezr 3, 11f; Ps 118, 22. x Ezr 6, 14ff. y Zec 3, 9. z Rv 1, 12. a Rv 11, 4. b Ez 2, 9. c Lv 19, 12.

cover into the opening. [9]Then I raised my eyes
and saw two women coming forth with a wind
ruffling their wings, for they had wings like the
wings of a stork. As they lifted up the bushel into
the air, [10]I said to the angel who spoke with me,
"Where are they taking the bushel?" [11]He re-
plied, "To build a temple for it in the land of
Shinar; when the temple is ready, they will
deposit it there in its place."[d]

## CHAPTER 6

**Four Chariots*** [1]Again I raised my eyes and
saw four chariots coming out from between two
mountains; and the mountains were of bronze.
[2]The first chariot had red horses, the second
chariot black horses,[e] [3]the third chariot white
horses, and the fourth chariot spotted horses—
all of them strong horses. [4]I asked the angel who
spoke with me, "What are these, my lord?" [5]The
angel said to me in reply, "These are the four
winds of the heavens, which are coming forth
after being reviewed by the LORD of all the
earth."[f] [6]The chariot with the black horses was
turning toward the land of the north, the red and
the white horses went after them, and the
spotted ones went toward the land of the south.
[7]As these strong horses emerged, eager to set
about patrolling the earth, he said, "Go, patrol
the earth!" Then, as they patrolled the earth, [8]he
called out to me and said, "See, they that go
forth to the land of the north will make my spirit
rest in the land of the north."

**The Coronation** [9]This word of the LORD then
came to me: [10]Take from the returned captives
Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah; and go the same day to
the house of Josiah, son of Zephaniah (these had
come from Babylon). [11]Silver and gold you shall
take, and make a crown; place it on the head of
[Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest] Zerub-
babel.* [12]And say to him: Thus says the LORD of
hosts: Here is a man whose name is Shoot, and
where he is he shall sprout, and he shall build
the temple of the LORD.[g] [13]Yes, he shall build
the temple of the LORD, and taking up the royal
insignia, he shall sit as ruler upon his throne. The
priest shall be at his right hand, and between the
two of them there shall be friendly understand-
ing.[h] [14]The crown itself shall be a memorial
offering in the temple of the LORD in favor of
Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and the son of Zepha-
niah. [15]And they who are from afar shall come
and build the temple of the LORD, and you shall
know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to
you.[i] And if you heed carefully the voice of the
LORD your God. . . .

Ch 6
See RG
380

## CHAPTER 7

**True Fasting** [1]In the fourth year of Darius the
king [the word of the LORD came to Zechariah],
on the fourth day of Chislev, the ninth month,*
[2]Bethel-sarezer sent Regemmelech and his men
to implore favor of the LORD [3]and to ask the
priests of the house of the LORD of hosts, and the
prophets, "Must I mourn and abstain in the fifth
month as I have been doing these many years?"[j]
[4]Thereupon this word of the LORD of hosts came
to me: [5]Say to all the people of the land and to
the priests: When you fasted and mourned in
the fifth and in the seventh month these seventy
years, was it really for me that you fasted?[k] [6]And
when you were eating and drinking, was it not
for yourselves that you ate, and for yourselves
that you drank? [7]Were not these the words
which the LORD spoke through the former
prophets, when Jerusalem and the surrounding
cities were inhabited and at peace, when the
Negeb and the foothills were inhabited?[l] [8][This
word of the LORD came to Zechariah: [9]Thus says
the LORD of hosts:] Render true judgment, and
show kindness and compassion toward each
other.[m] [10]Do not oppress the widow or the
orphan, the alien or the poor; do not plot evil

Ch 7
See RG
380

6, 1–8: The four chariots represent the angelic hosts sent by the Lord to the four ends of the earth. The chariot with the black horses brings the spirit, i.e., anger of the Lord against the land of the north, Babylonia.

6, 11: Make a crown; place it on the head of [Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest] Zerubbabel: according to the current Hebrew text, Joshua the high priest is to be crowned. However, since the crown is a sign of royalty, the original text must have had the name of Zerubbabel here, not that of Joshua. In Zec 3, 8 Joshua is a different man from the one called the Shoot, and in v 12 it is upon the Shoot that the crown is to be placed.

7, 1: The fourth year of Darius . . . the fourth day of Chislev, the ninth month: November, 518 B.C.

d Gn 11, 2ff. e Zec 1, 8; Rv 6, 4. f Ps 104, 4. g Zec 3, 8; Eph 2, 20; Heb 3, 3. h Ps 110, 4; Heb 3, 1. i Eph 2, 19f. j Zec 8, 19. k Is 58, 5; Rom 14, 6. l Jer 17, 26. m Is 58, 6.

against one another in your hearts.[n] 11But they
refused to listen; they stubbornly turned their
backs and stopped their ears so as not to hear.[o]
12And they made their hearts diamond-hard so
as not to hear the teaching and the message that
the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through
the former prophets.[p] 13Then the LORD of hosts
in his great anger said that, as they had not
listened when he called, so he would not listen
when they called,[q] 14but would scatter them
with a whirlwind among all the nations that they
did not know. Thus the land was left desolate
after them with no one traveling to and fro; they
made the pleasant land into a desert.[r]

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 8
See RG
380

**In the Days of the Messiah** 1This word of the
LORD of hosts came: Thus says the LORD of
hosts:

2I am intensely jealous for Zion,
stirred to jealous wrath for her.[s]
3 Thus says the LORD:
I will return to Zion,
and I will dwell within Jerusalem;
Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city,
and the mountain of the LORD of hosts,
the holy mountain.[t]

4Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and
old women, each with staff in hand because of
old age, shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem.
5The city shall be filled with boys and girls
playing in her streets. 6Thus says the LORD of
hosts: Even if this should seem impossible in the
eyes of the remnant of this people, shall it in
those days be impossible in my eyes also, says
the LORD of hosts? 7Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Lo, I will rescue my people from the land of the
rising sun, and from the land of the setting sun.[u]
8I will bring them back to dwell within Jerusa-
lem. They shall be my people, and I will be their
God, with faithfulness and justice.[v]

9Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands
be strong, you who in these days hear these
words spoken by the prophets on the day when
the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts
was laid for the building of the temple.[w] 10For
before those days there were no wages for men,
or hire for beasts; those who came and went had
no security from the enemy, for I set every man
against his neighbor. 11But now I will not deal
with the remnant of this people as in former
days, says the LORD of hosts, 12for it is the
seedtime of peace: the vine shall yield its fruit,
the land shall bear its crops, and the heavens
shall give their dew; all these things I will have
the remnant of the people possess. 13Just as you
were a curse among the nations, O house of
Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you that
you may be a blessing; do not fear, but let your
hands be strong.[x]

14Thus says the LORD of hosts: As I deter-
mined to harm you when your fathers provoked
me to wrath, says the LORD of hosts, and I did
not relent,[y] 15so again in these days I have
determined to favor Jerusalem and the house of
Judah; do not fear! 16These then are the things
you should do: Speak the truth to one another;
let there be honesty and peace in the judgments
at your gates,[z] 17and let none of you plot evil
against another in his heart, nor love a false oath.
For all these things I hate, says the LORD.[a]

18This word of the LORD of hosts came to me:
19Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast days of
the fourth, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth
months shall become occasions of joy and glad-
ness, cheerful festivals for the house of Judah;
only love faithfulness and peace.* 20Thus says
the LORD of hosts: There shall yet come peoples,
the inhabitants of many cities; 21and the inhabit-
ants of one city shall approach those of another,
and say, "Come! let us go to implore the favor of
the LORD"; and, "I too will go to seek the
LORD."[b] 22Many peoples and strong nations

8, 19: The fast day of the fourth month recalled the fall of Jerusalem in June. 587 B.C. (2 Kgs 25, 3f); that of the fifth month, the burning of the temple by Nebuzaradan in July of the same year (2 Kgs 25, 8f); that of the seventh month, the murder of Gedaliah in September of the same year (Jer 41, 1f); that of the tenth month, the beginning of the final siege of Jerusalem in January, 588 B.C. (2 Kgs 25, 1).

n Ex 22, 21–24; Dt 24, 17; Is 1, 17; Jer 5, 28. o Neh 9, 29; Hos 4, 16. p Ez 11, 19; 36, 26; Neh 9, 29. q Is 1, 15; Mi 3, 4. r Dt 4, 27. s Na 1, 2. t Is 2, 2; Jer 31, 23. u Is 11, 11; Jer 30, 18. v Jer 4, 2. w Ezr 5, 1; Hg 2, 18. x Is 19, 24; Jer 42, 18; Hg 2, 19; Zep 3, 20. y Jer 31, 28. z Zec 7, 9. a Zec 7, 10. b Is 2, 3.

shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to implore the favor of the LORD.[c]
23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten
men of every nationality, speaking different
tongues, shall take hold, yes, take hold of every
Jew by the edge of his garment and say, "Let us
go with you, for we have heard that God is with
you."[d]

## CHAPTER 9

### Invasion by the Lord*

1 An oracle:
The word of the LORD is upon the land of
Hadrach,
and Damascus is its resting place,
For the cities of Aram are the LORD's,
as are all the tribes of Israel,
2 Hamath also, on its border,
Tyre, too, and Sidon, however wise they
be.[e]
3 Tyre built herself a stronghold,
and heaped up silver like dust,
and gold like the mire of the streets.
4 Lo, the LORD will strip her of her possessions,
and smite her power on the sea,
and she shall be devoured by fire.[f]
5 Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid;
Gaza also: she shall be in great anguish;
Ekron, too, for her hope shall come to
nought.
The king shall disappear from Gaza,
and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited,
6 and the baseborn* shall occupy Ashdod.
I will destroy the pride of the Philistine[g]
7 and take from his mouth his bloody meat,
and his abominations from between his
teeth:
He also shall become a remnant* for our God,
and shall be like a family in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.
8 I will encamp by my house* as a guard
that none may pass to and fro;
No oppressor shall pass over them again,
for now I have regard for their affliction.

### Restoration under the Messiah

9 Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion,[h]
shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king shall come to you;
a just savior is he,
Meek, and riding on an ass,
on a colt, the foal of an ass.*
10 He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim,
and the horse from Jerusalem;
The warrior's bow shall be banished,
and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.
His dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River* to the ends of the
earth.[i]
11 As for you, for the blood of your covenant with
me,*
I will bring forth your prisoners from the
dungeon.[j]
12 In the return to the fortress
of the waiting prisoners,*
This very day, I will return you
double for your exile.[k]
13 For I will bend Judah as my bow,
I will arm myself with Ephraim;
I will arouse your sons, O Zion,
[against your sons, O Yavan,]
and I will use you as a warrior's sword.
14 The LORD shall appear over them,
and his arrow shall shoot forth as lightning;
The LORD God shall sound the trumpet,
and come in a storm from the south.

Ch 9–11
See RG
381–382

9, 1–8: Divine judgment is about to fall on the surrounding hostile peoples: Aram (Syria), including the cities of Hadrach and Damascus; Phoenicia, with its cities of Tyre and Sidon; Philistia, with its cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod.

9, 6: The baseborn: people of mixed ancestry.

9, 7: Remnant: see note on Hg 1, 12. The Jebusites: the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem, conquered by David and incorporated into Israel.

9, 8: My house: the Holy Land; cf Hos 8, 1; 9, 15; Jer 12, 7.

9, 9: The Messiah will come, not as a conquering warrior, but in lowliness and peace. Not like the last kings of Judah, who rode in chariots and on horses (Jer 17, 25; 22, 4), but like the princes of old (Gn 49, 11; Jgs 5, 10; 10, 4), the Messiah will ride on an ass. The Evangelists see a literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the Savior's triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21, 4f; Jn 12, 14f).

9, 10: The River: the Euphrates; see note on Ps 72, 8.

9, 11: The blood of your covenant with me: the covenant between the Lord and Israel sealed with sacrificial blood (Ex 24, 8).

9, 12: The waiting prisoners: the exiles awaiting the return to their country, where they will receive a double compensation for the double punishment they had suffered; cf Is 40, 2; 61, 7.

c Is 60, 3. d Is 66, 23. e Jer 49, 23. f Is 23, 1–18; Ez 26, 1—28, 26. g Am 1, 8. h Is 62, 11; Jer 23, 5; Mt 21, 5; Jn 12, 15. i Hos 1, 7. j Is 42, 7; Ez 24, 8. k Is 61, 7.

15 The LORD of hosts shall be a shield over them,
they shall overcome sling stones
and trample them underfoot;
They shall drink blood like wine,
till they are filled with it like libation bowls,
like the corners of the altar.
16 And the LORD, their God, shall save them on that day,
his people, like a flock.
For they are the jewels in a crown
raised aloft over his land. [l]
17 For what wealth is theirs, and what beauty!
grain that makes the youths flourish,
and new wine, the maidens!

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 9–11
See RG
381–382

### The New Order of Things

1 Ask of the LORD rain in the spring season!
It is the LORD who makes the storm clouds,
And sends men the pouring rain;
for everyone, grassy fields. [m]
2 For the teraphim* speak nonsense,
the diviners have false visions:
Deceitful dreams they tell,
empty comfort they offer.
This is why they wander like sheep,
wretched: they have no shepherd. [n]
3 My wrath is kindled against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;
For the LORD of hosts will visit his flock,
the house of Judah,
and make them his stately war horse.

Ch 9–11
See RG
381–382

4 From him shall come leader and chief,
from him warrior's bow and every officer.
5 They shall all be warriors,
trampling the mire of the streets in battle;
They shall wage war because the LORD is with them,
and shall put the horsemen to rout.
6 I will strengthen the house of Judah,
the house of Joseph I will save;
I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them,
they shall be as though I had never cast them off,
for I am the LORD, their God, and I will hear them.
7 Then Ephraim shall be valiant men,
and their hearts shall be cheered as by wine.
Their children shall see it and be glad,
their hearts shall rejoice in the LORD.

8 I will whistle for them to come together,
and when I redeem them
they will be as numerous as before. [o]
9 I sowed them among the nations,
yet in distant lands they remember me;
they shall rear their children and return.
10 I will bring them back from the land of Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria.
I will bring them into Gilead and into Lebanon,
but these shall not suffice them; [p]
11 I will cross over to Egypt
and smite the waves of the sea
and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up.
The pride of Assyria shall be cast down,
and the scepter of Egypt taken away. [q]
12 I will strengthen them in the LORD,
and they shall walk in his name, says the LORD. [r]

## CHAPTER 11

1 Open your doors, O Lebanon,
that the fire may devour your cedars!
2 Wail, you cypress trees,
for the cedars are fallen,
the mighty have been despoiled.
Wail, you oaks of Bashan,
for the impenetrable forest is cut down!
3 Hark! the wailing of the shepherds,
their glory has been ruined.
Hark! the roaring of the young lions,
the jungle of the Jordan is laid waste.

**Allegory of the Shepherds*** 4 Thus said the

**10, 2:** Teraphim: household idols, used for divination; cf Gn 31, 19. 34f; Jgs 17, 5; 18, 17f. 20; Ez 21, 26; Hos 3, 4.

**11, 4–17:** In this allegory the prophet becomes the good shepherd of God's flock, which is being slaughtered; he is the defender of the people exploited by bad rulers. The three shep-

l Is 62, 3. m Dt 11, 14; Jer 14, 22. n Jer 10, 8; Ez 34, 5. o Ez 36, 37. p Is 11, 11; 49, 20; Hos 11, 11. q Is 11, 15; Ez 30, 13. r Mi 4, 5.

LORD, my God: Shepherd the flock to be slaughtered. [5]For they who buy them slay them with impunity; while those who sell them say, "Blessed be the LORD, I have become rich!" Even their own shepherds do not feel for them.[s] [6](Nor shall I spare the inhabitants of the earth any more, says the LORD. Yes, I will deliver each of them into the power of his neighbor, or into the power of his king; they shall crush the earth, and I will not deliver it out of their power.)

[7]So I became the shepherd of the flock to be slaughtered for the sheep merchants. I took two staffs, one of which I called "Favor," and the other, "Bonds," and I fed the flock.[t] [8]In a single month I did away with the three shepherds. I wearied of them, and they behaved badly toward me. [9]"I will not feed you," I said. "What is to die, let it die; what is to perish, let it perish, and let those that are left devour one another's flesh."[u]

[10]Then I took my staff "Favor" and snapped it asunder, breaking off the covenant which I had made with all peoples; [11]that day it was broken off. The sheep merchants who were watching me understood that this was the word of the LORD. [12]I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, let it go." And they counted out my wages, thirty pieces of silver.[v] [13]But the LORD said to me, "Throw it in the treasury, the handsome price at which they valued me." So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the LORD.[w]

[14]Then I snapped asunder my other staff, "Bonds," breaking off the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. [15]The LORD said to me: This time take the gear of a foolish shepherd. [16]For I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will take no note of those that perish, nor seek the strays, nor heal the injured, nor feed what survives—he will eat the flesh of the fat ones and tear off their hoofs![x]

[17]Woe to my foolish shepherd
who forsakes the flock!
May the sword fall upon his arm
and upon his right eye;
Let his arm wither away entirely,
and his right eye be blind forever![y]

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 12–14
See RG
382–383

**Jerusalem God's Instrument*** [1]An oracle: the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus says the LORD, who spreads out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:[z] [2]See, I will make Jerusalem a bowl to stupefy all peoples round about. [Judah will be besieged, even Jerusalem.][a] [3]On that day I will make Jerusalem a weighty stone for all peoples. All who attempt to lift it shall injure themselves badly, and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered against her.[b] [4]On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with fright, and its rider with madness. I will strike blind all the horses of the peoples, but upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes, [5]and the princes of Judah shall say to themselves, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem have their strength in the LORD of hosts, their God." [6]On that day I will make the princes of Judah like a brazier of fire in the woodland, and like a burning torch among sheaves, and they shall devour right and left all the surrounding peoples; but Jerusalem shall still abide on its own site.[c] [7]The LORD shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be exalted over Judah. [8]On that day, the LORD will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the weakling among them shall be like David on that day, and the house of David godlike, like an angel of the

herds, rulers in general, are to destroy one another in a short time (a single month). The service of the good shepherd is contemptuously valued at thirty pieces of silver, the legal indemnity (Ex 21, 32) for a gored slave. The prophet is thus a type of Christ whose mission of salvation to his people was appraised by the Sanhedrists, the false shepherds, at the same base price (Mt 26, 14ff). In the case of the prophet as well as of Christ (Mt 27, 5), the money is thrown into the temple treasury, i.e., paid to God, showing thereby how shamefully his divine love and care are requited.

**12, 1–9:** Under the image of the deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem from invading enemies, the prophet foretells the ultimate victory of God's people in the messianic age.

s Jer 50, 7. t Hos 5, 6. u Jer 15, 2. v Ex 21, 32; Mt 26, 15. w Mt 27, 9f. x Ez 34, 2ff. y Jn 10, 12. z Is 42, 5. a Is 51, 17; Jer 51, 7. b Mt 21, 44. c Ob 18.

LORD before them.[d] 9On that day I will seek the destruction of all nations that come against Jerusalem.

**Messianic Jerusalem** 10I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition;[e] and they shall look on him whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a first-born.*

11*On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.[f] 12And the land shall mourn, each family apart: the family of the house of David, and their wives; the family of the house of Nathan, and their wives; 13the family of the house of Levi, and their wives; the family of Shemei, and their wives; 14and all the rest of the families, each family apart, and the wives apart.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 12–14 See RG 382–383

**The End of Falsehood** 1On that day there shall be open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain to purify from sin* and uncleanness.[g] 2On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will destroy the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be mentioned no more; I will also take away the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land.[h] 3If a man still prophesies, his parents, father and mother, shall say to him, "You shall not live, because you have spoken a lie in the name of the LORD." When he prophesies, his parents, father and mother, shall thrust him through.[i]

Ch 12–14 See RG 382–383

4On that day, every prophet shall be ashamed to prophesy his vision, neither shall he assume the hairy mantle* to mislead, 5but he shall say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil, for I have owned land since my youth."[j] 6And if anyone asks him, "What are these wounds on your chest?"* he shall answer, "With these I was wounded in the house of my dear ones."

### The Song of the Sword

7Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who is my associate,
says the LORD of hosts.
Strike the shepherd
that the sheep may be dispersed,*
and I will turn my hand against the little ones.[k]
8In all the land, says the LORD,
two thirds of them shall be cut off and perish,
and one third shall be left.
9I will bring the one third through fire,
and I will refine them as silver is refined,
and I will test them as gold is tested.[l]
They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them.
I will say, "They are my people,"
and they shall say, "The LORD is my God."

## CHAPTER 14

**The Fight for Jerusalem*** 1Lo, a day shall come for the LORD when the spoils shall be

12, 10: The divine blessings (a spirit of grace and petition) will be poured out on God's people through the intervention of an unnamed sufferer (him whom they have thrust through), similar to the Servant of the Lord in Is 52, 13—53, 12. In Jn 19, 37 the Evangelist sees in this passage a prophecy fulfilled in the piercing of Christ's side.

12, 11: The mourning for the pierced victim in Jerusalem is compared to a lamentation in the plain of Megiddo apparently over a certain personage called Hadadrimmon. The reference is no longer clear. Both Hadad and Rimmon were names of the Semitic storm god, often identified with the god Baal. Some see here a reference to the annual mourning by the pagans over the death of the fertility god. According to others, Hadadrimmon is the name of a place near Megiddo, and the reference would then be to the mourning over the death of King Josiah, who was killed in battle there; cf 2 Chr 35, 22–25.

13, 1: A fountain to purify from sin: in contrast to the lustral water used in ritual purification; cf Nm 19, 9. 13. 20; 31, 23. The Lord himself is the fountain of living water (Jer 2, 13); cf Is 12, 2ff.

13, 4: Hairy mantle: worn by prophets as a mark of their calling; cf 2 Kgs 1, 8; Mt 3, 4.

13, 6: Wounds on your chest: literally, "wounds between your hands." The false prophets, like the prophet of Baal (1 Kgs 13, 28), apparently inflicted wounds on themselves; to defend himself against the accusation of being a false prophet, a man will deny having inflicted wounds on himself and say instead that he received them at home, "in the house of my dear ones." In the liturgy this text is applied to Christ in an accommodated sense.

13, 7: When the shepherd is killed, the sheep are scattered. In Mt 26, 31 the Evangelist quotes from this verse, in somewhat different form, the words, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered, as said by Christ shortly before his arrest in the Garden of Olives and the flight of the Apostles.

14, 1–21: An apocalyptic description of the day of the Lord, in which Jerusalem, the figure of God's elect, after much suffering (siege: vv 1ff; riot: v 13; plague: vv 12, 15), is rescued by the Lord (vv 4f) and given great blessings (vv 6–11. 14. 16–21).

d Ex 32, 34. e Jer 6, 26; Jn 19, 34; Rv 1, 7. f 2 Chr 35, 22–25. g Heb 9, 14; 1 Pt 1, 18f; Rv 1, 5. h Mi 5, 12; 2 Pt 2, 1. i Dt 18, 20; Mi 3, 5ff. j Am 7, 14. k Mt 26, 31. l Jer 30, 22; Ps 66, 10.

divided in your midst. [2]And I will gather all the
nations against Jerusalem for battle: the city shall
be taken, houses plundered, women ravished;
half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of
the people shall not be removed from the city.
[3]Then the LORD shall go forth and fight against
those nations, fighting as on a day of battle.
[4]That day his feet shall rest upon the Mount of
Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east.
The Mount of Olives shall be cleft in two from
east to west by a very deep valley, and half of the
mountain shall move to the north and half of it
to the south. [5]And the valley of the LORD's
mountain shall be filled up when the valley of
those two mountains reaches its edge; it shall be
filled up as it was filled up by the earthquake in
the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the
LORD, my God, shall come, and all his holy ones
with him.

[6]On that day there shall no longer be cold or
frost. [7]There shall be one continuous day,
known to the LORD, not day and night, for in the
evening time there shall be light.[m]

[8]On that day, living waters shall flow from
Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea, and half to the
western sea, and it shall be so in summer and in
winter.[n] [9]The LORD shall become king over the
whole earth; on that day the LORD shall be the
only one, and his name the only one.[o]

[10]And from Geba to Rimmon in the Negeb, all
the land shall turn into a plain; but Jerusalem
shall remain exalted in its place. From the Gate
of Benjamin to the place of the First Gate, to the
Corner Gate; and from the Tower of Hananel to
the king's wine presses,[p] [11]they shall occupy
her. Never again shall she be doomed; Jerusalem
shall abide in security.[q]

[12]And this shall be the plague with which the
LORD shall strike all the nations that have fought
against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while they
stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall rot in
their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their
mouths.

[13]On that day there shall be among them a
great tumult from the LORD: every man shall
seize the hand of his neighbor, and the hand of
each shall be raised against that of his neighbor.
[14]Judah also shall fight against Jerusalem. The
riches of all the surrounding nations shall be
gathered together, gold, silver, and garments, in
great abundance.

[15]Similar to this plague shall be the plague
upon the horses, mules, camels, asses, and upon
all the beasts that are in those camps.

[16]All who are left of all the nations that came
against Jerusalem shall come up year after year
to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to
celebrate the feast of Booths.[r] [17]If any of the
families of the earth does not come up to
Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of
hosts, no rain shall fall upon them. [18]And if the
family of Egypt does not come up, or enter, upon
them shall fall the plague which the LORD will
inflict upon all the nations that do not come up
to celebrate the feast of Booths. [19]This shall be
the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of
all the nations that do not come up to celebrate
the feast of Booths.

[20]On that day there shall be upon the bells of
the horses, "Holy to the LORD." The pots in the
house of the LORD shall be as the libation bowls
before the altar. [21]And every pot in Jerusalem
and in Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts;
and all who come to sacrifice shall take them
and cook in them. On that day there shall no
longer be any merchant in the house of the LORD
of hosts.[s]

m Rv 21, 23. n Zec 13, 1; Ez 47, 1–8; Jl 3, 18. o Dt 6, 4; Eph 4, 5f; Rv 11, 15. p Zec 12, 6; Neh 3, 6; 12, 38. q Jer 31, 40; Rv 22, 3. r Lv 23, 34. 43; Neh 8, 14; Is 60, 6. 9. s Mt 21, 12; Jn 2, 13–16.

# THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Malachi
See RG
383–385

This work was composed by an anonymous writer shortly before Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem (455 B.C.). Because of the sharp reproaches he was leveling against the priests and rulers of the people, the author probably wished to conceal his identity. To do this he made a proper name out of the Hebrew expression for "My Messenger" (Malachi), which occurs in 1, 1 and 3, 1. The historical value of the prophecy is considerable in that it gives us a picture of life in the Jewish community returned from Babylon, between the period of Haggai and the reform measures of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is likely that the author's trenchant criticism of abuses and religious indifference in the community prepared the way for these necessary reforms.

The chosen people had made a sorry return for divine love. The priests, who should have been leaders, had dishonored God by their blemished sacrifices. In his first chapter, the writer foresees the time when all nations will offer a pure oblation (1, 11)—a prophecy whose fulfillment the church sees in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The author then turns from priests to people, denouncing their marriages with pagans and their callous repudiation of Israelite wives. Imbued with the rationalist and critical spirit of the times, many had wearied God with the question, "Where is the God of justice?" To this question the prophet replies that the day of the Lord is coming. But first the forerunner must come, who will prepare the soil for repentance and true worship. The gospel writers point to John the Baptizer as the forerunner ushering in the messianic age, the true day of the Lord. When the ground is prepared God will appear, measuring out rewards and punishments and purifying the nation in the furnace of judgment. He will create a new order in which the ultimate triumph of good is inevitable.

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–2
See RG
383–384

1 An oracle. The word of the LORD to Israel
through Malachi.

### Israel Preferred to Edom

2 I have loved you, says the LORD;
but you say, "How have you loved us?" [a]
3 Was not Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD:*
yet I loved Jacob, but hated Esau;
I made his mountains a waste,
his heritage a desert for jackals. [b]
4 If Edom says, "We have been crushed
but we will rebuild the ruins,"
Thus says the LORD of hosts:
They indeed may build, but I will tear down,
And they shall be called the land of guilt, [c]
the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.
5 Your own eyes shall see it, and you will say,
"Great is the LORD, even beyond the land of Israel." [d]

### Sins of the Priests and Levites

6 A son honors his father,
and a servant fears his master;
If then I am a father,
where is the honor due to me?
And if I am a master,
where is the reverence due to me?—
So says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests,
who despise his name.
But you ask, "How have we despised your name?"
7 By offering polluted food on my altar!

1, 3ff: The thought passes from the person Esau to his descendants, Edom, and from the person Jacob to his descendants, Israel. Loved: preferred; hated: rejected; cf Gn 25, 21ff. St. Paul uses this passage as an example of God's freedom of choice in calling the Gentiles to the faith (Rom 9, 13).

a Dt 7, 6ff; Ez 16; Am 1, 11. b Gn 25, 23; Rom 9, 13. c Is 34, 5f; 63, 1–6; Jer 49, 7–22; Ob 21. d Is 60.

Then you ask, "How have we polluted it?"
By saying the table of the LORD may be slighted!
[8] When you offer a blind animal for sacrifice,[e]
is this not evil?
When you offer the lame or the sick,
is it not evil?
Present it to your governor; see if he will accept it,
or welcome you, says the LORD of hosts.*
[9] So now if you implore God for mercy on us,
when you have done the like
Will he welcome any of you?
says the LORD of hosts.

[10] Oh, that one among you would shut the temple gates*
to keep you from kindling fire on my altar in vain!
I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts;
neither will I accept any sacrifice from your hands,
[11] For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting,
my name is great among the nations;
And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name,
and a pure offering;
For great is my name among the nations,
says the LORD of hosts.[f]
[12] But you behave profanely toward me by thinking
the LORD's table and its offering may be polluted,
and its food slighted.
[13] You also say, "What a burden!"
and you scorn it, says the LORD of hosts;
You bring in what you seize, or the lame, or the sick;
yes, you bring it as a sacrifice.
Shall I accept it from your hands?
says the LORD.
[14] Cursed is the deceiver, who has in his flock a male,
but under his vow sacrifices to the LORD a gelding;
For a great King am I, says the LORD of hosts,
and my name will be feared among the nations.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
384–385

[1] And now, O priests, this commandment is for you:
If you do not listen,
[2] And if you do not lay it to heart,
to give glory to my name, says the LORD of hosts,
I will send a curse upon you
and of your blessing I will make a curse.
Yes, I have already cursed it,
because you do not lay it to heart.[g]
[3] Lo, I will deprive you of the shoulder*
and I will strew dung in your faces,
The dung of your feasts,
and you will be carried off with it.
[4] Then you will know that I sent you this commandment
because I have a covenant with Levi,
says the LORD of hosts.[h]
[5] My covenant with him was one of life and peace;
fear I put in him, and he feared me,
and stood in awe of my name.[i]
[6] True doctrine was in his mouth,
and no dishonesty was found upon his lips;
He walked with me in integrity and uprightness,
and turned many away from evil.[j]
[7] For the lips of the priest are to keep knowledge,

**1, 8:** The offering in sacrifice of a lame, sick or blind animal was forbidden in the law (Lv 22, 17–25; Dt 17, 1).

**1, 10f:** The imperfect sacrifices offered without sincerity by the people of Judah are displeasing to the Lord. He will rather be pleased with the offerings of the Gentile nations throughout the world (from the rising of the sun, even to its setting), which anticipate the pure offering to be sacrificed in messianic times, the universal Sacrifice of the Mass, as we are told by the Council of Trent.

**2, 3:** I will deprive you of the shoulder: this part of a sacrificial animal, allotted by the law (Dt 18, 3) to the priests, will be withheld from them.

e Lv 22, 19–25; Dt 15, 21. f Ps 113, 3; Is 59, 19. g Lv 26, 14–45; Dt 28, 15–68. h Nm 25, 12f. i Nm 25, 12; Ez 37, 26ff. j Dt 33, 8–11.

and instruction is to be sought from his mouth,
because he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.[k]
8 But you have turned aside from the way,
and have caused many to falter by your instruction;
You have made void the covenant of Levi,
says the LORD of hosts.
9 I, therefore, have made you contemptible
and base before all the people,
Since you do not keep my ways,
but show partiality in your decisions.

### Sins of the People

10 Have we not all the one Father?*
Has not the one God created us?
Why then do we break faith with each other,
violating the covenant of our fathers?[l]
11 Judah has broken faith; an abominable thing
has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem.
Judah has profaned the temple which the LORD loves,
and has married an idolatrous woman.[m]
12 May the LORD cut off from the man who does this
both witness and advocate out of the tents of Jacob,
and anyone to offer sacrifice to the LORD of hosts!

13 This also you do: the altar of the LORD you cover
with tears, weeping and groaning,
Because he no longer regards your sacrifice
nor accepts it favorably from your hand;
14 And you say, "Why is it?"—
Because the LORD is witness
between you and the wife of your youth,
With whom you have broken faith
though she is your companion, your betrothed wife.[n]
15 Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit:
and what does that one require but godly offspring?
You must then safeguard life that is your own,
and not break faith with the wife of your youth.[o]
16 For I hate divorce,
says the LORD, the God of Israel,
And covering one's garment with injustice,
says the LORD of hosts;
You must then safeguard life that is your own,
and not break faith.

17 You have wearied the LORD with your words,
yet you say, "How have we wearied him?"
By your saying, "Every evildoer
is good in the sight of the LORD,
And he is pleased with him";
or else, "Where is the just God?"

## CHAPTER 3

### The Messenger of the Covenant

1 Lo, I am sending my messenger
to prepare the way before me;*
And suddenly there will come to the temple
the LORD whom you seek,
And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.
Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.[p]
2 But who will endure the day of his coming?
And who can stand when he appears?
For he is like the refiner's fire,
or like the fuller's lye.
3 He will sit refining and purifying [silver],
and he will purify the sons of Levi,
Refining them like gold or like silver

Ch 3 See RG 385

**2, 10–16:** Intermarriage of Israelites with foreigners was forbidden according to Dt 7, 1–4. After the exile this law was strictly enforced (Ezr 9—10). Foreign marriages are here portrayed as a violation of the covenant (v 10), which made the sacrifices offered by the offenders unacceptable to God (v 13). They were all the more reprehensible when accompanied by the divorce of Israelite wives (vv 14ff). This gradual return to the primitive ideal of the indissolubility of marriage was fully realized in New Testament times through the teaching of Christ; cf Mt 19, 3–12.

**3, 1:** My messenger . . . before me: in v 23 this messenger is called Elijah. In Mt 11, 10 these words are quoted by Christ as referring to John the Baptizer, who prepared the way for the coming of the Savior; cf Mt 3, 1ff. 11f; 17, 11ff; Mk 1, 2–8; Lk 3, 2–18; Jn 1, 31–34.

k Lv 10, 10f; Dt 17, 9f; Jer 18, 18; Hg 2, 12. l Mt 23, 9; Jb 31, 15; Eph 4, 6. m Ezr 9, 2; Neh 13, 25. n Gn 31, 49f; Prv 5, 18ff. o Gn 2, 7. 22ff. p Is 40, 3; Mt 11, 10; Mk 1, 2; Lk 1, 17; 7, 27.

that they may offer due sacrifice to the
LORD.[q]
4 Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem
will please the LORD,
as in the days of old, as in years gone by.
5 I will draw near to you for judgment,
and I will be swift to bear witness
Against the sorcerers, adulterers, and
perjurers,
those who defraud the hired man of his
wages,
Against those who defraud widows and
orphans;
those who turn aside the stranger,
and those who do not fear me, says the
LORD of hosts.

6 Surely I, the LORD, do not change,*
nor do you cease to be sons of Jacob.
7 Since the days of your fathers you have turned
aside
from my statutes, and have not kept them.
Return to me, and I will return to you,
says the LORD of hosts.
Yet you say, "How must we return?"[r]
8 Dare a man rob God? Yet you are robbing
me!
And you say, "How do we rob you?"
In tithes and in offerings![s]
9 You are indeed accursed,
for you, the whole nation, rob me.
10 Bring the whole tithe
into the storehouse,*
That there may be food in my house,
and try me in this, says the LORD of hosts:
Shall I not open for you the floodgates of
heaven,
to pour down blessing upon you without
measure?[t]
11 For your sake I will forbid the locust
to destroy your crops;
And the vine in the field will not be barren,
says the LORD of hosts.
12 Then all nations will call you blessed,
for you will be a delightful land,
says the LORD of hosts.

13 You have defied me in word, says the LORD,
yet you ask, "What have we spoken against
you?"
14 You have said, "It is vain to serve God,
and what do we profit by keeping his
command,
And going about in penitential dress
in awe of the LORD of hosts?[u]
15 Rather must we call the proud blessed;
for indeed evildoers prosper,
and even tempt God with impunity."
16 Then they who fear the LORD spoke with one
another,
and the LORD listened attentively;
And a record book* was written before him
of those who fear the LORD and trust in his
name.[v]
17 And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts,
my own special possession, on the day I
take action.
And I will have compassion on them,
as a man has compassion on his son who
serves him.[w]
18 Then you will again see the distinction
between the just and the wicked;
Between him who serves God,
and him who does not serve him.
19 For lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be
stubble,
And the day that is coming will set them on
fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch,
says the LORD of hosts.[x]
20 But for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays;
And you will gambol like calves out of the stall
21 and tread down the wicked;[y]
They will become ashes under the soles of
your feet,

**3, 6f:** God is faithful to his promises. He will not abandon the Israelites, who are still his people.
**3, 10:** Storehouse: the temple treasury.
**3, 16:** Record book: see note on Ex 32, 32.

q Is 1, 25; Zec 13, 9. r Zec 1, 3f; Acts 7, 51. s Neh 13, 10–14. t 2 Chr 31, 10f; Neh 10, 38; 13, 12; Prv 3, 9f. u Jb 21, 14f; 22, 17; Ps 73, 11f. v Rv 20, 12. w Ex 19, 5; Dt 7, 6; Pss 103, 13; 135, 4. x Is 13, 9; 34, 8; Jl 3, 3; Zep 1, 18; 2 Pt 3, 7. y Lk 1, 78f.

on the day I take action, says the LORD of
hosts.

22 Remember the law of Moses my servant,
which I enjoined upon him on Horeb,
The statutes and ordinances
for all Israel.[z]
23 Lo, I will send you
Elijah,* the prophet,
Before the day of the LORD comes,
the great and terrible day,
24 To turn the hearts of the fathers to their
children,
and the hearts of the children to their
fathers,[a]
Lest I come and strike
the land with doom.

Lo, I will send you
Elijah, the prophet,
Before the day of the LORD comes,
the great and terrible day.*

**3, 23:** Elijah: described in 2 Kgs 2, 11 as taken heavenward in a fiery chariot. Here his return to earth seems to be foretold. Jewish tradition has interpreted this literally; Christ declares it to be fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptizer (Mt 17, 10–13).

**3, 24:** The words in fine print, a repetition of v 23a-d, have been added by the scribes so that the collection of the twelve minor prophets will not end with the threat of doom.

z Ex 20; Lv 26; Dt 4, 1. 5f. a Mt 11, 14; 17, 10; Mk 9, 10ff; Lk 1, 17.

# THE
# NEW TESTAMENT

# PREFACE TO THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE
## FIRST EDITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament translation has been approached with essentially the same fidelity to the thought and individual style of the biblical writers as was applied in the Old Testament. In some cases, however, the problem of marked literary peculiarities had to be met. What by any Western standard are the limited vocabularies and stylistic infelicities of the evangelists cannot be retained in the exact form in which they appear in the originals without displeasing the modern ear. A compromise is here attempted whereby some measure of the poverty of the evangelists' expression is kept and placed at the service of their message in its richness. Similarly, the syntactical shortcomings of Paul, his frequent lapses into anacoluthon, and the like, are rendered as they occur in his epistles rather than "smoothed out." Only thus, the translators suppose, will contemporary readers have some adequate idea of the kind of writing they have before them. When the prose of the original flows more smoothly, as in Luke, Acts, and Hebrews, it is reflected in the translation.

The Gospel according to John comprises a special case. Absolute fidelity to his technique of reiterated phrasing would result in an assault on the English ear, yet the softening of the vocal effect by substitution of other words and phrases would destroy the effectiveness of his poetry. Again, resort is had to compromise. This is not an easy matter when the very repetitiousness which the author deliberately employed is at the same time regarded by those who read and speak English to be a serious stylistic defect. Only those familiar with the Greek originals can know what a relentless tattoo Johannine poetry can produce. A similar observation could be made regarding other New Testament books as well. Matthew and Mark are given to identical phrasing twice and three times in the same sentence. As for the rhetorical overgrowth and mixed figures of speech in the letters of Peter, James, and Jude, the translator must resist a powerful compulsion to tidy them up if only to render these letters intelligibly.

Without seeking refuge in complaints against the inspired authors, however, the translators of *The New American Bible* here state that what they have attempted is a translation rather than a paraphrase. To be sure, all translation can be called paraphrase by definition. Any striving for complete fidelity will shortly end in infidelity. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the temptation to improve overladen sentences by the consolidation or elimination of multiplied adjectives, or the simplification of clumsy hendiadys, has been resisted here. For the most part, rhetorically ineffective words and phrases are retained in this translation in some form, even when it is clear that a Western contemporary writer would never have employed them.

The spelling of proper names in *The New American Bible* follows the customary forms found in most English Bibles since the Authorized Version.

Despite the arbitrary character of the divisions into numbered verses (a scheme which in its present form is only four centuries old), the translators have made a constant effort to keep within an English verse the whole verbal content of the Greek verse. At times the effort has not seemed worth the result since it often does violence to the original author's flow of expression, which preceded it by so many centuries. If this translation had been prepared for purposes of public reading only, the editors would have foregone the effort at an early stage. But since they never departed from the threefold objective of preparing a translation suitable for liturgical use, private reading, and the purposes of students, the last-named consideration prevailed. Those familiar with Greek should be able to discover how the translators of the New Testament have

rendered any given original verse of scripture, if their exegetical or theological tasks require them to know this. At the same time, the fact should be set down here that the editors did not commit themselves in the synoptic gospels to rendering repeated words or phrases identically.

This leads to a final consideration: the Greek text used for the New Testament. Here, punctuation and verse division are at least as important as variant reading. In general, Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (25th edition, 1963) was followed. Additional help was derived from *The Greek New Testament* (Aland, Black, Metzger, Wikgren), produced for the use of translators by the United Bible Societies in 1966. However, the editors did not confine themselves strictly to these texts; at times, they inclined toward readings otherwise attested. The omission of alternative translations does not mean that the translators think them without merit, but only that in every case they had to make a choice.

Poorly attested readings do not occur in this translation. Doubtful readings of some merit appear within brackets; public readers may include such words or phrases, or omit them entirely without any damage to sense. Parentheses are used, as ordinarily in English, as a punctuation device. Material they enclose is in no sense textually doubtful. It is simply thought to be parenthetical in the intention of the biblical author, even though there is no such punctuation mark in Greek. The difficulty in dealing with quotation marks is well known. Since they do not appear in any form in the original text, wherever they occur here they constitute an editorial decision.

# PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

The New Testament of *The New American Bible,* a fresh translation from the Greek text, was first published in complete form in 1970, together with the Old Testament translation that had been completed the previous year. Portions of the New Testament had appeared earlier, in somewhat different form, in the provisional Mass lectionary of 1964 and in the *Lectionary for Mass* of 1970.

Since 1970 many different printings of the New Testament have been issued by a number of publishers, both separately and in complete Bibles, and the text has become widely known both in the United States and in other English-speaking countries. Most American Catholics have been influenced by it because of its widespread use in the liturgy, and it has received a generally favorable reception from many other Christians as well. It has taken its place among the standard contemporary translations of the New Testament, respected for its fidelity to the original and its attempt to render this into current American English.

Although the scriptures themselves are timeless, translations and explanations of them quickly become dated in an era marked by rapid cultural change to a degree never previously experienced. The explosion of biblical studies that has taken place in our century and the changing nature of our language itself require periodic adjustment both in translations and in the accompanying explanatory materials. The experience of actual use of the New Testament of *The New American Bible,* especially in oral proclamation, has provided a basis for further improvement. Accordingly, it was decided in 1978 to proceed with a thorough revision of the New Testament to reflect advances in scholarship and to satisfy needs identified through pastoral experience.

For this purpose a steering committee was formed to plan, organize, and direct the work of revision, to engage collaborators, and to serve as an editorial board to coordinate the work of the various revisers and to determine the final form of the text and the explanatory materials. Guidelines were drawn up and collaborators selected in 1978 and early 1979, and November of 1980 was established as the deadline for manuscripts. From December 1980 through September 1986 the editorial board met a total of fifty times and carefully reviewed and revised all the material in order to ensure accuracy and consistency of approach. The editors also worked together with the bishops' ad hoc committee that was appointed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1982 to oversee the revision.

The threefold purpose of the translation that was expressed in the preface to the first edition has been maintained in the revision: to provide a version suitable for liturgical proclamation, for private reading, and for purposes of study. Special attention has been given to the first of these purposes, since oral proclamation demands special qualities in a translation, and experience had provided insights and suggestions that could lead to improvement in this area. Efforts have also been made, however, to facilitate devotional reading by providing suitable notes and introductory materials, and to assist the student by achieving greater accuracy and consistency in the translation and supplying more abundant information in the introductions and notes.

The primary aim of the revision is to produce a version as accurate and faithful to the meaning of the Greek original as is possible for a translation. The editors have consequently moved in the direction of a formal-equivalence approach to translation, matching the vocabulary, structure, and even word order of the original as closely as possible in the receptor language. Some other contemporary biblical versions have adopted, in varying degrees, a

dynamic-equivalence approach, which attempts to respect the individuality of each language by expressing the meaning of the original in a linguistic structure suited to English, even though this may be very different from the corresponding Greek structure. While this approach often results in fresh and brilliant renderings, it has the disadvantages of more or less radically abandoning traditional biblical and liturgical terminology and phraseology, of expanding the text to include what more properly belongs in notes, commentaries, or preaching, and of tending toward paraphrase. A more formal approach seems better suited to the specific purposes intended for this translation.

At the same time, the editors have wished to produce a version in English that reflects contemporary American usage and is readily understandable to ordinary educated people, but one that will be recognized as dignified speech, on the level of formal rather than colloquial usage. These aims are not in fact contradictory, for there are different levels of language in current use: the language of formal situations is not that of colloquial conversation, though people understand both and may pass from one to the other without adverting to the transition. The liturgy is a formal situation that requires a level of discourse more dignified, formal, and hieratic than the world of business, sport, or informal communication. People readily understand this more formal level even though they may not often use it; our passive vocabulary is much larger than our active vocabulary. Hence this revision, while avoiding archaisms, does not shrink from traditional biblical terms that are easily understood even though not in common use in everyday speech. The level of language consciously aimed at is one appropriate for liturgical proclamation; this may also permit the translation to serve the purposes of devotional reading and serious study.

A particular effort has been made to insure consistency of vocabulary. Always to translate a given Greek word by the same English equivalent would lead to ludicrous results and to infidelity to the meaning of the text. But in passages where a particular Greek term retains the same meaning, it has been rendered in the same way insofar as this has been feasible; this is particularly significant in the case of terms that have a specific theological meaning. The synoptic gospels have been carefully translated so as to reveal both the similarities and the differences of the Gospels.

An especially sensitive problem today is the question of discrimination in language. In recent years there has been much discussion about allegations of anti-Jewish expressions in the New Testament and of language that discriminates against various minorities. Above all, however, the question of discrimination against women affects the largest number of people and arouses the greatest degree of interest and concern. At present there is little agreement about these problems or about the best way to deal with them. In all these areas the present translation attempts to display a sensitivity appropriate to the present state of the questions under discussion, which are not yet resolved and in regard to which it is impossible to please everyone, since intelligent and sincere participants in the debate hold mutually contradictory views.

The primary concern in this revision is fidelity to what the text says. When the meaning of the Greek is inclusive of both sexes, the translation seeks to reproduce such inclusivity insofar as this is possible in normal English usage, without resort to inelegant circumlocutions or neologisms that would offend against the dignity of the language. Although the generic sense of *man* is traditional in English, many today reject it; its use has therefore generally been avoided, though it is retained in cases where no fully satisfactory equivalent could be found. English does not possess a gender-inclusive third personal pronoun in the singular, and this translation

continues to use the masculine resumptive pronoun after *everyone* or *anyone,* in the traditional way, where this cannot be avoided without infidelity to the meaning.

The translation of the Greek word *adelphos,* particularly in the plural form *adelphoi,* poses an especially delicate problem. While the term literally means *brothers* or other male blood relatives, even in profane Greek the plural can designate two persons, one of either sex, who were born of the same parents. It was adopted by the early Christians to designate, in a figurative sense, the members of the Christian community, who were conscious of a new familial relationship to one another by reason of their adoption as children of God. They are consequently addressed as *adelphoi.* This has traditionally been rendered into English by *brothers* or, more archaically, *brethren.* There has never been any doubt that this designation includes *all* the members of the Christian community, both male and female. Given the absence in English of a corresponding term that explicitly includes both sexes, this translation retains the usage of *brothers,* with the inclusive meaning that has been traditionally attached to it in this biblical context.

Since the New Testament is the product of a particular time and culture, the views expressed in it and the language in which they are expressed reflect a particular cultural conditioning, which sometimes makes them quite different from contemporary ideas and concerns. Discriminatory language should be eliminated insofar as possible whenever it is unfaithful to the meaning of the New Testament, but the text should not be altered in order to adjust it to contemporary concerns. This translation does not introduce any changes, expansions, additions to, or subtractions from the text of scripture. It further retains the traditional biblical ways of speaking about God and about Christ, including the use of masculine nouns and pronouns.

The Greek text followed in this translation is that of the third edition of *The Greek New Testament,* edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, and published by the United Bible Societies in 1975. The same text, with a different critical apparatus and variations in punctuation and typography, was published as the twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* in 1979 by the Deutsche Bibelstiftung, Stuttgart. This edition has also been consulted. When variant readings occur, the translation, with few exceptions, follows the reading that was placed in the text of these Greek editions, though the occurrence of the principal variants is pointed out in the notes.

The editors of the Greek text placed square brackets around words or portions of words of which the authenticity is questionable because the evidence of textual witnesses is inconclusive. The same has been done in the translation insofar as it is possible to reproduce this convention in English. It should be possible to read the text either with or without the disputed words, but in English it is not always feasible to provide this alternative, and in some passages the bracketed words must be included to make sense. As in the first edition, parentheses do not indicate textual uncertainty, but are simply a punctuation device to indicate a passage that in the editors' judgment appears parenthetical to the thought of the author.

Citations from the Old Testament are placed within quotation marks; longer citations are set off as block quotations in a separate indented paragraph. The sources of such citations, as well as those of many more or less subtle allusions to the Old Testament, are identified in the biblical cross-reference section at the bottom of each page. Insofar as possible, the translation of such Old Testament citations agrees with that of *The New American Bible* Old Testament whenever the underlying Greek agrees with the Hebrew (or, in some cases, the Aramaic or Greek) text from which the Old Testament translation was made. But citations in the New Testament

frequently follow the Septuagint or some other version, or were made from memory; hence, in many cases the translation in the New Testament passage will not agree with what appears in the Old Testament. Some of these cases are explained in the notes.

It is a further aim of the revised edition to supply explanatory materials more abundantly than in the first edition. In most cases the introductions and notes have been entirely rewritten and expanded, and the cross-references checked and revised. It is intended that these materials should reflect the present state of sound biblical scholarship and should be presented in such a form that they can be assimilated by the ordinary intelligent reader without specialized biblical training. While they have been written with the ordinary educated Christian in mind, not all technical vocabulary can be entirely dispensed with in approaching the Bible, any more than in any other field. It is the hope of the editors that these materials, even if they sometimes demand an effort, will help the reader to a fuller and more intelligent understanding of the New Testament and a fruitful appropriation of its meaning for personal spiritual growth.

*The New American Bible* is a Roman Catholic translation. This revision, however, like the first edition, has been accomplished with the collaboration of scholars from other Christian churches, both among the revisers and on the editorial board, in response to the encouragement of Vatican Council II (*Dei Verbum,* 22). The editorial board expresses gratitude to all who have collaborated in the revision: to all the revisers, consultants, and bishops who contributed to it, to reviewers of the first edition, and to those who voluntarily submitted suggestions. May this translation fulfill its threefold purpose, "so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified" (2 Thes 3, 1).

*September 30, 1986* *The Feast of St. Jerome*

# THE GOSPELS

Gospels
See RG
386–388

The collection of writings that constitutes the New Testament begins with four gospels. Next comes the Acts of the Apostles, followed by twenty-one letters that are attributed to Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude. Finally, at the end of the early church's scriptures stands the Revelation to John. Virtually all Christians agree that these twenty-seven books constitute the "canon," a term that means "rule" and designates the list of writings that are regarded as authoritative for Christian faith and life.

It is the purpose of this Introduction to describe those features that are common to the four gospels. A similar treatment of the letters of the New Testament is provided in the two Introductions that appear before the Letter to the Romans and before the Letter of James, respectively. The Acts of the Apostles, a work that is both historical and theological, and Revelation, an apocalyptic work, have no counterparts in the New Testament; the special Introductions prefixed to these books treat of the literary characteristics proper to each of them.

While the New Testament contains four writings called "gospels," there is in reality only one gospel running through all of the Christian scriptures, the gospel of and about Jesus Christ. Our English word "gospel" translates the Greek term *euangelion,* meaning "good news." This noun was used in the plural by the Greek translators of the Old Testament to render the Hebrew term for "good news" (2 Sm 4, 10; possibly also 18, 20.25). But it is the corresponding verb *euangelizomai,* "to proclaim good news," that was especially significant in preparing for the New Testament idea of "gospel," since this term is used by Deutero-Isaiah of announcing the great victory of God that was to establish his universal kingship and inaugurate the new age (Is 40, 9; 52, 7; 61, 1).

Paul used the word *euangelion* to designate the message that he and the other apostles proclaimed, the "gospel of God" (Rom 1, 1; 15, 16; 2 Cor 11, 7; 1 Thes 2, 2.8.9). He often referred to it simply as "the gospel" (Rom 1, 16; 10, 16; 11, 28; etc.) or, because of its content and origin, as "the gospel of Christ" (Rom 15, 19; 1 Cor 9, 12; 1 Thes 3, 2; etc.). Because of its personal meaning for him and his own particular manner of telling the story about Jesus Christ and of explaining the significance of his cross and resurrection, Paul also referred to this message as "my gospel" (Rom 2, 16; cf Gal 1, 11; 2, 2) or "our gospel" (2 Cor 4, 3; 1 Thes 1, 5; 2 Thes 2, 14).

It was Mark, as far as we know, who first applied the term "gospel" to a book telling the story of Jesus; see Mk 1, 1 and the note there. This form of presenting Jesus' life, works, teachings, passion, and resurrection was developed further by the other evangelists; see the Introduction to each gospel. The first three of the canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are so similar at many points when viewed together, particularly when arranged in parallel columns or lines, that they are called "synoptic" gospels, from the Greek word for such a general view. The fourth gospel, John, often differs significantly from the synoptics in outline and approach. This work never uses the word "gospel" or its corresponding verb; nevertheless, its message concerns the same Jesus, and the reader is urged to believe in him as the Messiah, "that through this belief you may have life in his name" (20, 31).

From the second century onward, the practice arose of designating each of these four books as a "gospel," understood as a title, and of adding a phrase with a name that identified the traditional author, e.g., "The Gospel according to Matthew." The arrangement of the canon that was adopted, with the four gospels grouped together at the beginning followed by Acts, provides

a massive focus upon Jesus and allows Acts to serve as a framework for the letters of the New Testament. This order, however, conceals the fact that Luke's two volumes, a gospel and Acts, were intended by their author to go together. It further obscures the point that Paul's letters were written before any of our gospels, though the sayings and deeds of Jesus stand behind all the New Testament writings.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Matthew
See RG
388–405

The position of the Gospel according to Matthew as the first of the four gospels in the New Testament reflects both the view that it was the first to be written, a view that goes back to the late second century A.D., and the esteem in which it was held by the church; no other was so frequently quoted in the noncanonical literature of earliest Christianity. Although the majority of scholars now reject the opinion about the time of its composition, the high estimation of this work remains. The reason for that becomes clear upon study of the way in which Matthew presents his story of Jesus, the demands of Christian discipleship, and the breaking-in of the new and final age through the ministry but particularly through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The gospel begins with a narrative prologue (1, 1—2, 23), the first part of which is a genealogy of Jesus starting with Abraham, the father of Israel (1, 1-17). Yet at the beginning of that genealogy Jesus is designated as "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1, 1). The kingly ancestor who lived about a thousand years after Abraham is named first, for this is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the royal anointed one (1, 16). In the first of the episodes of the infancy narrative that follow the genealogy, the mystery of Jesus' person is declared. He is conceived of a virgin by the power of the Spirit of God (1, 18-25). The first of the gospel's fulfillment citations, whose purpose it is to show that he was the one to whom the prophecies of Israel were pointing, occurs here (1, 23): he shall be named Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.

The announcement of the birth of this newborn king of the Jews greatly troubles not only King Herod but all Jerusalem (2, 1-3), yet the Gentile magi are overjoyed to find him and offer him their homage and their gifts (2, 10-11). Thus his ultimate rejection by the mass of his own people and his acceptance by the Gentile nations is foreshadowed. He must be taken to Egypt to escape the murderous plan of Herod. By his sojourn there and his subsequent return after the king's death he relives the Exodus experience of Israel. The words of the Lord spoken through the prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt I called my son," are fulfilled in him (2, 15); if Israel was God's son, Jesus is so in a way far surpassing the dignity of that nation, as his marvelous birth and the unfolding of his story show (see 3, 17; 4, 1-11; 11, 27; 14, 33; 16, 16; 27, 54). Back in the land of Israel, he must be taken to Nazareth in Galilee because of the danger to his life in Judea, where Herod's son Archelaus is now ruling (2, 22-23). The sufferings of Jesus in the infancy narrative anticipate those of his passion, and if his life is spared in spite of the dangers, it is because his destiny is finally to give it on the cross as "a ransom for many" (20, 28). Thus the word of the angel will be fulfilled, ". . . he will save his people from their sins" (1, 21; cf 26, 28).

In 4, 12 Matthew begins his account of the ministry of Jesus, introducing it by the preparatory preaching of John the Baptist (3, 1-12), the baptism of Jesus that culminates in God's proclaiming him his "beloved Son" (3, 13-17), and the temptation in which he proves his true sonship by his victory over the devil's attempt to deflect him from the way of obedience to the Father (4, 1-11). The central message of Jesus' preaching is the coming of the kingdom of heaven and the need for repentance, a complete change of heart and conduct, on the part of those who are to receive this great gift of God (4, 17). Galilee is the setting for most of his ministry; he leaves there for Judea only in 19, 1, and his ministry in Jerusalem, the goal of his journey, is limited to a few days (21, 1—25, 46).

In this extensive material there are five great discourses of Jesus, each concluding with the formula "When Jesus finished these words" or one closely similar (7, 28; 11, 1; 13, 53; 19, 1; 26, 1). These are an important structure of the gospel. In every case the discourse is preceded by a narrative section, each narrative and discourse together constituting a "book" of the gospel. The discourses are, respectively, the "Sermon on the Mount" (5, 3—7, 27), the missionary discourse (10, 5-42), the parable discourse (13, 3-52), the "church order" discourse (18, 3-35), and the eschatological discourse (24, 4—25, 46). In large measure the material of these discourses came to Matthew from his tradition, but his work in modifying and adding to what he had received is abundantly evident. No other evangelist gives the teaching of Jesus with such elegance and order as he.

In the "Sermon on the Mount" the theme of righteousness is prominent, and even at this early stage of the ministry the note of opposition is struck between Jesus and the Pharisees, who are designated as "the hypocrites" (6, 2.5.16). The righteousness of his disciples must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees; otherwise, in spite of their alleged following of Jesus, they will not enter into the kingdom of heaven (5, 20). Righteousness means doing the will of the heavenly Father (7, 21), and his will is proclaimed in a manner that is startling to all who have identified it with the law of Moses. The antitheses of the Sermon (5, 21-48) both accept (5, 21-30.43-48) and reject (5, 31-42) elements of that law, and in the former case the understanding of the law's demands is deepened and extended. The antitheses are the best commentary on the meaning of Jesus' claim that he has come not to abolish but to fulfill the law (5, 17). What is meant by fulfillment of the law is not the demand to keep it exactly as it stood before the coming of Jesus, but rather his bringing the law to be a lasting expression of the will of God, and in that fulfillment there is much that will pass away. Should this appear contradictory to his saying that "until heaven and earth pass away" not even the smallest part of the law will pass (5, 18), that time of fulfillment is not the dissolution of the universe but the coming of the new age, which will occur with Jesus' death and resurrection. While righteousness in the new age will continue to mean conduct that is in accordance with the law, it will be conduct in accordance with the law as expounded and interpreted by Jesus (cf 28, 20, ". . . all that I have commanded you").

Though Jesus speaks harshly about the Pharisees in the Sermon, his judgment is not solely a condemnation of them. The Pharisees are portrayed as a negative example for his disciples, and his condemnation of those who claim to belong to him while disobeying his word is no less severe (7, 21-23.26-27).

In 4, 23 a summary statement of Jesus' activity speaks not only of his teaching and proclaiming the gospel but of his "curing every disease and illness among the people"; this is repeated almost verbatim in 9, 35. The narrative section that follows the Sermon on the Mount (8, 1—9,

38) is composed principally of accounts of those merciful deeds of Jesus, but it is far from being simply a collection of stories about miraculous cures. The nature of the community that Jesus will establish is shown; it will always be under the protection of him whose power can deal with all dangers (8, 23-27), but it is only for those who are prepared to follow him at whatever cost (8, 16-22), not only believing Israelites but Gentiles who have come to faith in him (8, 10-12). The disciples begin to have some insight, however imperfect, into the mystery of Jesus' person. They wonder about him whom "the winds and the sea obey" (8, 27), and they witness his bold declaration of the forgiveness of the paralytic's sins (9, 2). That episode of the narrative moves on two levels. When the crowd sees the cure that testifies to the authority of Jesus, the Son of Man, to forgive sins (9, 6), they glorify God "who had given such authority to human beings" (9, 8). The forgiveness of sins is now not the prerogative of Jesus alone but of "human beings," that is, of the disciples who constitute the community of Jesus, the church. The ecclesial character of this narrative section could hardly be more plainly indicated.

The end of the section prepares for the discourse on the church's mission (10, 5-42). Jesus is moved to pity at the sight of the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd (9, 36), and he sends out the twelve disciples to make the proclamation with which his own ministry began, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (10, 7; cf 4, 17), and to drive out demons and cure the sick as he has done (10, 1). Their mission is limited to Israel (10, 5-6) as Jesus' own was (15, 24), yet in v 16 that perspective broadens and the discourse begins to speak of the mission that the disciples will have after the resurrection and of the severe persecution that will attend it (10, 18). Again, the discourse moves on two levels: that of the time of Jesus and that of the time of the church.

The narrative section of the third book (11, 2—12, 50) deals with the growing opposition to Jesus. Hostility toward him has already been manifested (8, 10; 9, 3.10-13.34), but here it becomes more intense. The rejection of Jesus comes, as before, from Pharisees, who take "counsel against him to put him to death" (12, 14) and repeat their earlier accusation that he drives out demons because he is in league with demonic power (12, 22-24). But they are not alone in their rejection. Jesus complains of the lack of faith of "this generation" of Israelites (11, 16-19) and reproaches the towns "where most of his mighty deeds had been done" for not heeding his call to repentance (11, 20-24). This dark picture is relieved by Jesus' praise of the Father who has enabled "the childlike" to accept him (11, 25-27), but on the whole the story is one of opposition to his word and blindness to the meaning of his deeds. The whole section ends with his declaring that not even the most intimate blood relationship with him counts for anything; his only true relatives are those who do the will of his heavenly Father (12, 48-50).

The narrative of rejection leads up to the parable discourse (13, 3-52). The reason given for Jesus' speaking to the crowds in parables is that they have hardened themselves against his clear teaching, unlike the disciples to whom knowledge of "the mysteries of the kingdom has been granted" (13, 10-16). In 13, 36 he dismisses the crowds and continues the discourse to his disciples alone, who claim, at the end, to have understood all that he has said (13, 51). But, lest the impression be given that the church of Jesus is made up only of true disciples, the explanation of the parable of the weeds among the wheat (13, 37-43), as well as the parable of the net thrown into the sea "which collects fish of every kind" (13, 47-49), shows that it is composed of both the righteous and the wicked, and that separation between the two will be made only at the time of the final judgment.

In the narrative that constitutes the first part of the fourth book of the gospel (13, 54—17, 27), Jesus is shown preparing for the establishment of his church with its teaching authority that will supplant the blind guidance of the Pharisees (15, 13-14), whose teaching, curiously said to be that of the Sadducees also, is repudiated by Jesus as the norm for his disciples (16, 6.11-12). The church of Jesus will be built on Peter (16, 18), who will be given authority to bind and loose on earth, an authority whose exercise will be confirmed in heaven (16, 19). The metaphor of binding and loosing has a variety of meanings, among them that of giving authoritative teaching. This promise is made to Peter directly after he has confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God (16, 16), a confession that he has made as the result of revelation given to him by the heavenly Father (16, 17); Matthew's ecclesiology is based on his high christology.

Directly after that confession Jesus begins to instruct his disciples about how he must go the way of suffering and death (16, 21). Peter, who has been praised for his confession, protests against this and receives from Jesus the sharpest of rebukes for attempting to deflect Jesus from his God-appointed destiny. The future rock upon whom the church will be built is still a man of "little faith" (see 14, 31). Both he and the other disciples must know not only that Jesus will have to suffer and die but that they too will have to follow him on the way of the cross if they are truly to be his disciples (16, 24-25).

The discourse following this narrative (18, 1-35) is often called the "church order" discourse, although that title is perhaps misleading since the emphasis is not on the structure of the church but on the care that the disciples must have for one another in respect to guarding each other's faith in Jesus (18, 6-7), to seeking out those who have wandered from the fold (18, 10-14), and to repeated forgiving of their fellow disciples who have offended them (18, 21-35). But there is also the obligation to correct the sinful fellow Christian and, should one refuse to be corrected, separation from the community is demanded (18, 15-18).

The narrative of the fifth book (19, 1—23, 39) begins with the departure of Jesus and his disciples from Galilee for Jerusalem. In the course of their journey Jesus for the third time predicts the passion that awaits him at Jerusalem and also his resurrection (20, 17-19). At his entrance into the city he is hailed as the Son of David by the crowds accompanying him (21, 9). He cleanses the temple (21, 12-17), and in the few days of his Jerusalem ministry he engages in a series of controversies with the Jewish religious leaders (21, 23-27; 22, 15-22.23-33.34-40.41-46), meanwhile speaking parables against them (21, 28-32.33-46), against all those Israelites who have rejected God's invitation to the messianic banquet (22, 1-10), and against all, Jew and Gentile, who have accepted but have shown themselves unworthy of it (22, 11-14). Once again, the perspective of the evangelist includes not only the time of Jesus' ministry but that of the preaching of the gospel after his resurrection. The narrative culminates in Jesus' denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, reflecting not only his own opposition to them but that of Matthew's church (23, 1-36), and in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (23, 37-39).

In the discourse of the fifth book (24, 1—25, 46), the last of the great structural discourses of the gospel, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple and his own final coming. The time of the latter is unknown (24, 36.44), and the disciples are exhorted in various parables to live in readiness for it, a readiness that entails faithful attention to the duties of the interim period (24, 45—25, 30). The coming of Jesus will bring with it the great judgment by which the everlasting destiny of all will be determined (25, 31-46).

The story of Jesus' passion and resurrection (26, 1—28, 20), the climax of the gospel, throws

light on all that has preceded. In Mt "righteousness" means both the faithful response to the will of God demanded of all to whom that will is announced and also the saving activity of God for his people (see 3, 15; 5, 6; 6, 33). The passion supremely exemplifies both meanings of that central Matthean word. In Jesus' absolute faithfulness to the Father's will that he drink the cup of suffering (26, 39), the incomparable model for Christian obedience is given; in his death "for the forgiveness of sins" (26, 28), the saving power of God is manifested as never before.

Matthew's portrayal of Jesus in his passion combines both the majestic serenity of the obedient Son who goes his destined way in fulfillment of the scriptures (26, 52-54), confident of his ultimate vindication by God, and the depths of fear and abandonment that he feels in face of death (26, 38-39; 27, 46). These two aspects are expressed by an Old Testament theme that occurs often in the narrative, i.e., the portrait of the suffering Righteous One who complains to God in his misery, but is certain of eventual deliverance from his terrible ordeal.

The passion-resurrection of God's Son means nothing less than the turn of the ages, a new stage of history, the coming of the Son of Man in his kingdom (28, 18; cf 16, 28). That is the sense of the apocalyptic signs that accompany Jesus' death (27, 51-53) and resurrection (28, 2). Although the old age continues, as it will until the manifestation of Jesus' triumph at his parousia, the final age has now begun. This is known only to those who have seen the Risen One and to those, both Jews and Gentiles, who have believed in their announcement of Jesus' triumph and have themselves become his disciples (cf 28, 19). To them he is constantly, though invisibly, present (28, 20), verifying the name Emmanuel, "God is with us" (cf 1, 23).

The questions of authorship, sources, and the time of composition of this gospel have received many answers, none of which can claim more than a greater or less degree of probability. The one now favored by the majority of scholars is the following.

The ancient tradition that the author was the disciple and apostle of Jesus named Matthew (see 10, 3) is untenable because the gospel is based, in large part, on the Gospel according to Mark (almost all the verses of that gospel have been utilized in this), and it is hardly likely that a companion of Jesus would have followed so extensively an account that came from one who admittedly never had such an association rather than rely on his own memories. The attribution of the gospel to the disciple Matthew may have been due to his having been responsible for some of the traditions found in it, but that is far from certain.

The unknown author, whom we shall continue to call Matthew for the sake of convenience, drew not only upon the Gospel according to Mark but upon a large body of material (principally, sayings of Jesus) not found in Mk that corresponds, sometimes exactly, to material found also in the Gospel according to Luke. This material, called "Q" (probably from the first letter of the German word *Quelle,* meaning ("source"), represents traditions, written and oral, used by both Matthew and Luke. Mark and Q are sources common to the two other synoptic gospels; hence the name the "Two-Source Theory" given to this explanation of the relation among the synoptics.

In addition to what Matthew drew from Mk and Q, his gospel contains material that is found only there. This is often designated "M," written or oral tradition that was available to the author. Since Mk was written shortly before or shortly after A.D. 70 (see Introduction to Mk), Mt was composed certainly after that date, which marks the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans at the time of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66–70), and probably at least a decade later since Matthew's use of Mk presupposes a wide diffusion of that gospel. The post-A.D. 70 date is confirmed within the text by 22, 7, which refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

As for the place where the gospel was composed, a plausible suggestion is that it was Antioch, the capital of the Roman province of Syria. That large and important city had a mixed population of Greek-speaking Gentiles and Jews. The tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians there in the time of Paul (see Gal 2, 1-14) in respect to Christian obligation to observe Mosaic law are partially similar to tensions that can be seen between the two groups in Matthew's gospel. The church of Matthew, originally strongly Jewish Christian, had become one in which Gentile Christians were predominant. His gospel answers the question how obedience to the will of God is to be expressed by those who live after the "turn of the ages," the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Matthew are the following:

I. The Infancy Narrative (1, 1—2, 23)
II. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (3, 1—7, 29)
III. Ministry and Mission in Galilee (8, 1—11, 1)
IV. Opposition from Israel (11, 2—13, 53)
V. Jesus, the Kingdom, and the Church (13, 54—18, 35)
VI. Ministry in Judea and Jerusalem (19, 1—25, 46)
VII. The Passion and Resurrection (26, 1—28, 20)

# I: The Infancy Narrative

## CHAPTER 1

**The Genealogy of Jesus** [1] [a]*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[2] [b] [c]Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. [3] [d]Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, [4] [e]Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] [f]Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, [6] [g]Jesse the father of David the king.

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David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. [7] [h]*Solomon

**1, 1—2, 23:** The infancy narrative forms the prologue of the gospel. Consisting of a genealogy and five stories, it presents the coming of Jesus as the climax of Israel's history, and the events of his conception, birth, and early childhood as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The genealogy is probably traditional material that Matthew edited. In its first two sections (1, 2–11) it was drawn from Ru 4, 18–22 and 1 Chr 1—3. Except for Jechoniah, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel, none of the names in the third section (1, 12–16) is found in any Old Testament genealogy. While the genealogy shows the continuity of God's providential plan from Abraham on, discontinuity is also present. The women Tamar (1, 3), Rahab and Ruth (1, 5), and the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba (1, 6), bore their sons through unions that were in varying degrees strange and unexpected. These "irregularities" culminate in the supreme "irregularity" of the Messiah's birth of a virgin mother; the age of fulfillment is inaugurated by a creative act of God.

Drawing upon both biblical tradition and Jewish stories, Matthew portrays Jesus as reliving the Exodus experience of Israel and the persecutions of Moses. His rejection by his own people and his passion are foreshadowed by the troubled reaction of "all Jerusalem" to the question of the magi who are seeking the "newborn king of the Jews" (2, 2–3), and by Herod's attempt to have him killed. The magi who do him homage prefigure the Gentiles who will accept the preaching of the gospel. The infancy narrative proclaims who Jesus is, the savior of his people from their sins (1, 21), Emmanuel in whom "God is with us" (1, 23), and the Son of God (2, 15).

**1, 1: The Son of David, the son of Abraham:** two links of the genealogical chain are singled out. Although the later, David is placed first in order to emphasize that Jesus is the royal Messiah. The mention of Abraham may be due not only to his being the father of the nation Israel but to Matthew's interest in the universal scope of Jesus' mission; cf Gn 22, 18, ". . . in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing."

**1, 7:** The successor of Abijah was not Asaph but Asa (see 1 Chr 3, 10). Some textual witnesses read the latter name; however, **Asaph** is better attested. Matthew may have deliberately introduced the psalmist Asaph into the genealogy (and in v 10 the prophet Amos) in order to show that Jesus is the fulfillment not only of the promises made to David (see 2 Sm 7) but of all the Old Testament.

a Gn 5, 1 / 1 Chr 17, 11 / Gn 22, 18. b Lk 3, 23–38. c Gn 21, 3; 25, 26; 29, 35; 1 Chr 2, 1. d Gn 38, 29–30; Ru 4, 18; 1 Chr 2, 4–9. e Ru 4, 19–20; 1 Chr 2, 10–11. f Ru 4, 21–22; 1 Chr 2, 11–12. g 2 Sm 12, 24; 1 Chr 2, 15; 3, 5. h 2 Kgs 25, 1–21; 1 Chr 3, 10–15.

became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the
father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph.
[8]Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Je-
hoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father
of Uzziah. [9]Uzziah became the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of
Hezekiah. [10]*Hezekiah became the father of
Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos
the father of Josiah. [11]Josiah became the father of
Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the
Babylonian exile.

[12] *i*After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah be-
came the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father
of Zerubbabel, [13]Zerubbabel the father of Abiud.
Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the
father of Azor, [14]Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok
became the father of Achim, Achim the father of
Eliud, [15]Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar
became the father of Matthan, Matthan the
father of Jacob, [16]Jacob the father of Joseph, the
husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is
called the Messiah.

[17]*Thus the total number of generations from
Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from
David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen genera-
tions; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah,
fourteen generations.

**The Birth of Jesus** [18]*Now this is how the
birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his
mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but
before they lived together, she was found with
child through the holy Spirit. [19]*Joseph her
husband, since he was a righteous man, yet
unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to
divorce her quietly. [20] *j*Such was his intention
when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to
him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your
home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this
child has been conceived in her. [21]*She will bear
a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he
will save his people from their sins." [22]All this
took place to fulfill what the Lord had said
through the prophet:

[23] *k*"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and
bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means "God is with us." [24]When Joseph
awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had
commanded him and took his wife into his
home. [25] *l*He had no relations with her until
she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

**1, 10: Amos:** some textual witnesses read **Amon,** who was the actual successor of Manasseh (see 1 Chr 3, 14).

**1, 17:** Matthew is concerned with fourteen generations, probably because fourteen is the numerical value of the Hebrew letters forming the name of David. In the second section of the genealogy (6b-11), three kings of Judah, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, have been omitted (see 1 Chr 3, 11–12), so that there are fourteen generations in that section. Yet the third (12–16) apparently has only thirteen. Since Matthew here emphasizes that each section has fourteen, it is unlikely that the thirteen of the last was due to his oversight. Some scholars suggest that **Jesus who is called the Messiah** (16b) doubles the final member of the chain: **Jesus,** born within the family of David, opens up the new age as **Messiah,** so that in fact there are fourteen generations in the third section. This is perhaps too subtle, and the hypothesis of a slip not on the part of Matthew but of a later scribe seems likely. On **Messiah,** see the note on Lk 2, 11.

**1, 18–25:** This first story of the infancy narrative spells out what is summarily indicated in v 16. The virginal conception of Jesus is the work of the Spirit of God. Joseph's decision to divorce Mary is overcome by the heavenly command that he take her into his home and accept the child as his own. The natural genealogical line is broken but the promises to David are fulfilled; through Joseph's adoption the child belongs to the family of David. Matthew sees the virginal conception as the fulfillment of Is 7, 14.

**1, 18: Betrothed to Joseph:** betrothal was the first part of the marriage, constituting a man and woman as husband and wife. Subsequent infidelity was considered adultery. The betrothal was followed some months later by the husband's taking his wife into his home, at which time normal married life began.

**1, 19: A righteous man:** as a devout observer of the Mosaic law, Joseph wished to break his union with someone whom he suspected of gross violation of the law. It is commonly said that the law required him to do so, but the texts usually given in support of that view, e.g., Dt 22, 20–21, do not clearly pertain to Joseph's situation. **Unwilling to expose her to shame:** the penalty for proved adultery was death by stoning; cf Dt 22, 21–23.

**1, 20: The angel of the Lord:** in the Old Testament a common designation of God in communication with a human being. **In a dream:** see 2, 13.19.22. These dreams may be meant to recall the dreams of Joseph, son of Jacob the patriarch (Gn 37, 5–11.19). A closer parallel is the dream of Amram, father of Moses, related by Josephus (**Antiquities** 2, 9, 3 §§212, 215–16).

**1, 21: Jesus:** in first-century Judaism the Hebrew name Joshua (Greek **Iēsous**) meaning "Yahweh helps" was interpreted as "Yahweh saves."

**1, 23: God is with us:** God's promise of deliverance to Judah in Isaiah's time is seen by Matthew as fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, in whom God is with his people. The name Emmanuel is alluded to at the end of the gospel where the risen Jesus assures his disciples of his continued presence, " . . . I am with you always, until the end of the age" (28, 20).

**1, 25: Until she bore a son:** the evangelist is concerned to emphasize that Joseph was not responsible for the conception of Jesus. The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it.

i 1 Chr 3, 16–19. j 2, 13.19; Lk 1, 35. k Is 7, 14 LXX. l Lk 2, 7.

## CHAPTER 2

**The Visit of the Magi** 1*When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, 2 m*saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." 3When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4*Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 nThey said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

7Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. 8He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." 9After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. 10They were overjoyed at seeing the star, 11 o*and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

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**The Flight to Egypt** 13*When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." 14Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. 15 p*He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

**The Massacre of the Infants** 16When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. 17Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

18 q*"A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be consoled,
since they were no more."

**2, 1–12:** The future rejection of Jesus by Israel and his acceptance by the Gentiles are retrojected into this scene of the narrative.

**2, 1: In the days of King Herod:** Herod reigned from 37 to 4 B.C. **Magi:** originally a designation of the Persian priestly caste, the word became used of those who were regarded as having more than human knowledge. Matthew's magi are astrologers.

**2, 2: We saw his star:** it was a common ancient belief that a new star appeared at the time of a ruler's birth. Matthew also draws upon the Old Testament story of Balaam, who had prophesied that "A star shall advance from Jacob" (Nm 24, 17), though there the star means not an astral phenomenon but the king himself.

**2, 4:** Herod's consultation with the chief priests and scribes has some similarity to a Jewish legend about the child Moses in which the "sacred scribes" warn Pharaoh about the imminent birth of one who will deliver Israel from Egypt and the king makes plans to destroy him.

**2, 11:** Cf Ps 72, 10.15; Is 60, 6. These Old Testament texts led to the interpretation of the magi as kings.

**2, 13–23:** Biblical and nonbiblical traditions about Moses are here applied to the child Jesus, though the dominant Old Testament type is not Moses but Israel (see v 15).

**2, 13: Flee to Egypt:** Egypt was a traditional place of refuge for those fleeing from danger in Palestine (see 1 Kgs 11, 40; Jer 26, 21), but the main reason why the child is to be taken to Egypt is that he may relive the Exodus experience of Israel.

**2, 15:** The fulfillment citation is taken from Hos 11, 1. Israel, God's son, was called out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus; Jesus, the Son of God, will similarly be called out of that land in a new exodus. The father-son relationship between God and the nation is set in a higher key. Here the son is not a group adopted as "son of God," but the child who, as conceived by the holy Spirit, stands in unique relation to God. He is son of David and of Abraham, of Mary and of Joseph, but, above all, of God.

**2, 18:** Jer 31, 15 portrays Rachel, wife of the patriarch Jacob, weeping for her children taken into exile at the time of the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom (722–21 B.C.). Bethlehem was traditionally identified with Ephrath, the place near which Rachel was buried (see Gn 35, 19; 48, 7), and the mourning of Rachel is here applied to her lost children of a later age. **Ramah:** about six miles north of Jerusalem. The lamentation of Rachel is so great as to be heard at a far distance.

m Nm 24, 17. n Mi 5, 1 / 2 Sm 5, 2. o Ps 72, 10–11.15; Is 60, 6. p Hos 11, 1. q Jer 31, 15.

**The Return from Egypt** [19]When Herod had
died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a
dream to Joseph in Egypt [20 r]*and said, "Rise,
take the child and his mother and go to the land
of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are
dead." [21]He rose, took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel. [22]*But when he
heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in
place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go
back there. And because he had been warned in
a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee.
[23 s]*He went and dwelt in a town called Naza-
reth, so that what had been spoken through the
prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a
Nazorean."

## II: The Proclamation of the Kingdom

### CHAPTER 3

Ch 3–4
See RG
392–393

**The Preaching of John the Baptist** [1 t]*In
those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching
in the desert of Judea [2 u]*[and] saying, "Repent,
for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" [3 v]*It was
of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when
he said:

"A voice of one crying out in the desert,
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.' "

[4 w]*John wore clothing made of camel's hair and
had a leather belt around his waist. His food was
locusts and wild honey. [5]At that time Jerusalem,
all Judea, and the whole region around the
Jordan were going out to him [6]*and were being
baptized by him in the Jordan River as they
acknowledged their sins.

[7 x]*When he saw many of the Pharisees and
Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to
them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to
flee from the coming wrath? [8]Produce good fruit
as evidence of your repentance. [9 y]And do not
presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham
as our father." For I tell you, God can raise up

**2, 20: For those who sought the child's life are dead:** Moses, who had fled from Egypt because the Pharaoh sought to kill him (see Ex 2, 15), was told to return there, "for all the men who sought your life are dead" (Ex 4, 19).

**2, 22:** With the agreement of the emperor Augustus, Archelaus received half of his father's kingdom, including Judea, after Herod's death. He had the title "ethnarch" (i.e., "ruler of a nation") and reigned from 4 B.C. to A.D. 6.

**2, 23: Nazareth . . . he shall be called a Nazorean:** the tradition of Jesus' residence in Nazareth was firmly established, and Matthew sees it as being in accordance with the foreannounced plan of God. The town of Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and no such prophecy can be found there. The vague expression "through the prophets" may be due to Matthew's seeing a connection between Nazareth and certain texts in which there are words with a remote similarity to the name of that town. Some such Old Testament texts are Is 11, 1 where the Davidic king of the future is called "a bud" (**nēser**) that shall blossom from the roots of Jesse, and Jgs 13, 5.7 where Samson, the future deliverer of Israel from the Philistines, is called one who shall be consecrated (a **nāzîr**) to God.

**3, 1–12:** Here Matthew takes up the order of Jesus' ministry found in the gospel of Mark, beginning with the preparatory preaching of John the Baptist.

**3, 1:** Unlike Luke, Matthew says nothing of the Baptist's origins and does not make him a relative of Jesus. **The desert of Judea:** the barren region west of the Dead Sea extending up the Jordan valley.

**3, 2: Repent:** the Baptist calls for a change of heart and conduct, a turning of one's life from rebellion to obedience towards God. **The kingdom of heaven is at hand:** "heaven" (literally, "the heavens") is a substitute for the name "God" that was avoided by devout Jews of the time out of reverence. The expression "the kingdom of heaven" occurs only in the gospel of Matthew. It means the effective rule of God over his people. In its fullness it includes not only human obedience to God's word, but the triumph of God over physical evils, supremely over death. In the expectation found in Jewish apocalyptic, the kingdom was to be ushered in by a judgment in which sinners would be condemned and perish, an expectation shared by the Baptist. This was modified in Christian understanding where the kingdom was seen as being established in stages, culminating with the parousia of Jesus.

**3, 3:** See the note on Jn 1, 23.

**3, 4:** The clothing of John recalls the austere dress of the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 1, 8). The expectation of the return of Elijah from heaven to prepare Israel for the final manifestation of God's kingdom was widespread, and according to Matthew this expectation was fulfilled in the Baptist's ministry (11, 14; 17, 11–13).

**3, 6:** Ritual washing was practiced by various groups in Palestine between 150 B.C. and A.D. 250. John's baptism may have been related to the purificatory washings of the Essenes at Qumran.

**3, 7: Pharisees and Sadducees:** the former were marked by devotion to the law, written and oral, and the scribes, experts in the law, belonged predominantly to this group. The Sadducees were the priestly aristocratic party, centered in Jerusalem. They accepted as scripture only the first five books of the Old Testament, followed only the letter of the law, rejected the oral legal traditions, and were opposed to teachings not found in the Pentateuch, such as the resurrection of the dead. Matthew links both of these groups together as enemies of Jesus (16, 1.6.11.12; cf Mk 8, 11–13.15). The threatening words that follow are addressed to them rather than to "the crowds" as in Lk 3, 7. **The coming wrath:** the judgment that will bring about the destruction of unrepentant sinners.

r Ex 4, 19. s 13, 54; Mk 1, 9; Lk 2, 39; 4, 34; Jn 19, 19. t Mk 1, 2–8; Lk 3, 2–17. u 4, 17; 10, 7. v Is 40, 3. w 11,7–8; 2 Kgs 1, 8; Zec 13, 4. x 12, 34; 23, 33; Is 59, 5. y Jn 8, 33.39; Rom 9, 7–8; Gal 4, 21–31.

children to Abraham from these stones. [10]Even
now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore
every tree that does not bear good fruit will be
cut down and thrown into the fire. [11] [z]*I am
baptizing you with water, for repentance, but
the one who is coming after me is mightier than
I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will
baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. [12] [a]*His
winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his
threshing floor and gather his wheat into his
barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquench-
able fire."

**The Baptism of Jesus** [13] [b]*Then Jesus came
from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized
by him. [14]*John tried to prevent him, saying, "I
need to be baptized by you, and yet you are
coming to me?" [15]Jesus said to him in reply,
"Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill
all righteousness." Then he allowed him.
[16] [c]*After Jesus was baptized, he came up from
the water and behold, the heavens were opened
[for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descend-
ing like a dove [and] coming upon him. [17] [d]*And
a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is
my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4–7
See RG
393–395

**The Temptation of Jesus** [1] [e]*Then Jesus was
led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by
the devil. [2] [f]*He fasted for forty days and forty
nights, and afterwards he was hungry. [3]The
tempter approached and said to him, "If you are
the Son of God, command that these stones
become loaves of bread." [4] [g]*He said in reply, "It
is written:

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes forth
from the mouth of God.' "

[5]*Then the devil took him to the holy city, and
made him stand on the parapet of the temple,
[6] [h]and said to him, "If you are the Son of God,
throw yourself down. For it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you'
and 'with their hands they will support you,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

[7] [i]Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You
shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.' "
[8]Then the devil took him up to a very high
mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of
the world in their magnificence, [9]*and he said to

3, 11: **Baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire:** the water baptism of John will be followed by an "immersion" of the repentant in the cleansing power of the Spirit of God, and of the unrepentant in the destroying power of God's judgment. However, some see **the holy Spirit** and **fire** as synonymous, and the effect of this "baptism" as either purification or destruction. See the note on Lk 3, 16.

3, 12: The discrimination between the good and the bad is compared to the procedure by which a farmer separates wheat and chaff. The **winnowing fan** was a forklike shovel with which the threshed wheat was thrown into the air. The kernels fell to the ground; the light chaff, blown off by the wind, was gathered and burned up.

3, 13–17: The baptism of Jesus is the occasion on which he is equipped for his ministry by the holy Spirit and proclaimed to be the Son of God.

3, 14–15: This dialogue, peculiar to Matthew, reveals John's awareness of Jesus' superiority to him as the mightier one who is coming and who will baptize with the holy Spirit (11). His reluctance to admit Jesus among the sinners whom he is baptizing with water is overcome by Jesus' response. **To fulfill all righteousness:** in this gospel to **fulfill** usually refers to fulfillment of prophecy, and **righteousness** to moral conduct in conformity with God's will. Here, however, as in 5, 6 and 6, 33, **righteousness** seems to mean the saving activity of God. **To fulfill all righteousness** is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race. This involves Jesus' identification with sinners; hence the propriety of his accepting John's baptism.

3, 16: **The Spirit . . . coming upon him:** cf Is 42, 1.

3, 17: **This is my beloved Son:** the Marcan address to Jesus (Mk 1, 11) is changed into a proclamation. The Father's voice speaks in terms that reflect Is 42, 1, Ps 2, 7, and Gn 22, 2.

4, 1–11: Jesus, proclaimed Son of God at his baptism, is subjected to a triple temptation. Obedience to the Father is a characteristic of true sonship, and Jesus is tempted by the devil to rebel against God, overtly in the third case, more subtly in the first two. Each refusal of Jesus is expressed in language taken from the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 8, 3; 6, 13.16). The testings of Jesus resemble those of Israel during the wandering in the desert and later in Canaan, and the victory of Jesus, the true Israel and the true Son, contrasts with the failure of the ancient and disobedient "son," the old Israel. In the temptation account Matthew is almost identical with Luke; both seem to have drawn upon the same source.

4, 2: **Forty days and forty nights:** the same time as that during which Moses remained on Sinai (Ex 24, 18). The time reference, however, seems primarily intended to recall the forty years during which Israel was tempted in the desert (Dt 8, 2).

4, 4: Cf Dt 8, 3. Jesus refuses to use his power for his own benefit and accepts whatever God wills.

4, 5–7: The devil supports his proposal by an appeal to the scriptures, Ps 91, 11a.12. Unlike Israel (Dt 6, 16), Jesus refuses to "test" God by demanding from him an extraordinary show of power.

4, 9: The worship of Satan to which Jesus is tempted is probably intended to recall Israel's worship of false gods. His refusal is expressed in the words of Dt 6, 13.

z Jn 1, 26–27.33; Acts 1, 5. a 13, 30; Is 41, 16; Jer 15, 7. b Mk 1, 9–11; Lk 3, 21–22; Jn 1, 31–34. c Is 42, 1. d 12, 18; 17, 5; Gn 22, 2; Ps 2, 7; Is 42, 1. e Mk 1, 12–13; Lk 4, 1–13. f Ex 24, 18; Dt 8, 2. g Dt 8, 3. h Ps 91, 11–12. i Dt 6, 16.

him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will
prostrate yourself and worship me." [10] *j*At this,
Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written:

'The Lord, your God, shall you worship
and him alone shall you serve.' "

[11]Then the devil left him and, behold, angels
came and ministered to him.

**The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

[12] *k**When he heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee. [13] *l*He left Nazareth and
went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the
region of Zebulun and Naphtali, [14]that what had
been said through Isaiah the prophet might be
fulfilled:

[15] *m*"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,
[16] *n*the people who sit in darkness
have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen."

Ch 4–7
See RG
393–395

[17] *o**From that time on, Jesus began to preach
and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at
hand."

**The Call of the First Disciples** [18] *p**As he was
walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two
brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his
brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they
were fishermen. [19]He said to them, "Come after
me, and I will make you fishers of men." [20]*At
once they left their nets and followed him. [21]He
walked along from there and saw two other
brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his
brother John. They were in a boat, with their
father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called
them, [22]and immediately they left their boat and
their father and followed him.

**Ministering to a Great Multitude** [23] *q**He
went around all of Galilee, teaching in their
synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the king-
dom, and curing every disease and illness among
the people. [24]*His fame spread to all of Syria,
and they brought to him all who were sick with
various diseases and racked with pain, those
who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics,
and he cured them. [25] *r**And great crowds from
Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and
from beyond the Jordan followed him.

## CHAPTER 5

**The Sermon on the Mount** [1]*When he saw
the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after
he had sat down, his disciples came to him. [2]He
began to teach them, saying:

**4, 12–17:** Isaiah's prophecy of the light rising upon Zebulun and Naphtali (Is 8, 23—9, 1) is fulfilled in Jesus' residence at Capernaum. The territory of these two tribes was the first to be devastated (733–32 B.C.) at the time of the Assyrian invasion. In order to accommodate Jesus' move to Capernaum to the prophecy, Matthew speaks of that town as being "in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali" (13), whereas it was only in the territory of the latter, and he understands the sea of the prophecy, the Mediterranean, as the sea of Galilee.

**4, 17:** At the beginning of his preaching Jesus takes up the words of John the Baptist (3, 2) although with a different meaning; in his ministry the kingdom of heaven has already begun to be present (12, 28).

**4, 18–22:** The call of the first disciples promises them a share in Jesus' work and entails abandonment of family and former way of life. Three of the four, Simon, James, and John, are distinguished among the disciples by a closer relation with Jesus (17, 1; 26, 37).

**4, 20:** Here and in v 22, as in Mark (1, 16–20) and unlike the Lucan account (5, 1–11), the disciples' response is motivated only by Jesus' invitation, an element that emphasizes his mysterious power.

**4, 23–25:** This summary of Jesus' ministry concludes the narrative part of the first book of Matthew's gospel (chs 3–4). The activities of his ministry are teaching, proclaiming the gospel, and healing; cf 9, 35.

**4, 23: Their synagogues:** Matthew usually designates the Jewish synagogues as **their synagogue(s)** (9, 35; 10, 17; 12, 9; 13, 54) or, in address to Jews, **your synagogues** (23, 34), an indication that he wrote after the break between church and synagogue.

**4, 24: Syria:** the Roman province to which Palestine belonged.

**4, 25: The Decapolis:** a federation of Greek cities in Palestine, originally ten in number, all but one east of the Jordan.

**5, 1—7, 29:** The first of the five discourses that are a central part of the structure of this gospel. It is the discourse section of the first book and contains sayings of Jesus derived from Q and from M. The Lucan parallel is in that gospel's "Sermon on the Plain" (Lk 6, 20–49), although some of the sayings in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" have their parallels in other parts of Luke. The careful topical arrangement of the sermon is probably not due only to Matthew's editing; he seems to have had a structured discourse of Jesus as one of his sources. The form of that source may have been as follows: four beatitudes (5, 3–4.6.11–12), a section on the new righteousness with illustrations (5, 17.20–24.27–28.33–48), a section on good works (6, 1–6.16–18), and three warnings (7, 1–2.15–21.24–27).

**5, 1–2:** Unlike Luke's sermon, this is addressed not only to the disciples but to the crowds (see 7, 28).

j 16, 23; Dt 6, 13. k Mk 1, 14–15; Lk 4, 14.31. l Jn 2, 12. m Is 8, 23 LXX; 9, 1. n Lk 1, 79. o 3, 2. p Mk 1, 16–20; Lk 5, 1–11. q 9, 35; Mk 1, 39; Lk 4, 15.44. r Mk 3, 7–8; Lk 6, 17–19.

### The Beatitudes

3 [s]*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 [t]*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
5 [u]*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
6 *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
7 [v]Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
8 [w]*Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
10 [x]*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the
sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 [y]Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. 12 [z]*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**The Similes of Salt and Light** 13 [a]*"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 [b]You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. 15 [c]Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. 16 [d]Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

**Teaching about the Law** 17*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 [e]Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law,

**5, 3–12:** The form **Blessed are (is)** occurs frequently in the Old Testament in the Wisdom literature and in the psalms. Although modified by Matthew, the first, second, fourth, and ninth beatitudes have Lucan parallels (5, 3 // Lk 6, 20; 5, 4 // Lk 6, 21b; 5, 6 // Lk 6, 21a; 5, 11–12 // Lk 5, 22–23). The others were added by the evangelist and are probably his own composition. A few manuscripts, Western and Alexandrian, and many versions and patristic quotations give the second and third beatitudes in inverted order.

**5, 3: The poor in spirit:** in the Old Testament, the **poor (ănāwîm)** are those who are without material possessions and whose confidence is in God (see Is 61, 1; Zep 2, 3; in the NAB the word is translated **lowly** and **humble,** respectively, in those texts). Matthew added **in spirit** in order either to indicate that only the devout poor were meant or to extend the beatitude to all, of whatever social rank, who recognized their complete dependence on God. The same phrase **poor in spirit** is found in the Qumran literature (1QM 14, 7).

**5, 4:** Cf Is 61, 2, "(The Lord has sent me) . . . to comfort all who mourn." **They will be comforted:** here the passive is a "theological passive" equivalent to the active "God will comfort them"; so also in vv 6 and 7.

**5, 5:** Cf Ps 37, 11, " . . . the meek shall possess the land." In the psalm "the land" means the land of Palestine; here it means the kingdom.

**5, 6: For righteousness:** a Matthean addition. For the meaning of **righteousness** here, see the note on 3, 14–15.

**5, 8:** Cf Ps 24, 4. Only one "whose heart is clean" can take part in the temple worship. To be with God in the temple is described in Ps 42, 3 as "beholding his face," but here the promise to the **clean of heart** is that they will **see God** not in the temple but in the coming kingdom.

**5, 10: Righteousness** here, as usually in Matthew, means conduct in conformity with God's will.

**5, 12: The prophets who were before you:** the disciples of Jesus stand in the line of the persecuted prophets of Israel. Some would see the expression as indicating also that Matthew considered all Christian disciples as prophets.

**5, 13–16:** By their deeds the disciples are to influence the world for good. They can no more escape notice than **a city set on a mountain.** If they fail in good works, they are as useless as flavorless salt or as a lamp whose light is concealed.

**5, 13:** The unusual supposition of salt losing its flavor has led some to suppose that the saying refers to the salt of the Dead Sea that, because chemically impure, could lose its taste.

**5, 17–20:** This statement of Jesus' position concerning the Mosaic law is composed of traditional material from Matthew's sermon documentation (see the note on 5, 1—7, 29), other Q material (cf 18 and Lk 16, 17), and the evangelist's own editorial touches. **To fulfill** the law appears at first to mean a literal enforcement of the law in the least detail: **until heaven and earth pass away** nothing of the law **will pass** (18). Yet the "passing away" of heaven and earth is not necessarily the end of the world understood, as in much apocalyptic literature, as the dissolution of the existing universe. The "turning of the ages" comes with the apocalyptic event of Jesus' death and resurrection, and those to whom this gospel is addressed are living in the new and final age, prophesied by Isaiah as the time of "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65, 17; 66, 22). Meanwhile, during Jesus' ministry when the kingdom is already breaking in, his mission remains within the framework of the law, though with significant anticipation of the age to come, as the following antitheses (vv 21–48) show.

s Lk 6, 20–23. t Is 61, 2–3; Rv 21, 4. u Gn 13, 15; Ps 37, 11. v 18, 33; Jas 2, 13. w Pss 24, 4–5; 73, 1. x 1 Pt 2, 20; 3, 14; 4, 14. y 10, 22; Acts 5, 41. z 2 Chr 36, 16; Heb 11, 32–38; Jas 5, 10. a Mk 9, 50; Lk 14, 34–35. b Jn 8, 12. c Mk 4, 21; Lk 8, 16; 11, 33. d Jn 3, 21. e Lk 16, 17.

until all things have taken place. [19]*Therefore,
whoever breaks one of the least of these com-
mandments and teaches others to do so will be
called least in the kingdom of heaven. But
whoever obeys and teaches these command-
ments will be called greatest in the kingdom of
heaven. [20]I tell you, unless your righteousness
surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you
will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

**Teaching about Anger** [21]*f**"You have heard
that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not
kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judg-
ment.' [22]*g**But I say to you, whoever is angry
with his brother will be liable to judgment, and
whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be
answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says,
'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.
[23]*h*Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother has anything
against you, [24]leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother, and
then come and offer your gift. [25]*i*Settle with
your opponent quickly while on the way to court
with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand
you over to the judge, and the judge will hand
you over to the guard, and you will be thrown
into prison. [26]Amen, I say to you, you will not be
released until you have paid the last penny.

**Teaching about Adultery** [27]*j**"You have
heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit
adultery.' [28]But I say to you, everyone who looks
at a woman with lust has already committed
adultery with her in his heart. [29]*k**If your right
eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it
away. It is better for you to lose one of your
members than to have your whole body thrown
into Gehenna. [30]And if your right hand causes
you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is
better for you to lose one of your members than
to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

**Teaching about Divorce** [31]*l**"It was also said,
'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill
of divorce.' [32]*m*But I say to you, whoever
divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlaw-
ful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever
marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

**Teaching about Oaths** [33]*n**"Again you have
heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Do not

**5, 19:** Probably **these commandments** means those of the Mosaic law. But this is an interim ethic "until heaven and earth pass away."

**5, 21–48:** Six examples of the conduct demanded of the Christian disciple. Each deals with a commandment of the law, introduced by **You have heard that it was said to your ancestors** or an equivalent formula, followed by Jesus' teaching in respect to that commandment, **But I say to you;** thus their designation as "antitheses." Three of them accept the Mosaic law but extend or deepen it (21–22; 27–28; 43–44); three reject it as a standard of conduct for the disciples (31–32; 33–37; 38–39).

**5, 21:** Cf Ex 20, 13; Dt 5, 17. The second part of the verse is not an exact quotation from the Old Testament, but cf Ex 21, 12.

**5, 22:** Anger is the motive behind murder, as the insulting epithets are steps that may lead to it. They, as well as the deed, are all forbidden. **Raqa:** an Aramaic word **rēqā'** or **rēqâ** probably meaning "imbecile," "blockhead," a term of abuse. The ascending order of punishment, **judgment** (by a local council?), trial before **the Sanhedrin,** condemnation to **Gehenna,** points to a higher degree of seriousness in each of the offenses. **Sanhedrin:** the highest judicial body of Judaism. **Gehenna:** in Hebrew **gê-hinnōm,** "Valley of Hinnom," or **gê ben-hinnōm,** "Valley of the son of Hinnom," southwest of Jerusalem, the center of an idolatrous cult during the monarchy in which children were offered in sacrifice (see 2 Kgs 23, 10; Jer 7, 31). In Jos 18, 16 (Septuagint, Codex Vaticanus) the Hebrew is transliterated into Greek as **gaienna,** which appears in the New Testament as **geenna.** The concept of punishment of sinners by fire either after death or after the final judgment is found in Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g., Enoch 90, 26) but the name **geenna** is first given to the place of punishment in the New Testament.

**5, 22–26:** Reconciliation with an offended brother is urged in the admonition of vv 23–24 and the parable of vv 25–26 (// Lk 12, 58–59). The severity of the judge in the parable is a warning of the fate of unrepentant sinners in the coming judgment by God.

**5, 27:** See Ex 20, 14; Dt 5, 18.

**5, 29–30:** No sacrifice is too great to avoid total destruction in **Gehenna.**

**5, 31–32:** See Dt 24, 1–5. The Old Testament commandment that a bill of divorce be given to the woman assumes the legitimacy of divorce itself. It is this that Jesus denies. (**Unless the marriage is unlawful**): this "exceptive clause," as it is often called, occurs also in 19, 9, where the Greek is slightly different. There are other sayings of Jesus about divorce that prohibit it absolutely (see Mk 10, 11–12; Lk 16, 18; cf 1 Cor 7, 10.11b), and most scholars agree that they represent the stand of Jesus. Matthew's "exceptive clauses" are understood by some as a modification of the absolute prohibition. It seems, however, that the unlawfulness that Matthew gives as a reason why a marriage must be broken refers to a situation peculiar to his community: the violation of Mosaic law forbidding marriage between persons of certain blood and/or legal relationship (Lv 18, 6–18). Marriages of that sort were regarded as incest (**porneia**), but some rabbis allowed Gentile converts to Judaism who had contracted such marriages to remain in them. Matthew's "exceptive clause" is against such permissiveness for Gentile converts to Christianity; cf the similar prohibition of **porneia** in Acts 15, 20.29. In this interpretation, the clause constitutes no exception to the absolute prohibition of divorce when the marriage is lawful.

**5, 33:** This is not an exact quotation of any Old Testament text, but see Ex 20, 7, Dt 5, 11, and Lv 19, 12. The purpose of an oath was to guarantee truthfulness by one's calling on God as witness.

f Ex 20, 13; Dt 5, 17. g Jas 1, 19–20. h Mk 11, 25. i 18, 34–35; Lk 12, 58–59. j Ex 20, 14; Dt 5, 18. k 18, 8–9; Mk 9, 43–47. l 19, 3–9; Dt 24, 1. m Lk 16, 18; 1 Cor 7, 10–11. n Lv 19, 12; Nm 30, 3.

take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all
that you vow.' [34] [o]*But I say to you, do not
swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's
throne; [35]nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great
King. [36]Do not swear by your head, for you
cannot make a single hair white or black. [37]*Let
your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from the evil one.

**Teaching about Retaliation** [38] [p]*"You have
heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a
tooth for a tooth.' [39] [q]But I say to you, offer no
resistance to one who is evil. When someone
strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other
one to him as well. [40]If anyone wants to go to
law with you over your tunic, hand him your
cloak as well. [41] [r]*Should anyone press you into
service for one mile, go with him for two miles.
[42] [s]Give to the one who asks of you, and do not
turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

**Love of Enemies** [43] [t u]*"You have heard that it
was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate
your enemy.' [44]But I say to you, love your
enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,
[45]that you may be children of your heavenly
Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and
the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and
the unjust. [46]*For if you love those who love
you, what recompense will you have? Do not
the tax collectors do the same? [47]*And if you
greet your brothers only, what is unusual about
that? Do not the pagans do the same? [48] [v]*So be
perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 4–7
See RG
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**Teaching about Almsgiving** [1] [w]*"[But] take
care not to perform righteous deeds in order that
people may see them; otherwise, you will have
no recompense from your heavenly Father.
[2] [x]*When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet
before you, as the hypocrites do in the syna-
gogues and in the streets to win the praise of
others. Amen, I say to you, they have received
their reward. [3]But when you give alms, do not
let your left hand know what your right is doing,
[4]so that your almsgiving may be secret. And
your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

**Teaching about Prayer** [5]"When you pray, do
not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and
pray in the synagogues and on street corners so
that others may see them. Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward. [6]But when you
pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and
pray to your Father in secret. And your Father

**5, 34–36:** The use of these oath formularies that avoid the divine name is in fact equivalent to swearing by it, for all the things sworn by are related to God.

**5, 37: Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No':** literally, "let your speech be 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no.' " Some have understood this as a milder form of oath, permitted by Jesus. In view of v 34, "Do not swear at all," that is unlikely. **From the evil one:** i.e., from the devil. Oath-taking presupposes a sinful weakness of the human race, namely, the tendency to lie. Jesus demands of his disciples a truthfulness that makes oaths unnecessary.

**5, 38–42:** See Lv 24, 20. The Old Testament commandment was meant to moderate vengeance; the punishment should not exceed the injury done. Jesus forbids even this proportionate retaliation. Of the five examples that follow, only the first deals directly with retaliation for evil; the others speak of liberality.

**5, 41:** Roman garrisons in Palestine had the right to requisition the property and services of the native population.

**5, 43–48:** See Lv 19, 18. There is no Old Testament commandment demanding hatred of one's enemy, but the "neighbor" of the love commandment was understood as one's fellow countryman. Both in the Old Testament (Ps 139, 19–22) and at Qumran (1QS 9, 21) hatred of evil persons is assumed to be right. Jesus extends the love commandment to the enemy and the persecutor. His disciples, as children of God, must imitate the example of their Father, who grants his gifts of sun and rain to both the good and the bad.

**5, 46: Tax collectors:** Jews who were engaged in the collection of indirect taxes such as tolls and customs. See the note on Mk 2, 14.

**5, 47:** Jesus' disciples must not be content with merely usual standards of conduct; see v 20 where the verb "surpass" (Greek **perisseuō**) is cognate with the **unusual** (**perisson**) of this verse.

**5, 48: Perfect:** in the gospels this word occurs only in Matthew, here and in 19, 21. The Lucan parallel (6, 36) demands that the disciples be **merciful.**

**6, 1–18:** The sermon continues with a warning against doing good in order to be seen and gives three examples, almsgiving (2–4), prayer (5, 15), and fasting (16–18). In each, the conduct of the **hypocrites** (2) is contrasted with that demanded of the disciples. The sayings about **reward** found here and elsewhere (5, 12.46; 10, 41–42) show that this is a genuine element of Christian moral exhortation. Possibly to underline the difference between the Christian idea of **reward** and that of the **hypocrites,** the evangelist uses two different Greek verbs to express the rewarding of the disciples and that of the **hypocrites;** in the latter case it is the verb **apechō,** a commercial term for giving a receipt for what has been paid in full (2.5.16).

**6, 2: The hypocrites:** the scribes and Pharisees, see 23, 13.15. 23.25.27.29. The designation reflects an attitude resulting not only from the controversies at the time of Jesus' ministry but from the opposition between Pharisaic Judaism and the church of Matthew. **They have received their reward:** they desire praise and have received what they were looking for.

o Ps 48, 3; Sir 23, 9; Is 66, 1; Jas 5, 12. p Ex 21, 24; Lv 24, 19–20. q Lk 6, 29–30. r Lam 3, 30. s Dt 15, 7–8. t Lk 6, 27.32–36. u Lv 19, 18. v Lv 11, 44; 19, 2; Dt 18, 13; Jas 1, 4; 1 Pt 1, 16; 1 Jn 3, 3. w 23, 5. x Jn 12, 43.

who sees in secret will repay you. [7]*In praying,
do not babble like the pagans, who think that
they will be heard because of their many words.
[8]Do not be like them. Your Father knows what
you need before you ask him.

**The Lord's Prayer** [9]*y*"This is how you are to
pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
10 *z*your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
11 *a*Give us today our daily bread;
12 *b*and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
13 *c*and do not subject us to the final test,
but deliver us from the evil one.

[14]*d*If you forgive others their transgressions,
your heavenly Father will forgive you. [15]*e*But if
you do not forgive others, neither will your
Father forgive your transgressions.

**Teaching about Fasting** [16]*"When you fast,
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They
neglect their appearance, so that they may
appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to
you, they have received their reward. [17]But
when you fast, anoint your head and wash your
face, [18]so that you may not appear to others to be
fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And
your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

**Treasure in Heaven** [19]*f*"Do not store up for
yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and
decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal.
[20]*g*But store up treasures in heaven, where
neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves
break in and steal. [21]For where your treasure is,
there also will your heart be.

**The Light of the Body** [22]*h*"The lamp of the
body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole
body will be filled with light; [23]but if your eye is
bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if
the light in you is darkness, how great will the
darkness be.

**God and Money** [24]*i*"No one can serve two
masters. He will either hate one and love the
other, or be devoted to one and despise the
other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

**6, 7–15:** Matthew inserts into his basic traditional material an expansion of the material on prayer that includes the model prayer, the "Our Father." That prayer is found in Lk 11, 2–4 in a different context and in a different form.

**6, 7:** The example of what Christian prayer should be like contrasts it now not with the prayer of the hypocrites but with that of the **pagans.** Their babbling probably means their reciting a long list of divine names, hoping that one of them will force a response from the deity.

**6, 9–13:** Matthew's form of the "Our Father" follows the liturgical tradition of his church. Luke's less developed form also represents the liturgical tradition known to him, but it is probably closer than Matthew's to the original words of Jesus.

**6, 9: Our Father in heaven:** this invocation is found in many rabbinic prayers of the post-New Testament period. **Hallowed be your name:** though the "hallowing" of the divine name could be understood as reverence done to God by human praise and by obedience to his will, this is more probably a petition that God hallow his own name, i.e., that he manifest his glory by an act of power (cf Ez 36, 23), in this case, by the establishment of his kingdom in its fullness.

**6, 10: Your kingdom come:** this petition sets the tone of the prayer, and inclines the balance toward divine rather than human action in the petitions that immediately precede and follow it. **Your will be done, on earth as in heaven:** a petition that the divine purpose to establish the kingdom, a purpose present now **in heaven,** be executed **on earth.**

**6, 11: Give us today our daily bread:** the rare Greek word **epiousios,** here **daily,** occurs in the New Testament only here and in Lk 11, 3. A single occurrence of the word outside of these texts and of literature dependent on them has been claimed, but the claim is highly doubtful. The word may mean **daily** or "future" (other meanings have also been proposed). The latter would conform better to the eschatological tone of the whole prayer. So understood, the petition would be for a speedy coming of the kingdom (**today**), which is often portrayed in both the Old Testament and the New under the image of a feast (Is 25, 6; Mt 8, 11; 22, 1–10; Lk 13, 29; 14, 15–24).

**6, 12: Forgive us our debts:** the word **debts** is used metaphorically of sins, "debts" owed to God (see Lk 11, 4). The request is probably for forgiveness at the final judgment.

**6, 13:** Jewish apocalyptic writings speak of a period of severe trial before the end of the age, sometimes called the "messianic woes." This petition asks that the disciples be spared that **final test.**

**6, 14–15:** These verses reflect a set pattern called "Principles of Holy Law." Human action now will be met by a corresponding action of God at the final judgment.

**6, 16:** The only fast prescribed in the Mosaic law was that of the Day of Atonement (Lv 16, 31), but the practice of regular fasting was common in later Judaism; cf **Didache** 9, 1.

**6, 19–34:** The remaining material of this chapter is taken almost entirely from Q. It deals principally with worldly possessions, and the controlling thought is summed up in v 24: the disciple can serve only one master and must choose between God and wealth (**mammon**). See further the note on Lk 16, 9.

**6, 22–23:** In this context the parable probably points to the need for the disciple to be enlightened by Jesus' teaching on the transitory nature of earthly riches.

**6, 24: Mammon:** an Aramaic word meaning wealth or property.

y Lk 11, 2–4. z 26, 42. a Prv 30, 8–9. b 18, 21–22; Sir 28, 2. c Jn 17, 15; 2 Thes 3, 3. d 18, 35; Sir 28, 1–5; Mk 11, 25. e Jas 2, 13. f Jas 5, 2–3. g Lk 12, 33–34. h Lk 11, 34–36. i Lk 16, 13.

**Dependence on God** 25 *j**"Therefore I tell
you, do not worry about your life, what you will
eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will
wear. Is not life more than food and the body
more than clothing? 26 *k*Look at the birds in the
sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather
nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father
feeds them. Are not you more important than
they? 27*Can any of you by worrying add a
single moment to your life-span? 28Why are you
anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the
wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin.
29But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his
splendor was clothed like one of them. 30*If God
so clothes the grass of the field, which grows
today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow,
will he not much more provide for you, O you of
little faith? 31So do not worry and say, 'What are
we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What
are we to wear?' 32All these things the pagans
seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need
them all. 33*But seek first the kingdom [of God]
and his righteousness, and all these things will
be given you besides. 34Do not worry about
tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.
Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

## CHAPTER 7

**Judging Others** 1 *l m**"Stop judging, that you
may not be judged. 2 *n*For as you judge, so will
you be judged, and the measure with which you
measure will be measured out to you. 3Why do
you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but
do not perceive the wooden beam in your own
eye? 4How can you say to your brother, 'Let me
remove that splinter from your eye,' while the
wooden beam is in your eye? 5*You hypocrite,
remove the wooden beam from your eye first;
then you will see clearly to remove the splinter
from your brother's eye.

**Pearls before Swine** 6 *o**"Do not give what is
holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine,
lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and
tear you to pieces.

**The Answer to Prayers** 7 *p q*"Ask and it will be
given to you; seek and you will find; knock and
the door will be opened to you. 8 *r*For everyone
who asks, receives; and the one who seeks,
finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will
be opened. 9*Which one of you would hand his
son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, 10or
a snake when he asks for a fish? 11 *s*If you then,
who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to
your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask
him.

**The Golden Rule** 12 *t**"Do to others whatever
you would have them do to you. This is the law
and the prophets.

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6, 25–34: Jesus does not deny the reality of human needs (32), but forbids making them the object of anxious care and, in effect, becoming their slave.

6, 27: **Life-span:** the Greek word can also mean "stature." If it is taken in that sense, the word here translated **moment** (literally, "cubit") must be translated literally as a unit not of time but of spatial measure. The cubit is about eighteen inches.

6, 30: **Of little faith:** except for the parallel in Lk 12, 28, the word translated **of little faith** is found in the New Testament only in Matthew. It is used by him of those who are disciples of Jesus but whose faith in him is not as deep as it should be (see Mt 8, 26; 14, 31; 16, 8 and the cognate noun in 17, 20).

6, 33: **Righteousness:** see the note on 3, 14–15.

7, 1–12: In v 1 Matthew returns to the basic traditional material of the sermon (Lk 6, 37–38.41–42). The governing thought is the correspondence between conduct toward one's fellows and God's conduct toward the one so acting.

7, 1: This is not a prohibition against recognizing the faults of others, which would be hardly compatible with vv 5 and 6, but against passing judgment in a spirit of arrogance, forgetful of one's own faults.

7, 5: **Hypocrite:** the designation previously given to the scribes and Pharisees is here given to the Christian disciple who is concerned with the faults of another and ignores his own more serious offenses.

7, 6: **Dogs** and **swine** were Jewish terms of contempt for Gentiles. This saying may originally have derived from a Jewish Christian community opposed to preaching the gospel (**what is holy, pearls**) to Gentiles. In the light of 28, 19 that can hardly be Matthew's meaning. He may have taken the saying as applying to a Christian dealing with an obstinately impenitent fellow Christian (18, 17).

7, 9–10: There is a resemblance between a stone and a round loaf of bread and between a serpent and the scaleless fish called **barbut.**

7, 12: See Lk 6, 31. This saying, known since the eighteenth century as the "Golden Rule," is found in both positive and negative form in pagan and Jewish sources, both earlier and later than the gospel. **This is the law and the prophets** is an addition probably due to the evangelist.

j Lk 12, 22–31. k Pss 145, 15–16; 147, 9. l Lk 6, 37–38.41–42. m Rom 2, 1–2; 1 Cor 4, 5. n Wis 12, 22; Mk 4, 24. o Prv 23, 9. p Mk 11, 24; Lk 11, 9–13. q 18, 19. r Lk 18, 1–8; Jn 14, 13. s 1 Jn 5, 14–15. t Lk 6, 31.

**The Narrow Gate** 13 u*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. 14How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.

**False Prophets** 15 v*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. 16 wBy their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. 19 xEvery tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 20So by their fruits you will know them.

**The True Disciple** 21 y*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 z aMany will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' 23 b*Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'

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**The Two Foundations** 24 c*"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 dThe rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. 26And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. 27The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

28*When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 e*for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

## III: Ministry and Mission in Galilee

### CHAPTER 8

**The Cleansing of a Leper** 1 f*When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. 2*And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." 3He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be

**7, 13–28:** The final section of the discourse is composed of a series of antitheses, contrasting two kinds of life within the Christian community, that of those who obey the words of Jesus and that of those who do not. Most of the sayings are from Q and are found also in Luke.

**7, 13–14:** The metaphor of the "two ways" was common in pagan philosophy and in the Old Testament. In Christian literature it is found also in the **Didache** (1–6) and the **Epistle of Barnabas** (18–20).

**7, 15–20:** Christian disciples who claimed to speak in the name of God are called **prophets** (15) in 10, 41 and in 23, 34. They were presumably an important group within the church of Matthew. As in the case of the Old Testament prophets, there were both true and false ones, and for Matthew the difference could be recognized by the quality of their deeds, the **fruits** (16). The mention of **fruits** leads to the comparison with trees, some producing good fruit, others bad.

**7, 21–23:** The attack on the false prophets is continued, but is broadened to include those disciples who perform works of healing and exorcism in the name of Jesus (**Lord**) but live evil lives. Entrance into the kingdom is only for those who do the will of the Father. On the day of judgment (**on that day**) the morally corrupt prophets and miracle workers will be rejected by Jesus.

**7, 23: I never knew you:** cf 10, 33. **Depart from me, you evildoers:** cf Ps 6, 9.

**7, 24–27:** The conclusion of the discourse (cf Lk 6, 47–49). Here the relation is not between saying and doing as in vv 15–23 but between hearing and doing, and the words of Jesus are applied to every Christian (**everyone who listens**).

**7, 28–29: When Jesus finished these words:** this or a similar formula is used by Matthew to conclude each of the five great discourses of Jesus (cf 11, 1; 13, 53; 19, 1; 26, 1).

**7, 29: Not as their scribes:** scribal instruction was a faithful handing down of the traditions of earlier teachers; Jesus' teaching is based on his own authority. **Their scribes:** for the implications of **their**, see the note on 4, 23.

**8, 1—9, 38:** This narrative section of the second book of the gospel is composed of nine miracle stories, most of which are found in Mark, although Matthew does not follow the Marcan order and abbreviates the stories radically. The stories are arranged in three groups of three, each group followed by a section composed principally of sayings of Jesus about discipleship. Verse 9, 35 is an almost verbatim repetition of 4, 23. Each speaks of Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing. The teaching and preaching form the content of chs 5–7; the healing, that of chs 8–9. Some scholars speak of a portrayal of Jesus as "Messiah of the Word" in 5–7 and "Messiah of the Deed" in 8–9. That is accurate so far as it goes, but there is also a strong emphasis on discipleship in 8–9; these chapters have not only christological but ecclesiological import.

**8, 2: A leper:** see the note on Mk 1, 40.

u Lk 13, 24. v 2 Pt 2, 1. w 12, 33; Lk 6, 43–44. x 3, 10. y Is 29, 13; Lk 6, 46. z Lk 13, 26–27. a 25, 11–12. b Pss 5, 5; 6, 9. c Lk 6, 47–49. d Prv 10, 25. e Mk 1, 22; Lk 4, 32. f Mk 1, 40–44; Lk 5, 12–14.

made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. [4] [g]*Then Jesus said to him, "See that you
tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest,
and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will
be proof for them."

**The Healing of a Centurion's Servant**

[5] [h]*When he entered Capernaum, a centurion
approached him and appealed to him, [6]saying,
"Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed,
suffering dreadfully." [7]He said to him, "I will
come and cure him." [8]*The centurion said in
reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter
under my roof; only say the word and my
servant will be healed. [9]For I too am a person
subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me.
And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to
another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my
slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." [10]*When Jesus
heard this, he was amazed and said to those
following him, "Amen, I say to you, in no one in
Israel have I found such faith. [11] [i]*I say to you,
many will come from the east and the west, and
will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at
the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, [12]but the
children of the kingdom will be driven out into
the outer darkness, where there will be wailing
and grinding of teeth." [13]And Jesus said to the
centurion, "You may go; as you have believed,
let it be done for you." And at that very hour
[his] servant was healed.

**The Cure of Peter's Mother-in-Law**

[14] [j]*Jesus entered the house of Peter, and saw his
mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. [15] [k]He
touched her hand, the fever left her, and she
rose and waited on him.

**Other Healings** [16]*When it was evening, they
brought him many who were possessed by
demons, and he drove out the spirits by a word
and cured all the sick, [17] [l]*to fulfill what had
been said by Isaiah the prophet:

"He took away our infirmities
and bore our diseases."

**The Would-be Followers of Jesus** [18] [m]*When
Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to
cross to the other side. [19] [n]*A scribe approached
and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you
wherever you go." [20]*Jesus answered him,
"Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have
nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest
his head." [21]Another of [his] disciples said to
him, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father."

**8, 4:** Cf Lv 14, 2–9. **That will be proof for them:** the Greek can also mean "that will be proof against them." It is not clear whether **them** refers to the priests or the people.

**8, 5–13:** This story comes from Q (see Lk 7, 1–10) and is also reflected in Jn 4, 46–54. The similarity between the Q story and the Johannine is due to a common oral tradition, not to a common literary source. As in the later story of the daughter of the Canaanite woman (15, 21–28) Jesus here breaks with his usual procedure of ministering only to Israelites and anticipates the mission to the Gentiles.

**8, 5: A centurion:** a military officer commanding a hundred men. He was probably in the service of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee; see the note on 14, 1.

**8, 8–9:** Acquainted by his position with the force of a command, the centurion expresses faith in the power of Jesus' mere word.

**8, 10: In no one in Israel:** there is good textual attestation (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus) for a reading identical with that of Lk 7, 9, "not even in Israel." But that seems to be due to a harmonization of Matthew with Luke.

**8, 11–12:** Matthew inserts into the story a Q saying (see Lk 13, 28–29) about the entrance of Gentiles into the kingdom and the exclusion of those Israelites who, though descended from the patriarchs and members of the chosen nation (**the children of the kingdom**), refused to believe in Jesus. **There will be wailing and grinding of teeth:** the first occurrence of a phrase used frequently in this gospel to describe final condemnation (13, 42.50; 22, 13; 24, 51; 25, 30). It is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in Lk 13, 28.

**8, 14–15:** Cf Mk 1, 29–31. Unlike Mark, Matthew has no implied request by others for the woman's cure. Jesus acts on his own initiative, and the cured woman rises and waits not on "them" (Mk 1, 31) but on **him.**

**8, 16: By a word:** a Matthean addition to Mk 1, 34; cf 8, 8.

**8, 17:** This fulfillment citation from Is 53, 4 follows the MT, not the LXX. The prophet speaks of the Servant of the Lord who suffers vicariously for the sins ("infirmities") of others; Matthew takes the **infirmities** as physical afflictions.

**8, 18–22:** This passage between the first and second series of miracles about following Jesus is taken from Q (see Lk 9, 57–62). The third of the three sayings found in the source is absent from Matthew.

**8, 18: The other side:** i.e., of the Sea of Galilee.

**8, 19: Teacher:** for Matthew, this designation of Jesus is true, for he has Jesus using it of himself (10, 24.25; 23, 8; 26, 18), yet when it is used of him by others they are either his opponents (9, 11; 12, 38; 17, 24; 22, 16.24.36) or, as here and in 19, 16, well-disposed persons who cannot see more deeply. Thus it reveals an inadequate recognition of who Jesus is.

**8, 20: Son of Man:** see the note on Mk 8, 31. This is the first occurrence in Mt of a term that appears in the New Testament only in sayings of Jesus, except for Acts 7, 56 and possibly 9, 6 (// Mk 2, 10; Lk 5, 24). In Mt it refers to Jesus in his ministry (seven times, as here), in his passion and resurrection (nine times, e.g., 17, 22), and in his glorious coming at the end of the age (thirteen times, e.g., 24, 30).

g Lv 14, 2–32; Lk 17, 14. h Lk 7, 1–10; Jn 4, 46–53. i 13, 42.50; 22, 13; 24, 51; 25, 30; Lk 13, 28–29. j Mk 1, 29–34; Lk 4, 38–41. k 9, 25. l Is 53, 4. m Mk 4, 35. n Lk 9, 57–60.

22 *But Jesus answered him, "Follow me, and let
the dead bury their dead."

**The Calming of the Storm at Sea** 23 o*He got
into a boat and his disciples followed him.
24 *Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea,
so that the boat was being swamped by waves;
but he was asleep. 25 p*They came and woke
him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"
26 *He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O
you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the
winds and the sea, and there was great calm.
27 The men were amazed and said, "What sort of
man is this, whom even the winds and the sea
obey?"

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**The Healing of the Gadarene Demoniacs**
28 q*When he came to the other side, to the
territory of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who
were coming from the tombs met him. They
were so savage that no one could travel by that
road. 29 *They cried out, "What have you to do
with us, Son of God? Have you come here to
torment us before the appointed time?" 30 *Some
distance away a herd of many swine was feed-
ing. 31 rThe demons pleaded with him, "If you
drive us out, send us into the herd of swine."
32 And he said to them, "Go then!" They came
out and entered the swine, and the whole herd
rushed down the steep bank into the sea where
they drowned. 33 The swineherds ran away, and
when they came to the town they reported
everything, including what had happened to the
demoniacs. 34 Thereupon the whole town came
out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they
begged him to leave their district.

## CHAPTER 9

**The Healing of a Paralytic** 1 s*He entered a
boat, made the crossing, and came into his own
town. 2 tAnd there people brought to him a
paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw
their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage,
child, your sins are forgiven." 3 *At that, some of
the scribes said to themselves, "This man is
blaspheming." 4 Jesus knew what they were
thinking, and said, "Why do you harbor evil
thoughts? 5 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are
forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 6 u*But that
you may know that the Son of Man has authority
on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the
paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go
home." 7 He rose and went home. 8 *When the
crowds saw this they were struck with awe and
glorified God who had given such authority to
human beings.

**8, 22: Let the dead bury their dead:** the demand of Jesus overrides what both the Jewish and the Hellenistic world regarded as a filial obligation of the highest importance. See the note on Lk 9, 60.

**8, 23: His disciples followed him:** the first miracle in the second group (8, 23—9, 8) is introduced by a verse that links it with the preceding sayings by the catchword "follow." In Mk the initiative in entering the boat is taken by the disciples (Mk 4, 35–41); here, Jesus enters first and the disciples follow.

**8, 24: Storm:** literally, "earthquake," a word commonly used in apocalyptic literature for the shaking of the old world when God brings in his kingdom. All the synoptics use it in depicting the events preceding the parousia of the Son of Man (24, 7; Mk 13, 8; Lk 21, 11). Matthew has introduced it here and in his account of the death and resurrection of Jesus (27, 51–54; 28, 2).

**8, 25:** The reverent plea of the disciples contrasts sharply with their reproach of Jesus in Mk 4, 38.

**8, 26: You of little faith:** see the note on 6, 30. **Great calm:** Jesus' calming the sea may be meant to recall the Old Testament theme of God's control over the chaotic waters (Pss 65, 8; 89, 10; 93, 3–4; 107, 29).

**8, 28: Gadarenes:** this is the reading of Codex Vaticanus, supported by other important textual witnesses. The original reading of Codex Sinaiticus was Gazarenes, later changed to Gergesenes, and a few versions have Gerasenes. Each of these readings points to a different territory connected, respectively, with the cities Gadara, Gergesa, and Gerasa (modern Jerash). There is the same confusion of readings in the parallel texts, Mk 5, 1 and Lk 8, 26; there the best reading seems to be "Gerasenes," whereas "Gadarenes" is probably the original reading in Mt. The town of Gadara was about five miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, and Josephus (**Life** 9 §42) refers to it as possessing territory that lay on that sea. **Two demoniacs:** Mark (5, 1–20) has one.

**8, 29: What have you to do with us?:** see the note on Jn 2, 4. **Before the appointed time:** the notion that evil spirits were allowed by God to afflict human beings until the time of the final judgment is found in Enoch 16, 1 and Jubilees 10, 7–10.

**8, 30:** The tending of pigs, animals considered unclean by Mosaic law (Lv 11, 6–7), indicates that the population was Gentile.

**9, 1: His own town:** Capernaum; see 4, 13.

**9, 3: Scribes:** see the note on Mk 2, 6. Matthew omits the reason given in the Marcan story for the charge of blasphemy: "Who but God alone can forgive sins?" (Mk 2, 7).

**9, 6:** It is not clear whether "But that you may know . . . to forgive sins" is intended to be a continuation of the words of Jesus or a parenthetical comment of the evangelist to those who would hear or read this gospel. In any case, Matthew here follows the Marcan text.

**9, 8: Who had given such authority to human beings:** a significant difference from Mk 2, 12 ("They . . . glorified God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this' "). Matthew's extension to **human beings** of the authority to forgive sins points to the belief that such authority was being claimed by Matthew's church.

o Mk 4, 35–40; Lk 8, 22–25. p Ps 107, 28–29. q Mk 5, 1–17; Lk 8, 26–37. r Lk 4, 34.41. s Mk 2, 3–12; Lk 5, 18–26. t Lk 7, 48. u Jn 5, 27.

**The Call of Matthew** 9 [v]*As Jesus passed on
from there, he saw a man named Matthew
sitting at the customs post. He said to him,
"Follow me." And he got up and followed him.
10 [w]*While he was at table in his house, many
tax collectors and sinners came and sat with
Jesus and his disciples. 11*The Pharisees saw this
and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher
eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12*He
heard this and said, "Those who are well do not
need a physician, but the sick do. 13 [x]*Go and
learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy,
not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous
but sinners."

**The Question about Fasting** 14 [y]Then the disciples of John approached him and said, "Why
do we and the Pharisees fast [much], but your
disciples do not fast?" 15*Jesus answered them,
"Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the
bridegroom is with them? The days will come
when the bridegroom is taken away from them,
and then they will fast. 16*No one patches an old
cloak with a piece of unshrunken cloth, for its
fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear
gets worse. 17People do not put new wine into
old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the
wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather,
they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and
both are preserved."

**The Official's Daughter and the Woman with a Hemorrhage** 18 [z]*While he was saying
these things to them, an official came forward,
knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter
has just died. But come, lay your hand on her,
and she will live." 19Jesus rose and followed
him, and so did his disciples. 20*A woman
suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up
behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak.
21 [a]She said to herself, "If only I can touch his
cloak, I shall be cured." 22Jesus turned around
and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your
faith has saved you." And from that hour the
woman was cured.

23When Jesus arrived at the official's house
and saw the flute players and the crowd who
were making a commotion, 24*he said, "Go
away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." And
they ridiculed him. 25When the crowd was put
out, he came and took her by the hand, and the
little girl arose. 26And news of this spread
throughout all that land.

**9, 9–17:** In this section the order is the same as that of Mk 2, 13–22.

**9, 9: A man named Matthew:** Mark names this tax collector Levi (2, 14). No such name appears in the four lists of the twelve who were the closest companions of Jesus (10, 2–4; Mk 3, 16–19; Lk 6, 14–16; Acts 1, 13 [eleven, because of the defection of Judas Iscariot]), whereas all four list a Matthew, designated in 10, 3 as "the tax collector." The evangelist may have changed the "Levi" of his source to **Matthew** so that this man, whose call is given special notice, like that of the first four disciples (4, 18–22), might be included among the twelve. Another reason for the change may be that the disciple Matthew was the source of traditions peculiar to the church for which the evangelist was writing.

**9, 10: His house:** it is not clear whether **his** refers to Jesus or Matthew. **Tax collectors:** see the note on 5, 46. Table association with such persons would cause ritual impurity.

**9, 11: Teacher:** see the note on 8, 19.

**9, 12:** See the note on Mk 2, 17.

**9, 13: Go and learn . . . not sacrifice:** Matthew adds the prophetic statement of Hos 6, 6 to the Marcan account (see also 12, 7). If mercy is superior to the temple sacrifices, how much more to the laws of ritual impurity.

**9, 15:** Fasting is a sign of mourning and would be as inappropriate at this time of joy, when Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom, as it would be at a marriage feast. Yet the saying looks forward to the time when Jesus will no longer be with the disciples visibly, the time of Matthew's church. **Then they will fast:** see **Didache** 8, 1.

**9, 16–17:** Each of these parables speaks of the unsuitability of attempting to combine the old and the new. Jesus' teaching is not a patching up of Judaism, nor can the gospel be contained within the limits of Mosaic law.

**9, 18–34:** In this third group of miracles, the first (18–26) is clearly dependent on Mark (Mk 5, 21–43). Though it tells of two miracles, the cure of the woman had already been included within the story of the raising of the official's daughter, so that the two were probably regarded as a single unit. The other miracles seem to have been derived from Mark and Q respectively, though there Matthew's own editing is much more evident.

**9, 18: Official:** literally, "ruler." Mark calls him "one of the synagogue officials" (Mk 5, 22). **My daughter has just died:** Matthew heightens the Marcan "my daughter is at the point of death" (Mk 5, 23).

**9, 20: Tassel:** possibly "fringe." The Mosaic law prescribed that tassels be worn on the corners of one's garment as a reminder to keep the commandments (see Nm 15, 37–39; Dt 22, 12).

**9, 24: Sleeping:** sleep is a biblical metaphor for death (see Ps 87, 6 LXX; Dn 12, 2; 1 Thes 5, 10). Jesus' statement is not a denial of the child's real death, but an assurance that she will be roused from her sleep of death.

v Mk 2, 14–17; Lk 5, 27–32. w 11, 19; Lk 15, 1–2. x 12, 7; Hos 6, 6. y Mk 2, 18–22; Lk 5, 33–39. z Mk 5, 22–43; Lk 8, 41–56. a 14, 36; Nm 15, 37.

**The Healing of Two Blind Men** 27 *b c* *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed [him], crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" 28 When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." 30 And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

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**The Healing of a Mute Person** 32 *d* *As they were going out, a demoniac who could not speak was brought to him, 33 *e* and when the demon was driven out the mute person spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." 34 *f* *But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons."

**The Compassion of Jesus** 35 *g* *Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. 36 *h* *At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 *i* *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; 38 so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

## CHAPTER 10

**The Mission of the Twelve** 1 *j* *Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. 2 *The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; 4 Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

**The Commissioning of the Twelve** 5 *k* *Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a

**9, 27–31:** This story was probably composed by Matthew out of Mark's story of the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus (Mk 10, 46–52). Mark places the event late in Jesus' ministry, just before his entrance into Jerusalem, and Matthew has followed his Marcan source at that point in his gospel also (see 20, 29–34). In each of the Matthean stories the single blind man of Mark becomes two. The reason why Matthew would have given a double version of the Marcan story and placed the earlier one here may be that he wished to add a story of Jesus' curing the blind at this point in order to prepare for Jesus' answer to the emissaries of the Baptist (11, 4–6) in which Jesus, recounting his works, begins with his giving sight to the blind.

**9, 27: Son of David:** this messianic title is connected once with the healing power of Jesus in Mark (10, 47–48) and Luke (18, 38–39) but more frequently in Matthew (see also 12, 23; 15, 22; 20, 30–31).

**9, 32–34:** The source of this story seems to be Q (see Lk 11, 14–15). As in the preceding healing of the blind, Matthew has two versions of this healing, the later in 12, 22–24 and the earlier here.

**9, 34:** This spiteful accusation foreshadows the growing opposition to Jesus in chs 11 and 12.

**9, 35:** See the notes on 4, 23–25 and 8, 1—9, 38.

**9, 36:** See Mk 6, 34; Nm 27, 17; 1 Kgs 22, 17.

**9, 37–38:** This Q saying (see Lk 10, 2) is only imperfectly related to this context. It presupposes that only God (**the master of the harvest**) can take the initiative in sending out preachers of the gospel, whereas in Matthew's setting it leads into ch 10, where Jesus does so.

**10, 1—11, 1:** After an introductory narrative (10, 1–4), the second of the discourses of the gospel. It deals with the mission now to be undertaken by the disciples (5–15), but the perspective broadens and includes the missionary activity of the church between the time of the resurrection and the parousia.

**10, 1: His twelve disciples:** although, unlike Mark (3, 13–14) and Luke (6, 12–16), Matthew has no story of Jesus' choosing the Twelve, he assumes that the group is known to the reader. The earliest New Testament text to speak of it is 1 Cor 15, 5. The number probably is meant to recall the twelve tribes of Israel and implies Jesus' authority to call all Israel into the kingdom. While Luke (6, 13) and probably Mark (4, 10.34) distinguish between the Twelve and a larger group also termed disciples, Matthew tends to identify the disciples and the Twelve. **Authority . . . every illness:** activities the same as those of Jesus; see 4, 23; 9, 35; 10, 8. The Twelve also share in his proclamation of the kingdom (10, 7). But although he teaches (4, 23; 7, 28; 9, 35), they do not. Their commission to teach comes only after Jesus' resurrection, after they have been fully instructed by him (28, 20).

**10, 2–4:** Here, for the only time in Matthew, the Twelve are designated **apostles.** The word "apostle" means "one who is sent," and therefore fits the situation here described. In the Pauline letters, the place where the term occurs most frequently in the New Testament, it means primarily one who has seen the risen Lord and has been commissioned to proclaim the resurrection. With slight variants in Luke and Acts, the names of those who belong to this group are the same in the four lists given in the New Testament (see the note on 9, 9). **Cananean:** this represents an Aramaic word meaning "zealot." The meaning of that designation is unclear (see the note on Lk 6, 15).

**10, 5–6:** Like Jesus (15, 24), the Twelve are sent only to Israel. This saying may reflect an original Jewish Christian refusal of the mission to the Gentiles, but for Matthew it expresses rather the limitation that Jesus himself observed during his ministry.

b 20, 29–34. c 15, 22. d 12, 22–24; Lk 11, 14–15. e Mk 2, 12; 7, 37. f 10, 25; Mk 3, 22. g 4, 23; Lk 8, 1. h Nm 27, 17; 1 Kgs 22, 17; Jer 50, 6; Ez 34, 5; Mk 6, 34. i Lk 10, 2; Jn 4, 35. j Mk 3, 14–19; Lk 6, 13–16; Acts 1, 13. k Mk 6, 7–13; Lk 9, 1–6.

Samaritan town. 6 [l]Go rather to the lost sheep of
the house of Israel. 7 [m]As you go, make this
proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at
hand.' 8 *Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse
lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have
received; without cost you are to give. 9 [n]Do not
take gold or silver or copper for your belts; 10 [o]no
sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or
sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves
his keep. 11 [p]Whatever town or village you enter,
look for a worthy person in it, and stay there
until you leave. 12 As you enter a house, wish it
peace. 13 *If the house is worthy, let your peace
come upon it; if not, let your peace return to
you. 14 [q]*Whoever will not receive you or listen
to your words—go outside that house or town
and shake the dust from your feet. 15 [r]Amen, I
say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land
of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment
than for that town.

**Coming Persecutions** 16 [s]"Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. 17 [t u]*But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. 19 [v]When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 [w]*Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 22 *You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved. 23 *When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 [x]No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master. 25 *It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, for the slave that he become like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of his household!

**Courage under Persecution** 26 [y z]*"Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. 27 What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 [a]And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. 30 Even all the hairs of your head are counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. 32 *Everyone

**10, 8–11:** The Twelve have received their own call and mission through God's gift, and the benefits they confer are likewise to be given freely. They are not to take with them money, provisions, or unnecessary clothing; their lodging and food will be provided by those who receive them.

**10, 13:** The greeting of peace is conceived of not merely as a salutation but as an effective word. If it finds no worthy recipient, it will return to the speaker.

**10, 14: Shake the dust from your feet:** this gesture indicates a complete disassociation from such unbelievers.

**10, 17:** The persecutions attendant upon the post-resurrection mission now begin to be spoken of. Here Matthew brings into the discourse sayings found in Mk 13, which deals with events preceding the parousia.

**10, 21:** See Mi 7, 6, which is cited in vv 35.36.

**10, 22: To the end:** the original meaning was probably "until the parousia." But it is not likely that Matthew expected no missionary disciples to suffer death before then, since he envisages the martyrdom of other Christians (21). For him, **the end** is probably that of the individual's life (see 28).

**10, 23: Before the Son of Man comes:** since the coming of the Son of Man at the end of the age had not taken place when this gospel was written, much less during the mission of the Twelve during Jesus' ministry, Matthew cannot have meant the coming to refer to the parousia. It is difficult to know what he understood it to be: perhaps the "proleptic parousia" of 28, 16–20, or the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, viewed as a coming of Jesus in judgment on unbelieving Israel.

**10, 25: Beelzebul:** see 9, 34 for the charge linking Jesus with "the prince of demons," who is named **Beelzebul** in 12, 24. The meaning of the name is uncertain; possibly, "lord of the house."

**10, 26:** The **concealed** and **secret** coming of the kingdom is to be proclaimed by them, and no fear must be allowed to deter them from that proclamation.

**10, 32–33:** In the Q parallel (Lk 12, 8–9), the Son of Man will acknowledge those who have acknowledged Jesus, and those who deny him will be denied (by the Son of Man) before the angels of God at the judgment. Here Jesus and the Son of Man are identified, and the acknowledgment or denial will be before his heavenly Father.

l 15, 24. m 3, 2; 4, 17. n Mk 6, 8–9; Lk 9, 3; 10, 4. o Lk 10, 7; 1 Cor 9, 14; 2 Tm 5, 18. p Mk 6, 10–11; Lk 9, 4–5; 10, 5–12. q Acts 13, 51; 18, 6. r 11, 24; Gn 19, 1–29; Jude 7. s Lk 10, 3. t Mk 13, 9–13; Lk 21, 12–19. u Acts 5, 40. v Ex 4, 11–12; Jer 1, 6–10; Lk 12, 11–12. w 24, 9.13. x Lk 6, 40; Jn 13, 16; 15, 20. y Lk 12, 2–9. z Mk 4, 22; Lk 8, 17; 1 Tm 5, 25. a Jas 4, 12.

who acknowledges me before others I will
acknowledge before my heavenly Father. 33 [b]But
whoever denies me before others, I will deny
before my heavenly Father.

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**Jesus: A Cause of Division** 34 [c]"Do not think
that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I
have come to bring not peace but the sword.
35 For I have come to set

a man 'against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her
mother-in-law;
36 and one's enemies will be those of his
household.'

**The Conditions of Discipleship** 37 [d]"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 *and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. 39 [e]*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

**Rewards** 40 [f]**"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 *Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward. 42 [g]And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

## CHAPTER 11

1 *When Jesus finished giving these commands to his twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

# IV: Opposition from Israel

**The Messengers from John the Baptist**

2 [h]*When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him 3 *with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" 4 Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 [i]*the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. 6 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

**Jesus' Testimony to John** 7 [j]*As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. 9 *Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a

10, 38: The first mention of the cross in Matthew, explicitly that of the disciple, but implicitly that of Jesus (**and follow after me**). Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment used by the Romans for offenders who were not Roman citizens.

10, 39: One who denies Jesus in order to save one's earthly life will be condemned to everlasting destruction; loss of earthly life for Jesus' sake will be rewarded by everlasting life in the kingdom.

10, 40–42: All who receive the disciples of Jesus receive him, and God who sent him, and will be rewarded accordingly.

10, 41: **A prophet**: one who speaks in the name of God; here, the Christian prophets who proclaim the gospel. **Righteous man**: since righteousness is demanded of all the disciples, it is difficult to take the **righteous man** of this verse and **one of these little ones** (42) as indicating different groups within the followers of Jesus. Probably all three designations are used here of Christian missionaries as such.

11, 1: The closing formula of the discourse refers back to the original addressees, the Twelve.

11, 2—12, 50: The narrative section of the third book deals with the growing opposition to Jesus. It is largely devoted to disputes and attacks relating to faith and discipleship and thus contains much sayings-material, drawn in large part from Q.

11, 2: **In prison**: see 4, 12; 14, 1–12. **The works of the Messiah**: the deeds of chs 8–9.

11, 3: The question probably expresses a doubt of the Baptist that Jesus is **the one who is to come** (cf Mal 3, 1) because his mission has not been one of fiery judgment as John had expected (3, 2).

11, 5–6: Jesus' response is taken from passages of Isaiah (26, 19; 29, 18–19; 35, 5–6; 61, 1) that picture the time of salvation as marked by deeds such as those that Jesus is doing. The beatitude is a warning to the Baptist not to disbelieve because his expectations have not been met.

11, 7–19: Jesus' rebuke of John is counterbalanced by a reminder of the greatness of the Baptist's function (7–15) that is followed by a complaint about those who have heeded neither John nor Jesus (16–19).

11, 9–10: In common Jewish belief there had been no prophecy in Israel since the last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi. The coming of a new prophet was eagerly awaited, and Jesus agrees that John was such. Yet he was **more than a prophet**, for he was the precursor of the one who would bring in the new and final age. The Old Testament quotation is a combination of Mal 3, 1 and Ex 23, 20, with the significant change that the **before me** of Malachi becomes **before you**. The messenger now precedes not God, as in the original, but Jesus.

b Mk 8, 38; Lk 9, 26; 2 Tm 2, 12; Rv 3, 5. c Lk 12, 51–53. d 16, 24–25; Lk 14, 26–27. e Mk 8, 35; Lk 9, 24; Jn 12, 25. f Lk 10, 16; Jn 12, 44; 13, 20. g 25, 40; Mk 9, 41. h Lk 7, 18–28. i Is 26, 19; 29, 18–19; 35, 5–6; 61, 1. j 3,3.5.

prophet. 10 [k]This is the one about whom it is
written:

'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of
you;
he will prepare your way before you.'

11 *Amen, I say to you, among those born of
women there has been none greater than John
the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of
heaven is greater than he. 12 [l]*From the days of
John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of
heaven suffers violence, and the violent are
taking it by force. 13 *All the prophets and the
law prophesied up to the time of John. 14 [m]And if
you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one
who is to come. 15 Whoever has ears ought to
hear.

16 [n]*"To what shall I compare this generation?
It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call
to one another, 17 'We played the flute for you, but
you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not
mourn.' 18 [o]For John came neither eating nor
drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a
demon.' 19 [p]The Son of Man came eating and
drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and
a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'
But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

**Reproaches to Unrepentant Towns** 20 [q]Then
he began to reproach the towns where most of
his mighty deeds had been done, since they had
not repented. 21 [r]*"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe
to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done
in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon,
they would long ago have repented in sackcloth
and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more
tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of
judgment than for you. 23 [s]*And as for you,
Capernaum:

'Will you be exalted to heaven?
You will go down to the netherworld.'

For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had
been done in Sodom, it would have remained
until this day. 24 [t]But I tell you, it will be more
tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of
judgment than for you."

**The Praise of the Father** 25 [u]*At that time
Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have
hidden these things from the wise and the
learned you have revealed them to the childlike.
26 Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.
27 [v]All things have been handed over to me by
my Father. No one knows the Son except the
Father, and no one knows the Father except the
Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to
reveal him.

**11, 11:** John's preeminent greatness lies in his function of announcing the imminence of the kingdom (3, 1). But to be in the kingdom is so great a privilege that the least who has it is greater than the Baptist.

**11, 12:** The meaning of this difficult saying is probably that the opponents of Jesus are trying to prevent people from accepting the kingdom and to snatch it away from those who have received it.

**11, 13: All the prophets and the law:** Matthew inverts the usual order, "law and prophets," and says that both have **prophesied.** This emphasis on the prophetic character of the law points to its fulfillment in the teaching of Jesus and to the transitory nature of some of its commandments (see the note on 5, 17–20).

**11, 16–19:** See Lk 7, 31–35. The meaning of the parable (16–17) and its explanation (18–19b) is much disputed. A plausible view is that the **children** of the parable are two groups, one of which proposes different entertainments to the other that will not agree with either proposal. The first represents John, Jesus, and their disciples; the second those who reject John for his asceticism and Jesus for his table association with those despised by the religiously observant. Verse 19c (**her works**) forms an inclusion with v 2 ("the works of the Messiah"). The original form of the saying is better preserved in Lk 7, 35, ". . . wisdom is vindicated by all her children." There John and Jesus are the children of Wisdom; here the works of Jesus the Messiah are those of divine Wisdom, of which he is the embodiment. Some important textual witnesses, however, have essentially the same reading as in Luke.

**11, 21:** Tyre and Sidon were pagan cities denounced for their wickedness in the Old Testament; cf Jl 4, 4–7.

**11, 23:** Capernaum's pride and punishment are described in language taken from the taunt song against the king of Babylon (Is 14, 13–15).

**11, 25–27:** This Q saying, identical with Lk 10, 21–22 except for minor variations, introduces a joyous note into this section, so dominated by the theme of unbelief. While **the wise and the learned,** the scribes and Pharisees, have rejected Jesus' preaching and the significance of his mighty deeds, **the childlike** have accepted them. Acceptance depends upon the Father's revelation, but this is granted to those who are open to receive it and refused to the arrogant. Jesus can speak of all mysteries because he is **the Son** and there is perfect reciprocity of knowledge between him and the Father; what has been **handed over** to him is revealed only to those whom he wishes.

k Ex 23, 20; Mal 3, 1; Mk 1, 2; Lk 1, 76. l Lk 16, 16. m 17, 10–13; Mal 3, 23; Lk 1, 17. n Lk 7, 31–35. o Lk 1, 15. p 9, 10–11. q Lk 10, 12–15. r Jl 4, 4–7. s Is 14, 13–15. t 10, 15. u Lk 10, 21–22. v Jn 3, 35; 6, 46; 7, 28; 10, 15.

**The Gentle Mastery of Christ** 28*"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 w*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. 30For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 11-12
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**Picking Grain on the Sabbath** 1 x y*At that time Jesus was going through a field of grain on the sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. 2When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath." 3 z*He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, 4 a how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? 5 b*Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the sabbath and are innocent? 6I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. 7 c*If you knew what this meant, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned these innocent men. 8 d*For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath."

**The Man with a Withered Hand** 9 eMoving on from there, he went into their synagogue. 10*And behold, there was a man there who had a withered hand. They questioned him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. 11*He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12How much more valuable a person is than a sheep. So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." 13Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored as sound as the other. 14 f*But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him to put him to death.

**The Chosen Servant** 15*When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. Many [people] followed him, and he cured them all, 16but he warned them not to make him known. 17This was to fulfill what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

18 g"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved in whom I delight;
I shall place my spirit upon him,

**11, 28–29:** These verses are peculiar to Matthew and are similar to Ben Sirach's invitation to learn wisdom and submit to her yoke (Sir 51, 23.26).

**11, 28: Who labor and are burdened:** burdened by the law as expounded by the scribes and Pharisees (23, 4).

**11, 29:** In place of the yoke of the law, complicated by scribal interpretation, Jesus invites the burdened to take the yoke of obedience to his word, under which they **will find rest;** cf Jer 6, 16.

**12, 1–14:** Matthew here returns to the Marcan order that he left in 9, 18. The two stories depend on Mk 2, 23–28 and 3, 1–6, respectively, and are the only places in either gospel that deal explicitly with Jesus' attitude toward sabbath observance.

**12, 1–2:** The picking of the heads of grain is here equated with reaping, which was forbidden on the sabbath (Ex 34, 21).

**12, 3–4:** See 1 Sm 21, 2–7. In the Marcan parallel (2, 25–26) the high priest is mistakenly called Abiathar, although in 1 Sm this action is attributed to Ahimelech. The Old Testament story is not about a violation of the sabbath rest; its pertinence to this dispute is that a violation of the law was permissible because of David's men being without food.

**12, 5–6:** This and the following argument (7) are peculiar to Matthew. The temple service seems to be the changing of the showbread on the sabbath (Lv 24, 8) and the doubling on the sabbath of the usual daily holocausts (Nm 28, 9–10). The argument is that the law itself requires work that breaks the sabbath rest, because of the higher duty of temple service. If temple duties outweigh the sabbath law, how much more does the presence of Jesus, with his proclamation of the kingdom (**something greater than the temple**), justify the conduct of his disciples.

**12, 7:** See the note on 9, 13.

**12, 8:** The ultimate justification for the disciples' violation of the sabbath rest is that Jesus, the Son of Man, has supreme authority over the law.

**12, 10:** Rabbinic tradition later than the gospels allowed relief to be given to a sufferer on the sabbath if life was in danger. This may also have been the view of Jesus' Pharisaic contemporaries. But the case here is not about one in danger of death.

**12, 11:** Matthew omits the question posed by Jesus in Mk 3, 4 and substitutes one about rescuing a sheep on the sabbath, similar to that in Lk 14, 5.

**12, 14:** See Mk 3, 6. Here the plan to bring about Jesus' death is attributed to the Pharisees only. This is probably due to the situation of Matthew's church, when the sole opponents were the Pharisees.

**12, 15–21:** Matthew follows Mk 3, 7–12 but summarizes his source in two verses (15.16) that pick up the withdrawal, the healings, and the command for silence. To this he adds a fulfillment citation from the first Servant Song (Is 42, 1–4) that does not correspond exactly to either the Hebrew or the LXX of that passage. It is the longest Old Testament citation in this gospel, emphasizing the meekness of Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, and foretelling the extension of his mission to the Gentiles.

**12, 15:** Jesus' knowledge of the Pharisees' plot and his healing **all** are peculiar to Matthew.

w Sir 51, 26; Jer 6, 16. x Mk 2, 23–28; Lk 6, 1–5. y Dt 23, 26. z 1 Sm 21, 2–7. a Lv 24, 5–9. b Lv 24, 8; Nm 28, 9–10. c Hos 6, 6. d Jn 5, 16–17. e Mk 3, 1–6; Lk 6, 6–11. f Jn 5, 18. g Is 42, 1–4.

and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
19 *He will not contend or cry out,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed he will not break,
a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory.
21 *And in his name the Gentiles will hope."

**Jesus and Beelzebul** 22 *h**Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. 23 *i**All the crowd was astounded, and said, "Could this perhaps be the Son of David?" 24 *j**But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons." 25 *k**But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. 26 And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? 27 *l**And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 28 *l**But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 *m**How can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. 30 *m**Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 *n**Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

**A Tree and Its Fruits** 33 *o**"Either declare the tree good and its fruit is good, or declare the tree rotten and its fruit is rotten, for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 *p**You brood of vipers, how can you say good things when you are evil? For from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness, but an evil person brings forth evil out of a store of evil. 36 *q**I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. 37 By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

**12, 19:** The servant's not contending is seen as fulfilled in Jesus' withdrawal from the disputes narrated in 1–14.

**12, 21:** Except for a minor detail, Matthew here follows the LXX, although the meaning of the Hebrew ("the coastlands will wait for his teaching") is similar.

**12, 22–32:** For the exorcism, see the note on 9, 32–34. The long discussion combines Marcan and Q material (Mk 3, 22–30; Lk 11, 19–20.23; 12, 10). Mk 3, 20–21 is omitted, with a consequent lessening of the sharpness of 12, 48.

**12, 23:** See the note on 9, 27.

**12, 24:** See the note on 10, 25.

**12, 25–26:** Jesus' first response to the Pharisees' charge is that if it were true, Satan would be destroying his own kingdom.

**12, 27:** Besides pointing out the absurdity of the charge, Jesus asks how the work of Jewish exorcists (**your own people**) is to be interpreted. Are they, too, to be charged with collusion with Beelzebul? For an example of Jewish exorcism see Josephus, **Antiquities** 8, 2, 5 §§42–49.

**12, 28:** The Q parallel (Lk 11, 20) speaks of the "finger" rather than of the "spirit" of God. While the difference is probably due to Matthew's editing, he retains **the kingdom of God** rather than changing it to his usual "kingdom of heaven." **Has come upon you:** see 4, 17.

**12, 29:** A short parable illustrates what Jesus is doing. The **strong man** is Satan, whom Jesus has tied up and whose **house** he is plundering. Jewish expectation was that Satan would be chained up in the last days (Rv 20, 2); Jesus' exorcisms indicate that those days have begun.

**12, 30:** This saying, already attached to the preceding verses in Q (see Lk 11, 23), warns that there can be no neutrality where Jesus is concerned. Its pertinence in a context where Jesus is addressing not the neutral but the bitterly opposed is not clear. The accusation of scattering, however, does fit the situation. Jesus is the shepherd of God's people (2, 6), his mission is to the lost sheep of Israel (15, 24); the Pharisees, who oppose him, are guilty of scattering the sheep.

**12, 31: Blasphemy against the Spirit:** the sin of attributing to Satan (24) what is the work of the Spirit of God (28).

**12, 33: Declare:** literally, "make." The meaning of this verse is obscure. Possibly it is a challenge to the Pharisees either to declare Jesus and his exorcisms good or both of them bad. A tree is known by its fruit; if the fruit is good, so must the tree be. If the driving out of demons is good, so must its source be.

**12, 34:** The admission of Jesus' goodness cannot be made by the Pharisees, for they are evil, and the words that proceed from their evil hearts cannot be good.

**12, 36–37:** If on the day of judgment people will be held accountable for even their **careless** words, the vicious accusations of the Pharisees will surely lead to their condemnation.

h 9, 32–34; Lk 11, 14–15. i 9, 27. j 10, 25; Mk 3, 22. k Mk 3, 23–27; Lk 11, 17–22. l Lk 11, 20. m Lk 11, 23. n Mk 3, 28–30; Lk 12, 10. o Lk 6, 43–45. p 3, 7; 23, 33; 15, 11–12; Lk 3, 7. q Jas 3, 1–2.

**The Demand for a Sign** 38 r*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39*He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. 40*Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. 41*At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. 42 sAt the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.

**The Return of the Unclean Spirit** 43 t*"When an unclean spirit goes out of a person it roams through arid regions searching for rest but finds none. 44Then it says, 'I will return to my home from which I came.' But upon returning, it finds it empty, swept clean, and put in order. 45Then it goes and brings back with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they move in and dwell there; and the last condition of that person is worse than the first. Thus it will be with this evil generation."

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**The True Family of Jesus** 46 u*While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. [ 47*Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you."] 48But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" 49And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

## CHAPTER 13

**The Parable of the Sower** 1 v*On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. 2Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. 3*And he

**12, 38–42:** This section is mainly from Q (see Lk 11, 29–32). Mk 8, 11–12, which Matthew has followed in 16, 1–4, has a similar demand for a sign. The scribes and Pharisees refuse to accept the exorcisms of Jesus as authentication of his claims and demand a sign that will end all possibility of doubt. Jesus' response is that no such sign will be given. Because his opponents are evil and see him as an agent of Satan, nothing will convince them.

**12, 38: Teacher:** see the note on 8, 19. In 16, 1 the request is for a sign "from heaven" (Mk 8, 11).

**12, 39: Unfaithful:** literally, "adulterous." The covenant between God and Israel was portrayed as a marriage bond, and unfaithfulness to the covenant as adultery; cf Hos 2, 4–15; Jer 3, 6–10.

**12, 40:** See Jon 2, 1. While in Q the sign was simply Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites (Lk 11, 30.32), Matthew here adds Jonah's sojourn **in the belly of the whale** for **three days and three nights,** a prefigurement of Jesus' sojourn in the abode of the dead and, implicitly, of his resurrection.

**12, 41–42:** The Ninevites who **repented** (see Jon 3, 1–10) and **the queen of the south** (i.e., of Sheba; see 1 Kgs 10, 1–13) were pagans who responded to lesser opportunities than have been offered to Israel in the ministry of Jesus, **something greater than Jonah** or **Solomon.** At the final judgment they will condemn the faithless **generation** that has rejected him.

**12, 43–45:** Another Q passage; cf 11, 24–26. Jesus' ministry has broken Satan's hold over Israel, but the refusal of **this evil generation** to accept him will lead to a worse situation than what preceded his coming.

**12, 46–50:** See Mk 3, 31–35. Matthew has omitted Mk 3, 20–21, which is taken up in Mk 3, 31 (see the note on 12, 22–32), yet the point of the story is the same in both gospels: natural kinship with Jesus counts for nothing; only one who **does the will of his heavenly Father** belongs to his true family.

**12, 47:** This verse is omitted in some important textual witnesses, including Codex Sinaiticus (original reading) and Codex Vaticanus.

**13, 1–53:** The discourse in parables is the third great discourse of Jesus in Mt and constitutes the second part of the third book of the gospel. Matthew follows the Marcan outline (Mk 4, 1–35) but has only two of Mark's parables, the five others being from Q and M. In addition to the seven parables, the discourse gives the reason why Jesus uses this type of speech (10–15), declares the blessedness of those who understand his teaching (16–17), explains the parable of the sower (18–23) and of the weeds (36–43), and ends with a concluding statement to the disciples (51–52).

**13, 3: In parables:** the word "parable" (Greek **parabolē**) is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew **māshāl,** a designation covering a wide variety of literary forms such as axioms, proverbs, similitudes, and allegories. In the New Testament the same breadth of meaning of the word is found, but there it primarily designates stories that are illustrative comparisons between Christian truths and events of everyday life. Sometimes the event has a strange element that is quite different from usual experience (e.g., in v 33, the enormous amount of dough in the parable of the yeast); this is meant to sharpen the curiosity of the hearer. If each detail of such a story is given a figurative meaning, the story is an allegory. Those who maintain a sharp distinction between parable and allegory insist that a parable has only one point of comparison, and that while parables were characteristic of Jesus' teaching, to see allegorical details in them is to introduce meanings that go beyond their original intention and even falsify it. However, to exclude any allegorical elements from a parable is an excessively rigid mode of interpretation, now abandoned by many scholars.

**13, 3–8:** Since in Palestine sowing often preceded plowing, much of the seed is scattered on ground that is unsuitable. Yet while much is wasted, the seed that falls on good ground bears

r 16, 1–4; Jon 2, 1; 3, 1–10; Mk 8, 11–12; Lk 11, 29–32. s 1 Kgs 10, 1–10. t Lk 11, 24–26. u Mk 3, 31–35; Lk 8, 19–21. v Mk 4, 1–12; Lk 8, 4–10.

spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A
sower went out to sow. [4]And as he sowed, some
seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it
up. [5]Some fell on rocky ground, where it had
little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil
was not deep, [6]and when the sun rose it was
scorched, and it withered for lack of roots.
[7]Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns
grew up and choked it. [8]But some seed fell on
rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty
or thirtyfold. [9]Whoever has ears ought to hear."

**The Purpose of Parables** [10]The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to
them in parables?" [11]*He said to them in reply,
"Because knowledge of the mysteries of the
kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but
to them it has not been granted. [12]w*To anyone
who has, more will be given and he will grow
rich; from anyone who has not, even what he
has will be taken away. [13]x*This is why I speak
to them in parables, because 'they look but do
not see and hear but do not listen or understand.' [14]yIsaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them,
which says:

'You shall indeed hear but not understand,
you shall indeed look but never see.
[15]Gross is the heart of this people,
they will hardly hear with their ears,
they have closed their eyes,
lest they see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart and be
converted
and I heal them.'

**The Privilege of Discipleship** [16]z*"But
blessed are your eyes, because they see, and
your ears, because they hear. [17]Amen, I say to
you, many prophets and righteous people longed
to see what you see but did not see it, and to
hear what you hear but did not hear it.

**The Explanation of the Parable of the Sower** [18]a*"Hear then the parable of the
sower. [19]The seed sown on the path is the one
who hears the word of the kingdom without
understanding it, and the evil one comes and
steals away what was sown in his heart. [20]The
seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears
the word and receives it at once with joy. [21]But
he has no root and lasts only for a time. When
some tribulation or persecution comes because
of the word, he immediately falls away. [22]The
seed sown among thorns is the one who hears
the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure
of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit.
[23]But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who

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fruit in extraordinarily large measure. The point of the parable is that, in spite of some failure because of opposition and indifference, the message of Jesus about the coming of the kingdom will have enormous success.

**13, 11:** Since a parable is figurative speech that demands reflection for understanding, only those who are prepared to explore its meaning can come to know it. To understand is a gift of God, granted to the disciples but not to the crowds. In Semitic fashion, both the disciples' understanding and the crowd's obtuseness are attributed to God. The question of human responsibility for the obtuseness is not dealt with, although it is asserted in v 13. **The mysteries:** as in Lk 8, 10; Mk 4, 11 has "the mystery." The word is used in Dn 2, 18.19.27 and in the Qumran literature (1QpHab 7, 8; 1QS 3, 23; 1QM 3, 9) to designate a divine plan or decree affecting the course of history that can be known only when revealed. **Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven** means recognition that the kingdom has become present in the ministry of Jesus.

**13, 12:** In the New Testament use of this axiom of practical "wisdom" (see 25, 29; Mk 4, 25; Lk 8, 18; 19, 26), the reference transcends the original level. God gives further understanding to one who accepts the revealed mystery; from the one who does not, he will take it away (note the "theological passive," **more will be given, what he has will be taken away**).

**13, 13: Because 'they look . . . or understand':** Matthew softens his Marcan source, which states that Jesus speaks in parables so that the crowds may not understand (Mk 4, 12), and makes such speaking a punishment given **because** they have not accepted his previous clear teaching. However, his citation of Is 6, 9–10 in v 14 supports the harsher Marcan view.

**13, 16–17:** Unlike the unbelieving crowds, the disciples have seen that which the **prophets** and the **righteous** of the Old Testament **longed to see** without having their longing fulfilled.

**13, 18–23:** See Mk 4, 14–20; Lk 8, 11–15. In this explanation of the parable the emphasis is on the various types of soil on which the seed falls, i.e., on the dispositions with which the preaching of Jesus is received. The second and third types particularly are explained in such a way as to support the view held by many scholars that the explanation derives not from Jesus but from early Christian reflection upon apostasy from the faith that was the consequence of persecution and worldliness respectively. Others, however, hold that the explanation may come basically from Jesus even though it was developed in the light of later Christian experience. The four types of persons envisaged are (1) those who never accept **the word of the kingdom** (19); (2) those who believe for a while but fall away because of **persecution** (20–21); (3) those who believe, but in whom **the word** is choked by **worldly anxiety** and the seduction of **riches** (22); (4) those who respond to **the word** and produce **fruit** abundantly (23).

w 25, 29; Mk 4, 25; Lk 8, 18; 19, 26. x Jn 9, 39. y Is 6, 9–10; Jn 12, 40; Acts 28, 26–27; Rom 11, 8. z Lk 10, 23–24; 1 Pt 1, 10–12. a Mk 4, 13–20; Lk 8, 11–15.

hears the word and understands it, who indeed
bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or
thirtyfold."

**The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat** 24*He proposed another parable to
them. "The kingdom of heaven may be likened
to a man who sowed good seed in his field.
25*While everyone was asleep his enemy came
and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and
then went off. 26When the crop grew and bore
fruit, the weeds appeared as well. 27The slaves
of the householder came to him and said,
'Master, did you not sow good seed in your
field? Where have the weeds come from?' 28He
answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves
said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them
up?' 29He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds
you might uproot the wheat along with them.
30 b*Let them grow together until harvest; then
at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First
collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for
burning; but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed** 31 c*He
proposed another parable to them. "The king-
dom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a
person took and sowed in a field. 32 d*It is the
smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is
the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and
the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its
branches.' "

**The Parable of the Yeast** 33 e*He spoke to
them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven
is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with
three measures of wheat flour until the whole
batch was leavened."

**The Use of Parables** 34 f*All these things Jesus
spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to
them only in parables, 35 g*to fulfill what had
been said through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from
the foundation [of the world]."

**The Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds** 36*Then, dismissing the crowds, he
went into the house. His disciples approached
him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the
weeds in the field." 37*He said in reply, "He
who sows good seed is the Son of Man, 38*the
field is the world, the good seed the children of
the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the
evil one, 39*and the enemy who sows them is
the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and
the harvesters are angels. 40Just as weeds are
collected and burned [up] with fire, so will it be
at the end of the age. 41*The Son of Man will

**13, 24–30:** This parable is peculiar to Matthew. The comparison in v 24 does not mean that **the kingdom of heaven may be likened** simply to the person in question but to the situation narrated in the whole story. The refusal of **the householder** to allow his **slaves** to separate **the wheat** from the **weeds** while they are still growing is a warning to the disciples not to attempt to anticipate the final judgment of God by a definitive exclusion of sinners from the kingdom. In its present stage it is composed of the good and the bad. The judgment of God alone will eliminate the sinful. Until then there must be patience and the preaching of repentance.

**13, 25: Weeds:** darnel, a poisonous weed that in its first stage of growth resembles wheat.

**13, 30: Harvest:** a common biblical metaphor for the time of God's judgment; cf Jer 51, 33; Jl 4, 13; Hos 6, 11.

**13, 31–33:** See Mk 4, 30–32; Lk 13, 18–21. The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast illustrate the same point: the amazing contrast between the small beginnings of the kingdom and its marvelous expansion.

**13, 32:** See Dn 4, 7–9.17–19, where the birds nesting in the tree represent the people of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. See also Ez 17, 23 and 31, 6.

**13, 33:** Except in this Q parable and in 16, 12, **yeast** (or "leaven") is, in New Testament usage, a symbol of corruption (see 16, 6.11–12; Mk 8, 15; Lk 12, 1; 1 Cor 5, 6–8; Gal 5, 9). **Three measures:** an enormous amount, enough to feed a hundred people. The exaggeration of this element of the parable points to the greatness of the kingdom's effect.

**13, 34: Only in parables:** see vv 10–15.

**13, 35: The prophet:** some textual witnesses read "Isaiah the prophet." The quotation is actually from Ps 78, 2; the first line corresponds to the LXX text of the psalm. The psalm's title ascribes it to Asaph, the founder of one of the guilds of temple musicians. He is called "the prophet" (NAB "the seer") in 2 Chr 29, 30, but it is doubtful that Matthew averted to that; for him, any Old Testament text that could be seen as fulfilled in Jesus was prophetic.

**13, 36: Dismissing the crowds:** the return of Jesus to the house marks a break with the crowds, who represent unbelieving Israel. From now on his attention is directed more and more to his disciples and to their instruction. The rest of the discourse is addressed to them alone.

**13, 37–43:** In the explanation of the parable of the weeds emphasis lies on the fearful end of the wicked, whereas the parable itself concentrates on patience with them until judgment time.

**13, 38: The field is the world:** this presupposes the resurrection of Jesus and the granting to him of "all power in heaven and on earth" (28, 18).

**13, 39: The end of the age:** this phrase is found only in Mt (13, 40.49; 24, 3; 28, 20).

**13, 41: His kingdom:** the **kingdom** of the **Son of Man** is distin-

b 3, 12. c Mk 4, 30–32; Lk 13, 18–19. d Ez 17, 23; 31, 6; Dn 4, 7–9.17–19. e Lk 13, 20–21. f Mk 4, 33–34. g Ps 78, 2.

send his angels, and they will collect out of his
kingdom all who cause others to sin and all
evildoers. 42 [h]They will throw them into the fiery
furnace, where there will be wailing and grind-
ing of teeth. 43 [i]*Then the righteous will shine
like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.
Whoever has ears ought to hear.

**More Parables** 44 [j]*"The kingdom of heaven is
like a treasure buried in a field, which a person
finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and
sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 Again,
the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls. 46 When he finds a pearl
of great price, he goes and sells all that he has
and buys it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is
like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish
of every kind. 48 When it is full they haul it
ashore and sit down to put what is good into
buckets. What is bad they throw away. 49 Thus it
will be at the end of the age. The angels will go
out and separate the wicked from the righteous
50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where
there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

**Treasures New and Old** 51 *"Do you under-
stand all these things?" They answered, "Yes."
52 *And he replied, "Then every scribe who has
been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like
the head of a household who brings from his store-
room both the new and the old." 53 When Jesus
finished these parables, he went away from there.

## V: Jesus, the Kingdom, and the Church

**The Rejection at Nazareth** 54 [k] [l]*He came to
his native place and taught the people in their
synagogue. They were astonished and said,
"Where did this man get such wisdom and
mighty deeds? 55 [m]Is he not the carpenter's son?
Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers
James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? 56 Are not his
sisters all with us? Where did this man get all
this?" 57 [n]And they took offense at him. But Jesus
said to them, "A prophet is not without honor
except in his native place and in his own house."
58 And he did not work many mighty deeds there
because of their lack of faith.

### CHAPTER 14

**Herod's Opinion of Jesus** 1 [o] [p] [q]*At that time
Herod the tetrarch heard of the reputation of

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guished from that of the Father (43); see 1 Cor 15, 24–25. The church is the place where Jesus' kingdom is manifested, but his royal authority embraces the entire world; see the note on 13, 38.

**13, 43:** See Dn 12, 3.

**13, 44–50:** The first two of the last three parables of the discourse have the same point. The **person who finds** a buried **treasure** and the **merchant** who finds a **pearl of great price** sell **all** that they have to acquire these finds; similarly, the one who understands the supreme value of the kingdom gives up whatever he must to obtain it. The **joy** with which this is done is made explicit in the first parable, but it may be presumed in the second also. The concluding parable of the fishnet resembles the explanation of the parable of the weeds with its stress upon the final exclusion of evil persons from the kingdom.

**13, 44:** In the unsettled conditions of Palestine in Jesus' time, it was not unusual to guard valuables by burying them in the ground.

**13, 51:** Matthew typically speaks of the understanding of the disciples.

**13, 52:** Since Matthew tends to identify the disciples and the Twelve (see the note on 10, 1), this saying about the Christian **scribe** cannot be taken as applicable to all who accept the message of Jesus. While the Twelve are in many ways representative of all who believe in him, they are also distinguished from them in certain respects. The church of Matthew has leaders among whom are a group designated as "scribes" (23, 34). Like the scribes of Israel, they are teachers. It is the Twelve and these their later counterparts to whom this verse applies. The **scribe . . . instructed in the kingdom of heaven** knows both the teaching of Jesus (**the new**) and the law and prophets (**the old**) and provides in his own teaching **both the new and the old** as interpreted and fulfilled by **the new.** On the translation **head of a household** (for the same Greek word translated **householder** in v 27), see the note on 24, 45–51.

**13, 54—17, 27:** This section is the narrative part of the fourth book of the gospel.

**13, 54–58:** After the Sermon on the Mount the crowds are in admiring astonishment at Jesus' teaching (7, 28); here the astonishment is of those who take **offense at him.** Familiarity with his background and family leads them to regard him as pretentious. Matthew modifies his Marcan source (6, 1–6). Jesus is not the carpenter but the **carpenter's son** (55), "and among his own kin" is omitted (57), **he did not work many mighty deeds** in face of such unbelief (58) rather than the Marcan " . . . he was not able to perform any mighty deed there" (6, 5), and there is no mention of his amazement at his townspeople's lack of faith.

**14, 1–12:** The murder of the Baptist by Herod Antipas prefigures the death of Jesus (see 17, 12). The Marcan source (6, 14–29) is much reduced and in some points changed. In Mk Herod reveres John as a holy man and the desire to kill him is attributed to Herodias (6, 19.20), whereas here that desire is Herod's from the beginning (5).

**14, 1: Herod the tetrarch:** Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. When the latter died, his territory was divided among three of his surviving sons, Archelaus who received half of it (2, 23), Herod Antipas who became ruler of Galilee and Perea, and Philip who became ruler of northern Transjordan. Since he received a quarter of his father's domain, Antipas is accurately designated **tetrarch** ("ruler of a fourth [part]"), although in v 9 Matthew repeats the "king" of his Marcan source (6, 26).

h 8, 12; Rv 21, 8. i Dn 12, 3. j Prv 2, 4; 4, 7. k Mk 6, 1–6; Lk 4, 16–30. l 2, 23; Jn 1, 46; 7, 15. m 12, 46; 27, 56; Jn 6, 42. n Jn 4, 44. o Mk 6, 14–29. p Lk 3, 1. q Lk 9, 7–9.

Jesus [2]and said to his servants, "This man is John
the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead:
that is why mighty powers are at work in him."

**The Death of John the Baptist** [3] [r]*Now Her-
od had arrested John, bound [him], and put him
in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his
brother Philip, [4] [s]for John had said to him, "It is
not lawful for you to have her." [5] [t]Although he
wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they
regarded him as a prophet. [6]But at a birthday
celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias
performed a dance before the guests and de-
lighted Herod [7]so much that he swore to give
her whatever she might ask for. [8]Prompted by
her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter
the head of John the Baptist." [9]The king was
distressed, but because of his oaths and the
guests who were present, he ordered that it be
given, [10]and he had John beheaded in the prison.
[11]His head was brought in on a platter and given
to the girl, who took it to her mother. [12]His
disciples came and took away the corpse and
buried him; and they went and told Jesus.

**The Return of the Twelve and the Feeding of the Five Thousand** [13] [u]*When Jesus heard
of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place
by himself. The crowds heard of this and fol-
lowed him on foot from their towns. [14]When he
disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart
was moved with pity for them, and he cured
their sick. [15]When it was evening, the disciples
approached him and said, "This is a deserted
place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so
that they can go to the villages and buy food for
themselves." [16][Jesus] said to them, "There is no
need for them to go away; give them some food
yourselves." [17]But they said to him, "Five loaves
and two fish are all we have here." [18]Then he
said, "Bring them here to me," [19]*and he
ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and
looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke
the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who
in turn gave them to the crowds. [20]*They all ate
and were satisfied, and they picked up the
fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.
[21]Those who ate were about five thousand men,
not counting women and children.

**The Walking on the Water** [22] [v]*Then he
made the disciples get into the boat and precede
him to the other side, while he dismissed the
crowds. [23] [w]After doing so, he went up on the
mountain by himself to pray. When it was
evening he was there alone. [24]Meanwhile the
boat, already a few miles offshore, was being
tossed about by the waves, for the wind was
against it. [25]*During the fourth watch of the
night, he came toward them, walking on the
sea. [26]When the disciples saw him walking on
the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they
said, and they cried out in fear. [27]*At once
[Jesus] spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do
not be afraid." [28]Peter said to him in reply,
"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you

**14, 3:** Herodias was not the wife of Herod's half-brother Philip but of another half-brother, Herod Boethus. The union was prohibited by Lv 18, 16; 20, 21. According to Josephus (**Antiquities** 18, 5, 2 §§116–19), Herod imprisoned and then executed John because he feared that the Baptist's influence over the people might enable him to lead a rebellion.

**14, 13–21:** The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle of Jesus that is recounted in all four gospels. The principal reason for that may be that it was seen as anticipating the Eucharist and the final banquet in the kingdom (8, 11; 26, 29), but it looks not only forward but backward, to the feeding of Israel with manna in the desert at the time of the Exodus (Ex 16), a miracle that in some contemporary Jewish expectation would be repeated in the messianic age (2 Baruch 29, 8). It may also be meant to recall Elisha's feeding a hundred men with small provisions (2 Kgs 4, 42–44).

**14, 19:** The **taking,** saying the blessing, breaking, and giving to the disciples correspond to the actions of Jesus over the bread at the Last Supper (26, 26). Since they were usual at any Jewish meal, that correspondence does not necessarily indicate a eucharistic reference here. Matthew's silence about Jesus' dividing the fish among the people (Mk 6, 41) is perhaps more significant in that regard.

**14, 20: The fragments left over:** as in Elisha's miracle, food was **left over** after all had been fed. The word **fragments** (Greek **klasmata**) is used, in the singular, of the broken bread of the Eucharist in **Didache** 9, 3–4.

**14, 22–33:** The disciples, laboring against the turbulent sea, are saved by Jesus. For his power over the waters, see the note on 8, 26. Here that power is expressed also by his **walking on the sea** (25; cf Ps 77, 20; Jb 9, 8). Matthew has inserted into the Marcan story (Mk 6, 45–52) material that belongs to his special traditions on Peter (28–31).

**14, 25: The fourth watch of the night:** between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. The Romans divided the twelve hours between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. into four equal parts called "watches."

**14, 27:** It is I: see the note on Mk 6, 50.

r Lk 3, 19–20. s Lv 18, 16; 20, 21. t 21, 26. u 15, 32–38; Mk 6, 32–44; Lk 9, 10–17; Jn 6, 1–13. v Mk 6, 45–52; Jn 6, 16–21. w Mk 1, 35; Lk 5, 16; 6, 12.

on the water." 29He said, "Come." Peter got out
of the boat and began to walk on the water
toward Jesus. 30 *x*But when he saw how [strong]
the wind was he became frightened; and, begin-
ning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
31 *Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and
caught him, and said to him, "O you of little
faith, why did you doubt?" 32After they got into
the boat, the wind died down. 33 *y**Those who
were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly,
you are the Son of God."

**The Healings at Gennesaret** 34 *z*After making
the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret.
35When the men of that place recognized him,
they sent word to all the surrounding country.
People brought to him all those who were sick
36 *a*and begged him that they might touch only
the tassel on his cloak, and as many as touched it
were healed.

## CHAPTER 15

**The Tradition of the Elders** 1 *b**Then Phari-
sees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem
and said, 2 *c***"Why do your disciples break the
tradition of the elders? They do not wash [their]
hands when they eat a meal." 3 *He said to them
in reply, "And why do you break the command-
ment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 *d*For
God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,'
and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.'
5 *But you say, 'Whoever says to father or
mother, "Any support you might have had from
me is dedicated to God," 6need not honor his
father.' You have nullified the word of God for
the sake of your tradition. 7Hypocrites, well did
Isaiah prophesy about you when he said:

8 *e***'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
9 *f*in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.' "

10 *g*He summoned the crowd and said to them,
"Hear and understand. 11It is not what enters
one's mouth that defiles that person; but what
comes out of the mouth is what defiles one."
12Then his disciples approached and said to him,
"Do you know that the Pharisees took offense
when they heard what you said?" 13 *He said in
reply, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has
not planted will be uprooted. 14 *h*Let them alone;
they are blind guides [of the blind]. If a blind
person leads a blind person, both will fall into a
pit." 15 *Then Peter said to him in reply, "Ex-
plain [this] parable to us." 16He said to them,
"Are even you still without understanding? 17Do
you not realize that everything that enters the
mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled
into the latrine? 18 *i*But the things that come out
of the mouth come from the heart, and they

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**14, 31: You of little faith:** see the note on 6, 30. **Why did you doubt?:** the verb is peculiar to Matthew and occurs elsewhere only in 28, 17.

**14, 33:** This confession is in striking contrast to the Marcan parallel (6, 51) where the disciples are "completely astounded."

**15, 1–20:** This dispute begins with the question of the Pharisees and scribes why Jesus' disciples are breaking **the tradition of the elders** about washing one's hands before eating (2). Jesus' counterquestion accuses his opponents of breaking **the commandment of God for the sake of their tradition** (3) and illustrates this by their interpretation of the commandment of the Decalogue concerning parents (4–6). Denouncing them as hypocrites, he applies to them a derogatory prophecy of Isaiah (7–8). Then with a wider audience (**the crowd,** 10) he goes beyond the violation of tradition with which the dispute has started. The parable (11) is an attack on the Mosaic law concerning clean and unclean foods, similar to those antitheses that abrogate the law (5, 31–32.33–34.38–39). After a warning to his disciples not to follow the moral guidance of the Pharisees (13–14), he explains the **parable** (15) to them, saying that defilement comes not from what **enters the mouth** (17) but from the evil thoughts and deeds that rise from within, **from the heart** (18–20). The last verse returns to the starting point of the dispute (eating **with unwashed hands**). Because of Matthew's omission of Mk 7, 19b, some scholars think that Matthew has weakened the Marcan repudiation of the Mosaic food laws. But that half verse is ambiguous in the Greek, which may be the reason for its omission here.

**15, 2: The tradition of the elders:** see the note on Mk 7, 5. The purpose of the handwashing was to remove defilement caused by contact with what was ritually unclean.

**15, 3–4:** For the commandment see Ex 20, 12 (// Dt 5, 16); 21, 17. The honoring of one's parents had to do with supporting them in their needs.

**15, 5:** See the note on Mk 7, 11.

**15, 8:** The text of Is 29, 13 is quoted approximately according to the Septuagint.

**15, 13–14:** Jesus leads his disciples away from the teaching authority of the Pharisees.

**15, 15:** Matthew specifies **Peter** as the questioner, unlike Mk 7, 17. Given his tendency to present the disciples as more understanding than in his Marcan source, it is noteworthy that here he retains the Marcan rebuke, although in a slightly milder form. This may be due to his wish to correct the Jewish Christians within his church who still held to the food laws and thus separated themselves from Gentile Christians who did not observe them.

x 8, 25–26. y 16, 16. z Mk 6, 53–56. a 9, 20–22. b Mk 7, 1–23. c Lk 11, 38. d Ex 20, 12; 21, 17; Lv 20, 9; Dt 5, 16; Prv 20, 20. e Is 29, 13 LXX. f Col 2, 23. g Mk 7, 14. h 23, 16.19.24; Lk 6, 39; Jn 9, 40. i 12, 34.

defile. [19]*For from the heart come evil thoughts,
murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness,
blasphemy. [20]These are what defile a person, but
to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

**The Canaanite Woman's Faith** [21] *j**Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. [22]And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." [23]But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." [24]*He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [25] *k*But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." [26]*He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." [27]She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." [28] *l**Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour.

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**The Healing of Many People** [29]Moving on from there Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. [30] *m*Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. [31]The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

**The Feeding of the Four Thousand** [32] *n**Jesus summoned his disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way." [33]The disciples said to him, "Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?" [34]Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish." [35]He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. [36]*Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. [37] *o*They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full. [38]Those who ate were four thousand men, not counting women and children. [39]And when he had dismissed the crowds, he got into the boat and came to the district of Magadan.

## CHAPTER 16

**The Demand for a Sign** [1] *p**The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. [2]*He said to them in reply, "[In the evening you say, 'Tomorrow will be fair, for the sky is red'; [3] *q*and, in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times.] [4] *r**An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

**15, 19:** The Marcan list of thirteen things that defile (7, 21–22) is here reduced to seven that partially cover the content of the Decalogue.

**15, 21–28:** See the note on 8, 5–13.

**15, 24:** See the note on 10, 5–6.

**15, 26: The children:** the people of Israel. **Dogs:** see the note on 7, 6.

**15, 28:** As in the case of the cure of the centurion's servant (8, 10), Matthew ascribes Jesus' granting the request to the woman's **great faith,** a point not made equally explicit in the Marcan parallel (7, 24–30).

**15, 32–39:** Most probably this story is a doublet of that of the feeding of the five thousand (14, 13–21). It differs from it notably only in that Jesus takes the initiative, not the disciples (32), and in the numbers: the crowd has been with Jesus **three days** (32), **seven loaves** are multiplied (36), **seven baskets of fragments** remain after the feeding (37), and **four thousand** men are fed (38).

**15, 36: Gave thanks:** see 14, 19, "said the blessing." There is no difference in meaning. The thanksgiving was a blessing of God for his benefits.

**16, 1: A sign from heaven:** see the note on 12, 38–42.

**16, 2–3:** The answer of Jesus in these verses is omitted in many important textual witnesses, and it is very uncertain that it is an original part of this gospel. It resembles Lk 12, 54–56 and may have been inserted from there. It rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees who are able to read indications of coming weather but not the indications of the coming kingdom in the signs that Jesus does offer, his mighty deeds and teaching.

**16, 4:** See the notes on 12, 39.40.

j Mk 7, 24–30. k 10, 6. l 8, 10. m Is 35, 5–6. n Mk 8, 1–10. o 16, 10. p Mk 8, 11–21. q Lk 12, 54–56. r 12, 39; Jon 2, 1.

**The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees** [5] [s]*In coming to the other side of the sea, the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. [6] [t]*Jesus said to them, "Look out, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." [7]*They concluded among themselves, saying, "It is because we have brought no bread." [8]When Jesus became aware of this he said, "You of little faith, why do you conclude among yourselves that it is because you have no bread? [9] [u]Do you not yet understand, and do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many wicker baskets you took up? [10] [v]Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you took up? [11]How do you not comprehend that I was not speaking to you about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." [12]*Then they understood that he was not telling them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Peter's Confession about Jesus** [13] [w]*When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] [x]*They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15]He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] [y]*Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." [17]*Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. [18] [z]*And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. [19] [a]*I will give you the keys

**16, 5–12:** Jesus' warning his disciples against **the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees** comes immediately before his promise to confer on Peter the authority to bind and to loose on earth (19), an authority that will be confirmed in heaven. Such authority most probably has to do, at least in part, with teaching. The rejection of the teaching authority of the Pharisees (see also 12, 12–14) prepares for a new one derived from Jesus.

**16, 6: Leaven:** see the note on 13, 33. **Sadducees:** Matthew's Marcan source speaks rather of "the leaven of Herod" (8, 15).

**16, 7–11:** The disciples, men **of little faith,** misunderstand Jesus' metaphorical use of **leaven,** forgetting that, as the feeding of the crowds shows, he is not at a loss to provide them with bread.

**16, 12:** After his rebuke, the disciples understand that by **leaven** he meant the corrupting influence of **the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** The evangelist probably understands this **teaching** as common to both groups. Since at the time of Jesus' ministry the two differed widely on points of teaching, e.g., the resurrection of the dead, and at the time of the evangelist the Sadducee party was no longer a force in Judaism, the supposed common **teaching** fits neither period. The disciples' eventual understanding of Jesus' warning contrasts with their continuing obtuseness in the Marcan parallel (8, 14–21).

**16, 13–20:** The Marcan confession of Jesus as Messiah, made by Peter as spokesman for the other disciples (8, 27–29; cf also Lk 9, 18–20), is modified significantly here. The confession is of Jesus both as **Messiah** and as **Son of the living God** (16). Jesus' response, drawn principally from material peculiar to Matthew, attributes the confession to a divine revelation granted to Peter alone (17) and makes him the **rock** on which Jesus **will build** his **church** (18) and the disciple whose authority in the church **on earth** will be confirmed **in heaven,** i.e., by God (19).

**16, 13: Caesarea Philippi:** situated about twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the territory ruled by Philip, a son of Herod the Great, tetrarch from 4 B.C. until his death in A.D. 34 (see the note on 14, 1). He rebuilt the town of Paneas, naming it **Caesarea** in honor of the emperor, and **Philippi** ("of Philip") to distinguish it from the seaport in Samaria that was also called Caesarea. **Who do people say that the Son of Man is?:** although the question differs from the Marcan parallel (8, 27: "Who . . . that I am?"), the meaning is the same, for Jesus here refers to himself as **the Son of Man** (cf 15).

**16, 14: John the Baptist:** see 14, 2. **Elijah:** cf Mal 3, 23–24; Sir 48, 10; and see the note on 3, 4. **Jeremiah:** an addition of Matthew to the Marcan source.

**16, 16: The Son of the living God:** see 2, 15; 3, 17. The addition of this exalted title to the Marcan confession eliminates whatever ambiguity was attached to the title Messiah. This, among other things, supports the view proposed by many scholars that Matthew has here combined his source's confession with a post-resurrectional confession of faith in Jesus as **Son of the living God** that belonged to the appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter; cf 1 Cor 15, 5; Lk 24, 34.

**16, 17: Flesh and blood:** a Semitic expression for human beings, especially in their weakness. **Has not revealed this . . . but my heavenly Father:** that Peter's faith is spoken of as coming not through human means but through a revelation from God is similar to Paul's description of his recognition of who Jesus was; see Gal 1, 15–16, " . . . when he [God] . . . was pleased to reveal his Son to me . . . ."

**16, 18: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church:** the Aramaic word **kēpā'** meaning **rock** and transliterated into Greek as **Kēphas** is the name by which Peter is called in the Pauline letters (1 Cor 1, 12; 3, 22; 9, 5; 15, 4; Gal 1, 18; 2, 9.11.14) except in Gal 2, 7–8 ("Peter"). It is translated as **Petros** ("Peter") in Jn 1, 42. The presumed original Aramaic of Jesus' statement would have been, in English, "You are the Rock (**Kēpā'**) and upon this rock (**kēpā'**) I will build my church." The Greek text probably means the same, for the difference in gender between the masculine noun **petros,** the disciple's new name, and the feminine noun **petra** (rock) may be due simply to the unsuitability of using a feminine noun as the proper name of a male. Although the two words were generally used with slightly different nuances, they were also used interchangeably with the same meaning, "rock." **Church:** this word (Greek **ekklēsia**) occurs in the gospels only here and in 18, 17 (twice). There are several possibilities for an Aramaic original. Jesus' **church** means the community that he **will** gather and that, like a building, will have Peter as its solid foundation. That function of Peter consists in his being witness to Jesus as **the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it:** the netherworld (Greek **Hadēs,** the abode of the dead) is conceived of as a walled city whose **gates** will not close in upon the church of Jesus, i.e., it will not be overcome by the power of death.

**16, 19: The keys to the kingdom of heaven:** the image of **the**

s Mk 8, 14–21. t Lk 12, 1. u 14, 17–21; Jn 6, 9. v 15,34–38. w Mk 8, 27–29; Lk 9, 18–20. x 14, 2. y Jn 6, 69. z Jn 1, 42. a Is 22, 22; Rv 3, 7.

to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind
on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what-
ever you loose on earth shall be loosed in
heaven." 20 b*Then he strictly ordered his disci-
ples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

**The First Prediction of the Passion**
21 c d*From that time on, Jesus began to show his
disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer
greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the
scribes, and be killed and on the third day be
raised. 22*Then Peter took him aside and began
to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing
shall ever happen to you." 23 eHe turned and said
to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an
obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God
does, but as human beings do."

Ch 16–20
See RG
399–401

**The Conditions of Discipleship** 24 f*Then Je-
sus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to
come after me must deny himself, take up his
cross, and follow me. 25 g*For whoever wishes
to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his
life for my sake will find it. 26 What profit would
there be for one to gain the whole world and
forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange
for his life? 27 h*For the Son of Man will come
with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he
will repay everyone according to his conduct.
28*Amen, I say to you, there are some standing
here who will not taste death until they see the
Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

## CHAPTER 17

**The Transfiguration of Jesus** 1 i*After six
days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his
brother, and led them up a high mountain by

keys is probably drawn from Is 22, 15–25, where Eliakim, who succeeds Shebnah as master of the palace, is given "the key of the house of David," which he authoritatively "opens" and "shuts" (22, 22). **Whatever you bind . . . loosed in heaven:** there are many instances in rabbinic literature of the binding-loosing imagery. Of the several meanings given there to the metaphor, two are of special importance here: the giving of authoritative teaching, and the lifting or imposing of the ban of excommunication. It is disputed whether the image of **the keys** and that of binding and loosing are different metaphors meaning the same thing. In any case, the promise of the keys is given to Peter alone. In 18, 18 all the disciples are given the power of binding and loosing, but the context of that verse suggests that there the power of excommunication alone is intended. That **the keys** are those to **the kingdom of heaven** and that Peter's exercise of authority in the church **on earth** will be confirmed **in heaven** show an intimate connection between, but not an identification of, the church and **the kingdom of heaven.**

**16, 20:** Cf Mk 8, 30. Matthew makes explicit that the prohibition has to do with speaking of Jesus as **the Messiah;** see the note on Mk 8, 27–30.

**16, 21–23:** This first prediction of the passion follows Mk 8, 31–33 in the main and serves as a corrective to an understanding of Jesus' messiahship as solely one of glory and triumph. By his addition of **from that time on** (21) Matthew has emphasized that Jesus' revelation of his coming suffering and death marks a new phase of the gospel. Neither this nor the two later passion predictions (17, 22–23; 20, 17–19) can be taken as sayings that, as they stand, go back to Jesus himself. However, it is probable that he foresaw that his mission would entail suffering and perhaps death, but was confident that he would ultimately be vindicated by God (see 26, 29).

**16, 21: He:** the Marcan parallel (8, 31) has "the Son of Man." Since Matthew has already designated Jesus by that title (13), its omission here is not significant. The Matthean prediction is equally about the sufferings of the Son of Man. **Must:** this necessity is part of the tradition of all the synoptics; cf Mk 8, 31; Lk 9, 21. **The elders, the chief priests, and the scribes:** see the note on Mk 8, 31. **On the third day:** so also Lk 9, 22, against the Marcan "after three days" (8, 31). Matthew's formulation is, in the Greek, almost identical with the pre-Pauline fragment of the kerygma in 1 Cor 15, 4, and also with Hos 6, 2, which many take to be the Old Testament background to the confession that Jesus was raised **on the third day.** Josephus uses "after three days" and "on the third day" interchangeably (**Antiquities** 7, 11, 6 §§280–81; 8, 8, 1–2 §§214, 218) and there is probably no difference in meaning between the two phrases.

**16, 22–23:** Peter's refusal to accept Jesus' predicted suffering and death is seen as a satanic attempt to deflect Jesus from his God-appointed course, and the disciple is addressed in terms that recall Jesus' dismissal of the devil in the temptation account (4, 10: "Get away, Satan!"). Peter's satanic purpose is emphasized by Matthew's addition to the Marcan source of the words **You are an obstacle to me.**

**16, 24–28:** A readiness to follow Jesus even to giving up one's life for him is the condition for true discipleship; this will be repaid by him at the final judgment.

**16, 24: Deny himself:** to deny someone is to disown him (see 10, 33; 26, 34–35) and to deny oneself is to disown oneself as the center of one's existence.

**16, 25:** See the notes on 10, 38.39.

**16, 27:** The parousia and final judgment are described in 25, 31 in terms almost identical with these.

**16, 28: Coming in his kingdom:** since the **kingdom** of the **Son of Man** has been described as "the world" and Jesus' sovereignty precedes his final coming in glory (13, 38.41), the **coming** in this verse is not the parousia as in the preceding but the manifestation of Jesus' rule after his resurrection; see the notes on 13, 38.41.

**17, 1–8:** The account of the transfiguration confirms that Jesus is the **Son** of God (5) and points to fulfillment of the prediction that he will come **in his Father's glory** at the end of the age (16, 27). It has been explained by some as a resurrection appearance retrojected into the time of Jesus' ministry, but that is not probable since the account lacks many of the usual elements of the resurrection-appearance narratives. It draws upon motifs from the Old Testament and noncanonical Jewish apocalyptic literature that express the presence of the heavenly and the divine, e.g., brilliant light, white garments, and the overshadowing cloud.

**17, 1:** These three disciples are also taken apart from the others by Jesus in Gethsemane (26, 37). **A high mountain:** this has been

b Mk 8, 30; Lk 9, 21. c Mk 8, 31—9, 1; Lk 9, 22–27. d 17, 22–23; 20, 17–19. e 4, 10. f Lk 14, 27. g Lk 17, 33; Jn 12, 25. h 25, 31–33; Jb 34, 11; Ps 62, 13; Jer 17, 10; 2 Thes 1, 7–8. i Mk 9, 2–8; Lk 9, 28–36.

themselves. [2] [j]*And he was transfigured before
them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes
became white as light. [3]*And behold, Moses
and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with
him. [4]*Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it
is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make
three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and
one for Elijah." [5] [k]*While he was still speaking,
behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them,
then from the cloud came a voice that said,
"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well
pleased; listen to him." [6]*When the disciples
heard this, they fell prostrate and were very
much afraid. [7]But Jesus came and touched them,
saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." [8]And when
the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one
else but Jesus alone.

**The Coming of Elijah** [9] [l]*As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged
them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the
Son of Man has been raised from the dead."
[10] [m]*Then the disciples asked him, "Why do the
scribes say that Elijah must come first?" [11] [n]*He
said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and
restore all things; [12] [o]but I tell you that Elijah has
already come, and they did not recognize him
but did to him whatever they pleased. So also
will the Son of Man suffer at their hands."
[13]*Then the disciples understood that he was
speaking to them of John the Baptist.

**The Healing of a Boy with a Demon**

[14] [p]*When they came to the crowd a man
approached, knelt down before him, [15]*and
said, "Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a
lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into
fire, and often into water. [16]I brought him to
your disciples, but they could not cure him."
[17] [q]*Jesus said in reply, "O faithless and perverse
generation, how long will I be with you? How
long will I endure you? Bring him here to me."
[18]*Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out
of him, and from that hour the boy was cured.

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identified with Tabor or Hermon, but probably no specific mountain was intended by the evangelist or by his Marcan source (9, 2). Its meaning is theological rather than geographical, possibly recalling the revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 24, 12–18) and to Elijah at the same place (1 Kgs 19, 8–18; Horeb=Sinai).

**17, 2: His face shone like the sun:** this is a Matthean addition; cf Dn 10, 6. **His clothes became white as light:** cf Dn 7, 9, where the clothing of God appears "snow bright." For the **white** garments of other heavenly beings, see Rv 4, 4; 7, 9; 19, 14.

**17, 3:** See the note on Mk 9, 5.

**17, 4: Three tents:** the booths in which the Israelites lived during the feast of Tabernacles (cf Jn 7, 2) were meant to recall their ancestors' dwelling in booths during the journey from Egypt to the promised land (Lv 23, 39–42). The same Greek word, **skēnē**, here translated **tents,** is used in the LXX for the booths of that feast, and some scholars have suggested that there is an allusion here to that liturgical custom.

**17, 5: Cloud cast a shadow over them:** see the note on Mk 9, 7. **This is my beloved Son . . . listen to him:** cf 3, 17. The voice repeats the baptismal proclamation about Jesus, with the addition of the command **listen to him.** The latter is a reference to Dt 18, 15 in which the Israelites are commanded to **listen to** the prophet like Moses whom God will raise up for them. The command to **listen to** Jesus is general, but in this context it probably applies particularly to the preceding predictions of his passion and resurrection (16, 21) and of his coming (16, 27.28).

**17, 6–7:** A Matthean addition; cf Dn 10, 9–10.18–19.

**17, 9–13:** In response to the disciples' question about the expected return of Elijah, Jesus interprets the mission of the Baptist as the fulfillment of that expectation. But that was not suspected by those who opposed and finally killed him, and Jesus predicts a similar fate for himself.

**17, 9: The vision:** Matthew alone uses this word to describe the transfiguration. **Until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead:** only in the light of Jesus' resurrection can the meaning of his life and mission be truly understood; until then no testimony to **the vision** will lead people to faith.

**17, 10:** See the notes on 3, 4; 16, 14.

**17, 11–12:** The preceding question and this answer may reflect later controversy with Jews who objected to the Christian claims for Jesus that Elijah had not yet come.

**17, 13:** See 11, 14.

**17, 14–20:** Matthew has greatly shortened the Marcan story (9, 14–29). Leaving aside several details of the boy's illness, he concentrates on the need for faith, not so much on the part of the boy's father (as does Mark, for Matthew omits Mk 9, 22b-24) but on that of his own disciples whose inability to drive out the demon is ascribed to their **little faith** (20).

**17, 15: A lunatic:** this description of the boy is peculiar to Matthew. The word occurs in the New Testament only here and in 4, 24 and means one affected or struck by the moon. The symptoms of the boy's illness point to epilepsy, and attacks of this were thought to be caused by phases of the moon.

**17, 17: Faithless and perverse:** so Matthew and Luke (9, 41) against Mark's **faithless** (9, 19). The Greek word here translated **perverse** is the same as that in Dt 32, 5 LXX, where Moses speaks to his people. There is a problem in knowing to whom the reproach is addressed. Since the Matthean Jesus normally chides his disciples for their **little faith** (as in 20), it would appear that the charge of lack of faith could not be made against them and that the reproach is addressed to unbelievers among the Jews. However in v 20b (**if you have faith the size of a mustard seed**), which is certainly addressed to the disciples, they appear to have not even the smallest faith; if they had, they would have been able to cure the boy. In the light of v 20b the reproach of v 17 could have applied to the disciples. There seems to be an inconsistency between the charge of **little faith** in v 20a and that of not even a little in v 20b.

**17, 18: The demon came out of him:** not until this verse does Matthew indicate that the boy's illness is a case of demoniacal possession.

j 28, 3; Dn 7, 9; 10, 6; Rv 4, 4; 7, 9; 19, 14. k 3, 17; Dt 18, 15; 2 Pt 1, 17. l Mk 9, 9–13. m Mal 3, 23–24. n Lk 1, 17. o 11, 14. p Mk 9, 14–29; Lk 9, 37–43. q Dt 32, 5 LXX.

[19]Then the disciples approached Jesus in private
and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"
[20] r*He said to them, "Because of your little
faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the
size of a mustard seed, you will say to this
mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will
move. Nothing will be impossible for you." [21]*

**The Second Prediction of the Passion** [22] s*As they were gathering in Galilee,
Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be
handed over to men, [23]and they will kill him,
and he will be raised on the third day." And they
were overwhelmed with grief.

Ch 16-20
See RG
399-401

**Payment of the Temple Tax** [24] t*When they
came to Capernaum, the collectors of the tem-
ple tax approached Peter and said, "Doesn't
your teacher pay the temple tax?" [25]*"Yes," he
said. When he came into the house, before he
had time to speak, Jesus asked him, "What is
your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings
of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their
subjects or from foreigners?" [26]*When he said,
"From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the
subjects are exempt. [27]*But that we may not
offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and
take the first fish that comes up. Open its
mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the
temple tax. Give that to them for me and for
you."

## CHAPTER 18

**The Greatest in the Kingdom** [1] u*At that
time the disciples approached Jesus and said,
"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
[2]He called a child over, placed it in their midst,
[3] v*and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you
turn and become like children, you will not

**17, 20:** The entire verse is an addition of Matthew who (according to the better attested text) omits the reason given for the disciples' inability in Mk 9, 29. **Little faith:** see the note on 6, 30. **Faith the size of a mustard seed . . . and it will move:** a combination of a Q saying (cf Lk 17, 6) with a Marcan saying (cf Mk 11, 23).

**17, 21:** Some manuscripts add, "But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting"; this is a variant of the better reading of Mk 9, 29.

**17, 22–23:** The second passion prediction (cf 16, 21–23) is the least detailed of the three and may be the earliest. In the Marcan parallel the disciples do not understand (9, 32); here they understand and are **overwhelmed with grief** at the prospect of Jesus' death (23).

**17, 24–27:** Like 14, 28–31 and 16, 16b-19, this episode comes from Matthew's special material on Peter. Although the question of **the collectors** concerns Jesus' payment of **the temple tax,** it is put to **Peter.** It is he who receives instruction from Jesus about freedom from the obligation of payment and yet why it should be made. The means of doing so is provided miraculously. The pericope deals with a problem of Matthew's church, whether its members should pay the temple tax, and the answer is given through a word of Jesus conveyed to Peter. Some scholars see here an example of the teaching authority of Peter exercised in the name of Jesus (see 16, 19). The specific problem was a Jewish Christian one and may have arisen when the Matthean church was composed largely of that group.

**17, 24: The temple tax:** before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 every male Jew above nineteen years of age was obliged to make an annual contribution to its upkeep (cf Ex 30, 11–16; Neh 10, 33). After the destruction the Romans imposed upon Jews the obligation of paying that tax for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. There is disagreement about which period the story deals with.

**17, 25: From their subjects or from foreigners?:** the Greek word here translated **subjects** literally means "sons."

**17, 26: Then the subjects are exempt:** just as **subjects** are not bound by laws applying to **foreigners,** neither are Jesus and his disciples, who belong to the kingdom of heaven, bound by the duty of paying the temple tax imposed on those who are not of the kingdom. If the Greek is translated "sons," the freedom of Jesus, the Son of God, and of his disciples, children ("sons") of the kingdom (cf 13, 38), is even more clear.

**17, 27: That we may not offend them:** though they are **exempt** (26), Jesus and his disciples are to avoid giving offense; therefore the tax is to be paid. **A coin worth twice the temple tax:** literally, "a stater," a Greek coin worth two double drachmas. Two double drachmas were equal to the Jewish shekel and the tax was a half-shekel. **For me and for you:** not only Jesus but Peter pays the tax, and this example serves as a standard for the conduct of all the disciples.

**18, 1–35:** This discourse of the fourth book of the gospel is often called the "church order" discourse, but it lacks most of the considerations usually connected with church order, such as various offices in the church and the duties of each, and deals principally with the relations that must obtain among the members of the church. Beginning with the warning that greatness in **the kingdom of heaven** is measured not by rank or power but by childlikeness (1–5), it deals with the care that the disciples must take not to cause the **little ones to sin** or to neglect them if they stray from the community (6–14), the correction of members who sin (15–18), the efficacy of the prayer of the disciples because of the presence of Jesus (19–20), and the forgiveness that must be repeatedly extended to sinful members who repent (21–35).

**18, 1:** The initiative is taken not by Jesus as in the Marcan parallel (9, 33–34) but by the disciples. **Kingdom of heaven:** this may mean **the kingdom** in its fullness, i.e., after the parousia and the final judgment. But what follows about causes of sin, church discipline, and forgiveness, all dealing with the present age, suggests that the question has to do with rank also in the church, where **the kingdom** is manifested here and now, although only partially and by anticipation; see the notes on 3, 2; 4, 17.

**18, 3: Become like children:** the child is held up as a model for the disciples not because of any supposed innocence of children but because of their complete dependence on, and trust in, their parents. So must the disciples be, in respect to God.

r 21, 21; Lk 17, 6; 1 Cor 13, 2. s 16, 21; 20, 18–19. t Ex 30, 11–16; Neh 10, 33. u Mk 9, 36–37; Lk 9, 46–48. v 19, 14; Mk 10, 15; Lk 18, 17.

enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] [w]Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the
kingdom of heaven. [5]*And whoever receives
one child such as this in my name receives me.

**Temptations to Sin** [6] [x]*"Whoever causes one
of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it
would be better for him to have a great millstone
hung around his neck and to be drowned in the
depths of the sea. [7]*Woe to the world because of
things that cause sin! Such things must come,
but woe to the one through whom they come!
[8] [y]*If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it
off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter
into life maimed or crippled than with two
hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire.
[9]And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and
throw it away. It is better for you to enter into
life with one eye than with two eyes to be
thrown into fiery Gehenna.

**The Parable of the Lost Sheep** [10] [z]*"See that
you do not despise one of these little ones, for I
say to you that their angels in heaven always
look upon the face of my heavenly Father.* [[11]]* [a]
[12]What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred
sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not
leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search
of the stray? [13]And if he finds it, amen, I say to
you, he rejoices more over it than over the
ninety-nine that did not stray. [14]In just the same
way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father
that one of these little ones be lost.

**A Brother Who Sins** [15] [b]*"If your brother sins
[against you], go and tell him his fault between
you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have
won over your brother. [16] [c]*If he does not listen,
take one or two others along with you, so that
'every fact may be established on the testimony
of two or three witnesses.' [17] [d]*If he refuses to

**18, 5:** Cf 10, 40.

**18, 6: One of these little ones:** the thought passes from the child of vv 2–4 to the disciples, **little ones** because of their becoming **like children.** It is difficult to know whether this is a designation of all who are disciples or of those who are insignificant in contrast to others, e.g., the leaders of the community. Since apart from this chapter the designation **little ones** occurs in Mt only in 10, 42 where it means disciples as such, that is its more likely meaning here. **Who believe in me:** since discipleship is impossible without at least some degree of faith, this further specification seems superfluous. However, it serves to indicate that the warning against causing a **little one** to sin is principally directed against whatever would lead such a one to a weakening or loss of faith. The Greek verb **skandalizein,** here translated **causes . . . to sin,** means literally "causes to stumble"; what the stumbling is depends on the context. It is used of falling away from faith in 13, 21. According to the better reading of Mk 9, 42, **in me** is a Matthean addition to the Marcan source. **It would be better . . . depths of the sea:** cf Mk 9, 42.

**18, 7:** This is a Q saying; cf Lk 17, 1. The inevitability of **things that cause sin** (literally, "scandals") does not take away the responsibility of **the one through whom they come.**

**18, 8–9:** These verses are a doublet of 5, 29–30. In that context they have to do with causes of sexual sin. As in the Marcan source from which they have been drawn (Mk 9, 42–48), they differ from the first warning about scandal, which deals with causing another person to sin, for they concern what **causes** oneself **to sin** and they do not seem to be related to another's loss of faith, as the first warning is. It is difficult to know how Matthew understood the logical connection between these verses and vv 6–7.

**18, 10–14:** The first and last verses are peculiar to Mt. The parable itself comes from Q; see Lk 15, 3–7. In Lk it serves as justification for Jesus' table-companionship with sinners; here, it is an exhortation for the disciples to seek out fellow disciples who have gone **astray.** Not only must no one cause a fellow disciple to sin, but those who have strayed must be sought out and, if possible, brought back to the community. The joy of the shepherd on finding the sheep, though not absent in Mt (13), is more emphasized in Lk. By his addition of vv 10 and 14, Matthew has drawn out explicitly the application of the parable to the care of the **little ones.**

**18, 10: Their angels in heaven . . . my heavenly Father:** for the Jewish belief in angels as guardians of nations and individuals, see Dn 10, 13.20–21; Tb 5, 4–7; 1QH 5, 20–22; as intercessors who present the prayers of human beings to God, see Tb 13, 12.15. The high worth of the **little ones** is indicated by their being represented before God by these heavenly beings.

**18, 11:** Some manuscripts add, "For the Son of Man has come to save what was lost"; cf 9, 13. This is practically identical with Lk 19, 10 and is probably a copyist's addition from that source.

**18, 15–20:** Passing from the duty of Christian disciples, toward those who have strayed from their number, the discourse now turns to how they are to deal with one who sins and yet remains within the community. First there is to be private correction (15); if this is unsuccessful, further correction before **two or three witnesses** (16); if this fails, the matter is to be brought before the assembled community (**the church**), and if the sinner refuses to attend to the correction of **the church,** he is to be expelled (17). The church's judgment will be ratified **in heaven,** i.e., by God (18). This three-step process of correction corresponds, though not exactly, to the procedure of the Qumran community; see 1QS 5, 25—6, 1; 6, 24—7, 25; CD 9, 2–8. The section ends with a saying about the favorable response of God to prayer, even to that of a very small number, for Jesus is in the midst of any gathering of his disciples, however small (19–20). Whether this prayer has anything to do with the preceding judgment is uncertain.

**18, 15: Your brother:** a fellow disciple; see 23, 8. The bracketed words, **against you,** are widely attested but they are not in the important codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus or in some other textual witnesses. Their omission broadens the type of sin in question. **Won over:** literally, "gained."

**18, 16:** Cf Dt 19, 15.

**18, 17: The church:** the second of the only two instances of this word in the gospels; see the note on 16, 18. Here it refers not to the entire **church** of Jesus, as in 16, 18, but to the local congregation. **Treat him . . . a Gentile or a tax collector:** just as the observant Jew avoided the company of Gentiles and tax collectors, so must the congregation of Christian disciples separate

w 23, 12. x Mk 9, 42; Lk 17, 1–2. y 5, 29–30; Mk 9, 43–47. z Ez 34, 1–3.16; Lk 15, 3–7. a Lk 19, 10. b Lv 19, 17; Sir 19, 13; Gal 6, 1. c Dt 19, 15; Jn 8, 17; 1 Tm 5, 19. d 1 Cor 5, 1–13.

listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to
listen even to the church, then treat him as you
would a Gentile or a tax collector. 18 e*Amen, I
say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be
bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on
earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 f*Again,
[amen,] I say to you, if two of you agree on earth
about anything for which they are to pray, it shall
be granted to them by my heavenly Father.
20 g*For where two or three are gathered to-
gether in my name, there am I in the midst of
them."

**The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**

21 h*Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if
my brother sins against me, how often must I
forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22*Jesus
answered, "I say to you, not seven times but
seventy-seven times. 23 iThat is why the king-
dom of heaven may be likened to a king who
decided to settle accounts with his servants.
24*When he began the accounting, a debtor was
brought before him who owed him a huge
amount. 25Since he had no way of paying it
back, his master ordered him to be sold, along
with his wife, his children, and all his property,
in payment of the debt. 26*At that, the servant
fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient
with me, and I will pay you back in full.'
27Moved with compassion the master of that
servant let him go and forgave him the loan.
28*When that servant had left, he found one of
his fellow servants who owed him a much
smaller amount. He seized him and started to
choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you
owe.' 29Falling to his knees, his fellow servant
begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay
you back.' 30But he refused. Instead, he had him
put in prison until he paid back the debt. 31Now
when his fellow servants saw what had hap-
pened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to
their master and reported the whole affair. 32His
master summoned him and said to him, 'You
wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt
because you begged me to. 33 jShould you not
have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had
pity on you?' 34*Then in anger his master
handed him over to the torturers until he should
pay back the whole debt. 35 k*So will my heav-
enly Father do to you, unless each of you
forgives his brother from his heart."

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itself from the arrogantly sinful member who refuses to repent even when convicted of his sin by the whole **church**. Such a one is to be set outside the fellowship of the community. The harsh language about **Gentile** and **tax collector** probably reflects a stage of the Matthean **church** when it was principally composed of Jewish Christians. That time had long since passed, but the principle of exclusion for such a sinner remained. Paul makes a similar demand for excommunication in 1 Cor 5, 1–13.

**18, 18:** Except for the plural of the verbs **bind** and **loose**, this verse is practically identical with 16, 19b, and many scholars understand it as granting to all the disciples what was previously given to Peter alone. For a different view, based on the different contexts of the two verses, see the note on 16, 19.

**18, 19–20:** Some take these verses as applying to prayer on the occasion of the church's gathering to deal with the sinner of v 17. Unless an **a fortiori** argument is supposed, this seems unlikely. God's answer to the prayer of **two or three** envisages a different situation from one that involves the entire congregation. In addition, the object of this prayer is expressed in most general terms as **anything for which they are to pray.**

**18, 20: For where two or three . . . midst of them:** the presence of Jesus guarantees the efficacy of the prayer. This saying is similar to one attributed to a rabbi executed in A.D. 135 at the time of the second Jewish revolt: " . . . When two sit and there are between them the words of the Torah, the divine presence (Shekinah) rests upon them" (**Pirqê 'Abôt** 3, 3).

**18, 21–35:** The final section of the discourse deals with the forgiveness that the disciples are to give to their fellow disciples who sin against them. To the question of Peter how often forgiveness is to be granted (21), Jesus answers that it is to be given without limit (22) and illustrates this with the parable of the unmerciful servant (23–34), warning that his **heavenly Father** will give those who do not forgive the same treatment as that given to the unmerciful servant (35). Verses 21–22 correspond to Lk 17, 4; the parable and the final warning are peculiar to Mt. That the parable did not originally belong to this context is suggested by the fact that it really does not deal with repeated forgiveness, which is the point of Peter's question and Jesus' reply.

**18, 22: Seventy-seven times:** the Greek corresponds exactly to the LXX of Gn 4, 24. There is probably an allusion, by contrast, to the limitless vengeance of Lamech in the Gn text. In any case, what is demanded of the disciples is limitless forgiveness.

**18, 24: A huge amount:** literally, "ten thousand talents." The talent was a unit of coinage of high but varying value depending on its metal (gold, silver, copper) and its place of origin. It is mentioned in the New Testament only here and in 25, 14–30.

**18, 26: Pay you back in full:** an empty promise, given the size of the debt.

**18, 28: A much smaller amount:** literally, "a hundred denarii." A denarius was the normal daily wage of a laborer. The difference between the two debts is enormous and brings out the absurdity of the conduct of the Christian who has received the great forgiveness of God and yet refuses to forgive the relatively minor offenses done to him.

**18, 34:** Since the debt is so great as to be unpayable, the punishment will be endless.

**18, 35:** The Father's forgiveness, already given, will be withdrawn at the final judgment for those who have not imitated his forgiveness by their own.

e 16, 19; Jn 20, 23. f 7, 7–8; Jn 15, 7. g 1 Cor 5, 4. h 6, 12; Lk 17, 4. i 25, 19. j Sir 28, 4. k 6, 15; Jas 2, 13.

# VI: Ministry in Judea and Jerusalem

## CHAPTER 19

**Marriage and Divorce** [1]*When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan. [2]Great crowds followed him, and he cured them there. [3]*l**Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" [4]*m**He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' [5]*n*and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [6]So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." [7]*o**They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?" [8]He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. [9]*p**I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery." [10][His] disciples said to him, "If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." [11]*He answered, "Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted. [12]*Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it."

Ch 16–20
See RG
399–401

**19, 1—23, 39:** The narrative section of the fifth book of the gospel. The first part (19, 1—20, 34) has for its setting the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem; the second (21, 1—23, 39) deals with Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem up to the final great discourse of the gospel (chs 24–25). Matthew follows the Marcan sequence of events, though adding material both special to this gospel and drawn from Q. The second part ends with the denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (23, 1–36) followed by Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (37–39). This long and important speech raises a problem for the view that Mt is structured around five other discourses of Jesus (see Introduction) and that this one has no such function in the gospel. However, it is to be noted that this speech lacks the customary concluding formula that follows the five discourses (see the note on 7, 28), and that those discourses are all addressed either exclusively (chs 10, 18, 24–25) or primarily (chs 5–7, 13) to the disciples, whereas this is addressed primarily to the scribes and Pharisees (13–36). Consequently, it seems plausible to maintain that the evangelist did not intend to give it the structural importance of the five other discourses, and that, in spite of its being composed of sayings-material, it belongs to the narrative section of this book. In that regard, it is similar to the sayings-material of 11, 7–30. Some have proposed that Matthew wished to regard it as part of the final discourse of chs 24–25, but the intervening material (24, 1–4) and the change in matter and style of those chapters do not support that view.

**19, 1–12:** In giving Jesus' teaching on divorce (3–9), Matthew here follows his Marcan source (10, 2–12) as he does Q in 5, 31–32 (cf Lk 16, 18). Verses 10–12 are peculiar to Mt.

**19, 1: When Jesus finished these words:** see the note on 7, 28–29. **The district of Judea across the Jordan:** an inexact designation of the territory. Judea did not extend **across the Jordan;** the territory east of the river was Perea. The route to Jerusalem by way of Perea avoided passage through Samaria.

**19, 3: Tested him:** the verb is used of attempts of Jesus' opponents to embarrass him by challenging him to do something they think impossible (16, 1; Mk 8, 11; Lk 11, 16) or by having him say something that they can use against him (22, 18.35; Mk 10, 2; 12, 15). **For any cause whatever:** this is peculiar to Mt and has been interpreted by some as meaning that Jesus was being asked to take sides in the dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shammai on the reasons for divorce, the latter holding a stricter position than the former. It is unlikely, however, that to ask Jesus' opinion about the differing views of two Jewish schools, both highly respected, could be described as "testing" him, for the reason indicated above.

**19, 4–6:** Matthew recasts his Marcan source, omitting Jesus' question about Moses' command (Mk 10, 3) and having him recall at once two Genesis texts that show the will and purpose of **the Creator** in making **human beings male and female** (Gn 1, 27), namely, that **a man** may **be joined to his wife** in marriage in the intimacy of **one flesh** (Gn 2, 24). **What God has** thus **joined** must not be separated by any **human being.** (The NAB translation of the Hebrew *bāśār* of Gn 2, 24 as "body" rather than "flesh" obscures the reference of Mt to that text.)

**19, 7:** See Dt 24, 1–4.

**19, 9:** Moses' concession to human sinfulness (**the hardness of your hearts,** 8) is repudiated by Jesus, and the original will of the Creator is reaffirmed against that concession. (**Unless the marriage is unlawful**): see the note on 5, 31–32. There is some evidence suggesting that Jesus' absolute prohibition of divorce was paralleled in the Qumran community (see 11QTemple 57, 17–19; CD 4, 12b—5, 14). Matthew removes Mark's setting of this verse as spoken to the disciples alone "in the house" (Mk 10, 10) and also his extension of the divorce prohibition to the case of a woman's divorcing her husband (10, 12), probably because in Palestine, unlike the places where Roman and Greek law prevailed, the woman was not allowed to initiate the divorce.

**19, 11: [This] word:** probably the disciples' **it is better not to marry** (10). Jesus agrees but says that celibacy is not for all but only for those **to whom that is granted** by God.

**19, 12: Incapable of marriage:** literally, "eunuchs." Three classes are mentioned, eunuchs from birth, eunuchs by castration, and those who have voluntarily **renounced marriage** (literally, "have made themselves eunuchs") **for the sake of the kingdom,** i.e., to devote themselves entirely to its service. Some scholars take the last class to be those who have been divorced by their spouses and have refused to enter another marriage. But it is more likely that it is rather those who have chosen never to marry, since that suits better the optional nature of the decision: **whoever can . . . ought to accept it.**

l Mk 10, 2–12. m Gn 1, 27. n Gn 2, 24; 1 Cor 6, 16; Eph 5, 31. o Dt 24, 1–4. p 5, 32; Lk 16, 18; 1 Cor 7, 10–11.

**Blessing of the Children** 13 q*Then children
were brought to him that he might lay his hands
on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them,
14 r*but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me,
and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of
heaven belongs to such as these." 15 After he
placed his hands on them, he went away.

**The Rich Young Man** 16 s*Now someone ap-
proached him and said, "Teacher, what good
must I do to gain eternal life?" 17 *He answered
him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There
is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into
life, keep the commandments." 18 t*He asked
him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, " 'You
shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you
shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness;
19 honor your father and your mother'; and 'you
shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " 20 *The
young man said to him, "All of these I have ob-
served. What do I still lack?" 21 u*Jesus said to
him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you
have and give to [the] poor, and you will have
treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."
22 When the young man heard this statement, he
went away sad, for he had many possessions.
23 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say
to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter
the kingdom of heaven. 24 v Again I say to you, it is
easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a
needle than for one who is rich to enter the king-
dom of God." 25 *When the disciples heard this,
they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then
can be saved?" 26 w Jesus looked at them and said,
"For human beings this is impossible, but for God
all things are possible." 27 x Then Peter said to him
in reply, "We have given up everything and fol-
lowed you. What will there be for us?" 28 y*Jesus
said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who
have followed me, in the new age, when the Son
of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will your-
selves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve
tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has given up
houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or
children or lands for the sake of my name will
receive a hundred times more, and will inherit

**19, 13–15:** This account is understood by some as intended to justify the practice of infant baptism. That interpretation is based principally on the command not to **prevent** the children from coming, since that word sometimes has a baptismal connotation in the New Testament; see Acts 8, 36.

**19, 16–30:** Cf Mk 10, 17–31. This story does not set up a "two-tier" morality, that of those who seek (only) **eternal life** (16) and that of those who **wish to be perfect** (21). It speaks rather of the obstacle that riches constitute for the following of Jesus and of the impossibility, humanly speaking, for one who has **many possessions** (22) **to enter the kingdom** (24). Actual renunciation of riches is not demanded of all; Matthew counts the rich Joseph of Arimathea as a disciple of Jesus (27, 57). But only the poor in spirit (5, 3) can **enter the kingdom** and, as here, such poverty may entail the sacrifice of one's **possessions**. The Twelve, who **have given up everything** (27) to follow Jesus, will have as their reward a share in Jesus' (the Son of Man's) **judging the twelve tribes of Israel** (28), and all who have similarly sacrificed family or property for his sake **will inherit eternal life** (29).

**19, 16: Gain eternal life:** this is equivalent to "entering into life" (17) and "being saved" (25); the **life** is that of the new age after the final judgment (see 25, 46). It probably is also equivalent here to "entering the kingdom of heaven" (23) or "the kingdom of God" (24), but see the notes on 3, 2; 4, 17; 18, 1 for the wider reference of **the kingdom** in Mt.

**19, 17:** By Matthew's reformulation of the Marcan question and reply (Mk 10, 17–18) Jesus' repudiation of the term "good" for himself has been softened. Yet the Marcan assertion that "no one is good but God alone" stands, with only unimportant verbal modification.

**19, 18–19:** The first five commandments cited are from the Decalogue (see Ex 20, 12–16; Dt 5, 16–20). Matthew omits Mark's "you shall not defraud" (10, 19; see Dt 24, 14) and adds Lv 19, 18. This combination of commandments of the Decalogue with Lv 19, 18 is partially the same as Paul's enumeration of the demands of Christian morality in Rom 13, 9.

**19, 20: Young man:** in Mt alone of the synoptics the questioner is said to be a **young man**; thus the Marcan "from my youth" (10, 20) is omitted.

**19, 21: If you wish to be perfect: to be perfect** is demanded of all Christians; see 5, 48. In the case of this man, it involves selling his possessions and giving to the poor; only so can he **follow** Jesus.

**19, 23–24:** Riches are an obstacle to entering **the kingdom** that cannot be overcome by human power. The comparison with the impossibility of a camel's passing **through the eye of a needle** should not be mitigated by such suppositions as that **the eye of a needle** means a low or narrow gate. **The kingdom of God:** as in 12, 28; 21, 31.43, instead of Mt's usual **kingdom of heaven.**

**19, 25–26:** See the note on Mk 10, 23–27.

**19, 28:** This saying, directed to the Twelve, is from Q; see Lk 22, 29–30. **The new age:** the Greek word here translated "new age" occurs in the New Testament only here and in Ti 3, 5. Literally, it means "rebirth" or "regeneration," and is used in Ti of spiritual rebirth through baptism. Here it means the "rebirth" effected by the coming of the kingdom. Since that coming has various stages (see the notes on 3, 2; 4, 17), **the new age** could be taken as referring to the time after the resurrection when the Twelve will govern the true Israel, i.e., the church of Jesus. (For "judge" in the sense of "govern," cf Jgs 12, 8.9.11; 15, 20; 16, 31; Ps 2, 10). But since it is connected here with the time when **the Son of Man** will be **seated on his throne of glory,** language that Matthew uses in 25, 31 for the time of final judgment, it is more likely that what the Twelve are promised is that they will be joined with Jesus then in judging the people of Israel.

q Mk 10, 13–16; Lk 18, 15–17. r 18, 3; Acts 8, 36. s Mk 10, 17–31; Lk 18, 18–30. t Ex 20, 12–16; Dt 5, 16–20 / Lv 19, 18; Rom 13, 9. u 5, 48; 6, 20. v 7, 14. w Gn 18, 14; Jb 42, 2; Lk 1, 37. x 4, 20.22. y 25, 31; Dn 7, 9.22; Lk 22, 30; Rv 3, 21; 20, 4.

eternal life. [30] [z]*But many who are first will be
last, and the last will be first.

## CHAPTER 20

**The Workers in the Vineyard** [1]*"The king-
dom of heaven is like a landowner who went out
at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2]After
agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he
sent them into his vineyard. [3]Going out about
nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the
marketplace, [4]*and he said to them, 'You too go
into my vineyard, and I will give you what is
just.' [5]So they went off. [And] he went out again
around noon, and around three o'clock, and did
likewise. [6]Going out about five o'clock, he
found others standing around, and said to them,
'Why do you stand here idle all day?' [7]They
answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He
said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.'
[8] [a]*When it was evening the owner of the
vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the
laborers and give them their pay, beginning with
the last and ending with the first.' [9]When those
who had started about five o'clock came, each
received the usual daily wage. [10]So when the
first came, they thought that they would receive
more, but each of them also got the usual wage.
[11]And on receiving it they grumbled against the
landowner, [12]saying, 'These last ones worked
only one hour, and you have made them equal
to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.'
[13]*He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I
am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me
for the usual daily wage? [14]*Take what is yours
and go. What if I wish to give this last one the
same as you? [15][Or] am I not free to do as I wish
with my own money? Are you envious because I
am generous?' [16]*Thus, the last will be first, and
the first will be last."

Ch 16–20
See RG
399–401

**The Third Prediction of the Passion** [17] [b]*As
Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the
twelve [disciples] aside by themselves, and said to
them on the way, [18]"Behold, we are going up to
Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed
over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they
will condemn him to death, [19]and hand him over
to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and
crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

**The Request of James and John** [20] [c]*Then
the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached
him with her sons and did him homage, wishing
to ask him for something. [21]He said to her,
"What do you wish?" She answered him, "Com-
mand that these two sons of mine sit, one at
your right and the other at your left, in your
kingdom." [22]*Jesus said in reply, "You do not
know what you are asking. Can you drink the
cup that I am going to drink?" They said to him,
"We can." [23]He replied, "My cup you will

**19, 30:** Different interpretations have been given to this saying, which comes from Mk 10, 31. In view of Matthew's associating it with the following parable (20, 1–15) and substantially repeating it (in reverse order) at the end of that parable (20, 16), it may be that his meaning is that all who respond to the call of Jesus, at whatever time (**first** or **last**), will be the same in respect to inheriting the benefits of the kingdom, which is the gift of God.

**20, 1–16:** This parable is peculiar to Mt. It is difficult to know whether the evangelist composed it or received it as part of his traditional material and, if the latter is the case, what its original reference was. In its present context its close association with 19, 30 suggests that its teaching is the equality of all the disciples in the reward of inheriting eternal life.

**20, 4: What is just:** although the wage is not stipulated as in the case of those first hired, it will be fair.

**20, 8: Beginning with the last . . . the first:** this element of the parable has no other purpose than to show how **the first** knew what **the last** were given (12).

**20, 13: I am not cheating you:** literally, "I am not treating you unjustly."

**20, 14–15:** The owner's conduct involves no violation of justice (4.13), and that all the workers receive the same wage is due only to his generosity to the latest arrivals; the resentment of the first comes from envy.

**20, 16:** See the note on 19, 30.

**20, 17–19:** Cf Mk 10, 32–34. This is the third and the most detailed of the passion predictions (16, 21–23; 17, 22–23). It speaks of Jesus' being **handed over to the Gentiles** (27, 2), his being **mocked** (27, 27–30), **scourged** (27, 26), and **crucified** (27, 31.35). In all but the last of these points Matthew agrees with his Marcan source, but whereas Mk speaks of Jesus' being killed (10, 34), Mt has the specific **to be . . . crucified.**

**20, 20–28:** Cf Mk 10, 35–45. The request of the sons of Zebedee, made through their mother, for the highest places of honor in the **kingdom,** and the indignation of the other **ten** disciples at this request, show that neither **the two brothers** nor the others have understood that what makes for greatness in the kingdom is not lordly power but humble service. Jesus gives the example, and his ministry of service will reach its highest point when he gives his life for the deliverance of the human race from sin.

**20, 20–21:** The reason for Matthew's making **the mother** the petitioner (cf Mk 10, 35) is not clear. Possibly he intends an allusion to Bathsheba's seeking the kingdom for Solomon; see 1 Kgs 1, 11–21. **Your kingdom:** see the note on 16, 28.

**20, 22: You do not know what you are asking:** the Greek verbs are plural and, with the rest of the verse, indicate that the answer is addressed not to the woman but to her sons. **Drink the cup:** see the note on Mk 10, 38–40. Matthew omits the Marcan "or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized" (10, 38).

z 20, 16. a Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 15. b 16, 21; 17, 22–23; Mk 10, 32–34; Lk 18, 31–33. c Mk 10, 35–45.

indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left
[, this] is not mine to give but is for those for
whom it has been prepared by my Father."
24 *d*When the ten heard this, they became indig-
Ch 21–25 See RG 401–402
nant at the two brothers. 25 But Jesus summoned
them and said, "You know that the rulers of the
Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones
make their authority over them felt. 26 But it
shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever
wishes to be great among you shall be your
servant; 27 *e*whoever wishes to be first among
you shall be your slave. 28 *f**Just so, the Son of
Man did not come to be served but to serve and
to give his life as a ransom for many."

**The Healing of Two Blind Men** 29 *g**As they
left Jericho, a great crowd followed him.
30 *h**Two blind men were sitting by the roadside,
and when they heard that Jesus was passing by,
they cried out, "[Lord,] Son of David, have pity
on us!" 31 The crowd warned them to be silent,
but they called out all the more, "Lord, Son of
David, have pity on us!" 32 Jesus stopped and
called them and said, "What do you want me to
do for you?" 33 They answered him, "Lord, let
our eyes be opened." 34 Moved with pity, Jesus
touched their eyes. Immediately they received
their sight, and followed him.

## CHAPTER 21

**The Entry into Jerusalem** 1 *i**When they
drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on
the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,
2 *saying to them, "Go into the village opposite
you, and immediately you will find an ass
tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and
bring them here to me. 3 And if anyone should
say anything to you, reply, 'The master has need
of them.' Then he will send them at once."
4 *This happened so that what had been spoken
through the prophet might be fulfilled:

5 *j*"Say to daughter Zion,
'Behold, your king comes to you,
meek and riding on an ass,
and on a colt, the foal of a beast of
burden.' "

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered
them. 7 *They brought the ass and the colt and
laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon
them. 8 *k**The very large crowd spread their

**20, 28: Ransom:** this noun, which occurs in the New Testament only here and in the Marcan parallel (Mk 10, 45), does not necessarily express the idea of liberation by payment of some price. The cognate verb is used frequently in the LXX of God's liberating Israel from Egypt or from Babylonia after the Exile; see Ex 6, 6; 15, 13; Ps 77 (76 LXX), 16; Is 43, 1; 44, 22. The liberation brought by Jesus' death will be **for many;** cf Is 53, 12. **Many** does not mean that some are excluded, but is a Semitism designating the collectivity who benefit from the service of the one, and is equivalent to "all." While there are few verbal contacts between this saying and the fourth Servant Song (Is 52, 13—53, 12), the ideas of that passage are reflected here.

**20, 29–34:** The cure of the blind men is probably symbolic of what will happen to the disciples, now blind to the meaning of Jesus' passion and to the necessity of their sharing his suffering. As the men are given sight, so, after the resurrection, will the disciples come to see that to which they are now blind. Matthew has abbreviated his Marcan source (10, 46–52) and has made Mk's one man two. Such doubling is characteristic of this gospel; see 8, 28–34 (// Mk 5, 1–20) and the note on 9, 27–31.

**20, 30: [Lord]:** some important textual witnesses omit this, but that may be because copyists assimilated this verse to 9, 27. **Son of David:** see the note on 9, 27.

**21, 1–11:** Jesus' coming to Jerusalem is in accordance with the divine will that he must go there (cf 16, 21) to suffer, die, and be raised. He prepares for his entry into the city in such a way as to make it a fulfillment of the prophecy of Zec 9, 9 (2) that emphasizes the humility of the **king** who **comes** (5). That prophecy, absent from the Marcan parallel account (11, 1–11) although found also in the Johannine account of the entry (12, 15), is the center of the Matthean story. During the procession from Bethphage to Jerusalem, Jesus is acclaimed as the Davidic messianic king by the crowds who accompany him (9). On his arrival **the whole city was shaken,** and to the inquiry of the amazed populace about Jesus' identity the crowds with him reply that he is **the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee** (10.11).

**21, 1: Bethphage:** a village that can no longer be certainly identified. Mk mentions it before Bethany (11, 1), which suggests that it lay to the east of the latter. **The Mount of Olives:** the hill east of Jerusalem that is spoken of in Zec 14, 4 as the place where the Lord will come to rescue Jerusalem from the enemy nations.

**21, 2: An ass tethered, and a colt with her:** instead of the one animal of Mk 11, 2, Mt has two, as demanded by his understanding of Zec 9, 9.

**21, 4–5: The prophet:** this fulfillment citation is actually composed of two distinct Old Testament texts, Is 62, 11 **(Say to daughter Zion)** and Zec 9, 9. The ass and the **colt** are the same animal in the prophecy, mentioned twice in different ways, the common Hebrew literary device of poetic parallelism. That Matthew takes them as two is one of the reasons why some scholars think that he was a Gentile rather than a Jewish Christian who would presumably not make that mistake (see Introduction).

**21, 7: Upon them:** upon the two animals; an awkward picture resulting from Matthew's misunderstanding of the prophecy.

**21, 8: Spread . . . on the road:** cf 2 Kgs 9, 13. There is a similarity between the cutting and strewing of the **branches** and the festivities of Tabernacles (Lv 23, 39–40); see also 2 Mc 10, 5–8 where the celebration of the rededication of the temple is compared to that of Tabernacles.

d Lk 22, 25–27. e Mk 9, 35. f 26, 28; Is 53, 12; Rom 5, 6; 1 Tm 2, 6. g Mk 10, 46–52; Lk 18, 35–43. h 9, 27. i Mk 11, 1–11; Lk 19, 28–38; Jn 12, 12–15. j Is 62, 11; Zec 9, 9. k 2 Kgs 9, 13.

cloaks on the road, while others cut branches
from the trees and strewed them on the road.
9 *l**The crowds preceding him and those follow-
ing kept crying out and saying:

"Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord;
hosanna in the highest."

10*And when he entered Jerusalem the whole
city was shaken and asked, "Who is this?"
11*And the crowds replied, "This is Jesus the
prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."

**The Cleansing of the Temple** 12 *m n**Jesus
entered the temple area and drove out all those
engaged in selling and buying there. He over-
turned the tables of the money changers and the
seats of those who were selling doves. 13 *o**And
he said to them, "It is written:

'My house shall be a house of prayer,'
but you are making it a den of thieves."

14 *p**The blind and the lame approached him in
the temple area, and he cured them. 15*When
the chief priests and the scribes saw the won-
drous things he was doing, and the children
crying out in the temple area, "Hosanna to the
Son of David," they were indignant 16 *q**and said
to him, "Do you hear what they are saying?"
Jesus said to them, "Yes; and have you never
read the text, 'Out of the mouths of infants and
nurslings you have brought forth praise'?" 17And
leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany,
and there he spent the night.

**The Cursing of the Fig Tree** 18 *r**When he
was going back to the city in the morning, he
was hungry. 19 *s*Seeing a fig tree by the road, he
went over to it, but found nothing on it except
leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever
come from you again." And immediately the fig
tree withered. 20When the disciples saw this,
they were amazed and said, "How was it that
the fig tree withered immediately?" 21 *t**Jesus
said to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, if you
have faith and do not waver, not only will you
do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if
you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and
thrown into the sea,' it will be done.
22 *u*Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith,
you will receive."

**21, 9: Hosanna:** the Hebrew means "(O LORD) grant salvation"; see Ps 118, 25, but that invocation had become an acclamation of jubilation and welcome. **Blessed is he . . . in the name of the Lord:** see Ps 118, 26 and the note on Jn 12, 13. **In the highest:** probably only an intensification of the acclamation, although **Hosanna in the highest** could be taken as a prayer, "May God save (him)."

**21, 10: Was shaken:** in the gospels this verb is peculiar to Mt where it is used also of the earthquake at the time of the crucifixion (27, 51) and of the terror of the guards of Jesus' tomb at the appearance of the angel (28, 4). For Matthew's use of the cognate noun, see the note on 8, 24.

**21, 11: The prophet:** see 16, 14 ("one of the prophets") and 21, 46.

**21, 12–17:** Matthew changes the order of Mk (11, 11.12.15) and places the cleansing of the temple on the same day as the entry into Jerusalem, immediately after it. The activities going on in **the temple area** were not secular but connected with the temple worship. Thus Jesus' attack on those so engaged and his charge that they were **making God's house of prayer a den of thieves** (12–13) constituted a claim to authority over the religious practices of Israel and were a challenge to the priestly authorities. Verses 14–17 are peculiar to Mt. Jesus' healings and his countenancing the children's cries of praise rouse the indignation of **the chief priests and the scribes** (15). These two groups appear in the infancy narrative (2, 4) and have been mentioned in the first and third passion predictions (16, 21; 20, 18). Now, as the passion approaches, they come on the scene again, exhibiting their hostility to Jesus.

**21, 12:** These activities were carried on in the court of the Gentiles, the outermost court of **the temple area.** Animals for sacrifice were sold; the **doves** were for those who could not afford a more expensive offering; see Lv 5, 7. **Tables of the money changers:** only the coinage of Tyre could be used for the purchases; other money had to be exchanged for that.

**21, 13: 'My house . . . prayer':** cf Is 56, 7. Matthew omits the final words of the quotation, "for all peoples" ("all nations"), possibly because for him the worship of the God of Israel by all nations belongs to the time after the resurrection; see 28, 19. **A den of thieves:** the phrase is taken from Jer 7, 11.

**21, 14: The blind and the lame:** according to 2 Sm 5, 8 (LXX) **the blind and the lame** were forbidden to enter "the house of the Lord," the temple. These are the last of Jesus' healings in Mt.

**21, 15: The wondrous things:** the healings.

**21, 16: 'Out of the mouths . . . praise':** cf Ps 8, 3 (LXX).

**21, 18–22:** In Mk the effect of Jesus' cursing the fig tree is not immediate; see 11, 14.20. By making it so, Matthew has heightened the miracle. Jesus' act seems arbitrary and ill-tempered, but it is a prophetic action similar to those of Old Testament prophets that vividly symbolize some part of their preaching; see, e.g., Ez 12, 1–20. It is a sign of the judgment that is to come upon the Israel that with all its apparent piety lacks the fruit of good deeds (3, 10) and will soon bear the punishment of its fruitlessness (43). Some scholars propose that this story is the development in tradition of a parable of Jesus about the destiny of a fruitless tree, such as Lk 13, 6–9. Jesus' answer to the question of the amazed disciples (20) makes the miracle an example of the power of prayer made with unwavering **faith** (21–22).

**21, 21:** See 17, 20.

l Ps 118, 25–26. m Mk 11, 15–19; Lk 19, 45–48; Jn 2, 14–22. n Lv 5, 7. o Is 56, 7; Jer 7, 11. p 2 Sm 5, 8 LXX. q Ps 8, 2 LXX; Wis 10, 21. r Mk 11, 12–14.20–24. s Jer 8, 13; Lk 13, 6–9. t 17, 20; Lk 17, 6. u 7, 7; 1 Jn 3, 22.

## The Authority of Jesus Questioned

23 v w *When he had come into the temple area,
the chief priests and the elders of the people
approached him as he was teaching and said,
"By what authority are you doing these things?
And who gave you this authority?" 24 *Jesus said
to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question,
and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you
by what authority I do these things. 25 Where
was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or
of human origin?" They discussed this among
themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly
origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not
believe him?' 26 x *But if we say, 'Of human
origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard
John as a prophet." 27 *So they said to Jesus in
reply, "We do not know." He himself said to
them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority
I do these things.

**The Parable of the Two Sons** 28 *"What is
your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to
the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the
vineyard today.' 29 He said in reply, 'I will not,'
but afterwards he changed his mind and went.
30 The man came to the other son and gave the
same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did
not go. 31 *Which of the two did his father's
will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to
them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and
prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God
before you. 32 y *When John came to you in the
way of righteousness, you did not believe him;
but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even
when you saw that, you did not later change
your minds and believe him.

**The Parable of the Tenants** 33 z a *"Hear an-
other parable. There was a landowner who
planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a
wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he
leased it to tenants and went on a journey.
34 *When vintage time drew near, he sent his
servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.
35 But the tenants seized the servants and one
they beat, another they killed, and a third they
stoned. 36 Again he sent other servants, more
numerous than the first ones, but they treated

**21, 23–27:** Cf Mk 11, 27–33. This is the first of five controversies between Jesus and the religious authorities of Judaism in 21, 23—22, 46, presented in the form of questions and answers.

**21, 23: These things:** probably his entry into the city, his cleansing of the temple, and his healings there.

**21, 24:** To reply by counterquestion was common in rabbinical debate.

**21, 26: We fear . . . as a prophet:** cf 14, 5.

**21, 27:** Since through embarrassment on the one hand and fear on the other the religious authorities claim ignorance of the origin of John's baptism, they show themselves incapable of speaking with authority; hence Jesus refuses to discuss with them the grounds of his authority.

**21, 28–32:** The series of controversies is interrupted by three parables on the judgment of Israel (21, 28—22, 14) of which this, peculiar to Mt, is the first. The second (21, 33–46) comes from Mk (12, 1–12), and the third (22, 1–14) from Q; see Lk 14, 15–24. This interruption of the controversies is similar to that in Mk, although Mk has only one parable between the first and second controversy. As regards Mt's first parable, vv 28–30 if taken by themselves could point simply to the difference between saying and doing, a theme of much importance in this gospel (cf 7, 21; 12, 50); that may have been the parable's original reference. However, it is given a more specific application by the addition of vv 31–32. The two sons represent, respectively, the religious leaders and the religious outcasts who followed John's call to repentance. By the answer they give to Jesus' question (31) the leaders condemn themselves. There is much confusion in the textual tradition of the parable. Of the three different forms of the text given by important textual witnesses, one has the leaders answer that the son who agreed to go but did not was the one who did the father's will. Although some scholars accept that as the original reading, their arguments in favor of it seem unconvincing. The choice probably lies only between a reading that puts the son who agrees and then disobeys before the son who at first refuses and then obeys, and the reading followed in the present translation. The witnesses to the latter reading are slightly better than those that support the other.

**21, 31: Entering . . . before you:** this probably means "they enter; you do not."

**21, 32:** Cf Lk 7, 29–30. Although the thought is similar to that of the Lucan text, the formulation is so different that it is improbable that the saying comes from Q. **Came to you . . . way of righteousness:** several meanings are possible: that John himself was righteous, that he taught righteousness to others, or that he had an important place in God's plan of salvation. For the last, see the note on 3, 14–15.

**21, 33–46:** Cf Mk 12, 1–12. In this parable there is a close correspondence between most of the details of the story and the situation that it illustrates, the dealings of God with his people. Because of that heavy allegorizing, some scholars think that it does not in any way go back to Jesus, but represents the theology of the later church. That judgment applies to the Marcan parallel as well, although the allegorizing has gone farther in Mt. There are others who believe that while many of the allegorical elements are due to church sources, they have been added to a basic parable spoken by Jesus. This view is now supported by the Gospel of Thomas, #65, where a less allegorized and probably more primitive form of the parable is found.

**21, 33: Planted a vineyard . . . a tower:** cf Is 5, 1–2. The **vineyard** is defined in Is 5, 7 as "the house of Israel."

**21, 34–35: His servants:** Mt has two sendings of **servants** as against Mk's three sendings of a single servant (11, 2–5a) followed by a statement about the sending of "many others" (11, 2.5b). That these **servants** stand for the prophets sent by God to Israel is clearly implied but not made explicit here, but see 23, 37. **His produce:** cf Mk 12, 2, "some of the produce." The **produce** is the good works demanded by God, and his claim to them is total.

v Mk 11, 27–33; Lk 20, 1–8. w Jn 2, 18. x 14, 5. y Lk 7, 29–30. z Mk 12, 1–12; Lk 20, 9–19. a Is 5, 1–2.7.

them in the same way. 37Finally, he sent his son
to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.'
38*But when the tenants saw the son, they said
to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill
him and acquire his inheritance.' 39 b*They
seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and
killed him. 40What will the owner of the vine-
yard do to those tenants when he comes?"
41*They answered him, "He will put those
wretched men to a wretched death and lease his
vineyard to other tenants who will give him the
produce at the proper times." 42 c*Jesus said to
them, "Did you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes'?

43*Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God
will be taken away from you and given to a
people that will produce its fruit.[ 44*The one
who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces;
and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.]"
45*When the chief priests and the Pharisees
heard his parables, they knew that he was
speaking about them. 46And although they were
attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds,
for they regarded him as a prophet.

## CHAPTER 22

Ch 21-25
See RG
401-402

**The Parable of the Wedding Feast** 1 d*Jesus
again in reply spoke to them in parables, saying,
2*"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a
king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3*He
dispatched his servants to summon the invited
guests to the feast, but they refused to come. 4A
second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell
those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my
banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed,
and everything is ready; come to the feast."'
5Some ignored the invitation and went away,
one to his farm, another to his business. 6 eThe
rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them,
and killed them. 7*The king was enraged and
sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and
burned their city. 8Then he said to his servants,
'The feast is ready, but those who were invited
were not worthy to come. 9Go out, therefore,
into the main roads and invite to the feast
whomever you find.' 10*The servants went out
into the streets and gathered all they found, bad
and good alike, and the hall was filled with
guests. 11*But when the king came in to meet
the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a
wedding garment. 12He said to him, 'My friend,
how is it that you came in here without a
wedding garment?' But he was reduced to

**21, 38: Acquire his inheritance:** if a Jewish proselyte died without heir, the tenants of his land would have final claim on it.

**21, 39: Threw him out . . . and killed him:** the change in the Marcan order where the son is killed and his corpse then thrown out (12, 8) was probably made because of the tradition that Jesus died outside the city of Jerusalem; see Jn 19, 17; Heb 13, 12.

**21, 41: They answered:** in Mk 12, 9 the question is answered by Jesus himself; here the leaders answer and so condemn themselves; cf v 31. Matthew adds that the new **tenants** to whom the vineyard will be transferred **will give** the owner **the produce at the proper times.**

**21, 42:** Cf Ps 118, 22–23. The psalm was used in the early church as a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection; see Acts 4, 11; 1 Pt 2, 7. If, as some think, the original parable ended at v 39, it was thought necessary to complete it by a reference to Jesus' vindication by God.

**21, 43:** Peculiar to Mt. **Kingdom of God:** see the note on 19, 23–24. Its presence here instead of Mt's usual "kingdom of heaven" may indicate that the saying came from Matthew's own traditional material. **A people that will produce its fruit:** believing Israelites and Gentiles, the church of Jesus.

**21, 44:** The majority of textual witnesses omit this verse. It is probably an early addition to Mt from Lk 20, 18 with which it is practically identical.

**21, 45: The Pharisees:** Matthew inserts into the group of Jewish leaders (23) those who represented the Judaism of his own time.

**22, 1–14:** This parable is from Q; see Lk 14, 15–24. It has been given many allegorical traits by Matthew, e.g., the burning of the **city** of the guests who refused the invitation (7), which corresponds to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. It has similarities with the preceding parable of the tenants: the sending of two groups of **servants** (3.4), the murder of the **servants** (6), the punishment of the **murderers** (7), and the entrance of a new group into a privileged situation of which the others had proved themselves unworthy (8–10). The parable ends with a section that is peculiar to Mt (11–14), which some take as a distinct parable. Mt presents the **kingdom** in its double aspect, already present and something that can be entered here and now (1–10), and something that will be possessed only by those present members who can stand the scrutiny of the final judgment (11–14). The parable is not only a statement of God's judgment on Israel but a warning to Matthew's church.

**22, 2: Wedding feast:** the Old Testament's portrayal of final salvation under the image of a banquet (Is 25, 6) is taken up also in 8, 11; cf Lk 13, 15.

**22, 3–4: Servants . . . other servants:** probably Christian missionaries in both instances; cf 23, 34.

**22, 7:** See the note on vv 1–14.

**22, 10: Bad and good alike:** cf 13, 47.

**22, 11: A wedding garment:** the repentance, change of heart and mind, that is the condition for entrance into the kingdom (3, 2; 4, 17) must be continued in a life of good deeds (7, 21–23).

b Heb 13, 12. c Ps 118, 22–23; Is 28, 16; Acts 4, 11; 1 Pt 2, 7. d Lk 14, 15–24. e 21, 35.

silence. 13 f *Then the king said to his attendants,
'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the
darkness outside, where there will be wailing
and grinding of teeth.' 14 Many are invited, but
few are chosen."

**Paying Taxes to the Emperor** 15 g *Then the
Pharisees went off and plotted how they might
entrap him in speech. 16 *They sent their disci-
ples to him, with the Herodians, saying,
"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man
and that you teach the way of God in accordance
with the truth. And you are not concerned with
anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a
person's status. 17 *Tell us, then, what is your
opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to
Caesar or not?" 18 Knowing their malice, Jesus
said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?
19 *Show me the coin that pays the census tax."
Then they handed him the Roman coin. 20 He
said to them, "Whose image is this and whose
inscription?" 21 h *They replied, "Caesar's." At
that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar
what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs
to God." 22 When they heard this they were
amazed, and leaving him they went away.

**The Question about the Resurrection**
23 i *On that day Sadducees approached him,
saying that there is no resurrection. They put
this question to him, 24 j *saying, "Teacher, Mo-
ses said, 'If a man dies without children, his
brother shall marry his wife and raise up descen-
dants for his brother.' 25 Now there were seven
brothers among us. The first married and died
and, having no descendants, left his wife to his
brother. 26 The same happened with the second
and the third, through all seven. 27 Finally the
woman died. 28 Now at the resurrection, of the
seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had
been married to her." 29 *Jesus said to them in
reply, "You are misled because you do not know
the scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the
resurrection they neither marry nor are given in
marriage but are like the angels in heaven.
31 *And concerning the resurrection of the dead,

**22, 13: Wailing and grinding of teeth:** the Christian who lacks the wedding garment of good deeds will suffer the same fate as those Jews who have rejected Jesus; see the note on 8, 11–12.

**22, 15–22:** The series of controversies between Jesus and the representatives of Judaism (see the note on 21, 23–27) is resumed. As in the first (21, 23–27), here and in the following disputes Matthew follows his Marcan source with few modifications.

**22, 15: The Pharisees:** while Matthew retains the Marcan union of Pharisees and Herodians in this account, he clearly emphasizes the Pharisees' part. They alone are mentioned here, and the Herodians are joined with them only in a prepositional phrase of v 16. **Entrap him in speech:** the question that they will pose is intended to force Jesus to take either a position contrary to that held by the majority of the people or one that will bring him into conflict with the Roman authorities.

**22, 16: Herodians:** see the note on Mk 3, 6. They would favor payment of the tax; the Pharisees did not.

**22, 17: Is it lawful:** the law to which they refer is the law of God.

**22, 19: They handed him the Roman coin:** their readiness in producing the money implies their use of it and their acceptance of the financial advantages of the Roman administration in Palestine.

**22, 21: Caesar's:** the emperor Tiberius (A.D. 14–37). **Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar:** those who willingly use the coin that is Caesar's should **repay** him in kind. The answer avoids taking sides in the question of the lawfulness of the tax. **To God what belongs to God:** Jesus raises the debate to a new level. Those who have hypocritically asked about tax in respect to its relation to the law of God should be concerned rather with repaying **God** with the good deeds that are his due; cf 21, 41.43.

**22, 23–33:** Here Jesus' opponents are the **Sadducees,** members of the powerful priestly party of his time; see the note on 3, 7. Denying the resurrection of the dead, a teaching of relatively late origin in Judaism (cf Dn 12, 2), they appeal to a law of the Pentateuch (Dt 25, 5–10) and present a case based on it that would make resurrection from the dead ridiculous (24–28). Jesus chides them for knowing neither **the scriptures** nor **the power of God** (29). His argument in respect to God's **power** contradicts the notion, held even by many proponents as well as by opponents of the teaching, that the life of those raised from the dead would be essentially a continuation of the type of life they had had before death (30). His argument based on the scriptures (31–32) is of a sort that was accepted as valid among Jews of the time.

**22, 23: Saying that there is no resurrection:** in the Marcan parallel (12, 18) the Sadducees are correctly defined as those "who say there is no resurrection"; see also Lk 20, 27. Matthew's rewording of Mk can mean that these particular Sadducees deny the resurrection, which would imply that he was not aware that the denial was characteristic of the party. For some scholars this is an indication of his being a Gentile Christian; see the note on 21, 4–5.

**22, 24: 'If a man dies . . . his brother':** this is known as the "law of the levirate," from the Latin **levir,** "brother-in-law." Its purpose was to continue the family line of the deceased **brother** (Dt 25, 6).

**22, 29:** The sexual relationships of this world will be transcended; the risen body will be the work of the creative **power of God.**

**22, 31–32:** Cf Ex 3, 6. In the Pentateuch, which the Sadducees accepted as normative for Jewish belief and practice, God speaks even now (**to you**) of himself as the God of the patriarchs who died centuries ago. He identifies himself in relation to them, and because of their relation to him, the living God, they too are alive. This might appear no argument for the resurrection, but simply for life after death as conceived in Wis 3, 1–3. But the general thought of early first-century Judaism was not influenced by that conception; for it human immortality was connected with the existence of the body.

f 8, 12; 25, 30. g Mk 12, 13–17; Lk 20, 20–26. h Rom 13, 7. i Mk 12, 18–27; Lk 20, 27–40. j Gn 38, 8; Dt 25, 5–6.

have you not read what was said to you by God,
32 [k]'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the
dead but of the living." 33When the crowds
heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

**The Greatest Commandment** 34 [l]*When the
Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadduc-
cees, they gathered together, 35*and one of
them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking,
36*"Teacher, which commandment in the law is
the greatest?" 37 [m]*He said to him, "You shall
love the Lord, your God, with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38This
is the greatest and the first commandment.
39 [n]*The second is like it: You shall love your
neighbor as yourself. 40 [o]*The whole law and the
prophets depend on these two commandments."

**The Question about David's Son** 41 [p]*While
the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus ques-
tioned them, 42*saying, "What is your opinion
about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They
replied, "David's." 43He said to them, "How,
then, does David, inspired by the Spirit, call him
'lord,' saying:

44 [q]'The Lord said to my lord,
"Sit at my right hand
until I place your enemies under your
feet" '?

45*If David calls him 'lord,' how can he be his
son?" 46 [r]No one was able to answer him a word,
nor from that day on did anyone dare to ask him
any more questions.

## CHAPTER 23

**Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees**

Ch 21–25
See RG
401–402

1 [s]*Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his
disciples, 2*saying, "The scribes and the Phari-

**22, 34–40:** The Marcan parallel (12, 28–34) is an exchange between Jesus and a scribe who is impressed by the way in which Jesus has conducted himself in the previous controversy (12, 28), who compliments him for the answer he gives him (12, 32), and who is said by Jesus to be "not far from the kingdom of God" (12, 34). Matthew has sharpened that scene. The questioner, as the representative of other Pharisees, tests Jesus by his question (34–35), and both his reaction to Jesus' reply and Jesus' commendation of him are lacking.

**22, 35: [A scholar of the law]:** meaning "scribe." Although this reading is supported by the vast majority of textual witnesses, it is the only time that the Greek word so translated occurs in Mt. It is relatively frequent in Lk, and there is reason to think that it may have been added here by a copyist since it occurs in the Lucan parallel (10, 25–28). **Tested:** see the note on 19, 3.

**22, 36:** For the devout Jew all the commandments were to be kept with equal care, but there is evidence of preoccupation in Jewish sources with the question put to Jesus.

**22, 37–38:** Cf Dt 6, 5. Matthew omits the first part of Mk's fuller quotation (12, 29; Dt 6, 4–5), probably because he considered its monotheistic emphasis needless for his church. The love of God must engage the total person (**heart, soul, mind**).

**22, 39:** Jesus goes beyond the extent of the question put to him and joins to **the greatest and the first commandment a second,** that of **love of neighbor,** Lv 19, 18; see the note on 19, 18–19. This combination of the two commandments may already have been made in Judaism.

**22, 40:** The double commandment is the source from which **the whole law and the prophets** are derived.

**22, 41–46:** Having answered the questions of his opponents in the preceding three controversies, Jesus now puts a question to them about the sonship of the Messiah. Their easy response (43a) is countered by his quoting a verse of Ps 110 that raises a problem for their response (43b-45). They are unable to solve it and **from that day on** their questioning of him is ended.

**22, 41: The Pharisees . . . questioned them:** Mk is not specific about who are questioned (12, 35).

**22, 42–44: David's:** this view of the Pharisees was based on such Old Testament texts as Is 11, 1–9; Jer 23, 5; and Ez 34, 23; see also the extrabiblical Psalms of Solomon 17, 21. **How, then . . . saying:** Jesus cites Ps 110, 1, accepting the Davidic authorship of the psalm, a common view of his time. The psalm was probably composed for the enthronement of a Davidic king of Judah. Matthew assumes that the Pharisees interpret it as referring to the Messiah, although there is no clear evidence that it was so interpreted in the Judaism of Jesus' time. It was widely used in the early church as referring to the exaltation of the risen Jesus. **My lord:** understood as the Messiah.

**22, 45:** Since Matthew presents Jesus both as Messiah (16, 16) and as Son of David (1, 1; see also the note on 9, 27), the question is not meant to imply Jesus' denial of Davidic sonship. It probably means that although he is the Son of David, he is someone greater, Son of Man and Son of God, and recognized as greater by David who calls him my **'lord.'**

**23, 1–39:** The final section of the narrative part of the fifth book of the gospel is a denunciation by Jesus of the scribes and the Pharisees (see the note on 3, 7). It depends in part on Mk and Q (cf Mk 12, 38–39; Lk 11, 37–52; 13, 34–35), but in the main it is peculiar to Mt. (For the reasons against considering this extensive body of sayings-material either as one of the structural discourses of this gospel or as part of the one that follows in chs 24–25, see the note on 19, 1—23, 39.) While the tradition of a deep opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees is well founded, this speech reflects an opposition that goes beyond that of Jesus' ministry and must be seen as expressing the bitter conflict between Pharisaic Judaism and the church of Matthew at the time when the gospel was composed. The complaint often made that the speech ignores the positive qualities of Pharisaism and of its better representatives is true, but the complaint overlooks the circumstances that gave rise to the invective. Nor is the speech purely anti-Pharisaic. The evangelist discerns in his church many of the same faults that he finds in its opponents and warns his fellow Christians to look to their own conduct and attitudes.

**23, 2–3: Have taken their seat . . . Moses:** it is uncertain whether this is simply a metaphor for Mosaic teaching authority or refers to an actual **chair** on which the teacher sat. It has been proved that there was a seat so designated in synagogues of a later period than that of this gospel. **Do and observe . . . they tell you:** since the Matthean Jesus abrogates Mosaic law (5, 31–42), warns

k Ex 3, 6. l Mk 12, 28–34; Lk 10, 25–28. m Dt 6, 5. n Lv 19, 18; Jas 2, 8. o Rom 13, 8–10; Gal 5, 14. p Mk 12, 35–37; Lk 20, 41–44. q Ps 110, 1; Acts 2, 35; Heb 1, 13. r Lk 20, 40. s Mk 12, 38–39; Lk 11, 37–52; 13, 34–35.

sees have taken their seat on the chair of
Moses. [3]Therefore, do and observe all things
whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow
their example. For they preach but they do not
practice. [4] [t]*They tie up heavy burdens [hard to
carry] and lay them on people's shoulders, but
they will not lift a finger to move them. [5] [u]*All
their works are performed to be seen. They
widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tas-
sels. [6] [v]*They love places of honor at banquets,
seats of honor in synagogues, [7]greetings in
marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' [8]*As
for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but
one teacher, and you are all brothers. [9]Call no
one on earth your father; you have but one
Father in heaven. [10]Do not be called 'Master';
you have but one master, the Messiah. [11] [w]The
greatest among you must be your servant.
[12] [x]Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;
but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
[13] [y]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You lock the kingdom of heaven
before human beings. You do not enter your-
selves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying
to enter. [[14]]*
[15]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You traverse sea and land to make
one convert, and when that happens you make
him a child of Gehenna twice as much as
yourselves.
[16] [z]*"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If
one swears by the temple, it means nothing, but
if one swears by the gold of the temple, one is
obligated.' [17]Blind fools, which is greater, the
gold, or the temple that made the gold sacred?
[18]And you say, 'If one swears by the altar, it
means nothing, but if one swears by the gift on

his disciples against the teaching of the Pharisees (14, 1–12), and, in this speech, denounces the Pharisees as blind guides in respect to their teaching on oaths (16–22), this commandment to **observe all things whatsoever they** (the scribes and Pharisees) **tell you** cannot be taken as the evangelist's understanding of the proper standard of conduct for his church. The saying may reflect a period when the Matthean community was largely Jewish Christian and was still seeking to avoid a complete break with the synagogue. Matthew has incorporated this traditional material into the speech in accordance with his view of the course of salvation history, in which he portrays the time of Jesus' ministry as marked by the fidelity to the law, although with significant pointers to the new situation that would exist after his death and resurrection (see the note on 5, 17–20). The crowds and the disciples (1) are exhorted not to **follow** the **example** of the Jewish leaders, whose deeds do not conform to their teaching (3).

**23, 4: Tie up heavy burdens:** see the note on 11, 28.

**23, 5:** To the charge of preaching but not practicing (3), Jesus adds that of acting in order to earn praise. The disciples have already been warned against this same fault (see the note on 6, 1–18). **Phylacteries:** the Mosaic law required that during prayer small boxes containing parchments on which verses of scripture were written be worn on the left forearm and the forehead (see Ex 13, 9.16; Dt 6, 8; 11, 18). **Tassels:** see the note on 9, 20. The widening of **phylacteries** and the lengthening of **tassels** were for the purpose of making these evidences of piety more noticeable.

**23, 6–7:** Cf Mk 12, 38–39. **'Rabbi':** literally, "my great one," a title of respect for teachers and leaders.

**23, 8–12:** These verses, warning against the use of various titles, are addressed to the disciples alone. While only the title **'Rabbi'** has been said to be used in addressing the scribes and Pharisees (7), the implication is that **Father** and **'Master'** also were. The prohibition of these titles to the disciples suggests that their use was present in Matthew's church. The Matthean Jesus forbids not only the titles but the spirit of superiority and pride that is shown by their acceptance. **Whoever exalts . . . will be exalted:** cf Lk 14, 11.

**23, 13–36:** This series of seven "woes," directed against the **scribes and Pharisees** and addressed to them, is the heart of the speech. The phrase **woe to** occurs often in the prophetic and apocalyptic literature, expressing horror of a sin and punishment for those who commit it. **Hypocrites:** see the note on 6, 2. The hypocrisy of the **scribes and Pharisees** consists in the difference between their speech and action (3) and in demonstrations of piety that have no other purpose than to enhance their reputation as religious persons (5).

**23, 13: You lock the kingdom of heaven:** cf 16, 19 where Jesus tells Peter that he will give him the keys to **the kingdom of heaven.** The purpose of the authority expressed by that metaphor is to give entrance into the kingdom (the kingdom is closed only to those who reject the authority); here the charge is made that the authority of the **scribes and Pharisees** is exercised in such a way as to be an obstacle to entrance. Cf Lk 11, 52 where the accusation against the "scholars of the law" (Mt's **scribes**) is that they "have taken away the key of knowledge."

**23, 14:** Some manuscripts add a verse here or after v 12, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. Because of this, you will receive a very severe condemnation." Cf Mk 12, 40; Lk 20, 47. This "woe" is almost identical with Mk 12, 40 and seems to be an interpolation derived from that text.

**23, 15:** In the first century A.D. until the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (A.D. 66–70), many Pharisees conducted a vigorous missionary campaign among Gentiles. **Convert:** literally, "proselyte," a Gentile who accepted Judaism fully by submitting to circumcision and all other requirements of Mosaic law. **Child of Gehenna:** worthy of everlasting punishment; for **Gehenna,** see the note on 5, 22. **Twice as much as yourselves:** possibly this refers simply to the zeal of the **convert,** surpassing that of the one who converted him.

**23, 16–22:** An attack on the casuistry that declared some oaths binding (**one is obligated**) and others not (**it means nothing**) and held the binding oath to be the one made by something of lesser value (**the gold; the gift on the altar**). Such teaching, which inverts the order of values, reveals the teachers to be **blind guides;** cf 15, 14. Since the Matthean Jesus forbids all oaths to his disciples (5, 33–37), this **woe** does not set up a standard for Christian moral conduct, but ridicules the Pharisees on their own terms.

t Lk 11, 46. u 6, 1–6; Ex 13, 9.16; Nm 15, 38–39; Dt 6, 8; 11, 18. v Mk 12, 38–39; Lk 11, 43; 20, 46. w 20, 26. x Lk 14, 11; 18, 14. y Lk 11, 52. z 15, 14.

the altar, one is obligated.' [19]You blind ones,
which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes
the gift sacred? [20] [a]One who swears by the altar
swears by it and all that is upon it; [21]one who
swears by the temple swears by it and by him
who dwells in it; [22]one who swears by heaven
swears by the throne of God and by him who is
seated on it.

[23] [b]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and
cummin, and have neglected the weightier
things of the law: judgment and mercy and
fidelity. [But] these you should have done, with-
out neglecting the others. [24] [c]*Blind guides, who
strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!

[25] [d]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and
dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-
indulgence. [26]Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the
inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be
clean.

[27]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs,
which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside
are full of dead men's bones and every kind of
filth. [28] [e]Even so, on the outside you appear
righteous, but inside you are filled with hypoc-
risy and evildoing.

[29]*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you
hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets
and adorn the memorials of the righteous,
[30] [f]and you say, 'If we had lived in the days of
our ancestors, we would not have joined them
in shedding the prophets' blood.' [31] [g]Thus you
bear witness against yourselves that you are the
children of those who murdered the prophets;
[32]now fill up what your ancestors measured out!
[33] [h]You serpents, you brood of vipers, how can
you flee from the judgment of Gehenna?
[34] [i]*Therefore, behold, I send to you prophets
and wise men and scribes; some of them you
will kill and crucify, some of them you will
scourge in your synagogues and pursue from
town to town, [35]so that there may come upon
you all the righteous blood shed upon earth,
from the righteous blood of Abel to the blood of
Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you
murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.
[36]Amen, I say to you, all these things will come
upon this generation.

**23, 23:** The Mosaic law ordered tithing of the produce of the land (Lv 27, 30; Dt 14, 22–23), and the scribal tradition is said here to have extended this law to even the smallest herbs. The practice is criticized not in itself but because it shows the Pharisees' preoccupation with matters of less importance while they neglect **the weightier things of the law.**

**23, 24:** Cf Lv 11, 41–45 that forbids the eating of any "swarming creature." The Pharisees' scrupulosity about minor matters and neglect of greater ones (23) is further brought out by this contrast between straining liquids that might contain a tiny "swarming creature" and yet swallowing **the camel.** The latter was one of the unclean animals forbidden by the law (Lv 11, 4), but it is hardly possible that the scribes and Pharisees are being denounced as guilty of so gross a violation of the food laws. To **swallow the camel** is only a hyperbolic way of speaking of their neglect of what is important.

**23, 25–26:** The ritual washing of utensils for dining (cf Mk 7, 4) is turned into a metaphor illustrating a concern for appearances while inner purity is ignored. The **scribes and Pharisees** are compared to cups carefully washed on the outside but filthy within. **Self-indulgence:** the Greek word here translated means lack of self-control, whether in drinking or in sexual conduct.

**23, 27–28:** The sixth **woe,** like the preceding one, deals with concern for externals and neglect of what is **inside.** Since contact with dead bodies, even when one was unaware of it, caused ritual impurity (Nm 19, 11–22), tombs were whitewashed so that no one would contract such impurity inadvertently.

**23, 29–36:** The final **woe** is the most serious indictment of all. It portrays the **scribes and Pharisees** as standing in the same line as their **ancestors** who murdered **the prophets** and **the righteous.**

**23, 29–32:** In spite of honoring the slain dead by building their **tombs** and adorning their **memorials,** and claiming that they would not have joined in their ancestors' crimes if they **had lived in their days,** the **scribes and Pharisees** are true **children** of their ancestors and are defiantly ordered by Jesus to **fill up** what those **ancestors measured out.** This order reflects the Jewish notion that there was an allotted measure of suffering that had to be completed before God's final judgment would take place.

**23, 34–36:** There are important differences between the Matthean and the Lucan form of this Q material; cf Lk 11, 49–51. In Lk the one who sends the emissaries is the "wisdom of God." If, as many scholars think, that is the original wording of Q, Matthew, by making Jesus the sender, has presented him as the personified divine wisdom. In Lk, wisdom's emissaries are the Old Testament "prophets" and the Christian "apostles." Mt's **prophets and wise men and scribes** are probably Christian disciples alone; cf 10, 41 and see the note on 13, 52. **You will kill:** see 24, 9. **Scourge in your synagogues . . . town to town:** see 10, 17.23 and the note on 10, 17. **All the righteous blood shed upon the earth:** the slaying of the disciples is in continuity with all the shedding of **righteous blood** beginning with that of **Abel.** The persecution of Jesus' disciples by **this generation** involves the persecutors in the guilt of their murderous ancestors. **The blood of Zechariah:** see the note on Lk 11, 51. By identifying him as **the son of Barachiah** Matthew understands him to be Zechariah the Old Testament minor prophet; see Zec 1, 1.

a 5, 34–35. b Lv 27, 30; Dt 14, 22; Lk 11, 42. c Lv 11, 41–45. d Mk 7, 4; Lk 11, 39. e Lk 16, 15; 18, 9. f Lk 11, 47. g Acts 7, 52. h 3, 7; 12, 34. i 5, 12; Gn 4, 8; 2 Chr 24, 20–22; Zec 1, 1; Lk 11, 49–51; Rv 18, 24.

**The Lament over Jerusalem** 37 *j k* *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and
stone those sent to you, how many times I
yearned to gather your children together, as a
hen gathers her young under her wings, but you
were unwilling! 38 *l* Behold, your house will be
abandoned, desolate. 39 *m* I tell you, you will not
see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord.' "

## CHAPTER 24

Ch 21–25
See RG
401–402

**The Destruction of the Temple Foretold**

1 *n* *Jesus left the temple area and was going
away, when his disciples approached him to
point out the temple buildings. 2 *He said to
them in reply, "You see all these things, do you
not? Amen, I say to you, there will not be left
here a stone upon another stone that will not be
thrown down."

**The Beginning of Calamities** 3 *As he was
sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples
approached him privately and said, "Tell us,
when will this happen, and what sign will there
be of your coming, and of the end of the age?"
4 *Jesus said to them in reply, "See that no one
deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name,
saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive
many. 6 *o* *You will hear of wars and reports of
wars; see that you are not alarmed, for these
things must happen, but it will not yet be the
end. 7 *p* Nation will rise against nation, and king-
dom against kingdom; there will be famines and
earthquakes from place to place. 8 *All these are
the beginning of the labor pains. 9 *q* *Then they

**23, 37–39:** Cf Lk 13, 34–35. The denunciation of Pharisaic Judaism ends with this lament over **Jerusalem,** which has repeatedly rejected and murdered those whom God has **sent to** her. **How many times:** this may refer to various visits of Jesus to the city, an aspect of his ministry found in Jn but otherwise not in the synoptics. **As a hen . . . under her wings:** for imagery similar to this, see Pss 17, 8; 91, 4. **Your house . . . desolate:** probably an allusion to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. **You will not see me . . . in the name of the Lord:** Israel will not see Jesus again until he comes in glory for the final judgment. The acclamation has been interpreted in contrasting ways, as an indication that Israel will at last accept Jesus at that time, and as its troubled recognition of him as its dreaded judge who will pronounce its condemnation; in support of the latter view see 24, 30.

**24, 1—25, 46:** The discourse of the fifth book, the last of the five around which the gospel is structured. It is called the "eschatological" discourse since it deals with the coming of the new age (the **eschaton**) in its fullness, with events that will precede it, and with how the disciples are to conduct themselves while awaiting an event that is as certain as its exact time is unknown to all but the Father (24, 36). The discourse may be divided into two parts, 24, 1–44 and 24, 45—25, 46. In the first, Matthew follows his Marcan source (13, 1–37) closely. The second is drawn from Q and from the evangelist's own traditional material. Both parts show Matthew's editing of his sources by deletions, additions, and modifications. The vigilant waiting that is emphasized in the second part does not mean a cessation of ordinary activity and concentration only on what is to come, but a faithful accomplishment of duties at hand, with awareness that the end, for which the disciples must always be ready, will entail the great judgment by which the everlasting destiny of all will be determined.

**24, 2:** As in Mk, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple. By omitting the Marcan story of the widow's contribution (12, 41–44) that immediately precedes the prediction in that gospel, Matthew has established a close connection between it and 23, 38, " . . . your house will be abandoned, desolate."

**24, 3: The Mount of Olives:** see the note on 21, 1. **The disciples:** cf Mk 13, 3–4 where only Peter, James, John, and Andrew put the question that is answered by the discourse. In both gospels, however, the question is put **privately:** the ensuing discourse is only for those who are **disciples** of Jesus. **When will this happen . . . end of the age?:** Matthew distinguishes carefully between the destruction of the temple (**this**) and the **coming** of Jesus that will bring **the end of the age.** In Mk the two events are more closely connected, a fact that may be explained by Mark's believing that the one would immediately succeed the other. **Coming:** this translates the Greek word **parousia,** which is used in the gospels only here and in vv 27, 37, and 39. It designated the official visit of a ruler to a city or the manifestation of a saving deity, and it was used by Christians to refer to the final coming of Jesus in glory, a term first found in the New Testament with that meaning in 1 Thes 2, 19. **The end of the age:** see the note on 13, 39.

**24, 4–14:** This section of the discourse deals with calamities in the world (6–7) and in the church (9–12). The former **must happen** before **the end** comes (6), but they are only **the beginning of the labor pains** (8). (It may be noted that the Greek word translated **the end** in v 6 and in vv 13–14 is not the same as the phrase "the end of the age" in v 3, although the meaning is the same.) The latter are sufferings of the church, both from within and without, that will last until the **gospel** is **preached . . . to all nations. Then the end will come** and those who have endured the sufferings with fidelity **will be saved** (13–14).

**24, 6–7:** The disturbances mentioned here are a commonplace of apocalyptic language, as is the assurance that they **must happen** (see Dn 2, 28 LXX), for that is the plan of God. **Kingdom against kingdom:** see Is 19, 2.

**24, 8: The labor pains:** the tribulations leading up to the end of the age are compared to the pains of a woman about to give birth. There is much attestation for rabbinic use of the phrase "the woes (or birth pains) of the Messiah" after the New Testament period, but in at least one instance it is attributed to a rabbi who lived in the late first century A.D. In this Jewish usage it meant the distress of the time preceding the coming of the Messiah; here, the **labor pains** precede the coming of the Son of Man in glory.

**24, 9–12:** Matthew has used Mk 13, 9–12 in his missionary discourse (10, 17–21) and omits it here. Besides the sufferings, including death, and the hatred of **all nations** that the disciples will have to endure, there will be worse affliction within the church itself. This is described in vv 10–12, which are peculiar to Mt. **Will be led into sin:** literally, "will be scandalized," probably meaning that they will become apostates; see 13, 21 where "fall away" translates the same Greek word as here. **Betray:** in the Greek this is the same word as the **hand over** of v 9. The handing over to persecution and hatred from outside will have their counterpart within the church. **False prophets:** these are Chris-

j Lk 13, 34–35; 19, 41–44. k 21, 35. l Jer 12, 7. m Ps 118, 26. n Mk 13, 1–37; Lk 21, 5–36. o Dn 2, 28 LXX. p Is 19, 2. q 10, 17.

will hand you over to persecution, and they will
kill you. You will be hated by all nations because
of my name. [10]And then many will be led into
sin; they will betray and hate one another.
[11]Many false prophets will arise and deceive
many; [12]and because of the increase of
evildoing, the love of many will grow cold.
[13] [r]But the one who perseveres to the end will be
saved. [14] [s]*And this gospel of the kingdom will
be preached throughout the world as a witness
to all nations, and then the end will come.

**The Great Tribulation** [15] [t]*"When you see
the desolating abomination spoken of through
Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let
the reader understand), [16]*then those in Judea
must flee to the mountains, [17] [u]*a person on the
housetop must not go down to get things out of
his house, [18]a person in the field must not return
to get his cloak. [19]Woe to pregnant women and
nursing mothers in those days. [20]*Pray that your
flight not be in winter or on the sabbath, [21] [v]*for
at that time there will be great tribulation, such
as has not been since the beginning of the world
until now, nor ever will be. [22]And if those days
had not been shortened, no one would be saved;
but for the sake of the elect they will be
shortened. [23] [w]If anyone says to you then, 'Look,
here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not
believe it. [24]False messiahs and false prophets
will arise, and they will perform signs and
wonders so great as to deceive, if that were
possible, even the elect. [25]Behold, I have told it
to you beforehand. [26]*So if they say to you, 'He
is in the desert,' do not go out there; if they say,
'He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.
[27] [x]For just as lightning comes from the east and
is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of
the Son of Man be. [28]Wherever the corpse is,
there the vultures will gather.

**The Coming of the Son of Man** [29] [y]*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days,

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will fall from the sky,

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tians; see the note on 7, 15–20. **Evildoing:** see 7, 23. Because of the apocalyptic nature of much of this discourse, the literal meaning of this description of the church should not be pressed too hard. However, there is reason to think that Mt's addition of these verses reflects in some measure the condition of his community.

**24, 14:** Except for the last part (**and then the end will come**), this verse substantially repeats Mk 13, 10. The Matthean addition raises a problem since what follows in vv 15–23 refers to the horrors of the First Jewish Revolt including the destruction of the temple, and Matthew, writing after that time, knew that the parousia of Jesus was still in the future. A solution may be that the evangelist saw the events of those verses as foreshadowing the cosmic disturbances that he associates with the parousia (29) so that the period in which the former took place could be understood as belonging to **the end.**

**24, 15–28:** Cf Mk 13, 14–23; Lk 17, 23–24.37. A further stage in the tribulations that will precede the coming of the Son of Man, and an answer to the question of v 3a, "when will this (the destruction of the temple) happen?"

**24, 15: The desolating abomination:** in 167 B.C. the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the temple by setting up in it a statue of Zeus Olympios (see 1 Mc 1, 54). That event is referred to in Dn 12, 11 LXX as the "desolating abomination" (NAB "horrible abomination") and the same Greek term is used here; cf also Dn 9, 27; 11, 31. Although the desecration had taken place before Dn was written, it is presented there as a future event, and Matthew sees that "prophecy" fulfilled in the desecration of the temple by the Romans. **In the holy place:** the temple; more precise than Mk's **where he should not** (13, 14). **Let the reader understand:** this parenthetical remark, taken from Mk 13, 14, invites **the reader** to realize the meaning of Dn's "prophecy."

**24, 16:** The tradition that the Christians of Jerusalem fled from that city to Pella, a city of Transjordan, at the time of the First Jewish Revolt is found in Eusebius (**Ecclesiastical History,** 3, 5, 3), who attributes the flight to "a certain oracle given by revelation before the war." The tradition is not improbable but the Matthean command, derived from its Marcan source, is vague in respect to the place of flight (**to the mountains**), although some scholars see it as applicable to the flight to Pella.

**24, 17–19:** Haste is essential, and the journey will be particularly difficult for women who are burdened with unborn or infant children.

**24, 20: On the sabbath:** this addition to **in winter** (cf Mk 13, 18) has been understood as an indication that Mt was addressed to a church still observing the Mosaic law of sabbath rest and the scribal limitations upon the length of journeys that might lawfully be made on that day. That interpretation conflicts with Mt's view on sabbath observance (cf 12, 1–14). The meaning of the addition may be that those undertaking on the sabbath a journey such as the one here ordered would be offending the sensibilities of law-observant Jews and would incur their hostility.

**24, 21:** For the unparalleled distress of that time, see Dn 12, 1.

**24, 26–28:** Claims that the Messiah is to be found in some distant or secret place must be ignored. **The coming of the Son of Man** will be as clear as **lightning** is to all and as **the corpse** of an animal is to **vultures;** cf Lk 17, 24.37. Here there is clear identification of **the Son of Man** and the Messiah; cf v 23.

**24, 29:** The answer to the question of v 3b, "What will be the sign of your coming?" **Immediately after . . . those days:** the shortening of time between the preceding **tribulation** and the parousia has been explained as Matthew's use of a supposed device of Old Testament prophecy whereby certainty that a predicted event will occur is expressed by depicting it as imminent. While it is questionable that that is an acceptable understanding of the Old Testament predictions, it may be applicable here, for Matthew knew that the parousia had not come **immediately after** the fall of Jerusalem, and it is unlikely that he is attributing a mistaken calculation of time to Jesus. **The sun . . . be shaken:** cf Is 13, 10.13.

r 10, 22. s 28, 19; Rom 10, 18. t Dn 9, 27; 11, 31; 12, 11; Mk 13, 14. u Lk 17, 31. v Dn 12, 1. w Lk 17, 23. x Lk 17, 24.37. y Is 13, 10.13; Ez 32, 7; Am 8, 9.

and the powers of the heavens will be
shaken.
30 z*And then the sign of the Son of Man will
appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth
will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man
coming upon the clouds of heaven with power
and great glory. 31 a*And he will send out his
angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather
his elect from the four winds, from one end of
the heavens to the other.

**The Lesson of the Fig Tree** 32*"Learn a
lesson from the fig tree. When its branch be-
comes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that
summer is near. 33In the same way, when you
see all these things, know that he is near, at the
gates. 34*Amen, I say to you, this generation will
not pass away until all these things have taken
place. 35 bHeaven and earth will pass away, but
my words will not pass away.

**The Unknown Day and Hour** 36 c*"But of
that day and hour no one knows, neither the
angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father
alone. 37 d*For as it was in the days of Noah, so it
will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38In
[those] days before the flood, they were eating
and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,
up to the day that Noah entered the ark. 39They
did not know until the flood came and carried
them all away. So will it be [also] at the coming
of the Son of Man. 40 e*Two men will be out in
the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.
41Two women will be grinding at the mill; one
will be taken, and one will be left.
42f*Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know
on which day your Lord will come. 43 gBe sure of
this: if the master of the house had known the
hour of night when the thief was coming, he
would have stayed awake and not let his house
be broken into. 44So too, you also must be
prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the
Son of Man will come.

**The Faithful or the Unfaithful Servant**
45 h*"Who, then, is the faithful and prudent
servant, whom the master has put in charge of
his household to distribute to them their food at
the proper time? 46Blessed is that servant whom
his master on his arrival finds doing so. 47Amen,
I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his
property. 48*But if that wicked servant says to
himself, 'My master is long delayed,' 49and
begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and
drink with drunkards, 50the servant's master will
come on an unexpected day and at an unknown
hour 51 i*and will punish him severely and

**24, 30: The sign of the Son of Man:** perhaps this means the **sign** that is the glorious appearance **of the Son of Man;** cf 12, 39–40 where "the sign of Jonah" is Jonah's being in the "belly of the whale." **Tribes of the earth will mourn:** peculiar to Mt; cf Zec 12, 12–14. **Coming upon the clouds . . . glory:** cf Dn 7, 13, although there the "one like a son of man" comes to God to receive kingship; here **the Son of Man** comes from heaven for judgment.

**24, 31: Send out his angels:** cf 13, 41 where they are sent out to collect the wicked for punishment. **Trumpet blast:** cf Is 27, 13; 1 Thes 4, 16.

**24, 32–35:** Cf Mk 13, 28–31.

**24, 34:** The difficulty raised by this verse cannot be satisfactorily removed by the supposition that **this generation** means the Jewish people throughout the course of their history, much less the entire human race. Perhaps for Matthew it means the **generation** to which he and his community belonged.

**24, 36–44:** The statement of v 34 is now counterbalanced by one that declares that the exact time of the parousia is known only to **the Father** (36), and the disciples are warned to be always ready for it. This section is drawn from Mk and Q (cf Lk 17, 26–27.34–35; 12, 39–40).

**24, 36:** Many textual witnesses omit **nor the Son,** which follows Mk 13, 32. Since its omission can be explained by reluctance to attribute this ignorance to **the Son,** the reading that includes it is probably original.

**24, 37–39:** Cf Lk 17, 26–27. **In the days of Noah:** the Old Testament account of the flood lays no emphasis upon what is central for Matthew, i.e., the unexpected coming of the flood upon those who were unprepared for it.

**24, 40–41:** Cf Lk 17, 34–35. **Taken . . . left:** the former probably means **taken** into the kingdom; the latter, **left** for destruction. People in the same situation will be dealt with in opposite ways. In this context, the discrimination between them will be based on their readiness for the coming of the Son of Man.

**24, 42–44:** Cf Lk 12, 39–40. The theme of vigilance and readiness is continued with the bold comparison of the Son of Man to a thief who comes to break into a house.

**24, 45–51:** The second part of the discourse (see the note on 24, 1—25, 46) begins with this parable of **the faithful** or unfaithful **servant;** cf Lk 12, 41–46. It is addressed to the leaders of Matthew's church; **the servant has been put in charge** of his master's **household** (45) even though that **household** is composed of those who are his **fellow servants** (49).

**24, 45: To distribute . . . proper time:** readiness for the master's return means a vigilance that is accompanied by faithful performance of the duty assigned.

**24, 48: My master . . . delayed:** the note of delay is found also in the other parables of this section; cf 25, 5.19.

**24, 51: Punish him severely:** the Greek verb, found in the New Testament only here and in the Lucan parallel (12, 46),

z Dn 7, 13; Zec 12, 12–14; Rv 1, 7. a Is 27, 13; 1 Cor 15, 52; 1 Thes 4, 16. b Is 40, 8. c Acts 1, 7. d Gn 6, 5—7, 23; Lk 17, 26–27; 2 Pt 3, 6. e Lk 17, 34–35. f 25, 13; Lk 12, 39–40. g 1 Thes 5, 2. h Lk 12, 41–46. i 13, 42; 25, 30.

assign him a place with the hypocrites, where
there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

## CHAPTER 25

**The Parable of the Ten Virgins** 1*"Then the
kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who
took their lamps and went out to meet the
bridegroom. 2*Five of them were foolish and
five were wise. 3The foolish ones, when taking
their lamps, brought no oil with them, 4but the
wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.
5Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all
became drowsy and fell asleep. 6At midnight,
there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come
out to meet him!' 7Then all those virgins got up
and trimmed their lamps. 8The foolish ones said
to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our
lamps are going out.' 9But the wise ones replied,
'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for
yourselves.' 10While they went off to buy it, the
bridegroom came and those who were ready
went into the wedding feast with him. Then the
door was locked. 11 j*Afterwards the other vir-
gins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door
for us!' 12But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to
you, I do not know you.' 13 k*Therefore, stay
awake, for you know neither the day nor the
hour.

**The Parable of the Talents** 14 l*"It will be as
when a man who was going on a journey called
in his servants and entrusted his possessions to
them. 15*To one he gave five talents; to another,
two; to a third, one—to each according to his
ability. Then he went away. Immediately 16the
one who received five talents went and traded
with them, and made another five. 17Likewise,
the one who received two made another two.
18*But the man who received one went off and
dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's
money. 19After a long time the master of those
servants came back and settled accounts with
them. 20*The one who had received five talents
came forward bringing the additional five. He
said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I
have made five more.' 21 mHis master said to
him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.
Since you were faithful in small matters, I will
give you great responsibilities. Come, share your
master's joy.' 22[Then] the one who had received
two talents also came forward and said, 'Master,
you gave me two talents. See, I have made two
more.' 23His master said to him, 'Well done, my
good and faithful servant. Since you were faith-
ful in small matters, I will give you great
responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'
24Then the one who had received the one talent
came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you
were a demanding person, harvesting where you
did not plant and gathering where you did not
scatter; 25so out of fear I went off and buried
your talent in the ground. Here it is back.'
26*His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked,
lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I
did not plant and gather where I did not scatter?
27Should you not then have put my money in

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means, literally, "cut in two." **With the hypocrites:** see the note on 6, 2. Matthew classes the unfaithful Christian leader with the unbelieving leaders of Judaism. **Wailing and grinding of teeth:** see the note on 8, 11–12.

**25, 1–13:** Peculiar to Mt.

**25, 1: Then:** at the time of the parousia. **Kingdom . . . will be like:** see the note on 13, 24–30.

**25, 2–4: Foolish . . . wise:** cf the contrasted "wise man" and "fool" of 7, 24.26, where the two are distinguished by good deeds and lack of them, and such deeds may be signified by the **oil** of this parable.

**25, 11–12: Lord, Lord:** cf 7, 21. **I do not know you:** cf 7, 23, where the Greek verb is different but synonymous.

**25, 13: Stay awake:** some scholars see this command as an addition to the original parable of Matthew's traditional material, since in v 5 all the virgins, wise and foolish, fall asleep. But the wise virgins are adequately equipped for their task, and **stay awake** may mean no more than to be prepared; cf 24, 42.44.

**25, 14–30:** Cf Lk 19, 12–27.

**25, 14: It will be as when . . . journey:** literally, "For just as a man who was going on a journey." Although the comparison is not completed, the sense is clear; the kingdom of heaven is like the situation here described. Faithful use of one's gifts will lead to participation in the fullness of the kingdom, lazy inactivity to exclusion from it.

**25, 15: Talents:** see the note on 18, 24.

**25, 18: Buried his master's money:** see the note on 13, 44.

**25, 20–23:** Although the first two servants have received and doubled large sums, their faithful trading is regarded by the master as fidelity **in small matters** only, compared with the **great responsibilities** now to be given to them. The latter are unspecified. **Share your master's joy:** probably the joy of the banquet of the kingdom; cf 8, 11.

**25, 26–28: Wicked, lazy servant:** this man's inactivity is not negligible but seriously culpable. As punishment, he loses the gift he had received, that is now given to the first servant, whose possessions are already great.

j 7, 21.23; Lk 13, 25.27. k 24, 42; Mk 13, 33. l Lk 19, 12–27. m Lk 16, 10.

the bank so that I could have got it back with
interest on my return?' [28]Now then! Take the
talent from him and give it to the one with ten.
[29] [n]*For to everyone who has, more will be
given and he will grow rich; but from the one
who has not, even what he has will be taken
away. [30]*And throw this useless servant into the
darkness outside, where there will be wailing
and grinding of teeth.'

**The Judgment of the Nations** [31] [o]*"When the
Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels
with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,
[32] [p]*and all the nations will be assembled before
him. And he will separate them one from
another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from
the goats. [33]He will place the sheep on his right
and the goats on his left. [34]Then the king will
say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are
blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of the
world. [35] [q]For I was hungry and you gave me
food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a
stranger and you welcomed me, [36]naked and
you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in
prison and you visited me.' [37]*Then the righ-
teous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did
we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and
give you drink? [38]When did we see you a
stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe
you? [39]When did we see you ill or in prison, and
visit you?' [40] [r]And the king will say to them in
reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for
one of these least brothers of mine, you did for
me.' [41] [s]*Then he will say to those on his left,
'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal
fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42] [t]For I
was hungry and you gave me no food, I was
thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43]a stranger
and you gave me no welcome, naked and you
gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you
did not care for me.' [44]*Then they will answer
and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or
thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison,
and not minister to your needs?' [45]He will
answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did
not do for one of these least ones, you did not do
for me.' [46] [u]And these will go off to eternal
punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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# VII: The Passion and Resurrection

## CHAPTER 26

**The Conspiracy against Jesus** [1]*When Jesus
finished all these words, he said to his disciples,

**25, 29:** See the note on 13, 12 where there is a similar application of this maxim.

**25, 30:** See the note on 8, 11–12.

**25, 31–46:** The conclusion of the discourse, which is peculiar to Mt, portrays the final judgment that will accompany the parousia. Although often called a "parable," it is not really such, for the only parabolic elements are the depiction of **the Son of Man** as a **shepherd** and of **the righteous** and the wicked as **sheep** and **goats** respectively (32–33). The criterion of judgment will be the deeds of mercy that have been done for the **least** of Jesus' **brothers** (40). A difficult and important question is the identification of these **least brothers.** Are they all people who have suffered hunger, thirst, etc. (35.36) or a particular group of such sufferers? Scholars are divided in their response and arguments can be made for either side. But leaving aside the problem of what the traditional material that Matthew edited may have meant, it seems that a stronger case can be made for the view that in the evangelist's sense the sufferers are Christians, probably Christian missionaries whose sufferings were brought upon them by their preaching of the gospel. The criterion of judgment for **all the nations** is their treatment of those who have borne to the world the message of Jesus, and this means ultimately their acceptance or rejection of Jesus himself; cf 10, 40, "Whoever receives you, receives me."

**25, 31:** See the note on 16, 27.

**25, 32: All the nations:** before the end the gospel will have been preached throughout the world (24, 14); thus the Gentiles will be judged on their response to it. But the phrase **all the nations** includes the Jews also, for at the judgment "the Son of Man . . . will repay everyone according to his conduct" (16, 27).

**25, 37–40:** The **righteous** will be astonished that in caring for the needs of the sufferers they were ministering to the **Lord** himself. **One of these least brothers of mine:** cf 10, 42.

**25, 41: Fire prepared . . . his angels:** cf 1 Enoch 10, 13 where it is said of the evil angels and Semyaza, their leader, "In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire—and in torment—in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever."

**25, 44–45:** The **accursed** (41) will be likewise astonished that their neglect of the sufferers was neglect of the **Lord** and will receive from him a similar answer.

**26, 1—28, 20:** The five books with alternating narrative and discourse (3, 1—25, 46) that give this gospel its distinctive structure lead up to the climactic events that are the center of Christian belief and the origin of the Christian church, the passion and resurrection of Jesus. In his passion narrative (chs 26–27) Matthew follows his Marcan source closely but with omissions (e.g., Mk 14, 51–52) and additions (e.g., 27, 3–10.19). Some of the additions indicate that he utilized traditions that he had received from elsewhere; others are due to his own theological insight (e.g., 26, 28, " . . . for the forgiveness of sins"; 27, 52). In his editing Matthew also altered Mk in some minor details. But there is no need to suppose that he knew any passion narrative other than Mark's.

**26, 1–2: When Jesus finished all these words:** see the note on 7, 28–29. **"You know . . . crucified":** Matthew turns Mk's statement of the time (14, 1) into Jesus' final prediction of his passion. **Passover:** see the note on Mk 14, 1.

n 13, 12; Mk 4, 25; Lk 8, 18; 19, 26. o 16, 27; Dt 33, 2 LXX. p Ez 34, 17. q Is 58, 7; Ez 18, 7. r 10, 40.42. s 7, 23; Lk 13, 27. t Jb 22, 7; Jas 2, 15–16. u Dn 12, 2.

2 [v]"You know that in two days' time it will be
Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed
over to be crucified." 3*Then the chief priests
and the elders of the people assembled in the
palace of the high priest, who was called Caia-
phas, 4 [w]and they consulted together to arrest
Jesus by treachery and put him to death. 5*But
they said, "Not during the festival, that there
may not be a riot among the people."

**The Anointing at Bethany** 6 [x]*Now when
Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the
leper, 7a woman came up to him with an
alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil, and poured it
on his head while he was reclining at table.
8When the disciples saw this, they were indig-
nant and said, "Why this waste? 9It could have
been sold for much, and the money given to the
poor." 10Since Jesus knew this, he said to them,
"Why do you make trouble for the woman? She
has done a good thing for me. 11 [y]The poor you
will always have with you; but you will not
always have me. 12*In pouring this perfumed oil
upon my body, she did it to prepare me for
burial. 13Amen, I say to you, wherever this
gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what
she has done will be spoken of, in memory of
her."

**The Betrayal by Judas** 14 [z]*Then one of the
Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to
the chief priests 15 [a]*and said, "What are you
willing to give me if I hand him over to you?"
They paid him thirty pieces of silver, 16and from
that time on he looked for an opportunity to
hand him over.

**Preparations for the Passover** 17 [b c]*On the
first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the
disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do
you want us to prepare for you to eat the
Passover?" 18*He said, "Go into the city to a
certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My
appointed time draws near; in your house I shall
celebrate the Passover with my disciples." ' "
19The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered,
and prepared the Passover.

**The Betrayer** 20When it was evening, he re-
clined at table with the Twelve. 21*And while
they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you,
one of you will betray me." 22Deeply distressed
at this, they began to say to him one after
another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" 23He said in
reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish
with me is the one who will betray me. 24 [d]*The
Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him,
but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is
betrayed. It would be better for that man if he
had never been born." 25*Then Judas, his be-
trayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?"
He answered, "You have said so."

**26, 3: Caiaphas** was high priest from A.D. 18 to 36.

**26, 5: Not during the festival:** the plan to delay Jesus' arrest and execution until after **the festival** was not carried out, for according to the synoptics he was arrested on the night of Nisan 14 and put to death the following day. No reason is given why the plan was changed.

**26, 6–13:** See the notes on Mk 14, 3–9 and Jn 12, 1–8.

**26, 12: To prepare me for burial:** cf Mk 14, 8. In accordance with the interpretation of this act as Jesus' **burial** anointing, Matthew, more consistent than Mark, changes the purpose of the visit of the women to Jesus' tomb; they do not go to anoint him (Mk 16, 1) but "to see the tomb" (28, 1).

**26, 14: Iscariot:** see the note on Lk 6, 16.

**26, 15:** The motive of avarice is introduced by Judas's question about the price for betrayal, which is absent in the Marcan source (14, 10–11). **Hand him over:** the same Greek verb is used to express the saving purpose of God by which Jesus is handed over to death (cf 17, 22; 20, 18; 26, 2) and the human malice that hands him over. **Thirty pieces of silver:** the price of the betrayal is found only in Mt. It is derived from Zec 11, 12 where it is the wages paid to the rejected shepherd, a cheap price (Zec 11, 13). That amount is also the compensation paid to one whose slave has been gored by an ox (Ex 21, 32).

**26, 17: The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread:** see the note on Mk 14, 1. Matthew omits Mk's "when they sacrificed the Passover lamb."

**26, 18:** By omitting much of Mk 14, 13–15, adding **My appointed time draws near,** and turning the question into a statement, **in your house I shall celebrate the Passover,** Matthew has given this passage a solemnity and majesty greater than that of his source.

**26, 21:** Given Matthew's interest in the fulfillment of the Old Testament, it is curious that he omits the Marcan designation of Jesus' betrayer as "one who is eating with me" (14, 18), since that is probably an allusion to Ps 41, 10. However, the shocking fact that the betrayer is one who shares table fellowship with Jesus is emphasized in v 23.

**26, 24: It would be better . . . born:** the enormity of the deed is such that it would be better not to exist than to do it.

**26, 25:** Peculiar to Mt. **You have said so:** cf 26, 64; 27, 11. This is a half-affirmative. Emphasis is laid on the pronoun and the answer implies that the statement would not have been made if the question had not been asked.

v Mk 14, 1–2; Lk 22, 1–2. w Jn 11, 47–53. x Mk 14, 3–9; Jn 12, 1–8. y Dt 15, 11. z Mk 14, 10–11; Lk 22, 3–6. a Zec 11, 12. b Mk 14, 12–21; Lk 22, 7–23. c Ex 12, 14–20. d Is 53, 8–10.

**The Lord's Supper** 26 *e f* *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it,
and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and
eat; this is my body." 27 *Then he took a cup,
gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,
"Drink from it, all of you, 28 *g* for this is my
blood of the covenant, which will be shed on
behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 *I
tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit
of the vine until the day when I drink it with
you new in the kingdom of my Father."
30 *Then, after singing a hymn, they went out
to the Mount of Olives.

**Peter's Denial Foretold** 31 *h i* *Then Jesus said
to them, "This night all of you will have your
faith in me shaken, for it is written:

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be
dispersed';

32 but after I have been raised up, I shall go
before you to Galilee." 33 Peter said to him in
reply, "Though all may have their faith in you
shaken, mine will never be." 34 *j k* *Jesus said to
him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before
the cock crows, you will deny me three times."
35 Peter said to him, "Even though I should have
to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the
disciples spoke likewise.

**The Agony in the Garden** 36 *l m* *Then Jesus
came with them to a place called Gethsemane,
and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go
over there and pray." 37 *n* *He took along Peter
and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel
sorrow and distress. 38 *o* *Then he said to them,
"My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain
here and keep watch with me." 39 *p* *He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying,
"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from
me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." 40 When
he returned to his disciples he found them
asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep

**26, 26–29:** See the note on Mk 14, 22–24. The Marcan-Matthean is one of the two major New Testament traditions of the words of Jesus when instituting the Eucharist. The other (and earlier) is the Pauline-Lucan (1 Cor 11, 23–25; Lk 22, 19–20). Each shows the influence of Christian liturgical usage, but the Marcan-Matthean is more developed in that regard than the Pauline-Lucan. The words over the bread and cup succeed each other without the intervening meal mentioned in 1 Cor 11, 25; Lk 22, 20; and there is parallelism between the consecratory words (**this is my body . . . this is my blood**). Matthew follows Mk closely but with some changes.

**26, 26:** See the note on 14, 19. **Said the blessing:** a prayer blessing God. **Take and eat:** literally, **Take, eat.** Eat is an addition to Mk's "take it" (literally, "take"; 14, 22). **This is my body:** the bread is identified with Jesus himself.

**26, 27–28: Gave thanks:** see the note on 15, 36. **Gave it to them . . . all of you:** cf Mk 14, 23–24. In the Marcan sequence the disciples drink and then Jesus says the interpretative words. Matthew has changed this into a command to **drink** followed by those words. **My blood:** see Lv 17, 11 for the concept that the **blood** is "the seat of life" and that when placed on the altar it "makes atonement." **Which will be shed:** the present participle, "being shed" or "going to be shed," is future in relation to the Last Supper. **On behalf of:** Greek **peri;** see the note on Mk 14, 24. **Many:** see the note on 20, 28. **For the forgiveness of sins:** a Matthean addition. The same phrase occurs in Mk 1, 4 in connection with John's baptism but Matthew avoids it there (3, 11). He places it here probably because he wishes to emphasize that it is the sacrificial death of Jesus that brings **forgiveness of sins.**

**26, 29:** Although his death will interrupt the table fellowship he has had with the disciples, Jesus confidently predicts his vindication by God and a new table fellowship with them at the banquet of the kingdom.

**26, 30:** See the note on Mk 14, 26.

**26, 31: Will have . . . shaken:** literally, "will be scandalized in me"; see the note on 24, 9–12. **I will strike . . . dispersed:** cf Zec 13, 7.

**26, 34: Before the cock crows:** see the note on 14, 25. The third watch of the night was called "cockcrow." **Deny me:** see the note on 16, 24.

**26, 36–56:** Cf Mk 14, 32–52. The account of Jesus in Gethsemane is divided between that of his agony (36–46) and that of his betrayal and arrest (47–56). Jesus' **sorrow and distress** (37) in face of death is unrelieved by the presence of his three disciples who, though urged to **watch with** him (38.41), fall asleep (40.43). He prays that **if . . . possible** his death may be avoided (39) but that his Father's will be done (39.42.44). Knowing then that his death must take place, he announces to his companions that **the hour** for his being **handed over** has come (45). Judas arrives with an armed band provided by the Sanhedrin and greets Jesus with a kiss, the prearranged sign for his identification (47–49). After his arrest, he rebukes a disciple who has attacked **the high priest's servant** with a **sword** (51–54), and chides those who have come out to seize him with **swords and clubs** as if he were a **robber** (55–56). In both rebukes Jesus declares that the treatment he is now receiving is the fulfillment of the scriptures (55.56). The subsequent flight of **all the disciples** is itself the fulfillment of his own prediction (cf 31). In this episode, Matthew follows Mk with a few alterations.

**26, 36: Gethsemane:** the Hebrew name means "oil press" and designates an olive orchard on the western slope of the Mount of Olives; see the note on 21, 1. The name appears only in Mt and Mk. The place is called a "garden" in Jn 18, 1.

**26, 37: Peter and the two sons of Zebedee:** cf 17, 1.

**26, 38:** Cf Ps 42, 6.12. In the Septuagint (Ps 41, 5.12) the same Greek word for **sorrowful** is used as here. **To death:** i.e., "enough to die"; cf Jon 4, 9.

**26, 39: My Father:** see the note on Mk 14, 36. Matthew omits the Aramaic **'abbā'** and adds the qualifier **my. This cup:** see the note on Mk 10, 38–40.

e Mk 14, 22–26; Lk 22, 14–23; 1 Cor 11, 23–25. f 1 Cor 10, 16. g Ex 24, 8; Is 53, 12. h Mk 14, 7–31. i Zec 13, 7; Jn 16, 32. j Lk 22, 33–34; Jn 13, 37–38. k 26, 69–75. l Mk 14, 32–42; Lk 22, 39–46. m Jn 18, 1. n Heb 5, 7. o Ps 42, 6.12; Jon 4, 9. p Jn 4, 34; 6, 38; Phil 2, 8.

watch with me for one hour? 41 *Watch and pray
that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is
willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 q*Withdrawing
a second time, he prayed again, "My Father, if it
is not possible that this cup pass without my
drinking it, your will be done!" 43Then he
returned once more and found them asleep, for
they could not keep their eyes open. 44He left
them and withdrew again and prayed a third
time, saying the same thing again. 45 rThen he
returned to his disciples and said to them, "Are
you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold,
the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be
handed over to sinners. 46Get up, let us go.
Look, my betrayer is at hand."

**The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus** 47 sWhile
he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve,
arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with
swords and clubs, who had come from the chief
priests and the elders of the people. 48His
betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying,
"The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him."
49 *Immediately he went over to Jesus and said,
"Hail, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. 50Jesus an-
swered him, "Friend, do what you have come
for." Then stepping forward they laid hands on
Jesus and arrested him. 51And behold, one of
those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his
sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's
servant, cutting off his ear. 52Then Jesus said to
him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all
who take the sword will perish by the sword.
53Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father
and he will not provide me at this moment with
more than twelve legions of angels? 54But then
how would the scriptures be fulfilled which say
that it must come to pass in this way?" 55 *At
that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you
come out as against a robber, with swords and
clubs to seize me? Day after day I sat teaching in
the temple area, yet you did not arrest me.
56 tBut all this has come to pass that the writings
of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the
disciples left him and fled.

**Jesus before the Sanhedrin** 57 u*Those who
had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the
high priest, where the scribes and the elders
were assembled. 58Peter was following him at a
distance as far as the high priest's courtyard, and
going inside he sat down with the servants to see
the outcome. 59 *The chief priests and the entire
Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony
against Jesus in order to put him to death,
60 v*but they found none, though many false

**26, 41: Undergo the test:** see the note on 6, 13. In that verse "the final test" translates the same Greek word as is here translated **the test,** and these are the only instances of the use of that word in Mt. It is possible that the passion of Jesus is seen here as an anticipation of the great tribulation that will precede the parousia (see the notes on 24, 8; 24, 21) to which 6, 13 refers, and that just as Jesus prays to be delivered from death (39), so he exhorts the disciples to pray that they will not have to **undergo the great test** that his passion would be for them. Some scholars, however, understand **not undergo** (literally, "not enter") **the test** as meaning not that the disciples may be spared **the test** but that they may not yield to the temptation of falling away from Jesus because of his passion even though they will have to endure it.

**26, 42: Your will be done:** cf 6, 10.

**26, 49: Rabbi:** see the note on 23, 6–7. Jesus is so addressed twice in Mt (cf 25), both times by Judas. For the significance of the closely related address "teacher" in Mt, see the note on 8, 19.

**26, 55: Day after day . . . arrest me:** cf Mk 14, 49. This suggests that Jesus had taught for a relatively long period in Jerusalem, whereas 21, 1–11 puts his coming to the city for the first time only a few days before.

**26, 57–68:** Following Mk 14, 53–65, Matthew presents the nighttime appearance of Jesus before **the Sanhedrin** as a real trial. After **many false witnesses** bring charges against him that do not suffice for the death sentence (60), **two came forward** who charge him with claiming to be able to **destroy the temple . . . and within three days** to **rebuild it** (60–61). Jesus makes no answer even when challenged to do so by **the high priest,** who then orders him to declare **under oath . . . whether he is the Messiah, the Son of God** (62–63). Matthew changes Mk's clear affirmative response (14, 62) to the same one as that given to Judas (cf 25), but follows Mk almost verbatim in Jesus' predicting that his judges will see him (**the Son of Man**) **seated at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven** (64). The **high priest** then charges him with blasphemy (65), a charge with which the other members of **the Sanhedrin** agree by declaring that **he deserves to die** (66). They then attack him (67) and mockingly demand that he **prophesy** (68). This account contains elements that are contrary to the judicial procedures prescribed in the Mishnah, the Jewish code of law that dates in written form from ca. A.D. 200, e.g., trial on a feast day, a night session of the court, pronouncement of a verdict of condemnation at the same session at which testimony was received. Consequently, some scholars regard the account entirely as a creation of the early Christians without historical value. However, it is disputable whether the norms found in the Mishnah were in force at the time of Jesus. More to the point is the question whether the Matthean-Marcan night trial derives from a combination of two separate incidents, a nighttime preliminary investigation (cf Jn 18, 13.19–24) and a formal trial on the following morning (cf Lk 22, 66–71).

**26, 57: Caiaphas:** see the note on 26, 3.

**26, 59: Sanhedrin:** see the note on Lk 22, 66.

**26, 60–61:** Two: cf Dt 19, 15. I **can destroy . . . rebuild it:** there are significant differences from the Marcan parallel (14, 58).

q 6, 10; Heb 10, 9. r Jn 12, 23; 13, 1; 17, 1. s Mk 14, 43–50; Lk 22, 47–53; Jn 18, 3–11. t 26, 31. u Mk 14, 53–65; Lk 22, 54–55.63–71; Jn 18, 12–14.19–24. v Dt 19, 15; Jn 2, 19; Acts 6, 14.

witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward [61]who stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and within three days rebuild it.' " [62]The high priest rose and addressed him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" [63 w]*But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God." [64 x]*Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you:

> From now on you will see 'the Son of Man
> seated at the right hand of the Power'
> and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.' "

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[65]*Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy; [66]what is your opinion?" They said in reply, "He deserves to die!" [67 y]*Then they spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, [68]saying, "Prophesy for us, Messiah: who is it that struck you?"

**Peter's Denial of Jesus** [69 z]Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." [70]*But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" [71]As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." [72]Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" [73]*A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." [74]At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. [75 a]Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

## CHAPTER 27

**Jesus before Pilate** [1 b]*When it was morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. [2]They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

**The Death of Judas** [3 c d]*Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, [4]saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us?

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Matthew omits "made with hands" and "not made with hands" and changes Mk's "will destroy" and "will build another" to **can destroy** and (can) **rebuild**. The charge is probably based on Jesus' prediction of the temple's destruction; see the notes on 23, 37–39; 24, 2; and Jn 2, 19. A similar prediction by Jeremiah was considered as deserving death; cf Jer 7, 1–15; 26, 1–8.

**26, 63: Silent:** possibly an allusion to Is 53, 7. **I order you . . . living God:** peculiar to Mt; cf Mk 14, 61.

**26, 64: You have said so:** see the note on 26, 25. **From now on . . . heaven:** the Son of Man who is to be crucified (cf 20, 19) will be seen in glorious majesty (cf Ps 110, 1) and **coming on the clouds of heaven** (cf Dn 7, 13). **The Power:** see the note on Mk 14, 61–62.

**26, 65: Blasphemed:** the punishment for **blasphemy** was death by stoning (see Lv 24, 10–16). According to the Mishnah, to be guilty of **blasphemy** one had to pronounce "the Name itself," i.e., Yahweh; cf **Sanhedrin** 7, 4.5. Those who judge the gospel accounts of Jesus' trial by the later Mishnah standards point out that Jesus uses the surrogate "the Power," and hence no Jewish court would have regarded him as guilty of **blasphemy**; others hold that the Mishnah's narrow understanding of **blasphemy** was a later development.

**26, 67–68:** The physical abuse, apparently done to Jesus by the members of the Sanhedrin themselves, recalls the sufferings of the Isaian Servant of the Lord; cf Is 50, 6. The mocking challenge to **prophesy** is probably motivated by Jesus' prediction of his future glory (64).

**26, 70: Denied it in front of everyone:** see 10, 33. Peter's repentance (75) saves him from the fearful destiny of which Jesus speaks there.

**26, 73: Your speech . . . away:** Matthew explicates Mk's "you too are a Galilean" (14, 70).

**27, 1–31:** Cf Mk 15, 1–20. Matthew's account of the Roman trial before **Pilate** is introduced by a consultation of the Sanhedrin after which Jesus is **handed over to . . . the governor** (1–2). Matthew follows his Marcan source closely but adds some material that is peculiar to him, the death of **Judas** (3–10), possibly the name **Jesus** as the name of **Barabbas** also (16–17), the intervention of Pilate's **wife** (19), Pilate's washing **his hands** in token of his disclaiming responsibility for Jesus' death (24), and the assuming of that responsibility by **the whole people** (25).

**27, 1–2:** There is scholarly disagreement about the meaning of the Sanhedrin's taking **counsel (symboulion elabon;** cf 12, 14; 22, 15; 27, 7; 28, 12); see the note on Mk 15, 1. Some understand it as a discussion about the strategy for putting their death sentence against **Jesus** into effect since they lacked the right to do so themselves. Others see it as the occasion for their passing that sentence, holding that Matthew, unlike Mark (14, 64), does not consider that it had been passed in the night session (26, 66). Even in the latter interpretation, their handing **him over to Pilate** is best explained on the hypothesis that they did not have competence to put their sentence into effect, as is stated in Jn 18, 31.

**27, 3: The thirty pieces of silver:** see 26, 15.

w Is 53, 7. x Ps 110, 1; Dn 7, 13. y Wis 2, 19; Is 50, 6. z Mk 14, 66–72; Lk 22, 56–62; Jn 18, 17–18.25–27. a 26, 34. b Mk 15, 1; Lk 23, 1; Jn 18, 28. c Acts 1, 18–19. d 26, 15.

Look to it yourself." 5*Flinging the money into
the temple, he departed and went off and
hanged himself. 6The chief priests gathered up
the money, but said, "It is not lawful to deposit
this in the temple treasury, for it is the price of
blood." 7After consultation, they used it to buy
the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners.
8That is why that field even today is called the
Field of Blood. 9*Then was fulfilled what had
been said through Jeremiah the prophet, "And
they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of a
man with a price on his head, a price set by some
of the Israelites, 10 *e*and they paid it out for the
potter's field just as the Lord had commanded
me."

**Jesus Questioned by Pilate** 11*f**Now Jesus
stood before the governor, and he questioned
him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said,
"You say so." 12 *g**And when he was accused by
the chief priests and elders, he made no answer.
13Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how
many things they are testifying against you?"
14But he did not answer him one word, so that
the governor was greatly amazed.

**The Sentence of Death** 15 *h**Now on the occa-
sion of the feast the governor was accustomed to
release to the crowd one prisoner whom they
wished. 16*And at that time they had a notori-
ous prisoner called [Jesus] Barabbas. 17So when
they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which
one do you want me to release to you, [Jesus]
Barabbas, or Jesus called Messiah?" 18*For he
knew that it was out of envy that they had
handed him over. 19*While he was still seated
on the bench, his wife sent him a message,
"Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I
suffered much in a dream today because of
him." 20 *i*The chief priests and the elders per-
suaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to
destroy Jesus. 21The governor said to them in
reply, "Which of the two do you want me to
release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!"
22*Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do
with Jesus called Messiah?" They all said, "Let
him be crucified!" 23But he said, "Why? What
evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder,
"Let him be crucified!" 24 *j**When Pilate saw
that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot

**27, 5–8:** For another tradition about the death of Judas, cf Acts 1, 18–19. The two traditions agree only in the purchase of a **field** with **the money** paid to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus and the name given to the **field, the Field of Blood.** In Acts Judas himself buys the field and its name comes from his own blood shed in his fatal accident on it. **The potter's field:** this designation of the field is based on the fulfillment citation in v 10.

**27, 9–10:** Cf 26, 15. Matthew's attributing this text to Jeremiah is puzzling, for there is no such text in that book, and **the thirty pieces of silver** thrown by Judas "into the temple" (5) recall rather Zec 11, 12–13. It is usually said that the attribution of the text to Jeremiah is due to Matthew's combining the Zechariah text with texts from Jeremiah that speak of a **potter** (18, 2–3), the buying of a **field** (32, 6–9), or the breaking of a potter's flask at Topheth in the valley of Ben-Hinnom with the prediction that it will become a burial place (19, 1–13).

**27, 11: King of the Jews:** this title is used of Jesus only by pagans. The Matthean instances are, besides this verse, 2, 2; 27, 29.37. Matthew equates it with "Messiah"; cf 2, 2.4 and 27, 17.22 where he has changed "the king of the Jews" of his Marcan source (15, 9.12) to "[Jesus] called Messiah." The normal political connotation of both titles would be of concern to the Roman **governor. You say so:** see the note on 26, 25. An unqualified affirmative response is not made because Jesus' kingship is not what Pilate would understand it to be.

**27, 12–14:** Cf 26, 62–63. As in the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus' silence may be meant to recall Is 53, 7. **Greatly amazed:** possibly an allusion to Is 52, 14–15.

**27, 15–26:** The choice that Pilate offers **the crowd** between **Barabbas** and **Jesus** is said to be in accordance with a custom of releasing at the Passover feast **one prisoner** chosen by **the crowd** (15). This custom is mentioned also in Mk 15, 6 and Jn 18, 39 but not in Lk; see the note on Lk 23, 17. Outside of the gospels there is no direct attestation of it, and scholars are divided in their judgment of the historical reliability of the claim that there was such a practice.

**27, 16–17: [Jesus] Barabbas:** it is possible that the double name is the original reading; **Jesus** was a common Jewish name; see the note on 1, 21. This reading is found in only a few textual witnesses, although its absence in the majority can be explained as an omission of **Jesus** made for reverential reasons. That name is bracketed because of its uncertain textual attestation. The Aramaic name **Barabbas** means "son of the father"; the irony of the choice offered between him and Jesus, the true son of the Father, would be evident to those addressees of Mt who knew that.

**27, 18:** Cf Mk 14, 10. This is an example of the tendency, found in varying degree in all the gospels, to present Pilate in a relatively favorable light and emphasize the hostility of the Jewish authorities and eventually of the people.

**27, 19:** Jesus' innocence is declared by a Gentile woman. **In a dream:** in Mt's infancy narrative, dreams are the means of divine communication; cf 1, 20; 2, 12.13.19.22.

**27, 22: Let him be crucified:** incited by the chief priests and elders (20), the crowds demand that Jesus be executed by crucifixion, a peculiarly horrible form of Roman capital punishment. The Marcan parallel, "Crucify him" (15, 3), addressed to Pilate, is changed by Matthew to the passive, probably to emphasize the responsibility of the crowds.

**27, 24–25:** Peculiar to Mt. **Took water . . . blood:** cf Dt 21, 1–8, the handwashing prescribed in the case of a murder when the killer is unknown. The elders of the city nearest to where the corpse is found must wash their hands, declaring, "Our hands did not shed this blood." **Look to it yourselves:** cf v 4. **The whole people:** Matthew sees in those who speak these words the entire

*e* Zec 11, 12–13. *f* Mk 15, 2–5; Lk 23, 2–3; Jn 18, 29–38. *g* Is 53, 7. *h* Mk 15, 6–15; Lk 23, 17–25; Jn 18, 39—19, 16. *i* Acts 3, 14. *j* Dt 21, 1–8.

was breaking out instead, he took water and
washed his hands in the sight of the crowd,
saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look
to it yourselves." 25And the whole people said in
reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our
children." 26*Then he released Barabbas to
them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he
handed him over to be crucified.

**Mockery by the Soldiers** 27 k*Then the sol-
diers of the governor took Jesus inside the
praetorium and gathered the whole cohort
around him. 28*They stripped off his clothes
and threw a scarlet military cloak about him.
29 l*Weaving a crown out of thorns, they
placed it on his head, and a reed in his right
hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked
him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"
30 m*They spat upon him and took the reed and
kept striking him on the head. 31And when
they had mocked him, they stripped him of the
cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led
him off to crucify him.

**The Way of the Cross** 32 n*As they were going
out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this
man they pressed into service to carry his cross.

**The Crucifixion** 33 oAnd when they came to a
place called Golgotha (which means Place of the
Skull), 34 p*they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed
with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused
to drink. 35 q*After they had crucified him, they
divided his garments by casting lots; 36then they
sat down and kept watch over him there.
37*And they placed over his head the written
charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the
Jews. 38*Two revolutionaries were crucified
with him, one on his right and the other on his
left. 39 r*Those passing by reviled him, shaking
their heads 40 sand saying, "You who would
destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,
save yourself, if you are the Son of God, [and]
come down from the cross!" 41Likewise the
chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked
him and said, 42*"He saved others; he cannot
save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him
come down from the cross now, and we will
believe in him. 43 t*He trusted in God; let him

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**people:** (Greek **laos**) of Israel. **His blood . . . and upon our children:** cf Jer 26, 15. The responsibility for Jesus' death is accepted by the nation that was God's special possession (Ex 19, 5), his own **people** (Hos 2, 25), and they thereby lose that high privilege; see 21, 43 and the note on that verse. The controversy between Matthew's church and Pharisaic Judaism about which was the true people of God is reflected here. As the Second Vatican Council has pointed out, guilt for Jesus' death is not attributable to all the Jews of his time or to any Jews of later times.

**27, 26: He had Jesus scourged:** the usual preliminary to crucifixion.

**27, 27: The praetorium:** the residence of the Roman **governor.** His usual place of residence was at Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast, but he went to Jerusalem during the great feasts, when the influx of pilgrims posed the danger of a nationalistic riot. It is disputed whether **the praetorium** in Jerusalem was the old palace of Herod in the west of the city or the fortress of Antonia northwest of the temple area. **The whole cohort:** normally six hundred soldiers.

**27, 28: Scarlet military cloak:** so Mt as against the royal purple of Mk 15, 17 and Jn 19, 2.

**27, 29: Crown out of thorns:** probably of long **thorns** that stood upright so that it resembled the "radiant" **crown,** a diadem with spikes worn by Hellenistic kings. The soldiers' purpose was mockery, not torture. **A reed:** peculiar to Mt; a mock scepter.

**27, 30: Spat upon him:** cf 26, 67 where there also is a possible allusion to Is 50, 6.

**27, 32:** See the note on Mk 15, 21. **Cyrenian named Simon:** Cyrenaica was a Roman province on the north coast of Africa and Cyrene was its capital city. The city had a large population of Greek-speaking Jews. **Simon** may have been living in Palestine or have come there for the Passover as a pilgrim. **Pressed into service:** see the note on 5, 41.

**27, 34: Wine . . . mixed with gall:** cf Mk 15, 23 where the drink is "wine drugged with myrrh," a narcotic. Mt's text is probably an inexact allusion to Ps 69, 22. That psalm belongs to the class called the individual lament, in which a persecuted just man prays for deliverance in the midst of great suffering and also expresses confidence that his prayer will be heard. That theme of the suffering Just One is frequently applied to the sufferings of Jesus in the passion narratives.

**27, 35:** The clothing of an executed criminal went to his executioner(s), but the description of that procedure in the case of Jesus, found in all the gospels, is plainly inspired by Ps 22, 19. However, that psalm verse is quoted only in Jn 19, 24.

**27, 37:** The offense of a person condemned to death by crucifixion was written on a tablet that was displayed on his cross. The **charge** against **Jesus** was that he had claimed to be **the King of the Jews** (cf 11), i.e., the Messiah (cf 17.22).

**27, 38: Revolutionaries:** see the note on Jn 18, 40 where the same Greek word as that found here is used for Barabbas.

**27, 39–40: Reviled him . . . heads:** cf Ps 22, 8. **You who would destroy . . . three days:** cf 26, 61. **If you are the Son of God:** the same words as those of the devil in the temptation of Jesus; cf 4, 3.6.

**27, 42: King of Israel:** in their mocking of Jesus the members of the Sanhedrin call themselves and their people not "the Jews" but **Israel.**

**27, 43:** Peculiar to Mt. **He trusted in God . . . wants him:** cf Ps 22, 9. **He said . . . of God:** probably an allusion to Wis 2, 12–20 where the theme of the suffering Just One appears.

k Mk 15, 16–20; Jn 19, 2–3. l 27, 11. m Is 50, 6. n Mk 15, 21; Lk 23, 26. o Mk 15, 22–32; Lk 23, 32–38; Jn 19, 17–19.23–24. p Ps 69, 21. q Ps 22, 19. r Ps 22, 8. s 4, 3.6; 26, 61. t Ps 22, 9; Wis 2, 12–20.

deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I
am the Son of God.' " [44]The revolutionaries who
were crucified with him also kept abusing him in
the same way.

**The Death of Jesus** [45 u v]*From noon onward,
darkness came over the whole land until three in
the afternoon. [46 w]*And about three o'clock
Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Eli, Eli, lema
sabachthani?"* which means, "My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?" [47]*Some of the
bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling
for Elijah." [48 x]Immediately one of them ran to
get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it
on a reed, gave it to him to drink. [49]But the rest
said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save
him." [50]*But Jesus cried out again in a loud
voice, and gave up his spirit. [51 y]*And behold,
the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from
top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were
split, [52 z]tombs were opened, and the bodies of
many saints who had fallen asleep were raised.
[53]And coming forth from their tombs after his
resurrection, they entered the holy city and
appeared to many. [54]*The centurion and the
men with him who were keeping watch over
Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earth-
quake and all that was happening, and they said,
"Truly, this was the Son of God!" [55]*There were
many women there, looking on from a distance,
who had followed Jesus from Galilee, minister-
ing to him. [56 a]Among them were Mary Magda-
lene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph,
and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

**The Burial of Jesus** [57 b c]*When it was eve-
ning, there came a rich man from Arimathea
named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of
Jesus. [58]He went to Pilate and asked for the body
of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed
over. [59]Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in]
clean linen [60]and laid it in his new tomb that he
had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge
stone across the entrance to the tomb and
departed. [61]But Mary Magdalene and the other
Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

**The Guard at the Tomb** [62]*The next day, the
one following the day of preparation, the chief

**27, 45:** Cf Amos 8, 9 where on the day of the Lord "the sun will set at midday."

**27, 46: Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?:** Jesus cries out in the words of Ps 22, 2a, a psalm of lament that is the Old Testament passage most frequently drawn upon in this narrative. In Mk the verse is cited entirely in Aramaic, which Matthew partially retains but changes the invocation of God to the Hebrew **Eli**, possibly because that is more easily related to the statement of the following verse about Jesus' calling for Elijah.

**27, 47: Elijah:** see the note on 3, 4. This prophet, taken up into heaven (2 Kgs 2, 11), was believed to come to the help of those in distress, but the evidences of that belief are all later than the gospels.

**27, 50: Gave up his spirit:** cf the Marcan parallel (15, 37), "breathed his last." Matthew's alteration expresses both Jesus' control over his destiny and his obedient giving up of his life to God.

**27, 51–53: Veil of the sanctuary . . . bottom:** cf Mk 15, 38; Lk 23, 45. Lk puts this event immediately before the death of Jesus. There were two veils in the Mosaic tabernacle on the model of which the temple was constructed, the outer one before the entrance of the Holy Place and the inner one before the Holy of Holies (see Ex 26, 31–36). Only the high priest could pass through the latter and that only on the Day of Atonement (see Lv 16, 1–18). Probably the torn veil of the gospels is the inner one. The meaning of the scene may be that now, because of Jesus' death, all people have access to the presence of God, or that the temple, its holiest part standing exposed, is now profaned and will soon be destroyed. **The earth quaked . . . appeared to many:** peculiar to Mt. The earthquake, the splitting of the rocks, and especially the resurrection of the dead saints indicate the coming of the final age. In the Old Testament the coming of God is frequently portrayed with the imagery of an earthquake (see Pss 68, 9; 77, 19), and Jesus speaks of the earthquakes that will accompany the "labor pains" that signify the beginning of the dissolution of the old world (24, 7–8). For the expectation of the resurrection of the dead at the coming of the new and final age, see Dn 12, 1–3. Matthew knows that the end of the old age has not yet come (28, 20), but the new age has broken in with the death (and resurrection; cf the earthquake in 28, 2) of Jesus; see the note on 16, 28. **After his resurrection:** this qualification seems to be due to Matthew's wish to assert the primacy of Jesus' resurrection even though he has placed the resurrection of the dead saints immediately after Jesus' death.

**27, 54:** Cf Mk 15, 39. The Christian confession of faith is made by Gentiles, not only **the centurion**, as in Mk, but the other soldiers who **were keeping watch over Jesus** (cf 36).

**27, 55–56: Looking on from a distance:** cf Ps 38, 12. **Mary Magdalene . . . Joseph:** these two women are mentioned again in v 61 and 28, 1 and are important as witnesses of the reality of the empty tomb. A **James** and **Joseph** are referred to in 13, 55 as brothers of Jesus.

**27, 57–61:** Cf Mk 15, 42–47. Matthew drops Mk's designation of **Joseph of Arimathea** as "a distinguished member of the council" (the Sanhedrin), and makes him **a rich man** and **a disciple of Jesus**. The former may be an allusion to Is 53, 9 (the Hebrew reading of that text is disputed and the one followed in the NAB OT has nothing about the rich, but they are mentioned in the LXX version). **That the tomb was the new tomb of a rich man** and that it was seen by the women are indications of an apologetic intent of Matthew; there could be no question about the identity of Jesus' burial place. **The other Mary:** the mother of James and Joseph (56).

**27, 62–66:** Peculiar to Mt. The story prepares for 28, 11–15 and the Jewish charge that the tomb was empty because the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus (28, 13.15).

**27, 62: The next day . . . preparation:** the sabbath. According

u Mk 15, 33–41; Lk 23, 44–49; Jn 19, 28–30. v Am 8, 9. w Ps 22, 2. x Ps 69, 21. y Ex 26, 31–36; Ps 68, 9; 77, 19. z Dn 12, 1–3. a 13, 55. b Mk 15, 42–47; Lk 23, 50–56; Jn 19, 38–42. c Is 53, 9.

priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate
63 [d]and said, "Sir, we remember that this impos-
tor while still alive said, 'After three days I will
be raised up.' 64*Give orders, then, that the
grave be secured until the third day, lest his
disciples come and steal him and say to the
people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' This
last imposture would be worse than the first."
65*Pilate said to them, "The guard is yours; go
secure it as best you can." 66So they went and
secured the tomb by fixing a seal to the stone
and setting the guard.

## CHAPTER 28

Ch 28
See RG
404–405

**The Resurrection of Jesus** 1 [e]*After the sab-
bath, as the first day of the week was dawning,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to
see the tomb. 2[f]*And behold, there was a great
earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended
from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone,
and sat upon it. 3[g]His appearance was like
lightning and his clothing was white as snow.
4The guards were shaken with fear of him and
became like dead men. 5Then the angel said to
the women in reply, "Do not be afraid! I know
that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. 6*He is
not here, for he has been raised just as he said.
Come and see the place where he lay. 7 [h]Then go
quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised
from the dead, and he is going before you to
Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have
told you." 8*Then they went away quickly from
the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to
announce this to his disciples. 9 [i]*And behold,
Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.
They approached, embraced his feet, and did
him homage. 10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not

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to the synoptic chronology, in that year the day of preparation (for the sabbath) was the Passover; cf Mk 15, 42. **The Pharisees:** the principal opponents of Jesus during his ministry and, in Matthew's time, of the Christian church, join with the chief priests to guarantee against a possible attempt of Jesus' disciples to steal his body.

**27, 64:** This last imposture . . . the first: the claim that Jesus has been raised from the dead is clearly the last imposture; the first may be either his claim that he would be raised up (63) or his claim that he was the one with whose ministry the kingdom of God had come (see 12, 28).

**27, 65:** The guard is yours: literally, "have a guard" or "you have a guard." Either the imperative or the indicative could mean that Pilate granted the petitioners some Roman soldiers as guards, which is the sense of the present translation. However, if the verb is taken as an indicative it could also mean that Pilate told them to use their own Jewish guards.

**28, 1–20:** Except for vv 1–8, based on Mk 16, 1–8, the material of this final chapter is peculiar to Mt. Even where he follows Mk, Matthew has altered his source so greatly that a very different impression is given from that of the Marcan account. The two points that are common to the resurrection testimony of all the gospels are that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty and that the risen Jesus had appeared to certain persons, or, in the original form of Mk, that such an appearance was promised as soon to take place (see Mk 16, 7). On this central and all-important basis, Matthew has constructed an account that interprets the resurrection as the turning of the ages (2–4), shows the Jewish opposition to Jesus as continuing to the present in the claim that the resurrection is a deception perpetrated by the disciples who stole his body from the tomb (11–15), and marks a new stage in the mission of the disciples once limited to Israel (10, 5–6); now they are to make disciples of all nations. In this work they will be strengthened by the presence of the exalted Son of Man, who will be with them until the kingdom comes in fullness at the end of the age (16–20).

**28, 1:** After the sabbath . . . dawning: since the sabbath ended at sunset, this could mean in the early evening, for dawning can refer to the appearance of the evening star; cf Lk 23, 54. However, it is probable that Matthew means the morning dawn of the day after the sabbath, as in the similar though slightly different text of Mk, "when the sun had risen" (16, 2). Mary Magdalene and the other Mary: see the notes on 27, 55–56; 57–61. To see the tomb: cf Mk 16, 1–2 where the purpose of the women's visit is to anoint Jesus' body.

**28, 2–4:** Peculiar to Mt. A great earthquake: see the note on 27, 51–53. Descended from heaven: this trait is peculiar to Mt, although his interpretation of the "young man" of his Marcan source (16, 5) as an angel is probably true to Mk's intention; cf Lk 24, 23 where the "two men" of 24, 4 are said to be "angels." Rolled back the stone . . . upon it: not to allow the risen Jesus to leave the tomb but to make evident that the tomb is empty (see 6). Unlike the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (9, 35—11, 44), the New Testament does not describe the resurrection of Jesus, nor is there anyone who sees it. His appearance was like lightning . . . snow: see the note on 17, 2.

**28, 6–7:** Cf Mk 16, 6–7. Just as he said: a Matthean addition referring to Jesus' predictions of his resurrection, e.g., 16, 21; 17, 23; 20, 19. Tell his disciples: like the angel of the Lord of the infancy narrative, the angel interprets a fact and gives a commandment about what is to be done; cf 1, 20–21. Matthew omits Mk's "and Peter" (16, 7); considering his interest in Peter, this omission is curious. Perhaps the reason is that the Marcan text may allude to a first appearance of Jesus to Peter alone (cf 1 Cor 15, 5; Lk 24, 34) which Matthew has already incorporated into his account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi; see the note on 16, 16. He is going . . . Galilee: like Mk 16, 7, a reference to Jesus' prediction at the Last Supper (26, 32; Mk 14, 28). Matthew changes Mk's "as he told you" to a declaration of the angel.

**28, 8:** Contrast Mk 16, 8 where the women in their fear "said nothing to anyone."

**28, 9–10:** Although these verses are peculiar to Mt, there are similarities between them and Jn's account of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene (20, 17). In both there is a touching of Jesus' body, and a command of Jesus to bear a message to his disciples, designated as his brothers. Matthew may have drawn upon a tradition that appears in a different form in Jn. Jesus' words to the women are mainly a repetition of those of the angel (5a; 7b).

d 12, 40; 16, 21; 17, 23; 20, 19. e Mk 16, 1–8; Lk 24, 1–12; Jn 20, 1–10. f 25, 51. g 17, 2. h 26, 32. i Jn 20, 17.

be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,
and there they will see me."

**The Report of the Guard** 11 *While they were
going, some of the guard went into the city and
told the chief priests all that had happened.
12 They assembled with the elders and took
counsel; then they gave a large sum of money to
the soldiers, 13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His
disciples came by night and stole him while we
were asleep.' 14 And if this gets to the ears of the
governor, we will satisfy [him] and keep you out
of trouble." 15 The soldiers took the money and
did as they were instructed. And this story has
circulated among the Jews to the present [day].

**The Commissioning of the Disciples**
16 j *The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the
mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.
17 *When they saw him, they worshiped, but
they doubted. 18 k *Then Jesus approached and
said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth
has been given to me. 19 l *Go, therefore, and
make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in
the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
the holy Spirit, 20 m *teaching them to observe all
that I have commanded you. And behold, I am
with you always, until the end of the age."

**28, 11–15:** This account indicates that the dispute between Christians and Jews about the empty tomb was not whether the tomb was empty but why.

**28, 16–20:** This climactic scene has been called a "proleptic parousia," for it gives a foretaste of the final glorious coming of the Son of Man (26, 64). Then his triumph will be manifest to all; now it is revealed only to **the disciples,** who are commissioned to announce it to **all nations** and bring them to belief in Jesus and obedience to his commandments.

**28, 16: The eleven:** the number recalls the tragic defection of Judas Iscariot. **To the mountain . . . ordered them:** since the message to **the disciples** was simply that they were to go to Galilee (10), some think that **the mountain** comes from a tradition of the message known to Matthew and alluded to here. For the significance of **the mountain,** see the note on 17, 1.

**28, 17: But they doubted:** the Greek can also be translated, "but some doubted." The verb occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 14, 31 where it is associated with Peter's being of "little faith." For the meaning of that designation, see the note on 6, 30.

**28, 18: All power . . . me:** the Greek word here translated **power** is the same as that found in the LXX translation of Dn 7, 13–14 where one "like a son of man" is given **power** and an everlasting kingdom by God. The risen Jesus here claims universal power, i.e., **in heaven and on earth.**

**28, 19: Therefore:** since universal power belongs to the risen Jesus (18), he gives the eleven a mission that is universal. They are to **make disciples of all nations.** While **all nations** is understood by some scholars as referring only to **all** Gentiles, it is probable that it included the Jews as well. **Baptizing them:** baptism is the means of entrance into the community of the risen One, the Church. **In the name of the Father . . . holy Spirit:** this is perhaps the clearest expression in the New Testament of trinitarian belief. It may have been the baptismal formula of Matthew's church, but primarily it designates the effect of baptism, the union of the one baptized with the Father, Son, and holy Spirit.

**28, 20: All that I have commanded you:** the moral teaching found in this gospel, preeminently that of the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5–7). The commandments of Jesus are the standard of Christian conduct, not the Mosaic law as such, even though some of the Mosaic commandments have now been invested with the authority of Jesus. **Behold, I am with you always:** the promise of Jesus' real though invisible presence echoes the name Emmanuel given to him in the infancy narrative; see the note on 1, 23. **End of the age:** see the notes on 13, 39 and 24, 3.

j Mk 16, 14–16; Lk 24, 36–49; Jn 20, 19–23. k Dn 7, 14 LXX. l Acts 1, 8. m 1, 23; 13, 39; 24, 3.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Mark
See RG
405-417

This shortest of all New Testament gospels is likely the first to have been written, yet it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more detail than either Matthew or Luke (for example, the miracle stories at 5, 1-20 or 9, 14-29). It recounts what Jesus did in a vivid style, where one incident follows directly upon another. In this almost breathless narrative, Mark stresses Jesus' message about the kingdom of God now breaking into human life as good news (1, 14-15) and Jesus himself as the gospel of God (1, 1; 8, 35; 10, 29). Jesus is the Son whom God has sent to rescue humanity by serving and by sacrificing his life (10, 45).

The opening verse about good news in Mark (1, 1) serves as a title for the entire book. The action begins with the appearance of John the Baptist, a messenger of God attested by scripture.

But John points to a mightier one, Jesus, at whose baptism God speaks from heaven, declaring Jesus his Son. The Spirit descends upon Jesus, who eventually, it is promised, will baptize "with the holy Spirit." This presentation of who Jesus really is (1, 1-13) is rounded out with a brief reference to the temptation of Jesus and how Satan's attack fails. Jesus as Son of God will be victorious, a point to be remembered as one reads of Jesus' death and the enigmatic ending to Mark's Gospel.

The key verses at 1, 14-15, which are programmatic, summarize what Jesus proclaims as gospel: fulfillment, the nearness of the kingdom, and therefore the need for repentance and for faith. After the call of the first four disciples, all fishermen (1, 16-20), we see Jesus engaged in teaching (1, 21.22.27), preaching (1, 38.39), and healing (1, 29-31.34.40-45), and exorcising demons (1, 22-27.34.39). The content of Jesus' teaching is only rarely stated, and then chiefly in parables (ch 4) about the kingdom. His cures, especially on the sabbath (3, 1-5); his claim, like God, to forgive sins (2, 3-12); his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (2, 14-17); and the statement that his followers need not now fast but should rejoice while Jesus is present (2, 18-22), all stir up opposition that will lead to Jesus' death (3, 6).

In Mark, Jesus is portrayed as immensely popular with the people in Galilee during his ministry (2, 2; 3, 7; 4, 1). He appoints twelve disciples to help preach and drive out demons, just as he does (3, 13-19). He continues to work many miracles; the blocks 4, 35—6, 44 and 6, 45—7, 10 are cycles of stories about healings, miracles at the Sea of Galilee, and marvelous feedings of the crowds. Jesus' teaching in ch 7 exalts the word of God over "the tradition of the elders" and sees defilement as a matter of the heart, not of unclean foods. Yet opposition mounts. Scribes charge that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul (3, 22). His relatives think him "out of his mind" (3, 21). Jesus' kinship is with those who do the will of God, in a new eschatological family, not even with mother, brothers, or sisters by blood ties (3, 31-35; cf 6, 1-6). But all too often his own disciples do not understand Jesus (4, 13.40; 6, 52; 8, 17-21). The fate of John the Baptist (6, 17-29) hints ominously at Jesus' own passion (9, 13; cf 8, 31).

A breakthrough seemingly comes with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah; 8, 27-30). But Jesus himself emphasizes his passion (8, 31; 9, 31; 10, 33-34), not glory in the kingdom (10, 35-45). Momentarily he is glimpsed in his true identity when he is transfigured before three of the disciples (9, 2-8), but by and large Jesus is depicted in Mark as moving obediently along the way to his cross in Jerusalem. Occasionally there are miracles (9, 17-27; 10, 46-52; 11, 12-14.20-21, the only such account in Jerusalem), sometimes teachings (10, 2-11.23-31), but the greatest concern is with discipleship (8, 34—9, 1; 9, 33-50). For the disciples do not grasp the mystery being revealed (9, 32; 10, 32.38). One of them will betray him, Judas (14, 10-11.43-45); one will deny him, Peter (14, 27.31.54.66-72); all eleven men will desert Jesus (14, 27.50).

The passion account, with its condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrin (14, 53.55-65; 15, 1a) and sentencing by Pilate (15, 1b-15), is prefaced with the entry into Jerusalem (11, 1-11), ministry and controversies there (11, 15—12, 44), Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples (14, 1-26), and his arrest at Gethsemane (14, 32-52). A chapter of apocalyptic tone about the destruction of the temple (13, 1-2.14-23) and the coming of the Son of Man (13, 24-27), a discourse filled with promises (13, 11.31) and admonitions to be watchful (13, 2.23.37), is significant for Mark's Gospel, for it helps one see that God, in Jesus, will be victorious after the cross and at the end of history.

The Gospel of Mark ends in the most ancient manuscripts with an abrupt scene at Jesus'

tomb, which the women find empty (16, 1-8). His own prophecy of 14, 28 is reiterated, that Jesus goes before the disciples into Galilee; "there you will see him." These words may imply resurrection appearances there, or Jesus' parousia there, or the start of Christian mission, or a return to the roots depicted in 1, 9.14-15 in Galilee. Other hands have attached additional endings after 16, 8; see the note on 16, 9-20.

The framework of Mark's Gospel is partly geographical: Galilee (1, 14—9, 49), through the area "across the Jordan" (10, 1) and through Jericho (10, 46-52), to Jerusalem (11, 1—16, 8). Only rarely does Jesus go into Gentile territory (5, 1-20; 7, 24-37), but those who acknowledge him there and the centurion who confesses Jesus at the cross (15, 39) presage the gospel's expansion into the world beyond Palestine.

Mark's Gospel is even more oriented to christology. Jesus is the Son of God (1, 11; 9, 7; 15, 39; cf 1, 1; 14, 61). He is the Messiah, the anointed king of Davidic descent (12, 35; 15, 32), the Greek for which, *Christos,* has, by the time Mark wrote, become in effect a proper name (1, 1; 9, 41). Jesus is also seen as Son of Man, a term used in Mark not simply as a substitute for "I" or for humanity in general (cf 2, 10.27-28; 14, 21) or with reference to a mighty figure who is to come (13, 26; 14, 62), but also in connection with Jesus' predestined, necessary path of suffering and vindication (8, 31; 10, 45).

The unfolding of Mark's story about Jesus is sometimes viewed by interpreters as centered around the term "mystery." The word is employed just once, at 4, 11, in the singular, and its content there is the kingdom, the open secret that God's reign is now breaking into human life with its reversal of human values. There is a related sense in which Jesus' real identity remained a secret during his lifetime, according to Mark, although demons and demoniacs knew it (1, 24; 3, 11; 5, 7); Jesus warned against telling of his mighty deeds and revealing his identity (1, 44; 3, 12; 5, 43; 7, 36; 8, 26.30), an injunction sometimes broken (1, 45; cf 5, 19-20). Further, Jesus teaches by parables, according to Mark, in such a way that those "outside" the kingdom do not understand, but only those to whom the mystery has been granted by God.

Mark thus shares with Paul, as well as with other parts of the New Testament, an emphasis on election (13, 20.22) and upon the gospel as Christ and his cross (cf 1 Cor 1, 23). Yet in Mark the person of Jesus is also depicted with an unaffected naturalness. He reacts to events with authentic human emotion: pity (1, 44), anger (3, 5), triumph (4, 40), sympathy (5, 36; 6, 34), surprise (6, 9), admiration (7, 29; 10, 21), sadness (14, 33-34), and indignation (14, 48-49).

Although the book is anonymous, apart from the ancient heading "According to Mark" in manuscripts, it has traditionally been assigned to John Mark, in whose mother's house (at Jerusalem) Christians assembled (Acts 12, 12). This Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Col 4, 10) and accompanied Barnabas and Paul on a missionary journey (Acts 12, 25; 13, 3; 15, 36-39). He appears in Pauline letters (Phlm 24; 2 Tm 4, 11) and with Peter (1 Pt 5, 13). Papias (ca. A.D. 135) described Mark as Peter's "interpreter," a view found in other patristic writers. Petrine influence should not, however, be exaggerated. The evangelist has put together various oral and possibly written sources—miracle stories, parables, sayings, stories of controversies, and the passion—so as to speak of the crucified Messiah for Mark's own day.

Traditionally, the gospel is said to have been written shortly before A.D. 70 in Rome, at a time of impending persecution and when destruction loomed over Jerusalem. Its audience seems to have been Gentile, unfamiliar with Jewish customs (hence 7, 3-4.11). The book aimed to equip such Christians to stand faithful in the face of persecution (13, 9-13), while going on with the proclamation of the gospel begun in Galilee (13, 10; 14, 9). Modern research often proposes as

the author an unknown Hellenistic Jewish Christian, possibly in Syria, and perhaps shortly after the year 70.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Mark are the following:

I. The Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus (1, 1-13)
II. The Mystery of Jesus (1, 14—8, 26)
III. The Mystery Begins to Be Revealed (8, 27—9, 32)
IV. The Full Revelation of the Mystery (9, 33—16, 8)
The Longer Ending (16, 9-20)
The Shorter Ending
The Freer Logion (in the note on 16, 9-20)

## I: The Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
408-410

1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ
[the Son of God].

**The Preaching of John the Baptist** 2 [a b]*As it
is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of
you;
he will prepare your way.
3 [c]A voice of one crying out in the desert:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.' "

4 John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. 6 *John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. 7 And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. 8 [d]*I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit."

**The Baptism of Jesus** 9 [e]It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. 10 *On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. 11 [f]And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

**The Temptation of Jesus** 12 [g]*At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, 13 and he

1, 1–13: The prologue of the Gospel according to Mark begins with the title (1) followed by three events preparatory to Jesus' preaching: (1) the appearance in the Judean wilderness of John, baptizer, preacher of repentance, and precursor of Jesus (2–8); (2) the baptism of Jesus, at which a voice from heaven acknowledges Jesus to be God's Son, and the holy Spirit descends on him (9–11); (3) the temptation of Jesus by Satan (12–13).

1, 1: **The gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God]:** the "good news" of salvation in and through Jesus, crucified and risen, acknowledged by the Christian community as Messiah (8, 29; 14, 61–62) and Son of God (11; 9, 7; 15, 39), although some important manuscripts here omit **the Son of God.**

1, 2–3: Although Mark attributes the prophecy to Isaiah, the text is a combination of Mal 3, 1; Is 40, 3; and Ex 23, 20; cf Mt 11, 10; Lk 7, 27. John's ministry is seen as God's prelude to the saving mission of his Son. **The way of the Lord:** this prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah concerning the end of the Babylonian exile is here applied to the coming of Jesus; John the Baptist is to prepare the way for him.

1, 6: **Clothed in camel's hair . . . waist:** the Baptist's garb recalls that of Elijah in 2 Kgs 1, 8. Jesus speaks of the Baptist as Elijah who has already come (9, 11–13; Mt 17, 10–12; cf Mal 3, 23–24; Lk 1, 17).

1, 8–9: Through the life-giving baptism with the holy Spirit (8), Jesus will create a new people of God. But first he identifies himself with the people of Israel in submitting to John's baptism of repentance and in bearing on their behalf the burden of God's decisive judgment (9; cf 4). As in the desert of Sinai, so here in the wilderness of Judea, Israel's sonship with God is to be renewed.

1, 10–11: **He saw the heavens . . . and the Spirit . . . upon him:** indicating divine intervention in fulfillment of promise. Here the descent of the Spirit on Jesus is meant, anointing him for his ministry; cf Is 11, 2; 42, 1; 61, 1; 63, 9. **A voice . . . with you I am well pleased:** God's acknowledgment of Jesus as his unique Son, the object of his love. His approval of Jesus is the assurance that Jesus will fulfill his messianic mission of salvation.

1, 12–13: The same Spirit who descended on Jesus in his baptism now drives him into the desert for forty days. The result is radical confrontation and temptation by Satan who attempts to frustrate the work of God. The presence of wild beasts may indicate the horror and danger of the desert regarded as the abode of demons or may reflect the paradise motif of harmony among all creatures; cf Is 11, 6–9. The presence of ministering angels to sustain Jesus recalls the angel who guided the Israelites in the

a Mt 3, 1–11; Lk 3, 2–16. b Mal 3, 1. c Is 40, 3; Jn 1, 23. d Jn 1, 27; Acts 1, 5; 11, 16. e Mt 3, 13–17; Lk 3, 21–23; Jn 1, 32–33. f Ps 2, 7. g Mt 4, 1–11; Lk 4, 1–13.

remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by
Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels
ministered to him.

## II: The Mystery of Jesus

**The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**
14 *h**After John had been arrested, Jesus came to
Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: 15 *i*"This
is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is
at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
**The Call of the First Disciples** 16 *j**As he
passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and
his brother Andrew casting their nets into the
sea; they were fishermen. 17Jesus said to them,
"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of
men." 18Then they abandoned their nets and fol-
lowed him. 19He walked along a little farther and
saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother
John. They too were in a boat mending their
nets. 20 Then he called them. So they left their
father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired
men and followed him.
**The Cure of a Demoniac** 21 *k**Then they
came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath he
entered the synagogue and taught. 22 *l*The peo-
ple were astonished at his teaching, for he taught
them as one having authority and not as the
scribes. 23*In their synagogue was a man with
an unclean spirit; 24*he cried out, "What have
you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you
come to destroy us? I know who you are—the
Holy One of God!" 25Jesus rebuked him and
said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" 26The unclean
spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came
out of him. 27All were amazed and asked one
another, "What is this? A new teaching with
authority. He commands even the unclean spirits
and they obey him." 28His fame spread every-
where throughout the whole region of Galilee.
**The Cure of Simon's Mother-in-Law** 29 *m*On
leaving the synagogue he entered the house of
Simon and Andrew with James and John. 30Si-
mon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They
immediately told him about her. 31He ap-
proached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.
**Other Healings** 32When it was evening, after
sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or
possessed by demons. 33The whole town was
gathered at the door. 34He cured many who
were sick with various diseases, and he drove
out many demons, not permitting them to speak
because they knew him.
**Jesus Leaves Capernaum** 35 *n*Rising very early
before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted
place, where he prayed. 36Simon and those who
were with him pursued him 37and on finding
him said, "Everyone is looking for you." 38He
told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages
that I may preach there also. For this purpose
have I come." 39So he went into their syna-
gogues, preaching and driving out demons
throughout the whole of Galilee.
**The Cleansing of a Leper** 40 *o**A leper came
to him [and kneeling down] begged him and

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desert in the first Exodus (14, 19; 23, 20) and the angel who supplied nourishment to Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19, 5–7). The combined forces of good and evil were present to Jesus in the desert. His sustained obedience brings forth the new Israel of God there where Israel's rebellion had brought death and alienation.

**1, 14–15: After John had been arrested:** in the plan of God, Jesus was not to proclaim the good news of salvation prior to the termination of the Baptist's active mission. **Galilee:** in the Marcan account, scene of the major part of Jesus' public ministry before his arrest and condemnation. **The gospel of God:** not only the good news from God but about God at work in Jesus Christ. **This is the time of fulfillment:** i.e., of God's promises. **The kingdom of God . . . repent:** see the note on Mt 3, 2.

**1, 16–20:** These verses narrate the call of the first disciples. See the notes on Mt 4, 18–22 and 4, 20.

**1, 21–45:** The account of a single day's ministry of Jesus on a sabbath in and outside the synagogue of Capernaum (21–31) combines teaching and miracles of exorcism and healing. Mention is not made of the content of the teaching but of the effect of astonishment and alarm on the people. Jesus' teaching with authority, making an absolute claim on the hearer, was in the best tradition of the ancient prophets, not of the scribes. The narrative continues with events that evening (32–34; see the notes on Mt 8, 14–17) and the next day (35–39). The cleansing in vv 40–45 stands as an isolated story.

**1, 23: An unclean spirit:** so called because of the spirit's resistance to the holiness of God. The spirit knows and fears the power of Jesus to destroy his influence; cf 32.34; 3, 11; 6, 13.

**1, 24: What have you to do with us?:** see the note on Jn 2, 4.

**1, 24–25: The Holy One of God:** not a confession but an attempt to ward off Jesus' power, reflecting the notion that use of the precise name of an opposing spirit would guarantee mastery over him. Jesus silenced the cry of the unclean spirit and drove him out of the man.

**1, 40: A leper:** for the various forms of skin disease, see Lv 13, 1–50 and the note on Lv 13, 2–4. There are only two instances in

h Mt 4, 12–17; Lk 4, 14–15. i Mt 3, 2. j Mt 4, 18–22; Lk 5, 2–11. k Lk 4, 31–37. l Mt 7, 28–29. m Mt 8, 14–16; Lk 4, 38–41. n Lk 4, 42–44. o Mt 8, 2–4; Lk 5, 12–14.

said, "If you wish, you can make me clean."
41 [p]Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand,
touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be
made clean." 42 [q]The leprosy left him immedi-
ately, and he was made clean. 43Then, warning
him sternly, he dismissed him at once. 44 [r]Then
he said to him, "See that you tell no one
anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and
offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed;
that will be proof for them." 45The man went
away and began to publicize the whole matter.
He spread the report abroad so that it was
impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He
remained outside in deserted places, and people
kept coming to him from everywhere.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
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**The Healing of a Paralytic** 1 [s]*When Jesus
returned to Capernaum after some days, it
became known that he was at home. 2Many
gathered together so that there was no longer
room for them, not even around the door, and
he preached the word to them. 3They came
bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
4Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd,
they opened up the roof above him. After they
had broken through, they let down the mat on
which the paralytic was lying. 5*When Jesus saw
their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your
sins are forgiven." 6*Now some of the scribes
were sitting there asking themselves, 7 [t]*"Why
does this man speak that way? He is blasphem-
ing. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" 8Jesus
immediately knew in his mind what they were
thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you
thinking such things in your hearts? 9Which is
easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are
forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and
walk'? 10*But that you may know that the Son
of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth"—
11he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick
up your mat, and go home." 12He rose, picked
up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of
everyone. They were all astounded and glorified
God, saying, "We have never seen anything like
this."

**The Call of Levi** 13 [u]*Once again he went out
along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he
taught them. 14 [v]*As he passed by, he saw Levi,
son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He
said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and
followed him. 15*While he was at table in his
house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with
Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who
followed him. 16*Some scribes who were Phari-
sees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax
collectors and said to his disciples, "Why does he
eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17*Jesus

the Old Testament in which God is shown to have cured a leper (Nm 12, 10–15 and 2 Kgs 5, 1–14). The law of Moses provided for the ritual purification of a leper. In curing the leper, Jesus assumes that the priests will reinstate the cured man into the religious community. See also the note on Lk 5, 14.

**2, 1—3, 6:** This section relates a series of conflicts between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees in which the growing opposition of the latter leads to their plot to put Jesus to death (3, 6).

**2, 1–2: He was at home:** to the crowds that gathered in and outside the house Jesus **preached the word,** i.e., the gospel concerning the nearness of the kingdom and the necessity of repentance and faith (1, 14).

**2, 5:** It was the faith of the paralytic and those who carried him that moved Jesus to heal the sick man. Accounts of other miracles of Jesus reveal more and more his emphasis on faith as the requisite for exercising his healing powers (5, 34; 9, 23–24; 10, 52).

**2, 6: Scribes:** trained in oral interpretation of the written law; in Mark's gospel, adversaries of Jesus, with one exception (12, 28.34).

**2, 7: He is blaspheming:** an accusation made here and repeated during the trial of Jesus (14, 60–64).

**2, 10: But that you may know that the Son of Man . . . on earth:** although vv 8–9 are addressed to the scribes, the sudden interruption of thought and structure in v 10 seems not addressed to them nor to the paralytic. Moreover, the early public use of the designation "Son of Man" to unbelieving scribes is most unlikely. The most probable explanation is that Mark's insertion of v 10 is a commentary addressed to Christians for whom he recalls this miracle and who already accept in faith that Jesus is Messiah and Son of God.

**2, 13: He taught them:** see the note on 1, 21–45.

**2, 14: As he passed by:** see the note on 1, 16–20. **Levi, son of Alphaeus:** see the note on Mt 9, 9. **Customs post:** such tax collectors paid a fixed sum for the right to collect customs duties within their districts. Since whatever they could collect above this amount constituted their profit, the abuse of extortion was widespread among them. Hence, Jewish customs officials were regarded as sinners (16), outcasts of society, and disgraced along with their families. **He got up and followed him:** i.e., became a disciple of Jesus.

**2, 15: In his house:** cf v 1; Mt 9, 10. Lk 5, 29 clearly calls it Levi's house.

**2, 16–17:** This and the following conflict stories reflect a similar pattern: a statement of fact, a question of protest, and a reply by Jesus.

**2, 17: Do not need a physician:** this maxim of Jesus with its implied irony was uttered to silence his adversaries who objected

p 5, 30. q Lk 17, 14. r Lv 14, 2–32. s Mt 9, 2–8; Lk 5, 18–26. t Is 43, 25. u 4, 1. v Mt 9, 9–13; Lk 5, 27–32.

heard this and said to them [that], "Those who
are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.
I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

**The Question about Fasting** [18] [w]*The disci-
ples of John and of the Pharisees were accus-
tomed to fast. People came to him and objected,
"Why do the disciples of John and the disciples
of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not
fast?" [19]*Jesus answered them, "Can the wed-
ding guests fast while the bridegroom is with
them? As long as they have the bridegroom with
them they cannot fast. [20]But the days will come
when the bridegroom is taken away from them,
and then they will fast on that day. [21]No one
sews a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old
cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new
from the old, and the tear gets worse. [22]Like-
wise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins.
Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and
both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather,
new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."

**The Disciples and the Sabbath** [23] [x]*As he
was passing through a field of grain on the
sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while
picking the heads of grain. [24] [y]At this the Phari-
sees said to him, "Look, why are they doing
what is unlawful on the sabbath?" [25]*He said to
them, "Have you never read what David did
when he was in need and he and his compan-
ions were hungry? [26] [z]How he went into the
house of God when Abiathar was high priest and
ate the bread of offering that only the priests
could lawfully eat, and shared it with his com-
panions?" [27] [a]*Then he said to them, "The
sabbath was made for man, not man for the
sabbath. [28]*That is why the Son of Man is lord
even of the sabbath."

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
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**A Man with a Withered Hand** [1] [b]*Again he
entered the synagogue. There was a man there
who had a withered hand. [2]They watched him
closely to see if he would cure him on the
sabbath so that they might accuse him. [3]He said
to the man with the withered hand, "Come up
here before us." [4]Then he said to them, "Is it
lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to
do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" But
they remained silent. [5] [c]Looking around at them
with anger and grieved at their hardness of
heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your
hand." He stretched it out and his hand was
restored. [6]*The Pharisees went out and immedi-
ately took counsel with the Herodians against
him to put him to death.

**The Mercy of Jesus** [7] [d]*Jesus withdrew to-
ward the sea with his disciples. A large number

that he ate with **tax collectors and sinners** (16). Because the scribes and Pharisees were self-righteous, they were not capable of responding to Jesus' call to repentance and faith in the gospel.

**2, 18–22:** This conflict over the question of fasting has the same pattern as vv 16–17; see the notes on Mt 9, 15 and 9, 16–17.

**2, 19: Can the wedding guests fast?:** the bridal metaphor expresses a new relationship of love between God and his people in the person and mission of Jesus to his disciples. It is the inauguration of the new and joyful messianic time of fulfillment and the passing of the old. Any attempt at assimilating the Pharisaic practice of fasting, or of extending the preparatory discipline of John's disciples beyond the arrival of the bridegroom, would be as futile as sewing **a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old cloak** or pouring **new wine into old wineskins** with the resulting destruction of both cloth and wine (21–22). Fasting is rendered superfluous during the earthly ministry of Jesus; cf v 20.

**2, 23–28:** This conflict regarding the sabbath follows the same pattern as in vv 18–22.

**2, 25–26: Have you never read what David did?:** Jesus defends the action of his disciples on the basis of 1 Sm 21, 2–7 in which an exception is made to the regulation of Lv 24, 9 because of the extreme hunger of David and his men. According to 1 Sm, the priest who gave the bread to David was Ahimelech, father of Abiathar.

**2, 27: The sabbath was made for man:** a reaffirmation of the divine intent of the sabbath to benefit Israel as contrasted with the restrictive Pharisaic tradition added to the law.

**2, 28: The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath:** Mark's comment on the theological meaning of the incident is to benefit his Christian readers; see the note on 2, 10.

**3, 1–5:** Here Jesus is again depicted in conflict with his adversaries over the question of sabbath-day observance. His opponents were already ill disposed toward him because they regarded Jesus as a violator of the sabbath. Jesus' question **Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil?** places the matter in the broader theological context outside the casuistry of the scribes. The answer is obvious. Jesus heals the man with the withered hand in the sight of all and reduces his opponents to silence; cf Jn 5, 17–18.

**3, 6:** In reporting the plot of the Pharisees and Herodians to put Jesus to death after this series of conflicts in Galilee, Mark uses a pattern that recurs in his account of later controversies in Jerusalem (11, 17–18; 12, 13–17). The help of the Herodians, supporters of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, is needed to take action against Jesus. Both series of conflicts point to their gravity and to the impending passion of Jesus.

**3, 7–19:** This overview of the Galilean ministry manifests the

w Mt 9, 14–17; Lk 5, 33–39. x Mt 12, 1–8; Lk 6, 1–5. y Dt 23, 25. z 1 Sm 21, 2–7 / Lv 24, 5–9. a 2 Mc 5, 19. b Mt 12, 9–14; Lk 6, 6–11. c Lk 14, 4. d Mt 4, 23–25; 12, 15; Lk 6, 17–19.

of people [followed] from Galilee and from Judea.
8Hearing what he was doing, a large number of
people came to him also from Jerusalem, from
Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the
neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon. 9He told his
disciples to have a boat ready for him because of
the crowd, so that they would not crush him.
10 *e*He had cured many and, as a result, those
who had diseases were pressing upon him to
touch him. 11 *f**And whenever unclean spirits
saw him they would fall down before him and
shout, "You are the Son of God." 12He warned
them sternly not to make him known.

**The Mission of the Twelve** 13 *g**He went up
the mountain and summoned those whom he
wanted and they came to him. 14 *h**He ap-
pointed twelve [whom he also named apostles]
that they might be with him and he might send
them forth to preach 15and to have authority to
drive out demons: 16*[he appointed the twelve:]
Simon, whom he named Peter; 17 *i*James, son of
Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom
he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder;
18Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew,
Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus,
Simon the Cananean, 19and Judas Iscariot who
betrayed him.

**Blasphemy of the Scribes** 20 *j**He came
home. Again [the] crowd gathered, making it
impossible for them even to eat. 21 *k*When his
relatives heard of this they set out to seize him,
for they said, "He is out of his mind." 22 *l**The
scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He
is possessed by Beelzebul," and "By the prince of
demons he drives out demons."

**Jesus and Beelzebul** 23Summoning them, he
began to speak to them in parables, "How can
Satan drive out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided
against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25And
if a house is divided against itself, that house will
not be able to stand. 26And if Satan has risen up
against himself and is divided, he cannot stand;
that is the end of him. 27But no one can enter a
strong man's house to plunder his property
unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he
can plunder his house. 28 *m*Amen, I say to you, all
sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be
forgiven them. 29*But whoever blasphemes
against the holy Spirit will never have forgive-
ness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin." 30For
they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

**Jesus and His Family** 31 *n*His mother and his
brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent
word to him and called him. 32*A crowd seated
around him told him, "Your mother and your
brothers [and your sisters] are outside asking for
you." 33But he said to them in reply, "Who are
my mother and [my] brothers?" 34And looking
around at those seated in the circle he said,
"Here are my mother and my brothers. 35[For]

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power of Jesus to draw people to himself through his teaching and deeds of power. The crowds of Jews from many regions surround Jesus (7–12). This phenomenon prepares the way for creating a new people of Israel. The choice and mission of the Twelve is the prelude (13–19).

**3, 11–12:** See the note on 1, 24–25.

**3, 13: He went up the mountain:** here and elsewhere the mountain is associated with solemn moments and acts in the mission and self-revelation of Jesus (6, 46; 9, 2–8; 13, 3). Jesus acts with authority as he **summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him.**

**3, 14–15: He appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him:** literally "he made," i.e., instituted them as apostles to extend his messianic mission through them (6, 7–13). See the notes on Mt 10, 1 and 10, 2–4.

**3, 16: Simon, whom he named Peter:** Mark indicates that Simon's name was changed on this occasion. Peter is first in all lists of the apostles (Mt 10, 2; Lk 6, 14; Acts 1, 13; cf 1 Cor 15, 5–8).

**3, 20–35:** Within the narrative of the coming of Jesus' relatives (20–21) is inserted the account of the unbelieving scribes from Jerusalem who attributed Jesus' power over demons to Beelzebul (22–30); see the note on 5, 21–43. There were those even among the relatives of Jesus who disbelieved and regarded Jesus as **out of his mind** (21). Against this background, Jesus is informed of the arrival of his mother and brothers [and sisters] (32). He responds by showing that not family ties but doing God's will (35) is decisive in the kingdom; cf the note on Mt 12, 46–50.

**3, 20: He came home:** cf 2, 1–2 and see the note on 2, 15.

**3, 22: By Beelzebul:** see the note on Mt 10, 25. Two accusations are leveled against Jesus: (1) that **he is possessed** by an unclean spirit, and (2) **by the prince of demons he drives out demons.** Jesus answers the second charge by a parable (24–27) and responds to the first charge in vv 28–29.

**3, 29: Whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit:** this sin is called **an everlasting sin** because it attributes to Satan, who is the power of evil, what is actually the work of the holy Spirit, namely, victory over the demons.

**3, 32: Your brothers:** see the note on 6, 3.

e 5, 30. f 1, 34; Lk 4, 41. g Mt 10, 1–4; Lk 6, 12–16. h 6, 7. i Mt 16, 18; Jn 1, 42. j 2, 2. k Jn 10, 20. l Mt 12, 24–32; Lk 11, 15–22; 12, 10. m Lk 12, 10. n Mt 12, 46–50; Lk 8, 19–21.

whoever does the will of God is my brother and
sister and mother."

## CHAPTER 4

**The Parable of the Sower** 1 *o p**On another
occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very
large crowd gathered around him so that he got
into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the
whole crowd was beside the sea on land. 2And
he taught them at length in parables, and in the
course of his instruction he said to them,
3*"Hear this! A sower went out to sow. 4And as
he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the
birds came and ate it up. 5Other seed fell on
rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up
at once because the soil was not deep. 6And
when the sun rose, it was scorched and it
withered for lack of roots. 7Some seed fell
among thorns, and the thorns grew up and
choked it and it produced no grain. 8And some
seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came
up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a
hundredfold." 9He added, "Whoever has ears to
hear ought to hear."

**The Purpose of the Parables** 10And when he
was alone, those present along with the Twelve
questioned him about the parables. 11*He an-
swered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of
God has been granted to you. But to those
outside everything comes in parables, 12 *q*so that

> 'they may look and see but not perceive,
> and hear and listen but not understand,
> in order that they may not be converted and
> be forgiven.' "

13 *r**Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand
this parable? Then how will you understand any
of the parables? 14The sower sows the word.
15These are the ones on the path where the
word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes
at once and takes away the word sown in them.
16And these are the ones sown on rocky ground
who, when they hear the word, receive it at
once with joy. 17But they have no root; they last
only for a time. Then when tribulation or
persecution comes because of the word, they
quickly fall away. 18Those sown among thorns
are another sort. They are the people who hear
the word, 19but worldly anxiety, the lure of
riches, and the craving for other things intrude
and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. 20But
those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear
the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and
sixty and a hundredfold."

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**Parable of the Lamp** 21 *s t*He said to them, "Is
a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel
basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a
lampstand? 22 *u*For there is nothing hidden ex-
cept to be made visible; nothing is secret except
to come to light. 23Anyone who has ears to hear
ought to hear." 24 *v*He also told them, "Take care
what you hear. The measure with which you
measure will be measured out to you, and still
more will be given to you. 25 *w*To the one who
has, more will be given; from the one who has
not, even what he has will be taken away."

**Seed Grows of Itself** 26 *x**He said, "This is
how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a
man were to scatter seed on the land 27and

**4, 1–34: In parables** (2): see the note on Mt 13, 3. The use of parables is typical of Jesus' enigmatic method of teaching the crowds (2–9.12) as compared with the interpretation of the parables he gives to his disciples (10–25.33–34), to each group according to its capacity to understand (9–11). The key feature of the parable at hand is the sowing of the seed (3), representing the breakthrough of the kingdom of God into the world. The various types of soil refer to the diversity of response accorded the word of God (4–7). The climax of the parable is the harvest of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold, indicating the consummation of the kingdom (8). Thus both the present and the future action of God, from the initiation to the fulfillment of the kingdom, is presented through this and other parables (26–29.30–32).

**4, 1: By the sea:** the shore of the Sea of Galilee or a boat near the shore (2, 13; 3, 7–8) is the place where Mark depicts Jesus teaching the crowds. By contrast the mountain is the scene of Jesus at prayer (6, 46) or in the process of forming his disciples (3, 13; 9, 2).

**4, 3–8:** See the note on Mt 13, 3–8.

**4, 11–12:** These verses are to be viewed against their background in 3, 6.22 concerning the unbelief and opposition Jesus encountered in his ministry. It is against this background that the distinction in Jesus' method becomes clear of presenting the kingdom to the disbelieving crowd in one manner and to the disciples in another. To the former it is presented in parables and the truth remains hidden; for the latter the parable is interpreted and the mystery is partially revealed because of their faith; see the notes on Mt 13, 11 and 13, 13.

**4, 13–20:** See the note on Mt 13, 18–23.

**4, 26–29:** Only Mark records the parable of the seed's growth.

o Mt 13, 1–13; Lk 8, 4–10. p 2, 13; Lk 5, 1. q Is 6, 9; Jn 12, 40; Acts 28, 26; Rom 11, 8. r Mt 13, 18–23; Lk 8, 11–15. s Lk 8, 16–18. t Mt 5, 15; Lk 11, 33. u Mt 10, 26; Lk 12, 2. v Mt 7, 2; Lk 6, 38. w Mt 13, 12; Lk 19, 26. x Jas 5, 7.

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would sleep and rise night and day and the seed
would sprout and grow, he knows not how. 28Of
its own accord the land yields fruit, first the
blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.
29And when the grain is ripe, he wields the
sickle at once, for the harvest has come."

**The Mustard Seed** 30 *y*He said, "To what shall
we compare the kingdom of God, or what
parable can we use for it? 31It is like a mustard
seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the
smallest of all the seeds on the earth. 32*But
once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the
largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so
that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."
33 *z*With many such parables he spoke the word
to them as they were able to understand it.
34Without parables he did not speak to them,
but to his own disciples he explained everything
in private.

**The Calming of a Storm at Sea** 35 *a**On that
day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let
us cross to the other side." 36Leaving the crowd,
they took him with them in the boat just as he
was. And other boats were with him. 37A violent
squall came up and waves were breaking over
the boat, so that it was already filling up. 38Jesus
was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke
him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care
that we are perishing?" 39*He woke up, rebuked
the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!"
The wind ceased and there was great calm.
40Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified?
Do you not yet have faith?" 41 *b**They were filled
with great awe and said to one another, "Who
then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

## CHAPTER 5

**The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac**

1 *c**They came to the other side of the sea, to the
territory of the Gerasenes. 2*When he got out of
the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had
an unclean spirit met him. 3The man had been
dwelling among the tombs, and no one could
restrain him any longer, even with a chain. 4In
fact, he had frequently been bound with shack-
les and chains, but the chains had been pulled
apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no
one was strong enough to subdue him. 5Night
and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he
was always crying out and bruising himself with
stones. 6Catching sight of Jesus from a distance,
he ran up and prostrated himself before him,
7*crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to
do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I
adjure you by God, do not torment me!" 8(He
had been saying to him, "Unclean spirit, come
out of the man!") 9 *d**He asked him, "What is
your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name.
There are many of us." 10And he pleaded
earnestly with him not to drive them away from
that territory.

11*Now a large herd of swine was feeding
there on the hillside. 12And they pleaded with
him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter
them." 13And he let them, and the unclean
spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd
of about two thousand rushed down a steep
bank into the sea, where they were drowned.
14The swineherds ran away and reported the
incident in the town and throughout the country-
side. And people came out to see what had

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Sower and harvester are the same. The emphasis is on the power of the seed to grow of itself without human intervention (27). Mysteriously it produces **blade** and **ear** and **full grain** (28). Thus the kingdom of God initiated by Jesus in proclaiming the word develops quietly yet powerfully until it is fully established by him at the final judgment (29); cf Rv 14, 15.

**4, 32:** The universality of the kingdom of God is indicated here; cf Ez 17, 23; 31, 6; Dn 4, 17–19.

**4, 35—5, 43:** After the chapter on parables, Mark narrates four miracle stories: 4, 35–41; 5, 1–20; and two joined together in 5, 21–43. See also the notes on Mt 8, 23–34 and 9, 8–26.

**4, 39: Quiet! Be still!:** as in the case of silencing a demon (1, 25), Jesus rebukes the wind and subdues the turbulence of the sea by a mere word; see the note on Mt 8, 26.

**4, 41:** Jesus is here depicted as exercising power over wind and sea. In the Christian community this event was seen as a sign of Jesus' saving presence amid persecutions that threatened its existence.

**5, 1: The territory of the Gerasenes:** the reference is to pagan territory; cf Is 65, 1. Another reading is "Gadarenes"; see the note on Mt 8, 28.

**5, 2–6:** The man was an outcast from society, dominated by unclean spirits (8.13), living among the tombs. The prostration before Jesus (6) indicates Jesus' power over evil spirits.

**5, 7: What have you to do with me?:** cf 1, 24 and see the note on Jn 2, 4.

**5, 9: Legion is my name:** the demons were numerous and the condition of the possessed man was extremely serious; cf Mt 12, 45.

**5, 11: Herd of swine:** see the note on Mt 8, 30.

y Mt 13, 31–32; Lk 13, 18–19. z Mt 13, 34. a Mt 8, 18.23–37; Lk 8, 22–25. b 1, 27. c Mt 8, 28–34; Lk 8, 26–39. d Mt 12, 45; Lk 8, 2; 11, 26.

happened. [15]As they approached Jesus, they
caught sight of the man who had been possessed
by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right
mind. And they were seized with fear. [16]Those
who witnessed the incident explained to them
what had happened to the possessed man and to
the swine. [17]Then they began to beg him to
leave their district. [18]As he was getting into the
boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded
to remain with him. [19]*But he would not permit
him but told him instead, "Go home to your
family and announce to them all that the Lord in
his pity has done for you." [20]Then the man went
off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what
Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

**Jairus's Daughter and the Woman with a Hemorrhage** [21] *e**When Jesus had crossed
again [in the boat] to the other side, a large
crowd gathered around him, and he stayed
close to the sea. [22]*f*One of the synagogue
officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing
him he fell at his feet [23]*and pleaded earnestly
with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point
of death. Please, come lay your hands on her
that she may get well and live." [24]He went off
with him, and a large crowd followed him and
pressed upon him.

[25]There was a woman afflicted with hemor-
rhages for twelve years. [26]She had suffered
greatly at the hands of many doctors and had
spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped
but only grew worse. [27]She had heard about
Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and
touched his cloak. [28]*She said, "If I but touch
his clothes, I shall be cured." [29]Immediately her
flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that
she was healed of her affliction. [30]Jesus, aware at
once that power had gone out from him, turned
around in the crowd and asked, "Who has
touched my clothes?" [31]But his disciples said to
him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon
you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?' "
[32]And he looked around to see who had done it.
[33]The woman, realizing what had happened to
her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell
down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.
[34]*g*He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has
saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your
affliction."

[35]*While he was still speaking, people from
the synagogue official's house arrived and said,
"Your daughter has died; why trouble the
teacher any longer?" [36]Disregarding the message
that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue
official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." [37]He
did not allow anyone to accompany him inside
except Peter, James, and John, the brother of
James. [38]When they arrived at the house of the
synagogue official, he caught sight of a commo-
tion, people weeping and wailing loudly. [39]*h**So
he went in and said to them, "Why this commo-
tion and weeping? The child is not dead but
asleep." [40]And they ridiculed him. Then he put
them all out. He took along the child's father
and mother and those who were with him and
entered the room where the child was. [41]*He
took the child by the hand and said to her,
"*Talitha koum,*" which means, "Little girl, I say
to you, arise!" [42]The girl, a child of twelve, arose
immediately and walked around. [At that] they

**5, 19: Go home:** Jesus did not accept the man's request to **remain with him** as a disciple (18), yet invited him to announce to his own people what the Lord had done for him, i.e., proclaim the gospel message to his pagan family; cf 1, 14.39; 3, 14; 13, 10.

**5, 21–43:** The story of the raising to life of Jairus's daughter is divided into two parts: vv 21–24 and 35–43. Between these two separated parts the account of the cure of the hemorrhage victim (25–34) is interposed. This technique of intercalating or sandwiching one story within another occurs several times in Mk: 3, 19b-21 (22–30) 31–35; 6, 6b-13 (14–29) 30; 11, 12–14 (15–19) 20–25; 14, 53 (54) 55–65 (66–73).

**5, 23: Lay your hands on her:** this act for the purpose of healing is frequent in Mk (6, 5; 7, 32–35; 8, 23–25; 16, 18) and is also found in Mt 9, 18; Lk 4, 40; 13, 13; Acts 9, 17; 28, 8.

**5, 28:** Both in the case of Jairus and his daughter (23) and in the case of the hemorrhage victim, the inner conviction that physical contact (30) accompanied by faith in Jesus' saving power could effect a cure was rewarded.

**5, 35:** The faith of Jairus was put to a twofold test: (1) that his daughter might be cured and, now that she had died, (2) that she might be restored to life. His faith contrasts with the lack of faith of the crowd.

**5, 39: Not dead but asleep:** the New Testament often refers to death as sleep (Mt 27, 52; Jn 11, 11; 1 Cor 15, 6; 1 Thes 4, 13–15); see the note on Mt 9, 24.

**5, 41: Arise:** the Greek verb **egeirein** is the verb generally used to express resurrection from death (6, 14.16; Mt 11, 5; Lk 7, 14) and Jesus' own resurrection (16, 6; Mt 28, 6; Lk 24, 6).

e 2, 13. f Mt 9, 18–26; Lk 8, 41–56. g Lk 7, 30. h Acts 9, 40.

were utterly astounded. [43]He gave strict orders
that no one should know this and said that she
should be given something to eat.

## CHAPTER 6

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**The Rejection at Nazareth** [1 i]*He departed
from there and came to his native place, accom-
panied by his disciples. [2]*When the sabbath
came he began to teach in the synagogue, and
many who heard him were astonished. They
said, "Where did this man get all this? What
kind of wisdom has been given him? What
mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! [3 j]*Is he
not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the
brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?
And are not his sisters here with us?" And they
took offense at him. [4 k]*Jesus said to them, "A
prophet is not without honor except in his native
place and among his own kin and in his own
house." [5]*So he was not able to perform any
mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick
people by laying his hands on them. [6]He was
amazed at their lack of faith.

**The Mission of the Twelve** He went around
to the villages in the vicinity teaching. [7 l]*He
summoned the Twelve and began to send them
out two by two and gave them authority over
unclean spirits. [8]*He instructed them to take
nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no
food, no sack, no money in their belts. [9]They
were, however, to wear sandals but not a
second tunic. [10]*He said to them, "Wherever
you enter a house, stay there until you leave
from there. [11]Whatever place does not wel-
come you or listen to you, leave there and
shake the dust off your feet in testimony against
them." [12]So they went off and preached repen-
tance. [13 m]*They drove out many demons, and
they anointed with oil many who were sick and
cured them.

**Herod's Opinion of Jesus** [14 n o]*King Herod
heard about it, for his fame had become wide-
spread, and people were saying, "John the Bap-
tist has been raised from the dead; that is why
mighty powers are at work in him." [15 p]Others
were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a
prophet like any of the prophets." [16]But when
Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I
beheaded. He has been raised up."

**The Death of John the Baptist** [17 q]*Herod
was the one who had John arrested and bound

**6, 1: His native place:** the Greek word **patris** here refers to Nazareth (cf 1, 9; Lk 4, 16.23–24), though it can also mean native land.

**6, 2–6:** See the note on Mt 13, 54–58.

**6, 3: Is he not the carpenter?:** no other gospel calls Jesus a carpenter. Some witnesses have "the carpenter's son," as in Mt 13, 55. **Son of Mary:** contrary to Jewish custom, which calls a man the son of his father, this expression may reflect Mark's own faith that God is the Father of Jesus (1, 1.11; 8, 38; 13, 32; 14, 36). **The brother of James . . . Simon:** in Semitic usage, the terms 'brother,' 'sister' are applied not only to children of the same parents, but to nephews, nieces, cousins, half-brothers, and half-sisters; cf Gn 14, 16; 29, 15; Lv 10, 4. While one cannot suppose that the meaning of a Greek word should be sought in the first place from Semitic usage, the Septuagint often translates the Hebrew 'āh by the Greek word **adelphos,** "brother," as in the cited passages, a fact that may argue for a similar breadth of meaning in some New Testament passages. For instance, there is no doubt that in v 17, "brother" is used of Philip, who was actually the half-brother of Herod Antipas. On the other hand, Mark may have understood the terms literally; see also Mt 3, 31–32; 12, 46; 13, 55–56; Lk 8, 19; Jn 7, 3.5. The question of meaning here would not have arisen but for the faith of the church in Mary's perpetual virginity.

**6, 4: A prophet is not without honor except . . . in his own house:** a saying that finds parallels in other literatures, especially Jewish and Greek, but without reference to a prophet. Comparing himself to previous Hebrew prophets whom the people rejected, Jesus intimates his own eventual rejection by the nation especially in view of the dishonor his own relatives had shown him (3, 21) and now his townspeople as well.

**6, 5: He was not able to perform any mighty deed there:** according to Mark, Jesus' power could not take effect because of a person's lack of faith.

**6, 7–13:** The preparation for the mission of the Twelve is seen in the call (1) of the first disciples to be fishers of men (1, 16–20), (2) then of the Twelve set apart to be with Jesus and to receive authority to preach and expel demons (3, 13–19). Now they are given the specific mission to exercise that authority in word and power as representatives of Jesus during the time of their formation.

**6, 8–9:** In Mk the use of a **walking stick** (8) and **sandals** (9) is permitted, but not in Mt 10, 10 nor in Lk 10, 4. Mark does not mention any prohibition to visit pagan territory and to enter Samaritan towns. These differences indicate a certain adaptation to conditions in and outside of Palestine and suggest in Mark's account a later activity in the church. For the rest, Jesus required of his apostles a total dependence on God for food and shelter; cf vv 35–44; 8, 1–9.

**6, 10–11:** Remaining in the same house as a guest (10) rather than moving to another offering greater comfort avoided any impression of seeking advantage for oneself and prevented dishonor to one's host. Shaking the dust off one's feet served as testimony against those who rejected the call to repentance.

**6, 13: Anointed with oil . . . cured them:** a common medicinal remedy, but seen here as a vehicle of divine power for healing.

**6, 14–16:** The various opinions about Jesus anticipate the theme of his identity that reaches its climax in 8, 27–30.

**6, 14: King Herod:** see the note on Mt 14, 1.

**6, 17–29:** Similarities are to be noted between Mark's account of the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist in this pericope, and

i Mt 13, 54–58; Lk 4, 16–30. j 15, 40; Mt 12, 46; Jn 6, 42. k Jn 4, 44. l Mt 10, 1.9–14; Lk 9, 15; 10, 4–11. m Jas 5, 14. n Lk 9, 7–8. o Mt 14, 1–12. p Mt 16, 14. q Lk 3, 19–20.

in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his
brother Philip, whom he had married. 18 [r]John
had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to
have your brother's wife." 19*Herodias harbored
a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but
was unable to do so. 20Herod feared John,
knowing him to be a righteous and holy man,
and kept him in custody. When he heard him
speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked
to listen to him. 21She had an opportunity one
day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet
for his courtiers, his military officers, and the
leading men of Galilee. 22Herodias's own daugh-
ter came in and performed a dance that de-
lighted Herod and his guests. The king said to
the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I
will grant it to you." 23 [s]He even swore [many
things] to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask
of me, even to half of my kingdom." 24She went
out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask
for?" She replied, "The head of John the Bap-
tist." 25The girl hurried back to the king's
presence and made her request, "I want you to
give me at once on a platter the head of John the
Baptist." 26The king was deeply distressed, but
because of his oaths and the guests he did not
wish to break his word to her. 27 [t]So he promptly
dispatched an executioner with orders to bring
back his head. He went off and beheaded him in
the prison. 28He brought in the head on a platter
and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to
her mother. 29When his disciples heard about it,
they came and took his body and laid it in a
tomb.

**The Return of the Twelve** 30 [u]*The apostles
gathered together with Jesus and reported all
they had done and taught. 31 [v]*He said to them,
"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place
and rest a while." People were coming and going
in great numbers, and they had no opportunity
even to eat. 32 [w]So they went off in the boat by
themselves to a deserted place. 33People saw
them leaving and many came to know about it.
They hastened there on foot from all the towns
and arrived at the place before them.

**The Feeding of the Five Thousand** 34When
he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his
heart was moved with pity for them, for they
were like sheep without a shepherd; and he
began to teach them many things. 35*By now it
was already late and his disciples approached
him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is
already very late. 36Dismiss them so that they
can go to the surrounding farms and villages and
buy themselves something to eat." 37He said to
them in reply, "Give them some food your-
selves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy
two hundred days' wages worth of food and give
it to them to eat?" 38He asked them, "How
many loaves do you have? Go and see." And
when they had found out they said, "Five loaves
and two fish." 39So he gave orders to have them
sit down in groups on the green grass. 40*The
people took their places in rows by hundreds
and by fifties. 41*Then, taking the five loaves
and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he
said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave
them to [his] disciples to set before the people;

that of the passion of Jesus (15, 1–47). Herod and Pilate, each in turn, acknowledges the holiness of life of one over whom he unjustly exercises the power of condemnation and death (26–27; 15, 9–10.14–15). The hatred of Herodias toward John parallels that of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus. After the deaths of John and of Jesus, well-disposed persons request the bodies of the victims of Herod and of Pilate in turn to give them respectful burial (29; 15, 45–46).

**6, 19: Herodias:** see the note on Mt 14, 3.

**6, 30: Apostles:** here, and in some manuscripts at 3, 14, Mark calls apostles (i.e., those sent forth) the Twelve whom Jesus sends as his emissaries, empowering them to preach, to expel demons, and to cure the sick (13). Only after Pentecost is the title used in the technical sense.

**6, 31–34:** The withdrawal of Jesus with his disciples to a desert place to rest attracts a great number of people to follow them. Toward this people of the new exodus Jesus is moved with pity; he satisfies their spiritual hunger by teaching them many things, thus gradually showing himself the faithful shepherd of a new Israel; cf Nm 27, 17; Ez 34, 15.

**6, 35–44:** See the note on Mt 14, 13–21. Compare this section with 8, 1–9. The various accounts of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, two each in Mark and in Matthew and one each in Luke and in John, indicate the wide interest of the early church in their eucharistic gatherings; see, e.g., v 41; 8, 6; 14, 22; and recall also the sign of bread in Ex 16; Dt 8, 3–16; Pss 78, 24–25; 105, 40; Wis 16, 20–21.

**6, 40: The people . . . in rows by hundreds and by fifties:** reminiscent of the groupings of Israelites encamped in the desert (Ex 18, 21–25) and of the wilderness tradition of the prophets depicting the transformation of the wasteland into pastures where the true shepherd feeds his flock (Ez 34, 25–26) and makes his people beneficiaries of messianic grace.

**6, 41:** On the language of this verse as eucharistic (cf 14, 22),

r Lv 18, 16. s Est 5, 3. t Lk 9, 9. u Lk 9, 10. v 3, 20; Mt 14, 13; Lk 9, 10. w Mt 14, 13–21; Lk 9, 10–17; Jn 6, 1–13.

he also divided the two fish among them all.
42They all ate and were satisfied. 43And they
picked up twelve wicker baskets full of frag-
ments and what was left of the fish. 44Those
who ate [of the loaves] were five thousand men.

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**The Walking on the Water** 45 x*Then he
made his disciples get into the boat and precede
him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he
dismissed the crowd. 46*And when he had
taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain
to pray. 47When it was evening, the boat was far
out on the sea and he was alone on shore.
48*Then he saw that they were tossed about
while rowing, for the wind was against them.
About the fourth watch of the night, he came
toward them walking on the sea. He meant to
pass by them. 49But when they saw him walking
on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried
out. 50*They had all seen him and were terri-
fied. But at once he spoke with them, "Take
courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" 51He got into
the boat with them and the wind died down.
They were [completely] astounded. 52 y*They
had not understood the incident of the loaves.
On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

**The Healings at Gennesaret** 53 zAfter making
the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret
and tied up there. 54As they were leaving the
boat, people immediately recognized him.
55They scurried about the surrounding country
and began to bring in the sick on mats to
wherever they heard he was. 56 aWhatever vil-
lages or towns or countryside he entered, they
laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him
that they might touch only the tassel on his
cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

## CHAPTER 7

**The Tradition of the Elders** 1 b*Now when
the Pharisees with some scribes who had come
from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2they
observed that some of his disciples ate their
meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands.
3*(For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not
eat without carefully washing their hands, keep-
ing the tradition of the elders. 4And on coming
from the marketplace they do not eat without
purifying themselves. And there are many other
things that they have traditionally observed, the
purification of cups and jugs and kettles [and
beds].) 5*So the Pharisees and scribes questioned
him, "Why do your disciples not follow the
tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with
unclean hands?" 6 cHe responded, "Well did
Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is
written:

'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
7In vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.'

8You disregard God's commandment but cling to
human tradition." 9He went on to say, "How
well you have set aside the commandment of
God in order to uphold your tradition! 10 dFor
Moses said, 'Honor your father and your

see the notes on Mt 14, 19.20. Jesus observed the Jewish table ritual of blessing God before partaking of food.

**6, 45–52:** See the note on Mt 14, 22–33.

**6, 45: To the other side toward Bethsaida:** a village at the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**6, 46: He went off to the mountain to pray:** see 1, 35–38. In Jn 6, 15 Jesus withdrew to evade any involvement in the false messianic hopes of the multitude.

**6, 48: Walking on the sea:** see the notes on Mt 14, 22–33 and on Jn 6, 19.

**6, 50: It is I, do not be afraid!:** literally, "I am." This may reflect the divine revelatory formula of Ex 3, 14; Is 41, 4.10.14; 43, 1–3.10.13. Mark implies the hidden identity of Jesus as Son of God.

**6, 52: They had not understood . . . the loaves:** the revelatory character of this sign and that of the walking on the sea completely escaped the disciples. **Their hearts were hardened:** in 3, 5–6 hardness of heart was attributed to those who did not accept Jesus and plotted his death. Here the same disposition prevents the disciples from comprehending Jesus' self-revelation through signs; cf 8, 17.

**7, 1–23:** See the note on Mt 15, 1–20. Against the Pharisees' narrow, legalistic, and external practices of piety in matters of purification (2–5), external worship (6–7), and observance of commandments, Jesus sets in opposition the true moral intent of the divine law (8–13). But he goes beyond contrasting the law and Pharisaic interpretation of it. The parable of vv 14–15 in effect sets aside the law itself in respect to clean and unclean food. He thereby opens the way for unity between Jew and Gentile in the kingdom of God, intimated by Jesus' departure for pagan territory beyond Galilee. For similar contrast see 2, 1—3, 6; 3, 20–35; 6, 1–6.

**7, 3: Carefully washing their hands:** refers to ritual purification.

**7, 5: Tradition of the elders:** the body of detailed, unwritten, human laws regarded by the scribes and Pharisees to have the same binding force as that of the Mosaic law; cf Gal 1, 14.

x Mt 14, 22–32; Jn 6, 15–21. y 4, 13. z Mt 14, 34–36. a 5, 27–28; Acts 5, 15. b Mt 15, 1–20. c Is 29, 13. d Ex 21, 17; Lv 20, 9; Dt 5, 16; Eph 6, 2.

mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother
shall die.' [11]*Yet you say, 'If a person says to
father or mother, "Any support you might have
had from me is *qorban*" ' (meaning, dedicated to
God), [12]you allow him to do nothing more for
his father or mother. [13]You nullify the word of
God in favor of your tradition that you have
handed on. And you do many such things."
[14] [e]He summoned the crowd again and said to
them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand.
[15]Nothing that enters one from outside can
defile that person; but the things that come out
from within are what defile." [16]*

[17] [f]*When he got home away from the crowd
his disciples questioned him about the parable.
[18]He said to them, "Are even you likewise
without understanding? Do you not realize that
everything that goes into a person from outside
cannot defile, [19] [g]*since it enters not the heart
but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?"
(Thus he declared all foods clean.) [20]"But what
comes out of a person, that is what defiles.
[21] [h]From within people, from their hearts, come
evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, [22]adul-
tery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy,
blasphemy, arrogance, folly. [23]All these evils
come from within and they defile."

**The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith**

[24] [i]*From that place he went off to the district of
Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to
know about it, but he could not escape notice.
[25]Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean
spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his
feet. [26] [j]The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoeni-
cian by birth, and she begged him to drive the
demon out of her daughter. [27]*He said to her,
"Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to
take the food of the children and throw it to the
dogs." [28]She replied and said to him, "Lord, even
the dogs under the table eat the children's
scraps." [29]Then he said to her, "For saying this,
you may go. The demon has gone out of your
daughter." [30]When the woman went home, she
found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

**The Healing of a Deaf Man**

[31] [k]Again he left
the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to
the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the
Decapolis. [32]And people brought to him a deaf
man who had a speech impediment and begged
him to lay his hand on him. [33]He took him off by
himself away from the crowd. He put his finger
into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his
tongue; [34]then he looked up to heaven and
groaned, and said to him, "*Ephphatha*!" (that is,
"Be opened!") [35]And [immediately] the man's
ears were opened, his speech impediment was
removed, and he spoke plainly. [36]*He ordered
them not to tell anyone. But the more he
ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed
it. [37] [l]They were exceedingly astonished and
they said, "He has done all things well. He
makes the deaf hear and [the] mute speak."

## CHAPTER 8

**The Feeding of the Four Thousand**

[1] [m]*In
those days when there again was a great crowd

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**7, 11: Qorban:** a formula for a gift to God, dedicating the offering to the temple, so that the giver might continue to use it for himself but not give it to others, even needy parents.

**7, 16:** Verse 16, "Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear," is omitted because it is lacking in some of the best Greek manuscripts and was probably transferred here by scribes from 4, (9).23.

**7, 17: Away from the crowd . . . the parable:** in this context of privacy the term **parable** refers to something hidden, about to be revealed to the disciples; cf 4, 10–11.34. Jesus sets the Mosaic food laws in the context of the kingdom of God where they are abrogated, and he declares moral defilement the only cause of uncleanness.

**7, 19: (Thus he declared all foods clean):** if this bold declaration goes back to Jesus, its force was not realized among Jewish Christians in the early church; cf Acts 10, 1—11, 18.

**7, 24–37:** The withdrawal of Jesus to the district of Tyre may have been for a respite (24), but he soon moved onward to Sidon and, by way of the Sea of Galilee, to the Decapolis. These districts provided a Gentile setting for the extension of his ministry of healing because the people there acknowledged his power (29.37). The actions attributed to Jesus (33–35) were also used by healers of the time.

**7, 27–28:** The figure of a household in which children at table are fed first and then their leftover food is given to the dogs under the table is used effectively to acknowledge the prior claim of the Jews to the ministry of Jesus; however, Jesus accedes to the Gentile woman's plea for the cure of her afflicted daughter because of her faith.

**7, 36: The more they proclaimed it:** the same verb **proclaim** attributed here to the crowd in relation to the miracles of Jesus is elsewhere used in Mark for the preaching of the gospel on the part of Jesus, of his disciples, and of the Christian community (1, 14; 13, 10; 14, 9). Implied in the action of the crowd is a recognition of the salvific mission of Jesus; see the note on Mt 11, 5–6.

**8, 1–10:** The two accounts of the multiplication of loaves and fishes (8, 1–10 and 6, 31–44) have eucharistic significance. Their similarity of structure and themes but dissimilarity of detail are

e Mt 15, 10–20. f 4, 10.13. g Acts 10, 15. h Jer 17, 9. i Mt 15, 21–28. j Mt 8, 29. k Mt 15, 29–31. l Mt 15, 31. m 6, 34–44; Mt 15, 32–39.

without anything to eat, he summoned the
disciples and said, 2"My heart is moved with pity
for the crowd, because they have been with me
now for three days and have nothing to eat. 3If I
send them away hungry to their homes, they
will collapse on the way, and some of them have
come a great distance." 4His disciples answered
him, "Where can anyone get enough bread to
satisfy them here in this deserted place?" 5Still
he asked them, "How many loaves do you
have?" "Seven," they replied. 6*He ordered the
crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking
the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them,
and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and
they distributed them to the crowd. 7They also
had a few fish. He said the blessing over them
and ordered them distributed also. 8They ate
and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments
left over—seven baskets. 9There were about
four thousand people.

He dismissed them 10and got into the boat
with his disciples and came to the region of
Dalmanutha.

**The Demand for a Sign** 11 *n o**The Pharisees
came forward and began to argue with him,
seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.
12He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said,
"Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I
say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13Then he left them, got into the boat
again, and went off to the other shore.

**The Leaven of the Pharisees** 14 *p*They had
forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one
loaf with them in the boat. 15*He enjoined
them, "Watch out, guard against the leaven of
the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16They
concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. 17 *q*When he became
aware of this he said to them, "Why do you
conclude that it is because you have no bread?
Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are
your hearts hardened? 18 *r*Do you have eyes and
not see, ears and not hear? And do you not
remember, 19when I broke the five loaves for the
five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of
fragments you picked up?" They answered him,
"Twelve." 20"When I broke the seven loaves for
the four thousand, how many full baskets of
fragments did you pick up?" They answered
[him], "Seven." 21He said to them, "Do you still
not understand?"

**The Blind Man of Bethsaida** 22*When they
arrived at Bethsaida, they brought to him a blind
man and begged him to touch him. 23 *s*He took
the blind man by the hand and led him outside
the village. Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his
hands on him and asked, "Do you see anything?" 24Looking up he replied, "I see people
looking like trees and walking." 25Then he laid
hands on his eyes a second time and he saw
clearly; his sight was restored and he could see
everything distinctly. 26Then he sent him home
and said, "Do not even go into the village."

## III: The Mystery Begins to Be Revealed

**Peter's Confession about Jesus** 27 *t**Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of
Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his
disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

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considered by many to refer to a single event that, however, developed in two distinct traditions, one Jewish Christian and the other Gentile Christian, since Jesus in Mark's presentation (7, 24–37) has extended his saving mission to the Gentiles.

**8, 6:** See the note on 6, 41.

**8, 11–12:** The objection of the Pharisees that Jesus' miracles are unsatisfactory for proving the arrival of God's kingdom is comparable to the request of the crowd for a sign in Jn 6, 30–31. Jesus' response shows that a sign originating in human demand will not be provided; cf Nm 14, 11.22.

**8, 15: The leaven of the Pharisees . . . of Herod:** the corruptive action of leaven (1 Cor 5, 6–8; Gal 5, 9) was an apt symbol of the evil dispositions both of the Pharisees (11–13; 7, 5–13) and of Herod (6, 14–29) toward Jesus. The disciples of Jesus are warned against sharing such rebellious attitudes toward Jesus; cf vv 17, 21.

**8, 22–26:** Jesus' actions and the gradual cure of the blind man probably have the same purpose as in the case of the deaf man (7, 31–37). Some commentators regard the cure as an intended symbol of the gradual enlightenment of the disciples concerning Jesus' messiahship.

**8, 27–30:** This episode is the turning point in Mark's account of Jesus in his public ministry. Popular opinions concur in regard-

n Mt 12, 38–39; 16, 1–4. o Lk 11, 16. p Mt 16, 5–12; Lk 12, 1. q 4, 13. r Jer 5, 21; Ez 12, 2. s 7, 33; Jn 9, 6. t Mt 16, 13–20; Lk 9, 18–21.

[28]They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others
Elijah, still others one of the prophets." [29]And he
asked them, "But who do you say that I am?"
Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah." [30]Then he warned them not to tell anyone
about him.

**The First Prediction of the Passion** [31 u]*He
began to teach them that the Son of Man must
suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the
chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and
rise after three days. [32]He spoke this openly.
Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke
him. [33]At this he turned around and, looking at
his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God
does, but as human beings do."

**The Conditions of Discipleship** [34 v]*He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to
them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must
deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.
[35 w]*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose
it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that
of the gospel will save it. [36]What profit is there
for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his
life? [37]What could one give in exchange for his
life? [38 x]Whoever is ashamed of me and of my
words in this faithless and sinful generation, the
Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes
in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 8–10
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[1 y]*He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you,
there are some standing here who will not taste
death until they see that the kingdom of God has
come in power."

**The Transfiguration of Jesus** [2 z]*After six
days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led
them up a high mountain apart by themselves.
And he was transfigured before them, [3]and his
clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller
on earth could bleach them. [4]Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were
conversing with Jesus. [5]*Then Peter said to Jesus
in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let
us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses,
and one for Elijah." [6]He hardly knew what to
say, they were so terrified. [7]*Then a cloud came,
casting a shadow over them; then from the
cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son.
Listen to him." [8]Suddenly, looking around, they

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ing him as a prophet. The disciples by contrast believe him to be the Messiah. Jesus acknowledges this identification but prohibits them from making his messianic office known to avoid confusing it with ambiguous contemporary ideas on the nature of that office. See further the notes on Mt 16, 13–20.

**8, 31: Son of Man:** an enigmatic title. It is used in Dn 7, 13–14 as a symbol of "the saints of the Most High," the faithful Israelites who receive the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient One (God). They are represented by a human figure that contrasts with the various beasts who represent the previous kingdoms of the earth. In the Jewish apocryphal books of 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra the "Son of Man" is not, as in Dn, a group, but a unique figure of extraordinary spiritual endowments, who will be revealed as the one through whom the everlasting kingdom decreed by God will be established. It is possible though doubtful that this individualization of the Son of Man figure had been made in Jesus' time, and therefore his use of the title in that sense is questionable. Of itself, this expression means simply a human being, or, indefinitely, someone, and there are evidences of this use in pre-Christian times. Its use in the New Testament is probably due to Jesus' speaking of himself in that way, "a human being," and the later church's taking this in the sense of the Jewish apocrypha and applying it to him with that meaning. **Rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes:** the supreme council called the Sanhedrin was made up of seventy-one members of these three groups and presided over by the high priest. It exercised authority over the Jews in religious matters. See the note on Mt 8, 20.

**8, 34–35:** This utterance of Jesus challenges all believers to authentic discipleship and total commitment to himself through self-renunciation and acceptance of the cross of suffering, even to the sacrifice of life itself. **Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it . . . will save it:** an expression of the ambivalence of life and its contrasting destiny. Life seen as mere self-centered earthly existence and lived in denial of Christ ends in destruction, but when lived in loyalty to Christ, despite earthly death, it arrives at fullness of life.

**8, 35: For my sake and that of the gospel:** Mark here, as at 10, 29, equates Jesus with the gospel.

**9, 1: There are some standing . . . come in power:** understood by some to refer to the establishment by God's power of his kingdom on earth in and through the church; more likely, as understood by others, a reference to the imminent parousia.

**9, 2–8:** Mk and Mt 17, 1 place the transfiguration of Jesus six days after the first prediction of his passion and death and his instruction to the disciples on the doctrine of the cross; Lk 9, 28 has "about eight days." Thus the transfiguration counterbalances the prediction of the passion by affording certain of the disciples insight into the divine glory that Jesus possessed. His glory will overcome his death and that of his disciples; cf 2 Cor 3, 18; 2 Pt 1, 16–19. The heavenly voice (7) prepares the disciples to understand that in the divine plan Jesus must die ignominiously before his messianic glory is made manifest; cf Lk 24, 25–27. See further the note on Mt 17, 1–8.

**9, 5:** Moses and Elijah represent respectively law and prophecy in the Old Testament and are linked to Mt. Sinai; cf Ex 19, 16—20, 17; 1 Kgs 19, 2.8–14. They now appear with Jesus as witnesses to the fulfillment of the law and the prophets taking place in the person of Jesus as he appears in glory.

**9, 7: A cloud came, casting a shadow over them:** even the disciples enter into the mystery of his glorification. In the Old

u Mt 16, 21–27; Lk 9, 22–26. v Mt 10, 38–39; 16, 24–27; Lk 14, 26–27. w Jn 12, 25. x Mt 10, 33; Lk 12, 8. y Mt 16, 28; Lk 9, 27. z Mt 17, 1–13; Lk 9, 28–36.

no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

**The Coming of Elijah** 9 [a]*As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant. 11 [b]Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12He told them, "Elijah will indeed come first and restore all things, yet how is it written regarding the Son of Man that he must suffer greatly and be treated with contempt? 13 [c]But I tell you that Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

**The Healing of a Boy with a Demon** 14 [d]*When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. 15Immediately on seeing him, the whole crowd was utterly amazed. They ran up to him and greeted him. 16He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" 17Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. 18Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so." 19He said to them in reply, "O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me." 20They brought the boy to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. 21Then he questioned his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "Since childhood. 22It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23Jesus said to him, " 'If you can!' Everything is possible to one who has faith." 24Then the boy's father cried out, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" 25Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!" 26Shouting and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out. He became like a corpse, which caused many to say, "He is dead!" 27But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. 28When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29*He said to them, "This kind can only come out through prayer."

**The Second Prediction of the Passion** 30 [e f]They left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. 31He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise." 32But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

## IV: The Full Revelation of the Mystery

**The Greatest in the Kingdom** 33 [g]*They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. 35 [h]Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If

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Testament the cloud covered the meeting tent, indicating the Lord's presence in the midst of his people (Ex 40, 34–35) and came to rest upon the temple in Jerusalem at the time of its dedication (1 Kgs 8, 10).

**9, 9–13:** At the transfiguration of Jesus his disciples had seen Elijah. They were perplexed because, according to the rabbinical interpretation of Mal 3, 23–24, Elijah was to come first. Jesus' response shows that Elijah has come, in the person of John the Baptist, to prepare for the day of the Lord. Jesus **must suffer greatly and be treated with contempt** (12) like the Baptist (13); cf 6, 17–29.

**9, 14–29:** The disciples' failure to effect a cure seems to reflect unfavorably on Jesus (14–18.22). In response Jesus exposes their lack of trust in God (19) and scores their lack of prayer (29), i.e., of conscious reliance on God's power when acting in Jesus' name. For Mt, see the note on 17, 14–20. Luke 9, 37–43 centers attention on Jesus' sovereign power.

**9, 29: This kind can only come out through prayer:** a variant reading adds "and through fasting."

**9, 33–37:** Mark probably intends this incident and the sayings

a 8, 31. b Is 53, 3; Mal 3, 23. c 1 Kgs 19, 2–10. d Mt 17, 14–21; Lk 9, 37–43. e Jn 7, 1. f 8, 31; Mt 17, 22–23; Lk 9, 43–45. g Mt 18, 1–5; Lk 9, 46–48. h Mt 20, 27.

anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of
all and the servant of all." 36Taking a child he
placed it in their midst, and putting his arms
around it he said to them, 37 *i*"Whoever receives
one child such as this in my name, receives me;
and whoever receives me, receives not me but
the One who sent me."

**Another Exorcist** 38 *j**John said to him,
"Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in
your name, and we tried to prevent him because
he does not follow us." 39Jesus replied, "Do not
prevent him. There is no one who performs a
mighty deed in my name who can at the same
time speak ill of me. 40 *k*For whoever is not against
us is for us. 41 *l*Anyone who gives you a cup of
water to drink because you belong to Christ,
amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

**Temptations to Sin** 42 *m*"Whoever causes one
of these little ones who believe [in me] to sin, it
would be better for him if a great millstone were
put around his neck and he were thrown into
the sea. 43*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it
off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed
than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into
the unquenchable fire. [44]* 45And if your foot
causes you to sin, cut if off. It is better for you to
enter into life crippled than with two feet to be
thrown into Gehenna. [46]* 47And if your eye
causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to
enter into the kingdom of God with one eye
than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna,
48 *n*where 'their worm does not die, and the fire
is not quenched.'

**The Simile of Salt** 49*"Everyone will be salted
with fire. 50 *o*Salt is good, but if salt becomes
insipid, with what will you restore its flavor?
Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace
with one another."

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 8–10
See RG
413–414

**Marriage and Divorce** 1He set out from there
and went into the district of Judea [and] across
the Jordan. Again crowds gathered around him
and, as was his custom, he again taught them.
2 *p**The Pharisees approached and asked, "Is it
lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They
were testing him. 3He said to them in reply,
"What did Moses command you?" 4 *q*They replied, "Moses permitted him to write a bill of
divorce and dismiss her." 5But Jesus told them,
"Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote
you this commandment. 6 *r*But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and
female. 7 *s*For this reason a man shall leave his
father and mother [and be joined to his wife],
8and the two shall become one flesh.' So they
are no longer two but one flesh. 9Therefore what
God has joined together, no human being must
separate." 10In the house the disciples again
questioned him about this. 11 *t*He said to them,
"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another
commits adultery against her; 12and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she
commits adultery."

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that follow as commentary on the disciples' lack of understanding (32). Their role in Jesus' work is one of service, especially to the poor and lowly. Children were the symbol Jesus used for the **anawim,** the poor in spirit, the lowly in the Christian community.

**9, 38–41:** Jesus warns against jealousy and intolerance toward others, such as exorcists who do **not follow us.** The saying in v 40 is a broad principle of the divine tolerance. Even the smallest courtesies shown to those who teach in Jesus' name do not go unrewarded.

**9, 43.45.47: Gehenna:** see the note on Mt 5, 22.

**9, 44.46:** These verses, lacking in some important early manuscripts, are here omitted as scribal additions. They simply repeat v 48, itself a modified citation of Is 66, 24.

**9, 49: Everyone will be salted with fire:** so the better manuscripts. Some add "every sacrifice will be salted with salt." The purifying and preservative use of salt in food (Lv 2, 13) and the refinement effected through fire refer here to comparable effects in the spiritual life of the disciples of Jesus.

**10, 2–9:** In the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees on the subject of divorce, Jesus declares that the law of Moses permitted divorce (Dt 24, 1) only **because of the hardness of your hearts** (4–5). In citing Gn 1, 27 and 2, 24, Jesus proclaims permanence to be the divine intent from the beginning concerning human marriage (6–8). He reaffirms this with the declaration that **what God has joined together, no human being must separate** (9). See further the notes on Mt 5, 31–32 and 19, 3–9.

i Mt 10, 40; 18, 5; Jn 13, 20. j Nm 11, 28; Lk 9, 49–50; 1 Cor 12, 3. k Mt 12, 30. l Mt 10, 42; 1 Cor 3, 23. m Mt 5, 29–30; 18, 6–9; Lk 17, 1–2. n Is 66, 24. o Lv 2, 13; Mt 5, 13; Lk 14, 34–35; Col 4, 6. p Mt 19, 3–9. q Dt 24, 1–4. r Gn 1, 27. s Gn 2, 24; 1 Cor 6, 16; Eph 5, 31. t Mt 5, 32; Lk 16, 18; 1 Cor 7, 10–11.

**Blessing of the Children** 13 [u] [v]And people
were bringing children to him that he might
touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.
14When Jesus saw this he became indignant and
said to them, "Let the children come to me; do
not prevent them, for the kingdom of God
belongs to such as these. 15 [w]*Amen, I say to
you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of
God like a child will not enter it." 16Then he
embraced them and blessed them, placing his
hands on them.

**The Rich Man** 17 [x]As he was setting out on a
journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him,
and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to
inherit eternal life?" 18*Jesus answered him,
"Why do you call me good? No one is good but
God alone. 19 [y]You know the commandments:
'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal; you shall not bear false wit-
ness; you shall not defraud; honor your father
and your mother.' " 20He replied and said to him,
"Teacher, all of these I have observed from my
youth." 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and
said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell
what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will
have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."
22At that statement his face fell, and he went
away sad, for he had many possessions.

23 [z]*Jesus looked around and said to his disci-
ples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!" 24The disciples
were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to
them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter
the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to
pass through [the] eye of [a] needle than for one
who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
26They were exceedingly astonished and said
among themselves, "Then who can be saved?"
27Jesus looked at them and said, "For human
beings it is impossible, but not for God. All
things are possible for God." 28Peter began to say
to him, "We have given up everything and
followed you." 29Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,
there is no one who has given up house or
brothers or sisters or mother or father or children
or lands for my sake and for the sake of the
gospel 30who will not receive a hundred times
more now in this present age: houses and
brothers and sisters and mothers and children
and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in
the age to come. 31 [a]But many that are first will
be last, and [the] last will be first."

**The Third Prediction of the Passion**
32 [b]They were on the way, going up to Jerusa-
lem, and Jesus went ahead of them. They were
amazed, and those who followed were afraid.
Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell
them what was going to happen to him. 33"Be-
hold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the
Son of Man will be handed over to the chief
priests and the scribes, and they will condemn
him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles
34who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge
him, and put him to death, but after three days
he will rise."

**Ambition of James and John** 35 [c]Then James
and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and
said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us
whatever we ask of you." 36He replied, "What
do you wish [me] to do for you?" 37They
answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may
sit one at your right and the other at your left."
38 [d]*Jesus said to them, "You do not know what
you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I

**10, 15: Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child:** i.e., in total dependence upon and obedience to the gospel; cf Mt 18, 3–4.

**10, 18: Why do you call me good?:** Jesus repudiates the term "good" for himself and directs it to God, the source of all goodness who alone can grant the gift of eternal life; cf Mt 19, 16–17.

**10, 23–27:** In the Old Testament wealth and material goods are considered a sign of God's favor (Jb 1, 10; Ps 128, 1–2; Is 3, 10). The words of Jesus in 23–25 provoke astonishment among the disciples because of their apparent contradiction of the Old Testament concept (24.26). Since wealth, power, and merit generate false security, Jesus rejects them utterly as a claim to enter the kingdom. Achievement of salvation is beyond human capability and depends solely on the goodness of God who offers it as a gift (27).

**10, 38–40: Can you drink the cup . . . I am baptized?:** the metaphor of drinking the cup is used in the Old Testament to refer to acceptance of the destiny assigned by God; see the note on Ps 11, 6. In Jesus' case, this involves divine judgment on sin that Jesus the innocent one is to expiate on behalf of the guilty (14, 24; Is 53, 5). His baptism is to be his crucifixion and death for the salvation of the human race; cf Lk 12, 50. The request of James and John for a share in the glory (35–37) must of necessity involve a share in Jesus' sufferings, the endurance of tribulation and suffering for the gospel (39). The authority of assigning places of honor in the kingdom is reserved to God (40).

u Mt 19, 13–15; Lk 18, 15–17. v Lk 9, 47. w Mt 18, 3. x Mt 19, 16–30; Lk 18, 18–30. y Ex 20, 12–16; Dt 5, 16–21. z Prv 11, 28. a Mt 19, 30; Lk 13, 30. b 8, 31; Mt 20, 17–19; Lk 18, 31–33. c Mt 20, 20–28. d Lk 12, 50.

drink or be baptized with the baptism with
which I am baptized?" [39]They said to him, "We
can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink,
you will drink, and with the baptism with which
I am baptized, you will be baptized; [40]but to sit
at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is
for those for whom it has been prepared."
[41]When the ten heard this, they became indig-
nant at James and John. [42] *e**Jesus summoned
them and said to them, "You know that those
who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles
lord it over them, and their great ones make
their authority over them felt. [43]But it shall not
be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be
great among you will be your servant; [44]who-
ever wishes to be first among you will be the
slave of all. [45]For the Son of Man did not come
to be served but to serve and to give his life as a
ransom for many."

**The Blind Bartimaeus** [46] *f**They came to Jeri-
cho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his
disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a
blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the
roadside begging. [47]On hearing that it was Jesus
of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus,
son of David, have pity on me." [48]And many
rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he
kept calling out all the more, "Son of David,
have pity on me." [49]Jesus stopped and said, "Call
him." So they called the blind man, saying to
him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you."
[50]He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came
to Jesus. [51]Jesus said to him in reply, "What do
you want me to do for you?" The blind man
replied to him, "Master, I want to see." [52]Jesus
told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved
you." Immediately he received his sight and
followed him on the way.

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 11-16
See RG
414-417

**The Entry into Jerusalem** [1] *g**When they
drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Beth-
any at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his
disciples [2]and said to them, "Go into the village
opposite you, and immediately on entering it,
you will find a colt tethered on which no one has
ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. [3]If anyone
should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?'
reply, 'The Master has need of it and will send it
back here at once.' " [4]So they went off and
found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the
street, and they untied it. [5]Some of the bystand-
ers said to them, "What are you doing, untying
the colt?" [6]They answered them just as Jesus
had told them to, and they permitted them to do
it. [7]So they brought the colt to Jesus and put
their cloaks over it. And he sat on it. [8]Many
people spread their cloaks on the road, and
others spread leafy branches that they had cut
from the fields. [9] *h*Those preceding him as well
as those following kept crying out:

"Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord!
[10] Blessed is the kingdom of our father David
that is to come!
Hosanna in the highest!"

[11] *i*He entered Jerusalem and went into the
temple area. He looked around at everything
and, since it was already late, went out to
Bethany with the Twelve.

**Jesus Curses a Fig Tree** [12] *j**The next day as
they were leaving Bethany he was hungry.
[13]Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he
went over to see if he could find anything on it.
When he reached it he found nothing but

**10, 42–45:** Whatever authority is to be exercised by the disciples must, like that of Jesus, be rendered as service to others (45) rather than for personal aggrandizement (42–44). The service of Jesus is his passion and death for the sins of the human race (45); cf 14, 24; Is 53, 11–12; Mt 26, 28; Lk 22, 19–20.

**10, 46–52:** See the notes on Mt 9, 27–31 and 20, 29–34.

**11, 1–11:** In Mark's account Jesus takes the initiative in ordering the preparation for his entry into Jerusalem (1–6) even as he later orders the preparation of his last Passover supper (14, 12–16). In vv 9–10 the greeting Jesus receives stops short of proclaiming him Messiah. He is greeted rather as the prophet of the coming messianic kingdom. Contrast Mt 21, 9.

**11, 12–14:** Jesus' search for fruit on the fig tree recalls the prophets' earlier use of this image to designate Israel; cf Jer 8, 13; 29, 17; Jl 1, 7; Hos 9, 10.16. Cursing the fig tree is a parable in action representing Jesus' judgment (20) on barren Israel and the fate of Jerusalem for failing to receive his teaching; cf Is 34, 4; Hos 2, 14; Lk 13, 6–9.

e Lk 22, 25–27. f Mt 20, 29–34; Lk 18, 35–43. g Mt 21, 1–9; Lk 19, 29–38; Jn 12, 12–15. h 2 Sm 7, 16; Ps 118, 26. i Mt 21, 10.17. j Mt 21, 18–20; Lk 13, 6–9.

leaves; it was not the time for figs. [14]And he said
to it in reply, "May no one ever eat of your fruit
again!" And his disciples heard it.

**Cleansing of the Temple** [15] *k**They came to
Jerusalem, and on entering the temple area he
began to drive out those selling and buying
there. He overturned the tables of the money
changers and the seats of those who were selling
doves. [16]He did not permit anyone to carry
anything through the temple area. [17] *l*Then he
taught them saying, "Is it not written:

'My house shall be called a house of prayer for
all peoples'?
But you have made it a den of thieves."

[18]The chief priests and the scribes came to hear
of it and were seeking a way to put him to death,
yet they feared him because the whole crowd
was astonished at his teaching. [19] *m*When eve-
ning came, they went out of the city.

Ch 11–16
See RG
414–417

**The Withered Fig Tree** [20] *n*Early in the morn-
ing, as they were walking along, they saw the fig
tree withered to its roots. [21]Peter remembered
and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that
you cursed has withered." [22]Jesus said to them
in reply, "Have faith in God. [23] *o*Amen, I say to
you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up
and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in
his heart but believes that what he says will
happen, it shall be done for him. [24] *p*Therefore I
tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe
that you will receive it and it shall be yours.
[25] *q*When you stand to pray, forgive anyone
against whom you have a grievance, so that your
heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your
transgressions. [26]"*

**The Authority of Jesus Questioned**

[27]*They returned once more to Jerusalem. *r* As
he was walking in the temple area, the chief
priests, the scribes, and the elders approached
him [28]and said to him, "By what authority are
you doing these things? Or who gave you this
authority to do them?" [29]Jesus said to them, "I
shall ask you one question. Answer me, and I
will tell you by what authority I do these things.
[30]Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human
origin? Answer me." [31]They discussed this
among themselves and said, "If we say, 'Of
heavenly origin,' he will say, '[Then] why did
you not believe him?' [32]But shall we say, 'Of
human origin'?"—they feared the crowd, for
they all thought John really was a prophet. [33]So
they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know."
Then Jesus said to them, "Neither shall I tell you
by what authority I do these things."

## CHAPTER 12

**Parable of the Tenants** [1] *s t**He began to speak
to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard,
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press, and
built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers
and left on a journey. [2]At the proper time he sent
a servant to the tenants to obtain from them
some of the produce of the vineyard. [3]But they
seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-
handed. [4]Again he sent them another servant.
And that one they beat over the head and
treated shamefully. [5]He sent yet another whom
they killed. So, too, many others; some they
beat, others they killed. [6]He had one other to
send, a beloved son. He sent him to them last of
all, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' [7]But
those tenants said to one another, 'This is the
heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance
will be ours.' [8]So they seized him and killed him,
and threw him out of the vineyard. [9]What [then]
will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come,

**11, 15–19:** See the note on Mt 21, 12–17.

**11, 26:** This verse, which reads, "But if you do not forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your transgressions," is omitted in the best manuscripts. It was probably added by copyists under the influence of Mt 6, 15.

**11, 27–33:** The mounting hostility toward Jesus came from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders (27); the Herodians and the Pharisees (12, 13); and the Sadducees (12, 18). By their rejection of God's messengers, John the Baptist and Jesus, they incurred the divine judgment implied in vv 27–33 and confirmed in the parable of the vineyard tenants (12, 1–12).

**12, 1–12:** The vineyard denotes Israel (Is 5, 1–7). The tenant farmers are the religious leaders of Israel. God is the owner of the vineyard. His servants are his messengers, the prophets. The beloved son is Jesus (1, 11; 9, 7; Mt 3, 17; 17, 5; Lk 3, 22; 9, 35). The punishment of the tenants refers to the religious leaders, and the transfer of the vineyard to others refers to the people of the new Israel.

k Mt 21, 12–13; Lk 19, 45–46; Jn 2, 14–16. l Is 56, 7; Jer 7, 11. m Lk 21, 37. n Mt 21, 20–22. o Mt 17, 20–21; Lk 17, 6. p Mt 7, 7; Jn 11, 22; 14, 13. q Mt 6, 14; 18, 35. r Mt 21, 23–27; Lk 20, 1–8. s Mt 21, 33–46; Lk 20, 9–19. t Is 5, 1–7; Jer 2, 21.

put the tenants to death, and give the vineyard
to others. 10 [u]Have you not read this scripture
passage:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
11 by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes'?"

12 They were seeking to arrest him, but they
feared the crowd, for they realized that he had
addressed the parable to them. So they left him
and went away.

**Paying Taxes to the Emperor** 13 [v w]*They
sent some Pharisees and Herodians to him to
ensnare him in his speech. 14 They came and said
to him, "Teacher, we know that you are a
truthful man and that you are not concerned
with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a
person's status but teach the way of God in
accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the
census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or
should we not pay?" 15 Knowing their hypocrisy
he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring
me a denarius to look at." 16 They brought one to
him and he said to them, "Whose image and
inscription is this?" They replied to him, "Caesar's." 17 [x]So Jesus said to them, "Repay to
Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what
belongs to God." They were utterly amazed at
him.

**The Question about the Resurrection**
18 *Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and put this question to
him, 19 [y]saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, 'If
someone's brother dies, leaving a wife but no
child, his brother must take the wife and raise up
descendants for his brother.' 20 Now there were
seven brothers. The first married a woman and
died, leaving no descendants. 21 So the second
married her and died, leaving no descendants,
and the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no
descendants. Last of all the woman also died.
23 At the resurrection [when they arise] whose
wife will she be? For all seven had been married
to her." 24 Jesus said to them, "Are you not
misled because you do not know the scriptures
or the power of God? 25 When they rise from the
dead, they neither marry nor are given in
marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven.
26 [z]As for the dead being raised, have you not
read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about
the bush, how God told him, 'I am the God of
Abraham, [the] God of Isaac, and [the] God of
Jacob'? 27 He is not God of the dead but of the
living. You are greatly misled."

**The Greatest Commandment** 28 [a]*One of
the scribes, when he came forward and heard
them disputing and saw how well he had
answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of
all the commandments?" 29 Jesus replied, "The
first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is
Lord alone! 30 [b]You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, with all your soul, with all
your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 [c]The
second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as
yourself.' There is no other commandment
greater than these." 32 The scribe said to him,
"Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He
is One and there is no other than he.' 33 [d]And 'to
love him with all your heart, with all your
understanding, with all your strength, and to
love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more
than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 [e]And
when Jesus saw that [he] answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from
the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask
him any more questions.

**The Question about David's Son** 35 [f]*As Jesus was teaching in the temple area he said,
"How do the scribes claim that the Messiah is

**12, 13–34:** In the ensuing conflicts (cf also 2, 1—3, 6) Jesus vanquishes his adversaries by his responses to their questions and reduces them to silence (34).

**12, 13–17:** See the note on Mt 22, 15–22.

**12, 18–27:** See the note on Mt 22, 23–33.

**12, 28–34:** See the note on Mt 22, 34–40.

**12, 35–37:** Jesus questions the claim of the scribes about the Davidic descent of the Messiah, not to deny it (Mt 1, 1; Acts 2, 20.34; Rom 1, 3; 2 Tm 2, 8) but to imply that he is more than this. His superiority derives from his transcendent origin, to which David himself attested when he spoke of the Messiah with the name "Lord" (Ps 110, 1). See also the note on Mt 22, 41–46.

u Ps 118, 22–23; Is 28, 16. v Mt 22, 15–33; Lk 20, 20–39. w 3, 6. x Rom 13, 7. y Dt 25, 5. z Ex 3, 6. a Mt 22, 34–40; Lk 10, 25–28. b Dt 6, 4–5. c Lv 19, 18; Rom 13, 9; Gal 5, 14; Jas 2, 8. d Dt 6, 4; Ps 40, 7–9. e Mt 22, 46; Lk 20, 40. f Mt 22, 41–45; Lk 20, 41–44.

the son of David? 36 *g*David himself, inspired by
the holy Spirit, said:

'The Lord said to my lord,
"Sit at my right hand
until I place your enemies under your
feet." '

37 David himself calls him 'lord'; so how is he his
son?" [The] great crowd heard this with delight.

**Denunciation of the Scribes** 38 *h**In the
course of his teaching he said, "Beware of the
scribes, who like to go around in long robes and
accept greetings in the marketplaces, 39 seats of
honor in synagogues, and places of honor at
banquets. 40 They devour the houses of widows
and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They
will receive a very severe condemnation."

**The Poor Widow's Contribution** 41 *i**He sat
down opposite the treasury and observed how
the crowd put money into the treasury. Many
rich people put in large sums. 42 A poor widow
also came and put in two small coins worth a
few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to himself, he
said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor
widow put in more than all the other contribu-
tors to the treasury. 44 For they have all contrib-
uted from their surplus wealth, but she, from her
poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole
livelihood."

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 11-16
See RG
414-417

**The Destruction of the Temple Foretold**
1 *j**As he was making his way out of the temple
area one of his disciples said to him, "Look,
teacher, what stones and what buildings!" 2 Jesus
said to him, "Do you see these great buildings?
There will not be one stone left upon another
that will not be thrown down."

**The Signs of the End** 3 *k**As he was sitting on
the Mount of Olives opposite the temple area,
Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him
privately, 4 "Tell us, when will this happen, and
what sign will there be when all these things are
about to come to an end?" 5 *l*Jesus began to say
to them, "See that no one deceives you. 6 Many
will come in my name saying, 'I am he,' and
they will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars
and reports of wars do not be alarmed; such
things must happen, but it will not yet be the
end. 8 Nation will rise against nation and king-
dom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes
from place to place and there will be famines.
These are the beginnings of the labor pains.

**The Coming Persecution** 9 *m*"Watch out for
yourselves. They will hand you over to the
courts. You will be beaten in synagogues. You
will be arraigned before governors and kings
because of me, as a witness before them. 10 *But
the gospel must first be preached to all nations.
11 *n*When they lead you away and hand you
over, do not worry beforehand about what you
are to say. But say whatever will be given to you
at that hour. For it will not be you who are
speaking but the holy Spirit. 12 Brother will hand
over brother to death, and the father his child;
children will rise up against parents and have
them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all
because of my name. But the one who perse-
veres to the end will be saved.

**The Great Tribulation** 14 *o p**"When you see
the desolating abomination standing where he

**12, 38–40:** See the notes on 7, 1–23 and Mt 23, 1–39.

**12, 41–44:** See the note on Lk 21, 1–4.

**13, 1–2:** The reconstructed temple with its precincts, begun under Herod the Great ca. 20 B.C., was completed only some seven years before it was destroyed by fire in A.D. 70 at the hands of the Romans; cf Jer 26, 18; Mt 24, 1–2. For the dating of the reconstruction of the temple, see further the note on Jn 2, 20.

**13, 3–37:** Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple (2) provoked questions that the four named disciples put to him in private regarding the time and the sign when all **these things are about to come to an end** (3–4). The response to their questions was Jesus' eschatological discourse prior to his imminent death. It contained instruction and consolation exhorting the disciples and the church to faith and obedience through the trials that would confront them (5–13). The sign is the presence of **the desolating abomination** (14; see Dn 9, 27), i.e., of the Roman power profaning the temple. Flight from Jerusalem is urged rather than defense of the city through misguided messianic hope (14–23). Intervention will occur only after destruction (24–27), which will happen before the end of the first Christian generation (28–31). No one but the Father knows the precise time, or that of the parousia (32); hence the necessity of constant vigilance (33–37). Luke sets the parousia at a later date, after "the time of the Gentiles" (Lk 21, 24). See also the notes on Mt 24, 1—25, 46.

**13, 10: The gospel . . . to all nations:** the period of the Christian mission.

**13, 14:** The participle **standing** is masculine, in contrast to the neuter at Mt 24, 15.

g Ps 110, 1. h Mt 23, 1–7; Lk 11, 43; 20, 45–47. i Lk 21, 1–4. j Mt 24, 1–2; Lk 21, 5–6. k Mt 24, 3–8; Lk 21, 7–11. l Eph 5, 6; 2 Thes 2, 3. m Mt 24, 9–14; Lk 21, 12–19. n Mt 10, 19–22; Lk 12, 11–12. o Mt 24, 15–22; Lk 21, 20–24. p Dn 9, 27; Mt 24, 15.

should not (let the reader understand), then
those in Judea must flee to the mountains,
15 [q][and] a person on a housetop must not go
down or enter to get anything out of his house,
16 and a person in a field must not return to get
his cloak. 17 Woe to pregnant women and nurs-
ing mothers in those days. 18 Pray that this does
not happen in winter. 19 [r]For those times will
have tribulation such as has not been since the
beginning of God's creation until now, nor ever
will be. 20 If the Lord had not shortened those
days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of
the elect whom he chose, he did shorten the
days. 21 If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is
the Messiah! Look, there he is!' do not believe
it. 22 False messiahs and false prophets will arise
and will perform signs and wonders in order to
mislead, if that were possible, the elect. 23 Be
watchful! I have told it all to you beforehand.

**The Coming of the Son of Man** 24 [s t]"But in
those days after that tribulation

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
25 and the stars will be falling from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be
shaken.

26 [u]*And then they will see 'the Son of Man
coming in the clouds' with great power and
glory, 27 and then he will send out the angels and
gather [his] elect from the four winds, from the
end of the earth to the end of the sky.

**The Lesson of the Fig Tree** 28 [v]"Learn a
lesson from the fig tree. When its branch be-
comes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that
summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you
see these things happening, know that he is
near, at the gates. 30 Amen, I say to you, this
generation will not pass away until all these
things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will
pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**Need for Watchfulness** 32 "But of that day or
hour, no one knows, neither the angels in
heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 [w]Be
watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the
time will come. 34 [x]It is like a man traveling
abroad. He leaves home and places his servants
in charge, each with his work, and orders the
gatekeeper to be on the watch. 35 Watch, there-
fore; you do not know when the lord of the
house is coming, whether in the evening, or at
midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.
36 May he not come suddenly and find you
sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to all:
'Watch!' "

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 11–16
See RG
414–417

**The Conspiracy against Jesus** 1 [y]*The Pass-
over and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to
take place in two days' time. So the chief priests
and the scribes were seeking a way to arrest him
by treachery and put him to death. 2 They said,
"Not during the festival, for fear that there may
be a riot among the people."

**The Anointing at Bethany** 3 [z]*When he was in
Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon
the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of
perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She

**13, 26: Son of Man . . . with great power and glory:** Jesus cites this text from Dn 7, 13 in his response to the high priest, **Are you the Messiah?** (14, 61). In Ex 34, 5; Lv 16, 2; and Nm 11, 25 the clouds indicate the presence of the divinity. Thus in his role of Son of Man, Jesus is a heavenly being who will come in power and glory.

**14, 1—16, 8:** In the movement of Mark's gospel the cross is depicted as Jesus' way to glory in accordance with the divine will. Thus the passion narrative is seen as the climax of Jesus' ministry.

**14, 1: The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread:** the connection between the two festivals is reflected in Ex 12, 3–20; 34, 18; Lv 23, 4–8; Nm 9, 2–14; 28, 16–17; Dt 16, 1–8. The Passover commemorated the redemption from slavery and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt by night. It began at sundown after the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the temple in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan. With the Passover supper on the same evening was associated the eating of unleavened bread. The latter was continued through Nisan 21, a reminder of the affliction of the Israelites and of the haste surrounding their departure. Praise and thanks to God for his goodness in the past were combined at this dual festival with the hope of future salvation. **The chief priests . . . to death:** the intent to put Jesus to death was plotted for a long time but delayed for fear of the crowd (3, 6; 11, 18; 12, 12).

**14, 3–9:** At Bethany on the Mount of Olives, a few miles from Jerusalem, **in the house of Simon the leper,** Jesus defends a woman's loving action of anointing his head with perfumed oil in view of his impending death and burial as a criminal, in which case his body would not be anointed. See further the note on Jn 12, 7. He assures the woman of the remembrance of her deed in the worldwide preaching of the good news.

q Lk 17, 31. r Dn 12, 1. s Mt 24, 29–31; Lk 21, 25–27. t Is 13, 10; Ez 32, 7; Jl 2, 10. u 14, 62; Dn 7, 13–14. v Mt 24, 32–36; Lk 21, 29–33. w Mt 24, 42; 25, 13–15. x Mt 25, 14–30; Lk 19, 12–27. y Mt 26, 2–5; Lk 22, 1–2; Jn 11, 45–53. z Mt 26, 6–13; Jn 12, 1–8.

broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head.
4There were some who were indignant. "Why
has there been this waste of perfumed oil? 5It
could have been sold for more than three hun-
dred days' wages and the money given to the
poor." They were infuriated with her. 6Jesus said,
"Let her alone. Why do you make trouble for her?
She has done a good thing for me. 7The poor you
will always have with you, and whenever you
wish you can do good to them, but you will not
always have me. 8She has done what she could.
She has anticipated anointing my body for burial.
9Amen, I say to you, wherever the gospel is pro-
claimed to the whole world, what she has done
will be told in memory of her."

**The Betrayal by Judas** 10 *a*Then Judas Iscariot,
one of the Twelve, went off to the chief priests to
hand him over to them. 11When they heard him
they were pleased and promised to pay him
money. Then he looked for an opportunity to
hand him over.

**Preparations for the Passover** 12 *b**On the
first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when
they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples
said to him, "Where do you want us to go and
prepare for you to eat the Passover?" 13*He sent
two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into
the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar
of water. Follow him. 14Wherever he enters, say
to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says,
"Where is my guest room where I may eat the
Passover with my disciples?" ' 15Then he will
show you a large upper room furnished and
ready. Make the preparations for us there."
16The disciples then went off, entered the city,
and found it just as he had told them; and they
prepared the Passover.

**The Betrayer** 17 *c*When it was evening, he
came with the Twelve. 18*And as they reclined
at table and were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say
to you, one of you will betray me, one who is
eating with me." 19They began to be distressed
and to say to him, one by one, "Surely it is not
I?" 20He said to them, "One of the Twelve, the
one who dips with me into the dish. 21*For the
Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him,
but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is
betrayed. It would be better for that man if he
had never been born."

**The Lord's Supper** 22 *d**While they were eat-
ing, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it,
and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my
body." 23Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and
gave it to them, and they all drank from it.
24*He said to them, "This is my blood of the
covenant, which will be shed for many. 25Amen,
I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of
the vine until the day when I drink it new in the
kingdom of God." 26 *e**Then, after singing a
hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

**Peter's Denial Foretold** 27 *f**Then Jesus said
to them, "All of you will have your faith shaken,
for it is written:

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be dispersed.'

**14, 12: The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread . . . the Passover lamb:** a less precise designation of the day for sacrificing the Passover lamb as evidenced by some rabbinical literature. For a more exact designation, see the note on 14, 1. It was actually Nisan 14.

**14, 13: A man . . . carrying a jar of water:** perhaps a prearranged signal, for only women ordinarily carried water in jars. The Greek word used here, however, implies simply a person and not necessarily a male.

**14, 18: One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me:** contrasts the intimacy of table fellowship at the Passover meal with the treachery of the traitor; cf Ps 41, 10.

**14, 21: The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him:** a reference to Ps 41, 10 cited by Jesus concerning Judas at the Last Supper; cf Jn 13, 18–19.

**14, 22–24:** The actions and words of Jesus express within the framework of the Passover meal and the transition to a new covenant the sacrifice of himself through the offering of his body and blood in anticipation of his passion and death. His **blood of the covenant** both alludes to the ancient rite of Ex 24, 4–8 and indicates the new community that the sacrifice of Jesus will bring into being (Mt 26, 26–28; Lk 22, 19–20; 1 Cor 11, 23–25).

**14, 24: Which will be shed:** see the note on Mt 26, 27–28. **For many:** the Greek preposition **hyper** is a different one from that at Mt 26, 28 but the same as that found at Lk 22, 19.20 and 1 Cor 11, 24. The sense of both words is vicarious, and it is difficult in Hellenistic Greek to distinguish between them. For **many** in the sense of "all," see the note on Mt 20, 28.

**14, 26: After singing a hymn:** Pss 114–118, thanksgiving songs concluding the Passover meal.

**14, 27–31:** Jesus predicted that the Twelve would waver in their faith, even abandon him, despite their protestations to the contrary. Yet he reassured them that after his resurrection he would regather them in Galilee (16, 7; cf Mt 26, 32; 28, 7.10.16; Jn 21), where he first summoned them to be his followers as he began to preach the good news (1, 14–20).

a Mt 26, 14–16; Lk 22, 3–6. b Mt 26, 17–19; Lk 22, 7–13. c Mt 26, 20–24; Lk 22, 21–23; Jn 13, 21–26. d Mt 26, 26–30; Lk 22, 19–20; 1 Cor 11, 23–25. e Mt 26, 30–35; Lk 22, 34.39; Jn 13, 36–38. f Zec 13, 7; Jn 16, 32.

28But after I have been raised up, I shall go
before you to Galilee." 29Peter said to him,
"Even though all should have their faith shaken,
mine will not be." 30Then Jesus said to him,
"Amen, I say to you, this very night before the
cock crows twice you will deny me three times."
31But he vehemently replied, "Even though I
should have to die with you, I will not deny
you." And they all spoke similarly.

**The Agony in the Garden** 32 *g h* *Then they
came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said
to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33He
took with him Peter, James, and John, and began
to be troubled and distressed. 34Then he said to
them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death.
Remain here and keep watch." 35He advanced a
little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it
were possible the hour might pass by him; 36*he
said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to
you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I
will but what you will." 37When he returned he
found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are
you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one
hour? 38 *i* *Watch and pray that you may not
undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the
flesh is weak." 39Withdrawing again, he prayed,
saying the same thing. 40Then he returned once
more and found them asleep, for they could not
keep their eyes open and did not know what to
answer him. 41He returned a third time and said
to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your
rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold,
the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners.
42Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand."

**The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus** 43 *j* Then,
while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the
Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with
swords and clubs who had come from the chief
priests, the scribes, and the elders. 44His betrayer
had arranged a signal with them, saying, "The
man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead
him away securely." 45He came and immediately
went over to him and said, "Rabbi." And he
kissed him. 46At this they laid hands on him and
arrested him. 47One of the bystanders drew his
sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut
off his ear. 48Jesus said to them in reply, "Have
you come out as against a robber, with swords
and clubs, to seize me? 49Day after day I was
with you teaching in the temple area, yet you
did not arrest me; but that the scriptures may be
fulfilled." 50And they all left him and fled.
51Now a young man followed him wearing
nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They
seized him, 52but he left the cloth behind and
ran off naked.

**Jesus before the Sanhedrin** 53 *k* *They led
Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief
priests and the elders and the scribes came
together. 54Peter followed him at a distance into
the high priest's courtyard and was seated with
the guards, warming himself at the fire. 55The
chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying
to obtain testimony against Jesus in order to put
him to death, but they found none. 56Many gave
false witness against him, but their testimony did
not agree. 57*Some took the stand and testified
falsely against him, alleging, 58 *l* "We heard him
say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands
and within three days I will build another not
made with hands.' " 59Even so their testimony
did not agree. 60The high priest rose before the
assembly and questioned Jesus, saying, "Have
you no answer? What are these men testifying

**14, 32–34:** The disciples who had witnessed the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus (5, 37) and the transfiguration of their Master (9, 2) were now invited to witness his degradation and agony and to watch and pray with him.

**14, 36: Abba, Father:** an Aramaic term, here also translated by Mark, Jesus' special way of addressing God with filial intimacy. The word **'abbā'** seems not to have been used in earlier or contemporaneous Jewish sources to address God without some qualifier. Cf Rom 8, 15; Gal 4, 6 for other occurrences of the Aramaic word in the Greek New Testament. **Not what I will but what you will:** note the complete obedient surrender of the human will of Jesus to the divine will of the Father; cf Jn 4, 34; 8, 29; Rom 5, 19; Phil 2, 8; Heb 5, 8.

**14, 38: The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak:** the spirit is drawn to what is good yet found in conflict with the flesh, inclined to sin; cf Ps 51, 7.12. Everyone is faced with this struggle, the full force of which Jesus accepted on our behalf and, through his bitter passion and death, achieved the victory.

**14, 53: They led Jesus away . . . came together:** Mark presents a formal assembly of the whole Sanhedrin (chief priests, elders, and scribes) at night, leading to the condemnation of Jesus (64), in contrast to Lk 22, 66.71, where Jesus is condemned in a daytime meeting of the council; see also Jn 18, 13.19–24.

**14, 57–58:** See the notes on Mt 26, 60–61 and Jn 2, 19.

g Mt 26, 36–46; Lk 22, 40–46. h Jn 18, 1. i Rom 7, 5. j Mt 26, 47–56; Lk 22, 47–53; Jn 18, 3–11. k Mt 26, 57–68; Lk 22, 54–55.63–65.67–71; Jn 18, 12–13. l 15, 29; 2 Cor 5, 1.

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against you?" 61 *But he was silent and answered
nothing. Again the high priest asked him and
said to him, "Are you the Messiah, the son of the
Blessed One?" 62 *m*Then Jesus answered, "I am;

and 'you will see the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of the Power
and coming with the clouds of heaven.' "

63At that the high priest tore his garments and
said, "What further need have we of witnesses?
64You have heard the blasphemy. What do you
think?" They all condemned him as deserving to
die. 65 *n*Some began to spit on him. They blind-
folded him and struck him and said to him,
"Prophesy!" And the guards greeted him with
blows.

**Peter's Denial of Jesus** 66 *o*While Peter was
below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's
maids came along. 67Seeing Peter warming him-
self, she looked intently at him and said, "You
too were with the Nazarene, Jesus." 68 *But he
denied it saying, "I neither know nor understand
what you are talking about." So he went out into
the outer court. [Then the cock crowed.] 69The
maid saw him and began again to say to the
bystanders, "This man is one of them." 70Once
again he denied it. A little later the bystanders
said to Peter once more, "Surely you are one of
them; for you too are a Galilean." 71He began to
curse and to swear, "I do not know this man
about whom you are talking." 72 *p*And immedi-
ately a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter
remembered the word that Jesus had said to
him, "Before the cock crows twice you will deny
me three times." He broke down and wept.

## CHAPTER 15

**Jesus before Pilate** 1 *q r* *As soon as morning
came, the chief priests with the elders and the
scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a
council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and
handed him over to Pilate. 2 *Pilate questioned
him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to
him in reply, "You say so." 3The chief priests
accused him of many things. 4Again Pilate ques-
tioned him, "Have you no answer? See how
many things they accuse you of." 5Jesus gave
him no further answer, so that Pilate was
amazed.

**The Sentence of Death** 6 *s* *Now on the occa-
sion of the feast he used to release to them one
prisoner whom they requested. 7 *A man called
Barabbas was then in prison along with the
rebels who had committed murder in a rebel-
lion. 8The crowd came forward and began to
ask him to do for them as he was accustomed.
9Pilate answered, "Do you want me to release
to you the king of the Jews?" 10For he knew
that it was out of envy that the chief priests
had handed him over. 11But the chief priests
stirred up the crowd to have him release Barab-
bas for them instead. 12Pilate again said to
them in reply, "Then what [do you want] me to
do with [the man you call] the king of the
Jews?" 13 *They shouted again, "Crucify him."
14Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he
done?" They only shouted the louder, "Crucify
him." 15 *So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the
crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he
had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be
crucified.

**14, 61–62: The Blessed One:** a surrogate for the divine name, which Jews did not pronounce. **I am:** indicates Jesus' acknowledgment that he is the Messiah and Son of God; cf 1, 1. Contrast Mt 26, 64 and Lk 22, 67–70, in which Jesus leaves his interrogators to answer their own question. **You will see the Son of Man . . . with the clouds of heaven:** an allusion to Dn 7, 13 and Ps 110, 1, portending the enthronement of Jesus as judge in the transcendent glory of God's kingdom. **The Power:** another surrogate for the name of God.

**14, 68: [Then the cock crowed]:** found in most manuscripts, perhaps in view of vv 30 and 72, but omitted in others.

**15, 1: Held a council:** the verb here, **poieō**, can mean either "convene a council" or "take counsel." This reading is preferred to a variant "reached a decision" (cf 3, 6), which 14, 64 describes as having happened at the night trial; see the note on Mt 27, 1–2. **Handed him over to Pilate:** lacking authority to execute their sentence of condemnation (14, 64), the Sanhedrin had recourse to Pilate to have Jesus tried and put to death (15); cf Jn 18, 31.

**15, 2: The king of the Jews:** in the accounts of the evangelists a certain irony surrounds the use of this title as an accusation against Jesus (see the note on 15, 26). While Pilate uses this term (2.9.12), he is aware of the evil motivation of the chief priests who handed Jesus over for trial and condemnation (10; Lk 23, 14–16.20; Mt 27, 18.24; Jn 18, 38; 19, 4.6.12).

**15, 6–15:** See the note on Mt 27, 15–26.

**15, 7: Barabbas:** see the note on Mt 27, 16–17.

**15, 13: Crucify him:** see the note on Mt 27, 22.

**15, 15:** See the note on Mt 27, 26.

m 13, 26; Ps 110, 1; Dn 7, 13; Mt 24, 30. n Lk 22, 63–65. o Mt 26, 69–75; Lk 22, 56–62; Jn 18, 16–18.25–27. p Jn 13, 38. q Mt 27, 1–2.11–14; Lk 23, 1–3. r Jn 18, 28. s Mt 27, 15–26; Lk 23, 17–25; Jn 18, 39–40.

**Mockery by the Soldiers** 16 *t**The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. 17They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. 18They began to salute him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage. 20And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

**The Way of the Cross** 21 *u**They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

**The Crucifixion** 22 *v*They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull). 23They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 *w**Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. 25*It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26*The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 *x*With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. [28]* 29 *y**Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30save yourself by coming down from the cross." 31Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 *z*Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.

**The Death of Jesus** 33At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 *a**And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35*Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "Look, he is calling Elijah." 36One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down." 37Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38*The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 *b**When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 *c**There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome. 41These women had followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him. There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

**The Burial of Jesus** 42 *d*When it was already evening, since it was the day of preparation, the day before the sabbath, 43*Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the

**15, 16: Praetorium:** see the note on Mt 27, 27.

**15, 21: They pressed into service . . . Simon, a Cyrenian:** a condemned person was constrained to bear his own instrument of torture, at least the crossbeam. The precise naming of Simon and his sons is probably due to their being known among early Christian believers to whom Mark addressed his gospel. See also the notes on Mt 27, 32 and Lk 23, 26–32.

**15, 24:** See the notes on Mt 27, 35 and Jn 19, 23–25a.

**15, 25: It was nine o'clock in the morning:** literally, "the third hour," thus between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. Cf vv 33.34.42 for Mark's chronological sequence, which may reflect liturgical or catechetical considerations rather than the precise historical sequence of events; contrast the different chronologies in the other gospels, especially Jn 19, 14.

**15, 26: The inscription . . . the King of the Jews:** the political reason for the death penalty falsely charged by the enemies of Jesus. See further the notes on Mt 27, 37 and Jn 19, 19.

**15, 28:** This verse, "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'And he was counted among the wicked,' " is omitted in the earliest and best manuscripts. It contains a citation from Is 53, 12, and was probably introduced from Lk 22, 37.

**15, 29:** See the note on Mt 27, 39–40.

**15, 34:** An Aramaic rendering of Ps 22, 2. See also the note on Mt 27, 46.

**15, 35: Elijah:** a verbal link with **Eloi** (34). See the note on 9, 9–13; cf Mal 3, 23–24. See also the note on Mt 27, 47.

**15, 38:** See the note on Mt 27, 51–53.

**15, 39:** The closing portion of Mark's gospel returns to the theme of its beginning in the Gentile centurion's climactic declaration of belief that Jesus **was the Son of God.** It indicates the fulfillment of the good news announced in the prologue (1, 1) and may be regarded as the firstfruit of the passion and death of Jesus.

**15, 40–41:** See the note on Mt 27, 55–56.

**15, 43: Joseph of Arimathea:** see the note on Mt 27, 57–61.

t Mt 27, 27–31; Jn 19, 2–3. u Mt 27, 32; Lk 23, 26. v Mt 27, 33–51; Lk 23, 32–46; Jn 19, 17–30. w Ps 22, 18. x Lk 23, 33. y Jn 2, 19. z Lk 23, 39. a Ps 22, 2. b Mt 27, 54–56; Lk 23, 47–49. c 6, 3; Lk 8, 2–3. d Mt 27, 57–61; Lk 23, 50–56; Jn 19, 38–42.

body of Jesus. 44Pilate was amazed that he was
already dead. He summoned the centurion and
asked him if Jesus had already died. 45And when
he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the
body to Joseph. 46Having bought a linen cloth,
he took him down, wrapped him in the linen
cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn
out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against
the entrance to the tomb. 47Mary Magdalene
and Mary the mother of Joses watched where he
was laid.

## CHAPTER 16

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**The Resurrection of Jesus** 1 *e f* *When the
sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the
mother of James, and Salome bought spices so
that they might go and anoint him. 2Very early
when the sun had risen, on the first day of the
week, they came to the tomb. 3They were
saying to one another, "Who will roll back the
stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"
4When they looked up, they saw that the stone
had been rolled back; it was very large. 5 *g* On
entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting
on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and
they were utterly amazed. 6He said to them,
"Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth,
the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.
Behold, the place where they laid him. 7 *h* But go
and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going
before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as
he told you.' " 8Then they went out and fled
from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewil-
derment. They said nothing to anyone, for they
were afraid.

## The Longer Ending

**The Appearance to Mary Magdalene**
[9 *i* *When he had risen, early on the first day of
the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene,
out of whom he had driven seven demons.
10 *j* She went and told his companions who were
mourning and weeping. 11When they heard that
he was alive and had been seen by her, they did
not believe.

**The Appearance to Two Disciples** 12 *k* After
this he appeared in another form to two of them
walking along on their way to the country.
13They returned and told the others; but they
did not believe them either.

**The Commissioning of the Eleven** 14 *l* [But]
later, as the eleven were at table, he appeared to
them and rebuked them for their unbelief and
hardness of heart because they had not believed
those who saw him after he had been raised.
15 *m* He said to them, "Go into the whole world
and proclaim the gospel to every creature.
16Whoever believes and is baptized will be
saved; whoever does not believe will be con-
demned. 17These signs will accompany those
who believe: in my name they will drive out
demons, they will speak new languages.
18 *n* They will pick up serpents [with their hands],
and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not

**16, 1–8:** The purpose of this narrative is to show that the tomb is empty and that Jesus **has been raised** (6) and **is going before you to Galilee** (7) in fulfillment of 14, 28. The women find the tomb empty, and an angel stationed there announces to them what has happened. They are told to proclaim the news to Peter and the disciples in order to prepare them for a reunion with him. Mark's composition of the gospel ends at v 8 with the women telling no one, because they were afraid. This abrupt termination causes some to believe that the original ending of this gospel may have been lost. See the following note.

**16, 9–20:** This passage, termed the Longer Ending to the Marcan gospel by comparison with a much briefer conclusion found in some less important manuscripts, has traditionally been accepted as a canonical part of the gospel and was defined as such by the Council of Trent. Early citations of it by the Fathers indicate that it was composed by the second century, although vocabulary and style indicate that it was written by someone other than Mark. It is a general resume of the material concerning the appearances of the risen Jesus, reflecting, in particular, traditions found in Luke (24) and John (20).

The Shorter Ending: Found after v 8 before the Longer Ending in four seventh-to-ninth-century Greek manuscripts as well as in one Old Latin version, where it appears alone without the Longer Ending.

The Freer Logion: Found after v 14 in a fourth-fifth century manuscript preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, this ending was known to Jerome in the fourth century. It reads: "And they excused themselves, saying, 'This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things dominated by the spirits [or, does not allow the unclean things dominated by the spirits to grasp the truth and power of God]. Therefore reveal your righteousness now.' They spoke to Christ. And Christ responded to them, 'The limit of the years of Satan's power is completed, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who sinned I was handed over to death, that they might return to the truth and no longer sin, in order that they might inherit the spiritual and incorruptible heavenly glory of righteousness. But . . . .' "

e Mt 28, 1–8; Lk 24, 1–10; Jn 20, 1–10. f Mt 28, 1; Lk 23, 56. g Jn 20, 12. h 14, 28. i Mt 28, 1–10; Jn 20, 11–18. j Lk 24, 10–11; Jn 20, 18. k Lk 24, 13–35. l Lk 24, 36–49; 1 Cor 15, 5. m 13, 10; Mt 28, 18–20; Lk 24, 47; Jn 20, 21. n Mt 10, 1; Lk 10, 19; Acts 28, 3–6.

harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and
they will recover."
**The Ascension of Jesus** 19 [o]So then the Lord
Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into
heaven and took his seat at the right hand of
God. 20 [p]But they went forth and preached
everywhere, while the Lord worked with them
and confirmed the word through accompanying
signs.]

o Lk 24, 50–53. p 1 Tm 3, 16.

### The Shorter Ending

[And they reported all the instructions briefly
to Peter's companions. Afterwards Jesus himself,
through them, sent forth from east to west the
sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal
salvation. Amen.]

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Luke
See RG
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The Gospel according to Luke is the first part of a two-volume work that continues the biblical history of God's dealings with humanity found in the Old Testament, showing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus and how the salvation promised to Israel and accomplished by Jesus has been extended to the Gentiles. The stated purpose of the two volumes is to provide Theophilus and others like him with certainty—assurance—about earlier instruction they have received (1, 4). To accomplish his purpose, Luke shows that the preaching and teaching of the representatives of the early church are grounded in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, who during his historical ministry (Acts 1, 21-22) prepared his specially chosen followers and commissioned them to be witnesses to his resurrection and to all else that he did (Acts 10, 37-42). This continuity between the historical ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles is Luke's way of guaranteeing the fidelity of the church's teaching to the teaching of Jesus.

Luke's story of Jesus and the church is dominated by a historical perspective. This history is first of all salvation history. God's divine plan for human salvation was accomplished during the period of Jesus, who through the events of his life (22, 22) fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (4, 21; 18, 31; 22, 37; 24, 26-27.44), and this salvation is now extended to all humanity in the period of the church (Acts 4, 12). This salvation history, moreover, is a part of human history. Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to events in contemporary Palestinian (1, 5; 3, 1-2; Acts 4, 6) and Roman (2, 1-2; 3, 1; Acts 11, 28; 18, 2.12) history, for, as Paul says in Acts 26, 26, "this was not done in a corner." Finally, Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to contemporaneous church history. Luke is concerned with presenting Christianity as a legitimate form of worship in the Roman world, a religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of a world empire like that of Rome. To this end, Luke depicts the Roman governor Pilate declaring Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing three times (Acts 23, 29; 25, 25; 26, 31-32). At the same time Luke argues in Acts that Christianity is the logical development and proper fulfillment of Judaism and is therefore deserving of the same toleration and freedom traditionally accorded Judaism by Rome (Acts 13, 16-41; 23, 6-9; 24, 10-21; 26, 2-23).

The prominence given to the period of the church in the story has important consequences

for Luke's interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. By presenting the time of the church as a distinct phase of salvation history, Luke accordingly shifts the early Christian emphasis away from the expectation of an imminent parousia to the day-to-day concerns of the Christian community in the world. He does this in the gospel by regularly emphasizing the words "each day" (9, 23; cf Mk 8, 34; 11, 3; 16, 19; 19, 47) in the sayings of Jesus. Although Luke still believes the parousia to be a reality that will come unexpectedly (12, 38.45-46), he is more concerned with presenting the words and deeds of Jesus as guides for the conduct of Christian disciples in the interim period between the ascension and the parousia and with presenting Jesus himself as the model of Christian life and piety.

Throughout the gospel, Luke calls upon the Christian disciple to identify with the master Jesus, who is caring and tender toward the poor and lowly, the outcast, the sinner, and the afflicted, toward all those who recognize their dependence on God (4, 18; 6, 20-23; 7, 36-50; 14, 12-14; 15, 1-32; 16, 19-31; 18, 9-14; 19, 1-10; 21, 1-4), but who is severe toward the proud and self-righteous, and particularly toward those who place their material wealth before the service of God and his people (6, 24-26; 12, 13-21; 16, 13-15.19-31; 18, 9-14.15-25; cf 1, 50-53). No gospel writer is more concerned than Luke with the mercy and compassion of Jesus (7, 41-43; 10, 29-37; 13, 6-9; 15, 11-32). No gospel writer is more concerned with the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus and the Christian disciple (1, 35.41; 2, 25-27; 4, 1.14.18; 10, 21; 11, 13; 24, 49), with the importance of prayer (3, 21; 5, 16; 6, 12; 9, 28; 11, 1-13; 18, 1-8), or with Jesus' concern for women (7, 11-17.36-50; 8, 2-3; 10, 38-42). While Jesus calls all humanity to repent (5, 32; 10, 13; 11, 32; 13, 1-5; 15, 7-10; 16, 30; 17, 3-4; 24, 47), he is particularly demanding of those who would be his disciples. Of them he demands absolute and total detachment from family and material possessions (9, 57-62; 12, 32-34; 14, 25-35). To all who respond in faith and repentance to the word Jesus preaches, he brings salvation (2, 30-32; 3, 6; 7, 50; 8, 48.50; 17, 19; 19, 9) and peace (2, 14; 7, 50; 8, 48; 19, 38.42) and life (10, 25-28; 18, 26-30).

Early Christian tradition, from the late second century on, identifies the author of this gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles as Luke, a Syrian from Antioch, who is mentioned in the New Testament in Col 4, 14, Phlm 24, and 2 Tm 4, 11. The prologue of the gospel makes it clear that Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples but is himself dependent upon the traditions he received from those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (1, 2). His two-volume work marks him as someone who was highly literate both in the Old Testament traditions according to the Greek versions and in Hellenistic Greek writings.

Among the likely sources for the composition of this gospel (1, 3) were the Gospel of Mark, a written collection of sayings of Jesus known also to the author of the Gospel of Matthew (Q; see Introduction to Matthew), and other special traditions that were used by Luke alone among the gospel writers. Some hold that Luke used Mark only as a complementary source for rounding out the material he took from other traditions. Because of its dependence on the Gospel of Mark and because details in Luke's Gospel (13, 35a; 19, 43-44; 21, 20; 23, 28-31) imply that the author was acquainted with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Gospel of Luke is dated by most scholars after that date; many propose A.D. 80–90 as the time of composition.

Luke's consistent substitution of Greek names for the Aramaic or Hebrew names occurring in his sources (e.g., 23, 33 // Mk 15, 22; 18, 41 // Mk 10, 51), his omission from the gospel of specifically Jewish Christian concerns found in his sources (e.g., Mk 7, 1-23), his interest in Gentile Christians (2, 30-32; 3, 6.38; 4, 16-30; 13, 28–30; 14, 15-24; 17, 11-19; 24, 47-48),

and his incomplete knowledge of Palestinian geography, customs, and practices are among the characteristics of this gospel that suggest that Luke was a non-Palestinian writing to a non-Palestinian audience that was largely made up of Gentile Christians.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Luke are the following:

I. The Prologue (1, 1-4)
II. The Infancy Narrative (1, 5—2, 52)
III. The Preparation for the Public Ministry (3, 1—4, 13)
IV. The Ministry in Galilee (4, 14—9, 50)
V. The Journey to Jerusalem: Luke's Travel Narrative (9, 51—19, 27)
VI. The Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem (19, 28—21, 38)
VII. The Passion Narrative (22, 1—23, 56)
VIII. The Resurrection Narrative (24, 1-53)

## I: The Prologue

### CHAPTER 1

1 [a]*Since many have undertaken to compile a
narrative of the events that have been fulfilled
among us, 2 [b]just as those who were eyewit-
nesses from the beginning and ministers of the
word have handed them down to us, 3 I too have
decided, after investigating everything accu-
rately anew, to write it down in an orderly
sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus,
4 so that you may realize the certainty of the
teachings you have received.

1, 1–4: The Gospel according to Luke is the only one of the synoptic gospels to begin with a literary prologue. Making use of a formal, literary construction and vocabulary, the author writes the prologue in imitation of Hellenistic Greek writers and, in so doing, relates his story about Jesus to contemporaneous Greek and Roman literature. Luke is not only interested in the words and deeds of Jesus, but also in the larger context of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament. As a second- or third-generation Christian, Luke acknowledges his debt to earlier **eyewitnesses** and **ministers of the word,** but claims that his contribution to this developing tradition is a complete and accurate account, told in an orderly manner, and intended to provide **Theophilus** ("friend of God," literally) and other readers with certainty about earlier teachings they have received.

**1, 5—2, 52:** Like the Gospel according to Matthew, this gospel opens with an infancy narrative, a collection of stories about the birth and childhood of Jesus. The narrative uses early Christian traditions about the birth of Jesus, traditions about the birth and circumcision of John the Baptist, and canticles such as the Magnificat (1, 46–55) and Benedictus (1, 67–79), composed of phrases drawn from the Greek Old Testament. It is largely, however, the composition of Luke who writes in imitation of Old Testament birth stories, combining historical and legendary details, literary ornamentation and interpretation of scripture, to answer in advance the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" The focus of the narrative, therefore, is primarily christological. In this section Luke announces many of the themes that will become prominent in the rest of the gospel: the centrality of Jerusalem and the temple, the journey motif, the universality of salvation, joy and peace, concern for the lowly, the importance of women, the presentation of Jesus as savior, Spirit-guided revelation and prophecy, and the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The account presents parallel scenes (diptychs) of angelic announcements of the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus, and of the birth, circumcision, and presentation of John and Jesus. In this parallelism, the ascendency of Jesus over John is stressed: John is prophet of the Most High (1, 76); Jesus is Son of the Most High (1, 32). John is great in the sight of the Lord (1, 15); Jesus will be Great (a LXX attribute, used absolutely, of God) (1, 32). John will go before the Lord (1, 16–17); Jesus will be Lord (1, 43; 2, 11).

## II: The Infancy Narrative

**Announcement of the Birth of John** 5 [c]*In the
days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest
named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abi-
jah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron,
and her name was Elizabeth. 6 Both were righ-
teous in the eyes of God, observing all the com-
mandments and ordinances of the Lord blame-
lessly. 7 [d]*But they had no child, because Eliza-
beth was barren and both were advanced in
years. 8 Once when he was serving as priest in his
division's turn before God, 9 [e]according to the

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**1, 5: In the days of Herod, King of Judea:** Luke relates the story of salvation history to events in contemporary world history. Here and in 3, 1–2, he connects his narrative with events in Palestinian history; in 2, 1–2 and 3, 1, he casts the Jesus story in the light of events of Roman history. Herod the Great, the son of the Idumean Antipater, was declared "King of Judea" by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C., but became the undisputed ruler of Palestine only in 37 B.C. He continued as king until his death in 4 B.C. **Priestly division of Abijah:** a reference to the eighth of the twenty-four divisions of priests who, for a week at a time, twice a year, served in the Jerusalem temple.

**1, 7: They had no child:** though childlessness was looked upon in contemporaneous Judaism as a curse or punishment for sin, it is intended here to present Elizabeth in a situation similar to that of some of the great mothers of important Old Testament figures: Sarah (Gn 15, 3; 16, 1); Rebekah (Gn 25, 21); Rachel (Gn 29, 31; 30, 1); the mother of Samson and wife of Manoah (Jgs 13, 2–3); Hannah (1 Sm 1, 2).

a Acts 1, 1; 1 Cor 15, 3. b 24, 48; Jn 15, 27; Acts 1, 21–22. c 1 Chr 24, 10. d Gn 18, 11; Jgs 13, 2–5; 1 Sm 1, 5–6. e Ex 30, 7.

practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by
lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn
incense. [10]Then, when the whole assembly of the
people was praying outside at the hour of the
incense offering, [11]the angel of the Lord appeared
to him, standing at the right of the altar of in-
cense. [12]Zechariah was troubled by what he saw,
and fear came upon him. [13]*f**But the angel said to
him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your
prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will
bear you a son, and you shall name him John.
[14]And you will have joy and gladness, and many
will rejoice at his birth, [15]*g**for he will be great in
the sight of [the] Lord. He will drink neither wine
nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy
Spirit even from his mother's womb, [16]and he
will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord
their God. [17]*h**He will go before him in the spirit
and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers
toward children and the disobedient to the under-
standing of the righteous, to prepare a people fit
for the Lord." [18]Then Zechariah said to the angel,
"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and
my wife is advanced in years." [19]*i**And the angel
said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand
before God. I was sent to speak to you and to
announce to you this good news. [20]*j**But now
you will be speechless and unable to talk until the
day these things take place, because you did not
believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their
proper time."

[21]Meanwhile the people were waiting for
Zechariah and were amazed that he stayed so
long in the sanctuary. [22]But when he came out,
he was unable to speak to them, and they
realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctu-
ary. He was gesturing to them but remained
mute. [23]Then, when his days of ministry were
completed, he went home. [24]After this time his
wife Elizabeth conceived, and she went into
seclusion for five months, saying, [25]*k*"So has
the Lord done for me at a time when he has
seen fit to take away my disgrace before
others."

**Announcement of the Birth of Jesus** [26]*In
the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from
God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, [27]*l*to a
virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the
house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.
[28]*m*And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored
one! The Lord is with you." [29]But she was
greatly troubled at what was said and pondered
what sort of greeting this might be. [30]Then the
angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for
you have found favor with God. [31]*n*Behold, you
will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and
you shall name him Jesus. [32]*o**He will be great
and will be called Son of the Most High, and the
Lord God will give him the throne of David his
father, [33]*p*and he will rule over the house of
Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be

**1, 13: Do not be afraid:** a stereotyped Old Testament phrase spoken to reassure the recipient of a heavenly vision (Gn 15, 1; Jos 1, 9; Dn 10, 12.19 and elsewhere in 1, 30; 2, 10). **You shall name him John:** the name means "Yahweh has shown favor," an indication of John's role in salvation history.

**1, 15: He will drink neither wine nor strong drink:** like Samson (Jgs 13, 4–5) and Samuel (1 Sm 1, 11 LXX and 4QSam[a]), John is to be consecrated by Nazirite vow and set apart for the Lord's service.

**1, 17: He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah:** John is to be the messenger sent before Yahweh, as described in Mal 3, 1–2. He is cast, moreover, in the role of the Old Testament fiery reformer, the prophet Elijah, who according to Mal 3, 23 (4, 5) is sent before "the great and terrible day of the Lord comes."

**1, 19: I am Gabriel:** "the angel of the Lord" is identified as Gabriel, the angel who in Dn 9, 20–25 announces the seventy weeks of years and the coming of an anointed one, a prince. By alluding to Old Testament themes in vv 17 and 19, such as the coming of the day of the Lord and the dawning of the messianic era, Luke is presenting his interpretation of the significance of the births of John and Jesus.

**1, 20: You will be speechless and unable to talk:** Zechariah's becoming mute is the sign given in response to his question in v 18. When Mary asks a similar question in 1, 34, unlike Zechariah who was punished for his doubt, she, in spite of her doubt, is praised and reassured (35–37).

**1, 26–38:** The announcement to Mary of the birth of Jesus is parallel to the announcement to Zechariah of the birth of John. In both the angel Gabriel appears to the parent who is troubled by the vision (11–12.26–29) and then told by the angel not to fear (13.30). After the announcement is made (14–17.31–33) the parent objects (18.34) and a sign is given to confirm the announcement (20.36). The particular focus of the announcement of the birth of Jesus is on his identity as Son of David (32–33) and Son of God (32.35).

**1, 32: Son of the Most High:** cf 1, 76 where John is described as "prophet of the Most High." "Most High" is a title for God commonly used by Luke (35.76; 6, 35; 8, 28; Acts 7, 48; 16, 17).

f 1, 57.60.63; Mt 1, 20–21. g 7, 33; Nm 6, 1–21; Jgs 13, 4; 1 Sm 1, 11 LXX. h Sir 48, 10; Mal 3, 1; 3, 23–24; Mt 11, 14; 17, 11–13. i Dn 8, 16; 9, 21. j 1, 45. k Gn 30, 23. 12, 5; Mt 1, 16.18. m Jgs 6, 12; Ru 2, 4; Jdt 13, 18. n Gn 16, 11; Jgs 13, 3; Is 7, 14; Mt 1, 21–23. o 2 Sm 7, 12.13.16; Is 9, 7. p Dn 2, 44; 7, 14; Mi 4, 7; Mt 28, 18.

no end." 34 *But Mary said to the angel, "How
can this be, since I have no relations with a
man?" 35 [q]And the angel said to her in reply,
"The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the
power of the Most High will overshadow you.
Therefore the child to be born will be called
holy, the Son of God. 36 *And behold, Elizabeth,
your relative, has also conceived a son in her old
age, and this is the sixth month for her who was
called barren; 37 [r]for nothing will be impossible
for God." 38 Mary said, "Behold, I am the hand-
maid of the Lord. May it be done to me
according to your word." Then the angel de-
parted from her.

**Mary Visits Elizabeth** 39 During those days
Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in
haste to a town of Judah, 40 where she entered
the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
41 [s]When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the
infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled
with the holy Spirit, 42 [t]cried out in a loud voice
and said, "Most blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 *And
how does this happen to me, that the mother of
my Lord should come to me? 44 For at the
moment the sound of your greeting reached my
ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
45 [u]*Blessed are you who believed that what was
spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

**The Canticle of Mary** 46 [v w]*And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
47 [x]my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
48 [y]For he has looked upon his handmaid's
lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me
blessed.
49 [z]The Mighty One has done great things for
me,
and holy is his name.
50 [a]His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
51 [b]He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
52 [c]He has thrown down the rulers from their
thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
53 [d]The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
54 [e]He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
55 [f]according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants
forever."

56 Mary remained with her about three months
and then returned to her home.

**The Birth of John** 57 *When the time arrived
for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a

**1, 34:** Mary's questioning response is a denial of sexual relations and is used by Luke to lead to the angel's declaration about the Spirit's role in the conception of this child (35). According to Luke, the virginal conception of Jesus takes place through the holy Spirit, the power of God, and therefore Jesus has a unique relationship to Yahweh: he is Son of God.

**1, 36–37:** The sign given to Mary in confirmation of the angel's announcement to her is the pregnancy of her aged relative Elizabeth. If a woman past the childbearing age could become pregnant, why, the angel implies, should there be doubt about Mary's pregnancy, for **nothing will be impossible for God.**

**1, 43:** Even before his birth, Jesus is identified in Lk as the **Lord.**

**1, 45: Blessed are you who believed:** Luke portrays Mary as a believer whose faith stands in contrast to the disbelief of Zechariah (20). Mary's role as believer in the infancy narrative should be seen in connection with the explicit mention of her presence among "those who believed" after the resurrection at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles (14).

**1, 46–55:** Although Mary is praised for being the mother of the Lord and because of her belief, she reacts as the servant in a psalm of praise, the Magnificat. Because there is no specific connection of the canticle to the context of Mary's pregnancy and her visit to Elizabeth, the Magnificat (with the possible exception of v 48) may have been a Jewish Christian hymn that Luke found appropriate at this point in his story. Even if not composed by Luke, it fits in well with themes found elsewhere in Lk: joy and exultation in the Lord; the lowly being singled out for God's favor; the reversal of human fortunes; the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The loose connection between the hymn and the context is further seen in the fact that a few Old Latin manuscripts identify the speaker of the hymn as Elizabeth, even though the overwhelming textual evidence makes Mary the speaker.

**1, 57–66:** The birth and circumcision of John above all emphasize John's incorporation into the people of Israel by the sign of the covenant (Gn 17, 1–12). The narrative of John's circumcision also prepares the way for the subsequent description of the circumcision of Jesus in 2, 21. At the beginning of his two-volume work Luke shows those who play crucial roles in the inauguration of Christianity to be wholly a part of the people of Israel. At the end of the Acts of the Apostles (21, 20; 22, 3; 23, 6–9; 24, 14–16; 26, 2–8.22–23) he will argue that Christianity is the direct descendant of Pharisaic Judaism.

q Mt 1, 20. r Gn 18, 14; Jer 32, 27; Mt 19, 26. s 1, 15; Gn 25, 22 LXX. t 11, 27–28; Jgs 5, 24; Jdt 13, 18; Dt 28, 4. u 1, 20. v 1 Sm 2, 1–10. w Ps 35, 9; Is 61, 10; Hb 3, 18. x Ti 3, 4; Jude 25. y 11, 27; 1 Sm 1, 11; 2 Sm 16, 12; 2 Kgs 14, 26; Ps 113, 7. z Dt 10, 21; Pss 71, 19; 111, 9; 126, 2–3. a Pss 89, 2; 103, 13.17. b Pss 89, 10; 118, 15; Jer 32, 17 (39, 17 LXX). c 1 Sm 2, 7; 2 Sm 22, 28; Jb 5, 11; 12, 19; Ps 147, 6; Sir 10, 14; Jas 4, 6; 1 Pt 5, 5. d 1 Sm 2, 5; Ps 107, 9. e Ps 98, 3; Is 41, 8–9. f Gn 13, 15; 17, 7; 18, 18; 22, 17–18; Mi 7, 20.

son. 58 *g*Her neighbors and relatives heard that
the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her,
and they rejoiced with her. 59 *h**When they
came on the eighth day to circumcise the child,
they were going to call him Zechariah after his
father, 60 *i*but his mother said in reply, "No. He
will be called John." 61 But they answered her,
"There is no one among your relatives who has
this name." 62 So they made signs, asking his
father what he wished him to be called. 63 He
asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name,"
and all were amazed. 64 *j*Immediately his mouth
was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke
blessing God. 65 Then fear came upon all their
neighbors, and all these matters were discussed
throughout the hill country of Judea. 66 All who
heard these things took them to heart, saying,
"What, then, will this child be?" For surely the
hand of the Lord was with him.

**The Canticle of Zechariah** 67 Then Zechariah
his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied,
saying:

68 *k**"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has visited and brought redemption
to his people.
69 *l**He has raised up a horn for our salvation
within the house of David his servant,
70 even as he promised through the mouth of his
holy prophets from of old:
71 *m*salvation from our enemies and from the
hand of all who hate us,
72 *n o*to show mercy to our fathers
and to be mindful of his holy covenant
73 *p*and of the oath he swore to Abraham our
father,
and to grant us that, 74 rescued from the
hand of enemies,
without fear we might worship him 75 *q*in
holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
76 *r**And you, child, will be called prophet of the
Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare
his ways,
77 to give his people knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
78 *s t**because of the tender mercy of our God
by which the daybreak from on high will
visit us
79 to shine on those who sit in darkness and
death's shadow,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."

80 *u*The child grew and became strong in spirit,
and he was in the desert until the day of his
manifestation to Israel.

## CHAPTER 2

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**The Birth of Jesus** 1 *In those days a decree
went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole
world should be enrolled. 2 This was the first
enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of

**1, 59:** The practice of Palestinian Judaism at this time was to name the child at birth; moreover, though naming a male child after the father is not completely unknown, the usual practice was to name the child after the grandfather (see 61). The naming of the child John and Zechariah's recovery from his loss of speech should be understood as fulfilling the angel's announcement to Zechariah in 1, 13 and 20.

**1, 68–79:** Like the canticle of Mary (46–55) the canticle of Zechariah is only loosely connected with its context. Apart from vv 76–77, the hymn in speaking of **a horn for our salvation** (69) and **the daybreak from on high** (78) applies more closely to Jesus and his work than to John. Again like Mary's canticle, it is largely composed of phrases taken from the Greek Old Testament and may have been a Jewish Christian hymn of praise that Luke adapted to fit the present context by inserting vv 76–77 to give Zechariah's reply to the question asked in v 66.

**1, 69: A horn for our salvation:** the horn is a common Old Testament figure for strength (Pss 18, 3; 75, 5–6; 89, 18; 112, 9; 148, 14). This description is applied to God in Ps 18, 3 and is here transferred to Jesus. The connection of the phrase with **the house of David** gives the title messianic overtones and may indicate an allusion to a phrase in Hannah's song of praise (1 Sm 2, 10), "the horn of his anointed."

**1, 76: You will go before the Lord:** here **the Lord** is most likely a reference to Jesus (contrast 15–17 where Yahweh is meant) and John is presented as the precursor of Jesus.

**1, 78: The daybreak from on high:** three times in the LXX (Jer 23, 5; Zec 3, 8; 6, 12), the Greek word used here for **daybreak** translates the Hebrew word for "scion, branch," an Old Testament messianic title.

**2, 1–2:** Although universal registrations of Roman citizens are attested in 28 B.C., 8 B.C., and A.D. 14 and enrollments in individual provinces of those who are not Roman citizens are also attested, such a universal census of the Roman world under

g 1, 14. h 2, 21; Gn 17, 10.12; Lv 12, 3. i 1, 13. j 1, 20. k 7, 16; Pss 41, 13; 72, 18; 106, 48; 111, 9. l Ps 18, 3. m Ps 106, 10. n Ps 106, 45–46. o Gn 17, 7; Lv 26, 42; Ps 105, 8–9; Mi 7, 20. p Gn 22, 16–17. q Ti 2, 12. r Is 40, 3; Mal 3, 1; Mt 3, 3; 11, 10. s Mal 3, 20. t Is 60, 1–2. u 2, 40; Mt 3, 1.

Syria. [3]So all went to be enrolled, each to his
own town. [4] [v]And Joseph too went up from
Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to
the city of David that is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and family of
David, [5] [w]to be enrolled with Mary, his be-
trothed, who was with child. [6]While they were
there, the time came for her to have her child,
[7] [x]*and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She
wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him
in a manger, because there was no room for
them in the inn.

[8]*Now there were shepherds in that region
living in the fields and keeping the night watch
over their flock. [9] [y]The angel of the Lord ap-
peared to them and the glory of the Lord shone
around them, and they were struck with great
fear. [10]The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid;
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great
joy that will be for all the people. [11] [z]*For today
in the city of David a savior has been born for
you who is Messiah and Lord. [12]And this will be
a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in
swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." [13]And
suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly
host with the angel, praising God and saying:

[14] [a]*"Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom his
favor rests."

**The Visit of the Shepherds** [15]When the an-
gels went away from them to heaven, the
shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then,
to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken
place, which the Lord has made known to us."
[16]So they went in haste and found Mary and
Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.
[17]When they saw this, they made known the
message that had been told them about this

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Caesar Augustus is unknown outside the New Testament. Moreover, there are notorious historical problems connected with Luke's dating the census **when Quirinius was governor of Syria,** and the various attempts to resolve the difficulties have proved unsuccessful. P. Sulpicius Quirinius became legate of the province of Syria in A.D. 6–7 when Judea was annexed to the province of Syria. At that time, a provincial census of Judea was taken up. If Quirinius had been legate of Syria previously, it would have to have been before 10 B.C. because the various legates of Syria from 10 B.C. to 4 B.C. (the death of Herod) are known, and such a dating for an earlier census under Quirinius would create additional problems for dating the beginning of Jesus' ministry (3, 1.23). A previous legateship after 4 B.C. (and before A.D. 6) would not fit with the dating of Jesus' birth in the days of Herod (1, 5; Mt 2, 1). Luke may simply be combining Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with his vague recollection of a census under Quirinius (see also Acts 5, 37) to underline the significance of this birth for the whole Roman world: through this child born in Bethlehem peace and salvation come to the empire.

**2, 1: Caesar Augustus:** the reign of the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus is usually dated from 27 B.C. to his death in A.D. 14. According to Greek inscriptions, Augustus was regarded in the Roman Empire as "savior" and "god," and he was credited with establishing a time of peace, the **pax Augusta,** throughout the Roman world during his long reign. It is not by chance that Luke relates the birth of Jesus to the time of Caesar Augustus: the real savior (11) and peace-bearer (14; see also 19, 38) is the child born in Bethlehem. The great emperor is simply God's agent (like the Persian king Cyrus in Is 44, 28—45, 1) who provides the occasion for God's purposes to be accomplished. **The whole world:** that is, the whole Roman world: Rome, Italy, and the Roman provinces.

**2, 7: Firstborn son:** the description of Jesus as **firstborn son** does not necessarily mean that Mary had other sons. It is a legal description indicating that Jesus possessed the rights and privileges of the firstborn son (Gn 27; Ex 13, 2; Nm 3, 12–13; 18, 15–16; Dt 21, 15–17). See the notes on Mt 1, 25 and Mk 6, 3. **Wrapped him in swaddling clothes:** there may be an allusion here to the birth of another descendant of David, his son Solomon, who though a great king was wrapped in swaddling clothes like any other infant (Wis 7, 4–6). **Laid him in a manger:** a feeding trough for animals. A possible allusion to Is 1, 3 LXX.

**2, 8–20:** The annoucement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds is in keeping with Luke's theme that the lowly are singled out as the recipients of God's favors and blessings (see also 1, 48.52).

**2, 11:** The basic message of the infancy narrative is contained in the angel's announcement: this child is **savior, Messiah,** and **Lord.** Luke is the only synoptic gospel writer to use the title **savior** for Jesus (11; Acts 5, 31; 13, 23; see also 1, 69; 19, 9; Acts 4, 12). As savior, Jesus is looked upon by Luke as the one who rescues humanity from sin and delivers humanity from the condition of alienation from God. The title **christos,** "Christ," is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew **māšîah,** "Messiah," "anointed one." Among certain groups in first-century Palestinian Judaism, the title was applied to an expected royal leader from the line of David who would restore the kingdom to Israel (see Acts 1, 6). The political overtones of the title are played down in Lk and instead the Messiah of the Lord (26) or the Lord's anointed is the one who now brings salvation to all humanity, Jew and Gentile (29–32). **Lord** is the most frequently used title for Jesus in Lk and Acts. In the New Testament it is also applied to Yahweh, as it is in the Old Testament. When used of Jesus it points to his transcendence and dominion over humanity.

**2, 14: On earth peace to those on whom his favor rests:** the peace that results from the Christ event is for those whom God has favored with his grace. This reading is found in the oldest representatives of the Western and Alexandrian text traditions and is the preferred one; the Byzantine text tradition, on the other hand, reads: "on earth peace, good will toward men." The peace of which Luke's gospel speaks (14; 7, 50; 8, 48; 10, 5–6; 19, 38.42; 24, 36) is more than the absence of war of the **pax Augusta;** it also includes the security and well-being characteristic of peace in the Old Testament.

v Mi 5, 2; Mt 2, 6. w 1, 27; Mt 1, 18. x Mt 1, 25. y 1, 11.26. z Mt 1, 21; 16, 16; Jn 4, 42; Acts 2, 36; 5, 31; Phil 2, 11. a 19, 38.

child. [18]All who heard it were amazed by what
had been told them by the shepherds. [19]And
Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in
her heart. [20]Then the shepherds returned, glori-
fying and praising God for all they had heard and
seen, just as it had been told to them.

**The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus**

[21] [b]*When eight days were completed for his
circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name
given him by the angel before he was conceived
in the womb.

**The Presentation in the Temple** [22] [c]*When
the days were completed for their purification
according to the law of Moses, they took him up
to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, [23] [d]just
as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every
male that opens the womb shall be consecrated
to the Lord," [24]and to offer the sacrifice of "a
pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in
accordance with the dictate in the law of the
Lord.

[25]*Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose
name was Simeon. This man was righteous and
devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and
the holy Spirit was upon him. [26]It had been
revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should
not see death before he had seen the Messiah of
the Lord. [27]He came in the Spirit into the
temple; and when the parents brought in the
child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in
regard to him, [28]he took him into his arms and
blessed God, saying:

[29] "Now, Master, you may let your servant go
in peace, according to your word,
[30] [e]for my eyes have seen your salvation,
[31] which you prepared in sight of all the
peoples,
[32] [f]a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel."

[33]The child's father and mother were amazed at
what was said about him; [34] [g]and Simeon
blessed them and said to Mary his mother,
"Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise
of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be
contradicted [35]*(and you yourself a sword will
pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may
be revealed." [36]There was also a prophetess,
Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of
Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived
seven years with her husband after her marriage,
[37]and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.
She never left the temple, but worshiped night
and day with fasting and prayer. [38] [h]And coming
forward at that very time, she gave thanks to
God and spoke about the child to all who were
awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

**The Return to Nazareth** [39] [i]When they had
fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the
Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own

**2, 21:** Just as John before him had been incorporated into the people of Israel through his circumcision, so too this child (see the note on 1, 57–66).

**2, 22–40:** The presentation of Jesus in the temple depicts the parents of Jesus as devout Jews, faithful observers of the law of the Lord (23.24.39), i.e., the law of Moses. In this respect, they are described in a fashion similar to the parents of John (1, 6) and Simeon (25) and Anna (36–37).

**2, 22: Their purification:** syntactically, **their** must refer to Mary and Joseph, even though the Mosaic law never mentions the purification of the husband. Recognizing the problem, some Western scribes have altered the text to read "his purification," understanding the presentation of Jesus in the temple as a form of purification; the Vulgate version has a Latin form that could be either "his" or "her." According to the Mosaic law (Lv 12, 2–8), the woman who gives birth to a boy is unable for forty days to touch anything sacred or to enter the temple area by reason of her legal impurity. At the end of this period she is required to offer a year-old lamb as a burnt offering and a turtledove or young pigeon as an expiation of sin. The woman who could not afford a lamb offered instead two turtledoves or two young pigeons, as Mary does here. **They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord:** as the firstborn son (7) Jesus was consecrated to the Lord as the law required (Ex 13, 2.12), but there was no requirement that this be done at the temple. The concept of a presentation at the temple is probably derived from 1 Sm 1, 24–28, where Hannah offers the child Samuel for sanctuary services. The law further stipulated (Nm 3, 47–48) that the firstborn son should be redeemed by the parents through their payment of five shekels to a member of a priestly family. About this legal requirement Luke is silent.

**2, 25: Awaiting the consolation of Israel:** Simeon here and later Anna who speak about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem represent the hopes and expectations of faithful and devout Jews who at this time were looking forward to the restoration of God's rule in Israel. The birth of Jesus brings these hopes to fulfillment.

**2, 35: (And you yourself a sword will pierce):** Mary herself will not be untouched by the various reactions to the role of Jesus (34). Her blessedness as mother of the Lord will be challenged by her son who describes true blessedness as "hearing the word of God and observing it" (11, 27–28 and 8, 20–21).

b 1, 31; Gn 17, 12; Mt 1, 21. c Lv 12, 2–8. d Ex 13, 2.12. e 3, 6; Is 40, 5 LXX; 52, 10. f Is 42, 6; 46, 13; 49, 6; Acts 13, 47; 26, 23. g 12, 51; Is 8, 14; Jn 9, 39; Rom 9, 33; 1 Cor 1, 23; 1 Pt 2, 7–8. h Is 52, 9. i Mt 2, 23.

town of Nazareth. [40] *j*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

**The Boy Jesus in the Temple** [41] *k**Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, [42]and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. [43]After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. [44]Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, [45]but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. [46]After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, [47]and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. [48]When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." [49]*And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" [50]But they did not understand what he said to them. [51] *l*He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. [52] *m*And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

# III: The Preparation for the Public Ministry

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
425–426

**The Preaching of John the Baptist** [1] *n**In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, [2] *o**during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. [3] *p**He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the

**2, 41–52:** This story's concern with an incident from Jesus' youth is unique in the canonical gospel tradition. It presents Jesus in the role of the faithful Jewish boy, raised in the traditions of Israel, and fulfilling all that the law requires. With this episode, the infancy narrative ends just as it began, in the setting of the Jerusalem temple.

**2, 49: I must be in my Father's house:** this phrase can also be translated, "I must be about my Father's work." In either translation, Jesus refers to God as his Father. His divine sonship, and his obedience to his heavenly Father's will, take precedence over his ties to his family.

**3, 1–20:** Although Luke is indebted in this section to his sources, the Gospel of Mark and a collection of sayings of John the Baptist, he has clearly marked this introduction to the ministry of Jesus with his own individual style. Just as the gospel began with a long periodic sentence (1, 1–4), so too this section (1–2). He casts the call of John the Baptist in the form of an Old Testament prophetic call (2) and extends the quotation from Isaiah found in Mk 1, 3 (Is 40, 3) by the addition of Is 40, 4–5 in vv 5–6. In doing so, he presents his theme of the universality of salvation, which he has announced earlier in the words of Simeon (2, 30–32). Moreover, in describing the expectation of the people (15), Luke is characterizing the time of John's preaching in the same way as he had earlier described the situation of other devout Israelites in the infancy narrative (2, 25–26.37–38). In vv 7–18 Luke presents the preaching of John the Baptist who urges the crowds to reform in view of **the coming wrath** (7.9: eschatological preaching), and who offers the crowds certain standards for reforming social conduct (10–14: ethical preaching), and who announces to the crowds the coming of **one mightier than** he (15–18: messianic preaching).

**3, 1: Tiberius Caesar:** Tiberius succeeded Augustus as emperor in A.D. 14 and reigned until A.D. 37. The fifteenth year of his reign, depending on the method of calculating his first regnal year, would have fallen between A.D. 27 and 29. **Pontius Pilate:** prefect of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. The Jewish historian Josephus describes him as a greedy and ruthless prefect who had little regard for the local Jewish population and their religious practices (see 13, 1). **Herod:** i.e., Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. He ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. His official title **tetrarch** means literally, "ruler of a quarter," but came to designate any subordinate prince. **Philip:** also a son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of the territory to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34. Only two small areas of this territory are mentioned by Luke. **Lysanias:** nothing is known about this Lysanias who is said here to have been tetrarch of Abilene, a territory northwest of Damascus.

**3, 2: During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas:** after situating the call of John the Baptist in terms of the civil rulers of the period, Luke now mentions the religious leadership of Palestine (see the note on 1, 5). Annas had been high priest A.D. 6–15. After being deposed by the Romans in A.D. 15 he was succeeded by various members of his family and eventually by his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who was high priest A.D. 18–36. Luke refers to Annas as high priest at this time (but see Jn 18, 13.19), possibly because of the continuing influence of Annas or because the title continued to be used for the ex-high priest. **The word of God came to John:** Luke is alone among the New Testament writers in associating the preaching of John with a call from God. Luke is thereby identifying John with the prophets whose ministries began with similar calls. In 7, 26 John will be described as "more than a prophet"; he is also the precursor of Jesus (7, 27), a transitional figure inaugurating the period of the fulfillment of prophecy and promise.

**3, 3:** See the note on Mt 3, 2.

j 1, 80; 2, 52. k Ex 12, 24–27; 23, 15; Dt 16, 1–8. 12, 19. m 1, 80; 2, 40; 1 Sm 2, 26. n Mt 3, 1–12; Mk 1, 1–8; Jn 1, 19–28. o 1, 80. p Acts 13, 24; 19, 4.

forgiveness of sins, [4] [q] [r]*as it is written in the
book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one crying out in the desert:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.
[5] Every valley shall be filled
and every mountain and hill shall be made
low.
The winding roads shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth,
[6] [s]and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

[7] [t]He said to the crowds who came out to be
baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who
warned you to flee from the coming wrath?
[8] [u]Produce good fruits as evidence of your repen-
tance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We
have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God
can raise up children to Abraham from these
stones. [9] [v]Even now the ax lies at the root of the
trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce
good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the
fire."

[10]And the crowds asked him, "What then
should we do?" [11]He said to them in reply,
"Whoever has two cloaks should share with the
person who has none. And whoever has food
should do likewise." [12] [w]Even tax collectors
came to be baptized and they said to him,
"Teacher, what should we do?" [13]He answered
them, "Stop collecting more than what is pre-
scribed." [14]Soldiers also asked him, "And what is
it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not
practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone,
and be satisfied with your wages."

[15] [x]Now the people were filled with expecta-
tion, and all were asking in their hearts
whether John might be the Messiah. [16] [y]*John
answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you
with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I
am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his
sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit
and fire. [17] [z]*His winnowing fan is in his hand
to clear his threshing floor and to gather the
wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn
with unquenchable fire." [18]Exhorting them in
many other ways, he preached good news to
the people. [19] [a]*Now Herod the tetrarch, who
had been censured by him because of Herodias,
his brother's wife, and because of all the evil
deeds Herod had committed, [20]added still
another to these by [also] putting John in
prison.

**The Baptism of Jesus** [21] [b]*After all the people
had been baptized and Jesus also had been
baptized and was praying, heaven was opened
[22] [c]*and the holy Spirit descended upon him in
bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from
heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I
am well pleased."

**3, 4:** The Essenes from Qumran used the same passage to explain why their community was in the desert studying and observing the law and the prophets (1QS 8, 12–15).

**3, 16: He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire:** in contrast to John's baptism with water, Jesus is said to baptize with the holy Spirit and with fire. From the point of view of the early Christian community, the Spirit and fire must have been understood in the light of the fire symbolism of the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2, 1–4); but as part of John's preaching, the Spirit and fire should be related to their purifying and refining characteristics (Ez 36, 25–27; Mal 3, 2–3). See the note on Mt 3, 11.

**3, 17: Winnowing fan:** see the note on Mt 3, 12.

**3, 19–20:** Luke separates the ministry of John the Baptist from that of Jesus by reporting the imprisonment of John before the baptism of Jesus (21–22). Luke uses this literary device to serve his understanding of the periods of salvation history. With John the Baptist, the time of promise, the period of Israel, comes to an end; with the baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit upon him, the time of fulfillment, the period of Jesus, begins. In his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, Luke will introduce the third epoch in salvation history, the period of the church.

**3, 21–22:** This episode in Luke focuses on the heavenly message identifying Jesus as **Son** and, through the allusion to Is 42, 1, as Servant of Yahweh. The relationship of Jesus to the Father has already been announced in the infancy narrative (1, 32.35; 2, 49); it occurs here at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry and will reappear in 9, 35 before another major section of Luke's gospel, the travel narrative (9, 51—19, 27). Elsewhere in Luke's writings (4, 18; Acts 10, 38), this incident will be interpreted as a type of anointing of Jesus.

**3, 21: Was praying:** Luke regularly presents Jesus at prayer at important points in his ministry: here at his baptism; at the choice of the Twelve (6, 12); before Peter's confession (9, 18); at the transfiguration (9, 28); when he teaches his disciples to pray (11, 1); at the Last Supper (22, 32); on the Mount of Olives (22, 41); on the cross (23, 46).

**3, 22: You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased:** this is the best attested reading in the Greek manuscripts. The Western reading, "You are my Son, this day I have begotten you," is derived from Ps 2, 7.

q Is 40, 3–5. r Jn 1, 23. s 2, 30–31. t Mt 12, 34. u Jn 8, 39. v Mt 7, 19; Jn 15, 6. w 7, 29. x Acts 13, 25. y 7, 19–20; Jn 1, 27; Acts 1, 5; 11, 16. z Mt 3, 12. a Mt 14, 3–4; Mk 6, 17–18. b Mt 3, 13–17; Mk 1, 9–11. c 9, 35; Ps 2, 7; Is 42, 1; Mt 12, 18; 17, 5; Mk 9, 7; Jn 1, 32; 2 Pt 1, 17.

**The Genealogy of Jesus** 23 [d e]*When Jesus
began his ministry he was about thirty years of
age. He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph,
the son of Heli, 24the son of Matthat, the son of
Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the
son of Joseph, 25the son of Mattathias, the son of
Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son
of Naggai, 26the son of Maath, the son of
Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech,
the son of Joda, 27[f]the son of Joanan, the son of
Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28the son of Melchi, the son
of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam,
the son of Er, 29the son of Joshua, the son of
Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the
son of Levi, 30the son of Simeon, the son of
Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the
son of Eliakim, 31 [g h i]*the son of Melea, the son
of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of
Nathan, the son of David, 32the son of Jesse, the
son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the
son of Nahshon, 33[j]the son of Amminadab, the
son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of
Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,
34 [k l]the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of
Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,
35the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of
Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 [m]the
son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of
Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37the
son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of
Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,
38the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of
Adam, the son of God.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
426–427

**The Temptation of Jesus** 1 [n]*Filled with the
holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and
was led by the Spirit into the desert 2 [o]*for forty
days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing
during those days, and when they were over he
was hungry. 3The devil said to him, "If you are
the Son of God, command this stone to become
bread." 4 [p]Jesus answered him, "It is written,
'One does not live by bread alone.' " 5Then he
took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of
the world in a single instant. 6 [q]The devil said to
him, "I shall give to you all this power and their
glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I
may give it to whomever I wish. 7All this will be
yours, if you worship me." 8 [r]Jesus said to him in
reply, "It is written:

'You shall worship the Lord, your God,
and him alone shall you serve.' "

9*Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him
stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to
him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself
down from here, 10 [s]for it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,'

11 [t]and:

'With their hands they will support you,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

12 [u]Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You
shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.' "
13 [v]*When the devil had finished every tempta-
tion, he departed from him for a time.

**3, 23–38:** Whereas Mt 1, 2 begins the genealogy of Jesus with Abraham to emphasize Jesus' bonds with the people of Israel, Luke's universalism leads him to trace the descent of Jesus beyond Israel to Adam and beyond that to God (38) to stress again Jesus' divine sonship.

**3, 31: The son of Nathan, the son of David:** in keeping with Jesus' prophetic role in Lk and Acts (e.g., 7, 16.39; 9, 8; 13, 33; 24, 19; Acts 3, 22–23; 7, 37) Luke traces Jesus' Davidic ancestry through the prophet Nathan (see 2 Sm 7, 2) rather than through King Solomon, as Mt 1, 6–7.

**4, 1–13:** See the note on Mt 4, 1–11.

**4, 1: Filled with the holy Spirit:** as a result of the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism (3, 21–22), Jesus is now equipped to overcome the devil. Just as the Spirit is prominent at this early stage of Jesus' ministry (1.14.18), so too it will be at the beginning of the period of the church in Acts (Acts 1, 4; 2, 4.17).

**4, 2: For forty days:** the mention of forty days recalls the forty years of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites during the Exodus (Dt 8, 2).

**4, 9: To Jerusalem:** the Lucan order of the temptations concludes on the parapet of the temple in Jerusalem, the city of destiny in Luke-Acts. It is in Jerusalem that Jesus will ultimately face his destiny (9, 51; 13, 33).

**4, 13: For a time:** the devil's opportune time will occur before the passion and death of Jesus (Lk 22, 3.31–32.53).

d Mt 1, 1–17. e 4, 22; Jn 6, 42. f 1 Chr 3, 17; Ez 3, 2. g 2 Sm 5, 14. h 1 Sm 16, 1.18. i Ru 4, 17–22; 1 Chr 2, 1–15. j Gn 29, 35; 38, 29. k Gn 21, 3; 25, 26; 1 Chr 1, 34; 28, 34. l Gn 11, 10–26; 1 Chr 1, 24–27. m Gn 4, 25—5, 32; 1 Chr 1, 1–4. n Mt 4, 1–11; Mk 1, 12–13. o Heb 4, 15. p Dt 8, 3. q Jer 27, 5; Mt 28, 18. r Dt 6, 13. s Ps 91, 11. t Ps 91, 12. u Dt 6, 16; 1 Cor 10, 9. v 22, 3; Jn 13, 2.27; Heb 4, 15.

## IV: The Ministry in Galilee

### The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 *w x* *Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of
the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout
the whole region. 15 He taught in their syna-
gogues and was praised by all.

### The Rejection at Nazareth

16 *y* *He came to
Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went
according to his custom into the synagogue on
the sabbath day. He stood up to read 17 and was
handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He un-
rolled the scroll and found the passage where it
was written:

18 *z* *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
19 and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

20 Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the
attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in
the synagogue looked intently at him. 21 *He said
to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled
in your hearing." 22 *a* And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that
came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't
this the son of Joseph?" 23 *He said to them,
"Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physi-
cian, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your
native place the things that we heard were done
in Capernaum.' " 24 And he said, "Amen, I say to
you, no prophet is accepted in his own native
place. 25 *b* *Indeed, I tell you, there were many
widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the
sky was closed for three and a half years and a
severe famine spread over the entire land. 26 *c* *It
was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but
only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of
Sidon. 27 *d* Again, there were many lepers in
Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet
not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman
the Syrian." 28 When the people in the syna-
gogue heard this, they were all filled with fury.
29 They rose up, drove him out of the town, and
led him to the brow of the hill on which their
town had been built, to hurl him down head-
long. 30 But he passed through the midst of them
and went away.

### The Cure of a Demoniac

31 *e f* *Jesus then
went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He
taught them on the sabbath, 32 *g* and they were
astonished at his teaching because he spoke with

**4, 14: News of him spread:** a Lucan theme; see v 37; 5, 15; 7, 17.

**4, 16–30:** Luke has transposed to the beginning of Jesus' ministry an incident from his Marcan source, which situated it near the end of the Galilean ministry (Mk 6, 1–6a). In doing so, Luke turns the initial admiration (22) and subsequent rejection of Jesus (28–29) into a foreshadowing of the whole future ministry of Jesus. Moreover, the rejection of Jesus in his own hometown hints at the greater rejection of him by Israel (Acts 13, 46).

**4, 16: According to his custom:** Jesus' practice of regularly attending synagogue is carried on by the early Christians' practice of meeting in the temple (Acts 2, 46; 3, 1; 5, 12).

**4, 18: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me:** see the note on 3, 21–22. As this incident develops, Jesus is portrayed as a prophet whose ministry is compared to that of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Prophetic anointings are known in first-century Palestinian Judaism from the Qumran literature that speaks of prophets as God's anointed ones. **To bring glad tidings to the poor:** more than any other gospel writer Luke is concerned with Jesus' attitude toward the economically and socially poor (see 6, 20.24; 12, 16–21; 14, 12–14; 16, 19–26; 19, 8). At times, the poor in Luke's gospel are associated with the downtrodden, the oppressed and afflicted, the forgotten and the neglected (18; 6, 20–22; 7, 22; 14, 12–14), and it is they who accept Jesus' message of salvation.

**4, 21: Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing:** this sermon inaugurates the time of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Luke presents the ministry of Jesus as fulfilling Old Testament hopes and expectations (7, 22); for Luke, even Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are done in fulfillment of the scriptures (24, 25–27.44–46; Acts 3, 18).

**4, 23: The things that we heard were done in Capernaum:** Luke's source for this incident reveals an awareness of an earlier ministry of Jesus in Capernaum that Luke has not yet made use of because of his transposition of this Nazareth episode to the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry. It is possible that by use of the future tense **you will quote me . . .** , Jesus is being portrayed as a prophet.

**4, 25–26:** The references to Elijah and Elisha serve several purposes in this episode: they emphasize Luke's portrait of Jesus as a prophet like Elijah and Elisha; they help to explain why the initial admiration of the people turns to rejection; and they provide the scriptural justification for the future Christian mission to the Gentiles.

**4, 26: A widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon:** like Naaman the Syrian in v 27, a non-Israelite becomes the object of the prophet's ministry.

**4, 31–44:** The next several incidents in Jesus' ministry take place in Capernaum and are based on Luke's source, Mk 1, 21–39. To the previous portrait of Jesus as prophet (16–30) they now add a presentation of him as teacher (31–32), exorcist (32–37.41), healer (38–40), and proclaimer of God's kingdom (43).

w Mt 4, 12–17; Mk 1, 14–15. x 5, 15; Mt 3, 16. y Mt 13, 53–58; Mk 6, 1–6. z Is 61, 1–2; 58, 6. a 3, 23; Jn 6, 42. b 1 Kgs 17, 1–7; 18, 1; Jas 5, 17. c 1 Kgs 17, 9. d 2 Kgs 5, 1–14. e Mk 1, 21–28. f Mt 4, 13; Jn 2, 12. g Mt 7, 28–29.

authority. 33 *h*In the synagogue there was a man
with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he
cried out in a loud voice, 34 *i**"Ha! What have
you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you
come to destroy us? I know who you are—the
Holy One of God!" 35Jesus rebuked him and
said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the
demon threw the man down in front of them
and came out of him without doing him any
harm. 36They were all amazed and said to one
another, "What is there about his word? For
with authority and power he commands the
unclean spirits, and they come out." 37And news
of him spread everywhere in the surrounding
region.

**The Cure of Simon's Mother-in-Law**
38 *j**After he left the synagogue, he entered the
house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was
afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded
with him about her. 39He stood over her, re-
buked the fever, and it left her. She got up
immediately and waited on them.

**Other Healings** 40 *k*At sunset, all who had
people sick with various diseases brought them
to him. He laid his hands on each of them and
cured them. 41 *l**And demons also came out
from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God."
But he rebuked them and did not allow them to
speak because they knew that he was the
Messiah.

**Jesus Leaves Capernaum** 42 *m**At daybreak,
Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The
crowds went looking for him, and when they
came to him, they tried to prevent him from
leaving them. 43 *n*But he said to them, "To the
other towns also I must proclaim the good news
of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose
I have been sent." 44*And he was preaching in
the synagogues of Judea.

## CHAPTER 5

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**The Call of Simon the Fisherman** 1 *o p**While
the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening
to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake
of Gennesaret. 2He saw two boats there along-
side the lake; the fishermen had disembarked
and were washing their nets. 3Getting into one
of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he
asked him to put out a short distance from the
shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds
from the boat. 4 *q*After he had finished speaking,
he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and
lower your nets for a catch." 5Simon said in
reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night
and have caught nothing, but at your command I
will lower the nets." 6When they had done this,
they caught a great number of fish and their nets
were tearing. 7They signaled to their partners in
the other boat to come to help them. They came
and filled both boats so that they were in danger

**4, 34: What have you to do with us?:** see the note on Jn 2, 4. **Have you come to destroy us?:** the question reflects the current belief that before the day of the Lord control over humanity would be wrested from the evil spirits, evil destroyed, and God's authority over humanity reestablished. The synoptic gospel tradition presents Jesus carrying out this task.

**4, 38: The house of Simon:** because of Luke's arrangement of material, the reader has not yet been introduced to Simon (cf Mk 1, 16–18.29–31). Situated as it is before the call of Simon (5, 1–11), it helps the reader to understand Simon's eagerness to do what Jesus says (5, 5) and to follow him (5, 11).

**4, 41: They knew that he was the Messiah:** that is, the Christ (see the note on 2, 11).

**4, 42: They tried to prevent him from leaving them:** the reaction of these strangers in Capernaum is presented in contrast to the reactions of those in his hometown who rejected him (28–30).

**4, 44: In the synagogues of Judea:** instead of **Judea,** which is the best reading of the manuscript tradition, the Byzantine text tradition and other manuscripts read "Galilee," a reading that harmonizes Lk with Mt 4, 23 and Mk 1, 39. Up to this point Luke has spoken only of a ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Luke may be using **Judea** to refer to the land of Israel, the territory of the Jews, and not to a specific portion of it.

**5, 1–11:** This incident has been transposed from his source, Mk 1, 16–20, which places it immediately after Jesus makes his appearance in Galilee. By this transposition Luke uses this example of Simon's acceptance of Jesus to counter the earlier rejection of him by his hometown people, and since several incidents dealing with Jesus' power and authority have already been narrated, Luke creates a plausible context for the acceptance of Jesus by Simon and his partners. Many commentators have noted the similarity between the wondrous catch of fish reported here (4–9) and the post-resurrectional appearance of Jesus in Jn 21, 1–11. There are traces in Luke's story that the post-resurrectional context is the original one: in v 8 Simon addresses Jesus as **Lord** (a post-resurrectional title for Jesus—see 24, 34; Acts 2, 36—that has been read back into the historical ministry of Jesus) and recognizes himself as a sinner (an appropriate recognition for one who has denied knowing Jesus—22, 54–62). As used by Luke, the incident looks forward to Peter's leadership in Luke-Acts (6, 14; 9, 20; 22, 31–32; 24, 34; Acts 1, 15; 2, 14–40; 10, 11–18; 15, 7–12) and symbolizes the future success of Peter as fisherman (Acts 2, 41).

h 8, 28; Mt 8, 29; Mk 1, 23–24; 5, 7. i 4, 41; Jn 6, 69. j Mt 8, 14–15; Mk 1, 29–31. k Mt 8, 16; Mk 1, 32–34. l 4, 34; Mt 8, 29; Mk 3, 11–12. m Mk 1, 35–39. n 8, 1; Mk 1, 14–15. o Mt 4, 18–22; Mk 1, 16–20. p Mt 13, 1–2; Mk 2, 13; 3, 9–10; 4, 1–2. q Jn 21, 1–11.

of sinking. 8When Simon Peter saw this, he fell
at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me.
Lord, for I am a sinful man." 9For astonishment
at the catch of fish they had made seized him
and all those with him, 10 [r]and likewise James
and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were
partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not
be afraid; from now on you will be catching
men." 11 [s]*When they brought their boats to the
shore, they left everything and followed him.

**The Cleansing of a Leper** 12 [t]*Now there was
a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where
he was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate,
pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish,
you can make me clean." 13Jesus stretched out
his hand, touched him, and said, "I do will it. Be
made clean." And the leprosy left him immedi-
ately. 14 [u]*Then he ordered him not to tell
anyone, but "Go, show yourself to the priest and
offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed;
that will be proof for them." 15The report about
him spread all the more, and great crowds
assembled to listen to him and to be cured of
their ailments, 16 [v]but he would withdraw to
deserted places to pray.

**The Healing of a Paralytic** 17 [w]*One day as
Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the
law were sitting there who had come from every
village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and
the power of the Lord was with him for healing.
18And some men brought on a stretcher a man
who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring
him in and set [him] in his presence. 19*But not
finding a way to bring him in because of the
crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered
him on the stretcher through the tiles into the
middle in front of Jesus. 20*When he saw their
faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are for-
given." 21 [x]*Then the scribes and Pharisees be-
gan to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks
blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive
sins?" 22 [y]Jesus knew their thoughts and said to
them in reply, "What are you thinking in your
hearts? 23Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are
forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 24 [z]*But that
you may know that the Son of Man has authority
on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man
who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up
your stretcher, and go home." 25He stood up
immediately before them, picked up what he
had been lying on, and went home, glorifying
God. 26Then astonishment seized them all and
they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they
said, "We have seen incredible things today."

**The Call of Levi** 27 [a]After this he went out and
saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the
customs post. He said to him, "Follow me."
28*And leaving everything behind, he got up and
followed him. 29 [b]Then Levi gave a great banquet
for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax
collectors and others were at table with them.
30The Pharisees and their scribes complained to
his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink
with tax collectors and sinners?" 31Jesus said to
them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not
need a physician, but the sick do. 32I have not
come to call the righteous to repentance but
sinners."

**5, 11: They left everything:** in Mk 1, 16–20 and Mt 4, 18–22 the fishermen who follow Jesus leave their nets and their father; in Luke, they leave **everything** (see also 28; 12, 33; 14, 33; 18, 22), an indication of Luke's theme of complete detachment from material possessions.

**5, 12: Full of leprosy:** see the note on Mk 1, 40.

**5, 14: Show yourself to the priest . . . what Moses prescribed:** this is a reference to Lv 14, 2–9 that gives detailed instructions for the purification of one who had been a victim of leprosy and thereby excluded from contact with others (see Lv 13, 45–46.49; Nm 5, 2–3). **That will be proof for them:** see the note on Mt 8, 4.

**5, 17—6, 11:** From his Marcan source, Luke now introduces a series of controversies with Pharisees: controversy over Jesus' power to forgive sins (17–26); controversy over his eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners (27–32); controversy over not fasting (33–36); and finally two episodes narrating controversies over observance of the sabbath (1–11).

**5, 17: Pharisees:** see the note on Mt 3, 7.

**5, 19: Through the tiles:** Luke has adapted the story found in Mk to his non-Palestinian audience by changing "opened up the roof" (Mk 2, 4, a reference to Palestinian straw and clay roofs) to **through the tiles,** a detail that reflects the Hellenistic Greco-Roman house with tiled roof.

**5, 20: As for you, your sins are forgiven:** literally, "O man, your sins are forgiven you." The connection between the forgiveness of sins and the cure of the paralytic reflects the belief of first-century Palestine (based on the Old Testament: Ex 20, 5; Dt 5, 9) that sickness and infirmity are the result of sin, one's own or that of one's ancestors (see also 13, 2; Jn 5, 14; 9, 2).

**5, 21: The scribes:** see the note on Mk 2, 6.

**5, 24:** See the notes on Mt 9, 6 and Mk 2, 10.

**5, 28: Leaving everything behind:** see the note on 5, 11.

r Jer 16, 16. s Mt 19, 27. t Mt 8, 2–4; Mk 1, 40–45. u 8, 56; Lv 14, 2–32; Mk 7, 36. v Mk 1, 35. w Mt 9, 1–8; Mk 2, 1–12. x 7, 49; Is 43, 25. y 6, 8; 9, 47. z Jn 5, 8–9.27. a Mt 9, 9–13; Mk 2, 13–17. b 15, 1–2.

**The Question about Fasting** 33 [c]And they said
to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer
prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the
same; but yours eat and drink." 34*Jesus an-
swered them, "Can you make the wedding
guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?
35But the days will come, and when the bride-
groom is taken away from them, then they will
fast in those days." 36*And he also told them a
parable. "No one tears a piece from a new cloak
to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the
new and the piece from it will not match the old
cloak. 37Likewise, no one pours new wine into
old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will
burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the
skins will be ruined. 38Rather, new wine must
be poured into fresh wineskins. 39*[And] no one
who has been drinking old wine desires new, for
he says, 'The old is good.' "

## CHAPTER 6

**Debates about the Sabbath** 1 [d e]*While he
was going through a field of grain on a sabbath,
his disciples were picking the heads of grain,
rubbing them in their hands, and eating them.
2Some Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what
is unlawful on the sabbath?" 3[f]Jesus said to
them in reply, "Have you not read what David
did when he and those [who were] with him
were hungry? 4 [g]*[How] he went into the house
of God, took the bread of offering, which only
the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and
shared it with his companions." 5Then he said to
them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

6 [h]On another sabbath he went into the syna-
gogue and taught, and there was a man there
whose right hand was withered. 7 [i]The scribes
and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if
he would cure on the sabbath so that they might
discover a reason to accuse him. 8[j]But he
realized their intentions and said to the man
with the withered hand, "Come up and stand
before us." And he rose and stood there. 9Then
Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do
good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to
save life rather than to destroy it?" 10Looking
around at them all, he then said to him, "Stretch
out your hand." He did so and his hand was
restored. 11But they became enraged and dis-
cussed together what they might do to Jesus.

**The Mission of the Twelve** 12 [k]*In those days
he departed to the mountain to pray, and he
spent the night in prayer to God. 13*When day
came, he called his disciples to himself, and from
them he chose Twelve, whom he also named
apostles: 14 [l]*Simon, whom he named Peter,
and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip,
Bartholomew, 15*Matthew, Thomas, James the
son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot,

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**5, 34–35:** See the notes on Mt 9, 15 and Mk 2, 19.

**5, 34: Wedding guests:** literally, "sons of the bridal chamber."

**5, 36–39:** See the notes on Mt 9, 16–17 and Mk 2, 19.

**5, 39: The old is good:** this saying is meant to be ironic and offers an explanation for the rejection by some of the new wine that Jesus offers: satisfaction with old forms will prevent one from sampling the new.

**6, 1–11:** The two episodes recounted here deal with gathering grain and healing, both of which were forbidden on the sabbath. In his defense of his disciples' conduct and his own charitable deed, Jesus argues that satisfying human needs such as hunger and performing works of mercy take precedence even over the sacred sabbath rest. See also the notes on Mt 12, 1–14 and Mk 2, 25–26.

**6, 4: The bread of offering:** see the note on Mt 12, 5–6.

**6, 12–16:** See the notes on Mt 10, 1—11, 1 and Mk 3, 14–15.

**6, 12: Spent the night in prayer:** see the note on 3, 21.

**6, 13: He chose Twelve:** the identification of this group as the **Twelve** is a part of early Christian tradition (see 1 Cor 15, 5), and in Mt and Lk, the Twelve are associated with the twelve tribes of Israel (22, 29–30; Mt 19, 28). After the fall of Judas from his position among the Twelve, the need is felt on the part of the early community to reconstitute this group before the Christian mission begins at Pentecost (Acts 1, 15–26). From Luke's perspective, they are an important group who because of their association with Jesus from the time of his baptism to his ascension (Acts 1, 21–22) provide the continuity between the historical Jesus and the church of Luke's day and who as the original eyewitnesses guarantee the fidelity of the church's beliefs and practices to the teachings of Jesus (1, 1–4). **Whom he also named apostles:** only Luke among the gospel writers attributes to Jesus the bestowal of the name **apostles** upon the Twelve. See the note on Mt 10, 2–4. "Apostle" becomes a technical term in early Christianity for a missionary sent out to preach the word of God. Although Luke seems to want to restrict the title to the Twelve (only in Acts 4, 4.14 are Paul and Barnabas termed apostles), other places in the New Testament show an awareness that the term was more widely applied (1 Cor 15, 5–7; Gal 1, 19; 1 Cor 1, 1; 9, 1; Rom 16, 7).

**6, 14: Simon, whom he named Peter:** see the note on Mk 3, 16.

**6, 15: Simon who was called a Zealot:** the Zealots were the instigators of the First Revolt of Palestinian Jews against Rome in A.D. 66–70. Because the existence of the Zealots as a distinct group during the lifetime of Jesus is the subject of debate, the meaning of the identification of Simon as a Zealot is unclear.

c Mt 9, 14–17; Mk 2, 18–22. d Mt 12, 1–8; Mk 2, 23–28. e Dt 23, 26. f 1 Sm 21, 1–6. g Lv 24, 5–9. h Mt 12, 9–14; Mk 3, 1–6. i 14, 1. j 5, 22; 9, 47. k Mt 10, 1–4; Mk 3, 13–19. l Acts 1, 13.

16 *and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

**Ministering to a Great Multitude** 17 m *And he came down with them and stood on a stretch of level ground. A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon 18 came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. 19 Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

**Sermon on the Plain** 20 n *And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor,
for the kingdom of God is yours.
21 o Blessed are you who are now hungry,
for you will be satisfied.
Blessed are you who are now weeping,
for you will laugh.
22 p Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude and insult you,
and denounce your name as evil
on account of the Son of Man.
23 q Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.
24 r But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.
25 s But woe to you who are filled now,
for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will grieve and weep.
26 t Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for their ancestors treated the false prophets
in this way.

**Love of Enemies** 27 u v *"But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 w bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. 31 x Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32 For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. 34 y If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit [is] that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. 35 z But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.

**6, 16: Judas Iscariot:** the name **Iscariot** may mean "man from Kerioth."

**6, 17: The coastal region of Tyre and Sidon:** not only Jews from Judea and Jerusalem, but even Gentiles from outside Palestine come to hear Jesus (see 2, 31–32; 3, 6; 4, 24–27).

**6, 20–49:** Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" is the counterpart to Mt's "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5, 1—7, 27). It is addressed to the disciples of Jesus, and, like the sermon in Mt, it begins with beatitudes (20–22) and ends with the parable of the two houses (46–49). Almost all the words of Jesus reported by Lk are found in Mt's version, but because Mt includes sayings that were related to specifically Jewish Christian problems (e.g., Mt 5, 17–20; 6, 1--8.16–18) that Luke did not find appropriate for his predominantly Gentile Christian audience, the "Sermon on the Mount" is considerably longer. Lk's sermon may be outlined as follows: an introduction consisting of blessings and woes (20–26); the love of one's enemies (27–36); the demands of loving one's neighbor (37–42); good deeds as proof of one's goodness (43–45); a parable illustrating the result of listening to and acting on the words of Jesus (46--49). At the core of the sermon is Jesus' teaching on the love of one's enemies (27–36) that has as its source of motivation God's graciousness and compassion for all humanity (35–36) and Jesus' teaching on the love of one's neighbor (37–42) that is characterized by forgiveness and generosity.

**6, 20–26:** The introductory portion of the sermon consists of blessings and woes that address the real economic and social conditions of humanity (the poor—the rich; the hungry—the satisfied; those grieving—those laughing; the outcast—the socially acceptable). By contrast, Matthew emphasizes the religious and spiritual values of disciples in the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus ("poor in spirit," 5, 5; "hunger and thirst for righteousness," 5, 6). In the sermon, **blessed** extols the fortunate condition of persons who are favored with the blessings of God; the woes, addressed as they are to the disciples of Jesus, threaten God's profound displeasure on those so blinded by their present fortunate situation that they do not recognize and appreciate the real values of God's kingdom. In all the blessings and woes, the present condition of the persons addressed will be reversed in the future.

**6, 27–36:** See the notes on Mt 5, 43–48 and 5, 48.

m Mt 4, 23–25; Mk 3, 7–10. n Mt 5, 1–12. o Ps 126, 5–6; Is 61, 3; Jer 31, 25; Rv 7, 16–17. p Jn 15, 19; 16, 2; 1 Pt 4, 14. q 11, 47–48; 2 Chr 36, 16; Mt 23, 30–31. r Jas 5, 1. s Is 65, 13–14. t Jas 4, 4. u Mt 5, 38–48. v Prv 25, 21; Rom 12, 20–21. w Rom 12, 14; 1 Pt 3, 9. x Mt 7, 12. y Dt 15, 7–8. z Lv 25, 35–36.

**Judging Others** 37 [a] [b]*"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. 38 [c]Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." 39 [d]And he told them a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? 40 [e]No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. 41Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? 42How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

**A Tree Known by Its Fruit** 43 [f]*"A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. 44For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. 45A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

**The Two Foundations** 46 [g]"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command? 47 [h]*I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. 48That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. 49But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed."

## CHAPTER 7

### The Healing of a Centurion's Slave

Ch 7–9
See RG
428–429

1 [i]*When he had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum. 2*A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him. 3When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. 4They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, 5for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us." 6*And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. 7Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed. 8For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." 10When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

**6, 37–42:** See the notes on Mt 7, 1–12; 7, 1; 7, 5.

**6, 43–46:** See the notes on Mt 7, 15–20 and 12, 33.

**6, 47–49:** See the note on Mt 7, 24–27.

**7, 1—8, 3:** The episodes in this section present a series of reactions to the Galilean ministry of Jesus and reflect some of Luke's particular interests: the faith of a Gentile (1–10); the prophet Jesus' concern for a widowed mother (11–17); the ministry of Jesus directed to the afflicted and unfortunate of Is 61, 1 (18–23); the relation between John and Jesus and their role in God's plan for salvation (24–35); a forgiven sinner's manifestation of love (36–50); the association of women with the ministry of Jesus (8, 1–3).

**7, 1–10:** This story about the faith of the centurion, a Gentile who cherishes the Jewish nation (5), prepares for the story in Acts of the conversion by Peter of the Roman centurion Cornelius who is similarly described as one who is generous to the Jewish nation (Acts 10, 2). See also Acts 10, 34–35 in the speech of Peter: "God shows no partiality . . . the person who fears him and acts righteously is acceptable to him." See also the notes on Mt 8, 5–13 and Jn 4, 43–54.

**7, 2: A centurion:** see the note on Mt 8, 5.

**7, 6: I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof:** to enter the house of a Gentile was considered unclean for a Jew; cf Acts 10, 28.

a Mt 7, 1–5. b Mt 6, 14; Jas 2, 13. c Mk 4, 24. d Mt 15, 14; 23, 16–17.24. e Mt 10, 24–25; Jn 13, 16; 15, 20. f Mt 7, 16–20; 12, 33.35. g Mt 7, 21; Rom 2, 13; Jas 1, 22. h Mt 7, 24–27. i Mt 8, 5–13; Jn 4, 43–54.

**Raising of the Widow's Son** 11 [j]*Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. 12 [k]As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" 15 [l]The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. 16 [m]Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people." 17 This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

**The Messengers from John the Baptist**

18 [n]*The disciples of John told him about all these things. John summoned two of his disciples 19 [o]and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" 20 When the men came to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?' " 21 At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind. 22 [p]And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. 23 *And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

**Jesus' Testimony to John** 24 [q]*When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. "What did you go out to the desert to see—a reed swayed by the wind? 25 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces. 26 [r]Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 [s]This is the one about whom scripture says:

'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
he will prepare your way before you.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 [t](All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; 30 but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.)

31 [u]*"Then to what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another,

'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance.
We sang a dirge, but you did not weep.'

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' 34 [v]The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said, 'Look, he is a glutton

**7, 11–17:** In the previous incident Jesus' power was displayed for a Gentile whose servant was dying; in this episode it is displayed toward a widowed mother whose only son has already died. Jesus' power over death prepares for his reply to John's disciples in v 22: "the dead are raised." This resuscitation in alluding to the prophet Elijah's resurrection of the only son of a widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 7, 8–24) leads to the reaction of the crowd: "A great prophet has arisen in our midst" (16).

**7, 18–23:** In answer to John's question, **Are you the one who is to come?**—a probable reference to the return of the fiery prophet of reform, Elijah, "before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day" (Mal 3, 23)—Jesus responds that his role is rather to bring the blessings spoken of in Is 61, 1 to the oppressed and neglected of society (22; cf 4, 18).

**7, 23: Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me:** this beatitude is pronounced on the person who recognizes Jesus' true identity in spite of previous expectations of what "the one who is to come" would be like.

**7, 24–30:** In his testimony to John, Jesus reveals his understanding of the relationship between them: John is the precursor of Jesus (27); John is the messenger spoken of in Mal 3, 1 who in Mal 3, 23 is identified as Elijah. Taken with the previous episode, it can be seen that Jesus identifies John as precisely the person John envisioned Jesus to be: the Elijah who prepares the way for the coming of the day of the Lord.

**7, 31–35:** See the note on Mt 11, 16–19.

j 4, 25–26; 1 Kgs 17, 17–24. k 8, 42; 1 Kgs 17, 17. l 1 Kgs 17, 23; 2 Kgs 4, 36. m 1, 68; 19, 44. n Mt 11, 2–6. o Mal 3, 1; Rv 1, 4.8; 4, 8. p 4, 18; Is 35, 5–6; 61, 1. q Mt 11, 7–15. r 1, 76. s Mal 3, 1 / Is 40, 3. t 3, 7.12; Mt 21, 32. u Mt 11, 16–19. v 15, 2.

and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and
sinners.' [35]But wisdom is vindicated by all her
children."

**The Pardon of the Sinful Woman** [36 w]*A
Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he
entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at
table. [37 x y]Now there was a sinful woman in the
city who learned that he was at table in the
house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask
of ointment, [38]she stood behind him at his feet
weeping and began to bathe his feet with her
tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed
them, and anointed them with the ointment.
[39]When the Pharisee who had invited him saw
this he said to himself, "If this man were a
prophet, he would know who and what sort of
woman this is who is touching him, that she is a
sinner." [40]Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I
have something to say to you." "Tell me,
teacher," he said. [41]*"Two people were in debt
to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred
days' wages and the other owed fifty. [42]Since
they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it
for both. Which of them will love him more?"
[43]Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose,
whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him,
"You have judged rightly." [44]Then he turned to
the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this
woman? When I entered your house, you did
not give me water for my feet, but she has
bathed them with her tears and wiped them
with her hair. [45]You did not give me a kiss, but
she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time
I entered. [46]You did not anoint my head with oil,
but she anointed my feet with ointment. [47]*So I
tell you, her many sins have been forgiven;
hence, she has shown great love. But the one to
whom little is forgiven, loves little." [48 z]He said
to her, "Your sins are forgiven." [49 a]The others at
table said to themselves, "Who is this who even
forgives sins?" [50]But he said to the woman,
"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 7–9
See RG
428–429

**Galilean Women Follow Jesus** [1 b]*Afterward
he journeyed from one town and village to
another, preaching and proclaiming the good
news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying
him were the Twelve [2 c]and some women who
had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities,
Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven
demons had gone out, [3]Joanna, the wife of
Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many
others who provided for them out of their
resources.

**The Parable of the Sower** [4 d]*When a large
crowd gathered, with people from one town
after another journeying to him, he spoke in a
parable. [5]"A sower went out to sow his seed.
And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and
was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up.
[6]Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it

**7, 36–50:** In this story of the pardoning of the sinful woman Luke presents two different reactions to the ministry of Jesus. A Pharisee, suspecting Jesus to be a prophet, invites Jesus to a festive banquet in his house, but the Pharisee's self-righteousness leads to little forgiveness by God and consequently little love shown toward Jesus. The sinful woman, on the other hand, manifests a faith in God (50) that has led her to seek forgiveness for her sins, and because so much was forgiven, she now overwhelms Jesus with her display of love; cf the similar contrast in attitudes in 18, 9–14. The whole episode is a powerful lesson on the relation between forgiveness and love.

**7, 36: Reclined at table:** the normal posture of guests at a banquet. Other oriental banquet customs alluded to in this story include the reception by the host with a kiss (45), washing the feet of the guests (44), and the anointing of the guests' heads (46).

**7, 41: Days' wages:** one denarius is the normal daily wage of a laborer.

**7, 47: Her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love:** literally, "her many sins have been forgiven, seeing that she has loved much." That the woman's sins have been forgiven is attested by the great love she shows toward Jesus. Her love is the consequence of her forgiveness. This is also the meaning demanded by the parable in vv 41–43.

**8, 1–3:** Luke presents Jesus as an itinerant preacher traveling in the company of the Twelve and of the Galilean women who are sustaining them out of their means. These Galilean women will later accompany Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem and become witnesses to his death (23, 49) and resurrection (24, 9–11, where Mary Magdalene and Joanna are specifically mentioned; cf also Acts 1, 14). The association of women with the ministry of Jesus is most unusual in the light of the attitude of first-century Palestinian Judaism toward women. The more common attitude is expressed in Jn 4, 27, and early rabbinic documents caution against speaking with women in public.

**8, 4–21:** The focus in this section is on how one should hear the word of God and act on it. It includes the parable of the sower and its explanation (4–15), a collection of sayings on how one should act on the word that is heard (16–18), and the identification of the mother and brothers of Jesus as the ones who hear the word and act on it (19–21). See also the notes on Mt 13, 1–53 and Mk 4, 1–34.

**8, 4–8:** See the note on Mt 13, 3–8.

w 11, 37; 14, 1. x Mt 26, 7; Mk 14, 3. y Jn 12, 3. z 5, 20; Mt 9, 20; Mk 2, 5. a 5, 21. b 4,43. c 23, 49; 24, 10; Mt 27, 55–56; Mk 15, 40–41; Jn 19, 5. d Mt 13, 1–9; Mk 4, 1–9.

grew, it withered for lack of moisture. 7Some
seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew
with it and choked it. 8 [e]And some seed fell on
good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a
hundredfold." After saying this, he called out,
"Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

**The Purpose of the Parables** 9[f]Then his
disciples asked him what the meaning of this
parable might be. 10 [g]He answered, "Knowledge
of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been
granted to you; but to the rest, they are made
known through parables so that 'they may look
but not see, and hear but not understand.'

**The Parable of the Sower Explained**
11 [h i]*"This is the meaning of the parable. The
seed is the word of God. 12Those on the path are
the ones who have heard, but the devil comes
and takes away the word from their hearts that
they may not believe and be saved. 13Those on
rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear,
receive the word with joy, but they have no
root; they believe only for a time and fall away in
time of trial. 14As for the seed that fell among
thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as
they go along, they are choked by the anxieties
and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to
produce mature fruit. 15But as for the seed that
fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when
they have heard the word, embrace it with a
generous and good heart, and bear fruit through
perseverance.

**The Parable of the Lamp** 16 [j k]*"No one who
lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it
under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand
so that those who enter may see the light. 17 [l]For
there is nothing hidden that will not become
visible, and nothing secret that will not be
known and come to light. 18 [m]Take care, then,
how you hear. To anyone who has, more will be
given, and from the one who has not, even what
he seems to have will be taken away."

**Jesus and His Family** 19 [n]*Then his mother
and his brothers came to him but were unable to
join him because of the crowd. 20 [o]He was told,
"Your mother and your brothers are standing
outside and they wish to see you." 21*He said to
them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are
those who hear the word of God and act on it."

**The Calming of a Storm at Sea** 22 [p]*One day
he got into a boat with his disciples and said to
them, "Let us cross to the other side of the lake."
So they set sail, 23and while they were sailing he
fell asleep. A squall blew over the lake, and they
were taking in water and were in danger. 24They
came and woke him saying, "Master, master, we
are perishing!" He awakened, rebuked the wind
and the waves, and they subsided and there was
a calm. 25Then he asked them, "Where is your
faith?" But they were filled with awe and
amazed and said to one another, "Who then is
this, who commands even the winds and the
sea, and they obey him?"

**The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac**
26 [q]*Then they sailed to the territory of the
Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27When
he came ashore a man from the town who was
possessed by demons met him. For a long time
he had not worn clothes; he did not live in a
house, but lived among the tombs. 28 [r]When he
saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before

**8, 11–15:** On the interpretation of the parable of the sower, see the note on Mt 13, 18–23.

**8, 16–18:** These sayings continue the theme of responding to the word of God. Those who hear the word must become a light to others (16); even the mysteries of the kingdom that have been made known to the disciples (9–10) must come to light (17); a generous and persevering response to the word of God leads to a still more perfect response to the word.

**8, 19: His brothers:** see the note on Mk 6, 3.

**8, 21:** The family of Jesus is not constituted by physical relationship with him but by obedience to the word of God. In this, Luke agrees with the Marcan parallel (3, 31–35), although by omitting Mk 3, 33 and especially Mk 3, 20–21 Luke has softened the Marcan picture of Jesus' natural family. Probably he did this because Mary has already been presented in 1, 38 as the obedient handmaid of the Lord who fulfills the requirement for belonging to the eschatological family of Jesus; cf also 11, 27–28.

**8, 22–56:** This section records four miracles of Jesus that manifest his power and authority: (1) the calming of a storm on the lake (22–25); (2) the exorcism of a demoniac (26–39); (3) the cure of a hemorrhaging woman (40–48); (4) the raising of Jairus's daughter to life (49–56). They parallel the same sequence of stories at Mk 4, 35—5, 43.

**8, 26: Gerasenes:** other manuscripts read Gadarenes or Gergesenes. See also the note on Mt 8, 28. **Opposite Galilee:** probably Gentile territory (note the presence in the area of pigs—unclean animals to Jews) and an indication that the person who receives salvation (36) is a Gentile.

e 14, 35; Mt 11, 15; 13, 43; Mk 4, 23. f Mt 13, 10–13; Mk 4, 10–12. g Is 6, 9. h Mt 13, 18–23; Mk 4, 13–20. i 1 Pt 1, 23. j Mk 4, 21–25. k 11, 33; Mt 5, 15. l 12, 2; Mt 10, 26. m 19, 26; Mt 13, 12; 25, 29. n Mt 12, 46–50; Mk 3, 31–35. o 11, 27–28. p Mt 8, 18.23–27; Mk 4, 35–41. q Mt 8, 28–34; Mk 5, 1–20. r 4, 33–35; Mt 8, 29; Mk 1, 23–24.

him; in a loud voice he shouted, "What have
you to do with me, Jesus, son of the Most High
God? I beg you, do not torment me!" [29]For he
had ordered the unclean spirit to come out of
the man. (It had taken hold of him many times,
and he used to be bound with chains and
shackles as a restraint, but he would break his
bonds and be driven by the demon into de-
serted places.) [30]*Then Jesus asked him, "What
is your name?" He replied, "Legion," because
many demons had entered him. [31]*And they
pleaded with him not to order them to depart
to the abyss.

[32]A herd of many swine was feeding there on
the hillside, and they pleaded with him to allow
them to enter those swine; and he let them.
[33]The demons came out of the man and entered
the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep
bank into the lake and was drowned. [34]When
the swineherds saw what had happened, they
ran away and reported the incident in the town
and throughout the countryside. [35]*People came
out to see what had happened and, when they
approached Jesus, they discovered the man from
whom the demons had come out sitting at his
feet. He was clothed and in his right mind, and
they were seized with fear. [36]Those who wit-
nessed it told them how the possessed man had
been saved. [37]The entire population of the
region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave
them because they were seized with great fear.
So he got into a boat and returned. [38]The man
from whom the demons had come out begged to
remain with him, but he sent him away, saying,
[39]"Return home and recount what God has done
for you." The man went off and proclaimed
throughout the whole town what Jesus had done
for him.

**Jairus's Daughter and the Woman with a Hemorrhage** [40 s]*When Jesus returned, the
crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting
for him. [41]And a man named Jairus, an official of
the synagogue, came forward. He fell at the feet
of Jesus and begged him to come to his house,
[42]*because he had an only daughter, about
twelve years old, and she was dying. As he
went, the crowds almost crushed him. [43]*And a
woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve
years, who [had spent her whole livelihood on
doctors and] was unable to be cured by anyone,
[44]came up behind him and touched the tassel on
his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped.
[45]Jesus then asked, "Who touched me?" While
all were denying it, Peter said, "Master, the
crowds are pushing and pressing in upon you."
[46 t]But Jesus said, "Someone has touched me; for
I know that power has gone out from me."
[47]When the woman realized that she had not
escaped notice, she came forward trembling.
Falling down before him, she explained in the
presence of all the people why she had touched
him and how she had been healed immediately.
[48 u]He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has
saved you; go in peace."

[49]While he was still speaking, someone from
the synagogue official's house arrived and said,
"Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the
teacher any longer." [50]On hearing this, Jesus
answered him, "Do not be afraid; just have faith
and she will be saved." [51]When he arrived at the
house he allowed no one to enter with him
except Peter and John and James, and the child's
father and mother. [52 v]*All were weeping and
mourning for her, when he said, "Do not weep
any longer, for she is not dead, but sleeping."
[53]And they ridiculed him, because they knew

**8, 30: What is your name?:** the question reflects the popular belief that knowledge of the spirit's name brought control over the spirit. **Legion:** to Jesus' question the demon replies with a Latin word transliterated into Greek. The Roman legion at this period consisted of 5,000 to 6,000 foot soldiers; hence the name implies a very large number of demons.

**8, 31: Abyss:** the place of the dead (Rom 10, 7) or the prison of Satan (Rv 20, 3) or the subterranean "watery deep" that symbolizes the chaos before the order imposed by creation (Gn 1, 2).

**8, 35: Sitting at his feet:** the former demoniac takes the position of a disciple before the master (10, 39; Acts 22, 3).

**8, 40–56:** Two interwoven miracle stories, one a healing and the other a resuscitation, present Jesus as master over sickness and death. In the Lucan account, faith in Jesus is responsible for the cure (48) and for the raising to life (50).

**8, 42: An only daughter:** cf the son of the widow of Nain whom Luke describes as an "only" son (7, 12; see also 9, 38).

**8, 43: Afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years:** according to the Mosaic law (Lv 15, 25–30) this condition would render the woman unclean and unfit for contact with other people.

**8, 52: Sleeping:** her death is a temporary condition; cf Jn 11, 11–14.

s Mt 9, 18–26; Mk 5, 21–43. t 6, 19. u 7, 50; 17, 19; 18, 42. v 7, 13.

that she was dead. 54But he took her by the
hand and called to her, "Child, arise!" 55Her
breath returned and she immediately arose. He
then directed that she should be given some-
thing to eat. 56Her parents were astounded, and
he instructed them to tell no one what had
happened.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9-19
See RG
429-431

**The Mission of the Twelve** 1 w*He sum-
moned the Twelve and gave them power and
authority over all demons and to cure diseases,
2and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of
God and to heal [the sick]. 3*He said to them,
"Take nothing for the journey, neither walking
stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no
one take a second tunic. 4 xWhatever house you
enter, stay there and leave from there. 5 y*And as
for those who do not welcome you, when you
leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in
testimony against them." 6Then they set out and
went from village to village proclaiming the good
news and curing diseases everywhere.

**Herod's Opinion of Jesus** 7 z a*Herod the te-
trarch heard about all that was happening, and
he was greatly perplexed because some were
saying, "John has been raised from the dead";
8others were saying, "Elijah has appeared"; still
others, "One of the ancient prophets has arisen."
9 b*But Herod said, "John I beheaded. Who then
is this about whom I hear such things?" And he
kept trying to see him.

**The Return of the Twelve and the Feeding of the Five Thousand** 10 cWhen the apostles
returned, they explained to him what they had
done. He took them and withdrew in private to
a town called Bethsaida. 11The crowds, mean-
while, learned of this and followed him. He
received them and spoke to them about the
kingdom of God, and he healed those who
needed to be cured. 12As the day was drawing to
a close, the Twelve approached him and said,
"Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the
surrounding villages and farms and find lodging
and provisions; for we are in a deserted place
here." 13 dHe said to them, "Give them some
food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and
two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go
and buy food for all these people." 14Now the
men there numbered about five thousand. Then
he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in
groups of [about] fifty." 15They did so and made
them all sit down. 16 e*Then taking the five
loaves and the two fish, and looking up to
heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke
them, and gave them to the disciples to set
before the crowd. 17They all ate and were
satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were
picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

**Peter's Confession about Jesus** 18 f*Once
when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the
disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who
do the crowds say that I am?" 19 gThey said in
reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still

**9, 1–6:** Armed with the power and authority that Jesus himself has been displaying in the previous episodes, the Twelve are now sent out to continue the work that Jesus has been performing throughout his Galilean ministry: (1) proclaiming the kingdom (4, 43; 8, 1); (2) exorcising demons (4, 33–37.41; 8, 26–39) and (3) healing the sick (4, 38–40; 5, 12–16.17–26; 6, 6–10; 7, 1–10.17.22; 8, 40–56).

**9, 3: Take nothing for the journey:** the absolute detachment required of the disciple (14, 33) leads to complete reliance on God (12, 22–31).

**9, 5: Shake the dust from your feet:** see the note on Mt 10, 14.

**9, 7–56:** This section in which Luke gathers together incidents that focus on the identity of Jesus is introduced by a question that Herod is made to ask in this gospel: "Who then is this about whom I hear such things?" (9). In subsequent episodes, Luke reveals to the reader various answers to Herod's question: Jesus is one in whom God's power is present and who provides for the needs of God's people (10–17); Peter declares Jesus to be "the Messiah of God" (18–21); Jesus says he is the suffering Son of Man (22.43–45); Jesus is the Master to be followed, even to death (23–27); Jesus is God's Son, his Chosen One (28–36).

**9, 7: Herod the tetrarch:** see the note on 3, 1.

**9, 9: And he kept trying to see him:** this indication of Herod's interest in Jesus prepares for 13, 31–33 and for 23, 8–12 where Herod's curiosity about Jesus' power to perform miracles remains unsatisfied.

**9, 16: Then taking . . . :** the actions of Jesus recall the institution of the Eucharist in 22, 19; see also the note on Mt 14, 19.

**9, 18–22:** This incident is based on Mk 8, 27–33, but Luke has eliminated Peter's refusal to accept Jesus as suffering Son of Man (Mk 8, 32) and the rebuke of Peter by Jesus (Mk 8, 33). Elsewhere in the gospel, Luke softens the harsh portrait of Peter and the other apostles found in his Marcan source (cf 22, 39–46, which similarly lacks a rebuke of Peter that occurs in the source, Mk 14, 37–38).

**9, 18: When Jesus was praying in solitude:** see the note on 3, 21.

w Mt 10, 1.5–15; Mk 6, 7–13. x 10, 5–7. y 10, 10–11; Acts 13, 51. z Mt 14, 1–12; Mk 6, 14–29. a 9, 19; Mt 16, 14; Mk 8, 28. b 23, 8. c Mt 14, 13–21; Mk 6, 30–44; Jn 6, 1–14. d 2 Kgs 4, 42–44. e 22, 19; 24, 30–31; Acts 2, 42; 20, 11; 27, 35. f Mt 16, 13–20; Mk 8, 27–30. g 9, 7–8.

others, 'One of the ancient prophets has
arisen.' " 20*Then he said to them, "But who do
you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The
Messiah of God." 21He rebuked them and di-
rected them not to tell this to anyone.

**The First Prediction of the Passion** 22 *h*He
said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be
rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the
scribes, and be killed and on the third day be
raised."

**The Conditions of Discipleship** 23 *i j**Then
he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after
me, he must deny himself and take up his cross
daily and follow me. 24 *k*For whoever wishes to
save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life
for my sake will save it. 25What profit is there for
one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit
himself? 26 *l*Whoever is ashamed of me and of
my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of
when he comes in his glory and in the glory of
the Father and of the holy angels. 27Truly I say to
you, there are some standing here who will not
taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

**The Transfiguration of Jesus** 28 *m**About
eight days after he said this, he took Peter, John,
and James and went up the mountain to pray.
29While he was praying his face changed in
appearance and his clothing became dazzling
white. 30*And behold, two men were convers-
ing with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 *n**who ap-
peared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he
was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. 32 *o**Peter
and his companions had been overcome by
sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his
glory and the two men standing with him. 33*As
they were about to part from him, Peter said to
Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us
make three tents, one for you, one for Moses,
and one for Elijah." But he did not know what
he was saying. 34*While he was still speaking, a
cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and
they became frightened when they entered the
cloud. 35 *p**Then from the cloud came a voice
that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."
36*After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found
alone. They fell silent and did not at that time
tell anyone what they had seen.

**The Healing of a Boy with a Demon** 37 *q**On
the next day, when they came down from the
mountain, a large crowd met him. 38There was a
man in the crowd who cried out, "Teacher, I beg
you, look at my son; he is my only child. 39For a
spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams and it
convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it
releases him only with difficulty, wearing him
out. 40I begged your disciples to cast it out but
they could not." 41Jesus said in reply, "O faith-
less and perverse generation, how long will I be
with you and endure you? Bring your son here."
42As he was coming forward, the demon threw

**9, 20: The Messiah of God:** on the meaning of this title in first-century Palestinian Judaism, see the notes on 2, 11 and on Mt 16, 13–20 and Mk 8, 27–30.

**9, 23: Daily:** this is a Lucan addition to a saying of Jesus, removing the saying from a context that envisioned the imminent suffering and death of the disciple of Jesus (as does the saying in Mk 8, 34–35) to one that focuses on the demands of daily Christian existence.

**9, 28–36:** Situated shortly after the first announcement of the passion, death, and resurrection, this scene of Jesus' transfiguration provides the heavenly confirmation to Jesus' declaration that his suffering will end in glory (32); see also the notes on Mt 17, 1–8 and Mk 9, 2–8.

**9, 28: Up the mountain to pray:** the "mountain" is the regular place of prayer in Lk (see 6, 12; 22, 39–41).

**9, 30: Moses and Elijah:** the two figures represent the Old Testament law and the prophets. At the end of this episode, the heavenly voice will identify Jesus as the one to be listened to now (35). See also the note on Mk 9, 5.

**9, 31: His exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem:** Luke identifies the subject of the conversation as the **exodus** of Jesus, a reference to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus that will take place in Jerusalem, the city of destiny (see 9, 51). The mention of **exodus,** however, also calls to mind the Israelite Exodus from Egypt to the promised land.

**9, 32: They saw his glory:** the **glory** that is proper to God is here attributed to Jesus (see 24, 26).

**9, 33: Let us make three tents:** in a possible allusion to the feast of Tabernacles, Peter may be likening his joy on the occasion of the transfiguration to the joyful celebration of this harvest festival.

**9, 34: Over them:** it is not clear whether **them** refers to Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, or to the disciples. For the cloud casting its shadow, see the note on Mk 9, 7.

**9, 35:** Like the heavenly voice that identified Jesus at his baptism prior to his undertaking the Galilean ministry (3, 22), so too here before the journey to the city of destiny is begun (51) the heavenly voice again identifies Jesus as Son. **Listen to him:** the two representatives of Israel of old depart (33) and Jesus is left alone (36) as the teacher whose words must be heeded (see also Acts 3, 22).

**9, 36: At that time:** i.e., before the resurrection.

**9, 37–43a:** See the note on Mk 9, 14–29.

h 24, 7.26; Mt 16, 21; 20, 18–19; Mk 8, 31; 10, 33–34. i Mt 16, 24–28; Mk 8, 34—9, 1. j 14, 27; Mt 10, 38. k 17, 33; Mt 10, 39; Jn 12, 25. l 12, 9; Mt 10, 33; 2 Tm 2, 12. m Mt 17, 1–8; Mk 9, 2–8. n 9, 22; 13, 33. o Jn 1, 14; 2 Pt 1, 16. p 3, 22; Dt 18, 15; Ps 2, 7; Is 42, 1; Mt 3, 17; 12, 18; Mk 1, 11;2 Pt 1, 17–18. q Mt 17, 14–18; Mk 9, 14–27.

him to the ground in a convulsion; but Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and returned him to his father. 43 [r]And all were astonished by the majesty of God.

**The Second Prediction of the Passion**

While they were all amazed at his every deed, he said to his disciples, 44"Pay attention to what I am telling you. The Son of Man is to be handed over to men." 45But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was hidden from them so that they should not understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

**The Greatest in the Kingdom** 46 [s t]*An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. 47Jesus realized the intention of their hearts and took a child and placed it by his side 48 [u]and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest."

**Another Exorcist** 49 [v]Then John said in reply, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company." 50Jesus said to him, "Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you."

## V: The Journey to Jerusalem: Luke's Travel Narrative

**Departure for Jerusalem; Samaritan Inhospitality** 51 [w]*When the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, 52 [x]*and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, 53but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. 54 [y]When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" 55Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56and they journeyed to another village.

**The Would-be Followers of Jesus** 57 [z]*As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." 59And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "[Lord,] let me go first and bury my father." 60*But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 [a]And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." 62[To him] Jesus said, "No one who sets a

**9, 46–50:** These two incidents focus on attitudes that are opposed to Christian discipleship: rivalry and intolerance of outsiders.

**9, 51—18, 14:** The Galilean ministry of Jesus finishes with the previous episode and a new section of Luke's gospel begins, the journey to Jerusalem. This journey is based on Mk 10, 1–52, but Luke uses his Marcan source only in 18, 15—19, 27. Before that point he has inserted into his gospel a distinctive collection of sayings of Jesus and stories about him that he has drawn from Q, a collection of sayings of Jesus used also by Matthew, and from his own special traditions. All of the material collected in this section is loosely organized within the framework of a journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, the city of destiny, where his exodus (suffering, death, resurrection, ascension) is to take place (9, 31), where salvation is accomplished, and from where the proclamation of God's saving word is to go forth (24, 47; Acts 1, 8). Much of the material in the Lucan travel narrative is teaching for the disciples. During the course of this journey Jesus is preparing his chosen Galilean witnesses for the role they will play after his exodus (9, 31): they are to be his witnesses to the people (Acts 10, 39; 13, 31) and thereby provide certainty to the readers of Luke's gospel that the teachings they have received are rooted in the teachings of Jesus (1, 1–4).

**9, 51–55:** Just as the Galilean ministry began with a rejection of Jesus in his hometown, so too the travel narrative begins with the rejection of him by Samaritans. In this episode Jesus disassociates himself from the attitude expressed by his disciples that those who reject him are to be punished severely. The story alludes to 2 Kgs 1, 10.12, where the prophet Elijah takes the course of action Jesus rejects, and Jesus thereby rejects the identification of himself with Elijah.

**9, 51: Days for his being taken up:** like the reference to his exodus in v 31, this is probably a reference to all the events (suffering, death, resurrection, ascension) of his last days in Jerusalem. **He resolutely determined:** literally, "he set his face."

**9, 52: Samaritan:** Samaria was the territory between Judea and Galilee west of the Jordan river. For ethnic and religious reasons, the Samaritans and the Jews were bitterly opposed to one another (see Jn 4, 9).

**9, 57–62:** In these sayings Jesus speaks of the severity and the unconditional nature of Christian discipleship. Even family ties and filial obligations, such as burying one's parents, cannot distract one no matter how briefly from proclaiming the kingdom of God. The first two sayings are paralleled in Mt 8, 19–22; see also the notes there.

**9, 60: Let the dead bury their dead:** i.e., let the spiritually dead (those who do not follow) bury their physically dead. See also the note on Mt 8, 22.

r 18, 32–34; Mt 17, 22–23; Mk 9, 30–32. s Mt 18, 1–5; Mk 9, 33–37. t 22, 24. u 10, 16; Mt 10, 40; Jn 13, 20. v Mk 9, 38–40. w 9, 53; 13, 22.33; 17, 11; 18, 31; 19, 28; 24, 51; Acts 1, 2.9–11.22. x Mal 3, 1. y 2 Kgs 1, 10.12. z Mt 8, 19–22. a 1 Kgs 19, 20.

hand to the plow and looks to what was left
behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

## CHAPTER 10

**The Mission of the Seventy-two** 1 [b]*After
this the Lord appointed seventy[-two] others
whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every
town and place he intended to visit. 2 [c]He said to
them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers
are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send
out laborers for his harvest. 3 [d]Go on your way;
behold, I am sending you like lambs among
wolves. 4 [e f]*Carry no money bag, no sack, no
sandals; and greet no one along the way. 5*Into
whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to
this household.' 6*If a peaceful person lives
there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it
will return to you. 7 [g]Stay in the same house and
eat and drink what is offered to you, for the
laborer deserves his payment. Do not move
about from one house to another. 8 [h]Whatever
town you enter and they welcome you, eat what
is set before you, 9 [i]cure the sick in it and say to
them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.'
10 [j]Whatever town you enter and they do not
receive you, go out into the streets and say,
11 [k]'The dust of your town that clings to our feet,
even that we shake off against you.' Yet know
this: the kingdom of God is at hand. 12 [l]I tell you,
it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day
than for that town.

**Reproaches to Unrepentant Towns**
13 [m n]*"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you,
Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your
midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they
would long ago have repented, sitting in sack-
cloth and ashes. 14But it will be more tolerable
for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.
15 [o]*And as for you, Capernaum, 'Will you be
exalted to heaven? You will go down to the
netherworld.' " 16 [p]Whoever listens to you lis-
tens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And
whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent
me."

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**Return of the Seventy-two** 17The seventy
[-two] returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even
the demons are subject to us because of your
name." 18 [q]*Jesus said, "I have observed Satan
fall like lightning from the sky. 19 [r]Behold, I have
given you the power 'to tread upon serpents'
and scorpions and upon the full force of the
enemy and nothing will harm you.
20 [s]Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the
spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because
your names are written in heaven."

**Praise of the Father** 21 [t u]*At that very mo-
ment he rejoiced [in] the holy Spirit and said, "I
give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and
earth, for although you have hidden these things
from the wise and the learned you have revealed
them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been
your gracious will. 22 [v]All things have been

**10, 1–12:** Only the Gospel of Luke contains two episodes in which Jesus sends out his followers on a mission: the first (9, 1–6) is based on the mission in Mk 6, 6b-13 and recounts the sending out of the Twelve; here in vv 1–12 a similar report based on Q becomes the sending out of seventy-two in this gospel. The episode continues the theme of Jesus preparing witnesses to himself and his ministry. These witnesses include not only the Twelve but also the seventy-two who may represent the Christian mission in Luke's own day. Note that the instructions given to the Twelve and to the seventy-two are similar and that what is said to the seventy-two in v 4 is directed to the Twelve in 22, 35.

**10, 1: Seventy[-two]:** important representatives of the Alexandrian and Caesarean text types read "seventy," while other important Alexandrian texts and Western readings have "seventy-two."

**10, 4: Carry no money bag . . . greet no one along the way:** because of the urgency of the mission and the singlemindedness required of missionaries, attachment to material possessions should be avoided and even customary greetings should not distract from the fulfillment of the task.

**10, 5: First say, 'Peace to this household':** see the notes on 2, 14 and Mt 10, 13.

**10, 6: A peaceful person:** literally, "a son of peace."

**10, 13–16:** The call to repentance that is a part of the proclamation of the kingdom brings with it a severe judgment for those who hear it and reject it.

**10, 15: The netherworld:** the underworld, the place of the dead (Acts 2, 27.31), here contrasted with heaven; see also the note on Mt 11, 23.

**10, 18: I have observed Satan fall like lightning:** the effect of the mission of the seventy-two is characterized by the Lucan Jesus as a symbolic fall of Satan. As the kingdom of God is gradually being established, evil in all its forms is being defeated; the dominion of Satan over humanity is at an end.

**10, 21: Revealed them to the childlike:** a restatement of the theme announced in 8, 10: the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed to the disciples. See also the note on Mt 11, 25–27.

b Mk 6, 7. c Mt 9, 37–38; Jn 4, 35. d Mt 10, 16. e 9, 3; 2 Kgs 4, 29. f Mt 10, 7–14. g 9, 4; Mt 10, 10; 1 Cor 9, 6–14; 1 Tm 5, 18. h 1 Cor 10, 27. i Mt 3, 2; 4, 17; Mk 1, 15. j 9, 5. k Acts 13, 51; 18, 6. l Mt 10, 15; 11, 24. m Mt 11, 20–24. n Is 23; Ez 26–28; Jl 3, 4–8; Am 1, 1–10; Zec 9, 2–4. o Is 14, 13–15. p Mt 10, 40; Jn 5, 23; 13, 20; 15, 23. q Is 14, 12; Jn 12, 31; Rv 12, 7–12. r Ps 19, 13; Mk 16, 18. s Ex 32, 32; Dn 12, 1; Mt 7, 22; Phil 4, 3; Heb 12, 23; Rv 3, 5; 21, 27. t Mt 11, 25–27. u 1 Cor 1, 26–28. v Jn 3, 35; 10, 15.

handed over to me by my Father. No one knows
who the Son is except the Father, and who the
Father is except the Son and anyone to whom
the Son wishes to reveal him."

**The Privileges of Discipleship** 23 [w]Turning to
the disciples in private he said, "Blessed are the
eyes that see what you see. 24For I say to you,
many prophets and kings desired to see what
you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you
hear, but did not hear it."

**The Greatest Commandment** 25 [x y]*There
was a scholar of the law who stood up to test
him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to
inherit eternal life?" 26Jesus said to him, "What
is written in the law? How do you read it?"
27 [z]He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord,
your God, with all your heart, with all your
being, with all your strength, and with all your
mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 [a]He
replied to him, "You have answered correctly;
do this and you will live."

**The Parable of the Good Samaritan** 29But
because he wished to justify himself, he said to
Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30Jesus re-
plied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went
down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped
and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.
31*A priest happened to be going down that
road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the
opposite side. 32Likewise a Levite came to the
place, and when he saw him, he passed by on
the opposite side. 33But a Samaritan traveler
who came upon him was moved with compas-
sion at the sight. 34He approached the victim,
poured oil and wine over his wounds and
bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his
own animal, took him to an inn and cared for
him. 35The next day he took out two silver coins
and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruc-
tion, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than
what I have given you, I shall repay you on my
way back.' 36Which of these three, in your
opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?"
37He answered, "The one who treated him with
mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

**Martha and Mary** 38 [b]*As they continued their
journey he entered a village where a woman
whose name was Martha welcomed him. 39*She
had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the
Lord at his feet listening to him speak. 40Martha,
burdened with much serving, came to him and
said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has
left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to
help me." 41The Lord said to her in reply,
"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried
about many things. 42*There is need of only one
thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will
not be taken from her."

## CHAPTER 11

**The Lord's Prayer** 1 [c]*He was praying in a
certain place, and when he had finished, one of

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**10, 25–37:** In response to a question from a Jewish legal expert about inheriting eternal life, Jesus illustrates the superiority of love over legalism through the story of the good Samaritan. The law of love proclaimed in the "Sermon on the Plain" (6, 27–36) is exemplified by one whom the legal expert would have considered ritually impure (see Jn 4, 9). Moreover, the identity of the "neighbor" requested by the legal expert (29) turns out to be a Samaritan, the enemy of the Jew (see the note on 9, 52).

**10, 25: Scholar of the law:** an expert in the Mosaic law, and probably a member of the group elsewhere identified as the scribes (5, 21).

**10, 31–32: Priest . . . Levite:** those religious representatives of Judaism who would have been expected to be models of "neighbor" to the victim pass him by.

**10, 38–42:** The story of Martha and Mary further illustrates the importance of hearing the words of the teacher and the concern with women in Lk.

**10, 39: Sat beside the Lord at his feet:** it is remarkable for first-century Palestinian Judaism that a woman would assume the posture of a disciple at the master's feet (see also 8, 35; Acts 22, 3), and it reveals a characteristic attitude of Jesus toward women in this gospel (see 8, 2–3).

**10, 42: There is need of only one thing:** some ancient versions read, "there is need of few things"; another important, although probably inferior, reading found in some manuscripts is, "there is need of few things, or of one."

**11, 1–13:** Luke presents three episodes concerned with prayer. The first (1–4) recounts Jesus teaching his disciples the Christian communal prayer, the "Our Father"; the second (5–8), the importance of persistence in prayer; the third (9–13), the effectiveness of prayer.

**11, 1–4:** The Matthean form of the "Our Father" occurs in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 6, 9–15); the shorter Lucan version is presented while Jesus is at prayer (see the note on 3, 21) and his disciples ask him to teach them to pray just as John taught his disciples to pray. In answer to their question, Jesus presents them with an example of a Christian communal prayer that stresses the fatherhood of God and acknowledges him as the one to whom the Christian disciple owes daily sustenance (3), forgiveness (4), and deliverance from the final trial (4). See also the notes on Mt 6, 9–13.

w Mt 13, 16–17. x Mt 22, 34–40; Mk 12, 28–34. y 18, 18; Mt 19, 16; Mk 10, 17. z Lv 19, 18; Dt 6, 5; 10, 12; Jos 22, 5; Mt 19, 19; 22, 37–39; Rom 13, 9; Gal 5, 14; Jas 2, 8. a Lv 18, 5; Prv 19, 16; Rom 10, 5; Gal 3, 12. b Jn 11, 1; 12, 2–3. c Mt 6, 9–15.

his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray
just as John taught his disciples." 2*He said to
them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
3 *Give us each day our daily bread
4 and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to
us,
and do not subject us to the final test."

**Further Teachings on Prayer** 5 *d*And he said
to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to
whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend,
lend me three loaves of bread, 6for a friend of
mine has arrived at my house from a journey and
I have nothing to offer him,' 7and he says in
reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door
has already been locked and my children and I
are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you
anything.' 8I tell you, if he does not get up to
give him the loaves because of their friendship,
he will get up to give him whatever he needs
because of his persistence.

**The Answer to Prayer** 9 *ef*"And I tell you, ask
and you will receive; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you. 10For
everyone who asks, receives; and the one who
seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the
door will be opened. 11What father among you
would hand his son a snake when he asks for a
fish? 12Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for
an egg? 13*If you then, who are wicked, know
how to give good gifts to your children, how
much more will the Father in heaven give the
holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

**Jesus and Beelzebul** 14 *g*He was driving out a
demon [that was] mute, and when the demon
had gone out, the mute person spoke and the
crowds were amazed. 15 *h*Some of them said,
"By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of
demons, he drives out demons." 16 *i*Others, to
test him, asked him for a sign from heaven.
17But he knew their thoughts and said to them,
"Every kingdom divided against itself will be
laid waste and house will fall against house.
18And if Satan is divided against himself, how
will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by
Beelzebul that I drive out demons. 19*If I, then,
drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do
your own people drive them out? Therefore
they will be your judges. 20 *j*But if it is by the
finger of God that [I] drive out demons, then
the kingdom of God has come upon you.
21When a strong man fully armed guards his
palace, his possessions are safe. 22*But when
one stronger than he attacks and overcomes
him, he takes away the armor on which he
relied and distributes the spoils. 23 *k*Whoever is
not with me is against me, and whoever does
not gather with me scatters.

**The Return of the Unclean Spirit** 24 *l*"When
an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams
through arid regions searching for rest but,
finding none, it says, 'I shall return to my home
from which I came.' 25But upon returning, it
finds it swept clean and put in order. 26 *m*Then it
goes and brings back seven other spirits more
wicked than itself who move in and dwell there,
and the last condition of that person is worse
than the first."

**True Blessedness** 27 *n**While he was speaking,
a woman from the crowd called out and said to
him, "Blessed is the womb that carried you and
the breasts at which you nursed." 28He replied,

11, 2: **Your kingdom come:** in place of this petition, some early church Fathers record: "May your holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us," a petition that may reflect the use of the "Our Father" in a baptismal liturgy.

11, 3–4: **Daily bread:** see the note on Mt 6, 11. **The final test:** see the note on Mt 6, 13.

11, 13: **The holy Spirit:** this is a Lucan editorial alteration of a traditional saying of Jesus (see Mt 7, 11). Luke presents the gift of the holy Spirit as the response of the Father to the prayer of the Christian disciple.

11, 19: **Your own people:** the Greek reads "your sons." Other Jewish exorcists (see Acts 19, 13–20), who recognize that the power of God is active in the exorcism, would themselves convict the accusers of Jesus. See also the note on Mt 12, 27.

11, 22: **One stronger:** i.e., Jesus. Cf 3, 16 where John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "more powerful than I."

11, 27–28: The beatitude in v 28 should not be interpreted as a rebuke of the mother of Jesus; see the note on 8, 21. Rather, it emphasizes (like 2, 35) that attentiveness to God's word is more important than biological relationship to Jesus.

d 18, 1–5. e Mt 7, 7–11. f Mt 21, 22; Mk 11, 24; Jn 14, 13; 15, 7; 1 Jn 5, 14–15. g Mt 12, 22–30; Mk 3, 20–27. h Mt 9, 34. i Mt 12, 38; 16, 1; Mk 8, 11; 1 Cor 1, 22. j Ex 8, 19. k 9, 50; Mk 9, 40. l Mt 12, 43–45. m Jn 5, 14. n 1, 28.42.48.

"Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

**The Demand for a Sign** 29 [o] [p]*While still more people gathered in the crowd, he said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. 30 Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 [q]At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. 32 [r]At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.

**The Simile of Light** 33 [s]"No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it [under a bushel basket], but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light. 34 [t]The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is sound, then your whole body is filled with light, but when it is bad, then your body is in darkness. 35 Take care, then, that the light in you not become darkness. 36 If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is in darkness, then it will be as full of light as a lamp illuminating you with its brightness."

**Denunciation of the Pharisees and Scholars of the Law** 37 [u] [v]*After he had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. 38 [w]The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. 39 [x]The Lord said to him, "Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. 40 You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? 41 But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you. 42 [y]Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others. 43 [z]Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. 44 [a]*Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk."

45 [b]*Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, "Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too." 46 And he said, "Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them. 47 [c]Woe to you! You build the memorials of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. 48 Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed them and you do the building. 49 [d]*Therefore, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute' 50 in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, 51 [e]*from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with

**11, 29–32:** The "sign of Jonah" in Lk is the preaching of the need for repentance by a prophet who comes from afar. Cf Mt 12, 38–42 (and see the notes there) where the "sign of Jonah" is interpreted by Jesus as his death and resurrection.

**11, 37–54:** This denunciation of the Pharisees (39–44) and the scholars of the law (45–52) is set by Luke in the context of Jesus' dining at the home of a Pharisee. Controversies with or reprimands of Pharisees are regularly set by Luke within the context of Jesus' eating with Pharisees (see 5, 29–39; 7, 36–50; 14, 1–24). A different compilation of similar sayings is found in Mt 23 (see also the notes there).

**11, 44: Unseen graves:** contact with the dead or with human bones or graves (see Nm 19, 16) brought ritual impurity. Jesus presents the Pharisees as those who insidiously lead others astray through their seeming attention to the law.

**11, 45: Scholars of the law:** see the note on 10, 25.

**11, 49: I will send to them prophets and apostles:** Jesus connects the mission of the church (apostles) with the mission of the Old Testament prophets who often suffered the rebuke of their contemporaries.

**11, 51: From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah:** the murder of Abel is the first murder recounted in the Old Testament (Gn 4, 8). The Zechariah mentioned here may be the Zechariah whose murder is recounted in 2 Chr 24, 20–22, the last murder presented in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament.

o Mt 12, 38–42; Mk 8, 12. p Mt 16, 1.4; Jn 6, 30; 1 Cor 1, 22. q 1 Kgs 10, 1–10; 2 Chr 9, 1–12. r Jon 3, 8.10. s 8, 16; Mt 5, 15; Mk 4, 21. t Mt 6, 22–23. u 20, 45–47; Mt 23, 1–36; Mk 12, 38–40. v 7, 36; 14, 1. w Mt 15, 2; Mk 7, 2–5. x Mt 23, 25–26. y Lv 27, 30; Mt 23, 23. z 20, 46; Mt 23, 6; Mk 12, 38–39. a Mt 23, 27. b Mt 23, 4. c Mt 23, 29–32. d Mt 23, 34–36. e Gn 4, 8; 2 Chr 24, 20–22.

their blood! 52 *f*Woe to you, scholars of the law!
You have taken away the key of knowledge. You
yourselves did not enter and you stopped those
trying to enter." 53 *g*When he left, the scribes and
Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him
and to interrogate him about many things, 54 *h*for
they were plotting to catch him at something he
might say.

## CHAPTER 12

**The Leaven of the Pharisees** 1 *i**Meanwhile,
so many people were crowding together that
they were trampling one another underfoot. He
began to speak, first to his disciples, "Beware of
the leaven—that is, the hypocrisy—of the Phari-
sees.

**Courage under Persecution** 2 *j k**"There is
nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor
secret that will not be known. 3Therefore what-
ever you have said in the darkness will be heard
in the light, and what you have whispered
behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the
housetops. 4I tell you, my friends, do not be
afraid of those who kill the body but after that
can do no more. 5*I shall show you whom to
fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the
power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be
afraid of that one. 6*Are not five sparrows sold
for two small coins? Yet not one of them has
escaped the notice of God. 7 *l*Even the hairs of
your head have all been counted. Do not be
afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.
8I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me
before others the Son of Man will acknowledge
before the angels of God. 9 *m*But whoever denies
me before others will be denied before the
angels of God.

**Sayings about the holy Spirit** 10 *n**"Everyone
who speaks a word against the Son of Man will
be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against
the holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 *o*When
they take you before synagogues and before
rulers and authorities, do not worry about how
or what your defense will be or about what you
are to say. 12For the holy Spirit will teach you at
that moment what you should say."

**Saying against Greed** 13*Someone in the
crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to
share the inheritance with me." 14 *p*He replied to
him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge
and arbitrator?" 15 *q*Then he said to the crowd,
"Take care to guard against all greed, for though
one may be rich, one's life does not consist of
possessions."

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**Parable of the Rich Fool** 16Then he told them
a parable. "There was a rich man whose land
produced a bountiful harvest. 17He asked him-
self, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to
store my harvest?' 18And he said, 'This is what I
shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build
larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and
other goods 19 *r s*and I shall say to myself, "Now
as for you, you have so many good things stored
up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!" '
20But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your
life will be demanded of you; and the things you
have prepared, to whom will they belong?'
21*Thus will it be for the one who stores up
treasure for himself but is not rich in what
matters to God."

**Dependence on God** 22 *t*He said to [his] disci-
ples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about
your life and what you will eat, or about your
body and what you will wear. 23For life is more

**12, 1:** See the notes on Mk 8, 15 and Mt 16, 5–12.

**12, 2–9:** Luke presents a collection of sayings of Jesus exhorting his followers to acknowledge him and his mission fearlessly and assuring them of God's protection even in times of persecution. They are paralleled in Mt 10, 26–33.

**12, 5: Gehenna:** see the note on Mt 5, 22.

**12, 6: Two small coins:** the Roman copper coin, the assarion (Latin **as**), was worth about one-sixteenth of a denarius (see the note on 7, 41).

**12, 10–12:** The sayings about the holy Spirit are set in the context of fearlessness in the face of persecution (2–9; cf Mt 12, 31–32). The holy Spirit will be presented in Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, as the power responsible for the guidance of the Christian mission and the source of courage in the face of persecution.

**12, 13–34:** Luke has joined together sayings contrasting those whose focus and trust in life is on material possessions, symbolized here by the rich fool of the parable (16–21), with those who recognize their complete dependence on God (21), those whose radical detachment from material possessions symbolizes their heavenly treasure (33–34).

**12, 21: Rich in what matters to God:** literally, "rich for God."

f Mt 23, 13. g 6, 11; Mt 22, 15–22. h 20, 20. i Mt 16, 6; Mk 8, 15. j Mt 10, 26–33. k 8, 17; Mk 4, 22. l 12, 24; 21, 18; Acts 27, 34. m 9, 26; Mk 8, 38; 2 Tm 2, 12. n Mt 12, 31–32; Mk 3, 28–29. o 21, 12–15; Mt 10, 17–20; Mk 13, 11. p Ex 2, 14; Acts 7, 27. q 1 Tm 6, 9–10. r Mt 6, 19–21; 1 Tm 6, 17. s Sir 11, 19. t Mt 6, 25–34.

than food and the body more than clothing.
24 [u]Notice the ravens: they do not sow or reap;
they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God
feeds them. How much more important are you
than birds! 25Can any of you by worrying add a
moment to your life-span? 26If even the smallest
things are beyond your control, why are you
anxious about the rest? 27 [v]Notice how the
flowers grow. They do not toil or spin. But I tell
you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was
dressed like one of them. 28If God so clothes the
grass in the field that grows today and is thrown
into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more
provide for you, O you of little faith? 29As for
you, do not seek what you are to eat and what
you are to drink, and do not worry anymore.
30All the nations of the world seek for these
things, and your Father knows that you need
them. 31Instead, seek his kingdom, and these
other things will be given you besides. 32 [w]Do
not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your
Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.
33 [x]Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide
money bags for yourselves that do not wear out,
an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief
can reach nor moth destroy. 34For where your
treasure is, there also will your heart be.

**Vigilant and Faithful Servants** 35 [y]*"Gird
your loins and light your lamps 36 [z]and be like
servants who await their master's return from a
wedding, ready to open immediately when he
comes and knocks. 37Blessed are those servants
whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival.
Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have
them recline at table, and proceed to wait on
them. 38And should he come in the second or
third watch and find them prepared in this way,
blessed are those servants. 39 [a]Be sure of this: if
the master of the house had known the hour
when the thief was coming, he would not have
let his house be broken into. 40You also must be
prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the
Son of Man will come."

41Then Peter said, "Lord, is this parable meant
for us or for everyone?" 42And the Lord replied,
"Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward
whom the master will put in charge of his
servants to distribute [the] food allowance at the
proper time? 43Blessed is that servant whom his
master on arrival finds doing so. 44Truly, I say to
you, he will put him in charge of all his property.
45*But if that servant says to himself, 'My master
is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the
menservants and the maidservants, to eat and
drink and get drunk, 46then that servant's mas-
ter will come on an unexpected day and at an
unknown hour and will punish him severely and
assign him a place with the unfaithful. 47 [b]That
servant who knew his master's will but did not
make preparations nor act in accord with his will
shall be beaten severely; 48and the servant who
was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a
way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten
only lightly. Much will be required of the person
entrusted with much, and still more will be
demanded of the person entrusted with more.

**Jesus: A Cause of Division** 49*"I have come
to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were
already blazing! 50 [c]*There is a baptism with
which I must be baptized, and how great is my
anguish until it is accomplished! 51 [d] [e]Do you
think that I have come to establish peace on the
earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52From
now on a household of five will be divided, three
against two and two against three; 53 [f]a father
will be divided against his son and a son against
his father, a mother against her daughter and a
daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law
against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-
law against her mother-in-law."

**12, 35–48:** This collection of sayings relates to Luke's understanding of the end time and the return of Jesus. Luke emphasizes for his readers the importance of being faithful to the instructions of Jesus in the period before the parousia.

**12, 45: My master is delayed in coming:** this statement indicates that early Christian expectations for the imminent return of Jesus had undergone some modification. Luke cautions his readers against counting on such a delay and acting irresponsibly. Cf the similar warning in Mt 24, 48.

**12, 49–53:** Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is a refining and purifying fire. His message that meets with acceptance or rejection will be a source of conflict and dissension even within families.

**12, 50: Baptism:** i.e., his death.

u 12, 7. v 1 Kgs 10, 4–7; 2 Chr 9, 3–6. w 22, 29; Rv 1, 6. x 18, 22; Mt 6, 20–21; Mk 10, 21. y Mt 24, 45–51. z Mt 25, 1–13; Mk 13, 35–37. a Mt 24, 43–44; 1 Thes 5, 2. b Jas 4, 17. c Mk 10, 38–39. d Mt 10, 34–35. e 2, 14. f Mi 7, 6.

**Signs of the Times** 54 *g*He also said to the crowds, "When you see [a] cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain—and so it does; 55and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot—and so it is. 56You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

**Settlement with an Opponent** 57 *h*"Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? 58If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. 59*I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."

## CHAPTER 13

**A Call to Repentance** 1*At that time some people who were present there told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. 2 *i*He said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? 3 *j*By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! 4*Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? 5By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"

**The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree** 6 *k**And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, 7he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. [So] cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' 8He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; 9it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.' "

**Cure of a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath** 10*He was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath. 11And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. 12When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity." 13He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. 14 *l*But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, "There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day." 15 *m**The Lord said to him in

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**12, 59: The last penny:** Greek, **lepton,** a very small amount. Mt 5, 26 has for "the last penny" the Greek word **kodrantēs** (Latin **quadrans,** "farthing").

**13, 1–5:** The death of the Galileans at the hands of Pilate (1) and the accidental death of those on whom the tower fell (4) are presented by the Lucan Jesus as timely reminders of the need for all to repent, for the victims of these tragedies should not be considered outstanding sinners who were singled out for punishment.

**13, 1:** The slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate is unknown outside Lk; but from what is known about Pilate from the Jewish historian Josephus, such a slaughter would be in keeping with the character of Pilate. Josephus reports that Pilate had disrupted a religious gathering of the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim with a slaughter of the participants (**Antiquities** 18, 4, 1 §§86–87), and that on another occasion Pilate had killed many Jews who had opposed him when he appropriated money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct in Jerusalem (**Jewish War** 2, 9, 4 §§175–77; **Antiquities** 18, 3, 2 §§60–62).

**13, 4:** Like the incident mentioned in v 1, nothing of this accident in Jerusalem is known outside Lk and the New Testament.

**13, 6–9:** Following on the call to repentance in vv 1–5, the parable of the barren fig tree presents a story about the continuing patience of God with those who have not yet given evidence of their repentance (see 3, 8). The parable may also be alluding to the delay of the end time, when punishment will be meted out, and the importance of preparing for the end of the age because the delay will not be permanent (8–9).

**13, 10–17:** The cure of the crippled woman on the sabbath and the controversy that results furnishes a parallel to an incident that will be reported by Lk in 14, 1–6, the cure of the man with dropsy on the sabbath. A characteristic of Luke's style is the juxtaposition of an incident that reveals Jesus' concern for a man with an incident that reveals his concern for a woman; cf, e.g., 7, 11–17 and 8, 49–56.

**13, 15–16:** If the law as interpreted by Jewish tradition allowed for the untying of bound animals on the sabbath, how much more should this woman who has been bound by Satan's power be freed on the sabbath from her affliction.

g Mt 16, 2–3. h Mt 5, 25–26. i Jn 9, 2. j Jn 8, 24. k Jer 8, 13; Hb 3, 17; Mt 21, 19; Mk 11, 13. 16, 7; 14, 3; Ex 20, 8–11; Dt 5, 12–15; Mt 12, 10; Mk 3, 2–4; Jn 5, 16; 7, 23; 9, 14.16. m 14, 5; Dt 22, 4; Mt 12, 11.

reply, "Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on
the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the
manger and lead it out for watering? 16 n*This
daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound
for eighteen years now, ought she not to have
been set free on the sabbath day from this
bondage?" 17When he said this, all his adversar-
ies were humiliated; and the whole crowd
rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed** 18 o*Then
he said, "What is the kingdom of God like? To
what can I compare it? 19 pIt is like a mustard
seed that a person took and planted in the
garden. When it was fully grown, it became a
large bush and 'the birds of the sky dwelt in its
branches.' "

**The Parable of the Yeast** 20 qAgain he said,
"To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?
21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed
[in] with three measures of wheat flour until the
whole batch of dough was leavened."

**The Narrow Door; Salvation and Rejection**
22 *He passed through towns and villages, teach-
ing as he went and making his way to Jerusalem.
23 Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few
people be saved?" He answered them,
24 r s"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for
many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will
not be strong enough. 25 tAfter the master of the
house has arisen and locked the door, then will
you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord,
open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply,
'I do not know where you are from.' 26And you
will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and
you taught in our streets.' 27 uThen he will say to
you, 'I do not know where [you] are from.
Depart from me, all you evildoers!' 28 vAnd there
will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you
see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the
prophets in the kingdom of God and you your-
selves cast out. 29 wAnd people will come from
the east and the west and from the north and the
south and will recline at table in the kingdom of
God. 30 xFor behold, some are last who will be
first, and some are first who will be last."

**Herod's Desire to Kill Jesus** 31 At that time
some Pharisees came to him and said, "Go away,
leave this area because Herod wants to kill you."
32 *He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I
cast out demons and I perform healings today
and tomorrow, and on the third day I accomplish
my purpose. 33 y*Yet I must continue on my way
today, tomorrow, and the following day, for it is
impossible that a prophet should die outside of
Jerusalem.'

**The Lament over Jerusalem** 34 z"Jerusalem,
Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone
those sent to you, how many times I yearned to
gather your children together as a hen gathers
her brood under her wings, but you were
unwilling! 35 aBehold, your house will be aban-
doned. [But] I tell you, you will not see me until
[the time comes when] you say, 'Blessed is he
who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

## CHAPTER 14

**Healing of the Man with Dropsy on the Sabbath** 1 b c*On a sabbath he went to dine at

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**13, 16: Whom Satan has bound:** affliction and infirmity are taken as evidence of Satan's hold on humanity. The healing ministry of Jesus reveals the gradual wresting from Satan of control over humanity and the establishment of God's kingdom.

**13, 18–21:** Two parables are used to illustrate the future proportions of the kingdom of God that will result from its deceptively small beginning in the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus. They are paralleled in Mt 13, 31–33 and Mk 4, 30–32.

**13, 22–30:** These sayings of Jesus follow in Lk upon the parables of the kingdom (18–21) and stress that great effort is required for entrance into the kingdom (24) and that there is an urgency to accept the present opportunity to enter because the narrow door will not remain open indefinitely (25). Lying behind the sayings is the rejection of Jesus and his message by his Jewish contemporaries (26) whose places at table in the kingdom will be taken by Gentiles from the four corners of the world (29). Those called last (the Gentiles) will precede those to whom the invitation to enter was first extended (the Jews). See also 14, 15–24.

**13, 32:** Nothing, not even Herod's desire to kill Jesus, stands in the way of Jesus' role in fulfilling God's will and in establishing the kingdom through his exorcisms and healings.

**13, 33: It is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem:** Jerusalem is the city of destiny and the goal of the journey of the prophet Jesus. Only when he reaches the holy city will his work be accomplished.

**14, 1–6:** See the note on 13, 10–17.

n 19, 9. o Mt 13, 31–32; Mk 4, 30–32. p Ez 17, 23–24; 31, 6. q Mt 13, 33. r Mt 7, 13–14.21–23. s Mk 10, 25. t Mt 25, 10–12. u Ps 6, 9; Mt 7, 23; 25, 41. v Mt 8, 11–12. w Ps 107, 2–3. x Mt 19, 20; 20, 16; Mk 10, 31. y 2, 38; Jn 6, 30; 8, 20. z 19, 41–44; Mt 23, 37–39. a 19, 38; 1 Kgs 9, 7–8; Ps 118, 26; Jer 7, 4–7.13–15; 12, 7; 22, 5. b 6, 6–11; 13, 10–17. c 11, 37.

the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and
the people there were observing him carefully.
2 *In front of him there was a man suffering from
dropsy. 3 [d]Jesus spoke to the scholars of the law
and Pharisees in reply, asking, "Is it lawful to
cure on the sabbath or not?" 4 But they kept
silent; so he took the man and, after he had
healed him, dismissed him. 5 [e]*Then he said to
them, "Who among you, if your son or ox falls
into a cistern, would not immediately pull him
out on the sabbath day?" 6 [f]But they were
unable to answer his question.

**Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts** 7 [g]*He
told a parable to those who had been invited,
noticing how they were choosing the places of
honor at the table. 8 [h]"When you are invited by
someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at
table in the place of honor. A more distinguished
guest than you may have been invited by him,
9 and the host who invited both of you may
approach you and say, 'Give your place to this
man," and then you would proceed with embar-
rassment to take the lowest place. 10 Rather,
when you are invited, go and take the lowest
place so that when the host comes to you he
may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher
position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your
companions at the table. 11 [i]For everyone who
exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who
humbles himself will be exalted." 12 [j]Then he
said to the host who invited him, "When you
hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your
friends or your brothers or your relatives or your
wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you
back and you have repayment. 13 Rather, when
you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled,
the lame, the blind; 14 [k]blessed indeed will you
be because of their inability to repay you. For
you will be repaid at the resurrection of the
righteous."

**The Parable of the Great Feast** 15 *One of his
fellow guests on hearing this said to him,
"Blessed is the one who will dine in the kingdom
of God." 16 [l]He replied to him, "A man gave a
great dinner to which he invited many. 17 When
the time for the dinner came, he dispatched his
servant to say to those invited, 'Come, every-
thing is now ready.' 18 But one by one, they all
began to excuse themselves. The first said to
him, 'I have purchased a field and must go to
examine it; I ask you, consider me excused.'
19 And another said, 'I have purchased five yoke
of oxen and am on my way to evaluate them; I
ask you, consider me excused.' 20 And another
said, 'I have just married a woman, and there-
fore I cannot come.' 21 The servant went and
reported this to his master. Then the master of
the house in a rage commanded his servant, 'Go
out quickly into the streets and alleys of the
town and bring in here the poor and the
crippled, the blind and the lame.' 22 The servant
reported, 'Sir, your orders have been carried out
and still there is room.' 23 The master then
ordered the servant, 'Go out to the highways
and hedgerows and make people come in that
my home may be filled. 24 For, I tell you, none of
those men who were invited will taste my
dinner.' "

**Sayings on Discipleship** 25 *Great crowds
were traveling with him, and he turned and
addressed them, 26 [m n]*"If anyone comes to me
without hating his father and mother, wife and

**14, 2: Dropsy:** an abnormal swelling of the body because of the retention and accumulation of fluid.

**14, 5: Your son or ox:** this is the reading of many of the oldest and most important New Testament manuscripts. Because of the strange collocation of **son** and **ox**, some copyists have altered it to "your ass or ox," on the model of the saying in 13, 15.

**14, 7–14:** The banquet scene found only in Luke provides the opportunity for these teachings of Jesus on humility and presents a setting to display Luke's interest in Jesus' attitude toward the rich and the poor (see the notes on 4, 18; 6, 20–26; 12, 13–34).

**14, 15–24:** The parable of the great dinner is a further illustration of the rejection by Israel, God's chosen people, of Jesus' invitation to share in the banquet in the kingdom and the extension of the invitation to other Jews whose identification as the poor, crippled, blind, and lame (21) classifies them among those who recognize their need for salvation, and to Gentiles (23). A similar parable is found in Mt 22, 1–10.

**14, 25–33:** This collection of sayings, most of which are peculiar to Lk, focuses on the total dedication necessary for the disciple of Jesus. No attachment to family (26) or possessions (33) can stand in the way of the total commitment demanded of the disciple. Also, acceptance of the call to be a disciple demands readiness to accept persecution and suffering (27) and a realistic assessment of the hardships and costs (28–32).

**14, 26: Hating his father . . . :** cf the similar saying in Mt 10,

d 6, 9; Mk 3, 4. e 13, 15; Dt 22, 4; Mt 12, 11. f Mt 22, 46. g 11, 43; Mt 23, 6; Mk 12, 38–39. h Prv 25, 6–7. i 18, 14. j 6, 32–35. k Jn 5, 29. l Mt 22, 2–10. m Mt 10, 37–38. n 9, 57–62; 18, 29; Jn 12, 25.

children, brothers and sisters, and even his own
life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 [o]Whoever does
not carry his own cross and come after me
cannot be my disciple. 28Which of you wishing
to construct a tower does not first sit down and
calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its
completion? 29Otherwise, after laying the foun-
dation and finding himself unable to finish the
work the onlookers should laugh at him 30and
say, 'This one began to build but did not have
the resources to finish.' 31Or what king march-
ing into battle would not first sit down and
decide whether with ten thousand troops he can
successfully oppose another king advancing
upon him with twenty thousand troops? 32But if
not, while he is still far away, he will send a
delegation to ask for peace terms. 33 [p]In the same
way, everyone of you who does not renounce all
his possessions cannot be my disciple.

**The Simile of Salt** 34 [q]*"Salt is good, but if salt
itself loses its taste, with what can its flavor be
restored? 35 [r]It is fit neither for the soil nor for
the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has
ears to hear ought to hear."

## CHAPTER 15

Ch 9–19
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**The Parable of the Lost Sheep** 1 [s]*The tax
collectors and sinners were all drawing near to
listen to him, 2 [t]but the Pharisees and scribes
began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes
sinners and eats with them." 3So to them he
addressed this parable. 4 [u v w]"What man among
you having a hundred sheep and losing one of
them would not leave the ninety-nine in the
desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?
5And when he does find it, he sets it on his
shoulders with great joy 6and, upon his arrival
home, he calls together his friends and neighbors
and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I
have found my lost sheep.' 7 [x]I tell you, in just
the same way there will be more joy in heaven
over one sinner who repents than over ninety-
nine righteous people who have no need of
repentance.

**The Parable of the Lost Coin** 8*"Or what
woman having ten coins and losing one would
not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching
carefully until she finds it? 9And when she does
find it, she calls together her friends and neigh-
bors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because
I have found the coin that I lost.' 10In just the
same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing
among the angels of God over one sinner who
repents."

**The Parable of the Lost Son** 11Then he said,
"A man had two sons, 12and the younger son
said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of
your estate that should come to me.' So the
father divided the property between them.
13 [y]After a few days, the younger son collected
all his belongings and set off to a distant coun-
try where he squandered his inheritance on a
life of dissipation. 14When he had freely spent
everything, a severe famine struck that country,
and he found himself in dire need. 15So he
hired himself out to one of the local citizens
who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.
16And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on
which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.
17Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many
of my father's hired workers have more than
enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from
hunger. 18I shall get up and go to my father and
I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against
heaven and against you. 19I no longer deserve
to be called your son; treat me as you would
treat one of your hired workers." ' 20So he got
up and went back to his father. While he was

37. The disciple's family must take second place to the absolute dedication involved in following Jesus (see also 9, 59–62).

14, 34–35: The simile of salt follows the sayings of Jesus that demanded of the disciple total dedication and detachment from family and possessions and illustrates the condition of one who does not display this total commitment. The halfhearted disciple is like salt that cannot serve its intended purpose. See the simile of salt in Mt 5, 13 and the note there.

15, 1–32: To the parable of the lost sheep (1–7) that Luke shares with Matthew (Mt 18, 12–14), Luke adds two parables (the lost coin, 8–10; the prodigal son, 11–32) from his own special tradition to illustrate Jesus' particular concern for the lost and God's love for the repentant sinner.

15, 8: Ten coins: literally, "ten drachmas." A drachma was a Greek silver coin.

o 9, 23; Mt 16, 24; Mk 8, 34. p 5, 11. q Mt 5, 13; Mk 9, 50. r 8, 8; Mt 11, 15; 13, 9; Mk 4, 9.23. s Mt 9, 10–13. t 5, 30; 19, 7. u Mt 18, 12–14. v 19, 10. w Ez 34, 11–12.16. x Ez 18, 23. y Prv 29, 3.

still a long way off, his father caught sight of
him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to
his son, embraced him and kissed him. 21His
son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against
heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to
be called your son.' 22But his father ordered his
servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put
it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals
on his feet. 23Take the fattened calf and slaugh-
ter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, 24be-
cause this son of mine was dead, and has come
to life again; he was lost, and has been found.'
Then the celebration began. 25Now the older
son had been out in the field and, on his way
back, as he neared the house, he heard the
sound of music and dancing. 26He called one of
the servants and asked what this might mean.
27The servant said to him, 'Your brother has
returned and your father has slaughtered the
fattened calf because he has him back safe and
sound.' 28He became angry, and when he re-
fused to enter the house, his father came out
and pleaded with him. 29He said to his father in
reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and
not once did I disobey your orders; yet you
never gave me even a young goat to feast on
with my friends. 30But when your son returns
who swallowed up your property with prosti-
tutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'
31He said to him, 'My son, you are here with
me always; everything I have is yours. 32But
now we must celebrate and rejoice, because
your brother was dead and has come to life
again; he was lost and has been found.' "

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 9–19
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**The Parable of the Dishonest Steward**
1*Then he also said to his disciples, "A rich man
had a steward who was reported to him for squan-
dering his property. 2He summoned him and said,
'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full
account of your stewardship, because you can no
longer be my steward.' 3The steward said to him-
self, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking
the position of steward away from me? I am not
strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. 4I
know what I shall do so that, when I am removed
from the stewardship, they may welcome me into
their homes.' 5He called in his master's debtors
one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you
owe my master?' 6*He replied, 'One hundred
measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your
promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one
for fifty.' 7*Then to another he said, 'And you,
how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hun-
dred kors of wheat.' He said to him, 'Here is your
promissory note; write one for eighty.' 8z*And
the master commended that dishonest steward
for acting prudently.

**Application of the Parable** "For the children
of this world are more prudent in dealing with
their own generation than are the children of
light. 9a*I tell you, make friends for yourselves
with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you
will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.
10b*The person who is trustworthy in very small
matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the
person who is dishonest in very small matters is
also dishonest in great ones. 11If, therefore, you

**16, 1–8a:** The parable of the dishonest steward has to be understood in the light of Palestinian customs of agents acting on behalf of their masters and the usurious practices common to such agents. The dishonesty of the steward consisted in the squandering of his master's property (1) and not in any subsequent graft. The master commends the dishonest steward who has forgone his own usurious commission on the business transaction by having the debtors write new notes that reflected only the real amount owed the master (i.e., minus the steward's profit). The dishonest steward acts in this way in order to ingratiate himself with the debtors because he knows he is being dismissed from his position (3). The parable, then, teaches the prudent use of one's material goods in light of an imminent crisis.

**16, 6: One hundred measures:** literally, "one hundred baths." A **bath** is a Hebrew unit of liquid measurement equivalent to eight or nine gallons.

**16, 7: One hundred kors:** a **kor** is a Hebrew unit of dry measure for grain or wheat equivalent to ten or twelve bushels.

**16, 8b-13:** Several originally independent sayings of Jesus are gathered here by Luke to form the concluding application of the parable of the dishonest steward.

**16, 8b-9:** The first conclusion recommends the prudent use of one's wealth (in the light of the coming of the end of the age) after the manner of the children of this world, represented in the parable by the dishonest steward.

**16, 9: Dishonest wealth:** literally, "mammon of iniquity." Mammon is the Greek transliteration of a Hebrew or Aramaic word that is usually explained as meaning "that in which one trusts." The characterization of this wealth as **dishonest** expresses a tendency of wealth to lead one to dishonesty. **Eternal dwellings:** or, "eternal tents," i.e., heaven.

**16, 10–12:** The second conclusion recommends constant fidelity to those in positions of responsibility.

z Eph 5, 8; 1 Thes 5, 5. a 12, 33. b 19, 17; Mt 25, 20–23.

are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who
will trust you with true wealth? 12 If you are not
trustworthy with what belongs to another, who
will give you what is yours? 13 c *No servant can
serve two masters. He will either hate one and
love the other, or be devoted to one and despise
the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

**A Saying against the Pharisees** 14 *The Phari-
sees, who loved money, heard all these things
and sneered at him. 15 d And he said to them,
"You justify yourselves in the sight of others, but
God knows your hearts; for what is of human
esteem is an abomination in the sight of God.

**Sayings about the Law** 16 e *"The law and the
prophets lasted until John; but from then on the
kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone
who enters does so with violence. 17 f It is easier
for heaven and earth to pass away than for the
smallest part of a letter of the law to become
invalid.

**Sayings about Divorce** 18 g "Everyone who di-
vorces his wife and marries another commits
adultery, and the one who marries a woman
divorced from her husband commits adultery.

**The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus**
19 *"There was a rich man who dressed in purple
garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously
each day. 20 And lying at his door was a poor man
named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 h who
would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that
fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to
come and lick his sores. 22 When the poor man
died, he was carried away by angels to the
bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and
was buried, 23 *and from the netherworld,
where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and
saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
24 And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity
on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in
water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering
torment in these flames.' 25 i Abraham replied,
'My child, remember that you received what
was good during your lifetime while Lazarus
likewise received what was bad; but now he is
comforted here, whereas you are tormented.
26 Moreover, between us and you a great chasm
is established to prevent anyone from crossing
who might wish to go from our side to yours or
from your side to ours.' 27 He said, 'Then I beg
you, father, send him to my father's house, 28 for
I have five brothers, so that he may warn them,
lest they too come to this place of torment.'
29 But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and
the prophets. Let them listen to them.' 30 *He
said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone
from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'
31 j Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to
Moses and the prophets, neither will they be
persuaded if someone should rise from the
dead.' "

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## CHAPTER 17

**Temptations to Sin** 1 k He said to his disciples,
"Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but
woe to the person through whom they occur. 2 It
would be better for him if a millstone were put
around his neck and he be thrown into the sea
than for him to cause one of these little ones to

**16, 13:** The third conclusion is a general statement about the incompatibility of serving God and being a slave to riches. To be dependent upon wealth is opposed to the teachings of Jesus who counseled complete dependence on the Father as one of the characteristics of the Christian disciple (12, 22–39). **God and mammon:** see the note on 16, 9. Mammon is used here as if it were itself a god.

**16, 14–18:** The two parables about the use of riches in ch 16 are separated by several isolated sayings of Jesus on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (14–15), on the law (16–17), and on divorce (18).

**16, 14–15:** The Pharisees are here presented as examples of those who are slaves to wealth (see 16, 13) and, consequently, they are unable to serve God.

**16, 16:** John the Baptist is presented in Luke's gospel as a transitional figure between the period of Israel, the time of promise, and the period of Jesus, the time of fulfillment. With John, the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises has begun.

**16, 19–31:** The parable of the rich man and Lazarus again illustrates Luke's concern with Jesus' attitude toward the rich and the poor. The reversal of the fates of the rich man and Lazarus (22–23) illustrates the teachings of Jesus in Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" (6, 20–21.24–25).

**16, 19:** The oldest Greek manuscript of Lk dating from ca. A.D. 175–225 records the name of the rich man as an abbreviated form of "Nineveh," but there is very little textual support in other manuscripts for this reading. "Dives" of popular tradition is the Latin Vulgate's translation for "rich man."

**16, 23: The netherworld:** see the note on 10, 15.

**16, 30–31:** A foreshadowing in Luke's gospel of the rejection of the call to repentance even after Jesus' resurrection.

c Mt 6, 24. d 18, 9–14. e Mt 11, 12–13. f Mt 5, 18. g Mt 5, 32; 19, 9; Mk 10, 11–12; 1 Cor 7, 10–11. h Mt 15, 27; Mk 7, 28. i 6, 24–25. j Jn 5, 46–47; 11, 44–48. k Mt 18, 6–7.

sin. 3 *l**Be on your guard! If your brother sins,
rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.
4 *m*And if he wrongs you seven times in one day
and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am
sorry,' you should forgive him."

**Saying of Faith** 5And the apostles said to the
Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 *n*The Lord replied,
"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you
would say to [this] mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted
and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

**Attitude of a Servant** 7*"Who among you
would say to your servant who has just come in
from plowing or tending sheep in the field,
'Come here immediately and take your place at
table'? 8Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare
something for me to eat. Put on your apron and
wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat
and drink when I am finished'? 9Is he grateful to
that servant because he did what was com-
manded? 10So should it be with you. When you
have done all you have been commanded, say,
'We are unprofitable servants; we have done
what we were obliged to do.' "

**The Cleansing of Ten Lepers** 11 *o**As he
continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled
through Samaria and Galilee. 12As he was enter-
ing a village, ten lepers met [him]. They stood at
a distance from him 13 *p*and raised their voice,
saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"
14 *q**And when he saw them, he said, "Go show
yourselves to the priests." As they were going
they were cleansed. 15And one of them, realiz-
ing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God
in a loud voice; 16and he fell at the feet of Jesus
and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. 17Jesus
said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they
not? Where are the other nine? 18Has none but
this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"
19 *r*Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your
faith has saved you."

**The Coming of the Kingdom of God**
20 *s**Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom
of God would come, he said in reply, "The
coming of the kingdom of God cannot be ob-
served, 21 *t**and no one will announce, 'Look,
here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For behold, the
kingdom of God is among you."

**The Day of the Son of Man** 22Then he said to
his disciples, "The days will come when you will
long to see one of the days of the Son of Man,
but you will not see it. 23 *u*There will be those
who will say to you, 'Look, there he is,' [or]
'Look, here he is.' Do not go off, do not run in
pursuit. 24 *v*For just as lightning flashes and lights
up the sky from one side to the other, so will the
Son of Man be [in his day]. 25 *w*But first he must
suffer greatly and be rejected by this generation.
26 *x*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in
the days of the Son of Man; 27they were eating
and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage
up to the day that Noah entered the ark, and the
flood came and destroyed them all. 28 *y*Similarly,
as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating,
drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; 29on

17, 3a: **Be on your guard:** the translation takes v 3a as the conclusion to the saying on scandal in vv 1–2. It is not impossible that it should be taken as the beginning of the saying on forgiveness in vv 3b-4.

17, 7–10: These sayings of Jesus, peculiar to Luke, which continue his response to the apostles' request to increase their faith (5–6), remind them that Christian disciples can make no claim on God's graciousness; in fulfilling the exacting demands of discipleship, they are only doing their duty.

17, 11–19: This incident recounting the thankfulness of the cleansed Samaritan leper is narrated only in Luke's gospel and provides an instance of Jesus holding up a non-Jew (18) as an example to his Jewish contemporaries (cf 10, 33 where a similar purpose is achieved in the story of the good Samaritan). Moreover, it is the faith in Jesus manifested by the foreigner that has brought him salvation (19; cf the similar relationship between faith and salvation in 7, 50; 8, 48.50).

17, 11: **Through Samaria and Galilee:** or, "between Samaria and Galilee."

17, 14: See the note on 5, 14.

17, 20–37: To the question of the Pharisees about the time of the coming of God's kingdom, Jesus replies that the kingdom is **among you** (20–21). The emphasis has thus been shifted from an imminent observable coming of the kingdom to something that is already present in Jesus' preaching and healing ministry. Luke has also appended further traditional sayings of Jesus about the unpredictable suddenness of the day of the Son of Man, and assures his readers that in spite of the delay of that day (12, 45), it will bring judgment unexpectedly on those who do not continue to be vigilant.

17, 21: **Among you:** the Greek preposition translated as **among** can also be translated as "within." In the light of other statements in Luke's gospel about the presence of the kingdom (see 10, 9.11; 11, 20) "among" is to be preferred.

l Mt 18, 15. m Mt 6, 14; 18, 21–22.35; Mk 11, 25. n Mt 17, 20; 21, 21; Mk 11, 23. o 9, 51–53; 13, 22.33; 18, 31; 19, 28; Jn 4, 4. p 18, 38; Mt 9, 27; 15, 22. q 5, 14; Lv 14, 2–32; Mt 8, 4; Mk 1, 44. r 7, 50; 18, 42. s Jn 3, 3. t 17, 23; Mt 24, 23; Mk 13, 21. u 17, 21; Mt 24, 23.26; Mk 13, 21. v Mt 24, 27. w 9, 22; 18, 32–33; Mt 16, 21; 17, 22–23; 20, 18–19; Mk 8, 31; 9, 31; 10, 33–34. x Gn 6–8; Mt 24, 37–39. y Gn 18, 20–21; 19, 1–29.

the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone
rained from the sky to destroy them all. 30So it
will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed.
31 z a On that day, a person who is on the house-
top and whose belongings are in the house must
not go down to get them, and likewise a person
in the field must not return to what was left
behind. 32Remember the wife of Lot.
33 b Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it,
but whoever loses it will save it. 34I tell you, on
that night there will be two people in one bed;
one will be taken, the other left. 35 c And there
will be two women grinding meal together; one
will be taken, the other left." [36]* 37 d They said
to him in reply, "Where, Lord?" He said to them,
"Where the body is, there also the vultures will
gather."

## CHAPTER 18

Ch 9–19
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### The Parable of the Persistent Widow

1 e *Then he told them a parable about the
necessity for them to pray always without becom-
ing weary. He said, 2"There was a judge in a
certain town who neither feared God nor re-
spected any human being. 3And a widow in that
town used to come to him and say, 'Render a
just decision for me against my adversary.' 4For a
long time the judge was unwilling, but eventu-
ally he thought, 'While it is true that I neither
fear God nor respect any human being,
5 f *because this widow keeps bothering me I
shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally
come and strike me.' " 6The Lord said, "Pay
attention to what the dishonest judge says. 7Will
not God then secure the rights of his chosen
ones who call out to him day and night? Will he
be slow to answer them? 8I tell you, he will see
to it that justice is done for them speedily. But
when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith
on earth?"

### The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 g He then addressed this parable to
those who were convinced of their own righ-
teousness and despised everyone else. 10"Two
people went up to the temple area to pray; one
was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.
11The Pharisee took up his position and spoke
this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I
am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dis-
honest, adulterous—or even like this tax collec-
tor. 12 h I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on
my whole income.' 13 i But the tax collector
stood off at a distance and would not even raise
his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and
prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' 14 j I
tell you, the latter went home justified, not the
former; for everyone who exalts himself will be
humbled, and the one who humbles himself will
be exalted."

### Saying on Children and the Kingdom

15 k *People were bringing even infants to him
that he might touch them, and when the disci-
ples saw this, they rebuked them. 16Jesus, how-
ever, called the children to himself and said, "Let
the children come to me and do not prevent
them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as
these. 17 l Amen, I say to you, whoever does not
accept the kingdom of God like a child will not
enter it."

**17, 36:** The inclusion of v 36, "There will be two men in the field; one will be taken, the other left behind," in some Western manuscripts appears to be a scribal assimilation to Mt 24, 40.

**18, 1–14:** The particularly Lucan material in the travel narrative concludes with two parables on prayer. The first (1–8) teaches the disciples the need of persistent prayer so that they not fall victims to apostasy (8). The second (9–14) condemns the self-righteous, critical attitude of the Pharisee and teaches that the fundamental attitude of the Christian disciple must be the recognition of sinfulness and complete dependence on God's graciousness. The second parable recalls the story of the pardoning of the sinful woman (7, 36–50) where a similar contrast is presented between the critical attitude of the Pharisee Simon and the love shown by the pardoned sinner.

**18, 5: Strike me:** the Greek verb translated as **strike** means "to strike under the eye" and suggests the extreme situation to which the persistence of the widow might lead. It may, however, be used here in the much weaker sense of "to wear one out."

**18, 15—19, 27:** Luke here includes much of the material about the journey to Jerusalem found in his Marcan source (10, 1–52) and adds to it the story of Zacchaeus (19, 1–10) from his own particular tradition and the parable of the gold coins (minas) (19, 11–27) from Q, the source common to Lk and Mt.

**18, 15–17:** The sayings on children furnish a contrast to the attitude of the Pharisee in the preceding episode (9–14) and that of the wealthy official in the following one (18–23) who think that they can lay claim to God's favor by their own merit. The attitude of the disciple should be marked by the receptivity and trustful dependence characteristic of the child.

z Mt 24, 17–18; Mk 13, 15–16. a Gn 19, 17.26. b 9, 24; Mt 10, 39; 16, 25; Mk 8, 35; Jn 12, 25. c Mt 24, 40–41. d Jb 39, 30; Mt 24, 28. e Rom 12, 12; Col 4, 2; 1 Thes 5, 17. f 11, 8. g 16, 5; Mt 23, 25–28. h Mt 23, 23. i Ps 51, 3. j 14, 11; Mt 23, 12. k Mt 19, 13–15; Mk 10, 13–16. l Mt 18, 3.

**The Rich Official** 18 [m] [n]An official asked him
this question, "Good teacher, what must I do to
inherit eternal life?" 19Jesus answered him,
"Why do you call me good? No one is good but
God alone. 20 [o]You know the commandments,
'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not
kill; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false
witness; honor your father and your mother.' "
21And he replied, "All of these I have observed
from my youth." 22 [p]*When Jesus heard this he
said to him, "There is still one thing left for you:
sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor,
and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then
come, follow me." 23But when he heard this he
became quite sad, for he was very rich.

**On Riches and Renunciation** 24Jesus looked
at him [now sad] and said, "How hard it is for
those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of
God! 25For it is easier for a camel to pass through
the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter
the kingdom of God." 26Those who heard this
said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 [q]And he said,
"What is impossible for human beings is possible
for God." 28Then Peter said, "We have given up
our possessions and followed you." 29 [r]He said to
them, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who
has given up house or wife or brothers or parents
or children for the sake of the kingdom of God
30who will not receive [back] an overabundant
return in this present age and eternal life in the
age to come."

**The Third Prediction of the Passion**
31 [s]*Then he took the Twelve aside and said to
them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem
and everything written by the prophets about
the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 [t]He will be
handed over to the Gentiles and he will be
mocked and insulted and spat upon; 33and after
they have scourged him they will kill him, but
on the third day he will rise." 34 [u]But they
understood nothing of this; the word remained
hidden from them and they failed to comprehend what he said.

**The Healing of the Blind Beggar** 35 [v]Now as
he approached Jericho a blind man was sitting by
the roadside begging, 36and hearing a crowd
going by, he inquired what was happening.
37They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing
by." 38 [w]*He shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have
pity on me!" 39The people walking in front
rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he
kept calling out all the more, "Son of David,
have pity on me!" 40Then Jesus stopped and
ordered that he be brought to him; and when he
came near, Jesus asked him, 41 [x]"What do you
want me to do for you?" He replied, "Lord,
please let me see." 42 [y]Jesus told him, "Have
sight; your faith has saved you." 43He immediately received his sight and followed him, giving
glory to God. When they saw this, all the people
gave praise to God.

## CHAPTER 19

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**Zacchaeus the Tax Collector** 1*He came to
Jericho and intended to pass through the town.
2Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a
chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, 3was
seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not
see him because of the crowd, for he was short
in stature. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a

**18, 22:** Detachment from material possessions results in the total dependence on God demanded of one who would inherit eternal life. **Sell all that you have:** the original saying (cf Mk 10, 21) has characteristically been made more demanding by Luke's addition of "all."

**18, 31–33:** The details included in this third announcement of Jesus' suffering and death suggest that the literary formulation of the announcement has been directed by the knowledge of the historical passion and death of Jesus.

**18, 31: Everything written by the prophets . . . will be fulfilled:** this is a Lucan addition to the words of Jesus found in the Marcan source (Mk 10, 32–34). Luke understands the events of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but, as is usually the case in Luke-Acts, the author does not specify which Old Testament prophets he has in mind; cf 24, 25.27.44; Acts 3, 8; 13, 27; 26, 22–23.

**18, 38: Son of David:** the blind beggar identifies Jesus with a title that is related to Jesus' role as Messiah (see the note on 2, 11). Through this Son of David, salvation comes to the blind man. Note the connection between salvation and house of David mentioned earlier in Zechariah's canticle (1, 69). See also the note on Mt 9, 27.

**19, 1–10:** The story of the tax collector Zacchaeus is unique to this gospel. While a rich man (2), Zacchaeus provides a contrast to the rich man of 18, 18–23 who cannot detach himself from his material possessions to become a follower of Jesus. Zacchaeus, according to Luke, exemplifies the proper attitude toward wealth: he promises to give half of his possessions to the poor (8) and consequently is the recipient of salvation (9–10).

m Mt 19, 16–30; Mk 10, 17–31. n 10, 25. o Ex 20, 12–16; Dt 5, 16–20. p 12, 33; Sir 29, 11; Mt 6, 20. q Mk 14, 36. r 14, 26. s 24, 25–27.44; Mt 20, 17–19; Mk 10, 32–34; Acts 3, 18. t 9, 22.44. u Mk 9, 32. v Mt 20, 29–34; Mk 10, 46–52. w 17, 13; Mt 9, 27; 15, 22. x Mk 10, 36. y 7, 50; 17, 19.

sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was
about to pass that way. [5]When he reached the
place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zac-
chaeus, come down quickly, for today I must
stay at your house." [6]And he came down quickly
and received him with joy. [7] [z]When they all saw
this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has
gone to stay at the house of a sinner." [8] [a]But
Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
"Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall
give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything
from anyone I shall repay it four times over."
[9] [b]*And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has
come to this house because this man too is a
descendant of Abraham. [10] [c]*For the Son of Man
has come to seek and to save what was lost."

**The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins**

[11] [d]*While they were listening to him speak, he
proceeded to tell a parable because he was near
Jerusalem and they thought that the kingdom of
God would appear there immediately. [12] [e]So he
said, "A nobleman went off to a distant country
to obtain the kingship for himself and then to
return. [13]*He called ten of his servants and gave
them ten gold coins and told them, 'Engage in
trade with these until I return.' [14]His fellow
citizens, however, despised him and sent a
delegation after him to announce, 'We do not
want this man to be our king.' [15]But when he
returned after obtaining the kingship, he had the
servants called, to whom he had given the
money, to learn what they had gained by trad-
ing. [16]The first came forward and said, 'Sir, your
gold coin has earned ten additional ones.' [17] [f]He
replied, 'Well done, good servant! You have been
faithful in this very small matter; take charge of
ten cities.' [18]Then the second came and re-
ported, 'Your gold coin, sir, has earned five
more.' [19]And to this servant too he said, 'You,
take charge of five cities.' [20]Then the other
servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold
coin; I kept it stored away in a handkerchief,
[21]for I was afraid of you, because you are a
demanding person; you take up what you did
not lay down and you harvest what you did not
plant.' [22]He said to him, 'With your own words I
shall condemn you, you wicked servant. You
knew I was a demanding person, taking up what
I did not lay down and harvesting what I did not
plant; [23]why did you not put my money in a
bank? Then on my return I would have collected
it with interest.' [24]And to those standing by he
said, 'Take the gold coin from him and give it to
the servant who has ten.' [25]But they said to him,
'Sir, he has ten gold coins.' [26] [g]'I tell you, to
everyone who has, more will be given, but from
the one who has not, even what he has will be
taken away. [27]Now as for those enemies of mine
who did not want me as their king, bring them
here and slay them before me.' "

## VI: The Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem

**The Entry into Jerusalem** [28] [h]*After he had
said this, he proceeded on his journey up to

**19, 9: A descendant of Abraham:** literally, "a son of Abraham." The tax collector Zacchaeus, whose repentance is attested by his determination to amend his former ways, shows himself to be a true descendant of Abraham, the true heir to the promises of God in the Old Testament. Underlying Luke's depiction of Zacchaeus as a descendant of Abraham, the father of the Jews (1, 73; 16, 22–31), is his recognition of the central place occupied by Israel in the plan of salvation.

**19, 10:** This verse sums up for Luke his depiction of the role of Jesus as savior in this gospel.

**19, 11–27:** In this parable Luke has combined two originally distinct parables: (1) a parable about the conduct of faithful and productive servants (13.15b-26) and (2) a parable about a rejected king (12.14–15a.27). The story about the conduct of servants occurs in another form in Mt 25, 14–20. The story about the rejected king may have originated with a contemporary historical event. After the death of Herod the Great, his son Archelaus traveled to Rome to receive the title of king. A delegation of Jews appeared in Rome before Caesar Augustus to oppose the request of Archelaus. Although not given the title of king, Archelaus was made ruler over Judea and Samaria. As the story is used by Luke, however, it furnishes a correction to the expectation of the imminent end of the age and of the establishment of the kingdom in Jerusalem (11). Jesus is not on his way to Jerusalem to receive the kingly power; for that, he must go away and only after returning from the distant country (a reference to the parousia) will reward and judgment take place.

**19, 13: Ten gold coins:** literally, "ten minas." A mina was a monetary unit that in ancient Greece was the equivalent of one hundred drachmas.

**19, 28—21, 38:** With the royal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, a new section of Luke's gospel begins, the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem before his death and resurrection. Luke suggests that this was a lengthy ministry in Jerusalem (19, 47; 20, 1; 21, 37–38; 22, 53) and it is characterized by Jesus' daily teaching in the temple (21, 37–38). For the story of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, see also Mt 21, 1–11; Mk 11, 1–10; Jn 12, 12–19 and the notes there.

z 5, 30; 15, 2. a Ex 21, 37; Nm 5, 6–7; 2 Sm 12, 6. b 13, 16; Mt 21, 31. c 15, 4–10; Ez 34, 16. d Mt 25, 14–30. e Mk 13, 34. f 16, 10. g 8, 18; Mt 13, 12; Mk 4, 25. h Mt 21, 1–11; Mk 11, 1–11; Jn 12, 12–19.

Jerusalem. 29 [i]As he drew near to Bethphage
and Bethany at the place called the Mount of
Olives, he sent two of his disciples. 30 [j]He said,
"Go into the village opposite you, and as you
enter it you will find a colt tethered on which
no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here.
31 And if anyone should ask you, 'Why are you
untying it?' you will answer, 'The Master has
need of it.' " 32 [k]So those who had been sent
went off and found everything just as he had
told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt,
its owners said to them, "Why are you untying
this colt?" 34 They answered, "The Master has
need of it." 35 [l]So they brought it to Jesus,
threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped
Jesus to mount. 36 As he rode along, the people
were spreading their cloaks on the road; 37 and
now as he was approaching the slope of the
Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his
disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for
all the mighty deeds they had seen. 38 [m]*They
proclaimed:

"Blessed is the king who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest."

39 *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to
him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He said
in reply, "I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones
will cry out!"

**The Lament for Jerusalem** 41 [n o]*As he drew
near, he saw the city and wept over it, 42 [p]saying,
"If this day you only knew what makes for
peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.
43 [q]*For the days are coming upon you when
your enemies will raise a palisade against you;
they will encircle you and hem you in on all
sides. 44 [r]They will smash you to the ground and
your children within you, and they will not leave
one stone upon another within you because you
did not recognize the time of your visitation."

**The Cleansing of the Temple** 45 [s t]*Then Je-
sus entered the temple area and proceeded to
drive out those who were selling things,
46 [u]saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall
be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den
of thieves.' " 47 [v w]And every day he was teach-
ing in the temple area. The chief priests, the
scribes, and the leaders of the people, mean-
while, were seeking to put him to death, 48 but
they could find no way to accomplish their
purpose because all the people were hanging on
his words.

## CHAPTER 20

**The Authority of Jesus Questioned** 1 [x]*One
day as he was teaching the people in the temple
area and proclaiming the good news, the chief
priests and scribes, together with the elders,
approached him 2 [y]and said to him, "Tell us, by
what authority are you doing these things? Or

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**19, 38: Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord:** only in Lk is Jesus explicitly given the title **king** when he enters Jerusalem in triumph. Luke has inserted this title into the words of Ps 118, 26 that heralded the arrival of the pilgrims coming to the holy city and to the temple. Jesus is thereby acclaimed as **king** (see 1, 32) and as the one **who comes** (see Mal 3, 1; Lk 7, 19). **Peace in heaven . . .** : the acclamation of the disciples of Jesus in Lk echoes the announcement of the angels at the birth of Jesus (2, 14). The peace Jesus brings is associated with the salvation to be accomplished here in Jerusalem.

**19, 39: Rebuke your disciples:** this command, found only in Lk, was given so that the Roman authorities would not interpret the acclamation of Jesus as king as an uprising against them; cf 23, 2–3.

**19, 41–44:** The lament for Jerusalem is found only in Lk. By not accepting Jesus (the one who mediates peace), Jerusalem will not find peace but will become the victim of devastation.

**19, 43–44:** Luke may be describing the actual disaster that befell Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when it was destroyed by the Romans during the First Revolt.

**19, 45–46:** Immediately upon entering the holy city, Jesus in a display of his authority enters the temple (see Mal 3, 1–3) and lays claim to it after cleansing it that it might become a proper place for his teaching ministry in Jerusalem (19, 47; 20, 1; 21, 37; 22, 53). See Mt 21, 12–17; Mk 11, 15–19; Jn 2, 13–17 and the notes there.

**20, 1–47:** The Jerusalem religious leaders or their representatives, in an attempt to incriminate Jesus with the Romans and to discredit him with the people, pose a number of questions to him (about his authority, 2; about payment of taxes, 22; about the resurrection, 28–33).

i Zec 14, 4. j Nm 19, 2; Dt 21, 3, 1 Sm 6, 7; Zec 9, 9. k 22, 13. l 2 Kgs 9, 13. m 2, 14; Ps 118, 26. n 13, 34–35. o 2 Kgs 8, 11–12; Jer 14, 17; 15, 5. p 8, 10; Is 6, 9–10; Mt 13, 14; Mk 4, 12; Acts 28, 26–27; Rom 11, 8.10. q Is 29, 3. r 1, 68; 21, 6; Ps 137, 9; Mt 24, 2; Mk 13, 2. s Mt 21, 12–13; Mk 11, 15–17; Jn 2, 13–17. t 3, 1 / Hos 9, 15. u Is 56, 7; Jer 7, 11. v 20, 19; 22, 2; Mt 21, 46; Mk 11, 18; 12, 12; 14, 1–2; Jn 5, 18; 7, 30. w 21, 37; 22, 53; Jn 18, 20. x Mt 21, 23–27; Mk 11, 27–33. y Acts 4, 7.

who is the one who gave you this authority?"
3He said to them in reply, "I shall ask you a
question. Tell me, 4 [z]was John's baptism of
heavenly or of human origin?" 5 [a]They discussed
this among themselves, and said, "If we say, 'Of
heavenly origin,' he will say, 'Why did you not
believe him?' 6But if we say, 'Of human origin,'
then all the people will stone us, for they are
convinced that John was a prophet." 7So they
answered that they did not know from where it
came. 8Then Jesus said to them, "Neither shall I
tell you by what authority I do these things."

**The Parable of the Tenant Farmers**

9 [b c]*Then he proceeded to tell the people this
parable. "[A] man planted a vineyard, leased it to
tenant farmers, and then went on a journey for a
long time. 10 [d]At harvest time he sent a servant
to the tenant farmers to receive some of the
produce of the vineyard. But they beat the
servant and sent him away empty-handed. 11So
he proceeded to send another servant, but him
also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-
handed. 12Then he proceeded to send a third,
but this one too they wounded and threw out.
13 [e]The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I
do? I shall send my beloved son; maybe they will
respect him.' 14But when the tenant farmers saw
him they said to one another, 'This is the heir.
Let us kill him that the inheritance may become
ours.' 15*So they threw him out of the vineyard
and killed him. What will the owner of the
vineyard do to them? 16He will come and put
those tenant farmers to death and turn over the
vineyard to others." When the people heard this,
they exclaimed, "Let it not be so!" 17 [f]But he
looked at them and asked, "What then does this
scripture passage mean:

'The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone'?

18Everyone who falls on that stone will be
dashed to pieces; and it will crush anyone on
whom it falls." 19 [g]The scribes and chief priests
sought to lay their hands on him at that very
hour, but they feared the people, for they knew
that he had addressed this parable to them.

**Paying Taxes to the Emperor**

20 [h i]*They
watched him closely and sent agents pretending
to be righteous who were to trap him in speech,
in order to hand him over to the authority and
power of the governor. 21 [j]They posed this question to him, "Teacher, we know that what you
say and teach is correct, and you show no
partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22*Is it lawful for us to pay
tribute to Caesar or not?" 23Recognizing their
craftiness he said to them, 24*"Show me a
denarius; whose image and name does it bear?"
They replied, "Caesar's." 25 [k]So he said to them,
"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar
and to God what belongs to God." 26They were
unable to trap him by something he might say
before the people, and so amazed were they at
his reply that they fell silent.

**The Question about the Resurrection**

27 [l m]*Some Sadducees, those who deny that
there is a resurrection, came forward and put
this question to him, 28 [n]*saying, "Teacher, Mo-

**20, 9–19:** This parable about an absentee landlord and a tenant farmers' revolt reflects the social and economic conditions of rural Palestine in the first century. The synoptic gospel writers use the parable to describe how the rejection of the landlord's son becomes the occasion for the vineyard to be taken away from those to whom it was entrusted (the religious leadership of Judaism that rejects the teaching and preaching of Jesus; 19).

**20, 15: They threw him out of the vineyard and killed him:** cf Mk 12, 8. Luke has altered his Marcan source and reports that the murder of the son takes place outside the vineyard to reflect the tradition of Jesus' death outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem (see Heb 13, 12).

**20, 20: The governor:** i.e., Pontius Pilate, the Roman administrator responsible for the collection of taxes and maintenance of order in Palestine.

**20, 22:** Through their question the agents of the Jerusalem religious leadership hope to force Jesus to take sides on one of the sensitive political issues of first-century Palestine. The issue of nonpayment of taxes to Rome becomes one of the focal points of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66–70) that resulted in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. See also the note on Mt 22, 15–22.

**20, 24: Denarius:** a Roman silver coin (see the note on 7, 41).

**20, 27: Sadducees:** see the note on Mt 3, 7.

**20, 28–33:** The Sadducees' question, based on the law of levirate marriage recorded in Dt 25, 5–10, ridicules the idea of the resurrection. Jesus rejects their naive understanding of the resurrection (35–36) and then argues on behalf of the resurrection of the dead on the basis of the written law (37–38) that the Sadducees accept. See also the notes on Mt 22, 23–33.

z 3, 3.16. a Mt 21, 32. b Mt 21, 33–46; Mk 12, 1–12. c Is 5, 1–7. d 2 Chr 36, 15–16. e 3, 22. f Ps 118, 22; Is 28, 16. g 19, 47–48; 22, 2; Mt 21, 46; Mk 11, 18; 12, 12; 14, 1–2; Jn 5, 18; 7, 30. h Mt 22, 15–22; Mk 12, 13–17. i 11, 54. j Jn 3, 2. k Rom 13, 6–7. l Mt 22, 23–33; Mk 12, 18–27. m Acts 23, 8. n Gn 38, 8; Dt 25, 5.

ses wrote for us, 'If someone's brother dies
leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take
the wife and raise up descendants for his
brother.' [29]Now there were seven brothers; the
first married a woman but died childless. [30]Then
the second [31]and the third married her, and
likewise all the seven died childless. [32]Finally the
woman also died. [33]Now at the resurrection
whose wife will that woman be? For all seven
had been married to her." [34]Jesus said to them,
"The children of this age marry and remarry;
[35]but those who are deemed worthy to attain to
the coming age and to the resurrection of the
dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.
[36]*They can no longer die, for they are like
angels; and they are the children of God because
they are the ones who will rise. [37] [o]That the dead
will rise even Moses made known in the passage
about the bush, when he called 'Lord' the God
of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of
Jacob; [38] [p]and he is not God of the dead, but of
the living, for to him all are alive." [39]Some of the
scribes said in reply, "Teacher, you have answered well." [40] [q]And they no longer dared to
ask him anything.

**The Question about David's Son** [41] [r]*Then
he said to them, "How do they claim that the
Messiah is the Son of David? [42] [s]For David
himself in the Book of Psalms says:

'The Lord said to my lord,
"Sit at my right hand
[43] till I make your enemies your footstool." '

[44]Now if David calls him 'lord,' how can he be
his son?"

**Denunciation of the Scribes** [45] [t]Then, within
the hearing of all the people, he said to [his]
disciples, [46] [u]"Be on guard against the scribes,
who like to go around in long robes and love
greetings in marketplaces, seats of honor in
synagogues, and places of honor at banquets.
[47]They devour the houses of widows and, as a
pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They will receive
a very severe condemnation."

## CHAPTER 21

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**The Poor Widow's Contribution** [1] [v]*When
he looked up he saw some wealthy people
putting their offerings into the treasury [2]and he
noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins.
[3]He said, "I tell you truly, this poor widow put in
more than all the rest; [4]for those others have all
made offerings from their surplus wealth, but
she, from her poverty, has offered her whole
livelihood."

**The Destruction of the Temple Foretold**
[5] [w]*While some people were speaking about
how the temple was adorned with costly stones
and votive offerings, he said, [6] [x]"All that you see
here—the days will come when there will not
be left a stone upon another stone that will not
be thrown down."

**The Signs of the End** [7] [y]Then they asked him,
"Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign
will there be when all these things are about to
happen?" [8] [z]*He answered, "See that you not be

**20, 36: Because they are the ones who will rise:** literally, "being sons of the resurrection."

**20, 41–44:** After successfully answering the three questions of his opponents, Jesus now asks them a question. Their inability to respond implies that they have forfeited their position and authority as the religious leaders of the people because they do not understand the scriptures. This series of controversies between the religious leadership of Jerusalem and Jesus reveals Jesus as the authoritative teacher whose words are to be listened to (see 9, 35). See also the notes on Mt 22, 41–46.

**21, 1–4:** The widow is another example of the poor ones in this gospel whose detachment from material possessions and dependence on God leads to their blessedness (6, 20). Her simple offering provides a striking contrast to the pride and pretentiousness of the scribes denounced in the preceding section (20, 45–47). The story is taken from Mk 12, 41–44.

**21, 5–36:** Jesus' eschatological discourse in Lk is inspired by Mk 13, but Luke has made some significant alterations to the words of Jesus found there. Luke maintains, though in a modified form, the belief in the early expectation of the end of the age (see 27.28. 31.32.36), but, by focusing attention throughout the gospel on the importance of the day-to-day following of Jesus and by reinterpreting the meaning of some of the signs of the end from Mk 13, he has come to terms with what seemed to the early Christian community to be a delay of the parousia. Mark, for example, described the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans (Mk 13, 14) as the apocalyptic symbol (see Dn 9, 27; 12, 11) accompanying the end of the age and the coming of the Son of Man. Luke (21, 20–24), however, removes the apocalyptic setting and separates the historical destruction of Jerusalem from the signs of the coming of the Son of Man by a period that he refers to as "the times of the Gentiles" (21, 24). See also the notes on Mt 24, 1–36 and Mk 13, 1–37.

**21, 8: The time has come:** in Lk, the proclamation of the imminent end of the age has itself become a false teaching.

o Ex 3, 2.6.15–16. p Rom 14, 8–9. q Mt 22, 46; Mk 12, 34. r Mt 22, 41–45; Mk 12, 35–37. s Ps 110, 1. t 11, 37–54; Mt 23, 1–36; Mk 12, 38–40. u 14, 7–11. v Mk 12, 41–44. w Mt 24, 1–2; Mk 13, 1–2. x 19, 44. y Mt 24, 3–14; Mk 13, 3–13. z 17, 23; Mk 13, 5.6.21; 1 Jn 2, 18.

deceived, for many will come in my name,
saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do
not follow them! 9When you hear of wars and
insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things
must happen first, but it will not immediately be
the end." 10 [a]Then he said to them, "Nation will
rise against nation, and kingdom against king-
dom. 11There will be powerful earthquakes,
famines, and plagues from place to place; and
awesome sights and mighty signs will come from
the sky.

**The Coming Persecution** 12 [b c]*"Before all
this happens, however, they will seize and
persecute you, they will hand you over to the
synagogues and to prisons, and they will have
you led before kings and governors because of
my name. 13It will lead to your giving testimony.
14Remember, you are not to prepare your de-
fense beforehand, 15 [d]*for I myself shall give you
a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries
will be powerless to resist or refute. 16 [e f]You will
even be handed over by parents, brothers, rela-
tives, and friends, and they will put some of you
to death. 17You will be hated by all because of
my name, 18 [g]but not a hair on your head will be
destroyed. 19 [h]By your perseverance you will
secure your lives.

**The Great Tribulation** 20 [i j]*"When you see
Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its
desolation is at hand. 21 [k]Then those in Judea
must flee to the mountains. Let those within the
city escape from it, and let those in the country-
side not enter the city, 22for these days are the
time of punishment when all the scriptures are
fulfilled. 23 [l]Woe to pregnant women and nurs-
ing mothers in those days, for a terrible calamity
will come upon the earth and a wrathful judg-
ment upon this people. 24 [m]*They will fall by the
edge of the sword and be taken as captives to all
the Gentiles; and Jerusalem will be trampled
underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the
Gentiles are fulfilled.

**The Coming of the Son of Man** 25 [n o]"There
will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars,
and on earth nations will be in dismay, per-
plexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves.
26 [p]*People will die of fright in anticipation of
what is coming upon the world, for the powers
of the heavens will be shaken. 27 [q]And then they
will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with
power and great glory. 28 [r]But when these signs
begin to happen, stand erect and raise your
heads because your redemption is at hand."

**The Lesson of the Fig Tree** 29 [s]He taught
them a lesson. "Consider the fig tree and all the
other trees. 30When their buds burst open, you
see for yourselves and know that summer is now
near; 31in the same way, when you see these
things happening, know that the kingdom of
God is near. 32 [t]Amen, I say to you, this genera-
tion will not pass away until all these things have
taken place. 33 [u]Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will not pass away.

**Exhortation to be Vigilant** 34 [v]"Beware that
your hearts do not become drowsy from carous-
ing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily
life, and that day catch you by surprise 35like a
trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives
on the face of the earth. 36 [w]Be vigilant at all
times and pray that you have the strength to
escape the tribulations that are imminent and to
stand before the Son of Man."

**Ministry in Jerusalem** 37 [x]During the day, Je-
sus was teaching in the temple area, but at night

**21, 12: Before all this happens . . . :** to Luke and his community, some of the signs of the end just described (10–11) still lie in the future. Now in dealing with the persecution of the disciples (12–19) and the destruction of Jerusalem (20–24) Luke is pointing to eschatological signs that have already been fulfilled.

**21, 15: A wisdom in speaking:** literally, "a mouth and wisdom."

**21, 20–24:** The actual destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70 upon which Luke and his community look back provides the assurance that, just as Jesus' prediction of Jerusalem's destruction was fulfilled, so too will be his announcement of their final redemption (27–28).

**21, 24: The times of the Gentiles:** a period of indeterminate length separating the destruction of Jerusalem from the cosmic signs accompanying the coming of the Son of Man.

**21, 26: The powers of the heavens:** the heavenly bodies mentioned in v 25 and thought of as cosmic armies.

a 2 Chr 15, 6; Is 19, 2. b 12, 11–12; Mt 10, 17–20; Mk 13, 9–11. c Jn 16, 2; Acts 25, 24. d Acts 6, 10. e Mt 10, 21–22. f 12, 52–53. g 12, 7; 1 Sm 14, 45; Mt 10, 30; Acts 27, 34. h 8, 15. i Mt 24, 15–21; Mk 13, 14–19. j 19, 41–44. k 17, 31. l 1 Cor 7, 26. m Tb 14, 5; Ps 79, 1; Is 63, 18; Jer 21, 7; Rom 11, 25; Rv 11, 2. n Mt 24, 29–31; Mk 13, 24–27. o Wis 5, 22; Is 13, 10; Ez 32, 7; Jl 2, 10; 3, 3–4; 4, 15; Rv 6, 12–14. p Hg 2, 6.21. q Dn 7, 13–14; Mt 26, 64; Rv 1, 7. r 2, 38. s Mt 24, 32–35; Mk 13, 28–31. t 9, 27; Mt 16, 28. u 16, 17. v 12, 45–46; Mt 24, 48–50; 1 Thes 5, 3.6–7. w Mk 13, 33. x 19, 47; 22, 39.

he would leave and stay at the place called the
Mount of Olives. [38]And all the people would get
up early each morning to listen to him in the
temple area.

## VII: The Passion Narrative

### CHAPTER 22

**The Conspiracy against Jesus** [1 y]*Now the
feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover,
was drawing near, [2 z]and the chief priests and
the scribes were seeking a way to put him to
death, for they were afraid of the people.
[3 a b]*Then Satan entered into Judas, the one
surnamed Iscariot, who was counted among the
Twelve, [4]and he went to the chief priests and
temple guards to discuss a plan for handing him
over to them. [5]They were pleased and agreed to
pay him money. [6]He accepted their offer and
sought a favorable opportunity to hand him over
to them in the absence of a crowd.

**Preparations for the Passover** [7 c d]When the
day of the feast of Unleavened Bread arrived,
the day for sacrificing the Passover lamb, [8]he
sent out Peter and John, instructing them, "Go
and make preparations for us to eat the Pass-
over." [9]They asked him, "Where do you want us
to make the preparations?" [10]*And he answered
them, "When you go into the city, a man will
meet you carrying a jar of water. Follow him into
the house that he enters [11]and say to the master
of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is
the guest room where I may eat the Passover
with my disciples?" ' [12]He will show you a large
upper room that is furnished. Make the prepara-
tions there." [13 e]Then they went off and found
everything exactly as he had told them, and
there they prepared the Passover.

**The Last Supper** [14 f]When the hour came, he
took his place at table with the apostles. [15]*He
said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this
Passover with you before I suffer, [16 g]for, I tell
you, I shall not eat it [again] until there is
fulfillment in the kingdom of God." [17]*Then he
took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and
share it among yourselves; [18]for I tell you [that]
from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of
the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
[19 h]*Then he took the bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my
body, which will be given for you; do this in
memory of me." [20 i]And likewise the cup after
they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new
covenant in my blood, which will be shed for
you.

**The Betrayal Foretold** [21 j]"And yet behold,
the hand of the one who is to betray me is with
me on the table; [22]for the Son of Man indeed
goes as it has been determined; but woe to that
man by whom he is betrayed." [23]And they began

Ch 22–23
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433–435

**22, 1—23, 56a:** The passion narrative. Luke is still dependent upon Mk for the composition of the passion narrative but has incorporated much of his own special tradition into the narrative. Among the distinctive sections in Lk are: (1) the tradition of the institution of the Eucharist (22, 15–20); (2) Jesus' farewell discourse (22, 21–38); (3) the mistreatment and interrogation of Jesus (22, 63–71); (4) Jesus before Herod and his second appearance before Pilate (23, 6–16); (5) words addressed to the women followers on the way to the crucifixion (23, 27–32); (6) words to the penitent thief (23, 39–41); (7) the death of Jesus (23, 46.47b-49). Luke stresses the innocence of Jesus (23, 4.14–15.22) who is the victim of the powers of evil (22, 3.31.53) and who goes to his death in fulfillment of his Father's will (22, 42.46). Throughout the narrative Luke emphasizes the mercy, compassion, and healing power of Jesus (22, 51; 23, 43) who does not go to death lonely and deserted, but is accompanied by others who follow him on the way of the cross (23, 26–31.49).

**22, 1: Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover:** see the note on Mk 14, 1.

**22, 3: Satan entered into Judas:** see the note on 4, 13.

**22, 10: A man will meet you carrying a jar of water:** see the note on Mk 14, 13.

**22, 15: This Passover:** Luke clearly identifies this last supper of Jesus with the apostles as a Passover meal that commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Jesus reinterprets the significance of the Passover by setting it in the context of the kingdom of God (16). The "deliverance" associated with the Passover finds its new meaning in the blood that will be shed (20).

**22, 17:** Because of a textual problem in vv 19 and 20, some commentators interpret this cup as the eucharistic cup.

**22, 19c-20: Which will be given . . . do this in memory of me:** these words are omitted in some important Western text manuscripts and a few Syriac manuscripts. Other ancient text types, including the oldest papyrus manuscript of Lk dating from the late second or early third century, contain the longer reading presented here. The Lucan account of the words of institution of the Eucharist bears a close resemblance to the words of institution in the Pauline tradition (see 1 Cor 11, 23–26). See also the notes on Mt 26, 26–29; 26, 27–28; and Mk 14, 22–24.

y Mt 26, 1–5; Mk 14, 1–2; Jn 11, 47–53. z 19, 47–48; 20, 19; Mt 21, 46; Mk 12, 12; Jn 5, 18; 7, 30. a Mt 26, 14–16; Mk 14, 10–11; Jn 13, 2.27. b Acts 1, 17. c Mt 26, 17–19; Mk 14, 12–16. d Ex 12, 6.14–20. e 19, 32. f Mt 26, 20.26–30; Mk 14, 17.22–26; 1 Cor 11, 23–25. g 13, 29. h 24, 30; Acts 27, 35. i Ex 24, 8; Jer 31, 31; 32, 40; Zec 9, 11. j Ps 41, 10; Mt 26, 21–25; Mk 14, 18–21; Jn 13, 21–30.

to debate among themselves who among them
would do such a deed.

**The Role of the Disciples** 24 [k]*Then an argu-
ment broke out among them about which of
them should be regarded as the greatest. 25 [l]*He
said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it
over them and those in authority over them are
addressed as 'Benefactors'; 26 [m]but among you it
shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among
you be as the youngest, and the leader as the
servant. 27 For who is greater: the one seated at
table or the one who serves? Is it not the one
seated at table? I am among you as the one who
serves. 28 It is you who have stood by me in my
trials; 29 [n]and I confer a kingdom on you, just as
my Father has conferred one on me, 30 [o]that you
may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom;
and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve
tribes of Israel.

**Peter's Denial Foretold** 31 [p q]*"Simon, Simon,
behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like
wheat, 32 but I have prayed that your own faith
may not fail; and once you have turned back,
you must strengthen your brothers." 33 [r]He said
to him, "Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and
to die with you." 34 [s]But he replied, "I tell you,
Peter, before the cock crows this day, you will
deny three times that you know me."

**Instructions for the Time of Crisis** 35 [t]He
said to them, "When I sent you forth without a
money bag or a sack or sandals, were you in
need of anything?" "No, nothing," they replied.
36 [u]*He said to them, "But now one who has a
money bag should take it, and likewise a sack,
and one who does not have a sword should sell
his cloak and buy one. 37 [v]For I tell you that this
scripture must be fulfilled in me, namely, 'He
was counted among the wicked'; and indeed
what is written about me is coming to fulfill-
ment." 38 *Then they said, "Lord, look, there are
two swords here." But he replied, "It is
enough!"

**The Agony in the Garden** 39 [w]Then going out
he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of
Olives, and the disciples followed him. 40 [x]When
he arrived at the place he said to them, "Pray
that you may not undergo the test." 41 [y]After
withdrawing about a stone's throw from them
and kneeling, he prayed, 42 [z]saying, "Father, if
you are willing, take this cup away from me;
still, not my will but yours be done." [ 43 *And to
strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared
to him. 44 He was in such agony and he prayed so
fervently that his sweat became like drops of
blood falling on the ground.] 45 When he rose
from prayer and returned to his disciples, he
found them sleeping from grief. 46 [a]He said to
them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray
that you may not undergo the test."

**The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus** 47 [b]While
he was still speaking, a crowd approached and in
front was one of the Twelve, a man named
Judas. He went up to Jesus to kiss him. 48 Jesus
said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of
Man with a kiss?" 49 [c]His disciples realized what
was about to happen, and they asked, "Lord,
shall we strike with a sword?" 50 [d]And one of
them struck the high priest's servant and cut off
his right ear. 51 *But Jesus said in reply, "Stop, no
more of this!" Then he touched the servant's ear

**22, 24–38:** The Gospel of Luke presents a brief farewell discourse of Jesus; compare the lengthy farewell discourses and prayer in Jn, chs 13–17.

**22, 25: 'Benefactors':** this word occurs as a title of rulers in the Hellenistic world.

**22, 31: All of you:** literally, "you." The translation reflects the meaning of the Greek text that uses a second person plural pronoun here.

**22, 31–32:** Jesus' prayer for Simon's faith and the commission to strengthen his brothers anticipates the post-resurrectional prominence of Peter in the first half of Acts, where he appears as the spokesman for the Christian community and the one who begins the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10—11).

**22, 36:** In contrast to the ministry of the Twelve and of the seventy-two during the period of Jesus (9, 3; 10, 4), in the future period of the church the missionaries must be prepared for the opposition they will face in a world hostile to their preaching.

**22, 38: It is enough!:** the farewell discourse ends abruptly with these words of Jesus spoken to the disciples when they take literally what was intended as figurative language about being prepared to face the world's hostility.

**22, 43–44:** These verses, though very ancient, were probably not part of the original text of Lk. They are absent from the oldest papyrus manuscripts of Lk and from manuscripts of wide geographical distribution.

**22, 51: And healed him:** only Luke recounts this healing of the injured servant.

k 9, 46; Mt 18, 1; Mk 9, 34. l Mt 20, 25–27; Mk 10, 42–44; Jn 13, 3–16. m Mt 23, 11; Mk 9, 35. n 12, 32. o Mt 19, 28. p Mt 26, 33–35; Mk 14, 29–31; Jn 13, 37–38. q Jb 1, 6–12; Am 9, 9. r 22, 54. s 22, 54–62. t 9, 3; 10, 4; Mt 10, 9–10; Mk 6, 7–9. u 22, 49. v Is 53, 12. w Mt 26, 30.36–46; Mk 14, 26.32–42; Jn 18, 1–2. x 22, 46. y Heb 5, 7–8. z Mt 6, 10. a 22, 40. b Mt 26, 47–56; Mk 14, 43–50; Jn 18, 3–4. c 22, 36. d Jn 18, 26.

and healed him. 52 [e]And Jesus said to the chief
priests and temple guards and elders who had
come for him, "Have you come out as against a
robber, with swords and clubs? 53 [f]Day after day
I was with you in the temple area, and you did
not seize me; but this is your hour, the time for
the power of darkness."

**Peter's Denial of Jesus** 54 [g h]After arresting
him they led him away and took him into the
house of the high priest; Peter was following at a
distance. 55 They lit a fire in the middle of the
courtyard and sat around it, and Peter sat down
with them. 56 When a maid saw him seated in
the light, she looked intently at him and said,
"This man too was with him." 57 But he denied it
saying, "Woman, I do not know him." 58 A short
while later someone else saw him and said, "You
too are one of them"; but Peter answered, "My
friend, I am not." 59 About an hour later, still
another insisted, "Assuredly, this man too was
with him, for he also is a Galilean." 60 But Peter
said, "My friend, I do not know what you are
talking about." Just as he was saying this, the
cock crowed, 61 [i]*and the Lord turned and
looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the
word of the Lord, how he had said to him,
"Before the cock crows today, you will deny me
three times." 62 He went out and began to weep
bitterly. 63 [j]The men who held Jesus in custody
were ridiculing and beating him. 64 They blind-
folded him and questioned him, saying, "Proph-
esy! Who is it that struck you?" 65 And they
reviled him in saying many other things against
him.

**Jesus before the Sanhedrin** 66 [k l]*When day
came the council of elders of the people met,
both chief priests and scribes, and they brought
him before their Sanhedrin. 67 [m]They said, "If
you are the Messiah, tell us," but he replied to
them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, 68 and if
I question, you will not respond. 69 [n]But from
this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the
right hand of the power of God." 70 They all
asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He
replied to them, "You say that I am." 71 Then
they said, "What further need have we for
testimony? We have heard it from his own
mouth."

## CHAPTER 23

Ch 23–24
See RG
435–436

**Jesus before Pilate** 1 [o]*Then the whole assem-
bly of them arose and brought him before Pilate.
2 [p]They brought charges against him, saying,
"We found this man misleading our people; he
opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and
maintains that he is the Messiah, a king."
3 [q]Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the
Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so."
4 [r]Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the
crowds, "I find this man not guilty." 5 But they
were adamant and said, "He is inciting the
people with his teaching throughout all Judea,
from Galilee where he began even to here."

**Jesus before Herod** 6 *On hearing this Pilate
asked if the man was a Galilean; 7 [s]and upon
learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction,
he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at
that time. 8 [t]Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he

**22, 61:** Only Luke recounts that **the Lord turned and looked at Peter.** This look of Jesus leads to Peter's weeping bitterly over his denial (62).

**22, 66–71:** Luke recounts one daytime trial of Jesus (66–71) and hints at some type of preliminary nighttime investigation (54–65). Mark (and Matthew who follows Mk) has transferred incidents of this day into the nighttime interrogation with the result that there appear to be two Sanhedrin trials of Jesus in Mk (and Mt); see the note on Mk 14, 53.

**22, 66: Sanhedrin:** the word is a Hebraized form of a Greek word meaning a "council," and refers to the elders, chief priests, and scribes who met under the high priest's leadership to decide religious and legal questions that did not pertain to Rome's interests. Jewish sources are not clear on the competence of the Sanhedrin to sentence and to execute during this period.

**23, 1–5.13–25:** Twice Jesus is brought before Pilate in Luke's account, and each time Pilate explicitly declares Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing (4.14.22). This stress on the innocence of Jesus before the Roman authorities is also characteristic of John's gospel (Jn 18, 38; 19, 4.6). Luke presents the Jerusalem Jewish leaders as the ones who force the hand of the Roman authorities (1–2.5.10.13.18.21.23–25).

**23, 6–12:** The appearance of Jesus before Herod is found only in this gospel. Herod has been an important figure in Lk (9, 7–9; 13, 31–33) and has been presented as someone who has been curious about Jesus for a long time. His curiosity goes unrewarded. It is faith in Jesus, not curiosity, that is rewarded (7, 50; 8, 48.50; 17, 19).

e 22, 37. f 19, 47; 21, 37; Jn 7, 30; 8, 20; Col 1, 13. g Mt 26, 57–58.69–75; Mk 14, 53–54.66–72; Jn 18, 12–18.25–27. h 22, 33. i 22, 34. j Mt 26, 67–68; Mk 14, 65. k Mt 26, 59–66; Mk 14, 55–64. l Mt 27, 1; Mk 15, 1. m Jn 3, 12; 8, 45; 10, 24. n Ps 110, 1; Dn 7, 13–14; Acts 7, 56. o Mt 27, 1–2.11–14; Mk 15, 1–5; Jn 18, 28–38. p 20, 22–25; Acts 17, 7; 24, 5. q 22, 70; 1 Tm 6, 13. r 23, 14.22.41; Mt 27, 24; Jn 19, 4.6; Acts 13, 28. s 3, 1; 9, 7. t 9, 9; Acts 4, 27–28.

had been wanting to see him for a long time, for
he had heard about him and had been hoping to
see him perform some sign. 9 [u]He questioned
him at length, but he gave him no answer.
10 [v]The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile,
stood by accusing him harshly. 11 [w][Even] Herod
and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and
mocked him, and after clothing him in resplen-
dent garb, he sent him back to Pilate. 12 Herod
and Pilate became friends that very day, even
though they had been enemies formerly. 13 Pilate
then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and
the people 14 [x]and said to them, "You brought
this man to me and accused him of inciting the
people to revolt. I have conducted my investiga-
tion in your presence and have not found this
man guilty of the charges you have brought
against him, 15 nor did Herod, for he sent him
back to us. So no capital crime has been commit-
ted by him. 16 [y]Therefore I shall have him
flogged and then release him." [17]*

**The Sentence of Death** 18 [z]But all together
they shouted out, "Away with this man! Release
Barabbas to us." 19 (Now Barabbas had been
imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in
the city and for murder.) 20 Again Pilate ad-
dressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, 21 but
they continued their shouting, "Crucify him!
Crucify him!" 22 Pilate addressed them a third
time, "What evil has this man done? I found him
guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have
him flogged and then release him." 23 With loud
shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his
crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. 24 The
verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be
granted. 25 So he released the man who had been
imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom
they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to
deal with as they wished.

**The Way of the Cross** 26 [a]*As they led him
away they took hold of a certain Simon, a
Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country;
and after laying the cross on him, they made him
carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large crowd of people
followed Jesus, including many women who
mourned and lamented him. 28 [b]Jesus turned to
them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not
weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and
for your children, 29 for indeed, the days are
coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the
barren, the wombs that never bore and the
breasts that never nursed.' 30 [c]At that time
people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!'
and to the hills, 'Cover us!' 31 for if these things
are done when the wood is green what will
happen when it is dry?" 32 Now two others, both
criminals, were led away with him to be exe-
cuted.

**The Crucifixion** 33 [d e]When they came to the
place called the Skull, they crucified him and the
criminals there, one on his right, the other on his
left. 34 [f]*[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them,
they know not what they do."] They divided his
garments by casting lots. 35 [g h]The people stood
by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered
at him and said, "He saved others, let him save
himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of
God." 36 [i]Even the soldiers jeered at him. As
they approached to offer him wine 37 they called
out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself."
38 Above him there was an inscription that read,
"This is the King of the Jews."

39 *Now one of the criminals hanging there
reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah?

**23, 17:** This verse, "He was obliged to release one prisoner for them at the festival," is not part of the original text of Lk. It is an explanatory gloss from Mk 15, 6 (also Mt 27, 15) and is not found in many early and important Greek manuscripts. On its historical background, see the notes on Mt 27, 15–26.

**23, 26–32:** An important Lucan theme throughout the gospel has been the need for the Christian disciple to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Here this theme comes to the fore with the story of Simon of Cyrene who takes up the cross and follows Jesus (see 9, 23; 14, 27) and with the large crowd who likewise follow Jesus on the way of the cross. See also the note on Mk 15, 21.

**23, 34a: [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."]:** this portion of v 34 does not occur in the oldest papyrus manuscript of Lk and in other early Greek manuscripts and ancient versions of wide geographical distribution.

**23, 39–43:** This episode is recounted only in this gospel. The penitent sinner receives salvation through the crucified Jesus. Jesus' words to the penitent thief reveal Luke's understanding that the destiny of the Christian is "to be with Jesus."

u Mk 15, 5. v Mt 27, 12; Mk 15, 3. w Mt 27, 28–30; Mk 15, 17–19; Jn 19, 2–3. x 23, 4.22.41. y 23, 22; Jn 19, 12–14. z Mt 27, 20–26; Mk 15, 6–7.11–15; Jn 18, 38b-40; 19, 14–16; Acts 3, 13–14. a Mt 27, 32.38; Mk 15, 21.27; Jn 19, 17. b 19, 41–44; 21, 23–24. c Hos 10, 8; Rv 6, 16. d Mt 27, 33–44; Mk 15, 22–32; Jn 19, 17–24. e 22, 37; Is 53, 12. f Nm 15, 27–31; Ps 22, 19; Mt 5, 44; Acts 7, 60. g Ps 22, 8–9. h 4, 23. i Ps 69, 22; Mt 27, 48; Mk 15, 36.

Save yourself and us." [40]The other, however,
rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of
God, for you are subject to the same condemna-
tion? [41] [j]And indeed, we have been condemned
justly, for the sentence we received corresponds
to our crimes, but this man has done nothing
criminal." [42] [k]Then he said, "Jesus, remember
me when you come into your kingdom." [43] [l]He
replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you
will be with me in Paradise."

**The Death of Jesus** [44] [m] [n]*It was now about
noon and darkness came over the whole land
until three in the afternoon [45] [o]because of an
eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple
was torn down the middle. [46] [p]Jesus cried out in
a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I com-
mend my spirit"; and when he had said this he
breathed his last. [47]*The centurion who wit-
nessed what had happened glorified God and
said, "This man was innocent beyond doubt."
[48] [q]When all the people who had gathered for
this spectacle saw what had happened, they
returned home beating their breasts; [49] [r]but all
his acquaintances stood at a distance, including
the women who had followed him from Galilee
and saw these events.

**The Burial of Jesus** [50] [s]Now there was a virtu-
ous and righteous man named Joseph who,
though he was a member of the council, [51] [t]had
not consented to their plan of action. He came
from the Jewish town of Arimathea and was
awaiting the kingdom of God. [52]He went to
Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. [53] [u]After
he had taken the body down, he wrapped it in a
linen cloth and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb in
which no one had yet been buried. [54]It was the
day of preparation, and the sabbath was about to
begin. [55] [v]The women who had come from
Galilee with him followed behind, and when
they had seen the tomb and the way in which
his body was laid in it, [56] [w]they returned and
prepared spices and perfumed oils. Then they
rested on the sabbath according to the command-
ment.

## VIII: The Resurrection Narrative

### CHAPTER 24

Ch 23–24
See RG
435–436

**The Resurrection of Jesus** [1] [x]*But at day-
break on the first day of the week they took the
spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
[2]They found the stone rolled away from the
tomb; [3]but when they entered, they did not find
the body of the Lord Jesus. [4] [y]While they were
puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling
garments appeared to them. [5] [z]They were terri-
fied and bowed their faces to the ground. They
said to them, "Why do you seek the living one
among the dead? [6]*He is not here, but he has
been raised. Remember what he said to you
while he was still in Galilee, [7] [a]that the Son of
Man must be handed over to sinners and be
crucified, and rise on the third day." [8] [b]And they
remembered his words. [9] [c]*Then they returned
from the tomb and announced all these things to
the eleven and to all the others. [10] [d]The women
were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the
mother of James; the others who accompanied

**23, 44: Noon . . . three in the afternoon:** literally, the sixth and ninth hours. See the note on Mk 15, 25.

**23, 47: This man was innocent:** or, "This man was righteous."

**24, 1–53:** The resurrection narrative in Lk consists of five sections: (1) the women at the empty tomb (23, 56b—24, 12); (2) the appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (24, 13–35); (3) the appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem (24, 36–43); (4) Jesus' final instructions (24, 44–49); (5) the ascension (24, 50–53). In Lk, all the resurrection appearances take place in and around Jerusalem; moreover, they are all recounted as having taken place on Easter Sunday. A consistent theme throughout the narrative is that the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus were accomplished in fulfillment of Old Testament promises and of Jewish hopes (19a.21.26–27.44.46). In his second volume, Acts, Luke will argue that Christianity is the fulfillment of the hopes of Pharisaic Judaism and its logical development (see Acts 24, 10–21).

**24, 6a: He is not here, but he has been raised:** this part of the verse is omitted in important representatives of the Western text tradition, but its presence in other text types and the slight difference in wording from Mt 28, 6 and Mk 16, 6 argue for its retention.

**24, 9:** The women in this gospel do not flee from the tomb and tell no one, as in Mk 16, 8, but return and tell the disciples about their experience. The initial reaction to the testimony of the women is disbelief (11).

j 23, 4.14.22. k 9, 27; 23, 2.3.38. l 2 Cor 12, 3; Rv 2, 7. m Mt 27, 45–56; Mk 15, 33–41; Jn 19, 25–30. n Am 8, 9. o Ex 26, 31–33; 36, 35. p Ps 31, 6; Acts 7, 59. q 18, 13; Zec 12, 10. r 8, 1–3; 23, 55–56; 24, 10; Ps 38, 12. s Mt 27, 57–61; Mk 15, 42–47; Jn 19, 38–42; Acts 13, 29. t 2, 25.38. u 19, 30; Acts 13, 29. v 8, 2; 23, 49; 24, 10. w Ex 12, 16; 20, 10; Dt 5, 14. x Mt 28, 1–8; Mk 16, 1–8; Jn 20, 1–17. y 2 Mc 3, 26; Acts 1, 10. z Acts 2, 9. a 9, 22.44; 17, 25; 18, 32–33; Mt 16, 21; 17, 22–23; Mk 9, 31; Acts 17, 3. b Jn 2, 22. c Mk 16, 10–11; Jn 20, 18. d 8, 2–3; Mk 16, 9.

them also told this to the apostles, [11]but their
story seemed like nonsense and they did not
believe them. [12] *e**But Peter got up and ran to
the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths
alone; then he went home amazed at what had
happened.

**The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus**

[13] *f**Now that very day two of them were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called
Emmaus, [14]and they were conversing about all
the things that had occurred. [15]And it happened that while they were conversing and
debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked
with them, [16] *g**but their eyes were prevented
from recognizing him. [17]He asked them, "What
are you discussing as you walk along?" They
stopped, looking downcast. [18]One of them,
named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you
the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not
know of the things that have taken place there
in these days?" [19] *h*And he replied to them,
"What sort of things?" They said to him, "The
things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people, [20]how our chief
priests and rulers both handed him over to a
sentence of death and crucified him. [21] *i*But we
were hoping that he would be the one to
redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the
third day since this took place. [22] *j*Some women
from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
[23]and did not find his body; they came back
and reported that they had indeed seen a vision
of angels who announced that he was alive.
[24] *k*Then some of those with us went to the
tomb and found things just as the women had
described, but him they did not see." [25] *l*And he
said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How
slow of heart to believe all that the prophets
spoke! [26]*Was it not necessary that the Messiah
should suffer these things and enter into his
glory?" [27] *m*Then beginning with Moses and all
the prophets, he interpreted to them what
referred to him in all the scriptures. [28]As they
approached the village to which they were
going, he gave the impression that he was going
on farther. [29]But they urged him, "Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost
over." So he went in to stay with them. [30]And
it happened that, while he was with them at
table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it,
and gave it to them. [31]With that their eyes
were opened and they recognized him, but he
vanished from their sight. [32]Then they said to
each other, "Were not our hearts burning
[within us] while he spoke to us on the way and
opened the scriptures to us?" [33]So they set out
at once and returned to Jerusalem where they
found gathered together the eleven and those
with them [34] *n*who were saying, "The Lord has
truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"
[35]Then the two recounted what had taken
place on the way and how he was made known
to them in the breaking of the bread.

**The Appearance to the Disciples in Jerusalem** [36] *o p**While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said
to them, "Peace be with you." [37] *q*But they
were startled and terrified and thought that
they were seeing a ghost. [38]Then he said to
them, "Why are you troubled? And why do

**24, 12:** This verse is missing from the Western textual tradition but is found in the best and oldest manuscripts of other text types.

**24, 13–35:** This episode focuses on the interpretation of scripture by the risen Jesus and the recognition of him in the breaking of the bread. The references to the quotations of scripture and explanation of it (25–27), the kerygmatic proclamation (34), and the liturgical gesture (30) suggest that the episode is primarily catechetical and liturgical rather than apologetic.

**24, 13: Seven miles:** literally, "sixty stades." A stade was 607 feet. Some manuscripts read "160 stades" or more than eighteen miles. The exact location of Emmaus is disputed.

**24, 16:** A consistent feature of the resurrection stories is that the risen Jesus was different and initially unrecognizable (37; Mk 16, 12; Jn 20, 14; 21, 4).

**24, 26: That the Messiah should suffer . . . :** Luke is the only New Testament writer to speak explicitly of a suffering Messiah (26.46; Acts 3, 18; 17, 3; 26, 23). The idea of a suffering Messiah is not found in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature prior to the New Testament period, although the idea is hinted at in Mk 8, 31–33. See the notes on Mt 26, 63 and 26, 67–68.

**24, 36–43.44–49:** The Gospel of Luke, like each of the other gospels (Mt 28, 16–20; Mk 16, 14–15; Jn 20, 19–23), focuses on an important appearance of Jesus to the Twelve in which they are commissioned for their future ministry. As in vv 6 and 12, so in vv 36 and 40 there are omissions in the Western text.

e Jn 20, 3–7. f Mk 16, 12–13. g Jn 20, 14; 21, 4. h Mt 2, 23; 21, 11; Acts 2, 22. i 1, 54.68; 2, 38. j 24, 1–11; Mt 28, 1–8; Mk 16, 1–8. k Jn 20, 3–10. l 9, 22; 18, 31; 24, 44; Acts 3, 24; 17, 3. m 24, 44; Dt 18, 25; Ps 22, 1–18; Is 53; 1 Pt 1, 10–11. n 1 Cor 15, 4–5. o Mk 16, 14–19; Jn 20, 19–20. p 1 Cor 15, 5. q Mt 14, 26.

questions arise in your hearts? [39]*Look at my
hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me
and see, because a ghost does not have flesh
and bones as you can see I have." [40] [r]And as he
said this, he showed them his hands and his
feet. [41]While they were still incredulous for joy
and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you
anything here to eat?" [42] [s]They gave him a
piece of baked fish; [43]he took it and ate it in
front of them.

[44] [t]He said to them, "These are my words that
I spoke to you while I was still with you, that
everything written about me in the law of Moses
and in the prophets and psalms must be ful-
filled." [45] [u]Then he opened their minds to under-
stand the scriptures. [46] [v]*And he said to them,
"Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day [47] [w]and
that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
would be preached in his name to all the
nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] [x]You are
witnesses of these things. [49] [y]*And [behold] I am
sending the promise of my Father upon you; but
stay in the city until you are clothed with power
from on high."

**The Ascension** [50] [z]*Then he led them [out] as
far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed
them. [51]As he blessed them he parted from them
and was taken up to heaven. [52] [a]They did him
homage and then returned to Jerusalem with
great joy, [53]*and they were continually in the
temple praising God.

**24, 39–42:** The apologetic purpose of this story is evident in the concern with the physical details and the report that Jesus ate food.

**24, 46:** See the note on 24, 26.

**24, 49: The promise of my Father:** i.e., the gift of the holy Spirit.

**24, 50–53:** Luke brings his story about the time of Jesus to a close with the report of the ascension. He will also begin the story of the time of the church with a recounting of the ascension. In the gospel, Luke recounts the ascension of Jesus on Easter Sunday night, thereby closely associating it with the resurrection. In Acts (1, 3.9–11; 13, 31) he historicizes the ascension by speaking of a forty-day period between the resurrection and the ascension. The Western text omits some phrases in vv 51 and 52, perhaps to avoid any chronological conflict with Acts 1 about the time of the ascension.

**24, 53:** The Gospel of Luke ends as it began (1, 9), in the Jerusalem temple.

r Jn 21, 5.9–10.13. s Acts 10, 41. t 18, 31; 24, 27; Mt 16, 21; Jn 5, 39.46. u Jn 20, 9. v 9, 22; Is 53; Hos 6, 2. w Mt 3, 2; 28, 19–20; Mk 16, 15–16; Acts 10, 41. x Acts 1, 8. y Jn 14, 26; Acts 1, 4; 2, 3–4. z Mk 16, 19; Acts 1, 9–11. a Acts 1, 12.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

John
See RG
437–451

The Gospel according to John is quite different in character from the three synoptic gospels. It is highly literary and symbolic. It does not follow the same order or reproduce the same stories as the synoptic gospels. To a much greater degree, it is the product of a developed theological reflection and grows out of a different circle and tradition. It was probably written in the 90's of the first century.

The Gospel of John begins with a magnificent prologue, which states many of the major themes and motifs of the gospel, much as an overture does for a musical work. The prologue proclaims Jesus as the preexistent and incarnate Word of God who has revealed the Father to us. The rest of the first chapter forms the introduction to the gospel proper and consists of the Baptist's testimony about Jesus (there is no baptism of Jesus in this gospel—John simply points him out as the Lamb of God), followed by stories of the call of the first disciples, in which various titles predicated of Jesus in the early church are presented.

The gospel narrative contains a series of "signs"—the gospel's word for the wondrous deeds of Jesus. The author is primarily interested in the significance of these deeds, and so interprets them for the reader by various reflections, narratives, and discourses. The first sign is the transformation of water into wine at Cana (2, 1-11); this represents the replacement of the

Jewish ceremonial washings and symbolizes the entire creative and transforming work of Jesus. The second sign, the cure of the royal official's son (4, 46-54) simply by the word of Jesus at a distance, signifies the power of Jesus' life-giving word. The same theme is further developed by other signs, probably for a total of seven. The third sign, the cure of the paralytic at the pool with five porticoes in ch 5, continues the theme of water offering newness of life. In the preceding chapter, to the woman at the well in Samaria Jesus had offered living water springing up to eternal life, a symbol of the revelation that Jesus brings; here Jesus' life-giving word replaces the water of the pool that failed to bring life. Chapter 6 contains two signs, the multiplication of loaves and the walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee. These signs are connected much as the manna and the crossing of the Red Sea are in the Passover narrative and symbolize a new exodus. The multiplication of the loaves is interpreted for the reader by the discourse that follows, where the bread of life is used first as a figure for the revelation of God in Jesus and then for the Eucharist. After a series of dialogues reflecting Jesus' debates with the Jewish authorities at the Feast of Tabernacles in chs 7 and 8, the sixth sign is presented in ch 9, the sign of the young man born blind. This is a narrative illustration of the theme of conflict in the preceding two chapters; it proclaims the triumph of light over darkness, as Jesus is presented as the Light of the world. This is interpreted by a narrative of controversy between the Pharisees and the young man who had been given his sight by Jesus, ending with a discussion of spiritual blindness and spelling out the symbolic meaning of the cure. And finally, the seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus in ch 11, is the climax of signs. Lazarus is presented as a token of the real life that Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, who will now ironically be put to death because of his gift of life to Lazarus, will give to all who believe in him once he has been raised from the dead.

After the account of the seven signs, the "hour" of Jesus arrives, and the author passes from sign to reality, as he moves into the discourses in the upper room that interpret the meaning of the passion, death, and resurrection narratives that follow. The whole gospel of John is a progressive revelation of the glory of God's only Son, who comes to reveal the Father and then returns in glory to the Father. The author's purpose is clearly expressed in what must have been the original ending of the gospel at the end of ch 20: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name."

Critical analysis makes it difficult to accept the idea that the gospel as it now stands was written by one person. Chapter 21 seems to have been added after the gospel was completed; it exhibits a Greek style somewhat different from that of the rest of the work. The prologue (1, 1-18) apparently contains an independent hymn, subsequently adapted to serve as a preface to the gospel. Within the gospel itself there are also some inconsistencies, e.g., there are two endings of Jesus' discourse in the upper room (14, 31; 18, 1). To solve these problems, scholars have proposed various rearrangements that would produce a smoother order. However, most have come to the conclusion that the inconsistencies were probably produced by subsequent editing in which homogeneous materials were added to a shorter original.

Other difficulties for any theory of eyewitness authorship of the gospel in its present form are presented by its highly developed theology and by certain elements of its literary style. For instance, some of the wondrous deeds of Jesus have been worked into highly effective dramatic scenes (ch 9); there has been a careful attempt to have these followed by discourses that explain

them (chs 5 and 6); and the sayings of Jesus have been woven into long discourses of a quasi-poetic form resembling the speeches of personified Wisdom in the Old Testament.

The gospel contains many details about Jesus not found in the synoptic gospels, e.g., that Jesus engaged in a baptizing ministry (3, 22) before he changed to one of preaching and signs; that Jesus' public ministry lasted for several years (see the note on 2, 13); that he traveled to Jerusalem for various festivals and met serious opposition long before his death (2, 14-25; chs 5 and 7—8); and that he was put to death on the day before Passover (18, 28). These events are not always in chronological order because of the development and editing that took place. However, the accuracy of much of the detail of the fourth gospel constitutes a strong argument that the Johannine tradition rests upon the testimony of an eyewitness. Although tradition identified this person as John, the son of Zebedee, most modern scholars find that the evidence does not support this.

The fourth gospel is not simply history; the narrative has been organized and adapted to serve the evangelist's theological purposes as well. Among them are the opposition to the synagogue of the day and to John the Baptist's followers, who tried to exalt their master at Jesus' expense, the desire to show that Jesus was the Messiah, and the desire to convince Christians that their religious belief and practice must be rooted in Jesus. Such theological purposes have impelled the evangelist to emphasize motifs that were not so clear in the synoptic account of Jesus' ministry, e.g., the explicit emphasis on his divinity.

The polemic between synagogue and church produced bitter and harsh invective, especially regarding the hostility toward Jesus of the authorities—Pharisees and Sadducees—who are combined and referred to frequently as "the Jews" (see the note on 1, 19). These opponents are even described in 8, 44 as springing from their father the devil, whose conduct they imitate in opposing God by rejecting Jesus, whom God has sent. On the other hand, the author of this gospel seems to take pains to show that women are not inferior to men in the Christian community: the woman at the well in Samaria (ch 4) is presented as a prototype of a missionary (4, 4-42), and the first witness of the resurrection is a woman (20, 11-18).

The final editing of the gospel and arrangement in its present form probably dates from between A.D. 90 and 100. Traditionally, Ephesus has been favored as the place of composition, though many support a location in Syria, perhaps the city of Antioch, while some have suggested other places, including Alexandria.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to John are the following:

I. Prologue (1, 1-18)
II. The Book of Signs (1, 19—12, 50)
III. The Book of Glory (13, 1—20, 31)
IV. Epilogue: The Resurrection Appearance in Galilee (21, 1-25)

# I: Prologue

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
441–442

1 [a]*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
2 He was in the beginning with God.
3 [b]*All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be 4 [c]through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human
race;
5 [d]*the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 [e]*A man named John was sent from God.
7 [f]*He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him. 8 [g]He was
not the light, but came to testify to the light.
9 [h]The true light, which enlightens everyone,
was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
11 *He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.

12 [i]But to those who did accept him he gave
power to become children of God, to those who
believe in his name, 13 [j]*who were born not by
natural generation nor by human choice nor by a
man's decision but of God.

14 [k]*And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.

15 [l]*John testified to him and cried out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is
coming after me ranks ahead of me because he
existed before me.' " 16 *From his fullness we
have all received, grace in place of grace,
17 [m]because while the law was given through

**1, 1–18:** The prologue states the main themes of the gospel: life, light, truth, the world, testimony, and the preexistence of Jesus Christ, the incarnate **Logos**, who reveals God the Father. In origin, it was probably an early Christian hymn. Its closest parallel is in other christological hymns, Col 1, 15–20 and Phil 2, 6–11. Its core (1–5.10–11.14) is poetic in structure, with short phrases linked by "staircase parallelism," in which the last word of one phrase becomes the first word of the next. Prose inserts (at least 6–8 and 15) deal with John the Baptist.

**1, 1: In the beginning:** also the first words of the Old Testament (Gn 1, 1). **Was:** this verb is used three times with different meanings in this verse: existence, relationship, and predication. **The Word** (Greek **logos**): this term combines God's dynamic, creative word (Genesis), personified preexistent Wisdom as the instrument of God's creative activity (Proverbs), and the ultimate intelligibility of reality (Hellenistic philosophy). **With God:** the Greek preposition here connotes communication with another. **Was God:** lack of a definite article with "God" in Greek signifies predication rather than identification.

**1, 3: What came to be:** while the oldest manuscripts have no punctuation here, the corrector of Bodmer Papyrus $P^{75}$, some manuscripts, and the Ante-Nicene Fathers take this phrase with what follows, as staircase parallelism. Connection with v 3 reflects fourth-century anti-Arianism.

**1, 5:** The ethical dualism of light and darkness is paralleled in intertestamental literature and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. **Overcome:** "comprehend" is another possible translation, but cf 12, 35; Wis 7, 29–30.

**1, 6:** John was **sent** just as Jesus was "sent" (4, 34) in divine mission. Other references to John the Baptist in this gospel emphasize the differences between them and John's subordinate role.

**1, 7: Testimony:** the testimony theme of Jn is introduced, which portrays Jesus as if on trial throughout his ministry. All testify to Jesus: John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, scripture, his works, the crowds, the Spirit, and his disciples.

**1, 11: What was his own . . . his own people:** first a neuter, literally, "his own property/possession" (probably = Israel), then a masculine, "his own people" (the Israelites).

**1, 13:** Believers in Jesus become children of God not through any of the three natural causes mentioned but through God who is the immediate cause of the new spiritual life. **Were born:** the Greek verb can mean "begotten" (by a male) or "born" (from a female or of parents). The variant "he who was begotten," asserting Jesus' virginal conception, is weakly attested in Old Latin and Syriac versions.

**1, 14: Flesh:** the whole person, used probably against docetic tendencies (cf 1 Jn 4, 2; 2 Jn 7). **Made his dwelling:** literally, "pitched his tent/tabernacle." Cf the tabernacle or tent of meeting that was the place of God's presence among his people (Ex 25, 8–9). The incarnate Word is the new mode of God's presence among his people. The Greek verb has the same consonants as the Aramaic word for God's presence (Shekinah). **Glory:** God's visible manifestation of majesty in power, which once filled the tabernacle (Ex 40, 34) and the temple (1 Kgs 8, 10–11.27), is now centered in Jesus. **Only Son:** Greek, **monogenēs**, but see the note on 1, 18. **Grace and truth:** these words may represent two Old Testament terms describing Yahweh in covenant relationship with Israel (cf Ex 34, 6), thus God's "love" and "fidelity." The Word shares Yahweh's covenant qualities.

**1, 15:** This verse, interrupting vv 14 and 16, seems drawn from v 30.

**1, 16: Grace in place of grace:** replacement of the Old Covenant with the New (cf 17). Other possible translations are "grace upon grace" (accumulation) and "grace for grace" (correspondence).

a 10, 30; Gn 1, 1–5; Jb 28, 12–27; Prv 8, 22–25; Wis 9, 1–2; 1 Jn 1, 1–2; Col 1, 1.15; Rv 3, 14; 19, 13. b Ps 33, 9; Wis 9, 1; Sir 42, 15; 1 Cor 8, 6; Col 1, 16; Heb 1, 2; Rv 3, 14. c 5, 26; 8, 12; 1 Jn 1, 2. d 3, 19; 8, 12; 9, 5; 12, 35.46; Wis 7, 29–30; 1 Thes 5, 4; 1 Jn 2, 8. e Mt 3, 1; Mk 1, 4; Lk 3, 2–3. f 1, 19–34; 5, 33. g 5, 35. h 3, 19; 8, 12; 9, 39; 12, 46. i 3, 11–12; 5, 43–44; 12, 46–50; Gal 3, 26; 4, 6–7; Eph 1, 5; 1 Jn 3, 2. j 3, 5–6. k Ex 16, 10; 24, 17; 25, 8–9; 33, 22; 34, 6; Sir 24, 4.8; Is 60,1; Ez 43, 7; Jl 4, 17; Hb 2, 14; 1 Jn 1, 2; 4, 2; 2 Jn 7. l 1, 30; 3, 27–30. m 7, 19; Ex 31, 18; 34, 28.

Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus
Christ. 18 n*No one has ever seen God. The only
Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has
revealed him.

## II: The Book of Signs

### John the Baptist's Testimony to Himself

19*And this is the testimony of John. When the
Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites [to
him] to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 o*he admit-
ted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not
the Messiah." 21 p*So they asked him, "What are
you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am
not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered,
"No." 22So they said to him, "Who are you, so
we can give an answer to those who sent us?
What do you have to say for yourself?" 23 q*He
said:

"I am 'the voice of one crying out in the
desert,
"Make straight the way of the Lord," '

as Isaiah the prophet said." 24*Some Pharisees
were also sent. 25 rThey asked him, "Why then
do you baptize if you are not the Messiah or
Elijah or the Prophet?" 26 s*John answered
them, "I baptize with water; but there is one
among you whom you do not recognize, 27the
one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap
I am not worthy to untie." 28*This happened in
Bethany across the Jordan, where John was
baptizing.

### John the Baptist's Testimony to Jesus

29 t*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward
him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who
takes away the sin of the world. 30 u*He is the
one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me
who ranks ahead of me because he existed
before me.' 31*I did not know him, but the
reason why I came baptizing with water was
that he might be made known to Israel."
32 v*John testified further, saying, "I saw the
Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and
remain upon him. 33 wI did not know him, but
the one who sent me to baptize with water told
me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come
down and remain, he is the one who will baptize

**1, 18: The only Son, God:** while the vast majority of later textual witnesses have another reading, "the Son, the only one" or "the only Son," the translation above follows the best and earliest manuscripts, **monogenēs theos,** but takes the first term to mean not just "Only One" but to include a filial relationship with the Father, as at Lk 9, 38 ("only child") or Heb 11, 17 ("only son") and as translated at Jn 1, 14. The Logos is thus "only Son" and God but not Father/God.

**1, 19–51:** The testimony of John the Baptist about the Messiah and Jesus' self-revelation to the first disciples. This section constitutes the introduction to the gospel proper and is connected with the prose inserts in the prologue. It develops the major theme of testimony in four scenes: John's negative testimony about himself; his positive testimony about Jesus; the revelation of Jesus to Andrew and Peter; the revelation of Jesus to Philip and Nathanael.

**1, 19: The Jews:** throughout most of the gospel, the "Jews" does not refer to the Jewish people as such but to the hostile authorities, both Pharisees and Sadducees, particularly in Jerusalem, who refuse to believe in Jesus. The usage reflects the atmosphere, at the end of the first century, of polemics between church and synagogue, or possibly it refers to Jews as representative of a hostile world (10–11).

**1, 20: Messiah:** the anointed agent of Yahweh, usually considered to be of Davidic descent. See further the note on 1, 41.

**1, 21: Elijah:** the Baptist did not claim to be Elijah returned to earth (cf Mal 3, 23; Mt 11, 14). **The Prophet:** probably the prophet like Moses (Dt 18, 15; cf Acts 3, 22).

**1, 23:** This is a repunctuation and reinterpretation (as in the synoptic gospels and Septuagint) of the Hebrew text of Is 40, 3, which reads, "A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD."

**1, 24: Some Pharisees:** other translations, such as "Now they had been sent from the Pharisees," misunderstand the grammatical construction. This is a different group from that in v 19; the priests and Levites would have been Sadducees, not Pharisees.

**1, 26: I baptize with water:** the synoptics add "but he will baptize you with the holy Spirit" (Mk 1, 8) or " . . . holy Spirit and fire" (Mt 3, 11; Lk 3, 16). John's emphasis is on purification and preparation for a better baptism.

**1, 28: Bethany across the Jordan:** site unknown. Another reading is "Bethabara."

**1, 29: The Lamb of God:** the background for this title may be the victorious apocalyptic lamb who would destroy evil in the world (Rv 5—7; 17, 14); the paschal lamb, whose blood saved Israel (Ex 12); and/or the suffering servant led like a lamb to the slaughter as a sin-offering (Is 53, 7.10).

**1, 30: He existed before me:** possibly as Elijah (to come, 27); for the evangelist and his audience, Jesus' preexistence would be implied (see the note on 1, 1).

**1, 31: I did not know him:** this gospel shows no knowledge of the tradition (Lk 1) about the kinship of Jesus and John the Baptist. **The reason why I came baptizing with water:** in this gospel, John's baptism is not connected with forgiveness of sins; its purpose is revelatory, that Jesus may be made known to Israel.

**1, 32: Like a dove:** a symbol of the new creation (Gn 8, 8) or the community of Israel (Hos 11, 11). **Remain:** the first use of a favorite verb in Jn, emphasizing the permanency of the relationship between Father and Son (as here) and between the Son and the Christian. Jesus is the permanent bearer of the Spirit.

n 5, 37; 6, 46; Ex 33, 20; Jgs 13, 21–22; 1 Tm 6, 16; 1 Jn 4, 12. o 3, 28; Lk 3, 15; Acts 13, 25. p Dt 18, 15.18; 2 Kgs 2, 11; Sir 48, 10; Mal 3, 1.23; Mt 11, 14; 17, 11–13; Mk 9, 13; Acts 3, 22. q Is 40, 3; Mt 3, 3; Mk 1, 2; Lk 3, 4. r Ez 36, 25; Zec 13, 1; Mt 16, 14. s Mt 3, 11; Mk 1, 7–8; Lk 3, 16; Acts 13, 25. t 1, 36; Ex 12; Is 53, 7; Rv 5–7; 17, 14. u 1, 15; Mt 3, 11; Mk 1, 7; Lk 3, 16. v Sg 5, 2; Is 11, 2; Hos 11, 11; Mt 3, 16; Mk 1, 10; Lk 3, 21–22. w Is 42, 1; Mt 3, 11; Mk 1, 8; Lk 3, 16.

with the holy Spirit.' 34 x*Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

**The First Disciples** 35 y*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, 36*and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." 37*The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. 38Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39*He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. 40Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 41 z*He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42 a*Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

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43*The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." 44Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. 45 b*Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth." 46But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47*Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." 48 c*Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." 49 d*Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50*Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." 51 e*And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

## CHAPTER 2

**The Wedding at Cana** 1 f*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. 3When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to

**1, 34: The Son of God:** this reading is supported by good Greek manuscripts, including the Chester Beatty and Bodmer Papyri and the Vatican Codex, but is suspect because it harmonizes this passage with the synoptic version: "This is my beloved Son" (Mt 3, 17; Mk 1, 11; Lk 3, 22). The poorly attested alternate reading, "God's chosen One," is probably a reference to the Servant of Yahweh (Is 42, 1).

**1, 36:** John the Baptist's testimony makes his disciples' following of Jesus plausible.

**1, 37: The two disciples:** Andrew (40) and, traditionally, John, son of Zebedee (see the note on 13, 23).

**1, 39: Four in the afternoon:** literally, the tenth hour, from sunrise, in the Roman calculation of time. Some suggest that the next day, beginning at sunset, was the sabbath; they would have stayed with Jesus to avoid travel on it.

**1, 41: Messiah:** the Hebrew word **māšīah**, "anointed one" (see the note on Lk 2, 11), appears in Greek as the transliterated **messias** only here and in 4, 25. Elsewhere the Greek translation **christos** is used.

**1, 42: Simon, the son of John:** in Mt 16, 17, Simon is called **Bariōna**, "son of Jonah," a different tradition for the name of Simon's father. **Cephas:** in Aramaic = the Rock; cf Mt 16, 18. Neither the Greek equivalent **Petros** nor, with one isolated exception, **Cephas** is attested as a personal name before Christian times.

**1, 43: He:** grammatically, could be Peter, but logically is probably Jesus.

**1, 47: A True Israelite. There is no duplicity in him:** Jacob was the first to bear the name "Israel" (Gn 32, 29), but Jacob was a man of duplicity (Gn 27, 35–36).

**1, 48: Under the fig tree:** a symbol of messianic peace (cf Mi 4, 4; Zec 3, 10).

**1, 49: Son of God:** this title is used in the Old Testament, among other ways, as a title of adoption for the Davidic king (2 Sm 7, 14; Pss 2, 7; 89, 27), and thus here, with **King of Israel**, in a messianic sense. For the evangelist, Son of God also points to Jesus' divinity (cf 20, 28).

**1, 50:** Possibly a statement: "You [singular] believe because I saw you under the fig tree."

**1, 51:** The double "Amen" is characteristic of John. **You** is plural in Greek. The allusion is to Jacob's ladder (Gn 28, 12).

**2, 1—6, 71:** Signs revealing Jesus as the Messiah to all Israel. "Sign" (**sēmeion**) is John's symbolic term for Jesus' wondrous deeds (see Introduction). The Old Testament background lies in the Exodus story (cf Dt 11, 3; 29, 2). John is interested primarily in what the **sēmeia** signify: God's intervention in human history in a new way through Jesus.

**2, 1–11:** The first sign. This story of replacement of Jewish ceremonial washings (6) presents the initial revelation about Jesus at the outset of his ministry. He manifests his glory; the disciples believe. There is no synoptic parallel.

**2, 1: Cana:** unknown from the Old Testament. **The mother of Jesus:** she is never named in John.

x Is 42, 1; Mt 3, 17; Mk 1, 11; Lk 9, 35. y Mt 4, 18–22; Mk 1, 16–20; Lk 5, 1–11. z 4, 25. a Mt 16, 18; Mk 3, 16. b 21, 2. c Mi 4, 4; Zec 3, 10. d 12, 13; Ex 4, 22; Dt 14, 1; 2 Sm 7, 14; Jb 1, 6; 2, 1; 38, 7; Pss 2, 7; 29, 1; 89, 27; Wis 2, 18; Sir 4, 10; Dn 3, 25; Hos 11, 1; Mt 14, 33; 16, 16; Mk 13, 32. e Gn 28, 10–17; Dn 7, 13. f 4, 46; Jgs 14, 12; Tb 11, 8.

him, "They have no wine." [4] [g]*[And] Jesus said
to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect
me? My hour has not yet come." [5] [h]His mother
said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."
[6] [i]*Now there were six stone water jars there for
Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding
twenty to thirty gallons. [7]Jesus told them, "Fill
the jars with water." So they filled them to the
brim. [8]*Then he told them, "Draw some out
now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took
it. [9]And when the headwaiter tasted the water
that had become wine, without knowing where
it came from (although the servers who had
drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called
the bridegroom [10]and said to him, "Everyone
serves good wine first, and then when people
have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have
kept the good wine until now." [11] [j]*Jesus did this
as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee
and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began
to believe in him.

[12]*After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

**Cleansing of the Temple** [13] [k]*Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [14] [l]*He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. [15]He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, [16] [m]and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." [17] [n]*His disciples recalled the words of scripture, "Zeal for your house will consume me." [18] [o]At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" [19] [p]*Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." [20]*The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" [21]But he was speaking about the temple of his body. [22] [q]Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

**2, 4:** This verse may seek to show that Jesus did not work miracles to help his family and friends, as in the apocryphal gospels. **Woman:** a normal, polite form of address, but unattested in reference to one's mother. Cf also 19, 26. **How does your concern affect me?:** literally, "What is this to me and to you?"—a Hebrew expression of either hostility (Jgs 11, 12; 2 Chr 35, 21; 1 Kgs 17, 18) or denial of common interest (Hos 14, 9; 2 Kgs 3, 13). Cf Mk 1, 24; 5, 7, used by demons to Jesus. **My hour has not yet come:** the translation as a question ("Has not my hour now come?"), while preferable grammatically and supported by Greek Fathers, seems unlikely from a comparison with 7, 6.30. The "hour" is that of Jesus' passion, death, resurrection, and ascension (13, 1).

**2, 6: Twenty to thirty gallons:** literally, "two or three measures"; the Attic liquid measure contained 39.39 liters. The vast quantity recalls prophecies of abundance in the last days; cf Am 9, 13–14; Hos 14, 7; Jer 31, 12.

**2, 8: Headwaiter:** used of the official who managed a banquet, but there is no evidence of such a functionary in Palestine. Perhaps here a friend of the family acted as master of ceremonies; cf Sir 32, 1.

**2, 11: The beginning of his signs:** the first of seven (see Introduction).

**2, 12—3, 21:** The next three episodes take place in Jerusalem. Only the first is paralleled in the synoptic gospels.

**2, 12:** This transitional verse may be a harmonization with the synoptic tradition in Lk 4, 31 and Mt 4, 13. There are many textual variants. John depicts no extended ministry in Capernaum as do the synoptics.

**2, 13–22:** This episode indicates the post-resurrectional replacement of the temple by the person of Jesus.

**2, 13: Passover:** this is the first Passover mentioned in John; a second is mentioned in 6, 4, a third in 13, 1. Taken literally, they point to a ministry of at least two years.

**2, 14–22:** The other gospels place the cleansing of the temple in the last days of Jesus' life (Mt, on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem; Mk, on the next day). The order of events in the gospel narratives is often determined by theological motives rather than by chronological data.

**2, 14: Oxen, sheep, and doves:** intended for sacrifice. The doves were the offerings of the poor (Lv 5, 7). **Money-changers:** for a temple tax paid by every male Jew more than nineteen years of age, with a half-shekel coin (Ex 30, 11–16), in Tyrian currency. See the note on Mt 17, 24.

**2, 17:** Ps 69, 10, changed to future tense to apply to Jesus.

**2, 19:** This saying about the destruction of the temple occurs in various forms (Mt 24, 2; 27, 40; Mk 13, 2; 15, 29; Lk 21, 6; cf Acts 6, 14). Mt 26, 61 has: "I **can** destroy the temple of God . . ."; see the note there. In Mk 14, 58, there is a metaphorical contrast with a new temple: "I will destroy this temple **made with hands** and within three days I will build another **not made with hands.**" Here it is symbolic of Jesus' resurrection and the resulting community (see 21 and Rv 21, 2). **In three days:** an Old Testament expression for a short, indefinite period of time; cf Hos 6, 2.

**2, 20: Forty-six years:** based on references in Josephus (**Jewish Wars** 1, 21, 1 »»401; **Antiquities** 15, 11, 1 §380), possibly the spring of A.D. 28. Cf the note on Lk 3, 1.

g 7, 30; 8, 20; 12, 23; 13, 1; Jgs 11, 12; 1 Kgs 17, 18; 2 Kgs 3, 13; 2 Chr 35, 21; Hos 14, 9; Mk 1, 24; 5, 7; 7, 30; 8, 20; 12, 23; 13, 1. h Gn 41, 55. i 3, 25; Lv 11, 33; Am 9, 13–14; Mt 15, 2; 23, 25–26; Mk 7, 2–4; Lk 11, 38. j 4, 54. k Mt 21, 12–13; Mk 11, 15–17; Lk 19, 45–46. l Ex 30, 11–16; Lv 5, 7. m Zec 14, 21. n Ps 69, 9. o 6, 30. p Mt 24, 2; 26, 61; 27, 40; Mk 13, 2; 14, 58; 15, 29; Lk 21, 6; Acts 6, 14. q 5, 39; 12, 16; 14, 26; 20, 9; Mt 12, 6; Lk 24, 6–8; Rv 21, 22.

23 [r]While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of
Passover, many began to believe in his name
when they saw the signs he was doing. 24But
Jesus would not trust himself to them because he
knew them all, 25 [s]and did not need anyone to
testify about human nature. He himself under-
stood it well.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
443–444

**Nicodemus** 1 [t]*Now there was a Pharisee
named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 [u]He
came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi,
we know that you are a teacher who has come
from God, for no one can do these signs that you
are doing unless God is with him." 3*Jesus
answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say
to you, no one can see the kingdom of God
without being born from above." 4 [v]Nicodemus
said to him, "How can a person once grown old
be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his
mother's womb and be born again, can he?"
5 [w]Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
no one can enter the kingdom of God without
being born of water and Spirit. 6 [x]What is born of
flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.
7Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be
born from above.' 8 [y]*The wind blows where it
wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but
you do not know where it comes from or where
it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the
Spirit." 9Nicodemus answered and said to him,
"How can this happen?" 10Jesus answered and
said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and
you do not understand this? 11 [z]Amen, amen, I
say to you, we speak of what we know and we
testify to what we have seen, but you people do
not accept our testimony. 12 [a]If I tell you about
earthly things and you do not believe, how will
you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?
13 [b]No one has gone up to heaven except the one
who has come down from heaven, the Son of
Man. 14 [c]*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent
in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted
up, 15*so that everyone who believes in him
may have eternal life."

16 [d]*For God so loved the world that he gave
his only Son, so that everyone who believes in
him might not perish but might have eternal life.
17 [e]*For God did not send his Son into the world
to condemn the world, but that the world might
be saved through him. 18 [f]Whoever believes in
him will not be condemned, but whoever does
not believe has already been condemned, be-
cause he has not believed in the name of the
only Son of God. 19 [g]*And this is the verdict, that
the light came into the world, but people pre-
ferred darkness to light, because their works
were evil. 20 [h]For everyone who does wicked
things hates the light and does not come toward
the light, so that his works might not be
exposed. 21 [i]But whoever lives the truth comes

**3, 1–21:** Jesus instructs Nicodemus on the necessity of a new birth from above. This scene in Jerusalem at Passover exemplifies the faith engendered by signs (2, 23). It continues the self-manifestation of Jesus in Jerusalem begun in ch 2. This is the first of the Johannine discourses, shifting from dialogue to monologue (11–15) to reflection of the evangelist (16–21). The shift from singular through v 10 to plural in v 11 may reflect the early church's controversy with the Jews.

**3, 1: A ruler of the Jews:** most likely a member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin; see the note on Mk 8, 31.

**3, 3: Born:** see the note on 1, 13. **From above:** the Greek adverb **anōthen** means both "from above" and "again." Jesus means "from above" (see 31), but Nicodemus misunderstands it as "again." This misunderstanding serves as a springboard for further instruction.

**3, 8: Wind:** the Greek word **pneuma** (as well as the Hebrew **rûah**) means both "wind" and "spirit." In the play on the double meaning, "wind" is primary.

**3, 14: Lifted up:** in Nm 21, 9, Moses simply "mounted" a serpent upon a pole. John here substitutes a verb implying glorification. Jesus, exalted to glory at his cross and resurrection, represents healing for all.

**3, 15: Eternal life:** used here for the first time in John, this term stresses quality of life rather than duration.

**3, 16: Gave:** as a gift in the incarnation, and also "over to death" in the crucifixion; cf Rom 8, 32.

**3, 17–19: Condemn:** the Greek root means both judgment and condemnation. Jesus' purpose is to save, but his coming provokes judgment; some condemn themselves by turning from the light.

**3, 19:** Judgment is not only future but is partially realized here and now.

r 4, 45. s 1 Kgs 8, 39; Pss 33, 15; 94, 11; Sir 42, 18; Jer 17, 10; 20, 12. t 7, 50–51; 19, 39. u 9, 4.16.33; 10, 21; 11, 10; 13, 30; Mt 22, 16; Mk 12, 14; Lk 20, 21. v 1, 13. w 1, 32; 7, 39; 19, 30.34–35; Is 32, 15; 44, 3; Ez 36, 25–27; Jl 3, 1–2. x 6, 63; 1 Cor 15, 44–50. y Eccl 11, 4–5; Acts 2, 2–4. z 3, 32.34; 8, 14; Mt 11, 27. a 6, 62–65; Wis 9, 16–17; 1 Cor 15, 40; 2 Cor 5, 1; Phil 2, 10; 3, 19–20. b 1, 18; 6, 62; Dn 7, 13; Rom 10, 6; Eph 4, 9. c 8, 28; 12, 32.34; Nm 21, 4–9; Wis 16, 5–7. d 1 Jn 4, 9. e 5, 22.30; 8, 15–18; 12, 47. f 5, 24; Mk 16, 16. g 1, 5.9–11; 8, 12; 9, 5. h Jb 24, 13–17. i Gn 47, 29 LXX; Jos 2, 14 LXX; 2 Sm 2, 6 LXX; 15, 20 LXX; Tb 4, 6 LXX; 13, 6; Is 26, 10 LXX; Mt 5, 14–16.

to the light, so that his works may be clearly
seen as done in God.

**Final Witness of the Baptist** 22 *j**After this,
Jesus and his disciples went into the region of
Judea, where he spent some time with them
baptizing. 23*John was also baptizing in Aenon
near Salim, because there was an abundance of
water there, and people came to be baptized,
24 *k**for John had not yet been imprisoned.
25*Now a dispute arose between the disciples of
John and a Jew about ceremonial washings.
26 *l*So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi,
the one who was with you across the Jordan, to
whom you testified, here he is baptizing and
everyone is coming to him." 27 *m*John answered
and said, "No one can receive anything except
what has been given him from heaven. 28 *n*You
yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am not
the Messiah, but that I was sent before him.
29 *o**The one who has the bride is the bride-
groom; the best man, who stands and listens to
him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.
So this joy of mine has been made complete.
30 *p*He must increase; I must decrease."

**The One from Heaven** 31 *q**The one who
comes from above is above all. The one who is of
the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things.
But the one who comes from heaven [is above
all]. 32 *r*He testifies to what he has seen and
heard, but no one accepts his testimony.
33 *s*Whoever does accept his testimony certifies
that God is trustworthy. 34*For the one whom
God sent speaks the words of God. He does not
ration his gift of the Spirit. 35 *t*The Father loves
the Son and has given everything over to him.
36 *u*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,
but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life,
but the wrath of God remains upon him.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
444

1*Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees
had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing
more disciples than John 2*(although Jesus him-
self was not baptizing, just his disciples), 3he left
Judea and returned to Galilee.

**The Samaritan Woman** 4*He had to pass
through Samaria. 5 *v**So he came to a town of
Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that
Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob's well
was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat
down there at the well. It was about noon.

7A woman of Samaria came to draw water.
Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8His
disciples had gone into the town to buy food.
9 *w**The Samaritan woman said to him, "How
can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for
a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with
Samaritans.) 10 *x**Jesus answered and said to her,
"If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to
you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked
him and he would have given you living water."

**3, 22–26:** Jesus' ministry in Judea is only loosely connected with 2, 13—3, 21; cf 1, 19–36. Perhaps John the Baptist's further testimony was transposed here to give meaning to "water" in v 5. Jesus is depicted as baptizing (22); contrast 4, 2.

**3, 23: Aenon near Salim:** site uncertain, either in the upper Jordan valley or in Samaria.

**3, 24:** A remark probably intended to avoid objections based on a chronology like that of the synoptics (Mt 4, 12; Mk 1, 14).

**3, 25: A Jew:** some think Jesus is meant. Many manuscripts read "Jews."

**3, 29: The best man:** literally, "the friend of the groom," the **shoshben** of Jewish tradition, who arranged the wedding. Competition between him and the groom would be unthinkable.

**3, 31–36:** It is uncertain whether these are words by the Baptist, Jesus, or the evangelist. They are reflections on the two preceding scenes.

**3, 34: His gift:** of God or to Jesus, perhaps both. This verse echoes vv 5 and 8.

**4, 1–42:** Jesus in Samaria. The self-revelation of Jesus continues with his second discourse, on his mission to "half-Jews." It continues the theme of replacement, here with regard to cult (21). Water (7–15) serves as a symbol (as at Cana and in the Nicodemus episode).

**4, 2:** An editorial refinement of 3, 22, perhaps directed against followers of John the Baptist who claimed that Jesus imitated him.

**4, 4: He had to:** a theological necessity; geographically, Jews often bypassed Samaria by taking a route across the Jordan.

**4, 5: Sychar:** Jerome identifies this with Shechem, a reading found in Syriac manuscripts.

**4, 9:** Samaritan women were regarded by Jews as ritually impure, and therefore Jews were forbidden to drink from any vessel they had handled.

**4, 10: Living water:** the water of life, i.e., the revelation that Jesus brings; the woman thinks of "flowing water," so much more desirable than stagnant cistern water. On John's device of such misunderstanding, cf the note on 3, 3.

j 4, 1–2. k Mt 4, 12; 14, 3; Mk 1, 14; 6, 17; Lk 3, 20. l 1, 26.32–34.36. m 19, 11; 1 Cor 4, 7; 2 Cor 3, 5; Heb 5, 4. n 1, 20–23; Lk 3, 15. o 15, 11; 17, 13; Mt 9, 15. p 2 Sm 3, 1. q 8, 23. r 3, 11. s 8, 26; 12, 44–50; 1 Jn 5, 10. t 13, 3; Mt 11, 27; 28, 18; Lk 10, 22. u 3, 16; 1 Jn 5, 13. v Gn 33, 18–19; 48, 22; Jos 24, 32. w Sir 50, 25–26; Mt 10, 5. x Sir 24, 20–21; Is 55, 1; Jer 2, 13.

11 *[The woman] said to him, "Sir, you do not
even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;
where then can you get this living water? 12 [y]Are
you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us
this cistern and drank from it himself with his
children and his flocks?" 13 Jesus answered and
said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will
be thirsty again; 14 [z]but whoever drinks the
water I shall give will never thirst; the water I
shall give will become in him a spring of water
welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to
him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not
be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw
water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and
come back." 17 The woman answered and said to
him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered
her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a
husband.' 18 [a]For you have had five husbands,
and the one you have now is not your husband.
What you have said is true." 19 [b]The woman said
to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.
20 [c]*Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;
but you people say that the place to worship is in
Jerusalem." 21 Jesus said to her, "Believe me,
woman, the hour is coming when you will
worship the Father neither on this mountain nor
in Jerusalem. 22 [d]You people worship what you
do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 *But
the hour is coming, and is now here, when true
worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and
truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people
to worship him. 24 [e]God is Spirit, and those who
worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

25 [f]*The woman said to him, "I know that the
Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed;
when he comes, he will tell us everything."
26 [g]*Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is
speaking with you."

27 *At that moment his disciples returned, and
were amazed that he was talking with a woman,
but still no one said, "What are you looking for?"
or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 The
woman left her water jar and went into the town
and said to the people, 29 "Come see a man who
told me everything I have done. Could he
possibly be the Messiah?" 30 They went out of
the town and came to him. 31 Meanwhile, the
disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But he said
to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not
know." 33 So the disciples said to one another,
"Could someone have brought him something to
eat?" 34 [h]Jesus said to them, "My food is to do
the will of the one who sent me and to finish his
work. 35 [i]*Do you not say, 'In four months the
harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see
the fields ripe for the harvest. 36 [j]*The reaper is
already receiving his payment and gathering
crops for eternal life, so that the sower and
reaper can rejoice together. 37 [k]For here the
saying is verified that 'One sows and another
reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap what you have not
worked for; others have done the work, and you
are sharing the fruits of their work."

39 *Many of the Samaritans of that town began
to believe in him because of the word of the
woman who testified, "He told me everything I
have done." 40 When the Samaritans came to
him, they invited him to stay with them; and he

**4, 11: Sir:** the Greek **kyrios** means "master" or "lord," as a respectful mode of address for a human being or a deity; cf 4, 19. It is also the word used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew **'ăḏōnai**, substituted for the tetragrammaton YHWH.

**4, 20: This mountain:** Gerizim, on which a temple was erected in the fourth century B.C. by Samaritans to rival Mt. Zion in Jerusalem; cf Dt 27, 4 (Mt. Ebal = the Jews' term for Gerizim).

**4, 23: In Spirit and truth:** not a reference to an interior worship within one's own spirit. The Spirit is the spirit given by God that reveals truth and enables one to worship God appropriately (14, 16–17). Cf "born of water and Spirit" (3, 5).

**4, 25:** The expectations of the Samaritans are expressed here in Jewish terminology. They did not expect a messianic king of the house of David but a prophet like Moses (Dt 18, 15).

**4, 26: I am he:** it could also be translated "I am," an Old Testament self-designation of Yahweh (Is 43, 3, etc.); cf 6, 20; 8, 24.28.58; 13, 19; 18, 5.6.8. See the note on Mk 6, 50.

**4, 27: Talking with a woman:** a religious and social restriction that Jesus is pictured treating as unimportant.

**4, 35: 'In four months . . .':** probably a proverb; cf Mt 9, 37–38.

**4, 36: Already:** this word may go with the preceding verse rather than with 36.

**4, 39:** The woman is presented as a missionary, described in virtually the same words as the disciples are in Jesus' prayer (17, 20).

y 8, 53; Mt 12, 41. z 6, 35.58; 7, 37–39; Is 44, 3; 49, 10; Jl 4, 18; Rv 7, 16; 21, 6. a 2 Kgs 17, 24–34. b 9, 17; Hos 1, 3. c Dt 11, 29; 27, 4; Jos 8, 33; Ps 122, 1–5. d 2 Kgs 17, 27; Ps 76, 2–3. e 2 Cor 3, 17. f 1, 41. g 9, 37. h 5, 30.36; 6, 38; 9, 4; 17, 4. i Mt 9, 37–38; Lk 10, 2; Rv 14, 15. j Ps 126, 5–6; Am 9, 13–14. k Dt 20, 6; 28, 30; Jb 31, 8; Mi 6, 15.

stayed there two days. 41 Many more began to
believe in him because of his word, 42 [l]and they
said to the woman, "We no longer believe
because of your word; for we have heard for
ourselves, and we know that this is truly the
savior of the world."

**Return to Galilee** 43 *After the two days, he
left there for Galilee. 44 [m]*For Jesus himself
testified that a prophet has no honor in his native
place. 45 When he came into Galilee, the Galile-
ans welcomed him, since they had seen all he
had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they
themselves had gone to the feast.

**Second Sign at Cana** 46 [n]*Then he returned to
Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water
wine. Now there was a royal official whose son
was ill in Capernaum. 47 When he heard that
Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went
to him and asked him to come down and heal
his son, who was near death. 48 [o]Jesus said to
him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders,
you will not believe." 49 The royal official said to
him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."
50 [p]Jesus said to him, "You may go; your son will
live." The man believed what Jesus said to him
and left. 51 While he was on his way back, his
slaves met him and told him that his boy would
live. 52 He asked them when he began to recover.
They told him, "The fever left him yesterday,
about one in the afternoon." 53 The father real-
ized that just at that time Jesus had said to him,
"Your son will live," and he and his whole
household came to believe. 54 [q][Now] this was
the second sign Jesus did when he came to
Galilee from Judea.

## CHAPTER 5

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**Cure on a Sabbath** 1 [r]*After this, there was a
feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusa-
lem. 2 [s]*Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep
[Gate] a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with
five porticoes. 3 *In these lay a large number of
ill, blind, lame, and crippled. [4]* 5 One man was
there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.
6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that
he had been ill for a long time, he said to him,
"Do you want to be well?" 7 The sick man
answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into
the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am
on my way, someone else gets down there
before me." 8 [t]Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up
your mat, and walk." 9 [u]Immediately the man
became well, took up his mat, and walked.

Now that day was a sabbath. 10 [v]So the Jews
said to the man who was cured, "It is the
sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your
mat." 11 He answered them, "The man who
made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and
walk.' " 12 They asked him, "Who is the man
who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?" 13 [w]The

**4, 43–54:** Jesus' arrival in Cana in Galilee; the second sign. This section introduces another theme, that of the life-giving word of Jesus. It is explicitly linked to the first sign (2, 11). The royal official believes (50). The natural life given his son is a sign of eternal life.

**4, 44:** Probably a reminiscence of a tradition as in Mk 6, 4. Cf Gospel of Thomas 31: "No prophet is acceptable in his village, no physician heals those who know him."

**4, 46–54:** The story of the cure of the royal official's son may be a third version of the cure of the centurion's son (Mt 8, 5–13) or servant (Lk 7, 1–10). Cf also Mt 15, 21–28 // Mk 7, 24–30.

**5, 1–47:** The self-revelation of Jesus continues in Jerusalem at a feast. The third sign (cf 2, 11; 4, 54) is performed, the cure of a paralytic by Jesus' life-giving word. The water of the pool fails to bring life; Jesus' word does.

**5, 1:** The reference in vv 45–46 to Moses suggests that the feast was Pentecost. The connection of that feast with the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai, attested in later Judaism, may already have been made in the first century. The feast could also be Passover (cf 6, 4). John stresses that the day was a sabbath (9).

**5, 2:** There is no noun with **Sheep**. "Gate" is supplied on the grounds that there must have been a gate in the NE wall of the temple area where animals for sacrifice were brought in; cf Neh 3, 1.32; 12, 39. **Hebrew:** more precisely, Aramaic. **Bethesda:** preferred to variants "Be(th)zatha" and "Bethsaida"; **bēt-ʾešdatayīn** is given as the name of a double pool northeast of the temple area in the Qumran Copper Roll. **Five porticoes:** a pool excavated in Jerusalem actually has five porticoes.

**5, 3:** The Caesarean and Western recensions, followed by the Vulgate, add "waiting for the movement of the water." Apparently an intermittent spring in the pool bubbled up occasionally (see 7). This turbulence was believed to cure.

**5, 4:** Toward the end of the second century in the West and among the fourth-century Greek Fathers, an additional verse was known: "For [from time to time] an angel of the Lord used to come down into the pool; and the water was stirred up, so the first one to get in [after the stirring of the water] was healed of whatever disease afflicted him." The angel was a popular explanation of the turbulence and the healing powers attributed to it. This verse is missing from all early Greek manuscripts and the earliest versions, including the original Vulgate. Its vocabulary is markedly non-Johannine.

l 1 Jn 4, 14. m Mt 13, 57; Mk 6, 4; Lk 4, 24. n 2, 1–11; Mt 8, 5–13; 15, 21–28; Mk 7, 24–30; Lk 7, 1–10. o 2, 18.23; Wis 8, 8; Mt 12, 38; 1 Cor 1, 22. p 1 Kgs 17, 23. q 2, 11. r 6, 4. s Neh 3, 1.32; 12, 39. t Mt 9, 6; Mk 2, 11; Lk 5, 24; Acts 3, 6. u Mk 2, 12; Lk 5, 25 / 9, 14. v Ex 20, 8; Jer 17, 21–27; Mk 3, 2; Lk 13, 10; 14, 1. w Mt 8, 18; 13, 36; Mk 4, 36; 7, 17.

man who was healed did not know who it was,
for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a
crowd there. 14 [x]*After this Jesus found him in
the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are
well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse
may happen to you." 15 The man went and told
the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made
him well. 16 [y]Therefore, the Jews began to perse-
cute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.
17 [z]*But Jesus answered them, "My Father is at
work until now, so I am at work." 18 [a]For this
reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him,
because he not only broke the sabbath but he
also called God his own father, making himself
equal to God.

**The Work of the Son** 19 [b]*Jesus answered and
said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, a son
cannot do anything on his own, but only what he
sees his father doing; for what he does, his son
will do also. 20 [c]For the Father loves his Son and
shows him everything that he himself does, and
he will show him greater works than these, so
that you may be amazed. 21 [d]*For just as the Fa-
ther raises the dead and gives life, so also does the
Son give life to whomever he wishes. 22 [e]*Nor
does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all
judgment to his Son, 23 so that all may honor the
Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does
not honor the Son does not honor the Father who
sent him. 24 [f]Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever
hears my word and believes in the one who sent
me has eternal life and will not come to condem-
nation, but has passed from death to life.
25 [g]Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming
and is now here when the dead will hear the
voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will
live. 26 [h]For just as the Father has life in himself,
so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in
himself. 27 [i]And he gave him power to exercise
judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 [j]*Do
not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming
in which all who are in the tombs will hear his
voice 29 [k]and will come out, those who have
done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but
those who have done wicked deeds to the resur-
rection of condemnation.

30 [l]"I cannot do anything on my own; I judge
as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do
not seek my own will but the will of the one
who sent me.

**Witnesses to Jesus** 31 [m]"If I testify on my own
behalf, my testimony cannot be verified. 32 *But
there is another who testifies on my behalf, and I
know that the testimony he gives on my behalf is
true. 33 [n]You sent emissaries to John, and he
testified to the truth. 34 [o]I do not accept testi-
mony from a human being, but I say this so that
you may be saved. 35 [p]*He was a burning and
shining lamp, and for a while you were content
to rejoice in his light. 36 [q]But I have testimony
greater than John's. The works that the Father
gave me to accomplish, these works that I
perform testify on my behalf that the Father has
sent me. 37 [r]Moreover, the Father who sent me

**5, 14:** While the cure of the paralytic in Mk 2, 1–12 is associated with the forgiveness of sins, Jesus never drew a one-to-one connection between sin and suffering (cf 9, 3; Lk 12, 1–5), as did Ez 18, 20.

**5, 17:** Sabbath observance (10) was based on God's resting on the seventh day (cf Gn 2, 2–3; Ex 20, 11). Philo and some rabbis insisted that God's providence remains active on the sabbath, keeping all things in existence, giving life in birth and taking it away in death. Other rabbis taught that God rested from creating, but not from judging (= ruling, governing). Jesus here claims the same authority to work as the Father, and, in the discourse that follows, the same divine prerogatives: power over life and death (21.24–26) and judgment (22.27).

**5, 19:** This proverb or parable is taken from apprenticeship in a trade: the activity of a son is modeled on that of his father. Jesus' dependence on the Father is justification for doing what the Father does.

**5, 21: Gives life:** in the Old Testament, a divine prerogative (Dt 32, 39; 1 Sm 2, 6; 2 Kgs 5, 7; Tob 13, 2; Is 26, 19; Dan 12, 2).

**5, 22: Judgment:** another divine prerogative, often expressed as acquittal or condemnation (Dt 32, 36; Ps 43, 1).

**5, 28–29:** While vv 19–27 present realized eschatology, vv 28–29 are future eschatology; cf Dn 12, 2.

**5, 32: Another:** likely the Father, who in four different ways gives testimony to Jesus, as indicated in the verse groupings 33–34, 36, 37–38, 39–40.

**5, 35: Lamp:** cf Ps 132, 17 "I will place a lamp for my anointed (= David)," and possibly the description of Elijah in Sir 48, 1. But only **for a while,** indicating the temporary and subordinate nature of John's mission.

x 8, 11; 9, 2; Ez 18, 20. y 7, 23; Mt 12, 8. z Ex 20, 11. a 7, 1.25; 8, 37.40; 10, 33.36; 14, 28; Gn 3, 5–6; Wis 2, 16; Mt 26, 4; 2 Thes 2, 4. b 3, 34; 8, 26; 12, 49; 9, 4; 10, 30. c 3, 35. d 11, 25; Dt 32, 39; 1 Sm 2, 6; 2 Kgs 5, 7; Tb 13, 2; Wis 16, 13; Is 26, 19; Dn 7, 10.13; 12, 2; Rom 4, 17; 2 Cor 1, 9. e Acts 10, 42; 17, 31. f 3, 18; 8, 51; 1 Jn 3, 14. g 5, 28; 8, 51; 11, 25–26; Eph 2, 1; 5, 14; Rv 3, 1. h 1, 4; 1 Jn 5, 11. i 5, 22; Dn 7, 13.22; Mt 25, 31; Lk 21, 36. j 11, 43. k Dn 12, 2; Mt 16, 27; 25, 46; Acts 24, 15; 2 Cor 5, 10. l 6, 38. m 8, 13–14.18. n 1, 19–27; Mt 11, 10–11. o 1 Jn 5, 9. p 1, 8; Ps 132, 17; Sir 48, 1. q 10, 25. r 8, 18; Dt 4, 12.15; 1 Jn 5, 9.

has testified on my behalf. But you have never
heard his voice nor seen his form, 38 [s]and you do
not have his word remaining in you, because
you do not believe in the one whom he has sent.
39 [t]*You search the scriptures, because you think
you have eternal life through them; even they
testify on my behalf. 40 But you do not want to
come to me to have life.

**Unbelief of Jesus' Hearers** 41 *"I do not accept human praise; 42 [u]moreover, I know that
you do not have the love of God in you. 43 [v]I
came in the name of my Father, but you do not
accept me; yet if another comes in his own
name, you will accept him. 44 [w]How can you
believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from
the only God? 45 [x]Do not think that I will accuse
you before the Father: the one who will accuse
you is Moses, in whom you have placed your
hope. 46 [y]For if you had believed Moses, you
would have believed me, because he wrote
about me. 47 But if you do not believe his
writings, how will you believe my words?"

## CHAPTER 6

**Multiplication of the Loaves** 1 [z]*After this,
Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee [of Tiberias].
2 A large crowd followed him, because they saw
the signs he was performing on the sick. 3 Jesus
went up on the mountain, and there he sat
down with his disciples. 4 [a]The Jewish feast of
Passover was near. 5 [b]*When Jesus raised his
eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to
him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy
enough food for them to eat?" 6 *He said this to
test him, because he himself knew what he was
going to do. 7 [c]*Philip answered him, "Two
hundred days' wages worth of food would not
be enough for each of them to have a little [bit]."
8 One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of
Simon Peter, said to him, 9 [d]*"There is a boy
here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but
what good are these for so many?" 10 [e]*Jesus
said, "Have the people recline." Now there was
a great deal of grass in that place. So the men
reclined, about five thousand in number.
11 [f]Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and
distributed them to those who were reclining,
and also as much of the fish as they wanted.
12 When they had had their fill, he said to his
disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that
nothing will be wasted." 13 *So they collected
them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with
fragments from the five barley loaves that had
been more than they could eat. 14 [g]*When the
people saw the sign he had done, they said,
"This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to
come into the world." 15 [h]Since Jesus knew that
they were going to come and carry him off to
make him king, he withdrew again to the
mountain alone.

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**Walking on the Water** 16 [i]*When it was evening, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 em-

**5, 39: You search:** this may be an imperative: "Search the scriptures, because you think that you have eternal life through them."

**5, 41: Praise:** the same Greek word means "praise" or "honor" (from others) and "glory" (from God). There is a play on this in v 44.

**6, 1–15:** This story of the multiplication of the loaves is the fourth sign (cf the note on 5, 1–47). It is the only miracle story found in all four gospels (occurring twice in Mk and Mt). See the notes on Mt 14, 13–21 and 15, 32–39. John differs on the roles of Philip and Andrew, the proximity of Passover (4), and the allusion to Elisha (see 9). The story here symbolizes the food that is really available through Jesus. It connotes a new exodus and has eucharistic overtones.

**6, 1: [Of Tiberias]:** the awkward apposition represents a later name of the Sea of Galilee. It was probably originally a marginal gloss.

**6, 5:** Jesus takes the initiative (in the synoptics, the disciples do), possibly pictured as (cf 14) the new Moses (cf Nm 11, 13).

**6, 6:** Probably the evangelist's comment; in this gospel Jesus is never portrayed as ignorant of anything.

**6, 7: Days' wages:** literally, "denarii"; a Roman denarius is a day's wage in Mt 20, 2.

**6, 9: Barley loaves:** the food of the poor. There seems an allusion to the story of Elisha multiplying the barley bread in 2 Kgs 4, 42–44.

**6, 10: Grass:** implies springtime, and therefore Passover. **Five thousand:** so Mk 6, 39.44 and parallels.

**6, 13: Baskets:** the word describes the typically Palestinian wicker basket, as in Mk 6, 43 and parallels.

**6, 14: The Prophet:** probably the prophet like Moses (see the note on 1, 21). **The one who is to come into the world:** probably Elijah; cf Mal 3, 1.23.

**6, 16–21:** The fifth sign is a nature miracle, portraying Jesus sharing Yahweh's power. Cf the parallel stories following the multiplication of the loaves in Mk 6, 45–52 and Mt 14, 22–33.

s 1 Jn 2, 14. t 12, 16; 19, 28; 20, 9; Lk 24, 27.44; 1 Pt 1, 10. u 1 Jn 2, 15. v Mt 24, 5.24. w 12, 43. x Dt 31, 26. y 5, 39; Dt 18, 15; Lk 16, 31; 24, 44. z Mt 14, 13–21; Mk 6, 32–44; Lk 9, 10–17. a 2, 13; 11, 55. b Nm 11, 13. c Mt 20, 2. d 2 Kgs 4, 42–44. e Mt 14, 21; Mk 6, 44. f 21, 13. g Dt 18, 15.18; Mal 3, 1.23; Acts 3, 22. h 18, 36. i Mt 14, 22–27; Mk 6, 45–52.

barked in a boat, and went across the sea to
Capernaum. It had already grown dark, and
Jesus had not yet come to them. [18]The sea was
stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.
[19] [j]*When they had rowed about three or four
miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and
coming near the boat, and they began to be
afraid. [20]*But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be
afraid." [21]They wanted to take him into the
boat, but the boat immediately arrived at the
shore to which they were heading.

**The Bread of Life Discourse** [22]*The next day,
the crowd that remained across the sea saw that
there had been only one boat there, and that
Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the
boat, but only his disciples had left. [23]*Other
boats came from Tiberias near the place where
they had eaten the bread when the Lord gave
thanks. [24]When the crowd saw that neither
Jesus nor his disciples were there, they them-
selves got into boats and came to Capernaum
looking for Jesus. [25]And when they found him
across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did
you get here?" [26]Jesus answered them and said,
"Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for
me not because you saw signs but because you
ate the loaves and were filled. [27] [k]*Do not work
for food that perishes but for the food that
endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man
will give you. For on him the Father, God, has
set his seal." [28]So they said to him, "What can
we do to accomplish the works of God?" [29]Jesus
answered and said to them, "This is the work of
God, that you believe in the one he sent." [30] [l]So
they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we
may see and believe in you? What can you do?
[31] [m]*Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it
is written:

'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' "

[32] [n]So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to
you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from
heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from
heaven. [33]For the bread of God is that which
comes down from heaven and gives life to the
world."

[34] [o]So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread
always." [35] [p]*Jesus said to them, "I am the
bread of life; whoever comes to me will never
hunger, and whoever believes in me will never
thirst. [36] [q]But I told you that although you have
seen [me], you do not believe. [37]Everything that
the Father gives me will come to me, and I will
not reject anyone who comes to me, [38] [r]because
I came down from heaven not to do my own
will but the will of the one who sent me.
[39] [s]And this is the will of the one who sent me,
that I should not lose anything of what he gave
me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day.
[40] [t]For this is the will of my Father, that every-
one who sees the Son and believes in him may
have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the
last day."

[41]The Jews murmured about him because he
said, "I am the bread that came down from
heaven," [42] [u]and they said, "Is this not Jesus, the
son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and
mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come
down from heaven'?" [43] [v]*Jesus answered and
said to them, "Stop murmuring among your-
selves. [44]No one can come to me unless the
Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise

**6, 19: Walking on the sea:** although the Greek (cf 16) could mean "on the seashore" or "by the sea" (cf 21, 1), the parallels, especially Mt 14, 25, make clear that Jesus walked upon the water. John may allude to Job 9, 8: God "treads upon the crests of the sea."

**6, 20: It is I:** literally, "I am." See also the notes on 4, 26 and Mk 6, 50.

**6, 22–71:** Discourse on the bread of life; replacement of the manna. Verses 22–34 serve as an introduction, vv 35–59 constitute the discourse proper, vv 60–71 portray the reaction of the disciples and Peter's confession.

**6, 23:** Possibly a later interpolation, to explain how the crowd got to Capernaum.

**6, 27: The food that endures for eternal life:** cf 4, 14, on water "springing up to eternal life."

**6, 31: Bread from heaven:** cf Ex 16, 4.15.32–34 and the notes there; Ps 78, 24. The manna, thought to have been hidden by Jeremiah (2 Mc 2, 5–8), was expected to reappear miraculously at Passover, in the last days.

**6, 35–59:** Up to v 50, "bread of life" is a figure for God's revelation in Jesus; in vv 51–58, the eucharistic theme comes to the fore. There may thus be a break between vv 50 and 51.

**6, 43: Murmuring:** the word may reflect the Greek of Ex 16, 2.7.8.

j Jb 9, 8; Pss 29, 3–4; 77, 20; Is 43, 16. k 6, 50.51.54.58. l Mt 16, 1–4; Lk 11, 29–30. m Ex 16, 4–5; Nm 11, 7–9; Ps 78, 24. n Mt 6, 11. o 4, 15. p Is 55, 1–3; Am 8, 11–13. q 20, 29. r 4, 34; Mt 26, 39; Heb 10, 9. s 10, 28–29; 17, 12; 18, 9. t 1 Jn 2, 25. u Mt 13, 54–57; Mk 6, 1–4; Lk 4, 22. v Ex 16, 2.7.8; Lk 4, 22.

him on the last day. 45 [w]It is written in the prophets:

'They shall all be taught by God.'

Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 [x]Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48I am the bread of life. 49 [y]Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; 50this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 51 [z]I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

52The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?" 53Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. 54*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. 55For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. 57 [a]Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." 59These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

**The Words of Eternal Life** 60*Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" 61Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? 62*What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63*It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 [b]But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. 65And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."

66As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. 67Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" 68Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 [c]We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God." 70Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you twelve? Yet is not one of you a devil?" 71 [d]He was referring to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot; it was he who would betray him, one of the Twelve.

## CHAPTER 7*

Ch 7–8 See RG 446

**The Feast of Tabernacles** 1 [e]After this, Jesus moved about within Galilee; but he did not wish to travel in Judea, because the Jews were trying to kill him. 2 [f]But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. 3*So his brothers said to him, "Leave

**6, 54–58: Eats:** the verb used in these verses is not the classical Greek verb used of human eating, but that of animal eating: "munch," "gnaw." This may be part of John's emphasis on the reality of the flesh and blood of Jesus (cf 55), but the same verb eventually became the ordinary verb in Greek meaning "eat."

**6, 60–71:** These verses refer more to themes of vv 35–50 than to those of 51–58 and seem to be addressed to members of the Johannine community who found it difficult to accept the high christology reflected in the bread of life discourse.

**6, 62:** This unfinished conditional sentence is obscure. Probably there is a reference to vv 49–51. Jesus claims to be **the bread that comes down from heaven** (50); this claim provokes incredulity (60); and so Jesus is pictured as asking what his disciples will say when he goes up to heaven.

**6, 63: Spirit . . . flesh:** probably not a reference to the eucharistic body of Jesus but to the supernatural and the natural, as in 3, 6. **Spirit and life:** all Jesus said about the bread of life is the revelation of the Spirit.

**7—8:** These chapters contain events about the feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth, Ingathering: Ex 23, 16; Tents, Booths: Dt 16, 13–16), with its symbols of booths (originally built to shelter harvesters), rain (water from Siloam poured on the temple altar), and lights (illumination of the four torches in the Court of the Women). They continue the theme of the replacement of feasts (Passover, 2, 13; 6, 4; Hanukkah, 10, 22; Pentecost, 5, 1), here accomplished by Jesus as the Living Water. These chapters comprise seven miscellaneous controversies and dialogues. There is a literary inclusion with Jesus in hiding in 7, 4.10 and 8, 59. There are frequent references to attempts on his life: 7, 1.13.19.25.30.32.44; 8, 37.40.59.

**7, 3: Brothers:** these relatives (cf 2, 12 and see the note on Mk 6, 3) are never portrayed as disciples until after the resurrection

w Is 54, 13; Jer 31, 33–34. x 1, 18; 7, 29; Ex 33, 20. y 1 Cor 10, 3.5. z Mt 26, 26–27; Lk 22, 19. a 5, 26. b 13, 11. c 11, 27; Mt 16, 16; Mk 1, 24; Lk 4, 34. d 12, 4; 13, 2.27. e 5, 18; 8, 37.40. f Ex 23, 16; Lv 23, 34; Nm 29, 12; Dt 16, 13–16; Zec 14, 16–19.

here and go to Judea, so that your disciples also
may see the works you are doing. [4] [g]No one
works in secret if he wants to be known publicly.
If you do these things, manifest yourself to the
world." [5]For his brothers did not believe in him.
[6]*So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet
here, but the time is always right for you. [7] [h]The
world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because
I testify to it that its works are evil. [8]*You go up
to the feast. I am not going up to this feast,
because my time has not yet been fulfilled."
[9]After he had said this, he stayed on in Galilee.

[10]But when his brothers had gone up to the
feast, he himself also went up, not openly but [as
it were] in secret. [11]The Jews were looking for
him at the feast and saying, "Where is he?"
[12]And there was considerable murmuring about
him in the crowds. Some said, "He is a good
man," [while] others said, "No; on the contrary,
he misleads the crowd." [13] [i]Still, no one spoke
openly about him because they were afraid of
the Jews.

**The First Dialogue** [14]*When the feast was
already half over, Jesus went up into the temple
area and began to teach. [15] [j]*The Jews were
amazed and said, "How does he know scripture
without having studied?" [16]Jesus answered them
and said, "My teaching is not my own but is
from the one who sent me. [17] [k]*Whoever
chooses to do his will shall know whether my
teaching is from God or whether I speak on my
own. [18]Whoever speaks on his own seeks his
own glory, but whoever seeks the glory of the
one who sent him is truthful, and there is no
wrong in him. [19] [l]Did not Moses give you the
law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are
you trying to kill me?" [20] [m]*The crowd answered, "You are possessed! Who is trying to kill
you?" [21] [n]*Jesus answered and said to them, "I
performed one work and all of you are amazed
[22] [o]because of it. Moses gave you circumcision—
not that it came from Moses but rather from the
patriarchs—and you circumcise a man on the
sabbath. [23] [p]If a man can receive circumcision on
a sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be
broken, are you angry with me because I made a
whole person well on a sabbath? [24] [q]Stop judging
by appearances, but judge justly."

[25]So some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said,
"Is he not the one they are trying to kill? [26]*And
look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing
to him. Could the authorities have realized that
he is the Messiah? [27] [r]But we know where he is
from. When the Messiah comes, no one will
know where he is from." [28] [s]So Jesus cried out in
the temple area as he was teaching and said,
"You know me and also know where I am from.
Yet I did not come on my own, but the one who
sent me, whom you do not know, is true. [29] [t]I
know him, because I am from him, and he sent
me." [30] [u]So they tried to arrest him, but no one
laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not
yet come. [31] [v]But many of the crowd began to
believe in him, and said, "When the Messiah
comes, will he perform more signs than this man
has done?"

**Officers Sent to Arrest Jesus** [32]*The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring about him to

(Acts 1, 14). Mt 13, 55 and Mk 6, 3 give the names of four of them. Jesus has already performed works/signs in Judea; cf 2, 23; 3, 2; 4, 45; 5, 8.

**7, 6: Time:** the Greek word means "opportune time," here a synonym for Jesus' "hour" (see the note on 2, 4), his death and resurrection. In the wordplay, any time is suitable for Jesus' brothers, because they are not dependent on God's will.

**7, 8: I am not going up:** an early attested reading "not yet" seems a correction, since Jesus in the story does go up to the feast. "Go up," in a play on words, refers not only to going up to Jerusalem but also to exaltation at the cross, resurrection, and ascension; cf 3, 14; 6, 62; 20, 17.

**7, 14–31:** Jesus teaches in the temple; debate with the Jews.

**7, 15: Without having studied:** literally, "How does he know letters without having learned?" Children were taught to read and write by means of the scriptures. But here more than Jesus' literacy is being discussed; the people are wondering how he can teach like a rabbi. Rabbis were trained by other rabbis and traditionally quoted their teachers.

**7, 17: To do his will:** presumably a reference back to the "work" of 6, 29: belief in the one whom God has sent.

**7, 20: You are possessed:** literally, "You have a demon." The insane were thought to be possessed by a demoniacal spirit.

**7, 21: One work:** the cure of the paralytic (5, 1–9) because of the reference to the sabbath (22; 5, 9–10).

**7, 26: The authorities:** the members of the Sanhedrin (same term as 3, 1).

**7, 32–36:** Jesus announces his approaching departure (cf also 8, 21; 12, 36; 13, 33) and complete control over his destiny.

g 14, 22. h 15, 18. i 9, 22; 19, 38; 20, 19. j Lk 2, 47. k 6, 29. l Acts 7, 53. m 8, 48–49; 10, 20. n 5, 1–9. o Gn 17, 10; Lv 12, 3. p 5, 2–9.16; Mt 12, 11–12; Lk 14, 5. q 8, 15; Lv 19, 15; Is 11, 3–4. r Heb 7, 3. s 8, 19. t 6, 46; 8, 55. u 7, 44; 8, 20; Lk 4, 29–30. v 2, 11; 10, 42; 11, 45.

this effect, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent guards to arrest him. 33 *w*So Jesus said,
"I will be with you only a little while longer, and
then I will go to the one who sent me. 34 *x*You
will look for me but not find [me], and where I
am you cannot come." 35 *So the Jews said to
one another, "Where is he going that we will not
find him? Surely he is not going to the dispersion
among the Greeks to teach the Greeks, is he?
36 What is the meaning of his saying, 'You will
look for me and not find [me], and where I am
you cannot come'?"

**Rivers of Living Water** 37 *y**On the last and
greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and
exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me
and drink. 38 *z**Whoever believes in me, as
scripture says:

'Rivers of living water will flow from within
him.' "

39 *a**He said this in reference to the Spirit that
those who came to believe in him were to
receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet,
because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

**Discussion about the Origins of the Messiah** 40 *b**Some in the crowd who heard
these words said, "This is truly the Prophet."
41 Others said, "This is the Messiah." But others
said, "The Messiah will not come from Galilee,
will he? 42 *c*Does not scripture say that the
Messiah will be of David's family and come from
Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" 43 So
a division occurred in the crowd because of him.
44 Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but
no one laid hands on him.

45 So the guards went to the chief priests and
Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not
bring him?" 46 The guards answered, "Never
before has anyone spoken like this one." 47 So
the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also
been deceived? 48 *d*Have any of the authorities or
the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd,
which does not know the law, is accursed."
50 *e*Nicodemus, one of their members who had
come to him earlier, said to them, 51 *f*"Does our
law condemn a person before it first hears him
and finds out what he is doing?" 52 They answered and said to him, "You are not from
Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no
prophet arises from Galilee."

## CHAPTER 8

**A Woman Caught in Adultery** [ 53 *Then
each went to his own house, 1 *g**while Jesus
went to the Mount of Olives. 2 But early in the
morning he arrived again in the temple area, and
all the people started coming to him, and he sat
down and taught them. 3 Then the scribes and
the Pharisees brought a woman who had been
caught in adultery and made her stand in the
middle. 4 They said to him, "Teacher, this
woman was caught in the very act of committing
adultery. 5 *h**Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do
you say?" 6 *They said this to test him, so that
they could have some charge to bring against

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**7, 35: Dispersion:** or "diaspora": Jews living outside Palestine. **Greeks:** probably refers to the Gentiles in the Mediterranean area; cf 12, 20.

**7, 37–39:** Promise of living water through the Spirit.

**7, 38: Living water:** not an exact quotation from any Old Testament passage; in the gospel context the gift of the Spirit is meant; cf 3, 5. **From within him:** either Jesus or the believer; if Jesus, it continues the Jesus-Moses motif (water from the rock, Ex 17, 6; Nm 20, 11) as well as Jesus as the new temple (cf Ez 47, 1). Grammatically, it goes better with the believer.

**7, 39: No Spirit yet:** Codex Vaticanus and early Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions add "given." In this gospel, the sending of the Spirit cannot take place until Jesus' glorification through his death, resurrection, and ascension; cf 20, 22.

**7, 40–53:** Discussion of the Davidic lineage of the Messiah.

**7, 53—8, 11:** The story of the woman caught in adultery is a later insertion here, missing from all early Greek manuscripts. A Western text-type insertion, attested mainly in Old Latin translations, it is found in different places in different manuscripts: here, or after 7, 36, or at the end of this gospel, or after Lk 21, 38, or at the end of that gospel. There are many non-Johannine features in the language, and there are also many doubtful readings within the passage. The style and motifs are similar to those of Luke, and it fits better with the general situation at the end of Lk 21, but it was probably inserted here because of the allusion to Jer 17, 13 (cf the note on 8, 6) and the statement, "I do not judge anyone," in 8, 15. The Catholic Church accepts this passage as canonical scripture.

**8, 1: Mount of Olives:** not mentioned elsewhere in the gospel tradition outside of passion week.

**8, 5:** Lv 20, 10 and Dt 22, 22 mention only death, but Dt 22, 23–24 prescribes stoning for a betrothed virgin.

**8, 6:** Cf Jer 17, 13 (RSV): "Those who turn away from thee shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water"; cf 7, 38.

w 13, 33; 16, 16. x 8, 21; 12, 36; 13, 33.36; 16, 5; Dt 4, 29; Prv 1, 28; Is 55, 6; Hos 5, 6. y Rv 21, 6. z 4, 10.14; 19, 34; Is 12, 3; Ez 47, 1. a 16, 7. b Dt 18, 15.18. c 2 Sm 7, 12–14; Pss 89, 3–4; 132, 11; Mi 5, 1; Mt 2, 5–6. d 12, 42. e 3, 1; 19, 39. f Dt 1, 16–17. g Lk 21, 37–38. h Lv 20, 10; Dt 22, 22–29.

him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the
ground with his finger. 7 [i]*But when they contin-
ued asking him, he straightened up and said to
them, "Let the one among you who is without
sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8Again
he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9And in
response, they went away one by one, beginning
with the elders. So he was left alone with the
woman before him. 10[j]Then Jesus straightened
up and said to her, "Woman, where are they?
Has no one condemned you?" 11[k]She replied,
"No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I
condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin
any more."]

**The Light of the World** 12[l]*Jesus spoke to
them again, saying, "I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life." 13So the Pharisees
said to him, "You testify on your own behalf, so
your testimony cannot be verified." 14[m]*Jesus
answered and said to them, "Even if I do testify
on my own behalf, my testimony can be verified,
because I know where I came from and where I
am going. But you do not know where I come
from or where I am going. 15[n]*You judge by
appearances, but I do not judge anyone. 16[o]And
even if I should judge, my judgment is valid,
because I am not alone, but it is I and the Father
who sent me. 17[p]*Even in your law it is written
that the testimony of two men can be verified.
18[q]I testify on my behalf and so does the Father
who sent me." 19[r]So they said to him, "Where is
your father?" Jesus answered, "You know nei-
ther me nor my Father. If you knew me, you
would know my Father also." 20[s]He spoke these
words while teaching in the treasury in the
temple area. But no one arrested him, because
his hour had not yet come.

**Jesus, the Father's Ambassador** 21[t]*He said
to them again, "I am going away and you will
look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where
I am going you cannot come." 22*So the Jews
said, "He is not going to kill himself, is he,
because he said, 'Where I am going you cannot
come'?" 23[u]He said to them, "You belong to
what is below, I belong to what is above. You
belong to this world, but I do not belong to this
world. 24[v]*That is why I told you that you will
die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I
AM, you will die in your sins." 25[w]*So they
said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them,
"What I told you from the beginning. 26[x]I have
much to say about you in condemnation. But
the one who sent me is true, and what I heard
from him I tell the world." 27They did not
realize that he was speaking to them of the
Father. 28[y]So Jesus said [to them], "When you
lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize
that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own,
but I say only what the Father taught me. 29The
one who sent me is with me. He has not left
me alone, because I always do what is pleasing
to him." 30Because he spoke this way, many
came to believe in him.

**Jesus and Abraham** 31*Jesus then said to
those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain

**8, 7:** The first stones were to be thrown by the witnesses (Dt 17, 7).

**8, 12–20:** Jesus the light of the world. Jesus replaces the four torches of the illumination of the temple as the light of joy.

**8, 14: My testimony can be verified:** this seems to contradict 5, 31, but the emphasis here is on Jesus' origin from the Father and his divine destiny. **Where I am going:** indicates Jesus' passion and glorification.

**8, 15: By appearances:** literally, "according to the flesh." **I do not judge anyone:** superficial contradiction of 5, 22.27.30; here the emphasis is that the judgment is not by material standards.

**8, 17: Your law:** a reflection of later controversy between church and synagogue.

**8, 21–30:** He whose ambassador I am is with me. Jesus' origin is from God; he can reveal God.

**8, 21: You will die in your sin:** i.e., of disbelief; cf v 24. **Where I am going you cannot come:** except through faith in Jesus' passion-resurrection.

**8, 22:** The Jews suspect that he is referring to his death. Johannine irony is apparent here; Jesus' death will not be self-inflicted but destined by God.

**8, 24.28: I AM:** an expression that late Jewish tradition understood as Yahweh's own self-designation (Is 43, 10); see the note on 4, 26. Jesus is here placed on a par with Yahweh.

**8, 25: What I told you from the beginning:** this verse seems textually corrupt, with several other possible translations: "(I am) what I say to you"; "Why do I speak to you at all?" The earliest attested reading (Bodmer Papyrus $P^{66}$) has (in a second hand), "I told you at the beginning what I am also telling you (now)." The answer here (cf Prv 8, 22) seems to hinge on a misunderstanding of v 24 "that I AM" as "what I am."

**8, 31–59:** Jesus' origin ("before Abraham") and destiny are developed; the truth will free them from sin (34) and death (51).

**8, 31: Those Jews who believed in him:** a rough editorial suture, since in v 37 they are described as trying to kill Jesus.

i Dt 17, 7. j Ez 33, 11. k 5, 14. l 1, 4–5.9; 12, 46; Ex 13, 22; Is 42, 6; Zec 14, 8. m 5, 31. n 12, 47; 1 Sm 16, 7. o 5, 30. p Dt 17, 6; 19, 15; Nm 35, 30. q 5, 23.37. r 7, 28; 14, 7; 15, 21. s 7, 30. t 7, 34; 13, 33. u 3, 31; 17, 14; 18, 36. v Ex 3, 14; Dt 32, 39; Is 43, 10. w 10, 24. x 12, 44–50. y 3, 14; 12, 32.34.

in my word, you will truly be my disciples,
32 [z]and you will know the truth, and the truth
will set you free." 33 [a]*They answered him, "We
are descendants of Abraham and have never
been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You
will become free'?" 34 [b]Jesus answered them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who
commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 [c]*A slave does
not remain in a household forever, but a son
always remains. 36 So if a son frees you, then you
will truly be free. 37 I know that you are descen-
dants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me,
because my word has no room among you. 38 *I
tell you what I have seen in the Father's
presence; then do what you have heard from the
Father."

39 [d]*They answered and said to him, "Our
father is Abraham." Jesus said to them, "If you
were Abraham's children, you would be doing
the works of Abraham. 40 But now you are trying
to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that
I heard from God; Abraham did not do this.
41 [e]You are doing the works of your father!" [So]
they said to him, "We are not illegitimate. We
have one Father, God." 42 [f]Jesus said to them, "If
God were your Father, you would love me, for I
came from God and am here; I did not come on
my own, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not
understand what I am saying? Because you
cannot bear to hear my word. 44 [g]You belong to
your father the devil and you willingly carry out
your father's desires. He was a murderer from
the beginning and does not stand in truth,
because there is no truth in him. When he tells a
lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar
and the father of lies. 45 But because I speak the
truth, you do not believe me. 46 [h]Can any of you
charge me with sin? If I am telling the truth,
why do you not believe me? 47 [i]Whoever be-
longs to God hears the words of God; for this
reason you do not listen, because you do not
belong to God."

48 *The Jews answered and said to him, "Are
we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan
and are possessed?" 49 Jesus answered, "I am not
possessed; I honor my Father, but you dishonor
me. 50 [j]I do not seek my own glory; there is one
who seeks it and he is the one who judges.
51 [k]Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my
word will never see death." 52 [So] the Jews said
to him, "Now we are sure that you are pos-
sessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet
you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never
taste death.' 53 [l]*Are you greater than our father
Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died?
Who do you make yourself out to be?" 54 Jesus
answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is worth
nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, of
whom you say, 'He is our God.' 55 [m]You do not
know him, but I know him. And if I should say
that I do not know him, I would be like you a
liar. But I do know him and I keep his word.
56 [n]*Abraham your father rejoiced to see my
day; he saw it and was glad. 57 *So the Jews said
to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you
have seen Abraham?" 58 [o]*Jesus said to them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham
came to be, I AM." 59 [p]So they picked up stones
to throw at him; but Jesus hid and went out of
the temple area.

**8, 33: Have never been enslaved to anyone:** since, historically, the Jews were enslaved almost continuously, this verse is probably Johannine irony, about slavery to sin.

**8, 35: A slave . . . a son:** an allusion to Ishmael and Isaac (Gn 16 and 21), or to the release of a slave after six years (Ex 21, 2; Dt 15, 12).

**8, 38: The Father:** i.e., God. It is also possible, however, to understand the second part of the verse as a sarcastic reference to descent of the Jews from the devil (44), "You do what you have heard from [your] father."

**8, 39: The works of Abraham:** Abraham believed; cf Rom 4, 11–17; Jas 2, 21–23.

**8, 48: Samaritan:** therefore interested in magical powers; cf Acts 7, 14–24.

**8, 53: Are you greater than our father Abraham?:** cf 4, 12.

**8, 56: He saw it:** this seems a reference to the birth of Isaac (Gn 17, 7; 21, 6), the beginning of the fulfillment of promises about Abraham's seed.

**8, 57:** The evidence of the third-century Bodmer Papyrus $P^{75}$ and the first hand of Codex Sinaiticus indicates that the text originally read: "How can Abraham have seen you?"

**8, 58: Came to be, I AM:** the Greek word used for "came to be" is the one used of all creation in the prologue, while the word used for "am" is the one reserved for the Logos.

z Is 42, 7; Gal 4, 31. a Mt 3, 9. b Rom 6, 16–17. c Gn 21, 10; Gal 4, 30; Heb 3, 5–6. d Gn 26, 5; Rom 4, 11–17; Jas 2, 21–23. e Mal 2, 10. f 1 Jn 5, 1. g Gn 3, 4; Wis 1, 13; 2, 24; Acts 13, 10; 1 Jn 3, 8–15. h Heb 4, 15; 1 Pt 2, 22; 1 Jn 3, 5. i 10, 26; 1 Jn 4, 6. j 7, 18. k 5, 24–29; 6, 40.47; 11, 25–26. l 4, 12. m 7, 28–29. n Gn 17, 17; Mt 13, 17; Lk 17, 22. o 1, 30; 17, 5. p 10, 31.39; 11, 8; Lk 4, 29–30.

## CHAPTER 9

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**The Man Born Blind** 1 [q]*As he passed by he
saw a man blind from birth. 2 [r]*His disciples
asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his
parents, that he was born blind?" 3 [s]Jesus an-
swered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is
so that the works of God might be made visible
through him. 4 [t]We have to do the works of the
one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming
when no one can work. 5 [u]While I am in the
world, I am the light of the world." 6 [v]When he
had said this, he spat on the ground and made
clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his
eyes, 7 [w]*and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool
of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and
washed, and came back able to see.

8His neighbors and those who had seen him
earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who
used to sit and beg?" 9Some said, "It is," but
others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said,
"I am." 10So they said to him, "[So] how were
your eyes opened?" 11He replied, "The man
called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and
told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went
there and washed and was able to see." 12And
they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I
don't know."

13They brought the one who was once blind
to the Pharisees. 14 [x]*Now Jesus had made clay
and opened his eyes on a sabbath. 15So then the
Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.
He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I
washed, and now I can see." 16 [y]So some of the
Pharisees said, "This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath." [But]
others said, "How can a sinful man do such
signs?" And there was a division among them.
17 [z]So they said to the blind man again, "What
do you have to say about him, since he opened
your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

18Now the Jews did not believe that he had
been blind and gained his sight until they
summoned the parents of the one who had
gained his sight. 19They asked them, "Is this
your son, who you say was born blind? How
does he now see?" 20His parents answered and
said, "We know that this is our son and that he
was born blind. 21We do not know how he sees
now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask
him, he is of age; he can speak for himself."
22 [a]*His parents said this because they were
afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already
agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the
Messiah, he would be expelled from the syna-
gogue. 23 [b]For this reason his parents said, "He is
of age; question him."

24 [c]*So a second time they called the man
who had been blind and said to him, "Give God
the praise! We know that this man is a sinner."
25He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know.
One thing I do know is that I was blind and now
I see." 26So they said to him, "What did he do to
you? How did he open your eyes?" 27He an-
swered them, "I told you already and you did
not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do
you want to become his disciples, too?" 28They
ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's
disciple; we are disciples of Moses! 29 [d]We know
that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know
where this one is from." 30The man answered
and said to them, "This is what is so amazing,
that you do not know where he is from, yet he
opened my eyes. 31 [e]We know that God does not
listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his

**9, 1—10, 21:** Sabbath healing of the man born blind. This fifth sign is introduced to illustrate the saying, "I am the light of the world" (8, 12; 9, 5). The narrative of conflict about Jesus contrasts Jesus (light) with the Jews (blindness, 39–41). The theme of water is reintroduced in the reference to the pool of Siloam. Ironically, Jesus is being judged by the Jews, yet the Jews are judged by the Light of the world; cf 3, 19–21.

**9, 2:** See the note on 5, 14, and Ex 20, 5, that parents' sins were visited upon their children. Jesus denies such a cause and emphasizes the purpose: the infirmity was providential.

**9, 7: Go wash:** perhaps a test of faith; cf 2 Kgs 5, 10–14. The water tunnel Siloam (= Sent) is used as a symbol of Jesus, sent by his Father.

**9, 14:** In using spittle, kneading clay, and healing, Jesus had broken the sabbath rules laid down by Jewish tradition.

**9, 22:** This comment of the evangelist (in terms used again in 12, 42 and 16, 2) envisages a situation after Jesus' ministry. Rejection/excommunication from the synagogue of Jews who confessed Jesus as Messiah seems to have begun ca. A.D. 85, when the curse against the **mînîm** or heretics was introduced into the "Eighteen Benedictions."

**9, 24: Give God the praise!:** an Old Testament formula of adjuration to tell the truth; cf Jos 7, 19; 1 Sm 6, 5 LXX. Cf 5, 41.

**q** Is 42, 7. **r** Ex 20, 5; Ez 18, 20; Lk 13, 2. **s** 5, 14; 11, 4. **t** 11, 9–10; 12, 35–36. **u** 8, 12. **v** 5, 11; Mk 7, 33; 8, 23. **w** 2 Kgs 5, 10–14. **x** 5, 9. **y** 3, 2; Mt 12, 10–11; Lk 13, 10–11; 14, 1–4. **z** 4, 19. **a** 7, 13; 12, 42; 16, 2; 19, 38. **b** 12, 42. **c** Jos 7, 19; 1 Sm 6, 5 LXX. **d** Ex 33, 11. **e** 10, 21; Pss 34, 16; 66, 18; Prv 15, 29; Is 1, 15.

will, he listens to him. 32*It is unheard of that
anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born
blind. 33[f]If this man were not from God, he
would not be able to do anything." 34They
answered and said to him, "You were born
totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?"
Then they threw him out.

35When Jesus heard that they had thrown him
out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in
the Son of Man?" 36He answered and said,
"Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"
37[g]Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and
the one speaking with you is he." 38He said, "I
do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.
39[h]*Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for
judgment, so that those who do not see might
see, and those who do see might become blind."

40[i]Some of the Pharisees who were with him
heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not
also blind, are we?" 41[j]Jesus said to them, "If
you were blind, you would have no sin; but now
you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.

## CHAPTER 10

**The Good Shepherd** 1[k]*"Amen, amen, I say
to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold
through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a
thief and a robber. 2But whoever enters through
the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The
gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear
his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and
leads them out. 4[l]*When he has driven out all
his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep
follow him, because they recognize his voice.
5But they will not follow a stranger; they will
run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." 6*Although Jesus
used this figure of speech, they did not realize
what he was trying to tell them.

7*So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to
you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8*All who came
[before me] are thieves and robbers, but the
sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved, and
will come in and go out and find pasture. 10A
thief comes only to steal and slaughter and
destroy; I came so that they might have life and
have it more abundantly. 11[m]I am the good
shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for
the sheep. 12[n]A hired man, who is not a
shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees
a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs
away, and the wolf catches and scatters them.
13This is because he works for pay and has no
concern for the sheep. 14I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me,
15[o]just as the Father knows me and I know the
Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.
16[p]*I have other sheep that do not belong to this
fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear
my voice, and there will be one flock, one
shepherd. 17[q]This is why the Father loves me,
because I lay down my life in order to take it up
again. 18[r]*No one takes it from me, but I lay it
down on my own. I have power to lay it down,
and power to take it up again. This command I
have received from my Father."

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**9, 32: A person born blind:** the only Old Testament cure from blindness is found in Tobit (cf Tb 7, 7; 11, 7–13; 14, 1–2), but Tobit was not born blind.

**9, 39–41:** These verses spell out the symbolic meaning of the cure; the Pharisees are not the innocent blind, willing to accept the testimony of others.

**10, 1–21:** The good shepherd discourse continues the theme of attack on the Pharisees that ends ch 9. The figure is allegorical: the hired hands are the Pharisees who excommunicated the cured blind man. It serves as a commentary on ch 9. For the shepherd motif, used of Yahweh in the Old Testament, cf Ex 34; Gn 48, 15; 49, 24; Mi 7, 14; Pss 23, 1–4; 80, 1.

**10, 1: Sheepfold:** a low stone wall open to the sky.

**10, 4: Recognize his voice:** the Pharisees do not recognize Jesus, but the people of God, symbolized by the blind man, do.

**10, 6: Figure of speech:** John uses a different word for illustrative speech than the "parable" of the synoptics, but the idea is similar.

**10, 7–10:** In vv 7–8, the figure is of a gate for the shepherd to come to the sheep; in vv 9–10, the figure is of a gate for the sheep to **come in and go out.**

**10, 8: [Before me]:** these words are omitted in many good early manuscripts and versions.

**10, 16: Other sheep:** the Gentiles, possibly a reference to "God's dispersed children" of 11, 52 destined to be gathered into one, or "apostolic Christians" at odds with the community of the beloved disciple.

**10, 18: Power to take it up again:** contrast the role of the Father as the efficient cause of the resurrection in Acts 2, 24; 4, 10; etc.; Rom 1, 4; 4, 24. Yet even here is added: **This command I have received from my Father.**

f 3, 2. g 4, 26; Dn 7, 13. h Mt 13, 33–35. i Mt 15, 14; 23, 26; Rom 2, 19. j 15, 22. k Gn 48, 15; 49, 24; Pss 23, 1–4; 80, 2; Jer 23, 1–4; Ez 34, 1–31; Mi 7, 14. l Mi 2, 12–13. m Ps 23, 1–4; Is 40, 11; 49, 9–10; Heb 13, 20; Rv 7, 17. n Zec 11, 17. o 15, 13; 1 Jn 3, 16. p 11, 52; Is 56, 8; Jer 23, 3; Ez 34, 23; 37, 24; Mi 2, 12. q Heb 10, 10. r 19,11.

19 [s]Again there was a division among the Jews
because of these words. 20 [t]Many of them said,
"He is possessed and out of his mind; why listen
to him?" 21 [u]Others said, "These are not the
words of one possessed; surely a demon cannot
open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

**Feast of the Dedication** 22 [v]*The feast of the
Dedication was then taking place in Jerusalem. It
was winter. 23 *And Jesus walked about in the
temple area on the Portico of Solomon. 24 [w]*So
the Jews gathered around him and said to him,
"How long are you going to keep us in suspense?
If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." 25 [x]*Jesus
answered them, "I told you and you do not
believe. The works I do in my Father's name
testify to me. 26 [y]But you do not believe, because
you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear
my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
28 [z]I give them eternal life, and they shall never
perish. No one can take them out of my hand.
29 [a]*My Father, who has given them to me, is
greater than all, and no one can take them out of
the Father's hand. 30 [b]*The Father and I are
one."

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31 [c]The Jews again picked up rocks to stone
him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I have shown you
many good works from my Father. For which of
these are you trying to stone me?" 33 [d]The Jews
answered him, "We are not stoning you for a
good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are
making yourself God." 34 [e]*Jesus answered
them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You
are gods" '? 35 If it calls them gods to whom the
word of God came, and scripture cannot be set
aside, 36 [f]*can you say that the one whom the
Father has consecrated and sent into the world
blasphemes because I said, 'I am the Son of
God'? 37 If I do not perform my Father's works,
do not believe me; 38 [g]but if I perform them,
even if you do not believe me, believe the works,
so that you may realize [and understand] that the
Father is in me and I am in the Father." 39 [Then]
they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped
from their power.

40 [h]He went back across the Jordan to the
place where John first baptized, and there he
remained. 41 *Many came to him and said, "John
performed no sign, but everything John said
about this man was true." 42 [i]And many there
began to believe in him.

## CHAPTER 11

**The Raising of Lazarus** 1 [j]*Now a man was ill,
Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and
her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who had
anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried
his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus
who was ill. 3 So the sisters sent word to him,

**10, 22: Feast of the Dedication:** an eight-day festival of lights (Hebrew, Hanukkah) held in December, three months after the feast of Tabernacles (7, 2), to celebrate the Maccabees' rededication of the altar and reconsecration of the temple in 164 B.C., after their desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dn 8, 13; 9, 27; cf 1 Mc 4, 36–59; 2 Mc 1, 18—2, 19; 10, 1–8).

**10, 23: Portico of Solomon:** on the east side of the temple area, offering protection against the cold winds from the desert.

**10, 24: Keep us in suspense:** literally, "How long will you take away our life?" Cf 11, 48–50. **If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly:** cf Lk 22, 67. This is the climax of Jesus' encounters with the Jewish authorities. There has never yet been an open confession before them.

**10, 25: I told you:** probably at 8, 25, which was an evasive answer.

**10, 29:** The textual evidence for the first clause is very divided; it may also be translated: "As for the Father, what he has given me is greater than all," or "My Father is greater than all, in what he has given me."

**10, 30:** This is justification for v 29; it asserts unity of power and reveals that the words and deeds of Jesus are the words and deeds of God.

**10, 34:** This is a reference to the judges of Israel who, since they exercised the divine prerogative to judge (Dt 1, 17), were called "gods"; cf Ex 21, 6, besides Ps 82, 6, from which the quotation comes.

**10, 36: Consecrated:** this may be a reference to the rededicated altar at the Hanukkah feast; see the note on 10, 22.

**10, 41: Performed no sign:** this is to stress the inferior role of John the Baptist. The Transjordan topography recalls the great witness of John the Baptist to Jesus, as opposed to the hostility of the authorities in Jerusalem.

**11, 1–44:** The raising of Lazarus, the longest continuous narrative in John outside of the Passion account, is the climax of the signs. It leads directly to the decision of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus. The theme of life predominates. Lazarus is a token of the real life that Jesus dead and raised will give to all who believe in him. Johannine irony is found in the fact that Jesus' gift of life leads to his own death. The story is not found in the synoptics, but cf Mk 5, 21 and parallels; Lk 7, 11–17. There are also parallels between this story and Luke's parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Lk 16, 19–31). In both a man named Lazarus dies; in Luke, there is a request that he return to convince his contemporaries of the need for faith and repentance, while in John, Lazarus does return and some believe but others do not.

s 7, 43; 9, 16. t 7, 20; 8, 48. u 3, 2. v 1 Mc 4, 54.59. w Lk 22, 67. x 8, 25 / 5, 36; 10, 38. y 8, 45.47. z Dt 32, 39. a Wis 3, 1; Is 43, 13. b 1, 1; 12, 45; 14, 9; 17, 21. c 8, 59. d 5, 18; 19, 7; Lv 24, 16. e Ps 82, 6. f 5, 18. g 14, 10–11.20. h 1, 28. i 2, 23; 7, 31; 8, 30. j 12, 1–8; Lk 10, 38–42; 16, 19–31.

saying, "Master, the one you love is ill."
4 [k]*When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is
not to end in death, but is for the glory of God,
that the Son of God may be glorified through it."
5Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and
Lazarus. 6So when he heard that he was ill, he
remained for two days in the place where he
was. 7Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let
us go back to Judea." 8 [l]The disciples said to him,
"Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,
and you want to go back there?" 9 [m n]Jesus
answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day?
If one walks during the day, he does not
stumble, because he sees the light of this world.
10*But if one walks at night, he stumbles,
because the light is not in him." 11He said this,
and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is
asleep, but I am going to awaken him." 12So the
disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he
will be saved." 13 [o]But Jesus was talking about
his death, while they thought that he meant
ordinary sleep. 14So then Jesus said to them
clearly, "Lazarus has died. 15And I am glad for
you that I was not there, that you may believe.
Let us go to him." 16 [p]*So Thomas, called
Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also
go to die with him."

17When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus
had already been in the tomb for four days.
18*Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about
two miles away. 19 [q]And many of the Jews had
come to Martha and Mary to comfort them
about their brother. 20When Martha heard that
Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but
Mary sat at home. 21 [r]Martha said to Jesus,
"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would
not have died. 22[But] even now I know that
whatever you ask of God, God will give you."
23Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."
24 [s]Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in
the resurrection on the last day." 25 [t]Jesus told
her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever
believes in me, even if he dies, will live, 26and
everyone who lives and believes in me will
never die. Do you believe this?" 27 [u]*She said to
him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you
are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is
coming into the world."

28When she had said this, she went and called
her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is
here and is asking for you." 29As soon as she
heard this, she rose quickly and went to him.
30For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but
was still where Martha had met him. 31So when
the Jews who were with her in the house
comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go
out, they followed her, presuming that she was
going to the tomb to weep there. 32When Mary
came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at
his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been
here, my brother would not have died."
33*When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews
who had come with her weeping, he became
perturbed and deeply troubled, 34and said,
"Where have you laid him?" They said to him,
"Sir, come and see." 35 [v]And Jesus wept. 36So the
Jews said, "See how he loved him." 37But some
of them said, "Could not the one who opened
the eyes of the blind man have done something
so that this man would not have died?"

38So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the
tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.
39Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the
dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now
there will be a stench; he has been dead for four
days." 40Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that

11, 4: **Not to end in death:** this is misunderstood by the disciples as referring to physical death, but it is meant as spiritual death.

11, 10: **The light is not in him:** the ancients apparently did not grasp clearly the entry of light **through** the eye; they seem to have thought of it as being **in** the eye; cf Lk 11, 34; Mt 6, 23.

11, 16: **Called Didymus: Didymus** is the Greek word for twin. Thomas is derived from the Aramaic word for twin; in an ancient Syriac version and in the Gospel of Thomas (80, 11–12) his given name, Judas, is supplied.

11, 18: **About two miles:** literally, "about fifteen stades"; a stade was 607 feet.

11, 27: The titles here are a summary of titles given to Jesus earlier in the gospel.

11, 33: **Became perturbed:** a startling phrase in Greek, literally, "He snorted in spirit," perhaps in anger at the presence of evil (death).

k 9, 3.24. l 8, 59; 10, 31. m 8, 12; 9, 4. n 12, 35; 1 Jn 2, 10. o Mt 9, 24. p 14, 5.22. q 12, 9.17–18. r 11, 32. s 5, 29; 6, 39–40.44.54; 12, 48; Is 2, 2; Mi 4, 1; Acts 23, 8;24, 15. t 5, 24; 8, 51; 14, 6; Dn 12, 2. u 1, 9; 6, 69. v Lk 19, 41.

if you believe you will see the glory of God?"
41 *So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised
his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for
hearing me. 42 [w]I know that you always hear me;
but because of the crowd here I have said this,
that they may believe that you sent me." 43 *And
when he had said this, he cried out in a loud
voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man
came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands,
and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus
said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

**Session of the Sanhedrin** 45 [x]Now many of
the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what
he had done began to believe in him. 46 But some
of them went to the Pharisees and told them
what Jesus had done. 47 [y]So the chief priests and
the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said,
"What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. 48 *If we leave him alone, all will
believe in him, and the Romans will come and
take away both our land and our nation."
49 [z]*But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high
priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing, 50 nor do you consider that it is better for you
that one man should die instead of the people, so
that the whole nation may not perish." 51 He did
not say this on his own, but since he was high
priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was
going to die for the nation, 52 *and not only for
the nation, but also to gather into one the
dispersed children of God. 53 [a]So from that day
on they planned to kill him.

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54 *So Jesus no longer walked about in public
among the Jews, but he left for the region near
the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there
he remained with his disciples.

**The Last Passover** 55 [b]*Now the Passover of
the Jews was near, and many went up from the
country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify
themselves. 56 They looked for Jesus and said to
one another as they were in the temple area,
"What do you think? That he will not come to
the feast?" 57 For the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where
he was, he should inform them, so that they
might arrest him.

## CHAPTER 12

**The Anointing at Bethany** 1 [c d]*Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where
Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the
dead. 2 [e]They gave a dinner for him there, and
Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those
reclining at table with him. 3 [f]*Mary took a liter
of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and
dried them with her hair; the house was filled
with the fragrance of the oil. 4 Then Judas the
Iscariot, one [of] his disciples, and the one who
would betray him, said, 5 *"Why was this oil not
sold for three hundred days' wages and given to
the poor?" 6 [g]He said this not because he cared
about the poor but because he was a thief and
held the money bag and used to steal the
contributions. 7 *So Jesus said, "Leave her alone.
Let her keep this for the day of my burial. 8 [h]You
always have the poor with you, but you do not
always have me."

**11, 41: Father:** in Aramaic, **'abbā.'** See the note on Mk 14, 36.

**11, 43: Cried out in a loud voice:** a dramatization of 5, 28: "the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice."

**11, 48: The Romans will come:** Johannine irony; this is precisely what happened after Jesus' death.

**11, 49: That year:** emphasizes the conjunction of the office and the year. Actually, Caiaphas was high priest A.D. 18–36. The Jews attributed a gift of prophecy, sometimes unconscious, to the high priest.

**11, 52: Dispersed children of God:** perhaps the "other sheep" of 10, 16.

**11, 54:** Ephraim is usually located about twelve miles northeast of Jerusalem, where the mountains descend into the Jordan valley.

**11, 55: Purify:** prescriptions for purity were based on Ex 19, 10–11.15; Nm 9, 6–14; 2 Chr 30, 1–3.15–18.

**12, 1–8:** This is probably the same scene of anointing found in Mk 14, 3–9 (see the note there) and Mt 26, 6–13. The anointing by a penitent woman in Lk 7, 36–38 is different. Details from these various episodes have become interchanged.

**12, 3: The feet of Jesus:** so Mk 14, 3; but in Mt 26, 6, Mary anoints Jesus' head as a sign of regal, messianic anointing.

**12, 5: Days' wages:** literally, "denarii." A denarius is a day's wage in Mt 20, 2; see the note on 6, 7.

**12, 7:** Jesus' response reflects the rabbinical discussion of what was the greatest act of mercy, almsgiving or burying the dead. Those who favored proper burial of the dead thought it an essential condition for sharing in the resurrection.

w 12, 30. x Lk 16, 31. y 12, 19; Mt 26, 3–5; Lk 22, 2; Acts 4, 16. z 18, 13–14. a 5, 18; 7, 1; Mt 12, 14. b 2, 13; 5, 1; 6, 4; 18, 28; Ex 19, 10–11.15; Nm 9, 6–14; 19, 12; Dt 16, 6; 2 Chr 30, 1–3.15–18. c Mt 26, 6–13; Mk 14, 3–9. d 11, 1. e Lk 10, 38–42. f 11, 2. g 13, 29. h Dt 15, 11.

9 *i*[The] large crowd of the Jews found out that
he was there and came, not only because of
Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had
raised from the dead. 10And the chief priests
plotted to kill Lazarus too, 11 *j*because many of
the Jews were turning away and believing in
Jesus because of him.

**The Entry into Jerusalem** 12 *k**On the next
day, when the great crowd that had come to the
feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,
13 *l**they took palm branches and went out to
meet him, and cried out:

"Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord;
[even] the king of Israel."

14Jesus found an ass and sat upon it, as is
written:

15 *m**"Fear no more, O daughter Zion;
see, your king comes, seated upon an ass's
colt."

16 *n**His disciples did not understand this at first,
but when Jesus had been glorified they remem-
bered that these things were written about him
and that they had done this for him. 17*So the
crowd that was with him when he called Laza-
rus from the tomb and raised him from death
continued to testify. 18This was [also] why the
crowd went to meet him, because they heard
that he had done this sign. 19 *o**So the Pharisees
said to one another, "You see that you are
gaining nothing. Look, the whole world has
gone after him."

**The Coming of Jesus' Hour** 20 *p**Now there
were some Greeks among those who had come
up to worship at the feast. 21 *q**They came to
Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and
asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus."
22 *r*Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew
and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 *s**Jesus an-
swered them, "The hour has come for the Son of
Man to be glorified. 24 *t**Amen, amen, I say to
you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground
and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it
dies, it produces much fruit. 25 *u**Whoever loves
his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this
world will preserve it for eternal life.
26 *v*Whoever serves me must follow me, and
where I am, there also will my servant be. The
Father will honor whoever serves me.

27 *w**"I am troubled now. Yet what should I
say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was
for this purpose that I came to this hour.
28 *x*Father, glorify your name." Then a voice

**12, 12–19:** In Jn, the entry into Jerusalem follows the anointing whereas in the synoptics it precedes. In John, the crowd, not the disciples, are responsible for the triumphal procession.

**12, 13: Palm branches:** used to welcome great conquerors; cf 1 Mc 13, 51; 2 Mc 10, 7. They may be related to the **lûlāb**, the twig bundles used at the feast of Tabernacles. **Hosanna:** see Ps 118, 25–26. The Hebrew word means: "(O Lord), grant salvation." **He who comes in the name of the Lord:** referred in Ps 118, 26 to a pilgrim entering the temple gates, but here a title for Jesus (see the notes on Mt 11, 3 and Jn 6, 14; 11, 27). **The king of Israel:** perhaps from Zep 3, 14–15, in connection with the next quotation from Zec 9, 9.

**12, 15: Daughter Zion:** Jerusalem. **Ass's colt:** symbol of peace, as opposed to the war-horse.

**12, 16: They had done this:** the antecedent of **they** is ambiguous.

**12, 17–18:** There seem to be two different crowds in these verses. There are some good witnesses to the text that have another reading for v 17: "Then the crowd that was with him began to testify that he had called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead."

**12, 19: The whole world:** the sense is that everyone is following Jesus, but John has an ironic play on **world;** he alludes to the universality of salvation (3, 17; 4, 42).

**12, 20–36:** This announcement of glorification by death is an illustration of "the whole world" (19) going after him.

**12, 20: Greeks:** not used here in a nationalistic sense. These are probably Gentile proselytes to Judaism; cf 7, 35.

**12, 21–22: Philip . . . Andrew:** the approach is made through disciples who have distinctly Greek names, suggesting that access to Jesus was mediated to the Greek world through his disciples. Philip and Andrew were from Bethsaida (1, 44); Galileans were mostly bilingual. **See:** here seems to mean "have an interview with."

**12, 23:** Jesus' response suggests that only after the crucifixion could the gospel encompass both Jew and Gentile.

**12, 24:** This verse implies that through his death Jesus will be accessible to all. It **remains just a grain of wheat:** this saying is found in the synoptic triple and double traditions (Mk 8, 35 // Mt 16, 25 // Lk 9, 24; Mt 10, 39 // Lk 17, 33). John adds the phrases (25) **in this world** and **for eternal life.**

**12, 25: His life:** the Greek word **psychē** refers to a person's natural life. It does not mean "soul," for Hebrew anthropology did not postulate body/soul dualism in the way that is familiar to us.

**12, 27: I am troubled:** perhaps an allusion to the Gethsemane agony scene of the synoptics.

i 11, 19. j 11, 45. k Mt 21, 1–16; Mk 11, 1–10; Lk 19, 28–40. l 1, 49; Lv 23, 40; 1 Mc 13, 51; 2 Mc 10, 7; Rv 7, 9. m Is 40, 9; Zec 9, 9. n 2, 22. o 11, 47–48. p Acts 10, 2. q 1, 44. r 1, 40. s 2, 4. t Is 53, 10–12; 1 Cor 15, 36. u Mt 10, 39; 16, 25; Mk 8, 35; Lk 9, 24; 17, 33. v 14, 3; 17, 24; Mt 16, 24; Mk 8, 34; Lk 9, 23. w 6, 38; 18, 11; Mt 26, 38–39; Mk 14, 34–36; Lk 22, 42; Heb 5, 7–8. x 2, 11; 17, 5; Dn 4, 31.34.

came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will
glorify it again." 29 *y*The crowd there heard it and
said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel
has spoken to him." 30 *z*Jesus answered and said,
"This voice did not come for my sake but for
yours. 31 *a**Now is the time of judgment on this
world; now the ruler of this world will be driven
out. 32 *b*And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw everyone to myself." 33He said this
indicating the kind of death he would die.
34 *c**So the crowd answered him, "We have
heard from the law that the Messiah remains
forever. Then how can you say that the Son of
Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of
Man?" 35 *d*Jesus said to them, "The light will be
among you only a little while. Walk while you
have the light, so that darkness may not over-
come you. Whoever walks in the dark does not
know where he is going. 36 *e*While you have the
light, believe in the light, so that you may
become children of the light."

**Unbelief and Belief among the Jews** After
he had said this, Jesus left and hid from them.
37 *f**Although he had performed so many signs
in their presence they did not believe in him,
38 *g**in order that the word which Isaiah the
prophet spoke might be fulfilled:

"Lord, who has believed our preaching,
to whom has the might of the Lord been
revealed?"

39For this reason they could not believe,
because again Isaiah said:

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40 *h*"He blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
so that they might not see with their eyes
and understand with their heart and be
converted,
and I would heal them."

41 *i**Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and
spoke about him. 42 *j*Nevertheless, many, even
among the authorities, believed in him, but
because of the Pharisees they did not acknowl-
edge it openly in order not to be expelled from
the synagogue. 43 *k*For they preferred human
praise to the glory of God.

**Recapitulation** 44 *l*Jesus cried out and said,
"Whoever believes in me believes not only in me
but also in the one who sent me, 45 *m*and
whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. 46 *n*I
came into the world as light, so that everyone
who believes in me might not remain in dark-
ness. 47 *o*And if anyone hears my words and does
not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I
did not come to condemn the world but to save
the world. 48 *p*Whoever rejects me and does not
accept my words has something to judge him:
the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on
the last day, 49 *q*because I did not speak on my
own, but the Father who sent me commanded
me what to say and speak. 50And I know that his
commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say
as the Father told me."

# III: The Book of Glory*

## CHAPTER 13

### The Washing of the Disciples' Feet

1 *r**Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that

**12, 31: Ruler of this world:** Satan.

**12, 34:** There is no passage in the Old Testament that states precisely that **the Messiah remains forever.** Perhaps the closest is Ps 89, 37.

**12, 37–50:** These verses, on unbelief of the Jews, provide an epilogue to the Book of Signs.

**12, 38–41:** John gives a historical explanation of the disbelief of the Jewish people, not a psychological one. The Old Testament had to be fulfilled; the disbelief that met Isaiah's message was a foreshadowing of the disbelief that Jesus encountered. In v 42 and also in 3, 20, we see that there is no negation of freedom.

**12, 41: His glory:** Isaiah saw the glory of Yahweh enthroned in the heavenly temple, but in John the antecedent of **his** is Jesus.

**13, 1—19, 42:** The Book of Glory. There is a major break here; the word "sign" is used again only in 20, 30. In this phase of Jesus' return to the Father, the discourses (chs 13–17) precede the traditional narrative of the passion (chs 18–20) to interpret them for the Christian reader. This is the only extended example of esoteric teaching of disciples in John.

**13, 1–20:** Washing of the disciples' feet. This episode occurs in John at the place of the narration of the institution of the Eucharist in the synoptics. It may be a dramatization of Lk 22, 27: "I am your servant." It is presented as a "model" ("pattern") of the crucifixion. It symbolizes cleansing from sin by sacrificial death.

**13, 1: Before the feast of Passover:** this would be Thursday

y Ex 9, 28; 2 Sm 22, 14; Jb 37, 4; Ps 29, 3; Lk 22, 43; Acts 23, 9. z 11, 42. a 16, 11; Lk 10, 18; Rv 12, 9. b 3, 14; 8, 28; Is 52, 13. c Pss 89, 5; 110, 4; Is 9, 7; Dn 7, 13–14; Rv 20, 1–6. d 9, 4; 11, 10; Jb 5, 14. e Eph 5, 8. f Dt 29, 2–4; Mk 4, 11–12; Rom 9–11. g Is 53, 1; Rom 10, 16. h Is 6, 9–10; Mt 13, 13–15; Mk 4, 12. i 5, 39; Is 6, 1.4. j 9, 22. k 5, 44. l 13, 20; 14, 1. m 14, 7–9. n 1, 9; 8, 12. o 3, 17. p Lk 10, 16; Heb 4, 12. q 14, 10.31; Dt 18, 18–19. r 2, 4; 7, 30; 8, 20; Mt 26, 17.45; Mk 14, 12.41; Lk 22, 7.

his hour had come to pass from this world to
the Father. He loved his own in the world and
he loved them to the end. [2] [s]*The devil had
already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscar-
iot, to hand him over. So, during supper, [3] [t]fully
aware that the Father had put everything into
his power and that he had come from God and
was returning to God, [4]he rose from supper and
took off his outer garments. He took a towel
and tied it around his waist. [5] [u]*Then he
poured water into a basin and began to wash
the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel
around his waist. [6]He came to Simon Peter,
who said to him, "Master, are you going to
wash my feet?" [7]Jesus answered and said to
him, "What I am doing, you do not understand
now, but you will understand later." [8] [v]Peter
said to him, "You will never wash my feet."
Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you
will have no inheritance with me." [9]Simon
Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my
feet, but my hands and head as well."
[10] [w]*Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed
has no need except to have his feet washed, for
he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not
all." [11] [x]For he knew who would betray him;
for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are
clean."

[12]So when he had washed their feet [and] put
his garments back on and reclined at table again,
he said to them, "Do you realize what I have
done for you? [13] [y]You call me 'teacher' and
'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. [14]If I,
therefore, the master and teacher, have washed
your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.
[15] [z]I have given you a model to follow, so that as
I have done for you, you should also do.
[16] [a]*Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is
greater than his master nor any messenger
greater than the one who sent him. [17]If you
understand this, blessed are you if you do it.
[18] [b]I am not speaking of all of you. I know those
whom I have chosen. But so that the scripture
might be fulfilled, 'The one who ate my food has
raised his heel against me.' [19]From now on I am
telling you before it happens, so that when it
happens you may believe that I AM. [20] [c]Amen,
amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I
send receives me, and whoever receives me
receives the one who sent me."

**Announcement of Judas's Betrayal**

[21] [d]When he had said this, Jesus was deeply
troubled and testified, "Amen, amen, I say to
you, one of you will betray me." [22]The disciples
looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he
meant. [23] [e]*One of his disciples, the one whom
Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus' side. [24]So
Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he
meant. [25] [f]He leaned back against Jesus' chest
and said to him, "Master, who is it?" [26]*Jesus
answered, "It is the one to whom I hand the
morsel after I have dipped it." So he dipped the
morsel and [took it and] handed it to Judas, son
of Simon the Iscariot. [27] [g]After he took the
morsel, Satan entered him. So Jesus said to him,
"What you are going to do, do quickly." [28][Now]
none of those reclining at table realized why he
said this to him. [29] [h]Some thought that since
Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him,
"Buy what we need for the feast," or to give
something to the poor. [30]So he took the morsel
and left at once. And it was night.

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evening, before the day of preparation; in the synoptics, the Last Supper is a Passover meal taking place, in John's chronology, on Friday evening. **To the end:** or, "completely."

**13, 2: Induced:** literally, "The devil put into the heart that Judas should hand him over."

**13, 5:** The act of washing another's feet was one that could not be required of the lowliest Jewish slave. It is an allusion to the humiliating death of the crucifixion.

**13, 10: Bathed:** many have suggested that this passage is a symbolic reference to baptism. The Greek root involved is used in baptismal contexts in 1 Cor 6, 11; Eph 5, 26; Ti 3, 5; Heb 10, 22.

**13, 16: Messenger:** the Greek has **apostolos,** the only occurrence of the term in John. It is not used in the technical sense here.

**13, 23: The one whom Jesus loved:** also mentioned in 19, 26; 20, 2; 21, 7. A disciple, called "another disciple" or "the other disciple," is mentioned in 18, 15 and 20, 2; in the latter reference he is identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved. There is also an unnamed disciple in 1, 35–40; see the note on 1, 37.

**13, 26: Morsel:** probably the bitter herb dipped in salt water.

s 6, 71; 17, 12; Mt 26, 20–21; Mk 14, 17–18; Lk 22, 3. t 3, 35. u 1 Sm 25, 41. v 2 Sm 20, 1. w 15, 3. x 6, 70. y Mt 23, 8.10. z Lk 22, 27; 1 Pt 2, 21. a 15, 20; Mt 10, 24; Lk 6, 40. b Ps 41, 10. c Mt 10, 40; Mk 9, 37; Lk 9, 48. d Mt 26, 21–25; Mk 14, 18–21; Lk 22, 21–23. e 19, 26; 20, 2; 21, 7.20; Mt 10, 37. f 21, 20. g 13, 2; Lk 22, 3. h 12, 5–6.

**The New Commandment** 31 *When he had
left, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified,
and God is glorified in him. 32 [i][If God is glorified
in him,] God will also glorify him in himself, and
he will glorify him at once. 33 [j]My children, I will
be with you only a little while longer. You will
look for me, and as I told the Jews, 'Where I go
you cannot come,' so now I say it to you. 34 [k]*I
give you a new commandment: love one an-
other. As I have loved you, so you also should
love one another. 35 This is how all will know
that you are my disciples, if you have love for
one another."

**Peter's Denial Predicted** 36 [l]Simon Peter said
to him, "Master, where are you going?" Jesus
answered [him], "Where I am going, you cannot
follow me now, though you will follow later."
37 Peter said to him, "Master, why can't I follow
you now? I will lay down my life for you."
38 [m]Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life
for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will
not crow before you deny me three times.

## CHAPTER 14

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**Last Supper Discourses** 1 *"Do not let your
hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have
faith also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are
many dwelling places. If there were not, would I
have told you that I am going to prepare a place
for you? 3 [n]*And if I go and prepare a place for
you, I will come back again and take you to
myself, so that where I am you also may be.
4 *Where [I] am going you know the way."
5 Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know
where you are going; how can we know the
way?" 6 [o]*Jesus said to him, "I am the way and
the truth and the life. No one comes to the
Father except through me. 7 [p]*If you know me,
then you will also know my Father. From now
on you do know him and have seen him."
8 [q]*Philip said to him, "Master, show us the
Father, and that will be enough for us." 9 [r]Jesus
said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a
time and you still do not know me, Philip?
Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How
can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 [s]Do you
not believe that I am in the Father and the
Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I
do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells
in me is doing his works. 11 [t]Believe me that I am
in the Father and the Father is in me, or else,
believe because of the works themselves.
12 [u]Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes
in me will do the works that I do, and will do
greater ones than these, because I am going to
the Father. 13 [v]And whatever you ask in my
name, I will do, so that the Father may be
glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything of me
in my name, I will do it.

**The Advocate** 15 [w]"If you love me, you will
keep my commandments. 16 [x]*And I will ask

**13, 31—17, 26:** Two farewell discourses and a prayer. These seem to be Johannine compositions, including sayings of Jesus at the Last Supper and on other occasions, modeled on similar farewell discourses in Greek literature and the Old Testament (of Moses, Joshua, David).

**13, 31–38:** Introduction: departure and return. Terms of coming and going predominate. These verses form an introduction to the last discourse of Jesus, which extends through chs 14 to 17. In it John has collected Jesus' words to **his own** (13, 1). There are indications that several speeches have been fused together, e.g., in 14, 31 and 17, 1.

**13, 34: I give you a new commandment:** this puts Jesus on a par with Yahweh. The commandment itself is not new; cf Lv 19, 18 and the note there.

**14, 1–31:** Jesus' departure and return. This section is a dialogue marked off by a literary inclusion in vv 1 and 27: "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

**14, 1: You have faith:** could also be imperative: "Have faith."

**14, 3: Come back again:** a rare Johannine reference to the parousia; cf 1 Jn 2, 28.

**14, 4: The way:** here, of Jesus himself; also a designation of Christianity in Acts 9, 2; 19, 9.23; 22, 4; 24, 14.22.

**14, 6: The truth:** in John, the divinely revealed reality of the Father manifested in the person and works of Jesus. The possession of truth confers knowledge and liberation from sin (8, 32).

**14, 7:** An alternative reading, "If you knew me, then you would have known my Father also," would be a rebuke, as in 8, 19.

**14, 8: Show us the Father:** Philip is pictured asking for a theophany like Ex 24, 9–10; 33, 18.

**14, 16: Another Advocate:** Jesus is the first advocate (paraclete); see 1 Jn 2, 1, where Jesus is an advocate in the sense of intercessor in heaven. The Greek term derives from legal terminology for an advocate or defense attorney, and can mean spokesman, mediator, intercessor, comforter, consoler, although no one of these terms encompasses the meaning in John. The Paraclete in John is a teacher, a witness to Jesus, and a prosecutor of the world, who represents the continued presence on earth of the Jesus who has returned to the Father.

i 17, 1–5. j 7, 33; 8, 21. k 15, 12–13.17; Lv 19, 18; 1 Thes 4, 9; 1 Jn 2, 7–10; 3, 23; 2 Jn 5. l Mk 14, 27; Lk 22, 23. m 18, 27; Mt 26, 33–35; Mk 14, 29–31; Lk 22, 33–34. n 12, 26; 17, 24; 1 Jn 2, 28. o 8, 31–47. p 8, 19; 12, 45. q Ex 24, 9–10; 33, 18. r 1, 18; 10, 30; 12, 45; 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15; Heb 1, 3. s 1, 1; 10, 37–38; 12, 49. t 10, 38. u 1, 50; 5, 20. v 15, 7.16; 16, 23–24; Mt 7, 7–11. w 15, 10; Dt 6, 4–9; Ps 119; Wis 6, 18; 1 Jn 5, 3; 2 Jn 6. x 15, 26; Lk 24, 49; 1 Jn 2, 1.

the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, 17 *y**the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. 18*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. 19 *z*In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. 20 *a*On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. 21 *b*Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." 22 *c**Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, "Master, [then] what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 *d*Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

25"I have told you this while I am with you. 26 *e*The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you. 27 *f**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. 28 *g**You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. 29 *h*And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. 30*I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, 31 *i*but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me. Get up, let us go.

## CHAPTER 15

**The Vine and the Branches** 1 *j**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. 2*He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. 3 *k*You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. 4Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. 6 *l**Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. 7 *m*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. 8 *n*By this is my Father glorified, that you

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**14, 17: The Spirit of truth:** this term is also used at Qumran, where it is a moral force put into a person by God, as opposed to the spirit of perversity. It is more personal in John; it will teach the realities of the new order (26), and testify to the truth (6). While it has been customary to use masculine personal pronouns in English for the Advocate, the Greek word for "spirit" is neuter, and the Greek text and manuscript variants fluctuate between masculine and neuter pronouns.

**14, 18: I will come to you:** indwelling, not parousia.

**14, 22: Judas, not the Iscariot:** probably not the brother of Jesus in Mk 6, 3 // Mt 13, 55 or the apostle named Jude in Lk 6, 16, but Thomas (see the note on 11, 16), although other readings have "Judas the Cananean."

**14, 27: Peace:** the traditional Hebrew salutation **šālōm**; but Jesus' "Shalom" is a gift of salvation, connoting the bounty of messianic blessing.

**14, 28: The Father is greater than I:** because he **sent, gave,** etc., and Jesus is "a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God" (8, 40).

**14, 30: The ruler of the world:** Satan; cf 12, 31; 16, 11.

**15, 1—16, 4:** Discourse on the union of Jesus with his disciples. His words become a monologue and go beyond the immediate crisis of the departure of Jesus.

**15, 1–17:** Like 10, 1–5, this passage resembles a parable. Israel is spoken of as a vineyard at Is 5, 1–7; Mt 21, 33–46 and as a vine at Ps 80, 9–17; Jer 2, 21; Ez 15, 2; 17, 5–10; 19, 10; Hos 10, 1. The identification of the vine as the Son of Man in Ps 80, 16, and Wisdom's description of herself as a vine in Sir 24, 17, are further background for portrayal of Jesus by this figure. There may be secondary eucharistic symbolism here; cf Mk 14, 25, "the fruit of the vine."

**15, 2: Takes away . . . prunes:** in Greek there is a play on two related verbs.

**15, 6:** Branches were cut off and dried on the wall of the vineyard for later use as fuel.

y 16, 13; Mt 28, 20; 2 Jn 1–2. z 16, 16. a 10, 38; 17, 21; Is 2, 17; 4, 2–3. b 16, 27; 1 Jn 2, 5; 3, 24. c 7, 4; Acts 10, 40–41. d Rv 3, 20. e 15, 26; 16, 7.13–14; Ps 51, 13; Is 63, 10. f 16, 33; Eph 2, 14–18. g 8, 40. h 13, 19; 16, 4. i 6, 38. j Ps 80, 9–17; Is 5, 1–7; Jer 2, 21; Ez 15, 2; 17, 5–10; 19, 10. k 13, 10. l Ez 15, 6–7; 19, 10–14. m 14, 13; Mt 7, 7; Mk 11, 24; 1 Jn 5, 14. n Mt 5, 16.

bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9 [o]As
the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain
in my love. 10 [p]If you keep my commandments,
you will remain in my love, just as I have kept
my Father's commandments and remain in his
love.

11 [q]"I have told you this so that my joy may
be in you and your joy may be complete.
12 [r]This is my commandment: love one another
as I love you. 13 [s]*No one has greater love than
this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.
14 You are my friends if you do what I command
you. 15 [t]*I no longer call you slaves, because a
slave does not know what his master is doing. I
have called you friends, because I have told you
everything I have heard from my Father. 16 [u]It
was not you who chose me, but I who chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will
remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in
my name he may give you. 17 [v]This I command
you: love one another.

Ch 13–17
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**The World's Hatred** 18 [w]*"If the world hates
you, realize that it hated me first. 19 [x]If you
belonged to the world, the world would love its
own; but because you do not belong to the
world, and I have chosen you out of the world,
the world hates you. 20 [y]*Remember the word I
spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his
master.' If they persecuted me, they will also
persecute you. If they kept my word, they will
also keep yours. 21 [z]*And they will do all these
things to you on account of my name, because
they do not know the one who sent me. 22 [a]*If I
had not come and spoken to them, they would
have no sin; but as it is they have no excuse for
their sin. 23 [b]Whoever hates me also hates my
Father. 24 [c]If I had not done works among them
that no one else ever did, they would not have
sin; but as it is, they have seen and hated both
me and my Father. 25 [d]*But in order that the
word written in their law might be fulfilled,
'They hated me without cause.'

26 [e]*"When the Advocate comes whom I will
send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that
proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.
27 [f]And you also testify, because you have been
with me from the beginning.

## CHAPTER 16

1 "I have told you this so that you may not fall
away. 2 [g]*They will expel you from the syna-
gogues; in fact, the hour is coming when every-
one who kills you will think he is offering
worship to God. 3 [h]They will do this because
they have not known either the Father or me.
4 [i]*I have told you this so that when their hour
comes you may remember that I told you.

**Jesus' Departure; Coming of the Advocate**
"I did not tell you this from the beginning,
because I was with you. 5 [j]*But now I am going

15, 13: **For one's friends:** or: "those whom one loves." In 9–13a, the words for love are related to the Greek **agapaō**. In 13b-15, the words for love are related to the Greek **phileō**. For John, the two roots seem synonymous and mean "to love"; cf also 21, 15–17. The word **philos** is used here.

15, 15: **Slaves . . . friends:** in the Old Testament, Moses (Dt 34, 5), Joshua (Jos 24, 29), and David (Ps 89, 21) were called "servants" or "slaves of Yahweh"; only Abraham (Is 41, 8; 2 Chr 20, 7; cf Jas 2, 23) was called a "friend of God."

15, 18—16, 4: The hostile reaction of the world. There are synoptic parallels, predicting persecution, especially at Mt 10, 17–25; 24, 9–10.

15, 20: **The word I spoke to you:** a reference to 13, 16.

15, 21: **On account of my name:** the idea of persecution for Jesus' name is frequent in the New Testament (Mt 10, 22; 24, 9; Acts 9, 14). For John, association with Jesus' name implies union with Jesus.

15, 22.24: Jesus' words (**spoken**) and deeds (**works**) are the great motives of credibility. **They have seen and hated:** probably means that they have seen his works and still have hated; but the Greek can be read: "have seen both me and my Father and still have hated both me and my Father." **Works . . . that no one else ever did:** so Yahweh in Dt 4, 32–33.

15, 25: **In their law:** law is here used as a larger concept than the Pentateuch, for the reference is to Ps 35, 19 or 69, 5. See the notes on 10, 34; 12, 34. **Their** law reflects the argument of the church with the synagogue.

15, 26: **Whom I will send:** in 14, 16.26, the Paraclete is to be sent by the Father, at the request of Jesus. Here the Spirit comes from both Jesus and the Father in mission; there is no reference here to the eternal procession of the Spirit.

16, 2: **Hour:** of persecution, not Jesus' "hour" (see the note on 2, 4).

16, 4b–33: A duplicate of 14, 1–31 on departure and return.

16, 5: **Not one of you asks me:** the difficulty of reconciling this with Simon Peter's question in 13, 36 and Thomas' words in 14, 5 strengthens the supposition that the last discourse has been made up of several collections of Johannine material.

o 17, 23. p 8, 29; 14, 15. q 16, 22; 17, 13. r 13, 34. s Rom 5, 6–8; 1 Jn 3, 16. t Dt 34, 5; Jos 24, 29; 2 Chr 20, 7; Ps 89, 21; Is 41, 8; Rom 8, 15; Gal 4, 7; Jas 2, 23. u 14, 13; Dt 7, 6. v 13, 34; 1 Jn 3, 23; 4, 21. w 7, 7; 14, 17; Mt 10, 22; 24, 9; Mk 13, 13; Lk 6, 22; 1 Jn 3, 13. x 17, 14–16; 1 Jn 4, 5. y 13, 16; Mt 10, 24. z 8, 19; 16, 3. a 8, 21.24; 9, 41. b 5, 23; Lk 10, 16; 1 Jn 2, 23. c 3, 2; 9, 32; Dt 4, 32–33. d Ps 35, 19; 69, 4. e 14, 16.26; Mt 10, 19–20. f Lk 1, 2; Acts 1, 8. g 9, 22; 12, 42; Mt 10, 17; Lk 21, 12; Acts 26, 11. h 15, 21. i 13, 19; 14, 29. j 7, 33; 13, 36; 14, 5.

to the one who sent me, and not one of you asks
me, 'Where are you going?' 6But because I told
you this, grief has filled your hearts. 7 *k*But I tell
you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I
do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.
But if I go, I will send him to you. 8*And when
he comes he will convict the world in regard to
sin and righteousness and condemnation: 9 *l*sin,
because they do not believe in me; 10righteous-
ness, because I am going to the Father and you
will no longer see me; 11 *m*condemnation, be-
cause the ruler of this world has been con-
demned.

12"I have much more to tell you, but you
cannot bear it now. 13 *n**But when he comes, the
Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He
will not speak on his own, but he will speak
what he hears, and will declare to you the things
that are coming. 14He will glorify me, because
he will take from what is mine and declare it to
you. 15Everything that the Father has is mine;
for this reason I told you that he will take from
what is mine and declare it to you.

16 *o*"A little while and you will no longer see
me, and again a little while later and you will see
me." 17So some of his disciples said to one
another, "What does this mean that he is saying
to us, 'A little while and you will not see me, and
again a little while and you will see me,' and
'Because I am going to the Father'?" 18So they
said, "What is this 'little while' [of which he
speaks]? We do not know what he means."
19Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he
said to them, "Are you discussing with one
another what I said, 'A little while and you will
not see me, and again a little while and you will
see me'? 20 *p*Amen, amen, I say to you, you will
weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you
will grieve, but your grief will become joy.
21 *q*When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish
because her hour has arrived; but when she has
given birth to a child, she no longer remembers
the pain because of her joy that a child has been
born into the world. 22 *r*So you also are now in
anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts
will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away
from you. 23 *s*On that day you will not question
me about anything. Amen, amen, I say to you,
whatever you ask the Father in my name he will
give you. 24Until now you have not asked
anything in my name; ask and you will receive,
so that your joy may be complete.

25 *t**"I have told you this in figures of speech.
The hour is coming when I will no longer speak
to you in figures but I will tell you clearly about
the Father. 26 *u*On that day you will ask in my
name, and I do not tell you that I will ask the
Father for you. 27For the Father himself loves
you, because you have loved me and have come
to believe that I came from God. 28 *v*I came from
the Father and have come into the world. Now I
am leaving the world and going back to the
Father." 29His disciples said, "Now you are
talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech.
30*Now we realize that you know everything
and that you do not need to have anyone
question you. Because of this we believe that
you came from God." 31Jesus answered them,
"Do you believe now? 32 *w**Behold, the hour is
coming and has arrived when each of you will be
scattered to his own home and you will leave me
alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is
with me. 33 *x*I have told you this so that you
might have peace in me. In the world you will

**16, 8–11:** These verses illustrate the forensic character of the Paraclete's role: in the forum of the disciples' conscience he prosecutes the world. He leads believers to see (a) that the basic sin was and is refusal to believe in Jesus; (b) that, although Jesus was found guilty and apparently died in disgrace, in reality righteousness has triumphed, for Jesus has returned to his Father; (c) finally, that it is **the ruler of this world,** Satan, who has been condemned through Jesus' death (12, 32).

**16, 13: Declare to you the things that are coming:** not a reference to new predictions about the future, but interpretation of what has already occurred or been said.

**16, 25:** See the note on 10, 6. Here, possibly a reference to 15, 1–16 or 16, 21.

**16, 30:** The reference is seemingly to the fact that Jesus could anticipate their question in v 19. The disciples naively think they have the full understanding that is the climax of "the hour" of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension (25), but the only part of the hour that is at hand for them is their share in the passion (32).

**16, 32: You will be scattered:** cf Mk 14, 27 and Mt 26, 31, where both cite Zec 13, 7 about the sheep being dispersed.

k 7, 39; 14, 16–17.26; 15, 26. l 8, 21–24; 15, 22. m 12, 31. n 14, 17.26; 15, 26; Pss 25, 5; 143, 10; 1 Jn 2, 27; Rv 7, 17. o 7, 33; 14, 19. p Ps 126, 6. q Is 26, 17–18; Jer 31, 13; Mic 4, 9. r 14, 19; 15, 11; 20, 20. s 14, 13. t Mt 13, 34–35. u 14, 13. v 1, 1. w 8, 29; Zec 13, 7; Mt 26, 31; Mk 14, 27. x 14, 27.

have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

## CHAPTER 17

Ch 13-17
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**The Prayer of Jesus** 1 y*When Jesus had said this, he raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, 2 z*just as you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him. 3 a*Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. 4 I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 b Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.

6*"I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, 8 because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. 9 c I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, 10 d and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are. 12 e When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 f But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. 14 g I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. 15 h*I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. 17 i Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. 18 j As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. 19 And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

20"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 k so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. 22 And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. 24 l*Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 m Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. 26*I made known to them your name and I will make it

**17, 1–26:** Climax of the last discourse(s). Since the sixteenth century, this chapter has been called the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus. He speaks as intercessor, with words addressed directly to the Father and not to the disciples, who supposedly only overhear. Yet the prayer is one of petition, for immediate (6–19) and future (20–21) disciples. Many phrases reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer occur. Although still in the world (13), Jesus looks on his earthly ministry as a thing of the past (4.12). Whereas Jesus has up to this time stated that the disciples could follow him (13, 33.36), now he wishes them to be with him in union with the Father (12–14).

**17, 1:** The action of looking up to heaven and the address **Father** are typical of Jesus at prayer; cf 11, 41 and Lk 11, 2.

**17, 2:** Another possible interpretation is to treat the first line of the verse as parenthetical and the second as an appositive to the clause that ends v 1: **so that your son may glorify you (just as . . . all people), so that he may give eternal life. . . .**

**17, 3:** This verse was clearly added in the editing of the gospel as a reflection on the preceding verse; Jesus nowhere else refers to himself as Jesus Christ.

**17, 6: I revealed your name:** perhaps the name **I AM**; cf 8, 24. 28.58; 13, 19.

**17, 15:** Note the resemblance to the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "deliver us from the evil one." Both probably refer to the devil rather than to abstract evil.

**17, 24: Where I am:** Jesus prays for the believers ultimately to join him in heaven. Then they will not see his glory as in a mirror but clearly (2 Cor 3, 18; 1 Jn 3, 2).

**17, 26: I will make it known:** through the Advocate.

y 13, 31. z 3, 35; Mt 28, 18. a 1, 17; Wis 14, 7; 15, 3; 1 Jn 5, 20. b 1, 1.2; 12, 28; Phil 2, 6.9–11. c 17, 20. d 16, 15; 2 Thes 1, 10.12. e 13, 18; 18, 9; Ps 41, 10; Mt 26, 24; Acts 1, 16. f 15, 11. g 15, 19. h Mt 6, 13; 2 Thes 3, 3; 1 Jn 5, 18. i 1 Pt 1, 22 j 20, 21–22. k 10, 30; 14, 10–11.20. l 14, 3; 1 Thes 4, 17. m 1, 10.

known, that the love with which you loved me
may be in them and I in them."

## CHAPTER 18

**Jesus Arrested** 1 n*When he had said this,
Jesus went out with his disciples across the
Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into
which he and his disciples entered. 2Judas his
betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had
often met there with his disciples. 3 o*So Judas
got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief
priests and the Pharisees and went there with
lanterns, torches, and weapons. 4Jesus, knowing
everything that was going to happen to him,
went out and said to them, "Whom are you
looking for?" 5*They answered him, "Jesus the
Nazorean." He said to them, "I AM." Judas his
betrayer was also with them. 6When he said to
them, "I AM," they turned away and fell to the
ground. 7So he again asked them, "Whom are
you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the
Nazorean." 8Jesus answered, "I told you that I
AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men
go." 9 p*This was to fulfill what he had said, "I
have not lost any of those you gave me."
10*Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it,
struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right
ear. The slave's name was Malchus. 11 q*Jesus
said to Peter, "Put your sword into its scabbard.
Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave
me?"

12 rSo the band of soldiers, the tribune, and
the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound him,
13 s*and brought him to Annas first. He was the
father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest
that year. 14 tIt was Caiaphas who had counseled
the Jews that it was better that one man should
die rather than the people.

Ch 18–20
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**Peter's First Denial** 15 u*Simon Peter and an-
other disciple followed Jesus. Now the other
disciple was known to the high priest, and he
entered the courtyard of the high priest with
Jesus. 16But Peter stood at the gate outside. So
the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high
priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and
brought Peter in. 17Then the maid who was the
gatekeeper said to Peter, "You are not one of this
man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."
18Now the slaves and the guards were standing
around a charcoal fire that they had made,
because it was cold, and were warming them-
selves. Peter was also standing there keeping
warm.

**The Inquiry before Annas** 19 vThe high priest
questioned Jesus about his disciples and about
his doctrine. 20 w*Jesus answered him, "I have
spoken publicly to the world. I have always
taught in a synagogue or in the temple area
where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have
said nothing. 21Why ask me? Ask those who
heard me what I said to them. They know what I
said." 22 xWhen he had said this, one of the
temple guards standing there struck Jesus and

**18, 1–14:** John does not mention the agony in the garden and the kiss of Judas, nor does he identify the place as Gethsemane or the Mount of Olives.

**18, 1: Jesus went out:** see 14, 31, where it seems he is leaving the supper room. **Kidron valley:** literally, "the winter-flowing Kidron"; this wadi has water only during the winter rains.

**18, 3: Band of soldiers:** seems to refer to Roman troops, either the full cohort of 600 men (1/10 of a legion), or more likely the maniple of 200 under their tribune (12). In this case, John is hinting at Roman collusion in the action against Jesus before he was brought to Pilate. The lanterns and torches may be symbolic of the hour of darkness.

**18, 5: Nazorean:** the form found in Mt 26, 71 (see the note on Mt 2, 23) is here used, not **Nazarene** of Mark. **I AM:** or "I am he," but probably intended by the evangelist as an expression of divinity (cf their appropriate response in 6); see the note on 8, 24. John sets the confusion of the arresting party against the background of Jesus' divine majesty.

**18, 9:** The citation may refer to 6, 39; 10, 28; or 17, 12.

**18, 10:** Only John gives the names of the two antagonists; both John and Luke mention the right ear.

**18, 11:** The theme of the cup is found in the synoptic account of the agony (Mk 14, 36 and parallels).

**18, 13: Annas:** only John mentions an inquiry before Annas; cf 16.19–24; see the note on Lk 3, 2. It is unlikely that this nighttime interrogation before Annas is the same as the trial before Caiaphas placed by Matthew and Mark at night and by Luke in the morning.

**18, 15–16: Another disciple . . . the other disciple:** see the note on 13, 23.

**18, 20: I have always taught . . . in the temple area:** cf Mk 14, 49 for a similar statement.

n 2 Sm 15, 23; Mt 26, 30.36; Mk 14, 26.32; Lk 22, 39. o Mt 26, 47–51; Mk 14, 43–44; Lk 22, 47. p 6, 39; 10, 28; 17, 12. q Mt 20, 22; 26, 39; Mk 10, 38; Lk 22, 42. r Mt 26, 57–58; Mk 14, 53–54; Lk 22, 54–55. s Lk 3, 2. t 11, 49–50. u Mt 26, 58.69–70; Mk 14, 54.66–68; Lk 22, 54–57. v Mt 26, 59–66; Mk 14, 55–64; Lk 22, 66–71. w 6, 59; 7, 14.26; Is 48, 16; Mt 26, 55; Mk 4, 23; Lk 19, 47; 22, 53. x Acts 23, 2.

said, "Is this the way you answer the high
priest?" [23]Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken
wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have
spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"
[24] [y]*Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the
high priest.

**Peter Denies Jesus Again** [25] [z]Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm. And they
said to him, "You are not one of his disciples, are
you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." [26]One
of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the
one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I
see you in the garden with him?" [27]*Again Peter
denied it. And immediately the cock crowed.

**The Trial before Pilate** [28] [a]*Then they
brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium.
It was morning. And they themselves did not
enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled
so that they could eat the Passover. [29]So Pilate
came out to them and said, "What charge do
you bring [against] this man?" [30]They answered
and said to him, "If he were not a criminal, we
would not have handed him over to you." [31]*At
this, Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves,
and judge him according to your law." The Jews
answered him, "We do not have the right to
execute anyone," [32] [b]*in order that the word of
Jesus might be fulfilled that he said indicating the
kind of death he would die. [33]So Pilate went
back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus
and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"
[34]Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own
or have others told you about me?" [35] [c]Pilate
answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own
nation and the chief priests handed you over to
me. What have you done?" [36] [d]Jesus answered,
"My kingdom does not belong to this world. If
my kingdom did belong to this world, my
attendants [would] be fighting to keep me from
being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my
kingdom is not here." [37] [e]*So Pilate said to him,
"Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say
I am a king. For this I was born and for this I
came into the world, to testify to the truth.
Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my
voice." [38] [f]Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

When he had said this, he again went out to
the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in
him. [39]*But you have a custom that I release one
prisoner to you at Passover. Do you want me to
release to you the King of the Jews?" [40]*They
cried out again, "Not this one but Barabbas!"
Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Ch 18–20
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## CHAPTER 19

[1] [g]*Then Pilate took Jesus and had him
scourged. [2]And the soldiers wove a crown out of
thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed
him in a purple cloak, [3]and they came to him
and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they
struck him repeatedly. [4] [h]Once more Pilate went
out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him
out to you, so that you may know that I find no
guilt in him." [5] [i]So Jesus came out, wearing the
crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he
said to them, "Behold, the man!" [6] [j]When the
chief priests and the guards saw him they cried
out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to

**18, 24: Caiaphas:** see Mt 26, 3.57; Lk 3, 2; and the notes there. John may leave room here for the trial before Caiaphas described in the synoptic gospels.

**18, 27:** Cockcrow was the third Roman division of the night, lasting from midnight to 3 a.m.

**18, 28: Praetorium:** see the note on Mt 27, 27. **Morning:** literally, "the early hour," or fourth Roman division of the night, 3 to 6 a.m. **The Passover:** the synoptic gospels give the impression that the Thursday night supper was the Passover meal (Mk 14, 12); for John that meal is still to be eaten Friday night.

**18, 31: We do not have the right to execute anyone:** only John gives this reason for their bringing Jesus to Pilate. Jewish sources are not clear on the competence of the Sanhedrin at this period to sentence and to execute for political crimes.

**18, 32:** The Jewish punishment for blasphemy was stoning (Lv 24, 16). In coming to the Romans to ensure that Jesus would be crucified, the Jewish authorities fulfilled his prophecy that he would be **exalted** (3, 14; 12, 32–33). There is some historical evidence, however, for Jews crucifying Jews.

**18, 37: You say I am a king:** see Mt 26, 64 for a similar response to the high priest. It is at best a reluctant affirmative.

**18, 39:** See the note on Mt 27, 15.

**18, 40: Barabbas:** see the note on Mt 27, 16–17. **Revolutionary:** a guerrilla warrior fighting for nationalistic aims, though the term can also denote a robber. See the note on Mt 27, 38.

**19, 1:** Luke places the mockery of Jesus at the midpoint in the trial when Jesus was sent to Herod. Mark and Matthew place the scourging and mockery at the end of the trial after the sentence of death. Scourging was an integral part of the crucifixion penalty.

y Mt 26, 57. z Mt 26, 71–75; Mk 14, 69–72; Lk 22, 58–62. a Mt 27, 1–2.11–25; Mk 15, 1–5; Lk 23, 1–5. b 3, 14; 8, 28; 12, 32–33. c 1, 11. d 1, 10; 8, 23. e 8, 47; 1 Tm 6, 13. f Mt 27, 15–26; Mk 15, 6–15; Lk 23, 18–25; Acts 3, 14. g Mt 27, 27–31; Mk 15, 16–20; Lk 23, 13–25. h 18, 38. i Is 52, 14. j 18, 31; 19, 15.

them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I
find no guilt in him." 7 k*The Jews answered,
"We have a law, and according to that law he
ought to die, because he made himself the Son of
God." 8Now when Pilate heard this statement,
he became even more afraid, 9 l*and went back
into the praetorium and said to Jesus, "Where
are you from?" Jesus did not answer him. 10So
Pilate said to him, "Do you not speak to me? Do
you not know that I have power to release you
and I have power to crucify you?" 11 m*Jesus
answered [him], "You would have no power
over me if it had not been given to you from
above. For this reason the one who handed me
over to you has the greater sin." 12 n*Con-
sequently, Pilate tried to release him; but the
Jews cried out, "If you release him, you are not a
Friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a
king opposes Caesar."

13*When Pilate heard these words he brought
Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench in
the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew,
Gabbatha. 14*It was preparation day for Pass-
over, and it was about noon. And he said to the
Jews, "Behold, your king!" 15They cried out,
"Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!"
Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?"
The chief priests answered, "We have no king
but Caesar." 16*Then he handed him over to
them to be crucified.

**The Crucifixion of Jesus** So they took Jesus,
17 o*and carrying the cross himself he went out
to what is called the Place of the Skull, in
Hebrew, Golgotha. 18There they crucified him,
and with him two others, one on either side,
with Jesus in the middle. 19*Pilate also had an
inscription written and put on the cross. It read,
"Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews."
20Now many of the Jews read this inscription,
because the place where Jesus was crucified was
near the city; and it was written in Hebrew,
Latin, and Greek. 21 p*So the chief priests of the
Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of
the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the
Jews.' " 22Pilate answered, "What I have writ-
ten, I have written."

23 q r*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus,
they took his clothes and divided them into four
shares, a share for each soldier. They also took
his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in
one piece from the top down. 24So they said to
one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it
to see whose it will be," in order that the passage
of scripture might be fulfilled [that says]:

> "They divided my garments among them,
> and for my vesture they cast lots."

This is what the soldiers did. 25 s*Standing by
the cross of Jesus were his mother and his
mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and

**19, 7: Made himself the Son of God:** this question was not raised in John's account of the Jewish interrogations of Jesus as it was in the synoptic account. Nevertheless, see 5, 18; 8, 53; 10, 36.

**19, 12: Friend of Caesar:** a Roman honorific title bestowed upon high-ranking officials for merit.

**19, 13: Seated him:** others translate "(Pilate) sat down." In John's thought, Jesus is the real judge of the world, and John may here be portraying him seated on the judgment bench. **Stone Pavement:** in Greek **lithostrotos;** under the fortress Antonia, one of the conjectured locations of the praetorium, a massive stone pavement has been excavated. **Gabbatha** (Aramaic rather than Hebrew) probably means "ridge, elevation."

**19, 14: Noon:** Mk 15, 25 has Jesus crucified "at the third hour," which means either 9 a.m. or the period from 9 to 12. Noon, the time when, according to John, Jesus was sentenced to death, was the hour at which the priests began to slaughter Passover lambs in the temple; see Jn 1, 29.

**19, 16: He handed him over to them to be crucified:** in context this would seem to mean "handed him over to the chief priests." Lk 23, 25 has a similar ambiguity. There is a polemic tendency in the gospels to place the guilt of the crucifixion on the Jewish authorities and to exonerate the Romans from blame. But John later mentions the Roman soldiers (23), and it was to these soldiers that Pilate handed Jesus over.

**19, 17: Carrying the cross himself:** a different picture from that of the synoptics, especially Lk 23, 26, where Simon of Cyrene is made to carry the cross, walking behind Jesus. In John's theology, Jesus remained in complete control and master of his destiny (cf 10, 18). **Place of the Skull:** the Latin word for skull is **Calvaria;** hence "Calvary." **Golgotha** is actually an Aramaic rather than a Hebrew word.

**19, 19:** The inscription differs with slightly different words in each of the four gospels. John's form is fullest and gives the equivalent of the Latin **INRI = Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum.** Only John mentions its polyglot character (20) and Pilate's role in keeping the title unchanged (21–22).

**19, 23–25a:** While all four gospels describe the soldiers casting lots to divide Jesus' garments (see the note on Mt 27, 35), only John quotes the underlying passage from Ps 22, 19, and only John sees each line of the poetic parallelism literally carried out in two separate actions (23a; 23b-24).

**19, 25:** It is not clear whether four women are meant, or three (i.e., **Mary the wife of Cl[e]opas** [cf Lk 24, 18] is in apposition

k 10, 33–36; Lv 24, 16. 17, 28. m 3, 27; 10, 18; Rom 13, 1. n Acts 17, 7. o Mt 27, 32–37; Mk 15, 21–26; Lk 23, 26–35. p 18, 33; Lk 19, 14. q Mt 27, 38–44; Mk 15, 27–32; Lk 23, 36–43. r Ps 22, 19; Mt 27, 35; Mk 15, 24; Lk 23, 34. s Mt 27, 55; Mk 15, 40–41; Lk 8, 2; 23, 49.

Mary of Magdala. 26 [t]*When Jesus saw his
mother and the disciple there whom he loved,
he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your
son." 27Then he said to the disciple, "Behold,
your mother." And from that hour the disciple
took her into his home.

28 [u v]*After this, aware that everything was
now finished, in order that the scripture might
be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." 29*There was a
vessel filled with common wine. So they put a
sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and
put it up to his mouth. 30 [w]*When Jesus had
taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And
bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

**The Blood and Water** 31 [x]Now since it was
preparation day, in order that the bodies might
not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the
sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the
Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and
they be taken down. 32So the soldiers came and
broke the legs of the first and then of the other
one who was crucified with Jesus. 33But when
they came to Jesus and saw that he was already
dead, they did not break his legs, 34 [y]*but one
soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. 35 [z]*An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true;
he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that
you also may [come to] believe. 36 [a]For this
happened so that the scripture passage might be
fulfilled:

"Not a bone of it will be broken."

37 [b]And again another passage says:

"They will look upon him whom they have
pierced."

**The Burial of Jesus** 38 [c]*After this, Joseph of
Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of
the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the
body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he
came and took his body. 39 [d]Nicodemus, the one
who had first come to him at night, also came
bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing
about one hundred pounds. 40They took the
body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths
along with the spices, according to the Jewish
burial custom. 41Now in the place where he had
been crucified there was a garden, and in the
garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet
been buried. 42So they laid Jesus there because
of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was
close by.

## CHAPTER 20

**The Empty Tomb** 1 [ef]*On the first day of the
week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early

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with **his mother's sister**) or two (his mother and his mother's sister, i.e., Mary of Cl[e]opas and Mary of Magdala). Only John mentions the mother of Jesus here. The synoptics have a group of women looking on from a distance at the cross (Mk 15, 40).

**19, 26–27:** This scene has been interpreted literally, of Jesus' concern for his mother; and symbolically, e.g., in the light of the Cana story in ch 2 (the presence of the mother of Jesus, the address **woman,** and the mention of the **hour**) and of the upper room in ch 13 (the presence of the beloved disciple; the **hour**). Now that the hour has come (28), Mary (a symbol of the church?) is given a role as the mother of Christians (personified by the beloved disciple); or, as a representative of those seeking salvation, she is supported by the disciple who interprets Jesus' revelation; or Jewish and Gentile Christianity (or Israel and the Christian community) are reconciled.

**19, 28: The scripture . . . fulfilled:** either in the scene of vv 25–27, or in the **I thirst** of v 28. If the latter, Pss 22, 16 and 69, 22 deserve consideration.

**19, 29: Wine:** John does not mention the drugged wine, a narcotic that Jesus refused as the crucifixion began (Mk 15, 23), but only this final gesture of kindness at the end (Mk 15, 36). **Hyssop,** a small plant, is scarcely suitable for carrying a sponge (Mark mentions a reed) and may be a symbolic reference to the hyssop used to daub the blood of the paschal lamb on the doorpost of the Hebrews (Ex 12, 22).

**19, 30: Handed over the spirit:** there is a double nuance of dying (giving up the last breath or spirit) and that of passing on the holy Spirit; see 7, 39, which connects the giving of the Spirit with Jesus' glorious return to the Father, and 20, 22, where the author portrays the conferral of the Spirit.

**19, 34–35:** John probably emphasizes these verses to show the reality of Jesus' death, against the docetic heretics. In the blood and water there may also be a symbolic reference to the Eucharist and baptism.

**19, 35: He knows:** it is not certain from the Greek that this **he** is the **eyewitness** of the first part of the sentence. **May [come to] believe:** see the note on 20, 31.

**19, 38–42:** In the first three gospels there is no anointing on Friday. In Mt and Lk, the women come to the tomb on Sunday morning precisely to anoint Jesus.

**20, 1–31:** The risen Jesus reveals his glory and confers the Spirit. This story fulfills the basic need for testimony to the

t 13, 23. u Mt 27, 45–56; Mk 15, 33–41; Lk 23, 44–49. v Pss 22, 16; 69, 22. w 4, 34; 10, 18; 17, 4; Lk 23, 46. x Ex 12, 16; Dt 21, 23. y Nm 20, 11; 1 Jn 5, 6. z 7, 37–39; 21, 24. a Ex 12, 46; Nm 9, 12; Ps 34, 21. b Nm 21, 9; Zec 12, 10; Rv 1, 7. c Mt 27, 57–60; Mk 15, 42–46; Lk 34, 50–54. d 3, 1–2; 7, 50; Ps 45, 9. e Mt 28, 1–10; Mk 16, 1–11; Lk 24, 1–12. f 19,25.

in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw
the stone removed from the tomb. 2*So she ran
and went to Simon Peter and to the other
disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They
have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we
don't know where they put him." 3*So Peter
and the other disciple went out and came to the
tomb. 4They both ran, but the other disciple ran
faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first;
5he bent down and saw the burial cloths there,
but did not go in. 6 g*When Simon Peter arrived
after him, he went into the tomb and saw the
burial cloths there, 7 h and the cloth that had
covered his head, not with the burial cloths but
rolled up in a separate place. 8Then the other
disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at
the tomb first, and he saw and believed. 9 i*For
they did not yet understand the scripture that he
had to rise from the dead. 10Then the disciples
returned home.

**The Appearance to Mary of Magdala**

11 j*But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping.
And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb
12and saw two angels in white sitting there, one
at the head and one at the feet where the body
of Jesus had been. 13And they said to her,
"Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to
them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't
know where they laid him." 14 k When she had
said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there,
but did not know it was Jesus. 15 l Jesus said to
her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are
you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him
away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take
him." 16*Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned
and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which
means Teacher. 17 m*Jesus said to her, "Stop
holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to
the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them,
'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my
God and your God.' " 18Mary of Magdala went
and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the
Lord," and what he told her.

**Appearance to the Disciples**

19 n*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the
doors were locked, where the disciples were, for
fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their
midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."
20 o*When he had said this, he showed them his
hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when
they saw the Lord. 21 p*[Jesus] said to them

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resurrection. What we have here is not a record but a series of single stories.

**20, 1–10:** The story of the empty tomb is found in both the Matthean and the Lucan traditions; John's version seems to be a fusion of the two.

**20, 1: Still dark:** according to Mark the sun had risen, Matthew describes it as "dawning," and Luke refers to early dawn. Mary sees the stone removed, not the empty tomb.

**20, 2:** Mary runs away, not directed by an angel/young man as in the synoptic accounts. The plural "we" in the second part of her statement might reflect a tradition of more women going to the tomb.

**20, 3–10:** The basic narrative is told of Peter alone in Lk 24, 12, a verse missing in important manuscripts and which may be borrowed from tradition similar to John. Cf also Lk 24, 24.

**20, 6–8:** Some special feature about the state of the burial cloths caused the beloved disciple to believe. Perhaps the details emphasized that the grave had not been robbed.

**20, 9:** Probably a general reference to the scriptures is intended, as in Lk 24, 26 and 1 Cor 15, 4. Some individual Old Testament passages suggested are Ps 16, 10; Hos 6, 2; Jon 2, 1.2.11.

**20, 11–18:** This appearance to Mary is found only in Jn, but cf Mt 28, 8–10 and Mk 16, 9–11.

**20, 16: Rabbouni:** Hebrew or Aramaic for "my master."

**20, 17: Stop holding on to me:** see Mt 28, 9, where the women take hold of his feet. **I have not yet ascended:** for John and many of the New Testament writers, the ascension in the theological sense of going to the Father to be glorified took place with the resurrection as one action. This scene in John dramatizes such an understanding, for by Easter night Jesus is glorified and can give the Spirit. Therefore his ascension takes place immediately after he has talked to Mary. In such a view, the ascension after forty days described in Acts 1, 1–11 would be simply a termination of earthly appearances or, perhaps better, an introduction to the conferral of the Spirit upon the early church, modeled on Elisha's being able to have a (double) share in the spirit of Elijah if he saw him being taken up (same verb as ascending) into heaven (2 Kgs 2, 9–12). **To my Father and your Father, to my God and your God:** this echoes Ru 1, 16: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." The Father of Jesus will now become the Father of the disciples because, once ascended, Jesus can give them the Spirit that comes from the Father and they can be reborn as God's children (3, 5). That is why he calls them **my brothers.**

**20, 19–29:** The appearances to the disciples, without or with Thomas (cf 11, 16; 14, 5), have rough parallels in the other gospels only for vv 19–23; cf Lk 24, 36–39; Mk 16, 14–18.

**20, 19: The disciples:** by implication from v 24, this means ten of the Twelve, presumably in Jerusalem. **Peace be with you:** although this could be an ordinary greeting, John intends here to echo 14, 27. The theme of rejoicing in v 20 echoes 16, 22.

**20, 20: Hands and . . . side:** Lk 24, 39–40 mentions "hands and feet," based on Ps 22, 17.

**20, 21:** By means of this sending, the Eleven were made apostles, that is, "those sent" (cf 17, 18), though John does not use the noun in reference to them (see the note on 13, 16). A solemn

g Lk 24, 12. h 11, 44; 19, 40. i Acts 2, 26–27; 1 Cor 15, 4. j Mk 16, 9–11. k 21, 4; Mk 16, 12; Lk 24, 16; 1 Cor 15, 43–44. l Mt 28, 9–10. m Acts 1, 9. n Mt 28, 16–20; Mk 16, 14–18; Lk 24, 36–44. o 14, 27. p 17, 18; Mt 28, 19; Mk 16, 15; Lk 24, 47–48.

again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has
sent me, so I send you." 22 q*And when he had
said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the holy Spirit. 23 r*Whose sins you
forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you
retain are retained."

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**Thomas** 24Thomas, called Didymus, one of the
Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.
25 s*So the other disciples said to him, "We have
seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I
see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my
finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into
his side, I will not believe." 26 t*Now a week later
his disciples were again inside and Thomas was
with them. Jesus came, although the doors were
locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace
be with you." 27Then he said to Thomas, "Put
your finger here and see my hands, and bring
your hand and put it into my side, and do not be
unbelieving, but believe." 28 u*Thomas an-
swered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
29 v*Jesus said to him, "Have you come to
believe because you have seen me? Blessed are
those who have not seen and have believed."

**Conclusion** 30 w*Now Jesus did many other
signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not
written in this book. 31 x*But these are written
that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the
Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this
belief you may have life in his name.

# IV: Epilogue

## The Resurrection Appearance in Galilee

### CHAPTER 21

**The Appearance to the Seven Disciples**

1 y*After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his
disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed
himself in this way. 2*Together were Simon
Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from
Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others
of his disciples. 3 z*Simon Peter said to them, "I
am going fishing." They said to him, "We also
will come with you." So they went out and got
into the boat, but that night they caught noth-
ing. 4 a*When it was already dawn, Jesus was
standing on the shore; but the disciples did not
realize that it was Jesus. 5 b*Jesus said to them,
"Children, have you caught anything to eat?"
They answered him, "No." 6So he said to them,
"Cast the net over the right side of the boat and
you will find something." So they cast it, and
were not able to pull it in because of the number
of fish. 7So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to
Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard
that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment,
for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea.
8The other disciples came in the boat, for they
were not far from shore, only about a hundred
yards, dragging the net with the fish. 9 c*When

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mission or "sending" is also the subject of the post-resurrection appearances to the Eleven in Mt 28, 19; Lk 24, 47; Mk 16, 15.

**20, 22:** This action recalls Gn 2, 7, where God breathed on the first man and gave him life; just as Adam's life came from God, so now the disciples' new spiritual life comes from Jesus. Cf also the revivification of the dry bones in Ez 37. This is the author's version of Pentecost. Cf also the note on 19, 30.

**20, 23:** The Council of Trent defined that this power to forgive sins is exercised in the sacrament of penance. See Mt 16, 19 and 18, 18.

**20, 28: My Lord and my God:** this forms a literary inclusion with the first verse of the gospel: "and the Word was God."

**20, 29:** This verse is a beatitude on future generations; faith, not sight, matters.

**20, 30–31:** These verses are clearly a conclusion to the gospel and express its purpose. While many manuscripts read **come to believe,** possibly implying a missionary purpose for John's gospel, a small number of quite early ones read "continue to believe," suggesting that the audience consists of Christians whose faith is to be deepened by the book; cf 19, 35.

**21, 1–23:** There are many non-Johannine peculiarities in this chapter, some suggesting Lucan Greek style; yet this passage is closer to John than 7, 53—8, 11. There are many Johannine features as well. Its closest parallels in the synoptic gospels are found in Lk 5, 1–11 and Mt 14, 28–31. Perhaps the tradition was ultimately derived from John but preserved by some disciple other than the writer of the rest of the gospel. The appearances narrated seem to be independent of those in ch 20. Even if a later addition, the chapter was added before publication of the gospel, for it appears in all manuscripts.

**21, 2: Zebedee's sons:** the only reference to James and John in this gospel (but see the note on 1, 37). Perhaps the phrase was originally a gloss to identify, among the five, the **two others of his disciples.** The anonymity of the latter phrase is more Johannine (1, 35). The total of seven may suggest the community of the disciples in its fullness.

**21, 3–6:** This may be a variant of Luke's account of the catch of fish; see the note on Lk 5, 1–11.

**21, 9.12–13:** It is strange that Jesus already has fish since none have yet been brought ashore. This meal may have had eucharistic

q Gn 2, 7; Ez 37, 9; 1 Cor 15, 45. r Mt 16, 19; 18, 18. s 1 Jn 1, 1. t 21, 14. u 1, 1. v 4, 48; Lk 1, 45; 1 Pt 1, 8. w 21, 25. x 3, 14.15; 1 Jn 5, 13. y Mt 26, 32; 28, 7. z Mt 4, 18; Lk 5, 4–10. a 20, 14; Mt 28, 17; Lk 24, 16. b Lk 24, 41. c Lk 24, 41–43.

they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal
fire with fish on it and bread. [10]Jesus said to
them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught."
[11] [d]*So Simon Peter went over and dragged the
net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large
fish. Even though there were so many, the net
was not torn. [12]*Jesus said to them, "Come,
have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared
to ask him, "Who are you?" because they
realized it was the Lord. [13] [e]Jesus came over and
took the bread and gave it to them, and in like
manner the fish. [14] [f]*This was now the third
time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after
being raised from the dead.

**Jesus and Peter** [15]*When they had finished
breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son
of John, do you love me more than these?" He
said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love
you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." [16]He
then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of
John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes,
Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him,
"Tend my sheep." [17] [g]He said to him the third
time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"
Peter was distressed that he had said to him a
third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to
him, "Lord, you know everything; you know
that I love you." [Jesus] said to him, "Feed my
sheep. [18] [h]*Amen, amen, I say to you, when you
were younger, you used to dress yourself and go
where you wanted; but when you grow old, you
will stretch out your hands, and someone else
will dress you and lead you where you do not
want to go." [19] [i]He said this signifying by what
kind of death he would glorify God. And when
he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

**The Beloved Disciple** [20] [j]Peter turned and
saw the disciple following whom Jesus loved, the
one who had also reclined upon his chest during
the supper and had said, "Master, who is the one
who will betray you?" [21]When Peter saw him,
he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"
[22] [k]*Jesus said to him, "What if I want him to
remain until I come? What concern is it of
yours? You follow me." [23]*So the word spread
among the brothers that that disciple would not
die. But Jesus had not told him that he would
not die, just "What if I want him to remain until
I come? [What concern is it of yours?]"

**Conclusion** [24] [l]*It is this disciple who testifies
to these things and has written them, and we
know that his testimony is true. [25] [m]There are
also many other things that Jesus did, but if these
were to be described individually, I do not think
the whole world would contain the books that
would be written.

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significance for early Christians since v 13 recalls Jn 6, 11, which uses the vocabulary of Jesus' action at the Last Supper; but see also the note on Mt 14, 19.

**21, 11:** The exact number 153 is probably meant to have a symbolic meaning in relation to the apostles' universal mission; Jerome claims that Greek zoologists catalogued 153 species of fish. Or 153 is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 17. Others invoke Ez 47, 10.

**21, 12: None . . . dared to ask him:** is Jesus' appearance strange to them? Cf Lk 24, 16; Mk 16, 12; Jn 20, 14. The disciples do, however, recognize Jesus **before** the breaking of the bread (opposed to Lk 24, 35).

**21, 14:** This verse connects chs 20 and 21; cf 20, 19.26.

**21, 15–23:** This section constitutes Peter's rehabilitation and emphasizes his role in the church.

**21, 15–17:** In these three verses there is a remarkable variety of synonyms: two different Greek verbs for **love** (see the note on 15, 13); two verbs for **feed/tend;** two nouns for **sheep;** two verbs for **know.** But apparently there is no difference of meaning. The threefold confession of Peter is meant to counteract his earlier threefold denial (18, 17.25.27). The First Vatican Council cited these verses in defining that Jesus after his resurrection gave Peter the jurisdiction of supreme shepherd and ruler over the whole flock.

**21, 15: More than these:** probably "more than these disciples do" rather than "more than you love them" or "more than you love these things [fishing, etc.]."

**21, 18:** Originally probably a proverb about old age, now used as a figurative reference to the crucifixion of Peter.

**21, 22: Until I come:** a reference to the parousia.

**21, 23:** This whole scene takes on more significance if the disciple is already dead. The death of the apostolic generation caused problems in the church because of a belief that Jesus was to have returned first. Loss of faith sometimes resulted; cf 2 Pt 3, 4.

**21, 24: Who . . . has written them:** this does not necessarily mean he wrote them with his own hand. The same expression is used in 19, 22 of Pilate, who certainly would not have written the inscription himself. **We know:** i.e., the Christian community; cf 1, 14.16.

d 2 Chr 2, 16. e Lk 24, 42. f 20, 19.26. g 13, 37–38; 18, 15–18.25–27; Mt 26, 69–75; Mk 14, 66–72; Lk 22, 55–62. h Acts 21, 11.14; 2 Pt 1, 14. i 13, 36. j 13, 25. k Mt 16, 28. l 19, 35. m 20, 30.

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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The Acts of the Apostles, the second volume of Luke's two-volume work, continues Luke's presentation of biblical history, describing how the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament and accomplished by Jesus has now under the guidance of the holy Spirit been extended to the Gentiles. This was accomplished through the divinely chosen representatives (10, 41) whom Jesus prepared during his historical ministry (1, 21-22) and commissioned after his resurrection as witnesses to all that he taught (1, 8; 10, 37-43; Lk 24, 48). Luke's preoccupation with the Christian community as the Spirit-guided bearer of the word of salvation rules out of his book detailed histories of the activity of most of the preachers. Only the main lines of the roles of Peter and Paul serve Luke's interest.

Peter was the leading member of the Twelve (1, 13.15), a miracle worker like Jesus in the gospel (3, 1-10; 5, 1-11.15; 9, 32-35.36-42), the object of divine care (5, 17-21; 12, 6-11), and the spokesman for the Christian community (2, 14-36; 3, 12-26; 4, 8-12; 5, 29-32; 10, 34-43; 15, 7-11), who, according to Luke, was largely responsible for the growth of the community in the early days (2, 4; 4, 4). Paul eventually joined the community at Antioch (11, 25-26), which subsequently commissioned him and Barnabas to undertake the spread of the gospel to Asia Minor. This missionary venture generally failed to win the Jews of the diaspora to the gospel but enjoyed success among the Gentiles (13, 14—14, 27).

Paul's refusal to impose the Mosaic law upon his Gentile converts provoked very strong objection among the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem (15, 1), but both Peter and James supported his position (15, 6-21). Paul's second and third missionary journeys (16, 36—21, 16) resulted in the same pattern of failure among the Jews generally but of some success among the Gentiles. Paul, like Peter, is presented as a miracle worker (14, 8-18; 19, 12; 20, 7-12; 28, 7-10) and the object of divine care (16, 25-31).

In Acts, Luke has provided a broad survey of the church's development from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul's first Roman imprisonment, the point at which the book ends. In telling this story, Luke describes the emergence of Christianity from its origins in Judaism to its position as a religion of worldwide status and appeal. Originally a Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, the church was placed in circumstances impelling it to include within its membership people of other cultures: the Samaritans (8, 4-25), at first an occasional Gentile (8, 26-30; 10, 1-48), and finally the Gentiles on principle (11, 20-21). Fear on the part of the Jewish people that Christianity, particularly as preached to the Gentiles, threatened their own cultural heritage caused them to be suspicious of Paul's gospel (13, 42-45; 15, 1-5; 28, 17-24). The inability of Christian missionaries to allay this apprehension inevitably created a situation in which the gospel was preached more and more to the Gentiles. Toward the end of Paul's career, the Christian communities, with the exception of those in Palestine itself (9, 31), were mainly of Gentile membership. In tracing the emergence of Christianity from Judaism, Luke is insistent upon the prominence of Israel in the divine plan of salvation (see the note on 1, 26; see also 2, 5-6; 3, 13-15; 10, 36; 13, 16-41; 24, 14-15) and that the extension of salvation to the Gentiles has been a part of the divine plan from the beginning (see 15, 13-18; 26, 22-23).

In the development of the church from a Jewish Christian origin in Jerusalem, with its roots in Jewish religious tradition, to a series of Christian communities among the Gentiles of the Roman empire, Luke perceives the action of God in history laying open the heart of all humanity to the divine message of salvation. His approach to the history of the church is motivated by his

theological interests. His history of the apostolic church is the story of a Spirit-guided community and a Spirit-guided spread of the Word of God (1, 8). The travels of Peter and Paul are in reality the travels of the Word of God as it spreads from Jerusalem, the city of destiny for Jesus, to Rome, the capital of the civilized world of Luke's day. Nonetheless, the historical data he utilizes are of value for the understanding of the church's early life and development and as general background to the Pauline epistles. In the interpretation of Acts, care must be exercised to determine Luke's theological aims and interests and to evaluate his historical data without either exaggerating their literal accuracy or underestimating their factual worth.

Finally, an apologetic concern is evident throughout Acts. By stressing the continuity between Judaism and Christianity (13, 16-41; 23, 6-9; 24, 10-21; 26, 2-23), Luke argues that Christianity is deserving of the same toleration accorded Judaism by Rome. Part of Paul's defense before Roman authorities is to show that Christianity is not a disturber of the peace of the Roman Empire (24, 5.12-13; 25, 7-8). Moreover, when he stands before Roman authorities, he is declared innocent of any crime against the empire (18, 13-15; 23, 29; 25, 25-27; 26, 31–32). Luke tells his story with the hope that Christianity will be treated as fairly.

Concerning the date of Acts, see the Introduction to the Gospel according to Luke.

The principal divisions of the Acts of the Apostles are the following:

I. The Preparation for the Christian Mission (1, 1—2, 13)
II. The Mission in Jerusalem (2, 14—8, 3)
III. The Mission in Judea and Samaria (8, 4—9, 43)
IV. The Inauguration of the Gentile Mission (10, 1—15, 35)
V. The Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth (15, 36—28, 31)

## I: The Preparation for the Christian Mission

### CHAPTER 1

**The Promise of the Spirit** 1 [a]*In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught 2 [b]until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 [c]*He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 [d]*While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; 5 [e]for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit."

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**The Ascension of Jesus** 6 *When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at

1, 1–26: This introductory material (1–2) connects Acts with the Gospel of Luke, shows that the apostles were instructed by the risen Jesus (3–5), points out that the parousia or second coming in glory of Jesus will occur as certainly as his ascension occurred (6–11), and lists the members of the Twelve, stressing their role as a body of divinely mandated witnesses to his life, teaching, and resurrection (12–26).

1, 3: **Appearing to them during forty days:** Luke considered especially sacred the interval in which the appearances and instructions of the risen Jesus occurred and expressed it therefore in terms of the sacred number forty (cf Dt 8, 2). In his gospel, however, Luke connects the ascension of Jesus with the resurrection by describing the ascension on Easter Sunday evening (Lk 24, 50–53). What should probably be understood as one event (resurrection, glorification, ascension, sending of the Spirit—the paschal mystery) has been historicized by Luke when he writes of a visible ascension of Jesus after forty days and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. For Luke, the ascension marks the end of the appearances of Jesus except for the extraordinary appearance to Paul. With regard to Luke's understanding of salvation history, the ascension also marks the end of the time of Jesus (Lk 24, 50–53) and signals the beginning of the time of the church.

1, 4: **The promise of the Father:** the holy Spirit, as is clear from the next verse. This gift of the Spirit was first promised in Jesus' final instructions to his chosen witnesses in Luke's gospel (Lk 24, 49) and formed part of the continuing instructions of the risen Jesus on the kingdom of God, of which Luke speaks in v 3.

1, 6: The question of the disciples implies that in believing Jesus to be the Christ (see the note on Lk 2, 11) they had expected him to be a political leader who would restore self-rule to Israel during his historical ministry. When this had not taken place, they ask if it is to take place at this time, the period of the church.

a Lk 1, 1–4. b Mt 28, 19–20; Lk 24, 44–49; Jn 20, 22; 1 Tm 3, 16. c 10, 41; 13, 31. d Jn 14, 16.17.26. e 11, 16; Mt 3, 11; Mk 1, 8; Lk 3, 16; Jn 1, 26; Eph 1, 13.

this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"
7 f *He answered them, "It is not for you to know
the times or seasons that the Father has estab-
lished by his own authority. 8 g *But you will re-
ceive power when the holy Spirit comes upon
you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of
the earth." 9 h When he had said this, as they were
looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him
from their sight. 10 i While they were looking in-
tently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two
men dressed in white garments stood beside
them. 11 j They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you
standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who
has been taken up from you into heaven will
return in the same way as you have seen him
going into heaven." 12 k Then they returned to Je-
rusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is
near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.

**The First Community in Jerusalem** 13 When
they entered the city they went to the upper
room where they were staying, Peter and John
and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas,
Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Al-
phaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of
James. 14 l All these devoted themselves with one
accord to prayer, together with some women,
and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

**The Choice of Judas's Successor** 15 During
those days Peter stood up in the midst of the
brothers (there was a group of about one hun-
dred and twenty persons in the one place). He
said, 16 m "My brothers, the scripture had to be
fulfilled which the holy Spirit spoke beforehand
through the mouth of David, concerning Judas,
who was the guide for those who arrested Jesus.
17 He was numbered among us and was allotted
a share in this ministry. 18 n *He bought a parcel
of land with the wages of his iniquity, and falling
headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all
his insides spilled out. 19 This became known to
everyone who lived in Jerusalem, so that the
parcel of land was called in their language
'Akeldama,' that is, Field of Blood. 20 o For it is
written in the Book of Psalms:

> 'Let his encampment become desolate,
> and may no one dwell in it.'

And:

> 'May another take his office.'

21 Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men
who accompanied us the whole time the Lord
Jesus came and went among us, 22 p beginning
from the baptism of John until the day on which
he was taken up from us, become with us a
witness to his resurrection." 23 So they proposed
two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also
known as Justus, and Matthias. 24 Then they
prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all,
show which one of these two you have chosen
25 to take the place in this apostolic ministry from
which Judas turned away to go to his own
place." 26 q *Then they gave lots to them, and the
lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with
the eleven apostles.

## CHAPTER 2

**The Coming of the Spirit** 1 r *When the time
for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one

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1, 7: This verse echoes the tradition that the precise time of the parousia is not revealed to human beings; cf Mk 13, 32; 1 Thes 5, 1–3.

1, 8: Just as Jerusalem was the city of destiny in the Gospel of Luke (the place where salvation was accomplished), so here at the beginning of Acts, Jerusalem occupies a central position. It is the starting point for the mission of the Christian disciples to "the ends of the earth," the place where the apostles were situated and the doctrinal focal point in the early days of the community (15, 2.6). **The ends of the earth:** for Luke, this means Rome.

1, 18: Luke records a popular tradition about the death of Judas that differs from the one in Mt 27, 5, according to which Judas hanged himself. Here, although the text is not certain, Judas is depicted as purchasing a piece of property with the betrayal money and being killed on it in a fall.

1, 26: The need to replace Judas was probably dictated by the symbolism of the number twelve, recalling the twelve tribes of Israel. This symbolism also indicates that for Luke (see Lk 22, 30) the Christian church is a reconstituted Israel.

2, 1–41: Luke's pentecostal narrative consists of an introduction (1–13), a speech ascribed to Peter declaring the resurrection of Jesus and its messianic significance (14–36), and a favorable response from the audience (37–41). It is likely that the narrative telescopes events that took place over a period of time and on a less dramatic scale. The Twelve were not originally in a position to proclaim publicly the messianic office of Jesus without incurring immediate reprisal from those religious authorities in Jerusalem

f Mt 24, 36; 1 Thes 5, 1–2. g 2, 1–13; 10, 39; Is 43, 10; Mt 28, 19; Lk 24, 47–48. h 2 Kgs 2, 11; Mk 16, 19; Lk 24, 51. i Jn 20, 17. j Lk 24, 51; Eph 4, 8–10; 1 Pt 3, 22; Rv 1, 7. k Lk 6, 14–16. l Lk 23, 49. m Ps 41, 10; Lk 22, 47. n Mt 27, 3–10. o Pss 69, 26; 109, 8; Jn 17, 12. p 1, 8–9; 10, 39. q Prv 16, 33. r Lv 23, 15–21; Dt 16, 9–11.

place together. 2 [s]*And suddenly there came
from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they
were. 3 [t]*Then there appeared to them tongues
as of fire, which parted and came to rest on
each one of them. 4 [u]*And they were all filled
with the holy Spirit and began to speak in
different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to
proclaim.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every
nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. 6 At
this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but
they were confused because each one heard
them speaking in his own language. 7 [v]They
were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
"Are not all these people who are speaking
Galileans? 8 Then how does each of us hear them
in his own native language? 9 We are Parthians,
Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopota-
mia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts
of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from
Rome, 11 [w]both Jews and converts to Judaism,
Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in
our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."
12 They were all astounded and bewildered, and
said to one another, "What does this mean?"
13 [x]But others said, scoffing, "They have had too
much new wine."

## II: The Mission in Jerusalem

**Peter's Speech at Pentecost** 14 *Then Peter
stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and
proclaimed to them, "You who are Jews, indeed
all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known
to you, and listen to my words. 15 These people
are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine
o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was
spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 [y]'It will come to pass in the last days,'
God says,
'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit
upon all flesh.
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your young men shall see visions,
your old men shall dream dreams.
18 Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids
I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those
days,
and they shall prophesy.
19 And I will work wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below:
blood, fire, and a cloud of smoke.
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness,
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the great and
splendid day of the Lord,
21 [z]and it shall be that everyone shall be saved
who calls on the name of the Lord.'

22 [a]You who are Israelites, hear these words.
Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to
you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and
signs, which God worked through him in your
midst, as you yourselves know. 23 [b]This man,
delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge
of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify
him. 24 [c]But God raised him up, releasing him
from the throes of death, because it was impossi-
ble for him to be held by it. 25 [d]For David says of
him:

'I saw the Lord ever before me,
with him at my right hand I shall not be
disturbed.

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who had brought about Jesus' death precisely to stem the rising tide in his favor.

**2, 2: There came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind:** wind and spirit are associated in Jn 3, 8. The sound of a great rush of wind would herald a new action of God in the history of salvation.

**2, 3: Tongues as of fire:** see Ex 19, 18 where fire symbolizes the presence of God to initiate the covenant on Sinai. Here the holy Spirit acts upon the apostles, preparing them to proclaim the new covenant with its unique gift of the Spirit (38).

**2, 4: To speak in different tongues:** ecstatic prayer in praise of God, interpreted in vv 6 and 11 as speaking in foreign languages, symbolizing the worldwide mission of the church.

**2, 14–36:** The first of six discourses in Acts (along with 3, 12–26; 4, 8–12; 5, 29–32; 10, 34–43; 13, 16–41) dealing with the resurrection of Jesus and its messianic import. Five of these are attributed to Peter, the final one to Paul. Modern scholars term these discourses in Acts the "kerygma," the Greek word for proclamation (cf 1 Cor 15, 11).

s Jn 3, 8. t Lk 3, 16. u 1, 5; 4, 31; 8, 15.17; 10, 44; 11, 15–16; 15, 8; 19, 6; Ps 104, 30; Jn 20, 33. v 1, 11. w 10, 46. x 1 Cor 14, 23. y Is 2, 2; 44, 3; Jl 3, 1–5. z Rom 10, 13. a 10, 38; Lk 24, 19. b 1 Thes 2, 15. c 13, 34. d Ps 16, 8–11.

26 Therefore my heart has been glad and my
tongue has exulted;
my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,
27 [e]because you will not abandon my soul to the
nether world,
nor will you suffer your holy one to see
corruption.
28 You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29 My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. 30 [f]But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, 31 [g]he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. 33 [h]*Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you [both] see and hear. 34 [i]For David did not go up into heaven, but he himself said:

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand
35 until I make your enemies your footstool."'

36 [j]Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

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37 [k]Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" 38 [l]*Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. 39 [m]For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." 40 [n]He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 [o]Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

**Communal Life** 42 [p q]*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. 43 [r]Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 [s]All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## CHAPTER 3

**Cure of a Crippled Beggar** 1 *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple area for the

**2, 33: At the right hand of God:** or "by the right hand of God."

**2, 38: Repent and be baptized:** repentance is a positive concept, a change of mind and heart toward God reflected in the actual goodness of one's life. It is in accord with the apostolic teaching derived from Jesus (42) and ultimately recorded in the four gospels. Luke presents baptism in Acts as the expected response to the apostolic preaching about Jesus and associates it with the conferring of the Spirit (1, 5; 10, 44–48; 11, 16).

**2, 42–47:** The first of three summary passages (along with 4, 32–37 and 5, 12–16) that outline, somewhat idyllically, the chief characteristics of the Jerusalem community: adherence to the teachings of the Twelve and the centering of its religious life in the eucharistic liturgy (42); a system of distribution of goods that led wealthier Christians to sell their possessions when the needs of the community's poor required it (44 and the note on 4, 32–37); and continued attendance at the temple, since in this initial stage there was little or no thought of any dividing line between Christianity and Judaism (46).

**3, 1—4, 31:** This section presents a series of related events: the dramatic cure of a lame beggar (3, 1–10) produces a large audience for the kerygmatic discourse of Peter (3, 11–26). The Sadducees, taking exception to the doctrine of resurrection, have Peter, John, and apparently the beggar as well, arrested (4, 1–4) and brought to trial before the Sanhedrin. The issue concerns the authority by which Peter and John publicly teach religious doctrine in the temple (4, 5–7). Peter replies with a brief summary of the kerygma, implying that his authority is prophetic (4, 8–12). The court warns the apostles to abandon their practice of invoking prophetic authority in the name of Jesus (4, 13–18). When Peter and John reply that the prophetic role cannot be abandoned to satisfy human objections, the court nevertheless releases them, afraid to do otherwise since the beggar, lame from birth and over forty years old, is a well-known figure in Jerusalem and the facts of his cure are common property (4, 19–22). The narrative concludes with a prayer of the Christian community imploring divine aid against threats of persecution (4, 23–31).

**3, 1: For the three o'clock hour of prayer:** literally,

e 13, 35. f 2 Sm 7, 12; Ps 132, 11. g 13, 35; Ps 16, 10. h 1, 4–5. i Ps 110, 1. j 9, 22; Rom 10, 9; Phil 2, 11. k Lk 3, 10. l 3, 19; 16, 31; Lk 3, 3. m Is 57, 19; Jl 3, 5; Eph 2, 17. n Dt 32, 5; Ps 78, 8; Lk 9, 41; Phil 2, 15. o 2, 47; 4, 4; 5, 14; 6, 7; 11, 21.24; 21, 20. p 4, 32–35. q 1, 14; 6, 4. r 5, 12–16. s 4, 32.34–35.

three o'clock hour of prayer. 2 [t]And a man
crippled from birth was carried and placed at the
gate of the temple called "the Beautiful Gate"
every day to beg for alms from the people who
entered the temple. 3When he saw Peter and
John about to go into the temple, he asked for
alms. 4But Peter looked intently at him, as did
John, and said, "Look at us." 5He paid attention
to them, expecting to receive something from
them. 6 [u]*Peter said, "I have neither silver nor
gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name
of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk."
7Then Peter took him by the right hand and
raised him up, and immediately his feet and
ankles grew strong. 8 [v]He leaped up, stood, and
walked around, and went into the temple with
them, walking and jumping and praising God.
9When all the people saw him walking and
praising God, 10they recognized him as the one
who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of
the temple, and they were filled with amaze-
ment and astonishment at what had happened to
him.

**Peter's Speech** 11 [w]As he clung to Peter and
John, all the people hurried in amazement to-
ward them in the portico called "Solomon's
Portico." 12 [x]When Peter saw this, he addressed
the people, "You Israelites, why are you amazed
at this, and why do you look so intently at us as
if we had made him walk by our own power or
piety? 13 [y]*The God of Abraham, [the God] of
Isaac, and [the God] of Jacob, the God of our
ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus whom
you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence,
when he had decided to release him. 14 [z]*You
denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked
that a murderer be released to you. 15 [a]*The
author of life you put to death, but God raised
him from the dead; of this we are witnesses.
16And by faith in his name, this man, whom you
see and know, his name has made strong, and
the faith that comes through it has given him
this perfect health, in the presence of all of you.
17 [b]*Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of
ignorance, just as your leaders did; 18 [c]*but God
has thus brought to fulfillment what he had
announced beforehand through the mouth of all
the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.
19 [d]Repent, therefore, and be converted, that
your sins may be wiped away, 20*and that the
Lord may grant you times of refreshment and
send you the Messiah already appointed for you,
Jesus, 21*whom heaven must receive until the
times of universal restoration of which God

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"at the ninth hour of prayer." With the day beginning at 6 a.m., the ninth hour would be 3 p.m.

**3, 6–10:** The miracle has a dramatic cast; it symbolizes the saving power of Christ and leads the beggar to enter the temple, where he hears Peter's proclamation of salvation through Jesus.

**3, 13: Has glorified:** through the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God reversed the judgment against him on the occasion of his trial. **Servant:** the Greek word can also be rendered as "son" or even "child" here and also in 3, 26; 4, 25 (applied to David); 4, 27; and 4, 30. Scholars are of the opinion, however, that the original concept reflected in the words identified Jesus with the suffering Servant of the Lord of Is 52, 13—53, 12.

**3, 14: The Holy and Righteous One:** so designating Jesus emphasizes his special relationship to the Father (see Lk 1, 35; 4, 34) and emphasizes his sinlessness and religious dignity that are placed in sharp contrast with the guilt of those who rejected him in favor of Barabbas.

**3, 15: The author of life:** other possible translations of the Greek title are "leader of life" or "pioneer of life." The title clearly points to Jesus as the source and originator of salvation.

**3, 17: Ignorance:** a Lucan motif, explaining away the actions not only of the people but also of their leaders in crucifying Jesus. On this basis the presbyters in Acts could continue to appeal to the Jews in Jerusalem to believe in Jesus, even while affirming their involvement in his death because they were unaware of his messianic dignity. See also 13, 27 and Lk 23, 34.

**3, 18: Through the mouth of all the prophets:** Christian prophetic insight into the Old Testament saw the crucifixion and death of Jesus as the main import of messianic prophecy. The Jews themselves did not anticipate a suffering Messiah; they usually understood the Servant Song in Is 52, 13—53, 12 to signify their own suffering as a people. In his typical fashion (cf Lk 18, 31; 24, 25.27.44), Luke does not specify the particular Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus. See also the note on Lk 24, 26.

**3, 20: The Lord . . . and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus:** an allusion to the parousia or second coming of Christ, judged to be imminent in the apostolic age. This reference to its nearness is the only explicit one in Acts. Some scholars believe that this verse preserves a very early christology, in which the title "Messiah" (Greek "Christ") is applied to him as of his parousia, his second coming (contrast 2, 36). This view of a future messiahship of Jesus is not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

**3, 21: The times of universal restoration:** like "the times of refreshment" (20), an apocalyptic designation of the messianic age, fitting in with the christology of v 20 that associates the messiahship of Jesus with his future coming.

t 14, 8–10. u 4, 10. v Is 35, 6; Lk 7, 22. w 5, 12; Jn 10, 23. x 14, 15. y Ex 3, 6.15; Is 52, 13; Lk 23, 14–25. z Mt 27, 20–21; Mk 15, 11; Lk 23, 18; Jn 18, 40. a 4, 10; 5, 31 / 1, 8; 2, 32. b 13, 27; Lk 23, 34; 1 Cor 2, 8; 1 Tm 1, 13. c Lk 18, 31. d 2, 38.

spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets
from of old. 22 e*For Moses said:

'A prophet like me will the Lord, your God,
raise up for you
from among your own kinsmen;
to him you shall listen in all that he may say to
you.
23 f Everyone who does not listen to that prophet
will be cut off from the people.'

24 Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from
Samuel and those afterwards, also announced
these days. 25 g You are the children of the
prophets and of the covenant that God made
with your ancestors when he said to Abraham,
'In your offspring all the families of the earth
shall be blessed.' 26 h For you first, God raised up
his servant and sent him to bless you by turning
each of you from your evil ways."

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
456

1 *While they were still speaking to the people,
the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and
the Sadducees confronted them, 2 i disturbed that
they were teaching the people and proclaiming
in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They laid
hands on them and put them in custody until the
next day, since it was already evening. 4 But
many of those who heard the word came to
believe and [the] number of men grew to [about]
five thousand.

**Before the Sanhedrin** 5 On the next day, their
leaders, elders, and scribes were assembled in
Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caia-
phas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the
high-priestly class. 7 They brought them into
their presence and questioned them, "By what
power or by what name have you done this?"
8 j Then Peter, filled with the holy Spirit, an-
swered them, "Leaders of the people and elders:
9 If we are being examined today about a good
deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means
he was saved, 10 then all of you and all the people
of Israel should know that it was in the name of
Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified,
whom God raised from the dead; in his name
this man stands before you healed. 11 k*He is
'the stone rejected by you, the builders, which
has become the cornerstone.' 12 l*There is no
salvation through anyone else, nor is there any
other name under heaven given to the human
race by which we are to be saved."

13 Observing the boldness of Peter and John
and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary
men, they were amazed, and they recognized
them as the companions of Jesus. 14 Then when
they saw the man who had been cured standing
there with them, they could say nothing in reply.
15 So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin,
and conferred with one another, saying,
16 "What are we to do with these men? Everyone
living in Jerusalem knows that a remarkable sign
was done through them, and we cannot deny it.
17 m But so that it may not be spread any further
among the people, let us give them a stern
warning never again to speak to anyone in this
name."

18 So they called them back and ordered them
not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.
19 n Peter and John, however, said to them in
reply, "Whether it is right in the sight of God for
us to obey you rather than God, you be the
judges. 20 It is impossible for us not to speak
about what we have seen and heard." 21 After
threatening them further, they released them,

**3, 22:** A loose citation of Dt 18, 15, which teaches that the Israelites are to learn the will of Yahweh from no one but their prophets. At the time of Jesus, some Jews expected a unique prophet to come in fulfillment of this text. Early Christianity applied this tradition and text to Jesus and used them especially in defense of the divergence of Christian teaching from traditional Judaism.

**4, 1: The priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees:** the priests performed the temple liturgy; the temple guard was composed of Levites, whose captain ranked next after the high priest. The Sadducees, a party within Judaism at this time, rejected those doctrines, including bodily resurrection, which they believed alien to the ancient Mosaic religion. The Sadducees were drawn from priestly families and from the lay aristocracy.

**4, 11:** Early Christianity applied this citation from Ps 118, 22 to Jesus; cf Mk 12, 10; 1 Pt 2, 7.

**4, 12:** In the Roman world of Luke's day, salvation was often attributed to the emperor who was hailed as "savior" and "god." Luke, in the words of Peter, denies that deliverance comes through anyone other than Jesus.

e 7, 37; Dt 18, 15.18. f Lv 23, 29; Dt 18, 19. g Gn 12, 3; 18, 18; 22, 18; Sir 44, 19–21; Gal 3, 8–9. h 13, 46; Rom 1, 16. i 23, 6–8; 24, 21. j Mt 10, 20. k Ps 118, 22; Is 28, 16; Mt 21, 42; Mk 12, 10; Lk 20, 17; Rom 9, 33; 1 Pt 2, 7. l Mt 1, 21; 1 Cor 3, 11. m 5, 28. n 5, 29–32.

finding no way to punish them, on account of
the people who were all praising God for what
had happened. 22For the man on whom this sign
of healing had been done was over forty years
old.

**Prayer of the Community** 23After their re-
lease they went back to their own people and
reported what the chief priests and elders had
told them. 24And when they heard it, they raised
their voices to God with one accord and said,
"Sovereign Lord, maker of heaven and earth and
the sea and all that is in them, 25 *o*you said by the
holy Spirit through the mouth of our father
David, your servant:

'Why did the Gentiles rage
and the peoples entertain folly?
26The kings of the earth took their stand
and the princes gathered together
against the Lord and against his
anointed.'

27 *p**Indeed they gathered in this city against
your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed,
Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the
Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28to do what
your hand and [your] will had long ago planned
to take place. 29And now, Lord, take note of
their threats, and enable your servants to speak
your word with all boldness, 30as you stretch
forth [your] hand to heal, and signs and wonders
are done through the name of your holy servant
Jesus." 31 *q**As they prayed, the place where they
were gathered shook, and they were all filled
with the holy Spirit and continued to speak the
word of God with boldness.

**Life in the Christian Community** 32*The
community of believers was of one heart and
mind, and no one claimed that any of his
possessions was his own, but they had every-
thing in common. 33With great power the apos-
tles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord
Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.
34 *r*There was no needy person among them, for
those who owned property or houses would sell
them, bring the proceeds of the sale, 35and put
them at the feet of the apostles, and they were
distributed to each according to need.

36 *s*Thus Joseph, also named by the apostles
Barnabas (which is translated "son of encourage-
ment"), a Levite, a Cypriot by birth, 37sold a
piece of property that he owned, then brought
the money and put it at the feet of the apostles.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5
See RG
456–457

**Ananias and Sapphira** 1*A man named Ana-
nias, however, with his wife Sapphira, sold a
piece of property. 2He retained for himself, with
his wife's knowledge, some of the purchase
price, took the remainder, and put it at the feet
of the apostles. 3 *t*But Peter said, "Ananias, why
has Satan filled your heart so that you lied to the
holy Spirit and retained part of the price of the
land? 4While it remained unsold, did it not
remain yours? And when it was sold, was it not
still under your control? Why did you contrive
this deed? You have lied not to human beings,
but to God." 5When Ananias heard these words,
he fell down and breathed his last, and great fear
came upon all who heard of it. 6The young men
came and wrapped him up, then carried him out
and buried him.

7After an interval of about three hours, his
wife came in, unaware of what had happened.
8Peter said to her, "Tell me, did you sell the land

**4, 27: Herod:** Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, who executed John the Baptist and before whom Jesus was arraigned; cf Lk 23, 6–12.

**4, 31: The place . . . shook:** the earthquake is used as a sign of the divine presence in Ex 19, 18; Is 6, 4. Here the shaking of the building symbolizes God's favorable response to the prayer. Luke may have had as an additional reason for using the symbol in this sense the fact that it was familiar in the Hellenistic world. Ovid and Virgil also employ it.

**4, 32–37:** This is the second summary characterizing the Jerusalem community (see the note on 2, 42–47). It emphasizes the system of the distribution of goods and introduces Barnabas, who appears later in Acts as the friend and companion of Paul, and who, as noted here (37), endeared himself to the community by a donation of money through the sale of property. This sharing of material possessions continues a practice that Luke describes during the historical ministry of Jesus (Lk 8, 3) and is in accord with the sayings of Jesus in Luke's gospel (Lk 12, 33; 16, 9.11.13).

**5, 1–11:** The sin of Ananias and Sapphira did not consist in the withholding of part of the money but in their deception of the community. Their deaths are ascribed to a lie to the holy Spirit (3.9), i.e., they accepted the honor accorded them by the community for their generosity, but in reality they were not deserving of it.

o Ps 2, 1–2. p Lk 23, 12–13. q 2, 4. r 2, 44–45. s 9, 27; 11, 22.30; 12, 25; 13, 15; 1 Cor 9, 6; Gal 2, 1.9.13; Col 4, 10. t Lk 22, 3; Jn 13, 2.

for this amount?" She answered, "Yes, for that
amount." [9]Then Peter said to her, "Why did you
agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen, the
footsteps of those who have buried your hus-
band are at the door, and they will carry you
out." [10]At once, she fell down at his feet and
breathed her last. When the young men entered
they found her dead, so they carried her out and
buried her beside her husband. [11] [u]And great fear
came upon the whole church and upon all who
heard of these things.

**Signs and Wonders of the Apostles**

[12] [v]*Many signs and wonders were done among
the people at the hands of the apostles. They
were all together in Solomon's portico. [13]None
of the others dared to join them, but the people
esteemed them. [14]Yet more than ever, believers
in the Lord, great numbers of men and women,
were added to them. [15] [w]Thus they even carried
the sick out into the streets and laid them on
cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at
least his shadow might fall on one or another of
them. [16]A large number of people from the
towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered,
bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean
spirits, and they were all cured.

**Trial before the Sanhedrin** [17] [x]*Then the
high priest rose up and all his companions, that
is, the party of the Sadducees, and, filled with
jealousy, [18]laid hands upon the apostles and put
them in the public jail. [19] [y]But during the night,
the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the
prison, led them out, and said, [20]"Go and take
your place in the temple area, and tell the people
everything about this life." [21]When they heard
this, they went to the temple early in the
morning and taught. When the high priest and
his companions arrived, they convened the San-
hedrin, the full senate of the Israelites, and sent
to the jail to have them brought in. [22]But the
court officers who went did not find them in the
prison, so they came back and reported, [23]"We
found the jail securely locked and the guards
stationed outside the doors, but when we
opened them, we found no one inside." [24]When
they heard this report, the captain of the temple
guard and the chief priests were at a loss about
them, as to what this would come to. [25]Then
someone came in and reported to them, "The
men whom you put in prison are in the temple
area and are teaching the people." [26] [z]Then the
captain and the court officers went and brought
them in, but without force, because they were
afraid of being stoned by the people.

[27]When they had brought them in and made
them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest
questioned them, [28] [a]"We gave you strict orders
[did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet
you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and
want to bring this man's blood upon us." [29] [b]But
Peter and the apostles said in reply, "We must
obey God rather than men. [30] [c]*The God of our
ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him
killed by hanging him on a tree. [31] [d]*God exalted
him at his right hand as leader and savior to
grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.
[32] [e]We are witnesses of these things, as is the
holy Spirit that God has given to those who obey
him."

[33]When they heard this, they became infuri-
ated and wanted to put them to death. [34] [f]*But
a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a

**5, 12–16:** This, the third summary portraying the Jerusalem community, underscores the Twelve as its bulwark, especially because of their charismatic power to heal the sick; cf 2, 42–47; 4, 32–37.

**5, 17–42:** A second action against the community is taken by the Sanhedrin in the arrest and trial of the Twelve; cf 4, 1–3. The motive is the jealousy of the religious authorities over the popularity of the apostles (17) who are now charged with the defiance of the Sanhedrin's previous order to them to abandon their prophetic role (28; cf 4, 18). In this crisis the apostles are favored by a miraculous release from prison (18–24). (For similar incidents involving Peter and Paul, see 12, 6–11; 16, 25–29.) The real significance of such an event, however, would be manifest only to people of faith, not to unbelievers; since the Sanhedrin already judged the Twelve to be inauthentic prophets, it could disregard reports of their miracles. When the Twelve immediately resumed public teaching, the Sanhedrin determined to invoke upon them the penalty of death (33) prescribed in Dt 13, 6–10. Gamaliel's advice against this course finally prevailed, but it did not save the Twelve from the punishment of scourging (40) in a last endeavor to shake their conviction of their prophetic mission.

**5, 30: Hanging him on a tree:** that is, crucifying him (cf also Gal 3, 13).

**5, 31: At his right hand:** see the note on 2, 33.

**5, 34: Gamaliel:** in 22, 3, Paul identifies himself as a disciple of this Rabbi Gamaliel I who flourished in Jerusalem between A.D. 25 and 50.

u 2, 43; 5, 5; 19, 17. v 2, 43; 6, 8; 14, 3; 15, 12. w 19, 11–12; Mk 6, 56. x 4, 1–3.6. y 12, 7–10; 16, 25–26. z Lk 20, 19. a Mt 27, 25. b 4, 19. c 2, 23–24. d 2, 38. e Lk 24, 48; Jn 15, 26. f 22,3.

teacher of the law, respected by all the people,
stood up, ordered the men to be put outside for
a short time, 35and said to them, "Fellow Israel-
ites, be careful what you are about to do to
these men. 36*Some time ago, Theudas ap-
peared, claiming to be someone important, and
about four hundred men joined him, but he
was killed, and all those who were loyal to him
were disbanded and came to nothing. 37After
him came Judas the Galilean at the time of the
census. He also drew people after him, but he
too perished and all who were loyal to him
were scattered. 38So now I tell you, have noth-
ing to do with these men, and let them go. For
if this endeavor or this activity is of human
origin, it will destroy itself. 39But if it comes
from God, you will not be able to destroy them;
you may even find yourselves fighting against
God." They were persuaded by him. 40 *g*After
recalling the apostles, they had them flogged,
ordered them to stop speaking in the name of
Jesus, and dismissed them. 41 *h*So they left the
presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they
had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for
the sake of the name. 42 *i*And all day long, both
at the temple and in their homes, they did not
stop teaching and proclaiming the Messiah,
Jesus.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 6
See RG
457

**The Need for Assistants** 1 *j**At that time, as
the number of disciples continued to grow, the
Hellenists complained against the Hebrews be-
cause their widows were being neglected in the
daily distribution. 2*So the Twelve called to-
gether the community of the disciples and said,
"It is not right for us to neglect the word of God
to serve at table. 3Brothers, select from among
you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit
and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this
task, 4whereas we shall devote ourselves to
prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5The
proposal was acceptable to the whole commu-
nity, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with
faith and the holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus,
Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of
Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 *k**They pre-
sented these men to the apostles who prayed
and laid hands on them. 7 *l*The word of God
continued to spread, and the number of the
disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a
large group of priests were becoming obedient to
the faith.

**Accusation against Stephen** 8*Now Stephen,
filled with grace and power, was working great
wonders and signs among the people. 9Certain
members of the so-called Synagogue of Freed-

**5, 36–37:** Gamaliel offers examples of unsuccessful contemporary movements to argue that if God is not the origin of this movement preached by the apostles it will perish by itself. The movement initiated by Theudas actually occurred when C. Cuspius Fadus was governor, A.D. 44–46. Luke's placing of Judas the Galilean after Theudas and at the time of the census (see the note on Lk 2, 1–2) is an indication of the vagueness of his knowledge of these events.

**6, 1–7: The Hellenists . . . the Hebrews:** the Hellenists were not necessarily Jews from the diaspora, but were more probably Palestinian Jews who spoke only Greek. The Hebrews were Palestinian Jews who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and who may also have spoken Greek. Both groups belong to the Jerusalem Jewish Christian community. The conflict between them leads to a restructuring of the community that will better serve the community's needs. The real purpose of the whole episode, however, is to introduce Stephen as a prominent figure in the community whose long speech and martyrdom will be recounted in ch 7.

**6, 2–4:** The essential function of the Twelve is the "service of the word," including development of the kerygma by formulation of the teachings of Jesus.

**6, 2: To serve at table:** some commentators think that it is not the serving of food that is described here but rather the keeping of the accounts that recorded the distribution of food to the needy members of the community. In any case, after Stephen and the others are chosen, they are never presented carrying out the task for which they were appointed (2–3). Rather, two of their number, Stephen and Philip, are presented as preachers of the Christian message. They, the Hellenist counterpart of the Twelve, are active in the ministry of the word.

**6, 6: They . . . laid hands on them:** the customary Jewish way of designating persons for a task and invoking upon them the divine blessing and power to perform it.

**6, 8—8, 1:** The summary (6, 7) on the progress of the Jerusalem community, illustrated by the conversion of the priests, is followed by a lengthy narrative regarding Stephen. Stephen's defense is not a response to the charges made against him but takes the form of a discourse that reviews the fortunes of God's word to Israel and leads to a prophetic declaration: a plea for the hearing of that word as announced by Christ and now possessed by the Christian community.

The charges that Stephen depreciated the importance of the temple and the Mosaic law and elevated Jesus to a stature above Moses (6, 13–14) were in fact true. Before the Sanhedrin, no defense against them was possible. With Stephen, who thus perceived the fuller implications of the teachings of Jesus, the differences between Judaism and Christianity began to appear. Luke's account of Stephen's martyrdom and its aftermath shows how the major impetus behind the Christian movement passed from Jerusalem, where the temple and law prevailed, to Antioch in Syria, where these influences were less pressing.

g Mt 10, 17; Acts 4, 17–18. h Mt 5, 10–11; 1 Pt 4, 13. i 2, 46; 5, 20–21.25; 8, 35; 17, 3; 18, 5.28; 19, 4–5. j 2, 45; 4, 34–35. k 1, 24; 13, 3; 14, 23. l 9, 31; 12, 24; 16, 5; 19, 20; 28, 30–31.

men, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and people
from Cilicia and Asia, came forward and debated
with Stephen, 10 [m]but they could not withstand
the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.
11 [n]Then they instigated some men to say, "We
have heard him speaking blasphemous words
against Moses and God." 12 They stirred up the
people, the elders, and the scribes, accosted him,
seized him, and brought him before the Sanhe-
drin. 13 *They presented false witnesses who
testified, "This man never stops saying things
against [this] holy place and the law. 14 [o]For we
have heard him claim that this Jesus the
Nazorean will destroy this place and change the
customs that Moses handed down to us." 15 All
those who sat in the Sanhedrin looked intently
at him and saw that his face was like the face of
an angel.

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7
See RG
457–458

**Stephen's Discourses** 1 Then the high priest
asked, "Is this so?" 2 [p]*And he replied, "My
brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory
appeared to our father Abraham while he was in
Mesopotamia, before he had settled in Haran,
3 [q]and said to him, 'Go forth from your land and
[from] your kinsfolk to the land that I will show
you.' 4 [r]So he went forth from the land of the
Chaldeans and settled in Haran. And from there,
after his father died, he made him migrate to this
land where you now dwell. 5 [s]Yet he gave him
no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but
he did promise to give it to him and his
descendants as a possession, even though he was
childless. 6 [t]And God spoke thus, 'His descen-
dants shall be aliens in a land not their own,
where they shall be enslaved and oppressed for
four hundred years; 7 [u]but I will bring judgment
on the nation they serve,' God said, 'and after
that they will come out and worship me in this
place.' 8 [v]Then he gave him the covenant of
circumcision, and so he became the father of
Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, as
Isaac did Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs.

9 [w]"And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold
him into slavery in Egypt; but God was with him
10 [x]and rescued him from all his afflictions. He
granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh,
the king of Egypt, who put him in charge of
Egypt and [of] his entire household. 11 [y]Then a
famine and great affliction struck all Egypt and
Canaan, and our ancestors could find no food;
12 [z]but when Jacob heard that there was grain in
Egypt, he sent our ancestors there a first time.
13 [a]The second time, Joseph made himself
known to his brothers, and Joseph's family
became known to Pharaoh. 14 [b]Then Joseph sent
for his father Jacob, inviting him and his whole
clan, seventy-five persons; 15 [c]and Jacob went
down to Egypt. And he and our ancestors died
16 [d]and were brought back to Shechem and
placed in the tomb that Abraham had purchased
for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor at
Shechem.

17 [e]"When the time drew near for the fulfill-
ment of the promise that God pledged to Abra-
ham, the people had increased and become very
numerous in Egypt, 18 [f]until another king who
knew nothing of Joseph came to power [in
Egypt]. 19 He dealt shrewdly with our people and
oppressed [our] ancestors by forcing them to
expose their infants, that they might not survive.
20 [g]At this time Moses was born, and he was

**6, 13: False witnesses:** here, and in his account of Stephen's execution (7, 54–60), Luke parallels the martyrdom of Stephen with the death of Jesus.

**7, 2–53:** Stephen's speech represents Luke's description of Christianity's break from its Jewish matrix. Two motifs become prominent in the speech: (1) Israel's reaction to God's chosen leaders in the past reveals that the people have consistently rejected them; and (2) Israel has misunderstood God's choice of the Jerusalem temple as the place where he is to be worshiped.

**7, 2: God . . . appeared to our father Abraham . . . in Mesopotamia:** the first of a number of minor discrepancies between the data of the Old Testament and the data of Stephen's discourse. According to Gn 12, 1, God first spoke to Abraham in Haran. The main discrepancies are these: in v 16 it is said that Jacob was buried in Shechem, whereas Gn 50, 13 says he was buried at Hebron; in the same verse it is said that the tomb was purchased by Abraham, but in Gn 33, 19 and Jos 24, 32 the purchase is attributed to Jacob himself.

m Lk 21, 15. n Mt 26, 59–61; Mk 14, 55–58; Acts 21, 21. o Mt 26, 59–61; 27, 40; Jn 2, 19. p Gn 11, 31; 12, 1; Ps 29, 3. q Gn 12, 1. r Gn 12, 5; 15, 7. s Gn 12, 7; 13, 15; 15, 2; 16, 1; Dt 2, 5. t Gn 15, 13–14. u Ex 3, 12. v Gn 17, 10–14; 21, 2–4. w Gn 37, 11.28; 39, 2.3.21.23. x Gn 41, 37–43; Ps 105, 21; Wis 10, 13–14. y Gn 41, 54–57; 42, 5. z Gn 42, 1–2. a Gn 45, 3–4.16. b Gn 45, 9–11.18–19; 46, 27; Ex 1, 5 LXX; Dt 10, 22. c Gn 46, 5–6; 49, 33. d Gn 23, 3–20; 33, 19; 49, 29–30; 50, 13; Jos 24, 32. e Ex 1, 7. f Ex 1, 8. g Ex 2, 2; Heb 11, 23.

extremely beautiful. For three months he was
nursed in his father's house; 21 [h]but when he
was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him
and brought him up as her own son. 22Moses
was educated [in] all the wisdom of the Egyp-
tians and was powerful in his words and deeds.

23 [i]"When he was forty years old, he decided
to visit his kinsfolk, the Israelites. 24When he
saw one of them treated unjustly, he defended
and avenged the oppressed man by striking
down the Egyptian. 25He assumed [his] kinsfolk
would understand that God was offering them
deliverance through him, but they did not under-
stand. 26 [j]The next day he appeared to them as
they were fighting and tried to reconcile them
peacefully, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why
are you harming one another?' 27Then the one
who was harming his neighbor pushed him
aside, saying, 'Who appointed you ruler and
judge over us? 28Are you thinking of killing me
as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 [k]Moses
fled when he heard this and settled as an alien in
the land of Midian, where he became the father
of two sons.

30 [l]"Forty years later, an angel appeared to
him in the desert near Mount Sinai in the flame
of a burning bush. 31When Moses saw it, he was
amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look
at it, the voice of the Lord came, 32'I am the God
of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac,
and of Jacob.' Then Moses, trembling, did not
dare to look at it. 33But the Lord said to him,
'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place
where you stand is holy ground. 34I have wit-
nessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and
have heard their groaning, and I have come
down to rescue them. Come now, I will send
you to Egypt.' 35 [m]This Moses, whom they had
rejected with the words, 'Who appointed you
ruler and judge?' God sent as [both] ruler and
deliverer, through the angel who appeared to
him in the bush. 36 [n]This man led them out,
performing wonders and signs in the land of
Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert for forty
years. 37 [o]It was this Moses who said to the
Israelites, 'God will raise up for you, from among
your own kinsfolk, a prophet like me.' 38 [p]It was
he who, in the assembly in the desert, was with
the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and
with our ancestors, and he received living utter-
ances to hand on to us.

39 [q]"Our ancestors were unwilling to obey
him; instead, they pushed him aside and in their
hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 [r]saying to Aaron,
'Make us gods who will be our leaders. As for
that Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt,
we do not know what has happened to him.'
41 [s]So they made a calf in those days, offered
sacrifice to the idol, and reveled in the works of
their hands. 42 [t] [u]Then God turned and handed
them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is
written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings
for forty years in the desert, O house of
Israel?
43 No, you took up the tent of Moloch
and the star of [your] god Rephan,
the images that you made to worship.
So I shall take you into exile beyond Babylon.'

44 [v]Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in
the desert just as the One who spoke to Moses
directed him to make it according to the pattern
he had seen. 45 [w]Our ancestors who inherited it
brought it with Joshua when they dispossessed
the nations that God drove out from before our
ancestors, up to the time of David, 46 [x]who
found favor in the sight of God and asked that he
might find a dwelling place for the house of
Jacob. 47 [y]But Solomon built a house for him.
48 [z]Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses
made by human hands. As the prophet says:

49 [a]'The heavens are my throne,
the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house can you build for me?
says the Lord,
or what is to be my resting place?
50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

h Ex 2, 3–10. i Ex 2, 11–12. j Ex 2, 13–14. k Ex 2, 15.21–22; 18, 3–4. l Ex 3, 2–3. m Ex 2, 14. n Ex 7, 3.10; 14, 21; Nm 14, 33. o Dt 18, 15; Acts 3, 22. p Ex 19, 3; 20, 1–17; Dt 5, 4–22; 6, 4–25. q Nm 14, 3. r Ex 32, 1.23. s Ex 32, 4–6. t Am 5, 25–27. u Jer 7, 18; 8, 2; 19, 13. v Ex 25, 9.40. w Jos 3, 14–17; 18, 1; 2 Sm 7, 5–7. x 2 Sm 7, 1–2; 1 Kgs 8, 17; Ps 132, 1–5. y 1 Kgs 6, 1; 1 Chr 17, 12. z 17, 24. a Is 66, 1–2.

**Conclusion** 51"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose
the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors.
52 [b]Which of the prophets did your ancestors not
persecute? They put to death those who foretold
the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.
53 [c]You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it."

**Stephen's Martyrdom** 54When they heard
this, they were infuriated, and they ground their
teeth at him. 55 [d]*But he, filled with the holy
Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the
glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand
of God, 56and he said, "Behold, I see the
heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at
the right hand of God." 57*But they cried out in
a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed
upon him together. 58 [e]They threw him out of
the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses
laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man
named Saul. 59[f]*As they were stoning Stephen,
he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
60 [g]Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a
loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against
them"; and when he said this, he fell asleep.

## CHAPTER 8

Ch 8
See RG
458–459

1 [h]*Now Saul was consenting to his execution.

**Persecution of the Church** On that day, there
broke out a severe persecution of the church in
Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the
countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the
apostles. 2Devout men buried Stephen and made
a loud lament over him. 3 [i]*Saul, meanwhile,
was trying to destroy the church; entering house
after house and dragging out men and women,
he handed them over for imprisonment.

## III: The Mission in Judea and Samaria

**Philip in Samaria** 4 [j]Now those who had been
scattered went about preaching the word.
5 [k]Thus Philip went down to [the] city of Samaria
and proclaimed the Messiah to them. 6With one
accord, the crowds paid attention to what was
said by Philip when they heard it and saw the
signs he was doing. 7 [l]For unclean spirits, crying
out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed
people, and many paralyzed and crippled people
were cured. 8There was great joy in that city.

**Simon the Magician** 9*A man named Simon
used to practice magic in the city and astounded
the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone
great. 10All of them, from the least to the
greatest, paid attention to him, saying, "This
man is the 'Power of God' that is called
'Great.' " 11They paid attention to him because
he had astounded them by his magic for a long
time, 12 [m]but once they began to believe Philip as
he preached the good news about the kingdom
of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and
women alike were baptized. 13Even Simon him-

**7, 55: He . . . saw . . . Jesus standing at the right hand of God:** Stephen affirms to the Sanhedrin that the prophecy Jesus made before them has been fulfilled (Mk 14, 62).

**7, 57: Covered their ears:** Stephen's declaration, like that of Jesus, is a scandal to the court, which regards it as blasphemy.

**7, 59:** Compare Lk 23, [34].46.

**8, 1–40:** Some idea of the severity of the persecution that now breaks out against the Jerusalem community can be gathered from 22, 4 and 26, 9–11. Luke, however, concentrates on the fortunes of the word of God among people, indicating how the dispersal of the Jewish community resulted in the conversion of the Samaritans (4–17.25). His narrative is further expanded to include the account of Philip's acceptance of an Ethiopian (26–39).

**8, 1: All were scattered . . . except the apostles:** this observation leads some modern scholars to conclude that the persecution was limited to the Hellenist Christians and that the Hebrew Christians were not molested, perhaps because their attitude toward the law and temple was still more in line with that of their fellow Jews (see the charge leveled against the Hellenist Stephen in 6, 13–14). Whatever the facts, it appears that the Twelve took no public stand regarding Stephen's position, choosing, instead, to await the development of events.

**8, 3: Saul . . . was trying to destroy the church:** like Stephen, Saul was able to perceive that the Christian movement contained the seeds of doctrinal divergence from Judaism. A pupil of Gamaliel, according to 22, 3, and totally dedicated to the law as the way of salvation (Gal 1, 13–14), Saul accepted the task of crushing the Christian movement, at least insofar as it detracted from the importance of the temple and the law. His vehement opposition to Christianity reveals how difficult it was for a Jew of his time to accept a messianism that differed so greatly from the general expectation.

**8, 9–13.18–24:** Sorcerers were well known in the ancient world. Probably the incident involving Simon and his altercation with Peter is introduced to show that the miraculous charisms possessed by members of the Christian community (6–7) were not to be confused with the magic of sorcerers.

b 2 Chr 36, 16; Mt 23, 31.34. c Gal 3, 19; Heb 2, 2. d Mt 26, 64; Mk 14, 62; Lk 22, 69; Acts 2, 34. e 22, 20. f Ps 31, 6; Lk 23, 46. g Mt 27, 46.50; Mk 15, 34; Lk 23, 46. h 22, 20. i 9, 1.13; 22, 4; 26, 9–11; 1 Cor 5, 9; Gal 1, 13. j 11, 19. k 6, 5; 21, 8–9. l Mk 16, 17. m 1, 3; 19, 8; 28, 23.31.

self believed and, after being baptized, became
devoted to Philip; and when he saw the signs
and mighty deeds that were occurring, he was
astounded.

[14]Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard
that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they
sent them Peter and John, [15]who went down
and prayed for them, that they might receive the
holy Spirit, [16]*for it had not yet fallen upon any
of them; they had only been baptized in the
name of the Lord Jesus. [17] [n]Then they laid hands
on them and they received the holy Spirit.

[18]*When Simon saw that the Spirit was
conferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands,
he offered them money [19]and said, "Give me
this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay
my hands may receive the holy Spirit." [20]But
Peter said to him, "May your money perish with
you, because you thought that you could buy the
gift of God with money. [21]You have no share or
lot in this matter, for your heart is not upright
before God. [22]Repent of this wickedness of yours
and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your
intention may be forgiven. [23]For I see that you
are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of
iniquity." [24]Simon said in reply, "Pray for me to
the Lord, that nothing of what you have said
may come upon me." [25]So when they had
testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord,
they returned to Jerusalem and preached the
good news to many Samaritan villages.

**Philip and the Ethiopian** [26]*Then the angel
of the Lord spoke to Philip, "Get up and head
south on the road that goes down from Jerusa-
lem to Gaza, the desert route." [27] [o]*So he got up
and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eu-
nuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the
queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire
treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship,
[28]and was returning home. Seated in his chariot,
he was reading the prophet Isaiah. [29]The Spirit
said to Philip, "Go and join up with that char-
iot." [30]*Philip ran up and heard him reading
Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand
what you are reading?" [31] [p]He replied, "How can
I, unless someone instructs me?" So he invited
Philip to get in and sit with him. [32] [q]This was the
scripture passage he was reading:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.
[33]In [his] humiliation justice was denied him.
Who will tell of his posterity?
For his life is taken from the earth."

[34]Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, "I beg
you, about whom is the prophet saying this?
About himself, or about someone else?" [35]Then
Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with
this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to
him. [36] [r]As they traveled along the road they
came to some water, and the eunuch said,
"Look, there is water. What is to prevent my
being baptized?" [37]* [38]Then he ordered the
chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both
went down into the water, and he baptized him.
[39] [s]When they came out of the water, the Spirit
of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the

**8, 16:** Here and in 10, 44–48 and 19, 1–6, Luke distinguishes between baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus and the reception of the Spirit. In each case, the Spirit is conferred through members of the Twelve (Peter and John) or their representative (Paul). This may be Luke's way of describing the role of the church in the bestowal of the Spirit. Elsewhere in Acts, baptism and the Spirit are more closely related (1, 5; 11, 16).

**8, 18–20:** Simon attempts to buy the gift of God (20) with money. Peter's cursing of Simon's attempt so to use his money expresses a typically Lucan attitude toward material wealth (cf Lk 6, 24; 12, 16–21; 16, 13).

**8, 26–40:** In the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, Luke adduces additional evidence to show that the spread of Christianity outside the confines of Judaism itself was in accord with the plan of God. He does not make clear whether the Ethiopian was originally a convert to Judaism or, as is more probable, a "God-fearer" (10, 1), i.e., one who accepted Jewish monotheism and ethic and attended the synagogue but did not consider himself bound by other regulations such as circumcision and observance of the dietary laws. The story of his conversion to Christianity is given a strong supernatural cast by the introduction of an angel (26), instruction from the holy Spirit (29), and the strange removal of Philip from the scene (39).

**8, 27: The Candace:** Candace is not a proper name here but the title of a Nubian queen.

**8, 30–34:** Philip is brought alongside the carriage at the very moment when the Ethiopian is pondering the meaning of Is 53, 7–8, a passage that Christianity, from its earliest origins, has applied to Jesus; cf the note on 3, 13.

**8, 37:** The oldest and best manuscripts of Acts omit this verse, which is a Western text reading: "And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he said in reply, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' "

n 2, 4; 4, 31; 10, 44–47; 15, 8–9; 19, 2.6. o Is 56, 3–5. p Jn 16, 13. q Is 53, 7–8 LXX. r 10, 47. s 1 Kgs 18, 12.

eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing. 40 [t]Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 9
See RG
459–460

**Saul's Conversion** 1 [u v]*Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2*and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. 3 [w]On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. 4 [x]He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 [y]He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 [z]Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." 7 [a]The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. 8 [b]*Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. 9For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

**Saul's Baptism** 10 [c]There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." 11 [d]The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, 12and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay [his] hands on him, that he may regain his sight." 13 [e]*But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. 14 [f]And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." 15 [g]But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, 16and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." 17So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit." 18Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, 19*and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength.

**Saul Preaches in Damascus** He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, 20*and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21All who heard him were astounded and said, "Is not this the man who in Jerusalem ravaged those who call upon this name, and came here expressly to take them back in chains to the chief priests?" 22But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded [the] Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this is the Messiah.

**Saul Visits Jerusalem** 23After a long time had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, 24 [h]but

**9, 1–19:** This is the first of three accounts of Paul's conversion (with 22, 3–16 and 26, 2–18) with some differences of detail owing to Luke's use of different sources. Paul's experience was not visionary but was precipitated by the appearance of Jesus, as he insists in 1 Cor 15, 8. The words of Jesus, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" related by Luke with no variation in all three accounts, exerted a profound and lasting influence on the thought of Paul. Under the influence of this experience he gradually developed his understanding of justification by faith (see the letters to the Galatians and Romans) and of the identification of the Christian community with Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 12, 27). That Luke would narrate this conversion three times is testimony to the importance he attaches to it. This first account occurs when the word is first spread to the Gentiles. At this point, the conversion of the hero of the Gentile mission is recounted. The emphasis in the account is on Paul as a divinely chosen instrument (15).

**9, 2: The Way:** a name used by the early Christian community for itself (18, 26; 19, 9.23; 22, 4; 24, 14.22). The Essene community at Qumran used the same designation to describe its mode of life.

**9, 8: He could see nothing:** a temporary blindness (18) symbolizing the religious blindness of Saul as persecutor (cf 26, 18).

**9, 13: Your holy ones:** literally, "your saints."

**9, 19–30:** This is a brief resume of Paul's initial experience as an apostolic preacher. At first he found himself in the position of being regarded as an apostate by the Jews and suspect by the Christian community of Jerusalem. His acceptance by the latter was finally brought about through his friendship with Barnabas (27).

**9, 20: Son of God:** the title "Son of God" occurs in Acts only here, but cf the citation of Ps 2, 7 in Paul's speech at Antioch in Pisidia (13, 33).

t 21, 8. u 8, 3; 9, 13; 22, 4; 1 Cor 15, 9; Gal 1, 13–14. v 9, 14; 26, 10. w 1 Cor 9, 1; 15, 8; Gal 1, 16. x 22, 6; 26, 14. y 22, 8; 26, 15; Mt 25, 40. z 22, 10; 26, 16. a 22, 9; 26, 13–14. b 22, 11. c 22, 12–16. d 21, 39. e 8, 3; 9, 1. f 9,1–2; 26, 10; 1 Cor 1, 2; 2 Tm 2, 22. g 22, 15; 26, 1; 27, 24. h 2 Cor 11, 32–33.

their plot became known to Saul. Now they
were keeping watch on the gates day and night
so as to kill him, [25]but his disciples took him one
night and let him down through an opening in
the wall, lowering him in a basket.

[26] [i]*When he arrived in Jerusalem he tried to
join the disciples, but they were all afraid of
him, not believing that he was a disciple.
[27]Then Barnabas took charge of him and
brought him to the apostles, and he reported to
them how on the way he had seen the Lord
and that he had spoken to him, and how in
Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the
name of Jesus. [28]He moved about freely with
them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the
name of the Lord. [29]*He also spoke and de-
bated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill
him. [30] [j]And when the brothers learned of this,
they took him down to Caesarea and sent him
on his way to Tarsus.

**The Church at Peace** [31]*The church through-
out all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace.
It was being built up and walked in the fear of
the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy
Spirit it grew in numbers.

**Peter Heals Aeneas at Lydda** [32]As Peter was
passing through every region, he went down to
the holy ones living in Lydda. [33]There he found a
man named Aeneas, who had been confined to
bed for eight years, for he was paralyzed. [34]Peter
said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get
up and make your bed." He got up at once.
[35]And all the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon
saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

**Peter Restores Tabitha to Life** [36]*Now in
Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which
translated means Dorcas). She was completely
occupied with good deeds and almsgiving.
[37]Now during those days she fell sick and died,
so after washing her, they laid [her] out in a room
upstairs. [38]Since Lydda was near Joppa, the
disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two
men to him with the request, "Please come to us
without delay." [39]So Peter got up and went with
them. When he arrived, they took him to the
room upstairs where all the widows came to him
weeping and showing him the tunics and cloaks
that Dorcas had made while she was with them.
[40] [k]Peter sent them all out and knelt down and
prayed. Then he turned to her body and said,
"Tabitha, rise up." She opened her eyes, saw
Peter, and sat up. [41]He gave her his hand and
raised her up, and when he had called the holy
ones and the widows, he presented her alive.
[42]This became known all over Joppa, and many
came to believe in the Lord. [43] [l]*And he stayed a
long time in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

## IV: The Inauguration of the Gentile Mission

### CHAPTER 10

Ch 10–11
See RG
460–461

**The Vision of Cornelius** [1] [m]*Now in Caesarea
there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion
of the Cohort called the Italica, [2]*devout and
God-fearing along with his whole household,
who used to give alms generously to the Jewish

**9, 26:** This visit of Paul to Jerusalem is mentioned by Paul in Gal 1, 18.

**9, 29: Hellenists:** see the note on 6, 1–7.

**9, 31–43:** In the context of the period of peace enjoyed by the community through the cessation of Paul's activities against it, Luke introduces two traditions concerning the miraculous power exercised by Peter as he was making a tour of places where the Christian message had already been preached. The towns of Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa were populated by both Jews and Gentiles and their Christian communities may well have been mixed.

**9, 36: Tabitha (Dorcas),** respectively the Aramaic and Greek words for "gazelle," exemplifies the right attitude toward material possessions expressed by Jesus in the Lucan Gospel (Lk 6, 30; 11, 41; 12, 33; 18, 22; 19, 8).

**9, 43:** The fact that Peter lodged with a tanner would have been significant to both the Gentile and Jewish Christians, for Judaism considered the tanning occupation unclean.

**10, 1–48:** The narrative centers on the conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile and a "God-fearer" (see the note on 8, 26–40). Luke considers the event of great importance, as is evident from his long treatment of it. The incident is again related in 11, 1–18 where Peter is forced to justify his actions before the Jerusalem community and alluded to in 15, 7–11 where at the Jerusalem "Council" Peter supports Paul's missionary activity among the Gentiles. The narrative divides itself into a series of distinct episodes, concluding with Peter's presentation of the Christian kerygma (34–43) and a pentecostal experience undergone by Cornelius' household preceding their reception of baptism (44–48).

**10, 1: The Cohort called the Italica:** this battalion was an auxiliary unit of archers formed originally in Italy but transferred to Syria shortly before A.D. 69.

**10, 2: Used to give alms generously:** like Tabitha (9, 36), Cornelius exemplifies the proper attitude toward wealth (see the note on 9, 36).

i Gal 1, 18. j 11, 25. k Mk 5, 40–41. l 10, 6. m 10,30–33.

people and pray to God constantly. 3*One afternoon about three o'clock, he saw plainly in a
vision an angel of God come in to him and say to
him, "Cornelius." 4He looked intently at him
and, seized with fear, said, "What is it, sir?" He
said to him, "Your prayers and almsgiving have
ascended as a memorial offering before God.
5Now send some men to Joppa and summon one
Simon who is called Peter. 6 nHe is staying with
another Simon, a tanner, who has a house by the
sea." 7*When the angel who spoke to him had
left, he called two of his servants and a devout
soldier from his staff, 8explained everything to
them, and sent them to Joppa.

**The Vision of Peter** 9*The next day, while
they were on their way and nearing the city,
Peter went up to the roof terrace to pray at about
noontime. 10He was hungry and wished to eat,
and while they were making preparations he fell
into a trance. 11 oHe saw heaven opened and
something resembling a large sheet coming
down, lowered to the ground by its four corners.
12In it were all the earth's four-legged animals
and reptiles and the birds of the sky. 13A voice
said to him, "Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat."
14 pBut Peter said, "Certainly not, sir. For never
have I eaten anything profane and unclean."
15 qThe voice spoke to him again, a second time,
"What God has made clean, you are not to call
profane." 16This happened three times, and then
the object was taken up into the sky.

17*While Peter was in doubt about the meaning of the vision he had seen, the men sent by
Cornelius asked for Simon's house and arrived at
the entrance. 18They called out inquiring
whether Simon, who is called Peter, was staying
there. 19 rAs Peter was pondering the vision, the
Spirit said [to him], "There are three men here
looking for you. 20So get up, go downstairs, and
accompany them without hesitation, because I
have sent them." 21Then Peter went down to
the men and said, "I am the one you are looking
for. What is the reason for your being here?"
22 sThey answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an
upright and God-fearing man, respected by the
whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy
angel to summon you to his house and to hear
what you have to say." 23So he invited them in
and showed them hospitality.

The next day he got up and went with them,
and some of the brothers from Joppa went with
him. 24*On the following day he entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had
called together his relatives and close friends.
25 tWhen Peter entered, Cornelius met him and,
falling at his feet, paid him homage. 26Peter,
however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I
myself am also a human being." 27While he
conversed with him, he went in and found many
people gathered together 28 u*and said to them,
"You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man
to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has
shown me that I should not call any person
profane or unclean. 29And that is why I came
without objection when sent for. May I ask,
then, why you summoned me?"

30*Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this
hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, I was at
prayer in my house when suddenly a man in
dazzling robes stood before me and said, 31'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your
almsgiving remembered before God. 32Send
therefore to Joppa and summon Simon, who is
called Peter. He is a guest in the house of Simon,

**10, 3: About three o'clock:** literally, "about the ninth hour." See the note on 3, 1.

**10, 7: A devout soldier:** by using this adjective, Luke probably intends to classify him as a "God-fearer" (see the note on 8, 26–40).

**10, 9–16:** The vision is intended to prepare Peter to share the food of Cornelius' household without qualms of conscience (48). The necessity of such instructions to Peter reveals that at first not even the apostles fully grasped the implications of Jesus' teaching on the law. In Acts, the initial insight belongs to Stephen.

**10, 9: At about noontime:** literally, "about the sixth hour."

**10, 17–23:** The arrival of the Gentile emissaries with their account of the angelic apparition illuminates Peter's vision: he is to be prepared to admit Gentiles, who were considered unclean like the animals of his vision, into the Christian community.

**10, 24–27:** So impressed is Cornelius with the apparition that he invites close personal friends to join him in his meeting with Peter. But his understanding of the person he is about to meet is not devoid of superstition, suggested by his falling down before him. For a similar experience of Paul and Barnabas, see 14, 11–18.

**10, 28:** Peter now fully understands the meaning of his vision; see the note on 10, 17–23.

**10, 30: Four days ago:** literally, "from the fourth day up to this hour."

n 9, 43. o 11, 5–12. p Lv 11, 1–47; Ez 4, 14. q Mk 7, 15–19; Gal 2, 12. r 13, 2. s Lk 7, 4–5. t 14, 13–15; Rv 19, 10. u Gal 2, 11–16.

a tanner, by the sea.' [33]So I sent for you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to listen to all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

**Peter's Speech** [34 v]*Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. [35]Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. [36 w]*You know the word [that] he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, [37 x]what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, [38 y]*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39]*We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and [in] Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. [40]This man God raised [on] the third day and granted that he be visible, [41 z]not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42 a]*He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. [43]To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

**The Baptism of Cornelius** [44 b]*While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. [45]The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, [46]for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, [47 c]"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?" [48]He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. [49]Then they invited him to stay for a few days.

## CHAPTER 11

### The Baptism of the Gentiles Explained

Ch 11-14 See RG 461-462

[1]*Now the apostles and the brothers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles too had accepted the word of God. [2]So when Peter went up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers confronted him, [3]*saying, "You entered the house of uncircumcised people and ate with them." [4]Peter began and explained it to them step by step, saying, [5 d]"I was at prayer in the city of Joppa when in a trance I had a vision, something

**10, 34–43:** Peter's speech to the household of Cornelius typifies early Christian preaching to Gentiles.

**10, 34–35:** The revelation of God's choice of Israel to be the people of God did not mean he withheld the divine favor from other people.

**10, 36–43:** These words are more directed to Luke's Christian readers than to the household of Cornelius, as indicated by the opening words, "You know." They trace the continuity between the preaching and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and the proclamation of Jesus by the early community. The emphasis on this divinely ordained continuity (41) is meant to assure Luke's readers of the fidelity of Christian tradition to the words and deeds of Jesus.

**10, 36: To the Israelites:** Luke, in the words of Peter, speaks of the prominent position occupied by Israel in the history of salvation.

**10, 38: Jesus of Nazareth:** God's revelation of his plan for the destiny of humanity through Israel culminated in Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, the ministry of Jesus is an integral part of God's revelation. This viewpoint explains why the early Christian communities were interested in conserving the historical substance of the ministry of Jesus, a tradition leading to the production of the four gospels.

**10, 39: We are witnesses:** the apostolic testimony was not restricted to the resurrection of Jesus but also included his historical ministry. This witness, however, was theological in character; the Twelve, divinely mandated as prophets, were empowered to interpret his sayings and deeds in the light of his redemptive death and resurrection. The meaning of these words and deeds was to be made clear to the developing Christian community as the bearer of the word of salvation (cf 1, 21–26). **Hanging him on a tree:** see the note on 5, 30.

**10, 42: As judge of the living and the dead:** the apostolic preaching to the Jews appealed to their messianic hope, while the preaching to Gentiles stressed the coming divine judgment; cf 1 Thes 1, 10.

**10, 44:** Just as the Jewish Christians received the gift of the Spirit, so too do the Gentiles.

**11, 1–18:** The Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were scandalized to learn of Peter's sojourn in the house of the Gentile Cornelius. Nonetheless, they had to accept the divine directions given to both Peter and Cornelius. They concluded that the setting aside of the legal barriers between Jew and Gentile was an exceptional ordinance of God to indicate that the apostolic kerygma was also to be directed to the Gentiles. Only in ch 15 at the "Council" in Jerusalem does the evangelization of the Gentiles become the official position of the church leadership in Jerusalem.

**11, 3: You entered . . .** : alternatively, this could be punctuated as a question.

v Dt 17, 2; 2 Chr 19, 7; Jb 34, 19; Wis 6, 7; Rom 2, 11; Gal 2,6; Eph 6, 9; 1 Pt 1, 17. w Is 52, 7; Na 2, 1. x Mt 4, 12; Mk 1, 14; Lk 4, 14. y Is 61, 1; Lk 4, 18. z Lk 24, 41–43. a 1, 8; 3, 15; 17, 31; Lk 24, 48; Rom 14, 9; 2 Tm 4, 1. b 11, 15; 15, 8. c 8, 36. d 10, 11–20.

resembling a large sheet coming down, lowered
from the sky by its four corners, and it came to
me. [6]Looking intently into it, I observed and saw
the four-legged animals of the earth, the wild
beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. [7]I
also heard a voice say to me, 'Get up, Peter.
Slaughter and eat.' [8]But I said, 'Certainly not,
sir, because nothing profane or unclean has ever
entered my mouth.' [9]But a second time a voice
from heaven answered, 'What God has made
clean, you are not to call profane.' [10]This happened three times, and then everything was
drawn up again into the sky. [11]Just then three
men appeared at the house where we were, who
had been sent to me from Caesarea. [12]*The
Spirit told me to accompany them without
discriminating. These six brothers also went
with me, and we entered the man's house.
[13] [e]He related to us how he had seen [the] angel
standing in his house, saying, 'Send someone to
Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter,
[14]who will speak words to you by which you
and all your household will be saved.' [15] [f]As I
began to speak, the holy Spirit fell upon them as
it had upon us at the beginning, [16] [g]and I
remembered the word of the Lord, how he had
said, 'John baptized with water but you will be
baptized with the holy Spirit.' [17] [h]If then God
gave them the same gift he gave to us when we
came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who
was I to be able to hinder God?" [18]When they
heard this, they stopped objecting and glorified
God, saying, "God has then granted life-giving
repentance to the Gentiles too."

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**The Church at Antioch** [19] [i]*Now those who
had been scattered by the persecution that arose
because of Stephen went as far as Phoenicia,
Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no
one but Jews. [20]There were some Cypriots and
Cyrenians among them, however, who came to
Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks as
well, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. [21]The hand of
the Lord was with them and a great number
who believed turned to the Lord. [22]The news
about them reached the ears of the church in
Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas [to go] to
Antioch. [23]When he arrived and saw the grace
of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to
remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart,
[24]for he was a good man, filled with the holy
Spirit and faith. And a large number of people
was added to the Lord. [25]Then he went to
Tarsus to look for Saul, [26]*and when he had
found him he brought him to Antioch. For a
whole year they met with the church and taught
a large number of people, and it was in Antioch
that the disciples were first called Christians.

**The Prediction of Agabus** [27]*At that time
some prophets came down from Jerusalem to
Antioch, [28] [j]and one of them named Agabus
stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there
would be a severe famine all over the world, and
it happened under Claudius. [29] [k]So the disciples
determined that, according to ability, each
should send relief to the brothers who lived in
Judea. [30]*This they did, sending it to the presbyters in care of Barnabas and Saul.

## CHAPTER 12

### Herod's Persecution of the Christians

[1]*About that time King Herod laid hands upon

**11, 12: These six brothers:** companions from the Christian community of Joppa (see 10, 23).

**11, 19–26:** The Jewish Christian antipathy to the mixed community was reflected by the early missionaries generally. The few among them who entertained a different view succeeded in introducing Gentiles into the community at Antioch (in Syria). When the disconcerted Jerusalem community sent Barnabas to investigate, he was so favorably impressed by what he observed that he persuaded his friend Saul to participate in the Antioch mission.

**11, 26: Christians:** "Christians" is first applied to the members of the community at Antioch because the Gentile members of the community enable it to stand out clearly from Judaism.

**11, 27–30:** It is not clear whether the prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch to request help in view of the coming famine or whether they received this insight during their visit there. The former supposition seems more likely. Suetonius and Tacitus speak of famines during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54), while the Jewish historian Josephus mentions a famine in Judea in A.D. 46–48. Luke is interested, rather, in showing the charity of the Antiochene community toward the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem despite their differences on mixed communities.

**11, 30: Presbyters:** this is the same Greek word that elsewhere is translated "elders," primarily in reference to the Jewish community.

**12, 1–19:** Herod Agrippa ruled Judea A.D. 41–44. While Luke does not assign a motive for his execution of James and his intended execution of Peter, the broad background lies in Herod's support of Pharisaic Judaism. The Jewish Christians had lost the

e 10, 3–5.22.30–32. f 10, 44. g 1, 5; 19, 4; Lk 3, 16. h 15, 8–9. i 8, 1–4. j 21, 10. k 12,25.

some members of the church to harm them.
2*He had James, the brother of John, killed by
the sword, 3*and when he saw that this was
pleasing to the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter
also. (It was [the] feast of Unleavened Bread.)
4He had him taken into custody and put in
prison under the guard of four squads of four
soldiers each. He intended to bring him before
the people after Passover. 5 *l*Peter thus was being
kept in prison, but prayer by the church was
fervently being made to God on his behalf.

6On the very night before Herod was to bring
him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains,
was sleeping between two soldiers, while out-
side the door guards kept watch on the prison.
7Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him
and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on
the side and awakened him, saying, "Get up
quickly." The chains fell from his wrists. 8The
angel said to him, "Put on your belt and your
sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Put
on your cloak and follow me." 9So he followed
him out, not realizing that what was happening
through the angel was real; he thought he was
seeing a vision. 10They passed the first guard,
then the second, and came to the iron gate
leading out to the city, which opened for them
by itself. They emerged and made their way
down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him.
11Then Peter recovered his senses and said,
"Now I know for certain that [the] Lord sent his
angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod
and from all that the Jewish people had been
expecting." 12 *m*When he realized this, he went
to the house of Mary, the mother of John who is
called Mark, where there were many people
gathered in prayer. 13When he knocked on the
gateway door, a maid named Rhoda came to
answer it. 14She was so overjoyed when she
recognized Peter's voice that, instead of opening
the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter
was standing at the gate. 15They told her, "You
are out of your mind," but she insisted that it
was so. But they kept saying, "It is his angel."
16But Peter continued to knock, and when they
opened it, they saw him and were astounded.
17*He motioned to them with his hand to be
quiet and explained [to them] how the Lord had
led him out of the prison, and said, "Report this
to James and the brothers." Then he left and
went to another place. 18 *n*At daybreak there was
no small commotion among the soldiers over
what had become of Peter. 19Herod, after insti-
tuting a search but not finding him, ordered the
guards tried and executed. Then he left Judea to
spend some time in Caesarea.

**Herod's Death** 20*He had long been very
angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, who
now came to him in a body. After winning over
Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they sued for
peace because their country was supplied with
food from the king's territory. 21On an appointed
day, Herod, attired in royal robes, [and] seated on
the rostrum, addressed them publicly. 22The
assembled crowd cried out, "This is the voice of
a god, not of a man." 23At once the angel of the
Lord struck him down because he did not
ascribe the honor to God, and he was eaten by
worms and breathed his last. 24 *o*But the word of
God continued to spread and grow.

**Mission of Barnabas and Saul** 25 *p*After Bar-
nabas and Saul completed their relief mission,
they returned to Jerusalem, taking with them
John, who is called Mark.

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popularity they had had in Jerusalem (2, 47), perhaps because of suspicions against them traceable to the teaching of Stephen.

**12, 2: James, the brother of John:** this James, the son of Zebedee, was beheaded by Herod Agrippa ca. A.D. 44.

**12, 3.4: Feast of Unleavened Bread . . . Passover:** see the note on Lk 22, 1.

**12, 17: To James:** this James is not the son of Zebedee mentioned in v 2, but is James, the "brother of the Lord" (Gal 1, 19), who in chs 15 and 21 is presented as leader of the Jerusalem Christian community. **He left and went to another place:** the conjecture that Peter left for Rome at this time has nothing to recommend it. His chief responsibility was still the leadership of the Jewish Christian community in Palestine (see Gal 2, 7). The concept of the great missionary effort of the church was yet to come (see 13, 1–3).

**12, 20–23:** Josephus gives a similar account of Herod's death that occurred in A.D. 44. Early Christian tradition considered the manner of it to be a divine punishment upon his evil life. See 2 Kgs 19, 35 for the figure of the angel of the Lord in such a context.

**12, 25: They returned to Jerusalem:** many manuscripts read "from Jerusalem," since 11, 30 implies that Paul and Barnabas are already in Jerusalem. This present verse could refer to a return visit or subsequent relief mission.

*l* Jas 5, 16. *m* 12, 25; 15, 37. *n* 5, 22–24. *o* 6, 7. *p* 11,29–30.

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## CHAPTER 13

1 *Now there were in the church at Antioch
prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who
was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen
who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch,
and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord
and fasting, the holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me
Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have
called them." 3 Then, completing their fasting
and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent
them off.

**First Mission Begins in Cyprus** 4 *So they,
sent forth by the holy Spirit, went down to
Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus.
5 *When they arrived in Salamis, they pro-
claimed the word of God in the Jewish syna-
gogues. They had John also as their assistant.
6 *When they had traveled through the whole
island as far as Paphos, they met a magician
named Bar-Jesus who was a Jewish false prophet.
7 He was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, a
man of intelligence, who had summoned Barna-
bas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of
God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for that is what
his name means) opposed them in an attempt to
turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 *But
Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the holy
Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You
son of the devil, you enemy of all that is right,
full of every sort of deceit and fraud. Will you
not stop twisting the straight paths of [the] Lord?
11 Even now the hand of the Lord is upon you.
You will be blind, and unable to see the sun for a
time." Immediately a dark mist fell upon him,
and he went about seeking people to lead him by
the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had
happened, he came to believe, for he was
astonished by the teaching about the Lord.

**Paul's Arrival at Antioch in Pisidia** 13 [q] From
Paphos, Paul and his companions set sail and
arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. But John left them
and returned to Jerusalem. 14 They continued on
from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On
the sabbath they entered [into] the synagogue
and took their seats. 15 After the reading of the
law and the prophets, the synagogue officials
sent word to them, "My brothers, if one of you
has a word of exhortation for the people, please
speak."

**Paul's Address in the Synagogue** 16 *So Paul
got up, motioned with his hand, and said,
"Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-
fearing, listen. 17 [r] The God of this people Israel
chose our ancestors and exalted the people
during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With
uplifted arm he led them out of it 18 [s] *and for
about forty years he put up with them in the
desert. 19 [t] When he had destroyed seven nations
in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as
an inheritance 20 [u] *at the end of about four
hundred and fifty years. After these things he
provided judges up to Samuel [the] prophet.

13, 1–3: The impulse for the first missionary effort in Asia Minor is ascribed to the prophets of the Antiochene community, under the inspiration of the holy Spirit. Just as the Jerusalem community had earlier been the center of missionary activity, so too Antioch becomes the center from which the missionaries Barnabas and Saul are sent out.

13, 4—14, 27: The key event in Luke's account of the first missionary journey is the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch (13, 14–52). The Christian kerygma proclaimed by Paul in the synagogue was favorably received. Some Jews and "God-fearers" (see the note on 8, 26–40) became interested and invited the missionaries to speak again on the following sabbath (13, 42). By that time, however, the appearance of a large number of Gentiles from the city had so disconcerted the Jews that they became hostile toward the apostles (13, 44–50). This hostility of theirs appears in all three accounts of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts, the Jews of Iconium (14, 1–2) and Beroea (17, 11) being notable exceptions.

13, 5: **John:** that is, John Mark (see 12, 12.25).

13, 6: **A magician named Bar-Jesus who was a Jewish false prophet:** that is, he posed as a prophet. Again Luke takes the opportunity to dissociate Christianity from the magical acts of the time (7–11); see also 8, 18–24.

13, 9: **Saul, also known as Paul:** there is no reason to believe that his name was changed from Saul to Paul upon his conversion. The use of a double name, one Semitic (Saul), the other Greco-Roman (Paul), is well attested (cf 1, 23, Joseph Justus; 12, 12.25, John Mark).

13, 16–41: This is the first of several speeches of Paul to Jews proclaiming that the Christian church is the logical development of Pharisaic Judaism (see also 24, 10–21; 26, 2–23).

13, 16: **Who are God-fearing:** see the note on 8, 26–40.

13, 18: **Put up with:** some manuscripts read "sustained."

13, 20: **At the end of about four hundred and fifty years:** the manuscript tradition makes it uncertain whether the mention of four hundred and fifty years refers to the sojourn in Egypt before the Exodus, the wilderness period and the time of the conquest (see Ex 12, 40–41), as the translation here suggests, or to the time between the conquest and the time of Samuel, the period of the judges, if the text is read, "After these things, for about four hundred and fifty years, he provided judges."

q 15, 38. r Ex 6, 1.6; 12, 51. s Ex 16, 1.35; Nm 14, 34. t Dt 7, 1; Jos 14, 1–2. u Jgs 2, 16; 1 Sm 3, 20.

21 [v]Then they asked for a king. God gave them
Saul, son of Kish, a man from the tribe of
Benjamin, for forty years. 22 [w]Then he removed
him and raised up David as their king; of him he
testified, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man
after my own heart; he will carry out my every
wish.' 23 [x]From this man's descendants God,
according to his promise, has brought to Israel a
savior, Jesus. 24 [y]John heralded his coming by
proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the
people of Israel; 25 [z]and as John was completing
his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose
that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming
after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the
sandals of his feet.'

26 "My brothers, children of the family of
Abraham, and those others among you who are
God-fearing, to us this word of salvation has
been sent. 27 The inhabitants of Jerusalem and
their leaders failed to recognize him, and by
condemning him they fulfilled the oracles of the
prophets that are read sabbath after sabbath.
28 [a]For even though they found no grounds for a
death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him
put to death, 29 [b]and when they had accom-
plished all that was written about him, they took
him down from the tree and placed him in a
tomb. 30 [c]But God raised him from the dead,
31 [d]*and for many days he appeared to those
who had come up with him from Galilee to
Jerusalem. These are [now] his witnesses before
the people. 32 We ourselves are proclaiming this
good news to you that what God promised our
ancestors 33 [e]he has brought to fulfillment for us,
[their] children, by raising up Jesus, as it is
written in the second psalm, 'You are my son;
this day I have begotten you.' 34 [f]And that he
raised him from the dead never to return to
corruption he declared in this way, 'I shall give
you the benefits assured to David.' 35 [g]That is
why he also says in another psalm, 'You will not
suffer your holy one to see corruption.' 36 [h]Now
David, after he had served the will of God in his
lifetime, fell asleep, was gathered to his ances-
tors, and did see corruption. 37 But the one
whom God raised up did not see corruption.
38 *You must know, my brothers, that through
him forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to
you, [and] in regard to everything from which
you could not be justified under the law of
Moses, 39 [i]in him every believer is justified. 40 Be
careful, then, that what was said in the prophets
not come about:

41 [j]'Look on, you scoffers,
be amazed and disappear.
For I am doing a work in your days,
a work that you will never believe even if
someone tells you.' "

42 As they were leaving, they invited them to
speak on these subjects the following sabbath.
43 After the congregation had dispersed, many
Jews and worshipers who were converts to
Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke
to them and urged them to remain faithful to the
grace of God.

**Address to the Gentiles** 44 On the following
sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear
the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the
crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with
violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.
46 [k]*Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly

**13, 31:** The theme of the Galilean witnesses is a major one in the Gospel of Luke and in Acts and is used to signify the continuity between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the church and to guarantee the fidelity of the church's teachings to the words of Jesus.

**13, 38–39: Justified:** the verb is the same as that used in Paul's letters to speak of the experience of justification and, as in Paul, is here connected with the term "to have faith" ("every believer"). But this seems the only passage about Paul in Acts where justification is mentioned. In Lucan fashion it is paralleled with "forgiveness of sins" (a theme at 2, 38; 3, 19; 5, 31; 10, 43) based on Jesus' resurrection (37) rather than his cross, and is put negatively (38). Therefore, some would translate, "in regard to everything from which you could not be acquitted . . . every believer is acquitted."

**13, 46:** The refusal to believe frustrates God's plan for his chosen people; however, no adverse judgment is made here concerning their ultimate destiny. Again, Luke, in the words of Paul, speaks of the priority of Israel in the plan for salvation (see 10, 36).

v 1 Sm 8, 5.19; 9, 16; 10, 1.20–21.24; 11, 15. w 1 Sm 13, 14; 16, 12–13; Ps 89, 20–21. x Is 11, 1. y Mt 3, 1–2; Mk 1, 4–5; Lk 3, 2–3. z Mt 3, 11; Mk 1, 7; Lk 3, 16; Jn 1, 20.27. a Mt 27, 20.22–23; Mk 15, 13–14; Lk 23, 4.14–15.21–23; Jn 19, 4–6.15. b Mt 27, 59–60; Mk 15, 46; Lk 23, 53; Jn 19, 38.41–42. c 2, 24.32; 3, 15; 4, 10; 17, 31. d 1, 3.8; 10, 39.41; Mt 28, 8–10.16–20; Mk 16, 9.12–20; Lk 24, 13–53; Jn 20, 11–29; 21, 1–23. e Ps 2, 7. f Is 55, 3. g Ps 16, 10. h 2, 29; 1 Kgs 2, 10. i Rom 3, 20. j Hb 1, 5. k 3, 26; Rom 1, 16.

and said, "It was necessary that the word of God
be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and
condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life,
we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 [l]For so the Lord
has commanded us, 'I have made you a light to
the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of
salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

48The Gentiles were delighted when they
heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All
who were destined for eternal life came to
believe, 49and the word of the Lord continued to
spread through the whole region. 50The Jews,
however, incited the women of prominence
who were worshipers and the leading men of
the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and
Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory.
51 [m]*So they shook the dust from their feet in
protest against them and went to Iconium. 52The
disciples were filled with joy and the holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 11–14
See RG
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**Paul and Barnabas at Iconium** 1In Iconium
they entered the Jewish synagogue together and
spoke in such a way that a great number of both
Jews and Greeks came to believe, 2although the
disbelieving Jews stirred up and poisoned the
minds of the Gentiles against the brothers. 3 [n]So
they stayed for a considerable period, speaking
out boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the word
about his grace by granting signs and wonders to
occur through their hands. 4The people of the
city were divided: some were with the Jews;
others, with the apostles. 5 [o]When there was an
attempt by both the Gentiles and the Jews,
together with their leaders, to attack and stone
them, 6they realized it and fled to the Lycaonian
cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding
countryside, 7where they continued to proclaim
the good news.

**Paul and Barnabas at Lystra** 8*At Lystra
there was a crippled man, lame from birth, who
had never walked. 9He listened to Paul speaking,
who looked intently at him, saw that he had the
faith to be healed, 10and called out in a loud
voice, "Stand up straight on your feet." He
jumped up and began to walk about. 11 [p]When
the crowds saw what Paul had done, they cried
out in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to
us in human form." 12*They called Barnabas
"Zeus" and Paul "Hermes," because he was the
chief speaker. 13And the priest of Zeus, whose
temple was at the entrance to the city, brought
oxen and garlands to the gates, for he together
with the people intended to offer sacrifice.

14*The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their
garments when they heard this and rushed out
into the crowd, shouting, 15 [q]*"Men, why are
you doing this? We are of the same nature as
you, human beings. We proclaim to you good
news that you should turn from these idols to
the living God, 'who made heaven and earth and
sea and all that is in them.' 16 [r]In past generations he allowed all Gentiles to go their own
ways; 17 [s]yet, in bestowing his goodness, he did
not leave himself without witness, for he gave
you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and
filled you with nourishment and gladness for
your hearts." 18Even with these words, they
scarcely restrained the crowds from offering
sacrifice to them.

19 [t]However, some Jews from Antioch and
Iconium arrived and won over the crowds. They
stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city,
supposing that he was dead. 20But when the
disciples gathered around him, he got up and
entered the city. On the following day he left
with Barnabas for Derbe.

**13, 51:** See the note on Lk 9, 5.

**14, 8–18:** In an effort to convince his hearers that the divine power works through his word, Paul cures the cripple. However, the pagan tradition of the occasional appearance of gods among human beings leads the people astray in interpreting the miracle. The incident reveals the cultural difficulties with which the church had to cope. Note the similarity of the miracle worked here by Paul to the one performed by Peter in 3, 2–10.

**14, 12: Zeus . . . Hermes:** in Greek religion, Zeus was the chief of the Olympian gods, the "father of gods and men"; Hermes was a son of Zeus and was usually identified as the herald and messenger of the gods.

**14, 14: Tore their garments:** a gesture of protest.

**14, 15–17:** This is the first speech of Paul to Gentiles recorded by Luke in Acts (cf 17, 22–31). Rather than showing how Christianity is the logical outgrowth of Judaism, as he does in speeches before Jews, Luke says that God excuses past Gentile ignorance and then presents a natural theology arguing for the recognition of God's existence and presence through his activity in natural phenomena.

l Is 49, 6. m Mt 10, 14; Mk 6, 11; Lk 9, 5; 10, 11. n Mk 16, 17–20. o 2 Tm 3, 11. p 28, 6. q 3, 12; 10, 26; Ex 20, 11; Ps 146, 6. r 17, 30. s Wis 13, 1. t 2 Cor 11, 25; 2 Tm 3, 11.

**End of the First Mission** [21]After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a
considerable number of disciples, they returned
to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. [22] [u]They
strengthened the spirits of the disciples and ex-
horted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is
necessary for us to undergo many hardships to
enter the kingdom of God." [23]*They appointed
presbyters for them in each church and, with
prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord
in whom they had put their faith. [24]Then they
traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia.
[25]After proclaiming the word at Perga they went
down to Attalia. [26] [v]From there they sailed to Anti-
och, where they had been commended to the
grace of God for the work they had now accom-
plished. [27]And when they arrived, they called the
church together and reported what God had done
with them and how he had opened the door of
faith to the Gentiles. [28]Then they spent no little
time with the disciples.

## CHAPTER 15

**Council of Jerusalem** [1] [w x]*Some who had
come down from Judea were instructing the
brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according
to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved."
[2]Because there arose no little dissension and
debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was
decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the
others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles
and presbyters about this question. [3]They were
sent on their journey by the church, and passed
through Phoenicia and Samaria telling of the
conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy
to all the brothers. [4]When they arrived in
Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church,
as well as by the apostles and the presbyters, and
they reported what God had done with them.
[5]But some from the party of the Pharisees who
had become believers stood up and said, "It is
necessary to circumcise them and direct them to
observe the Mosaic law."

[6]*The apostles and the presbyters met to-
gether to see about this matter. [7] [y]*After much
debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to
them, "My brothers, you are well aware that
from early days God made his choice among you
that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear
the word of the gospel and believe. [8] [z]And God,
who knows the heart, bore witness by granting
them the holy Spirit just as he did us. [9] [a]He made
no distinction between us and them, for by faith
he purified their hearts. [10] [b]Why, then, are you
now putting God to the test by placing on the
shoulders of the disciples a yoke that neither our
ancestors nor we have been able to bear?
[11] [c]*On the contrary, we believe that we are
saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the
same way as they." [12]The whole assembly fell
silent, and they listened while Paul and Barnabas
described the signs and wonders God had
worked among the Gentiles through them.

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**James on Dietary Law** [13]*After they had
fallen silent, James responded, "My brothers,

**14, 23: They appointed presbyters:** the communities are given their own religious leaders by the traveling missionaries. The structure in these churches is patterned on the model of the Jerusalem community (11, 30; 15, 2.5.22; 21, 18).

**15, 1–35:** The Jerusalem "Council" marks the official rejection of the rigid view that Gentile converts were obliged to observe the Mosaic law completely. From here to the end of Acts, Paul and the Gentile mission become the focus of Luke's writing.

**15, 1–5:** When some of the converted Pharisees of Jerusalem discover the results of the first missionary journey of Paul, they urge that the Gentiles be taught to follow the Mosaic law. Recognizing the authority of the Jerusalem church, Paul and Barnabas go there to settle the question of whether Gentiles can embrace a form of Christianity that does not include this obligation.

**15, 6–12:** The gathering is possibly the same as that recalled by Paul in Gal 2, 1–10. Note that in v 2 it is only the apostles and presbyters, a small group, with whom Paul and Barnabas are to meet. Here Luke gives the meeting a public character because he wishes to emphasize its doctrinal significance (see 22).

**15, 7–11:** Paul's refusal to impose the Mosaic law on the Gentile Christians is supported by Peter on the ground that within his own experience God bestowed the holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household without preconditions concerning the adoption of the Mosaic law (see 10, 44–47).

**15, 11:** In support of Paul, Peter formulates the fundamental meaning of the gospel: that all are invited to be saved through faith in the power of Christ.

**15, 13–35:** Some scholars think that this apostolic decree suggested by James, the immediate leader of the Jerusalem community, derives from another historical occasion than the meeting in question. This seems to be the case if the meeting is the same as the one related in Gal 2, 1–10. According to that account, nothing was imposed upon Gentile Christians in respect to Mosaic law; whereas the decree instructs Gentile Christians of mixed communities to abstain from meats sacrificed to idols and from blood-meats, and to avoid marriage within forbidden degrees of consanguinity and affinity (Lv 18), all of which practices were especially abhorrent to Jews. Luke seems to have telescoped two originally independent incidents here: the first a Jerusalem "Coun-

u 1 Thes 3, 3. v 13, 1–3. w Gal 2, 1–9. x Lv 12, 3; Gal 5, 2. y 10, 27–43. z 10, 44–48. a 10, 34–35. b Mt 23, 4; Gal 5, 1. c Gal 2, 16; 3, 11; Eph 2, 5–8.

listen to me. 14 *Symeon has described how God
first concerned himself with acquiring from
among the Gentiles a people for his name. 15 The
words of the prophets agree with this, as is
written:

16 [d]'After this I shall return
and rebuild the fallen hut of David;
from its ruins I shall rebuild it
and raise it up again,
17 so that the rest of humanity may seek out the
Lord,
even all the Gentiles on whom my name is
invoked.
Thus says the Lord who accomplishes these
things,
18 known from of old.'

19 [e]It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to
stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God,
20 [f]but tell them by letter to avoid pollution from
idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled
animals, and blood. 21 For Moses, for generations
now, has had those who proclaim him in every
town, as he has been read in the synagogues
every sabbath."

**Letter of the Apostles** 22 Then the apostles
and presbyters, in agreement with the whole
church, decided to choose representatives and to
send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.
The ones chosen were Judas, who was called
Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers.
23 This is the letter delivered by them: "The
apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the
brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile
origin: greetings. 24 Since we have heard that
some of our number [who went out] without any
mandate from us have upset you with their
teachings and disturbed your peace of mind,
25 we have with one accord decided to choose
representatives and to send them to you along
with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 who
have dedicated their lives to the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ. 27 So we are sending Judas and
Silas who will also convey this same message by
word of mouth: 28 [g]'It is the decision of the holy
Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden
beyond these necessities, 29 [h]namely, to abstain
from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from
meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful
marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be
doing what is right. Farewell.' "

**Delegates at Antioch** 30 And so they were
sent on their journey. Upon their arrival in
Antioch they called the assembly together and
delivered the letter. 31 When the people read it,
they were delighted with the exhortation. 32 Ju-
das and Silas, who were themselves prophets,
exhorted and strengthened the brothers with
many words. 33 After they had spent some time
there, they were sent off with greetings of
peace from the brothers to those who had
commissioned them. [34]* 35 But Paul and Barna-
bas remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaim-
ing with many others the word of the Lord.

## V: The Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth

**Paul and Barnabas Separate** 36 *After some
time, Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us make
a return visit to see how the brothers are getting

cil" that dealt with the question of circumcision, and the second a Jerusalem decree dealing mainly with Gentile observance of dietary laws (see 21, 25 where Paul seems to be learning of the decree for the first time).

**15, 14: Symeon:** elsewhere in Acts he is called either Peter or Simon. The presence of the name Symeon here suggests that, in the source Luke is using for this part of the Jerusalem "Council" incident, the name may have originally referred to someone other than Peter (see 13, 1 where the Antiochene Symeon Niger is mentioned). As the text now stands, however, it is undoubtedly a reference to Simon Peter (7).

**15, 34:** Some manuscripts add, in various wordings, "But Silas decided to remain there."

**15, 36—18, 22:** This continuous narrative recounts Paul's second missionary journey. On the internal evidence of the Lucan account, it lasted about three years. Paul first visited the communities he had established on his first journey (16, 1–5), then pushed on into Macedonia, where he established communities at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea (16, 7—17, 5). To escape the hostility of the Jews of Thessalonica, he left for Greece and while resident in Athens attempted, without success, to establish an effective Christian community there. From Athens he proceeded to Corinth and, after a stay of a year and a half, returned to Antioch by way of Ephesus and Jerusalem (17, 16—18, 22). Luke does not concern himself with the structure or statistics of the communities but aims to show the general progress of the gospel in the Gentile world as well as its continued failure to take root in the Jewish community.

d Am 9, 11–12. e 15, 28–29; 21, 25. f Gn 9, 4; Lv 3, 17; 17, 10–14. g 15, 19–20. h Gn 9, 4; Lv 3, 17; 17, 10–14.

on in all the cities where we proclaimed the
word of the Lord." [37]Barnabas wanted to take
with them also John, who was called Mark,
[38] *j*but Paul insisted that they should not take
with them someone who had deserted them at
Pamphylia and who had not continued with
them in their work. [39]So sharp was their dis-
agreement that they separated. Barnabas took
Mark and sailed to Cyprus. [40]But Paul chose
Silas and departed after being commended by
the brothers to the grace of the Lord. [41]He
traveled through Syria and Cilicia bringing
strength to the churches.

## CHAPTER 16

**Paul in Lycaonia: Timothy** [1] *j*He reached
[also] Derbe and Lystra where there was a
disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish
woman who was a believer, but his father was a
Greek. [2] *k*The brothers in Lystra and Iconium
spoke highly of him, [3]*and Paul wanted him to
come along with him. On account of the Jews of
that region, Paul had him circumcised, for they
all knew that his father was a Greek. [4]As they
traveled from city to city, they handed on to the
people for observance the decisions reached by
the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem. [5]Day
after day the churches grew stronger in faith and
increased in number.

**Through Asia Minor** [6]They traveled through
the Phrygian and Galatian territory because they
had been prevented by the holy Spirit from
preaching the message in the province of Asia.
[7]*When they came to Mysia, they tried to go on
into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow
them, [8]so they crossed through Mysia and came
down to Troas. [9]During [the] night Paul had a
vision. A Macedonian stood before him and
implored him with these words, "Come over to
Macedonia and help us." [10]*When he had seen
the vision, we sought passage to Macedonia at
once, concluding that God had called us to
proclaim the good news to them.

**Into Europe** [11]*We set sail from Troas, making
a straight run for Samothrace, and on the next
day to Neapolis, [12]and from there to Philippi, a
leading city in that district of Macedonia and a
Roman colony. We spent some time in that city.
[13]On the sabbath we went outside the city gate
along the river where we thought there would
be a place of prayer. We sat and spoke with the
women who had gathered there. [14]*One of
them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple
cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of
God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to
pay attention to what Paul was saying. [15]After
she and her household had been baptized, she
offered us an invitation, "If you consider me a
believer in the Lord, come and stay at my
home," and she prevailed on us.

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**Imprisonment at Philippi** [16]*As we were go-
ing to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl
with an oracular spirit, who used to bring a large
profit to her owners through her fortune-telling.
[17]She began to follow Paul and us, shouting,
"These people are slaves of the Most High God,
who proclaim to you a way of salvation." [18]She
did this for many days. Paul became annoyed,
turned, and said to the spirit, "I command you in
the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."
Then it came out at that moment.

[19]When her owners saw that their hope of
profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and
dragged them to the public square before the

**16, 3: Paul had him circumcised:** he did this in order that Timothy might be able to associate with the Jews and so perform a ministry among them. Paul did not object to the Jewish Christians' adherence to the law. But he insisted that the law could not be imposed on the Gentiles. Paul himself lived in accordance with the law, or as exempt from the law, according to particular circumstances (see 1 Cor 9, 19–23).

**16, 7: The Spirit of Jesus:** this is an unusual formulation in Luke's writings. The parallelism with v 6 indicates its meaning, the holy Spirit.

**16, 10–17:** This is the first of the so-called "we-sections" in Acts, where Luke writes as one of Paul's companions. The other passages are 20, 5–15; 21, 1–18; 27, 1—28, 16. Scholars debate whether Luke may not have used the first person plural simply as a literary device to lend color to the narrative. The realism of the narrative, however, lends weight to the argument that the "we" includes Luke or another companion of Paul whose data Luke used as a source.

**16, 11–40:** The church at Philippi became a flourishing community to which Paul addressed one of his letters (see Introduction to the Letter to the Philippians).

**16, 14: A worshiper of God:** a "God-fearer." See the note on 8, 26–40.

**16, 16: With an oracular spirit:** literally, "with a Python spirit." The Python was the serpent or dragon that guarded the Delphic oracle. It later came to designate a "spirit that pronounced oracles" and also a ventriloquist who, it was thought, had such a spirit in the belly.

i 13, 13. j 1 Tm 1, 2; 2 Tm 1, 5. k Phil 2, 20.

local authorities. 20*They brought them before
the magistrates and said, "These people are Jews
and are disturbing our city 21and are advocating
customs that are not lawful for us Romans to
adopt or practice." 22 *l*The crowd joined in the
attack on them, and the magistrates had them
stripped and ordered them to be beaten with
rods. 23After inflicting many blows on them,
they threw them into prison and instructed the
jailer to guard them securely. 24When he re-
ceived these instructions, he put them in the
innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake.

**Deliverance from Prison** 25About midnight,
while Paul and Silas were praying and singing
hymns to God as the prisoners listened, 26there
was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the
foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew
open, and the chains of all were pulled loose.
27When the jailer woke up and saw the prison
doors wide open, he drew [his] sword and was
about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners
had escaped. 28But Paul shouted out in a loud
voice, "Do no harm to yourself; we are all here."
29He asked for a light and rushed in and,
trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul
and Silas. 30Then he brought them out and said,
"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31And they
said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your
household will be saved." 32So they spoke the
word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his
house. 33He took them in at that hour of the
night and bathed their wounds; then he and all
his family were baptized at once. 34He brought
them up into his house and provided a meal and
with his household rejoiced at having come to
faith in God.

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35*But when it was day, the magistrates sent
the lictors with the order, "Release those men."
36The jailer reported the[se] words to Paul, "The
magistrates have sent orders that you be re-
leased. Now, then, come out and go in peace."
37 *m**But Paul said to them, "They have beaten
us publicly, even though we are Roman citizens
and have not been tried, and have thrown us
into prison. And now, are they going to release
us secretly? By no means. Let them come
themselves and lead us out." 38 *n*The lictors
reported these words to the magistrates, and
they became alarmed when they heard that they
were Roman citizens. 39So they came and pla-
cated them, and led them out and asked that
they leave the city. 40When they had come out
of the prison, they went to Lydia's house where
they saw and encouraged the brothers, and then
they left.

## CHAPTER 17

**Paul in Thessalonica** 1 *o*When they took the
road through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they
reached Thessalonica, where there was a syna-
gogue of the Jews. 2Following his usual custom,
Paul joined them, and for three sabbaths he
entered into discussions with them from the
scriptures, 3 *p*expounding and demonstrating
that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the
dead, and that "This is the Messiah, Jesus,
whom I proclaim to you." 4Some of them were
convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so, too, a
great number of Greeks who were worshipers,
and not a few of the prominent women. 5 *q*But
the Jews became jealous and recruited some
worthless men loitering in the public square,
formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil. They
marched on the house of Jason, intending to
bring them before the people's assembly.
6*When they could not find them, they dragged
Jason and some of the brothers before the city
magistrates, shouting, "These people who have
been creating a disturbance all over the world
have now come here, 7 *r**and Jason has wel-

**16, 20: Magistrates:** in Greek, **stratēgoi,** the popular designation of the **duoviri,** the highest officials of the Roman colony of Philippi.

**16, 35: The lictors:** the equivalent of police officers, among whose duties were the apprehension and punishment of criminals.

**16, 37:** Paul's Roman citizenship granted him special privileges in regard to criminal process. Roman law forbade under severe penalty the beating of Roman citizens (see also 22, 25).

**17, 6–7:** The accusations against Paul and his companions echo the charges brought against Jesus in Lk 23, 2.

**17, 7: There is another king, Jesus:** a distortion into a political sense of the apostolic proclamation of Jesus and the kingdom of God (see 8, 12).

l 2 Cor 11, 25; Phil 1, 30; 1 Thes 2, 2. m 22, 25. n 22, 29. o 1 Thes 2, 1–2. p 3, 18; Lk 24, 25–26.46. q Rom 16, 21. r Lk 23, 2; Jn 19, 12–15.

comed them. They all act in opposition to the
decrees of Caesar and claim instead that there is
another king, Jesus." [8]They stirred up the crowd
and the city magistrates who, upon hearing
these charges, [9]took a surety payment from
Jason and the others before releasing them.

**Paul in Beroea** [10]The brothers immediately
sent Paul and Silas to Beroea during the night.
Upon arrival they went to the synagogue of the
Jews. [11] [s]These Jews were more fair-minded than
those in Thessalonica, for they received the
word with all willingness and examined the
scriptures daily to determine whether these
things were so. [12]Many of them became believers, as did not a few of the influential Greek
women and men. [13]But when the Jews of
Thessalonica learned that the word of God had
now been proclaimed by Paul in Beroea also,
they came there too to cause a commotion and
stir up the crowds. [14] [t]So the brothers at once
sent Paul on his way to the seacoast, while Silas
and Timothy remained behind. [15]After Paul's
escorts had taken him to Athens, they came
away with instructions for Silas and Timothy to
join him as soon as possible.

**Paul in Athens** [16]*While Paul was waiting for
them in Athens, he grew exasperated at the sight
of the city full of idols. [17]So he debated in the
synagogue with the Jews and with the worshipers, and daily in the public square with whoever
happened to be there. [18]*Even some of the
Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him
in discussion. Some asked, "What is this scavenger trying to say?" Others said, "He sounds like a
promoter of foreign deities," because he was
preaching about 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection.'
[19] [u]*They took him and led him to the Areopagus and said, "May we learn what this new
teaching is that you speak of? [20]For you bring
some strange notions to our ears; we should like
to know what these things mean." [21]Now all the
Athenians as well as the foreigners residing there
used their time for nothing else but telling or
hearing something new.

**Paul's Speech at the Areopagus** [22]*Then
Paul stood up at the Areopagus and said:

"You Athenians, I see that in every respect
you are very religious. [23]*For as I walked around
looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, 'To an Unknown God.'
What therefore you unknowingly worship, I
proclaim to you. [24] [v]The God who made the
world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and
earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by
human hands, [25]nor is he served by human
hands because he needs anything. Rather it is he
who gives to everyone life and breath and
everything. [26]*He made from one the whole

**17, 16–21:** Paul's presence in Athens sets the stage for the great discourse before a Gentile audience in vv 22–31. Although Athens was a politically insignificant city at this period, it still lived on the glories of its past and represented the center of Greek culture. The setting describes the conflict between Christian preaching and Hellenistic philosophy.

**17, 18: Epicurean and Stoic philosophers:** for the followers of Epicurus (342–271 B.C.), the goal of life was happiness attained through sober reasoning and the searching out of motives for all choice and avoidance. The Stoics were followers of Zeno, a younger contemporary of Alexander the Great. Zeno and his followers believed in a type of pantheism that held that the spark of divinity was present in all reality and that, in order to be free, each person must live "according to nature." **This scavenger:** literally, "seed-picker," as of a bird that picks up grain. The word is later used of scrap collectors and of people who take other people's ideas and propagate them as if they were their own. **Promoter of foreign deities:** according to Xenophon, Socrates was accused of promoting new deities. The accusation against Paul echoes the charge against Socrates. **'Jesus' and 'Resurrection':** the Athenians are presented as misunderstanding Paul from the outset; they think he is preaching about Jesus and a goddess named **Anastasis,** i.e., Resurrection.

**17, 19: To the Areopagus:** the "Areopagus" refers either to the Hill of Ares west of the Acropolis or to the Council of Athens, which at one time met on the hill but which at this time assembled in the Royal Colonnade (**Stoa Basileios**).

**17, 22–31:** In Paul's appearance at the Areopagus he preaches his climactic speech to Gentiles in the cultural center of the ancient world. The speech is more theological than christological. Paul's discourse appeals to the Greek world's belief in divinity as responsible for the origin and existence of the universe. It contests the common belief in a multiplicity of gods supposedly exerting their powers through their images. It acknowledges that the attempt to find God is a constant human endeavor. It declares, further, that God is the judge of the human race, that the time of the judgment has been determined, and that it will be executed through a man whom God raised from the dead. The speech reflects sympathy with pagan religiosity, handles the subject of idol worship gently, and appeals for a new examination of divinity, not from the standpoint of creation but from the standpoint of judgment.

**17, 23: 'To an Unknown God':** ancient authors such as Pausanias, Philostratus, and Tertullian speak of Athenian altars with no specific dedication as altars of "unknown gods" or "nameless altars."

**17, 26: From one:** many manuscripts read "from one blood." **Fixed . . . seasons:** or "fixed limits to the epochs."

s Jn 5, 39. t 1 Thes 3, 1–2. u 1 Cor 1, 22. v 7, 48–50; Gn 1, 1; 1 Kgs 8, 27; Is 42, 5.

human race to dwell on the entire surface of the
earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the
boundaries of their regions, 27 [w]so that people
might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and
find him, though indeed he is not far from any
one of us. 28 *For 'In him we live and move and
have our being,' as even some of your poets have
said, 'For we too are his offspring.' 29 [x]Since
therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought
not to think that the divinity is like an image
fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human
art and imagination. 30 God has overlooked the
times of ignorance, but now he demands that all
people everywhere repent 31 [y]because he has
established a day on which he will 'judge the
world with justice' through a man he has
appointed, and he has provided confirmation for
all by raising him from the dead."

32 When they heard about resurrection of the
dead, some began to scoff, but others said, "We
should like to hear you on this some other time."
33 And so Paul left them. 34 But some did join
him, and became believers. Among them were
Dionysius, a member of the Court of the Areopa-
gus, a woman named Damaris, and others with
them.

## CHAPTER 18

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**Paul in Corinth** 1 After this he left Athens and
went to Corinth. 2 [z]*There he met a Jew named
Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently
come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because
Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome.
He went to visit them 3 and, because he prac-
ticed the same trade, stayed with them and
worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.
4 Every sabbath, he entered into discussions in
the synagogue, attempting to convince both
Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy came down from
Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally
with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews
that the Messiah was Jesus. 6 [a]*When they
opposed him and reviled him, he shook out his
garments and said to them, "Your blood be on
your heads! I am clear of responsibility. From
now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 [b]*So he left
there and went to a house belonging to a man
named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God; his
house was next to a synagogue. 8 [c]*Crispus, the
synagogue official, came to believe in the Lord
along with his entire household, and many of the
Corinthians who heard believed and were bap-
tized. 9 [d]One night in a vision the Lord said to
Paul, "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do
not be silent, 10 for I am with you. No one will
attack and harm you, for I have many people in
this city." 11 He settled there for a year and a half
and taught the word of God among them.

**Accusations before Gallio** 12 *But when Gal-
lio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up
together against Paul and brought him to the
tribunal, 13 *saying, "This man is inducing peo-
ple to worship God contrary to the law."
14 When Paul was about to reply, Gallio spoke to
the Jews, "If it were a matter of some crime or
malicious fraud, I should with reason hear the
complaint of you Jews; 15 but since it is a
question of arguments over doctrine and titles
and your own law, see to it yourselves. I do not
wish to be a judge of such matters." 16 And he
drove them away from the tribunal. 17 They all
seized Sosthenes, the synagogue official, and

**17, 28: 'In him we live and move and have our being':** some scholars understand this saying to be based on an earlier saying of Epimenides of Knossos (6th century B.C.). **'For we too are his offspring':** here Paul is quoting Aratus of Soli, a third-century B.C. poet from Cilicia.

**18, 2: Aquila . . . Priscilla:** both may already have been Christians at the time of their arrival in Corinth (see 26). According to 1 Cor 16, 19, their home became a meeting place for Christians. **Claudius:** the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome ca. A.D. 40. The Roman historian Suetonius gives as reason for the expulsion disturbances among the Jews "at the instigation of Chrestos," probably meaning disputes about the messiahship of Jesus.

**18, 6: Shook out his garments:** a gesture indicating Paul's repudiation of his mission to the Jews there; cf 28, 17–31.

**18, 7: A worshiper of God:** see the note on 8, 26–40.

**18, 8: Crispus:** in 1 Cor 1, 14, Paul mentions that Crispus was one of the few he himself baptized at Corinth.

**18, 12: When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia:** Gallio's proconsulship in Achaia is dated to A.D. 51–52 from an inscription discovered at Delphi. This has become an important date in establishing a chronology of the life and missionary work of Paul.

**18, 13: Contrary to the law:** Gallio (15) understands this to be a problem of Jewish, not Roman, law.

w Jer 23, 23; Wis 13, 6; Rom 1, 19. x 19, 26; Is 40, 18–20; 44, 10–17; Rom 1, 22–23. y 10, 42. z Rom 16, 3. a 13, 51; Mt 10, 14; 27, 24–25; Mk 6, 11; Lk 9, 5; 10, 10–11. b 13, 46–47; 28, 28. c 1 Cor 1, 14. d Jer 1, 8.

assembly, [40]*for, as it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's conduct. There is no cause for it. We shall [not] be able to give a reason for this demonstration." With these words he dismissed the assembly.

## CHAPTER 20

**Journey to Macedonia and Greece** [1] [m]When the disturbance was over, Paul had the disciples summoned and, after encouraging them, he bade them farewell and set out on his journey to Macedonia. [2]As he traveled throughout those regions, he provided many words of encouragement for them. Then he arrived in Greece, [3]where he stayed for three months. But when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return by way of Macedonia.

**Return to Troas** [4] [n]Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea, accompanied him, as did Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia [5] [o]*who went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. [6]*We sailed from Philippi after the feast of Unleavened Bread, and rejoined them five days later in Troas, where we spent a week.

**Eutychus Restored to Life** [7]*On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day, and he kept on speaking until midnight. [8]There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were gathered, [9]and a young man named Eutychus who was sitting on the window sill was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. Once overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and when he was picked up, he was dead. [10] [p]*Paul went down, threw himself upon him, and said as he embraced him, "Don't be alarmed; there is life in him." [11]Then he returned upstairs, broke the bread, and ate; after a long conversation that lasted until daybreak, he departed. [12]And they took the boy away alive and were immeasurably comforted.

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**Journey to Miletus** [13]We went ahead to the ship and set sail for Assos where we were to take Paul on board, as he had arranged, since he was going overland. [14]When he met us in Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. [15]We sailed away from there on the next day and reached a point off Chios, and a day later we reached Samos, and on the following day we arrived at Miletus. [16]*Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order not to lose time in the province of Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if at all possible, for the day of Pentecost.

**Paul's Farewell Speech at Miletus** [17]From Miletus he had the presbyters of the church at Ephesus summoned. [18]When they came to him, he addressed them, "You know how I lived among you the whole time from the day I first came to the province of Asia. [19]I served the Lord with all humility and with the tears and trials that came to me because of the plots of the Jews, [20]and I did not at all shrink from telling you what was for your benefit, or from teaching you in public or in your homes. [21]I earnestly bore witness for both Jews and Greeks to repentance before God and to faith in our Lord Jesus. [22]But now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. What will happen to me there I do not know, [23] [q]except that in one city after another the holy Spirit has been warning me that

**19, 40:** Some manuscripts omit the negative in **[not] be able,** making the meaning, "There is no cause for which we shall be able to give a reason for this demonstration."

**20, 5:** The second "we-section" of Acts begins here. See the note on 16, 10–17.

**20, 6: Feast of Unleavened Bread:** see the note on Lk 22, 1.

**20, 7: The first day of the week:** the day after the sabbath and the first day of the Jewish week, apparently chosen originally by the Jerusalem community for the celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist in order to relate it to the resurrection of Christ.

**20, 10:** The action of Paul in throwing himself upon the dead boy recalls that of Elijah in 1 Kgs 17, 21 where the son of the widow of Zarephath is revived and that of Elisha in 2 Kgs 4, 34 where the Shunamite woman's son is restored to life.

**20, 16–35:** Apparently aware of difficulties at Ephesus and neighboring areas, Paul calls the presbyters together at Miletus, about thirty miles from Ephesus. He reminds them of his dedication to the gospel (18–21), speaks of what he is about to suffer for the gospel (22–27), and admonishes them to guard the community against false prophets, sure to arise upon his departure (28–31). He concludes by citing a saying of Jesus (35) not recorded in the gospel tradition. Luke presents this farewell to the Ephesian presbyters as Paul's last will and testament.

m 1 Cor 16, 1. n Rom 16, 21. o 21, 29; 2 Tm 4, 20. p 1 Kgs 17, 17–24; 2 Kgs 4, 30–37; Mt 9, 24; Mk 5, 39; Lk 8, 52. q 9, 16.

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imprisonment and hardships await me. 24 [r]Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace.

25 "But now I know that none of you to whom I preached the kingdom during my travels will ever see my face again. 26 And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, 27 for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God. 28 [s]*Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood. 29 [t]I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. 30 [u]And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. 31 [v]So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are consecrated. 33 I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 [w]You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. 35 [x]In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

36 When he had finished speaking he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 They were all weeping loudly as they threw their arms around Paul and kissed him, 38 for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

## CHAPTER 21

**Arrival at Tyre** 1 *When we had taken leave of them we set sail, made a straight run for Cos, and on the next day for Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 Finding a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went on board and put out to sea. 3 We caught sight of Cyprus but passed by it on our left and sailed on toward Syria and put in at Tyre where the ship was to unload cargo. 4 There we sought out the disciples and stayed for a week. They kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to embark for Jerusalem. 5 At the end of our stay we left and resumed our journey. All of them, women and children included, escorted us out of the city, and after kneeling on the beach to pray, 6 we bade farewell to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

**Arrival at Ptolemais and Caesarea** 7 We continued the voyage and came from Tyre to Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed a day with them. 8 [y]*On the next day we resumed the trip and came to Caesarea, where we went to the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four virgin daughters gifted with prophecy. 10 *We had been there several days when a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 [z]*He came up to us, took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the holy Spirit: This is the way the Jews will bind the owner of this belt in Jerusalem, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles." 12 When we heard this, we and the local residents begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 [a]Then Paul replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am prepared not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord

**20, 28: Overseers:** see the note on Phil 1, 1. **The church of God:** because the clause "that he acquired with his own blood" following "the church of God" suggests that "his own blood" refers to God's blood, some early copyists changed "the church of God" to "the church of the Lord." Some prefer the translation "acquired with the blood of his own," i.e., Christ.

**21, 1–18:** The third "we-section" of Acts (see the note on 16, 10–17).

**21, 8: One of the Seven:** see the note on 6, 2–4.

**21, 10: Agabus:** mentioned in 11, 28 as the prophet who predicted the famine that occurred when Claudius was emperor.

**21, 11:** The symbolic act of Agabus recalls those of Old Testament prophets. Compare Is 20, 2; Ez 4, 1; Jer 13, 1.

r 2 Tm 4, 7. s Jn 21, 15–17; 1 Pt 5, 2. t Jn 10, 12. u Mt 7, 15; 2 Pt 2, 1–3; 1 Jn 2, 18–19. v 1 Thes 2, 11. w 1 Cor 4, 12; 1 Thes 2, 9; 2 Thes 3, 8. x Sir 4, 31. y 6, 5; 8, 5–6. z 11, 28; 20, 23. a 19, 15–16.

Jesus." [14] [b]*Since he would not be dissuaded
we let the matter rest, saying, "The Lord's will
be done."

**Paul and James in Jerusalem** [15]After these
days we made preparations for our journey, then
went up to Jerusalem. [16]Some of the disciples
from Caesarea came along to lead us to the
house of Mnason, a Cypriot, a disciple of long
standing, with whom we were to stay. [17]*When
we reached Jerusalem the brothers welcomed us
warmly. [18]The next day, Paul accompanied us
on a visit to James, and all the presbyters were
present. [19]He greeted them, then proceeded to
tell them in detail what God had accomplished
among the Gentiles through his ministry. [20]They
praised God when they heard it but said to him,
"Brother, you see how many thousands of believers there are from among the Jews, and they are
all zealous observers of the law. [21]They have
been informed that you are teaching all the Jews
who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses
and that you are telling them not to circumcise
their children or to observe their customary
practices. [22]What is to be done? They will surely
hear that you have arrived. [23] [c]*So do what we
tell you. We have four men who have taken a
vow. [24]*Take these men and purify yourself with
them, and pay their expenses that they may have
their heads shaved. In this way everyone will
know that there is nothing to the reports they
have been given about you but that you yourself
live in observance of the law. [25] [d]*As for the
Gentiles who have come to believe, we sent
them our decision that they abstain from meat
sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of
strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage."
[26] [e]So Paul took the men, and on the next day
after purifying himself together with them entered the temple to give notice of the day when
the purification would be completed and the
offering made for each of them.

**Paul's Arrest** [27]When the seven days were
nearly completed, the Jews from the province of
Asia noticed him in the temple, stirred up the
whole crowd, and laid hands on him,
[28] [f]*shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us. This is
the man who is teaching everyone everywhere
against the people and the law and this place,
and what is more, he has even brought Greeks
into the temple and defiled this sacred place."
[29]For they had previously seen Trophimus the
Ephesian in the city with him and supposed that
Paul had brought him into the temple. [30]The
whole city was in turmoil with people rushing
together. They seized Paul and dragged him out
of the temple, and immediately the gates were
closed. [31]*While they were trying to kill him, a
report reached the cohort commander that all
Jerusalem was rioting. [32]He immediately took
soldiers and centurions and charged down on
them. When they saw the commander and the
soldiers they stopped beating Paul. [33]The cohort
commander came forward, arrested him, and
ordered him to be secured with two chains; he
tried to find out who he might be and what he
had done. [34]Some in the mob shouted one thing,

**21, 14:** The Christian disciples' attitude reflects that of Jesus (see Lk 22, 42).

**21, 17–26:** The leaders of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem inform Paul that the Jews there believe he has encouraged the Jews of the diaspora to abandon the Mosaic law. According to Acts, Paul had no objection to the retention of the law by the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem and left the Jews of the diaspora who accepted Christianity free to follow the same practice.

**21, 23–26:** The leaders of the community suggest that Paul, on behalf of four members of the Jerusalem community, make the customary payment for the sacrifices offered at the termination of the Nazirite vow (see Nm 6, 1–24) in order to impress favorably the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem with his high regard for the Mosaic law. Since Paul himself had once made this vow (18, 18), his respect for the law would be on public record.

**21, 24: Pay their expenses:** according to Nm 6, 14–15 the Nazirite had to present a yearling lamb for a holocaust, a yearling ewe lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering, along with food and drink offerings, upon completion of the period of the vow.

**21, 25:** Paul is informed about the apostolic decree, seemingly for the first time (see the note on 15, 13–35). The allusion to the decree was probably introduced here by Luke to remind his readers that the Gentile Christians themselves were asked to respect certain Jewish practices deriving from the law.

**21, 28:** The charges against Paul by the diaspora Jews are identical to the charges brought against Stephen by diaspora Jews in 6, 13. **Brought Greeks into the temple:** non-Jews were forbidden, under penalty of death, to go beyond the Court of the Gentiles. Inscriptions in Greek and Latin on a stone ballustrade marked off the prohibited area.

**21, 31: Cohort commander:** literally, "the leader of a thousand in a cohort." At this period the Roman cohort commander usually led six hundred soldiers, a tenth of a legion; but the number in a cohort varied.

b Mt 6, 10; 26, 39; Mk 14, 36; Lk 22, 42. c 18, 18; Nm 6, 1–21. d 15, 19–20.28–29. e 1 Cor 9, 20. f Rom 15, 31.

others something else; so, since he was unable
to ascertain the truth because of the uproar, he
ordered Paul to be brought into the compound.
35 When he reached the steps, he was carried by
the soldiers because of the violence of the mob,
36 g*for a crowd of people followed and shouted,
"Away with him!"

37 Just as Paul was about to be taken into the
compound, he said to the cohort commander,
"May I say something to you?" He replied, "Do
you speak Greek? 38 h*So then you are not the
Egyptian who started a revolt some time ago and
led the four thousand assassins into the desert?"
39 Paul answered, "I am a Jew, of Tarsus in
Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; I request you
to permit me to speak to the people." 40 *When
he had given his permission, Paul stood on the
steps and motioned with his hand to the people;
and when all was quiet he addressed them in
Hebrew.

## CHAPTER 22

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### Paul's Defense before the Jerusalem Jews

1 *"My brothers and fathers, listen to what I am
about to say to you in my defense." 2 When they
heard him addressing them in Hebrew they
became all the more quiet. And he continued,
3 i"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but
brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel I
was educated strictly in our ancestral law and
was zealous for God, just as all of you are today.
4 jI persecuted this Way to death, binding both
men and women and delivering them to prison.
5 Even the high priest and the whole council of
elders can testify on my behalf. For from them I
even received letters to the brothers and set out
for Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem in
chains for punishment those there as well.

6 k"On that journey as I drew near to Damas-
cus, about noon a great light from the sky
suddenly shone around me. 7 lI fell to the ground
and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why
are you persecuting me?' 8 mI replied, 'Who are
you, sir?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus the
Nazorean whom you are persecuting.' 9 nMy
companions saw the light but did not hear the
voice of the one who spoke to me. 10 oI asked,
'What shall I do, sir?' The Lord answered me,
'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you
will be told about everything appointed for you
to do.' 11 pSince I could see nothing because of
the brightness of that light, I was led by hand by
my companions and entered Damascus.

12 q"A certain Ananias, a devout observer of
the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews
who lived there, 13 came to me and stood there
and said, 'Saul, my brother, regain your sight.'
And at that very moment I regained my sight
and saw him. 14 Then he said, 'The God of our
ancestors designated you to know his will, to see
the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his
voice; 15 *for you will be his witness before all to
what you have seen and heard. 16 Now, why
delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and
your sins washed away, calling upon his name.'

17 "After I had returned to Jerusalem and
while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a
trance 18 and saw the Lord saying to me, 'Hurry,
leave Jerusalem at once, because they will not
accept your testimony about me.' 19 rBut I re-
plied, 'Lord, they themselves know that from
synagogue to synagogue I used to imprison and

**21, 36: Away with him:** at the trial of Jesus before Pilate in Lk 23, 18, the people similarly shout, "Away with this man."

**21, 38: The Egyptian:** according to the Jewish historian Josephus, an Egyptian gathered a large crowd on the Mount of Olives to witness the destruction of the walls of Jerusalem that would fall at the Egyptian "prophet's" word. The commotion was put down by the Roman authorities and the Egyptian escaped, but only after thousands had been killed. **Four thousand assassins:** literally, **sicarii.** According to Josephus, these were political nationalists who removed their opponents by assassination with a short dagger, called in Latin a **sica.**

**21, 40: In Hebrew:** meaning, perhaps, in Aramaic, which at this time was the Semitic tongue in common use.

**22, 1–21:** Paul's first defense speech is presented to the Jerusalem crowds. Luke here presents Paul as a devout Jew (3) and zealous persecutor of the Christian community (4–5), and then recounts the conversion of Paul for the second time in Acts (see the note on 9, 1–19).

**22, 15: His witness:** like the Galilean followers during the historical ministry of Jesus, Paul too, through his experience of the risen Christ, is to be a witness to the resurrection (compare 1, 8; 10, 39–41; Lk 24, 48).

g 22, 22; Lk 23, 18; Jn 19, 15. h 5, 36–37. i 5, 34; 26, 4–5; 2 Cor 11, 22; Gal 1, 13–14; Phil 3, 5–6. j 8, 3; 9, 1–2; 22, 19; 26, 9–11; Phil 3, 6. k 9, 3; 26, 13; 1 Cor 15, 8. l 9, 4; 26, 14. m 9, 5; 26, 15; Mt 25, 40. n 9, 7; 26, 13–14. o 9, 6; 26, 16. p 9, 8. q 9, 10–19. r 8, 3; 9, 1–2; 22, 4–5; 26, 9–11.

beat those who believed in you. 20 [s]And when
the blood of your witness Stephen was being
shed, I myself stood by giving my approval and
keeping guard over the cloaks of his murderers.'
21 [t]*Then he said to me, 'Go, I shall send you far
away to the Gentiles.' "

**Paul Imprisoned** 22 [u]*They listened to him
until he said this, but then they raised their
voices and shouted, "Take such a one as this
away from the earth. It is not right that he
should live." 23And as they were yelling and
throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into
the air, 24the cohort commander ordered him to
be brought into the compound and gave instruction that he be interrogated under the lash to
determine the reason why they were making
such an outcry against him. 25 [v]*But when they
had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to
the centurion on duty, "Is it lawful for you to
scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and has
not been tried?" 26When the centurion heard
this, he went to the cohort commander and
reported it, saying, "What are you going to do?
This man is a Roman citizen." 27Then the
commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are
you a Roman citizen?" "Yes," he answered.
28The commander replied, "I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money." Paul said,
"But I was born one." 29At once those who were
going to interrogate him backed away from him,
and the commander became alarmed when he
realized that he was a Roman citizen and that he
had had him bound.

**Paul before the Sanhedrin** 30The next day,
wishing to determine the truth about why he
was being accused by the Jews, he freed him and
ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin to convene. Then he brought Paul down
and made him stand before them.

## CHAPTER 23

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1 [w]Paul looked intently at the Sanhedrin and
said, "My brothers, I have conducted myself
with a perfectly clear conscience before God to
this day." 2*The high priest Ananias ordered his
attendants to strike his mouth. 3 [x]*Then Paul
said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. Do you indeed sit in judgment
upon me according to the law and yet in
violation of the law order me to be struck?" 4The
attendants said, "Would you revile God's high
priest?" 5 [y]*Paul answered, "Brothers, I did not
realize he was the high priest. For it is written,
'You shall not curse a ruler of your people.' "

6 [z]Paul was aware that some were Sadducees
and some Pharisees, so he called out before the
Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the
son of Pharisees; [I] am on trial for hope in the
resurrection of the dead." 7When he said this, a
dispute broke out between the Pharisees and
Sadducees, and the group became divided. 8 [a]For
the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection
or angels or spirits, while the Pharisees acknowledge all three. 9A great uproar occurred, and
some scribes belonging to the Pharisee party
stood up and sharply argued, "We find nothing
wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit or an
angel has spoken to him?" 10The dispute was so
serious that the commander, afraid that Paul
would be torn to pieces by them, ordered his
troops to go down and rescue him from their
midst and take him into the compound. 11 [b]*The
following night the Lord stood by him and said,
"Take courage. For just as you have borne

**22, 21:** Paul endeavors to explain that his position on the law has not been identical with that of his audience because it has been his prophetic mission to preach to the Gentiles to whom the law was not addressed and who had no faith in it as a way of salvation.

**22, 22:** Paul's suggestion that his prophetic mission to the Gentiles did not involve his imposing the law on them provokes the same opposition as occurred in Pisidian Antioch (13, 45).

**22, 25: Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and has not been tried?:** see the note on 16, 37.

**23, 2: The high priest Ananias:** Ananias, son of Nedebaeus, was high priest from A.D. 47 to 59.

**23, 3: God will strike you:** Josephus reports that Ananias was later assassinated in A.D. 66 at the beginning of the First Revolt.

**23, 5:** Luke portrays Paul as a model of one who is obedient to the Mosaic law. Paul, because of his reverence for the law (Ex 22, 27), withdraws his accusation of hypocrisy, "whitewashed wall" (cf Mt 23, 27), when he is told Ananias is the high priest.

**23, 11:** The occurrence of the vision of Christ consoling Paul and assuring him that he will be his witness in Rome prepares the reader for the final section of Acts: the journey of Paul and the word he preaches to Rome under the protection of the Romans.

s 7, 58; 8, 1. t 9, 15; Gal 2, 7–9. u 21, 36; Lk 23, 18; Jn 19, 15. v 16, 37. w 24, 16. x Ez 13, 10–15; Mt 23, 27. y Ex 22, 27. z 24, 15.21; 26, 5; Phil 3, 5. a Mt 22, 23; Lk 20, 27. b 19, 21.

witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must
also bear witness in Rome."
**Transfer to Caesarea** 12When day came, the
Jews made a plot and bound themselves by oath
not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.
13There were more than forty who formed this
conspiracy. 14They went to the chief priests and
elders and said, "We have bound ourselves by a
solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed
Paul. 15You, together with the Sanhedrin, must
now make an official request to the commander
to have him bring him down to you, as though
you meant to investigate his case more thoroughly. We on our part are prepared to kill him
before he arrives." 16The son of Paul's sister,
however, heard about the ambush; so he went
and entered the compound and reported it to
Paul. 17*Paul then called one of the centurions
and requested, "Take this young man to the
commander; he has something to report to
him." 18So he took him and brought him to the
commander and explained, "The prisoner Paul
called me and asked that I bring this young man
to you; he has something to say to you." 19The
commander took him by the hand, drew him
aside, and asked him privately, "What is it you
have to report to me?" 20He replied, "The Jews
have conspired to ask you to bring Paul down to
the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant
to inquire about him more thoroughly, 21but do
not believe them. More than forty of them are
lying in wait for him; they have bound themselves by oath not to eat or drink until they have
killed him. They are now ready and only wait for
your consent." 22As the commander dismissed
the young man he directed him, "Tell no one
that you gave me this information."

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23*Then he summoned two of the centurions
and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go
to Caesarea by nine o'clock tonight, along with
seventy horsemen and two hundred auxiliaries.
24Provide mounts for Paul to ride and give him
safe conduct to Felix the governor." 25Then he
wrote a letter with this content: 26*"Claudius
Lysias to his excellency the governor Felix,
greetings. 27 [c]This man, seized by the Jews and
about to be murdered by them, I rescued after
intervening with my troops when I learned that
he was a Roman citizen. 28I wanted to learn the
reason for their accusations against him so I
brought him down to their Sanhedrin. 29 [d]I
discovered that he was accused in matters of
controversial questions of their law and not of
any charge deserving death or imprisonment.
30Since it was brought to my attention that there
will be a plot against the man, I am sending him
to you at once, and have also notified his
accusers to state [their case] against him before
you."

31So the soldiers, according to their orders,
took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris. 32The next day they returned to the compound, leaving the horsemen to complete the
journey with him. 33When they arrived in Caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and
presented Paul to him. 34When he had read it
and asked to what province he belonged, and
learned that he was from Cilicia, 35he said, "I
shall hear your case when your accusers arrive."
Then he ordered that he be held in custody in
Herod's praetorium.

## CHAPTER 24

**Trial before Felix** 1Five days later the high
priest Ananias came down with some elders and
an advocate, a certain Tertullus, and they presented formal charges against Paul to the governor. 2When he was called, Tertullus began to
accuse him, saying, "Since we have attained
much peace through you, and reforms have been

**23, 17: Centurions:** a centurion was a military officer in charge of one hundred soldiers.

**23, 23: By nine o'clock tonight:** literally, "by the third hour of the night." The night hours began at 6 p.m. **Two hundred auxiliaries:** the meaning of the Greek is not certain. It seems to refer to spearmen from the local police force and not from the cohort of soldiers, which would have numbered only 500–1000 men.

**23, 26–30:** The letter emphasizes the fact that Paul is a Roman citizen and asserts the lack of evidence that he is guilty of a crime against the empire. The tone of the letter implies that the commander became initially involved in Paul's case because of his Roman citizenship, but this is not an exact description of what really happened (see 21, 31–33; 22, 25–29).

**23, 26:** M. Antonius Felix was procurator of Judea from A.D. 52 to 60. His procuratorship was marked by cruelty toward and oppression of his Jewish subjects.

c 21, 30–34; 22, 27. d 18, 14–15; 25, 18–19.

accomplished in this nation through your provident care, [3]we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all gratitude. [4]But in order not to detain you further, I ask you to give us a brief hearing with your customary graciousness. [5] *e**We found this man to be a pest; he creates dissension among Jews all over the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoreans. [6] *f*He even tried to desecrate our temple, but we arrested him. [7]* [8]If you examine him you will be able to learn from him for yourself about everything of which we are accusing him." [9]The Jews also joined in the attack and asserted that these things were so.

[10]*Then the governor motioned to him to speak and Paul replied, "I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years and so I am pleased to make my defense before you. [11]As you can verify, not more than twelve days have passed since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. [12]Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor anywhere in the city did they find me arguing with anyone or instigating a riot among the people. [13]Nor can they prove to you the accusations they are now making against me. [14] *g*But this I do admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors and I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and written in the prophets. [15] *h*I have the same hope in God as they themselves have that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. [16] *i*Because of this, I always strive to keep my conscience clear before God and man. [17] *j*After many years, I came to bring alms for my nation and offerings. [18] *k*While I was so engaged, they found me, after my purification, in the temple without a crowd or disturbance. [19]But some Jews from the province of Asia, who should be here before you to make whatever accusation they might have against me— [20]or let these men themselves state what crime they discovered when I stood before the Sanhedrin, [21] *l*unless it was my one outcry as I stood among them, that 'I am on trial before you today for the resurrection of the dead.' "

[22]Then Felix, who was accurately informed about the Way, postponed the trial, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I shall decide your case." [23]He gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that he should not prevent any of his friends from caring for his needs.

**Captivity in Caesarea** [24]*Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He had Paul summoned and listened to him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. [25]But as he spoke about righteousness and self-restraint and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, "You may go for now; when I find an opportunity I shall summon you again." [26]At the same time he hoped that a bribe would be offered him by Paul, and so he sent for him very often and conversed with him.

[27]*Two years passed and Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

## CHAPTER 25

Ch 21–26
See RG
466–467

**Appeal to Caesar** [1]Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem [2]*where the chief priests and Jewish leaders presented him their formal charges against Paul. They asked him [3]as a favor to have him sent to Jerusalem, for they were plotting to kill him along the way. [4]Festus replied that Paul was being held in custody in Caesarea

**24, 5: Nazoreans:** that is, followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

**24, 7:** The Western text has added here a verse (really 6b-8a) that is not found in the best Greek manuscripts. It reads, "and would have judged him according to our own law, but the cohort commander Lysias came and violently took him out of our hands and ordered his accusers to come before you."

**24, 10–21:** Whereas the advocate Tertullus referred to Paul's activities on his missionary journeys, the apostle narrowed the charges down to the riot connected with the incident in the temple (see 21, 27–30; 24, 17–20). In his defense, Paul stresses the continuity between Christianity and Judaism.

**24, 24–25:** The way of Christian discipleship greatly disquiets Felix, who has entered into an adulterous marriage with Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa I. This marriage provides the background for the topics Paul speaks about and about which Felix does not want to hear.

**24, 27:** Very little is known of Porcius Festus who was a procurator of Judea from A.D. 60 to 62.

**25, 2:** Even after two years the animosity toward Paul in Jerusalem had not subsided (see 24, 27).

e 24, 14; Lk 23, 2. f 21, 28. g 24, 5. h Dn 12, 2; Jn 5, 28–29. i 23, 1. j Rom 15, 25–26; Gal 2, 10. k 21, 26–30. l 23, 6; 24, 15.

and that he himself would be returning there
shortly. [5]He said, "Let your authorities come
down with me, and if this man has done
something improper, let them accuse him."
[6]After spending no more than eight or ten
days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and
on the following day took his seat on the tribunal
and ordered that Paul be brought in. [7]When he
appeared, the Jews who had come down from
Jerusalem surrounded him and brought many
serious charges against him, which they were
unable to prove. [8]In defending himself Paul said,
"I have committed no crime either against the
Jewish law or against the temple or against
Caesar." [9]*Then Festus, wishing to ingratiate
himself with the Jews, said to Paul in reply, "Are
you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there stand
trial before me on these charges?" [10]Paul an-
swered, "I am standing before the tribunal of
Caesar; this is where I should be tried. I have
committed no crime against the Jews, as you
very well know. [11]If I have committed a crime or
done anything deserving death, I do not seek to
escape the death penalty; but if there is no
substance to the charges they are bringing
against me, then no one has the right to hand me
over to them. I appeal to Caesar." [12]Then Festus,
after conferring with his council, replied, "You
have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go."

**Paul before King Agrippa** [13]*When a few
days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice
arrived in Caesarea on a visit to Festus. [14]*m*Since
they spent several days there, Festus referred
Paul's case to the king, saying, "There is a man
here left in custody by Felix. [15]When I was in
Jerusalem the chief priests and the elders of the
Jews brought charges against him and demanded
his condemnation. [16]I answered them that it was
not Roman practice to hand over an accused
person before he has faced his accusers and had
the opportunity to defend himself against their
charge. [17]So when [they] came together here, I
made no delay; the next day I took my seat on
the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought
in. [18]*n*His accusers stood around him, but did
not charge him with any of the crimes I sus-
pected. [19]Instead they had some issues with him
about their own religion and about a certain
Jesus who had died but who Paul claimed was
alive. [20]Since I was at a loss how to investigate
this controversy, I asked if he were willing to go
to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these
charges. [21]And when Paul appealed that he be
held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I
ordered him held until I could send him to
Caesar." [22]Agrippa said to Festus, "I too should
like to hear this man." He replied, "Tomorrow
you will hear him."
[23]The next day Agrippa and Bernice came
with great ceremony and entered the audience
hall in the company of cohort commanders and
the prominent men of the city and, by command
of Festus, Paul was brought in. [24]And Festus
said, "King Agrippa and all you here present
with us, look at this man about whom the whole
Jewish populace petitioned me here and in
Jerusalem, clamoring that he should live no
longer. [25]I found, however, that he had done
nothing deserving death, and so when he ap-
pealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.
[26]But I have nothing definite to write about him
to our sovereign; therefore I have brought him
before all of you, and particularly before you,
King Agrippa, so that I may have something to
write as a result of this investigation. [27]For it
seems senseless to me to send up a prisoner
without indicating the charges against him."

## CHAPTER 26

**King Agrippa Hears Paul** [1]Then Agrippa said
to Paul, "You may now speak on your own
behalf." So Paul stretched out his hand and
began his defense. [2]*"I count myself fortunate,

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**25, 9–12:** Paul refuses to acknowledge that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem has any jurisdiction over him now (11). Paul uses his right as a Roman citizen to appeal his case to the jurisdiction of the Emperor (Nero, ca. A.D. 60) (12). This move broke the deadlock between Roman protective custody of Paul and the plan of his enemies to kill him (3).

**25, 13: King Agrippa and Bernice:** brother and sister, children of Herod Agrippa I whose activities against the Jerusalem community are mentioned in 12, 1–19. Agrippa II was a petty ruler over small areas in northern Palestine and some villages in Perea. His influence on the Jewish population of Palestine was insignificant.

**26, 2–23:** Paul's final defense speech in Acts is now made before a king (see 9, 15). In the speech Paul presents himself as a zealous Pharisee and Christianity as the logical development of

m 24, 27. n 18, 14–15; 23, 29.

King Agrippa, that I am to defend myself before
you today against all the charges made against
me by the Jews, 3especially since you are an
expert in all the Jewish customs and controver-
sies. And therefore I beg you to listen patiently.
4*My manner of living from my youth, a life
spent from the beginning among my people and
in Jerusalem, all [the] Jews know. 5 [o]They have
known about me from the start, if they are
willing to testify, that I have lived my life as a
Pharisee, the strictest party of our religion. 6 [p]But
now I am standing trial because of my hope in
the promise made by God to our ancestors. 7Our
twelve tribes hope to attain to that promise as
they fervently worship God day and night; and
on account of this hope I am accused by Jews, O
king. 8Why is it thought unbelievable among
you that God raises the dead? 9 [q]I myself once
thought that I had to do many things against the
name of Jesus the Nazorean, 10 [r]and I did so in
Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the holy ones
with the authorization I received from the chief
priests, and when they were to be put to death I
cast my vote against them. 11Many times, in
synagogue after synagogue, I punished them in
an attempt to force them to blaspheme; I was so
enraged against them that I pursued them even
to foreign cities.

12"On one such occasion I was traveling to
Damascus with the authorization and commis-
sion of the chief priests. 13 [s] [t]At midday, along the
way, O king, I saw a light from the sky, brighter
than the sun, shining around me and my travel-
ing companions. 14 [u]*We all fell to the ground
and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew,
'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is
hard for you to kick against the goad.' 15 [v]And I
said, 'Who are you, sir?' And the Lord replied, 'I
am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 [w]*Get up
now, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to
you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant
and witness of what you have seen [of me] and
what you will be shown. 17 [x]I shall deliver you
from this people and from the Gentiles to whom
I send you, 18 [y]*to open their eyes that they may
turn from darkness to light and from the power
of Satan to God, so that they may obtain
forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among
those who have been consecrated by faith in
me.'

19"And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedi-
ent to the heavenly vision. 20On the contrary,
first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and
throughout the whole country of Judea, and
then to the Gentiles, I preached the need to
repent and turn to God, and to do works giving
evidence of repentance. 21 [z]That is why the Jews
seized me [when I was] in the temple and tried
to kill me. 22 [a]*But I have enjoyed God's help to
this very day, and so I stand here testifying to
small and great alike, saying nothing different
from what the prophets and Moses foretold,
23 [b]*that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the
first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim
light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

**Reactions to Paul's Speech** 24While Paul was
so speaking in his defense, Festus said in a loud
voice, "You are mad, Paul; much learning is
driving you mad." 25But Paul replied, "I am not
mad, most excellent Festus; I am speaking
words of truth and reason. 26*The king knows
about these matters and to him I speak boldly,

Pharisaic Judaism. The story of his conversion is recounted for the third time in Acts in this speech (see the note on 9, 1–19).

**26, 4: Among my people:** that is, among the Jews.

**26, 14: In Hebrew:** see the note on 21, 40. **It is hard for you to kick against the goad:** this proverb is commonly found in Greek literature and in this context signifies the senselessness and ineffectiveness of any opposition to the divine influence in his life.

**26, 16:** The words of Jesus directed to Paul here reflect the dialogues between Christ and Ananias (9, 15) and between Ananias and Paul (22, 14–15) in the two previous accounts of Paul's conversion.

**26, 18: To open their eyes:** though no mention is made of Paul's blindness in this account (cf 9, 8–9.12.18; 22, 11–13), the task he is commissioned to perform is the removal of other people's spiritual blindness.

**26, 22: Saying nothing different from what the prophets and Moses foretold:** see the note on Lk 18, 31.

**26, 23: That the Messiah must suffer:** see the note on Lk 24, 26.

**26, 26: Not done in a corner:** for Luke, this Greek proverb expresses his belief that he is presenting a story about Jesus and the church that is already well known. As such, the entire history of Christianity is public knowledge and incontestable. Luke pres-

o Phil 3, 5–6; Gal 1, 13–14; 2 Cor 11, 22. p 23, 6; 24, 15.21; 28, 20. q 8, 3; 9, 1–2; 22, 19; Phil 3, 6. r 9, 14. s 9, 7. t 9, 3; 22, 6. u 9, 4; 22, 7. v 9, 5; 22, 8; Mt 25, 40. w 9, 6; 22, 10; Ez 2, 1. x Jer 1, 7. y Is 42, 7.16; 61, 1 LXX; Col 1, 13. z 21, 31. a 3, 18; Lk 24, 26–27.44–47. b Is 42, 6; 49, 6; Lk 2, 32; 1 Cor 15, 20–23.

for I cannot believe that [any] of this has escaped
his notice; this was not done in a corner.
27 *King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I
know you believe." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul,
"You will soon persuade me to play the Christian." 29 Paul replied, "I would pray to God that
sooner or later not only you but all who listen to
me today might become as I am except for these
chains."

30 Then the king rose, and with him the
governor and Bernice and the others who sat
with them. 31 *And after they had withdrawn
they said to one another, "This man is doing
nothing [at all] that deserves death or imprisonment." 32 [c]And Agrippa said to Festus, "This
man could have been set free if he had not
appealed to Caesar."

## CHAPTER 27

Ch 27–28
See RG
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**Departure for Rome** 1 *When it was decided
that we should sail to Italy, they handed Paul
and some other prisoners over to a centurion
named Julius of the Cohort Augusta. 2 [d]We went
on board a ship from Adramyttium bound for
ports in the province of Asia and set sail.
Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica,
was with us. 3 On the following day we put in at
Sidon where Julius was kind enough to allow
Paul to visit his friends who took care of him.
4 From there we put out to sea and sailed around
the sheltered side of Cyprus because of the
headwinds, 5 and crossing the open sea off the
coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia we came to Myra
in Lycia.

**Storm and Shipwreck** 6 There the centurion
found an Alexandrian ship that was sailing to
Italy and put us on board. 7 For many days we
made little headway, arriving at Cnidus only
with difficulty, and because the wind would not
permit us to continue our course we sailed for
the sheltered side of Crete off Salmone. 8 We
sailed past it with difficulty and reached a place
called Fair Havens, near which was the city of
Lasea.

9 [e]*Much time had now passed and sailing
had become hazardous because the time of the
fast had already gone by, so Paul warned them,
10 "Men, I can see that this voyage will result in
severe damage and heavy loss not only to the
cargo and the ship, but also to our lives." 11 The
centurion, however, paid more attention to the
pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what
Paul said. 12 Since the harbor was unfavorably
situated for spending the winter, the majority
planned to put out to sea from there in the hope
of reaching Phoenix, a port in Crete facing west-
northwest, there to spend the winter.

13 A south wind blew gently, and thinking they
had attained their objective, they weighed anchor and sailed along close to the coast of Crete.
14 Before long an offshore wind of hurricane
force called a "Northeaster" struck. 15 Since the
ship was caught up in it and could not head into
the wind we gave way and let ourselves be
driven. 16 We passed along the sheltered side of
an island named Cauda and managed only with
difficulty to get the dinghy under control. 17 They
hoisted it aboard, then used cables to undergird
the ship. Because of their fear that they would
run aground on the shoal of Syrtis, they lowered
the drift anchor and were carried along in this
way. 18 We were being pounded by the storm so
violently that the next day they jettisoned some
cargo, 19 and on the third day with their own

ents his story in this way to provide "certainty" to his readers about the instructions they have received (Lk 1, 4).

**26, 27–28:** If the Christian missionaries proclaim nothing different from what the Old Testament prophets had proclaimed (22–23), then the logical outcome for the believing Jew, according to Luke, is to become a Christian.

**26, 31–32:** In recording the episode of Paul's appearance before Agrippa, Luke wishes to show that, when Paul's case was judged impartially, no grounds for legal action against him were found (see 23, 29; 25, 25).

**27, 1—28, 16:** Here Luke has written a stirring account of adventure on the high seas, incidental to his main purpose of showing how well Paul got along with his captors and how his prophetic influence saved the lives of all on board. The recital also establishes the existence of Christian communities in Puteoli and Rome. This account of the voyage and shipwreck also constitutes the final "we-section" in Acts (see the note on 16, 10–17).

**27, 1: Cohort Augusta:** the presence of a Cohort Augusta in Syria during the first century A.D. is attested in inscriptions. Whatever the historical background to this information given by Luke may be, the name Augusta serves to increase the prominence and prestige of the prisoner Paul whose custodians bear so important a Roman name.

**27, 9: The time of the fast:** the fast kept on the occasion of the Day of Atonement (Lv 16, 29–31), which occurred in late September or early October.

c 25, 11–12. d 19, 29; 20, 4. e Lv 16, 29–31.

hands they threw even the ship's tackle overboard. [20]Neither the sun nor the stars were visible for many days, and no small storm raged. Finally, all hope of our surviving was taken away.

[21]When many would no longer eat, Paul stood among them and said, "Men, you should have taken my advice and not have set sail from Crete and you would have avoided this disastrous loss. [22]I urge you now to keep up your courage; not one of you will be lost, only the ship. [23]For last night an angel of the God to whom [I] belong and whom I serve stood by me [24]*f* and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You are destined to stand before Caesar; and behold, for your sake, God has granted safety to all who are sailing with you.' [25]Therefore, keep up your courage, men; I trust in God that it will turn out as I have been told. [26]We are destined to run aground on some island."

[27]On the fourteenth night, as we were still being driven about on the Adriatic Sea, toward midnight the sailors began to suspect that they were nearing land. [28]They took soundings and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on, they again took soundings and found fifteen fathoms. [29]Fearing that we would run aground on a rocky coast, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. [30]The sailors then tried to abandon ship; they lowered the dinghy to the sea on the pretext of going to lay out anchors from the bow. [31]But Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." [32]So the soldiers cut the ropes of the dinghy and set it adrift.

[33]Until the day began to dawn, Paul kept urging all to take some food. He said, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting, going hungry and eating nothing. [34]I urge you, therefore, to take some food; it will help you survive. Not a hair of the head of anyone of you will be lost." [35]*g**When he said this, he took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, broke it, and began to eat. [36]They were all encouraged, and took some food themselves. [37]In all, there were two hundred seventy-six of us on the ship. [38]After they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

[39]When day came they did not recognize the land, but made out a bay with a beach. They planned to run the ship ashore on it, if they could. [40]So they cast off the anchors and abandoned them to the sea, and at the same time they unfastened the lines of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail into the wind, they made for the beach. [41]But they struck a sandbar and ran the ship aground. The bow was wedged in and could not be moved, but the stern began to break up under the pounding [of the waves]. [42]The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so that none might swim away and escape, [43]but the centurion wanted to save Paul and so kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to the shore, [44]and then the rest, some on planks, others on debris from the ship. In this way, all reached shore safely.

## CHAPTER 28

Ch 27–28
See RG
467–468

**Winter in Malta** [1]Once we had reached safety we learned that the island was called Malta. [2]The natives showed us extraordinary hospitality; they lit a fire and welcomed all of us because it had begun to rain and was cold. [3]Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire when a viper, escaping from the heat, fastened on his hand. [4]*When the natives saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must certainly be a murderer; though he escaped the sea, Justice has not let him remain alive." [5]But he shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm. [6]*h*They were expecting him to swell up or suddenly to fall down dead but, after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god. [7]In the vicinity of that place

**27, 35: He took bread . . .** : the words recall the traditional language of the celebration of the Eucharist (see Lk 22, 19).

**28, 4: Justice:** in Greek mythology, the pursuing goddess of vengeance and justice.

f 23, 11. g Mt 15, 36; Mk 6, 41; 8, 6; Lk 22, 19; 1 Cor 11, 23–24. h 14, 11.

were lands belonging to a man named Publius,
the chief of the island. He welcomed us and
received us cordially as his guests for three days.
8It so happened that the father of Publius was
sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him
and, after praying, laid his hands on him and
healed him. 9After this had taken place, the rest
of the sick on the island came to Paul and were
cured. 10They paid us great honor and when we
eventually set sail they brought us the provisions
we needed.

**Arrival in Rome** 11*Three months later we set
sail on a ship that had wintered at the island. It
was an Alexandrian ship with the Dioscuri as its
figurehead. 12We put in at Syracuse and stayed
there three days, 13and from there we sailed
round the coast and arrived at Rhegium. After a
day, a south wind came up and in two days we
reached Puteoli. 14There we found some broth-
ers and were urged to stay with them for seven
days. And thus we came to Rome. 15The broth-
ers from there heard about us and came as far as
the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet
us. On seeing them, Paul gave thanks to God
and took courage. 16*When he entered Rome,
Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the
soldier who was guarding him.

**Testimony to Jews in Rome** 17 *i**Three days
later he called together the leaders of the Jews.
When they had gathered he said to them, "My
brothers, although I had done nothing against
our people or our ancestral customs, I was
handed over to the Romans as a prisoner from
Jerusalem. 18 *j*After trying my case the Romans
wanted to release me, because they found noth-
ing against me deserving the death penalty.
19 *k*But when the Jews objected, I was obliged to
appeal to Caesar, even though I had no accusa-
tion to make against my own nation. 20 *l**This is
the reason, then, I have requested to see you and
to speak with you, for it is on account of the
hope of Israel that I wear these chains." 21They
answered him, "We have received no letters
from Judea about you, nor has any of the
brothers arrived with a damaging report or
rumor about you. 22 *m*But we should like to hear
you present your views, for we know that this
sect is denounced everywhere."

23So they arranged a day with him and came
to his lodgings in great numbers. From early
morning until evening, he expounded his posi-
tion to them, bearing witness to the kingdom of
God and trying to convince them about Jesus
from the law of Moses and the prophets. 24Some
were convinced by what he had said, while
others did not believe. 25*Without reaching any
agreement among themselves they began to
leave; then Paul made one final statement.
"Well did the holy Spirit speak to your ancestors
through the prophet Isaiah, saying:

26 *n*'Go to this people and say:
You shall indeed hear but not understand.
You shall indeed look but never see.
27 Gross is the heart of this people;
they will not hear with their ears;
they have closed their eyes,
so they may not see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart and be
converted,
and I heal them.'

28 *o*Let it be known to you that this salvation of

**28, 11: Dioscuri:** that is, the Twin Brothers, Castor and Pollux, the sons of Zeus and the patrons of the sailors.

**28, 16:** With Paul's arrival in Rome, the programmatic spread of the word of the Lord to "the ends of the earth" (1, 8) is accomplished. In Rome, Paul is placed under house arrest, and under this mild form of custody he is allowed to proclaim the word in the capital of the civilized world of his day.

**28, 17–22:** Paul's first act in Rome is to learn from the leaders of the Jewish community whether the Jews of Jerusalem plan to pursue their case against him before the Roman jurisdiction. He is informed that no such plan is afoot, but that the Jews of Rome have heard the Christian teaching denounced. Paul's offer to explain it to them is readily accepted.

**28, 20: The hope of Israel:** in the words of Paul (23, 6), Luke has identified this hope as hope in the resurrection of the dead.

**28, 25–28:** Paul's final words in Acts reflect a major concern of Luke's writings: how the salvation promised in the Old Testament, accomplished by Jesus, and offered first to Israel (13, 26), has now been offered to and accepted by the Gentiles. Quoting Is 6, 9–10, Paul presents the scriptural support for his indictment of his fellow Jews who refuse to accept the message he proclaims. Their rejection leads to its proclamation among the Gentiles.

i 24, 12–13; 25, 8. j 23, 29; 25, 25; 26, 31–32. k 25, 11. l 23, 6; 24, 15.21; 26, 6–8. m 24, 5.14. n Is 6, 9–10; Mt 13, 14–15; Mk 4, 12; Lk 8, 10; Jn 12, 40; Rom 11, 8. o 13, 46; 18, 6; Ps 67, 2; Is 40, 5 LXX; Lk 3, 6.

God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will
listen." [29]*
30*He remained for two full years in his
lodgings. He received all who came to him,
31and with complete assurance and without
hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God
and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

**28, 29:** The Western text has added here a verse that is not found in the best Greek manuscripts: "And when he had said this, the Jews left, seriously arguing among themselves."

**28, 30–31:** Although the ending of Acts may seem to be abrupt, Luke has now completed his story with the establishment of Paul and the proclamation of Christianity in Rome. Paul's confident and unhindered proclamation of the gospel in Rome forms the climax to the story whose outline was provided in 1, 8: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem . . . and to the ends of the earth."

# NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Letters
See RG
470–472

In the New Testament canon, between the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation, there are twenty-one documents that take the form of letters or epistles. Most of these are actual letters, but some are more like treatises in the guise of letters. In a few cases even some of the more obvious elements of the letter form are absent; see the Introductions to Hebrews and to 1 John.

The virtually standard form found in these documents, though with some variation, is dependent upon the conventions of letter writing common in the ancient world, but these were modified to suit the purposes of Christian writers. The New Testament letters usually begin with a greeting including an identification of the sender or senders and of the recipients. Next comes a prayer, usually in the form of a thanksgiving. The body of the letter provides an exposition of Christian teaching, usually provoked by concrete circumstances, and generally also draws conclusions regarding ethical behavior. There often follows a discussion of practical matters, such as the writer's travel plans, and the letter concludes with further advice and a formula of farewell.

Fourteen of the twenty-one letters have been traditionally attributed to Paul. One of these, the Letter to the Hebrews, does not itself claim to be the work of Paul; when it was accepted into the canon after much discussion, it was attached at the very end of the Pauline corpus. The other thirteen identify Paul as their author, but most scholars believe that some of them were actually written by his disciples; see the Introductions to Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy.

Four of the letters in the Pauline corpus (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) are called the "Captivity Epistles" because in each of them the author speaks of being in prison at the time of writing. Three others (1–2 Timothy and Titus) are known as the "Pastoral Epistles" because, addressed to individuals rather than communities, they give advice to disciples about caring for the flock. The letters of the Pauline corpus are arranged in roughly descending order of length from Romans to Philemon, with Hebrews added at the end.

The other seven letters of the New Testament that follow the Pauline corpus are collectively referred to as the "Catholic Epistles." This term, which means "universal," refers to the fact that most of them are directed not to a single Christian community, as are most of the Pauline letters, but to a wider audience; see the Introduction to the catholic letters. Three of them (1–2–3 John) are closely related to the fourth gospel and thus belong to the Johannine corpus. The catholic letters, like those of the Pauline corpus, are also arranged in roughly descending order of length, but the three Johannine letters are kept together and Jude is placed at the end.

The genuine letters of Paul are earlier in date than any of our written gospels. The dates of the other New Testament letters are more difficult to determine, but for the most part they belong to the second and third Christian generations rather than to the first.

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## THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Romans
See RG
472–484

Of all the letters of Paul, that to the Christians at Rome has long held pride of place. It is the longest and most systematic unfolding of the apostle's thought, expounding the gospel of God's

righteousness that saves all who believe (1, 16-17); it reflects a universal outlook, with special implications for Israel's relation to the church (chs 9—11). Yet, like all Paul's letters, Romans too arose out of a specific situation, when the apostle wrote from Greece, likely Corinth, between A.D. 56 and 58 (cf Acts 20, 2-3).

Paul at that time was about to leave for Jerusalem with a collection of funds for the impoverished Jewish Christian believers there, taken up from his predominantly Gentile congregations (15, 25-27). He planned then to travel on to Rome and to enlist support there for a mission to Spain (15, 24.28). Such a journey had long been on his mind (1, 9-13; 15, 23). Now, with much missionary preaching successfully accomplished in the East (15, 19), he sought new opportunities in the West (15, 20-21), in order to complete the divine plan of evangelization in the Roman world. Yet he recognized that the visit to Jerusalem would be hazardous (15, 30-32), and we know from Acts that Paul was arrested there and came to Rome only in chains, as a prisoner (Acts 21—28, especially 21, 30-33 and 28, 14.30-31).

The existence of a Christian community in Rome antedates Paul's letter there. When it arose, likely within the sizable Jewish population at Rome, and how, we do not know. The Roman historian Suetonius mentions an edict of the Emperor Claudius about A.D. 49 ordering the expulsion of Jews from Rome in connection with a certain "Chrestus," probably involving a dispute in the Jewish community over Jesus as the Messiah ("Christus"). According to Acts 18, 2, Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca, as in Rom 16, 3) were among those driven out; from them, in Corinth, Paul may have learned about conditions in the church at Rome.

Opinions vary as to whether Jewish or Gentile Christians predominated in the house churches (cf 16, 5) in the capital city of the empire at the time Paul wrote. Perhaps already by then Gentile Christians were in the majority. Paul speaks in Romans of both Jews and Gentiles (3, 9.29; see the note on 1, 14). The letter also refers to those "weak in faith" (14, 1) and those "who are strong" (15, 1); this terminology may reflect not so much differences between believers of Jewish and of Gentile background, respectively, as an ascetic tendency in some converts (14, 2) combined with Jewish laws about clean and unclean foods (14, 14.20). The issues were similar to problems that Paul had faced in Corinth (1 Cor 8). If Romans 16 is part of the letter to Rome (see the note on 16, 1-23), then Paul had considerable information about conditions in Rome through all these people there whom he knew, and our letter does not just reflect a generalized picture of an earlier situation in Corinth.

In any case, Paul writes to introduce himself and his message to the Christians at Rome, seeking to enlist their support for the proposed mission to Spain. He therefore employs formulations likely familiar to the Christians at Rome; see the note on the confessional material at 1, 3-4 and compare 3, 25-26 and 4, 25. He cites the Old Testament frequently (1, 17; 3, 10-18; ch 4; 9, 7.12-13.15.17.25-29.33; 10, 5-13.15-21; 15, 9-12). The gospel Paul presents is meant to be a familiar one to those in Rome, even though they heard it first from other preachers.

As the outline below shows, this gospel of Paul (see 16, 25) finds its center in salvation and justification through faith in Christ (1, 16-17). While God's wrath is revealed against all sin and wickedness of Gentile and Jew alike (1, 18—3, 20), God's power to save by divine righteous or justifying action in Christ is also revealed (1, 16-17; 3, 21—5, 21). The consequences and implications for those who believe are set forth (6, 1—8, 39), as are results for those in Israel (chs 9—11) who, to Paul's great sorrow (9, 1-5), disbelieve. The apostle's hope is that, just as rejection of the gospel by some in Israel has led to a ministry of salvation for non-Jews, so one day, in God's mercy, "all Israel" will be saved (11, 11-15.25-29.30-32). The fuller ethical

response of believers is also drawn out, both with reference to life in Christ's body (ch 12) and with regard to the world (13, 1-7), on the basis of the eschatological situation (13, 11–14) and conditions in the community (14, 1—15, 13).

Others have viewed Romans more in the light of Paul's earlier, quite polemical Letter to the Galatians and so see the theme as the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, a topic judged to be much in the minds of the Roman Christians. Each of these religious faiths claimed to be the way of salvation based upon a covenant between God and a people chosen and made the beneficiary of divine gifts. But Christianity regarded itself as the prophetic development and fulfillment of the faith of the Old Testament, declaring that the preparatory Mosaic covenant must now give way to the new and more perfect covenant in Jesus Christ. Paul himself had been the implacable advocate of freedom of Gentiles from the laws of the Mosaic covenant and, especially in Galatia, had refused to allow attempts to impose them on Gentile converts to the gospel. He had witnessed the personal hostilities that developed between the adherents of the two faiths and had written his strongly worded letter to the Galatians against those Jewish Christians who were seeking to persuade Gentile Christians to adopt the religious practices of Judaism. For him, the purity of the religious understanding of Jesus as the source of salvation would be seriously impaired if Gentile Christians were obligated to amalgamate the two religious faiths.

Still others find the theme of Israel and the church as expressed in Romans 9—11 to be the heart of Romans. Then the implication of Paul's exposition of justification by faith rather than by means of law is that the divine plan of salvation works itself out on a broad theological plane to include the whole of humanity, despite the differences in the content of the given religious system to which a human culture is heir. Romans presents a plan of salvation stretching from Adam through Abraham and Moses to Christ (chs 4 and 5) and on to the future revelation at Christ's parousia (8, 18-25). Its outlook is universal.

Paul's Letter to the Romans is a powerful exposition of the doctrine of the supremacy of Christ and of faith in Christ as the source of salvation. It is an implicit plea to the Christians at Rome, and to all Christians, to hold fast to that faith. They are to resist any pressure put on them to accept a doctrine of salvation through works of the law (see the note on 10, 4). At the same time they are not to exaggerate Christian freedom as an abdication of responsibility for others (12, 1-2) or as a repudiation of God's law and will (see the notes on 3, 9-26; 3, 31; 7, 7-12.13-25).

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Romans are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-15)
II. Humanity Lost without the Gospel (1, 16—3, 20)
III. Justification through Faith in Christ (3, 21—5, 21)
IV. Justification and the Christian Life (6, 1—8, 39)
V. Jews and Gentiles in God's Plan (9, 1—11, 36)
VI. The Duties of Christians (12, 1—15, 13)
VII. Conclusion (15, 14—16, 27)

# I: Address

## CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called
to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of
God, 2 [b]which he promised previously through
his prophets in the holy scriptures, 3 [c]*the gospel
about his Son, descended from David according
to the flesh, 4 [d]but established as Son of God in
power according to the spirit of holiness through
resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our
Lord. 5 [e]*Through him we have received the
grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedi-
ence of faith, for the sake of his name, among all
the Gentiles, 6 [f]among whom are you also, who
are called to belong to Jesus Christ; 7 [g]*to all the
beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy. Grace
to you and peace from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving** 8 [h]*First, I give thanks to my
God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because
your faith is heralded throughout the world.
9 [i]God is my witness, whom I serve with my
spirit in proclaiming the gospel of his Son, that I
remember you constantly, 10 [j]*always asking in
my prayers that somehow by God's will I may at
last find my way clear to come to you. 11 [k]For I
long to see you, that I may share with you some
spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened,
12 that is, that you and I may be mutually
encouraged by one another's faith, yours and
mine. 13 [l]*I do not want you to be unaware,
brothers, that I often planned to come to you,
though I was prevented until now, that I might
harvest some fruit among you, too, as among the
rest of the Gentiles. 14 *To Greeks and non-
Greeks alike, to the wise and the ignorant, I am

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

**1, 1–7:** In Paul's letters the greeting or **praescriptio** follows a standard form, though with variations. It is based upon the common Greco-Roman epistolary practice, but with the addition of Semitic and specifically Christian elements. The three basic components are: name of sender; name of addressee; greeting. In identifying himself, Paul often adds phrases to describe his apostolic mission; this element is more developed in Rom than in any other letter. Elsewhere he associates co-workers with himself in the greeting: Sosthenes (1 Cor), Timothy (2 Cor; Phil; Phlm), Silvanus (1–2 Thes). The standard secular greeting was the infinitive **chairein**, "greetings." Paul uses instead the similar-sounding **charis**, "grace," together with the Semitic greeting **šālôm** (Greek **eirēnē**), "peace." These gifts, foreshadowed in God's dealings with Israel (see Nm 6, 24–26), have been poured out abundantly in Christ, and Paul wishes them to his readers. In Rom the Pauline **praescriptio** is expanded and expressed in a formal tone; it emphasizes Paul's office as apostle to the Gentiles. Verses 3–4 stress the gospel or kerygma, v 2 the fulfillment of God's promise, and vv 1 and 5 Paul's office. On his call, see Gal 1, 15–16; 1 Cor 9, 1; 15, 8–10; Acts 9, 1–22; 22, 3–16; 26, 4–18.

**1, 1: Slave of Christ Jesus:** Paul applies the term slave to himself in order to express his undivided allegiance to the Lord of the church, the Master of all, including slaves and masters. "No one can serve (i.e., be a slave to) two masters," said Jesus (Mt 6, 24). It is this aspect of the slave-master relationship rather than its degrading implications that Paul emphasizes when he discusses Christian commitment.

**1, 3–4:** Paul here cites an early confession that proclaims Jesus' sonship as messianic descendant of David (cf Mt 22, 42; 2 Tm 2, 8; Rv 22, 16) and as Son of God by the resurrection. As "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15, 45), Jesus Christ is able to communicate the Spirit to those who believe in him.

**1, 5:** Paul recalls his apostolic office, implying that the Romans know something of his history. **The obedience of faith:** as Paul will show at length in chs 6–8 and 12–15, faith in God's justifying action in Jesus Christ relates one to God's gift of the new life that is made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the activity of the holy Spirit (see especially 8, 1–11).

**1, 7: Called to be holy:** Paul often refers to Christians as "the holy ones" or "the saints." The Israelite community was called a "holy assembly" because they had been separated for the worship and service of the Lord (see Lv 11, 44; 23, 1–44). The Christian community regarded its members as sanctified by baptism (6, 22; 15, 16; 1 Cor 6, 11; Eph 5, 26–27). Christians are called to holiness (1 Cor 1, 2; 1 Thes 4, 7), that is, they are called to make their lives conform to the gift they have already received.

**1, 8:** In Greco-Roman letters, the greeting was customarily followed by a prayer. The Pauline letters usually include this element (except Gal and Ti), expressed in Christian thanksgiving formulas and usually stating the principal theme of the letter. In 2 Cor the thanksgiving becomes a blessing, and in Eph it is preceded by a lengthy blessing. Sometimes the thanksgiving is blended into the body of the letter, especially in 1 Thes. In Rom it is stated briefly.

**1, 10–12:** Paul lays the groundwork for his more detailed statement in 15, 22–24 about his projected visit to Rome.

**1, 13: Brothers** is idiomatic for all Paul's "kin in Christ," all those who believe in the gospel; it includes women as well as men (cf 4, 3).

**1, 14: Greeks and non-Greeks:** literally, "Greeks and barbarians." As a result of Alexander's conquests, Greek became the standard international language of the Mediterranean world. **Greeks** in Paul's statement therefore means people who know Greek or who have been influenced by Greek culture. **Non-Greeks** were people whose cultures remained substantially unaffected by Greek influences. Greeks called such people "barbarians" (cf Acts 28, 2), meaning people whose speech was foreign. Roman citizens would scarcely classify themselves as such, and Nero, who was reigning when Paul wrote this letter, prided himself on his admiration for Greek culture. **Under obligation:** Paul will expand on the theme of obligation in 13, 8; 15, 1.27.

a Gal 1, 10; Phil 1, 1; Jas 1, 1 / Acts 9, 15; 13, 2; 1 Cor 1, 1; Gal 1, 15; Ti 1, 1. b 16, 25–26; Ti 1, 2. c 9, 5; 2 Sm 7, 12; Mt 1, 1; Mk 12, 35; Jn 7, 42; Acts 13, 22–23;2 Tm 2, 8; Rv 22, 16. d 10, 9; Acts 13, 33; Phil 3, 10. e 15, 15; Gal 2, 7.9 / 15, 18; Acts 9, 15; 26, 16–18; Gal 1, 16; 2, 7.9. f 1 Cor 1, 9. g Nm 6, 25–26; 1 Cor 1, 2–3; 2 Cor 1, 1–2. h 16, 19; 1 Thes 1, 8. i 2 Cor 1, 23; Eph 1, 16; Phil 1, 8; 1 Thes 1, 2; 2, 5.10;2 Tm 1, 3. j 15, 23.32; Acts 18, 21; 1 Cor 4, 19; 1 Thes 2, 17. k 1 Thes 2, 17; 3, 10. l 15, 22; Jn 15, 16; Acts 19, 21.

under obligation; 15 [m]that is why I am eager to
preach the gospel also to you in Rome.

## II: Humanity Lost Without the Gospel

**God's Power for Salvation** 16 [n]*For I am not
ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for
the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew
first, and then Greek. 17 [o]*For in it is revealed
the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it
is written, "The one who is righteous by faith
will live."

**Punishment of Idolators** 18 [p]*The wrath of
God is indeed being revealed from heaven
against every impiety and wickedness of those
who suppress the truth by their wickedness.
19 [q]For what can be known about God is evident
to them, because God made it evident to them.
20 [r]Ever since the creation of the world, his
invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity
have been able to be understood and perceived
in what he has made. As a result, they have no
excuse; 21 [s]for although they knew God they did
not accord him glory as God or give him thanks.
Instead, they became vain in their reasoning,
and their senseless minds were darkened.
22 [t]While claiming to be wise, they became fools
23 [u]and exchanged the glory of the immortal God
for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of
birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes.

24 [v]*Therefore, God handed them over to
impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the
mutual degradation of their bodies. 25 [w]They
exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered
and worshiped the creature rather than the
creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions. Their females exchanged natural relations
for unnatural, 27 [x]and the males likewise gave up
natural relations with females and burned with
lust for one another. Males did shameful things
with males and thus received in their own
persons the due penalty for their perversity.
28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge
God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper. 29 [y]They are
filled with every form of wickedness, evil, greed,
and malice; full of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, and spite. They are gossips 30 and scandalmongers and they hate God. They are inso-

1, 16–17: The principal theme of the letter is salvation through faith. **I am not ashamed of the gospel:** Paul is not ashamed to proclaim the gospel, despite the criticism that Jews and Gentiles leveled against the proclamation of the crucified savior; cf 1 Cor 1, 23–24. Paul affirms, however, that it is precisely through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus that God's saving will and power become manifest. **Jew first** (cf 2, 9–10) means that Jews especially, in view of the example of Abraham (ch 4), ought to be the leaders in the response of faith.

1, 17: **In it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith:** the gospel centers in Jesus Christ, in whom God's saving presence and righteousness in history have been made known. Faith is affirmation of the basic purpose and meaning of the Old Testament as proclamation of divine promise (2; 4, 13) and exposure of the inability of humanity to effect its salvation even through covenant law. Faith is the gift of the holy Spirit and denotes acceptance of salvation as God's righteousness, that is, God's gift of a renewed relationship in forgiveness and power for a new life. Faith is response to God's total claim on people and their destiny. **The one who is righteous by faith will live:** see the note on Hb 2, 4.

1, 18—3, 20: Paul aims to show that all humanity is in a desperate plight and requires God's special intervention if it is to be saved.

1, 18–32: In this passage Paul uses themes and rhetoric common in Jewish-Hellenistic mission proclamation (cf Wis 13, 1—14, 31) to indict especially the non-Jewish world. The close association of idolatry and immorality is basic, but the generalization needs in all fairness to be balanced against the fact that non-Jewish Christian society on many levels displayed moral attitudes and performance whose quality would challenge much of contemporary Christian culture. Romans themselves expressed abhorrence over devotion accorded to animals in Egypt. Paul's main point is that the wrath of God does not await the end of the world but goes into action at each present moment in humanity's history when misdirected piety serves as a facade for self-interest.

1, 18: **The wrath of God:** God's reaction to human sinfulness, an Old Testament phrase that expresses the irreconcilable opposition between God and evil (see Is 9, 11.16.18.20; 10, 4; 30, 27). It is not contrary to God's universal love for his creatures, but condemns Israel's turning aside from the covenant obligations. Hosea depicts Yahweh as suffering intensely at the thought of having to punish Israel (Hos 11, 8–9). God's wrath was to be poured forth especially on the "Day of Yahweh" and thus took on an eschatological connotation (see Zep 1, 15).

1, 24: In order to expose the depth of humanity's rebellion against the Creator, **God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts.** Instead of curbing people's evil interests, God abandoned them to self-indulgence, thereby removing the facade of apparent conformity to the divine will. Subsequently Paul will show that the Mosaic law produces the same effect; cf 5, 20; 7, 13–24. The divine judgment expressed here is related to the theme of hardness of heart described in 9, 17–18.

m Acts 28, 30–31. n Ps 119, 46; 1 Cor 1, 18.24 / 2, 9; Acts 3, 26; 13, 46. o 3, 21–22; Hb 2, 4; Gal 3, 11; Heb 10, 38. p 2, 5.8–9; Is 66, 15; Eph 5, 6; Col 3, 6. q Wis 13–19; Acts 14, 15–17; 17, 23–29. r Jb 12, 7–9; Pss 8, 4; 19, 2; Sir 17, 7–9; Is 40, 26; Acts 14, 17;17, 25–28. s Eph 4, 17–18. t Wis 13, 1–9; Is 5, 21; Jer 10, 14; Acts 17, 29–30;1 Cor 1, 19–21. u Dt 4, 15–19; Ps 106, 20; Wis 11, 15; 12, 24; 13, 10–19; Jer 2, 11. v Wis 12, 25; 14, 22–31; Acts 7, 41–42; Eph 4, 19. w 9, 5; Jer 13, 25–27. x Lv 18, 22; 20, 13; Wis 14, 26; 1 Cor 6, 9; 1 Tm 1, 10. y 13, 13; Mt 15, 19; Mk 7, 21–22; Gal 5, 19–21; 2 Tm 3, 2–4.

lent, haughty, boastful, ingenious in their wickedness, and rebellious toward their parents. 31 They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 [z]Although they know the just decree of God that all who practice such things deserve death, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

## CHAPTER 2

**God's Just Judgment** 1 [a]*Therefore, you are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment. For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God on those who do such things is true. 3 [b]Do you suppose, then, you who judge those who engage in such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 [c]Or do you hold his priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that the kindness of God would lead you to repentance? 5 [d]By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, 6 [e]*who will repay everyone according to his works: 7 eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, 8 [f]but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. 9 Yes, affliction and distress will come upon every human being who does evil, Jew first and then Greek. 10 [g]But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek. 11 [h]*There is no partiality with God.

**Judgment by the Interior Law** 12 [i]*All who sin outside the law will also perish without reference to it, and all who sin under the law will be judged in accordance with it. 13 [j]For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified. 14 [k]For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law. 15 *They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them 16 [l]on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people's hidden works through Christ Jesus.

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

**Judgment by the Mosaic Law** 17 [m]*Now if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of God 18 [n]and know his will and are able to discern what is important since you are instructed from the law, 19 [o]and if you are confident that you are a guide for the blind and a light for those in darkness, 20 [p]that you are a trainer of the foolish and teacher of the simple, because in the law you have the formulation of knowledge and truth— 21 [q]then you who teach another, are you failing to teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You

**2, 1—3, 20:** After his general indictment of the Gentile, Paul shows that in spite of special revelation Jews enjoy no advantage in moral status before God (3, 1–8). With the entire human race now declared guilty before God (3, 9–20), Paul will then be able to display the solution for the total problem: salvation through God's redemptive work that is revealed in Christ Jesus for all who believe (3, 21–31).

**2, 1–11:** As a first step in his demonstration that Jews enjoy no real moral supremacy over Gentiles, Paul explains that the final judgment will be a review of performance, not of privilege. From this perspective Gentiles stand on an equal footing with Jews, and Jews cannot condemn the sins of Gentiles without condemning themselves.

**2, 6: Will repay everyone according to his works:** Paul reproduces the Septuagint text of Ps 62, 12 and Prv 24, 12.

**2, 11: No partiality with God:** this sentence is not at variance with the statements in vv 9–10. Since Jews are the first to go under indictment, it is only fair that they be given first consideration in the distribution of blessings. Basic, of course, is the understanding that God accepts no bribes (Dt 10, 17).

**2, 12–16:** Jews cannot reasonably demand from Gentiles the standard of conduct inculcated in the Old Testament since God did not address its revelation to them. Rather, God made it possible for Gentiles to know instinctively the difference between right and wrong. But, as Paul explained in 1, 18–32, humanity misread the evidence of God's existence, power, and divinity, and "while claiming to be wise, they became fools" (1, 22).

**2, 15:** Paul expands on the thought of Jer 31, 33; Wis 17, 11.

**2, 17–29:** Mere possession of laws is no evidence of virtue. By eliminating circumcision as an elitist moral sign, Paul clears away the last obstacle to his presentation of justification through faith without claims based on the receipt of circumcision and its attendant legal obligations.

z Acts 8, 1; 2 Thes 2, 12. a Mt 7, 1–2. b Wis 16, 15–16. c 3, 25–26; 9, 22; Wis 11, 23; 15, 1; 2 Pt 3, 9.15. d Ex 33, 3; Acts 7, 51; Rv 6, 17; 11, 18. e Ps 62, 12; Prv 24, 12; Sir 16, 14; Mt 16, 27; Jn 5, 29;2 Cor 5, 10. f 2 Thes 1, 8. g 1, 16; 3, 9. h Dt 10, 17; 2 Chr 19, 7; Sir 35, 12–13; Acts 10, 34; Gal 2, 6; Eph 6, 9; Col 3, 25; 1 Pt 1, 17. i 3, 19. j Mt 7, 21; Lk 6, 46–49; 8, 21; Jas 1, 22–25; 1 Jn 3, 7. k Acts 10, 35. l Acts 10, 42; 17, 31. m Is 48, 1–2; Mi 3, 11; Phil 3, 4–6. n Phil 1, 10. o Mt 15, 14; Lk 6, 39. p 2 Tm 3, 15. q Ps 50, 16–21; Mt 23, 3–4.

who forbid adultery, do you commit adultery?
You who detest idols, do you rob temples? 23 You
who boast of the law, do you dishonor God by
breaking the law? 24 r*For, as it is written,
"Because of you the name of God is reviled
among the Gentiles."

25 s t Circumcision, to be sure, has value if you
observe the law; but if you break the law, your
circumcision has become uncircumcision.
26 u Again, if an uncircumcised man keeps the
precepts of the law, will he not be considered
circumcised? 27 Indeed, those who are physically
uncircumcised but carry out the law will pass
judgment on you, with your written law and
circumcision, who break the law. 28 v One is not a
Jew outwardly. True circumcision is not out-
ward, in the flesh. 29 w Rather, one is a Jew
inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the
spirit, not the letter; his praise is not from
human beings but from God.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

**Answers to Objections** 1 *What advantage is
there then in being a Jew? Or what is the value
of circumcision? 2 x Much, in every respect. [For]
in the first place, they were entrusted with the
utterances of God. 3 y What if some were unfaith-
ful? Will their infidelity nullify the fidelity of
God? 4 z*Of course not! God must be true,
though every human being is a liar, as it is
written:

"That you may be justified in your words,
and conquer when you are judged."

5 a But if our wickedness provides proof of God's
righteousness, what can we say? Is God unjust,
humanly speaking, to inflict his wrath? 6 Of
course not! For how else is God to judge the
world? 7 But if God's truth redounds to his glory
through my falsehood, why am I still being
condemned as a sinner? 8 b And why not say—as
we are accused and as some claim we say—that
we should do evil that good may come of it?
Their penalty is what they deserve.

**Universal Bondage to Sin** 9 c*Well, then, are
we better off? Not entirely, for we have already
brought the charge against Jews and Greeks alike
that they are all under the domination of sin,
10 d as it is written:

"There is no one just, not one,
11 there is no one who understands,
there is no one who seeks God.
12 All have gone astray; all alike are worthless;
there is not one who does good,
[there is not] even one.
13 e Their throats are open graves;
they deceive with their tongues;
the venom of asps is on their lips;
14 f their mouths are full of bitter cursing.
15 g Their feet are quick to shed blood;
16 ruin and misery are in their ways,
17 and the way of peace they know not.
18 h There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 i*Now we know that what the law says is
addressed to those under the law, so that every
mouth may be silenced and the whole world
stand accountable to God, 20 j*since no human

**2, 24:** According to Is 52, 5 the suffering of Israel prompts her enemies to revile God. Paul uses the passage in support of his point that the present immorality of Israelites is the cause of such defamation.

**3, 1–4:** In keeping with the popular style of diatribe, Paul responds to the objection that his teaching on the sinfulness of all humanity detracts from the religious prerogatives of Israel. He stresses that Jews have remained the vehicle of God's revelation despite their sins, though this depends on the fidelity of God.

**3, 4: Though every human being is a liar:** these words reproduce the Greek text of Ps 116, 11. The rest of the verse is from Ps 51, 6.

**3, 9–20: Well, then, are we better off?:** this phrase can also be translated "Are we at a disadvantage?" but the latter version does not substantially change the overall meaning of the passage. Having explained that Israel's privileged status is guaranteed by God's fidelity, Paul now demonstrates the infidelity of the Jews by a catena of citations from scripture, possibly derived from an existing collection of **testimonia.** These texts show that all human beings share the common burden of sin. They are linked together by mention of organs of the body: throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, eyes.

**3, 19: The law:** Paul here uses the term in its broadest sense to mean all of the scriptures; none of the preceding texts is from the Torah or Pentateuch.

**3, 20: No human being will be justified in his sight:** these

r Is 52, 5; Ez 36, 20; 2 Pt 2, 2. s Jer 4, 4; 9, 24–25. t 1 Cor 7, 19; Gal 5, 3. u Gal 5, 6. v Jn 7, 24; 8, 15.39. w Dt 30, 6; Jer 4, 4; 9, 25; Col 2, 11 / 1 Cor 4, 5; 2 Cor 10, 18. x 9, 4; Dt 4, 7–8; Pss 103, 7; 147, 19–20. y 9, 6; 11, 1.29; Ps 89, 30–37; 2 Tm 2, 13. z Ps 116, 11 / Ps 51, 6. a 9, 14; Jb 34, 12–17. b 6, 1. c 1, 18—2, 25; 3, 23; Sir 8, 5. d Pss 14, 1–3; 53, 2–4; Eccl 7, 20. e Pss 5, 10; 140, 4. f Ps 10, 7. g Prv 1, 16; Is 59, 7–8. h Ps 36, 2. i 7, 7. j Ps 143, 2; Gal 2, 16 / 7, 7.

being will be justified in his sight by observing the law; for through the law comes consciousness of sin.

## III: Justification Through Faith in Christ

**Justification apart from the Law** 21 *k**But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, though testified to by the law and the prophets, 22 *l*the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; 23 *m*all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. 24 *n*They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, 25 *o**whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed, 26 through the forbearance of God—to prove his righteousness in the present time, that he might be righteous and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 *p**What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out. On what principle, that of works? No, rather on the principle of faith. 28 *q*For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 *r*Does God belong to Jews alone? Does he not belong to Gentiles, too? Yes, also to Gentiles, 30 *s*for God is one and will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 *t**Are we then annulling the law by this faith? Of course not! On the contrary, we are supporting the law.

### CHAPTER 4

Ch 1–8 See RG 474–481

**Abraham Justified by Faith** 1 *u**What then can we say that Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2*Indeed, if Abraham was justified on the basis of his works, he has reason to boast; but this was not so in the sight of God. 3 *v**For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 *w*A worker's wage is credited not as a gift, but as something due. 5 But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as

words are freely cited from Ps 143, 2. In place of the psalmist's "no living person," Paul substitutes "no human being" (literally "no flesh," a Hebraism), and he adds "by observing the law."

**3, 21–31:** These verses provide a clear statement of Paul's "gospel," i.e., the principle of justification by faith in Christ. God has found a means of rescuing humanity from its desperate plight: Paul's general term for this divine initiative is **the righteousness of God** (21). Divine mercy declares the guilty innocent and makes them so. God does this not as a result of the law but apart from it (21), and not because of any merit in human beings but through forgiveness of their sins (24), in virtue of the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus for all who believe (22.24–25). God has manifested his righteousness in the coming of Jesus Christ, whose saving activity inaugurates a new era in human history.

**3, 21: But now:** Paul adopts a common phrase used by Greek authors to describe movement from disaster to prosperity. The expressions indicate that vv 21–26 are the consolatory answer to vv 9–20.

**3, 25: Expiation:** this rendering is preferable to "propitiation," which suggests hostility on the part of God toward sinners. As Paul will be at pains to point out (5, 8–10), it is humanity that is hostile to God.

**3, 27–31:** People cannot boast of their own holiness, since it is God's free gift (27), both to the Jew who practices circumcision out of faith and to the Gentile who accepts faith without the Old Testament religious culture symbolized by circumcision (29–30).

**3, 27: Principle of faith:** literally, "law of faith." Paul is fond of wordplay involving the term "law"; cf 7, 21.23; 8, 2. Since "law" in Greek may also connote "custom" or "principle," his readers and hearers would have sensed no contradiction in the use of the term after the negative statement concerning law in v 20.

**3, 31: We are supporting the law:** giving priority to God's intentions. God is the ultimate source of law, and the essence of law is fairness. On the basis of the Mosaic covenant, God's justice is in question if those who sinned against the law are permitted to go free (see 23–26). In order to rescue all humanity rather than condemn it, God thinks of an alternative: the law or "principle" of faith (27). What can be more fair than to admit everyone into the divine presence on the basis of forgiveness grasped by faith? Indeed, this principle of faith antedates the Mosaic law, as Paul will demonstrate in ch 4, and does not therefore mark a change in divine policy.

**4, 1–25:** This is an expanded treatment of the significance of Abraham's faith, which Paul discusses in Gal 3, 6–18; see the notes there.

**4, 2–5:** Verse 2 corresponds to v 4, and v 3 to v 5. The Greek term here rendered **credited** means "made an entry." The context determines whether it is credit or debit. Verse 8 speaks of "recording sin" as a debit. Paul's repeated use of accountants' terminology in this and other passages can be traced both to the Old Testament texts he quotes and to his business activity as a tentmaker. The commercial term in Gn 15, 6, "credited it to him," reminds Paul in vv 7–8 of Ps 32, 2, in which the same term is used and applied to forgiveness of sins. Thus Paul is able to argue that Abraham's faith involved receipt of forgiveness of sins and that all believers benefit as he did through faith.

**4, 3:** Jas 2, 24 appears to conflict with Paul's statement. However, James combats the error of extremists who used the doctrine of justification through faith as a screen for moral self-determination. Paul discusses the subject of holiness in greater detail than does James and beginning with ch 6 shows how justification through faith introduces one to the gift of a new life in Christ through the power of the holy Spirit.

k Is 51, 6–8; Acts 10, 43. l 1, 17; Gal 2, 16; Phil 3, 9. m 3, 9; 5, 12. n Eph 2, 8; Ti 3, 7 / 5, 1–2; Eph 1, 7. o Lv 16, 12–15; Acts 17, 31; 1 Jn 4, 10. p 8, 2; 1 Cor 1, 29–31. q 5, 1; Gal 2, 16. r 10, 12. s Dt 6, 4; Gal 3, 20; Jas 2, 19 / 4, 11–12. t 8, 4; Mt 5, 17. u Gal 3, 6–9. v Gn 15, 6; Gal 3, 6; Jas 2, 14.20–24. w 11, 6.

righteousness. [6]So also David declares the blessedness of the person to whom God credits
righteousness apart from works:

[7] [x]"Blessed are they whose iniquities are
forgiven
and whose sins are covered.
[8]Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does
not record."

[9] [y]*Does this blessedness apply only to the circumcised, or to the uncircumcised as well? Now we assert that "faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness." [10]Under what circumstances was it credited? Was he circumcised or not? He was not circumcised, but uncircumcised. [11] [z]And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal on the righteousness received through faith while he was uncircumcised. Thus he was to be the father of all the uncircumcised who believe, so that to them [also] righteousness might be credited, [12]as well as the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but also follow the path of faith that our father Abraham walked while still uncircumcised.

**Inheritance through Faith** [13] [a]It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith. [14] [b]For if those who adhere to the law are the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. [15] [c]*For the law produces wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. [16] [d]For this reason, it depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, and the promise may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us, [17] [e]as it is written, "I have made you father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist. [18] [f]He believed, hoping against hope, that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "Thus shall your descendants be." [19] [g]He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body as [already] dead (for he was almost a hundred years old) and the dead womb of Sarah. [20]*He did not doubt God's promise in unbelief; rather, he was empowered by faith and gave glory to God [21] [h]and was fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do. [22] [i]That is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." [23]But it was not for him alone that it was written that "it was credited to him"; [24] [j]it was also for us, to whom it will be credited, who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, [25] [k]who was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification.

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

## CHAPTER 5

**Faith, Hope, and Love** [1] [l]*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] [m]through whom we have gained access [by

**4, 9: Blessedness:** evidence of divine favor.

**4, 15:** Law has the negative function of bringing the deep-seated rebellion against God to the surface in specific sins; see the note on 1, 18–32.

**4, 20: He did not doubt God's promise in unbelief:** any doubts Abraham might have had were resolved in commitment to God's promise. Heb 11, 8–12 emphasizes the faith of Abraham and Sarah.

**5, 1–11:** Popular piety frequently construed reverses and troubles as punishment for sin; cf Jn 9, 2. Paul therefore assures believers that God's justifying action in Jesus Christ is a declaration of peace. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ displays God's initiative in certifying humanity for unimpeded access into the divine presence. Reconciliation is God's gift of pardon to the entire human race. Through faith one benefits personally from this pardon or, in Paul's term, is justified. The ultimate aim of God is to liberate believers from the pre-Christian self as described in chs 1–3. Since this liberation will first find completion in the believer's resurrection, salvation is described as future in 5, 10. Because this fullness of salvation belongs to the future it is called the Christian **hope.** Paul's Greek term for **hope** does not, however, suggest a note of uncertainty, to the effect: "I wonder whether God really means it." Rather, God's promise in the gospel fills believers with expectation and anticipation for the climactic gift of unalloyed commitment in the holy Spirit to the performance of the will of God. The persecutions that attend Christian commitment are to teach believers patience and to strengthen this hope, which will not disappoint them because the holy Spirit dwells in their hearts and imbues them with God's love (5).

**5, 1: We have peace:** a number of manuscripts, versions, and church Fathers read "Let us have peace"; cf 14, 19.

x Ps 32, 1–2. y 4, 3. z Gn 17, 10–11; Gal 3, 6–8. a Gn 12, 7; 18, 18; 22, 17–18; Sir 44, 21; Gal 3, 16–18.29. b Gal 3, 18. c 3, 20; 5, 13; 7, 8; Gal 3, 19. d Sir 44, 19; Gal 3, 7–9. e Gn 17, 5; Heb 11, 19 / Is 48, 13. f Gn 15, 5. g Gn 17, 17; Heb 11, 11. h Gn 18, 14; Lk 1, 37. i Gn 15, 6. j 10, 9; 1 Pt 1, 21. k Is 53, 4–5.12; 1 Cor 15, 17; 1 Pt 1, 3 / 8, 11. 13, 24–28; Gal 2, 16. m Eph 2, 18; 3, 12.

faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we
boast in hope of the glory of God. [3]Not only that,
but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing
that affliction produces endurance, [4] [n]and endur-
ance, proven character, and proven character,
hope, [5] [o]and hope does not disappoint, because
the love of God has been poured out into our
hearts through the holy Spirit that has been
given to us. [6]For Christ, while we were still
helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the
ungodly. [7]*Indeed, only with difficulty does one
die for a just person, though perhaps for a good
person one might even find courage to die.
[8] [p]But God proves his love for us in that while
we were still sinners Christ died for us. [9] [q]How
much more then, since we are now justified by
his blood, will we be saved through him from
the wrath. [10] [r]Indeed, if, while we were ene-
mies, we were reconciled to God through the
death of his Son, how much more, once recon-
ciled, will we be saved by his life. [11]Not only
that, but we also boast of God through our Lord
Jesus Christ, through whom we have now
received reconciliation.

**Humanity's Sin through Adam** [12] [s]*There-
fore, just as through one person sin entered the
world, and through sin, death, and thus death
came to all, inasmuch as all sinned— [13] [t]for up
to the time of the law, sin was in the world,
though sin is not accounted when there is no
law. [14] [u]But death reigned from Adam to Moses,
even over those who did not sin after the pattern
of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the
one who was to come.

**Grace and Life through Christ** [15]But the gift
is not like the transgression. For if by that one
person's transgression the many died, how much
more did the grace of God and the gracious gift
of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the
many. [16]And the gift is not like the result of the
one person's sinning. For after one sin there was
the judgment that brought condemnation; but
the gift, after many transgressions, brought ac-
quittal. [17]For if, by the transgression of one
person, death came to reign through that one,
how much more will those who receive the
abundance of grace and of the gift of justification
come to reign in life through the one person
Jesus Christ. [18] [v]In conclusion, just as through
one transgression condemnation came upon all,
so through one righteous act acquittal and life
came to all. [19] [w]For just as through the disobedi-
ence of one person the many were made sinners,
so through the obedience of one the many will
be made righteous. [20] [x]*The law entered in so
that transgression might increase but, where sin
increased, grace overflowed all the more, [21] [y]so
that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might
reign through justification for eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## IV: Justification and the Christian Life

### CHAPTER 6

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

**Freedom from Sin; Life in God** [1] [z]*What
then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that
grace may abound? Of course not! [2] [a]How can

**5, 7:** In the world of Paul's time the **good person** is especially one who is magnanimous to others.

**5, 12–21:** Paul reflects on the sin of Adam (Gn 3, 1–13) in the light of the redemptive mystery of Christ. Sin, as used in the singular by Paul, refers to the dreadful power that has gripped humanity, which is now in revolt against the Creator and engaged in the exaltation of its own desires and interests. But no one has a right to say, "Adam made me do it," for all are culpable (12): Gentiles under the demands of the law written in their hearts (2, 14–15), and Jews under the Mosaic covenant. Through the Old Testament law, the sinfulness of humanity that was operative from the beginning (13) found further stimulation, with the result that sins were generated in even greater abundance. According to vv 15–21, God's act in Christ is in total contrast to the disastrous effects of the virus of sin that invaded humanity through Adam's crime.

**5, 12: Inasmuch as all sinned:** others translate "because all sinned," and understand v 13 as a parenthetical remark. Unlike Wis 2, 24, Paul does not ascribe the entry of death to the devil.

**5, 20: The law entered in:** sin had made its entrance (12); now the law comes in alongside sin. See the notes on 1, 18–32; 5, 12–21. **Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more:** Paul declares that grace outmatches the productivity of sin.

**6, 1–11:** To defend the gospel against the charge that it promotes moral laxity (cf 3, 5–8), Paul expresses himself in the typical style of spirited diatribe. God's display of generosity or grace is not evoked by sin but, as stated in 5, 8, is the expression of God's love, and this love pledges eternal life to all believers (5, 21). Paul views the present conduct of the believers from the perspective of God's completed salvation when the body is resurrected and directed totally by the holy Spirit. Through baptism believers share the

n 2 Cor 12, 9–10; Jas 1, 2–4; 1 Pt 1, 5–7; 4, 12–14. o 8, 14–16; Pss 22, 5–6; 25, 20. p Jn 3, 16; 1 Jn 4, 10.19. q 1, 18; 1 Thes 1, 10. r 8, 7–8; 2 Cor 5, 18; Col 1, 21–22. s Gn 2, 17; 3, 1–19; Wis 2, 24 / 3, 19.23. t 4, 15. u 1 Cor 15, 21. v 1 Cor 15, 21–22. w Is 53, 11; Phil 2, 8–9. x 4, 15; 7, 7–8; Gal 3, 19. y 6, 23. z 3, 5–8. a 1 Pt 4, 1.

we who died to sin yet live in it? 3 [b]Or are you
unaware that we who were baptized into Christ
Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 [c]We were
indeed buried with him through baptism into
death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the
dead by the glory of the Father, we too might
live in newness of life.

5 [d]For if we have grown into union with him
through a death like his, we shall also be united
with him in the resurrection. 6 [e]We know that
our old self was crucified with him, so that our
sinful body might be done away with, that we
might no longer be in slavery to sin. 7 For a dead
person has been absolved from sin. 8 [f]If, then,
we have died with Christ, we believe that we
shall also live with him. 9 [g]We know that Christ,
raised from the dead, dies no more; death no
longer has power over him. 10 [h]As to his death,
he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he
lives for God. 11 [i]Consequently, you too must
think of yourselves as [being] dead to sin and
living for God in Christ Jesus.

12 [j]*Therefore, sin must not reign over your
mortal bodies so that you obey their desires.
13 [k]And do not present the parts of your bodies to
sin as weapons for wickedness, but present
yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life
and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons
for righteousness. 14 [l]For sin is not to have any
power over you, since you are not under the law
but under grace.

Ch 1–8
See RG
474–481

15 [m]What then? Shall we sin because we are
not under the law but under grace? Of course
not! 16 [n o]Do you not know that if you present
yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you
are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin,
which leads to death, or of obedience, which
leads to righteousness? 17 *But thanks be to God
that, although you were once slaves of sin, you
have become obedient from the heart to the
pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted.
18 Freed from sin, you have become slaves of
righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms
because of the weakness of your nature. For just
as you presented the parts of your bodies as
slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawless-
ness, so now present them as slaves to righteous-
ness for sanctification. 20 [p]*For when you were
slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness.
21 [q]But what profit did you get then from the
things of which you are now ashamed? For the
end of those things is death. 22 [r]*But now that
you have been freed from sin and have become
slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to
sanctification, and its end is eternal life. 23 [s]For
the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is
eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## CHAPTER 7

**Freedom from the Law** 1 *Are you unaware,
brothers (for I am speaking to people who know
the law), that the law has jurisdiction over one as
long as one lives? 2 [t]Thus a married woman is
bound by law to her living husband; but if her

death of Christ and thereby escape from the grip of sin. Through the resurrection of Christ the power to live anew becomes reality for them, but the fullness of participation in Christ's resurrection still lies in the future. But life that is lived in dedication to God now is part and parcel of that future. Hence anyone who sincerely claims to be interested in that future will scarcely be able to say, "Let us sin so that grace may prosper" (cf 1).

**6, 12–19:** Christians have been released from the grip of sin, but sin endeavors to reclaim its victims. The antidote is constant remembrance that divine grace has claimed them and identifies them as people who are alive only for God's interests.

**6, 17:** In contrast to humanity, which was handed over to self-indulgence (1, 24–32), believers are **entrusted** ("handed over") to God's **pattern of teaching,** that is, the new life God aims to develop in Christians through the productivity of the holy Spirit. Throughout this passage Paul uses the slave-master model in order to emphasize the fact that one cannot give allegiance to both God and sin.

**6, 20: You were free from righteousness:** expressed ironically, for such freedom is really tyranny. The commercial metaphors in vv 21–23 add up only one way: sin is a bad bargain.

**6, 22: Sanctification:** or holiness.

**7, 1–6:** Paul reflects on the fact that Christians have a different understanding of the law because of their faith in Christ. Law binds the living, not the dead, as exemplified in marriage, which binds in life but is dissolved through death. Similarly, Christians who through baptism have died with Christ to sin (cf 6, 2–4) are freed from the law that occasioned transgressions, which in turn were productive of death. Now that Christians are joined to Christ, the power of Christ's resurrection makes it possible for them to bear the fruit of newness of life for God.

b Gal 3, 27. c Col 2, 12; 1 Pt 3, 21–22. d Phil 3, 10–11; 2 Tm 2, 11. e Gal 5, 24; 6, 14; Eph 4, 22–23. f 1 Thes 4, 17. g Acts 13, 34; 1 Cor 15, 26; 2 Tm 1, 10; Rv 1, 18. h Heb 9, 26–28; 1 Pt 3, 18. i 2 Cor 5, 15; 1 Pt 2, 24. j Gn 4, 7. k 12, 1; Eph 2, 5; 5, 14 / Col 3, 5. l Gal 5, 18; 1 Jn 3, 6. m 5, 17.21. n Jn 8, 31–34; 2 Pt 2, 19. o Jn 8, 32–36. p Jn 8, 34. q 8, 6.13; Prv 12, 28; Ez 16, 61.63. r 1 Pt 1, 9. s Gn 2, 17; Gal 6, 7–9; Jas 1, 15. t 1 Cor 7, 39.

husband dies, she is released from the law in
respect to her husband. [3]Consequently, while her
husband is alive she will be called an adulteress if
she consorts with another man. But if her hus-
band dies she is free from that law, and she is not
an adulteress if she consorts with another man.

[4]In the same way, my brothers, you also were
put to death to the law through the body of
Christ, so that you might belong to another, to
the one who was raised from the dead in order
that we might bear fruit for God. [5] [u]For when we
were in the flesh, our sinful passions, awakened
by the law, worked in our members to bear fruit
for death. [6] [v]But now we are released from the
law, dead to what held us captive, so that we
may serve in the newness of the spirit and not
under the obsolete letter.

**Acquaintance with Sin through the Law**

[7] [w]*What then can we say? That the law is sin?
Of course not! Yet I did not know sin except
through the law, and I did not know what it is to
covet except that the law said, "You shall not
covet." [8] [x]But sin, finding an opportunity in the
commandment, produced in me every kind of
covetousness. Apart from the law sin is dead. [9]I
once lived outside the law, but when the com-
mandment came, sin became alive; [10] [y]then I
died, and the commandment that was for life
turned out to be death for me. [11] [z]For sin, seizing
an opportunity in the commandment, deceived
me and through it put me to death. [12] [a]So then
the law is holy, and the commandment is holy
and righteous and good.

**Sin and Death**

[13] [b]*Did the good, then, be-
come death for me? Of course not! Sin, in order
that it might be shown to be sin, worked death
in me through the good, so that sin might
become sinful beyond measure through the
commandment. [14] [c]We know that the law is
spiritual; but I am carnal, sold into slavery to sin.
[15]What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do
what I want, but I do what I hate. [16]Now if I do
what I do not want, I concur that the law is
good. [17]So now it is no longer I who do it, but
sin that dwells in me. [18] [d]For I know that good
does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. The
willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is
not. [19]For I do not do the good I want, but I do
the evil I do not want. [20]Now if [I] do what I do
not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that
dwells in me. [21]So, then, I discover the principle
that when I want to do right, evil is at hand.
[22]For I take delight in the law of God, in my
inner self, [23] [e]*but I see in my members another
principle at war with the law of my mind, taking
me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my
members. [24]Miserable one that I am! Who will
deliver me from this mortal body? [25] [f]Thanks be
to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore,
I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God
but, with my flesh, the law of sin.

## CHAPTER 8

**The Flesh and the Spirit**

[1]*Hence, now there
is no condemnation for those who are in Christ

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**7, 7–25:** In this passage Paul uses the first person singular in the style of diatribe for the sake of argument. He aims to depict the disastrous consequences when a Christian reintroduces the law as a means to attain the objective of holiness pronounced in 6, 22.

**7, 7–12:** The apostle defends himself against the charge of identifying the law with sin. Sin does not exist in law but in human beings, whose sinful inclinations are not overcome by the proclamation of law.

**7, 13–25:** Far from improving the sinner, law encourages sin to expose itself in transgressions or violations of specific commandments (see 1, 24; 5, 20). Thus persons who do not experience the justifying grace of God, and Christians who revert to dependence on law as the criterion for their relationship with God, will recognize a rift between their reasoned desire for the goodness of the law and their actual performance that is contrary to the law. Unable to free themselves from the slavery of sin and the power of death, they can only be rescued from defeat in the conflict by the power of God's grace working through Jesus Christ.

**7, 23:** As in 3, 27, Paul plays on the term **law**, which in Greek can connote custom, system, or **principle**.

**8, 1–13:** After his warning in ch 7 against the wrong route to fulfillment of the objective of holiness expressed in 6, 22, Paul points his addressees to the correct way. Through the redemptive work of Christ, Christians have been liberated from the terrible forces of sin and death. Holiness was impossible so long as the **flesh** (or our "old self"), that is, self-interested hostility toward God (7), frustrated the divine objectives expressed in the law. What is worse, sin used the law to break forth into all manner of lawlessness (8). All this is now changed. At the cross God broke the power of sin and pronounced sentence on it (3). Christians still retain the flesh, but it is alien to their new being, which is life in the spirit, namely the new self, governed by the holy Spirit.

u 6, 21; 8, 6.13. v 8, 2; 2 Cor 3, 6. w 3, 20; Ex 20, 17; Dt 5, 21. x 5, 13.20; 1 Cor 15, 56 / 4, 15. y Lv 18, 5. z Gn 3, 13; Heb 3, 13. a 1 Tm 1, 8. b 4, 15; 5, 20. c 8, 7–8; Ps 51, 7. d Gn 6, 5; 8, 21; Phil 2, 13. e Gal 5, 17; 1 Pt 2, 11. f 1 Cor 15, 57.

Jesus. [2] [g]For the law of the spirit of life in Christ
Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and
death. [3] [h]For what the law, weakened by the
flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done:
by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful
flesh and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin
in the flesh, [4] [i]so that the righteous decree of the
law might be fulfilled in us, who live not
according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
[5]For those who live according to the flesh are
concerned with the things of the flesh, but those
who live according to the spirit with the things
of the spirit. [6] [j]The concern of the flesh is death,
but the concern of the spirit is life and peace.
[7] [k]For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward
God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor
can it; [8] [l]and those who are in the flesh cannot
please God. [9] [m]But you are not in the flesh; on
the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the
Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not
have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
[10] [n]But if Christ is in you, although the body is
dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of
righteousness. [11]If the Spirit of the one who
raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one
who raised Christ from the dead will give life to
your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that
dwells in you. [12]Consequently, brothers, we are
not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the
flesh. [13] [o]For if you live according to the flesh,
you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death
the deeds of the body, you will live.

**Children of God through Adoption** [14] [p]*For
those who are led by the Spirit of God are
children of God. [15] [q]*For you did not receive a
spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you
received a spirit of adoption, through which we
cry, "*Abba,* Father!" [16] [r]The Spirit itself bears
witness with our spirit that we are children of
God, [17] [s]and if children, then heirs, heirs of God
and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with
him so that we may also be glorified with him.

**Destiny of Glory** [18] [t]*I consider that the suffer-
ings of this present time are as nothing compared
with the glory to be revealed for us. [19]For
creation awaits with eager expectation the reve-
lation of the children of God; [20] [u]for creation was
made subject to futility, not of its own accord but
because of the one who subjected it, in hope
[21] [v]that creation itself would be set free from
slavery to corruption and share in the glorious
freedom of the children of God. [22] [w]We know
that all creation is groaning in labor pains even
until now; [23] [x]and not only that, but we our-
selves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we
also groan within ourselves as we wait for
adoption, the redemption of our bodies. [24] [y]For
in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for
itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one
sees? [25]But if we hope for what we do not see,
we wait with endurance.

[26]In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the
aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to
pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes
with inexpressible groanings. [27] [z]And the one
who searches hearts knows what is the intention
of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy
ones according to God's will.

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Under the direction of the holy Spirit Christians are able to fulfill the divine will that formerly found expression in the law (4). The same Spirit who enlivens Christians for holiness will also resurrect their bodies at the last day (11). Christian life is therefore the experience of a constant challenge to put to death the evil deeds of the body through life of the spirit (13).

**8, 14–17:** Christians, by reason of the Spirit's presence within them, enjoy not only new life but also a new relationship to God, that of adopted children and heirs through Christ, whose sufferings and glory they share.

**8, 15: Abba:** see the note on Mk 14, 36.

**8, 18–27:** The glory that believers are destined to share with Christ far exceeds the sufferings of the present life. Paul considers the destiny of the created world to be linked with the future that belongs to the believers. As it shares in the penalty of corruption brought about by sin, so also will it share in the benefits of redemption and future glory that comprise the ultimate liberation of God's people (19–22). After patient endurance in steadfast expectation, the full harvest of the Spirit's presence will be realized. On earth believers enjoy the firstfruits, i.e., the Spirit, as a guarantee of the total liberation of their bodies from the influence of the rebellious old self (23).

g 7, 23–24; 2 Cor 3, 17. h Acts 13, 38; 15, 10 / Jn 3, 16–17; 2 Cor 5, 21; Gal 3, 13; 4, 4; Phil 2, 7; Col 1, 22; Heb 2, 17; 4, 15; 1 Jn 4, 9. i Gal 5, 16–25. j 6, 21; 7, 5; 8, 13; Gal 6, 8. k 5, 10; Jas 4, 4. l 1 Jn 2, 16. m 1 Cor 3, 16. n Gal 2, 20; 1 Pt 4, 6. o Gal 5, 24; 6, 8; Eph 4, 22–24. p Gal 5, 18. q Mk 14, 36; Gal 4, 5–6; 2 Tm 1, 7. r Jn 1, 12; Gal 3, 26–29. s Gal 4, 7; 1 Pt 4, 13; 5, 1. t 2 Cor 4, 17. u Gn 3, 17–19. v 2 Pt 3, 12–13; Rv 21, 1. w 2 Cor 5, 2–5. x 2 Cor 1, 22; Gal 5, 5. y 2 Cor 5, 7; Heb 11, 1. z Ps 139, 1; 1 Cor 4, 5.

**God's Indomitable Love in Christ** 28 [a]*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 [b]*For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 [c]And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

31 [d]*What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 [e]He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? 33 [f]Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. 34 [g]Who will condemn? It is Christ [Jesus] who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. 35 What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? 36 [h]As it is written:

"For your sake we are being slain all the day;
we are looked upon as sheep to be
slaughtered."

37 [i]No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. 38 [j]*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, 39 *nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## V: Jews and Gentiles in God's Plan

### CHAPTER 9

Ch 9–11
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**Paul's Love for Israel** 1 [k]*I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit in bearing me witness 2 that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. 3 [l]For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh. 4 [m]They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; 5 [n]*theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.

**8, 28–30:** These verses outline the Christian vocation as it was designed by God: **to be conformed to the image of his Son,** who is to **be the firstborn among many brothers** (29). God's redemptive action on behalf of the believers has been in process before the beginning of the world. Those whom God chooses are **those he foreknew** (29) or elected. Those who are **called** (30) are **predestined** or predetermined. These expressions do not mean that God is arbitrary. Rather, Paul uses them to emphasize the thought and care that God has taken for the Christian's salvation.

**8, 28: We know that all things work for good for those who love God:** a few ancient authorities have God as the subject of the verb, and some translators render: "We know that God makes everything work for good for those who love God . . . ."

**8, 29: Image:** while man and woman were originally created in God's image (Gn 1, 26–27), it is through baptism into Christ, the image of God (2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15), that we are renewed according to the image of the Creator (Col 3, 10).

**8, 31–39:** The all-conquering power of God's love has overcome every obstacle to Christians' salvation and every threat to separate them from God. That power manifested itself fully when God's own Son was delivered up to death for their salvation. Through him Christians can overcome all their afflictions and trials.

**8, 38: Present things** and **future things** may refer to astrological data. Paul appears to be saying that the gospel liberates believers from dependence on astrologers.

**8, 39: Height, depth** may refer to positions in the zodiac, positions of heavenly bodies relative to the horizon. In astrological documents the term for "height" means "exaltation" or the position of greatest influence exerted by a planet. Since hostile spirits were associated with the planets and stars, Paul includes **powers** (38) in his list of malevolent forces.

**9, 1—11, 36:** Israel's unbelief and its rejection of Jesus as savior astonished and puzzled Christians. It constituted a serious problem for them in view of God's specific preparation of Israel for the advent of the Messiah. Paul addresses himself here to the essential question of how the divine plan could be frustrated by Israel's unbelief. At the same time, he discourages both complacency and anxiety on the part of Gentiles. To those who might boast of their superior advantage over Jews, he warns that their enjoyment of the blessings assigned to Israel can be terminated. To those who might anxiously ask, "How can we be sure that Israel's fate will not be ours?" he replies that only unbelief can deprive one of salvation.

**9, 1–5:** The apostle speaks in strong terms of the depth of his grief over the unbelief of his own people. He would willingly undergo a curse himself for the sake of their coming to the knowledge of Christ (3; cf Lv 27, 28–29). His love for them derives from God's continuing choice of them and from the spiritual benefits that God bestows on them and through them on all of humanity (4–5).

**9, 5:** Some editors punctuate this verse differently and prefer the translation, "Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all." However, Paul's point is that **God who is over all** aimed to use Israel, which had been entrusted with every privilege, in outreach to the entire world through the Messiah.

a Eph 1, 4–14; 3, 11. b Eph 1, 5; 1 Pt 1, 2. c Is 45, 25; 2 Thes 2, 13–14. d Ps 118, 6; Heb 13, 6. e Jn 3, 16. f Is 50, 8. g Ps 110, 1; Heb 7, 25; 1 Jn 2, 1. h Ps 44, 23; 1 Cor 4, 9; 15, 30; 2 Cor 4, 11; 2 Tm 3, 12. i 1 Jn 5, 4. j 1 Cor 3, 22; Eph 1, 21; 1 Pt 3, 22. k 2 Cor 11, 31; 1 Tm 2, 7. l Ex 32, 32. m 3, 2; Ex 4, 22; Dt 7, 6; 14, 1–2. n Mt 1, 1–16; Lk 3, 23–38 / 1, 25; Ps 41, 14.

**God's Free Choice** 6 [o]But it is not that the
word of God has failed. For not all who are of
Israel are Israel, 7 [p]nor are they all children of
Abraham because they are his descendants; but
"It is through Isaac that descendants shall bear
your name." 8 [q]This means that it is not the
children of the flesh who are the children of
God, but the children of the promise are counted
as descendants. 9 [r]For this is the wording of the
promise, "About this time I shall return and
Sarah will have a son." 10 [s]*And not only that,
but also when Rebecca had conceived children
by one husband, our father Isaac— 11 before they
had yet been born or had done anything, good or
bad, in order that God's elective plan might
continue, 12 [t]not by works but by his call—she
was told, "The older shall serve the younger."
13 [u]*As it is written:

"I loved Jacob
but hated Esau."

14 [v]*What then are we to say? Is there injustice
on the part of God? Of course not! 15 [w]For he
says to Moses:

"I will show mercy to whom I will,
I will take pity on whom I will."

16 [x]So it depends not upon a person's will or
exertion, but upon God, who shows mercy.
17 [y]For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "This is
why I have raised you up, to show my power
through you that my name may be proclaimed
throughout the earth." 18 [z]*Consequently, he
has mercy upon whom he wills, and he hardens
whom he wills.

19 [a]*You will say to me then, "Why [then]
does he still find fault? For who can oppose his
will?" 20 [b]But who indeed are you, a human
being, to talk back to God? Will what is made
say to its maker, "Why have you created me so?"
21 Or does not the potter have a right over the
clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for
a noble purpose and another for an ignoble one?
22 [c]What if God, wishing to show his wrath and
make known his power, has endured with much
patience the vessels of wrath made for destruc-
tion? 23 This was to make known the riches of his
glory to the vessels of mercy, which he has
prepared previously for glory, 24 namely, us
whom he has called, not only from the Jews but
also from the Gentiles.

**Witness of the Prophets** 25 [d]*As indeed he
says in Hosea:

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my
people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call
'beloved.'
26 [e]And in the very place where it was said to
them, 'You are not my people,'
there they shall be called children of the
living God."

**9, 10: Children by one husband, our father Isaac:** Abraham had two children, Ishmael and Isaac, by two wives, Hagar and Sarah, respectively. In that instance Isaac, although born later than Ishmael, became the bearer of the messianic promise. In the case of twins born to Rebecca, God's elective procedure is seen even more dramatically, and again the younger, contrary to Semitic custom, is given the preference.

**9, 13:** The literal rendering, **"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,"** suggests an attitude of divine hostility that is not implied in Paul's statement. In Semitic usage "hate" means to love less; cf Lk 14, 26 with Mt 10, 37. Israel's unbelief reflects the mystery of the divine election that is always operative within it. Mere natural descent from Abraham does not ensure the full possession of the divine gifts; it is God's sovereign prerogative to bestow this fullness upon, or to withhold it from, whomsoever he wishes; cf Mt 3, 9; Jn 8, 39. The choice of Jacob over Esau is a case in point.

**9, 14–18:** The principle of divine election does not invite Christians to theoretical inquiry concerning the nonelected, nor does this principle mean that God is unfair in his dealings with humanity. The instruction concerning divine election is a part of the gospel and reveals that the gift of faith is the enactment of God's mercy (16). God raised up Moses to display that mercy, and Pharaoh to display divine severity in punishing those who obstinately oppose their Creator.

**9, 18:** The basic biblical principle is: those who will not see or hear **shall** not see or hear. On the other hand, the same God who thus makes stubborn or hardens the heart can reconstruct it through the work of the holy Spirit.

**9, 19–29:** The apostle responds to the objection that if God rules over faith through the principle of divine election, God cannot then accuse unbelievers of sin (19). For Paul, this objection is in the last analysis a manifestation of human insolence, and his "answer" is less an explanation of God's ways than the rejection of an argument that places humanity on a level with God. At the same time, Paul shows that God is far less arbitrary than appearances suggest, for God endures **with much patience** (22) a person like the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

**9, 25: Beloved:** in Semitic discourse means "preferred" or "favorite" (cf 13). See Hos 2, 1, which is transposed after Hos 3, 5 in the NAB.

o Nm 23, 19 / Mt 3, 9. p Gn 21, 12; Gal 3, 29. q Gal 4, 23.28. r Gn 18, 10.14. s Gn 25, 21. t 11, 5–6 / Gn 25, 23–24. u Mal 1, 3. v Dt 32, 4. w Ex 33, 19. x Eph 2, 8; Ti 3, 5. y Ex 9, 16. z 11, 30–32; Ex 4, 21; 7, 3. a 3, 7; Wis 12, 12. b Wis 15, 7; Is 29, 16; 45, 9; Jer 18, 6. c 2, 4; Wis 12, 20–21; Jer 50, 25. d Hos 2, 25. e Hos 2, 1.

27 *f*And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,
"Though the number of the Israelites were like
the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be
saved; 28 for decisively and quickly will the Lord
execute sentence upon the earth." 29 *g*And as
Isaiah predicted:

"Unless the Lord of hosts had left us
descendants,
we would have become like Sodom
and have been made like Gomorrah."

**Righteousness Based on Faith** 30 *h**What
then shall we say? That Gentiles, who did not
pursue righteousness, have achieved it, that is,
righteousness that comes from faith; 31 *i*but that
Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, did
not attain to that law? 32 *j**Why not? Because
they did it not by faith, but as if it could be done
by works. They stumbled over the stone that
causes stumbling, 33 *k*as it is written:

"Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion
that will make people stumble
and a rock that will make them fall,
and whoever believes in him shall not be put
to shame."

## CHAPTER 10

1 *l**Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God
on their behalf is for salvation. 2 *m*I testify with
regard to them that they have zeal for God, but it
is not discerning. 3 *n*For, in their unawareness of
the righteousness that comes from God and their
attempt to establish their own [righteousness],
they did not submit to the righteousness of God.
4 *o**For Christ is the end of the law for the
justification of everyone who has faith.

5 *p**Moses writes about the righteousness that
comes from [the] law, "The one who does these
things will live by them." 6 *q*But the righteous-
ness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in
your heart, 'Who will go up into heaven?' (that
is, to bring Christ down) 7 *r**or 'Who will go
down into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up
from the dead)." 8 *s*But what does it say?

"The word is near you,
in your mouth and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we preach), 9 *t**for,
if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord
and believe in your heart that God raised him
from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For one
believes with the heart and so is justified, and
one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.
11 *u*For the scripture says, "No one who believes
in him will be put to shame." 12 *v*For there is no
distinction between Jew and Greek; the same
Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon
him. 13 *w*For "everyone who calls on the name of
the Lord will be saved."

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14 *x**But how can they call on him in whom

**9, 30–33:** In the conversion of the Gentiles and, by contrast, of relatively few Jews, the Old Testament prophecies are seen to be fulfilled; cf 25–29. Israel feared that the doctrine of justification through faith would jeopardize the validity of the Mosaic law, and so they never reached their goal of righteousness that they had sought to attain through meticulous observance of the law (31). Since Gentiles, including especially Greeks and Romans, had a great regard for righteousness, Paul's statement concerning Gentiles in v 30 is to be understood from a Jewish perspective: quite evidently they had not been interested in "God's" righteousness, for it had not been revealed to them; but now in response to the proclamation of the gospel they respond in faith.

**9, 32:** Paul discusses Israel as a whole from the perspective of contemporary Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah. The Old Testament and much of Jewish noncanonical literature in fact reflect a fervent faith in divine mercy.

**10, 1–13:** Despite Israel's lack of faith in God's act in Christ, Paul does not abandon hope for her salvation (1). However, Israel must recognize that the Messiah's arrival in the person of Jesus Christ means the termination of the Mosaic law as the criterion for understanding oneself in a valid relationship to God. Faith in God's saving action in Jesus Christ takes precedence over any such legal claim (6).

**10, 4:** The Mosaic legislation has been superseded by God's action in Jesus Christ. Others understand **end** here in the sense that Christ is the goal of the law, i.e., the true meaning of the Mosaic law, which cannot be correctly understood apart from him. Still others believe that both meanings are intended.

**10, 5–6:** The subject of the verb **says** (6) is **righteousness** personified. Both of the statements in vv 5 and 6 derive from Moses, but Paul wishes to contrast the language of law and the language of faith.

**10, 7:** Here Paul blends Dt 30, 13 and Ps 107, 26.

**10, 9–11:** To confess Jesus as Lord was frequently quite hazardous in the first century (cf Mt 10, 18; 1 Thes 2, 2; 1 Pt 2, 18–21; 3, 14). For a Jew it could mean disruption of normal familial and other social relationships, including great economic sacrifice. In the face of penalties imposed by the secular world, Christians are assured that **no one who believes in** Jesus **will be put to shame** (11).

**10, 14–21:** The gospel has been sufficiently proclaimed to

f Is 10, 22–23; Hos 2, 1 / 11, 5 / Is 28, 22. g Is 1, 9; Mt 10, 15. h 10, 4.20. i 10, 3. j Is 8, 14. k Is 28, 16; 1 Pt 2, 6–8. l 9, 1.3. m Acts 22, 3. n 9, 31–32; Phil 3, 9. o Acts 13, 38–39; 2 Cor 3, 14; Heb 8, 13. p Lv 18, 5; Gal 3, 12. q Dt 9, 4; 30, 12. r Dt 30, 13; 1 Pt 3, 19. s Dt 30, 14. t 1 Cor 12, 3. u 9, 33; Is 28, 16. v 1, 16; 3, 22.29; Acts 10, 34; 15, 9.11; Gal 3, 28; Eph 2, 14. w Jl 3, 5; Acts 2, 21. x Acts 8, 31.

they have not believed? And how can they
believe in him of whom they have not heard?
And how can they hear without someone to
preach? 15 *y**And how can people preach unless
they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful
are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!"
16 *z*But not everyone has heeded the good news;
for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what
was heard from us?" 17 *a*Thus faith comes from
what is heard, and what is heard comes through
the word of Christ. 18 *b*But I ask, did they not
hear? Certainly they did; for

"Their voice has gone forth to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world."

19 *c*But I ask, did not Israel understand? First
Moses says:

"I will make you jealous of those who are not a
nation;
with a senseless nation I will make you
angry."

20 *d*Then Isaiah speaks boldly and says:

"I was found [by] those who were not seeking
me;
I revealed myself to those who were not
asking for me."

21 But regarding Israel he says, "All day long I
stretched out my hands to a disobedient and
contentious people."

## CHAPTER 11

Ch 9–11
See RG
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**The Remnant of Israel** 1 *ef**I ask, then, has
God rejected his people? Of course not! For I too
am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the
tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his
people whom he foreknew. Do you not know
what the scripture says about Elijah, how he
pleads with God against Israel? 3 *g*"Lord, they
have killed your prophets, they have torn down
your altars, and I alone am left, and they are
seeking my life." 4 *h*But what is God's response
to him? "I have left for myself seven thousand
men who have not knelt to Baal." 5 *i*So also at
the present time there is a remnant, chosen by
grace. 6 *j*But if by grace, it is no longer because of
works; otherwise grace would no longer be
grace. 7 *k*What then? What Israel was seeking it
did not attain, but the elect attained it; the rest
were hardened, 8 *l*as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of deep sleep,
eyes that should not see
and ears that should not hear,
down to this very day."

9 *m*And David says:

"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for
them;
10 let their eyes grow dim so that they may not
see,
and keep their backs bent forever."

**The Gentiles' Salvation** 11 *n**Hence I ask, did
they stumble so as to fall? Of course not! But
through their transgression salvation has come
to the Gentiles, so as to make them jealous.
12 Now if their transgression is enrichment for
the world, and if their diminished number is
enrichment for the Gentiles, how much more
their full number.

13 *o*Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I

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Israel, and Israel has adequately understood God's plan for the messianic age, which would see the gospel brought to the uttermost parts of the earth. As often in the past, Israel has not accepted the prophetic message; cf Acts 7, 51–53.

**10, 15: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news:** in Semitic fashion, the parts of the body that bring the messenger with welcome news are praised; cf Lk 11, 27.

**11, 1–10:** Although Israel has been unfaithful to the prophetic message of the gospel (10, 14–21), God remains faithful to Israel. Proof of the divine fidelity lies in the existence of Jewish Christians like Paul himself. The unbelieving Jews, says Paul, have been blinded by the Christian teaching concerning the Messiah.

**11, 11–15:** The unbelief of the Jews has paved the way for the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles and for their easier acceptance of it outside the context of Jewish culture. Through his mission to the Gentiles Paul also hopes to fill his fellow Jews with jealousy. Hence he hastens to fill the entire Mediterranean world with the gospel. Once all the Gentile nations have heard the gospel, Israel as a whole is expected to embrace it. This will be tantamount to resurrection of the dead, that is, the reappearance of Jesus Christ with all the believers at the end of time.

y Is 52, 7; Na 2, 1; Eph 6, 15. z Is 53, 1; Jn 12, 38. a Jn 17, 20. b Ps 19, 5; Mt 24, 14. c 11, 11.14; Dt 32, 21. d 9, 30; Is 65, 1–2. e 2 Cor 11, 22; Phil 3, 5. f 1 Sm 12, 22; Ps 94, 14. g 1 Kgs 19, 10.14. h 1 Kgs 19, 18. i 9, 27. j 4, 4; Gal 3, 18. k 9, 31. l Dt 29, 3; Is 29, 10; Mt 13, 13–15; Acts 28, 26–27. m Pss 69, 23–24; 35, 8. n Acts 13, 46; 18, 6; 28, 28 / 10, 19; Dt 32, 21. o 1,5.

glory in my ministry [14]in order to make my race
jealous and thus save some of them. [15]For if their
rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what
will their acceptance be but life from the dead?
[16] [p]*If the firstfruits are holy, so is the whole
batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the
branches.

[17] [q]But if some of the branches were broken
off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in
their place and have come to share in the rich
root of the olive tree, [18] [r]do not boast against the
branches. If you do boast, consider that you do
not support the root; the root supports you.
[19]Indeed you will say, "Branches were broken
off so that I might be grafted in." [20] [s]That is so.
They were broken off because of unbelief, but
you are there because of faith. So do not become
haughty, but stand in awe. [21] [t]For if God did not
spare the natural branches, [perhaps] he will not
spare you either. [22] [u]See, then, the kindness and
severity of God: severity toward those who fell,
but God's kindness to you, provided you remain
in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut
off. [23] [v]And they also, if they do not remain in
unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to
graft them in again. [24]For if you were cut from
what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted,
contrary to nature, into a cultivated one, how
much more will they who belong to it by nature
be grafted back into their own olive tree.

**God's Irrevocable Call** [25] [w]*I do not want you
to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, so that
you will not become wise [in] your own estima-
tion: a hardening has come upon Israel in part,
until the full number of the Gentiles comes in,
[26] [x y]and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is
written:

"The deliverer will come out of Zion,
he will turn away godlessness from Jacob;
[27] [z]and this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."

[28] [a]In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on
your account; but in respect to election, they are
beloved because of the patriarchs. [29] [b]For the
gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

**Triumph of God's Mercy** [30]*Just as you once
disobeyed God but have now received mercy
because of their disobedience, [31]so they have
now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the
mercy shown to you, they too may [now] receive
mercy. [32] [c]For God delivered all to disobedience,
that he might have mercy upon all.

[33] [d]*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom
and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his
judgments and how unsearchable his ways!

[34] [e]*"For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counselor?"
[35] [f]*"Or who has given him anything
that he may be repaid?"

[36] [g]For from him and through him and for him
are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**11, 16–24:** Israel remains holy in the eyes of God and stands as a witness to the faith described in the Old Testament because of **the firstfruits** (or the first piece baked) (16), that is, the converted remnant, and **the root** that is **holy**, that is, the patriarchs (16). The Jews' failure to believe in Christ is a warning to Gentile Christians to be on guard against any semblance of anti-Jewish arrogance, that is, failure to recognize their total dependence on divine grace.

**11, 25–29:** In God's design, Israel's unbelief is being used to grant the light of faith to the Gentiles. Meanwhile, Israel remains dear to God (cf 9, 13), still the object of special providence, the mystery of which will one day be revealed.

**11, 30–32:** Israel, together with the Gentiles who have been handed over to all manner of vices (ch 1), has been **delivered . . . to disobedience.** The conclusion of v 32 repeats the thought of 5, 20, "Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more."

**11, 33–36:** This final reflection celebrates the wisdom of God's plan of salvation. As Paul has indicated throughout these chapters, both Jew and Gentile, despite the religious recalcitrance of each, have received the gift of faith. The methods used by God in making this outreach to the world stagger human comprehension but are at the same time a dazzling invitation to abiding faith.

**11, 34:** The citation is from the Greek text of Is 40, 13. Paul does not explicitly mention Isaiah in this verse, nor Job in v 35.

**11, 35:** Paul quotes from an old Greek version of Jb 41, 3a, which differs from the Hebrew text (Jb 41, 11a).

p Nm 15, 17–21; Ez 44, 30; Neh 10, 36–38. q Eph 2, 11–19. r 1 Cor 1, 31. s 12, 16. t 1 Cor 10, 12. u Jn 15, 2.4; Heb 3, 14. v 2 Cor 3, 16. w Prv 3, 7 / 12, 16; Mk 13, 10; Lk 21, 24; Jn 10, 16. x Mt 23, 39. y Ps 14, 7; Is 59, 20–21. z Is 27, 9; Jer 31, 33–34. a 15, 8; 1 Thes 2, 15–16. b 9, 6; Nm 23, 19; Is 54, 10. c Gal 3, 22; 1 Tm 2, 4. d Jb 11, 7–8; Ps 139, 6.17–18; Wis 17, 1; Is 55, 8–9. e Jb 15, 8; Wis 9, 13; Is 40, 13; Jer 23, 18; 1 Cor 2, 11–16. f Jb 41, 3; Is 40, 14. g 1 Cor 8, 6; Col 1, 16–17.

# VI: The Duties of Christians

## CHAPTER 12

Ch 12–13
See RG
482–483

**Sacrifice of Body and Mind** 1 [h]*I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. 2 [i]Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

**Many Parts in One Body** 3 [j]For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. 4 [k]For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 *so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. 6 [l]*Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; 7 if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; 8 *if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Ch 12–13
See RG
482–483

**Mutual Love** 9 [m]Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; 10 [n]love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. 11 [o]Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 [p]Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. 13 [q]Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. 14 [r s]*Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them. 15 [t]Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 [u]Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 [v]Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 [w]If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. 19 [x]Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 [y]Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." 21 Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

## CHAPTER 13

**Obedience to Authority** 1 [z]*Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for

**12, 1—13, 14:** Since Christ marks the termination of the Mosaic law as the primary source of guidance for God's people (10, 4), the apostle explains how Christians can function, in the light of the gift of justification through faith, in their relation to one another and the state.

**12, 1–8:** The Mosaic code included elaborate directions on sacrifices and other cultic observances. The gospel, however, invites believers to present their **bodies as a living sacrifice** (1). Instead of being limited by specific legal maxims, Christians are liberated for the exercise of good judgment as they are confronted with the many and varied decisions required in the course of daily life. To assist them, God distributes a variety of gifts to the fellowship of believers, including those of prophecy, teaching, and exhortation (6–8). Prophets assist the community to understand the will of God as it applies to the present situation (6). Teachers help people to understand themselves and their responsibilities in relation to others (7). One who **exhorts** offers encouragement to the community to exercise their faith in the performance of all that is pleasing to God (8). Indeed, this very section, beginning with v 1, is a specimen of Paul's own style of exhortation.

**12, 5: One body in Christ:** on the church as the body of Christ, see 1 Cor 12, 12–27.

**12, 6:** Everyone has some gift that can be used for the benefit of the community. When the instruction on justification through faith is correctly grasped, the possesser of a gift will understand that it is not an instrument of self-aggrandizement. Possession of a gift is not an index to quality of faith. Rather, the gift is a challenge to faithful use.

**12, 8: Over others:** usually taken to mean "rule over" but possibly "serve as a patron." Wealthier members in Greco-Roman communities were frequently asked to assist in public service projects. In view of the references to contributing **in generosity** and to **acts of mercy,** Paul may have in mind people like Phoebe (16, 1–2), who is called a **benefactor** (or "patron") because of the services she rendered to many Christians, including Paul.

**12, 14–21:** Since God has justified the believers, it is not necessary for them to take justice into their own hands by taking vengeance. God will ultimately deal justly with all, including those who inflict injury on the believers. This question of personal rights as a matter of justice prepares the way for more detailed consideration of the state as adjudicator.

**13, 1–7:** Paul must come to grips with the problem raised by a message that declares people free from the law. How are they to relate to Roman authority? The problem was exacerbated by the fact that imperial protocol was interwoven with devotion to various deities. Paul builds on the traditional instruction exhibited in Wis 6, 1–3, according to which kings and magistrates rule by

h 2 Cor 1, 3 / 6, 13; 1 Pt 2, 5. i Eph 4, 17.22–23; 1 Pt 1, 14 / Eph 5, 10.17; Phil 1, 10. j 15, 15 / Phil 2, 3 / 1 Cor 12, 11; Eph 4, 7. k 1 Cor 12, 12.27; Eph 4, 25. l 1 Cor 12, 4–11.28–31; Eph 4, 7–12; 1 Pt 4, 10–11 / 2 Cor 9, 7. m 2 Cor 6, 6; 1 Tm 1, 5; 1 Pt 1, 22 / Am 5, 15. n Jn 13, 34; 1 Thes 4, 9; 1 Pt 2, 17; 2 Pt 1, 7 / Phil 2, 3. o Acts 18, 25. p 5, 2–3; Col 4, 2; 1 Thes 5, 17. q Heb 13, 2; 1 Pt 4, 9. r Mt 5, 38–48; 1 Cor 4, 12; 1 Pt 3, 9. s Lk 6, 27–28. t Ps 35, 13; Sir 7, 34; 1 Cor 12, 26. u 15, 5; Phil 2, 2–3 / 11, 20; Prv 3, 7; Is 5, 21. v Prv 3, 4; 1 Thes 5, 15; 1 Pt 3, 9. w Heb 12, 14. x Lv 19, 18; Dt 32, 35.41; Mt 5, 39; 1 Cor 6, 6–7; Heb 10, 30. y Prv 25, 21–22; Mt 5, 44. z Prv 8, 15–16; Wis 6, 3; Jn 19, 11; 1 Pt 2, 13–17; Ti 3, 1.

there is no authority except from God, and those
that exist have been established by God. 2Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what
God has appointed, and those who oppose it will
bring judgment upon themselves. 3 [a]For rulers
are not a cause of fear to good conduct, but to
evil. Do you wish to have no fear of authority?
Then do what is good and you will receive
approval from it, 4 [b]for it is a servant of God for
your good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for it
does not bear the sword without purpose; it is
the servant of God to inflict wrath on the
evildoer. 5 [c]Therefore, it is necessary to be subject not only because of the wrath but also
because of conscience. 6This is why you also pay
taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God,
devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 [d]Pay to
all their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, toll
to whom toll is due, respect to whom respect is
due, honor to whom honor is due.

**Love Fulfills the Law** 8 [e]*Owe nothing to
anyone, except to love one another; for the one
who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 [f]The
commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you
shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this
saying, [namely] "You shall love your neighbor as
yourself." 10 [g]Love does no evil to the neighbor;
hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

**Awareness of the End of Time** 11 [h]*And do
this because you know the time; it is the hour
now for you to awake from sleep. For our
salvation is nearer now than when we first
believed; 12 [i]the night is advanced, the day is at
hand. Let us then throw off the works of
darkness [and] put on the armor of light; 13 [j]*let
us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not
in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity
and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy.
14 [k]But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make
no provision for the desires of the flesh.

## CHAPTER 14

Ch 14
See RG
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**To Live and Die for Christ** 1 [l] [m]*Welcome
anyone who is weak in faith, but not for disputes
over opinions. 2 [n]One person believes that one
may eat anything, while the weak person eats
only vegetables. 3 [o]The one who eats must not
despise the one who abstains, and the one who
abstains must not pass judgment on the one who
eats; for God has welcomed him. 4 [p]Who are you
to pass judgment on someone else's servant?
Before his own master he stands or falls. And he
will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him
stand. 5 [q]*[For] one person considers one day
more important than another, while another
person considers all days alike. Let everyone be
fully persuaded in his own mind. 6Whoever
observes the day, observes it for the Lord. Also

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consent of God. From this perspective, then, believers who render obedience to the governing authorities are obeying the one who is highest in command. At the same time, it is recognized that Caesar has the responsibility to make just ordinances and to commend uprightness; cf Wis 6, 4–21. That Caesar is not entitled to obedience when such obedience would nullify God's prior claim to the believers' moral decision becomes clear in the light of the following verses.

**13, 8–10:** When love directs the Christian's moral decisions, the interest of law in basic concerns, such as familial relationships, sanctity of life, and security of property, is safeguarded (9). Indeed, says Paul, the same applies to any **other commandment** (9), whether one in the Mosaic code or one drawn up by local magistrates under imperial authority. Love anticipates the purpose of public legislation, namely, to secure the best interests of the citizenry. Since Caesar's obligation is to punish the wrongdoer (4), the Christian who acts in love is free from all legitimate indictment.

**13, 11–14:** These verses provide the motivation for the love that is encouraged in vv 8–10.

**13, 13: Let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day:** the behavior described in 1, 29–30 is now to be reversed. Secular moralists were fond of making references to people who could not wait for nightfall to do their carousing. Paul says that Christians claim to be people of the new day that will dawn with the return of Christ. Instead of planning for nighttime behavior they should be concentrating on conduct that is consonant with avowed interest in the Lord's return.

**14, 1—15, 6:** Since Christ spells termination of the law, which included observance of specific days and festivals as well as dietary instruction, the jettisoning of long-practiced customs was traumatic for many Christians brought up under the Mosaic code. Although Paul acknowledges that in principle no food is a source of moral contamination (14), he recommends that the consciences of Christians who are scrupulous in this regard be respected by other Christians (21). On the other hand, those who have scruples are not to sit in judgment on those who know that the gospel has liberated them from such ordinances (10). See 1 Cor 8 and 10.

**14, 5:** Since the problem to be overcome was humanity's perverted mind or judgment (1, 28), Paul indicates that the **mind** of the Christian is now able to function with appropriate discrimination (cf 12, 2).

a 1 Pt 2, 13–14; 3, 13. b 12, 19. c 1 Pt 2, 19. d Mt 22, 21; Mk 12, 17; Lk 20, 25. e Jn 13, 34; Gal 5, 14. f Ex 20, 13–17 / Lv 19, 18; Dt 5, 17–21; Mt 5, 43–44; 19, 18–19;22, 39; Mk 12, 31; Lk 10, 27; Gal 5, 14; Jas 2, 8. g Mt 22, 40; 1 Cor 13, 4–7. h Eph 5, 8–16; 1 Thes 5, 5–7. i Jn 8, 12; 1 Thes 5, 4–8; 1 Jn 2, 8 / 2 Cor 6, 7; 10, 4; Eph 5, 11; 6, 13–17. j Lk 21, 34; Eph 5, 18. k Gal 3, 27; 5, 16; Eph 4, 24; 6, 11. l 1 Cor 8, 1–13. m 15, 1.7; 1 Cor 9, 22. n Gn 1, 29; 9, 3; 1 Cor 8, 1–13; 10, 14–33. o Col 2, 16. p 2, 1; Mt 7, 11; Jas 4, 11–12. q Gal 4, 10.

whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives
thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains
for the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 None of
us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself.
8 r*For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we
die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we
live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 s For this is why
Christ died and came to life, that he might be
Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 t Why
then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do
you look down on your brother? For we shall all
stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 u for it
is written:

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend
before me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God."

Ch 15–16
See RG
483–484

12 v So [then] each of us shall give an account of
himself [to God].

**Consideration for the Weak Conscience**

13 w Then let us no longer judge one another, but
rather resolve never to put a stumbling block or
hindrance in the way of a brother. 14 x I know
and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing
is unclean in itself; still, it is unclean for some-
one who thinks it unclean. 15 y If your brother is
being hurt by what you eat, your conduct is no
longer in accord with love. Do not because of
your food destroy him for whom Christ died.
16 z So do not let your good be reviled. 17 a For the
kingdom of God is not a matter of food and
drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the
holy Spirit; 18 whoever serves Christ in this way
is pleasing to God and approved by others.
19 b*Let us then pursue what leads to peace and
to building up one another. 20 c For the sake of
food, do not destroy the work of God. Every-
thing is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone
to become a stumbling block by eating; 21 it is
good not to eat meat or drink wine or do
anything that causes your brother to stumble.
22 Keep the faith [that] you have to yourself in the
presence of God; blessed is the one who does
not condemn himself for what he approves.
23 d*But whoever has doubts is condemned if he
eats, because this is not from faith; for whatever
is not from faith is sin.

## CHAPTER 15

**Patience and Self-Denial** 1 e We who are
strong ought to put up with the failings of the
weak and not to please ourselves; 2 f let each of
us please our neighbor for the good, for building
up. 3 g*For Christ did not please himself; but, as
it is written, "The insults of those who insult you
fall upon me." 4 h For whatever was written
previously was written for our instruction, that
by endurance and by the encouragement of the
scriptures we might have hope. 5 i*May the God
of endurance and encouragement grant you to
think in harmony with one another, in keeping
with Christ Jesus, 6 that with one accord you
may with one voice glorify the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ.

**God's Fidelity and Mercy** 7 j*Welcome one
another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the
glory of God. 8 k For I say that Christ became a

**14, 8: The Lord:** Jesus, our Master. The same Greek word, **kyrios,** was applied to both rulers and holders of slaves. Throughout the Letter to the Romans Paul emphasizes God's total claim on the believer; see the note on 1, 1.

**14, 19:** Some manuscripts, versions, and church Fathers read, "We then pursue . . ."; cf 5, 1.

**14, 23: Whatever is not from faith is sin:** Paul does not mean that all the actions of unbelievers are sinful. He addresses himself to the question of intracommunity living. **Sin** in the singular is the dreadful power described in 5, 12–14.

**15, 3:** Liberation from the law of Moses does not make the scriptures of the old covenant irrelevant. Much consolation and motivation for Christian living can be derived from the Old Testament, as in the citation from Ps 69, 10. Because this psalm is quoted several times in the New Testament, it has been called indirectly messianic.

**15, 5: Think in harmony:** a Greco-Roman ideal. Not rigid uniformity of thought and expression but thoughtful consideration of other people's views finds expression here.

**15, 7–13:** True oneness of mind is found in pondering the ultimate mission of the church: to bring it about that God's name be glorified throughout the world and that Jesus Christ be universally recognized as God's gift to all humanity. Paul here prepares his addressees for the climactic appeal he is about to make.

r Lk 20, 38; 2 Cor 5, 15; Gal 2, 20; 1 Thes 5, 10. s Acts 10, 42. t Acts 17, 31; 2 Cor 5, 10. u Is 49, 18 / Is 45, 23; Phil 2, 10–11. v Gal 6, 5. w 1 Cor 8, 9.13. x Mk 7, 5.20; Acts 10, 15; 1 Cor 10, 25–27; 1 Tm 4, 4. y 1 Cor 8, 11–13. z 2, 24; Ti 2, 5. a 1 Cor 8, 8. b 12, 18 / 15, 2. c 1 Cor 8, 11–13; 10, 28–29; Ti 1, 15. d Ti 1, 15; Jas 4, 17. e 14, 1–2. f 14, 1.19; 1 Cor 9, 19; 10, 24.33. g Ps 69, 10. h 4, 23–24; 1 Mc 12, 9; 1 Cor 10, 11; 2 Tm 3, 16. i 12, 16; Phil 2, 2; 4, 2. j 14, 1. k Mt 15, 24 / Mi 7, 20; Acts 3, 25.

minister of the circumcised to show God's
truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the
patriarchs, 9 [l]but so that the Gentiles might
glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore, I will praise you among the
Gentiles
and sing praises to your name."

10 [m]*And again it says:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

11 [n]And again:

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him."

12 [o]And again Isaiah says:

"The root of Jesse shall come,
raised up to rule the Gentiles;
in him shall the Gentiles hope."

13 [p]May the God of hope fill you with all joy and
peace in believing, so that you may abound in
hope by the power of the holy Spirit.

## VII: Conclusion

**Apostle to the Gentiles** 14*I myself am convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another. 15 [q]But I have written to you rather boldly in some respects to remind you, because of the grace given me by God 16 [r]to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in performing the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast in what pertains to God. 18 [s]For I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to lead the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, 19*by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit [of God], so that from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum I have finished preaching the gospel of Christ. 20 [t]*Thus I aspire to proclaim the gospel not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on another's foundation, 21 [u]*but as it is written:

"Those who have never been told of him shall
see,
and those who have never heard of him
shall understand."

**Paul's Plans; Need for Prayers** 22 That is why I have so often been prevented from coming to you. 23 [v]But now, since I no longer have any opportunity in these regions and since I have desired to come to you for many years, 24 [w]I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain and to be sent on my way there by you, after I have enjoyed being with you for a time. 25 [x]*Now, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the holy ones. 26 [y]*For Macedonia and Achaia have decided to make some contribution for the poor among the holy ones in Jerusalem; 27 [z]they decided to do it, and in fact they are indebted to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to serve

**15, 10:** Paul's citation of Dt 32, 43 follows the Greek version.

**15, 14–33:** Paul sees himself as apostle and benefactor in the priestly service of the gospel and so sketches plans for a mission in Spain, supported by those in Rome.

**15, 14: Full of goodness:** the opposite of what humanity was filled with according to 1, 29–30.

**15, 19: Illyricum:** Roman province northwest of Greece on the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

**15, 20: I aspire:** Paul uses terminology customarily applied to philanthropists. Unlike some philanthropists of his time, Paul does not engage in cheap competition for public acclaim. This explanation of his missionary policy is to assure the Christians in Rome that he is also not planning to remain in that city and build on other people's foundations (cf 2 Cor 10, 12–18). However, he does solicit their help in sending him on his way to Spain, which was considered the limit of the western world. Thus Paul's addressees realize that evangelization may be understood in the broader sense of mission or, as in Rom 1, 15, of instruction within the Christian community that derives from the gospel.

**15, 21:** The citation from Is 52, 15 concerns the Servant of the Lord. According to Isaiah, the Servant is first of all Israel, which was to bring the knowledge of Yahweh to the nations. In chs 9–11 Paul showed how Israel failed in this mission. Therefore, he himself undertakes almost singlehandedly Israel's responsibility as the Servant and moves as quickly as possible with the gospel through the Roman empire.

**15, 25–27:** Paul may have viewed the contribution he was gathering from Gentile Christians for the poor in Jerusalem (cf 2 Cor 8 and 9) as a fulfillment of the vision of Is 60, 5–6. In confidence that the messianic fulfillment was taking place, Paul stresses in chs 14–16 the importance of harmonious relationships between Jews and Gentiles.

**15, 26: Achaia:** the Roman province of southern Greece.

l 11, 30 / 2 Sm 22, 50; Ps 18, 50. m Dt 32, 43. n Ps 117, 1. o Is 11, 10; Rv 5, 5; 22, 16. p 5, 1–2. q 1, 5; 12, 3. r 11, 13; Phil 2, 17. s Acts 15, 12; 2 Cor 12, 12. t 2 Cor 10, 13–18. u Is 52, 15. v 1, 10–13; Acts 19, 21–22. w 1 Cor 16, 6. x Acts 19, 21; 20, 22. y 1 Cor 16, 1; 2 Cor 8, 1–4; 9, 2.12. z 9, 4 / 1 Cor 9, 11.

them in material blessings. [28]So when I have
completed this and safely handed over this
contribution to them, I shall set out by way of
you to Spain; [29]and I know that in coming to
you I shall come in the fullness of Christ's
blessing.

[30] [a]I urge you, [brothers,] by our Lord Jesus
Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in
the struggle by your prayers to God on my
behalf, [31]that I may be delivered from the
disobedient in Judea, and that my ministry for
Jerusalem may be acceptable to the holy ones,
[32]so that I may come to you with joy by the will
of God and be refreshed together with you.
[33] [b]The God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

## CHAPTER 16

Ch 15–16
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**Phoebe Commended** [1] [c]*I commend to you
Phoebe our sister, who is [also] a minister of the
church at Cenchreae, [2]that you may receive her
in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones,
and help her in whatever she may need from
you, for she has been a benefactor to many and
to me as well.

**Paul's Greetings** [3] [d]*Greet Prisca and Aquila,
my co-workers in Christ Jesus, [4]who risked their
necks for my life, to whom not only I am grateful
but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
[5] [e]*greet also the church at their house. Greet
my beloved Epaenetus, who was the firstfruits in
Asia for Christ. [6]Greet Mary, who has worked
hard for you. [7]*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my
relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are
prominent among the apostles and they were in
Christ before me. [8]Greet Ampliatus, my beloved
in the Lord. [9]Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in
Christ, and my beloved Stachys. [10]Greet Apelles,
who is approved in Christ. Greet those who
belong to the family of Aristobulus. [11]Greet my
relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who
belong to the family of Narcissus. [12]Greet those
workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa.
Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard
in the Lord. [13] [f]*Greet Rufus, chosen in the
Lord, and his mother and mine. [14]Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and
the brothers who are with them. [15]Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas,
and all the holy ones who are with them.
[16] [g]Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the
churches of Christ greet you.

**Against Factions** [17] [h]*I urge you, brothers, to
watch out for those who create dissensions and
obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you
learned; avoid them. [18] [i]For such people do not
serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites,
and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the
hearts of the innocent. [19] [j]For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I
want you to be wise as to what is good, and
simple as to what is evil; [20] [k]*then the God of
peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Greetings from Corinth** [21] [l]Timothy, my co-
worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and
Sosipater, my relatives. [22]I, Tertius, the writer of

**16, 1–23:** Some authorities regard these verses as a later addition to the letter, but in general the evidence favors the view that they were included in the original. Paul endeavors through the long list of greetings (3–16; 21–23) to establish strong personal contact with congregations that he has not personally encountered before. The combination of Jewish and Gentile names dramatically attests the unity in the gospel that transcends previous barriers of nationality, religious ceremony, or racial status.

**16, 1: Minister:** in Greek, **diakonos;** see the note on Phil 1, 1.

**16, 3: Prisca and Aquila:** presumably the couple mentioned at Acts 18, 2; 1 Cor 16, 19; 2 Tm 4, 19.

**16, 5: The church at their house:** i.e., that meets there. Such local assemblies (cf 1 Cor 16, 19; Col 4, 15; Phlm 2) might consist of only one or two dozen Christians each. It is understandable, therefore, that such smaller groups might experience difficulty in relating to one another on certain issues. **Firstfruits:** cf 8, 23; 11, 16; 1 Cor 16, 15.

**16, 7:** The name Junia is a woman's name. One ancient Greek manuscript and a number of ancient versions read the name "Julia." Most editors have interpreted it as a man's name, Junias.

**16, 13:** This Rufus cannot be identified to any degree of certainty with the Rufus of Mk 15, 21.

**16, 17–18:** Paul displays genuine concern for the congregations in Rome by warning them against self-seeking teachers. It would be a great loss, he intimates, if their obedience, which is known to all (cf 1, 8), would be diluted.

**16, 20:** This verse contains the only mention of Satan in Romans.

a 2 Cor 1, 11; Phil 1, 27; Col 4, 3; 2 Thes 3, 1. b 16, 20; 2 Cor 13, 11; Phil 4, 9; 1 Thes 5, 23; 2 Thes 3, 16; Heb 13, 20. c Acts 18, 18. d Acts 18, 2.18–26; 1 Cor 16, 19; 2 Tm 4, 19. e 1 Cor 16, 19; Col 4, 15; Phlm 2 / 1 Cor 16, 15. f Mk 15, 21. g 1 Cor 16, 20; 2 Cor 13, 12; 1 Thes 5, 26; 1 Pt 5, 14. h Mt 7, 15; Ti 3, 10. i Phil 3, 18–19 / Col 2, 4; 2 Pt 2, 3. j 1, 8; Mt 10, 16; 1 Cor 14, 20. k 15, 33; Gn 3, 15; Lk 10, 19 / 1 Cor 16, 23; 1 Thes 5, 28;2 Thes 3, 18. l Acts 16, 1–2; 19, 22; 20, 4; 1 Cor 4, 17; 16, 10; Phil 2, 19–22; Heb 13, 23.

this letter, greet you in the Lord. [23] [m]*Gaius,
who is host to me and to the whole church,
greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our
brother Quartus greet you. [24]*

**Doxology** [25 [n]*Now to him who can
strengthen you, according to my gospel and the
proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the
revelation of the mystery kept secret for long
ages [26] [o]but now manifested through the pro-
phetic writings and, according to the command
of the eternal God, made known to all nations to
bring about the obedience of faith, [27] [p]to the only
wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever
and ever. Amen.]

**16, 23:** This Erastus is not necessarily to be identified with the Erastus of Acts 19, 22 or of 2 Tm 4, 20.

**16, 24:** Some manuscripts add, similarly to v 20, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

**16, 25–27:** This doxology is assigned variously to the end of chs 14, 15, and 16 in the manuscript tradition. Some manuscripts omit it entirely. Whether written by Paul or not, it forms an admirable conclusion to the letter at this point.

**16, 25:** Paul's gospel reveals **the mystery kept secret for long ages:** justification and salvation through faith, with all the implications for Jews and Gentiles that Paul has developed in the letter.

**m** Acts 19, 29; 1 Cor 1, 14 / 2 Tm 4, 20. **n** 1 Cor 2, 7; Eph 1, 9; 3, 3–9; Col 1, 26. **o** 2 Tm 1, 10 / 1, 5; Eph 3, 4–5.9; 1 Pt 1, 20. **p** 11, 36; Gal 1, 5; Eph 3, 20–21; Phil 4, 20; 1 Tm 1, 17; 2 Tm 4, 18; Heb 13, 21; 1 Pt 4, 11; 2 Pt 3, 18; Jude 25, Rev 1, 6.

# THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians
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Paul's first letter to the church of Corinth provides us with a fuller insight into the life of an early Christian community of the first generation than any other book of the New Testament. Through it we can glimpse both the strengths and the weaknesses of this small group in a great city of the ancient world, men and women who had accepted the good news of Christ and were now trying to realize in their lives the implications of their baptism. Paul, who had founded the community and continued to look after it as a father, responds both to questions addressed to him and to situations of which he had been informed. In doing so, he reveals much about himself, his teaching, and the way in which he conducted his work of apostleship. Some things are puzzling because we have the correspondence only in one direction. For the person studying this letter, it seems to raise as many questions as it answers, but without it our knowledge of church life in the middle of the first century would be much poorer.

Paul established a Christian community in Corinth about the year 51, on his second missionary journey. The city, a commercial crossroads, was a melting pot full of devotees of various pagan cults and marked by a measure of moral depravity not unusual in a great seaport. The Acts of the Apostles suggests that moderate success attended Paul's efforts among the Jews in Corinth at first, but that they soon turned against him (Acts 18, 1-8). More fruitful was his year and a half spent among the Gentiles (Acts 18, 11), which won to the faith many of the city's poor and underprivileged (1, 26). After his departure the eloquent Apollos, an Alexandrian Jewish Christian, rendered great service to the community, expounding "from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus" (Acts 18, 24-28).

While Paul was in Ephesus on his third journey (16, 8; Acts 19, 1-20), he received disquieting news about Corinth. The community there was displaying open factionalism, as certain members were identifying themselves exclusively with individual Christian leaders and interpreting Christian teaching as a superior wisdom for the initiated few (1, 10—4, 21). The community lacked the decisiveness to take appropriate action against one of its members who was living publicly in an incestuous union (5, 1-13). Other members engaged in legal conflicts in

pagan courts of law (6, 1-11); still others may have participated in religious prostitution (6, 12-20) or temple sacrifices (10, 14-22).

The community's ills were reflected in its liturgy. In the celebration of the Eucharist certain members discriminated against others, drank too freely at the agape, or fellowship meal, and denied Christian social courtesies to the poor among the membership (11, 17-22). Charisms such as ecstatic prayer, attributed freely to the impulse of the holy Spirit, were more highly prized than works of charity (13, 1-2.8), and were used at times in a disorderly way (14, 1-40). Women appeared at the assembly without the customary head-covering (11, 3-16), and perhaps were quarreling over their right to address the assembly (14, 34-35).

Still other problems with which Paul had to deal concerned matters of conscience discussed among the faithful members of the community: the eating of meat that had been sacrificed to idols (8, 1-13), the use of sex in marriage (7, 1-7), and the attitude to be taken by the unmarried toward marriage in view of the possible proximity of Christ's second coming (7, 25-40). There was also a doctrinal matter that called for Paul's attention, for some members of the community, despite their belief in the resurrection of Christ, were denying the possibility of general bodily resurrection.

To treat this wide spectrum of questions, Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus about the year A.D. 56. The majority of the Corinthian Christians may well have been quite faithful. Paul writes on their behalf to guard against the threats posed to the community by the views and conduct of various minorities. He writes with confidence in the authority of his apostolic mission, and he presumes that the Corinthians, despite their deficiencies, will recognize and accept it. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to exercise his authority as his judgment dictates in each situation, even going so far as to promise a direct confrontation with recalcitrants, should the abuses he scores remain uncorrected (4, 18-21).

The letter illustrates well the mind and character of Paul. Although he is impelled to insist on his office as founder of the community, he recognizes that he is only one servant of God among many and generously acknowledges the labors of Apollos (3, 5-8). He provides us in this letter with many valuable examples of his method of theological reflection and exposition. He always treats the questions at issue on the level of the purity of Christian teaching and conduct. Certain passages of the letter are of the greatest importance for the understanding of early Christian teaching on the Eucharist (10, 14-22; 11, 17-34) and on the resurrection of the body (15, 1-58).

Paul's authorship of 1 Corinthians, apart from a few verses that some regard as later interpolations, has never been seriously questioned. Some scholars have proposed, however, that the letter as we have it contains portions of more than one original Pauline letter. We know that Paul wrote at least two other letters to Corinth (see 5, 9; 2 Cor 2, 3-4) in addition to the two that we now have; this theory holds that the additional letters are actually contained within the two canonical ones. Most commentators, however, find 1 Corinthians quite understandable as a single coherent work.

The principal divisions of the First Letter to the Corinthians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-9)
II. Disorders in the Corinthian Community (1, 10—6, 20)
  A. Divisions in the Church (1, 10—4, 21)
  B. Moral Disorders (5, 1—6, 20)

III. Answers to the Corinthians' Questions (7, 1—11, 1)
A. Marriage and Virginity (7, 1-40)
B. Offerings to Idols (8, 1—11, 1)
IV. Problems in Liturgical Assemblies (11, 2—14, 40)
A. Women's Headdresses (11, 3-16)
B. The Lord's Supper (11, 17-34)
C. Spiritual Gifts (12, 1—14, 40)
V. The Resurrection (15, 1-58)
A. The Resurrection of Christ (15, 1-11)
B. The Resurrection of the Dead (15, 12-34)
C. The Manner of the Resurrection (15, 35-58)
VI. Conclusion (16, 1-24)

# I: Address

## CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, called to be an apostle of
Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes
our brother, 2 [b]to the church of God that is in
Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in
Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those
everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. 3 Grace to you
and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving** 4 I give thanks to my God always
on your account for the grace of God bestowed
on you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in him you were
enriched in every way, with all discourse and all
knowledge, 6 *as the testimony to Christ was
confirmed among you, 7 [c]so that you are not
lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the
revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 [d]He will
keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the
day of our Lord Jesus [Christ]. 9 [e]God is faithful,
and by him you were called to fellowship with
his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ch 1-4
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# II: Disorders in the Corinthian Community

## A. Divisions in the Church

**Groups and Slogans** 10 [f]*I urge you, brothers,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of
you agree in what you say, and that there be no
divisions among you, but that you be united in
the same mind and in the same purpose. 11 For it
has been reported to me about you, my brothers,
by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among
you. 12 [g]*I mean that each of you is saying, "I
belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I
belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 *Is
Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or
were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 [h]I give

1, 1–9: Paul follows the conventional form for the opening of a Hellenistic letter (cf Rom 1, 1–7), but expands the opening with details carefully chosen to remind the readers of their situation and to suggest some of the issues the letter will discuss.

1, 1: **Called . . . by the will of God:** Paul's mission and the church's existence are grounded in God's initiative. God's call, grace, and fidelity are central ideas in this introduction, emphasized by repetition and wordplays in the Greek.

1, 6: **The testimony:** this defines the purpose of Paul's mission (see also 15, 15 and the note on 2, 1). The forms of his testimony include oral preaching and instruction, his letters, and the life he leads as an apostle.

1, 10—4, 21: The first problem Paul addresses is that of divisions within the community. Although we are unable to reconstruct the situation in Corinth completely, Paul clearly traces the divisions back to a false self-image on the part of the Corinthians, coupled with a false understanding of the apostles who preached to them (cf 4, 6.9; 9, 1–5) and of the Christian message itself. In these chapters he attempts to deal with those underlying factors and to bring the Corinthians back to a more correct perspective.

1, 12: **I belong to:** the activities of Paul and Apollos in Corinth are described in Acts 18. **Cephas** (i.e., "the Rock," a name by which Paul designates Peter also in 3, 22; 9, 5; 15, 5 and in Gal 1, 18; 2, 9.11.14) may well have passed through Corinth; he could have baptized some members of the community either there or elsewhere. The reference to Christ may be intended ironically here.

1, 13–17: The reference to baptism and the contrast with preaching the gospel in v 17a suggest that some Corinthians were paying special allegiance to the individuals who initiated them into the community.

a Rom 1, 1. b Acts 18, 1–11. c Ti 2, 13. d Phil 1, 6. e 1 Jn 1, 3. f Phil 2, 2. g 3, 4.22; 16, 12; Acts 18, 24–28. h Acts 18, 8 / Rom 16, 23.

thanks [to God] that I baptized none of you
except Crispus and Gaius, [15]so that no one can
say you were baptized in my name. [16] [i]{I bap-
tized the household of Stephanas also; beyond
that I do not know whether I baptized anyone
else.} [17] [j]*For Christ did not send me to baptize
but to preach the gospel, and not with the
wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of
Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

**Paradox of the Cross** [18] [k]The message of the
cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of
God. [19] [l]For it is written:

> "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
> and the learning of the learned I will set
> aside."

[20] [m]Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe?
Where is the debater of this age? Has not God
made the wisdom of the world foolish? [21] *For
since in the wisdom of God the world did not
come to know God through wisdom, it was the
will of God through the foolishness of the
proclamation to save those who have faith.
[22] [n]For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for
wisdom, [23] [o]but we proclaim Christ crucified, a
stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to
Gentiles, [24]but to those who are called, Jews and
Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the
wisdom of God. [25]For the foolishness of God is
wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of
God is stronger than human strength.

**The Corinthians and Paul** [26] *Consider your
own calling, brothers. Not many of you were
wise by human standards, not many were power-
ful, not many were of noble birth. [27] [p]Rather,
God chose the foolish of the world to shame the
wise, and God chose the weak of the world to
shame the strong, [28]and God chose the lowly
and despised of the world, those who count for
nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are
something, [29] [q]*so that no human being might
boast before God. [30] [r]It is due to him that you are
in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from
God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and
redemption, [31] [s]so that, as it is written, "Who-
ever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

## CHAPTER 2

[1] [t]*When I came to you, brothers, proclaiming
the mystery of God, I did not come with
sublimity of words or of wisdom. [2] [u]For I re-
solved to know nothing while I was with you
except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [3] *I came

Ch 1–4
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**1, 17b-18:** The basic theme of chs 1–4 is announced. Adherence to individual leaders has something to do with differences in rhetorical ability and also with certain presuppositions regarding wisdom, eloquence, and effectiveness (power), which Paul judges to be in conflict with the gospel and the cross.

**1, 17b: Not with the wisdom of human eloquence:** both of the nouns employed here involve several levels of meaning, on which Paul deliberately plays as his thought unfolds. **Wisdom (sophia)** may be philosophical and speculative, but in biblical usage the term primarily denotes practical knowledge such as is demonstrated in the choice and effective application of means to achieve an end. The same term can designate the arts of building (cf 3, 10) or of persuasive speaking (cf 2, 4) or effectiveness in achieving salvation. **Eloquence (logos):** this translation emphasizes one possible meaning of the term **logos** (cf the references to rhetorical style and persuasiveness in 2, 1.4). But the term itself may denote an internal reasoning process, plan, or intention, as well as an external word, speech, or message. So by his expression **ouk en sophia logou** in the context of gospel preaching, Paul may intend to exclude both human ways of reasoning or thinking about things and human rhetorical technique. **Human:** this adjective does not stand in the Greek text but is supplied from the context. Paul will begin immediately to distinguish between **sophia** and **logos** from their divine counterparts and play them off against each other.

**1, 21–25:** True wisdom and power are to be found paradoxically where one would least expect them, in the place of their apparent negation. To human eyes the crucified Christ symbolizes impotence and absurdity.

**1, 26—2, 5:** The pattern of God's wisdom and power is exemplified in their own experience, if they interpret it rightly (1, 26–31), and can also be read in their experience of Paul as he first appeared among them preaching the gospel (2, 1–5).

**1, 29–31:** "Boasting (about oneself)" is a Pauline expression for the radical sin, the claim to autonomy on the part of a creature, the illusion that we live and are saved by our own resources. "Boasting in the Lord" (31), on the other hand, is the acknowledgment that we live only from God and for God.

**2, 1: The mystery of God:** God's secret, known only to himself, is his plan for the salvation of his people; it is clear from 1, 18–25; 2, 2.8–10 that this secret involves Jesus and the cross. In place of **mystery,** other good manuscripts read "testimony" (cf 1, 6).

**2, 3:** The **weakness** of the crucified Jesus is reflected in Paul's own bearing (cf 2 Cor 10—13). **Fear and much trembling:** reverential fear based on a sense of God's transcendence permeates Paul's existence and preaching. Compare his advice to the Philippians to work out their salvation with "fear and trembling" (Phil 2, 12), because God is at work in them just as his exalting power was paradoxically at work in the emptying, humiliation, and obedience of Jesus to death on the cross (Phil 2, 6–11).

i 16, 15–17. j 2, 1.4. k 2, 14 / Rom 1, 16. l Is 29, 14. m Is 19, 12. n Mt 12, 38; 16, 1 / Acts 17, 18–21. o 2, 2; Gal 3, 1 / Gal 5, 11. p Jas 2, 5. q Eph 2, 9. r Rom 4, 17 / 6, 11; Rom 3, 24–26; 2 Cor 5, 21 / Eph 1, 7; Col 1, 14; 1 Thes 5, 23. s Jer 9, 23; 2 Cor 10, 17. t 1, 17. u 1, 23; Gal 6, 14.

to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, 4 v*and my message and my proclamation
were not with persuasive [words of] wisdom, but
with a demonstration of spirit and power, 5 w*so
that your faith might rest not on human wisdom
but on the power of God.

**The True Wisdom** 6*Yet we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom
of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are
passing away. 7*Rather, we speak God's wisdom,
mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined
before the ages for our glory, 8*and which none
of the rulers of this age knew, for, if they had
known it, they would not have crucified the
Lord of glory. 9 x*But as it is written:

"What eye has not seen, and ear has not
heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love
him,"

10 y*this God has revealed to us through the
Spirit.

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the
depths of God. 11Among human beings, who
knows what pertains to a person except the
spirit of the person that is within? Similarly, no
one knows what pertains to God except the
Spirit of God. 12We have not received the spirit
of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so
that we may understand the things freely given
us by God. 13*And we speak about them not
with words taught by human wisdom, but with
words taught by the Spirit, describing spiritual
realities in spiritual terms.

14*Now the natural person does not accept
what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is
foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. 15*The spiritual
person, however, can judge everything but is not
subject to judgment by anyone.

16 z*For "who has known the mind of the Lord,
so as to counsel him?" But we have the mind of
Christ.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–4
See RG
487–489

1*Brothers, I could not talk to you as spiritual
people, but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ.
2 a*I fed you milk, not solid food, because you
were unable to take it. Indeed, you are still not
able, even now, 3 b*for you are still of the flesh.
While there is jealousy and rivalry among you,

**2, 4:** Among many manuscript readings here the best is either "not with the persuasion of wisdom" or "not with persuasive words of wisdom," which differ only by a nuance. Whichever reading is accepted, the inefficacy of human wisdom for salvation is contrasted with the power of the cross.

**2, 6—3, 4:** Paul now asserts paradoxically what he has previously been denying. To the Greeks who "are looking for wisdom" (1, 22), he does indeed bring a wisdom, but of a higher order and an entirely different quality, the only wisdom really worthy of the name. The Corinthians would be able to grasp Paul's preaching as wisdom and enter into a wisdom-conversation with him if they were more open to the Spirit and receptive to the new insight and language that the Spirit teaches.

**2, 7–10a: God's wisdom:** his plan for our salvation. This was his own eternal secret that no one else could fathom, but in this new age of salvation he has graciously revealed it to us. For the pattern of God's secret, hidden to others and now revealed to the Church, cf also Rom 11, 25–36; 16, 25–27; Eph 1, 3–10; 3, 3–11; Col 1, 25–28.

**2, 8: The rulers of this age:** this suggests not only the political leaders of the Jews and Romans under whom Jesus was crucified (cf Acts 4, 25–28) but also the cosmic powers behind them (cf Eph 1, 20–23; 3, 10). **They would not have crucified the Lord of glory:** they became the unwitting executors of God's plan, which will paradoxically bring about their own conquest and submission (15, 24–28).

**2, 13: In spiritual terms:** the Spirit teaches spiritual people a new mode of perception (12) and an appropriate language by which they can share their self-understanding, their knowledge about what God has done in them. The final phrase in v 13 can also be translated "describing spiritual realities to spiritual people," in which case it prepares for vv 14–16.

**2, 14: The natural person:** see the note on 3, 1.

**2, 15: The spiritual person . . . is not subject to judgment:** since spiritual persons have been given knowledge of what pertains to God (11–12), they share in God's own capacity to judge. One to whom the mind of the Lord (and of Christ) is revealed (16) can be said to share in some sense in God's exemption from counseling and criticism.

**3, 1–4:** The Corinthians desire a sort of wisdom dialogue or colloquy with Paul; they are looking for solid, adult food, and he appears to disappoint their expectations. Paul counters: if such a dialogue has not yet taken place, the reason is that they are still at an immature stage of development (cf 2, 6).

**3, 1: Spiritual people . . . fleshly people:** Paul employs two clusters of concepts and terms to distinguish what later theology will call the "natural" and the "supernatural." (1) The natural person (2, 14) is one whose existence, perceptions, and behavior are determined by purely natural principles, the **psychē** (2, 14) and the **sarx** (flesh, a biblical term that connotes creatureliness, 1.3). Such persons are only infants (1); they remain on a purely human level (**anthrōpoi**, 4). (2) On the other hand, they are called to be animated by a higher principle, the **pneuma**, God's spirit. They are to become spiritual (**pneumatikoi**, 1) and mature (2, 6) in their perceptions and behavior (cf Gal 5, 16–26). The culmination of existence in the Spirit is described in 15, 44–49.

**3, 3–4:** Jealousy, rivalry, and divisions in the community are symptoms of their arrested development; they reveal the immaturity both of their self-understanding (4) and of the judgments about their apostles (21).

v 4, 20; Rom 15, 19; 1 Thes 1, 5. w 2 Cor 4, 7. x Is 64, 3. y Mt 11, 25; 13, 11; 16, 17. z Wis 9, 13; Is 40, 13; Rom 11, 34. a Heb 5, 12–14. b Jas 3, 13–16.

are you not of the flesh and behaving in an ordinary human way? 4 [c]Whenever someone says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

**The Role of God's Ministers** 5 *What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. 6 [d]I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. 7 Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. 9 [e]For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building.

10 *According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, 11 for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, 13 [f]*the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire [itself] will test the quality of each one's work. 14 If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. 15 *But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire. 16 [g]Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 *If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.

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18 [h]Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you considers himself wise in this age, let him become a fool so as to become wise. 19 [i]For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God, for it is written:

"He catches the wise in their own ruses,"

20 [j]and again:

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,
that they are vain."

21 [k]*So let no one boast about human beings, for everything belongs to you, 22 Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future: all belong to you, 23 and you to Christ, and Christ to God.

## CHAPTER 4

1 [l]Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. 3 It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal; I do not even pass judgment on myself; 4 [m]I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore, do

**3, 5—4, 5:** The Corinthians tend to evaluate their leaders by the criteria of human wisdom and to exaggerate their importance. Paul views the role of the apostles in the light of his theology of spiritual gifts (cf chs 12–14, where the charism of the apostle heads the lists). The essential aspects of all spiritual gifts (12, 4–6 presents them as gifts of grace, as services, and as modes of activity) are exemplified by the apostolate, which is a gift of grace (3, 10) through which God works (3, 9) and a form of service (3, 5) for the common good (elsewhere expressed by the verb "build up," suggested here by the image of the building, 3, 9). The apostles serve the church, but their accountability is to God and to Christ (4, 1–5).

**3, 5: Ministers:** for other expressions of Paul's understanding of himself as minister or steward to the church, cf 4, 1; 9, 17.19–27; 2 Cor 3, 6–9; 4, 1; 5, 18; 6, 3–4; and 11, 23 (the climax of Paul's defense).

**3, 10–11:** There are diverse functions in the service of the community, but each individual's task is serious, and each will stand accountable for the quality of his contribution.

**3, 13: The Day:** the great day of Yahweh, the day of judgment, which can be a time of either gloom or joy. **Fire** both destroys and purifies.

**3, 15: Will be saved:** although Paul can envision very harsh divine punishment (cf 17), he appears optimistic about the success of divine corrective means both here and elsewhere (cf 5, 5; 11, 32 [discipline]). The text of v 15 has sometimes been used to support the notion of purgatory, though it does not envisage this.

**3, 17: Holy:** i.e., "belonging to God." The cultic sanctity of the community is a fundamental theological reality to which Paul frequently alludes (cf 1, 2.30; 6, 11; 7, 14).

**3, 21–23:** These verses pick up the line of thought of 1, 10–13. If the Corinthians were genuinely wise (18–20), their perceptions would be reversed, and they would see everything in the world and all those with whom they exist in the church in their true relations with one another. Paul assigns all the persons involved in the theological universe a position on a scale: God, Christ, church members, church leaders. Read from top to bottom, the scale expresses ownership; read from bottom to top, the obligation to serve. This picture should be complemented by similar statements such as those in 8, 6 and 15, 20–28.

c 1, 12. d Acts 18, 1–11.24–28. e Eph 2, 20–22; 1 Pt 2, 5. f Mt 3, 11–12; 2 Thes 1, 7–10. g 6, 19; 2 Cor 6, 16; Eph 2, 20–22. h 8, 2; Is 5, 21; Gal 6, 3. i 1, 20 / Jb 5, 13. j Ps 94, 11. k 4, 6 / Rom 8, 32. l Ti 1, 7; 1 Pt 4, 10. m 2 Cor 1, 12 / Rom 2, 16; 2 Cor 5, 10.

not make any judgment before the appointed
time, until the Lord comes, for he will bring to
light what is hidden in darkness and will mani-
fest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone
will receive praise from God.

**Paul's Life as Pattern** 6 *I have applied these
things to myself and Apollos for your benefit,
brothers, so that you may learn from us not to
go beyond what is written, so that none of you
will be inflated with pride in favor of one
person over against another. 7 Who confers dis-
tinction upon you? What do you possess that
you have not received? But if you have received
it, why are you boasting as if you did not
receive it? 8 *You are already satisfied; you have
already grown rich; you have become kings
without us! Indeed, I wish that you had be-
come kings, so that we also might become
kings with you.

9 [n] *For as I see it, God has exhibited us
apostles as the last of all, like people sentenced
to death, since we have become a spectacle to
the world, to angels and human beings alike.
10 [o] We are fools on Christ's account, but you are
wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong;
you are held in honor, but we in disrepute. 11 [p] To
this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are
poorly clad and roughly treated, we wander
about homeless 12 [q] and we toil, working with
our own hands. When ridiculed, we bless; when
persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we
respond gently. We have become like the world's
rubbish, the scum of all, to this very moment.

14 *I am writing you this not to shame you,
but to admonish you as my beloved children.
15 [r] Even if you should have countless guides to
Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I
became your father in Christ Jesus through the
gospel. 16 [s] Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of
me. 17 [t] For this reason I am sending you Timo-
thy, who is my beloved and faithful son in the
Lord; he will remind you of my ways in Christ
[Jesus], just as I teach them everywhere in every
church.

18 *Some have become inflated with pride, as
if I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to
you soon, if the Lord is willing, and I shall
ascertain not the talk of these inflated people but
their power. 20 [u] For the kingdom of God is not a
matter of talk but of power. 21 [v] Which do you
prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with
love and a gentle spirit?

**4, 6–21:** This is an emotionally charged peroration to the discussion about divisions. It contains several exhortations and statements of Paul's purpose in writing (cf 6.14–17.21) that counterbalance the initial exhortation at 1, 10.

**4, 6: That you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written:** the words "to go" are not in the Greek, but have here been added as the minimum necessary to elicit sense from this difficult passage. It probably means that the Corinthians should avoid the false wisdom of vain speculation, contenting themselves with Paul's proclamation of the cross, which is the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament (what is written). **Inflated with pride:** literally, "puffed up," i.e., arrogant, filled with a sense of self-importance. The term is particularly Pauline, found in the New Testament only in 1 Cor 4, 6.18–19; 5, 2; 8, 1; 13, 4; Col 2, 18 (cf the related noun at 2 Cor 12, 20). It sometimes occurs in conjunction with the theme of "boasting," as in vv 6–7 here.

**4, 8: Satisfied . . . rich . . . kings:** these three statements could also be punctuated as questions continuing the series begun in v 7. In any case these expressions reflect a tendency at Corinth toward an overrealized eschatology, a form of self-deception that draws Paul's irony. The underlying attitude has implications for the Corinthians' thinking about other issues, notably morality and the resurrection, that Paul will address later in the letter.

**4, 9–13:** A rhetorically effective catalogue of the circumstances of apostolic existence, in the course of which Paul ironically contrasts his own sufferings with the Corinthians' illusion that they have passed beyond the folly of the passion and have already reached the condition of glory. His language echoes that of the beatitudes and woes, which assert a future reversal of present conditions. Their present sufferings ("to this very hour," 11) place the apostles in the class of those to whom the beatitudes promise future relief (Mt 5, 3–11; Lk 6, 20–23); whereas the Corinthians' image of themselves as "already" filled, rich, ruling (8), as wise, strong, and honored (10) places them paradoxically in the position of those whom the woes threaten with future undoing (Lk 6, 24–26). They have lost sight of the fact that the reversal is predicted for the future.

**4, 14–17: My beloved children:** the close of the argument is dominated by the tender metaphor of the father who not only gives his children life but also educates them. Once he has begotten them through his preaching, Paul continues to present the gospel to them existentially, by his life as well as by his word, and they are to learn, as children do, by imitating their parents (16). The reference to the **rod** in v 21 belongs to the same image-complex. So does the image of the **ways** in v 17: the ways that Paul teaches everywhere, "his ways in Christ Jesus," mean a behavior pattern quite different from the human ways along which the Corinthians are walking (3, 3).

**4, 18–21:** Verse 20 picks up the contrast between a certain kind of talk (**logos**) and true power (**dynamis**) from 1, 17–18 and 2, 4–5. The kingdom, which many of them imagine to be fully present in their lives (8), will be rather unexpectedly disclosed in the strength of Paul's encounter with them, if they make a powerful intervention on his part necessary. Compare the similar ending to an argument in 2 Cor 13, 1–4.10.

n 15, 31; Rom 8, 36; 2 Cor 4, 8–12; 11, 23 / Heb 10, 33. o 1, 18; 3, 18; 2 Cor 11, 19 / 2, 3; 2 Cor 13, 9. p Rom 8, 35; 2 Cor 11, 23–27. q Acts 9, 6–14; 18, 3; 20, 34; 1 Thes 2, 9 / 1 Pt 3, 9. r Gal 4, 19; Phlm 10. s 11, 1; Phil 3, 17; 4, 9; 1 Thes 1, 6; 2 Thes 3, 7.9. t 16, 10; Acts 19, 22. u 2, 4; 1 Thes 1, 5. v 2 Cor 1, 23; 10, 2.

## B. Moral Disorders

### CHAPTER 5

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**A Case of Incest** 1 [w]*It is widely reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of a kind not found even among pagans—a man living with his father's wife. 2*And you are inflated with pride. Should you not rather have been sorrowful? The one who did this deed should be expelled from your midst. 3 [x]I, for my part, although absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as if present, pronounced judgment on the one who has committed this deed, 4in the name of [our] Lord Jesus: when you have gathered together and I am with you in spirit with the power of the Lord Jesus, 5 [y]*you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

Ch 5–6
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6 [z]*Your boasting is not appropriate. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? 7 [a]*Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. 8 [b]Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people, 10 [c]not at all referring to the immoral of this world or the greedy and robbers or idolaters; for you would then have to leave the world. 11 [d]But I now write to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person. 12For why should I be judging outsiders? Is it not your business to judge those within? 13 [e]God will judge those outside. "Purge the evil person from your midst."

### CHAPTER 6

**Lawsuits before Unbelievers** 1*How can any one of you with a case against another dare to bring it to the unjust for judgment instead of to the holy ones? 2 [f]*Do you not know that the holy ones will judge the world? If the world is to be judged by you, are you unqualified for the lowest law courts? 3Do you not know that we will judge angels? Then why not everyday matters? 4If, therefore, you have courts for everyday matters, do you seat as judges people of no standing in the church? 5I say this to shame you. Can it be that there is not one among you wise enough to be able to settle a case between brothers? 6But rather brother goes to court against brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 [g]Now indeed [then] it is, in any case, a failure

**5, 1—6, 20:** Paul now takes up a number of other matters that require regulation. These have come to his attention by hearsay (5, 1), probably in reports brought by "Chloe's people" (1, 11).

**5, 1–13:** Paul first deals with the incestuous union of a man with his stepmother (1–8) and then attempts to clarify general admonitions he has given about associating with fellow Christians guilty of immorality (9–13). Each of these three brief paragraphs expresses the same idea: the need of separation between the holy and the unholy.

**5, 2: Inflated with pride:** this remark and the reference to **boasting** in v 6 suggest that they are proud of themselves despite the infection in their midst, tolerating and possibly even approving the situation. The attitude expressed in 6, 2.13 may be influencing their thinking in this case.

**5, 5: Deliver this man to Satan:** once the sinner is expelled from the church, the sphere of Jesus' lordship and victory over sin, he will be in the region outside over which Satan is still master. **For the destruction of his flesh:** the purpose of the penalty is medicinal: through affliction, sin's grip over him may be destroyed and the path to repentance and reunion laid open. With Paul's instructions for an excommunication ceremony here, contrast his recommendations for the reconciliation of a sinner in 2 Cor 2, 5–11.

**5, 6: A little yeast:** yeast, which induces fermentation, is a natural symbol for a source of corruption that becomes all-pervasive. The expression is proverbial.

**5, 7–8:** In the Jewish calendar, Passover was followed immediately by the festival of Unleavened Bread. In preparation for this feast all traces of old bread were removed from the house, and during the festival only unleavened bread was eaten. The sequence of these two feasts provides Paul with an image of Christian existence: Christ's death (the true Passover celebration) is followed by the life of the Christian community, marked by newness, purity, and integrity (a perpetual feast of unleavened bread). Paul may have been writing around Passover time (cf 16, 5); this is a little Easter homily, the earliest in Christian literature.

**5, 9–13:** Paul here corrects a misunderstanding of his earlier directives against associating with immoral fellow Christians. He concedes the impossibility of avoiding contact with sinners in society at large but urges the Corinthians to maintain the inner purity of their own community.

**6, 1–11:** Christians at Corinth are suing one another before pagan judges in Roman courts. A barrage of rhetorical questions (1–9) betrays Paul's indignation over this practice, which he sees as an infringement upon the holiness of the Christian community.

**6, 2–3:** The principle to which Paul appeals is an eschatological prerogative promised to Christians: they are to share with Christ the judgment of the world (cf Dn 7, 22.27). Hence they ought to be able to settle minor disputes within the community.

w Lv 18, 7–8; 20, 11; Dt 27, 20. x Col 2, 5. y 1 Tm 1, 20. z Gal 5, 9. a Ex 12, 1–13; Dt 16, 1–2; 1 Pt 1, 19. b Ex 12, 15–20; 13, 7; Dt 16, 3. c 10, 27; Jn 17, 15. d Mt 18, 17; 2 Thes 3, 6.14; 2 Jn 10. e Dt 13, 6; 17, 7; 22, 24. f Wis 3, 8; Mt 19, 28; Rv 20, 4. g Mt 5, 38–42; Rom 12, 17–21; 1 Thes 5, 15.

on your part that you have lawsuits against one another. Why not rather put up with injustice? Why not rather let yourselves be cheated? [8]Instead, you inflict injustice and cheat, and this to brothers. [9] [h]*Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor sodomites [10]nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] [i]That is what some of you used to be; but now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

**Sexual Immorality** [12] [j]*"Everything is lawful for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is lawful for me," but I will not let myself be dominated by anything. [13]"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food," but God will do away with both the one and the other. The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; [14] [k]God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

[15] [l]*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take Christ's members and make them the members of a prostitute? Of course not! [16] [m][Or] do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For "the two," it says, "will become one flesh." [17] [n]But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. [18]*Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. [19] [o]*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? [20] [p]For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

# III: Answers to the Corinthians' Questions

## A. Marriage and Virginity

### CHAPTER 7

**Advice to the Married** [1]*Now in regard to the matters about which you wrote: "It is a good

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6, 9–10: A catalogue of typical vices that exclude from the kingdom of God and that should be excluded from God's church. Such lists (cf 5, 10) reflect the common moral sensibility of the New Testament period.

6, 9: The Greek word translated as **boy prostitutes** may refer to catamites, i.e., boys or young men who were kept for purposes of prostitution, a practice not uncommon in the Greco-Roman world. In Greek mythology this was the function of Ganymede, the "cupbearer of the gods," whose Latin name was Catamitus. The term translated **sodomites** would then refer to adult males who indulged in homosexual practices with such boys. See similar condemnations of such practices in Rom 1, 26–27; 1 Tm 1, 10.

6, 12–20: Paul now turns to the opinion of some Corinthians that sexuality is a morally indifferent area (12–13). This leads him to explain the mutual relation between the Lord Jesus and our bodies (13b) in a densely packed paragraph that contains elements of a profound theology of sexuality (15–20).

6, 12–13: **Everything is lawful for me:** the Corinthians may have derived this slogan from Paul's preaching about Christian freedom, but they mean something different by it: they consider sexual satisfaction a matter as indifferent as food, and they attribute no lasting significance to bodily functions (13a). Paul begins to deal with the slogan by two qualifications, which suggest principles for judging sexual activity. **Not everything is beneficial:** cf 10, 23, and the whole argument of chs 8–10 on the finality of freedom and moral activity. **Not let myself be dominated:** certain apparently free actions may involve in fact a secret servitude in conflict with the lordship of Jesus.

6, 15b-16: **A prostitute:** the reference may be specifically to religious prostitution, an accepted part of pagan culture at Corinth and elsewhere; but the prostitute also serves as a symbol for any sexual relationship that conflicts with Christ's claim over us individually. **The two . . . will become one flesh:** the text of Gn 2, 24 is applied positively to human marriage in Mt and Mk, and in Eph 5, 29–32: love of husband and wife reflect the love of Christ for his church. The application of the text to union with a prostitute is jarring, for such a union is a parody, an antitype of marriage, which does conflict with Christ's claim over us. This explains the horror expressed in 15b.

6, 18: **Against his own body:** expresses the intimacy and depth of sexual disorder, which violates the very orientation of our bodies.

6, 19–20: Paul's vision becomes trinitarian. **A temple:** sacred by reason of God's gift, his indwelling Spirit. **Not your own:** but "for the Lord," who acquires ownership by the act of redemption. **Glorify God in your body:** the argument concludes with a positive imperative to supplement the negative "avoid immorality" of v 18. Far from being a terrain that is morally indifferent, the area of sexuality is one in which our relationship with God (and his Christ and his Spirit) is very intimately expressed: he is either highly glorified or deeply offended.

7, 1–40: Paul now begins to answer questions addressed to him by the Corinthians (7, 1—11, 1). The first of these concerns marriage. This chapter contains advice both to the married (1–16) and to the unmarried (25–38) or widowed (39–40); these two parts are separated by vv 17–24, which enunciate a principle applicable to both.

7, 1–16: It seems that some Christians in Corinth were advocating asceticism in sexual matters. The pattern **it is a good thing . . . , but** occurs twice (1–2.8–9; cf 26), suggesting that in

h 15, 50; Gal 5, 19–21; Eph 5, 5. i Ti 3, 3–7. j 10, 23. k Rom 8, 11; 2 Cor 4, 14. l 12, 27; Rom 6, 12–13; 12, 5; Eph 5, 30. m Gn 2, 24; Mt 19, 5; Mk 10, 8; Eph 5, 31. n Rom 8, 9–10; 2 Cor 3, 17. o 3, 16–17; Rom 5, 5. p 3, 23; 7, 23; Acts 20, 28 / Rom 12, 1; Phil 1, 20.

thing for a man not to touch a woman," 2but
because of cases of immorality every man should
have his own wife, and every woman her own
husband. 3The husband should fulfill his duty
toward his wife, and likewise the wife toward
her husband. 4A wife does not have authority
over her own body, but rather her husband, and
similarly a husband does not have authority over
his own body, but rather his wife. 5Do not
deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual
consent for a time, to be free for prayer, but then
return to one another, so that Satan may not
tempt you through your lack of self-control.
6*This I say by way of concession, however, not
as a command. 7 q*Indeed, I wish everyone to be
as I am, but each has a particular gift from God,
one of one kind and one of another.

8 r*Now to the unmarried and to widows I
say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they
are, as I do, 9but if they cannot exercise self-
control they should marry, for it is better to
marry than to be on fire. 10 s*To the married,
however, I give this instruction (not I, but the
Lord): a wife should not separate from her
husband 11—and if she does separate she must
either remain single or become reconciled to her
husband—and a husband should not divorce his
wife.

12*To the rest I say (not the Lord): if any
brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she
is willing to go on living with him, he should not
divorce her; 13and if any woman has a husband
who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to go on
living with her, she should not divorce her
husband. 14 tFor the unbelieving husband is
made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving
wife is made holy through the brother. Other-
wise your children would be unclean, whereas
in fact they are holy.

15*If the unbeliever separates, however, let
him separate. The brother or sister is not bound
in such cases; God has called you to peace. 16For
how do you know, wife, whether you will save
your husband; or how do you know, husband,
whether you will save your wife?

**The Life That the Lord Has Assigned**

17*Only, everyone should live as the Lord has
assigned, just as God called each one. I give this
order in all the churches. 18 uWas someone
called after he had been circumcised? He should
not try to undo his circumcision. Was an uncir-
cumcised person called? He should not be cir-
cumcised. 19 vCircumcision means nothing, and
uncircumcision means nothing; what matters is
keeping God's commandments. 20Everyone
should remain in the state in which he was
called.

21Were you a slave when you were called? Do
not be concerned but, even if you can gain your
freedom, make the most of it. 22 wFor the slave
called in the Lord is a freed person in the Lord,
just as the free person who has been called is a

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this matter as in others the Corinthians have seized upon a genuine value but are exaggerating or distorting it in some way. Once again Paul calls them to a more correct perspective and a better sense of their own limitations. The phrase **it is a good thing** (1) may have been the slogan of the ascetic party at Corinth.

**7, 1–7:** References to Paul's own behavior (7–8) suggest that his celibate way of life and his preaching to the unmarried (cf 25–35) have given some the impression that asceticism within marriage, i.e., suspension of normal sexual relations, would be a laudable ideal. Paul points to their experience of widespread immorality to caution them against overestimating their own strength (2); as individuals they may not have the particular gift that makes such asceticism feasible (7) and hence are to abide by the principle to be explained in vv 17–24.

**7, 6: By way of concession:** this refers most likely to the concession mentioned in v 5a: temporary interruption of relations for a legitimate purpose.

**7, 7: A particular gift from God:** use of the term **charisma** suggests that marriage and celibacy may be viewed in the light of Paul's theology of spiritual gifts (chs 12–14).

**7, 8:** Paul was obviously unmarried when he wrote this verse. Some interpreters believe that he had previously been married and widowed; there is no clear evidence either for or against this view, which was expressed already at the end of the second century by Clement of Alexandria.

**7, 10–11: (Not I, but the Lord):** Paul reminds the married of Jesus' principle of nonseparation (Mk 10, 9). This is one of his rare specific references to the teaching of Jesus.

**7, 12–14: To the rest:** marriages in which only one partner is a baptized Christian. Jesus' prohibition against divorce is not addressed to them, but Paul extends the principle of nonseparation to such unions, provided they are marked by peacefulness and shared sanctification.

**7, 15–16: If the unbeliever separates:** the basis of the "Pauline privilege" in Catholic marriage legislation.

**7, 17–24:** On the ground that distinct human conditions are less significant than the whole new existence opened up by God's call, Paul urges them to be less concerned with changing their states of life than with answering God's call where it finds them. The principle applies both to the married state (1–16) and to the unmarried (25–38).

q Mt 19, 11–12. r 1 Tm 5, 11–16 / 9, 5; s Mt 5, 32; 19, 9. t Rom 11, 16. u 1 Mc 1, 15 / Acts 15, 1–2. v Rom 2, 25.29; Gal 5, 6; 6, 15. w Eph 6, 5–9; Col 3, 11; Phlm 16.

slave of Christ. 23 [x]You have been purchased at a
price. Do not become slaves to human beings.
24Brothers, everyone should continue before
God in the state in which he was called.

**Advice to Virgins and Widows** 25*Now in
regard to virgins I have no commandment from
the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by
the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 [y]So this is
what I think best because of the present distress:
that it is a good thing for a person to remain as
he is. 27Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek a
separation. Are you free of a wife? Then do not
look for a wife. 28If you marry, however, you do
not sin, nor does an unmarried woman sin if she
marries; but such people will experience afflic-
tion in their earthly life, and I would like to spare
you that.

29 [z]*I tell you, brothers, the time is running
out. From now on, let those having wives act as
not having them, 30those weeping as not weep-
ing, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying
as not owning, 31those using the world as not
using it fully. For the world in its present form is
passing away.

32I should like you to be free of anxieties. An
unmarried man is anxious about the things of
the Lord, how he may please the Lord. 33 [a]But a
married man is anxious about the things of the
world, how he may please his wife, 34 [b]and he is
divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is
anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she
may be holy in both body and spirit. A married
woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the
things of the world, how she may please her
husband. 35 [c]I am telling you this for your own
benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but
for the sake of propriety and adherence to the
Lord without distraction.

36*If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly
toward his virgin, and if a critical moment has
come and so it has to be, let him do as he
wishes. He is committing no sin; let them get
married. 37The one who stands firm in his
resolve, however, who is not under compulsion
but has power over his own will, and has made
up his mind to keep his virgin, will be doing
well. 38So then, the one who marries his virgin
does well; the one who does not marry her will
do better.

39 [d]*A wife is bound to her husband as long as
he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be
married to whomever she wishes, provided that
it be in the Lord. 40 [e]She is more blessed, though,
in my opinion, if she remains as she is, and I
think that I too have the Spirit of God.

## B. Offerings to Idols

### CHAPTER 8

**Knowledge Insufficient** 1 [f]*Now in regard to
meat sacrificed to idols: we realize that "all of us

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**7, 25–28:** Paul is careful to explain that the principle of v 17 does not bind under sin but that present earthly conditions make it advantageous for the unmarried to remain as they are (28). These remarks must be complemented by the statement about "particular gifts" from v 7.

**7, 29–31: The world . . . is passing away:** Paul advises Christians to go about the ordinary activities of life in a manner different from those who are totally immersed in them and unaware of their transitoriness.

**7, 36–38:** The passage is difficult to interpret, because it is unclear whether Paul is thinking of a father and his unmarried daughter (or slave), or of a couple engaged in a betrothal or spiritual marriage. The general principles already enunciated apply: there is no question of sin, even if they should marry, but staying as they are is "better" (for the reasons mentioned in 28–35). Once again the **charisma** of v 7, which applies also to the unmarried (8–9), is to be presupposed.

**7, 36: A critical moment has come:** either because the woman will soon be beyond marriageable age, or because their passions are becoming uncontrollable (cf 9).

**7, 39–40:** Application of the principles to the case of widows. If they do choose to remarry, they ought to prefer Christian husbands.

**8, 1—11, 1:** The Corinthians' second question concerns meat that has been sacrificed to idols; in this area they were exhibiting a disordered sense of liberation that Paul here tries to rectify. These chapters contain a sustained and unified argument that illustrates Paul's method of theological reflection on a moral dilemma. Although the problem with which he is dealing is dated, the guidelines for moral decisions that he offers are of lasting validity.

Essentially Paul urges them to take a communitarian rather than an individualistic view of their Christian freedom. Many decisions that they consider pertinent only to their private relationship with God have, in fact, social consequences. Nor can moral decisions be determined by merely theoretical considerations; they must be based on concrete circumstances, specifically on the value and needs of other individuals and on mutual responsibility within the community. Paul here introduces the theme of "building up" (**oikodomē**), i.e., of contributing by individual action to the welfare and growth of the community. This theme will be further developed in ch 14; see the note on 14, 3b-5. Several years later Paul would again deal with the problem of meat sacrificed to idols in Rom 14, 1—15, 6.

**8, 1a: Meat sacrificed to idols:** much of the food consumed in the city could have passed through pagan religious ceremonies before finding its way into markets and homes. **"All of us have**

x 6, 20. y 8. z Rom 13, 11. a Lk 14, 20. b 1 Tm 5, 5. c Lk 10, 39–42. d Rom 7, 2. e 25. f Rom 15, 14 / 13, 1–13; Rom 14, 15.19.

have knowledge"; knowledge inflates with
pride, but love builds up. [2]If anyone supposes he
knows something, he does not yet know as he
ought to know. [3] [g]But if one loves God, one is
known by him.

[4] [h]So about the eating of meat sacrificed to
idols: we know that "there is no idol in the
world," and that "there is no God but one."
[5]Indeed, even though there are so-called gods in
heaven and on earth (there are, to be sure, many
"gods" and many "lords"), [6] [i]*yet for us there is

one God, the Father,
from whom all things are and for whom we exist,
and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom all things are and through whom we exist.

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**Practical Rules** [7] [j]But not all have this knowledge. There are some who have been so used to idolatry up until now that, when they eat meat sacrificed to idols, their conscience, which is weak, is defiled.

[8] [k]*Now food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do. [9] [l]But make sure that this liberty of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. [10]If someone sees you, with your knowledge, reclining at table in the temple of an idol, may not his conscience too, weak as it is, be "built up" to eat the meat sacrificed to idols? [11] [m]Thus through your knowledge, the weak person is brought to destruction, the brother for whom Christ died. [12]When you sin in this way against your brothers and wound their consciences, weak as they are, you are sinning against Christ. [13] [n]*Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to sin.

## CHAPTER 9

**Paul's Rights as an Apostle** [1] [o]*Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? [2]Although I may not be an apostle for others, certainly I am for you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

[3]*My defense against those who would pass judgment on me is this. [4]*Do we not have the right to eat and drink? [5]Do we not have the right to take along a Christian wife, as do the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? [6] [p]Or is it only myself and Barnabas who do not have the right not to work? [7] [q]Who ever serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating its produce? Or who shepherds a flock without using some of the

**knowledge":** a slogan, similar to 6, 12, which reveals the self-image of the Corinthians. Verse 4 will specify the content of this knowledge.

**8, 6:** This verse rephrases the monotheistic confession of v 4 in such a way as to contrast it with polytheism (5) and to express our relationship with the one God in concrete, i.e., in personal and Christian terms. **And for whom we exist:** since the Greek contains no verb here and the action intended must be inferred from the preposition **eis,** another translation is equally possible: "toward whom we return." **Through whom all things:** the earliest reference in the New Testament to Jesus' role in creation.

**8, 8–9:** Although the food in itself is morally neutral, extrinsic circumstances may make the eating of it harmful. **A stumbling block:** the image is that of tripping or causing someone to fall (cf 13; 9, 12; 10, 12.32; 2 Cor 6, 3; Rom 14, 13.20–21). This is a basic moral imperative for Paul, a counterpart to the positive imperative to "build one another up"; compare the expression "giving offense" as opposed to "pleasing" in 10, 32–33.

**8, 13:** His own course is clear: he will avoid any action that might harm another Christian. This statement prepares for the paradigmatic development in ch 9.

**9, 1–27:** This chapter is an emotionally charged expansion of Paul's appeal to his own example in 8, 13; its purpose is to reinforce the exhortation of 8, 9. The two opening questions introduce the themes of Paul's freedom and his apostleship (1), themes that the chapter will develop in reverse order, vv 1–18 treating the question of his apostleship and the rights that flow from it, and vv 19–27 exploring dialectically the nature of Paul's freedom. The language is highly rhetorical, abounding in questions, wordplays, paradoxes, images, and appeals to authority and experience. The argument is unified by repetitions; its articulations are highlighted by inclusions and transitional verses.

**9, 3: My defense against those who would pass judgment on me:** the reference to a defense (**apologia**) is surprising, and suggests that Paul is incorporating some material here that he has previously used in another context. The defense will touch on two points: the fact of Paul's rights as an apostle (4–12a and 13–14) and his nonuse of those rights (12b and 15–18).

**9, 4–12a:** Apparently some believe that Paul is not equal to the other apostles and therefore does not enjoy equal privileges. His defense on this point (here and in 13–14) reinforces the assertion of his apostolic character in v 2. It consists of a series of analogies from natural equity (7) and religious custom (13) designed to establish his equal right to support from the churches (4–6.11–12a); these analogies are confirmed by the authority of the law (8–10) and of Jesus himself (14).

g Rom 8, 29; Gal 4, 9; h 10, 19; Dt 6, 4. i Mal 2, 10 / Rom 11, 36; Eph 4, 5–6 / 1, 2–3 / Jn 1, 3; Col 1, 16. j 10, 28; Rom 14, 23 / Rom 14, 1; 15, 1. k Rom 14, 17. l Rom 14, 13.20–21. m Rom 14, 15.20. n Mt 18, 6; Rom 14, 20–21. o 19 / 2 Cor 12, 12 / 15, 8–9; Acts 9, 17; 26, 16. p Acts 4, 36–37; 13, 1–2; Gal 2, 1.9.13; Col 4, 10. q 2 Tm 2, 3–4.

milk from the flock? [8]Am I saying this on human
authority, or does not the law also speak of these
things? [9] [r]It is written in the law of Moses, "You
shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out
the grain." Is God concerned about oxen, [10] [s]or
is he not really speaking for our sake? It was
written for our sake, because the plowman
should plow in hope, and the thresher in hope of
receiving a share. [11] [t]If we have sown spiritual
seed for you, is it a great thing that we reap a
material harvest from you? [12] [u]*If others share
this rightful claim on you, do not we still more?

**Reason for Not Using His Rights** Yet we
have not used this right. On the contrary, we
endure everything so as not to place an obstacle
to the gospel of Christ. [13] [v]*Do you not know
that those who perform the temple services eat
[what] belongs to the temple, and those who
minister at the altar share in the sacrificial
offerings? [14] [w]In the same way, the Lord ordered
that those who preach the gospel should live by
the gospel.

[15] [x]*I have not used any of these rights,
however, nor do I write this that it be done so in
my case. I would rather die. Certainly no one is
going to nullify my boast. [16] [y]If I preach the
gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an
obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to
me if I do not preach it! [17] [z]If I do so willingly, I
have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I
have been entrusted with a stewardship.
[18] [a]What then is my recompense? That, when I
preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not
to make full use of my right in the gospel.

**All Things to All** [19] [b]*Although I am free in
regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so
as to win over as many as possible. [20]To the Jews
I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those
under the law I became like one under the
law—though I myself am not under the law—to
win over those under the law. [21]To those outside
the law I became like one outside the law—
though I am not outside God's law but within
the law of Christ—to win over those outside the
law. [22] [c]To the weak I became weak, to win over
the weak. I have become all things to all, to save
at least some. [23]All this I do for the sake of the
gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.

[24] [d]*Do you not know that the runners in the
stadium all run in the race, but only one wins
the prize? Run so as to win. [25] [e]Every athlete
exercises discipline in every way. They do it to
win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable
one. [26]Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight
as if I were shadowboxing. [27]*No, I drive my
body and train it, for fear that, after having
preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

## CHAPTER 10

**Warning against Overconfidence** [1] [f]*I do not
want you to be unaware, brothers, that our ances-

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**9, 12b:** It appears, too, that suspicion or misunderstanding has been created by Paul's practice of not living from his preaching. The first reason he asserts in defense of this practice is an entirely apostolic one; it anticipates the developments to follow in vv 19–22. He will give a second reason in vv 15–18.

**9, 13–14:** The position of these verses produces an interlocking of the two points of Paul's defense. These arguments by analogy (13) and from authority (14) belong with those of vv 7–10 and ground the first point. But Paul defers them until he has had a chance to mention "the gospel of Christ" (12b), after which it is more appropriate to mention Jesus' injunction to his preachers and to argue by analogy from the sacred temple service to his own liturgical service, the preaching of the gospel (cf Rom 1, 9; 15, 16).

**9, 15–18:** Paul now assigns a more personal motive to his nonuse of his right to support. His preaching is not a service spontaneously undertaken on his part but a stewardship imposed by a sort of divine compulsion. Yet to merit any reward he must bring some spontaneous quality to his service, and this he does by freely renouncing his right to support. The material here is quite similar to that contained in Paul's "defense" at 2 Cor 11, 5–12; 12, 11–18.

**9, 19–23:** In a rhetorically balanced series of statements Paul expands and generalizes the picture of his behavior and explores the paradox of apostolic freedom. It is not essentially freedom from restraint but freedom for service—a possibility of constructive activity.

**9, 24–27:** A series of miniparables from sports, appealing to readers familiar with Greek gymnasia and the nearby Isthmian games.

**9, 27: For fear that . . . I myself should be disqualified:** a final paradoxical turn to the argument: what appears at first a free, spontaneous renunciation of rights (12–18) seems subsequently to be required for fulfillment of Paul's stewardship (to preach effectively he must reach his hearers wherever they are, 19–22), and finally is seen to be necessary for his own salvation (23–27). Mention of the possibility of disqualification provides a transition to ch 10.

**10, 1–5:** Paul embarks unexpectedly upon a panoramic survey of the events of the Exodus period. The privileges of Israel in the

r Dt 25, 4; 1 Tm 5, 18. s 2 Tm 2, 6. t Rom 15, 27. u 2 Cor 11, 7–12; 12, 13–18; 2 Thes 3, 6–12. v Nm 18, 8.31; Dt 18, 1–5. w Mt 10, 10; Lk 10, 7–8. x 2 Cor 11, 9–10. y Acts 26, 14–18. z 4, 1; Gal 2, 7. a 2 Cor 11, 7–12. b Mt 20, 26–27. c 10, 33; Rom 15, 1; 2 Cor 11, 29. d Heb 12, 1. e 2 Tm 2, 5 / 2 Tm 4, 7–8; Jas 1, 12; 1 Pt 5, 4. f Ex 13, 21–22; 14, 19–20 / Ex 14, 21–22.26–30.

tors were all under the cloud and all passed
through the sea, 2 [g]and all of them were baptized
into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 All ate the
same spiritual food, 4 [h]*and all drank the same
spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock
that followed them, and the rock was the Christ.
5 [i]Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for
they were struck down in the desert.

6 [j]*These things happened as examples for us,
so that we might not desire evil things, as they
did. 7 [k]And do not become idolaters, as some of
them did, as it is written, "The people sat down
to eat and drink, and rose up to revel." 8 [l]Let us
not indulge in immorality as some of them did,
and twenty-three thousand fell within a single
day. 9 [m]*Let us not test Christ as some of them
did, and suffered death by serpents. 10 [n]Do not
grumble as some of them did, and suffered death
by the destroyer. 11 *These things happened to
them as an example, and they have been written
down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of
the ages has come. 12 *Therefore, whoever
thinks he is standing secure should take care not
to fall. 13 [o]No trial has come to you but what is
human. God is faithful and will not let you be
tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he
will also provide a way out, so that you may be
able to bear it.

**Warning against Idolatry** 14 [p]*Therefore, my
beloved, avoid idolatry. 15 I am speaking as to
sensible people; judge for yourselves what I am
saying. 16 [q]The cup of blessing that we bless, is it
not a participation in the blood of Christ? The
bread that we break, is it not a participation in
the body of Christ? 17 [r]Because the loaf of bread
is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all
partake of the one loaf.

18 [s]Look at Israel according to the flesh; are
not those who eat the sacrifices participants in
the altar? 19 So what am I saying? That meat
sacrificed to idols is anything? Or that an idol is
anything? 20 [t]*No, I mean that what they sacri-
fice, [they sacrifice] to demons, not to God, and I
do not want you to become participants with
demons. 21 [u]You cannot drink the cup of the
Lord and also the cup of demons. You cannot
partake of the table of the Lord and of the table
of demons. 22 [v]Or are we provoking the Lord to
jealous anger? Are we stronger than he?

**Seek the Good of Others** 23 [w]*"Everything is
lawful," but not everything is beneficial. "Every-
thing is lawful," but not everything builds up.

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wilderness are described in terms that apply strictly only to the realities of the new covenant ("baptism," "spiritual food and drink"); interpreted in this way they point forward to the Christian experience (1–4). But those privileges did not guarantee God's permanent pleasure (5).

**10, 4: A spiritual rock that followed them:** the Torah speaks only about a rock from which water issued, but rabbinic legend amplified this into a spring that followed the Israelites throughout their migration. Paul uses this legend as a literary type: he makes the rock itself accompany the Israelites, and he gives it a spiritual sense. **The rock was the Christ:** in the Old Testament, Yahweh is the Rock of his people (cf Dt 32, Moses' song to Yahweh the Rock). Paul now applies this image to the Christ, the source of the living water, the true Rock that accompanied Israel, guiding their experiences in the desert.

**10, 6–13:** This section explicitates the typological value of these Old Testament events: the desert experiences of the Israelites are examples, meant as warnings, to deter us from similar sins (idolatry, immorality, etc.) and from a similar fate.

**10, 9: Christ:** to avoid Paul's concept of Christ present in the wilderness events, some manuscripts read "the Lord."

**10, 11: Upon whom the end of the ages has come:** it is our period in time toward which past ages have been moving and in which they arrive at their goal.

**10, 12–13: Take care not to fall:** the point of the whole comparison with Israel is to caution against overconfidence, a sense of complete security (12). This warning is immediately balanced by a reassurance, based, however, on God (13).

**10, 14–22:** The warning against idolatry from v 7 is now repeated (14) and explained in terms of the effect of sacrifices: all sacrifices, Christian (16–17), Jewish (18), or pagan (20), establish communion. But communion with Christ is exclusive, incompatible with any other such communion (21). Compare the line of reasoning at 6, 15.

**10, 20: To demons:** although Jews denied divinity to pagan gods, they often believed that there was some nondivine reality behind the idols, such as the dead, or angels, or demons. The explanation Paul offers in v 20 is drawn from Dt 32, 7: the power behind the idols, with which the pagans commune, consists of demonic powers hostile to God.

**10, 23—11, 1:** By way of peroration Paul returns to the opening situation (ch 8) and draws conclusions based on the intervening considerations (chs 9–10).

**10, 23–24:** He repeats in the context of this new problem the slogans of liberty from 6, 12, with similar qualifications. Liberty is not merely an individual perfection, nor an end in itself, but is to be used for the common good. The language of v 24 recalls the description of Jesus' self-emptying in Phil 2.

g Rom 6, 3; Gal 3, 27 / Ex 16, 4–35. h Ex 17, 1–7; Nm 20, 7–11; Dt 8, 15. i Nm 14, 28–38; Jude 5. j Nm 11, 4.34. k Ex 32, 6. l Nm 25, 1–9. m Nm 21, 5–9. n Nm 14, 2–37; 16, 1–35. o Mt 6, 13; Jas 1, 13–14 / 1, 9. p 1 Jn 5, 21. q Mt 26, 26–29; Acts 2, 42. r Rom 12, 5; Eph 4, 4. s Lv 7, 6. t Dt 32, 17. u 2 Cor 6, 14–18. v Dt 32, 21 / Eccl 6, 10. w 6,12.

24 [x]No one should seek his own advantage, but
that of his neighbor. 25 *Eat anything sold in the
market, without raising questions on grounds of
conscience, 26 [y]for "the earth and its fullness are
the Lord's." 27 If an unbeliever invites you and
you want to go, eat whatever is placed before
you, without raising questions on grounds of
conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, "This
was offered in sacrifice," do not eat it on
account of the one who called attention to it
and on account of conscience; 29 I mean not
your own conscience, but the other's. For why
should my freedom be determined by someone
else's conscience? 30 [z]If I partake thankfully,
why am I reviled for that over which I give
thanks?

31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever
you do, do everything for the glory of God.
32 *Avoid giving offense, whether to Jews or
Greeks or the church of God, 33 [a]just as I try to
please everyone in every way, not seeking my
own benefit but that of the many, that they may
be saved.

## CHAPTER 11

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1 [b]Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

## IV: Problems in Liturgical Assemblies

2 [c]*I praise you because you remember me in
everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as
I handed them on to you.

### A. Women's Headdresses

**Man and Woman** 3 [d]*But I want you to know
that Christ is the head of every man, and a
husband the head of his wife, and God the head
of Christ. 4 *Any man who prays or prophesies
with his head covered brings shame upon his
head. 5 But any woman who prays or prophesies
with her head unveiled brings shame upon her
head, for it is one and the same thing as if she
had had her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does
not have her head veiled, she may as well have
her hair cut off. But if it is shameful for a woman
to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then
she should wear a veil.

7 [e]*A man, on the other hand, should not

**10, 25–30:** A summary of specific situations in which the eating of meat sacrificed to idols could present problems of conscience. Three cases are considered. In the first (the marketplace, 25–26) and the second (at table, 27), there is no need to be concerned with whether food has passed through a pagan sacrifice or not, for the principle of 8, 4–6 still stands, and the whole creation belongs to the one God. But in the third case (28), the situation changes if someone present explicitly raises the question of the sacrificial origin of the food; eating in such circumstances may be subject to various interpretations, some of which could be harmful to individuals. Paul is at pains to insist that the enlightened Christian conscience need not change its judgment about the neutrality, even the goodness, of the food in itself (29–30); yet the total situation is altered to the extent that others are potentially endangered, and this calls for a different response, for the sake of others.

**10, 32—11, 1:** In summary, the general rule of mutually responsible use of their Christian freedom is enjoined first negatively (32), then positively, as exemplified in Paul (33), and finally grounded in Christ, the pattern for Paul's behavior and theirs (11, 1; cf Rom 15, 1–3).

**11, 2—14, 40:** This section of the letter is devoted to regulation of conduct at the liturgy. The problems Paul handles have to do with the dress of women in the assembly (11, 3–16), improprieties in the celebration of community meals (11, 17–34), and the use of charisms or spiritual gifts (12, 1—14, 40). The statement in 11, 2 introduces all of these discussions, but applies more appropriately to the second (cf the mention of praise in 11, 17 and of tradition in 11, 23).

**11, 3–16:** Women have been participating in worship at Corinth without the head-covering normal in Greek society of the period. Paul's stated goal is to bring them back into conformity with contemporary practice and propriety. In his desire to convince, he reaches for arguments from a variety of sources, though he has space to develop them only sketchily and is perhaps aware that they differ greatly in persuasiveness.

**11, 3: A husband the head of his wife:** the specific problem suggests to Paul the model of the head as a device for clarifying relations within a hierarchical structure. The model is similar to that developed later in greater detail and nuance in Eph 5, 21–33. It is a hybrid model, for it grafts onto a strictly theological scale of existence (cf 3, 21–23) the hierarchy of sociosexual relations prevalent in the ancient world: men, dominant, reflect the active function of Christ in relation to his church; women, submissive, reflect the passive role of the church with respect to its savior. This gives us the functional scale: God, Christ, man, woman.

**11, 4–6:** From man's direct relation to Christ, Paul infers that his head should not be covered. But woman, related not directly to Christ on the scale but to her husband, requires a covering as a sign of that relationship. **Shameful . . . to have her hair cut off:** certain less honored classes in society, such as lesbians and prostitutes, are thought to have worn their hair close-cropped.

**11, 7–9:** The hierarchy of v 3 is now expressed in other metaphors: the image (**eikōn**) and the reflected glory (**doxa**). Paul is alluding basically to the text of Gn 1, 27, in which mankind as a whole, the male-female couple, is created in God's image and given the command to multiply and together dominate the lower creation. But Gn 1, 24 is interpreted here in the light of the second creation narrative in Gn 2, in which each of the sexes is created separately (first the man and then the woman **from** man and **for** him, to be his helpmate, Gn 2, 20–23), and under the influence of the story of the fall, as a result of which the husband rules over the woman (Gn 3, 16). This interpretation splits the single image of God into two, at different degrees of closeness.

x Rom 15, 2; Phil 2, 4.21. y Pss 24, 1; 50, 12. z Rom 14, 6; 1 Tm 4, 3–4. a 9, 22; Rom 15, 2. b 4, 16; Phil 3, 17. c 15, 3; 2 Thes 2, 15. d Eph 5, 23. e Gn 1, 26–27; 5, 1.

cover his head, because he is the image and glory
of God, but woman is the glory of man. [8] [f]For
man did not come from woman, but woman
from man; [9] [g]nor was man created for woman,
but woman for man; [10]*for this reason a woman
should have a sign of authority on her head, be-
cause of the angels. [11] [h]*Woman is not indepen-
dent of man or man of woman in the Lord. [12] [i]For
just as woman came from man, so man is born of
woman; but all things are from God.

[13]*Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a
woman to pray to God with her head unveiled?
[14]Does not nature itself teach you that if a man
wears his hair long it is a disgrace to him,
[15]whereas if a woman has long hair it is her
glory, because long hair has been given [her] for a
covering? [16]But if anyone is inclined to be
argumentative, we do not have such a custom,
nor do the churches of God.

## B. The Lord's Supper

**An Abuse at Corinth** [17]*In giving this instruc-
tion, I do not praise the fact that your meetings are
doing more harm than good. [18] [j]First of all, I hear
that when you meet as a church there are divi-
sions among you, and to a degree I believe it;
[19]*there have to be factions among you in order
that [also] those who are approved among you
may become known. [20]When you meet in one
place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, [21]for
in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper,
and one goes hungry while another gets drunk.
[22] [k]Do you not have houses in which you can eat
and drink? Or do you show contempt for the
church of God and make those who have nothing
feel ashamed? What can I say to you? Shall I praise
you? In this matter I do not praise you.

**Tradition of the Institution** [23] [l]*For I received
from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that
the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over,
took bread, [24]and, after he had given thanks,
broke it and said, "This is my body that is for
you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] [m]In the
same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do
this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of
me." [26]For as often as you eat this bread and
drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the
Lord until he comes.

[27]*Therefore, whoever eats the bread or
drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have
to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.
[28]*A person should examine himself, and so eat
the bread and drink the cup. [29]*For anyone who

**11, 10: A sign of authority:** "authority" (**exousia**) may possibly be due to mistranslation of an Aramaic word for "veil"; in any case, the connection with v 9 indicates that the covering is a sign of woman's subordination. **Because of the angels:** a surprising additional reason, which the context does not clarify. Presumably the reference is to cosmic powers who might inflict harm on women or whose function is to watch over women or the cult.

**11, 11–12:** These parenthetical remarks relativize the argument from Gn 2—3. **In the Lord:** in the Christian economy the relation between the sexes is characterized by a mutual dependence, which is not further specified. And even in the natural order conditions have changed: the mode of origin described in Gn 2 has been reversed (12a). But the ultimately significant fact is the origin that all things have in common (12b).

**11, 13–16:** The argument for conformity to common church practice is summed up and pressed home. Verses 14–15 contain a final appeal to the sense of propriety that contemporary Greek society would consider "natural" (cf 5–6).

**11, 17–34:** Paul turns to another abuse connected with the liturgy, and a more serious one, for it involves neglect of basic Christian tradition concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Paul recalls that tradition for them and reminds them of its implications.

**11, 19: That . . . those who are approved among you may become known:** Paul situates their divisions within the context of the eschatological separation of the authentic from the inauthentic and the final revelation of the difference. The notion of authenticity-testing recurs in the injunction to self-examination in view of present and future judgment (28–32).

**11, 23–25:** This is the earliest written account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. The narrative emphasizes Jesus' action of self-giving (expressed in the words over the bread and the cup) and his double command to repeat his own action.

**11, 27:** It follows that the only proper way to celebrate the Eucharist is one that corresponds to Jesus' intention, which fits with the meaning of his command to reproduce his action in the proper spirit. If the Corinthians eat and drink unworthily, i.e., without having grasped and internalized the meaning of his death for them, they **will have to answer for the body and blood,** i.e., will be guilty of a sin against the Lord himself (cf 8, 12).

**11, 28: Examine himself:** the Greek word is similar to that for "approved" in v 19, which means "having been tested and found true." The self-testing required for proper eating involves **discerning the body** (29), which, from the context, must mean understanding the sense of Jesus' death (26), perceiving the imperative to unity that follows from the fact that Jesus gives himself to all and requires us to repeat his sacrifice in the same spirit (18–25).

**11, 29–32: Judgment:** there is a series of wordplays in these verses that would be awkward to translate literally into English; it includes all the references to judgment (**krima,** 29.34; **krinō,** 31.32), discernment (**diakrinō,** 29.31), and condemnation (**katakrinō,** 32). The judgment is concretely described as the illness, infirmity, and death that have visited the community. These are signs that the power of Jesus' death is not yet com-

f Gn 2, 21–23. g Gn 2, 18. h Gal 3, 27–28. i 8, 6; Rom 11, 36. j 1, 10–12; Gal 5, 20. k Jas 2, 1–7. 12; 15, 3 / 10, 16–17; Mt 26, 26–29; Mk 14, 22–25; Lk 22, 14–20. m Ex 24, 8; 2 Cor 3, 6; Heb 8, 6–13.

eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats
and drinks judgment on himself. 30That is why
many among you are ill and infirm, and a
considerable number are dying. 31If we dis-
cerned ourselves, we would not be under judg-
ment; 32 [n]but since we are judged by [the] Lord,
we are being disciplined so that we may not be
condemned along with the world.
33Therefore, my brothers, when you come
together to eat, wait for one another. 34If anyone
is hungry, he should eat at home, so that your
meetings may not result in judgment. The other
matters I shall set in order when I come.

## C. Spiritual Gifts

### CHAPTER 12

**Unity and Variety** 1 *Now in regard to spiritual
gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware.
2 [o]*You know how, when you were pagans, you
were constantly attracted and led away to mute
idols. 3 [p]Therefore, I tell you that nobody speak-
ing by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be accursed."
And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by
the holy Spirit.
4 [q]*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts
but the same Spirit; 5there are different forms of
service but the same Lord; 6there are different
workings but the same God who produces all of
them in everyone. 7To each individual the mani-
festation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.
8 [r]To one is given through the Spirit the expres-
sion of wisdom; to another the expression of
knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9to
another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts
of healing by the one Spirit; 10 [s]to another
mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another
discernment of spirits; to another varieties of
tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.
11 [t]But one and the same Spirit produces all of
these, distributing them individually to each
person as he wishes.
**One Body, Many Parts** 12 [u]*As a body is one
though it has many parts, and all the parts of the
body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.
13 [v]For in one Spirit we were all baptized into
one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free
persons, and we were all given to drink of one
Spirit.
14Now the body is not a single part, but many.
15If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I
do not belong to the body," it does not for this
reason belong any less to the body. 16Or if an ear
should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not
belong to the body," it does not for this reason
belong any less to the body. 17If the whole body
were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the
whole body were hearing, where would the
sense of smell be? 18But as it is, God placed the
parts, each one of them, in the body as he
intended. 19If they were all one part, where
would the body be? 20But as it is, there are many
parts, yet one body. 21The eye cannot say to the
hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to
the feet, "I do not need you." 22Indeed, the parts
of the body that seem to be weaker are all the
more necessary, 23and those parts of the body
that we consider less honorable we surround
with greater honor, and our less presentable

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pletely recognized and experienced. Yet even the judgment incurred is an expression of God's concern; it is a medicinal measure meant to rescue us from condemnation with God's enemies.

**12, 1—14, 40:** Ecstatic and charismatic activity were common in early Christian experience, as they were in other ancient religions. But the Corinthians seem to have developed a disproportionate esteem for certain phenomena, especially tongues, to the detriment of order in the liturgy. Paul's response to this development provides us with the fullest exposition we have of his theology of the charisms.

**12, 2–3:** There is an experience of the Spirit and an understanding of ecstatic phenomena that are specifically Christian and that differ, despite apparent similarities, from those of the pagans. It is necessary to discern which spirit is leading one; ecstatic phenomena must be judged by their effect (2). Verse 3 illustrates this by an example: power to confess Jesus as Lord can come only from the Spirit, and it is inconceivable that the Spirit would move anyone to curse the Lord.

**12, 4–6:** There are some features common to all charisms, despite their diversity: all are **gifts (charismata)**, grace from outside ourselves; all are **forms of service (diakoniai)**, an expression of their purpose and effect; and all are **workings (energēmata)**, in which God is at work. Paul associates each of these aspects with what later theology will call one of the persons of the Trinity, an early example of "appropriation."

**12, 12–26:** The image of **a body** is introduced to explain Christ's relationship with believers (12). Verse 13 applies this model to the church: by baptism all, despite diversity of ethnic or social origins, are integrated into one organism. Verses 14–26 then develop the need for diversity of function among the parts of a body without threat to its unity.

n Dt 8, 5; Heb 12, 5–11. o Eph 2, 11–18. p Rom 10, 9; 1 Jn 4, 2–3. q Rom 12, 6; Eph 4, 7.11. r 2, 6–13. s 14, 5.26.39; Acts 2, 4. t 7, 7; Eph 4, 7. u 10, 17; Rom 12, 4–5; Eph 2, 16; Col 3, 15. v Gal 3, 28; Eph 2, 13–18; Col 3, 11 / Jn 7, 37–39.

parts are treated with greater propriety,
24 whereas our more presentable parts do not
need this. But God has so constructed the body
as to give greater honor to a part that is without
it, 25 so that there may be no division in the body,
but that the parts may have the same concern for
one another. 26 If [one] part suffers, all the parts
suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts
share its joy.

**Application to Christ** 27 w*Now you are
Christ's body, and individually parts of it.
28 x*Some people God has designated in the
church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets;
third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of
healing, assistance, administration, and varieties
of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets?
Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds?
30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in
tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Strive eagerly for the
greatest spiritual gifts.

**The Way of Love** But I shall show you a still
more excellent way.

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1 y*If I speak in human and angelic tongues but
do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a
clashing cymbal. 2 z And if I have the gift of
prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all
knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move
mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
3 a If I give away everything I own, and if I hand
my body over so that I may boast but do not
have love, I gain nothing.

4 b*Love is patient, love is kind. It is not
jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated,
5 c it is not rude, it does not seek its own
interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not
brood over injury, 6 it does not rejoice over
wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. 7 d It
bears all things, believes all things, hopes all
things, endures all things.

8*Love never fails. If there are prophecies,
they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they
will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to
nothing. 9 For we know partially and we proph-
esy partially, 10 but when the perfect comes, the
partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I
used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as
a child; when I became a man, I put aside
childish things. 12 e At present we see indistinctly,
as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I
know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am
fully known. 13 f*So faith, hope, love remain,
these three; but the greatest of these is love.

## CHAPTER 14

**Prophecy Greater than Tongues** 1 g*Pursue
love, but strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts,

**12, 27–30:** Paul now applies the image again to the church as a whole and its members (27). The lists in vv 28–30 spell out the parallelism by specifying the diversity of functions found in the church (cf Rom 12, 6–8; Eph 4, 11).

**12, 28: First, apostles:** apostleship was not mentioned in vv 8–10, nor is it at issue in these chapters, but Paul gives it pride of place in his listing. It is not just one gift among others but a prior and fuller gift that includes the others. They are all demonstrated in Paul's apostolate, but he may have developed his theology of charisms by reflecting first of all on his own grace of apostleship (cf 3, 5—4, 14; 9, 1–27; 2 Cor 2, 14—6, 13; 10, 1—13, 30, esp. 11, 23 and 12, 12).

**13, 1–13:** This chapter involves a shift of perspective and a new point. All or part of the material may once have been an independent piece in the style of Hellenistic eulogies of virtues, but it is now integrated, by editing, into the context of chs 12–14 (cf the reference to tongues and prophecy) and into the letter as a whole (cf the references to knowledge and to behavior). The function of ch 13 within the discussion of spiritual gifts is to relativize all the charisms by contrasting them with the more basic, pervasive, and enduring value that gives them their purpose and their effectiveness. The rhetoric of this chapter is striking.

**13, 1–3:** An inventory of gifts, arranged in careful gradation: neither tongues (on the lowest rung), nor prophecy, knowledge, or faith, nor even self-sacrifice has value unless informed by love.

**13, 4–7:** This paragraph is developed by personification and enumeration, defining love by what it does or does not do. The Greek contains fifteen verbs; it is natural to translate many of them by adjectives in English.

**13, 8–13:** The final paragraph announces its topic, **Love never fails** (8), then develops the permanence of love in contrast to the charisms (9–12), and finally asserts love's superiority even over the other "theological virtues" (13).

**13, 13:** In speaking of love, Paul is led by spontaneous association to mention faith and hope as well. They are already a well-known triad (cf 1 Thes 1, 3), three interrelated (cf 7) features of Christian life, more fundamental than any particular charism. **The greatest . . . is love:** love is operative even within the other members of the triad (7), so that it has a certain primacy among them. Or, if the perspective is temporal, love will remain (cf "never fails," 8) even when faith has yielded to sight and hope to possession.

**14, 1–5:** Verse 1b returns to the thought of 12, 31a and reveals Paul's primary concern. The series of contrasts in vv 2–5 discloses the problem at Corinth: a disproportionate interest in tongues, with a corresponding failure to appreciate the worth of prophecy. Paul attempts to clarify the relative values of those gifts by indicat-

w Rom 12, 5–8; Eph 1, 23; 4, 12; 5, 30; Col 1, 18.24. x Eph 2, 20; 3, 5; 4, 11. y 8, 1; 16, 14; Rom 12, 9–10; 13, 8–10. z 4, 1; 14, 2 / 1, 5; 8, 1–3; 12, 8 / Mt 17, 20; 21, 21; Col 2, 3. a Mt 6, 2. b Eph 4, 2 / 4, 6.18; 5, 2; 8, 1. c 10, 24.33; Phil 2, 4.21; 1 Thes 5, 15. d Prv 10, 12; 1 Pt 4, 8. e 2 Cor 5, 7; Heb 11, 1 / 2 Tm 2, 19; 1 Jn 3, 2. f Col 1, 4; 1 Thes 1, 3; 5, 8. g 5.12.39.

above all that you may prophesy. [2]*For one who
speaks in a tongue does not speak to human
beings but to God, for no one listens; he utters
mysteries in spirit. [3] [h]*On the other hand, one
who prophesies does speak to human beings, for
their building up, encouragement, and solace.
[4]Whoever speaks in a tongue builds himself up,
but whoever prophesies builds up the church.
[5]Now I should like all of you to speak in tongues,
but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies
is greater than one who speaks in tongues,
unless he interprets, so that the church may be
built up.

[6]*Now, brothers, if I should come to you
speaking in tongues, what good will I do you if I
do not speak to you by way of revelation, or
knowledge, or prophecy, or instruction? [7]Like-
wise, if inanimate things that produce sound,
such as flute or harp, do not give out the tones
distinctly, how will what is being played on flute
or harp be recognized? [8]And if the bugle gives an
indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?
[9]Similarly, if you, because of speaking in
tongues, do not utter intelligible speech, how
will anyone know what is being said? For you
will be talking to the air. [10]It happens that there
are many different languages in the world, and
none is meaningless; [11]but if I do not know the
meaning of a language, I shall be a foreigner to
one who speaks it, and one who speaks it a
foreigner to me. [12]So with yourselves: since you
strive eagerly for spirits, seek to have an abun-
dance of them for building up the church.

**Need for Interpretation** [13]*Therefore, one
who speaks in a tongue should pray to be able to
interpret. [14]*[For] if I pray in a tongue, my spirit
is at prayer but my mind is unproductive. [15] [i]So
what is to be done? I will pray with the spirit,
but I will also pray with the mind. I will sing
praise with the spirit, but I will also sing praise
with the mind. [16]Otherwise, if you pronounce a
blessing [with] the spirit, how shall one who
holds the place of the uninstructed say the
"Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not
know what you are saying? [17]For you may be
giving thanks very well, but the other is not built
up. [18]I give thanks to God that I speak in
tongues more than any of you, [19]but in the
church I would rather speak five words with my
mind, so as to instruct others also, than ten
thousand words in a tongue.

**Functions of These Gifts** [20] [j]*Brothers, stop
being childish in your thinking. In respect to evil
be like infants, but in your thinking be mature.
[21] [k]It is written in the law:

"By people speaking strange tongues
and by the lips of foreigners

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ing the kind of communication achieved in each and the kind of effect each produces.

**14, 2–3a:** They involve two kinds of communication: tongues, private speech toward God in inarticulate terms that need interpretation to be intelligible to others (see 27–28); prophecy, communication with others in the community.

**14, 3b-5:** They produce two kinds of effect. One who speaks in tongues **builds himself up;** it is a matter of individual experience and personal perfection, which inevitably recalls Paul's previous remarks about being inflated, seeking one's own good, pleasing oneself. But a prophet **builds up the church:** the theme of "building up" or "edifying" others, the main theme of the letter, comes to clearest expression in this chapter (3.4.5.12.17). It has been anticipated at 8, 1 and 10, 23, and by the related concept of "the beneficial" in 6, 12; 10, 23; 12, 7; etc.

**14, 6–12:** Sound, in order to be useful, must be intelligible. This principle is illustrated by a series of analogies from music (7–8) and from ordinary human speech (10–11); it is applied to the case at hand in v 9 and v 12.

**14, 13–19:** The charism of interpretation lifts tongues to the level of intelligibility, enabling them to produce the same effect as prophecy (cf 5.26–28).

**14, 14–15: My spirit:** Paul emphasizes the exclusively ecstatic, nonrational quality of tongues. The tongues at Pentecost are also described as an ecstatic experience (Acts 2, 4.12–13), though Luke superimposes further interpretations of his own. **My mind:** the ecstatic element, dominant in earliest Old Testament prophecy as depicted in 1 Sam 10, 5–13; 19, 20–24, seems entirely absent from Paul's notion of prophecy and completely relegated to tongues. He emphasizes the role of reason when he specifies instruction as a function of prophecy (6.19.31). But he does not exclude intuition and emotion; cf references to encouragement and consolation (3.31) and the scene describing the ideal exercise of prophecy (24–25).

**14, 20–22:** The Corinthians pride themselves on tongues as a sign of God's favor, a means of direct communication with him (2.28). To challenge them to a more mature appraisal, Paul draws from scripture a less flattering explanation of what speaking in tongues may signify. Isaiah threatened the people that if they failed to listen to their prophets, the Lord would speak to them (in punishment) through the lips of Assyrian conquerors (Is 28, 11–12). Paul compresses Isaiah's text and makes God address his people directly. Equating tongues with foreign languages (cf 10–11), Paul concludes from Isaiah that **tongues are a sign not for those who believe,** i.e., not a mark of God's pleasure for those who listen to him but a mark of his displeasure with those in the community who are faithless, who have not heeded the message that he has sent through the prophets.

h 4–5.12.17.26; 3, 9; 8, 1.10; 10, 23. i Eph 5, 19; Col 3, 16. j Mt 10, 16; Rom 16, 19; Eph 4, 14. k Is 28, 11–12; Dt 28, 49.

I will speak to this people,
and even so they will not listen to me,

says the Lord." 22Thus, tongues are a sign not for those who believe but for unbelievers, whereas prophecy is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

23 l *So if the whole church meets in one place and everyone speaks in tongues, and then uninstructed people or unbelievers should come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24But if everyone is prophesying, and an unbeliever or uninstructed person should come in, he will be convinced by everyone and judged by everyone, 25 m and the secrets of his heart will be disclosed, and so he will fall down and worship God, declaring, "God is really in your midst."

**Rules of Order** 26 n *So what is to be done, brothers? When you assemble, one has a psalm, another an instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything should be done for building up. 27If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be two or at most three, and each in turn, and one should interpret. 28But if there is no interpreter, the person should keep silent in the church and speak to himself and to God.

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29Two or three prophets should speak, and the others discern. 30But if a revelation is given to another person sitting there, the first one should be silent. 31For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. 32Indeed, the spirits of prophets are under the prophets' control, 33 *since he is not the God of disorder but of peace.

As in all the churches of the holy ones, 34 o women should keep silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. 35But if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in the church. 36Did the word of God go forth from you? Or has it come to you alone?

37If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize that what I am writing to you is a commandment of the Lord. 38If anyone does not acknowledge this, he is not acknowledged. 39So, [my] brothers, strive eagerly to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, 40but everything must be done properly and in order.

# V: The Resurrection

## A. The Resurrection of Christ

### CHAPTER 15

**The Gospel Teaching** 1 *Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you

**14, 23–25:** Paul projects the possible missionary effect of two hypothetical liturgical experiences, one consisting wholly of tongues, the other entirely of prophecy. **Uninstructed (idiōtai):** the term may simply mean people who do not speak or understand tongues, as in v 16, where it seems to designate Christians. But coupled with the term "unbelievers" it may be another way of designating those who have not been initiated into the community of faith; some believe it denotes a special class of non-Christians who are close to the community, such as catechumens. **Unbelievers (apistoi):** he has shifted from the inner-community perspective of v 22; the term here designates non-Christians (cf 6, 6; 7, 15; 10, 27).

**14, 26–33a:** Paul concludes with specific directives regarding exercise of the gifts in their assemblies. Verse 26 enunciates the basic criterion in the use of any gift: it must contribute to "building up."

**14, 33b-36:** Verse 33b may belong with what precedes, so that the new paragraph would begin only with v 34. Verses 34–35 change the subject. These two verses have the theme of submission in common with ch 11, despite differences in vocabulary, and a concern with what is or is not becoming; but it is difficult to harmonize the injunction to silence here with ch 11, which appears to take it for granted that women do pray and prophesy aloud in the assembly (cf 11, 5.13). Hence the verses are often considered an interpolation, reflecting the discipline of later churches; such an interpolation would have to have antedated our manuscripts, all of which contain them, though some transpose them to the very end of the chapter.

**15, 1–58:** Some consider this chapter an earlier Pauline composition inserted into the present letter. The problem that Paul treats is clear to a degree: some of the Corinthians are denying the resurrection of the dead (12), apparently because of their inability to imagine how any kind of bodily existence could be possible after death (35). It is plausibly supposed that their attitude stems from Greek anthropology, which looks with contempt upon matter and would be content with the survival of the soul, and perhaps also from an overrealized eschatology of gnostic coloration, such as that reflected in 2 Tm 2, 18, which considers the resurrection a purely spiritual experience already achieved in baptism and in the forgiveness of sins. Paul, on the other hand, will affirm both the essential corporeity of the resurrection and its futurity.

His response moves through three steps: a recall of the basic kerygma about Jesus' resurrection (1–11), an assertion of the logical inconsistencies involved in denial of the resurrection (12–34), and an attempt to perceive theologically what the properties of the resurrected body must be (35–58).

**15, 1–11:** Paul recalls the tradition (3–7), which he can presuppose as common ground and which provides a starting point for

l Acts 2, 6.13. m 4, 5 / Is 45, 14; Zec 8, 23. n Eph 4, 12. o 1 Tm 2, 11–15; 1 Pt 3, 1.

also stand. 2Through it you are also being saved,
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you,
unless you believed in vain. 3 p*For I handed on
to you as of first importance what I also re-
ceived: that Christ died for our sins in accor-
dance with the scriptures; 4 qthat he was buried;
that he was raised on the third day in accordance
with the scriptures; 5 rthat he appeared to
Cephas, then to the Twelve. 6After that, he
appeared to more than five hundred brothers at
once, most of whom are still living, though some
have fallen asleep. 7After that he appeared to
James, then to all the apostles. 8 sLast of all, as to
one born abnormally, he appeared to me. 9 t*For
I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called
an apostle, because I persecuted the church of
God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am,
and his grace to me has not been ineffective.
Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not
I, however, but the grace of God [that is] with
me. 11Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we
preach and so you believed.

## B. The Resurrection of the Dead

**Results of Denial** 12*But if Christ is preached
as raised from the dead, how can some among
you say there is no resurrection of the dead?
13 uIf there is no resurrection of the dead, then
neither has Christ been raised. 14And if Christ
has not been raised, then empty [too] is our
preaching; empty, too, your faith. 15 vThen we
are also false witnesses to God, because we
testified against God that he raised Christ, whom
he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised.
16For if the dead are not raised, neither has
Christ been raised, 17*and if Christ has not been
raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your
sins. 18Then those who have fallen asleep in
Christ have perished. 19If for this life only we
have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable
people of all.

**Christ the Firstfruits** 20 w*But now Christ has
been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those
who have fallen asleep. 21*For since death came
through a human being, the resurrection of the
dead came also through a human being. 22 xFor
just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all
be brought to life, 23 ybut each one in proper
order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming,
those who belong to Christ; 24 z*then comes the
end, when he hands over the kingdom to his
God and Father, when he has destroyed every

his argument. This is the fundamental content of all Christian preaching and belief (1–2.11).

**15, 3–7:** The language by which Paul expresses the essence of the "gospel" (1) is not his own but is drawn from older credal formulas. This credo highlights Jesus' death for our sins (confirmed by his burial) and Jesus' resurrection (confirmed by his appearances) and presents both of them as fulfillment of prophecy. **In accordance with the scriptures:** conformity of Jesus' passion with the scriptures is asserted in Mt 16, 1; Lk 24, 25–27.32.44–46. Application of some Old Testament texts (Pss 2, 7; 16, 8–11) to his resurrection is illustrated by Acts 2, 27–31; 13, 29–39; and Is 52, 13—53, 12 and Hos 6, 2 may also have been envisaged.

**15, 9–11:** A persecutor may have appeared disqualified (**ouk . . . hikanos**) from apostleship, but in fact God's grace has qualified him. Cf the remarks in 2 Cor about his qualifications (2, 16; 3, 5) and his greater labors (11, 23). These verses are parenthetical, but a nerve has been touched (the references to his abnormal birth and his activity as a persecutor may echo taunts from Paul's opponents), and he is instinctively moved to self-defense.

**15, 12–19:** Denial of the resurrection (12) involves logical inconsistencies. The basic one, stated twice (13.16), is that if there is no such thing as (bodily) resurrection, then it has not taken place even in Christ's case.

**15, 17–18:** The consequences for the Corinthians are grave: both forgiveness of sins and salvation are an illusion, despite their strong convictions about both. Unless Christ is risen, their faith does not save.

**15, 20–28:** After a triumphant assertion of the reality of Christ's resurrection (20a), Paul explains its positive implications and consequences. As a soteriological event of both human (20–23) and cosmic (24–28) dimensions, Jesus' resurrection logically and necessarily involves ours as well.

**15, 20: The firstfruits:** the portion of the harvest offered in thanksgiving to God implies the consecration of the entire harvest to come. Christ's resurrection is not an end in itself; its finality lies in the whole harvest, ourselves.

**15, 21–22:** Our human existence, both natural and supernatural, is corporate, involves solidarity. **In Adam . . . in Christ:** the Hebrew word **'adām** in Genesis is both a common noun for mankind and a proper noun for the first man. Paul here presents Adam as at least a literary type of Christ; the parallelism and contrast between them will be developed further in vv 45–49 and in Rom 5, 12–21.

**15, 24–28:** Paul's perspective expands to cosmic dimensions, as he describes the climax of history, **the end.** His viewpoint is still christological, as in vv 20–23. Verses 24 and 28 describe Christ's final relations to his enemies and his Father in language that is both royal and military; vv 25–28 insert a proof from scripture (Pss 110, 1; 8, 7) into this description. But the viewpoint is also theological, for God is the ultimate agent and end, and likewise soteriological, for we are the beneficiaries of all the action.

p 11, 23 / 1 Pt 2, 24; 3, 18 / Is 53, 4–12. q Acts 2, 23–24 / Ps 16, 8–11; Hos 6, 1–2; Jon 2, 1. r Mk 16, 14; Mt 28, 16–17; Lk 24, 36; Jn 20, 19. s 9, 1; Acts 9, 3–6; Gal 1, 16. t Acts 8, 3; 9, 1–2; Gal 1, 23; Eph 3, 8; 1 Tm 1, 15. u 1 Thes 4, 14. v Acts 5, 32. w Rom 8, 11; Col 1, 18; 1 Thes 4, 14. x Gn 3, 17–19; Rom 5, 12–19. y 1 Thes 4, 15–17. z Eph 1, 22.

sovereignty and every authority and power.
25 [a]For he must reign until he has put all his
enemies under his feet. 26 [b]*The last enemy to
be destroyed is death, 27 [c]*for "he subjected
everything under his feet." But when it says that
everything has been subjected, it is clear that it
excludes the one who subjected everything to
him. 28 [d]When everything is subjected to him,
then the Son himself will [also] be subjected to
the one who subjected everything to him, so that
God may be all in all.

**Practical Arguments** 29*Otherwise, what will
people accomplish by having themselves bap-
tized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at
all, then why are they having themselves bap-
tized for them?

30 [e]*Moreover, why are we endangering our-
selves all the time? 31 [f]Every day I face death; I
swear it by the pride in you [brothers] that I have
in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 [g]If at Ephesus I fought
with beasts, so to speak, what benefit was it to
me? If the dead are not raised:

"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."

33 Do not be led astray:

"Bad company corrupts good morals."

34 [h]Become sober as you ought and stop sinning.
For some have no knowledge of God; I say this
to your shame.

## C. The Manner of the Resurrection

35*But someone may say, "How are the dead
raised? With what kind of body will they come
back?"

**The Resurrection Body** 36 [i]*You fool! What
you sow is not brought to life unless it dies.
37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be
but a bare kernel of wheat, perhaps, or of some
other kind; 38 [j]but God gives it a body as he
chooses, and to each of the seeds its own body.
39*Not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind
for human beings, another kind of flesh for
animals, another kind of flesh for birds, and
another for fish. 40 There are both heavenly
bodies and earthly bodies, but the brightness of
the heavenly is one kind and that of the earthly
another. 41 The brightness of the sun is one kind,
the brightness of the moon another, and the
brightness of the stars another. For star differs
from star in brightness.

42*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is
sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. 43 [k]It
is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is
sown weak; it is raised powerful. 44 It is sown a

**15, 26: The last enemy . . . is death:** a parenthesis that specifies the final fulfillment of the two Old Testament texts just referred to, Ps 110, 1 and Ps 8, 7. Death is not just one cosmic power among many, but the ultimate effect of sin in the universe (cf 56; Rom 5, 12). Christ defeats death where it prevails, in our bodies. The destruction of the last enemy is concretely the "coming to life" (22) of "those who belong to Christ" (23).

**15, 27b-28: The one who subjected everything to him:** the Father is the ultimate agent in the drama, and the final end of the process, to whom the Son and everything else is ordered (24.28). **That God may be all in all:** his reign is a dynamic exercise of creative power, an outpouring of life and energy through the universe, with no further resistance. This is the supremely positive meaning of "subjection": that God may fully be God.

**15, 29–34:** Paul concludes his treatment of logical inconsistencies with a listing of miscellaneous Christian practices that would be meaningless if the resurrection were not a fact.

**15, 29: Baptized for the dead:** this practice is not further explained here, nor is it necessarily mentioned with approval, but Paul cites it as something in their experience that attests in one more way to belief in the resurrection.

**15, 30–34:** A life of sacrifice, such as Paul describes in 4, 9–13 and 2 Cor, would be pointless without the prospect of resurrection; a life of pleasure, such as that expressed in the Epicurean slogan of v 32, would be far more consistent. **I fought with beasts:** since Paul does not elsewhere mention a combat with beasts at Ephesus, he may be speaking figuratively about struggles with adversaries.

**15, 35–58:** Paul imagines two objections that the Corinthians could raise: one concerning the manner of the resurrection (**how?**), the other pertaining to the qualities of the risen body (**what kind?**). These questions probably lie behind their denial of the resurrection (12), and seem to reflect the presumption that no kind of body other than the one we now possess would be possible. Paul deals with these objections in inverse order, in vv 36–49 and vv 50–58. His argument is fundamentally theological and its appeal is to the understanding.

**15, 35–49:** Paul approaches the question of the nature of the risen body (**what kind of body?**) by means of two analogies: the seed (36–44) and the first man, Adam (45–49).

**15, 36–38:** The analogy of the seed: there is a change of attributes from seed to plant; the old life-form must be lost for the new to emerge. By speaking about the seed as a **body** that dies and comes to life, Paul keeps the point of the analogy before the reader's mind.

**15, 39–41:** The expression "its own body" (38) leads to a development on the marvelous diversity evident in bodily life.

**15, 42–44:** The principles of qualitative difference before and after death (36–38) and of diversity on different levels of creation (39–41) are now applied to the human body. Before: a body

a Ps 110, 1. b Rom 6, 9; 2 Tm 1, 10; Rv 20, 14; 21, 4. c Ps 8, 7; Eph 1, 22; Phil 3, 21. d Eph 4, 6; Col 3, 11. e 2 Cor 4, 8–12; 11, 23–27. f Ps 44, 23; Rom 8, 36. g 4, 9; 2 Cor 4, 10–11 / Wis 2, 5–7; Is 22, 13. h Mt 22, 29; Mk 12, 24. i Jn 12, 24. j Gn 1, 11. k Phil 3, 20–21; Col 3, 4.

natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there
is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one.
45 [l]*So, too, it is written, "The first man,
Adam, became a living being," the last Adam a
life-giving spirit. 46 But the spiritual was not first;
rather the natural and then the spiritual. 47 The
first man was from the earth, earthly; the second
man, from heaven. 48 As was the earthly one, so
also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one,
so also are the heavenly. 49 [m]*Just as we have
borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also
bear the image of the heavenly one.

**The Resurrection Event** 50 [n]*This I declare,
brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the
kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit
incorruption. 51 [o]*Behold, I tell you a mystery.
We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be
changed, 52 [p]in an instant, in the blink of an eye,
at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,
the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we
shall be changed. 53 [q]For that which is corrupt-
ible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and
that which is mortal must clothe itself with
immortality. 54 [r]*And when this which is corrupt-
ible clothes itself with incorruptibility and this
which is mortal clothes itself with immortality,
then the word that is written shall come about:

"Death is swallowed up in victory.
55 [s]Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 [t]*The sting of death is sin, and the power of
sin is the law. 57 [u]But thanks be to God who
gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus
Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm,
steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the
Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not
in vain.

## VI: Conclusion

### CHAPTER 16

**The Collection** 1 [v]*Now in regard to the collec-
tion for the holy ones, you also should do as I
ordered the churches of Galatia. 2 On the first
day of the week each of you should set aside and
save whatever he can afford, so that collections
will not be going on when I come. 3 And when I
arrive, I shall send those whom you have ap-

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animated by a lower, natural life-principle (**psychē**) and endowed with the properties of natural existence (corruptibility, lack of glory, weakness). After: a body animated by a higher life-principle (**pneuma**; cf 45) and endowed with other qualities (incorruptibility, glory, power, spirituality), which are properties of God himself.

**15, 45:** The analogy of **the first man, Adam,** is introduced by a citation from Gn 2, 7. Paul alters the text slightly, adding the adjective **first,** and translating the Hebrew **'adām** twice, so as to give it its value both as a common noun (**man**) and as a proper name (**Adam**). Verse 45b then specifies similarities and differences between the two Adams. **The last Adam,** Christ (cf 21–22) has become **a . . . spirit** (**pneuma**), a life-principle transcendent with respect to the natural soul (**psychē**) of the first Adam (on the terminology here, cf the note on 3, 1). Further, he is not just alive, but **life-giving,** a source of life for others.

**15, 49: We shall also bear the image:** although it has less manuscript support, this reading better fits the context's emphasis on futurity and the transforming action of God; on future transformation as conformity to the image of the Son, cf Rom 8, 29; Phil 3, 21. The majority reading, "let us bear the image," suggests that the image of the heavenly man is already present and exhorts us to conform to it.

**15, 50–57:** These verses, an answer to the first question of v 35, explain theologically how the change of properties from one image to another will take place: God has the power to transform, and he will exercise it.

**15, 50–53: Flesh and blood . . . corruption:** living persons and the corpses of the dead, respectively. In both cases, the gulf between creatures and God is too wide to be bridged unless God himself transforms us.

**15, 51–52: A mystery:** the last moment in God's plan is disclosed; cf the notes on 2, 1.7–10a. The final trumpet and the awakening of the dead are stock details of the apocalyptic scenario. **We shall not all fall asleep:** Paul expected that some of his contemporaries might still be alive at Christ's return; after the death of Paul and his whole generation, copyists altered this statement in various ways. **We will all be changed:** the statement extends to all Christians, for Paul is not directly speaking about anyone else. Whether they have died before the end or happen still to be alive, all must be transformed.

**15, 54–55: Death is swallowed up in victory:** scripture itself predicts death's overthrow. **O death:** in his prophetic vision Paul may be making Hosea's words his own, or imagining this cry of triumph on the lips of the risen church.

**15, 56: The sting of death is sin:** an explanation of Hosea's metaphor. Death, scorpion-like, is equipped with a sting, sin, by which it injects its poison. Christ defeats sin, the cause of death (Gn 3, 19; Rom 5, 12).

**16, 1–4:** This paragraph contains our earliest evidence for a project that became a major undertaking of Paul's ministry. The collection for the church at Jerusalem was a symbol in his mind for the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Cf Gal 2, 10; Rom 15, 25–29; 2 Cor 8—9 and the notes to this last passage.

**16, 1: In regard to the collection:** it has already begun in Galatia and Macedonia (cf 2 Cor 8), and presumably he has already instructed the Corinthians about its purpose.

l Gn 2, 7 / Jn 5, 21–29; 2 Cor 3, 6.17. m Gn 5, 3 / Rom 8, 29; Phil 3, 21. n Jn 3, 3–6. o 1 Thes 4, 14–17. p Jl 2, 1; Zec 9, 14; Mt 24, 31; Rv 11, 15–18. q 2 Cor 5, 2–4. r Is 25, 8; 2 Cor 5, 4; 2 Tm 1, 10; Heb 2, 14–15. s Hos 13, 14. t Rom 4, 15; 7, 7.13. u Jn 16, 33; 1 Jn 5, 4. v Acts 24, 17; Rom 15, 25–32; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2, 10.

proved with letters of recommendation to take
your gracious gift to Jerusalem. 4*If it seems
fitting that I should go also, they will go with
me.

**Paul's Travel Plans** 5 w*I shall come to you
after I pass through Macedonia (for I am going to
pass through Macedonia), 6and perhaps I shall
stay or even spend the winter with you, so that
you may send me on my way wherever I may
go. 7 x*For I do not wish to see you now just in
passing, but I hope to spend some time with you,
if the Lord permits. 8 y*I shall stay in Ephesus
until Pentecost, 9 z*because a door has opened for
me wide and productive for work, but there are
many opponents.

10 a*If Timothy comes, see that he is without
fear in your company, for he is doing the work of
the Lord just as I am. 11Therefore, no one should
disdain him. Rather, send him on his way in
peace that he may come to me, for I am
expecting him with the brothers. 12 b*Now in
regard to our brother Apollos, I urged him
strongly to go to you with the brothers, but it
was not at all his will that he go now. He will go
when he has an opportunity.

**Exhortation and Greetings** 13Be on your
guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be
strong. 14Your every act should be done with
love.

15 c*I urge you, brothers—you know that the
household of Stephanas is the firstfruits of Achaia
and that they have devoted themselves to the
service of the holy ones— 16be subordinate to
such people and to everyone who works and
toils with them. 17I rejoice in the arrival of
Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because
they made up for your absence, 18 d*for they
refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give
recognition to such people.

19 e*The churches of Asia send you greetings.
Aquila and Prisca together with the church at
their house send you many greetings in the Lord.
20 f*All the brothers greet you. Greet one another
with a holy kiss.

21 g*I, Paul, write you this greeting in my own
hand. 22 h*If anyone does not love the Lord, let
him be accursed. *Marana tha.* 23 i*The grace of
the Lord Jesus be with you. 24My love to all of
you in Christ Jesus.

**16, 4: That I should go also:** presumably Paul delivered the collection on his final visit to Jerusalem; cf Rom 15, 25–32; Acts 24, 14.

**16, 5–12:** The travel plans outlined here may not have materialized precisely as Paul intended; cf 2 Cor 1, 8—2, 13; 7, 4–16.

**16, 8: In Ephesus until Pentecost:** this tells us the place from which he wrote the letter and suggests he may have composed it about Easter time (cf 5, 7–8).

**16, 19–24:** These paragraphs conform to the normal epistolary conclusion, but their language is overlaid with liturgical coloration as well. The **greetings** of the Asian churches are probably to be read, along with the letter, in the liturgy at Corinth, and the union of the church is to be expressed by **a holy kiss** (19–20). Paul adds to this his own greeting (21) and blessings (23–24).

**16, 22: Accursed:** literally, "anathema." This expression (cf 12, 3) is a formula for exclusion from the community; it may imply here a call to self-examination before celebration of the Eucharist, in preparation for the Lord's coming and judgment (cf 11, 17–34). **Marana tha:** an Aramaic expression, probably used in the early Christian liturgy. As understood here ("O Lord, come!"), it is a prayer for the early return of Christ. If the Aramaic words are divided differently (**Maran atha,** "Our Lord has come"), it becomes a credal declaration. The former interpretation is supported by what appears to be a Greek equivalent of this acclamation in Rv 22, 20: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

w Acts 19, 21; Rom 15, 26; 2 Cor 1, 15–16. x Acts 18, 21. y 15, 32; Acts 18, 19; 19, 1–10. z Acts 14, 27; 2 Cor 2, 12. a 4, 17; Acts 16, 1; 19, 22; Phil 2, 19–23. b 1, 12; 3, 4–6.22; Acts 18, 24–28. c 1, 16. d 1 Thes 5, 12–13. e Acts 18, 2.18.26; Rom 16, 3–5. f Rom 16, 16; 2 Cor 13, 12; 1 Thes 5, 26; 1 Pt 5, 14. g Gal 6, 11; Col 4, 18; 2 Thes 3, 17. h 12, 3; Rom 9, 3; Gal 1, 8–9; Rv 22, 20. i Rom 16, 20.

# THE SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

2 Corinthians
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The Second Letter to the Corinthians is the most personal of all of Paul's extant writings, and it reveals much about his character. In it he deals with one or more crises that have arisen in the Corinthian church. The confrontation with these problems caused him to reflect deeply on his relationship with the community and to speak about it frankly. One moment he is venting his feelings of frustration and uncertainty, the next he is pouring out his relief and affection. The importance of the issues at stake between them calls forth from him an enormous effort of personal persuasion, as well as doctrinal considerations that are of great value for us. Paul's ability to produce profound theological foundations for what may at first sight appear to be rather commonplace circumstances is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in Second Corinthians. The emotional tone of the letter, its lack of order, and our ignorance of some of its background do not make it easy to follow, but it amply repays the effort required of the reader.

Second Corinthians is rich and varied in content. The interpretation of Exodus in chapter 3, for instance, offers a striking example of early apologetic use of the Old Testament. Paul's discussion of the collection in chs 8–9 contains a theology of sharing of possessions, of community of goods among Christian churches, which is both balanced and sensitive. Furthermore, the closing chapters provide an illustration of early Christian invective and polemic, because the conflict with intruders forces Paul to assert his authority. But in those same chapters Paul articulates the vision and sense of values that animate his own apostolate, revealing his faith that Jesus' passion and resurrection are the pattern for all Christian life and expressing a spirituality of ministry unsurpassed in the New Testament.

The letter is remarkable for its rhetoric. Paul falls naturally into the style and argumentation of contemporary philosophic preachers, employing with ease the stock devices of the "diatribe." By a barrage of questions, by challenges both serious and ironic, by paradox heaped upon paradox, even by insults hurled at his opponents, he strives to awaken in his hearers a true sense of values and an appropriate response. All his argument centers on the destiny of Jesus, in which a paradoxical reversal of values is revealed. But Paul appeals to his own personal experience as well. In passages of great rhetorical power (4, 7-15; 6, 3-10; 11, 21-29; 12, 5-10; 13, 3-4) he enumerates the circumstances of his ministry and the tribulations he has had to endure for Jesus and the gospel, in the hope of illustrating the pattern of Jesus' existence in his own and of drawing the Corinthians into a reappraisal of the values they cherish. Similar passages in the same style in his other letters (cf especially Rom 8, 31-39; 1 Cor 1, 26-31; 4, 6-21; 9, 1-27; 13, 1-13; Phil 4, 10-19) confirm Paul's familiarity with contemporary rhetoric and demonstrate how effectively it served to express his vision of Christian life and ministry.

Second Corinthians was occasioned by events and problems that developed after Paul's first letter reached Corinth. We have no information about these circumstances except what is contained in the letter itself, which of course supposes that they are known to the readers. Consequently the reconstruction of the letter's background is an uncertain enterprise about which there is not complete agreement.

The letter deals principally with these three topics: (1) a crisis between Paul and the Corinthians, occasioned at least partially by changes in his travel plans (1, 12—2, 13), and the successful resolution of that crisis (7, 5-16); (2) further directives and encouragement in regard to the collection for the church in Jerusalem (8, 1—9, 15); (3) the definition and defense of Paul's ministry as an apostle. Paul's reflections on this matter are occasioned by visitors from

other churches who passed through Corinth, missionaries who differed from Paul in a variety of ways, both in theory and in practice. Those differences led to comparisons. Either the visitors themselves or some of the local church members appear to have sown confusion among the Corinthians with regard to Paul's authority or his style, or both. Paul deals at length with aspects of this situation in 2, 14—7, 4 and again in 10, 1—13, 10, though the manner of treatment and the thrust of the argument differ in each of these sections.

Scholars have noticed a lack of continuity in this document. For example, the long section of 2, 14—7, 4 seems abruptly spliced into the narrative of a crisis and its resolution. Identical or similar topics, moreover, seem to be treated several times during the letter (compare 2, 14—7, 4 with 10, 1—13, 10, and 8, 1-24 with 9, 1-15). Many judge, therefore, that this letter as it stands incorporates several briefer letters sent to Corinth over a certain span of time. If this is so, then Paul himself or, more likely, some other editor clearly took care to gather those letters together and impose some literary unity upon the collection, thus producing the document that has come down to us as the Second Letter to the Corinthians. Others continue to regard it as a single letter, attributing its inconsistencies to changes of perspective in Paul that may have been occasioned by the arrival of fresh news from Corinth during its composition. The letter, or at least some sections of it, appears to have been composed in Macedonia (2, 12-13; 7, 5-6; 8, 1-4; 9, 2-4). It is generally dated about the autumn of A.D. 57; if it is a compilation, of course, the various parts may have been separated by intervals of at least some months.

The principal divisions of the Second Letter to the Corinthians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-11)
II. The Crisis between Paul and the Corinthians (1, 12—7, 16)
  A. Past Relationships (1, 12—2, 13)
  B. Paul's Ministry (2, 14—7, 4)
  C. Resolution of the Crisis (7, 5–16)
III. The Collection for Jerusalem (8, 1—9, 15)
IV. Paul's Defense of His Ministry (10, 1—13, 10)
V. Conclusion (13, 11-13)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

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**Greeting** 1 a*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the
church of God that is in Corinth, with all the holy
ones throughout Achaia: 2grace to you and peace
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
**Thanksgiving** 3 b*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement,
4 cwho encourages us in our every affliction, so
that we may be able to encourage those who are
in any affliction with the encouragement with
which we ourselves are encouraged by God.
5*For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so
through Christ does our encouragement also
overflow. 6If we are afflicted, it is for your
encouragement and salvation; if we are encour-

1, 1–11: The opening follows the usual Pauline form, except that the thanksgiving takes the form of a doxology or glorification of God (3). This introduces a meditation on the experience of suffering and encouragement shared by Paul and the Corinthians (4–7), drawn, at least in part, from Paul's reflections on a recent affliction (8–10). The section ends with a modified and delayed allusion to thanksgiving (11).

1, 3: **God of all encouragement:** Paul expands a standard Jewish blessing so as to state the theme of the paragraph. The theme of "encouragement" or "consolation" (**paraklēsis**) occurs ten times in this opening, against a background formed by multiple references to "affliction" and "suffering."

1, 5: **Through Christ:** the Father of compassion is the Father of our Lord Jesus (3); Paul's sufferings and encouragement (or "consolation") are experienced in union with Christ. Cf Lk 2, 25: the "consolation of Israel" is Jesus himself.

a Eph 1, 1; Col 1, 1 / 1, 19; Acts 16 / Rom 1, 7; 1 Cor 1, 2. b 1 Cor 15, 24; Eph 1, 3; 1 Pt 1, 3 / Rom 15, 5. c 7,6–7.13; 1 Thes 3, 6–8; 2 Thes 2, 16.

aged, it is for your encouragement, which en-
ables you to endure the same sufferings that we
suffer. 7 *Our hope for you is firm, for we know
that as you share in the sufferings, you also share
in the encouragement.

8 d *We do not want you to be unaware,
brothers, of the affliction that came to us in the
province of Asia; we were utterly weighed down
beyond our strength, so that we despaired even
of life. 9 e *Indeed, we had accepted within
ourselves the sentence of death, that we might
trust not in ourselves but in God who raises the
dead. 10 f He rescued us from such great danger
of death, and he will continue to rescue us; in
him we have put our hope [that] he will also
rescue us again, 11 g as you help us with prayer,
so that thanks may be given by many on our
behalf for the gift granted us through the prayers
of many.

## II: The Crisis between Paul and the Corinthians

### A. Past Relationships

**Paul's Sincerity and Constancy** 12 *For our
boast is this, the testimony of our conscience
that we have conducted ourselves in the world,
and especially toward you, with the simplicity
and sincerity of God, [and] not by human
wisdom but by the grace of God. 13 For we
write you nothing but what you can read and
understand, and I hope that you will under-
stand completely, 14 h as you have come to un-
derstand us partially, that we are your boast as
you also are ours, on the day of [our] Lord
Jesus.

15 *With this confidence I formerly intended
to come to you so that you might receive a
double favor, 16 i namely, to go by way of you to
Macedonia, and then to come to you again on
my return from Macedonia, and have you send
me on my way to Judea. 17 j *So when I intended
this, did I act lightly? Or do I make my plans
according to human considerations, so that with
me it is "yes, yes" and "no, no"? 18 *As God is
faithful, our word to you is not "yes" and "no."
19 k For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was
proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy
and me, was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has
been in him. 20 l For however many are the
promises of God, their Yes is in him; therefore,
the Amen from us also goes through him to God

**1, 7: You also share in the encouragement:** the eschatological reversal of affliction and encouragement that Christians expect (cf Mt 5, 4; Lk 6, 24) permits some present experience of reversal in the Corinthians' case, as in Paul's.

**1, 8: Asia:** a Roman province in western Asia Minor, the capital of which was Ephesus.

**1, 9–10: The sentence of death:** it is unclear whether Paul is alluding to a physical illness or to an external threat to life. The result of the situation was to produce an attitude of faith in God alone. **God who raises the dead:** rescue is the constant pattern of God's activity; his final act of encouragement is the resurrection.

**1, 12—2, 13:** The autobiographical remarks about the crisis in Asia Minor lead into consideration of a crisis that has arisen between Paul and the Corinthians. Paul will return to this question, after a long digression, in 7, 5–16. Both of these sections deal with travel plans Paul had made, changes in the plans, alternative measures adopted, a breach that opened between him and the community, and finally a reconciliation between them.

**1, 12–14:** Since Paul's own conduct will be under discussion here, he prefaces the section with a statement about his habitual behavior and attitude toward the community. He protests his openness, single-mindedness, and conformity to God's grace; he hopes that his relationship with them will be marked by mutual understanding and pride, which will constantly increase until it reaches its climax at the judgment. Two references to boasting frame this paragraph (12.14), the first appearances of a theme that will be important in the letter, especially in chs 10–13; the term is used in a positive sense here (cf the note on 1 Cor 1, 29–31).

**1, 15: I formerly intended to come:** this plan reads like a revision of the one mentioned in 1 Cor 16, 5. Not until 1, 23—2, 1 will Paul tell us something his original readers already knew, that he has canceled one or the other of these projected visits.

**1, 17: Did I act lightly?:** the subsequent change of plans casts suspicion on the original intention, creating the impression that Paul is vacillating and inconsistent or that **human considerations** keep dictating shifts in his goals and projects (cf the counterclaim of 12). **"Yes, yes" and "no, no":** stating something and denying it in the same or the next breath; being of two minds at once, or from one moment to the next.

**1, 18–22: As God is faithful:** unable to deny the change in plans, Paul nonetheless asserts the firmness of the original plan and claims a profound constancy in his life and work. He grounds his defense in God himself, who is firm and reliable; this quality can also be predicated in various ways of those who are associated with him. Christ, Paul, and the Corinthians all participate in analogous ways in the constancy of God. A number of the terms here, which appear related only conceptually in Greek or English, would be variations of the same root, **'mn,** in a Semitic language, and thus naturally associated in a Semitic mind, such as Paul's. These include the words **yes** (17–20), **faithful** (18), **Amen** (20), **gives us security** (21), **faith, stand firm** (24).

d Acts 20, 18–19; 1 Cor 15, 32. e 4, 7–11; Rom 4, 17. f 2 Tm 4, 18. g 4, 15; 9, 12. h Phil 2, 16; 1 Thes 2, 19–20. i 1 Cor 16, 5–9; Acts 19, 21. j Mt 5, 37; Jas 5, 12. k Acts 16, 1–3; 1 Thes 1, 1; 2 Thes 1, 1. l 1 Cor 14, 16; Rv 3, 14.

for glory. 21 m*But the one who gives us security
with you in Christ and who anointed us is God;
22 nhe has also put his seal upon us and given the
Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

**Paul's Change of Plan** 23 o*But I call upon God
as witness, on my life, that it is to spare you that I
have not yet gone to Corinth. 24Not that we lord it
over your faith; rather, we work together for your
joy, for you stand firm in the faith.

## CHAPTER 2

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1For I decided not to come to you again in
painful circumstances. 2For if I inflict pain upon
you, then who is there to cheer me except the
one pained by me? 3*And I wrote as I did so that
when I came I might not be pained by those in
whom I should have rejoiced, confident about all
of you that my joy is that of all of you. 4For out of
much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to
you with many tears, not that you might be
pained but that you might know the abundant
love I have for you.

**The Offender** 5*If anyone has caused pain, he
has caused it not to me, but in some measure
(not to exaggerate) to all of you. 6This punish-
ment by the majority is enough for such a
person, 7 pso that on the contrary you should
forgive and encourage him instead, or else the
person may be overwhelmed by excessive pain.
8Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love for
him. 9 qFor this is why I wrote, to know your
proven character, whether you were obedient in
everything. 10Whomever you forgive anything,
so do I. For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have
forgiven anything, has been for you in the
presence of Christ, 11 rso that we might not be
taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not
unaware of his purposes.

**Paul's Anxiety** 12 s*When I went to Troas for
the gospel of Christ, although a door was opened
for me in the Lord, 13 t*I had no relief in my
spirit because I did not find my brother Titus. So
I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

## B. Paul's Ministry

**Ministers of a New Covenant** 14*But thanks
be to God, who always leads us in triumph in

**1, 21–22:** The commercial terms **gives us security, seal, first installment** are here used analogously to refer to the process of initiation into the Christian life, perhaps specifically to baptism. The passage is clearly trinitarian. The Spirit is the **first installment** or "down payment" of the full messianic benefits that God guarantees to Christians. Cf Eph 1, 13–14.

**1, 23–24: I have not yet gone to Corinth:** some suppose that Paul received word of some affair in Corinth, which he decided to regulate by letter even before the first of his projected visits (cf 16). Others conjecture that he did pay the first visit, was offended there (cf 2, 5), returned to Ephesus, and sent a letter (2, 3–9) in place of the second visit. The expressions **to spare you** (23) and **work together for your joy** (24) introduce the major themes of the next two paragraphs, which are remarkable for insistent repetition of key words and ideas. These form two clusters of terms in the English translation: (1) cheer, rejoice, encourage, joy; (2) pain, affliction, anguish. These clusters reappear when Paul resumes treatment of this subject in 7, 5–16.

**2, 3–4: I wrote as I did:** we learn for the first time about the sending of a letter in place of the proposed visit. Paul mentions the letter in passing, but emphasizes his motivation in sending it: to avoid being saddened by them (cf 1), and to help them realize the depth of his love. Another motive will be added in 7, 12: to bring to light their own concern for him. **With many tears:** it has been suggested that we may have all or part of this "tearful letter" somewhere in the Corinthian correspondence, either in 1 Cor 5 (the case of the incestuous man), or in 1 Cor as a whole, or in 2 Cor 10—13. None of these hypotheses is entirely convincing. See the note on 13, 1.

**2, 5–11:** The nature of the **pain** (5) is unclear, though some believe an individual at Corinth rejected Paul's authority, thereby scandalizing many in the community. In any case, action has been taken, and Paul judges the measures adequate to right the situation (6). The follow-up directives he now gives are entirely positive: forgive, encourage, love. **Overwhelmed** (7): a vivid metaphor (literally "swallowed") that Paul employs positively at 5, 4 and in 1 Cor 15, 54 (7). It is often used to describe satanic activity (cf 1 Pt 5, 8); note the reference to Satan here in v 11.

**2, 12–13: I had no relief:** Paul does not explain the reason for his anxiety until he resumes the thread of his narrative at 7, 5: he was waiting to hear how the Corinthians would respond to his letter. Since 7, 5–16 describes their response in entirely positive terms, we never learn in detail why he found it necessary to defend and justify his change of plans, as in 1, 15–24. Was this portion of the letter written before the arrival of Titus with his good news (7, 6–7)?

**2, 13: Macedonia:** a Roman province in northern Greece.

**2, 14—7, 4:** This section constitutes a digression within the narrative of the crisis and its resolution (1, 12—2, 13 and 7, 5–16). The main component (2, 14—6, 10) treats the nature of Paul's ministry and his qualifications for it; this material bears some similarity to the defense of his ministry in chs 10–13, but it may well come from a period close to the crisis. This is followed by a supplementary block of material quite different in character and tone (6, 14—7, 1). These materials may have been brought together into their present position during final editing of the letter; appeals to the Corinthians link them to one another (6, 11–13) and lead back to the interrupted narrative (7, 2–4).

**2, 14—6, 10:** The question of Paul's adequacy (16; cf 3, 5) and his credentials (3, 1–2) has been raised. Paul responds by an extended treatment of the nature of his ministry. It is a ministry of glory (3, 7—4, 6), of life (4, 7—5, 10), of reconciliation (5, 11—6, 10).

**2, 14–16a:** The initial statement plunges us abruptly into an-

m 1 Jn 2, 20.27. n Eph 1, 13–14; 4, 30 / 5, 5; Rom 5, 5; 8, 16.23. o 13, 2. p Col 3, 13. q 7, 15. r Eph 4, 27. s Acts 16, 8. t 7, 6; 1 Tm 1, 3.

Christ and manifests through us the odor of the
knowledge of him in every place. [15] [u]For we are
the aroma of Christ for God among those who
are being saved and among those who are
perishing, [16]*to the latter an odor of death that
leads to death, to the former an odor of life that
leads to life. Who is qualified for this? [17] [v]For we
are not like the many who trade on the word of
God; but as out of sincerity, indeed as from God
and in the presence of God, we speak in Christ.

## CHAPTER 3

[1] [w]*Are we beginning to commend ourselves
again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of
recommendation to you or from you? [2]*You are
our letter, written on our hearts, known and
read by all, [3] [x]*shown to be a letter of Christ
administered by us, written not in ink but by the
Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone
but on tablets that are hearts of flesh.

[4]*Such confidence we have through Christ
toward God. [5] [y]Not that of ourselves we are
qualified to take credit for anything as coming
from us; rather, our qualification comes from
God, [6] [z]*who has indeed qualified us as minis-
ters of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit;
for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives
life.

**Contrast with the Old Covenant** [7] [a]*Now if
the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone,
was so glorious that the Israelites could not look
intently at the face of Moses because of its glory

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other train of thought. Paul describes his personal existence and his function as a preacher in two powerful images (14) that constitute a prelude to the development to follow.

**2, 14a: Leads us in triumph in Christ:** this metaphor of a festive parade in honor of a conquering military hero can suggest either a positive sharing in Christ's triumph or an experience of defeat, being led in captivity and submission (cf 4, 8–11; 1 Cor 4, 9). Paul is probably aware of the ambiguity, as he is in the case of the next metaphor.

**2, 14b-16a: The odor of the knowledge of him:** incense was commonly used in triumphal processions. The metaphor suggests the gradual diffusion of the knowledge of God through the apostolic preaching. **The aroma of Christ:** the image shifts from the fragrance Paul diffuses to the aroma that he is. Paul is probably thinking of the "sweet odor" of the sacrifices in the Old Testament (e.g., Gn 8, 21; Ex 29, 18) and perhaps of the metaphor of wisdom as a sweet odor (Sir 24, 15). **Death . . . life:** the aroma of Christ that comes to them through Paul is perceived differently by various classes of people. To some his preaching and his life (cf 1 Cor 1, 17—2, 6) are perceived as **death,** and the effect is death for them; others perceive him, despite appearances, as **life,** and the effect is life for them. This fragrance thus produces a separation and a judgment (cf the function of the "light" in John's gospel).

**2, 16b-17: Qualified:** Paul may be echoing either the self-satisfied claims of other preachers or their charges about Paul's deficiencies. No one is really qualified, but the apostle contrasts himself with those who dilute or falsify the preaching for personal advantage and insists on his totally good conscience: his ministry is from God, and he has exercised it with fidelity and integrity (cf 3, 5–6).

**3, 1:** Paul seems to allude to certain preachers who pride themselves on their written credentials. Presumably they reproach him for not possessing similar credentials and compel him to spell out his own qualifications (4, 2; 5, 12; 6, 4). The Corinthians themselves should have performed this function for Paul (5, 12; cf 12, 11). Since he is forced to find something that can recommend him, he points to them: their very existence constitutes his **letter** of recommendation (1–2). Others who engage in self-commendation will also be mentioned in 10, 12–18.

**3, 2–3:** Mention of "letters of recommendation" generates a series of metaphors in which Paul plays on the word "letter": (1) the community is Paul's letter of recommendation (2a); (2) they are a letter engraved on his affections for all to see and read (2b); (3) they are a letter from Christ that Paul merely delivers (3a); (4) they are a letter written by the Spirit on the tablets of human hearts (3b). One image dissolves into another.

**3, 3b:** This verse contrasts Paul's letter with those **written . . . in ink** (like the credentials of other preachers) and those **written . . . on tablets of stone** (like the law of Moses). These contrasts suggest that the other preachers may have claimed special relationship with Moses. If they were Judaizers zealous for the Mosaic law, that would explain the detailed contrast between the old and the new covenants (6; 4, 7—6, 10). If they were charismatics who claimed Moses as their model, that would explain the extended treatment of Moses himself and his glory (3, 7—4, 6). **Hearts of flesh:** cf Ezekiel's contrast between the heart of flesh that the Spirit gives and the heart of stone that it replaces (Ez 36, 26); the context is covenant renewal and purification that makes observance of the law possible.

**3, 4–6:** These verses resume 2, 1—3, 3. Paul's confidence (4) is grounded in his sense of God-given mission (2, 17), the specifics of which are described in vv 1–3. Verses 5–6 return to the question of his qualifications (2, 16), attributing them entirely to God. Verse 6 further spells out the situation described in v 3b and "names" it: Paul is living within **a new covenant,** characterized by the Spirit, which **gives life.** The usage of a **new covenant** is derived from Jer 31, 31–33, a passage that also speaks of writing on the heart; cf 2.

**3, 6b:** This verse serves as a topic sentence for 3, 7—6, 10. For the contrast between **letter** and **spirit,** cf Rom 2, 29; 7, 5–6.

**3, 7—4, 6:** Paul now develops the contrast enunciated in 3, 6b in terms of the relative glory of the two covenants, insisting on the greater glory of the new. His polemic seems directed against individuals who appeal to the glorious Moses and fail to perceive any comparable glory either in Paul's life as an apostle or in the gospel he preaches. He asserts in response that Christians have a glory of their own that far surpasses that of Moses.

**3, 7: The ministry of death:** from his very first words, Paul describes the Mosaic covenant and ministry from the viewpoint of their limitations. They lead to **death** rather than life (6–7; cf 4, 7—5, 10), to **condemnation** rather than reconciliation (9; cf 5, 11—6, 10). **Was so glorious:** the basic text to which Paul alludes is Ex 34, 29–35, to which his opponents have undoubtedly laid claim. **Going to fade:** Paul concedes the glory of Moses' covenant and ministry, but grants them only temporary significance.

u 4, 3; 1 Cor 1, 18. v 4, 2; 1 Cor 5, 8. w Acts 18, 27; Rom 16, 1; 1 Cor 16, 3. x Ex 24, 12; 31, 18; 32, 15–19 / Jer 31, 33; Ez 11, 19; 36, 26–27. y Jn 3, 27. z Eph 3, 7 / Jer 31, 31–34. a Ex 34, 29–35.

that was going to fade, [8]*how much more will
the ministry of the Spirit be glorious? [9]For if the
ministry of condemnation was glorious, the
ministry of righteousness will abound much
more in glory. [10]Indeed, what was endowed
with glory has come to have no glory in this
respect because of the glory that surpasses it.
[11]For if what was going to fade was glorious,
how much more will what endures be glorious.

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[12]*Therefore, since we have such hope, we
act very boldly [13]*and not like Moses, who put a
veil over his face so that the Israelites could not
look intently at the cessation of what was fading.
[14]*Rather, their thoughts were rendered dull, for
to this present day the same veil remains unlifted
when they read the old covenant, because
through Christ it is taken away. [15] [b]To this day, in
fact, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over
their hearts, [16] [c]but whenever a person turns to
the Lord the veil is removed. [17]*Now the Lord is
the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom. [18] [d]*All of us, gazing with
unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being
transformed into the same image from glory to
glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.

## CHAPTER 4

**Integrity in the Ministry** [1]*Therefore, since
we have this ministry through the mercy shown
us, we are not discouraged. [2] [e]Rather, we have
renounced shameful, hidden things; not acting
deceitfully or falsifying the word of God, but by
the open declaration of the truth we commend
ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight
of God. [3] [f]*And even though our gospel is
veiled, it is veiled for those who are perishing,
[4] [g]in whose case the god of this age has blinded
the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may
not see the light of the gospel of the glory of
Christ, who is the image of God. [5]*For we do
not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord,
and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus.
[6] [h]*For God who said, "Let light shine out of

**3, 8–11: How much more:** the argument "from the less to the greater" is repeated three times (8.9.11). Verse 10 expresses another point of view: the difference in glory is so great that only the new covenant and ministry can properly be called "glorious" at all.

**3, 12: Such hope:** the glory is not yet an object of experience, but that does not lessen Paul's confidence. **Boldly:** the term **parrēsia** expresses outspoken declaration of Christian conviction (cf 4, 1–2). Paul has nothing to hide and no reason for timidity.

**3, 13–14a: Not like Moses:** in Exodus Moses veiled his face to protect the Israelites from God's reflected glory. Without impugning Moses' sincerity, Paul attributes another effect to the veil. Since it lies between God's glory and the Israelites, it explains how they could fail to notice the glory disappearing. **Their thoughts were rendered dull:** the problem lay with their understanding. This will be expressed in vv 14b-16 by a shift in the place of the veil: it is no longer over Moses' face but over their perception.

**3, 14b-16:** The parallelism in these verses makes it necessary to interpret corresponding parts in relation to one another. **To this present day:** this signals the shift of Paul's attention to his contemporaries; his argument is typological, as in 1 Cor 10. The Israelites of Moses' time typify the Jews of Paul's time, and perhaps also Christians of Jewish origin or mentality who may not recognize the temporary character of Moses' glory. **When they read the old covenant:** the lasting dullness prevents proper appraisal of Moses' person and covenant. When his writings are read in the synagogue, a veil still impedes their understanding. **Through Christ:** i.e., in the new covenant. **Whenever a person turns to the Lord:** Moses in Exodus appeared before God without the veil and gazed on his face unprotected. Paul applies that passage to converts to Christianity: when they turn to the Lord fully and authentically, the impediment to their understanding is removed.

**3, 17: The Lord is the Spirit:** the "Lord" to whom the Christian turns (16) is the Spirit of whom Paul has been speaking, the life-giving Spirit of the living God (6.8), the inaugurator of the new covenant and ministry, who is also the Spirit of Christ. **The Spirit of the Lord:** the Lord here is the living God (3), but there may also be an allusion to Christ as Lord (14.16). **Freedom:** i.e., from the ministry of death (7) and the covenant that condemned (9).

**3, 18:** Another application of the veil image. **All of us . . . with unveiled face:** Christians (Israelites from whom the veil has been removed) are like Moses, standing in God's presence, beholding and reflecting his glory. **Gazing:** the verb may also be translated "contemplating as in a mirror"; 4, 6 would suggest that the mirror is Christ himself. **Are being transformed:** elsewhere Paul speaks of transformation, conformity to Jesus, God's image, as a reality of the end time, and even v 12 speaks of the glory as an object of hope. But the life-giving Spirit, the distinctive gift of the new covenant, is already present in the community (cf 1, 22, the "first installment"), and the process of transformation has already begun. **Into the same image:** into the image of God, which is Christ (4, 4).

**4, 1–2:** A ministry of this sort generates confidence and forthrightness; cf 1, 12–14; 2, 17.

**4, 3–4: Though our gospel is veiled:** the final application of the image. Paul has been reproached either for obscurity in his preaching or for his manner of presenting the gospel. But he confidently asserts that there is no veil over his gospel. If some fail to perceive its light, that is because of unbelief. The veil lies over their eyes (3, 14), a blindness induced by Satan, and a sign that they are headed for destruction (cf 2, 15).

**4, 5: We do not preach ourselves:** the light seen in his gospel is the glory of Christ (4). Far from preaching himself, the preacher should be a transparent medium through whom Jesus is perceived (cf 10–11). **Your slaves:** Paul draws attention away from individuals as such and toward their role in relation to God, Christ, and the community; cf 1 Cor 3, 5; 4, 1.

**4, 6:** Autobiographical allusion to the episode at Damascus

b Rom 11, 7–10. c Ex 34, 34. d Rom 8, 29–30; 12, 2; Gal 4, 19; Phil 3, 10.20–21 / 4, 4–6;1 Cor 15, 49; Col 1, 15; 3, 9–11; 1 Jn 3, 2. e 2, 17; 1 Thes 2, 4–7. f 2, 15–16; 2 Thes 2, 10. g Jn 12, 31–36 / 1 Tm 1, 11. h Gn 1, 3; Is 9, 1; Acts 26, 13–23; Gal 1, 15–16 / Jn 8, 12; Heb 1, 3.

darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to
light the knowledge of the glory of God on the
face of [Jesus] Christ.

**The Paradox of the Ministry** [7]*But we hold
this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpass-
ing power may be of God and not from us.
[8] [i]*We are afflicted in every way, but not con-
strained; perplexed, but not driven to despair;
[9]persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down,
but not destroyed; [10] [j]*always carrying about in
the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of
Jesus may also be manifested in our body. [11] [k]For
we who live are constantly being given up to
death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of
Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

[12]*So death is at work in us, but life in you.
[13] [l]*Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith,
according to what is written, "I believed, there-
fore I spoke," we too believe and therefore
speak, [14] [m]knowing that the one who raised the
Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place
us with you in his presence. [15] [n]Everything
indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in
abundance on more and more people may cause
the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of
God.

[16] [o]*Therefore, we are not discouraged;
rather, although our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.
[17] [p]For this momentary light affliction is produc-
ing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all
comparison, [18] [q]as we look not to what is seen
but to what is unseen; for what is seen is
transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

## CHAPTER 5

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**Our Future Destiny** [1] [r]*For we know that if
our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be de-
stroyed, we have a building from God, a dwell-
ing not made with hands, eternal in heaven.
[2] [s]*For in this tent we groan, longing to be

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clarifies the origin and nature of Paul's service; cf Acts 9, 1–19; 22, 3–16; 26, 2–18. **"Let light shine out of darkness":** Paul seems to be thinking of Gn 1, 3 and presenting his apostolic ministry as a new creation. There may also be an allusion to Is 9, 1, suggesting his prophetic calling as servant of the Lord and light to the nations; cf Is 42, 6.16; 49, 6; 60, 1–2, and the use of light imagery in Acts 26, 13–23. **To bring to light the knowledge:** Paul's role in the process of revelation, expressed at the beginning under the image of the odor and aroma (2, 14–15), is restated now, at the end of this first moment of the development, in the imagery of light and glory (3–6).

**4, 7—5, 10:** Paul now confronts the difficulty that his present existence does not appear glorious at all; it is marked instead by suffering and death. He deals with this by developing the topic already announced in 3, 3.6, asserting his faith in the presence and ultimate triumph of life, in his own and every Christian existence, despite the experience of death.

**4, 7: This treasure:** the glory that he preaches and into which they are being transformed. **In earthen vessels:** the instruments God uses are human and fragile; some imagine small terracotta lamps in which light is carried.

**4, 8–9:** A catalogue of his apostolic trials and afflictions. Yet in these the negative never completely prevails; there is always some experience of rescue, of salvation.

**4, 10–11:** Both the negative and the positive sides of the experience are grounded christologically. The logic is similar to that of 1, 3–11. His sufferings are connected with Christ's, and his deliverance is a sign that he is to share in Jesus' resurrection.

**4, 12–15:** His experience does not terminate in himself, but in others (12.15; cf 1, 4–5). Ultimately, everything is ordered even beyond the community, toward God (15; cf 1, 11).

**4, 13–14:** Like the Psalmist, Paul clearly proclaims his faith, affirming life within himself despite death (10–11) and the life-giving effect of his experience upon the church (12.14–15). **And place us with you in his presence:** Paul imagines God presenting him and them to Jesus at the parousia and the judgment; cf 11, 2; Rom 14, 10.

**4, 16–18:** In a series of contrasts Paul explains the extent of his faith in life. Life is not only already present and revealing itself (8–11.16) but will outlast his experience of affliction and dying: it is eternal (17–18).

**4, 16: Not discouraged:** i.e., despite the experience of death. Paul is still speaking of himself personally, but he assumes his faith and attitude will be shared by all Christians. **Our outer self:** the individual subject of ordinary perception and observation, in contrast to the interior and hidden self, which undergoes renewal. **Is being renewed day by day:** this suggests a process that has already begun; cf 3, 18. The renewal already taking place even in Paul's dying is a share in the life of Jesus, but this is recognized only by faith (13.18; 5, 7).

**5, 1: Our earthly dwelling:** the same contrast is restated in the imagery of a dwelling. The language recalls Jesus' saying about the destruction of the temple and the construction of another building **not made with hands** (Mk 14, 58), a prediction later applied to Jesus' own body (Jn 2, 20).

**5, 2–5:** Verses 2–3 and 4 are largely parallel in structure. **We groan, longing:** see the note on 5, 5. **Clothed with our heavenly habitation:** Paul mixes his metaphors, adding the image of the garment to that of the building. **Further clothed:** the verb means strictly "to put one garment on over another." Paul may desire to put the resurrection body on over his mortal body, without dying; vv 2 and 4 permit this meaning but do not impose it. Or perhaps he imagines the resurrection body as a garment put on over the Christ-garment first received in baptism (Gal 3, 27) and preserved by moral behavior (Rom 13, 12–14; Col 3, 12; cf Mt 22, 11–13). Some support for this interpretation may be found in the context; cf the references to baptism (5), to judgment according to works (10), and to present renewal (4, 16), an idea elsewhere combined with the image of "putting on" a new nature (Eph 4, 22–24; Col 3, 1–5.9–10).

i 6, 4–10; 1 Cor 4, 9–13. j Col 1, 24. k Rom 8, 36; 1 Cor 15, 31. l Ps 116, 10. m Rom 4, 24–25; 8, 11; 1 Cor 6, 14; 1 Thes 4, 14. n 1, 11. o 4, 1.1. p Mt 5, 11–12; Rom 8, 18. q Rom 8, 24–25; Heb 11, 1. r Is 38, 12 / Col 3, 1–4 / Mk 14, 58; Col 2, 11; Heb 9, 11.24. s Rom 8, 23 / 1 Cor 15, 51–54.

further clothed with our heavenly habitation [3]*if
indeed, when we have taken it off, we shall not
be found naked. [4] [t]*For while we are in this tent
we groan and are weighed down, because we do
not wish to be unclothed but to be further
clothed, so that what is mortal may be swal-
lowed up by life. [5] [u]*Now the one who has
prepared us for this very thing is God, who has
given us the Spirit as a first installment.

[6]*So we are always courageous, although we
know that while we are at home in the body we
are away from the Lord, [7]for we walk by faith,
not by sight. [8] [v]Yet we are courageous, and we
would rather leave the body and go home to the
Lord. [9]Therefore, we aspire to please him,
whether we are at home or away. [10] [w]*For we
must all appear before the judgment seat of
Christ, so that each one may receive recom-
pense, according to what he did in the body,
whether good or evil.

**The Ministry of Reconciliation** [11] [x]*There-
fore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try
to persuade others; but we are clearly apparent
to God, and I hope we are also apparent to your
consciousness. [12] [y]We are not commending our-
selves to you again but giving you an opportunity
to boast of us, so that you may have something
to say to those who boast of external appearance
rather than of the heart. [13]*For if we are out of
our minds, it is for God; if we are rational, it is
for you. [14] [z]*For the love of Christ impels us,
once we have come to the conviction that one
died for all; therefore, all have died. [15] [a]He
indeed died for all, so that those who live might
no longer live for themselves but for him who for
their sake died and was raised.

[16]*Consequently, from now on we regard no
one according to the flesh; even if we once
knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we
know him so no longer. [17] [b]So whoever is in
Christ is a new creation: the old things have
passed away; behold, new things have come.
[18]*And all this is from God, who has reconciled
us to himself through Christ and given us the

**5, 3: When we have taken it off:** the majority of witnesses read "when we have put it on," i.e., when we have been clothed (in the resurrection body), then we shall not be without a body (naked). This seems mere tautology, though some understand it to mean: whether we are "found" (by God at the judgment) clothed or naked depends upon whether we have preserved or lost our original investiture in Christ (cf the previous note). In this case to "put it on" does not refer to the resurrection body, but to keeping intact the Christ-garment of baptism. The translation follows the western reading (Codex Bezae, Tertullian), the sense of which is clear: to "take it off" is to shed our mortal body in death, after which we shall be clothed in the resurrection body and hence not "naked" (cf 1 Cor 15, 51–53).

**5, 4: We do not wish to be unclothed:** a clear allusion to physical death (4, 16; 5, 1). Unlike the Greeks, who found dissolution of the body desirable (cf Socrates), Paul has a Jewish horror of it. He seems to be thinking of the "intermediate period," an interval between death and resurrection. **Swallowed up by life:** cf 1 Cor 15, 54.

**5, 5:** God has created us for resurrected bodily life and already prepares us for it by the gift of the Spirit in baptism. **The Spirit as a first installment:** the striking parallel to 5, 1–5 in Rom 8, 17–30 describes Christians who have received the "firstfruits" (cf "first installment" here) of the Spirit as "groaning" (cf 2.4 here) for the resurrection, the complete redemption of their bodies. In place of clothing and building, Rom 8 uses other images for the resurrection: adoption and conformity to the image of the Son.

**5, 6–9:** Tension between present and future is expressed by another spatial image, the metaphor of the country and its citizens. At present we are like citizens in exile or far away from home. The Lord is the distant homeland, believed in but unseen (7).

**5, 10: We must all appear:** the verb is ambiguous: we are scheduled to "appear" for judgment, at which we will be "revealed" as we are (cf 11; 2, 14; 4, 10–11).

**5, 11–15:** This paragraph is transitional. Paul sums up much that has gone before. Still playing on the term "appearance," he reasserts his transparency before God and the Corinthians, in contrast to the self-commendation, boasting, and preoccupation with externals that characterize some others (cf 1, 12–14; 2, 14; 3, 1; 3, 7—4, 6). Verse 14 recalls 3, 7—4, 6, and sums up 4, 7—5, 10.

**5, 13: Out of our minds:** this verse confirms that a concern for ecstasy and charismatic experience may lie behind the discussion about "glory" in 3, 7—4, 6. Paul also enjoys such experiences but, unlike others, does not make a public display of them or consider them ends in themselves. **Rational:** the Greek virtue **sōphrosynē**, to which Paul alludes, implies reasonableness, moderation, good judgment, self-control.

**5, 14–15:** These verses echo 4, 14 and resume the treatment of "life despite death" from 4, 7—5, 10.

**5, 16–17: Consequently:** the death of Christ described in vv 14–15 produces a whole new order (17) and a new mode of perception (16). **According to the flesh:** the natural mode of perception, characterized as "fleshly," is replaced by a mode of perception proper to the Spirit. Elsewhere Paul contrasts what Christ looks like according to the old criteria (weakness, powerlessness, folly, death) and according to the new (wisdom, power, life); cf vv 15.21; 1 Cor 1, 17—3, 3. Similarly, he describes the paradoxical nature of Christian existence, e.g., in 4, 10–11.14. **A new creation:** rabbis used this expression to describe the effect of the entrance of a proselyte or convert into Judaism or of the remission of sins on the Day of Atonement. The new order created **in Christ** is the new covenant (3, 6).

**5, 18–21:** Paul attempts to explain the meaning of God's action by a variety of different categories; his attention keeps moving rapidly back and forth from God's act to his own ministry as well. **Who has reconciled us to himself:** i.e., he has brought all into oneness. **Not counting their trespasses:** the reconciliation is described as an act of justification (cf "righteousness," 21); this

t Is 25, 8; 1 Cor 15, 54. u 1, 22. v Phil 1, 21–23. w Mt 16, 27; 25, 31–46; Rom 2, 16; 14, 10–11. x 1, 12–14. y 3, 1 / 1, 14; Phil 1, 26. z Rom 6, 1–6. a Rom 4, 25; 6, 4–11; 14, 9; Col 3, 3–4. b Gal 6, 15; Eph 2, 15 / Is 43, 18–21; Rv 21, 5.

ministry of reconciliation, 19 [c]namely, God was
reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not
counting their trespasses against them and en-
trusting to us the message of reconciliation.
20 [d]So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God
were appealing through us. We implore you on
behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 [e]*For
our sake he made him to be sin who did not
know sin, so that we might become the righ-
teousness of God in him.

## CHAPTER 6

**The Experience of the Ministry** 1 [f]*Working
together, then, we appeal to you not to receive
the grace of God in vain. 2 [g]*For he says:

"In an acceptable time I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you."

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold,
now is the day of salvation. 3 [h]*We cause no one
to stumble in anything, in order that no fault
may be found with our ministry; 4 [i]*on the
contrary, in everything we commend ourselves
as ministers of God, through much endurance,
in afflictions, hardships, constraints, 5 [j]beatings,
imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts; 6 [k]*by
purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy
spirit, in unfeigned love, 7 [l]in truthful speech, in
the power of God; with weapons of righteous-
ness at the right and at the left; 8 *through glory
and dishonor, insult and praise. We are treated
as deceivers and yet are truthful; 9 [m]as unrecog-
nized and yet acknowledged; as dying and
behold we live; as chastised and yet not put to
death; 10 [n]as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as
poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and
yet possessing all things.

Ch 2–7
See RG
498–500

11 *We have spoken frankly to you, Corinthi-
ans; our heart is open wide. 12 [o]You are not
constrained by us; you are constrained by your
own affections. 13 [p]As recompense in kind (I
speak as to my children), be open yourselves.

**Call to Holiness** 14 *Do not be yoked with
those who are different, with unbelievers. For

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contrasts with the covenant that condemned (3, 8). **The ministry of reconciliation:** Paul's role in the wider picture is described: entrusted with the message of reconciliation (19), he is Christ's ambassador, through whom God appeals (20a). In v 20b Paul acts in the capacity just described.

**5, 21:** This is a statement of God's purpose, expressed paradoxically in terms of sharing and exchange of attributes. As Christ became our righteousness (1 Cor 1, 30), we become God's righteousness (cf vv 14–15).

**6, 1–10:** This paragraph is a single long sentence in the Greek, interrupted by the parenthesis of v 2. The one main verb is "we appeal." In this paragraph Paul both exercises his ministry of reconciliation (cf 5, 20) and describes how his ministry is exercised: the "message of reconciliation" (5, 19) is lived existentially in his apostolic experience.

**6, 1: Not to receive . . . in vain:** i.e., conform to the gift of justification and new creation. The context indicates how this can be done concretely: become God's righteousness (5, 21), not live for oneself (5, 15), be reconciled with Paul (6, 11–13; 7, 2–3).

**6, 2: In an acceptable time:** Paul cites the Septuagint text of Is 49, 8; the Hebrew reads "in a time of favor"; it is parallel to "on the day of salvation." **Now:** God is bestowing favor and salvation at this very moment, as Paul is addressing his letter to them.

**6, 3: Cause no one to stumble:** the language echoes that of 1 Cor 8—10, as does the expression "no longer live for themselves" in 5, 15. **That no fault may be found:** i.e., at the eschatological judgment (cf 1 Cor 4, 2–5).

**6, 4a:** This is the central assertion, the topic statement for the catalogue that follows. **We commend ourselves:** Paul's self-commendation is ironical (with an eye on the charges mentioned in 3, 1–3) and paradoxical (pointing mostly to experiences that would not normally be considered points of pride but are perceived as such by faith). Cf also the self-commendation in 11, 23–29. **As ministers of God:** the same Greek word, **diakonos,** means "minister" and "servant"; cf 11, 23, the central assertion in a similar context, and 1 Cor 3, 5.

**6, 4b-5: Through much endurance:** this phrase functions as a subtitle; it is followed by an enumeration of nine specific types of trials endured.

**6, 6–7a:** A list of virtuous qualities in two groups of four, the second fuller than the first.

**6, 8b-10:** A series of seven rhetorically effective antitheses, contrasting negative external impressions with positive inner reality. Paul perceives his existence as a reflection of Jesus' own and affirms an inner reversal that escapes outward observation. The final two members illustrate two distinct kinds of paradox or apparent contradiction that are characteristic of apostolic experience.

**6, 11–13:** Paul's tone becomes quieter, but his appeal for acceptance and affection is emotionally charged. References to the heart and their mutual relations bring the development begun in 2, 14—3, 3 to an effective conclusion.

**6, 14—7, 1:** Language and thought shift noticeably here. Suddenly we are in a different atmosphere, dealing with a quite different problem. Both the vocabulary and the thought, with their contrast between good and evil, are more characteristic of Qumran documents or the Book of Revelation than they are of Paul. Hence, critics suspect that this section was inserted by another hand.

**6, 14–16a:** The opening injunction to separate from unbelievers is reinforced by five rhetorical questions to make the point that Christianity is not compatible with paganism. Their opposition is emphasized also by the accumulation of five distinct designations for each group. These verses are a powerful statement of God's holiness and the exclusiveness of his claims.

c Rom 5, 10–11; Col 1, 20. d Eph 6, 20; Phlm 9. e Is 53, 6–9; Gal 3, 13 / Rom 3, 24–26; 1 Cor 1, 30; 1 Pt 2, 24; 1 Jn 3, 5–8. f 1 Cor 3, 9; 1 Thes 3, 2. g Is 49, 8. h 1 Cor 9, 12; 10, 32 / 8, 20–21. i 4, 8–11; 11, 23–27; 1 Cor 4, 9–13. j Acts 16, 23. k Gal 5, 22–23. l 10, 4; Rom 13, 12; Eph 6, 11–17. m 4, 10–11; Rom 8, 36. n Rom 8, 32; 1 Cor 3, 21. o 7, 3. p Gal 4, 19.

what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have
with darkness? [15]What accord has Christ with
Beliar? Or what has a believer in common with
an unbeliever? [16] [q]*What agreement has the
temple of God with idols? For we are the temple
of the living God; as God said:

"I will live with them and move among them,
and I will be their God
and they shall be my people.
[17] [r]Therefore, come forth from them
and be separate," says the Lord,
"and touch nothing unclean;
then I will receive you
[18] [s]and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,
says the Lord Almighty."

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 7
See RG
500–501

[1]Since we have these promises, beloved, let us
cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh
and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of
God.

[2]*Make room for us; we have not wronged
anyone, or ruined anyone, or taken advantage of
anyone. [3] [t]I do not say this in condemnation, for
I have already said that you are in our hearts,
that we may die together and live together. [4]I
have great confidence in you, I have great pride
in you; I am filled with encouragement, I am
overflowing with joy all the more because of all
our affliction.

## C. Resolution of the Crisis

**Paul's Joy in Macedonia** [5] [u]*For even when
we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest,
but we were afflicted in every way—external
conflicts, internal fears. [6] [v]But God, who encour-
ages the downcast, encouraged us by the arrival
of Titus, [7]and not only by his arrival but also by
the encouragement with which he was encour-
aged in regard to you, as he told us of your
yearning, your lament, your zeal for me, so that I
rejoiced even more. [8] [w]*For even if I saddened
you by my letter, I do not regret it; and if I did
regret it ([for] I see that that letter saddened you,
if only for a while), [9]I rejoice now, not because
you were saddened, but because you were
saddened into repentance; for you were sad-
dened in a godly way, so that you did not suffer
loss in anything because of us. [10]For godly
sorrow produces a salutary repentance without
regret, but worldly sorrow produces death. [11]For
behold what earnestness this godly sorrow has
produced for you, as well as readiness for a
defense, and indignation, and fear, and yearning,
and zeal, and punishment. In every way you
have shown yourselves to be innocent in the
matter. [12] [x]So then even though I wrote to you, it
was not on account of the one who did the
wrong, or on account of the one who suffered

**6, 16c-18:** This is a chain of scriptural citations carefully woven together. God's covenant relation to his people and his presence among them (16) is seen as conditioned on cultic separation from the profane and cultically impure (17); that relation is translated into the personal language of the parent-child relationship, an extension to the community of the language of 2 Sm 7, 14 (18). Some remarkable parallels to this chain are found in the final chapters of Revelation. God's presence among his people (21, 22) is expressed there, too, by applying 2 Sm 7, 14 to the community (21, 7). There is a call to separation (18, 4) and exclusion of the unclean from the community and its liturgy (21, 27). The title "Lord Almighty" (**Pantokratōr**) occurs in the New Testament only here in 18 and nine times in Rv.

**7, 2–4:** These verses continue the thought of 6, 11–13, before the interruption of 6, 14—7, 1. Verse 4 serves as a transition to the next section: the four themes it introduces (confidence; pride or "boasting"; encouragement; joy in affliction) are developed in vv 5–16. All have appeared previously in the letter.

**7, 5–16:** This section functions as a peroration or formal summing up of the whole first part of the letter, chs 1–7. It deals with the restoration of right relations between Paul and the Corinthians, and it is marked by fullness and intensity of emotion.

**7, 5–7:** Paul picks up the thread of the narrative interrupted at 2, 13 (5) and describes the resolution of the tense situation there depicted (6–7). Finally Titus arrives and his coming puts an end to Paul's restlessness (2, 13; 7, 5), casts out his fears, and reverses his mood. The theme of encouragement and affliction is reintroduced (cf 1, 3–11); here, too, encouragement is traced back to God and is described as contagious (6). The language of joy and sorrow also reappears in v 7 (cf 1, 23—2, 1 and the note on 1, 23–24).

**7, 5: Macedonia:** see the note on 2, 13.

**7, 8–12:** Paul looks back on the episode from the viewpoint of its ending. The goal of their common activity, promotion of their joy (1, 24), has been achieved, despite and because of the sorrow they felt. That sorrow was God-given. Its salutary effects are enumerated fully and impressively in vv 10–11; not the least important of these is that it has revealed to them the attachment they have to Paul.

q 1 Cor 10, 20–21 / 1 Cor 3, 16–17; 6, 19 / Ex 25, 8; 29, 45; Lv 26, 12; Jer 31, 1; 32, 38; Ez 37, 27. r Is 52, 11; Ez 20, 34.41; Rv 18, 4; 21, 27. s 2 Sm 7, 14; Ps 2, 7; Is 43, 6; Jer 31, 9; Rv 21, 7 / Rv 4, 8;11, 17; 15, 3; 21, 22. t 6,11–13. u 2, 13. v 7, 13–14; 1 Thes 3, 6–8. w 2, 2–4; Heb 12, 11. x 2, 3.9; 7, 8.

the wrong, but in order that your concern for us
might be made plain to you in the sight of God.
13 *For this reason we are encouraged.

And besides our encouragement, we rejoice
even more because of the joy of Titus, since his
spirit has been refreshed by all of you. 14 For if I
have boasted to him about you, I was not put to
shame. No, just as everything we said to you was
true, so our boasting before Titus proved to be
the truth. 15 [y] And his heart goes out to you all
the more, as he remembers the obedience of all
of you, when you received him with fear and
trembling. 16 I rejoice, because I have confidence
in you in every respect.

## III: The Collection for Jerusalem

### CHAPTER 8

**Generosity in Giving** 1 [z] *We want you to
know, brothers, of the grace of God that has
been given to the churches of Macedonia, 2 *for
in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of
their joy and their profound poverty overflowed
in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 *For
according to their means, I can testify, and
beyond their means, spontaneously, 4 [a] they
begged us insistently for the favor of taking part
in the service to the holy ones, 5 *and this, not as
we expected, but they gave themselves first to
the Lord and to us through the will of God,
6 [b] *so that we urged Titus that, as he had already
begun, he should also complete for you this
gracious act also. 7 [c] *Now as you excel in every
respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may
you excel in this gracious act also.

8 I say this not by way of command, but to test
the genuineness of your love by your concern for
others. 9 [d] *For you know the gracious act of our

Ch 8–9
See RG
501

**7, 13–16:** Paul summarizes the effect of the experience on Titus: encouragement, joy, love, relief. Finally, he describes its effects on himself: encouragement, joy, confidence, pride or "boasting" (i.e., the satisfaction resulting from a boast that proves well-founded; cf 4; 1, 12.14).

**8, 1—9, 15:** Paul turns to a new topic, the collection for the church in Jerusalem. There is an early precedent for this project in the agreement mentioned in Gal 2, 6–10. According to Acts, the church at Antioch had sent Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem with relief (Acts 11, 27–30). Subsequently Paul organized a project of relief for Jerusalem among his own churches. Our earliest evidence for it comes in 1 Cor 16, 1–4, after it had already begun (see the notes there); by the time Paul wrote Rom 15, 25–28 the collection was completed and ready for delivery. Chapters 8 and 9 contain what appear to be two letters on the subject. In them Paul gives us his fullest exposition of the meaning he sees in the enterprise, presenting it as an act of Christian charity and as an expression of the unity of the church, both present and eschatological. These chapters are especially rich in the recurrence of key words, on which Paul plays; it is usually impossible to do justice to these wordplays in the translation.

**8, 1–24:** This is a letter of recommendation for Titus and two unnamed companions, written from Macedonia probably at least a year later than 1 Cor 16. The recommendation proper is prefaced by remarks about the ideals of sharing and equality within the Christian community (1–15). Phil 4, 10–20 shows that Paul has reflected on his personal experience of need and relief in his relations with the community at Philippi; he now develops his reflections on the larger scale of relations between his Gentile churches and the mother church in Jerusalem.

**8, 1–5:** The example of the Macedonians, a model of what ought to be happening at Corinth, provides Paul with the occasion for expounding his theology of "giving."

**8, 1: The grace of God:** the fundamental theme is expressed by the Greek noun **charis,** which will be variously translated throughout these chapters as "grace" (8, 1; 9, 8.14), "favor" (8, 4), "gracious act" (8, 6.7.9) or "gracious work" (8, 19), to be compared to "gracious gift" (1 Cor 16, 3). The related term, **eucharistia,** "thanksgiving," also occurs at 9, 11.12. The wordplay is not superficial; various mutations of the same root signal inner connection between aspects of a single reality, and Paul consciously exploits the similarities in vocabulary to highlight that connection.

**8, 2:** Three more terms are now introduced. **Test (dokimē):** the same root is translated as "to test" (8) and "evidence" (9, 13); it means to be tried and found genuine. **Abundance:** variations on the same root lie behind "overflow" (8, 2; 9, 12), "excel" (8, 7), "surplus" (8, 14), "superfluous" (9, 1), "make abundant" and "have an abundance" (9, 8). These expressions of fullness contrast with references to need (8, 14; 9, 12). **Generosity:** the word **haplotēs** has nuances of both simplicity and sincerity; here and in 9, 11.13 it designates the singleness of purpose that manifests itself in generous giving.

**8, 3–4:** Paul emphasizes the spontaneity of the Macedonians and the nature of their action. **They begged us insistently:** the same root is translated as "urge," "appeal," "encourage" (8, 6.17; 9, 5). **Taking part:** the same word is translated "contribution" in 9, 13 and a related term as "partner" in 8, 23. **Service (diakonia):** this word occurs also in 9, 1.13 as "service"; in 9, 12 it is translated "administration," and in 8, 19.20 the corresponding verb is rendered "administer."

**8, 5: They gave themselves . . . to the Lord and to us:** on its deepest level their attitude is one of self-giving.

**8, 6: Titus:** 1 Cor 16 seemed to leave the organization up to the Corinthians, but apparently Paul has sent Titus to initiate the collection as well; 8, 16–17 will describe Titus' attitude as one of shared concern and cooperation.

**8, 7:** The charitable service Paul is promoting is seen briefly and in passing within the perspective of Paul's theology of the charisms. **Earnestness (spoudē):** this or related terms occur also in v 22 ("earnest") and 8, 8.16.17 ("concern").

**8, 9:** The dialectic of Jesus' experience, expressed earlier in terms of life and death (5, 15), sin and righteousness (5, 21), is now rephrased in terms of poverty and wealth. Many scholars think this is a reference to Jesus' preexistence with God (his "wealth") and to his incarnation and death (his "poverty"), and they point to the similarity between this verse and Phil 2, 6–8. Others interpret the wealth and poverty as succeeding phases of

y 2, 9. z 11, 9; Rom 15, 26. a Acts 24, 17; Rom 15, 31. b 2, 13; 7, 6–7.13–14; 8, 16.23; 12, 18. c 1 Cor 1, 5. d 6, 10; Phil 2, 6–8.

Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 10 *e*And I am giving counsel in this matter, for it is appropriate for you who began not only to act but to act willingly last year: 11 *complete it now, so that your eager willingness may be matched by your completion of it out of what you have. 12 *For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have; 13 not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality 14 your surplus at the present time should supply their needs, so that their surplus may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. 15 *f*As it is written:

Ch 8–9 See RG 501

"Whoever had much did not have more,
and whoever had little did not have less."

**Titus and His Collaborators** 16 *But thanks be to God who put the same concern for you into the heart of Titus, 17 for he not only welcomed our appeal but, since he is very concerned, he has gone to you of his own accord. 18 *g**With him we have sent the brother who is praised in all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 19 *h*And not only that, but he has also been appointed our traveling companion by the churches in this gracious work administered by us for the glory of the Lord [himself] and for the expression of our eagerness. 20 *This we desire to avoid, that anyone blame us about this lavish gift administered by us, 21 *i*for we are concerned for what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of others. 22 And with them we have sent our brother whom we often tested in many ways and found earnest, but who is now much more earnest because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker for you; as for our brothers, they are apostles of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 *So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to them.

## CHAPTER 9

**God's Indescribable Gift** 1 *Now about the service to the holy ones, it is superfluous for me to write to you, 2 *j**for I know your eagerness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 *Nonetheless, I sent the brothers so that our boast about you might not prove empty in this case, so that you might be ready, as I said, 4 for fear that if any Macedonians come with me and find you not ready we might be put to shame (to say nothing of you) in this conviction. 5 So I thought it necessary to encourage the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for your promised gift, so that in this way it might be ready as a bountiful gift and not as an exaction.

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Jesus' earthly existence, e.g., his sense of intimacy with God and then the desolation and the feeling of abandonment by God in his death (cf Mk 15, 34).

**8, 11: Eager:** the word **prothymia** also occurs in 8, 12.19; 9, 2.

**8, 12–15:** Paul introduces the principle of **equality** into the discussion. The goal is not impoverishment but sharing of resources; balance is achieved at least over the course of time. In v 15 Paul grounds his argument unexpectedly in the experience of Israel gathering manna in the desert: equality was achieved, independently of personal exertion, by God, who gave with an even hand according to need. Paul touches briefly here on the theme of "living from God."

**8, 16–24:** In recommending Titus and his companions, Paul stresses their personal and apostolic qualities, their good dispositions toward the Corinthians, and their authority as messengers of the churches and representatives of Christ.

**8, 18: The brother:** we do not know the identity of this co-worker of Paul, nor of the third companion mentioned below in v 22.

**8, 20–22: That anyone blame us:** 12, 16–18 suggests that misunderstandings may indeed have arisen concerning Paul's management of the collection through the messengers mentioned here, but those same verses seem to imply that the Corinthians by and large would recognize the honesty of Paul's conduct in this area as in others (cf 6, 3).

**8, 24:** As Paul began by holding up the Macedonians as examples to be imitated, he closes by exhorting the Corinthians to show their love (by accepting the envoys and by cooperating as the Macedonians do), thus justifying the pride Paul demonstrates because of them before other churches.

**9, 1–15:** Quite possibly this was originally an independent letter, though it deals with the same subject and continues many of the same themes. In that case, it may have been written a few weeks later than ch 8, while the delegation there mentioned was still on its way.

**9, 2: Achaia:** see the note on Rom 15, 26.

**9, 3: I sent the brothers:** the Greek aorist tense here could be epistolary, referring to the present; in that case Paul would be sending them now, and ch 9 would merely conclude the letter of recommendation begun in ch 8. But the aorist may also refer to a sending that is past as Paul writes; then ch 9, with its apparently fresh beginning, is a follow-up message entrusted to another carrier.

e 9, 2; 1 Cor 16, 1–4. f Ex 16, 18. g 12, 18. h 1 Cor 16, 3–4. i Rom 12, 17. j 8, 10; Rom 15, 26.

6 [k]Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will
also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bounti-
fully will also reap bountifully. 7 [l]Each must do as
already determined, without sadness or compul-
sion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 *Moreover,
God is able to make every grace abundant for
you, so that in all things, always having all you
need, you may have an abundance for every
good work. 9 [m]As it is written:

"He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."

10 [n]The one who supplies seed to the sower and
bread for food will supply and multiply your seed
and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
11 *You are being enriched in every way for all
generosity, which through us produces thanksgiv-
ing to God, 12 for the administration of this public
service is not only supplying the needs of the
holy ones but is also overflowing in many acts of
thanksgiving to God. 13 [o]Through the evidence
of this service, you are glorifying God for your
obedient confession of the gospel of Christ and
the generosity of your contribution to them and
to all others, 14 while in prayer on your behalf
they long for you, because of the surpassing
grace of God upon you. 15 [p]Thanks be to God for
his indescribable gift!

# IV: Paul's Defense of His Ministry

## CHAPTER 10

Ch 10–13
See RG
501–503

**Accusation of Weakness** 1 *Now I myself,
Paul, urge you through the gentleness and
clemency of Christ, I who am humble when face
to face with you, but brave toward you when
absent, 2 [q]*I beg you that, when present, I may
not have to be brave with that confidence with
which I intend to act boldly against some who
consider us as acting according to the flesh.
3 *For, although we are in the flesh, we do not
battle according to the flesh, 4 [r]for the weapons
of our battle are not of flesh but are enormously
powerful, capable of destroying fortresses. We
destroy arguments 5 and every pretension raising
itself against the knowledge of God, and take
every thought captive in obedience to Christ,

**9, 8–10:** The behavior to which he exhorts them is grounded in God's own pattern of behavior. God is capable of overwhelming generosity, as scripture itself attests (9), so that they need not fear being short. He will provide in abundance, both supplying their natural needs and increasing their righteousness. Paul challenges them to godlike generosity and reminds them of the fundamental motive for encouragement: God himself cannot be outdone.

**9, 11–15:** Paul's vision broadens to take in all the interested parties in one dynamic picture. His language becomes liturgically colored and conveys a sense of fullness. With a final play on the words **charis** and **eucharistia** (see the note on 8, 1), he describes a circle that closes on itself: the movement of grace overflowing from God to them and handed on from them through Paul to others is completed by the prayer of praise and thanksgiving raised on their behalf to God.

**10, 1—13, 10:** These final chapters have their own unity of structure and theme and could well have formed the body of a separate letter. They constitute an **apologia** on Paul's part, i.e., a legal defense of his behavior and his ministry; the writing is emotionally charged and highly rhetorical. In the central section (11, 16—12, 10), the **apologia** takes the form of a boast. This section is prepared for by a prologue (11, 1–15) and followed by an epilogue (12, 11–18), which are similar in content and structure. These sections, in turn, are framed by an introduction (10, 1–18) and a conclusion (12, 19—13, 10), both of which assert Paul's apostolic authority and confidence and define the purpose of the letter. The structure that results from this disposition of the material is chiastic, i.e., the first element corresponds to the last, the second to the second last, etc., following the pattern **abcb'a'**.

**10, 1–18:** Paul asserts his apostolic authority and expresses the confidence this generates in him. He writes in response to certain opinions that have arisen in the community and certain charges raised against him and in preparation for a forthcoming visit in which he intends to set things in order. This section gives us an initial glimpse of the situation in Corinth that Paul must address; much of its thematic material will be taken up again in the finale (12, 19—13, 10).

**10, 1–2:** A strong opening plunges us straight into the conflict. Contrasts dominate here: presence versus absence, gentleness-clemency-humility versus boldness-confidence-bravery. **Through the gentleness and clemency of Christ:** the figure of the gentle Christ, presented in a significant position before any specifics of the situation are suggested, forms a striking contrast to the picture of the bold and militant Paul (2–6); this tension is finally resolved in 13, 3–4. **Absent . . . present:** this same contrast, with a restatement of the purpose of the letter, recurs in 13, 10, which forms an inclusion with 10, 1–2.

**10, 2b-4a: Flesh:** the Greek word **sarx** can express both the physical life of the body without any pejorative overtones (as in "we are in the flesh," 3) and our natural life insofar as it is marked by limitation and weakness (as in the other expressions) in contrast to the higher life and power conferred by the Spirit; cf the note on 1 Cor 3, 1. The wordplay is intended to express the paradoxical situation of a life already taken over by the Spirit but not yet seen as such except by faith. Lack of empirical evidence of the Spirit permits misunderstanding and misjudgment, but Paul resolutely denies that his behavior and effectiveness are as limited as some suppose.

**10, 3b-6:** Paul is involved in combat. The strong military language and imagery are both an assertion of his confidence in the divine power at his disposal and a declaration of war against those who underestimate his resources. The threat is echoed in 13, 2–3.

**k** Prv 11, 24–25. **l** Prv 22, 8 LXX. **m** Ps 112, 9. **n** Is 55, 10. **o** 8, 4; Rom 15, 31. **p** Rom 5, 15–16. **q** 13, 2.10; 1 Cor 4, 21. **r** 6, 7; 13, 2–3; 1 Cor 1, 25; Eph 6, 10–14.

[6] [s]and we are ready to punish every disobedi-
ence, once your obedience is complete.
[7] [t]*Look at what confronts you. Whoever is
confident of belonging to Christ should consider
that as he belongs to Christ, so do we. [8] [u]And
even if I should boast a little too much of our
authority, which the Lord gave for building you
up and not for tearing you down, I shall not be
put to shame. [9]*May I not seem as one frighten-
ing you through letters. [10] [v]For someone will say,
"His letters are severe and forceful, but his
bodily presence is weak, and his speech con-
temptible." [11] [w]Such a person must understand
that what we are in word through letters when
absent, that we also are in action when present.

Ch 10–13
See RG
501–503

[12] [x]*Not that we dare to class or compare
ourselves with some of those who recommend
themselves. But when they measure themselves
by one another and compare themselves with
one another, they are without understanding.
[13]*But we will not boast beyond measure but
will keep to the limits God has apportioned us,
namely, to reach even to you. [14]For we are not
overreaching ourselves, as though we did not
reach you; we indeed first came to you with the
gospel of Christ. [15]We are not boasting beyond
measure, in other people's labors; yet our hope
is that, as your faith increases, our influence
among you may be greatly enlarged, within our
proper limits, [16] [y]so that we may preach the
gospel even beyond you, not boasting of work
already done in another's sphere. [17] [z]*"Whoever
boasts, should boast in the Lord." [18] [a]*For it is
not the one who recommends himself who is
approved, but the one whom the Lord recom-
mends.

## CHAPTER 11

**Preaching without Charge** [1] [b]*If only you
would put up with a little foolishness from me!
Please put up with me. [2] [c]*For I am jealous of
you with the jealousy of God, since I betrothed
you to one husband to present you as a chaste
virgin to Christ. [3] [d]*But I am afraid that, as the
serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your
thoughts may be corrupted from a sincere [and
pure] commitment to Christ. [4] [e]*For if someone

**10, 7–8: Belonging to Christ . . . so do we:** these phrases already announce the pattern of Paul's boast in 11, 21b-29, especially 11, 22–23. **For building you up and not for tearing you down:** Paul draws on the language by which Jeremiah described the purpose of the prophetic power the Lord gave to him (Jer 1, 9–10; 12, 16–17; 24, 6). Though Paul's power may have destructive effects on others (2–6), its intended effect on the community is entirely constructive (cf 13, 10). **I shall not be put to shame:** his assertions will not be refuted; they will be revealed as true at the judgment.

**10, 9–10:** Paul cites the complaints of some who find him lacking in personal forcefulness and holds out the threat of a personal **parousia** (both "return" and "presence") that will be forceful, indeed will be a demonstration of Christ's own power (cf 13, 2–4).

**10, 12–18:** Paul now qualifies his claim to boldness, indicating its limits. He distinguishes his own behavior from that of others, revealing those "others" as they appear to him: as self-recommending, immoderately boastful, encroaching on territory not assigned to them, and claiming credit not due to them.

**10, 13: Will keep to the limits:** the notion of proper limits is expressed here by two terms with overlapping meanings, **metron** and **kanōn**, which are played off against several expressions denoting overreaching or expansion beyond a legitimate sphere.

**10, 17: Boast in the Lord:** there is a legitimate boasting, in contrast to the immoderate boasting to which vv 13 and 15 allude. God's work through Paul in the community is the object of his boast (13–16; 1, 12–14) and constitutes his recommendation (3, 1–3). Cf the notes on 1, 12–14 and 1 Cor 1, 29–31.

**10, 18: Approved:** to be approved is to come successfully through the process of testing for authenticity (cf 13, 3–7 and the note on 8, 2). **Whom the Lord recommends:** self-commendation is a premature and unwarranted anticipation of the final judgment, which the Lord alone will pass (cf 1 Cor 4, 3–5). Paul alludes to this judgment throughout chs 10–13, frequently in final or transitional positions; cf 11, 15; 12, 19a; 13, 3–7.

**11, 1–15:** Although these verses continue to reveal information about Paul's opponents and the differences he perceives between them and himself, 11, 1 signals a turn in Paul's thought. This section constitutes a prologue to the boasting that he will undertake in 11, 16—12, 10, and it bears remarkable similarities to the section that follows the central boast, 12, 11–18.

**11, 1: Put up with a little foolishness from me:** this verse indicates more clearly than the general statement of intent in 10, 13 the nature of the project Paul is about to undertake. He alludes ironically to the Corinthians' toleration for others. **Foolishness:** Paul qualifies his project as folly from beginning to end; see the note on 11, 16—12, 10.

**11, 2:** Paul gives us a sudden glimpse of the theological values that are at stake. **The jealousy of God:** the perspective is that of the covenant, described in imagery of love and marriage, as in the prophets; cf 1 Cor 10, 22. **I betrothed you:** Paul, like a father (cf 12, 14), betroths the community to Christ as his bride (cf Eph 5, 21–33) and will present her to him at his second coming. Cf Mt 25, 1–13 and the nuptial imagery in Rv 21.

**11, 3: As the serpent deceived Eve:** before Christ can return for the community Paul fears a repetition of the primal drama of seduction. Corruption of minds is satanic activity (see 2, 11; 4, 4). Satanic imagery recurs in 11, 13–15.20; 12, 7b.16–17; see the notes on these passages.

**11, 4: Preaches another Jesus:** the danger is specified, and Paul's opponents are identified with the cunning serpent. The battle for minds has to do with the understanding of Jesus, the Spirit, the gospel; the Corinthians have flirted with another under-

s 2, 9. t 1 Cor 1, 12. u 13, 10. v 1 Cor 2, 3. w 13, 1–2. x 3, 1–2; 4, 2; 5, 12; 6, 4; 10, 18; 12, 11. y Rom 15, 20–21. z Jer 9, 22–23; 1 Cor 1, 31. a 13, 3–9. b 11, 21; 12, 11. c Hos 2, 21–22; Eph 5, 26–27. d Gn 3, 1–6. e Gal 1, 6–9.

comes and preaches another Jesus than the one
we preached, or if you receive a different spirit
from the one you received or a different gospel
from the one you accepted, you put up with it
well enough. [5] *f* *For I think that I am not in any
way inferior to these "superapostles." [6] *g* *Even if
I am untrained in speaking, I am not so in
knowledge; in every way we have made this
plain to you in all things.

[7] *h* *Did I make a mistake when I humbled
myself so that you might be exalted, because I
preached the gospel of God to you without
charge? [8] I plundered other churches by accept-
ing from them in order to minister to you. [9] *i* And
when I was with you and in need, I did not
burden anyone, for the brothers who came from
Macedonia supplied my needs. So I refrained
and will refrain from burdening you in any way.
[10] *j* By the truth of Christ in me, this boast of
mine shall not be silenced in the regions of
Achaia. [11] *k* *And why? Because I do not love
you? God knows I do!

[12] And what I do I will continue to do, in order
to end this pretext of those who seek a pretext
for being regarded as we are in the mission of
which they boast. [13] *For such people are false
apostles, deceitful workers, who masquerade as
apostles of Christ. [14] And no wonder, for even
Satan masquerades as an angel of light. [15] So it is
not strange that his ministers also masquerade as
ministers of righteousness. Their end will corre-
spond to their deeds.

**Paul's Boast: His Labors** [16] *I repeat, no one
should consider me foolish; but if you do, accept
me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.
[17] What I am saying I am not saying according to
the Lord but as in foolishness, in this boastful
state. [18] Since many boast according to the flesh,
I too will boast. [19] For you gladly put up with
fools, since you are wise yourselves. [20] *For you
put up with it if someone enslaves you, or

standing than the one that Paul handed on to them as traditional and normative.

**11, 5: These "superapostles":** this term, employed again in 12, 11b, designates the opponents of whom Paul has spoken in ch 10 and again in 11, 4. They appear to be intruders at Corinth. Their preaching is marked at least by a different emphasis and style, and they do not hesitate to accept support from the community. Perhaps these itinerants appeal to the authority of church leaders in Jerusalem and even carry letters of recommendation from them. But it is not those distant leaders whom Paul is attacking here. The intruders are "superapostles" not in the sense of the "pillars" at Jerusalem (Gal 2), but in their own estimation. They consider themselves superior to Paul as apostles and ministers of Christ, and they are obviously enjoying some success among the Corinthians. Paul rejects their claim to be apostles in any superlative sense (**hyperlian**), judging them bluntly as "false apostles," ministers of Satan masquerading as apostles of Christ (13–15). On the contrary, he himself will claim to be a superminister of Christ (**hyper egō**, 23).

**11, 6:** Apparently found deficient in both rhetorical ability (cf 10, 10) and knowledge (cf 10, 5), Paul concedes the former charge but not the latter. **In every way:** in all their contacts with him revelation has been taking place. Paul, through whom God reveals the knowledge of himself (2, 14), and in whom the death and life of Jesus are revealed (4, 10–11; cf 6, 4), also demonstrates his own role as the bearer of true knowledge. Cf 1 Cor 1, 18—2, 16.

**11, 7–10:** Abruptly Paul passes to another reason for complaints: his practice of preaching without remuneration (cf 1 Cor 9, 3–18). He deftly defends his practice by situating it from the start within the pattern of Christ's own self-humiliation (cf 10, 1) and reduces objections to absurdity by rhetorical questions (cf 12, 13).

**11, 11–12:** Paul rejects lack of affection as his motive (possibly imputed to him by his opponents) and states his real motive, a desire to emphasize the disparity between himself and the others (cf 19–21). The topic of his gratuitous service will be taken up once more in 12, 13–18. 1 Cor 9, 15–18 gives a different but complementary explanation of his motivation.

**11, 13–15:** Paul picks up again the imagery of v 3 and applies it to the opponents: they are false apostles of Christ, really serving another master. **Deceitful . . . masquerade:** deception and simulation, like cunning (3), are marks of the satanic. **Angel of light:** recalls the contrast between light and darkness, Christ and Beliar at 6, 14–15. **Ministers of righteousness:** recalls the earlier contrast between the ministry of condemnation and that of righteousness (3, 9). **Their end:** the section closes with another allusion to the judgment, when all participants in the final conflict will be revealed or unmasked and dealt with as they deserve.

**11, 16—12, 10:** Paul now accepts the challenge of his opponents and indulges in boasting similar to theirs, but with differences that he has already signaled in 10, 12–18 and that become clearer as he proceeds. He defines the nature of his project and unmistakably labels it as folly at the beginning and the end (11, 16–23; 12, 11). Yet his boast does not spring from ignorance (11, 21; 12, 6) nor is it concerned merely with human distinctions (11, 18). Paul boasts "in moderation" (10, 13.15) and "in the Lord" (10, 17).

**11, 16–29:** The first part of Paul's boast focuses on labors and afflictions, in which authentic service of Christ consists.

**11, 16–21:** These verses recapitulate remarks already made about the foolishness of boasting and the excessive toleration of the Corinthians. They form a prelude to the boast proper.

**11, 20:** Paul describes the activities of the "others" in terms that fill out the picture drawn in vv 3–4.13–15. Much of the vocabulary suggests fleshly or even satanic activity. **Enslaves:** cf Gal 2, 4. **Devours:** cf 1 Pt 5, 8. **Gets the better:** the verb **lambanō** means "to take," but is used in a variety of senses; here it may imply financial advantage, as in the English colloquialism "to take someone." It is similarly used at 12, 16 and is there connected with cunning and deceit. **Puts on airs:** the same verb is rendered "raise oneself" (10, 5) and "be too elated" (12, 7).

f 12, 11. g 1 Cor 1, 5.17; 2, 1–5. h 12, 13–18; Acts 18, 3; 1 Cor 9, 6–18. i Phil 4, 15.18. j 1 Cor 9, 15. k 12, 15.

devours you, or gets the better of you, or puts on
airs, or slaps you in the face. 21 *To my shame I
say that we were too weak!

But what anyone dares to boast of (I am
speaking in foolishness) I also dare. 22 l *Are they
Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I.
Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.
23 m *Are they ministers of Christ? (I am talking
like an insane person.) I am still more, with far
greater labors, far more imprisonments, far
worse beatings, and numerous brushes with
death. 24 n Five times at the hands of the Jews I
received forty lashes minus one. 25 o Three times
I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three
times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a
day on the deep; 26 on frequent journeys, in
dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles,
dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness,
dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers;
27 p in toil and hardship, through many sleepless
nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure.
28 And apart from these things, there is the daily
pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the
churches. 29 q Who is weak, and I am not weak?
Who is led to sin, and I am not indignant?

Ch 10–13
See RG
501–503

**Paul's Boast: His Weakness** 30 *If I must
boast, I will boast of the things that show my
weakness. 31 *The God and Father of the Lord
Jesus knows, he who is blessed forever, that I do
not lie. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King
Aretas guarded the city of Damascus, in order to
seize me, 33 r but I was lowered in a basket
through a window in the wall and escaped his
hands.

## CHAPTER 12

1 *I must boast; not that it is profitable, but I will
go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I
know someone in Christ who, fourteen years
ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do
not know, God knows), was caught up to the
third heaven. 3 And I know that this person
(whether in the body or out of the body I do not
know, God knows) 4 s was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one
may utter. 5 *About this person I will boast, but
about myself I will not boast, except about my
weaknesses. 6 Although if I should wish to boast,
I would not be foolish, for I would be telling the
truth. But I refrain, so that no one may think
more of me than what he sees in me or hears
from me 7 t *because of the abundance of the

11, 21: Paul ironically concedes the charge of personal weakness from 10, 1–18 but will refute the other charge there mentioned, that of lack of boldness, accepting the challenge to demonstrate it by his boast.

11, 22: The opponents apparently pride themselves on their "Jewishness." Paul, too, can claim to be a Jew by race, religion, and promise. **Descendants of Abraham:** elsewhere Paul distinguishes authentic from inauthentic heirs of Abraham and the promise (Rom 4, 13–18; 9, 7–13; 11, 1; Gal 3, 9.27–29; cf Jn 8, 33–47). Here he grants his opponents this title in order to concentrate on the principal claim that follows.

11, 23a: **Ministers of Christ . . . I am still more:** the central point of the boast (cf the note on 11, 5). **Like an insane person:** the climax of his folly.

11, 23b-29: Service of the humiliated and crucified Christ is demonstrated by trials endured for him. This rhetorically impressive catalogue enumerates many of the labors and perils Paul encountered on his missionary journeys.

11, 30—12, 10: The second part of Paul's boast, marked by a change of style and a shift in focus. After recalling the project in which he is engaged, he states a new topic: his weaknesses as matter for boasting. Everything in this section, even the discussion of privileges and distinctions, will be integrated into this perspective.

11, 31–32: The episode at Damascus is symbolic. It aptly illustrates Paul's weakness but ends in deliverance (cf 4, 7–11).

12, 1–4: **In the body or out of the body:** he seemed no longer confined to bodily conditions, but he does not claim to understand the mechanics of the experience. **Caught up:** i.e., in ecstasy. **The third heaven . . . Paradise:** ancient cosmologies depicted a multitiered universe. Jewish intertestamental literature contains much speculation about the number of heavens. Seven is the number usually mentioned, but the Testament of Levi (Lev 2, 7–10; 3, 1–4) speaks of three; God himself dwelt in the third of these. Without giving us any clear picture of the cosmos, Paul indicates a mental journey to a nonearthly space, set apart by God, in which secrets were revealed to him. **Ineffable things:** i.e., privileged knowledge, which it was not possible or permitted to divulge.

12, 5–7: **This person:** the indirect way of referring to himself has the effect of emphasizing the distance between that experience and his everyday life, just as the indirect **someone in Christ** (2) and all the passive verbs emphasize his passivity and receptivity in the experience. The revelations were not a personal achievement, nor were they meant to draw attention to any quality of his own.

12, 7b: **That I might not become too elated:** God assures that there is a negative component to his experience, so that he cannot lose proper perspective; cf 1, 9; 4, 7–11. **A thorn in the flesh:** variously interpreted as a sickness or physical disability, a temptation, or a handicap connected with his apostolic activity. But since Hebrew "thorn in the flesh," like English "thorn in my side," refers to persons (cf Nm 33, 55; Ez 28, 24), Paul may be referring to some especially persistent and obnoxious opponent. The language of vv 7–8 permits this interpretation. If this is correct, the

l Acts 22, 3 / Rom 11, 1; Phil 3, 5–6. m 6, 5; Acts 16, 22–24; 1 Cor 15, 31–32. n Dt 25, 2–3. o Acts 14, 19; 27, 43–44. p 1 Cor 4, 11. q 1 Cor 9, 22. r Acts 9, 23–25. s Lk 23, 43; Rv 2, 7. t Nm 33, 55; Jos 23, 13; Ez 28, 24.

revelations. Therefore, that I might not become
too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me,
an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from
being too elated. [8] [u]*Three times I begged the
Lord about this, that it might leave me, [9] [v]*but
he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for
power is made perfect in weakness." I will
rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in
order that the power of Christ may dwell with
me. [10] [w]*Therefore, I am content with weak-
nesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and con-
straints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am
weak, then I am strong.

**Selfless Concern for the Church** [11] [x]*I have
been foolish. You compelled me, for I ought to
have been commended by you. For I am in no
way inferior to these "superapostles," even
though I am nothing. [12] [y]*The signs of an apostle
were performed among you with all endurance,
signs and wonders, and mighty deeds. [13] [z]*In
what way were you less privileged than the rest
of the churches, except that on my part I did not
burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

[14]Now I am ready to come to you this third
time. And I will not be a burden, for I want not
what is yours, but you. Children ought not to
save for their parents, but parents for their
children. [15]I will most gladly spend and be
utterly spent for your sakes. If I love you more,
am I to be loved less? [16] [a]But granted that I
myself did not burden you, yet I was crafty and
got the better of you by deceit. [17]Did I take
advantage of you through any of those I sent to
you? [18] [b]I urged Titus to go and sent the brother
with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did
we not walk in the same spirit? And in the same
steps?

**Final Warnings and Appeals** [19]*Have you
been thinking all along that we are defending
ourselves before you? In the sight of God we are
speaking in Christ, and all for building you up,
beloved. [20] [c]*For I fear that when I come I may

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frequent appearance of singular pronouns in depicting the opposition may not be merely a stylistic variation; the singular may be provoked and accompanied by the image of one individual in whom criticism of Paul's preaching, way of life, and apostolic consciousness is concentrated, and who embodies all the qualities Paul attributes to the group. **An angel of Satan:** a personal messenger from Satan; cf the satanic language already applied to the opponents in 11, 3.13–15.20.

**12, 8: Three times:** his prayer was insistent, like that of Jesus in Gethsemane, a sign of how intolerable he felt the thorn to be.

**12, 9: But he said to me:** Paul's petition is denied; release and healing are withheld for a higher purpose. The Greek perfect tense indicates that Jesus' earlier response still holds at the time of writing. **My grace is sufficient for you:** this is not a statement about the sufficiency of grace in general. Jesus speaks directly to Paul's situation. **Is made perfect:** i.e., is given most fully and manifests itself fully.

**12, 9b-10a:** Paul draws the conclusion from the autobiographical anecdote and integrates it into the subject of this part of the boast. **Weaknesses:** the apostolic hardships he must endure, including active personal hostility, as specified in a final catalogue (10a). **That the power of Christ may dwell with me:** Paul pinpoints the ground for the paradoxical strategy he has adopted in his self-defense.

**12, 10b: When I am weak, then I am strong:** Paul recognizes a twofold pattern in the resolution of the weakness-power (and death-life) dialectic, each of which looks to Jesus as the model and is experienced in him. The first is personal, involving a reversal in oneself (Jesus, 13, 4a; Paul, 1, 9–10; 4, 10–11; 6, 9). The second is apostolic, involving an effect on others (Jesus, 5, 14–15; Paul, 1, 6; 4, 12; 13, 9). The specific kind of "effectiveness in ministry" that Paul promises to demonstrate on his arrival (13, 4b; cf 10, 1–11) involves elements of both; this, too, will be modeled on Jesus' experience and a participation in that experience (9; 13, 3b).

**12, 11–18:** This brief section forms an epilogue or concluding observation to Paul's boast, corresponding to the prologue in 11, 1–15. A four-step sequence of ideas is common to these two sections: Paul qualifies his boast as folly (11, 1; 12, 11a), asserts his noninferiority to the "superapostles" (11, 5; 12, 11b), exemplifies this by allusion to charismatic endowments (11, 6; 12, 12), and finally denies that he has been a financial burden to the community (11, 7–12; 12, 13–18).

**12, 12:** Despite weakness and affliction (suggested by the mention of **endurance**), his ministry has been accompanied by demonstrations of power (cf 1 Cor 2, 3–4). **Signs of an apostle:** visible proof of belonging to Christ and of mediating Christ's power, which the opponents require as touchstones of apostleship (11; cf 13, 3).

**12, 13–18:** Paul insists on his intention to continue refusing support from the community (cf 11, 8–12). In defending his practice and his motivation, he once more protests his love (cf 11, 11) and rejects the suggestion of secret self-enrichment. He has recourse here again to language applied to his opponents earlier: "cunning" (11, 3), "deceit" (11, 13), "got the better of you" (see the note on 11, 20), "take advantage" (2, 11).

**12, 19—13, 10:** This concludes the development begun in ch 10. In the chiastic arrangement of the material (see the note on 10, 1—13, 10), this final part corresponds to the opening; there are important similarities of content between the two sections as well.

**12, 19:** This verse looks back at the previous chapters and calls them by their proper name, a defense, an **apologia** (cf 1 Cor 9, 3). Yet Paul insists on an important distinction: he has indeed been speaking for their benefit, but the ultimate judgment to which he submits is God's (cf 1 Cor 4, 3–5). This verse also leads into the final section, announcing two of its themes: judgment and building up.

**12, 20: I fear that . . . :** earlier Paul expressed fear that the Corinthians were being victimized, exploited, seduced from right thinking by his opponents (11, 3–4.19–21). Here he alludes unexpectedly to moral disorders among the Corinthians themselves. The catalogue suggests the effects of factions that have grown up around rival apostles.

u Mt 26, 39–44. v 4, 7. w 6, 4–5; Rom 5, 3 / Phil 4, 13. x 11, 5. y Rom 15, 19; 1 Thes 1, 5. z 11, 9–12. a 11, 3.13. b 2, 13; 8, 16.23. c 1 Cor 1, 11; 3, 3.

find you not such as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish; that there may be rivalry, jealousy, fury, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 *I fear that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness they practiced.

## CHAPTER 13

Ch 10–13 See RG 501–503

1 d*This third time I am coming to you. "On the testimony of two or three witnesses a fact shall be established." 2*I warned those who sinned earlier and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not be lenient, 3*since you are looking for proof of Christ speaking in me. He is not weak toward you but powerful in you. 4For indeed he was crucified out of weakness, but he lives by the power of God. So also we are weak in him, but toward you we shall live with him by the power of God.

5*Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, of course, you fail the test. 6I hope you will discover that we have not failed. 7But we pray to God that you may not do evil, not that we may appear to have passed the test but that you may do what is right, even though we may seem to have failed. 8For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9For we rejoice when we are weak but you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement.

10 e*I am writing this while I am away, so that when I come I may not have to be severe in virtue of the authority that the Lord has given me to build up and not to tear down.

## V: Conclusion

11*Finally, brothers, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12f Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the holy ones greet you.

13 g The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.

**12, 21: Again:** one can also translate, "I fear that when I come my God may again humiliate me." Paul's allusion to the humiliation and mourning that may await him recall the mood he described in 2, 1–4, but there is no reference here to any individual such as there is in 2, 5–11. The crisis of ch 2 has happily been resolved by integration of the offender and repentance (7, 4–16), whereas 12, 21 is preoccupied with still unrepentant sinners. The sexual sins recall 1 Cor 5–7.

**13, 1: This third time I am coming:** designation of the forthcoming visit as the "third" (cf 12, 14) may indicate that, in addition to his founding sojourn in Corinth, Paul had already made the first of two visits mentioned as planned in 1, 15, and the next visit will be the long-postponed second of these. If so, the materials in 1, 12—2, 13 plus 7, 4–16 and chs 10–13 may date from the same period of time, presumably of some duration, between Paul's second and third visit, though it is not clear that they are addressing the same crisis. The chronology is too unsure and the relations between sections of 2 Cor too unclear to yield any certainty. The hypothesis that chs 10–13 are themselves the "tearful letter" mentioned at 2, 3–4 creates more problems than it solves.

**13, 2: I warned those who sinned earlier:** mention of unrepentant sinners (12, 21 and here) and of an oral admonition given them on an earlier visit complicates the picture at the very end of Paul's development. It provides, in fact, a second explanation for the show of power that has been threatened from the beginning (10, 1–6), but a different reason for it, quite unsuspected until now. It is not clear whether Paul is merely alluding to a dimension of the situation that he has not previously had occasion to mention, or whether some other community crisis, not directly connected with that behind chs 10–13, has influenced the final editing. **I will not be lenient:** contrast Paul's hesitation and reluctance to inflict pain in 1, 23 and 2, 1–4. The next visit will bring the showdown.

**13, 3–4:** Paul now gives another motive for severity when he comes, the charge of weakness leveled against him as an apostle. The motive echoes more closely the opening section (10, 1–18) and the intervening development (especially 11, 30—12, 10). **Proof of Christ speaking in me:** the threat of 10, 1–2 is reworded to recall Paul's conformity with the pattern of Christ, his insertion into the interplay of death and life, weakness and power (cf the note on 12, 10b).

**13, 5–9:** Paul turns the challenge mentioned in v 3 on them: they are to put themselves to the test to demonstrate whether Christ is in them. These verses involve a complicated series of plays on the theme of **dokimē** (testing, proof, passing and failing a test). Behind this stands the familiar distinction between present human judgment and final divine judgment. This is the final appearance of the theme (cf 10, 18; 11, 15; 12, 19).

**13, 10: Authority . . . to build up and not to tear down:** Paul restates the purpose of his letter in language that echoes 10, 2.8, emphasizing the positive purpose of his authority in their regard. This verse forms an inclusion with the topic sentence of the section (12, 19), as well as with the opening of this entire portion of the letter (10, 1–2).

**13, 11–13:** These verses may have originally concluded chs 10–13, but they have nothing specifically to do with the material of that section. It is also possible to consider them a conclusion to the whole of 2 Cor in its present edited form. The exhortations are general, including a final appeal for peace in the community. The letter ends calmly, after its many storms, with the prospect of ecclesial unity and divine blessing. The final verse is one of the clearest trinitarian passages in the New Testament.

d Dt 19, 15; Mt 18, 16; Jn 8, 17; Heb 10, 28. e 10, 8. f Rom 16, 16; 1 Cor 16, 20 / Phil 4, 22; 1 Thes 5, 26; 1 Pt 5, 14. g Rom 16, 20; 1 Cor 16, 23.

# THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians
See RG
503–509

The Galatians to whom the letter is addressed were Paul's converts, most likely among the descendants of Celts who had invaded western and central Asia Minor in the third century B.C. and had settled in the territory around Ancyra (modern Ankara, Turkey). Paul had passed through this area on his second missionary journey (Acts 16, 6) and again on his third (Acts 18, 23). It is less likely that the recipients of this letter were Paul's churches in the southern regions of Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia where he had preached earlier in the Hellenized cities of Perge, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13, 13—14, 27); this area was part of the Roman province of Galatia, and some scholars think that South Galatia was the destination of this letter.

If it is addressed to the Galatians in the north, the letter was probably written around A.D. 54 or 55, most likely from Ephesus after Paul's arrival there for a stay of several years on his third missionary journey (Acts 19; 20, 31). On the South Galatian theory, the date would be earlier, perhaps A.D. 48–50. Involved is the question of how one relates the events of 2, 1-10 to the "Council of Jerusalem" described in Acts 15 (see the notes on each passage).

In any case, the new Christians whom Paul is addressing were converts from paganism (4, 8-9) who were now being enticed by other missionaries to add the observances of the Jewish law, including the rite of circumcision, to the cross of Christ as a means of salvation. For, since Paul's visit, some other interpretation of Christianity had been brought to these neophytes, probably by converts from Judaism (the name "Judaizers" is sometimes applied to them); it has specifically been suggested that they were Jewish Christians who had come from the austere Essene sect.

These interlopers insisted on the necessity of following certain precepts of the Mosaic law along with faith in Christ. They were undermining Paul's authority also, asserting that he had not been trained by Jesus himself, that his gospel did not agree with that of the original and true apostles in Jerusalem, that he had kept from his converts in Galatia the necessity of accepting circumcision and other key obligations of the Jewish law, in order more easily to win them to Christ, and that his gospel was thus not the full and authentic one held by "those of repute" in Jerusalem (2, 2). Some scholars also see in chapters 5 and 6 another set of opponents against whom Paul writes, people who in their emphasis on the Spirit set aside all norms for conduct and became libertines in practice.

When Paul learned of the situation, he wrote this defense of his apostolic authority and of the correct understanding of the faith. He set forth the unique importance of Christ and his redemptive sacrifice on the cross, the freedom that Christians enjoy from the old burdens of the law, the total sufficiency of Christ and of faith in Christ as the way to God and to eternal life, and the beauty of the new life of the Spirit. Galatians is thus a summary of basic Pauline theology. Its themes were more fully and less polemically developed in the Letter to the Romans.

Autobiographically, the letter gives us Paul's own accounts of how he came to faith (1, 15-24), the agreement in "the truth of the gospel" (2, 5.14) that he shared with the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem, James, Kephas, and John (2, 1-10), and the rebuke he had to deliver to Kephas in Antioch for inconsistency, contrary to the gospel, on the issue of table fellowship in the racially mixed church of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch (2, 11-14; cf 15-21). At the conclusion of the letter (6, 11-18), Paul wrote in his own hand (cf 2 Thes 3, 17-18) a vivid summary of the message to the Galatians.

In his vigorous emphasis on the absolute preeminence of Christ and his cross as God's way to salvation and holiness, Paul stresses Christian freedom and the ineffectiveness of the Mosaic law for gaining divine favor and blessings (3, 19-29). The pious Jew saw in the law a way established by God to win divine approval by a life of meticulous observance of ritual, social, and moral regulations. But Paul's profound insight into the higher designs of God in Christ led him to understand and welcome the priority of promise and faith (shown in the experience of Abraham, 3, 6-18) and the supernatural gifts of the Spirit (3, 2-5; 5, 16—6, 10). His enthusiasm for this new vision of the life of grace in Christ and of the uniquely salvific role of Christ's redemptive death on the cross shines through this whole letter.

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Galatians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-5)
II. Loyalty to the Gospel (1, 6-10)
III. Paul's Defense of His Gospel and His Authority (1, 11—2, 21)
IV. Faith and Liberty (3, 1—4, 31)
V. Exhortation to Christian Living (5, 1—6, 10)
VI. Conclusion (6, 11-18)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1 See RG 505

**Greeting** [1 a b]*Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, [2]*and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: [3]grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4 c]*who gave himself for our sins that he might rescue us from the present evil age in accord with the will of our God and Father, [5 d]to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

## II: Loyalty to the Gospel

[6 e]*I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by [the] grace [of Christ] for a different gospel [7](not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. [8 f]*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! [9]As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

[10 g]*Am I now currying favor with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

**1, 1–5:** See the note on Rom 1, 1–7, concerning the greeting.

**1, 1: Apostle:** because of attacks on his authority in Galatia, Paul defends his apostleship. He is not an apostle commissioned by a congregation (Phil 2, 25; 2 Cor 8, 23) or even by prophets (1 Tm 1, 18 and 4, 14) but **through Jesus Christ and God the Father.**

**1, 2: All the brothers:** fellow believers in Christ, male and female; cf 3, 27–28. Paul usually mentions the co-sender(s) at the start of a letter, but the use of **all** is unique, adding weight to the letter. **Galatia:** central Turkey more likely than the Roman province of Galatia; see Introduction.

**1, 4:** The greeting in v 3 is expanded by a christological formula that stresses deliverance through the Lord Jesus from a world dominated by Satan; cf 2 Cor 4, 4; Eph 2, 2; 6, 12.

**1, 6–10:** In place of the usual thanksgiving (see the note on Rom 1, 8), Paul, with little to be thankful for in the Galatian situation, expresses amazement at the way his converts are deserting the gospel of Christ for a perverted message. He reasserts the one gospel he has preached (7–9) and begins to defend himself (10).

**1, 6: The one who called you:** God or Christ, though in actuality Paul was the divine instrument to call the Galatians.

**1, 8: Accursed:** in Greek, **anathema;** cf Rom 9, 3; 1 Cor 12, 3; 16, 22.

**1, 10:** This charge by Paul's opponents, that he sought to conciliate people with flattery and to curry favor with God, might refer to his mission practices (cf 1 Cor 9, 19–23) but the word **still** suggests it refers to his pre-Christian days (cf 14; Phil 3, 6). The self-description **slave of Christ** is one Paul often uses in a greeting (Rom 1, 1).

a Rom 1, 1–7; 1 Cor 1, 1–3. b 1, 11–12. c 2, 20; Eph 5, 2; 1 Tm 2, 6 / 1 Jn 5, 19 / Rom 12, 2; Eph 5, 16; Heb 10, 10. d Rom 16, 27; 2 Tm 4, 18. e 5, 8.10; Acts 15, 1.24; 2 Cor 11, 4. f 1 Cor 16, 22 / 5, 3.21; 2 Cor 13, 2. g 2 Cor 5, 11 / 1 Thes 2, 4.

## III: Paul's Defense of His Gospel and His Authority

**His Call by Christ** 11 *h**Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. 12 *For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 *i**For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, 14 *j*and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions. 15 *k*But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 *l**to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, 17 *nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.

18 *m**Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas and remained with him for fifteen days. 19 *n**But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord. 20 *o*(As to what I am writing to you, behold, before God, I am not lying.) 21 *p*Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown personally to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 23 *q*they only kept hearing that "the one who once was persecuting us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 So they glorified God because of me.

## CHAPTER 2

**The Council of Jerusalem** 1 *r**Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 *s**I went up

Ch 2 See RG 506–507

1, 11—2, 21: Paul's presentation on behalf of his message and of his apostleship reflects rhetorical forms of his day: he first narrates the facts about certain past events (1, 12—2, 14) and then states his contention regarding justification by faith as the gospel message (2, 15–21). Further arguments follow from both experience and scripture in chs 3 and 4, before he draws out the ethical consequences (5, 1—6, 10). The specific facts that he takes up here to show that his gospel is not a human invention (1, 11) but **came through a revelation of Jesus Christ** (1, 12) deal with his own calling as a Christian missionary (1, 13–17), his initial relations with the apostles in Jerusalem (1, 18–24), a later journey to Jerusalem (2, 1–10), and an incident in Antioch involving Kephas and persons from James (2, 11–14). The content of Paul's revealed gospel is then set forth in the heart of the letter (2, 15–21).

1, 12: Although Paul received his gospel **through a revelation** from Christ, this did not exclude his use of early Christian confessional formulations. See the note on 1, 4.

1, 13–17: Along with Phil 3, 4–11, which also moves from autobiography to its climax in a discussion on justification by faith (cf Gal 2, 15–21), this passage is Paul's chief account of the change from his **former way of life** (13) to service as a Christian missionary (16); cf Acts 9, 1–22; 22, 4–16; 26, 9–18. Paul himself does not use the term "conversion" but stresses revelation (12.16). In v 15 his language echoes the Old Testament prophetic call of Jeremiah. Unlike the account in Acts (cf 22, 4–16), the calling of Paul here includes the mission to proclaim Christ to **the Gentiles** (16).

1, 16: **Flesh and blood:** human authorities (cf Mt 16, 17; 1 Cor 15, 50). Paul's apostleship comes from God (1).

1, 17: **Arabia:** probably the region of the Nabataean Arabs, east and south of Damascus.

1, 18–24: Paul's first journey to Jerusalem as a Christian, according to Galatians (cf Acts 9, 23–31 and the note on Acts 12, 25). He is quite explicit about contacts there, testifying under oath (20). On returning to **Syria** (perhaps specifically Damascus, cf v 17) **and Cilicia** (including his home town Tarsus, cf Acts 9, 30; 22, 3), Paul most likely engaged in missionary work. He underscores the fact that Christians in Judea knew of him only by reputation.

1, 18: **After three years:** two years and more, since Paul's call. To confer with Cephas may mean simply "pay a visit" or more specifically "get information from" him about Jesus, over a two-week period. **Cephas:** Aramaic name of Simon (Peter); cf Mt 16, 16–18 and the notes there.

1, 19: **James the brother of the Lord:** not one of the Twelve, but a brother of Jesus (see the note on Mk 6, 3). He played an important role in the Jerusalem church (see the note on Gal 2, 9), the leadership of which he took over from Peter (Acts 12, 17). Paul may have regarded James as an apostle.

2, 1–10: Paul's second journey to Jerusalem, according to Galatians, involved a private meeting with **those of repute** (2). At issue was a Gentile, Titus, and the question of circumcision, which **false brothers** (4) evidently demanded for him. Paul insists that the gospel he preaches (2; cf 1, 9.11) remained intact with no addition by those of repute (6); that **Titus** was not **compelled** to accept circumcision (3); and that he and the reputed **pillars** in Jerusalem agreed on how each would advance the missionary task (7–10). Usually, 1–10 is equated with the "Council of Jerusalem," as it is called, described in Acts 15. See the notes on Acts 15, 6–12 and 15, 13–35, the latter concerning the "decree" that Paul does not mention.

2, 1: **After fourteen years:** thirteen or more years, probably reckoned from the return to Syria and Cilicia (1, 21), though possibly from Paul's calling as a Christian (1, 15). **Barnabas:** cf 9.13; 1 Cor 9, 6. A Jewish Christian missionary, with whom Paul worked (Acts 4, 36–37; 11, 22.25.30; 12, 25; 13, 1–3; 15, 2). **Titus:** a missionary companion of Paul (2 Cor 2, 13; 7, 6.13–15; 8, 6.16.23; 12, 18), non-Jewish (Gal 2, 3), never mentioned in Acts.

2, 2: **A revelation:** cf 1, 1.12. Paul emphasizes it was God's will, not Jerusalem authority, that led to the journey. Acts 15, 2 states that the church in Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas for the task. **Those of repute:** leaders of the Jerusalem church; the term, while positive, may be slightly ironic (cf 6.9). **Run, in vain:** while Paul presents a positive picture in what follows, his missionary work in Galatia would have been to no purpose if his oppo-

h 1 Cor 15, 1 / 1, 1; Eph 3, 3. i Acts 8, 1–3; 9, 1–2; 1 Cor 15, 9. j Acts 26, 4–5. k Is 49, 1; Jer 1, 4. l 1, 11–12; Rom 1, 5; 1 Cor 15, 10; Acts 9, 3–9 / 2, 2.7 / Mt 16, 17. m Acts 9, 26–30 / Jn 1, 42. n 2, 9; Mt 13, 55; Acts 12, 17. o Rom 9, 1; 2 Cor 11, 31. p Acts 9, 30. q 1, 13. r Acts 15, 2. s 1, 11–12.16 / 1, 16 / Phil 2, 16.

in accord with a revelation, and I presented to
them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles—
but privately to those of repute—so that I might
not be running, or have run, in vain.
3 t*Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me,
although he was a Greek, was compelled to be
circumcised, 4 u*but because of the false broth-
ers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on
our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that
they might enslave us— 5 v*to them we did not
submit even for a moment, so that the truth of
the gospel might remain intact for you. 6 w*But
from those who were reputed to be important
(what they once were makes no difference to
me; God shows no partiality)—those of repute
made me add nothing. 7 x*On the contrary,
when they saw that I had been entrusted with
the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to
the circumcised, 8 for the one who worked in
Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised
worked also in me for the Gentiles, 9 y*and
when they recognized the grace bestowed upon
me, James and Cephas and John, who were re-
puted to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their
right hands in partnership, that we should go to
the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.
10 z*Only, we were to be mindful of the poor,
which is the very thing I was eager to do.

**Peter's Inconsistency at Antioch** 11 a*And
when Cephas came to antioch, I opposed him to
his face because he clearly was wrong. 12 b*For,
until some people came from James, he used to
eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he
began to draw back and separated himself,
because he was afraid of the circumcised.
13 c*And the rest of the Jews [also] acted hypo-
critically along with him, with the result that
even Barnabas was carried away by their hypoc-
risy. 14 d*But when I saw that they were not on
the right road in line with the truth of the gospel,
I said to Cephas in front of all, "If you, though a
Jew, are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew,
how can you compel the Gentiles to live like
Jews?"

**Faith and Works** 15*We, who are jews by na-
ture and not sinners from among the Gentiles,

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nents were correct that circumcision is needed for complete faith in Christ.

**2, 3: Not even** a Gentile Christian like Titus was compelled to receive the rite of circumcision. The Greek text could be interpreted that he voluntarily accepted circumcision, but this is unlikely in the overall argument.

**2, 4: False brothers:** Jewish Christians who took the position that Gentile Christians must first become Jews through circumcision and observance of the Mosaic law in order to become Christians; cf Acts 15, 1.

**2, 5: The truth of the gospel:** the true gospel, in contrast to the false one of the opponents (1, 6–9); the gospel of grace, used as a norm (14).

**2, 7–9:** Some think that actual "minutes" of the meeting are here quoted. Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles (1, 16) is recognized alongside that of Peter to the Jews. Moreover, the right to proclaim the gospel without requiring circumcision and the Jewish law is sealed by a handshake. That Paul and colleagues **should go to the Gentiles** did not exclude his preaching to the Jews as well (Rom 1, 13–16) or Kephas to Gentile areas.

**2, 9: James and Cephas and John:** see the notes on 1, 18 and 19; on Peter and John as leaders in the Jerusalem church, cf Acts 3, 1 and 8, 14. The order here, with James first, may reflect his prominence in Jerusalem after Peter (Cephas) departed (Acts 12, 17).

**2, 10: The poor:** Jerusalem Christians or a group within the church there (cf Rom 15, 26). The collection for them was extremely important in Paul's thought and labor (cf Rom 15, 25–28; 1 Cor 16, 1–4; 2 Cor 8 and 9).

**2, 11–14:** The decision reached in Jerusalem (3–7) recognized the freedom of Gentile Christians from the Jewish law. But the problem of table fellowship between Jewish Christians, who possibly still kept kosher food regulations, and Gentile believers was not yet settled. When Cephas first came to the racially mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch (12), he ate with non-Jews. Pressure from persons arriving later from Jerusalem caused him and Barnabas to draw back. Paul therefore publicly rebuked Peter's inconsistency toward the gospel (14). Some think that what Paul said on that occasion extends through v 16 or v 21.

**2, 11: Clearly was wrong:** literally, "stood condemned," by himself and also by Paul. His action in breaking table fellowship was especially grievous if the eating involved the meal at the Lord's supper (cf 1 Cor 11, 17–25).

**2, 12: Some people came from James:** strict Jewish Christians (cf Acts 15, 1.5; 21, 20–21), either sent by James (1, 19; 2, 9) or claiming to be from the leader of the Jerusalem church. **The circumcised:** presumably Jewish Christians, not Jews.

**2, 13: The Jews:** Jewish Christians, like Barnabas. **Hypocrisy:** literally, "pretense," "play-acting"; moral insincerity.

**2, 14: Compel the Gentiles to live like Jews:** that is, conform to Jewish practices, such as circumcision (3–5) or regulations about food (12).

**2, 15–21:** Following on the series of incidents cited above, Paul's argument, whether spoken to Cephas at Antioch or only now articulated, is pertinent to the Galatian situation, where believers were having themselves circumcised (6, 12–13) and obeying other aspects of Jewish law (4, 9–10; 5, 1–4). He insists that salvation is by faith in Christ, not by works of the law. His teaching on the gospel concerns justification by faith (16) in relation to sin (17), law (19), life in Christ (19–20), and grace (21).

t 2 Cor 2, 13; 7, 6–7; 8, 16–17; 12, 18; Ti 1, 4 / 2, 14; 6, 12. u 5, 1; Acts 15, 1.24. v 2, 14; 4, 16. w Dt 10, 17; Rom 2, 11. x 1, 15–16; Acts 9, 15; 15, 12; 22, 21; Rom 1, 5. y Rom 15, 15 / 1, 18–19; Jn 1, 42; Acts 12, 17 / 2, 1. z Acts 11, 29–30; Rom 15, 25–28; 1 Cor 16, 1–4; 2 Cor 8, 9. a 1, 18 / Acts 11, 19–30; 15, 1–2. b Acts 10, 15.28; 11, 3. c 2, 1.9. d 2, 5 / 1, 18; 2, 9 / 2, 3.

16 e*[yet] who know that a person is not justified
by works of the law but through faith in Jesus
Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus
that we may be justified by faith in Christ and
not by works of the law, because by works of the
law no one will be justified. 17*But if, in seeking
to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found
to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? Of
course not! 18*But if I am building up again
those things that I tore down, then I show
myself to be a transgressor. 19f*For through the
law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I
have been crucified with Christ; 20gyet I live, no
longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now
live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God
who has loved me and given himself up for me.
21hI do not nullify the grace of God; for if
justification comes through the law, then Christ
died for nothing.

## IV: Faith and Liberty

### CHAPTER 3

**Justification by Faith** 1i*O stupid Galatians!
Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes
Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?
2j*I want to learn only this from you: did you
receive the Spirit from works of the law, or from
faith in what you heard? 3k*Are you so stupid?
After beginning with the Spirit, are you now
ending with the flesh? 4*Did you experience so
many things in vain?—if indeed it was in vain.
5lDoes, then, the one who supplies the Spirit to
you and works mighty deeds among you do so
from works of the law or from faith in what you
heard? 6m*Thus Abraham "believed God, and it
was credited to him as righteousness."

7n*Realize then that it is those who have faith
who are children of Abraham. 8oScripture,
which saw in advance that God would justify the
Gentiles by faith, foretold the good news to
Abraham, saying, "Through you shall all the
nations be blessed." 9pConsequently, those who
have faith are blessed along with Abraham who
had faith. 10q*For all who depend on works of
the law are under a curse; for it is written,
"Cursed be everyone who does not persevere in
doing all the things written in the book of the
law." 11rAnd that no one is justified before God
by the law is clear, for "the one who is righteous

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**2, 16: No one will be justified:** Ps 143, 2 is reflected.

**2, 17: A minister of sin:** literally, "a servant of sin" (cf Rom 15, 8), an agent of sin, one who promotes it. This is possibly a claim by opponents that justification on the basis of faith in Christ makes Christ an abettor of sin when Christians **are found to be sinners.** Paul denies the conclusion (cf Rom 6, 1–4).

**2, 18:** To return to observance of the law as the means to salvation would entangle one not only in inevitable transgressions of it but also in the admission that it was wrong to have abandoned the law in the first place.

**2, 19: Through the law I died to the law:** this is variously explained: the law revealed sin (Rom 7, 7–9) and led to death and then to belief in Christ; or, the law itself brought the insight that law cannot justify (16; Ps 143, 2); or, the "law of Christ" (6, 2) led to abandoning the Mosaic law; or, the law put Christ to death (cf 3, 13) and so provided a way to our salvation, through baptism into Christ, through which we die (**crucified with Christ;** see Rom 6, 6). Cf also 3, 19–25 on the role of the law in reference to salvation.

**3, 1–14:** Paul's contention that justification comes not through the law or the works of the law but by faith in Christ and in his death (2, 16.21) is supported by appeals to Christian experience (1–5) and to scripture (6–14). The gift of God's Spirit to the Galatians came from the gospel received in faith, not from doing what the law enjoins. The story of Abraham shows that faith in God brings **righteousness** (6; Gn 15, 6). The promise to Abraham (8; Gn 12, 3) extends to the Gentiles (14).

**3, 1: Stupid:** not just senseless, for they were in danger of deserting their salvation.

**3, 2: Faith in what you heard:** Paul's message received with faith. The Greek can also mean "the proclamation of the faith" or "a hearing that comes from faith."

**3, 3:** On the contrast of **Spirit** and **flesh,** cf Rom 8, 1–11. Having received the Spirit, they need not be circumcised now.

**3, 4: Experience so many things:** probably the **mighty deeds** of v 5 but possibly the experience of sufferings.

**3, 6: Abraham . . . righteousness:** see Gn 15, 6; Rom 4, 3. The Galatians like Abraham heard with faith and experienced justification. This first argument forms the basis for the further scriptural evidence that follows.

**3, 7–9: Faith** is what matters, for **Abraham** and the **children of Abraham,** in contrast to the claims of the opponents that circumcision and observance of the law are needed to bring the promised blessing of Gn 12, 3; cf Gn 18, 18; Sir 44, 21; Acts 3, 25.

**3, 10–14:** Those **who depend** not on promise and faith but **on works of the law are under a curse** because they do **not persevere in doing all the things written in the book of the law** (10; Dt 27, 26) in order to gain life (12; Lv 18, 5; cf Rom 10, 5). But scripture teaches that **no one is justified before God by the law** (11; Hb 2, 4, adapted from the Greek version of Habakkuk; cf Rom 1, 17; Heb 10, 38). Salvation, then, depends on faith in Christ who died on the cross (13), taking upon himself a curse found in Dt 21, 23 (about executed criminals hanged in public view), to free us from **the curse of the law** (13). That the Gentile Galatians have received the promised Spirit (14) by faith and in no other way returns the argument to the experience cited in vv 1–5.

e 3, 2.11; Ps 143, 1–2; Rom 3, 20.28; 4, 5; 11, 6; Eph 2, 8–9; Phil 3, 9. f 6, 14; Rom 6, 6.8.10; 7, 6. g 1, 4; Rom 8, 10–11; Col 3, 3–4. h 5, 2. i 5, 7; 1 Cor 1, 23. j 2, 16 / 3, 14; Rom 10, 17. k 5, 16–18. l 2, 16. m Gn 15, 6; Rom 4, 3; Jas 2, 23. n 3, 29; Rom 4, 11–12 / Sir 44, 19–21. o Gn 12, 3; 18, 17–19; Acts 3, 25. p Rom 4, 16. q Dt 27, 26; Jas 2, 10. r 2, 16; Hb 2, 4; Rom 1, 17.

by faith will live." 12 [s]But the law does not
depend on faith; rather, "the one who does
these things will live by them." 13 [t]Christ ran-
somed us from the curse of the law by becoming
a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed be
everyone who hangs on a tree," 14 [u]that the
blessing of Abraham might be extended to the
Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might
receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**The Law Did Not Nullify the Promise**

15 [v]*Brothers, in human terms I say that no one
can annul or amend even a human will once
ratified. 16 [w]*Now the promises were made to
Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say,
"And to descendants," as referring to many, but
as referring to one, "And to your descendant,"
who is Christ. 17 [x]*This is what I mean: the law,
which came four hundred and thirty years
afterward, does not annul a covenant previously
ratified by God, so as to cancel the promise.
18 [y]*For if the inheritance comes from the law, it
is no longer from a promise; but God bestowed
it on Abraham through a promise.

19 [z]*Why, then, the law? It was added for
transgressions, until the descendant came to
whom the promise had been made; it was
promulgated by angels at the hand of a mediator.
20 [a]Now there is no mediator when only one
party is involved, and God is one. 21 [b]Is the law
then opposed to the promises [of God]? Of
course not! For if a law had been given that
could bring life, then righteousness would in
reality come from the law. 22 [c]But scripture
confined all things under the power of sin, that
through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might
be given to those who believe.

**What Faith Has Brought Us**

23 [d]*Before faith
came, we were held in custody under law,
confined for the faith that was to be revealed.
24 [e]*Consequently, the law was our disciplinar-
ian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
25 [f]But now that faith has come, we are no
longer under a disciplinarian. 26 [g]*For through
faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.
27 [h]*For all of you who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 [i]There is
neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor
free person, there is not male and female; for

**3, 15–18:** A third argument to support Paul's position that salvation is not through the law but by promise (1–14) comes from legal practice and scriptural history. A legal agreement or **human will,** duly **ratified,** is unalterable (15). God's **covenant** with **Abraham** and its repeated promises (Gn 12, 2–3.7; 13, 15; 17, 7–8; 22, 16–18; 24, 7) is not superseded by **the law,** which came much later, in the time of Moses. **The inheritance** (of the Spirit and the blessings) is by promise, not by law (18). Paul's argument hinges on the fact that the same Greek word, **diathēkē,** can be rendered as **will** or testament (15) and as **covenant** (17).

**3, 16: Descendant:** literally, "and to his seed." The Hebrew, as in Gn 12, 7; 15, 18; 22, 17–18, is a collective singular, traditionally rendered as a plural, **descendants,** but taken by Paul in its literal number to refer to **Christ** as descendant of Abraham.

**3, 17: Four hundred and thirty years afterward:** follows Ex 12, 40 in the Greek (Septuagint) version, in contrast to Gn 15, 13 and Acts 7, 6, for chronology.

**3, 18:** This refutes the opponents' contention that the promises of God are fulfilled only as a reward for human observance of the law.

**3, 19–22:** A digression: if the Mosaic law, then, does not save or **bring life,** why was it given? Elsewhere, Paul says the law served to show what sin is (Rom 3, 20; 7, 7–8). Here the further implication is that the law in effect served to produce transgressions. Moreover, it was received at second hand **by angels,** through a **mediator,** not directly from God (19). The law does not, however, oppose God's purposes, for it carries out its function (22), so that **righteousness** comes by **faith** and **promise,** not by human works of the law.

**3, 19: The descendant:** Christ (16). **By angels:** Dt 33, 2–4 stressed their presence as enhancing the importance of the law; Paul uses their role to diminish its significance (cf Acts 7, 38.53). **A mediator:** Moses. But in a covenant of promise, where all depends on the one God, no mediator is needed (20).

**3, 23–29:** Paul adds a further argument in support of righteousness or justification by faith and through God's promise rather than by works of the law (2, 16; 3, 22): as **children of God, baptized into Christ,** the Galatians are all **Abraham's descendant** and **heirs of the promise** to Abraham (8.14.16–18.29). The teaching in 23–25, that since **faith** (Christianity) **has come, we are no longer under** the law, could be taken with the previous paragraph on the role of the Mosaic law, but it also fits here as a contrast between the situation **before faith** (23) and the results after faith has come (25–29).

**3, 24–25: Disciplinarian:** the Greek **paidagōgos** referred to a slave who escorted a child to school but did not teach or tutor; hence, a guardian or monitor. Applying this to the law fits the role of the law described in vv 19–25.

**3, 26: Children of God:** literally "sons," in contrast to the young child under the disciplinarian in vv 24–25. The term includes males and females (28).

**3, 27: Clothed yourselves with Christ:** literally, "have put on Christ"; cf Rom 13, 14; Eph 4, 24; Col 3, 10. Baptismal imagery, traceable to the Old Testament (Jb 29, 14; Is 59, 17) but also found in pagan mystery cults.

s Lv 18, 5; Rom 10, 5. t Dt 21, 23; Rom 8, 3; 2 Cor 5, 21. u 3, 2–3.5; Is 44, 3; Jl 3, 1–2; Acts 2, 33. v Rom 3, 5 / Heb 9, 16–17. w Gn 12, 7; 13, 15; 17, 8; 22, 17; 24, 7; Mt 1, 1. x Ex 12, 40. y Rom 4, 16; 11, 6. z Rom 4, 15; 5, 20; 7, 7.13 / Acts 7, 38.53. a Dt 6, 4. b Rom 7, 7.10; 8, 2–4. c Rom 3, 9–20.23; 11, 32. d 4, 3–5; 5, 18. e 2, 16. f Rom 10, 4. g 4, 5–7; Jn 1, 12; Rom 8, 14–17. h Rom 6, 3; 13, 14; Eph 4, 24. i Rom 10, 12; 1 Cor 12, 13; Col 3, 11.

you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] *j*And if you
belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descen-
dant, heirs according to the promise.

## CHAPTER 4

**God's Free Children in Christ** [1]*I mean that
as long as the heir is not of age, he is no different
from a slave, although he is the owner of
everything, [2]but he is under the supervision of
guardians and administrators until the date set
by his father. [3] *k**In the same way we also, when
we were not of age, were enslaved to the
elemental powers of the world. [4] *l*But when the
fullness of time had come, God sent his Son,
born of a woman, born under the law, [5] *m*to
ransom those under the law, so that we might
receive adoption. [6] *n**As proof that you are
children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our
hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" [7] *o*So you are
no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then
also an heir, through God.

**Do Not Throw This Freedom Away** [8] *p**At a
time when you did not know God, you became
slaves to things that by nature are not gods; [9] *q*but
now that you have come to know God, or rather
to be known by God, how can you turn back
again to the weak and destitute elemental pow-
ers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over
again? [10] *r**You are observing days, months, sea-
sons, and years. [11]*I am afraid on your account
that perhaps I have labored for you in vain.

**Appeal to Former Loyalty** [12] *s**I implore you,
brothers, be as I am, because I have also become
as you are. You did me no wrong; [13]*you know
that it was because of a physical illness that I
originally preached the gospel to you, [14]and you
did not show disdain or contempt because of the
trial caused you by my physical condition, but
rather you received me as an angel of God, as
Christ Jesus. [15]*Where now is that blessedness
of yours? Indeed, I can testify to you that, if it
had been possible, you would have torn out your
eyes and given them to me. [16]So now have I
become your enemy by telling you the truth?
[17] *t**They show interest in you, but not in a good
way; they want to isolate you, so that you may
show interest in them. [18]Now it is good to be
shown interest for good reason at all times, and
not only when I am with you. [19] *u*My children,
for whom I am again in labor until Christ be
formed in you! [20]I would like to be with you
now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed
because of you.

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**An Allegory on Christian Freedom** [21]*Tell
me, you who want to be under the law, do you

4, 1–7: What Paul has argued in 3, 26–29 is now elaborated in terms of the Christian as **the heir** (1.7; cf 3, 18.29) freed from control by others. Again, as in 3, 2–5, the proof that Christians are children of God is the gift of the Spirit of Christ relating them intimately to God.

4, 1.3: **Not of age:** an infant or minor.

4, 3: **The elemental powers of the world:** while the term can refer to the "elements" like earth, air, fire, and water or to elementary forms of religion, the sense here is more likely that of celestial beings that were thought in pagan circles to control the world; cf 8; Col 2, 8.20.

4, 6: **Children:** see the note on 3, 26; here in contrast to the infant or young person **not of age** (1.3). **Abba:** cf Mk 14, 36 and the note; Rom 8, 15.

4, 8–11: On the basis of the arguments advanced from 3, 1 through 4, 7, Paul now launches his appeal to the Galatians with the question, **how can you turn back** to the slavery of the law (9)? The question is posed with reference to bondage to the **elemental powers** (see the note on 4, 3) because the Galatians had originally been converted to Christianity from paganism, not Judaism (8). The use of the direct question is like 3, 3–5.

4, 8: **Things that by nature are not gods:** or "gods that by nature do not exist."

4, 10: This is likely a reference to ritual observances from the Old Testament, promoted by opponents: sabbaths or Yom Kippur, new moon, Passover or Pentecost, sabbatical years.

4, 11: Cf 2, 2. If the Galatians become **slaves . . . all over again** to the law (9), Paul will have worked in vain among them.

4, 12–20: A strongly personal section. Paul appeals to past ties between the Galatians and himself. He speaks sharply of the opponents (17–18) and pastorally to the Galatians (19–20).

4, 12: **Because I have also become as you are:** a terse phrase in Greek, meaning "Be as I, Paul, am," i.e., living by faith, independent of the law, for, in spite of my background in Judaism (1, 13), I have become as you Galatians are now, a brother in Christ.

4, 13: **Physical illness:** because its nature is not described, some assume an eye disease (15); others, epilepsy; some relate it to 2 Cor 12, 7–9. **Originally:** this may also be translated "formerly" or "on the first (of two) visit(s)"; cf Acts 16, 6; 18, 23.

4, 15: **That blessedness of yours:** possibly a reference to the Galatians' initial happy reception of Paul (14) and of his gospel (1, 6; 3, 1–4) and their felicitation at such blessedness, but the phrase could also refer ironically to earlier praise by Paul of the Galatians, no longer possible when they turn from the gospel to the claims of the opponents (17–18; 1, 7). If the word is a more literal reference to a beatitude, Gal 3, 26–28 may be in view.

4, 17: **Isolate you:** that is, from the blessings of the gospel and/or from Paul.

4, 21–31: Paul supports his appeal for the gospel (9; 1, 6–9; 2,

j 3, 7.14.16.18; Rom 4, 16–17; 9, 7 / 4, 1.7; Rom 4, 13–14; 8, 17; Heb 6, 12; Jas 2, 5. k 3, 23 / 4, 9; Col 2, 20. l Mk 1, 15. m 3, 13.26. n 3, 26; Rom 8, 15. o 3, 29; Rom 8, 16–17. p 1 Cor 12, 2. q 4, 3; Col 2, 20. r Col 2, 16–20. s 1 Cor 11, 1. t 1, 7; 6, 12; Acts 20, 30. u 1 Cor 4, 14–15; 2 Cor 6, 13; 1 Thes 2, 7–8.

not listen to the law? 22 [v]For it is written that
Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman
and the other by the freeborn woman. 23 [w]The
son of the slave woman was born naturally, the
son of the freeborn through a promise. 24 [x]Now
this is an allegory. These women represent two
covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing
children for slavery; this is Hagar. 25*Hagar
represents Sinai, a mountain in Arabia; it corre-
sponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in
slavery along with her children. 26 [y]But the
Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our
mother. 27 [z]*For it is written:

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"Rejoice, you barren one who bore no
children;
break forth and shout, you who were not in
labor;
for more numerous are the children of the
deserted one
than of her who has a husband."

28 [a]Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of
the promise. 29But just as then the child of the
flesh persecuted the child of the spirit, it is the
same now. 30 [b]But what does the scripture say?

"Drive out the slave woman and her son!
For the son of the slave woman shall not
share the inheritance with the son"

of the freeborn. 31 [c]Therefore, brothers, we are
children not of the slave woman but of the
freeborn woman.

## V: Exhortation to Christian Living

### CHAPTER 5

**The Importance of Faith** 1 [d]*For freedom
Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not
submit again to the yoke of slavery.

2 [e]It is I, Paul, who am telling you that if you
have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no
benefit to you. 3 [f]*Once again I declare to every
man who has himself circumcised that he is
bound to observe the entire law. 4You are
separated from Christ, you who are trying to be
justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
5 [g]For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the
hope of righteousness. 6 [h]*For in Christ Jesus,
neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts
for anything, but only faith working through
love.

**Be Not Misled** 7*You were running well; who
hindered you from following [the] truth? 8 [i]*That
enticement does not come from the one who
called you. 9 [j]A little yeast leavens the whole
batch of dough. 10 [k]I am confident of you in the
Lord that you will not take a different view, and
that the one who is troubling you will bear the
condemnation, whoever he may be. 11 [l]*As for

16; 3, 2) by a further argument from scripture (cf 3, 6–18). It involves the relationship of **Abraham** (3, 6–16) to his wife, Sarah, the **freeborn woman**, and to Hagar, **the slave woman**, and the contrast between the sons born to each, **Isaac**, child of promise, and Ishmael, son of Hagar (Gn 16 and 21). Only through Isaac is the promise of God preserved. This **allegory** (24), with its equation of the Sinai covenant and Mosaic law with slavery and of the promise of God with freedom, Paul uses only in light of previous arguments. His quotation of Gn 21, 10 at v 30 suggests on a scriptural basis that the Galatians should expel those who are troubling them (1, 7).

**4, 25: Hagar represents Sinai . . .** : some manuscripts have what seems a geographical note, "For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia."

**4, 27:** Is 54, 1 in the Septuagint translation is applied to Sarah as the **barren one** (in Gn 15) who ultimately becomes the mother not only of Isaac but now of numerous children, i.e., of all those who believe, the **children of the promise** (28).

**5, 1–6:** Paul begins the exhortations, continuing through 6, 10, with an appeal to the Galatians to side with freedom instead of slavery (1). He reiterates his message of justification or righteousness by faith instead of law and circumcision (2–5); cf 2, 16; 3, 3. Faith, not circumcision, is what counts (6).

**5, 1: Freedom:** Paul stresses as the conclusion from the allegory in 4, 21–31 this result of Christ's work for us. It is a principle previously mentioned (2, 4), the responsible use of which v 13 will emphasize.

**5, 3:** Cf 3, 10–12. Just as those who seek to live by the law must carry out all its contents, so those who have faith and live by promise must stand firm in their freedom (1.13).

**5, 6:** Cf Rom 2, 25–26; 1 Cor 7, 19; Gal 6, 15. The Greek for **faith working through love** or "faith expressing itself through love" can also be rendered as "faith energized by (God's) love."

**5, 7–12:** Paul addresses the Galatians directly: with questions (7.11), a proverb (9), a statement (8), and biting sarcasm (12), seeking to persuade the Galatians to break with those trying to add law and circumcision to Christ as a basis for salvation.

**5, 7: Running well:** as in an athletic contest; cf 2, 2; 1 Cor 9, 24–26; Phil 2, 16; 3, 14.

**5, 8: The one who called you:** see the note on 1, 6.

**5, 11: Preaching circumcision:** this could refer to Paul's pre-Christian period (possibly as a missionary for Judaism); more

v Gn 16, 15; 21, 2–3. w Gn 17, 16; Rom 4, 19–20; 9, 7–9. x 3, 17 / Ex 19, 20 / Gn 16, 1. y Heb 12, 22; Rv 21, 2. z Is 54, 1. a Rom 9, 8. b Gn 21, 10. c 3, 29; Jn 8, 35. d 2, 4; 4, 5.9; Jn 8, 32.36. e 2, 21; Acts 15, 1–29. f 3, 10; Rom 2, 25; Jas 2, 10. g Rom 8, 23.25. h 3, 28; 6, 15; 1 Cor 7, 19. i 1, 6. j 1 Cor 5, 6. k 1, 7. l 6, 12.14; 1 Cor 1, 23.

me, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision,
why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the
stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.
12 *Would that those who are upsetting you
might also castrate themselves!

**Freedom for Service** 13 [m]*For you were called
for freedom, brothers. But do not use this
freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather,
serve one another through love. 14 [n]*For the
whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely,
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But
if you go on biting and devouring one another,
beware that you are not consumed by one
another.

16 [o]*I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will
certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh.
17 [p]For the flesh has desires against the Spirit,
and the Spirit against the flesh; these are op-
posed to each other, so that you may not do
what you want. 18 [q]But if you are guided by the
Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 [r]*Now the
works of the flesh are obvious: immorality,
impurity, licentiousness, 20 [s]idolatry, sorcery, ha-
treds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of
selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 *occasions of
envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn
you, as I warned you before, that those who do
such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
22 [t]In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,
peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithful-
ness, 23 [u]gentleness, self-control. Against such
there is no law. 24 [v]Now those who belong to
Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its
passions and desires. 25 [w]If we live in the Spirit,
let us also follow the Spirit. 26 [x]Let us not be
conceited, provoking one another, envious of
one another.

## CHAPTER 6

**Life in the Community of Christ**

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1 [y]*Brothers, even if a person is caught in some
transgression, you who are spiritual should cor-
rect that one in a gentle spirit, looking to
yourself, so that you also may not be tempted.
2 [z]*Bear one another's burdens, and so you will
fulfill the law of Christ. 3 [a]For if anyone thinks he
is something when he is nothing, he is deluding
himself. 4 *Each one must examine his own
work, and then he will have reason to boast with
regard to himself alone, and not with regard to
someone else; 5 [b]for each will bear his own load.

6 [c]*One who is being instructed in the word
should share all good things with his instructor.
7 Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a
person will reap only what he sows, 8 [d]because
the one who sows for his flesh will reap corrup-
tion from the flesh, but the one who sows for the
spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. 9 [e]Let

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probably it arose as a charge from opponents, based perhaps on the story in Acts 16, 1–3 that Paul had circumcised Timothy "on account of the Jews." Unlike the Gentile Titus in Gal 2, 3, Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother. **The stumbling block of the cross:** cf 1 Cor 1, 23.

**5, 12:** A sarcastic half-wish that their knife would go beyond mere circumcision; cf Phil 3, 2 and the note there.

**5, 13–26:** In light of another reminder of the freedom of the gospel (13; cf 1), Paul elaborates on what believers are called to do and be: they fulfill the law by love of neighbor (14–15), walking in the Spirit (16–26), as is illustrated by concrete **fruit of the Spirit** in their lives.

**5, 13: Serve . . . through love:** cf v 6.

**5, 14:** Lv 19, 18, emphasized by Jesus (Mt 22, 39; Lk 10, 27); cf Rom 13, 8–10.

**5, 16–25: Spirit . . . flesh:** cf 3, 3 and the note on Rom 8, 1–13.

**5, 19–23:** Such lists of vices and virtues (cf Rom 1, 29–31; 1 Cor 6, 9–10) were common in the ancient world. Paul contrasts **works of the flesh** (19) with **fruit** (not "works") **of the Spirit** (22). Not law, but the Spirit, leads to such traits.

**5, 21: Occasions of envy:** after the Greek word **phthonoi,** "envies," some manuscripts add a similar sounding one, **phonoi,** "murders."

**6, 1–10:** The ethical exhortations begun at 5, 1 continue with a variety of admonitions to the community (**brothers:** see the note on 1, 2). Nearly every sentence contains a separate item of practical advice; the faith and freedom of the gospel underlie each maxim. Tensions and temptation within communal life have previously been addressed in 5, 15.26, and v 1 continues with a case in which **a person is caught in some transgression** such as those in 5, 19–21; cf 2, 17.

**6, 2: The law of Christ:** cf Rom 8, 2; 1 Cor 9, 21; Gal 5, 14. The principle of love for others is meant. To **bear one another's burdens** is to "serve one another through love" (5, 13).

**6, 4–5:** Self-examination is the cure for self-deception. Compare what you are with what you were before, and give the glory to God; cf Rom 6, 19–22. **Load:** used elsewhere of a soldier's pack. Correcting one's own conduct avoids burdening others with it.

**6, 6:** Implies oral instruction in the faith by catechists; these are to be remunerated for their service; cf Rom 15, 27.

m 5, 1 / Rom 6, 18; 1 Cor 8, 9; 1 Pt 2, 16. n Lv 19, 18; Mt 22, 39; Rom 13, 8–10. o 5, 24–25; Rom 8, 5. p Rom 7, 15.23; 8, 6. q Rom 6, 14; 8, 14. r Rom 1, 29–31; 1 Cor 6, 9–10; Col 3, 5–6.8. s Rv 22, 15. t Eph 5, 9 / 1 Cor 13, 4–7; 2 Cor 6, 6; 1 Tm 4, 12; 2 Pt 1, 6. u 1 Tm 1, 9. v 2, 19; Rom 6, 6; 8, 13. w 5, 16. x Phil 2, 3. y Mt 18, 15; Jas 5, 19 / 1 Cor 10, 12–13. z Col 3, 13 / 1 Cor 9, 21. a 1 Cor 3, 18; 8, 2; 2 Cor 12, 11. b Rom 14, 12. c 1 Cor 9, 14. d Prv 11, 18; Rom 8, 6.13. e 2 Thes 3, 13; Heb 12, 1–3.

us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time
we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.
10 f *So then, while we have the opportunity, let
us do good to all, but especially to those who
belong to the family of the faith.

## VI: Conclusion

**Final Appeal** 11 g *See with what large letters I
am writing to you in my own hand! 12 h *It is
those who want to make a good appearance in
the flesh who are trying to compel you to have
yourselves circumcised, only that they may not
be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 *Not
even those having themselves circumcised ob-
serve the law themselves; they only want you to
be circumcised so that they may boast of your
flesh. 14 i *But may I never boast except in the
cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which
the world has been crucified to me, and I to the
world. 15 j *For neither does circumcision mean
anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a
new creation. 16 k *Peace and mercy be to all
who follow this rule and to the Israel of God.

17 l *From now on, let no one make troubles
for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

18 m The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with
your spirit, brothers. Amen.

**6, 10: The family of the faith:** the Christian household or church. Doing good has a universal object (**to all**), but the local community makes specific the reality of those to be served.

**6, 11–18:** A postscript in Paul's own hand, as was his practice (see 1 Cor 16, 21; 2 Thes 3, 17). Paul summarizes his appeal against his opponents (12–13), then returns to his message of glorying in the cross, not in circumcision, as the means of salvation (14–15; cf 5, 11). A benediction follows at v 16. In the polemical spirit that the attack on his apostleship called forth (1, 11—2, 21), Paul reasserts his missionary credentials (17) before giving a final benediction (18).

**6, 11: Large letters:** in contrast to the finer hand of the scribe who wrote the letter up to this point. The larger Greek letters make Paul's message even more emphatic. Some find a hint of poor eyesight on Paul's part. See the note on 4, 13.

**6, 12–15:** The Jewish Christian opponents wished **not to be persecuted,** possibly by Jews. But since Judaism seems to have had a privileged status as a religion in the Roman empire, circumcised Christians might, if taken as Jews, thereby avoid persecution from the Romans. In any case, Paul instead stresses conformity with **the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;** cf 2, 19–21; 5, 11.

**6, 13: Those having themselves circumcised:** other manuscripts read, "those who have had themselves circumcised."

**6, 14: Through which:** or "through whom."

**6, 15: New creation:** or "new creature"; cf 2 Cor 5, 17.

**6, 16: This rule:** the principle in vv 14 and 15. **The Israel of God:** while the church may be meant (the phrase can be translated "to all who follow this rule, even the Israel of God"; cf 10; 1 Cor 10, 18), the reference may also be to God's ancient people, Israel; cf Pss 125, 5; 128, 6.

**6, 17: The marks of Jesus:** slaves were often branded by marks (**stigmata**) burned into their flesh to show to whom they belonged; so also were devotees of pagan gods. Paul implies that instead of outdated circumcision, his body bears the scars of his apostolic labors (2 Cor 11, 22–31), such as floggings (Acts 16, 22; 2 Cor 11, 25) and stonings (Acts 14, 19), that mark him as belonging to the Christ who suffered (cf Rom 6, 3; 2 Cor 4, 10; Col 1, 24) and will protect his own.

f 1 Thes 5, 15. g 1 Cor 16, 21. h 5, 2.11. i 2, 20; 1 Cor 2, 2. j 5, 6; 1 Cor 7, 19 / 2 Cor 5, 17. k Pss 125, 5; 128, 6. l 2 Cor 4, 10. m Phil 4, 23; 2 Tm 4, 22; Phlm 25.

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# THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Ephesians
See RG
509–514

Ephesians is the great Pauline letter about the church. It deals, however, not so much with a congregation in the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor as with the worldwide church, the head of which is Christ (4, 15), the purpose of which is to be the instrument for making God's plan of salvation known throughout the universe (3, 9-10). Yet this ecclesiology is anchored in God's saving love, shown in Jesus Christ (2, 4-10), and the whole of redemption is rooted in the plan and accomplishment of the triune God (1, 3-14). The language is often that of doxology (1, 3-14) and prayer (cf 1, 15-23; 3, 14-19), indeed of liturgy and hymns (3, 20-21; 5, 14).

The majestic chapters of Ephesians emphasize the unity in the church of Christ that has come about for both Jews and Gentiles within God's household (1, 15—2, 22, especially 2, 11-22) and indeed the "seven unities" of church, Spirit, hope; one Lord, faith, and baptism; and the one God (4, 4-6). Yet the concern is not with the church for its own sake but rather as the means for mission in the world (3, 1—4, 24). The gifts Christ gives its members are to lead to

growth and renewal (4, 7-24). Ethical admonition is not lacking either; all aspects of human life and relationships are illumined by the light of Christ (4, 25—6, 20).

The letter is seemingly addressed by Paul to Christians in Ephesus (1, 1), a place where the apostle labored for well over two years (Acts 19, 10). Yet there is a curiously impersonal tone to the writing for a community with which Paul was so intimately acquainted (cf 3, 2 and 4, 21). There are no personal greetings (cf 6, 23). More significantly, important early manuscripts omit the words "in Ephesus" (see the note on 1, 1). Many therefore regard the letter as an encyclical or "circular letter" sent to a number of churches in Asia Minor, the addressees to be designated in each place by its bearer, Tychicus (6, 21-22). Others think that Ephesians is the letter referred to in Colossians 4, 16 as "to the Laodiceans."

Paul, who is designated as the sole author at 1, 1, is described in almost unparalleled terms with regard to the significant role he has in God's plan for bringing the Gentiles to faith in Christ (3, 1-12). Yet at the time of writing he is clearly in prison (3, 1; 4, 1; 6, 20), suffering afflictions (3, 13). Traditionally this "Captivity Epistle" has, along with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon, been dated to an imprisonment in Rome, likely in A.D. 61–63. Others appeal to an earlier imprisonment, perhaps in Caesarea (Acts 23, 27—27, 2). Since the early ninteenth century, however, much of critical scholarship has considered the letter's style and use of words (especially when compared with Colossians), its concept of the church, and other points of doctrine put forward by the writer as grounds for serious doubt about authorship by Paul. The letter may then be the work of a secretary writing at the apostle's direction or of a later disciple who sought to develop Paul's ideas for a new situation around A.D. 80–100.

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Ephesians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-14)
II. Unity of the Church in Christ (1, 15—2, 22)
III. World Mission of the Church (3, 1—4, 24)
IV. Daily Conduct, an Expression of Unity (4, 25—6, 20)
V. Conclusion (6, 21-24)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** [1] [a]*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the holy ones who are [in Ephesus] faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] [b]grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Father's Plan of Salvation** [3] [c]*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, [4] [d]as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love [5] [e]he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus

Ch 1–2
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510–512

**1, 1–2:** For the epistolary form used at the beginning of letters, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7. Twenty-two of the thirty Greek words in vv 1–2 also occur in Col 1, 1–2.

**1, 1: [In Ephesus]:** the phrase is lacking in important early witnesses such as $P^{46}$ (3rd cent.), and Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th cent.), appearing in the latter two as a fifth-century addition. Basil and Origen mention its absence from manuscripts. See Introduction. Without the phrase, the Greek can be rendered, as in Col 1, 2, "to the holy ones and faithful brothers in Christ."

**1, 3–14:** While a Pauline letter usually continues after the greeting with a prayer of thanksgiving, as in 15–23 below, Ephesians first inserts a blessing of God for the blessings Christians have experienced, as in 2 Cor 1, 3–4 and 1 Pt 1, 3–12. The blessing here, akin to a Jewish **berakah,** is rich in images almost certainly drawn from hymns and liturgy. Many ideas here are also found in Col 1, 3–23. Certain phrases are frequently repeated, such as **in Christ** (3.10.12) or **in him** (4.7.9.11.13) or **in the Beloved** (6) and **(for) the praise of (his) glory** (6.12.14). Some terms like **chose** (4) and **destined** (5) reflect Old Testament theology (Dt 7, 7; 9, 4–6; 23, 5) or Pauline themes (**redemption,** 7.14; **grace,** 6.7) or specific emphases in Col (**forgiveness,** Col 1, 14).

A triadic structure is discernible in vv 3–14: **God** the **Father**

a Rom 1, 7; 1 Cor 1, 1–2; Col 1, 1. b Col 1, 2. c 2, 6; 2 Cor 1, 3. d 5, 27; Jn 15, 16; 17, 24; Rom 8, 29; 2 Thes 2, 13. e Jn 1, 12; 1 Jn 3, 1.

Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, [6] [j]for
the praise of the glory of his grace that he
granted us in the beloved.

**Fulfillment through Christ** [7] [g]In him we have
redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of
transgressions, in accord with the riches of his
grace [8] [h]that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom
and insight, [9] [i]*he has made known to us the
mystery of his will in accord with his favor that
he set forth in him [10] [j]as a plan for the fullness of
times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven
and on earth.

**Inheritance through the Spirit** [11] [k]In him we
were also chosen, destined in accord with the
purpose of the One who accomplishes all things
according to the intention of his will, [12]*so that
we might exist for the praise of his glory, we
who first hoped in Christ. [13] [l]*In him you also,
who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of
your salvation, and have believed in him, were
sealed with the promised holy Spirit, [14] [m]*which
is the first installment of our inheritance toward
redemption as God's possession, to the praise of
his glory.

## II: Unity of the Church in Christ

**The Church as Christ's Body** [15] [n]*Therefore,
I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and
of your love for all the holy ones, [16] [o]do not cease
giving thanks for you, remembering you in my
prayers, [17] [p]that the God of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit
of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge
of him. [18] [q]May the eyes of your [your] hearts be
enlightened, that you may know what is the
hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches
of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones,
[19] [r]and what is the surpassing greatness of his
power for us who believe, in accord with the
exercise of his great might, [20] [s]which he worked
in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating
him at his right hand in the heavens, [21] [t]far
above every principality, authority, power, and
dominion, and every name that is named not
only in this age but also in the one to come.
[22] [u]And he put all things beneath his feet and
gave him as head over all things to the church,
[23] [v]*which is his body, the fullness of the one
who fills all things in every way.

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(3–6.8.11), **Christ** (3.5.7–10.12), and the **Spirit** (13–14). The spiritual blessings Christians have received through Christ (3) are gratefully enumerated: the call to holiness (4; cf Col 1, 22); the gift of divine **adoption** establishing a unique spiritual relationship with God the Father through Christ (5; cf Gal 4, 5); liberation from sin through Christ's sacrificial death (7); revelation of God's plan of salvation in Christ (9; cf 3, 3–4; Rom 16, 25); the gift of election and faith in Christ bestowed upon Jewish Christians (see the note on 12, **we who first hoped in Christ**); and finally, the same gift granted to Gentiles (13, **you also**). In the Christ-centered faith and existence of the Christian communities the apostle sees the predetermined **plan** of God to bring all creation under the final rule of Christ (4–5.9–10) being **made known** (9) and carried through, to God's **glory** (6.12.14).

**1, 3: In the heavens:** literally, "in the heavenlies" or "in the heavenly places," a term in Eph for the divine realm.

**1, 9: Mystery:** as in Rom 16, 25; Col 1, 26.27 and elsewhere, a secret of God now revealed in the **plan** to save and **sum up all things in Christ** (10); cf 3, 3–6.

**1, 12: We who first hoped:** probably Jewish Christians (contrast 13, **you**, the Gentiles); possibly the people of Israel, "we who already enjoyed the hope of Christ," or perhaps present hope in contrast to future redemption (cf 14).

**1, 13: Sealed:** by God, in baptism; cf 4, 30; 2 Cor 1, 22.

**1, 14: First installment:** down payment by God on full salvation, as at 2 Cor 1, 22.

**1, 15–23:** See the note on Rom 1, 8 for the thanksgiving form in a letter. Much of the content parallels thoughts in Col 1, 3–20. The prayer moves from God and Christ (17.20–21) to the Ephesians (17–19) and the church (22–23). Paul asks that the blessing imparted by God the Father (3) to the Ephesians will be strengthened in them through the message of the gospel (13.17–19). Those blessings are seen in the context of God's **might** in establishing the sovereignty of Christ over all other creatures (19–21) and in appointing him **head** of the church (22–23). For the allusion to angelic spirits in v 21, see Rom 8, 38 and Col 1, 16. Here, as in 1 Cor 15, 24–25 and Col 2, 15, every such **principality** and **power** is made subject to Christ.

**1, 15: Your faith . . . your love:** some manuscripts omit the latter phrase, but cf Col 1, 4.

**1, 23: His body:** the church (22); cf the note on Col 1, 18. Only in Eph and Col is Christ the **head** of the **body**, in contrast to the view in 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12, 4–8 where Christ is equated with the entire body or community. **Fullness:** see the note on Col 1, 19. Some take **the one who fills** as God, others as Christ (cf 4, 10). If in Christ "dwells the fullness of the deity bodily" (Col 2, 9), then, as God "fills" Christ, Christ in turn fills the church and the believer (3, 19; 5, 18). But the difficult phrases here may also allow the church to be viewed as the "complement" of Christ who is "being filled" as God's plan for the universe is carried out through the church (cf 3, 9–10).

f Mt 3, 17; Col 1, 13. g 2, 7–13; Rom 3, 24; Col 1, 14.20. h Col 1, 9. i 3, 3.9; Rom 16, 25. j Gal 4, 4; Col 1, 16.20. k Is 46, 10; Rom 8, 28; Col 1, 12; Rv 4, 11. l 4, 30; Acts 2, 33; Col 1, 5–6. m 2 Cor 1, 22; 5, 5. n Col 1, 3–4; Phlm 4–5. o Col 1, 3.9. p 3, 14.16; Col 1, 9–10; 1 Jn 5, 20. q 4, 4; Col 1, 12.27. r 2 Cor 13, 4; Col 1, 11; 2, 12. s Ps 110, 1; Heb 1, 3. t Phil 2, 9; Col 1, 16; 1 Pt 3, 22. u 4, 15; Ps 8, 7; Mt 28, 18; Col 1, 18. v 4, 10.12; Rom 12, 5; 1 Cor 12, 27; Col 1, 19.

## CHAPTER 2

**Generosity of God's Plan** 1 [w]*You were dead
in your transgressions and sins 2 [x]*in which you
once lived following the age of this world,
following the ruler of the power of the air, the
spirit that is now at work in the disobedient.
3 [y]All of us once lived among them in the desires
of our flesh, following the wishes of the flesh and
the impulses, and we were by nature children of
wrath, like the rest. 4 But God, who is rich in
mercy, because of the great love he had for us,
5 [z]*even when we were dead in our transgres-
sions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace
you have been saved), 6 [a]raised us up with him,
and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ
Jesus, 7 [b]that in the ages to come he might show
the immeasurable riches of his grace in his
kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 [c]For by grace you
have been saved through faith, and this is not
from you; it is the gift of God; 9 [d]it is not from
works, so no one may boast. 10 [e]For we are his
handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good
works that God has prepared in advance, that
we should live in them.

Ch 1-2
See RG
510-512

**One in Christ** 11 *Therefore, remember that at
one time you, Gentiles in the flesh, called the
uncircumcision by those called the circumcision,
which is done in the flesh by human hands,
12 [f]*were at that time without Christ, alienated
from the community of Israel and strangers to
the covenants of promise, without hope and
without God in the world. 13 [g]But now in Christ
Jesus you who once were far off have become
near by the blood of Christ.

14 [h]*For he is our peace, he who made both
one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity,
through his flesh, 15 [i]*abolishing the law with its
commandments and legal claims, that he might
create in himself one new person in place of the
two, thus establishing peace, 16 [j]and might recon-
cile both with God, in one body, through the
cross, putting that enmity to death by it. 17 [k]He
came and preached peace to you who were far
off and peace to those who were near, 18 [l]for

**2, 1–22:** The gospel of **salvation** (1, 13) that God **worked in Christ** (1, 20) is reiterated in terms of what God's **great love** (4), expressed in Christ, means for us. The passage sometimes addresses **you**, Gentiles (1–2.8.11–13.19.22), but other times speaks of **all of us** who believe (3–7.10.14.18). In urging people to **remember** their grim past when they were **dead** in sins (1–3.11–12) and what they are **now in Christ** (4–10.13), the author sees both Jew and Gentile reconciled with God, now **one new person**, a new humanity, **one body, the household of God, a temple** and **dwelling place** of God's Spirit (15–16.19–22). The presentation falls into two parts, the second stressing more the meaning for the church.

**2, 1–10:** The recipients of Paul's letter have experienced, in their redemption from **transgressions and sins**, the effect of Christ's supremacy over the power of the devil (1–2; cf 6, 11–12), who rules not from the netherworld but from the **air** between God in heaven and human beings on earth. Both Jew and Gentile have experienced, through Christ, God's free gift of salvation that already marks them for a future heavenly destiny (3–7). The language **dead, raised us up,** and **seated us . . . in the heavens** closely parallels Jesus' own passion and Easter experience. The terms in vv 8–9 describe salvation in the way Paul elsewhere speaks of justification: **by grace, through faith, the gift of God, not from works;** cf Gal 2, 16–21; Rom 3, 24–28. Christians are a newly created people in Christ, fashioned by God for a life of goodness (10).

**2, 1–7:** These verses comprise one long sentence in Greek, the main verb coming in v 5, God **brought us to life**, the object you/us **dead in . . . transgressions** being repeated in 1 and 5; cf Col 2, 13.

**2, 2: Age of this world:** or "aeon," a term found in gnostic thought, possibly synonymous with **the rulers of this world,** but also reflecting the Jewish idea of "two ages," this present evil age and "the age to come"; cf 1 Cor 3, 19; 5, 10; 7, 31; Gal 1, 4; Ti 2, 12. **The disobedient:** literally, "the sons of disobedience," a Semitism as at Is 30, 9.

**2, 5:** Our relation through baptism **with Christ,** the risen Lord, is depicted in terms of realized eschatology, as already exaltation, though v 7 brings in the future aspect too.

**2, 11–22:** The Gentiles lacked Israel's messianic expectation, lacked the various **covenants** God made with **Israel,** lacked **hope** of salvation and knowledge of the true **God** (11–12); but through Christ all these religious barriers between Jew and Gentile have been transcended (13–14) by the abolition of the Mosaic covenant-law (15) for the sake of uniting Jew and Gentile into a single religious community (15–16), imbued with the same holy **Spirit** and worshiping the same **Father** (18). The Gentiles are now included in God's **household** (19) as it arises upon the **foundation** of **apostles** assisted by those endowed with the prophetic gift (3, 5), the preachers of Christ (20; cf 1 Cor 12, 28). With Christ as the **capstone** (20; cf Is 28, 16; Mt 21, 42), they are being built into the holy **temple** of God's people where the divine presence dwells (21–22).

**2, 12: The community of Israel:** or "commonwealth"; cf 4, 18. **The covenants:** cf Rom 9, 4: with Abraham, with Moses, with David.

**2, 14–16:** The elaborate imagery here combines pictures of Christ as **our peace** (Is 9, 5), his crucifixion, the ending of the Mosaic law (cf Col 2, 14), reconciliation (2 Cor 5, 18–21), and the destruction of **the dividing wall** such as kept people from God in the temple or a barrier in the heavens.

**2, 15: One new person:** a corporate body, the Christian community, made up of Jews and Gentiles, replacing ancient divisions; cf Rom 1, 16.

w Col 1, 21; 2, 13. x 6, 12; Jn 12, 31; Col 1, 13. y Col 3, 6–7. z Rom 5, 8; 6, 13; Col 2, 13. a Rom 8, 10–11; Phil 3, 20; Col 2, 12. b 1, 7. c Rom 3, 24; Gal 2, 16. d 1 Cor 1, 29. e 4, 24; Ti 2, 14. f Rom 9, 4; Col 1, 21.27. g 2, 17; Is 57, 19; Col 1, 20. h Gal 3, 28. i 2 Cor 5, 17; Col 2, 14. j Col 1, 20.22. k Is 57, 19; Zec 9, 10. l 3, 12.

through him we both have access in one Spirit to
the Father.
[19] [m]So then you are no longer strangers and
sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the
holy ones and members of the household of
God, [20] [n]*built upon the foundation of the apos-
tles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as
the capstone. [21] [o]Through him the whole struc-
ture is held together and grows into a temple
sacred in the Lord; [22] [p]in him you also are being
built together into a dwelling place of God in the
Spirit.

## III: World Mission of the Church

### CHAPTER 3

Ch 3-4
See RG
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**Commission to Preach God's Plan** [1] [q]*Be-
cause of this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ [Jesus]
for you Gentiles— [2] [r]*if, as I suppose, you have
heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was
given to me for your benefit, [3] [s]*[namely, that]
the mystery was made known to me by revela-
tion, as I have written briefly earlier. [4]When you
read this you can understand my insight into the
mystery of Christ, [5] [t]which was not made
known to human beings in other generations as
it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and
prophets by the Spirit, [6] [u]that the Gentiles are
coheirs, members of the same body, and copart-
ners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the
gospel.
[7] [v]Of this I became a minister by the gift of
God's grace that was granted me in accord with
the exercise of his power. [8] [w]To me, the very
least of all the holy ones, this grace was given, to
preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of
Christ, [9] [x]*and to bring to light [for all] what is
the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in
God who created all things, [10] [y]*so that the
manifold wisdom of God might now be made
known through the church to the principalities
and authorities in the heavens. [11]This was ac-
cording to the eternal purpose that he accom-
plished in Christ Jesus our Lord, [12] [z]in whom we
have boldness of speech and confidence of
access through faith in him. [13] [a]So I ask you not
to lose heart over my afflictions for you; this is
your glory.
**Prayer for the Readers** [14]*For this reason I
kneel before the Father, [15]from whom every
family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] [b]that
he may grant you in accord with the riches of his
glory to be strengthened with power through his
Spirit in the inner self, [17] [c]and that Christ may
dwell in your hearts through faith; that you,
rooted and grounded in love, [18] [d]may have
strength to comprehend with all the holy ones
what is the breadth and length and height and

**2, 20: Capstone:** the Greek can also mean cornerstone or keystone.

**3, 1–13:** Paul reflects on his mission to the Gentiles. He alludes to his call and appointment to the apostolic office (2–3) and how his **insight** through revelation, as well as that of the other apostles and charismatic prophets in the church (4–5), has deepened understanding of God's plan of salvation in Christ. Paul is the special herald (7) of a new **promise** to the **Gentiles** (6): that the divine plan includes them in the spiritual benefits promised to Israel. Not only is this unique apostolic role his; Paul also has been given the task of explaining to all the divine **plan** of salvation (8–9), once **hidden**. Through **the church,** God's plan to save through Christ is becoming manifest to angelic beings (10; cf 1, 21), in accord with God's **purpose** (11). The fulfillment of the plan in Christ gives the whole church more **confidence** through **faith** in God (12). The readers of this letter are also thereby encouraged to greater confidence despite Paul's imprisonment (13).

**3, 1: A prisoner of Christ:** see Introduction. Paul abruptly departs from his train of thought at the end of v 1, leaving an incomplete sentence.

**3, 2: Stewardship:** the Greek is the same term employed at 1, 10 for the **plan** that God administers (Col 1, 25) and in which Paul plays a key role.

**3, 3–4: The mystery:** God's resolve to deliver Gentiles along with Israel through Christ; cf the notes on 1, 10; 3, 9.

**3, 9: [For all]:** while some think this phrase was added so as to yield the sense "to enlighten all about the plan . . . ," it is more likely that some manuscripts and Fathers omitted it accidentally or to avoid the idea that **all** conflicted with Paul's assignment to preach to **the Gentiles** (8) specifically.

**3, 10: Principalities and authorities:** see the note on 1, 15–23 regarding v 21.

**3, 14–21:** The apostle prays that those he is addressing may, like the rest of the church, deepen their understanding of God's plan of salvation in Christ. It is a plan that affects the whole universe (15) with **the breadth and length and height and depth** of God's love in Christ (18) or possibly the universe in all its dimensions. The apostle prays that they may perceive the redemptive love of Christ for them and be completely immersed in the fullness of God (19). The prayer concludes with a doxology to God (20–21).

**3, 14–15: Every family:** in the Greek there is wordplay on the word for **the Father (patria, patēr)**. The phrase could also mean "God's whole family" (cf 2, 21).

m Heb 12, 22–23. n Is 28, 16; Rv 21, 14. o 1 Cor 3, 16; Col 2, 19. p 1 Pt 2, 5. q Phil 1, 7.13; Col 1, 24–29; 4, 18; Phlm 1, 9; 2 Tm 2, 9. r Col 1, 25. s 1, 9–10; Col 1, 26. t Col 1, 26. u 2, 13.18–19. v Rom 15, 15; Col 1, 25.29. w 1 Cor 15, 8–10; Gal 1, 16; 2, 7–9. x Rom 16, 25; Col 1, 26–27. y 1 Pt 1, 12. z Rom 5, 1–2; Heb 4, 16. a Col 1, 22.24; 2 Tm 2, 10. b 6, 10; Rom 7, 22; 2 Cor 4, 16; Col 1, 11. c Jn 14, 23; Col 1, 23; 2, 7. d Col 2, 2.

depth, 19 [e]and to know the love of Christ that
surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled
with all the fullness of God.

20 [f]Now to him who is able to accomplish far
more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at
work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and
ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER 4

**Unity in the Body** 1 [g]*I, then, a prisoner for
the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of
the call you have received, 2 [h]with all humility
and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one
another through love, 3 [i]striving to preserve the
unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:
4 [j]*one body and one Spirit, as you were also
called to the one hope of your call; 5 [k]one Lord,
one faith, one baptism; 6 [l]one God and Father of
all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**Diversity of Gifts** 7 [m]But grace was given to
each of us according to the measure of Christ's
gift. 8 [n]*Therefore, it says:

> "He ascended on high and took prisoners
> captive;
> he gave gifts to men."

9 What does "he ascended" mean except that he
also descended into the lower [regions] of the
earth? 10 The one who descended is also the one
who ascended far above all the heavens, that he
might fill all things.

11 [o]*And he gave some as apostles, others as
prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors
and teachers, 12 *to equip the holy ones for the
work of ministry, for building up the body of
Christ, 13 [p]*until we all attain to the unity of
faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to
mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature
of Christ, 14 [q]so that we may no longer be
infants, tossed by waves and swept along by
every wind of teaching arising from human
trickery, from their cunning in the interests of
deceitful scheming. 15 [r]*Rather, living the truth
in love, we should grow in every way into him
who is the head, Christ, 16 [s]from whom the
whole body, joined and held together by every
supporting ligament, with the proper function-
ing of each part, brings about the body's growth
and builds itself up in love.

Ch 3–4
See RG
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**Renewal in Christ** 17 [t]*So I declare and testify
in the Lord that you must no longer live as the
Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds;
18 [u]darkened in understanding, alienated from
the life of God because of their ignorance,
because of their hardness of heart, 19 [v]they have
become callous and have handed themselves
over to licentiousness for the practice of every

**4, 1–16:** A general plea for unity in the church. Christians have been fashioned through the **Spirit** into a single harmonious religious community (**one body,** 4.12; cf 16), belonging to a single **Lord** (in contrast to the many gods of the pagan world), and by one way of salvation through **faith,** brought out especially by the significance of **baptism** (1–6; cf Rom 6, 1–11). But Christian unity is more than adherence to a common belief. It is manifested in the exalted Christ's gifts to individuals to serve so as to make the community more Christlike (11–16). This teaching on Christ as the source of the gifts is introduced in v 8 by a citation of Ps 68, 18, which depicts Yahweh triumphantly leading Israel to salvation in Jerusalem. It is here understood of Christ, ascending **above all the heavens,** the **head** of the church; through his redemptive death, resurrection, and ascension he has become the source of the church's spiritual gifts. The "descent" of Christ (9–10) refers more probably to the incarnation (cf Phil 2, 6–8) than to Christ's presence after his death in the world of the dead (cf 1 Pt 3, 19).

**4, 4–6:** The "seven unities" (church, **Spirit, hope; Lord, faith** in Christ [1, 13], **baptism; one God**) reflect the triune structure of later creeds in reverse.

**4, 8–10:** While the emphasis is on an ascension and gift-giving by Christ, there is also a reference in taking **prisoners captive** to the aeons and powers mentioned at 1, 21; 2, 2; 3, 10; and 6, 12.

**4, 11:** Concerning this list of ministers, cf 1 Cor 12, 28 and Rom 12, 6–8. **Evangelists:** missionary preachers (cf Acts 21, 8 and 2 Tm 4, 5), not those who wrote gospels. **Pastors and teachers:** a single group in the Greek, shepherding congregations.

**4, 12:** The ministerial leaders in v 11 are to equip the whole people of God for their **work of ministry.**

**4, 13: Mature manhood:** literally, "a perfect man" (cf Col 1, 28), possibly the "one new person" of 2, 15, though there **anthrōpos** suggests humanity, while here **anēr** is the term for male. This personage becomes visible in the church's growing to its fullness in the unity of those who believe in Christ.

**4, 15–16: The head, Christ:** cf Col 1, 18 and contrast 1 Cor 12, 12–27 and Rom 12, 4–5 where Christ is identified with the whole body, including the head. The imagery may derive from ancient views in medicine, the **head** coordinating and caring for the body, each **ligament** (perhaps the ministers of v 11) supporting the whole. But as at 2, 19–22, where the temple is depicted as a growing organism, there may also be the idea here of growing toward the capstone, Christ.

**4, 17–24:** Paul begins to indicate how the new life in Christ contrasts with the Gentiles' old way of existence. Literally, **the old self** (22) and **the new self** (24) are "the old man" and "the new man" (**anthrōpos,** person), as at 2, 15; cf the note on 4, 13.

e Col 2, 3.9. f Rom 16, 25–27; Col 1, 29. g 3, 1; Col 1, 10. h Col 3, 12–13. i Col 3, 14–15. j Rom 12, 5; 1 Cor 10, 17; 12, 12–13. k 1 Cor 8, 6. l 1 Cor 12, 6. m Rom 12, 3.6; 1 Cor 12, 28. n Ps 68, 19; Col 2, 15. o 1 Cor 12, 28. p Col 1, 28. q 1 Cor 14, 20; Col 2, 4.8; Heb 13, 9; Jas 1, 6. r 1 Cor 11, 3; Col 1, 18; 2, 19. s Col 2, 19. t Rom 1, 21. u Col 1, 21; 1 Pt 1, 14. v Col 3, 5.

kind of impurity to excess. [20]That is not how you
learned Christ, [21]assuming that you have heard
of him and were taught in him, as truth is in
Jesus, [22] [w]that you should put away the old self of
your former way of life, corrupted through
deceitful desires, [23] [x]and be renewed in the spirit
of your minds, [24] [y]*and put on the new self,
created in God's way in righteousness and
holiness of truth.

## IV: Daily Conduct, an Expression of Unity

**Rules for the New Life** [25] [z]*Therefore, put-
ting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to
his neighbor, for we are members one of an-
other. [26] [a]*Be angry but do not sin; do not let the
sun set on your anger, [27] [b]and do not leave room
for the devil. [28] [c]*The thief must no longer steal,
but rather labor, doing honest work with his
[own] hands, so that he may have something to
share with one in need. [29] [d]No foul language
should come out of your mouths, but only such
as is good for needed edification, that it may
impart grace to those who hear. [30]*And do not
grieve the holy Spirit of God, with which you
were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] [e]All
bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling
must be removed from you, along with all
malice. [32] [f][And] be kind to one another, compas-
sionate, forgiving one another as God has for-
given you in Christ.

### CHAPTER 5

Ch 5–6
See RG
512–513

[1] [g]*So be imitators of God, as beloved children,
[2] [h]and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed
himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God
for a fragrant aroma. [3] [i]Immorality or any impu-
rity or greed must not even be mentioned among
you, as is fitting among holy ones, [4] [j]no obscenity
or silly or suggestive talk, which is out of place,
but instead, thanksgiving. [5] [k]Be sure of this, that
no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is,
an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom
of Christ and of God.

**Duty to Live in the Light** [6] [l]*Let no one
deceive you with empty arguments, for because
of these things the wrath of God is coming upon
the disobedient. [7]So do not be associated with
them. [8] [m]For you were once darkness, but now
you are light in the Lord. Live as children of
light, [9] [n]for light produces every kind of good-
ness and righteousness and truth. [10] [o]Try to learn
what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] [p]Take no part in
the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose
them, [12]for it is shameful even to mention the
things done by them in secret; [13] [q]but everything
exposed by the light becomes visible, [14] [r]*for
everything that becomes visible is light. There-
fore, it says:

"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."

[15] [s]*Watch carefully then how you live, not as
foolish persons but as wise, [16]making the most of
the opportunity, because the days are evil.
[17]Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but
try to understand what is the will of the Lord.
[18] [t]And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies
debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,
[19] [u]addressing one another [in] psalms and
hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to
the Lord in your hearts, [20] [v]giving thanks always
and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ to God the Father.

**4, 24: Put on:** in baptism. See the note on Gal 3, 27.

**4, 25—6, 20:** For similar exhortations to a morally good life in response to God's gift of faith, see the notes on Rom 12, 1—13, 14 and Gal 5, 13–26.

**4, 26:** If angry, seek reconciliation that day, not giving the devil (6, 11) opportunity to lead into sin.

**4, 28: Honest work:** literally, "the good." **His [own] hands:** some manuscripts have the full phrase as in 1 Cor 4, 12.

**4, 30:** See the note on 1, 13.

**5, 1: Imitators of God:** in forgiving (4, 32) and in loving (as exhibited in how **Christ loved us**).

**5, 6:** See the note on 2, 2.

**5, 14:** An early Christian hymn, possibly from a baptismal liturgy. For the content compare 2, 5–6; 3, 9 and Is 60, 1.

**5, 15–16.19–20:** The wording is similar to Col 4, 5 and 3, 16–17.

w Rom 8, 13; Gal 6, 8; Col 3, 9. x Rom 12, 2. y Gn 1, 26–27; Col 3, 10. z Zec 8, 16. a Ps 4, 5 LXX; Mt 5, 22. b 2 Cor 2, 11. c 1 Thes 4, 11. d 5, 4; Col 3, 16; 4, 6. e Col 3, 8. f Mt 6, 14; Col 3, 12–13. g Mt 5, 45.48. h Ex 29, 18; Ps 40, 7; Gal 2, 20; 1 Jn 3, 16. i Gal 5, 19; Col 3, 5. j 4, 29; Col 3, 8. k 1 Cor 6, 9–10; Gal 5, 21; Col 3, 5. l Rom 1, 18; Col 2, 4.8. m 2, 11–13; Jn 12, 36; Col 1, 12–13. n Gal 5, 22. o Rom 12, 2. p Rom 13, 12. q Jn 3, 20–21. r Is 26, 19; 60, 1. s Col 4, 5. t Prv 23, 31 LXX; Lk 21, 34. u Ps 33, 2–3; Col 3, 16. v Col 3, 17.

**Wives and Husbands** 21 [w]*Be subordinate to
one another out of reverence for Christ.
22 [x]Wives should be subordinate to their hus-
bands as to the Lord. 23 [y]For the husband is head
of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he
himself the savior of the body. 24 As the church is
subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subor-
dinate to their husbands in everything.
25 [z]Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ
loved the church and handed himself over for
her 26 [a]to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath
of water with the word, 27 [b]that he might
present to himself the church in splendor, with-
out spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she
might be holy and without blemish. 28 So [also]
husbands should love their wives as their own
bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
29 For no one hates his own flesh but rather
nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does
the church, 30 [c]because we are members of his
body.

31 [d]"For this reason a man shall leave [his] father
and [his] mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."

32 [e]This is a great mystery, but I speak in
reference to Christ and the church. 33 In any
case, each one of you should love his wife as
himself, and the wife should respect her hus-
band.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 5–6
See RG
512–513

**Children and Parents** 1 [f]Children, obey your
parents [in the Lord], for this is right. 2 [g]"Honor
your father and mother." This is the first com-
mandment with a promise, 3 "that it may go well
with you and that you may have a long life on
earth." 4 [h]Fathers, do not provoke your children
to anger, but bring them up with the training
and instruction of the Lord.

**Slaves and Masters** 5 [i]Slaves, be obedient to
your human masters with fear and trembling, in
sincerity of heart, as to Christ, 6 [j]not only when
being watched, as currying favor, but as slaves of
Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,
7 willingly serving the Lord and not human
beings, 8 knowing that each will be requited from
the Lord for whatever good he does, whether he
is slave or free. 9 [k]Masters, act in the same way
toward them, and stop bullying, knowing that
both they and you have a Master in heaven and
that with him there is no partiality.

**Battle against Evil** 10 *Finally, draw your
strength from the Lord and from his mighty
power. 11 [l]Put on the armor of God so that you
may be able to stand firm against the tactics of
the devil. 12 [m]For our struggle is not with flesh
and blood but with the principalities, with the
powers, with the world rulers of this present
darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.
13 [n]Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you
may be able to resist on the evil day and, having
done everything, to hold your ground. 14 [o]So
stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed

**5, 21—6, 9:** Cf the notes on Col 3, 18—4, 1 and 1 Pt 2, 18—3, 7 for a similar listing of household duties where the inferior is admonished first (**wives,** 5, 22; **children,** 6, 1; **slaves,** 6, 5), then the superior (**husbands,** 5, 25; **fathers,** 6, 4; **masters,** 6, 9). Paul varies this pattern by an emphasis on mutuality (see 5, 20); use of Old Testament material about **father and mother** in 6, 2; the judgment to come for slave-owners (**you have a Master in heaven,** 6, 9); and above all the initial principle of subordination **to one another** under **Christ,** thus effectively undermining exclusive claims to domination by one party. Into the section on **wives** and **husbands** an elaborate teaching on **Christ** and **the church** has been woven (5, 22–33).

**5, 21–33:** The apostle exhorts married Christians to a strong mutual love. Holding with Gn 2, 24 that marriage is a divine institution (31), Paul sees Christian marriage as taking on a new meaning symbolic of the intimate relationship of love between Christ and the church. The wife should serve her husband in the same spirit as that of the church's service to Christ (22.24), and the husband should care for his wife with the devotion of Christ to the church (25–30). Paul gives to the Genesis passage its highest meaning in the light of the union of Christ and the church, of which Christlike loyalty and devotion in Christian marriage are a clear reflection (31–33).

**6, 10–20:** A general exhortation to courage and prayer. Drawing upon the imagery and ideas of Is 11, 5; 59, 16–17; and Wis 5, 17–23, Paul describes the Christian in terms of the dress and equipment of Roman soldiers. He observes, however, that the Christian's readiness for combat is not directed against human beings but against the spiritual powers of evil (10–17; cf 1, 21; 2, 2; 3, 10). Unique importance is placed upon prayer (18–20).

w 1 Pt 5, 5. x Col 3, 18—4, 1; 1 Pt 3, 1–7. y 1 Cor 11, 3; Col 1, 18. z Col 3, 19; 1 Tm 2, 6. a Rom 6, 4; Ti 3, 5–7. b 2 Cor 11, 2; Col 1, 22. c Rom 12, 5; 1 Cor 6, 15. d Gn 2, 24; Mt 19, 5; Mk 10, 7–8. e Rv 19, 7. f Prv 6, 20; Sir 3, 1–6; Col 3, 20. g Ex 20, 12; Dt 5, 16. h Col 3, 21–22. i Col 3, 22–25; 1 Tm 6, 1–2; Ti 2, 9–10. j 1 Pt 2, 18. k Col 4, 1. l Rom 13, 12; 2 Cor 6, 7; 10, 4; Jas 4, 7. m 1, 21; 2, 2; Col 1, 13. n Rom 13, 12. o Wis 5, 17–20; Is 11, 5; Lk 12, 35; 1 Thes 5, 8.

with righteousness as a breastplate, 15 [p]and your
feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.
16 [q]In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to
quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one.
17 [r]And take the helmet of salvation and the
sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

**Constant Prayer** 18 [s]With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To
that end, be watchful with all perseverance and
supplication for all the holy ones 19 [t]and also for
me, that speech may be given me to open my
mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel 20 [u]for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to
speak as I must.

## V: Conclusion

**A Final Message** 21 [v]*So that you also may
have news of me and of what I am doing,
Tychicus, my beloved brother and trustworthy
minister in the Lord, will tell you everything.
22 [w]I am sending him to you for this very
purpose, so that you may know about us and
that he may encourage your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with
faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ. 24 [x]Grace be with all who love our Lord
Jesus Christ in immortality.

**6, 21–24: Tychicus:** the bearer of the letter; see the note on Col 4, 7. Verses 21–22 parallel Col 4, 7–8, often word for word. If Ephesians is addressed to several Christian communities (see Introduction), it is understandable that no greetings to individual members of these communities should have been included in it.

p Is 52, 7. q 1 Pt 5, 9. r Is 59, 17; 1 Thes 5, 8. s Mt 26, 41; Col 4, 2–3. t Acts 4, 29; Col 4, 3; 2 Thes 3, 1. u 2 Cor 5, 20; Col 4, 4. v Acts 20, 4; Col 4, 7; 2 Tm 4, 12. w Col 4, 8. x 1 Pt 1, 8.

# THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians
See RG
514–518

Philippi, in northeastern Greece, was a city of some importance in the Roman province of Macedonia. Lying on the great road from the Adriatic coast to Byzantium, the Via Egnatia, and in the midst of rich agricultural plains near the gold deposits of Mt. Pangaeus, it was in Paul's day a Roman town (Acts 16, 21), with a Greek-Macedonian population and a small group of Jews (see Acts 16, 13). Originally founded in the sixth century B.C. as Krenides by the Thracians, the town was taken over after 360 B.C. by Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, and was renamed for himself, "Philip's City." The area became Roman in the second century B.C. On the plains near Philippi in October 42 B.C., Antony and Octavian decisively defeated the forces of Brutus and Cassius, the slayers of Julius Caesar. Octavian (Augustus) later made Philippi a Roman colony and settled many veterans of the Roman armies there.

Paul, according to Acts (16, 9-40), established at Philippi the first Christian community in Europe. He came to Philippi, via its harbor town of Neapolis (modern Kavalla), on his second missionary journey, probably in A.D. 49 or 50, accompanied by Silas and Timothy (Acts 15, 40; 16, 3; cf Phil 1, 1) and Luke, if he is to be included in the "we" references of Acts 16, 10-17. The Acts account tells of the conversion of a business woman, Lydia; the exorcism of a slave girl; and, after an earthquake, while Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, the faith and baptism of a jailer and his family. None of these persons, however, is directly mentioned in Philippians (cf the notes on 4, 2 and 4, 3). Acts 16 concludes its account by describing how Paul (and Silas), asked by the magistrates to leave Philippi, went on to Thessalonica (Acts 17, 1-10), where several times his loyal Philippians continued to support him with financial aid (Phil 4,

16). Later, Paul may have passed through Philippi on his way from Ephesus to Greece (Acts 20, 1-2), and he definitely stopped there on his fateful trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20, 6).

Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi was written while he was in a prison somewhere (1, 7.13.14.17), indeed in danger of death (1, 20-23). Although under guard for preaching Christ, Paul rejoices at the continuing progress of the gospel (1, 12-26) and expresses gratitude for the Philippians' renewed concern and help in an expression of thanks most clearly found at 4, 10-20. Much of the letter is devoted to instruction about unity and humility within the Christian community at Philippi (1, 27—2, 18) and exhortations to growth, joy, and peace in their life together (4, 1-9). The letter seems to be drawing to a close at the end of what we number as ch 2, as Paul reports the plans of his helper Timothy and of Epaphroditus (whom the Philippians had sent to aid Paul) to come to Philippi (2, 19—3, 1), and even Paul's own expectation that he will go free and come to Philippi (1, 25-26; 2, 24). Yet quite abruptly at 3, 2, Paul erupts into warnings against false teachers who threaten to impose on the Philippians the burdens of the Mosaic law, including circumcision. The section that follows, 3, 2-21, is a vigorous attack on these Judaizers (cf Gal 2, 11—3, 29) or Jewish Christian teachers (cf 2 Cor 11, 12-23), giving us insights into Paul's own life story (3, 4-6) and into the doctrine of justification, the Christian life, and ultimate hope (3, 7-21).

The location of Paul's imprisonment when he wrote to the Philippians, and thus the date of the letter, are uncertain. The traditional view has been that it stems from Paul's confinement in Rome, between A.D. 59 and 63 (cf Acts 28, 14-31). One modern view suggests the period when he was imprisoned at Caesarea, on the coast of Palestine, A.D. 57 or 58 (Acts 23, 23—26, 32); another suggests Corinth (cf 2 Cor 11, 9). Much recent scholarship favors Ephesus, around A.D. 55, a situation referred to in 2 Cor 1, 8 concerning "the affliction that came to us" in Asia Minor (cf also 1 Cor 15, 32). The reference at 1, 13 to the "praetorium" (cf also 4, 22) can be understood to mean the imperial guard or government house at Ephesus (or Caesarea), or the praetorian camp in Rome. Involved in a decision are the several journeys back and forth between Philippi and wherever Paul is imprisoned, mentioned in the letter (2, 25-28; 4, 14); this factor causes many to prefer Ephesus because of its proximity to Philippi. The Ephesian hypothesis dates the composition of Philippians to the mid-50s when most of Paul's major letters were written.

There is also a likelihood, according to some scholars, that the letter as we have it is a composite from parts of three letters by Paul to the Philippians. Seemingly 4, 10-20 is a brief note of appreciation for help sent through Epaphroditus. The long section from 1, 3 to 3, 1 is then another letter, with news of Paul's imprisonment and reports on Timothy and Epaphroditus (who has fallen ill while with Paul), along with exhortations to the Philippians about Christian conduct; and 3, 2-21 a third communication warning about threats to Philippian Christianity. The other verses in ch 4 and 1, 1-2, are variously assigned by critics to these three underlying letters, which an editor presumably put together to produce a picture of Paul writing earnestly from prison (chs 1–2), facing opponents of the faith (ch 3), and with serene joy advising and thanking his Philippians (ch 4). If all four chapters were originally a unity, then one must assume that a break occurred between the writing of 3, 1 and 3, 2, possibly involving the receipt of bad news from Philippi, and that Paul had some reasons for delaying his words of thanks for the aid brought by Epaphroditus till the end of his letter.

This beautiful letter is rich in insights into Paul's theology and his apostolic love and concern for the gospel and his converts. In Philippians, Paul reveals his human sensitivity and tenderness, his enthusiasm for Christ as the key to life and death (1, 21), and his deep feeling for those

in Christ who dwell in Philippi. With them he shares his hopes and convictions, his anxieties and fears, revealing the total confidence in Christ that constitutes faith (3, 8-10). The letter incorporates a hymn about the salvation that God has brought about through Christ (2, 6-11), applied by Paul to the relations of Christians with one another (2, 1-5). Philippians has been termed "the letter of joy" (4, 4.10). It is the rejoicing of faith, based on true understanding of Christ's unique role in the salvation of all who profess his lordship (2, 11; 3, 8-12.14.20-21).

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Philippians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-11)
II. Progress of the Gospel (1, 12-26)
III. Instructions for the Community (1, 27—2, 18)
IV. Travel Plans of Paul and His Assistants (2, 19—3, 1)
V. Polemic: Righteousness and the Goal in Christ (3, 2-21)
VI. Instructions for the Community (4, 1-9)
VII. Gratitude for the Philippians' Generosity (4, 10-20)
VIII. Farewell (4, 21-23)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
515-516

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ
Jesus, to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus who are
in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers:
2 [b]*grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving** 3 [c]*I give thanks to my God at
every remembrance of you, 4praying always
with joy in my every prayer for all of you,
5because of your partnership for the gospel from
the first day until now. 6 [d]*I am confident of this,
that the one who began a good work in you will
continue to complete it until the day of Christ
Jesus. 7It is right that I should think this way
about all of you, because I hold you in my heart,
you who are all partners with me in grace, both
in my imprisonment and in the defense and
confirmation of the gospel. 8 [e]For God is my
witness, how I long for all of you with the
affection of Christ Jesus. 9 [f]And this is my prayer:
that your love may increase ever more and more
in knowledge and every kind of perception,

**1, 1–2:** See the note on Rom 1, 1–7, concerning the greeting.

**1, 1: Slaves:** Paul usually refers to himself at the start of a letter as an apostle. Here he substitutes a term suggesting the unconditional obligation of himself and Timothy to the service of Christ, probably because, in view of the good relationship with the Philippians, he wishes to stress his status as a co-servant rather than emphasize his apostolic authority. Reference to Timothy is a courtesy: Paul alone writes the letter, as the singular verb throughout shows (3–26), and the reference (2, 19–24) to Timothy in the third person. **Overseers:** the Greek term **episkopos** literally means "one who oversees" or "one who supervises," but since the second century it has come to designate the "bishop," the official who heads a local church. In New Testament times this office had not yet developed into the form that it later assumed, though it seems to be well on the way to such development in the Pastorals; see 1 Tm 3, 2 and Ti 1, 7, where it is translated **bishop.** At Philippi, however (and at Ephesus, according to Acts 20, 28), there was more than one **episkopos,** and the precise function of these officials is uncertain. In order to distinguish this office from the later stages into which it developed, the term is here translated as **overseers. Ministers:** the Greek term **diakonoi** is used frequently in the New Testament to designate "servants," "attendants," or "ministers." Paul refers to himself and to other apostles as "ministers of God" (2 Cor 6, 4) or "ministers of Christ" (2 Cor 11, 23). In the Pastorals (1 Tm 3, 8.12) the **diakonos** has become an established official in the local church; hence the term is there translated as **deacon.** The **diakonoi** at Philippi seem to represent an earlier stage of development of the office; we are uncertain about their precise functions. Hence the term is here translated as **ministers.** See Rom 16, 1, where Phoebe is described as a **diakonos (minister)** of the church of Cenchreae.

**1, 2:** The gifts come **from** Christ the Lord, not simply through him from the Father; compare the christology in 2, 6–11.

**1, 3–11:** As in Rom 1, 8–15 and all the Pauline letters except Galatians, a thanksgiving follows, including a direct prayer for the Philippians (9–11); see the note on Rom 1, 8. On their **partnership for the gospel** (5), cf 29–30; 4, 10–20. Their devotion to the faith and to Paul made them his pride and joy (4, 1). The characteristics thus manifested are evidence of the community's continuing preparation for the Lord's parousia (6.10). Paul's especially warm relationship with the Philippians is suggested here (7.8) as elsewhere in the letter. The eschatology serves to underscore a concern for ethical growth (9–11), which appears throughout the letter.

**1, 6: The day of Christ Jesus:** the parousia or triumphant return of Christ, when those loyal to him will be with him and share in his eternal glory; cf 10; 2, 16; 3, 20–21; 1 Thes 4, 17; 5, 10; 2 Thes 1, 10; 1 Cor 1, 8.

a Rom 1, 1; 2 Cor 1, 1; 1 Thes 1, 1; Phlm 1 / 1 Tm 3, 1–13. b Rom 1, 7; Gal 1, 3; Phlm 3. c Rom 1, 8; 1 Cor 1, 4; 1 Thes 1, 2. d 2, 13 / 1, 10; 2, 16; 1 Cor 1, 8. e Rom 1, 9; 2 Cor 1, 23; 1 Thes 2, 5. f Eph 3, 14–19; Col 1, 9–10; Phlm 6.

10 [g]to discern what is of value, so that you may
be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
11 [h]filled with the fruit of righteousness that
comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and
praise of God.

## II: Progress of the Gospel

12 [i]*I want you to know, brothers, that my
situation has turned out rather to advance the
gospel, 13 [j]*so that my imprisonment has be-
come well known in Christ throughout the
whole praetorium and to all the rest, 14*and so
that the majority of the brothers, having taken
encouragement in the Lord from my imprison-
ment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word
fearlessly.

15Of course, some preach Christ from envy
and rivalry, others from good will. 16The latter
act out of love, aware that I am here for the
defense of the gospel; 17the former proclaim
Christ out of selfish ambition, not from pure
motives, thinking that they will cause me trou-
ble in my imprisonment. 18 [k]*What difference
does it make, as long as in every way, whether in
pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed?
And in that I rejoice.

Indeed I shall continue to rejoice, 19 [l]*for I
know that this will result in deliverance for me
through your prayers and support from the
Spirit of Jesus Christ. 20 [m]My eager expectation
and hope is that I shall not be put to shame in
any way, but that with all boldness, now as
always, Christ will be magnified in my body,
whether by life or by death. 21 [n]For to me life is
Christ, and death is gain. 22 [o]If I go on living in
the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I
do not know which I shall choose. 23 [p]I am
caught between the two. I long to depart this
life and be with Christ, [for] that is far better.
24Yet that I remain [in] the flesh is more neces-
sary for your benefit. 25And this I know with
confidence, that I shall remain and continue in
the service of all of you for your progress and
joy in the faith, 26so that your boasting in Christ
Jesus may abound on account of me when I
come to you again.

## III: Instructions for the Community

**Steadfastness in Faith** 27 [q]*Only, conduct
yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of
Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or
am absent, I may hear news of you, that you are
standing firm in one spirit, with one mind
struggling together for the faith of the gospel,
28not intimidated in any way by your opponents.
This is proof to them of destruction, but of your
salvation. And this is God's doing. 29 [r]For to you
has been granted, for the sake of Christ, not only
to believe in him but also to suffer for him.
30 [s]*Yours is the same struggle as you saw in me
and now hear about me.

**1, 12–26:** The body of the letter begins with an account of Paul's present **situation,** i.e., his **imprisonment** (12–13; see Introduction), and then goes on with advice for the Philippians (1, 27—2, 18). The **advance of the gospel** (12) and the **progress** of the Philippians **in the faith** (25) frame what is said.

**1, 13: Praetorium:** either the praetorian guard in the city where Paul was imprisoned or the governor's official residence in a Roman province (cf Mk 15, 16; Acts 23, 35). See Introduction on possible sites.

**1, 14–18:** Although Paul is imprisoned, Christians there nonetheless go on preaching Christ. But they do so with varied motives, some with personal hostility toward Paul, others out of personal ambition.

**1, 18: Rejoice:** a major theme in the letter; see Introduction.

**1, 19–25:** Paul earnestly debates his prospects of martyrdom or continued missionary labor. While he may **long to depart this life** and thus **be with Christ** (23), his overall and final expectation is that he will be delivered from this imprisonment and **continue in the service** of the Philippians and of others (19.25; 2, 24). In either case, Christ is central (20.21); if to live means Christ for Paul, death means to be united with Christ in a deeper sense.

**1, 19: Result in deliverance for me:** an echo of Jb 13, 16, hoping that God will turn suffering to ultimate good and deliverance from evil.

**1, 27–30:** Ethical admonition begins at this early point in the letter, emphasizing steadfastness and congregational unity in the face of possible suffering. The **opponents** (28) are those in Philippi, probably pagans, who oppose the gospel cause. **This is proof . . .** (28) may refer to the whole outlook and conduct of the Philippians, turning out for their salvation but to the judgment of the opponents (cf 2 Cor 2, 15–16), or possibly the sentence refers to the opinion of the opponents, who hold that the obstinacy of the Christians points to the destruction of such people as defy Roman authority (though in reality, Paul holds, such faithfulness leads to salvation).

**1, 30:** A reference to Paul's earlier imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16, 19–24; 1 Thes 2, 2) and to his present confinement.

g Rom 2, 18; 12, 2 / 1, 6. h Jn 15, 8. i Eph 3, 1; 6, 20; 2 Tm 2, 9; Phlm 9. j 4, 22. k 4, 10. l Jb 13, 16 / 2 Cor 1, 11. m 1 Cor 6, 20; 1 Pt 4, 16. n Gal 2, 20. o Rom 1, 13. p 2 Cor 5, 8. q Eph 4, 1; Col 1, 10; 1 Thes 2, 12 / 4, 3. r Mt 5, 10; 10, 38; Mk 8, 34; Acts 5, 41. s 1, 13; Acts 16, 22–24.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2
See RG
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**Plea for Unity and Humility** 1 *If there is any
encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any
participation in the Spirit, any compassion and
mercy, 2 [t]complete my joy by being of the same
mind, with the same love, united in heart,
thinking one thing. 3 [u]Do nothing out of selfish-
ness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard
others as more important than yourselves,
4 [v]each looking out not for his own interests, but
[also] everyone for those of others.

5 *Have among yourselves the same attitude
that is also yours in Christ Jesus,

6 [w]*Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God something
to be grasped.
7 [x]*Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
8 [y]*he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross.

9 [z]*Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above every name,
10 [a]*that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under
the earth,
11 [b]*and every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

**Obedience and Service in the World** 12 [c]*So
then, my beloved, obedient as you have always
been, not only when I am present but all the
more now when I am absent, work out your
salvation with fear and trembling. 13 [d]For God is
the one who, for his good purpose, works in you
both to desire and to work. 14 [e]Do everything
without grumbling or questioning, 15 [f]*that you
may be blameless and innocent, children of God
without blemish in the midst of a crooked and
perverse generation, among whom you shine
like lights in the world, 16 [g]as you hold on to the
word of life, so that my boast for the day of
Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor

**2, 1–11:** The admonition to likemindedness and unity (2–5) is based on the believers' threefold experience with Christ, God's love, and the Spirit. The appeal to humility (3) and to obedience (12) is rooted in christology, specifically in a statement about Christ Jesus (6–11) and his humbling of self and obedience to the point of death (8).

**2, 5: Have . . . the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus:** or, "that also Christ Jesus had." While it is often held that Christ here functions as a model for moral imitation, it is not the historical Jesus but the entire Christ event that vv 6–11 depict. Therefore, the appeal is to have in relations among yourselves that same relationship you have in Jesus Christ, i.e., serving one another as you serve Christ (4).

**2, 6–11:** Perhaps an early Christian hymn quoted here by Paul. The short rhythmic lines fall into two parts, vv 6–8 where the subject of every verb is Christ, and vv 9–11 where the subject is God. The general pattern is thus of Christ's humiliation and then exaltation. More precise analyses propose a division into six three-line stanzas (6; 7abc; 7d-8; 9; 10; 11) or into three stanzas (6–7ab; 7cd-8; 9–11). Phrases such as **even death on a cross** (8c) are considered by some to be additions (by Paul) to the hymn, as are vv 10c and 11c.

**2, 6:** Either a reference to Christ's preexistence and those aspects of divinity that he was willing to give up in order to serve in human form, or to what the man Jesus refused to grasp at to attain divinity. Many see an allusion to the Genesis story: unlike Adam, Jesus, **though . . . in the form of God** (Gn 1, 26–27), did not reach out for **equality with God,** in contrast with the first Adam in Gn 3, 5–6.

**2, 7: Taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness:** or ". . . taking the form of a slave. // Coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance." While it is common to take vv 6 and 7 as dealing with Christ's preexistence and v 8 with his incarnate life, so that lines 7b and c are parallel, it is also possible to interpret so as to exclude any reference to preexistence (see the note on 2, 6) and to take vv 6–8 as presenting two parallel stanzas about Jesus' human state (6–7b; 7cd-8); in the latter alternative, **coming in human likeness** begins the second stanza and parallels 6a to some extent.

**2, 8:** There may be reflected here language about the servant of the Lord, Is 52, 13—53, 12, especially 53, 12.

**2, 9: The name:** "Lord" (11), revealing the true nature of the one who is named.

**2, 10–11: Every knee should bend . . . every tongue confess:** into this language of Is 45, 23 there has been inserted a reference to the three levels in the universe, according to ancient thought, **heaven, earth, under the earth.**

**2, 11: Jesus Christ is Lord:** a common early Christian acclamation; cf 1 Cor 12, 3; Rom 10, 9. But doxology to God the Father is not overlooked here (11c) in the final version of the hymn.

**2, 12–18:** Paul goes on to draw out further ethical implications for daily life (14–18) from the salvation God works in Christ.

**2, 12: Fear and trembling:** a common Old Testament expression indicating awe and seriousness in the service of God (cf Ex 15, 16; Jdt 2, 28; Ps 2, 11; Is 19, 16).

**2, 15–16: Generation . . . as you hold on to . . . :** or ". . . generation. Among them shine like lights in the world because you hold the word of life . . . ."

t Rom 15, 5; 1 Cor 1, 10. u Rom 12, 3.10; Gal 5, 26. v 1 Cor 10, 24.33; 13, 5. w Jn 1, 1–2; 17, 5; Col 2, 9; Heb 1, 3. x Is 53, 3.11; Jn 1, 14; Rom 8, 3; 2 Cor 8, 9; Gal 4, 4; Heb 2, 14.17. y Mt 26, 39; Jn 10, 17; Heb 5, 8; 12, 2. z Acts 2, 33; Mt 23, 12; Eph 1, 20–21; Heb 1, 3–4. a Is 45, 23; Jn 5, 23; Rom 14, 11; Rv 5, 13. b Acts 2, 36; Rom 10, 9; 1 Cor 12, 3. c Ps 2, 11; 1 Cor 2, 3; 2 Cor 7, 15. d 1, 6; 1 Cor 12, 6; 15, 10; 2 Cor 3, 5. e 1 Cor 10, 10; 1 Pt 4, 9. f 1 Thes 3, 13 / Dt 32, 5; Mt 10, 16; Acts 2, 40 / Dn 12, 3; Mt 5, 14.16; Eph 5, 8. g 1 Thes 2, 19 / Is 49, 4; 65, 23; Gal 2, 2.

in vain. [17] [h]*But, even if I am poured out as a
libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith,
I rejoice and share my joy with all of you. [18] [i]In
the same way you also should rejoice and share
your joy with me.

## IV: Travel Plans of Paul and His Assistants

**Timothy and Paul** [19] [j]*I hope, in the Lord
Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too
may be heartened by hearing news of you. [20]For
I have no one comparable to him for genuine
interest in whatever concerns you. [21] [k]For they
all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus
Christ. [22]But you know his worth, how as a
child with a father he served along with me in
the cause of the gospel. [23]He it is, then, whom I
hope to send as soon as I see how things go with
me, [24]*but I am confident in the Lord that I
myself will also come soon.

**Epaphroditus** [25] [l]*With regard to Epaphroditus, my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister in my need, I consider it necessary to send him to you. [26]For he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was ill. [27]He was indeed ill, close to death; but God had mercy on him, not just on him but also on me, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. [28]I send him therefore with the greater eagerness, so that, on seeing him, you may rejoice again, and I may have less anxiety. [29] [m]Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy and hold such people in esteem, [30]because for the sake of the work of Christ he came close to death, risking his life to make up for those services to me that you could not perform.

### CHAPTER 3

**Concluding Admonitions** [1] [n]*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. Writing the same things to you is no burden for me but is a safeguard for you.

Ch 3
See RG
516–517

## V: Polemic: Righteousness and the Goal in Christ

**Against Legalistic Teachers** [2] [o]*Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil-workers! Beware of the mutilation! [3] [p]*For we are the circumcision, we who worship through the Spirit of God, who boast in Christ Jesus and do not put our confidence in flesh, [4] [q]although I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh.

**Paul's Autobiography** If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I.

**2, 17: Libation:** in ancient religious ritual, the pouring out on the ground of a liquid offering as a sacrifice. Paul means that he may be facing death.

**2, 19—3, 1:** The plans of Paul and his assistants for future travel are regularly a part of a Pauline letter near its conclusion; cf Rom 15, 22–29; 1 Cor 16, 5–12.

**2, 19: Timothy:** already known to the Philippians (Acts 16, 1–15; cf 1 Cor 4, 17; 16, 10).

**2, 24: I myself will also come soon:** cf 1, 19–25 for the significance of this statement.

**2, 25: Epaphroditus:** sent by the Philippians as their **messenger** (literally, "apostle") to aid Paul in his imprisonment, he had fallen seriously ill; Paul commends him as he sends him back to Philippi.

**3, 1: Finally . . . rejoice:** the adverb often signals the close of a letter; cf 4, 8; 2 Cor 13, 11. While the verb could also be translated "good-bye" or "farewell," although it is never so used in Greek epistolography, the theme of joy has been frequent in the letter (1, 18; 2, 2.18); note also 4, 4 and the addition of "always" there as evidence for the meaning "rejoice." To write **the same things** may refer to what Paul has previously taught in Philippi or to what he has just written or to what follows.

**3, 2–21:** An abrupt change in content and tone, either because Paul at this point responds to disturbing news he has just heard about a threat to the faith of the Philippians in the form of false teachers, or because part of another Pauline letter was inserted here; see Introduction. The chapter describes these teachers in strong terms as **dogs.** The persons meant are evidently different from the rival preachers of 1, 14–18 and the opponents of 1, 28. Since vv 2–4 emphasize Jewish terms like **circumcision** (2–3.5), some relate them to the "Judaizers" of the Letter to the Galatians. Other phrases make them appear more like the false teachers of 2 Cor 11, 12–15, the **evil-workers.** The latter part of the chapter depicts the **many** who are **enemies** of Christ's cross in terms that may sound more Gentile or even "gnostic" than Jewish (18–19). Accordingly, some see two groups of false teachers in ch 3, others one group characterized by a claim of having attained "perfect maturity" (12–15).

**3, 2–11:** Paul sets forth the Christian claim, especially using personal, autobiographical terms that are appropriate to the situation. He presents his own experience in coming to know Christ Jesus in terms of **righteousness** or justification (cf Rom 1, 16–17; 3, 21—5, 11; Gal 2, 5–11), contrasting **the righteousness from God** through faith and that of one's own **based on the law** as two exclusive ways of pleasing God.

**3, 2: Beware of the mutilation:** literally, "incision," an ironic wordplay on "circumcision"; cf Gal 5, 12. There may be an association with the self-inflicted mutilations of the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18, 28) and of devotees of Cybele who slashed themselves in religious frenzy.

**3, 3: We are the circumcision:** the true people of God, seed and offspring of Abraham (Gal 3, 7.29; 6, 15). **Spirit of God:** some manuscripts read "worship God by the Spirit."

h Rom 15, 16; 2 Tm 4, 6. i 3, 1; 4, 4. j Acts 16, 1–3; 17, 14–15; 1 Cor 4, 17; 16, 10. k 1 Cor 13, 5; 2 Tm 4, 10. 14, 10–11.15–16.18. m 1 Cor 16, 18. n 2, 18; 4, 4. o Ps 22, 17.21; Rv 22, 15 / 2 Cor 11, 13 / Gal 5, 6.12. p Rom 2, 28–29; Col 2, 11. q 2 Cor 11, 18.21–23.

5 [r]*Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of
Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of
Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a
Pharisee, 6 [s]in zeal I persecuted the church, in
righteousness based on the law I was blameless.

**Righteousness from God** 7 [t]*[But] whatever
gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss
because of Christ. 8More than that, I even
consider everything as a loss because of the
supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things
and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may
gain Christ 9 [u]and be found in him, not having
any righteousness of my own based on the law
but that which comes through faith in Christ,
the righteousness from God, depending on faith
10 [v]to know him and the power of his resurrec-
tion and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being
conformed to his death, 11 [w]if somehow I may
attain the resurrection from the dead.

**Forward in Christ** 12 [x]*It is not that I have
already taken hold of it or have already attained
perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in
hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed
been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus].
13Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself
to have taken possession. Just one thing: forget-
ting what lies behind but straining forward to
what lies ahead, 14 [y]I continue my pursuit to-
ward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling,
in Christ Jesus. 15Let us, then, who are "per-
fectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you
have a different attitude, this too God will reveal
to you. 16*Only, with regard to what we have
attained, continue on the same course.

Ch 4
See RG
517–518

**Wrong Conduct and Our Goal** 17 [z]*Join with
others in being imitators of me, brothers, and
observe those who thus conduct themselves
according to the model you have in us. 18 [a]For
many, as I have often told you and now tell you
even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of
the cross of Christ. 19 [b]Their end is destruction.
Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their
"shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly
things. 20 [c]*But our citizenship is in heaven, and
from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus
Christ. 21 [d]He will change our lowly body to
conform with his glorified body by the power
that enables him also to bring all things into
subjection to himself.

# VI: Instructions for the Community

## CHAPTER 4

**Live in Concord** 1 [e]*Therefore, my brothers,
whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in
this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.

2*I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come
to a mutual understanding in the Lord. 3 [f]*Yes,
and I ask you also, my true yokemate, to help
them, for they have struggled at my side in

**3, 5: Circumcised on the eighth day:** as the law required (Gn 17, 12; Lv 12, 3).

**3, 7: Loss:** his knowledge of Christ led Paul to reassess the ways of truly pleasing and serving God. His reevaluation indicates the profound and lasting effect of his experience of the meaning of Christ on the way to Damascus some twenty years before (Gal 1, 15–16; Acts 9, 1–22).

**3, 12–16:** To be **taken possession of by Christ** does not mean that one has already arrived at perfect spiritual maturity. Paul and the Philippians instead press on, trusting in God.

**3, 12: Attained perfect maturity:** possibly an echo of the concept in the mystery religions of being an initiate, admitted to divine secrets.

**3, 16:** Some manuscripts add, probably to explain Paul's cryptic phrase, "thinking alike."

**3, 17–21:** Paul and those who live a life centered in Christ, envisaging both his suffering and resurrection, provide a model that is the opposite of opponents who reject Christ's cross (cf 1 Cor 1, 23).

**3, 17: Being imitators of me:** not arrogance, but humble simplicity, since all his converts know that Paul is wholly dedicated to imitating Christ (1 Cor 11, 1; cf also Phil 4, 9; 1 Thes 1, 6; 2 Thes 3, 7.9; 1 Cor 4, 6).

**3, 20: Citizenship:** Christians constitute a colony of heaven, as Philippi was a **colonia** of Rome (Acts 16, 12). The hope Paul expresses involves the final coming of Christ, not a status already attained, such as the opponents claim.

**4, 1–9:** This series of ethical admonitions rests especially on the view of Christ and his coming (cf 5) in 3, 20–21. Paul's instructions touch on unity within the congregation, joy, prayer, and the Christian outlook on life.

**4, 2: Euodia . . . Syntyche:** two otherwise unknown women in the Philippian congregation; on the advice to them, cf 2, 2–4.

**4, 3: Yokemate:** or "comrade," although the Greek **syzygos** could also be a proper name. **Clement:** otherwise unknown, although later writers sought to identify him with Clement, bishop of Rome (Eusebius, **Ecclesiastical History** 3.15.1).

r Lk 1, 59; 2, 21 / Acts 22, 3; 23, 6; 26, 5. s Acts 8, 3; 22, 4; 26, 9–11. t Mt 13, 44.46; Lk 14, 33. u Rom 3, 21–22. v Rom 6, 3–5; 8, 17; Gal 6, 17. w Jn 11, 23–26; Acts 4, 2; Rv 20, 5–6. x 1 Tm 6, 12.19. y 1 Cor 9, 24–25; 2 Tm 4, 7. z 1 Cor 4, 16; 11, 1; 1 Thes 1, 7; 1 Pt 5, 3. a 1 Cor 1, 17.23; Gal 6, 12. b Rom 8, 5–6; 16, 18. c Eph 2, 6.19; Col 3, 1–3; Heb 12, 22. d Rom 8, 23.29; 1 Cor 15, 42–57; 2 Cor 3, 18; 5, 1–5 /1 Cor 15, 27–28. e 1 Thes 2, 19–20. f Ex 32, 32–33; Ps 69, 29; Dn 12, 1; Lk 10, 20; Rv 3, 5; 13, 8;17, 8; 20, 12.15; 21, 27.

promoting the gospel, along with Clement and
my other co-workers, whose names are in the
book of life.

**Joy and Peace** [4] [g]*Rejoice in the Lord always. I
shall say it again: rejoice! [5] [h]*Your kindness
should be known to all. The Lord is near. [6] [i]Have
no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer
and petition, with thanksgiving, make your re-
quests known to God. [7] [j]Then the peace of God
that surpasses all understanding will guard your
hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[8] [k]*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, what-
ever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is
pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if
there is any excellence and if there is anything
worthy of praise, think about these things.
[9] [l]*Keep on doing what you have learned and
received and heard and seen in me. Then the
God of peace will be with you.

## VII: Gratitude for the Philippians' Generosity

[10] [m]*I rejoice greatly in the Lord that now at
last you revived your concern for me. You were,
of course, concerned about me but lacked an
opportunity. [11] [n]Not that I say this because of
need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I
find myself, to be self-sufficient. [12]I know indeed
how to live in humble circumstances; I know
also how to live with abundance. In every
circumstance and in all things I have learned the
secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of
living in abundance and of being in need. [13] [o]I
have the strength for everything through him
who empowers me. [14]Still, it was kind of you to
share in my distress.

[15]*You Philippians indeed know that at the
beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia,
not a single church shared with me in an
account of giving and receiving, except you
alone. [16]For even when I was at Thessalonica
you sent me something for my needs, not only
once but more than once. [17]It is not that I am
eager for the gift; rather, I am eager for the profit
that accrues to your account. [18] [p]*I have re-
ceived full payment and I abound. I am very well
supplied because of what I received from you
through Epaphroditus, "a fragrant aroma," an
acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. [19] [q]My God
will fully supply whatever you need, in accord
with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. [20] [r]To our
God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

## VIII: Farewell

[21]*Give my greetings to every holy one in
Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send
you their greetings; [22] [s]*all the holy ones send
you their greetings, especially those of Caesar's
household. [23]The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
be with your spirit.

**4, 4: Rejoice:** see the note on 3, 1.

**4, 5: Kindness:** considerateness, forbearance, fairness. **The Lord is near:** most likely a reference to Christ's parousia (1, 6.10; 3, 20–21; 1 Cor 16, 22), although some sense an echo of Ps 119, 151 and the perpetual presence of the Lord.

**4, 8:** The language employs terms from Roman Stoic thought.

**4, 9:** Cf the note on 3, 17.

**4, 10–20:** Paul, more directly than anywhere else in the letter (cf 1, 3–5), here thanks the Philippians for their gift of money sent through Epaphroditus (2, 25). Paul's own policy was **to be self-sufficient** as a missionary, supporting himself by his own labor (1 Thes 2, 5–9; 1 Cor 9, 15–18; cf Acts 18, 2–3). In spite of this reliance on self and on God to provide (11–13), Paul accepted gifts from the Philippians **not only once but more than once** (16) when he was in Thessalonica (Acts 17, 1–9), as he does now, in prison (**my distress,** 14). While commercial terms appear in the passage, like **an account of giving and receiving** (15) and **received full payment** (18), Paul is most concerned about the spiritual growth of the Philippians (10.17.19); he emphasizes that God will care for their needs, through Christ.

**4, 15: The beginning of the gospel:** it was at Philippi that Paul first preached Christ in Europe, going on from there to Thessalonica and Beroea (Acts 16, 9—17, 14).

**4, 18: Aroma . . . sacrifice:** Old Testament cultic language (cf Gn 8, 21; Ex 29, 18.25.41; Lv 1, 9.13; Ez 20, 41) applied to the Philippians' gift; cf Eph 5, 2; 2 Cor 2, 14–16.

**4, 21–23:** On the usual greetings at the conclusion of a letter, see the note on 1 Cor 16, 19–24. Inclusion of greetings from **all the holy ones** in the place from which Paul writes would involve even the Christians of 1, 14–18 who had their differences with Paul.

**4, 22: Those of Caesar's household:** minor officials or even slaves and freedmen, found in Ephesus or Rome, among other places.

g 2, 18; 3, 1. h Ti 3, 2 / Ps 145, 18; Heb 10, 37; Jas 5, 8–9. i Mt 6, 25–34; 1 Pt 5, 7 / Col 4, 2. j Jn 14, 27; Col 3, 15. k Rom 12, 17. l 1 Thes 4, 1 / Rom 15, 33; 16, 20; 1 Cor 14, 33; 1 Thes 5, 23. m 1, 18; 2, 25; 1 Cor 9, 11; 2 Cor 11, 9. n 1 Cor 4, 11; 2 Cor 6, 10; 11, 27 / 2 Cor 12, 9–10. o Col 1, 29; 2 Tm 4, 17. p Gn 8, 21; Ex 29, 18; Eph 5, 2; Heb 13, 16. q 1 Thes 3, 11.13. r Rom 16, 27; Eph 5, 20. s 1, 13.

# THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colossians
See RG
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This letter is addressed to a congregation at Colossae in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor, east of Ephesus. At the time of writing, Paul had not visited there, the letter says (1, 4; 2, 1). The community had apparently been established by Epaphras of Colossae (1, 7; 4, 12; Phlm 23). Problems, however, had arisen, brought on by teachers who emphasized Christ's relation to the universe (cosmos). Their teachings stressed angels (2, 18; "principalities and powers," 2, 15), which were connected with astral powers and cultic practices (see the note on 2, 16) and rules about food and drink and ascetical disciplines (2, 16.18). These teachings, Paul insists, detract from the person and work of Christ for salvation as set forth magnificently in a hymnic passage at 1, 15-20 and reiterated throughout the letter. Such teachings are but "shadows"; Christ is "reality" (2, 17).

For help in dealing with these problems that the new teachers posed at Colossae, Epaphras sought out Paul, who was then imprisoned (4, 10.18) at a place that the letter does not mention. Paul, without entering into debate over the existence of angelic spirits or their function, simply affirms that Christ possesses the sum total of redemptive power (1, 19) and that the spiritual renewal of the human person occurs through contact in baptism with the person of Christ, who died and rose again (2, 9-14). It is unnecessary for the Christian to be concerned about placating spirits (2, 15) or avoiding imagined defilement through ascetical practices in regard to food and drink (2, 20-23). True Christian asceticism consists in the conquering of personal sins (3, 5-10) and the practice of love of neighbor in accordance with the standard set by Christ (3, 12-16).

Paul commends the community as a whole (1, 3-8); this seems to indicate that, though the Colossians have been under pressure to adopt the false doctrines, they have not yet succumbed. The apostle expresses his prayerful concern for them (1, 9-14). His preaching has cost him persecution, suffering, and imprisonment, but he regards these as reflective of the sufferings of Christ, a required discipline for the sake of the gospel (see the note on 1, 24; cf 1, 29; 2, 1). His instructions to the Christian family and to slaves and masters require a new spirit of reflection and action. Love, obedience, and service are to be rendered "in the Lord" (3, 18—4, 1).

Colossians follows the outline of a typical Pauline letter. It is distinguished by the poetic lines in 1, 15-20 concerning who Christ is and what Christ means in creation and redemption. This hymn may be compared with similar passages in Philippians 2, 6-11; 1 Timothy 3, 16; and John 1, 1-18. It was apparently familiar liturgical material to the author, the audience, and the false teachers. In 1, 21—2, 7, however, Paul interprets the relation between the body of Christ, which he insists is the church (1, 18), and the world or cosmos to be one not simply of Christ's preexistence and rule but one of missionary advance into the world by the spreading of the word (1, 25.28). In this labor of the missionary body of Christ, Paul as a minister plays a prime part in bringing Christ and the gospel as hope to the Gentiles (1, 23.25.27). To "every creature under heaven" the word is to be proclaimed, so that everyone receives Christ, is established in faith, and walks in Christ (1, 28; 2, 6.7).

Paul wrote the Letter to the Colossians while in prison, but his several imprisonments leave the specific place and date of composition uncertain. On this point the same problem exists as with Ephesians and Philippians (see the Introductions to these letters). Traditionally the house arrest at Rome, in which Paul enjoyed a certain restricted freedom in preaching (see Acts 28, 16-28), or a second Roman imprisonment has been claimed as the setting. Others suggest a still

earlier imprisonment at Caesarea (see Acts 23, 12—27, 1) or in Ephesus (see Acts 19). Still others regard the letter as the work of some pupil or follower of Paul, writing in his name. In any case, the contents are often closely paralleled by thoughts in Ephesians.

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Colossians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-14)
II. The Preeminence of Christ (1, 15—2, 3)
III. Warnings against False Teachers (2, 4-23)
IV. The Ideal Christian Life in the World (3, 1—4, 6)
V. Conclusion (4, 7-18)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2to
the holy ones and faithful brothers in Christ in
Colossae: grace to you and peace from God our
Father.

**Thanksgiving** 3 [b]*We always give thanks to
God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when
we pray for you, 4for we have heard of your faith
in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all
the holy ones 5 [c]because of the hope reserved for
you in heaven. Of this you have already heard
through the word of truth, the gospel, 6that has
come to you. Just as in the whole world it is
bearing fruit and growing, so also among you,
from the day you heard it and came to know the
grace of God in truth, 7 [d]*as you learned it from
Epaphras our beloved fellow slave, who is a
trustworthy minister of Christ on your behalf
8and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

**Prayer for Continued Progress** 9 [e]*There-
fore, from the day we heard this, we do not
cease praying for you and asking that you may be
filled with the knowledge of his will through all
spiritual wisdom and understanding 10to live in a
manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully
pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and
growing in the knowledge of God, 11strength-
ened with every power, in accord with his
glorious might, for all endurance and patience,
with joy 12 [f]*giving thanks to the Father, who
has made you fit to share in the inheritance of
the holy ones in light. 13He delivered us from
the power of darkness and transferred us to the
kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 [g]in whom we
have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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**1, 1–2:** For the epistolary form used by Paul at the beginning of his letters, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7. On **holy ones** or "God's people," see the note on Rom 1, 7. Awareness of their calling helps this group to be **faithful brothers** and sisters **in Christ,** i.e., dedicated to the tasks implied in their calling.

**1, 3–8:** On thanksgiving at the start of a letter, see the note on Rom 1, 8. The apostle, recalling his own prayers for them and the good report about them he has received (3–4), congratulates the Colossians upon their acceptance of Christ and their faithful efforts to live the gospel (3, 6–8). To encourage them he mentions the success of the gospel elsewhere (6) and assures them that his knowledge of their community is accurate, since he has been in personal contact with Epaphras (7–8), who likely had evangelized Colossae and other cities in the Lycus Valley of Asia Minor (cf 4, 12.13; Phlm 23). On **faith, love,** and **hope** (4.5.8), see the note on 1 Cor 13, 13; cf 1 Thes 1, 3; 5, 8.

**1, 7: Epaphras:** now with Paul but a Colossian, founder of the church there.

**1, 9–14:** Moved by Epaphras' account, the apostle has prayed and continues to pray fervently for the Colossians that, in their response to the gospel, they **may be filled with the knowledge of God's will** (9; cf 3, 10). Paul expects a mutual interaction between their life according to the gospel and this knowledge (10), yielding results (**fruit,** 10; cf 6) **in every good work:** growth, strength, **endurance, patience, with joy** (11), and the further giving of thanks (12).

**1, 12–14:** A summary about **redemption** by **the Father** precedes the statement in vv 15–20 about the **beloved Son** who is God's love in person (13). Christians share **the inheritance . . . in light** with **the holy ones,** here probably the angels (12). The imagery reflects the Exodus (**delivered . . . transferred**) and Jesus' theme of **the kingdom. Redemption** is explained as **forgiveness of sins** (cf Acts 2, 38; Rom 3, 24–25; Eph 1, 7).

a Eph 1, 1. b Eph 1, 15–16; Phlm 4–5. c Eph 1, 13.18; 1 Pt 1, 4. d Phlm 23. e Eph 1, 15–17; 5, 17; Phil 1, 9. f 3, 17; Jn 8, 12; Acts 26, 18; 1 Tm 6, 16; 1 Pt 2, 9. g Eph 1, 7.

## II: The Preeminence of Christ
## His Person and Work

15 [h]*He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.
16 [i]*For in him were created all things in heaven
and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or
principalities or powers;
all things were created through him and for
him.
17 He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
18 [j]*He is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the
dead,
that in all things he himself might be
preeminent.
19 *For in him all the fullness was pleased to
dwell,
20 [k]*and through him to reconcile all things
for him,
making peace by the blood of his cross
[through him], whether those on earth or
those in heaven.

21 [l]*And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds 22 he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through his death, to present you holy, without blemish, and irreproachable before him, 23 provided that you persevere in the faith, firmly grounded, stable, and not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, am a minister.

**Christ in Us** 24 *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, 25 of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion

**1, 15–20:** As the poetic arrangement indicates, these lines are probably an early Christian hymn, known to the Colossians and taken up into the letter from liturgical use (cf Phil 2, 6–11; 1 Tm 3, 16). They present Christ as the mediator of creation (15–18a) and of redemption (18b-20). There is a parallelism between **firstborn of all creation** (15) and **firstborn from the dead** (18). While many of the phrases were at home in Greek philosophical use and even in gnosticism, the basic ideas also reflect Old Testament themes about Wisdom found in Prv 8, 22–31; Wis 7, 22—8, 1; and Sir 1, 4. See also the notes on what is possibly a hymn in Jn 1, 1–18.

**1, 15: Image:** cf Gn 1, 27. Whereas the man and the woman were originally created in the image and likeness of God (see also Gn 1, 26), Christ as image (2 Cor 4, 4) of **the invisible God** (Jn 1, 18) now shares this new nature in baptism with those redeemed (cf 3, 10–11).

**1, 16–17:** Christ (though not mentioned by name) is preeminent and supreme as God's agent in the creation of **all things** (cf Jn 1, 3), as prior to **all things** (17; cf Heb 1, 3).

**1, 18: Church:** such a reference seemingly belongs under "redemption" in the following lines, not under the "creation" section of the hymn. Stoic thought sometimes referred to the world as "the body of Zeus." Pauline usage is to speak of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12, 12–27; Rom 12, 4–5). Some think that the author of Colossians has inserted the reference to the church here so as to define "head of the body" in Paul's customary way. See v 24. **Preeminent:** when Christ was raised by God as **firstborn from the dead** (cf Acts 26, 23; Rv 1, 5), he was placed over the community, the church, that he had brought into being, but he is also indicated as crown of the whole new creation, over **all things.** His further role is to **reconcile all things** (20) for God or possibly "to himself."

**1, 19: Fullness:** in gnostic usage this term referred to a spiritual world of beings above, between God and the world; many later interpreters take it to refer to **the fullness of the deity** (2, 9); the reference could also be to the fullness of grace (cf Jn 1, 16).

**1, 20: The blood of his cross:** the most specific reference in the hymn to redemption through Christ's death, a central theme in Paul; cf 2, 14–15; 1 Cor 1, 17.18.23. **[Through him]:** the phrase, lacking in some manuscripts, seems superfluous but parallels the reference to reconciliation through Christ earlier in the verse.

**1, 21–23:** Paul, in applying this hymn to the Colossians, reminds them that they have experienced the reconciling effect of Christ's death. He sees the effects of the cross in the redemption of human beings, not of cosmic powers such as those referred to in vv 16 and 20 (**all things**). Paul also urges adherence to Christ in faith and begins to point to his own role as minister (23), sufferer (24), and proclaimer (27–28) of this gospel.

**1, 24—2, 3:** As the community at Colossae was not personally known to Paul (see Introduction), he here invests his teaching with greater authority by presenting a brief sketch of his apostolic ministry and sufferings as they reflect those of Christ on behalf of the church (24). The preaching of God's word (25) carries out the divine plan (**the mystery,** 26) to make Christ known to the Gentiles (27). It teaches the God-given wisdom about Christ (28), whose power works mightily in the apostle (29). Even in those communities that do not know him personally (2, 1), he can increase the perception of God in Christ, unite the faithful more firmly in love, and so bring encouragement to them (2). He hopes that his apostolic authority will make the Colossians perceive more readily the defects in the teaching of others who have sought to delude them, the next concern in the letter.

**1, 24: What is lacking:** although variously interpreted, this phrase does not imply that Christ's atoning death on the cross was defective. It may refer to the apocalyptic concept of a quota of "messianic woes" to be endured before the end comes; cf Mk 13, 8.19–20.24 and the note on Mt 23, 29–32. Others suggest that Paul's mystical unity with Christ allowed him to call his own **sufferings the afflictions of Christ.**

h Ps 89, 28; Jn 1, 3.18; 2 Cor 4, 4. i 1 Cor 8, 6; Eph 1, 10.21. j 1 Cor 11, 3; 12, 12.27; 15, 20; Eph 1, 22–23; Rv 1, 5. k 2 Cor 5, 18–19; Eph 1, 10. l Eph 2, 14–16.

for you the word of God, 26 [m]the mystery hidden
from ages and from generations past. But now it
has been manifested to his holy ones, 27 [n]to
whom God chose to make known the riches of
the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it
is Christ in you, the hope for glory. 28 [o]It is he
whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and
teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may
present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 [p]For this I
labor and struggle, in accord with the exercise of
his power working within me.

## CHAPTER 2

1 *For I want you to know how great a struggle I
am having for you and for those in Laodicea and
all who have not seen me face to face, 2 [q]that
their hearts may be encouraged as they are
brought together in love, to have all the richness
of fully assured understanding, for the knowl-
edge of the mystery of God, Christ, 3 [r]in whom
are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and
knowledge.

## III: Warnings against False Teachers

**A General Admonition** 4 [s]*I say this so that
no one may deceive you by specious arguments.
5 [t]For even if I am absent in the flesh, yet I am
with you in spirit, rejoicing as I observe your
good order and the firmness of your faith in
Christ. 6 So, as you received Christ Jesus the
Lord, walk in him, 7 [u]rooted in him and built
upon him and established in the faith as you
were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 [v]*See
to it that no one captivate you with an empty,
seductive philosophy according to human tradi-
tion, according to the elemental powers of the
world and not according to Christ.

**Sovereign Role of Christ** 9 [w]*For in him
dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily,
10 and you share in this fullness in him, who is
the head of every principality and power. 11 [x]*In
him you were also circumcised with a circumci-
sion not administered by hand, by stripping off
the carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ.
12 [y]You were buried with him in baptism, in
which you were also raised with him through
faith in the power of God, who raised him from
the dead. 13 [z]And even when you were dead [in]
transgressions and the uncircumcision of your
flesh, he brought you to life along with him,
having forgiven us all our transgressions;
14 [a]*obliterating the bond against us, with its
legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also
removed it from our midst, nailing it to the
cross; 15 [b]*despoiling the principalities and the
powers, he made a public spectacle of them,
leading them away in triumph by it.

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**2, 1: Laodicea:** chief city in Phrygia, northwest of Colossae; cf 4, 13.16; Rv 3, 14–22.

**2, 4–23:** In face of the threat posed by false teachers (4), the Colossians are admonished to adhere to the gospel as it was first preached to them (6), steeping themselves in it with grateful hearts (7). They must reject religious teachings originating in any source except the gospel (8) because in Christ alone will they have access to God, **the deity** (9). So fully has Christ enlightened them that they need no other source of religious knowledge or virtue (10). They do not require **circumcision** (11), for **in baptism** their whole being has been affected by Christ (12) through forgiveness of sin and resurrection to a new life (13; cf 3, 1 and Rom 6, 1–11).

On the cross Christ canceled the record of the debt that stood against us with all its claims (14), i.e., he eliminated the law (cf Eph 2, 15) that human beings could not observe—and that could not save them. He forgave sins against the law (14) and exposed as false and misleading (15) all other powers (cf 1, 16) that purport to offer salvation. Therefore, the Colossians are not to accept judgments from such teachers on **food and drink** or to keep certain religious festivals or engage in certain cultic practices (16), for the Colossians would thereby risk severing themselves from Christ (19). If, when they accepted the gospel, they believed in Christ as their savior, they must be convinced that their salvation cannot be achieved by appeasing ruling spirits through dietary practices or through a wisdom gained simply by means of harsh asceticism (20–23).

**2, 8: Elemental powers of the world:** see the note on Gal 4, 3.

**2, 9: Fullness of the deity:** the divine nature, not just attributes; see the note on 1, 19.

**2, 11:** A description of baptism (12) in symbolic terms of the Old Testament rite for entry into the community. The false teachers may have demanded physical circumcision of the Colossians.

**2, 14:** The elaborate metaphor here about how God canceled the legal claims against us through Christ's cross depicts not Christ being nailed to the cross by men but **the bond . . . with its legal claims** being nailed to the cross by God.

**2, 15:** The picture derives from the **public spectacle** and **triumph** of a Roman emperor's victory parade, where captives marched in subjection. **The principalities and the powers** are here conquered, not reconciled (cf 1, 16.20). An alternate rendering for **by it** (the cross) is "by him" (Christ).

m Rom 16, 25–26; 1 Cor 2, 7; Eph 3, 3.9. n 3, 4; Rom 8, 10. o Eph 4, 13. p 2, 1; 4, 12; Phil 4, 13. q 1, 26–27; Eph 3, 18–19. r Prv 2, 4–5; Is 45, 3; Rom 11, 33; 1 Cor 1, 30. s Eph 4, 14. t 1 Cor 5, 3; Phil 1, 27. u Eph 2, 20–22; 3, 17. v Gal 4, 3; Eph 5, 6. w 1, 19; Eph 3, 19. x 1, 22; Jer 4, 4; Rom 2, 25–29; Phil 3, 3. y Rom 6, 3–4. z Eph 2, 1.5. a Eph 2, 14–15. b 1, 16.20; 2 Cor 2, 14; Eph 1, 21.

**Practices Contrary to Faith** [16] [c]*Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbath. [17] [d]These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ. [18] [e]*Let no one disqualify you, delighting in self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, inflated without reason by his fleshly mind, [19] [f]and not holding closely to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and bonds, achieves the growth that comes from God.

[20]If you died with Christ to the elemental powers of the world, why do you submit to regulations as if you were still living in the world? [21]"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" [22] [g]These are all things destined to perish with use; they accord with human precepts and teachings. [23]While they have a semblance of wisdom in rigor of devotion and self-abasement [and] severity to the body, they are of no value against gratification of the flesh.

## IV: The Ideal Christian Life in the World

### CHAPTER 3

Ch 3–4
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**Mystical Death and Resurrection** [1] [h]*If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. [2]Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. [3] [i]For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4]When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

**Renunciation of Vice** [5] [j]*Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. [6] [k]*Because of these the wrath of God is coming [upon the disobedient]. [7]By these you too once conducted yourselves, when you lived in that way. [8] [l]*But now you must put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths. [9] [m]Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices [10] [n]*and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. [11] [o]*Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

[12] [p]Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, [13] [q]bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. [14] [r]And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. [15] [s]And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. [16] [t]Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. [17] [u]And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**2, 16: Festival or new moon or sabbath:** yearly, monthly, and weekly observances determined by religious powers associated with a calendar set by the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars (cf 8).

**2, 18:** Ascetic practices encouraged by the false teachers included subjection of self humbly to their rules, worship of angels, and cultivation of visions, though exact details are unclear.

**3, 1–4:** By retaining the message of the gospel that the risen, living Christ is the source of their salvation, the Colossians will be free from false religious evaluations of the things of the world (1–2). They have died to these; but one day **when Christ . . . appears,** they will live with Christ in the presence of God (3–4).

**3, 5–17:** In lieu of false asceticism and superstitious festivals, the apostle reminds the Colossians of the moral life that is to characterize their response to God through Christ. He urges their participation in the liturgical hymns and prayers that center upon God's plan of salvation in Christ (16).

**3, 5.8:** The two lists of five vices each are similar to enumerations at Rom 1, 29–31 and Gal 5, 19–21.

**3, 6: The wrath of God:** see the note on Rom 1, 18. Many manuscripts add, as at Eph 5, 6, "upon the disobedient."

**3, 8–10: Put . . . away; have taken off; have put on:** the terms may reflect baptismal practice, taking off garments and putting on new ones after being united with Christ, here translated into ethical terms.

**3, 10: Image:** see the note on 1, 15.

**3, 11: Scythian:** a barbarous people from north of the Black Sea.

c Rom 14, 3–4; 1 Tm 4, 3. d Heb 8, 5; 10, 1. e 2, 23; Mt 24, 4. f Eph 2, 21–22; 4, 16. g Is 29, 13. h 2, 12; Ps 110, 1; Phil 3, 20; Eph 2, 6. i Rom 6, 2–5. j Mt 15, 19; Rom 1, 29–30; Gal 5, 19–21; Eph 5, 3.5. k Rom 1, 18. l Eph 4, 22.25.31. m Rom 6, 4.6; Eph 4, 22–25; Heb 12, 1; 1 Pt 2, 1; 4, 2. n Gn 1, 26–27. o 1 Cor 12, 13; Gal 3, 27–28. p Eph 4, 1–2.32; 1 Thes 5, 15. q Mt 6, 14; 18, 21–35; Eph 4, 32. r Rom 13, 8–10. s Rom 12, 5; 1 Cor 12, 12; Eph 2, 16; 4, 3–4; Phil 4, 7. t Eph 5, 19–20. u 1 Cor 10, 31.

**The Christian Family** 18 [v]*Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord.
19 Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any
bitterness toward them. 20 [w]Children, obey your
parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the
Lord. 21 [x]Fathers, do not provoke your children,
so they may not become discouraged.

**Slaves and Masters** 22 [y]*Slaves, obey your human masters in everything, not only when being
watched, as currying favor, but in simplicity of
heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do
from the heart, as for the Lord and not for
others, 24 knowing that you will receive from the
Lord the due payment of the inheritance; be
slaves of the Lord Christ. 25 [z]For the wrongdoer
will receive recompense for the wrong he committed, and there is no partiality.

## CHAPTER 4

1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly,
realizing that you too have a Master in heaven.

**Prayer and Apostolic Spirit** 2 [a]Persevere in
prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving;
3 [b]at the same time, pray for us, too, that God
may open a door to us for the word, to speak of
the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison,
4 that I may make it clear, as I must speak.
5 [c]Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders,
making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your
speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt,
so that you know how you should respond to
each one.

# V: Conclusion

**Tychicus and Onesimus** 7 [d]*Tychicus, my beloved brother, trustworthy minister, and fellow
slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news of
me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very
purpose, so that you may know about us and
that he may encourage your hearts, 9 [e]together
with Onesimus, a trustworthy and beloved
brother, who is one of you. They will tell you
about everything here.

**From Paul's Co-Workers** 10 [f]*Aristarchus, my
fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, as does
Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom
you have received instructions; if he comes to
you, receive him), 11 *and Jesus, who is called
Justus, who are of the circumcision; these alone
are my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and
they have been a comfort to me. 12 [g]*Epaphras
sends you greetings; he is one of you, a slave of
Christ [Jesus], always striving for you in his
prayers so that you may be perfect and fully
assured in all the will of God. 13 *For I can testify
that he works very hard for you and for those in
Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. 14 [h]*Luke the
beloved physician sends greetings, as does Demas.

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**A Message for the Laodiceans** 15 *Give greetings to the brothers in Laodicea and to Nympha
and to the church in her house. 16 *And when
this letter is read before you, have it read also in
the church of the Laodiceans, and you your-

**3, 18—4, 6:** After general recommendations that connect family life and the social condition of slavery with the service of Christ (3, 18—4, 1), Paul requests prayers for himself, especially in view of his imprisonment (2–3), and recommends friendly relations and meaningful discussions of Christian teaching with **outsiders**, i.e., non-Christians (5–6). See the note on Eph 5, 21—6, 9.

**3, 22–25: Slaves:** within this table of duties in family and societal relations, involving wives and husbands, children and parents (18–21), such as also appears in Eph 5, 22—6, 9, slaves here receive special attention because of the case of Onesimus the slave returning to his master (4, 9; Phlm 10–12).

**4, 7–18:** Paul concludes with greetings and information concerning various Christians known to the Colossians.

**4, 7: Tychicus:** Acts 20, 4 mentions his role in the collection for Jerusalem; Eph 6, 21 repeats what is said here; see also 2 Tm 4, 12; Ti 3, 12.

**4, 10: Aristarchus:** a Thessalonian who was with Paul at Ephesus and Caesarea and on the voyage to Rome (Acts 19, 29; 20, 4; 27, 2). **Mark:** also referred to at Phlm 24 and 2 Tm 4, 11 and, as "John Mark," in Acts (12, 12.25; 13, 13; 15, 37–40). See also 1 Pt 5, 13 and the note there. Traditionally the author of the second gospel.

**4, 11: Jesus:** a then common Jewish name, the Greek form of Joshua.

**4, 12: Epaphras:** see the notes on 1, 3–8 and 1, 7.

**4, 13: Laodicea:** see the note on 2, 1. **Hierapolis:** a city northeast of Laodicea and northwest of Colossae.

**4, 14: Luke:** only here described as a medical doctor; cf Phlm 24 and 2 Tm 4, 11. Traditionally the author of the third gospel. **Demas:** cf Phlm 24; he later deserted Paul (2 Tm 4, 10).

**4, 15: Nympha and . . . her house:** some manuscripts read a masculine for the house-church leader, "Nymphas and . . . his house."

**4, 16: The one from Laodicea:** either a letter by Paul that has been lost or the Letter to the Ephesians (cf the note on Eph 1, 1, in **Ephesus**).

v Eph 5, 22; Ti 2, 5; 1 Pt 3, 1. w Eph 6, 1. x Eph 6, 4. y Eph 6, 5; 1 Tm 6, 1; Ti 2, 9–10; 1 Pt 2, 18. z Rom 2, 11. a Lk 18, 1; Rom 12, 12; Eph 6, 18–20; 1 Thes 5, 17. b Rom 15, 30; 1 Cor 16, 9; Eph 6, 19; 2 Thes 3, 1. c Eph 5, 15–16. d Acts 20, 4; Eph 6, 21–22; Phil 1, 12. e Phlm 10–11. f Acts 19, 29; 20, 4; 27, 2 / Acts 12, 12.25; 13, 13; 15, 37.40;2 Tm 4, 11; Phlm 24; 1 Pt 5, 13. g 1, 7; Rom 15, 30. h Phlm 24; 2 Tm 4, 10–11.

selves read the one from Laodicea. 17 *i**And tell
Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that
you received in the Lord."

4, 17: **Fulfill the ministry:** usually taken to mean that **Archippus,** the son of Philemon and Apphia (Phlm 1–2), is "pastor" at Colossae. An alternate interpretation is that Archippus, not Philemon, is the owner of the slave Onesimus and that Paul is asking Archippus to complete the service he has received in the Lord by sending Onesimus back to minister to Paul in his captivity (cf Phlm 20).

18 *j**The greeting is in my own hand, Paul's.
Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

4, 18: **My own hand:** a postscript in Paul's own hand was his custom; cf Gal 6, 11–18 and 2 Thes 3, 17–18.

i Phlm 2. j 1 Cor 16, 21; Gal 6, 11; Eph 3, 1; 2 Thes 3, 17.

# THE FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

1 Thessalonians
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When Paul parted from Barnabas (Acts 15, 36-41) at the beginning of what is called his second missionary journey, he chose Silvanus (Silas) as his traveling companion. Soon afterwards he took Timothy along with him (Acts 16, 1-3). Paul was now clearly at the head of his own missionary band. About A.D. 50, he arrived in Greece for the first time. In making converts in Philippi and, soon afterwards, in Thessalonica, he was beset by persecution from Jews and Gentiles alike. Moving on to Beroea, he was again harassed by enemies from Thessalonica and hurriedly left for Athens (Acts 16, 11—17, 15). Silvanus and Timothy remained behind for a while. Paul soon sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to strengthen that community in its trials (3, 1-5). Timothy and Silvanus finally returned to Paul when he reached Corinth (Acts 18, 1-18), probably in the early summer of A.D. 51. Timothy's return with a report on conditions at Thessalonica served as the occasion for Paul's first letter (3, 6-8).

The letter begins with a brief address (1, 1) and concludes with a greeting (5, 26-28). The body of the letter consists of two major parts. The first (1, 2—3, 13) is a set of three sections of thanksgiving connected by two *apologiae* (defenses) dealing, respectively, with the missionaries' previous conduct and their current concerns. Paul's thankful optimism regarding the Thessalonians' spiritual welfare is tempered by his insistence on their recognition of the selfless love shown by the missionaries. In an age of itinerant peddlers of new religions, Paul found it necessary to emphasize not only the content of his gospel but also his manner of presenting it, for both attested to God's grace as freely bestowed and powerfully effected.

The second part of the letter (4, 1—5, 25) is specifically hortatory or parenetic. The superabundant love for which Paul has just prayed (3, 12-13) is to be shown practically by living out the norms of conduct that he has communicated to them. Specific "imperatives" of Christian life, principles for acting morally, stem from the "indicative" of one's relationship to God through Christ by the sending of the holy Spirit. Thus, moral conduct is the practical, personal expression of one's Christian faith, love, and hope.

The principal divisions of the First Letter to the Thessalonians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-10)
II. Previous Relations with the Thessalonians (2, 1—3, 13)
III. Specific Exhortations (4, 1—5, 25)
IV. Final Greeting (5, 26-28)

# I: Address

## CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to
the church of the Thessalonians in God the
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you
and peace.

**Thanksgiving for Their Faith** 2 [b]We give
thanks to God always for all of you, remember-
ing you in our prayers, unceasingly 3 *calling to
mind your work of faith and labor of love and
endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ,
before our God and Father, 4 [c]knowing, brothers
loved by God, how you were chosen. 5 [d]For our
gospel did not come to you in word alone, but
also in power and in the holy Spirit and [with]
much conviction. You know what sort of people
we were [among] you for your sake. 6 *And you
became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving
the word in great affliction, with joy from the
holy Spirit, 7 [e]so that you became a model for all
the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 [f]For
from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth
not only in Macedonia and [in] Achaia, but in
every place your faith in God has gone forth, so
that we have no need to say anything. 9 [g]For
they themselves openly declare about us what
sort of reception we had among you, and how
you turned to God from idols to serve the living
and true God 10 [h]and to await his Son from
heaven, whom he raised from [the] dead, Jesus,
who delivers us from the coming wrath.

# II: Previous Relations with the Thessalonians

## CHAPTER 2

**Paul's Ministry Among Them** 1 For you your-
selves know, brothers, that our reception among
you was not without effect. 2 [i]Rather, after we
had suffered and been insolently treated, as you
know, in Philippi, we drew courage through our
God to speak to you the gospel of God with
much struggle. 3 Our exhortation was not from
delusion or impure motives, nor did it work
through deception. 4 [j]*But as we were judged
worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel,
that is how we speak, not as trying to please
human beings, but rather God, who judges our
hearts. 5 Nor, indeed, did we ever appear with
flattering speech, as you know, or with a pretext
for greed—God is witness— 6 [k]nor did we seek
praise from human beings, either from you or
from others, 7 *although we were able to impose
our weight as apostles of Christ. Rather, we
were gentle among you, as a nursing mother
cares for her children. 8 With such affection for
you, we were determined to share with you not
only the gospel of God, but our very selves as
well, so dearly beloved had you become to us.
9 [l]You recall, brothers, our toil and drudgery.
Working night and day in order not to burden
any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of
God. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how
devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved
toward you believers. 11 [m]As you know, we
treated each one of you as a father treats his
children, 12 [n]exhorting and encouraging you and
insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy
of the God who calls you into his kingdom and
glory.

**Further Thanksgiving** 13 And for this reason
we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in
receiving the word of God from hearing us, you
received not a human word but, as it truly is, the
word of God, which is now at work in you who
believe. 14 *For you, brothers, have become

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Ch 2–3
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1, 1: On the address, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7.

1, 3: **Faith . . . love . . . hope:** this, along with 5, 8, is the earliest mention in Christian literature of the three "theological virtues" (see 1 Cor 13, 13). The order here stresses eschatological hope, in line with the letter's emphasis on the Lord's second, triumphal coming, or parousia (10; 2, 12.19; 3, 13; 4, 13—5, 11; 5, 23).

1, 6: **Imitators:** the Pauline theme of "imitation" (see 2, 14; 1 Cor 4, 16; 11, 1; 2 Thes 3, 9) is rooted in Paul's view of solidarity in Christ through sharing in Jesus' cross and in the Spirit of the risen Lord.

2, 4: **Judged worthy:** Paul regards "worthiness" not as grounded in one's own talent or moral self-righteousness but in God's discernment of genuinely selfless attitudes and actions (see 2 Cor 10, 17–18).

2, 7: **Gentle:** many excellent manuscripts read "infants" (**nēpioi**), but "gentle" (**ēpioi**) better suits the context here.

2, 14: Luke's picture of the persecutions at Philippi (by Gen-

a Acts 15, 40; 16, 1–3.19; 17, 14–15; 2 Thes 1, 1–2. b 2 Thes 1, 3. c 2 Thes 2, 13. d Acts 13, 52; 17, 1–9. e 2 Thes 1, 4; 1 Cor 4, 16; 11, 1 / 2, 14; Phil 3, 17. f Rom 1, 8. g Acts 14, 15; Gal 4, 8 / 4, 5. h Rom 2, 1–16; 5, 9; 13, 4 / 5, 9. i Acts 16, 19—17, 10. j Gal 1, 10. k Jn 5, 41.44; 1 Cor 10, 31; 2 Cor 4, 17. l Acts 20, 34; 1 Cor 4, 12; 9, 3–18; 2 Thes 3, 7–9. m Acts 20, 31. n 1 Pt 5, 10 / 4, 7; 2 Thes 2, 14.

imitators of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you suffer the same things from your compatriots as they did from the Jews, 15 [o]*who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us; they do not please God, and are opposed to everyone, 16 [p]trying to prevent us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved, thus constantly filling up the measure of their sins. But the wrath of God has finally begun to come upon them.

**Paul's Recent Travel Plans** 17 [q]Brothers, when we were bereft of you for a short time, in person, not in heart, we were all the more eager in our great desire to see you in person. 18 [r]We decided to go to you—I, Paul, not only once but more than once—yet Satan thwarted us. 19 [s]For what is our hope or joy or crown to boast of in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming if not you yourselves? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 2–3
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1 [t]That is why, when we could bear it no longer, we decided to remain alone in Athens 2 [u]and sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, 3 *so that no one be disturbed in these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.

Ch 4–5
See RG
525–527

4 [v]For even when we were among you, we used to warn you in advance that we would undergo affliction, just as has happened, as you know. 5 For this reason, when I too could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had put you to the test and our toil might come to nothing.

6 But just now Timothy has returned to us from you, bringing us the good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us and long to see us as we long to see you. 7 Because of this, we have been reassured about you, brothers, in our every distress and affliction, through your faith. 8 For we now live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

**Concluding Thanksgiving and Prayer** 9 *What thanksgiving, then, can we render to God for you, for all the joy we feel on your account before our God? 10 Night and day we pray beyond measure to see you in person and to remedy the deficiencies of your faith. 11 Now may God himself, our Father, and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you, 12 [w]and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, 13 [x]so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. [Amen.]

# III: Specific Exhortations

## CHAPTER 4

**General Exhortations** 1 Finally, brothers, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God—and as you are conducting yourselves—you do so even

tiles) and in Thessalonica and Beroea (by Jews) seems to be considerably schematized (Acts 16, 11–40; 17, 1–15). Paul pictures the Thessalonian community as composed of converts from paganism (1, 9) and speaks here of persecution by their (pagan) compatriots rather than by Jews.

**2, 15–16:** Paul is speaking of historical opposition on the part of Palestinian Jews in particular and does so only some twenty years after Jesus' crucifixion. Even so, he quickly proceeds to depict the persecutors typologically, in apocalyptic terms. His remarks give no grounds for anti-Semitism to those willing to understand him, especially in view of Paul's pride in his own ethnic and religious background (Rom 9, 1–5; 10, 1; 11, 1–3; Phil 3, 4–6). Sinful conduct (16) is itself an anticipation of the ultimate wrath or judgment of God (Rom 1, 18—2, 5), whether or not it is perceived as such.

**3, 3: We are destined:** the Greek phraseology and the context suggest Paul's concern to alert his readers to difficulties he knew they would necessarily face and to enable them to see their present experience in the light of what he warned them would happen in the future. This line of thought is followed in 2 Thes 2, 1–15.

**3, 9–10:** The tension between Paul's optimism concerning the Thessalonians' faith and his worries about their perseverance remains unresolved. Perhaps this is accounted for not only by the continuing harassment but also by the shortness of his own stay in Thessalonica (even if that were over twice as long as the conventional three weeks that Luke assigns to it, Acts 17, 2).

o Acts 2, 23; 7, 52. p Gn 15, 16; 2 Mc 6, 14 / Rom 1, 18; 2, 5–6. q 3, 10; Rom 1, 10–11. r Rom 15, 22. s 2 Cor 1, 14; Phil 2, 16; 4, 1. t Acts 17, 14. u Acts 16, 1-2; 1 Cor 3, 5–9. v Acts 14, 22; 2 Thes 2, 5–7; 2 Tm 3, 12. w 4, 9–10; 2 Thes 1, 3. x 5, 23; 1 Cor 1, 8.

more. [2]*For you know what instructions we
gave you through the Lord Jesus.

**Holiness in Sexual Conduct** [3]*This is the will
of God, your holiness: that you refrain from
immorality, [4]that each of you know how to
acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honor,
[5]*y*not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who
do not know God; [6]not to take advantage of or
exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an
avenger in all these things, as we told you before
and solemnly affirmed. [7]For God did not call us
to impurity but to holiness. [8]*z*Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human
being but God, who [also] gives his holy Spirit to
you.

**Mutual Charity** [9]*a*On the subject of mutual
charity you have no need for anyone to write
you, for you yourselves have been taught by God
to love one another. [10]*b*Indeed, you do this for
all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Nevertheless we urge you, brothers, to progress even
more, [11]and to aspire to live a tranquil life, to
mind your own affairs, and to work with your
[own] hands, as we instructed you, [12]that you
may conduct yourselves properly toward outsiders and not depend on anyone.

**Hope for the Christian Dead** [13]We do not
want you to be unaware, brothers, about those
who have fallen asleep, so that you may not
grieve like the rest, who have no hope. [14]*c*For if
we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will
God, through Jesus, bring with him those who
have fallen asleep. [15]*d**Indeed, we tell you this,
on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive,
who are left until the coming of the Lord, will
surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.
[16]*e*For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with
the trumpet of God, will come down from
heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
[17]*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be
caught up together with them in the clouds to
meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be
with the Lord. [18]Therefore, console one another
with these words.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 4–5
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525–527

**Vigilance** [1]*f*Concerning times and seasons,
brothers, you have no need for anything to be
written to you. [2]*g*For you yourselves know very
well that the day of the Lord will come like a
thief at night. [3]When people are saying, "Peace
and security," then sudden disaster comes upon
them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman,
and they will not escape.

[4]*h*But you, brothers, are not in darkness, for
that day to overtake you like a thief. [5]*For all of
you are children of the light and children of the
day. We are not of the night or of darkness.
[6]*i*Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but
let us stay alert and sober. [7]Those who sleep go
to sleep at night, and those who are drunk get
drunk at night. [8]*j*But since we are of the day, let
us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith
and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation. [9]For God did not destine us for wrath, but

**4, 2: Instructions:** these include specific guidelines on the basis of the Lord's authority, not necessarily sayings Jesus actually uttered. More profoundly, as v 8 implies, the instructions are practical principles that Paul worked out in accordance with his understanding of the role of the Spirit.

**4, 3–8:** Many think that this passage deals with a variety of moral regulations (fornication, adultery, sharp business practices). It can be more specifically interpreted as bringing general norms to bear on a specific problem, namely, marriage within degrees of consanguinity (as between uncle and niece) forbidden in Jewish law but allowed according to a Greek heiress law, which would insure retention of an inheritance within the family and perhaps thereby occasion divorce. In that case, "immorality" (3) should be rendered as "unlawful marriage" and "this matter" (6) as "a lawsuit." The phrase in v 4, "acquire a wife for himself," has often been interpreted to mean "control one's body."

**4, 15: Coming of the Lord:** Paul here assumes that the second coming, or parousia, will occur within his own lifetime but insists that the time or season is unknown (5, 1–2). Nevertheless, the most important aspect of the parousia for him was the fulfillment of union with Christ. His pastoral exhortation focuses first on hope for the departed faithful, then (5, 1–3) on the need of preparedness for those who have to achieve their goal.

**4, 17: Will be caught up together:** literally, snatched up, carried off; cf 2 Cor 12, 2; Rv 12, 5. From the Latin verb here used, **rapiemur,** has come the idea of "the rapture," when believers will be transported away from the woes of the world; this construction combines this verse with Mt 24, 40–41 (see the note there) // Lk 17, 34–35 and passages from Rv in a scheme of millennial dispensationalism.

**5, 5: Children of the light:** that is, belonging to the daylight of God's personal revelation and expected to achieve it (an analogous development of imagery that appears in Jn 12, 36).

y Ps 79, 6; Jer 10, 25; 2 Thes 1, 8; 1 Pt 3, 7. z Lk 10, 16. a Jn 6, 45; 13, 34; 1 Jn 2, 20–21.27; 4, 7. b 2 Thes 3, 6–12. c 1 Cor 15, 3–4.12.20. d 1 Cor 15, 51; Rv 14, 13; 20, 4–6. e Mt 24, 31; 1 Cor 15, 23.52. f Mt 24, 36–45. g 2 Pt 3, 10. h Eph 5, 8–9. i Mt 24, 42; Rom 13, 12–13; 1 Pt 5, 8. j Is 59, 17; Rom 13, 11–14; Eph 6, 11.14–17.

to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
10*who died for us, so that whether we are
awake or asleep we may live together with him.
11 *k*Therefore, encourage one another and build
one another up, as indeed you do.

**Church Order** 12We ask you, brothers, to
respect those who are laboring among you and
who are over you in the Lord and who admonish
you, 13and to show esteem for them with special
love on account of their work. Be at peace
among yourselves.

14We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,
cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be
patient with all. 15 *l*See that no one returns evil
for evil; rather, always seek what is good [both]
for each other and for all. 16Rejoice always.
17Pray without ceasing. 18 *m*In all circumstances
give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in
Christ Jesus. 19*Do not quench the Spirit. 20Do
not despise prophetic utterances. 21Test every-
thing; retain what is good. 22Refrain from every
kind of evil.

**Concluding Prayer** 23 *n**May the God of peace
himself make you perfectly holy and may you
entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved
blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ. 24The one who calls you is faithful, and
he will also accomplish it. 25Brothers, pray for us
[too].

## IV: Final Greeting

26*Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. 27I
adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to
the brothers. 28The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ be with you.

**5, 10:** Characteristically, Paul plays on words suggesting ultimate and anticipated death and life. Union with the crucified and risen Lord at his parousia is anticipated in some measure in contrasted states of our temporal life. The essential element he urges is our indestructible personal union in Christ's own life (see Rom 5, 1–10).

**5, 19–21:** Paul's buoyant encouragement of charismatic freedom sometimes occasioned excesses that he or others had to remedy (see 1 Cor 14; 2 Thes 2, 1–15; 2 Pt 3, 1–16).

**5, 23:** Another possible translation is, "May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and sanctify your spirit fully, and may both soul and body be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In either case, Paul is not offering an anthropological or philosophical analysis of human nature. Rather, he looks to the wholeness of what may be called the supernatural and natural aspects of a person's service of God.

**5, 26: Kiss:** the holy embrace (see Rom 16, 16; 1 Cor 16, 20; 2 Cor 13, 12; 1 Pt 5, 14) was a greeting of respect and affection, perhaps given during a liturgy at which Paul's letter would have been read.

k Rom 15, 2; 1 Cor 8, 1; 14, 12.26; Eph 4, 29. l Prv 20, 22; Mt 5, 38–42; Rom 12, 17. m Eph 5, 20. n 2 Thes 3, 16.

# THE SECOND LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians
See RG
527–530

This letter is addressed to the same church as the letter that precedes it in the canon and contains many expressions parallel to those in the First Letter to the Thessalonians, indeed verbatim with them. Yet other aspects of the contents of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians suggest a more impersonal tone and changed circumstances in the situation at Thessalonica.

The letter begins with an address (1, 1-2) that expands only slightly on that of 1 Thes 1, 1. It ends with a greeting insisting on its Pauline authority in the face of false claims made in Paul's name (see the note on 2, 2). The body of the letter falls into three short parts, of which the second is notoriously difficult (ch 2).

The opening thanksgiving and prayer (1, 3-12) speak of the Thessalonians' increasing faith and love in the face of outside persecution. God's eventual judgment against persecutors and his salvation for the faithful are already evidenced by the very fact of persecution. The second part (2, 1-17), the heart of the letter, deals with a problem threatening the faith of the community. A message involving a prophetic oracle and apparently a forged letter, possibly presented at a liturgical gathering (cf 2, 2 and 1 Cor 14, 26-33), to the effect that the day of the Lord and all that it means have already come, has upset the life of the Thessalonian church.

The writer counters their preoccupation with the date of the parousia (or coming again of the Lord Jesus from heaven, 2, 1) by recalling Paul's teaching concerning what must happen first and by going on to describe what will happen at the Lord's coming (2, 8); he indicates the twofold process by which the "activity of Satan" and God's actions (2, 9-11) are working out, namely, a growing division between believers and those who succumb to false prophecy and "the lie." He concludes by insisting on Pauline traditions and by praying for divine strength (2, 13-17). The closing part of the letter (3, 1-16) deals in particular with the apostle's directives and model style of life and with correction of disorderly elements within the community.

Traditional opinion holds that this letter was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians. Occasionally it has been argued that 2 Thessalonians was written first or that the two letters are addressed to different segments within the church at Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians being directed to the Jewish Christians there) or even that 2 Thessalonians was originally written to some other nearby place where Paul carried out mission work, such as Philippi or Beroea. Increasingly in recent times, however, the opinion has been advanced that 2 Thessalonians is a pseudepigraph, that is, a letter written authoritatively in Paul's name, to maintain apostolic traditions in a later period, perhaps during the last two decades of the first century.

In any case, the presumed audience of Second Thessalonians and certain features of its style and content require that it be read and studied in a Pauline context, particularly that provided by 1 Thessalonians. At the same time, and especially if the letter is regarded as not by Paul himself, its apocalyptic presentation of preconditions for the parousia (2, 1-12) may profit from and require recourse to a wider biblical basis for interpretation, namely Old Testament books such as Daniel and Isaiah and especially, in the New Testament, the synoptic apocalyptic discourse (Mk 13; Mt 24–25; Lk 21, 5-36) and the Book of Revelation.

The principal divisions of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-12)
II. Warning against Deception Concerning the Parousia (2, 1-17)
III. Concluding Exhortations (3, 1-16)
IV. Final Greetings (3, 17-18)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to
the church of the Thessalonians in God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2]grace to you
and peace from God [our] Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving** [3] [b]*We ought to thank God al-
ways for you, brothers, as is fitting, because your
faith flourishes ever more, and the love of every
one of you for one another grows ever greater.
[4]Accordingly, we ourselves boast of you in the
churches of God regarding your endurance and
faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions
you endure.

[5] [c]This is evidence of the just judgment of
God, so that you may be considered worthy of
the kingdom of God for which you are suffering.
[6]For it is surely just on God's part to repay with

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1, 1–2: On the address, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7 and cf 1 Thes 1, 1.

1, 3–12: On the thanksgiving, see the note on Rom 1, 8 and cf 1 Thes 1, 2–10. Paul's gratitude to God for the faith and love of the Thessalonians (3) and his Christian pride in their faithful endurance (4–5) contrast with the condemnation announced for those who afflict them, a judgment to be carried out at the parousia (6–10), which is described in vivid language drawn from Old Testament apocalyptic. A prayer for the fulfillment of God's purpose in the Thessalonians (11–12) completes the section, as is customary in a Pauline letter (cf 1 Thes 1, 2–3).

a 1 Thes 1, 1. b 1 Cor 1, 4; 1 Thes 1, 2; 3, 12. c Phil 1, 28; 1 Thes 2, 12.

afflictions those who are afflicting you, [7]and to grant rest along with us to you who are undergoing afflictions, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels, [8] *d*in blazing fire, inflicting punishment on those who do not acknowledge God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9] *e*These will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, [10] *f* *when he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, for our testimony to you was believed.

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**Prayer** [11] *g*To this end, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, [12] *h* *that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

# II: Warning against Deception Concerning the Parousia

## CHAPTER 2

**Christ and the Lawless One** [1] *i* *We ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, [2] *j* *not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand. [3] *Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one doomed to perdition, [4] *k* *who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so as to seat himself in the temple of God, claiming that he is a god—[5]do you not recall that while I was still with you I told you these things? [6] *And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in

**1, 10: Among his holy ones:** in the Old Testament, this term can refer to an angelic throng (cf also Jude 14), but here, in parallel with **among all who have believed,** it can refer to the triumphant people of God.

**1, 12: The grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ:** the Greek can also be translated, "the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

**2, 1–17:** The Thessalonians have been **shaken** by a message purporting to come from Paul himself that **the day of the Lord** is already present. He warns against this deception in eschatology by citing a scenario of events that must first occur (3–12) before the end will come. The overall point Paul makes is the need to reject such lies as Satan sends; he also reaffirms the Thessalonians in their calling (13–14). They are to uphold what Paul himself has taught (15). There is a concluding prayer for their strengthening (16–17). As in 1, 8–10, the Old Testament provides a good deal of coloring; cf especially Is 14, 13–14; 66, 15.18–21; Ez 28, 2–9; Dn 11, 36–37. The contents of 2, 3b-8 may come from a previously existing apocalypse. The details have been variously interpreted.

An alternative to the possibilities noted below understands that an oracular utterance, supposedly coming from a prophetic spirit (2–3a), has so disrupted the community's thinking that its effects may be compared to those of the mania connected with the worship of the Greek god Dionysus. On this view, the writer seems to allude in vv 6–8 to Dionysiac "seizure," although, of course, ironically, somewhat as Paul alludes to witchcraft ("an evil eye") in Gal 3, 1 in speaking of the threat to faith posed by those disturbing the Galatians (Gal 1, 6–7; 5, 10b). On this view of 2 Thes 2, the Greek participles **katechon** (rendered above as **what is restraining**) and **katechōn** (**the one who restrains**) are to be translated "the seizing power" in v 6 and "the seizer" in v 7. They then allude to a pseudocharismatic force or spirit of Dionysiac character that has suddenly taken hold of the Thessalonian community (see 2). The addressees **know** (6) this force or spirit because of the problem it is causing. This pseudocharismatic force or spirit is a kind of anticipation and advance proof of the ultimate, climactic figure (**the lawless one** or the rebel, 3), of which the community has been warned (see the note on 1 Thes 3, 3). It is, however, only the beginning of the end that the latter's manifestation entails; the end is not yet. For in the course of the **mystery of lawlessness** (7), false prophetism, after it ceases in the Thessalonian community, will be manifested in the world at large (8–12), where it will also be eliminated in turn by the Lord Jesus.

**2, 2: "Spirit":** a Spirit-inspired utterance or ecstatic revelation. **An oral statement:** literally, a "word" or pronouncement, not necessarily of ecstatic origin. **A letter allegedly sent by us:** possibly a forged letter, so that Paul calls attention in 3, 17 to his practice of concluding a genuine letter with a summary note or greeting in his own hand, as at Gal 6, 11–18 and elsewhere.

**2, 3b-5:** This incomplete sentence (anacoluthon, 4) recalls what the Thessalonians had already been taught, an apocalyptic scenario depicting, in terms borrowed especially from Dn 11, 36–37 and related verses, human self-assertiveness against God in the **temple of God** itself. **The lawless one** represents the climax of such activity in this account.

**2, 4: Seat himself in the temple of God:** a reflection of the language in Dn 7, 23–25; 8, 9–12; 9, 27; 11, 36–37; and 12, 11 about the attempt of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to set up a statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple and possibly of the Roman emperor Caligula to do a similar thing (Mk 13, 14). Here the imagery suggests an attempt to install someone in the place of God, **claiming that he is a god** (cf Ez 28, 2). Usually, it is the Jerusalem temple that is assumed to be meant; on the alternative view sketched above (see the note on 2, 1–17), **the temple** refers to the Christian community.

**2, 6–7: What is restraining . . . the one who restrains:** neuter and masculine, respectively, of a force and person holding back the lawless one. The Thessalonians know what is meant (6), but the terms, seemingly found only in this passage and in writings dependent on it, have been variously interpreted. Traditionally, v 6 has been applied to the Roman empire and v 7 to the Roman emperor (in Paul's day, Nero) as bulwarks holding back chaos (cf Rom 13, 1–7). A second interpretation suggests that cosmic or angelic powers are binding Satan (9) and so restraining him; some relate this to an anti-Christ figure (1 Jn 2, 18) or to Michael the archangel (Rv 12, 7–9; 20, 1–3). A more recent view suggests

d Ps 79, 5–6; Is 66, 15; Jer 10, 25. e Is 2, 10.19.21. f Ps 89, 8; Dn 7, 18–22.27; 1 Thes 3, 13. g 1 Thes 1, 2–3. h Is 66, 5. i 1 Thes 4, 13–17. j Mt 24, 6; 1 Cor 14, 26.32–33; 1 Thes 5, 1-2. k Dn 11, 36–37; Ez 28, 2.

his time. 7 [l]*For the mystery of lawlessness is
already at work. But the one who restrains is to
do so only for the present, until he is removed
from the scene. 8 [m]And then the lawless one will
be revealed, whom the Lord [Jesus] will kill with
the breath of his mouth and render powerless by
the manifestation of his coming, 9 [n]the one
whose coming springs from the power of Satan
in every mighty deed and in signs and wonders
that lie, 10 and in every wicked deceit for those
who are perishing because they have not accepted the love of truth so that they may be
saved. 11 Therefore, God is sending them a
deceiving power so that they may believe the lie,
12 that all who have not believed the truth but
have approved wrongdoing may be condemned.

13 [o]*But we ought to give thanks to God for
you always, brothers loved by the Lord, because
God chose you as the firstfruits for salvation
through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in
truth. 14 [p]To this end he has [also] called you
through our gospel to possess the glory of our
Lord Jesus Christ. 15 *Therefore, brothers, stand
firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were
taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter
of ours.

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God
our Father, who has loved us and given us
everlasting encouragement and good hope
through his grace, 17 encourage your hearts and
strengthen them in every good deed and word.

## III: Concluding Exhortations

### CHAPTER 3

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**Request for Prayers** 1 [q]*Finally, brothers, pray
for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed
forward and be glorified, as it did among you,
2 and that we may be delivered from perverse
and wicked people, for not all have faith. 3 [r]But
the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and
guard you from the evil one. 4 [s]We are confident
of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,
you [both] are doing and will continue to do.
5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of
God and to the endurance of Christ.

**Neglect of Work** 6 *We instruct you, brothers,
in the name of [our] Lord Jesus Christ, to shun
any brother who conducts himself in a disorderly
way and not according to the tradition they
received from us. 7 For you know how one must
imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way
among you, 8 [t]nor did we eat food received free
from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to
burden any of you. 9 [u]Not that we do not have
the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might

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that it is the preaching of the Christian gospel that restrains the end, for in God's plan the end cannot come until the gospel is preached to all nations (Mk 13, 10); in that case, Paul as missionary preacher par excellence is "the one who restrains," whose removal (death) will bring the end (7). On the alternative view (see the note on 2, 1–17), the phrases should be referred to that which and to him who seizes (a prophet) in ecstasy so as to have him speak pseudo-oracles.

**2, 7–12: The lawless one** and **the one who restrains** are involved in an activity or process, **the mystery of lawlessness,** behind which **Satan** stands (9). The action of **the Lord [Jesus]** in overcoming the lawless one is described in Old Testament language (**with the breath of his mouth;** cf Is 11, 4; Jb 4, 9; Rv 19, 15). His **coming** is literally the Lord's "parousia." The biblical concept of the "holy war," eschatologically conceived, may underlie the imagery.

**2, 13: As the firstfruits:** there is also strong manuscript evidence for the reading, "God chose you from the beginning," thus providing a focus on God's activity from beginning to end; **firstfruits** is a Pauline term, however; cf Rom 8, 23; 11, 16; 16, 5, among other references.

**2, 15:** Reference to **an oral statement** and **a letter** (2) and the content here, including a formula of conclusion (cf 1 Cor 16, 13; Gal 5, 1), suggest that vv 1–15 or even 1–17 are to be taken as a literary unit, notwithstanding the incidental thanksgiving formula in v 13.

**3, 1–18:** The final chapter urges the Thessalonians to pray for Paul and his colleagues (1–2) and reiterates confidence in the Thessalonians (3–5), while admonishing them about a specific problem in their community that has grown out of the intense eschatological speculation, namely, not to work but to become instead disorderly busybodies (6–15). A benediction (16) and postscript in Paul's own hand round out the letter. On vv 17–18, cf the note on 2, 2.

**3, 6:** Some members of the community, probably because they regarded the parousia as imminent or the new age of the Lord to be already here (2, 2), had apparently ceased to work for a living. The disciplinary problem they posed could be rooted in distorted thinking about Paul's own teaching (cf 1 Thes 2, 16; 3, 3–4; 5, 4–5) or, more likely, in a forged letter (2, 2) and the type of teaching dealt with in 2, 1–15. The apostle's own moral teaching, reflected in his selfless labors for others, was rooted in a deep doctrinal concern for the gospel message (cf 1 Thes 2, 3–10).

l Mt 13, 36–43; Acts 20, 29; Gal 5, 10; 2 Pt 2, 1; Rv 22, 11. m Is 11, 4; Rv 19, 15. n Mt 24, 24; Rv 13, 13. o 1 Thes 2, 13; 5, 9. p Rom 5, 1–10; 8, 29–30; 1 Thes 4, 7; 5, 9. q Eph 6, 19; Col 4, 3. r 1 Thes 5, 24 / 1 Cor 16, 13 / Mt 6, 13. s 2 Cor 7, 16; 1 Thes 4, 1–2. t 1 Thes 2, 9. u Mt 10, 10; Phil 3, 17.

imitate us. [10] [v]In fact, when we were with you,
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling
to work, neither should that one eat. [11] [w]We
hear that some are conducting themselves
among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping
busy but minding the business of others. [12]Such
people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus
Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.
[13]But you, brothers, do not be remiss in doing
good. [14]If anyone does not obey our word as
expressed in this letter, take note of this person
not to associate with him, that he may be put to
shame. [15] [x]Do not regard him as an enemy but
admonish him as a brother. [16] [y]May the Lord of
peace himself give you peace at all times and in
every way. The Lord be with all of you.

## IV: Final Greetings

[17] [z]This greeting is in my own hand, Paul's.
This is the sign in every letter; this is how I
write. [18]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be
with all of you.

v 1 Thes 4, 11. w 1 Thes 5, 14. x 2 Cor 2, 7; Gal 6, 1. y Jn 14, 27; Rom 15, 33. z 1 Cor 16, 21; Gal 6, 11.

# THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

1 Timothy
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The three letters, First and Second Timothy and Titus, form a distinct group within the Pauline corpus. In the collection of letters by the Apostle to the Gentiles, they differ from the others in form and contents. All three suggest they were written late in Paul's career. The opponents are not "Judaizers" as in Galatians but false teachers stressing "knowledge" (*gnōsis;* see the note on 1 Tm 6, 20-21). Attention is given especially to correct doctrine and church organization. Jesus' second coming recedes into the background compared to references in Paul's earlier letters (though not Colossians and Ephesians). The three letters are addressed not to congregations but to those who shepherd congregations (Latin, *pastores*). These letters were first named "Pastoral Epistles" in the eighteenth century because they all are concerned with the work of a pastor in caring for the community or communities under his charge.

The first of the Pastorals, 1 Timothy, is presented as having been written from Macedonia. Timothy, whom Paul converted, was of mixed Jewish and Gentile parentage (Acts 16, 1-3). He was the apostle's companion on both the second and the third missionary journeys (Acts 16, 3; 19, 22) and was often sent by him on special missions (Acts 19, 22; 1 Cor 4, 17; 1 Thes 3, 2). In 1 Timothy (1, 3), he is described as the administrator of the entire Ephesian community.

The letter instructs Timothy on his duty to restrain false and useless teaching (1, 3-11; 4, 1-5; 6, 3-16) and proposes principles pertaining to his relationship with the older members of the community (5, 1-2) and with the presbyters (5, 17-22). It gives rules for aid to widows (5, 3-8) and their selection for charitable ministrations (5, 9-16) and also deals with liturgical celebrations (2, 1-15), selections for the offices of bishop and deacon (3, 1-13), relation of slaves with their masters (6, 1-2), and obligations of the wealthier members of the community (6, 17-19). This letter also reminds Timothy of the prophetic character of his office (1, 12-20) and encourages him in his exercise of it (4, 6-16). The central passage of the letter (3, 14-16) expresses the principal motive that should guide the conduct of Timothy—preservation of the purity of the church's doctrine against false teaching. On this same note the letter concludes (6, 20-21).

From the late second century to the nineteenth, Pauline authorship of the three Pastoral Epistles went unchallenged. Since then, the attribution of these letters to Paul has been

questioned. Most scholars are convinced that Paul could not have been responsible for the vocabulary and style, the concept of church organization, or the theological expressions found in these letters. A second group believes, on the basis of statistical evidence, that the vocabulary and style are Pauline, even if at first sight the contrary seems to be the case. They state that the concept of church organization in the letters is not as advanced as the questioners of Pauline authorship hold since the notion of hierarchical order in a religious community existed in Israel before the time of Christ, as evidenced in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Finally, this group sees affinities between the theological thought of the Pastorals and that of the unquestionably genuine letters of Paul. Other scholars, while conceding a degree of validity to the positions mentioned above, suggest that the apostle made use of a secretary who was responsible for the composition of the letters. A fourth group of scholars believes that these letters are the work of a compiler, that they are based on traditions about Paul in his later years, and that they include, in varying amounts, actual fragments of genuine Pauline correspondence.

If Paul is considered the more immediate author, the Pastorals are to be dated between the end of his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28, 16) and his execution under Nero (A.D. 63–67); if they are regarded as only more remotely Pauline, their date may be as late as the early second century. In spite of these problems of authorship and dating, the Pastorals are illustrative of early Christian life and remain an important element of canonical scripture.

The principal divisions of the First Letter to Timothy are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-2)
II. Sound Teaching (1, 3-20)
III. Problems of Discipline (2, 1—4, 16)
IV. Duties toward Others (5, 1—6, 2a)
V. False Teaching and True Wealth (6, 2b-19)
VI. Final Recommendation and Warning (6, 20-21)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
command of God our savior and of Christ Jesus
our hope, 2 [b]to Timothy, my true child in faith:
grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father
and Christ Jesus our Lord.

## II: Sound Teaching

**Warning against False Doctrine** 3 [c]*I repeat
the request I made of you when I was on my
way to Macedonia, that you stay in Ephesus to
instruct certain people not to teach false doc-
trines 4 [d]*or to concern themselves with myths
and endless genealogies, which promote specula-
tions rather than the plan of God that is to be
received by faith. 5 [e]The aim of this instruction is
love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a
sincere faith. 6 [f]Some people have deviated from
these and turned to meaningless talk, 7 wanting
to be teachers of the law, but without under-
standing either what they are saying or what
they assert with such assurance.

8 [g]*We know that the law is good, provided

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1, 1–2: For the Pauline use of the conventional epistolary form, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7.

1, 3–7: Here Timothy's initial task in Ephesus (cf Acts 20, 17–35) is outlined: to suppress the idle religious speculations, probably about Old Testament figures (3–4, but see the note on 6, 20–21), which do not contribute to the development of love within the community (5) but rather encourage similar useless conjectures (6–7).

1, 4: **The plan of God that is to be received by faith:** the Greek may also possibly mean "God's trustworthy plan" or "the training in faith that God requires."

1, 8–11: Those responsible for the speculations that are to be suppressed by Timothy do not present the Old Testament from the Christian viewpoint. The Christian values the Old Testament not

a 2, 3; Lk 1, 47; Ti 1, 3; 2, 10 / Col 1, 27. b 2 Tm 1, 2; Ti 1, 4. c Acts 20, 1. d 4, 7; Ti 1, 14; 3, 9; 2 Pt 1, 16. e Rom 13, 10. f 6, 4.20; Ti 1, 10. g Rom 7, 12.16.

that one uses it as law, [9]with the understanding
that law is meant not for a righteous person but
for the lawless and unruly, the godless and
sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill
their fathers or mothers, murderers, [10] [h]*the
unchaste, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers,
and whatever else is opposed to sound teaching,
[11] [i]according to the glorious gospel of the blessed
God, with which I have been entrusted.

**Gratitude for God's Mercy** [12] [j]*I am grateful
to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus
our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy
in appointing me to the ministry. [13] [k]I was once a
blasphemer and a persecutor and an arrogant
man, but I have been mercifully treated because
I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief.
[14] [l]Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been
abundant, along with the faith and love that are
in Christ Jesus. [15] [m]*This saying is trustworthy
and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came
into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the
foremost. [16]But for that reason I was mercifully
treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ
Jesus might display all his patience as an example
for those who would come to believe in him for
everlasting life. [17] [n]*To the king of ages, incor-
ruptible, invisible, the only God, honor and glory
forever and ever. Amen.

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**Responsibility of Timothy** [18] [o]*I entrust this
charge to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance
with the prophetic words once spoken about
you. Through them may you fight a good fight
[19] [p]by having faith and a good conscience. Some,
by rejecting conscience, have made a shipwreck
of their faith, [20] [q]*among them Hymenaeus and
Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to
be taught not to blaspheme.

## III: Problems of Discipline

### CHAPTER 2

**Prayer and Conduct** [1] [r]*First of all, then, I ask
that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanks-
givings be offered for everyone, [2]for kings and
for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and
tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. [3] [s]This is
good and pleasing to God our savior, [4] [t]who wills
everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge
of the truth.

as a system of law but as the first stage in God's revelation of his saving plan, which is brought to fulfillment in the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

1, 10: **Sodomites:** see 1 Cor 6, 9 and the note there.

1, 12–17: Present gratitude for the Christian apostleship leads Paul to recall an earlier time when he had been a fierce persecutor of the Christian communities (cf Acts 26, 9–11) until his conversion by intervention of divine mercy through the appearance of Jesus. This and his subsequent apostolic experience testify to the saving purpose of Jesus' incarnation. The fact of his former ignorance of the truth has not kept the apostle from regarding himself as having been the worst of sinners (15). Yet he was chosen to be an apostle, that God might manifest his firm will to save sinful humanity through Jesus Christ (16). The recounting of so great a mystery leads to a spontaneous outpouring of adoration (17).

1, 15: **This saying is trustworthy:** this phrase regularly introduces in the Pastorals a basic truth of early Christian faith; cf 3, 1; 4, 9; 2 Tm 2, 11; Ti 3, 8.

1, 17: **King of ages:** through Semitic influence, the Greek expression could mean "everlasting king"; it could also mean "king of the universe."

1, 18–20: Timothy is to be mindful of his calling, which is here compared to the way Barnabas and Saul were designated by Christ as prophets for missionary service; cf Acts 13, 1–3. Such is probably the sense of the allusion to the prophetic words (18). His task is not to yield, whether in doctrine or in conduct, to erroneous opinions, taking warning from what has already happened at Ephesus in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander (19–20).

1, 18: **The prophetic words once spoken about you:** the Greek may also be translated, "the prophecies that led (me) to you." It probably refers to testimonies given by charismatic figures in the Christian communities. **Fight a good fight:** this translation preserves the play on words in Greek. The Greek terms imply a lengthy engagement in battle and might well be translated "wage a good campaign."

1, 20: **Hymenaeus:** mentioned in 2 Tm 2, 17 as saying that the resurrection has already taken place (in baptism). **Alexander:** probably the Alexander mentioned in 2 Tm 4, 14 as the coppersmith who "did me a great deal of harm." **Whom I have handed over to Satan:** the same terms are used in the condemnation of the incestuous man in 1 Cor 5, 5.

2, 1–7: This marked insistence that the liturgical prayer of the community concern itself with the needs of all, whether Christian or not, and especially of those in authority, may imply that a disposition existed at Ephesus to refuse prayer for pagans. In actuality, such prayer aids the community to achieve peaceful relationships with non-Christians (2) and contributes to salvation, since it derives its value from the presence within the community of Christ, who is the one and only savior of all (3–6). The vital apostolic mission to the Gentiles (7) reflects Christ's purpose of universal salvation.

Verse 5 contains what may well have been a very primitive creed. Some interpreters have called it a Christian version of the Jewish **shema:** "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone . . ." (Dt 6, 4–5). The assertion in v 7, "I am speaking the truth, I am not lying," reminds one of similar affirmations in Rom 9, 1; 2 Cor 11, 31; and Gal 1, 20.

h 4, 6; 6, 3; 2 Tm 4, 3; Ti 1, 9; 2, 1. i Ti 1, 3. j Phil 4, 13 / Acts 9, 15; Gal 1, 15–16. k Acts 8, 3; 9, 1–2; 1 Cor 15, 9; Gal 1, 13. l Rom 5, 20; 2 Tm 1, 13. m Lk 15, 2; 19, 10. n Rom 16, 27. o 4, 14 / 6, 12; 2 Tm 4, 7; Jude 3. p 3, 9. q 2 Tm 2, 17; 4, 14 / 1 Cor 5, 5. r Eph 6, 18; Phil 4, 6. s 1, 1; 4, 10. t 2 Tm 3, 7; 2 Pt 3, 9.

5 [u]For there is one God.
There is also one mediator between God and
the human race,
Christ Jesus, himself human,
6 [v]*who gave himself as ransom for all.

This was the testimony at the proper time. 7 [w]For this I was appointed preacher and apostle (I am speaking the truth, I am not lying), teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

8*It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument. 9 [x]Similarly, [too,] women should adorn themselves with proper conduct, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hairstyles and gold ornaments, or pearls, or expensive clothes, 10 [y]but rather, as befits women who profess reverence for God, with good deeds. 11 [z]A woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control. 12*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be quiet. 13 [a]For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 [b]Further, Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. 15 [c]But she will be saved through motherhood, provided women persevere in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

## CHAPTER 3

**Qualifications of Various Ministers** 1 [d]*This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. 2Therefore, a bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach, 3 [e]not a drunkard, not aggressive, but gentle, not contentious, not a lover of money. 4He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with perfect dignity; 5for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? 6*He should not be a recent convert, so that he may not become conceited and thus incur the devil's punishment. 7 [f]He must also have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, the devil's trap.

Ch 2–4 See RG 532

8*Similarly, deacons must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, 9holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10Moreover, they should be tested first; then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 [g]*Women, similarly, should be dignified, not slanderers, but temperate and faithful in everything. 12Deacons may be married only once and

**2, 6: The testimony:** to make sense of this overly concise phrase, many manuscripts supply "to which" (or "to whom"); two others add "was given." The translation has supplied "this was."

**2, 8–15:** The prayer of the community should be unmarred by internal dissension (8); cf Mt 5, 21–26; 6, 14; Mk 11, 25. At the liturgical assembly the dress of women should be appropriate to the occasion (9); their chief adornment is to be reputation for good works (10). Women are not to take part in the charismatic activity of the assembly (11–12; cf 1 Cor 14, 34) or exercise authority; their conduct there should reflect the role of man's helpmate (13; cf Gn 2, 18) and not the later relationship of Eve to Adam (14; cf Gn 3, 6–7). As long as women perform their role as wives and mothers in faith and love, their salvation is assured (15).

**2, 12: A man:** this could also mean "her husband."

**3, 1–7:** The passage begins by commending those who aspire to the office of bishop (**episkopos**; see the note on Phil 1, 1) within the community, but this first sentence (1) may also imply a warning about the great responsibilities involved. The writer proceeds to list the qualifications required: personal stability and graciousness; talent for teaching (2); moderation in habits and temperament (3); managerial ability (4); and experience in Christian living (5–6). Moreover, the candidate's previous life should provide no grounds for the charge that he did not previously practice what he now preaches. No list of qualifications for presbyters appears in 1 Tm. The presbyter-bishops here and in Ti (see the note on Ti 1, 5–9) lack certain functions reserved here for Paul and Timothy.

**3, 1: This saying is trustworthy:** the saying introduced is so unlike others after this phrase that some later Western manuscripts read, "This saying is popular." It is understood by some interpreters as concluding the preceding section (2, 8–15). **Bishop:** literally, "overseer"; see the note on Phil 1, 1.

**3, 6: The devil's punishment:** this phrase could mean the punishment once incurred by the devil (objective genitive) or a punishment brought about by the devil (subjective genitive).

**3, 8–13:** Deacons, besides possessing the virtue of moderation (8), are to be outstanding for their faith (9) and well respected within the community (10). Women in the same role, although some interpreters take them to mean wives of deacons, must be dignified, temperate, dedicated, and not given to malicious talebearing (11). Deacons must have shown stability in marriage and have a good record with their families (12), for such experience prepares them well for the exercise of their ministry on behalf of the community (13). See further the note on Phil 1, 1.

**3, 11: Women:** this seems to refer to women deacons but may possibly mean wives of deacons. The former is preferred because the word is used absolutely; if deacons' wives were meant, a possessive "their" would be expected. Moreover, they are also introduced by the word "similarly," as in v 8; this parallel suggests that they too exercised ecclesiastical functions.

u 1 Cor 8, 6; Heb 8, 6; 9, 15; 12, 24 / Rom 5, 15. v Mk 10, 45; Gal 1, 4; 2, 20; Eph 5, 25; Ti 2, 14. w Acts 9, 15; 1 Cor 9, 1; Gal 2, 7–8. x 1 Pt 3, 3–5. y 5, 10; 1 Pt 3, 1. z 1 Cor 14, 34–35. a Gn 1, 27; 2, 7.22; 1 Cor 11, 8–9. b Gn 3, 6.13; 2 Cor 11, 3. c 5, 14. d Ti 1, 6–9. e Heb 13, 5. f 2 Cor 8, 21; 2 Tm 2, 26. g Ti 2, 3.

must manage their children and their households well. [13]Thus those who serve well as deacons gain good standing and much confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

**The Mystery of Our Religion** [14]*I am writing you about these matters, although I hope to visit you soon. [15] *h*But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth. [16] *i**Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion,

Who was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed to the Gentiles,
believed in throughout the world,
taken up in glory.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 2–4 See RG 532

**False Asceticism** [1] *j**Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the last times some will turn away from the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic instructions [2]through the hypocrisy of liars with branded consciences. [3] *k*They forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. [4] *l*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, [5]*for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.

**Counsel to Timothy** [6]*If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed. [7] *m*Avoid profane and silly myths. Train yourself for devotion, [8] *n*for, while physical training is of limited value, devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life both for the present and for the future. [9] *o*This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. [10] *p**For this we toil and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the savior of all, especially of those who believe.

[11]*Command and teach these things. [12] *q**Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. [13]*Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. [14] *r**Do not neglect the gift you have, which was

**3, 14–16:** In case there is some delay in the visit to Timothy at Ephesus planned for the near future, the present letter is being sent on ahead to arm and enlighten him in his task of preserving sound Christian conduct in the Ephesian church. The care he must exercise over this community is required by the profound nature of Christianity. It centers in Christ, appearing in human flesh, vindicated by the holy Spirit; the mystery of his person was revealed to the angels, announced to the Gentiles, and accepted by them in faith. He himself was taken up (through his resurrection and ascension) to the divine glory (16). This passage apparently includes part of a liturgical hymn used among the Christian communities in and around Ephesus. It consists of three couplets in typical Hebrew balance: flesh-spirit (contrast), seen-proclaimed (complementary), world-glory (contrast).

**3, 16: Who:** the reference is to Christ, who is himself "the mystery of our devotion." Some predominantly Western manuscripts read "which," harmonizing the gender of the pronoun with that of the Greek word for mystery; many later (eighth/ninth century on), predominantly Byzantine manuscripts read "God," possibly for theological reasons.

**4, 1–5:** Doctrinal deviations from the true Christian message within the church have been prophesied, though the origin of the prophecy is not specified (1–2); cf Acts 20, 29–30. The letter warns against a false asceticism that prohibits marriage and regards certain foods as forbidden, though they are part of God's good creation (3).

**4, 5: The invocation of God in prayer:** literally, "the word of God and petition." The use of "word of God" without an article in Greek suggests that it refers to the name of God being invoked in blessing rather than to the "word of God" proclaimed to the community.

**4, 6–10:** Timothy is urged to be faithful, both in his teaching and in his own life, as he looks only to God for salvation.

**4, 10: Struggle:** other manuscripts and patristic witnesses read "suffer reproach."

**4, 11–16:** Timothy is urged to preach and teach with confidence, relying on the gifts and the mission that God has bestowed on him.

**4, 12: Youth:** some commentators find this reference a sign of pseudepigraphy. Timothy had joined Paul as a missionary already in A.D. 49, some fifteen years before the earliest supposed date of composition.

**4, 13: Reading:** the Greek word refers to private or public reading. Here, it probably designates the public reading of scripture in the Christian assembly.

**4, 14: Prophetic word:** this may mean the utterance of a Christian prophet designating the candidate or a prayer of blessing accompanying the rite. **Imposition of hands:** this gesture was used in the Old Testament to signify the transmission of authority from Moses to Joshua (Nm 27, 18–23; Dt 34, 9). The early Christian community used it as a symbol of installation into an office: the Seven (Acts 6, 6) and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13, 3). **Of the presbyterate:** this would mean that each member of the college of presbyters imposed hands and appears to contradict 2 Tm 1, 6, in which Paul says that he imposed hands on Timothy. This latter text, however, does not exclude participation by others in the rite. Some prefer to translate "for the presbyterate," and thus understand it to designate the office into which Timothy was installed rather than the agents who installed him.

**h** Eph 2, 19–22. **i** Jn 1, 14; Rom 1, 3–4. **j** 2 Tm 3, 1; 4, 3; 2 Pt 3, 3; Jude 18. **k** Gn 9, 3; Rom 14, 6; 1 Cor 10, 30–31. **l** Gn 1, 31; Acts 10, 15. **m** 1, 4; 2 Tm 2, 16; Ti 1, 14. **n** 6, 6. **o** 1, 15; 2 Tm 2, 11; Ti 3, 8. **p** 2, 4; Ti 2, 11. **q** 1 Cor 16, 11; Ti 2, 15 / Phil 3, 17. **r** 5, 22; Acts 6, 6; 8, 17; 2 Tm 1, 6.

conferred on you through the prophetic word
with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.
15Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in
them, so that your progress may be evident to
everyone. 16Attend to yourself and to your
teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so
you will save both yourself and those who listen
to you.

## IV: Duties toward Others

### CHAPTER 5

1 s*Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to
him as a father. Treat younger men as brothers,
2older women as mothers, and younger women
as sisters with complete purity.

**Rules for Widows** 3Honor widows who are
truly widows. 4But if a widow has children or
grandchildren, let these first learn to perform
their religious duty to their own family and to
make recompense to their parents, for this is
pleasing to God. 5 tThe real widow, who is all
alone, has set her hope on God and continues in
supplications and prayers night and day. 6But the
one who is self-indulgent is dead while she lives.
7Command this, so that they may be irreproach-
able. 8And whoever does not provide for rela-
tives and especially family members has denied
the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than
sixty years old, married only once, 10 uwith a
reputation for good works, namely, that she has
raised children, practiced hospitality, washed the
feet of the holy ones, helped those in distress,
involved herself in every good work. 11But
exclude younger widows, for when their sensual-
ity estranges them from Christ, they want to
marry 12and will incur condemnation for break-
ing their first pledge. 13 vAnd furthermore, they
learn to be idlers, going about from house to
house, and not only idlers but gossips and
busybodies as well, talking about things that
ought not to be mentioned. 14 wSo I would like
younger widows to marry, have children, and
manage a home, so as to give the adversary no
pretext for maligning us. 15For some have al-
ready turned away to follow Satan. 16*If any
woman believer has widowed relatives, she
must assist them; the church is not to be
burdened, so that it will be able to help those
who are truly widows.

Ch 5–6
See RG
532–533

**Rules for Presbyters** 17 x*Presbyters who pre-
side well deserve double honor, especially those
who toil in preaching and teaching. 18 yFor the
scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox
when it is threshing," and, "A worker deserves
his pay." 19 zDo not accept an accusation against
a presbyter unless it is supported by two or three
witnesses. 20 aReprimand publicly those who do
sin, so that the rest also will be afraid. 21I charge
you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect
angels to keep these rules without prejudice,
doing nothing out of favoritism. 22 bDo not lay
hands too readily on anyone, and do not share in

**5, 1–16:** After a few words of general advice based on common sense (1–2), the letter takes up, in its several aspects, the subject of widows. The first responsibility for their care belongs to the family circle, not to the Christian community as such (3–4.16). The widow left without the aid of relatives may benefit the community by her prayer, and the community should consider her material sustenance its responsibility (5–8). Widows who wish to work directly for the Christian community should not be accepted unless they are well beyond the probability of marriage, i.e., sixty years of age, married only once, and with a reputation for good works (9–10). Younger widows are apt to be troublesome and should be encouraged to remarry (11–15).

**5, 16: Woman believer:** some early Latin manuscripts and Fathers have a masculine here, while most later manuscripts and patristic quotations conflate the two readings, perhaps to avoid unfair restriction to women.

**5, 17–25:** The function of presbyters is not exactly the same as that of the **episkopos**, "bishop" (3, 1); in fact, the relation of the two at the time of this letter is obscure (but cf the note on Ti 1, 5–9). The Pastorals seem to reflect a transitional stage that developed in many regions of the church into the monarchical episcopate of the second and third centuries. The presbyters possess the responsibility of preaching and teaching, for which functions they are supported by the community (17–18). The realization that their position subjects them to adverse criticism is implied in the direction to Timothy (19–20) to make sure of the truth of any accusation against them before public reproof is given. He must be as objective as possible in weighing charges against presbyters (21), learning from his experience to take care in selecting them (22). Some scholars take v 22 as a reference not to ordination of presbyters but to reconciliation of public sinners. The letter now sounds an informal note of personal concern in its advice to Timothy not to be so ascetic that he even avoids wine (23). Judgment concerning the fitness of candidates to serve as presbyters is easy with persons of open conduct, more difficult and prolonged with those of greater reserve (24–25).

s Lv 19, 32; Ti 2, 2. t Jer 49, 11; Lk 2, 37; 18, 7. u Jn 13, 14; Heb 13, 2. v 2 Thes 3, 11. w 1 Cor 7, 9. x 1 Cor 16, 18; Phil 2, 29. y Dt 25, 4; 1 Cor 9, 8 / Mt 10, 10; Lk 10, 7. z Dt 17, 6; 19, 15; Mt 18, 16; 2 Cor 13, 1. a Gal 2, 14; Eph 5, 11; 2 Tm 4, 2; Ti 1, 9.13. b 4, 14; 2 Tm 1, 6.

another's sins. Keep yourself pure. [23]Stop drinking only water, but have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

[24]Some people's sins are public, preceding them to judgment; but other people are followed by their sins. [25]Similarly, good works are also public; and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

## CHAPTER 6

Ch 5–6 See RG 532–533

**Rules for Slaves** [1] [c]*Those who are under the yoke of slavery must regard their masters as worthy of full respect, so that the name of God and our teaching may not suffer abuse. [2] [d]*Those whose masters are believers must not take advantage of them because they are brothers but must give better service because those who will profit from their work are believers and are beloved.

## V: False Teaching and True Wealth

Teach and urge these things. [3] [e]Whoever teaches something different and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the religious teaching [4]is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid disposition for arguments and verbal disputes. From these come envy, rivalry, insults, evil suspicions, [5] [f]and mutual friction among people with corrupted minds, who are deprived of the truth, supposing religion to be a means of gain. [6] [g]*Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. [7] [h]For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. [8] [i]If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. [9] [j]Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. [10]For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.

**Exhortations to Timothy** [11] [k]*But you, man of God, avoid all this. Instead, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. [12] [l]Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. [13] [m]I charge [you] before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession, [14]to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ [15] [n]that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, [16] [o]who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

**Right Use of Wealth** [17] [p]*Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth but rather on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. [18]Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, [19] [q]thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life.

**6, 1–2:** Compare the tables for household duties, such as that of Col 3, 18—4, 1. Domestic relationships derive new meaning from the Christian faith.

**6, 1: Our teaching:** this refers to the teaching of the Christian community.

**6, 2b-10:** Timothy is exhorted to maintain steadfastly the position outlined in this letter, not allowing himself to be pressured into any other course. He must realize that false teachers can be discerned by their pride, envy, quarrelsomeness, and greed for material gain. Verse 6 is rather obscure and is interpreted, and therefore translated, variously. The suggestion seems to be that the important gain that religion brings is spiritual, but that there is material gain, too, up to the point of what is needed for physical sustenance (cf 17–19).

**6, 6: Contentment:** the word **autarkeia** is a technical Greek philosophical term for the virtue of independence from material goods (Aristotle, Cynics, Stoics).

**6, 11–16:** Timothy's position demands total dedication to God and faultless witness to Christ (11–14) operating from an awareness, through faith, of the coming revelation in Jesus of the invisible God (15–16).

**6, 11: Man of God:** a title applied to Moses and the prophets (Dt 33, 1; 1 Sm 2, 27; 1 Kgs 12, 22; 13, 1; etc.).

**6, 17–19:** Timothy is directed to instruct the rich, advising them to make good use of their wealth by aiding the poor.

c Eph 6, 5; Ti 2, 9–10. d Phlm 16. e Gal 1, 6–9; 2 Tm 1, 13; Ti 1, 1. f 2 Tm 3, 8; 4, 4; Ti 1, 14. g 4, 8; Phil 4, 11–12; Heb 13, 5. h Jb 1, 21; Eccl 5, 14. i Prv 30, 8. j Prv 23, 4; 28, 22. k 2 Tm 2, 22. l 1 Cor 9, 26; 2 Tm 4, 7. m Jn 18, 36–37; 19, 11. n 2 Mc 13, 4; Rv 17, 14. o Ex 33, 20; Ps 104, 2. p Ps 62, 11; Lk 12, 20. q Mt 6, 20.

## VI: Final Recommendation and Warning

20 r*O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid profane babbling and the absurdities of so-called knowledge. 21 sBy professing it, some people have deviated from the faith.

Grace be with all of you.

6, 20–21: A final solemn warning against the heretical teachers, with what seems to be a specific reference to gnosticism, the great rival and enemy of the church for two centuries and more (the Greek word for "knowledge" is **gnōsis**). If gnosticism is being referred to here, it is probable that the warnings against "speculations" and "myths and genealogies" (cf especially 1, 4; Ti 3, 9) involve allusions to that same kind of heresy. Characteristic of the various gnostic systems of speculation was an elaborate mythology of innumerable superhuman intermediaries, on a descending scale ("genealogies"), between God and the world. Thus would be explained the emphasis upon Christ's being the **one** mediator (as in 2, 5). Although fully developed gnosticism belonged to the second and later centuries, there are signs that incipient forms of it belonged to Paul's own period.

r 2 Tm 1, 14 / 4, 7. s 1, 6; 2 Tm 2, 18.

# THE SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

2 Timothy
See RG
533–536

The authorship and date of this letter, as one of the Pastoral Epistles, are discussed in the Introduction to the First Letter to Timothy.

The tone here is more personal than in First Timothy, for this letter addresses Timothy in vivid terms (1, 6-14; 2, 1-13) and depicts Paul's courage and hope in the face of discouragements late in the course of his apostolic ministry (1, 15-18; 3, 10-17; 4, 9-18). Indeed, the letter takes on the character of a final exhortation and testament from Paul to the younger Timothy (4, 1-8). Paul is portrayed as a prisoner (1, 8.16; 2, 9) in Rome (1, 17), and there is a hint that Timothy may be in Ephesus (2, 17). The letter reveals that, with rare exceptions, Christians have not rallied to Paul's support (1, 15-18) and takes a pessimistic view of the outcome of his case (4, 6). It describes Paul as fully aware of what impends, looking to God, not to human beings, for his deliverance (4, 3-8.18). It recalls his mission days with Timothy (1, 3-5; cf Acts 16, 1-4). It points to his preaching of the gospel as the reason for his imprisonment and offers Timothy, as a motive for steadfastness, his own example of firmness in faith despite adverse circumstances (1, 6-14). The letter suggests that Timothy should prepare others to replace himself as Paul has prepared Timothy to replace him (2, 1-2). Paul urges him not to desist out of fear from preserving and spreading the Christian message (2, 3-7). It presents the resurrection of Jesus and his messianic role as the heart of the gospel for which Paul has been ready to lay down his life (2, 8-9) and thus not only to express his own conviction fully but to support the conviction of others (2, 10-13).

This letter, like the preceding one, urges Timothy to protect the community from the inevitable impact of false teaching (2, 14—3, 9), without fear of the personal attacks that may result (3, 10-13). It recommends that he rely on the power of the scriptures, on proclamation of the word, and on sound doctrine (3, 14—4, 2), without being troubled by those who do not accept him (4, 3-5). The letter poignantly observes in passing that Paul has need of his reading materials and his cloak (4, 13) and, what will be best of all, a visit from Timothy.

On the theory of authorship by Paul himself, Second Timothy appears to be the last of the three Pastoral Epistles. The many scholars who argue that the Pastorals are products of the Pauline school often incline toward Second Timothy as the earliest of the three and the one most likely to have actual fragments of material from Paul himself.

The principal divisions of the Second Letter to Timothy are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-5)
II. Exhortations to Timothy (1, 6—2, 13)
III. Instructions Concerning False Teaching (2, 14—4, 8)
IV. Personal Requests and Final Greetings (4, 9-22)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1-4
See RG
534-535

**Greeting** 1 [a]*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God for the promise of life in Christ Jesus, 2 to Timothy, my dear child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Thanksgiving** 3 [b]*I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. 4 *I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy, 5 [c]as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and that I am confident lives also in you.

## II: Exhortations to Timothy

**The Gifts Timothy Has Received** 6 [d]*For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. 7 [e]For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. 8 [f]*So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.

9 [g]*He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 [h]but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 [i]*for which I was appointed preacher and apostle and teacher. 12 [j]*On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. 13 [k]Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 [l]Guard this rich trust with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us.

**Paul's Suffering** 15 [m]*You know that everyone in Asia deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 [n]*May the Lord grant mercy to

**1, 1–2:** For the formula of address and greeting, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7.

**1, 1: The promise of life in Christ Jesus:** that God grants through union with Christ in faith and love; cf Col 3, 4; 1 Tm 4, 8.

**1, 3: As my ancestors did:** this emphasizes the continuity of Judaism and Christianity; for a similar view, see Rom 9, 3–5; Phil 3, 4–6.

**1, 4–5:** Purportedly written from prison in Rome (8.17; 4, 6–8) shortly before the writer's death, the letter recalls the earlier sorrowful parting from Timothy, commending him for his faith and expressing the longing to see him again.

**1, 6: The gift of God:** the grace resulting from the conferral of an ecclesiastical office. **The imposition of my hands:** see the note on 1 Tm 4, 14.

**1, 8: Do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord:** i.e., of preaching and suffering for the sake of the gospel.

**1, 9–10:** Redemption from sin and the call to holiness of life are not won by personal deeds but are freely and graciously bestowed according to God's eternal plan; cf Eph 1, 4.

**1, 11: Teacher:** the overwhelming majority of manuscripts and Fathers read "teacher of the nations," undoubtedly a harmonization with 1 Tm 2, 7.

**1, 12: He is able to guard . . . until that day:** the intervening words can also be translated "what I have entrusted to him" (i.e., the fruit of his ministry) as well as "what has been entrusted to me" (i.e., the faith). The same difficult term occurs in v 14, where it is modified by the adjective "rich" and used without a possessive.

**1, 15:** Keen disappointment is expressed, here and later (4, 16), that the Christians of the province of Asia, especially Phygelus and Hermogenes, should have abandoned the writer and done nothing to defend his case in court.

**1, 16–18: The family of Onesiphorus because he . . . of my chains:** Onesiphorus seems to have died before this letter was written. His family is mentioned twice (here and in 4, 19), though it was Onesiphorus himself who was helpful to Paul in prison and rendered much service to the community of Ephesus. Because the apostle complains of abandonment by all in Asia during his second imprisonment and trial, the assistance of Onesiphorus seems to have been given to Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 61–63).

a 1 Tm 4, 8. b 1 Tm 3, 9 / Phil 3, 5. c 1 Tm 1, 5 / Acts 16, 1. d 1 Tm 4, 14; 5, 22 / Acts 6, 6; 8, 17. e Rom 5, 5; 8, 15; 1 Cor 2, 4. f 2, 3.15; Rom 1, 16. g Eph 2, 8–9; Ti 3, 5 / Eph 1, 4; Ti 1, 2. h Rom 16, 26; 1 Pt 1, 20 / 1 Tm 6, 14 / Phil 3, 20; Ti 1, 4; 2, 13; 2 Pt 1, 11 / 1 Cor 15, 54–55; Heb 2, 14 / 1 Cor 15, 53–54. i 1 Tm 2, 7. j 1 Pt 4, 16 / 1 Tm 1, 10–11. k 1 Tm 1, 14. l 1 Tm 6, 20 / Rom 8, 11. m 4, 16. n 4, 19.

the family of Onesiphorus because he often gave
me new heart and was not ashamed of my
chains. [17]But when he came to Rome, he
promptly searched for me and found me.
[18] [o]*May the Lord grant him to find mercy from
the Lord on that day. And you know very well
the services he rendered in Ephesus.

## CHAPTER 2

**Timothy's Conduct** [1]*So you, my child, be
strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. [2]And
what you heard from me through many wit-
nesses entrust to faithful people who will have
the ability to teach others as well. [3] [p]Bear your
share of hardship along with me like a good
soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] [q]To satisfy the one who
recruited him, a soldier does not become entan-
gled in the business affairs of life. [5] [r]Similarly, an
athlete cannot receive the winner's crown ex-
cept by competing according to the rules. [6] [s]The
hardworking farmer ought to have the first share
of the crop. [7] [t]Reflect on what I am saying, for
the Lord will give you understanding in every-
thing.

[8] [u]*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the
dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel,
[9] [v]for which I am suffering, even to the point of
chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is
not chained. [10] [w]Therefore, I bear with every-
thing for the sake of those who are chosen, so
that they too may obtain the salvation that is in
Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory. [11] [x]This
saying is trustworthy:

If we have died with him
we shall also live with him;
[12] [y]if we persevere
we shall also reign with him.
But if we deny him
he will deny us.
[13] [z]If we are unfaithful
he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself.

Ch 1-4
See RG
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# III: Instructions Concerning False Teaching

**Warning against Useless Disputes**
[14] [a]*Remind people of these things and charge
them before God to stop disputing about words.
This serves no useful purpose since it harms
those who listen. [15] [b]Be eager to present yourself
as acceptable to God, a workman who causes no
disgrace, imparting the word of truth without
deviation. [16] [c]Avoid profane, idle talk, for such
people will become more and more godless,
[17] [d]and their teaching will spread like gangrene.
Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,
[18] [e]who have deviated from the truth by saying
that [the] resurrection has already taken place
and are upsetting the faith of some.
[19] [f]Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands,
bearing this inscription, "The Lord knows those
who are his"; and, "Let everyone who calls upon
the name of the Lord avoid evil."

[20]In a large household there are vessels not
only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay,
some for lofty and others for humble use. [21] [g]If

**1, 18: Lord . . . Lord:** the first "Lord" here seems to refer to Christ, the second "Lord" to the Father.

**2, 1–7:** This passage manifests a characteristic deep concern for safeguarding the faith and faithfully transmitting it through trustworthy people (1–2; cf 1, 14; 1 Tm 6, 20; Ti 1, 9). Comparisons to the soldier's detachment, the athlete's sportsmanship, and the farmer's arduous work as the price of recompense (4–6) emphasize the need of singleness of purpose in preaching the word, even at the cost of hardship, for the sake of Christ (3).

**2, 8–13:** The section begins with a sloganlike summary of Paul's gospel about Christ (8) and concludes with what may be part of an early Christian hymn (11b-12a; most exegetes include the rest of v 12 and all of v 13 as part of the quotation). The poetic lines suggest that through baptism Christians die spiritually with Christ and hope to live with him and reign with him forever, but the Christian life includes endurance, witness, and even suffering, as the final judgment will show and as Paul's own case makes clear; while he is imprisoned for preaching the gospel (9), his sufferings are helpful to the elect for obtaining the salvation and glory available in Christ (10), who will be true to those who are faithful and will disown those who deny him (12–13).

**2, 14–19:** For those who dispute about mere words (cf 23–24) and indulge in irreligious talk to the detriment of their listeners (16–19), see the notes on 1 Tm 1, 3–7; 6, 20–21. Hymenaeus and Philetus (17), while accepting the Christian's mystical death and resurrection in Christ through baptism, claimed that baptized Christians are already risen with Christ in this life and thus that there is no future bodily resurrection or eternal glory to come. The first quotation in v 19 is from Nm 16, 5; the other quotation is from some unidentified Jewish or Christian writing.

**2, 14: Before God:** many ancient manuscripts read "before the Lord."

o Jude 21. p 1, 8; 4, 5; Phlm 2. q 1 Cor 9, 6. r 1 Cor 9, 25. s 1 Cor 9, 7–10. t Prv 2, 6. u Rom 1, 3; 1 Cor 15, 4.20 / Rom 2, 16; Gal 1, 11; 2, 2. v Phil 1, 12–14. w Col 1, 24; 1 Tm 1, 15. x Rom 6, 8. y Mt 10, 22.33; Lk 12, 9. z Nm 23, 19; Rom 3, 3–4; 1 Cor 10, 13; Ti 1, 2. a 1 Tm 6, 4. b 1, 8; 2 Cor 6, 7; Eph 1, 13; Col 1, 5. c 1 Tm 4, 7. d 1 Tm 1, 20. e 2 Thes 2, 2. f Is 28, 16; 1 Cor 3, 10–15 / Nm 16, 5; Jn 10, 14. g 3, 17.

anyone cleanses himself of these things, he will
be a vessel for lofty use, dedicated, beneficial to
the master of the house, ready for every good
work. 22 [h]*So turn from youthful desires and
pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace,
along with those who call on the Lord with
purity of heart. 23 [i]Avoid foolish and ignorant
debates, for you know that they breed quarrels.
24 [j]A slave of the Lord should not quarrel, but
should be gentle with everyone, able to teach,
tolerant, 25 [k]correcting opponents with kindness.
It may be that God will grant them repentance
that leads to knowledge of the truth, 26 [l]*and
that they may return to their senses out of the
devil's snare, where they are entrapped by him,
for his will.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 1–4
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**The Dangers of the Last Days** 1 [m]*But understand this: there will be terrifying times in the last days. 2 [n]People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, 3 callous, implacable, slanderous, licentious, brutal, hating what is good, 4 traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 [o]as they make a pretense of religion but deny its power. Reject them. 6 [p]For some of these slip into homes and make captives of women weighed down by sins, led by various desires, 7 [q]always trying to learn but never able to reach a knowledge of the truth. 8 [r]Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so they also oppose the truth—people of depraved mind, unqualified in the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be plain to all, as it was with those two.

Ch 1–4
See RG
534–535

**Paul's Example and Teaching** 10 *You have followed my teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 [s]persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, persecutions that I endured. Yet from all these things the Lord delivered me. 12 [t]In fact, all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But wicked people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. 14 [u]But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, 15 [v]and that from infancy you have known [the] sacred scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 [w]*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 [x]so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

## CHAPTER 4

**Solemn Charge** 1 [y]*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and

**2, 22: Those who call on the Lord:** those who believe in Christ and worship him as Lord, i.e., Christians (Acts 9, 14–16.20–21; Rom 10, 12–13; cf 19, literally, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord").

**2, 26:** Some interpreters would render this passage, "Thus they may come to their senses and, forced to do his (i.e., God's) will, may escape the devil's trap." This interpretation of the Greek is possible, but the one accepted in the text seems more likely.

**3, 1–9:** The moral depravity and false teaching that will be rampant in the last days are already at work (1–5). The frivolous and superficial, too, devoid of the true spirit of religion, will be easy victims of those who pervert them by falsifying the truth (6–8), just as Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh's magicians of Egypt (Ex 7, 11–12.22), discredited the truth in Moses' time. Exodus does not name the magicians, but the two names are widely found in much later Jewish, Christian, and even pagan writings. Their origins are legendary.

**3, 10–17:** Paul's example for Timothy includes persecution, a frequent emphasis in the Pastorals. Timothy is to be steadfast to what he has been taught and to scripture. The scriptures are the source of wisdom, i.e., of belief in and loving fulfillment of God's word revealed in Christ, through whom salvation is given.

**3, 16: All scripture is inspired by God:** this could possibly also be translated, "All scripture inspired by God is useful for . . . ." In this classic reference to inspiration, God is its principal author, with the writer as the human collaborator. Thus the scriptures are the word of God in human language. See also 2 Pt 1, 20–21.

**3, 16–17: Useful for teaching . . . every good work:** because as God's word the scriptures share his divine authority. It is exercised through those who are ministers of the word.

**4, 1–5:** The gravity of the obligation incumbent on Timothy to preach the word can be gauged from the solemn adjuration: in the presence of God, and of Christ coming as universal judge, and by his appearance and his kingly power (1). Patience, courage, constancy, and endurance are required despite the opposition, hostility, indifference, and defection of many to whom the truth has been preached (2–5).

h Gal 5, 22; 1 Tm 6, 11 / Rom 10, 13; 1 Cor 1, 2. i 1 Tm 1, 4; 4, 7; 6, 4; Ti 3, 9. j 1 Tm 3, 2–3. k 3, 7; 1 Tm 2, 4. l 1 Tm 3, 7. m 1 Tm 4, 1; 2 Pt 3, 3; Jude 18. n Rom 1, 29–31. o Rom 2, 20–22; Ti 1, 16. p Ti 1, 11. q 2, 25. r Ex 7, 11.22; 1 Tm 6, 5. s Acts 13, 50; 14, 5.19 / Ps 34, 20. t Jn 15, 20; Acts 14, 22. u 2, 2. v Jn 5, 39. w Rom 15, 4; 2 Pt 1, 19–21. x 2, 21. y 1 Tm 5, 21; 6, 14 / Acts 10, 42; Rom 14, 9–10; 1 Pt 4, 5.

his kingly power: [2] [z]proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. [3] [a]*For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers [4] [b]and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. [5]But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.

**Reward for Fidelity** [6] [c]*For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] [d]*I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. [8] [e]*From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.

## IV: Personal Requests and Final Greetings

**Paul's Loneliness** [9]*Try to join me soon, [10] [f]*for Demas, enamored of the present world, deserted me and went to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. [11] [g]Luke is the only one with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is helpful to me in the ministry. [12] [h]I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. [13] [i]When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, the papyrus rolls, and especially the parchments.

[14] [j]*Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. [15]You too be on guard against him, for he has strongly resisted our preaching.

[16] [k]At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them! [17] [l]But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth. [18] [m]The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Final Greeting** [19] [n]*Greet Prisca and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus. [20] [o]*Erastus remained in Corinth, while I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. [21]*Try to get here before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers send greetings.

[22] [p]The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with all of you.

**4, 3: Insatiable curiosity:** literally, "with itching ears."

**4, 6:** The apostle recognizes his death through martyrdom to be imminent. He regards it as an act of worship in which his blood will be poured out in sacrifice; cf Ex 29, 38–40; Phil 2, 17.

**4, 7:** At the close of his life Paul could testify to the accomplishment of what Christ himself foretold concerning him at the time of his conversion, "I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name" (Acts 9, 16).

**4, 8:** When the world is judged at the parousia, all who have eagerly looked for the Lord's appearing and have sought to live according to his teachings will be rewarded. The crown is a reference to the laurel wreath placed on the heads of victorious athletes and conquerors in war; cf 2, 5; 1 Cor 9, 25.

**4, 9–13:** Demas either abandoned the work of the ministry for worldly affairs or, perhaps, gave up the faith itself (10). Luke (11) may have accompanied Paul on parts of his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16, 10–12; 20, 5–7). Notice the presence of the first personal pronoun "we" in these Acts passages, suggesting to some that Luke (or at least some traveling companion of Paul's) was the author of Acts. Mark, once rejected by Paul (Acts 13, 13; 15, 39), is now to render him a great service (11); cf Col 4, 10; Phlm 24. For Tychicus, see Eph 6, 21; cf also Acts 20, 4; Col 4, 7.

**4, 10: Galatia:** some manuscripts read "Gaul" or "Gallia."

**4, 14–18: Alexander:** an opponent of Paul's preaching (14–15), perhaps the one who is mentioned in 1 Tm 1, 20. Despite Paul's abandonment by his friends in the province of Asia (cf 1, 15–16), the divine assistance brought this first trial to a successful issue, even to the point of making the gospel message known to those who participated in or witnessed the trial (16–17).

**4, 19: Prisca and Aquila:** they assisted Paul in his ministry in Corinth (Acts 18, 2–3) and Ephesus (Acts 18, 19.26; 1 Cor 16, 19). They risked death to save his life, and all the Gentile communities are indebted to them (Rom 16, 3–5).

**4, 20: Erastus:** he was the treasurer of the city of Corinth (Rom 16, 24); cf also Acts 19, 22. **Trophimus:** from the province of Asia, he accompanied Paul from Greece to Troas (Acts 20, 4–5).

**4, 21: Linus:** Western tradition sometimes identified this Linus with the supposed successor of Peter as bishop of Rome, and Claudia as the mother of Linus (**Apostolic Constitutions,** fourth century).

z Acts 20, 20.31; 1 Tm 5, 20. a 1 Tm 4, 1. b 1 Tm 1, 4; 4, 7; Ti 1, 14. c Phil 2, 17. d 1 Tm 1, 18; 6, 12; Jude 3 / Acts 20, 24; 1 Cor 9, 24; Heb 12, 1. e 2, 5; Wis 5, 16; 1 Cor 9, 25; Phil 3, 14; Jas 1, 12; 1 Pt 5, 4; Rv 2, 10. f Col 4, 14; Phlm 24 / 2 Cor 2, 13; 7, 6–7; 8, 23; Gal 2, 3; Ti 1, 4. g Col 4, 14; Phlm 24 / Col 4, 10; Phlm 24. h Acts 20, 4; Eph 6, 21; Col 4, 7. i Acts 16, 8; 20, 6. j 1 Tm 1, 20 / 2 Sm 3, 39; Pss 28, 4; 62, 12; Prv 24, 12; Rom 2, 6. k 1, 15. l Acts 23, 11; 27, 23; Phil 4, 13 / 1 Mc 2, 60; Ps 22, 22; Dn 6, 23. m 2 Cor 1, 10 / Rom 16, 27. n Acts 18, 2; Rom 16, 3; 1 Cor 16, 19 / 1, 16. o Acts 19, 22; Rom 16, 24 / Acts 20, 4; 21, 29. p Gal 6, 18; Phil 4, 23; Col 4, 18; 1 Tm 6, 21; Ti 3, 15.

# THE LETTER TO TITUS

Titus
See RG
536–538

The third of the Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament is addressed to a different co-worker of Paul than are First and Second Timothy. The situation is different, too, for Titus is addressed as the person in charge of developing the church on the large Mediterranean island of Crete (1, 5), a place Paul had never, according to the New Testament, visited. The tone is closer to that of First Timothy as three topics of church life and structure are discussed: presbyter-bishops (see the note on 1, 5-9), groups with which one must work in the church (2, 1-10), and admonitions for conduct based on the grace and love of God that appeared in Jesus Christ (2, 11—3, 10). The warmer personal tone of Second Timothy is replaced by emphasis on church office and on living in the society of the day, in which deceivers and heretics abound (1, 10-16; 3, 9-10).

The Pauline assistant who is addressed, Titus, was a Gentile Christian, but we are nowhere informed of his place of birth or residence. He went from Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Gal 2, 1; cf Acts 15, 2). According to 2 Corinthians (2, 13; 7, 6.13-14), he was with Paul on his third missionary journey; his name, however, does not appear in Acts. Besides being the bearer of Paul's severe letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 7, 6-8), he had the responsibility of taking up the collection in Corinth for the Christian community of Jerusalem (2 Cor 8, 6.16-19.23). In the present letter (1, 5), he is mentioned as the administrator of the Christian community in Crete, charged with the task of organizing it through the appointment of presbyters and bishops (1, 5-9; here the two terms refer to the same personages).

The letter instructs Titus about the character of the assistants he is to choose in view of the pastoral difficulties peculiar to Crete (1, 5-16). It suggests the special individual and social virtues that the various age groups and classes in the Christian community should be encouraged to acquire (2, 1-10). The motivation for transformation of their lives comes from christology, especially the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and his future coming, as applied through baptism and justification (2, 11-14; 3, 4-8). The community is to serve as a leaven for Christianizing the social world about it (3, 1-3). Good works are to be the evidence of their faith in God (3, 8); those who engage in religious controversy are, after suitable warning, to be ignored (3, 9-11).

The authorship and date of the Letter to Titus are discussed in the Introduction to 1 Timothy. Those who assume authorship by Paul himself usually place Titus after 1 Timothy and before 2 Timothy. Others see it as closely related to 1 Timothy, in a growing emphasis on church structure and opposition to heresy, later than the letters of Paul himself and 2 Timothy. It has also been suggested that, if the three Pastorals once circulated as a literary unit, Titus was meant to be read ahead of 1 and 2 Timothy.

The principal divisions of the Letter to Titus are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-4)
II. Pastoral Charge (1, 5-16)
III. Teaching the Christian Life (2, 1—3, 15)

# I: Address

## CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** [1] [a]*Paul, a slave of God and apostle of
Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's
chosen ones and the recognition of religious
truth, [2] [b]in the hope of eternal life that God, who
does not lie, promised before time began, [3] [c]who
indeed at the proper time revealed his word in
the proclamation with which I was entrusted by
the command of God our savior, [4] [d]to Titus, my
true child in our common faith: grace and peace
from God the Father and Christ Jesus our savior.

# II: Pastoral Charge

**Titus in Crete** [5]*For this reason I left you in
Crete so that you might set right what remains
to be done and appoint presbyters in every town,
as I directed you, [6] [e]on condition that a man be
blameless, married only once, with believing
children who are not accused of licentiousness
or rebellious. [7]For a bishop as God's steward
must be blameless, not arrogant, not irritable,
not a drunkard, not aggressive, not greedy for
sordid gain, [8]but hospitable, a lover of goodness,
temperate, just, holy, and self-controlled,
[9] [f]holding fast to the true message as taught so
that he will be able both to exhort with sound
doctrine and to refute opponents. [10]*For there
are also many rebels, idle talkers and deceivers,
especially the Jewish Christians. [11]It is imperative to silence them, as they are upsetting whole
families by teaching for sordid gain what they
should not. [12]*One of them, a prophet of their
own, once said, "Cretans have always been liars,
vicious beasts, and lazy gluttons." [13] [g]That testimony is true. Therefore, admonish them sharply,
so that they may be sound in the faith,
[14] [h]instead of paying attention to Jewish myths
and regulations of people who have repudiated
the truth. [15] [i]To the clean all things are clean, but
to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is clean; in fact, both their minds and their
consciences are tainted. [16]They claim to know
God, but by their deeds they deny him. They are
vile and disobedient and unqualified for any
good deed.

Ch 1
See RG
536–537

# III: Teaching the Christian Life

## CHAPTER 2

**Christian Behavior** [1] [j]*As for yourself, you
must say what is consistent with sound doctrine,
namely, [2]that older men should be temperate,
dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love,
and endurance. [3]Similarly, older women should
be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers, not
addicted to drink, teaching what is good, [4]so
that they may train younger women to love their
husbands and children, [5] [k]to be self-controlled,
chaste, good homemakers, under the control of
their husbands, so that the word of God may not
be discredited.

[6]Urge the younger men, similarly, to control
themselves, [7]showing yourself as a model of
good deeds in every respect, with integrity in
your teaching, dignity, [8]and sound speech that
cannot be criticized, so that the opponent will be
put to shame without anything bad to say about
us.

Ch 2–3
See RG
537

1, 1–4: On the epistolary form, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7. The apostolate is the divinely appointed mission to lead others to the true faith and through it to eternal salvation (1–3).

1, 5–9: This instruction on the selection and appointment of presbyters, substantially identical with that in 1 Tm 3, 1–7 on a bishop (see the note there), was aimed at strengthening the authority of Titus by apostolic mandate; cf 2, 15. In vv 5.7 and Acts 20, 17.28, the terms **episkopos** and **presbyteros** ("bishop" and "presbyter") refer to the same persons. Deacons are not mentioned in Titus. See also the note on Phil 1, 1.

1, 10–16: This adverse criticism of the defects within the community is directed especially against certain Jewish Christians, who busy themselves with useless speculations over persons mentioned in the Old Testament, insist on the observance of Jewish ritual purity regulations, and thus upset whole families by teaching things they have no right to teach; cf 3, 9; 1 Tm 1, 3–10.

1, 10: **Jewish Christians:** literally, "those of the circumcision."

1, 12: **Cretans . . . gluttons:** quoted from Epimenides, a Cretan poet of the sixth century B.C.

2, 1–10: One of Titus' main tasks in Crete is to become acquainted with the character of the Cretans and thereby learn to cope with its deficiencies (see 1, 12). The counsel is not only for Titus himself but for various classes of people with whom he must deal: older men and women (2–4), younger women and men (4–7), and slaves (9–10); cf Eph 6, 1–9; Col 3, 18—4, 1.

a 1 Tm 2, 4; 4, 3; 2 Tm 2, 25; 3, 7; Heb 10, 26. b 3, 7; 2 Tm 1, 1; 1 Jn 2, 25. c 2, 10; 3, 4; Ps 24, 5; 1 Tm 1, 1; 2, 3; 4, 10; Jude 25. d 2, 13; 3, 6; Phil 3, 20; 2 Tm 1, 10; 2 Pt 1, 1.11; 2, 20; 3, 2.18. e 1 Tm 3, 2–7; 2 Tm 2, 24–26. f 1, 13; 2, 1–2.8; 1 Tm 1, 10; 6, 3; 2 Tm 1, 13; 4, 3. g 1, 9. h 3, 9; 1 Tm 1, 4; 4, 7; 2 Tm 4, 4; 2 Pt 1, 16. i Mk 7, 18–23; Acts 10, 15; Rom 14, 14–23. j 1, 9.13; 2, 8; 1 Tm 1, 10; 6, 3; 2 Tm 1, 13; 4, 3. k 1 Cor 11, 3; 14, 34; Eph 5, 22–24; Col 3, 18; 1 Tm 2, 11–15; 1 Pt 3, 1–6.

9 [l]Slaves are to be under the control of their
masters in all respects, giving them satisfaction,
not talking back to them 10 [m]or stealing from
them, but exhibiting complete good faith, so as to
adorn the doctrine of God our savior in every way.

**Transformation of Life** 11 [n]*For the grace of
God has appeared, saving all 12 and training us to
reject godless ways and worldly desires and to
live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age,
13 [o]*as we await the blessed hope, the appear-
ance of the glory of the great God and of our
savior Jesus Christ, 14 [p]who gave himself for us
to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse
for himself a people as his own, eager to do what
is good.

15 [q]Say these things. Exhort and correct with
all authority. Let no one look down on you.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 2–3 See RG 537

1 [r]*Remind them to be under the control of
magistrates and authorities, to be obedient, to be
open to every good enterprise. 2 They are to
slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate,
exercising all graciousness toward everyone.
3 [s]For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedi-
ent, deluded, slaves to various desires and plea-
sures, living in malice and envy, hateful our-
selves and hating one another.

4 [t]But when the kindness and generous love
of God our savior appeared,
5 [u]not because of any righteous deeds we had
done
but because of his mercy,
he saved us through the bath of rebirth
and renewal by the holy Spirit,
6 [v]whom he richly poured out on us
through Jesus Christ our savior,
7 [w]so that we might be justified by his grace
and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

8 [x]*This saying is trustworthy.

**Advice to Titus** I want you to insist on these
points, that those who have believed in God be
careful to devote themselves to good works;
these are excellent and beneficial to others.
9 [y]*Avoid foolish arguments, genealogies, rival-
ries, and quarrels about the law, for they are
useless and futile. 10 [z]After a first and second
warning, break off contact with a heretic, 11 real-
izing that such a person is perverted and sinful
and stands self-condemned.

**Directives, Greetings, and Blessing**
12 [a]*When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus,
try to join me at Nicopolis, where I have decided
to spend the winter. 13 [b]Send Zenas the lawyer
and Apollos on their journey soon, and see to it
that they have everything they need. 14 [c]But let
our people, too, learn to devote themselves to
good works to supply urgent needs, so that they
may not be unproductive.

15 [d]All who are with me send you greetings.
Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with all of you.

**2, 11–15:** Underlying the admonitions for moral improvement in 1–10 as the moving force is the constant appeal to God's revelation of salvation in Christ, with its demand for transformation of life.

**2, 13: The blessed hope, the appearance:** literally, "the blessed hope and appearance," but the use of a single article in Greek strongly suggests an epexegetical, i.e., explanatory sense. **Of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ:** another possible translation is "of our great God and savior Jesus Christ."

**3, 1–8:** The list of Christian duties continues from 2, 9–10, undergirded again as in 2, 11–13 by appeal to what God in Christ has done (4–7; cf 2, 11–14). The spiritual renewal of the Cretans, signified in God's merciful gift of baptism (4–7), should be reflected in their improved attitude toward civil authority and in their Christian relationship with all (1–3).

**3, 1: Magistrates and authorities:** some interpreters understand these terms as referring to the principalities and powers of the heavenly hierarchy. **To be open to every good enterprise:** this implies being good citizens. It could also be translated "ready to do every sort of good work" (as Christians); cf 14.

**3, 8–11:** In matters of good conduct and religious doctrine, Titus is to stand firm.

**3, 9:** See the note on 1 Tm 6, 20–21.

**3, 12–15: Artemas or Tychicus** (2 Tm 4, 12) is to replace Titus, who will join Paul in his winter sojourn at Nicopolis in Epirus, on the western coast of Greece.

l 1 Cor 7, 21–22; Eph 6, 5–8; Col 3, 22–25; 1 Tm 6, 1–2; 1 Pt 2, 18. m 1, 3; 3, 4; Ps 24, 5; 1 Tm 1, 1; 2, 3; 4, 10; Jude 25. n 1 Tm 2, 4; 4, 10. o 1 Cor 1, 7; Phil 3, 20; 1 Thes 1, 10 / 2 Tm 1, 10 / 1, 4; 3, 6; 2 Pt 1, 1.11; 2, 20; 3, 2.18. p Gal 1, 4; 2, 20; Eph 5, 2.25; 1 Tm 2, 6; 1 Pt 1, 18–19 / Ps 130, 8. q 1 Tm 4, 12. r Rom 13, 1–7; 1 Tm 2, 1–2; 1 Pt 2, 13–14. s 1 Cor 6, 9–11; Eph 2, 1–3; 5, 8; Col 3, 5–7; 1 Pt 4, 3. t 1, 3; 2, 10; Ps 24, 5; 1 Tm 1, 1; 2, 3; 4, 10; Jude 25. u Dt 9, 5; Eph 2, 4–5.8–9; 2 Tm 1, 9. v 1, 4; 2, 13; Phil 3, 20; 2 Tm 1, 10; 2 Pt 1, 1.11; 2, 20; 3, 2.18. w 1, 2; 2 Tm 1, 1; 1 Jn 2, 25. x 1 Tm 1, 15; 3, 1; 4, 9; 2 Tm 2, 11. y 1 Tm 1, 4; 4, 7; 2 Tm 2, 23. z Mt 18, 15–18; Rom 16, 17; 1 Cor 5, 11; 2 Thes 3, 6.14–15. a Acts 20, 4; Eph 6, 21; Col 4, 7; 2 Tm 4, 12. b Acts 18, 24–26; 1 Cor 1, 12; 3, 4–6.22; 4, 6; 16, 12. c 2, 14; 3, 8; Heb 10, 24; 1 Pt 3, 13. d Heb 13, 25.

# THE LETTER TO PHILEMON

Philemon
See RG
538–540

This short letter addressed to three specific individuals was written by Paul during an imprisonment, perhaps in Rome between A.D. 61 and 63 (see the Introduction to Colossians for other possible sites). It concerns Onesimus, a slave from Colossae (Col 4, 9), who had run away from his master, perhaps guilty of theft in the process (18). Onesimus was converted to Christ by Paul (10). Paul sends him back to his master (12) with this letter asking that he be welcomed willingly by his old master (8-10.14.17) not just as a slave but as a brother in Christ (16). Paul uses very strong arguments (especially 19) in his touching appeal on behalf of Onesimus. It is unlikely that Paul is subtly hinting that he would like to retain Onesimus as his own slave, lent to Paul by his master. Rather, he suggests he would like to have Onesimus work with him for the gospel (13.20-21). There is, however, little evidence connecting this Onesimus with a bishop of Ephesus of the same name mentioned by Ignatius of Antioch (ca. A.D. 110).

Paul's letter deals with an accepted institution of antiquity, human slavery. But Paul breathes into this letter the spirit of Christ and of equality within the Christian community. He does not attack slavery directly, for this is something the Christian communities of the first century were in no position to do, and the expectation that Christ would soon come again militated against social reforms. Yet Paul, by presenting Onesimus as "brother, beloved . . . to me, but even more so to you" (16), voiced an idea revolutionary in that day and destined to break down worldly barriers of division "in the Lord."

**Address and Greeting** [1 a]*Paul, a prisoner for
Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our beloved and our co-worker, [2 b]*to
Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church at your house. [3 c]*Grace
to you and peace from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving** [4 d]*I give thanks to my God
always, remembering you in my prayers, [5]*as I
hear of the love and the faith you have in the
Lord Jesus and for all the holy ones, [6 e]*so that
your partnership in the faith may become effective in recognizing every good there is in us that
leads to Christ.

**Plea for Onesimus** [7 f]*For I have experienced
much joy and encouragement from your love,
because the hearts of the holy ones have been
refreshed by you, brother. [8]*Therefore, although
I have the full right in Christ to order you to do
what is proper, [9 g]*I rather urge you out of love,
being as I am, Paul, an old man, and now also a
prisoner for Christ Jesus. [10 h]I urge you on behalf
of my child Onesimus, whose father I have
become in my imprisonment, [11]*who was once

1: **Prisoner:** as often elsewhere (cf Rom, 1 Cor, Gal especially), the second word in Greek enunciates the theme and sets the tone of the letter. Here it is the prisoner appealing rather than the apostle commanding.

2: **Apphia our sister:** sister is here used (like brother) to indicate a fellow Christian. **The church at your house: your** here is singular. It more likely refers to Philemon than to the last one named, Archippus; Philemon is then the owner of the slave Onesimus (10). An alternate view is that the actual master of the slave is Archippus and that the one to whom the letter is addressed, Philemon, is the most prominent Christian there; see the note on Col 4, 17.

3: **Grace . . . and peace:** for this greeting, which may be a combination of Greek and Aramaic epistolary formulae, see the note on Rom 1, 1–7.

4: **In my prayers:** literally, "at the time of my prayers."

5: **Holy ones:** a common term for members of the Christian community (so also 7).

6: **In us:** some good ancient manuscripts have **in you** (plural). **That leads to Christ: leads to** translates the Greek preposition **eis**, indicating direction or purpose.

7: **Encouragement:** the Greek word **paraklēsis** is cognate with the verb translated "urge" in vv 9.10, and serves as an introduction to Paul's plea. **Hearts:** literally, "bowels," expressing in Semitic fashion the seat of the emotions, one's "inmost self." The same Greek word is used in v 12 and again in v 20, where it forms a literary inclusion marking off the body of the letter.

8: **Full right:** often translated "boldness," the Greek word **parrēsia** connotes the full franchise of speech, as the right of a citizen to speak before the body politic, claimed by the Athenians as their privilege (Euripides).

9: **Old man:** some editors conjecture that Paul here used a similar Greek word meaning "ambassador" (cf Eph 6, 20). This conjecture heightens the contrast with "prisoner" but is totally without manuscript support.

11: **Useless . . . useful:** here Paul plays on the name Onesi-

a 9; Eph 3, 1; 4, 1; Phil 1, 7.13. b Col 4, 17. c Rom 1, 7; Gal 1, 3; Phil 1, 2. d Rom 1, 8–9; Eph 1, 15–16. e Phil 1, 9; Col 1, 9. f 2 Cor 7, 4. g 1; Eph 3, 1; 4, 1; Phil 1, 7.13. h 1 Cor 4, 14–15; Gal 4, 19; Col 4, 9.

useless to you but is now useful to [both] you and
me. [12]I am sending him, that is, my own heart,
back to you. [13] *[i]I should have liked to retain
him for myself, so that he might serve me on
your behalf in my imprisonment for the gospel,
[14] [j]but I did not want to do anything without
your consent, so that the good you do might not
be forced but voluntary. [15]*Perhaps this is why
he was away from you for a while, that you
might have him back forever, [16] *[k]no longer as a
slave but more than a slave, a brother, beloved
especially to me, but even more so to you, as a
man and in the Lord. [17]So if you regard me as a
partner, welcome him as you would me. [18]*And
if he has done you any injustice or owes you
anything, charge it to me. [19] [l]I, Paul, write this in
my own hand: I will pay. May I not tell you that
you owe me your very self. [20]Yes, brother, may I
profit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in
Christ.

[21]With trust in your compliance I write to
you, knowing that you will do even more than I
say. [22] [m]At the same time prepare a guest room
for me, for I hope to be granted to you through
your prayers.

**Final Greetings** [23] *[n]Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, [24] [o]as well as
Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-
workers. [25]The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be
with your spirit.

mus, which means "useful" or "beneficial." The verb translated "profit" in v 20 is cognate.

13: **Serve:** the Greek **diakoneō** could connote a ministry.

15: **Was away from:** literally, "was separated from," but the same verb means simply "left" in Acts 18, 1. It is a euphemism for his running away.

16: **As a man:** literally, "in the flesh." With this and the following phrase, Paul describes the natural and spiritual orders.

18–19: **Charge it to me . . . I will pay:** technical legal and commercial terms in account keeping and acknowledgment of indebtedness.

23–24: **Epaphras:** a Colossian who founded the church there (Col 1, 7) and perhaps also in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 2, 1; 4, 12–13). **Aristarchus:** a native of Thessalonica and fellow worker of Paul (Acts 19, 29; 20, 4; 27, 2). For Mark, Demas, and Luke, see 2 Tm 4, 9–13 and the note there.

i Phil 2, 30. j 2 Cor 9, 7; 1 Pt 5, 2. k 1 Tm 6, 2. l Gal 6, 11; 2 Thes 3, 17. m Heb 13, 19. n Col 1, 7; 4, 12–13. o Acts 12, 12.15; 13, 13; 15, 37–39; 19, 29; 20, 4; 27, 2; Col 4, 10.14; 2 Tm 4, 10–13.

# THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Hebrews
See RG
541–547

As early as the second century, this treatise, which is of great rhetorical power and force in its admonition to faithful pilgrimage under Christ's leadership, bore the title "To the Hebrews." It was assumed to be directed to Jewish Christians. Usually Hebrews was attached in Greek manuscripts to the collection of letters by Paul. Although no author is mentioned (for there is no address), a reference to Timothy (13, 23) suggested connections to the circle of Paul and his assistants. Yet the exact audience, the author, and even whether Hebrews is a letter have long been disputed.

The author saw the addressees in danger of apostasy from their Christian faith. This danger was due not to any persecution from outsiders but to a weariness with the demands of Christian life and a growing indifference to their calling (2, 1; 4, 14; 6, 1-12; 10, 23-32). The author's main theme, the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus (chs 3–10), is not developed for its own sake but as a means of restoring their lost fervor and strengthening them in their faith. Another important theme of the letter is that of the pilgrimage of the people of God to the heavenly Jerusalem (11, 10; 12, 1-3.18-29; 13, 14). This theme is intimately connected with that of Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (9, 11—10, 22).

The author calls this work a "message of encouragement" (13, 22), a designation that is given to a synagogue sermon in Acts 13, 15. Hebrews is probably therefore a written homily, to which the author gave an epistolary ending (13, 22-25).

The author begins with a reminder of the preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation of Jesus (1, 3) that proclaimed him the climax of God's word to humanity (1, 1-3). He dwells upon the dignity of the person of Christ, superior to the angels (1, 4—2, 2). Christ is God's final word of salvation communicated (in association with accredited witnesses to his teaching: cf 2, 3-4) not merely by word but through his suffering in the humanity common to him and to all others (2, 5-16). This enactment of salvation went beyond the pattern known to Moses, faithful prophet of God's word though he was, for Jesus as high priest expiated sin and was faithful to God with the faithfulness of God's own Son (2, 17—3, 6).

Just as the infidelity of the people thwarted Moses' efforts to save them, so the infidelity of any Christian may thwart God's plan in Christ (3, 6—4, 13). Christians are to reflect that it is their humanity that Jesus took upon himself, with all its defects save sinfulness, and that he bore the burden of it until death out of obedience to God. God declared this work of his Son to be the cause of salvation for all (4, 14—5, 10). Although Christians recognize this fundamental teaching, they may grow weary of it and of its implications, and therefore require other reflections to stimulate their faith (5, 11—6, 20).

Therefore, the author presents to the readers for their reflection the everlasting priesthood of Christ (7, 1-28), a priesthood that fulfills the promise of the Old Testament (8, 1-13). It also provides the meaning God ultimately intended in the sacrifices of the Old Testament (9, 1-28): these pointed to the unique sacrifice of Christ, which alone obtains forgiveness of sins (10, 1-18). The trial of faith experienced by the readers should resolve itself through their consideration of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and his perpetual intercession there on their behalf (7, 25; 8, 1-13). They should also be strengthened by the assurance of his foreordained parousia, and by the fruits of faith that they have already enjoyed (10, 19-39).

It is in the nature of faith to recognize the reality of what is not yet seen and is the object of hope, and the saints of the Old Testament give striking example of that faith (11, 1-40). The perseverance to which the author exhorts the readers is shown forth in the early life of Jesus. Despite the afflictions of his ministry and the supreme trial of his suffering and death, he remained confident of the triumph that God would bring him (12, 1-3). The difficulties of human life have meaning when they are accepted as God's discipline (12, 4-13), and if Christians persevere in fidelity to the word in which they have believed, they are assured of possessing forever the unshakable kingdom of God (12, 14-29).

The letter concludes with specific moral commandments (13, 1-17), in the course of which the author recalls again his central theme of the sacrifice of Jesus and the courage needed to associate oneself with it in faith (13, 9-16).

As early as the end of the second century, the church of Alexandria in Egypt accepted Hebrews as a letter of Paul, and that became the view commonly held in the East. Pauline authorship was contested in the West into the fourth century, but then accepted. In the sixteenth century, doubts about that position were again raised, and the modern consensus is that the letter was not written by Paul. There is, however, no widespread agreement on any of the other suggested authors, e.g., Barnabas, Apollos, or Prisc(ill)a and Aquila. The document itself has no statement about its author.

Among the reasons why Pauline authorship has been abandoned are the great difference of vocabulary and style between Hebrews and Paul's letters, the alternation of doctrinal teaching with moral exhortation, the different manner of citing the Old Testament, and the resemblance between the thought of Hebrews and that of Alexandrian Judaism. The Greek of the letter is in many ways the best in the New Testament.

Since the letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, written about A.D. 96, most probably cites Hebrews, the upper limit for the date of composition is reasonably certain. While the letter's references in the present tense to the Old Testament sacrificial worship do not necessarily show that temple worship was still going on, many older commentators and a growing number of recent ones favor the view that it was and that the author wrote before the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In that case, the argument of the letter is more easily explained as directed toward Jewish Christians rather than those of Gentile origin, and the persecutions they have suffered in the past (cf 10, 32-34) may have been connected with the disturbances that preceded the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 under the emperor Claudius. These were probably caused by disputes between Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not.

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Hebrews are the following:

I. Introduction (1, 1-4)
II. The Son Higher than the Angels (1, 5—2, 18)
III. Jesus, Faithful and Compassionate High Priest (3, 1—5, 10)
IV. Jesus' Eternal Priesthood and Eternal Sacrifice (5, 11—10, 39)
V. Examples, Discipline, Disobedience (11, 1—12, 29)
VI. Final Exhortation, Blessing, Greetings (13, 1-25)

## I: Introduction

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1–2
See RG
542–543

1 *In times past, God spoke in partial and
various ways to our ancestors through the proph-
ets; 2 [a]in these last days, he spoke to us through
a son, whom he made heir of all things and
through whom he created the universe,

3 [b]who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty
word.
When he had accomplished purification from
sins,
he took his seat at the right hand of the
Majesty on high,
4 [c]as far superior to the angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent
than theirs.

1, 1–4: The letter opens with an introduction consisting of a reflection on the climax of God's revelation to the human race in his Son. The divine communication was initiated and maintained during Old Testament times in fragmentary and varied ways through **the prophets** (1), including Abraham, Moses, and all through whom God spoke. But now **in these last days** (2), the final age, God's revelation of his saving purpose is achieved **through a son,** i.e., one who is Son, whose role is redeemer and mediator of creation. He was made **heir of all things** through his death and exaltation to glory, yet he existed before he appeared as man; through him God **created the universe.** Verses 3–4, which may be based upon a liturgical hymn, assimilate the Son to the personified Wisdom of the Old Testament as **refulgence of** God's **glory** and **imprint of his being** (3; cf Wis 7, 26). These same terms are used of the Logos in Philo. The author now turns from the cosmological role of the preexistent Son to the redemptive work of Jesus: he brought about purification from sins and has been exalted to the right hand of God (see Ps 110, 1). The once-humiliated and crucified Jesus has been declared God's Son, and this name shows his superiority to the angels. The reason for the author's insistence on that superiority is, among other things, that in some Jewish traditions angels were mediators of the old covenant (see Acts 7, 53; Gal 3, 19). Finally, Jesus' superiority to the angels emphasizes the superiority of the new covenant to the old because of the heavenly priesthood of Jesus.

a Is 2, 2; Jer 23, 20; Ez 38, 16; Dn 10, 14 / Jn 3, 17; Rom 8, 3; Gal 4, 4 / Prv 8, 30; Wis 7, 22; Jn 1, 3; 1 Cor 8, 6; Col 1, 16. b Wis 7, 26; 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15 / 8, 1; 10, 12; 12, 2; Mk 16, 19; Acts 2, 33; 7, 55–56; Rom 8, 34; Eph 1, 20; Col 3, 1; 1 Pt 3, 22. c Eph 1, 21; Phil 2, 9–11.

## II: The Son Higher Than the Angels

**Messianic Enthronement** 5 [d]*For to which of the angels did God ever say:

"You are my son; this day I have begotten you"?

Or again:

"I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me"?

6 [e]*And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says:

"Let all the angels of God worship him."

7 [f]Of the angels he says:

"He makes his angels winds
and his ministers a fiery flame";

8 [g]*but of the Son:

"Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever;
and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.
9 You loved justice and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your companions";

10 [h]and:

"At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth,
and the heavens are the works of your hands.
11 They will perish, but you remain;
and they will all grow old like a garment.
12 You will roll them up like a cloak,
and like a garment they will be changed.
But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

13 [i]But to which of the angels has he ever said:

"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies your footstool"?

14 [j]Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

### CHAPTER 2

Ch 1-2 See RG 542-543

**Exhortation to Faithfulness** 1 *Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. 2 [k]For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 [l]how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. 4 [m]God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

**Exaltation through Abasement** 5 *For it was not to angels that he subjected the world to

**1, 5–14:** Jesus' superiority to the angels is now demonstrated by a series of seven Old Testament texts. Some scholars see in the stages of Jesus' exaltation an order corresponding to that of enthronement ceremonies in the ancient Near East, especially in Egypt, namely, elevation to divine status (5–6); presentation to the angels and proclamation of everlasting lordship (7–12); enthronement and conferral of royal power (13). The citations from the Psalms in vv 5 and 13 were traditionally used of Jesus' messianic sonship (cf Acts 13, 33) through his resurrection and exaltation (cf Acts 2, 33–35); those in vv 8 and 10–12 are concerned with his divine kingship and his creative function. The central quotation in v 7 serves to contrast the angels with the Son. The author quotes it according to the Septuagint translation, which is quite different in meaning from that of the Hebrew ("You make the winds your messengers, and flaming fire your ministers"). The angels are only **sent to serve . . . those who are to inherit salvation** (14).

**1, 6: And again, when he leads:** the Greek could also be translated "And when he again leads" in reference to the parousia.

**1, 8–12: O God:** the application of the name "God" to the Son derives from the preexistence mentioned in vv 2–3; the psalmist had already used it of the Hebrew king in the court style of the original. See the note on Ps 45, 7. It is also important for the author's christology that in vv 10–12 an Old Testament passage addressed to God is redirected to Jesus.

**2, 1–4:** The author now makes a transition into exhortation, using an a fortiori argument (as at 7, 21–22; 9, 13–14; 10, 28–29; 12, 25). The **word announced through angels** (2), the Mosaic law, is contrasted with the more powerful word that Christians have received (3–4). Christ's supremacy strengthens Christians against being **carried away** from their faith.

**2, 5–18:** The humanity and the suffering of Jesus do not constitute a valid reason for relinquishing the Christian faith. Ps 8 (6–7) is also applied to Jesus in 1 Cor 15, 27; Eph 1, 22; and probably 1 Pt 3, 22. This christological interpretation, therefore, probably reflects a common early Christian tradition, which may have originated in the expression **the son of man** (6). The psalm contrasts God's greatness with man's relative insignificance but also stresses the superiority of man to the rest of creation, of which he is lord. Heb applies this christologically: Jesus lived a truly human existence, **lower than the angels,** in the days of his

d Ps 2, 7 / 2 Sm 7, 14. e Dt 32, 43 LXX; Ps 97, 7. f Ps 104, 4 LXX. g Ps 45, 7–8. h Ps 102, 26–28. i Ps 110, 1. j Ps 91, 11; Dn 7, 10. k Acts 7, 38.53; Gal 3, 19. l 10, 29; 12, 25. m Mk 16, 20; Acts 14, 3; 19, 11.

come, of which we are speaking. 6 [n]Instead,
someone has testified somewhere:

"What is man that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man that you care for him?
7 You made him for a little while lower than the
angels;
you crowned him with glory and honor,
8 [o]subjecting all things under his feet."

In "subjecting" all things [to him], he left nothing
not "subject to him." Yet at present we do not
see "all things subject to him," 9 [p]but we do see
Jesus "crowned with glory and honor" because
he suffered death, he who "for a little while"
was made "lower than the angels," that by the
grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 [q]For it was fitting that he, for whom and
through whom all things exist, in bringing many
children to glory, should make the leader to their
salvation perfect through suffering. 11 He who
consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not
ashamed to call them "brothers," 12 [r]saying:

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers,
in the midst of the assembly I will praise
you";

13 [s]and again:

"I will put my trust in him";

and again:

"Behold, I and the children God has given
me."

14 [t]Now since the children share in blood and
flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through
death he might destroy the one who has the
power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free
those who through fear of death had been
subject to slavery all their life. 16 Surely he did
not help angels but rather the descendants of
Abraham; 17 [u]therefore, he had to become like
his brothers in every way, that he might be a
merciful and faithful high priest before God to
expiate the sins of the people. 18 Because he
himself was tested through what he suffered, he
is able to help those who are being tested.

## III: Jesus, Faithful and Compassionate High Priest

### CHAPTER 3

Ch 3-5
See RG
543-544

**Jesus, Superior to Moses** 1 *Therefore, holy
"brothers," sharing in a heavenly calling, reflect

earthly life, particularly in his suffering and death; now, **crowned with glory and honor,** he is raised above all creation. The author considers all things as already **subject to him** because of his exaltation (8–9), though **we do not see** this yet. The reference to Jesus as **leader** (10) sounds the first note of an important leitmotif in Heb: the journey of the people of God to the sabbath rest (4, 9), the heavenly sanctuary, following Jesus, their "forerunner" (6, 20). It was fitting that God should make him **perfect through suffering,** consecrated by obedient suffering. Because he is perfected as high priest, Jesus is then able to consecrate his people (11); access to God is made possible by each of these two consecrations. If Jesus is able to help human beings, it is because he has become one of us; we are his "brothers." The author then cites three Old Testament texts as proofs of this unity between ourselves and the Son. Psalm 22, 23 is interpreted so as to make Jesus the singer of this lament, which ends with joyful praise of the Lord in the assembly of "brothers." The other two texts are from Is 8, 17.18. The first of these seems intended to display in Jesus an example of the trust in God that his followers should emulate. The second curiously calls these followers "children"; probably this is to be understood to mean children of Adam, but the point is our solidarity with Jesus. By sharing human nature, including the ban of death, Jesus broke the power of the devil over death (14); the author shares the view of Hellenistic Judaism that death was not intended by God and that it had been introduced into the world by the devil. The **fear of death** (15) is a religious fear based on the false conception that death marks the end of a person's relations with God (cf Ps 115, 17–18; Is 38, 18). Jesus deliberately allied himself with **the descendants of Abraham** (16) in order to be **a merciful and faithful high priest.** This is the first appearance of the central theme of Heb, Jesus the great high priest expiating **the sins of the people** (17), as one who experienced the same tests as they (18).

**3, 1–6:** The author now takes up the two qualities of Jesus mentioned in 2, 17, but in inverse order: faithfulness (3, 1—4, 13) and mercy (4, 14—5, 10). Christians are called **holy "brothers"** because of their common relation to him (2, 11), the **apostle,** a designation for Jesus used only here in the New Testament (cf Jn 13, 16; 17, 3), meaning one sent as God's final word to us (1, 2). He is compared with Moses probably because he is seen as mediator of the new covenant (9, 15) just as Moses was of the old (9, 19–22, including his sacrifice). But when the author of Heb speaks of Jesus' sacrifice, he does not consider Moses as the Old Testament antitype, but rather the high priest on the Day of Atonement (9, 6–15). Moses' faithfulness **"in [all] his house"** refers back to Nm 12, 7, on which this section is a midrashic commentary. In vv 3–6, the author does not indicate that he thinks of either Moses or Christ as the founder of the household. **His house** (2.5.6) means God's house, not that of Moses or

n Ps 8, 5–7. o Mt 28, 18; 1 Cor 15, 25–28; Eph 1, 20–23; Phil 3, 21; 1 Pt 3, 22. p Phil 2, 6–11. q 12, 2; Is 53, 4 / Rom 11, 36; 1 Cor 8, 6. r Ps 22, 23. s Is 8, 17.18. t Is 25, 8; Hos 13, 14; Jn 12, 31; Rom 6, 9; 1 Cor 15, 54–55;2 Tm 1, 10; Rv 12, 10. u 4, 15; 5, 1–3.

on Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our
confession, 2 [v]who was faithful to the one who
appointed him, just as Moses was "faithful in [all]
his house." 3 [w]But he is worthy of more "glory"
than Moses, as the founder of a house has more
"honor" than the house itself. 4Every house is
founded by someone, but the founder of all is
God. 5Moses was "faithful in all his house" as a
"servant" to testify to what would be spoken,
6 [x]*but Christ was faithful as a son placed over
his house. We are his house, if [only] we hold fast
to our confidence and pride in our hope.

**Israel's Infidelity a Warning** 7 [y]*Therefore, as
the holy Spirit says:

"Oh, that today you would hear his voice,
8 'Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion
in the day of testing in the desert,
9 [z]where your ancestors tested and tried me
and saw my works 10for forty years.
Because of this I was provoked with that
generation
and I said, "They have always been of
erring heart,
and they do not know my ways."
11 As I swore in my wrath,
"They shall not enter into my rest." ' "

12Take care, brothers, that none of you may have
an evil and unfaithful heart, so as to forsake the
living God. 13Encourage yourselves daily while it
is still "today," so that none of you may grow
hardened by the deceit of sin. 14 [a]We have
become partners of Christ if only we hold the
beginning of the reality firm until the end, 15 [b]for
it is said:

"Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
'Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion.' "

16 [c]Who were those who rebelled when they
heard? Was it not all those who came out of
Egypt under Moses? 17 [d]With whom was he
"provoked for forty years"? Was it not those who
had sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert?
18 [e]And to whom did he "swear that they should
not enter into his rest," if not to those who were
disobedient? 19And we see that they could not
enter for lack of faith.

## CHAPTER 4

**The Sabbath Rest** 1Therefore, let us be on our
guard while the promise of entering into his rest
remains, that none of you seem to have failed.
2For in fact we have received the good news just
as they did. But the word that they heard did not
profit them, for they were not united in faith
with those who listened. 3 [f]For we who believed
enter into [that] rest, just as he has said:

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"As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter into my rest,' "

and yet his works were accomplished at the
foundation of the world. 4 [g]For he has spoken

Christ; in the case of Christ, compare v 6 with 10, 21. The **house** of v 6 is the Christian community; the author suggests its continuity with Israel by speaking not of two houses but of only one. Verse 6 brings out the reason why Jesus is superior to Moses: the latter was the faithful **servant** laboring in the house founded by God, but Jesus is God's **son,** placed **over** the house.

3, 6: The majority of manuscripts add "firm to the end," but these words are not found in the three earliest and best witnesses and are probably an interpolation derived from v 14.

3, 7—4, 13: The author appeals for steadfastness of faith in Jesus, basing his warning on the experience of Israel during the Exodus. In the Old Testament the Exodus had been invoked as a symbol of the return of Israel from the Babylonian exile (Is 42, 9; 43, 16–21; 51, 9–11). In the New Testament the redemption was similarly understood as a new exodus, both in the experience of Jesus himself (Lk 9, 31) and in that of his followers (1 Cor 10, 1–4). The author cites Ps 95, 7–11, a salutary example of hardness of heart, as a warning against the danger of growing weary and giving up the journey. To call God **living** (12) means that he reveals himself in his works (cf Jos 3, 10; Jer 10, 10). The **rest** (11) into which Israel was to enter was only a foreshadowing of that rest to which Christians are called. They are to remember the example of Israel's revolt in the desert that cost a whole generation the loss of the promised land (15–19; cf Nm 14, 20–29). In 4, 1–11, the symbol of **rest** is seen in deeper dimension: because the promise to the ancient Hebrews foreshadowed that given to Christians, it is **good news;** and because the promised land was the place of rest that God provided for his people, it was a share in his own rest, which he enjoyed after he had finished his creative work (3–4; cf Gn 2, 2). The author attempts to read this meaning of God's rest into Ps 95, 7–11 (6–9). The Greek form of the name of Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land, is Jesus (8). The author plays upon the name but stresses the superiority of Jesus, who leads his followers into heavenly rest. Verses 12 and 13 are meant as a continuation of the warning, for the word of God brings judgment as well as salvation. Some would capitalize **the word of God** and see it as a personal title of Jesus, comparable to that of Jn 1, 1–18.

v Nm 12, 7. w 2 Cor 3, 7–8. x 10, 21; Eph 2, 19; 1 Tm 3, 15; 1 Pt 4, 17. y Ps 95, 7–11. z Ex 17, 7; Nm 20, 2–5. a Rom 8, 17. b Ps 95, 7–8. c Nm 14, 1–38; Dt 1, 19–40. d Nm 14, 29. e Nm 14, 22–23; Dt 1, 35. f 3, 11; Ps 95, 11. g Gn 2, 2.

somewhere about the seventh day in this manner, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"; 5 [h]and again, in the previously mentioned place, "They shall not enter into my rest." 6 Therefore, since it remains that some will enter into it, and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience, 7 [i]he once more set a day, "today," when long afterwards he spoke through David, as already quoted:

"Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
'Harden not your hearts.' "

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8 [j]Now if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterwards of another day. 9 Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. 10 And whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from his. 11 Therefore, let us strive to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience.

12 [k]Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. 13 [l]No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

## Jesus, Compassionate High Priest

14 [m]*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 [n]For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. 16 [o]So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

## CHAPTER 5

1 *Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 *He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness 3 [p]and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. 4 [q]No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 [r]In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him:

"You are my son;
this day I have begotten you";

6 [s]*just as he says in another place:

"You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek."

**4, 14–16:** These verses, which return to the theme first sounded in 2, 16—3, 1, serve as an introduction to the section that follows. The author here alone calls Jesus **a great high priest** (14), a designation used by Philo for the Logos; perhaps he does so in order to emphasize Jesus' superiority over the Jewish high priest. He has **been tested in every way, yet without sin** (15); this indicates an acquaintance with the tradition of Jesus' temptations, not only at the beginning (as in Mk 1, 13) but throughout his public life (cf Lk 22, 28). Although the reign of the exalted Jesus is a theme that occurs elsewhere in Heb, and Jesus' throne is mentioned in 1, 8, **the throne of grace** (16) refers to the throne of God. The similarity of v 16 to 10, 19–22 indicates that the author is thinking of our confident access to God, made possible by the priestly work of Jesus.

**5, 1–10:** The true humanity of Jesus (see the note on 2, 5–18) makes him a more rather than a less effective high priest to the Christian community. In Old Testament tradition, the high priest was identified with the people, guilty of personal sin just as they were (1–3). Even so, the office was of divine appointment (4), as was also the case with the sinless Christ (5). For v 6, see the note on Ps 110, 4. Although Jesus was Son of God, he was destined as a human being to learn obedience by accepting the suffering he had to endure (8). Because of his perfection through this experience of human suffering, he is the cause of salvation for all (9), a **high priest according to the order of Melchizedek** (10; cf 6 and 7, 3).

**5, 1: To offer gifts and sacrifices for sins:** the author is thinking principally of the Day of Atonement rite, as is clear from 9, 7. This ritual was celebrated to atone for "all the sins of the Israelites" (Lv 16, 34).

**5, 2: Deal patiently:** the Greek word **metriopathein** occurs only here in the Bible; this term was used by the Stoics to designate the golden mean between excess and defect of passion. Here it means rather the ability to sympathize.

**5, 6–8:** The author of Heb is the only New Testament writer to cite v 4 of Ps 110, here and in 7, 17.21, to show that Jesus has been called by God to his role as priest. Verses 7–8 deal with his ability to sympathize with sinners, because of his own experience of the trials and weakness of human nature, especially fear of death. In his present exalted state, weakness is foreign to him, but he understands what we suffer because of his previous earthly experience.

h Ps 95, 11. i 3, 7–8.15; Ps 95, 7–8. j Dt 31, 7; Jos 22, 4. k Wis 18, 15–16; Is 49, 2; Eph 6, 17; Rv 1, 16; 2, 12. l Jb 34, 21–22; Pss 90, 8; 139, 2–4. m 9, 11.24. n 2, 17–18; 5, 2. o 8, 1; 10, 19.22.35; 12, 2; Eph 3, 12. p Lv 9, 7; 16, 15–17.30.34. q Ex 28, 1. r Ps 2, 7. s Ps 110, 4.

7 [t]*In the days when he was in the flesh, he
offered prayers and supplications with loud cries
and tears to the one who was able to save him
from death, and he was heard because of his
reverence. 8 [u]*Son though he was, he learned
obedience from what he suffered; 9 [v]and when
he was made perfect, he became the source of
eternal salvation for all who obey him,
10 [w]declared by God high priest according to the
order of Melchizedek.

## IV: Jesus' Eternal Priesthood and Eternal Sacrifice

**Exhortation to Spiritual Renewal** 11 *About
this we have much to say, and it is difficult to
explain, for you have become sluggish in hear-
ing. 12 [x]Although you should be teachers by this
time, you need to have someone teach you again
the basic elements of the utterances of God. You
need milk, [and] not solid food. 13 Everyone who
lives on milk lacks experience of the word of
righteousness, for he is a child. 14 But solid food
is for the mature, for those whose faculties are
trained by practice to discern good and evil.

### CHAPTER 6

1 [y]Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teach-
ing about Christ and advance to maturity, with-
out laying the foundation all over again: repen-
tance from dead works and faith in God,
2 [z]*instruction about baptisms and laying on of
hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal
judgment. 3 And we shall do this, if only God
permits. 4 [a]*For it is impossible in the case of
those who have once been enlightened and
tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the holy
Spirit 5 *and tasted the good word of God and
the powers of the age to come, 6 [b]*and then
have fallen away, to bring them to repentance
again, since they are recrucifying the Son of God
for themselves and holding him up to contempt.
7 [c]Ground that has absorbed the rain falling upon
it repeatedly and brings forth crops useful to
those for whom it is cultivated receives a bless-
ing from God. 8 [d]But if it produces thorns and
thistles, it is rejected; it will soon be cursed and
finally burned.

9 But we are sure in your regard, beloved, of
better things related to salvation, even though
we speak in this way. 10 For God is not unjust
so as to overlook your work and the love you
have demonstrated for his name by having
served and continuing to serve the holy ones.
11 [e]We earnestly desire each of you to demon-
strate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of

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**5, 7: He offered prayers . . . to the one who was able to save him from death:** at Gethsemane (cf Mk 14, 35), though some see a broader reference (see the note on Jn 12, 27).

**5, 8: Son though he was:** two different though not incompatible views of Jesus' sonship coexist in Heb, one associating it with his exaltation, the other with his preexistence. The former view is the older one (cf Rom 1, 4).

**5, 11—6, 20:** The central section of Heb (5, 11—10, 39) opens with a reprimand and an appeal. Those to whom the author directs his teaching about Jesus' priesthood, which is **difficult to explain,** have become **sluggish in hearing** and forgetful of even **the basic elements** (5, 12). But rather than treating of basic teachings, the author apparently believes that the challenge of more advanced ones may shake them out of their inertia (**therefore,** 6, 1). The six examples of **basic teaching** in 6, 1–3 are probably derived from a traditional catechetical list. No effort is made to address apostates, for their very hostility to the Christian message cuts them off completely from Christ (6, 4–8). This harsh statement seems to rule out repentance after apostasy, but perhaps the author deliberately uses hyperbole in order to stress the seriousness of abandoning Christ. With 6, 9 a milder tone is introduced, and the criticism of the community (6, 1–3.9) is now balanced by an expression of confidence that its members are living truly Christian lives, and that God will justly reward their efforts (10). The author is concerned especially about their persevering (11–12), citing in this regard the achievement of Abraham, who relied on God's promise and on God's oath (13–18; cf Gn 22, 16), and proposes to them as a firm anchor of Christian hope the high priesthood of Christ, who is now living with God (19–20).

**6, 2: Instruction about baptisms:** not simply about Christian baptism but about the difference between it and similar Jewish rites, such as proselyte baptism, John's baptism, and the washings of the Qumran sectaries. **Laying on of hands:** in Acts 8, 17; 19, 6 this rite effects the infusion of the holy Spirit; in Acts 6, 6; 13, 3; 1 Tm 4, 14; 5, 22; 2 Tm 1, 6 it is a means of conferring some ministry or mission in the early Christian community.

**6, 4: Enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift:** this may refer to baptism and the Eucharist, respectively, but more probably means the neophytes' enlightenment by faith and their experience of salvation.

**6, 5: Tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come:** the proclamation of the **word of God** was accompanied by signs of the Spirit's power (1 Thes 1, 5; 1 Cor 2, 4).

**6, 6: They are recrucifying the Son of God for themselves:** a colorful description of the malice of apostasy, which is portrayed as again crucifying and deriding the Son of God.

t Mt 26, 38–44; Mk 14, 34–40; Lk 22, 41–46; Jn 12, 27. u Rom 5, 19; Phil 2, 8. v 7, 24–25.28. w 6, 20; Ps 110, 4. x 1 Cor 3, 1–3. y 9, 14. z 9, 10; Mk 7, 4 / Acts 6, 6; 8, 17; 13, 3; 19, 6; 1 Tm 4, 14; 5, 22; 2 Tm 1, 6. a 10, 26.32; Ps 34, 6; 2 Cor 4, 6. b 2 Pt 2, 21. c Gn 1, 11–12; Dt 11, 11. d Gn 3, 17–18; Mt 7, 16; 13, 7; Mk 4, 7; Lk 8, 7. e 3,14.

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hope until the end, [12] [f]*so that you may not
become sluggish, but imitators of those who,
through faith and patience, are inheriting the
promises.

**God's Promise Immutable** [13] [g]*When God
made the promise to Abraham, since he had no
one greater by whom to swear, "he swore by
himself," [14] [h]and said, "I will indeed bless you
and multiply" you. [15] [i]*And so, after patient
waiting, he obtained the promise. [16]Human
beings swear by someone greater than them-
selves; for them an oath serves as a guarantee
and puts an end to all argument. [17] [j]So when
God wanted to give the heirs of his promise an
even clearer demonstration of the immutability
of his purpose, he intervened with an oath,
[18] [k]*so that by two immutable things, in which
it was impossible for God to lie, we who have
taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to
hold fast to the hope that lies before us.
[19] [l]*This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure
and firm, which reaches into the interior be-
hind the veil, [20] [m]where Jesus has entered on
our behalf as forerunner, becoming high priest
forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

## CHAPTER 7

**Melchizedek, a Type of Christ** [1] [n]*This "Mel-
chizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most
High," "met Abraham as he returned from his
defeat of the kings" and "blessed him." [2]*And
Abraham apportioned to him "a tenth of every-
thing." His name first means righteous king, and
he was also "king of Salem," that is, king of
peace. [3] [o]*Without father, mother, or ancestry,
without beginning of days or end of life, thus
made to resemble the Son of God, he remains a
priest forever.

[4] [p]*See how great he is to whom the patriarch
"Abraham [indeed] gave a tenth" of his spoils.
[5] [q]The descendants of Levi who receive the
office of priesthood have a commandment ac-
cording to the law to exact tithes from the
people, that is, from their brothers, although
they also have come from the loins of Abraham.
[6]But he who was not of their ancestry received
tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had
received the promises. [7]*Unquestionably, a
lesser person is blessed by a greater. [8]In the one
case, mortal men receive tithes; in the other, a
man of whom it is testified that he lives on.
[9]*One might even say that Levi himself, who

**6, 12: Imitators of those . . . inheriting the promises:** the author urges the addressees to imitate the faith of the holy people of the Old Testament, who now possess the promised goods of which they lived in hope. This theme will be treated fully in ch 11.

**6, 13: He swore by himself:** God's promise to Abraham, which he confirmed by an oath ("I swear by myself," Gen 22, 16) was the basis for the hope of all Abraham's descendants.

**6, 15: He obtained the promise:** this probably refers not to Abraham's temporary possession of the land but to the eschatological blessings that Abraham and the other patriarchs have now come to possess.

**6, 18: Two immutable things:** the promise and the oath, both made by God.

**6, 19: Anchor . . . into the interior behind the veil:** a mixed metaphor. The Holy of Holies, beyond the veil that separates it from the Holy Place (Ex 26, 31–33), is seen as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly abode of God. This theme will be developed in ch 9.

**7, 1–3:** Recalling the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham described in Gn 14, 17–20, the author enhances the significance of this priest by providing the popular etymological meaning of his name and that of the city over which he ruled (2). Since Genesis gives no information on the parentage or the death of Melchizedek, he is seen here as a type of Christ, representing a priesthood that is unique and eternal (3).

**7, 1:** The author here assumes that Melchizedek was a priest of the God of Israel (cf Gn 14, 22 and the note there).

**7, 2:** In Gn 14, the Hebrew text does not state explicitly who gave tithes to whom. The author of Heb supplies Abraham as the subject, according to a contemporary interpretation of the passage. This supports the argument of the midrash and makes it possible to see in Melchizedek a type of Jesus. The messianic blessings of righteousness and peace are foreshadowed in the names "Melchizedek" and "Salem."

**7, 3: Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life:** this is perhaps a quotation from a hymn about Melchizedek. The rabbis maintained that anything not mentioned in the Torah does not exist. Consequently, since the Old Testament nowhere mentions Melchizedek's ancestry, birth, or death, the conclusion can be drawn that he **remains . . . forever.**

**7, 4–10:** The tithe that Abraham gave to Melchizedek (4), a practice later followed by the levitical priesthood (5), was a gift (6) acknowledging a certain superiority in Melchizedek, the foreign priest (7). This is further indicated by the fact that the institution of the levitical priesthood was sustained by hereditary succession in the tribe of Levi, whereas the absence of any mention of Melchizedek's death in Gn implies that his personal priesthood is permanent (8). The levitical priesthood itself, through Abraham, its ancestor, paid tithes to Melchizedek, thus acknowledging the superiority of his priesthood over its own (9–10).

**7, 7: A lesser person is blessed by a greater:** though this sounds like a principle, there are some examples in the Old Testament that do not support it (cf 2 Sm 14, 22; Jb 31, 20). The author may intend it as a statement of a liturgical rule.

**7, 9: Levi:** for the author this name designates not only the son

f 5, 11; Gal 3, 14; Eph 1, 13–14. g Gn 22, 16. h Gn 22, 17. i 12; Rom 4, 20. j 12. k Nm 23, 19; 1 Sm 15, 29; Jn 8, 17; 2 Tm 2, 13. l 10, 20; Ex 26, 31–33; Lv 16, 2. m 5, 10; Ps 110, 4. n Gn 14, 17–20. o 4, 14; 6, 6; 10, 29. p Gn 14, 20. q Nm 18, 21 / Gn 35, 11.

receives tithes, was tithed through Abraham,
10for he was still in his father's loins when
Melchizedek met him.

11 r*If, then, perfection came through the
levitical priesthood, on the basis of which the
people received the law, what need would there
still have been for another priest to arise accor-
ding to the order of Melchizedek, and not reck-
oned according to the order of Aaron? 12When
there is a change of priesthood, there is necessar-
ily a change of law as well. 13*Now he of whom
these things are said belonged to a different
tribe, of which no member ever officiated at the
altar. 14 s*It is clear that our Lord arose from
Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said
nothing about priests. 15*It is even more obvious
if another priest is raised up after the likeness of
Melchizedek, 16*who has become so, not by a
law expressed in a commandment concerning
physical descent but by the power of a life that
cannot be destroyed. 17 t*For it is testified:

"You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek."

18 u*On the one hand, a former commandment is
annulled because of its weakness and useless-
ness, 19*for the law brought nothing to perfec-
tion; on the other hand, a better hope is
introduced, through which we draw near to
God. 20*And to the degree that this happened
not without the taking of an oath—for others
became priests without an oath, 21 v*but he with
an oath, through the one who said to him:

"The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent:
'You are a priest forever' "—

22 w*to that same degree has Jesus [also] become
the guarantee of an [even] better covenant.
23Those priests were many because they were
prevented by death from remaining in office,
24 x*but he, because he remains forever, has a
priesthood that does not pass away.
25 y*Therefore, he is always able to save those
who approach God through him, since he lives
forever to make intercession for them.

26 z*It was fitting that we should have such a
high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated

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of Jacob mentioned in Genesis but the priestly tribe that was thought to be descended from him.

**7, 11–14:** The levitical priesthood was not typified by the priesthood of Melchizedek, for Ps 110, 4 speaks of a priesthood of a new order, the order of Melchizedek, to arise in messianic times (11). Since the levitical priesthood served the Mosaic law, a new priesthood (12) would not come into being without a change in the law itself. Thus Jesus was not associated with the Old Testament priesthood, for he was a descendant of the tribe of Judah, which had never exercised the priesthood (13–14).

**7, 13: He of whom these things are said:** Jesus, the priest "according to the order of Melchizedek." According to the author's interpretation, Ps 110 spoke prophetically of Jesus.

**7, 14: Judah:** the author accepts the early Christian tradition that Jesus was descended from the family of David (cf Mt 1, 1–2.16.20; Lk 1, 27; 2, 4; Rom 1, 3). The Qumran community expected two Messiahs, one descended from Aaron and one from David; Heb shows no awareness of this view or at least does not accept it. Our author's view is not attested in contemporaneous Judaism.

**7, 15–19:** Jesus does not exercise a priesthood through family lineage but through his immortal existence (15–16), fulfilling Ps 110, 4 (17; cf 3). Thus he abolishes forever both the levitical priesthood and the law it serves, because neither could effectively sanctify people (18) by leading them into direct communication with God (19).

**7, 16: A life that cannot be destroyed:** the life to which Jesus has attained by virtue of his resurrection; it is his exaltation rather than his divine nature that makes him priest. The Old Testament speaks of the Aaronic priesthood as eternal (see Ex 40, 15); our author does not explicitly consider this possible objection to his argument but implicitly refutes it in vv 23–24.

**7, 19: A better hope:** this hope depends upon the sacrifice of the Son of God; through it we "approach the throne of grace" (4, 16); cf 6, 19.20.

**7, 20–25:** As was the case with the promise to Abraham (6, 13), though not with the levitical priesthood, the eternal priesthood of the order of Melchizedek was confirmed by God's oath (20–21); cf Ps 110, 4. Thus Jesus becomes the guarantee of a permanent covenant (22) that does not require a succession of priests as did the levitical priesthood (23) because his high priesthood is eternal and unchangeable (24). Consequently, Jesus is able to save all who draw near to God through him since he is their ever-living intercessor (25).

**7, 20: An oath:** God's oath in Ps 110, 4.

**7, 22: An [even] better covenant:** better than the Mosaic covenant because it will be eternal, like the priesthood of Jesus upon which it is based. Verse 12 argued that a change of priesthood involves a change of law; since "law" and "covenant" are used correlatively, a new covenant is likewise instituted.

**7, 25: To make intercession:** the intercession of the exalted Jesus, not the sequel to his completed sacrifice but its eternal presence in heaven; cf Rom 8, 34.

**7, 26–28:** Jesus is precisely the high priest whom the human race requires, holy and sinless, installed far above humanity (26); one having no need to offer sacrifice daily for sins but making a single offering of himself (27) once for all. The law could only appoint high priests with human limitations, but the fulfillment of God's oath regarding the priesthood of Melchizedek (Ps 110, 4) makes the Son of God the perfect priest forever (28).

**7, 26:** This verse with its list of attributes is reminiscent of v 3 and is perhaps a hymnic counterpart to it, contrasting the exalted Jesus with Melchizedek.

r 5, 6; Ps 110, 4. s Gn 49, 10; Is 11, 1; Mt 1, 1–2.16.20; 2, 6; Lk 1, 27; 2, 4; Rom 1, 3; Rv 5, 5. t 5, 6; Ps 110, 4. u 10, 1. v Ps 110, 4. w 8, 6–10; 9, 15–20; 10, 29; 12, 24; 13, 20. x 5, 6; 13, 8. y Rom 8, 34; 1 Jn 2, 1; Rv 1, 18. z 4, 14.15.

from sinners, higher than the heavens. 27 [a]*He
has no need, as did the high priests, to offer
sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and
then for those of the people; he did that once for
all when he offered himself. 28 [b]For the law
appoints men subject to weakness to be high
priests, but the word of the oath, which was
taken after the law, appoints a son, who has
been made perfect forever.

## CHAPTER 8

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**Heavenly Priesthood of Jesus** 1 [c]*The main
point of what has been said is this: we have such
a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right
hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,
2 [d]*a minister of the sanctuary and of the true
tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.
3 [e]Now every high priest is appointed to offer
gifts and sacrifices; thus the necessity for this
one also to have something to offer. 4 [f]If then he
were on earth, he would not be a priest, since
there are those who offer gifts according to the
law. 5 [g]They worship in a copy and shadow of
the heavenly sanctuary, as Moses was warned
when he was about to erect the tabernacle. For
he says, "See that you make everything accord-
ing to the pattern shown you on the mountain."
6 [h]Now he has obtained so much more excellent
a ministry as he is mediator of a better covenant,
enacted on better promises.

**Old and New Covenants** 7*For if that first
covenant had been faultless, no place would
have been sought for a second one. 8 [i]*But he
finds fault with them and says:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the
Lord,
when I will conclude a new covenant with
the house of Israel and the house of
Judah.
9 It will not be like the covenant I made with
their fathers
the day I took them by the hand to lead
them forth from the land of Egypt;
for they did not stand by my covenant
and I ignored them, says the Lord.
10 [j]But this is the covenant I will establish with
the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds
and I will write them upon their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
11 And they shall not teach, each one his fellow
citizen
and kinsman, saying, 'Know the
Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from least to greatest.
12 For I will forgive their evildoing
and remember their sins no more."

**7, 27**: Such daily sacrifice is nowhere mentioned in the Mosaic law; only on the Day of Atonement is it prescribed that the high priest must **offer sacrifice . . . for his own sins and then for those of the people** (Lv 16, 11–19). **Once for all:** this translates the Greek words **ephapax/hapax** that occur eleven times in Heb.

**8, 1–6**: The Christian community has in Jesus the kind of high priest described in 7, 26–28. In virtue of his ascension Jesus has taken his place at God's right hand in accordance with Ps 110, 1 (1), where he presides over the heavenly sanctuary established by God himself (2). Like every high priest, he has his offering to make (3; cf 9, 12.14), but it differs from that of the levitical priesthood in which he had no share (4) and which was in any case but a shadowy reflection of the true offering in the heavenly sanctuary (5). But Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is that of mediator of a superior covenant that accomplishes what it signifies (6).

**8, 2: The sanctuary:** the Greek term could also mean "holy things" but bears the meaning "sanctuary" elsewhere in Heb (9, 8.12.24.25; 10, 19; 13, 11). **The true tabernacle:** the heavenly tabernacle **that the Lord . . . set up** is contrasted with the earthly tabernacle that Moses set up in the desert. **True** means "real" in contradistinction to a mere "copy and shadow" (5); compare the Johannine usage (e.g., Jn 1, 9; 6, 32; 15, 1). The idea that the earthly sanctuary is a reflection of a heavenly model may be based upon Ex 25, 9, but probably also derives from the Platonic concept of a real world of which our observable world is merely a shadow.

**8, 7–13**: Since the first covenant was deficient in accomplishing what it signified, it had to be replaced (7), as Jeremiah (31, 31–34) had prophesied (8–12). Even in the time of Jeremiah, the first covenant was antiquated (13). In 7, 22–24, the superiority of the new covenant was seen in the permanence of its priesthood; here the superiority is based on better promises, made explicit in the citation of Jer 31 (LXX: 38), 31–34, namely, in the immediacy of the people's knowledge of God (11) and in the forgiveness of sin (12).

**8, 8–12**: In citing Jer the author follows the Septuagint; some apparent departures from it may be the result of a different Septuagintal text rather than changes deliberately introduced.

a 5, 3; 9, 12.25–28; 10, 11–14; Ex 29, 38–39; Lv 16, 6.11.15–17; Nm 28, 3–4; Is 53, 10; Rom 6, 10. b 5, 1.2.9. c 1, 3; 4, 14; 7, 26–28. d 9, 11; Ex 33, 7; Nm 24, 6 LXX. e 5, 1. f 7, 13. g 9, 23; Ex 25, 40; Acts 7, 44; Col 2, 17. h 7, 22; 9, 15. i Jer 31, 31–34. j 10, 16–17.

13 k*When he speaks of a "new" covenant, he
declares the first one obsolete. And what has
become obsolete and has grown old is close to
disappearing.

## CHAPTER 9

**The Worship of the First Covenant** 1*Now
[even] the first covenant had regulations for
worship and an earthly sanctuary. 2 l*For a
tabernacle was constructed, the outer one, in
which were the lampstand, the table, and the
bread of offering; this is called the Holy Place.
3 m*Behind the second veil was the tabernacle
called the Holy of Holies, 4 n*in which were the
gold altar of incense and the ark of the covenant
entirely covered with gold. In it were the gold jar
containing the manna, the staff of Aaron that
had sprouted, and the tablets of the covenant.
5 o*Above it were the cherubim of glory over-
shadowing the place of expiation. Now is not the
time to speak of these in detail.

6 p*With these arrangements for worship, the
priests, in performing their service, go into the
outer tabernacle repeatedly, 7 q*but the high
priest alone goes into the inner one once a year,
not without blood that he offers for himself and
for the sins of the people. 8 In this way the holy
Spirit shows that the way into the sanctuary had
not yet been revealed while the outer tabernacle
still had its place. 9*This is a symbol of the
present time, in which gifts and sacrifices are
offered that cannot perfect the worshiper in
conscience 10 rbut only in matters of food and
drink and various ritual washings: regulations
concerning the flesh, imposed until the time of
the new order.

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**Sacrifice of Jesus** 11 s*But when Christ came
as high priest of the good things that have come
to be, passing through the greater and more
perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is,
not belonging to this creation, 12 the entered
once for all into the sanctuary, not with the
blood of goats and calves but with his own
blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.
13 u*For if the blood of goats and bulls and the
sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those
who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed,
14 v*how much more will the blood of Christ,

**8, 13: Close to disappearing:** from the prophet's perspective, not that of the author of Heb.

**9, 1–10:** The regulations for worship under the old covenant permitted all the priests to enter the Holy Place (2, 6), but only the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year (3–5.7). The description of the sanctuary and its furnishings is taken essentially from Ex 25–26. This exclusion of the people from the Holy of Holies signified that they were not allowed to stand in God's presence (8) because their offerings and sacrifices, which were merely symbols of their need of spiritual renewal (10), could not obtain forgiveness of sins (9).

**9, 2: The outer one:** the author speaks of **the outer tabernacle** (6) and **the inner one** (7) rather than of one Mosaic tabernacle divided into two parts or sections.

**9, 3: The second veil:** what is meant is the veil that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. It is here called **the second,** because there was another veil at the entrance to the Holy Place, or "outer tabernacle" (Ex 26, 36).

**9, 4: The gold altar of incense:** Ex 30, 6 locates this altar in the Holy Place, i.e., the first tabernacle, rather than in the Holy of Holies. Neither is there any Old Testament support for the assertion that the jar of manna and the staff of Aaron were in the ark of the covenant. For the tablets of the covenant, see Ex 25, 16.

**9, 5: The place of expiation:** the gold "mercy seat" (Greek **hilastērion,** as in Rom 3, 25), where the blood of the sacrificial animals was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Lv 16, 14–15). This rite achieved "expiation" or atonement for the sins of the preceding year.

**9, 6: In performing their service:** the priestly services that had to be performed regularly in the Holy Place or **outer tabernacle** included burning incense on the incense altar twice each day (Ex 30, 7), replacing the loaves on the table of the bread of offering once each week (Lv 24, 8), and constantly caring for the lamps on the lampstand (Ex 27, 21).

**9, 7: Not without blood:** blood was essential to Old Testament sacrifice because it was believed that life was located in the blood. Hence blood was especially sacred, and its outpouring functioned as a meaningful symbol of cleansing from sin and reconciliation with God. Unlike Heb, the Old Testament never says that the blood is "offered." The author is perhaps retrojecting into his description of Mosaic ritual a concept that belongs to the New Testament antitype, as Paul does when he speaks of the Israelites' passage through the sea as a "baptism" (1 Cor 10, 2).

**9, 9: The present time:** this expression is equivalent to the "present age," used in contradistinction to the "age to come."

**9, 11–14:** Christ, the high priest of the spiritual blessings foreshadowed in the Old Testament sanctuary, has actually entered the true sanctuary of heaven that is not of human making (11). His place there is permanent, and his offering is his own blood that won eternal redemption (12). If the sacrifice of animals could bestow legal purification (13), how much more effective is the blood of the sinless, divine Christ who spontaneously offered himself to purge the human race of sin and render it fit for the service of God (14).

**9, 11: The good things that have come to be:** the majority of later manuscripts here read "the good things to come"; cf 10, 1.

**9, 13: A heifer's ashes:** ashes from a red heifer that had been burned were mixed with water and used for the cleansing of those who had become ritually defiled by touching a corpse; see Nm 19, 9.14–21.

**9, 14: Through the eternal spirit:** this expression does not

k Rom 10, 4. l Ex 25, 23–30. m Ex 26, 31–34. n Ex 16, 32–34; 25, 10.16.21; 30, 1–10; Lv 16, 12–13; Nm 17, 2–7.16–26. o Ex 25, 16–22; 26, 34; Lv 16, 14–15. p Ex 27, 21; 30, 7; Lv 24, 8. q Ex 30, 10; Lv 16, 1–14. r 13, 9; Lv 11; 14, 8; Nm 19, 11–21; Col 2, 16. s 4, 14; 10, 1.20. t 7, 27; Mt 26, 28. u 10, 4; Lv 16, 6–16; Nm, 19, 9.14–21. v 10, 10; Rom 5, 9; 1 Tm 3, 9; Ti 2, 14; 1 Pt 1, 18–19; 1 Jn 1, 7; Rv 1, 5.

who through the eternal spirit offered himself
unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences
from dead works to worship the living God.
15 [w]*For this reason he is mediator of a new
covenant: since a death has taken place for
deliverance from transgressions under the first
covenant, those who are called may receive the
promised eternal inheritance. 16*Now where
there is a will, the death of the testator must be
established. 17For a will takes effect only at
death; it has no force while the testator is alive.
18Thus not even the first covenant was inaugu-
rated without blood. 19 [x]*When every command-
ment had been proclaimed by Moses to all the
people according to the law, he took the blood of
calves [and goats], together with water and
crimson wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both
the book itself and all the people, 20 [y]saying,
"This is 'the blood of the covenant which God
has enjoined upon you.' " 21 [z]*In the same way,
he sprinkled also the tabernacle and all the
vessels of worship with blood. 22 [a]*According to
the law almost everything is purified by blood,
and without the shedding of blood there is no
forgiveness.
23 [b]*Therefore, it was necessary for the copies
of the heavenly things to be purified by these
rites, but the heavenly things themselves by
better sacrifices than these. 24 [c]For Christ did not
enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of
the true one, but heaven itself, that he might
now appear before God on our behalf. 25Not that
he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high
priest enters each year into the sanctuary with
blood that is not his own; 26 [d]*if that were so, he
would have had to suffer repeatedly from the
foundation of the world. But now once for all he
has appeared at the end of the ages to take away
sin by his sacrifice. 27 [e]Just as it is appointed that
human beings die once, and after this the
judgment, 28 [f]*so also Christ, offered once to
take away the sins of many, will appear a second
time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation
to those who eagerly await him.

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refer either to the holy Spirit or to the divine nature of Jesus but to the life of the risen Christ, "a life that cannot be destroyed" (7, 16).

**9, 15–22:** Jesus' role as **mediator of the new covenant** is based upon his sacrificial **death** (cf 8, 6). His death has effected **deliverance from transgressions,** i.e., deliverance from sins committed under the old covenant, which the Mosaic sacrifices were incapable of effacing. Until this happened, the **eternal inheritance** promised by God could not be obtained (15). This effect of his work follows the human pattern by which a last will and testament becomes effective only with the death of the testator (16–17). The Mosaic covenant was also associated with death, for Moses made use of blood to seal the pact between God and the people (18–21). In Old Testament tradition, guilt could normally not be remitted without the use of blood (22; cf Lv 17, 11).

**9, 16–17: A will . . . death of the testator:** the same Greek word **diathēkē,** meaning "covenant" in vv 15 and 18, is used here with the meaning **will.** The new covenant, unlike the old, is at the same time a will that requires **the death of the testator.** Jesus as eternal Son is the one who established the new covenant together with his Father, author of both covenants; at the same time he is the testator whose death puts his **will** into effect.

**9, 19–20:** A number of details here are different from the description of this covenant rite in Ex 24, 5–8. Exodus mentions only calves ("young bulls," NAB), not goats (but this addition in Heb is of doubtful authenticity), says nothing of the use of **water and crimson wool and hyssop** (these features probably came from a different rite; cf Lv 14, 3–7; Nm 19, 6–18), and describes Moses as splashing blood on the altar, whereas Heb says he sprinkled it on the book (but both book and altar are meant to symbolize the agreement of God). The words of Moses are also slightly different from those in Exodus and are closer to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper in Mk 14, 24 // Mt 26, 28.

**9, 21:** According to Ex, the tabernacle did not yet exist at the time of the covenant rite. Moreover, nothing is said of sprinkling it with blood at its subsequent dedication (Ex 40, 9–11).

**9, 22: Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness:** in fact, ancient Israel did envisage other means of obtaining forgiveness; the Old Testament mentions contrition of heart (Ps 51, 19), fasting (Jl 2, 12), and almsgiving (Sir 3, 29). The author is limiting his horizon to the sacrificial cult, which did always involve the shedding of blood for its expiatory and unitive value.

**9, 23–28:** Since the blood of animals became a cleansing symbol among Old Testament prefigurements, it was necessary that the realities foreshadowed be brought into being by a shedding of blood that was infinitely more effective by reason of its worth (23). Christ did not simply prefigure the heavenly realities (24) by performing an annual sacrifice with a blood not his own (25); he offered the single sacrifice of himself as the final annulment of sin (26). Just as death is the unrepeatable act that ends a person's life, so Christ's offering of himself for all is the unrepeatable sacrifice that has once for all achieved redemption (27–28).

**9, 26: At the end of the ages:** the use of expressions such as this shows that the author of Heb, despite his interest in the Platonic concept of an eternal world above superior to temporal reality here below, nevertheless still clings to the Jewish Christian eschatology with its sequence of "the present age" and "the age to come."

**9, 28: To take away the sins of many:** the reference is to Is 53, 12. Since the Greek verb **anapherō** can mean both "to take away" and "to bear," the author no doubt intended to play upon both senses: Jesus took away sin by bearing it himself. See the similar wordplay in Jn 1, 29. **Many** is used in the Semitic meaning of "all" in the inclusive sense, as in Mk 14, 24. **To those who eagerly await him:** Jesus will appear **a second time** at the parousia, as the high priest reappeared on the Day of Atonement, emerging from the Holy of Holies, which he had entered **to take away sin.** This dramatic scene is described in Sir 50, 5–11.

w 1 Tm 2, 5. x 12–13. y Ex 24, 3–8; Mt 26, 28; Mk 14, 24. z Ex 40, 9; Lv 8, 15.19. a Lv 17, 11. b Jb 15, 15. c 7, 25; Rom 8, 34; 1 Jn 2, 1–2. d 7, 27; Jn 1, 29; Gal 4, 4. e Gn 3, 19. f 10, 10; Is 53, 12.

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## CHAPTER 10

**One Sacrifice instead of Many** 1 *g**Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year. 2Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of sins? 3 *h*But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, 4 *i*for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins. 5 *j**For this reason, when he came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
6 holocausts and sin offerings you took no
delight in.
7 Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll,
Behold, I come to do your will, O God.' "

8 *k**First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. 9 *l*Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. 10 *m*By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 *n**Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12 *o*But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; 13*now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. 14 *p*For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. 15*The holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying:

16 *q*"This is the covenant I will establish with
them after those days, says the Lord:
'I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them upon their minds,' "

17 *r**he also says:

"Their sins and their evildoing
I will remember no more."

18Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.

**Recalling the Past** 19 *s**Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confi-

**10, 1–10:** Christian faith now realizes that the Old Testament sacrifices did not effect the spiritual benefits to come but only prefigured them (1). For if the sacrifices had actually effected the forgiveness of sin, there would have been no reason for their constant repetition (2). They were rather a continual reminder of the people's sins (3). It is not reasonable to suppose that human sins could be removed by the blood of animal sacrifices (4). Christ, therefore, is here shown to understand his mission in terms of Ps 40, 6–8, cited according to the Septuagint (5–7). Jesus acknowledged that the Old Testament sacrifices did not remit the sins of the people and so, perceiving the will of God, offered his own body for this purpose (8–10).

**10, 1: A shadow of the good things to come:** the term **shadow** was used in 8, 5 to signify the earthly counterpart of the Platonic heavenly reality. But here it means a prefiguration of what is to come in Christ, as it is used in the Pauline literature; cf Col 2, 17.

**10, 5–7:** A passage from Ps 40, 7–9a is placed in the mouth of the Son at his incarnation. As usual, the author follows the Septuagint text. There is a notable difference in v 5 ( = Ps 40, 7b), where the Masoretic text reads "ears you have dug for me" ("ears open to obedience you gave me," NAB), but most Septuagint manuscripts have "a body you prepared for me," a reading obviously more suited to the interpretation of Heb.

**10, 8: Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings:** these four terms taken from the preceding passage of Ps 40 (with the first two changed to plural forms) are probably intended as equivalents to the four principal types of Old Testament sacrifices: peace offerings (Lv 3, here called **sacrifices**); cereal offerings (Lv 2, here called **offerings**); **holocausts** (Lv 1); and **sin offerings** (Lv 4—5). This last category includes the guilt offerings of Lv 5, 14–26.

**10, 11–18:** Whereas the levitical priesthood offered daily sacrifices that were ineffectual in remitting sin (11), Jesus offered a single sacrifice that won him a permanent place at God's right hand. There he has only to await the final outcome of his work (12–13; cf Ps 110, 1). Thus he has brought into being in his own person the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (31, 33–34) that has rendered meaningless all other offerings for sin (14–18).

**10, 13: Until his enemies are made his footstool:** Ps 110, 1 is again used; the reference here is to the period of time between the enthronement of Jesus and his second coming. The identity of the **enemies** is not specified; cf 1 Cor 15, 25–27.

**10, 15–17:** The testimony of the scriptures is now invoked to support what has just preceded. The passage cited is a portion of the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31, 31–34, which the author previously used in 8, 8–12.

**10, 17: He also says:** these words are not in the Greek text, which has only **kai**, "also," but the expression **after saying** in v 15 seems to require such a phrase to divide the Jeremiah text into two sayings. Others understand "the Lord says" of v 16 (here rendered **says the Lord**) as outside the quotation and consider v 16b as part of the second saying. Two ancient versions and a number of minuscules introduce the words "then he said" or a similar expression at the beginning of v 17.

**10, 19–39:** Practical consequences from these reflections on

g 8, 5; Col 2, 17. h Lv 16, 21; Nm 5, 15 LXX. i Is 1, 11; Mi 6, 6–8. j Ps 40, 7–9. k 5–6; Ps 40, 7. 17; Ps 40, 8; Mt 26, 39; Mk 14, 36; Lk 22, 42; Jn 6, 38. m 9, 12.14. n 7, 27; Dt 10, 8; 18, 7. o Ps 110, 1. p 9, 28. q 8, 10; Jer 31, 33. r 8, 12; Jer 31, 34. s 3, 6; 4, 16; 6, 19–20; Eph 1, 7; 3, 12.

dence of entrance into the sanctuary [20] [t]*by the
new and living way he opened for us through
the veil, that is, his flesh, [21] [u]*and since we have
"a great priest over the house of God," [22] [v]*let us
approach with a sincere heart and in absolute
trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an
evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure
water. [23] [w]Let us hold unwaveringly to our
confession that gives us hope, for he who made
the promise is trustworthy. [24]We must consider
how to rouse one another to love and good
works. [25] [x]*We should not stay away from our
assembly, as is the custom of some, but encour-
age one another, and this all the more as you see
the day drawing near.

[26] [y]*If we sin deliberately after receiving
knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains
sacrifice for sins [27] [z]but a fearful prospect of
judgment and a flaming fire that is going to
consume the adversaries. [28] [a]*Anyone who re-
jects the law of Moses is put to death without
pity on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
[29] [b]Do you not think that a much worse punish-
ment is due the one who has contempt for the
Son of God, considers unclean the covenant-
blood by which he was consecrated, and insults
the spirit of grace? [30] [c]We know the one who
said:

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay,"

and again:

"The Lord will judge his people."

[31] [d]It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the
living God.

[32] [e]*Remember the days past when, after you
had been enlightened, you endured a great con-
test of suffering. [33] [f]At times you were publicly
exposed to abuse and affliction; at other times
you associated yourselves with those so treated.
[34] [g]You even joined in the sufferings of those in
prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of
your property, knowing that you had a better and
lasting possession. [35] [h]Therefore, do not throw
away your confidence; it will have great recom-
pense. [36] [i]You need endurance to do the will of
God and receive what he has promised.

[37] [j]*"For, after just a brief moment,
he who is to come shall come;
he shall not delay.

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the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ should make it clear that Christians may now have direct and confident access to God through the person of Jesus (19–20), who rules God's house as high priest (21). They should approach God with sincerity and faith, in the knowledge that through baptism their sins have been remitted (22), reminding themselves of the hope they expressed in Christ at that event (23). They are to encourage one another to Christian love and activity (24), not refusing, no matter what the reason, to participate in the community's assembly, especially in view of the parousia (25; cf 1 Thes 4, 13–18). If refusal to participate in the assembly indicates rejection of Christ, no sacrifice exists to obtain forgiveness for so great a sin (26); only the dreadful judgment of God remains (27). For if violation of the Mosaic law could be punished by death, how much worse will be the punishment of those who have turned their backs on Christ by despising his sacrifice and disregarding the gifts of the holy Spirit (28–29). Judgment belongs to the Lord, and he enacts it by his living presence (30–31). There was a time when the spirit of their community caused them to welcome and share their sufferings (32–34). To revitalize that spirit is to share in the courage of the Old Testament prophets (cf Is 26, 20; Hb 2, 3–4), the kind of courage that must distinguish the faith of the Christian (35–39).

**10, 20: Through the veil, that is, his flesh:** the term **flesh** is used pejoratively. As the temple veil kept people from entering the Holy of Holies (it was rent at Christ's death, Mk 15, 38), so the flesh of Jesus constituted an obstacle to approaching God.

**10, 21: The house of God:** this refers back to 3, 6, "we are his house."

**10, 22: With our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience:** as in 9, 13 (see the note there), the sprinkling motif refers to the Mosaic rite of cleansing from ritual impurity. This could produce only an external purification, whereas sprinkling with the blood of Christ (9, 14) cleanses the **conscience. Washed in pure water:** baptism is elsewhere referred to as a washing; cf 1 Cor 6, 11; Eph 5, 26.

**10, 25: Our assembly:** the liturgical **assembly** of the Christian community, probably for the celebration of the Eucharist. **The day:** this designation for the parousia also occurs in the Pauline letters, e.g., Rom 2, 16; 1 Cor 3, 13; 1 Thes 5, 2.

**10, 26: If we sin deliberately:** verse 29 indicates that the author is here thinking of apostasy; cf 3, 12; 6, 4–8.

**10, 28: Rejects the law of Moses:** evidently not any sin against the law, but idolatry. Dt 17, 2–7 prescribed capital punishment for idolaters who were convicted on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

**10, 32: After you had been enlightened:** "enlightenment" is an ancient metaphor for baptism (cf Eph 5, 14; Jn 9, 11), but see 6, 4 and the note there.

**10, 37–38:** In support of his argument, the author uses Hb 2, 3–4 in a wording almost identical with the text of the Codex Alexandrinus of the Septuagint but with the first and second lines of v 4 inverted. He introduces it with a few words from Is 26, 20: **after just a brief moment.** Note the Pauline usage of Hb 2, 4 in Rom 1, 17; Gal 3, 11.

t Jn 14, 6 / 6, 19–20; 9, 8.11–12; Mt 27, 51; Mk 15, 38; Lk 23, 45. u 3, 6. v 9, 13–14; Ez 36, 25; 1 Cor 6, 11; Ti 3, 5; 1 Pt 3, 21. w 3, 1.6; 4, 14; 1 Cor 10, 13. x Rom 13, 12; 1 Cor 3, 13. y 3, 12; 6, 4–8. z 31; 9, 27; Is 26, 11 LXX; Zep 1, 18. a Dt 17, 6. b 6, 6. c Dt 32, 35.36; Rom 12, 19. d 27; Mt 10, 28; Lk 12, 4–5. e 6, 4. f 1 Cor 4, 9. g 13, 3; Mt 6, 19–20; Lk 12, 33–34. h 4, 16. i Lk 21, 19. j Is 26, 20; Hb 2, 3.

38 [k]But my just one shall live by faith,
and if he draws back I take no pleasure in
him."

39 We are not among those who draw back and perish, but among those who have faith and will possess life.

## V: Examples, Discipline, Disobedience

### CHAPTER 11

**Faith of the Ancients** 1 [l]*Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. 2 Because of it the ancients were well attested. 3 [m]*By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible. 4 [n]*By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice greater than Cain's. Through this he was attested to be righteous, God bearing witness to his gifts, and through this, though dead, he still speaks. 5 [o]By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and "he was found no more because God had taken him." Before he was taken up, he was attested to have pleased God. 6 [p]*But without faith it is impossible to please him, for anyone who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 [q]By faith Noah, warned about what was not yet seen, with reverence built an ark for the salvation of his household. Through this he condemned the world and inherited the righteousness that comes through faith.

8 [r]By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 [s]By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; 10 [t]for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God. 11 [u]By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age—and Sarah herself was sterile—for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy. 12 [v]So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore.

13 [w]All these died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged them-

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**11, 1–40:** This chapter draws upon the people and events of the Old Testament to paint an inspiring portrait of religious faith, firm and unyielding in the face of any obstacles that confront it. These pages rank among the most eloquent and lofty to be found in the Bible. They expand the theme announced in 6, 12, to which the author now returns (10, 39). The material of this chapter is developed chronologically. Verses 3–7 draw upon the first nine chapters of Gn; vv 8–22, upon the period of the patriarchs; vv 23–31, upon the time of Moses; vv 32–38, upon the history of the judges, the prophets, and the Maccabean martyrs. The author gives the most extensive description of faith provided in the New Testament, though his interest does not lie in a technical, theological definition. In view of the needs of his audience he describes what authentic faith does, not what it is in itself. Through faith God guarantees the blessings to be hoped for from him, providing evidence in the gift of faith that what he promises will eventually come to pass (1). Because they accepted in faith God's guarantee of the future, the biblical personages discussed in vv 3–38 were themselves commended by God (2). Christians have even greater reason to remain firm in faith since they, unlike the Old Testament men and women of faith, have perceived the beginning of God's fulfillment of his messianic promises (39–40).

**11, 1: Faith is the realization . . . evidence:** the author is not attempting a precise definition. There is dispute about the meaning of the Greek words **hypostasis** and **elenchos,** here translated **realization** and **evidence,** respectively. **Hypostasis** usually means "substance," "being" (as translated in 1, 3), or "reality" (as translated in 3, 14); here it connotes something more subjective, and so **realization** has been chosen rather than "assurance" (RSV). **Elenchos,** usually "proof," is used here in an objective sense and so translated **evidence** rather than the transferred sense of "(inner) conviction" (RSV).

**11, 3: By faith . . . God:** this verse does not speak of the faith of the Old Testament men and women but is in the first person plural. Hence it seems out of place in the sequence of thought.

**11, 4:** The "Praise of the Ancestors" in Sir 44, 1—50, 21 gives a similar list of heroes. The Cain and Abel narrative in Gn 4, 1–16 does not mention Abel's faith. It says, however, that God "looked with favor on Abel and his offering" (Gn 4, 4); in view of v 6 the author probably understood God's favor to have been activated by Abel's faith. **Though dead, he still speaks:** possibly because his blood "cries out to me from the soil" (Gn 4, 10), but more probably a way of saying that the repeated story of Abel provides ongoing witness to faith.

**11, 6:** One must believe not only that God **exists** but that he is concerned about human conduct; the Old Testament defines folly as the denial of this truth; cf Ps 52, 2.

k Hb 2, 4; Rom 1, 17; Gal 3, 11. 11, 3; 3, 14; Rom 8, 24; 2 Cor 4, 18. m Gn 1, 3; Ps 33, 6; Wis 9, 1; Jn 1, 3. n 12, 24; Gn 4, 4.10. o Gn 5, 24; Sir 44, 16. p Wis 4, 10. q Gn 6, 8–22; Sir 44, 17–18; Mt 24, 37–39; Lk 17, 26–27; 1 Pt 3, 20; 2, Pt 2, 5. r Gn 12, 1–4; 15, 7–21; Sir 44, 19–22; Acts 7, 2–8; Rom 4, 16–22. s Gn 12, 8; 13, 12; 23, 4; 26, 3; 35, 27. t 12, 22; 13, 14; Rv 21, 10–22. u Gn 17, 19; 21, 2; Rom 4, 19–21 / 1 Cor 10, 13. v Gn 15, 5; 22, 17; 32, 13; Ex 32, 13; Dt 10, 22; Dn 3, 36 LXX. w Gn 23, 4; Ps 39, 13.

selves to be strangers and aliens on earth, [14]for
those who speak thus show that they are seeking
a homeland. [15]If they had been thinking of the
land from which they had come, they would
have had opportunity to return. [16] [x]But now they
desire a better homeland, a heavenly one. There-
fore, God is not ashamed to be called their God,
for he has prepared a city for them.

[17] [y]By faith Abraham, when put to the test,
offered up Isaac, and he who had received the
promises was ready to offer his only son, [18] [z]of
whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants
shall bear your name." [19] [a]*He reasoned that
God was able to raise even from the dead, and
he received Isaac back as a symbol. [20] [b]*By faith
regarding things still to come Isaac blessed Jacob
and Esau. [21] [c]By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed
each of the sons of Joseph and "bowed in
worship, leaning on the top of his staff." [22] [d]By
faith Joseph, near the end of his life, spoke of the
Exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions
about his bones.

[23] [e]By faith Moses was hidden by his parents
for three months after his birth, because they
saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were
not afraid of the king's edict. [24] [f]*By faith Moses,
when he had grown up, refused to be known as
the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25]he chose to be
ill-treated along with the people of God rather
than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. [26]He
considered the reproach of the Anointed greater
wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was
looking to the recompense. [27] [g]By faith he left
Egypt, not fearing the king's fury, for he perse-
vered as if seeing the one who is invisible. [28] [h]By
faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the
blood, that the Destroyer of the firstborn might
not touch them. [29] [i]By faith they crossed the Red
Sea as if it were dry land, but when the
Egyptians attempted it they were drowned.
[30] [j]By faith the walls of Jericho fell after being
encircled for seven days. [31] [k]By faith Rahab the
harlot did not perish with the disobedient, for
she had received the spies in peace.

[32] [l]What more shall I say? I have not time to
tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of
David and Samuel and the prophets, [33] [m]who by
faith conquered kingdoms, did what was righ-
teous, obtained the promises; they closed the
mouths of lions, [34] [n]put out raging fires, escaped
the devouring sword; out of weakness they were
made powerful, became strong in battle, and
turned back foreign invaders. [35] [o]Women re-
ceived back their dead through resurrection.
Some were tortured and would not accept
deliverance, in order to obtain a better resurrec-
tion. [36] [p]Others endured mockery, scourging,
even chains and imprisonment. [37] [q]They were
stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's
point; they went about in skins of sheep or
goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. [38] [r]The world
was not worthy of them. They wandered about
in deserts and on mountains, in caves and in
crevices in the earth.

[39]Yet all these, though approved because of
their faith, did not receive what had been
promised. [40]*God had foreseen something bet-
ter for us, so that without us they should not be
made perfect.

**11, 19: As a symbol:** Isaac's "return from death" is seen as a **symbol** of Christ's resurrection. Others understand the words **en parabolē** to mean "in figure," i.e., the word **dead** is used figuratively of Isaac, since he did not really die. But in the one other place that **parabolē** occurs in Heb, it means symbol (9, 9).

**11, 20–22:** Each of these three patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, had faith in the future fulfillment of God's promise and renewed this faith when near death.

**11, 24–27:** The reason given for Moses' departure from Egypt differs from the account in Ex 2, 11–15. The author also gives a christological interpretation of his decision to share the trials of his people.

**11, 40: So that without us they should not be made perfect:** the heroes of the Old Testament obtained their recompense only after the saving work of Christ had been accomplished. Thus they already enjoy what Christians who are still struggling do not yet possess in its fullness.

x 13, 14; Ex 3, 6. y Gn 22, 1–10; Sir 44, 20; 1 Mc 2, 52; Jas 2, 21. z Gn 21, 12 LXX; Rom 9, 7. a Rom 4, 16–22. b Gn 27, 27–40. c Gn 27, 38–40; 47, 31 LXX; 48, 15–16. d Gn 50, 24–25. e Ex 2, 2; Acts 7, 20. f Ex 2, 10–15; Acts 7, 23–29. g Ex 2, 15; Acts 7, 29. h Ex 12, 21–23; Wis 18, 25; 1 Cor 10, 10. i Ex 14, 22–28. j Jos 6, 12–21. k Jos 2, 1–21; 6, 22–25; Jas 2, 25. l Jgs 4, 6—22; 6, 11—8, 32; 11, 1–12, 7. m Dn 6, 23. n Dn 3, 22–25.49–50. o 1 Kgs 17, 17–24; 2 Kgs 4, 18–37; 2 Mc 6, 18—7, 42. p 2 Chr 36, 16; Jer 20, 2; 37, 15. q 2 Chr 24, 21. r 1 Mc 2, 28–30.

## CHAPTER 12

**God our Father** 1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us 2 [s]while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. 3 Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood. 5 [t]You have also forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons:

"My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord
or lose heart when reproved by him;
6 for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines;
he scourges every son he acknowledges."

7 [u]Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are without discipline, in which all have shared, you are not sons but bastards. 9 [v]Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not [then] submit all the more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 They disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them, but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness. 11 [w]At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.

12 [x]So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. 13 [y]Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed.

**Penalties of Disobedience** 14 [z]Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 [a] *See to it that no one be deprived of the grace of God, that no bitter root spring up and cause trouble, through which many may become defiled, 16 [b]that no one be an immoral or profane person like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 [c]For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit his father's blessing, he was rejected because he found no opportunity to change his mind, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

18 [d] *You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm 19 [e]and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them, 20 [f]for they could not bear to hear the command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 [g]Indeed, so fearful was the spectacle that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." 22 [h]No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the

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**12, 1–13:** Christian life is to be inspired not only by the Old Testament men and women of faith (1) but above all by Jesus. As the architect of Christian faith, he had himself to endure the cross before receiving the glory of his triumph (2). Reflection on his sufferings should give his followers courage to continue the struggle, if necessary even to the shedding of blood (3–4). Christians should regard their own sufferings as the affectionate correction of the Lord, who loves them as a father loves his children.

**12, 1: That clings to us:** the meaning is uncertain, since the Greek word **euperistatos,** translated **cling,** occurs only here. The papyrus $P^{40}$ and one minuscule read **euperispastos,** "easily distracting," which also makes good sense.

**12, 15–17:** Esau serves as an example in two ways: his **profane** attitude illustrates the danger of apostasy, and his inability to secure a blessing afterward illustrates the impossibility of repenting after falling away (see 6, 4–6).

**12, 18–29:** As a final appeal for adherence to Christian teaching, the two covenants, of Moses and of Christ, are compared. The Mosaic covenant, the author argues, is shown to have originated in fear of God and threats of divine punishment (18–21). The covenant in Christ gives us direct access to God (22), makes us members of the Christian community, God's children, a sanctified people (23), who have Jesus as mediator to speak for us (24). Not to heed the voice of the risen Christ is a graver sin than the rejection of the word of Moses (25–26). Though Christians fall away, God's kingdom in Christ will remain and his justice will punish those guilty of deserting it (28–29).

**12, 18–24:** This remarkably beautiful passage contrasts two great assemblies of people: that of the Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai for the sealing of the old covenant and the promulgation of the Mosaic law, and that of the followers of Jesus gathered at **Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem,** the assembly of the **new covenant.** This latter scene, marked by the presence of **countless angels** and of **Jesus** with his redeeming **blood,** is reminiscent of the celestial liturgies of the Book of Revelation.

s 2, 10; Ps 110, 1; Phil 2, 6–8. t Prv 3, 11–12 / Dt 8, 5; 1 Cor 11, 32. u Prv 13, 24; Sir 30, 1. v Nm 16, 22; 27, 16 LXX. w 2 Cor 4, 17; Phil 1, 11; Jas 3, 18. x Is 35, 3; Sir 25, 23; Jb 4, 3–4. y Prv 4, 26 LXX. z Rom 12, 18; 14, 19. a Dt 29, 18 (17 LXX). b Gn 25, 33. c Gn 27, 34–38. d Ex 19, 12–14; Dt 4, 11; 5, 22–23. e Ex 19, 16.19; 20, 18–19. f Ex 19, 12–13. g Dt 9, 19. h Gal 4, 26; Rv 21, 2.

heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in
festal gathering, 23 [i]*and the assembly of the
firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge
of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect,
24 [j]*and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,
and the sprinkled blood that speaks more elo-
quently than that of Abel.
25 [k]See that you do not reject the one who
speaks. For if they did not escape when they
refused the one who warned them on earth,
how much more in our case if we turn away
from the one who warns from heaven. 26 [l]His
voice shook the earth at that time, but now he
has promised, "I will once more shake not only
earth but heaven." 27 [m]That phrase, "once
more," points to [the] removal of shaken, created
things, so that what is unshaken may remain.
28 [n]Therefore, we who are receiving the unshak-
able kingdom should have gratitude, with which
we should offer worship pleasing to God in
reverence and awe. 29 [o]For our God is a consum-
ing fire.

## VI: Final Exhortation, Blessing, Greetings

### CHAPTER 13

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1 *Let mutual love continue. 2 [p]Do not neglect
hospitality, for through it some have unknow-
ingly entertained angels. 3 [q]Be mindful of prison-
ers as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the
ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the
body. 4 [r]Let marriage be honored among all and
the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will
judge the immoral and adulterers. 5 [s]Let your life
be free from love of money but be content with
what you have, for he has said, "I will never
forsake you or abandon you." 6 [t]Thus we may
say with confidence:

"The Lord is my helper,
[and] I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders who spoke the word of
God to you. Consider the outcome of their way
of life and imitate their faith. 8 [u]Jesus Christ is the
same yesterday, today, and forever.
9 [v]*Do not be carried away by all kinds of
strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts
strengthened by grace and not by foods, which
do not benefit those who live by them. 10 *We
have an altar from which those who serve the
tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 [w]The bodies of
the animals whose blood the high priest brings
into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned
outside the camp. 12 [x]Therefore, Jesus also suf-
fered outside the gate, to consecrate the people
by his own blood. 13 Let us then go to him
outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he
bore. 14 [y]For here we have no lasting city, but we
seek the one that is to come. 15 [z]Through him
[then] let us continually offer God a sacrifice of
praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his
name. 16 [a]Do not neglect to do good and to share
what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of
that kind.

**12, 23: The assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven:** this expression may refer to the angels of v 22, or to the heroes of the Old Testament (see ch 11), or to the entire assembly of the new covenant.

**12, 24: Speaks more eloquently:** the blood of Abel, the first human blood to be shed, is contrasted with that of Jesus. Abel's blood cried out from the earth for vengeance, but the blood of Jesus has opened the way for everyone, providing cleansing and access to God (10, 19).

**13, 1–16:** After recommendations on social and moral matters (1–6), the letter turns to doctrinal issues. The fact that the original leaders are dead should not cause the recipients of this letter to lose their faith (7), for Christ still lives and he remains always the same (8). They must not rely for their personal sanctification on regulations concerning foods (9), nor should they entertain the notion that Judaism and Christianity can be intermingled (10; cf the notes on Gal 2, 11–14 and 2, 15–21). As Jesus died separated from his own people, so must the Christian community remain apart from the religious doctrines of Judaism (11–14). Christ must be the heart and center of the community (15–16).

**13, 9: Strange teaching:** this doctrine about foods probably refers to the Jewish food laws; in view of v 10, however, the author may be thinking of the Mosaic sacrificial banquets.

**13, 10: We have an altar:** this does not refer to the Eucharist, which is never clearly mentioned in Heb, but to the sacrifice of Christ.

i Lk 10, 20; Rv 5, 11. j 7, 22; 8, 6; 9, 15 / 11, 4; Gn 4, 10. k Ex 20, 19. l Ex 19, 18; Jgs 5, 4–5; Ps 68, 9; Hg 2, 6. m Is 66, 22; Mt 24, 35; Mk 13, 31; Lk 21, 33. n Dn 7, 14.18 / Rom 1, 9. o Dt 4, 24; Is 33, 14. p Gn 18, 3; 19, 2–3; Jgs 6, 11–22; Tb 5, 4. q Mt 25, 36. r 1 Cor 5, 13; Eph 5, 5. s Dt 31, 6.8; Jos 1, 5. t Pss 27, 1–3; 118, 6. u 1, 12; 7, 24; Rv 1, 17. v Rom 14, 17; 1 Cor 8, 8; Eph 4, 14; Col 2, 16. w Ex 29, 14; Lv 16, 27. x Mt 21, 39; Mk 12, 8; Lk 20, 15; Jn 19, 17. y 11, 10.14. z Hos 14, 3. a Phil 4, 18.

[17] *Obey your leaders and defer to them, for
they keep watch over you and will have to give
an account, that they may fulfill their task with
joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no
advantage to you.

[18] Pray for us, for we are confident that we
have a clear conscience, wishing to act rightly in
every respect. [19] I especially ask for your prayers
that I may be restored to you very soon.

[20] [b] *May the God of peace, who brought up
from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep by
the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our
Lord, [21] furnish you with all that is good, that you
may do his will. May he carry out in you what is
pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom
be glory forever [and ever]. Amen.

[22] Brothers, I ask you to bear with this message of encouragement, for I have written to you rather briefly. [23] [c] I must let you know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he comes soon, I shall see you together with him. [24] Greetings to all your leaders and to all the holy ones. Those from Italy send you greetings. [25] [d] Grace be with all of you.

**13, 17–25:** Recommending obedience to the leaders of the community, the author asks for prayers (17–19). The letter concludes with a blessing (20–21), a final request for the acceptance of its message (22), information regarding Timothy (23), and general greetings (24–25).

**13, 20–21:** These verses constitute one of the most beautiful blessings in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is presupposed throughout Heb, since it is included in the author's frequently expressed idea of his exaltation, but this is the only place where it is explicitly mentioned.

b Is 63, 11; Zec 9, 11; Jn 10, 11; Acts 2, 24; Rom 15, 33.
c Acts 16, 1. d Ti 3, 15.

# THE CATHOLIC LETTERS

Catholic Letters See RG 547–571

In addition to the thirteen letters attributed to Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews, the New Testament contains seven other letters. Three of these are attributed to John, two to Peter, and one each to James and Jude, all personages of the apostolic age. The term "catholic letter" first appears, with reference only to 1 John, in the writings of Apollonius of Ephesus, a second-century apologist, known only from a citation in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History.* Eusebius himself (A.D. 260–340) used the term to refer to all seven letters.

The reason for the term "catholic," which means "universal," was the perception that these letters, unlike those of Paul, which were directed to a particular local church, were apparently addressed more generally to the universal church. This designation is not entirely accurate, however. On the one hand, Hebrews has no specifically identified addressees, and originally this was probably true of Ephesians as well. On the other hand, 3 John is addressed to a named individual, 2 John to a specific, though unnamed, community, and 1 Peter to a number of churches that are specified as being located in Asia Minor.

While all seven of these writings begin with an epistolary formula, several of them do not appear to be real letters in the modern sense of the term. In the ancient world it was not unusual to cast an exhortation in the form of a letter for literary effect, a phenomenon comparable to the "open letter" that is sometimes used today.

With the exception of 1 Peter and 1 John, the ancient church showed reluctance to include the catholic letters in the New Testament canon. The reason for this was widespread doubt whether they had actually been written by the apostolic figures to whom they are attributed. The early Christians saw the New Testament as the depository of apostolic faith; therefore, they wished to include only the testimony of apostles. Today we distinguish more clearly between the authorship of a work and its canonicity: even though written by other, later witnesses than those whose names they bear, these writings nevertheless testify to the apostolic faith and constitute canonical scripture. By the late fourth or early fifth centuries, most objections had been overcome in both the Greek and Latin churches (though not in the Syriac), and all seven of the catholic letters have since been acknowledged as canonical.

## THE LETTER OF JAMES

James See RG 547–553

The person to whom this letter is ascribed can scarcely be one of the two members of the Twelve who bore the name James (see Mt 10, 2-3; Mk 3, 17-18; Lk 6, 14-15), for he is not identified as an apostle but only as "slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1, 1). This designation most probably refers to the third New Testament personage named James, a relative of Jesus who is usually called "brother of the Lord" (see Mt 13, 55; Mk 6, 3). He was the leader of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem whom Paul acknowledged as one of the "pillars" (Gal 2, 9). In Acts he appears as the authorized spokesman for the Jewish Christian position in the early Church (Acts 12, 17; 15, 13-21). According to the Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities 20, 9, 1 §§200–203), he was stoned to death by the Jews under the high priest Ananus II in A.D. 62.

The letter is addressed to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion." In Old Testament terminology the term "twelve tribes" designates the people of Israel; the "dispersion" or "diaspora" refers to the non-Palestinian Jews who had settled throughout the Greco-Roman world (see Jn 7, 35). Since in Christian thought the church is the new Israel, the address probably designates the Jewish Christian churches located in Palestine, Syria, and elsewhere. Or perhaps the letter is meant more generally for all Christian communities, and the "dispersion" has the symbolic meaning of exile from our true home, as it has in the address of 1 Peter (1, 1). The letter is so markedly Jewish in character that some scholars have regarded it as a Jewish document subsequently "baptized" by a few Christian insertions, but such an origin is scarcely tenable in view of the numerous contacts discernible between the Letter of James and other New Testament literature.

From the viewpoint of its literary form, James is a letter only in the most conventional sense; it has none of the characteristic features of a real letter except the address. It belongs rather to the genre of *parenesis* or exhortation and is concerned almost exclusively with ethical conduct. It therefore falls within the tradition of Jewish wisdom literature, such as can be found in the Old Testament (Proverbs, Sirach) and in the extracanonical Jewish literature (*Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,* the *Books of Enoch,* the *Manual of Discipline* found at Qumran). More specifically, it consists of sequences of didactic proverbs, comparable to Tob 4, 5-19, to many passages in Sirach, and to sequences of sayings in the synoptic gospels. Numerous passages in James treat of subjects that also appear in the synoptic sayings of Jesus, especially in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, but the correspondences are too general to establish any literary dependence. James represents a type of early Christianity that emphasized sound teaching and responsible moral behavior. Ethical norms are derived not primarily from christology, as in Paul, but from a concept of salvation that involves conversion, baptism, forgiveness of sin, and expectation of judgment (1, 17; 4, 12).

Paradoxically, this very Jewish work is written in an excellent Greek style, which ranks among the best in the New Testament and appears to be the work of a trained Hellenistic writer. Those who continue to regard James of Jerusalem as its author are therefore obliged to suppose that a secretary must have put the letter into its present literary form. This assumption is not implausible in the light of ancient practice. Some regard the letter as one of the earliest writings in the New Testament and feel that its content accurately reflects what we would expect of the leader of Jewish Christianity. Moreover, they argue that the type of Jewish Christianity reflected in the letter cannot be situated historically after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Others, however, believe it more likely that James is a pseudonymous work of a later period. In addition to its Greek style, they observe further that (a) the prestige that the writer is assumed to enjoy points to the later legendary reputation of James; (b) the discussion of the importance of good works seems to presuppose a debate subsequent to that in Paul's own day; (c) the author does not rely upon prescriptions of the Mosaic law, as we would expect from the historical James; (d) the letter contains no allusions to James's own history and to his relationship with Jesus or to the early Christian community of Jerusalem. For these reasons, many recent interpreters assign James to the period A.D. 90–100.

The principal divisions of the Letter of James are the following:

I. Address (1, 1)
II. The Value of Trials and Temptation (1, 2-18)
III. Exhortations and Warnings (1, 19—5, 12)
IV. The Power of Prayer (5, 13-20)

# I: Address

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
See RG
548–549

1 [a]*James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus
Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion,
greetings.

# II: The Value of Trials and Temptation

**Perseverance in Trial** 2 [b]*Consider it all joy,
my brothers, when you encounter various trials,
3*for you know that the testing of your faith
produces perseverance. 4And let perseverance
be perfect, so that you may be perfect and
complete, lacking in nothing. 5 [c]*But if any of
you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives
to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will
be given it. 6 [d]But he should ask in faith, not
doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave
of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the
wind. 7For that person must not suppose that he
will receive anything from the Lord, 8since he is
a man of two minds, unstable in all his ways.

9 [e]*The brother in lowly circumstances should
take pride in his high standing, 10 [f]and the rich
one in his lowliness, for he will pass away "like
the flower of the field." 11For the sun comes up
with its scorching heat and dries up the grass, its
flower droops, and the beauty of its appearance
vanishes. So will the rich person fade away in
the midst of his pursuits.

**Temptation** 12 [g]*Blessed is the man who perse-
veres in temptation, for when he has been
proved he will receive the crown of life that he
promised to those who love him. 13 [h]*No one
experiencing temptation should say, "I am being
tempted by God"; for God is not subject to
temptation to evil, and he himself tempts no
one. 14Rather, each person is tempted when he
is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15Then
desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when
sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death.

16*Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers:
17*all good giving and every perfect gift is from
above, coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no alteration or shadow
caused by change. 18 [i]*He willed to give us birth
by the word of truth that we may be a kind of
firstfruits of his creatures.

# III: Exhortations and Warnings

**Doers of the Word** 19 [j]*Know this, my dear
brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow
to speak, slow to wrath, 20 [k]for the wrath of a

**1, 1: James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ:** a declaration of the writer's authority for instructing the Christian communities; cf Rom 1, 1. Regarding the identity of the author, see Introduction. **Dispersion:** see Introduction.

**1, 2: Consider it all joy . . . various trials:** a frequent teaching of the New Testament derived from the words and sufferings of Jesus (Mt 5, 10–12; Jn 10, 11; Acts 5, 41).

**1, 3–8:** The sequence of testing, perseverance, and being perfect and complete indicates the manner of attaining spiritual maturity and full preparedness for the coming of Christ (5, 7–12; cf 1 Pt 1, 6–7; Rom 5, 3–5). These steps require wisdom (5).

**1, 5: Wisdom:** a gift that God readily grants to all who ask in faith and that sustains the Christian in times of trial. It is a kind of knowledge or understanding not accessible to the unbeliever or those who doubt, which gives the recipient an understanding of the real importance of events. In this way a Christian can deal with adversity with great calm and hope (cf 1 Cor 2, 6–12).

**1, 9–11:** Throughout his letter (see 2, 5; 4, 10.13–16; 5, 1–6), the author reaffirms the teaching of Jesus that worldly prosperity is not necessarily a sign of God's favor but can even be a hindrance to proper humility before God (cf Lk 6, 20–25; 12, 16–21; 16, 19–31).

**1, 12: Temptation:** the Greek word used here is the same one used for "trials" in v 2. **The crown of life:** in ancient Palestine, crowns or wreaths of flowers were worn at festive occasions as signs of joy and honor. In the Hellenistic world, wreaths were given as a reward to great statesmen, soldiers, athletes. **Life:** here means eternal life. **He promised:** some manuscripts read "God" or "the Lord," while the best witnesses do not specify the subject of "promised."

**1, 13–15:** It is contrary to what we know of God for God to be the author of human temptation (13). In the commission of a sinful act, one is first beguiled by passion (14), then consent is given, which in turn causes the sinful act. When sin permeates the entire person, it incurs the ultimate penalty of death (15).

**1, 16–18:** The author here stresses that God is the source of all good and of good alone, and the evil of temptation does not come from him.

**1, 17: All good giving and every perfect gift** may be a proverb written in hexameter. **Father of lights:** God is here called the Father of the heavenly luminaries, i.e., the stars, sun, and moon that he created (Gn 1, 14–18). Unlike orbs moving from nadir to zenith, he never changes or diminishes in brightness.

**1, 18:** Acceptance of the gospel message, **the word of truth,** constitutes new birth (Jn 3, 5–6) and makes the recipient the **firstfruits** (i.e., the cultic offering of the earliest grains, symbolizing the beginning of an abundant harvest) of a new creation; cf 1 Cor 15, 20; Rom 8, 23.

**1, 19–25:** To **be quick to hear** the gospel is to accept it readily and to act in conformity with it, removing from one's soul whatever is opposed to it, so that it may take root and effect salvation (19–21). To listen to the gospel message but not practice it is failure to improve oneself (22–24). Only conformity of life to the perfect law of true freedom brings happiness (25).

a Jn 7, 35; 1 Pt 1, 1. b Rom 5, 3–5; 1 Pt 1, 6; 4, 13–16. c Prv 2, 2–6; Wis 9, 4.9–12. d Mt 7, 7; Mk 11, 24. e 2, 5. f Is 40, 6–7. g 1 Cor 9, 25; 2 Tm 4, 8; 1 Pt 5, 4; Rv 2, 10. h Sir 15, 11–20; 1 Cor 10, 13. i Jn 1, 12–13; 1 Pt 1, 23. j Prv 14, 17; Sir 5, 11. k Eph 4, 26.

man does not accomplish the righteousness of
God. 21 [l]Therefore, put away all filth and evil
excess and humbly welcome the word that has
been planted in you and is able to save your
souls.
22 [m]Be doers of the word and not hearers only,
deluding yourselves. 23For if anyone is a hearer
of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who
looks at his own face in a mirror. 24He sees
himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what
he looked like. 25 [n]*But the one who peers into
the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is
not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts,
such a one shall be blessed in what he does.
26 [o]*If anyone thinks he is religious and does
not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his
religion is vain. 27 [p]*Religion that is pure and
undefiled before God and the Father is this: to
care for orphans and widows in their affliction
and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

## CHAPTER 2

**Sin of Partiality** 1*My brothers, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. 2For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, 3and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," 4*have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?
5 [q]*Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? 6But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court? 7 [r]Is it not they who blaspheme the noble name that was invoked over you? 8 [s]*However, if you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.
9 [t]But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 [u]For whoever keeps the whole law, but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it. 11 [v]For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not kill." Even if you do not commit adultery but kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 [w]*So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. 13 [x]For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Ch 2
See RG
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**Faith and Works** 14 [y]*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15If a

**1, 25: Peers into the perfect law:** the image of a person doing this is paralleled to that of hearing God's word. The **perfect law** applies the Old Testament description of the Mosaic law to the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings freedom.

**1, 26–27:** A practical application of v 22 is now made.

**1, 26:** For control of the tongue, see the note on 3, 1–12.

**1, 27:** In the Old Testament, orphans and widows are classical examples of the defenseless and oppressed.

**2, 1–13:** In the Christian community there must be no discrimination or favoritism based on status or wealth (2–4; cf Mt 5, 3; 11, 5; 23, 6; 1 Cor 1, 27–29). Divine favor rather consists in God's election and promises (5). The rich who oppress the poor blaspheme the name of Christ (6–7). By violating one law of love of neighbor, they offend against the whole law (8–11). On the other hand, conscious awareness of the final judgment helps the faithful to fulfill the whole law (12).

**2, 4:** When Christians show favoritism to the rich they are guilty of the worst kind of prejudice and discrimination. The author says that such Christians set themselves up as judges who judge not by divine law but by the basest, self-serving motives.

**2, 5:** The poor, "God's poor" of the Old Testament, were seen by Jesus as particularly open to God for belief in and reliance on him alone (Lk 6, 20). God's law cannot tolerate their oppression in any way (9).

**2, 8: Royal:** literally, "kingly"; because the Mosaic law came from God, the universal king. There may be an allusion to Jesus' uses of this commandment in his preaching of the kingdom of God (Mt 22, 39; Mk 12, 31; Lk 10, 27).

**2, 12–13:** The law upon which the last judgment will be based is the law of freedom. As Jesus taught, mercy (which participates in God's own loving mercy) includes forgiveness of those who wrong us (see Mt 6, 12.14–15).

**2, 14–26:** The theme of these verses is the relationship of faith and works (deeds). It has been argued that the teaching here contradicts that of Paul (see especially Rom 4, 5–6). The problem can only be understood if the different viewpoints of the two authors are seen. Paul argues against those who claim to participate in God's salvation because of their good deeds as well as because they have committed themselves to trust in God through Jesus Christ (Paul's concept of faith). Paul certainly understands, however, the implications of true faith for a life of love and generosity (see Gal 5, 6.13–15). The author of James is well aware that proper conduct can only come about with an authentic commitment to God in faith (18.26). Many think he was seeking to correct a misunderstanding of Paul's view.

l Col 3, 8. m Mt 7, 26; Rom 2, 13. n 2, 12; Ps 19, 8; Rom 8, 2. o 3, 2; Ps 34, 14. p Ex 22, 21. q 1 Cor 1, 26–28; Rv 2, 9. r 1 Pt 4, 4. s Lv 19, 18; Mt 22, 39; Rom 13, 9. t Dt 1, 17. u Gal 3, 10. v Ex 20, 13–14; Dt 5, 17–18. w 1, 25; Rom 8, 2. x Mt 5, 7; 6, 14–15; 18, 32–33. y Mt 25, 31–46; Gal 5, 6.

brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no
food for the day, 16 [z]and one of you says to them,
"Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you
do not give them the necessities of the body,
what good is it? 17So also faith of itself, if it does
not have works, is dead.

18Indeed someone may say, "You have faith
and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to
me without works, and I will demonstrate my
faith to you from my works. 19You believe that
God is one. You do well. Even the demons
believe that and tremble. 20Do you want proof,
you ignoramus, that faith without works is
useless? 21 [a]Was not Abraham our father justified
by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the
altar? 22You see that faith was active along with
his works, and faith was completed by the
works. 23 [b]Thus the scripture was fulfilled that
says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called
"the friend of God." 24See how a person is
justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 [c]And
in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also
justified by works when she welcomed the
messengers and sent them out by a different
route? 26For just as a body without a spirit is
dead, so also faith without works is dead.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 3
See RG
550–551

**Power of the Tongue** 1*Not many of you
should become teachers, my brothers, for you
realize that we will be judged more strictly, 2 [d]for
we all fall short in many respects. If anyone does
not fall short in speech, he is a perfect man, able
to bridle his whole body also. 3If we put bits into
the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we
also guide their whole bodies. 4It is the same
with ships: even though they are so large and
driven by fierce winds, they are steered by a very
small rudder wherever the pilot's inclination
wishes. 5In the same way the tongue is a small
member and yet has great pretensions.

Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest
ablaze. 6The tongue is also a fire. It exists among
our members as a world of malice, defiling the
whole body and setting the entire course of our
lives on fire, itself set on fire by Gehenna. 7For
every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea
creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by
the human species, 8 [e]but no human being can
tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of
deadly poison. 9With it we bless the Lord and
Father, and with it we curse human beings who
are made in the likeness of God. 10From the
same mouth come blessing and cursing. This
need not be so, my brothers. 11Does a spring
gush forth from the same opening both pure and
brackish water? 12 [f]Can a fig tree, my brothers,
produce olives, or a grapevine figs? Neither can
salt water yield fresh.

**True Wisdom** 13 [g]*Who among you is wise and
understanding? Let him show his works by a good
life in the humility that comes from wisdom.
14But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the
truth. 15Wisdom of this kind does not come down
from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.
16For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist,
there is disorder and every foul practice. 17 [h]But
the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then
peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and
good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity.
18 [i]And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace
for those who cultivate peace.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
See RG
551–552

**Causes of Division** 1 [j]*Where do the wars and
where do the conflicts among you come from? Is

**3, 1–12:** The use and abuse of the important role of teaching in the church (1) are here related to the good and bad use of the tongue (9–12), the instrument through which teaching was chiefly conveyed (see Sir 5, 11—6, 1; 28, 12–26).

**3, 13–18:** This discussion of true wisdom is related to the previous reflection on the role of the teacher as one who is in control of his speech. The qualities of the wise man endowed from above are detailed (17–18; cf Gal 5, 22–23), in contrast to the qualities of earthbound wisdom (14–16; cf 2 Cor 12, 20).

**4, 1–12:** The concern here is with the origin of conflicts in the Christian community. These are occasioned by love **of the world,** which **means enmity with God** (4). Further, the conflicts are bound up with failure to pray properly (cf Mt 7, 7–11; Jn 14, 13; 15, 7; 16, 23), that is, not asking God at all or using God's kindness only for one's pleasure (2–3). In contrast, the proper dispositions are submission to God, repentance, humility, and resistance to evil (7–10).

**4, 1: Passions:** the Greek word here (literally, "pleasures") does

z 1 Jn 3, 17. a Gn 22, 9–12; Heb 11, 17. b Gn 15, 6; Rom 4, 3; Gal 3, 6 / 2 Chr 20, 7; Is 41, 8. c Jos 2, 1–21. d 1, 26; Prv 13, 3; Sir 28, 12–26. e Ps 140, 4. f Mt 7, 16–17. g Eph 4, 1–2. h 1, 17; Wis 7, 22–23. i Mt 5, 9. j Rom 7, 23; 1 Pt 2, 11.

it not from your passions that make war within
your members? 2You covet but do not possess.
You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you
fight and wage war. You do not possess because
you do not ask. 3You ask but do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your
passions. 4 k*Adulterers! Do you not know that
to be a lover of the world means enmity with
God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of
the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5*Or
do you suppose that the scripture speaks without
meaning when it says, "The spirit that he has
made to dwell in us tends toward jealousy"?
6 l*But he bestows a greater grace; therefore, it
says:

"God resists the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

7 mSo submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil,
and he will flee from you. 8 nDraw near to God,
and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your
hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you
of two minds. 9Begin to lament, to mourn, to
weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourn-
ing and your joy into dejection. 10 oHumble
yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.
11*Do not speak evil of one another, brothers.
Whoever speaks evil of a brother or judges his
brother speaks evil of the law and judges the
law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of
the law but a judge. 12 pThere is one lawgiver
and judge who is able to save or to destroy. Who
then are you to judge your neighbor?

**Warning against Presumption** 13*Come
now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we shall
go into such and such a town, spend a year there
doing business, and make a profit"— 14 q*you
have no idea what your life will be like tomor-
row. You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly
and then disappears. 15*Instead you should say,
"If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or
that." 16But now you are boasting in your
arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 r*So for
one who knows the right thing to do and does
not do it, it is a sin.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 5
See RG
552–553

**Warning to the Rich** 1 s*Come now, you rich,
weep and wail over your impending miseries.
2 tYour wealth has rotted away, your clothes
have become moth-eaten, 3 uyour gold and silver
have corroded, and that corrosion will be a
testimony against you; it will devour your flesh
like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the
last days. 4 vBehold, the wages you withheld
from the workers who harvested your fields are
crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have

not indicate that pleasure is evil. Rather, as the text points out (2–3), it is the manner in which one deals with needs and desires that determines good or bad. The motivation for any action can be wrong, especially if one does not pray properly but seeks only selfish enjoyment (3).

4, 4: **Adulterers:** a common biblical image for the covenant between God and his people is the marriage bond. In this image, breaking the covenant with God is likened to the unfaithfulness of adultery.

4, 5: The meaning of this saying is difficult because the author of Jas cites, probably from memory, a passage that is not in any extant manuscript of the Bible. Other translations of the text with a completely different meaning are possible: "The Spirit that he (God) made to dwell in us yearns (for us) jealously," or, "He (God) yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us." If this last translation is correct, the author perhaps had in mind an apocryphal religious text that echoes the idea that God is zealous for his creatures; cf Ex 20, 5; Dt 4, 24; Zec 8, 2.

4, 6: The point of this whole argument is that God wants the happiness of all, but that selfishness and pride can make that impossible. We must work with him in humility (10).

4, 11: Slander of a fellow Christian does not break just one commandment but makes mockery of the authority of law in general and therefore of God.

4, 13–17: The uncertainty of life (14), its complete dependence on God, and the necessity of submitting to God's will (15) all help one know and do what is right (17). To disregard this is to live in pride and arrogance (16); failure to do what is right is a sin (17).

4, 14: Some important Greek manuscripts here have, "You who have no idea what tomorrow will bring. Why, what is your life?"

4, 15: **If the Lord wills it:** often in piety referred to as the **"conditio Jacobaea,"** the condition James says we should employ to qualify all our plans.

4, 17: **It is a sin:** those who live arrogantly, forgetting the contingency of life and our dependence on God (13–16), are guilty of sin.

5, 1–6: Continuing with the theme of the transitory character of life on earth, the author points out the impending ruin of the godless. He denounces the unjust rich, whose victims cry to heaven for judgment on their exploiters (4–6). The decay and corrosion of the costly garments and metals, which symbolize wealth, prove them worthless and portend the destruction of their possessors (2–3).

k Mt 6, 24; Lk 16, 13; Rom 8, 7; 1 Jn 2, 15–16. l Jb 22, 29; Prv 3, 34; Mt 23, 12; 1 Pt 5, 5. m 1 Pt 5, 8–9. n Zec 1, 3; Mal 3, 7. o Jb 5, 11; Mt 23, 12; Lk 14, 11; 18, 14; 1 Pt 5, 6. p Mt 7, 1; Rom 2, 1; 14, 4. q Prv 27, 1 / Ps 39, 6–7. r Lk 12, 47. s Lk 6, 24. t Mt 6, 19. u Ps 21, 10; Prv 11, 4; Jdt 16, 17. v Lv 19, 13; Dt 24, 14–15; Mal 3, 5.

reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 [w]You
have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you
have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. 6 [x]*You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no
resistance.

**Patience and Oaths** 7*Be patient, therefore,
brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how
the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the
earth, being patient with it until it receives the
early and the late rains. 8 [y]You too must be
patient. Make your hearts firm, because the
coming of the Lord is at hand. 9Do not complain,
brothers, about one another, that you may not
be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before
the gates. 10Take as an example of hardship and
patience, brothers, the prophets who spoke in
the name of the Lord. 11 [z]Indeed we call blessed
those who have persevered. You have heard of
the perseverance of Job, and you have seen the
purpose of the Lord, because "the Lord is
compassionate and merciful."

12 [a]*But above all, my brothers, do not swear,
either by heaven or by earth or with any other
oath, but let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your
"No" mean "No," that you may not incur
condemnation.

## IV: The Power of Prayer

**Anointing of the Sick** 13Is anyone among you
suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good
spirits? He should sing praise. 14 [b]*Is anyone
among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over
him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of
the Lord, 15*and the prayer of faith will save
the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up.
If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

**Confession and Intercession** 16Therefore,
confess your sins to one another and pray for one
another, that you may be healed. The fervent
prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.
17 [c]Elijah was a human being like us; yet he
prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for
three years and six months it did not rain upon
the land. 18 [d]Then he prayed again, and the sky
gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

**Conversion of Sinners** 19 [e]My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and
someone bring him back, 20 [f]*he should know
that whoever brings back a sinner from the error
of his way will save his soul from death and will
cover a multitude of sins.

**5, 6:** The author does not have in mind any specific crime in his readers' communities but rather echoes the Old Testament theme of the harsh oppression of the righteous poor (see Prv 1, 11; Wis 2, 10.12.20).

**5, 7–11:** Those oppressed by the unjust rich are reminded of the need for patience, both in bearing the sufferings of human life (9) and in their expectation of the coming of the Lord. It is then that they will receive their reward (7–8.10–11; cf Heb 10, 25; 1 Jn 2, 18).

**5, 7: The early and the late rains:** an expression related to the agricultural season in ancient Palestine (see Dt 11, 14; Jer 5, 24; Jl 2, 23).

**5, 12:** This is the threat of condemnation for the abuse of swearing oaths (cf Mt 5, 33–37). **By heaven or by earth:** these words were substitutes for the original form of an oath, to circumvent its binding force and to avoid pronouncing the holy name of God (see Ex 22, 10).

**5, 14:** In case of sickness a Christian should ask for the presbyters of the church, i.e., those who have authority in the church (cf Acts 15, 2.22–23; 1 Tm 5, 17; Ti 1, 5). They are to pray over the person and anoint with oil; oil was used for medicinal purposes in the ancient world (see Is 1, 6; Lk 10, 34). In Mk 6, 13, the Twelve anoint the sick with oil on their missionary journey. **In the name of the Lord:** by the power of Jesus Christ.

**5, 15:** The results of the prayer and anointing are physical health and forgiveness of sins. The Roman Catholic Church (Council of Trent, Session 14) declared that this anointing of the sick is a sacrament "instituted by Christ and promulgated by blessed James the apostle."

**5, 20:** When a Christian is instrumental in the conversion of a sinner, the result is forgiveness of sins and a reinstatement of the sinner to the life of grace.

w Jer 12, 3; Lk 16, 19–25. x Wis 2, 10–20. y Lk 21, 19; Heb 10, 36 / Heb 10, 25; 1 Pt 4, 7. z Ex 34, 6; Ps 103, 8. a Mt 5, 34–37. b Mk 6, 13. c 1 Kgs 17, 1; Lk 4, 25. d 1 Kgs 18, 45. e Mt 18, 15; Gal 6, 1. f Prv 10, 12; 1 Pt 4, 8.

# THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

1 Peter
See RG
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This letter begins with an address by Peter to Christian communities located in five provinces of Asia Minor (1, 1), including areas evangelized by Paul (Acts 16, 6-7; 18, 23). Christians there are encouraged to remain faithful to their standards of belief and conduct in spite of threats of persecution. Numerous allusions in the letter suggest that the churches addressed were largely of Gentile composition (1, 14.18; 2, 9-10; 4, 3-4), though considerable use is made of the Old Testament (1, 24; 2, 6-7.9-10.22; 3, 10-12).

The contents following the address both inspire and admonish these "chosen sojourners" (1, 1) who, in seeking to live as God's people, feel an alienation from their previous religious roots and the society around them. Appeal is made to Christ's resurrection and the future hope it provides (1, 3-5) and to the experience of baptism as new birth (1, 3.23-25; 3, 21). The suffering and death of Christ serve as both source of salvation and example (1, 19; 2, 21-25; 3, 18). What Christians are in Christ, as a people who have received mercy and are to proclaim and live according to God's call (2, 9-10), is repeatedly spelled out for all sorts of situations in society (2, 11-17), work (even as slaves, 2, 18-20), the home (3, 1-7), and general conduct (3, 8-12; 4, 1-11). But over all hangs the possibility of suffering as a Christian (3, 13-17). In 4, 12-19 persecution is described as already occurring, so that some have supposed the letter was addressed both to places where such a "trial by fire" was already present and to places where it might break out.

The letter constantly mingles moral exhortation (*paraklēsis*) with its catechetical summaries of mercies in Christ. Encouragement to fidelity in spite of suffering is based upon a vision of the meaning of Christian existence. The emphasis on baptism and allusions to various features of the baptismal liturgy suggest that the author has incorporated into his exposition numerous homiletic, credal, hymnic, and sacramental elements of the baptismal rite that had become traditional at an early date.

From Irenaeus in the late second century until modern times, Christian tradition regarded Peter the apostle as author of this document. Since he was martyred at Rome during the persecution of Nero between A.D. 64 and 67, it was supposed that the letter was written from Rome shortly before his death. This is supported by its reference to "Babylon" (5, 13), a code name for Rome in the early church.

Some modern scholars, however, on the basis of a number of features that they consider incompatible with Petrine authenticity, regard the letter as the work of a later Christian writer. Such features include the cultivated Greek in which it is written, difficult to attribute to a Galilean fisherman, together with its use of the Greek Septuagint translation when citing the Old Testament; the similarity in both thought and expression to the Pauline literature; and the allusions to widespread persecution of Christians, which did not occur until at least the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96). In this view the letter would date from the end of the first century or even the beginning of the second, when there is evidence for persecution of Christians in Asia Minor (the letter of Pliny the Younger to Trajan, A.D. 111–12).

Other scholars believe, however, that these objections can be met by appeal to use of a secretary, Silvanus, mentioned in 5, 12. Such secretaries often gave literary expression to the author's thoughts in their own style and language. The persecutions may refer to local harassment rather than to systematic repression by the state. Hence there is nothing in the document incompatible with Petrine authorship in the 60s.

Still other scholars take a middle position. The many literary contacts with the Pauline literature, James, and 1 John suggest a common fund of traditional formulations rather than direct dependence upon Paul. Such liturgical and catechetical traditions must have been very ancient and in some cases of Palestinian origin.

Yet it is unlikely that Peter addressed a letter to the Gentile churches of Asia Minor while Paul was still alive. This suggests a period after the death of the two apostles, perhaps A.D. 70–90. The author would be a disciple of Peter in Rome, representing a Petrine group that served as a bridge between the Palestinian origins of Christianity and its flowering in the Gentile world. The problem addressed would not be official persecution but the difficulty of living the Christian life in a hostile, secular environment that espoused different values and subjected the Christian minority to ridicule and oppression.

The principal divisions of the First Letter of Peter are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-2)
II. The Gift and Call of God in Baptism (1, 3—2, 10)
III. The Christian in a Hostile World (2, 11—4, 11)
IV. Advice to the Persecuted (4, 12—5, 11)
V. Conclusion (5, 12-14)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
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**Greeting** 1 [a]*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 [b]in the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification by the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be yours in abundance.

## II: The Gift and Call of God in Baptism

**Blessing** 3 [c]*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 [d]to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you 5 who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. 6 [e]*In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, 7 [f]so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 [g]Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 as you attain the goal of [your] faith, the salvation of your souls.

10 *Concerning this salvation, prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours

1, 1–2: The introductory formula names **Peter** as the writer (but see Introduction). In his comments to the presbyters (5, 1), the author calls himself a "fellow presbyter." He addresses himself to the Gentile converts of Asia Minor. Their privileged status as a **chosen** and sanctified people makes them worthy of God's **grace** and **peace**. In contrast is their actual existence as aliens and **sojourners**, scattered among pagans, far from their true country.

1, 1: **Dispersion:** literally, diaspora; see Jas 1, 1 and Introduction to that letter. **Pontus . . . Bithynia:** five provinces in Asia Minor, listed in clockwise order from the north, perhaps in the sequence in which a messenger might deliver the letter.

1, 3–5: A prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God who bestows the gift of new life and hope in baptism (**new birth,** 3) **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** The new birth is a sign of an **imperishable inheritance** (4), of **salvation** that is still in the future (**to be revealed in the final time,** 5).

1, 6–9: As the glory of Christ's resurrection was preceded by his sufferings and death, the new life of faith that it bestows is to be subjected to many **trials** (6) while achieving its goal: the glory of the fullness of **salvation** (9) at the coming of Christ (7).

1, 10–12: The **Spirit of Christ** (11) is here shown to have been present in the prophets, moving them to search, investigate, and prophesy about the **grace of salvation** that was to come (10), and in the apostles impelling them to preach the fulfillment of salvation in the message of Christ's sufferings and glory (12).

a Jas 1, 1. b Rom 8, 29. c Ti 3, 5. d Mt 6, 19–20. e Jas 1, 2–3. f 1 Cor 3, 13. g 2 Cor 5, 6–7.

searched and investigated it, 11 [h]investigating the
time and circumstances that the Spirit of Christ
within them indicated when it testified in ad-
vance to the sufferings destined for Christ and
the glories to follow them. 12 It was revealed to
them that they were serving not themselves but
you with regard to the things that have now
been announced to you by those who preached
the good news to you [through] the holy Spirit
sent from heaven, things into which angels
longed to look.

**Obedience** 13 *Therefore, gird up the loins of
your mind, live soberly, and set your hopes
completely on the grace to be brought to you at
the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 *Like obedient
children, do not act in compliance with the
desires of your former ignorance 15 [i]but, as he
who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in
every aspect of your conduct, 16 [j]for it is written,
"Be holy because I [am] holy."

**Reverence** 17 [k]Now if you invoke as Father him
who judges impartially according to each one's
works, conduct yourselves with reverence dur-
ing the time of your sojourning, 18 [l]realizing that
you were ransomed from your futile conduct,
handed on by your ancestors, not with perish-
able things like silver or gold 19 [m]*but with the
precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblem-
ished lamb. 20 He was known before the founda-
tion of the world but revealed in the final time
for you, 21 who through him believe in God who
raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so
that your faith and hope are in God.

**Mutual Love** 22 [n]*Since you have purified your-
selves by obedience to the truth for sincere
mutual love, love one another intensely from a
[pure] heart. 23 [o]*You have been born anew, not
from perishable but from imperishable seed,
through the living and abiding word of God,
24 [p]for:

"All flesh is like grass,
and all its glory like the flower of the field;
the grass withers,
and the flower wilts;
25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."

This is the word that has been proclaimed to
you.

## CHAPTER 2

**God's House and People** 1 [q]*Rid yourselves
of all malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy, and
all slander; 2 like newborn infants, long for pure
spiritual milk so that through it you may grow
into salvation, 3 [r]*for you have tasted that the
Lord is good. 4 [s]*Come to him, a living stone,
rejected by human beings but chosen and pre-
cious in the sight of God, 5 [t]*and, like living
stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual
house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual
sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus
Christ. 6 [u]For it says in scripture:

"Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in it shall not be put to
shame."

Ch 2
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**1, 13–25:** These verses are concerned with the call of God's people to holiness and to mutual love by reason of their redemption through the blood of Christ (18–21).

**1, 13: Gird up the loins of your mind:** a figure reminiscent of the rite of Passover when the Israelites were in flight from their oppressors (Ex 12, 11), and also suggesting the vigilance of the Christian people in expectation of the parousia of Christ (Lk 12, 35).

**1, 14–16:** The **ignorance** here referred to (14) was their former lack of knowledge of God, leading inevitably to godless conduct. Holiness (15–16), on the contrary, is the result of their call to the knowledge and love of God.

**1, 19:** Christians have received the redemption prophesied by Isaiah (52, 3), through the blood (Jewish symbol of life) of the spotless lamb (Is 53, 7.10; Jn 1, 29; Rom 3, 24–25; cf 1 Cor 6, 20).

**1, 22–25:** The new birth of Christians (23) derives from Christ, the **imperishable seed** or sowing that produces a new and lasting existence in those who accept the gospel (24–25), with the consequent duty of loving **one another** (22).

**1, 23: The living and abiding word of God:** or, "the word of the living and abiding God."

**2, 1–3:** Growth toward salvation is seen here as two steps: first, stripping away all that is contrary to the new life in Christ; second, the nourishment **(pure spiritual milk)** that the newly baptized have received.

**2, 3: Tasted that the Lord is good:** cf Ps 34, 9.

**2, 4–8:** Christ is the cornerstone (cf Is 28, 16) that is the foundation of the spiritual edifice of the Christian community (5). To unbelievers, Christ is an obstacle and a stumbling block on which they are destined to fall (8); cf Rom 11, 11.

**2, 5: Let yourselves be built:** the form of the Greek word could also be indicative passive, "you are being built" (cf 9).

h Is 52, 13—53, 12; Dn 9, 24. i Mt 5, 48; 1 Jn 3, 3. j Lv 11, 44; 19, 2. k 2, 11. l Is 52, 3; 1 Cor 6, 20. m Ex 12, 5; Jn 1, 29; Heb 9, 14. n Rom 12, 10. o 1 Jn 3, 9. p Is 40, 6–8. q Jas 1, 21. r Ps 34, 9. s Ps 118, 22; Mt 21, 42; Acts 4, 11. t Eph 2, 21–22. u Is 28, 16.

7 [v]Therefore, its value is for you who have faith,
but for those without faith:

"The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,"

8 [w]and

"A stone that will make people stumble,
and a rock that will make them fall."

They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny.

9 [x]*But you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

10 [y]Once you were "no people"
but now you are God's people;
you "had not received mercy"
but now you have received mercy.

## III: The Christian in a Hostile World

**Christian Examples** 11 [z]*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul. 12Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**Christian Citizens** 13 [a]*Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme 14or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the approval of those who do good. 15For it is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 [b]Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God. 17 [c]Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the king.

**Christian Slaves** 18 [d]*Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and equitable but also to those who are perverse. 19For whenever anyone bears the pain of unjust suffering because of consciousness of God, that is a grace. 20But what credit is there if you are patient when beaten for doing wrong? But if you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. 21 [e]*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.

22 [f]*"He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

**2, 9–10:** The prerogatives of ancient Israel mentioned here are now more fully and fittingly applied to the Christian people: "a chosen race" (cf Is 43, 20–21) indicates their divine election (Eph 1, 4–6); "a royal priesthood" (cf Ex 19, 6) to serve and worship God in Christ, thus continuing the priestly functions of his life, passion, and resurrection; "a holy nation" (Ex 19, 6) reserved for God, a people he claims for his own (cf Mal 3, 17) in virtue of their baptism into his death and resurrection. This transcends all natural and national divisions and unites the people into one community to glorify the one who led them from the darkness of paganism to the light of faith in Christ. From being "no people" deprived of all mercy, they have become the very people of God, the chosen recipients of his mercy (cf Hos 1, 9; 2, 25).

**2, 11—3, 12:** After explaining the doctrinal basis for the Christian community, the author makes practical applications in terms of the virtues that should prevail in all the social relationships of the members of the community: good example to Gentile neighbors (2, 11–12); respect for human authority (2, 13–17); obedience, patience, and endurance of hardship in domestic relations (2, 18–25); Christian behavior of husbands and wives (3, 1–7); mutual charity (3, 8–12).

**2, 11: Aliens and sojourners:** no longer signifying absence from one's native land (Gn 23, 4), this image denotes rather their estrangement from the world during their earthly pilgrimage (see also 1, 1.17).

**2, 13–17:** True Christian freedom is the result of being servants of God (16; see the note on 2, 18–23). It includes reverence for God, esteem for every individual, and committed love for fellow Christians (17). Although persecution may threaten, subjection to human government is urged (13.17) and concern for the impact of Christians' conduct on those who are not Christians (12.15).

**2, 18–21:** Most of the labor in the commercial cities of first-century Asia Minor was performed by a working class of slaves. The sense of freedom contained in the gospel undoubtedly caused great tension among Christian slaves: witness the special advice given concerning them here and in 1 Cor 7, 21–24; Eph 6, 5–8; Col 3, 22–25; Phlm. The point made here does not have so much to do with the institution of slavery, which the author does not challenge, but with the nonviolent reaction (20) of slaves to unjust treatment. Their patient suffering is compared to that of Jesus (21), which won righteousness for all humanity.

**2, 21: Suffered:** some ancient manuscripts and versions read "died" (cf 3, 18).

**2, 22–25:** After the quotation of Is 53, 9b, the passage describes Jesus' passion with phrases concerning the Suffering Servant from Is 53, 4–12, perhaps as employed in an early Christian confession of faith; cf 1, 18–21 and 3, 18–22.

v Ps 118, 22; Mt 21, 42; Lk 20, 17; Acts 4, 11. w Is 8, 14; Rom 9, 33. x Ex 19, 6; Is 61, 6; Rv 1, 6; 20, 6. y Hos 1, 9; 2, 25 / Hos 1, 6. z Gal 5, 24. a Rom 13, 1–7. b Gal 5, 13. c Prv 24, 21; Mt 22, 21. d Eph 6, 5. e Mt 16, 24. f Is 53, 9.

23 [g]When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead,
he handed himself over to the one who judges
justly. 24 [h]He himself bore our sins in his body
upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might
live for righteousness. By his wounds you have
been healed. 25 [i]*For you had gone astray like
sheep, but you have now returned to the shep-
herd and guardian of your souls.

## CHAPTER 3

**Christian Spouses** 1*Likewise, you wives
should be subordinate to your husbands so that,
even if some disobey the word, they may be won
over without a word by their wives' conduct
2 [j]when they observe your reverent and chaste
behavior. 3 [k]Your adornment should not be an
external one: braiding the hair, wearing gold
jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes, 4but rather
the hidden character of the heart, expressed in
the imperishable beauty of a gentle and calm
disposition, which is precious in the sight of
God. 5For this is also how the holy women who
hoped in God once used to adorn themselves
and were subordinate to their husbands; 6thus
Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord." You
are her children when you do what is good and
fear no intimidation.

7 [l]*Likewise, you husbands should live with
your wives in understanding, showing honor to
the weaker female sex, since we are joint heirs
of the gift of life, so that your prayers may not be
hindered.

**Christian Conduct** 8*Finally, all of you, be of
one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one an-
other, compassionate, humble. 9 [m]Do not return
evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the
contrary, a blessing, because to this you were
called, that you might inherit a blessing. 10 [n]For:

"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep the tongue from evil
and the lips from speaking deceit,
11 must turn from evil and do good,
seek peace and follow after it.
12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears turned to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against evildoers."

Ch 3
See RG
557–558

**Christian Suffering** 13*Now who is going to
harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is
good? 14But even if you should suffer because of
righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid
or terrified with fear of them, 15 [o]but sanctify
Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to
give an explanation to anyone who asks you for
a reason for your hope, 16but do it with gentle-
ness and reverence, keeping your conscience
clear, so that, when you are maligned, those
who defame your good conduct in Christ may
themselves be put to shame. 17For it is better to
suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God,
than for doing evil.

**2, 25: The shepherd and guardian of your souls:** the familiar shepherd and flock figures express the care, vigilance, and love of God for his people in the Old Testament (Ps 23; Is 40, 11; Jer 23, 4–5; Ez 34, 11–16) and of Jesus for all humanity in the New Testament (Mt 18, 10–14; Lk 15, 4–7; Jn 10, 1–16; Heb 13, 20).

**3, 1–6:** The typical marital virtues of women of the ancient world, obedience, reverence, and chastity (1–2), are outlined here by the author, who gives them an entirely new motivation: Christian wives are to be virtuous so that they may be instrumental in the conversion of their husbands. In imitation of **holy women** in the past (5) they are to cultivate the interior life (4) instead of excessive concern with their appearance (3).

**3, 7:** Husbands who do not respect their wives will have as little success in prayer as those who, according to Paul, have no love: their prayers will be "a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal" (1 Cor 13, 1). Consideration for others is shown as a prerequisite for effective prayer also in Mt 5, 23–24; 1 Cor 11, 20–22; Jas 4, 3. After all, whatever the social position of women in the world and in the family, they are equal recipients of the gift of God's salvation. Paul is very clear on this point, too (see 1 Cor 11, 11–12; Gal 3, 28).

**3, 8–12:** For the proper ordering of Christian life in its various aspects as described in 2, 11—3, 9, there is promised the blessing expressed in Ps 34, 13–17. In the Old Testament this refers to longevity and prosperity; here, it also refers to eternal life.

**3, 13–22:** This exposition, centering on v 17, runs as follows: by his suffering and death Christ the righteous one saved the unrighteous (18); by his resurrection he received new life in the spirit, which he communicates to believers through the baptismal bath that cleanses their consciences from sin. As Noah's family was saved **through water**, so Christians are saved through the waters of baptism (19–22). Hence they need not share the fear of sinners; they should rather rejoice in suffering because of their hope in Christ. Thus their innocence disappoints their accusers (13–16; cf Mt 10, 28; Rom 8, 35–39).

g Mt 5, 39. h Is 53, 4.12 / Is 53, 5. i Is 53, 6. j 1 Cor 7, 12–16; Eph 5, 22–24; Col 3, 18; 1 Tm 2, 9–15. k 1 Tm 2, 9–10. l Eph 5, 25–33; Col 3, 19. m Mt 5, 44; Lk 6, 28; Rom 12, 14. n Ps 34, 13–17. o Is 8, 12.

18 p*For Christ also suffered for sins once, the
righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he
might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the spirit. 19*In it he
also went to preach to the spirits in prison,
20 qwho had once been disobedient while God
patiently waited in the days of Noah during the
building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight
in all, were saved through water. 21 r*This prefig-
ured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a
removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to
God for a clear conscience, through the resurrec-
tion of Jesus Christ, 22 swho has gone into
heaven and is at the right hand of God, with
angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

## CHAPTER 4

Ch 4
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**Christian Restraint** 1*Therefore, since Christ
suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with
the same attitude (for whoever suffers in the
flesh has broken with sin), 2so as not to spend
what remains of one's life in the flesh on human
desires, but on the will of God. 3 tFor the time
that has passed is sufficient for doing what the
Gentiles like to do: living in debauchery, evil
desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and wan-
ton idolatry. 4They are surprised that you do not
plunge into the same swamp of profligacy, and
they vilify you; 5 ubut they will give an account
to him who stands ready to judge the living and
the dead. 6*For this is why the gospel was
preached even to the dead that, though con-
demned in the flesh in human estimation, they
might live in the spirit in the estimation of God.

**Christian Charity** 7*The end of all things is at
hand. Therefore, be serious and sober for
prayers. 8 v*Above all, let your love for one
another be intense, because love covers a multi-
tude of sins. 9 wBe hospitable to one another
without complaining. 10 xAs each one has re-
ceived a gift, use it to serve one another as good
stewards of God's varied grace. 11 y*Whoever
preaches, let it be with the words of God;
whoever serves, let it be with the strength that
God supplies, so that in all things God may be
glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong
glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

## IV: Advice to the Persecuted

**Trial of Persecution** 12 z*Beloved, do not be
surprised that a trial by fire is occurring among
you, as if something strange were happening to
you. 13 aBut rejoice to the extent that you share
in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory
is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly. 14 bIf
you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed
are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests
upon you. 15But let no one among you be made
to suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as

**3, 18: Suffered:** very many ancient manuscripts and versions read "died." **Put to death in the flesh:** affirms that Jesus truly died as a human being. **Brought to life in the spirit:** that is, in the new and transformed existence freed from the limitations and weaknesses of natural human life (cf 1 Cor 15, 45).

**3, 19: The spirits in prison:** it is not clear just who these spirits are. They may be the spirits of the sinners who died in the flood, or angelic powers, hostile to God, who have been overcome by Christ (cf 22; Gn 6, 4; Enoch 6–36, especially 21, 6; 2 Enoch 7, 1–5).

**3, 21: Appeal to God:** this could also be translated "pledge," that is, a promise on the part of Christians to live with a good conscience before God, or a pledge from God of forgiveness and therefore a good conscience for us.

**4, 1–6:** Willingness to suffer with Christ equips the Christian with the power to conquer sin (1). Christ is here portrayed as the judge to whom those guilty of pagan vices must render an account (5; cf Jn 5, 22–27; Acts 10, 42; 2 Tm 4, 1).

**4, 6: The dead:** these may be the sinners of the flood generation who are possibly referred to in 3, 19. But many scholars think that there is no connection between these two verses, and that **the dead** here are Christians who have died since hearing the preaching of the gospel.

**4, 7–11:** The inner life of the eschatological community is outlined as **the end** (the parousia of Christ) and the judgment draws near in terms of seriousness, sobriety, prayer, and love expressed through hospitality and the use of one's gifts for the glory of God and of Christ.

**4, 8: Love covers a multitude of sins:** a maxim based on Prv 10, 12; see also Ps 32, 1; Jas 5, 20.

**4, 11:** Some scholars feel that this doxology concludes the part of the homily addressed specifically to the newly baptized, begun in 1, 3; others that it concludes a baptismal liturgy. Such doxologies do occur within a New Testament letter, e.g., Rom 9, 5. Some propose that v 11 was an alternate ending, with 4, 12—5, 14 being read in places where persecution was more pressing. But such doxologies usually do not occur at the end of letters (the only examples are 2 Pt 3, 18, Jude 25, and Rom 16, 27, the last probably a liturgical insertion).

**4, 12–19:** The suffering to which the author has already frequently referred is presented in more severe terms. This has led some scholars to see these verses as referring to an actual persecution. Others see the heightening of the language as only a rhetorical device used at the end of the letter to emphasize the suffering motif.

p 1 Cor 15, 45. q Gn 7, 7.17; 2 Pt 2, 5. r Eph 5, 26; Heb 10, 22. s Eph 1, 20–21. t Eph 2, 2–3; 4, 17–19; Col 3, 7; Ti 3, 3. u Acts 10, 42; 2 Tm 4, 1. v Prv 10, 12; Jas 5, 20. w Heb 13, 2. x Rom 12, 6–8; 1 Cor 12, 4–11. y 1 Cor 10, 31. z 1, 6–7; 3, 14.17. a Rom 5, 3–5; 8, 17; 2 Tm 2, 12. b Acts 5, 41 / Is 11, 2.

an intriguer. [16]But whoever is made to suffer as a
Christian should not be ashamed but glorify God
because of the name. [17] [c]For it is time for the
judgment to begin with the household of God; if
it begins with us, how will it end for those who
fail to obey the gospel of God?

[18] [d]"And if the righteous one is barely saved,
where will the godless and the sinner
appear?"

[19]As a result, those who suffer in accord with
God's will hand their souls over to a faithful
creator as they do good.

## CHAPTER 5

**Advice to Presbyters** [1]*So I exhort the presbyters among you, as a fellow presbyter and
witness to the sufferings of Christ and one who
has a share in the glory to be revealed. [2] [e]Tend
the flock of God in your midst, [overseeing] not
by constraint but willingly, as God would have
it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. [3]Do not
lord it over those assigned to you, but be
examples to the flock. [4] [f]*And when the chief
Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

**Advice to the Community** [5] [g]*Likewise, you
younger members, be subject to the presbyters.
And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility
in your dealings with one another, for:

"God opposes the proud
but bestows favor on the humble."

[6] [h]So humble yourselves under the mighty hand
of God, that he may exalt you in due time.
[7] [i]Cast all your worries upon him because he
cares for you.

[8] [j]Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the
devil is prowling around like a roaring lion
looking for [someone] to devour. [9]Resist him,
steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow
believers throughout the world undergo the
same sufferings. [10] [k]The God of all grace who
called you to his eternal glory through Christ
[Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen,
and establish you after you have suffered a little.
[11]To him be dominion forever. Amen.

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## V: Conclusion

[12]*I write you this briefly through Silvanus,
whom I consider a faithful brother, exhorting
you and testifying that this is the true grace of
God. Remain firm in it. [13]*The chosen one at
Babylon sends you greeting, as does Mark, my
son. [14] [l]Greet one another with a loving kiss.
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

**5, 1–4:** In imitation of Christ, the chief shepherd, those entrusted with a pastoral office are to tend the flock by their care and example.

**5, 1: Presbyters:** the officially appointed leaders and teachers of the Christian community (cf 1 Tm 5, 17–18; Ti 1, 5–8; Jas 5, 14).

**5, 4:** See the note on 2, 25.

**5, 5–11:** The community is to be subject to the presbyters and to show humility toward one another and trust in God's love and care (5–7). With sobriety, alertness, and steadfast faith they must resist the evil one; their sufferings are shared with Christians everywhere (8–9). They will be strengthened and called to eternal glory (10–11).

**5, 5: Younger members:** this may be a designation for officeholders of lesser rank.

**5, 12: Silvanus:** the companion of Paul (see 2 Cor 1, 19; 1 Thes 1, 1; 2 Thes 1, 1). Jews and Jewish Christians, like Paul, often had a Hebrew name (Saoul, Silas) and a Greek or Latin name (Paul, Silvanus). On Silvanus's possible role as amanuensis, see Introduction.

**5, 13: The chosen one:** feminine, referring to the Christian community (**ekklēsia**) at **Babylon**, the code name for Rome in Rv 14, 8; 17, 5; 18, 2. **Mark, my son:** traditionally a prominent disciple of Peter and co-worker at the church in Rome, perhaps the John Mark referred to in Acts 12, 12.25; 13, 5.13; and in 15, 37–39, a companion of Barnabas. Perhaps this is the same Mark mentioned as Barnabas's cousin in Col 4, 10, a co-worker with Paul in Phlm 24 (see also 2 Tm 4, 11).

c Lk 23, 31; 2 Thes 1, 8. d Prv 11, 31 LXX. e Acts 20, 28; Ti 1, 7. f Wis 5, 15–16; 1 Cor 9, 25; 2 Tm 4, 8; Jas 1, 12. g Prv 3, 34. h Jb 22, 29; Jas 4, 10. i Ps 55, 23; Mt 6, 25–33; Lk 12, 22–31; Phil 4, 6. j 1 Thes 5, 6. k Rom 8, 18; 2 Cor 4, 17. l Rom 16, 16; 1 Cor 16, 20; 2 Cor 13, 12.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

2 Peter
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This letter can be appreciated both for its positive teachings and for its earnest warnings. It seeks to strengthen readers in faith (1, 1), hope for the future (3, 1-10), knowledge (1, 2.6.8), love (1, 7), and other virtues (1, 5-6). This aim is carried out especially by warning against false teachers, the condemnation of whom occupies the long central section of the letter (2, 1-22). A particular crisis is the claim by "scoffers" that there will be no second coming of Jesus, a doctrine that the author vigorously affirms (3, 1-10). The concept of God's "promises" is particularly precious in the theology of 2 Peter (1, 4; 3, 4.9.13). Closing comments at 3, 17-18 well sum up the twin concerns: that you not "be led into" error and "fall" but instead "grow in grace" and "knowledge" of Jesus Christ.

Second Peter is clearly structured in its presentation of these points. It reminds its readers of the divine authenticity of Christ's teaching (1, 3-4), continues with reflections on Christian conduct (1, 5-15), then returns to the exalted dignity of Jesus by incorporating into the text the apostolic witness to his transfiguration (1, 16-18). It takes up the question of the interpretation of scripture by pointing out that it is possible to misunderstand the sacred writings (1, 19-21) and that divine punishment will overtake false teachers (2, 1-22). It proclaims that the parousia is the teaching of the Lord and of the apostles and is therefore an eventual certainty (3, 1-13). At the same time, it warns that the meaning of Paul's writings on this question should not be distorted (3, 14-18).

In both content and style this letter is very different from 1 Peter, which immediately precedes it in the canon. The opening verse attributes it to "Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ." Moreover, the author in 3, 1 calls his work a "second letter," referring probably to 1 Peter as his first, and in 1, 18 counts himself among those present at the transfiguration of Jesus.

Nevertheless, acceptance of 2 Peter into the New Testament canon met with great resistance in the early church. The oldest certain reference to it comes from Origen in the early third century. While he himself accepted both Petrine letters as canonical, he testifies that others rejected 2 Peter. As late as the fifth century some local churches still excluded it from the canon, but eventually it was universally adopted. The principal reason for the long delay was the persistent doubt that the letter stemmed from the apostle Peter.

Among modern scholars there is wide agreement that 2 Peter is a pseudonymous work, i.e., one written by a later author who attributed it to Peter according to a literary convention popular at the time. It gives the impression of being more remote in time from the apostolic period than 1 Peter; indeed, many think it is the latest work in the New Testament and assign it to the first or even the second quarter of the second century.

The principal reasons for this view are the following. The author refers to the apostles and "our ancestors" as belonging to a previous generation, now dead (3, 2-4). A collection of Paul's letters exists and appears to be well known, but disputes have arisen about the interpretation of them (3, 14-16). The passage about false teachers (2, 1-18) contains a number of literary contacts with Jude 4-16, and it is generally agreed that 2 Peter depends upon Jude, not vice versa. Finally, the principal problem exercising the author is the false teaching of "scoffers" who have concluded from the delay of the parousia that the Lord is not going to return. This could scarcely have been an issue during the lifetime of Simon Peter.

The Christians to whom the letter is addressed are not identified, though it may be the intent of 3, 1 to identify them with the churches of Asia Minor to which 1 Peter was sent. Except for the epistolary greeting in 1, 1-2, 2 Peter does not have the features of a genuine letter at all, but is rather a general exhortation cast in the form of a letter. The author must have been a Jewish Christian of the dispersion for, while his Jewish heritage is evident in various features of his thought and style, he writes in the rather stilted literary Greek of the Hellenistic period. He appeals to tradition against the twin threat of doctrinal error and moral laxity, which appear to reflect an early stage of what later developed into full-blown gnosticism. Thus he forms a link between the apostolic period and the church of subsequent ages.

The principal divisions of the Second Letter of Peter are the following:

I. Address (1, 1-2)
II. Exhortation to Christian Virtue (1, 3-21)
III. Condemnation of the False Teachers (2, 1-22)
IV. The Delay of the Second Coming (3, 1-16)
V. Final Exhortation and Doxology (3, 17-18)

## I: Address

### CHAPTER 1

**Greeting** 1 *Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle
of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a
faith of equal value to ours through the righteous-
ness of our God and savior Jesus Christ: 2 *may
grace and peace be yours in abundance through
knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

## II: Exhortation to Christian Virtue

**The Power of God's Promise** 3 a *His divine
power has bestowed on us everything that makes
for life and devotion, through the knowledge of
him who called us by his own glory and power.
4 b Through these, he has bestowed on us the pre-
cious and very great promises, so that through
them you may come to share in the divine nature,
after escaping from the corruption that is in the
world because of evil desire. 5 c *For this very rea-
son, make every effort to supplement your faith
with virtue, virtue with knowledge, 6 knowledge
with self-control, self-control with endurance, en-
durance with devotion, 7 devotion with mutual
affection, mutual affection with love. 8 If these are
yours and increase in abundance, they will keep
you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowl-
edge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 d Anyone who
lacks them is blind and shortsighted, forgetful of
the cleansing of his past sins. 10 *Therefore, broth-
ers, be all the more eager to make your call and
election firm, for, in doing so, you will never
stumble. 11 For, in this way, entry into the eternal
kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will
be richly provided for you.

**Apostolic Witness** 12 *Therefore, I will always
remind you of these things, even though you

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1, 1: **Symeon Peter:** on the authorship of 2 Peter, see Introduction; on the spelling here of the Hebrew name **Šim'ôn,** cf Acts 15, 14. The greeting is especially similar to those in 1 Peter and Jude. The words translated **our God and savior Jesus Christ** could also be rendered "our God and the savior Jesus Christ"; cf 11; 2, 20; 3, 2.18.

1, 2: **Knowledge:** a key term in the letter (3.8; 2, 20; 3, 18), perhaps used as a Christian emphasis against gnostic claims.

1, 3–4: Christian life in its fullness is a gift of divine power effecting a knowledge of Christ and the bestowal of divine promises (3, 4.9). **To share in the divine nature,** escaping from a corrupt world, is a thought found elsewhere in the Bible but expressed only here in such Hellenistic terms, since it is said to be accomplished through **knowledge** (3); cf 2; 2, 20; but see also Jn 15, 4; 17, 22–23; Rom 8, 14–17; Heb 3, 14; 1 Jn 1, 3; 3, 2.

1, 3: **By his own glory and power:** the most ancient papyrus and the best codex read "through glory and power."

1, 5–9: Note the climactic gradation of qualities (5–7), beginning with faith and leading to the fullness of Christian life, which is love; cf Rom 5, 3–4; Gal 5, 6.22 for a similar series of "virtues," though the program and sense here are different than in Paul. The fruit of these is knowledge of Christ (8) referred to in v 3; their absence is spiritual blindness (9).

1, 10–11: Perseverance in the Christian vocation is the best preventative against losing it and the safest provision for attaining its goal, the kingdom. **Kingdom of . . . Christ,** instead of "God," is unusual; cf Col 1, 13 and Mt 13, 41, as well as the **righteousness of . . . Christ** (1).

1, 12–19: The purpose in writing is to call to mind the apostle's witness to the truth, even as he faces the end of his life (12–15), his eyewitness testimony to Christ (16–18), and the true pro-

a 2 Cor 4, 6; 1 Pt 2, 9. b 2 Cor 7, 1; 1 Jn 2, 15. c Gal 5, 22–23. d 1 Jn 2, 9.11.

already know them and are established in the truth you have. 13*I think it right, as long as I am in this "tent," to stir you up by a reminder, 14 *e*since I know that I will soon have to put it aside, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. 15I shall also make every effort to enable you always to remember these things after my departure.

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16*f**We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17*g**For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." 18*We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. 19*h*Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20*Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation, 21for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God.

## III: Condemnation of the False Teachers

### CHAPTER 2

**False Teachers** 1*i**There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2*j*Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. 3*k*In their greed they will exploit you with fabrications, but from of old their condemnation has not been idle and their destruction does not sleep.

**Lessons from the Past** 4*l**For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but condemned them to the chains of Tartarus and handed them over to be kept for judgment; 5*m**and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, together with seven others, when

phetic message (19) through the Spirit in scripture (20–21), in contrast to what false teachers are setting forth (ch 2).

**1, 13: Tent:** a biblical image for transitory human life (Is 38, 12), here combined with a verb that suggests not folding or packing up a tent but its being discarded in death (cf 2 Cor 5, 1–4).

**1, 16: Coming:** in Greek **parousia,** used at 3, 4.12 of the second coming of Christ. The word was used in the extrabiblical writings for the visitation of someone in authority; in Greek cult and Hellenistic Judaism it was used for the manifestation of the divine presence. What the apostles **made known** has been interpreted to refer to Jesus' transfiguration (17) or to his entire first coming or to his future coming in power (ch 3).

**1, 17:** The author assures the readers of the reliability of the apostolic message (including Jesus' power, glory, and coming; cf the note on 1, 16) by appeal to the transfiguration of Jesus in glory (cf Mt 17, 1–8 and parallels) and by appeal to the prophetic message (19; perhaps Nm 24, 17). Here, as elsewhere, the New Testament insists on continued reminders as necessary to preserve the historical facts about Jesus and the truths of the faith; cf 3, 1–2; 1 Cor 11, 2; 15, 1–3. **My Son, my beloved:** or, "my beloved Son."

**1, 18: We:** at Jesus' transfiguration, referring to Peter, James, and John (Mt 17, 1).

**1, 20–21:** Often cited, along with 2 Tm 3, 16, on the "inspiration" of scripture or against private interpretation, these verses in context are directed against the false teachers of ch 2 and clever tales (16). The prophetic word in scripture comes admittedly through **human beings** (21), but **moved by the holy Spirit,** not from their own interpretation, and is a matter of what the author and Spirit intended, not the **personal interpretation** of false teachers. Instead of **under the influence of God,** some manuscripts read "holy ones of God."

**2, 1–3:** The pattern of **false prophets** among the Old Testament people of God will recur through **false teachers** in the church. Such destructive opinions of heretical sects bring loss of faith in Christ, contempt for the way of salvation (cf 21), and immorality.

**2, 4–6:** The false teachers will be punished just as surely and as severely as were the fallen **angels** (4; cf Jude 6; Gn 6, 1–4), the sinners of Noah's day (5; Gn 7, 21–23), and the inhabitants of the cities of the Plain (6; Jude 7; Gn 19, 25). Whereas there are three examples in Jude 5–7 (Exodus and wilderness; rebellious angels; Sodom and Gomorrah), 2 Peter omitted the first of these, has inserted a new illustration about Noah (5) between Jude's second and third examples, and listed the resulting three examples in their Old Testament order (Gn 6; 7; 19).

**2, 4: Chains of Tartarus:** cf Jude 6; other manuscripts in 2 Peter read "pits of Tartarus." **Tartarus:** a term borrowed from Greek mythology to indicate the infernal regions.

**2, 5–10a:** Although God did not spare the sinful, he kept and saved the righteous, such as **Noah** (5) and **Lot** (7), and he **knows how to rescue the devout** (9), who are contrasted with the false teachers of the author's day. On Noah, cf Gn 5, 32—9, 29, especially 7, 1. On Lot, cf Gn 13 and 19.

*e* Is 38, 12; Jn 21, 18–19. *f* Lk 9, 28–36; Jn 1, 14. *g* Ps 2, 7; Mt 17, 4–6. *h* Lk 1, 78–79; Rv 2, 28. *i* Mt 24, 11.24; 1 Tm 4, 1; Jude 4. *j* Is 52, 5. *k* Rom 16, 18. *l* Jude 6. *m* Gn 8, 15–19; Heb 11, 7.

he brought a flood upon the godless world;
6 [n]and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and
Gommorah [to destruction], reducing them to
ashes, making them an example for the godless
[people] of what is coming; 7and if he rescued
Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious
conduct of unprincipled people 8(for day after
day that righteous man living among them was
tormented in his righteous soul at the lawless
deeds that he saw and heard), 9 [o]then the Lord
knows how to rescue the devout from trial and
to keep the unrighteous under punishment for
the day of judgment, 10 [p]*and especially those
who follow the flesh with its depraved desire
and show contempt for lordship.

**False Teachers Denounced** Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to revile glorious beings,
11 [q]*whereas angels, despite their superior
strength and power, do not bring a reviling judgment against them from the Lord. 12 [r]But these
people, like irrational animals born by nature for
capture and destruction, revile things that they
do not understand, and in their destruction they
will also be destroyed, 13 [s]*suffering wrong as payment for wrongdoing. Thinking daytime revelry a
delight, they are stains and defilements as they
revel in their deceits while carousing with you.
14Their eyes are full of adultery and insatiable for
sin. They seduce unstable people, and their
hearts are trained in greed. Accursed children!
15 [t]*Abandoning the straight road, they have
gone astray, following the road of Balaam, the son
of Bosor, who loved payment for wrongdoing,
16 [u]but he received a rebuke for his own crime: a
mute beast spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.
17 [v]These people are waterless springs and
mists driven by a gale; for them the gloom of
darkness has been reserved. 18 [w]*For, talking
empty bombast, they seduce with licentious
desires of the flesh those who have barely
escaped from people who live in error. 19 [x]They
promise them freedom, though they themselves
are slaves of corruption, for a person is a slave of
whatever overcomes him. 20 [y]For if they, having
escaped the defilements of the world through
the knowledge of [our] Lord and savior Jesus
Christ, again become entangled and overcome
by them, their last condition is worse than their
first. 21 [z]*For it would have been better for them
not to have known the way of righteousness
than after knowing it to turn back from the holy
commandment handed down to them.
22 [a]*What is expressed in the true proverb has
happened to them, "The dog returns to its own
vomit," and "A bathed sow returns to wallowing
in the mire."

## IV: The Delay of the Second Coming

### CHAPTER 3

**Denial of the Parousia** 1*This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you;

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**2, 10b-22:** Some take 10b and 11 with the preceding paragraph. Others begin the new paragraph with 10a, supplying from v 9 **The Lord knows how . . . to keep . . . under punishment,** with reference to God and probably specifically Christ (1). The conduct of the false teachers is described and condemned in language similar to that of Jude 8–16. This arrogance knows no bounds; animal-like, they are due to be caught and destroyed. They seduce even those who have knowledge of Christ (20).

**2, 10b: Glorious beings:** literally, "glories"; cf Jude 8. While some think that illustrious personages are meant or even political officials behind whom (fallen) angels stand, it is more likely that the reference is to glorious angelic beings (cf Jude 9).

**2, 11: From the Lord:** some manuscripts read "before the Lord"; cf Jude 9.

**2, 13: Suffering wrong:** some manuscripts read "receiving a reward." **In their deceits:** some manuscripts read "in their love feasts" (Jude 12).

**2, 15: Balaam, the son of Bosor:** in Nm 22, 5, Balaam is said to be the son of Beor, and it is this name that turns up in a few ancient Greek manuscripts by way of "correction" of the text. Balaam is not portrayed in such a bad light in Nm 22. His evil reputation and his **madness** (16), and possibly his surname Bosor, may have come from a Jewish tradition about him in the first/second century, of which we no longer have any knowledge.

**2, 18: Barely escaped:** some manuscripts read "really escaped."

**2, 21: Commandment handed down:** cf 3, 2 and Jude 3.

**2, 22:** The second proverb is of unknown origin, while the first appears in Prv 26, 11.

**3, 1–4:** The false teachers not only flout Christian morality (cf Jude 8–19); they also deny the second coming of Christ and the judgment (4; cf 7). They seek to justify their licentiousness by arguing that the promised return of Christ has not been realized and the world is the same, no better than it was before (3–4). The author wishes to strengthen the faithful against such errors by reminding them in this **second letter** of the instruction in 1 Pt and of the teaching of the **prophets** and of Christ, conveyed through the **apostles** (1–2; cf Jude 17); cf 1 Pt 1, 10–12.16–21, especially 16–21; Eph 2, 20.

n Gn 19, 24–25; Jude 7. o 1 Cor 10, 13; Rv 3, 10. p Jude 8. q Jude 9. r Ps 49, 13–15; Jude 10. s Jude 12. t Nm 31, 16; Jude 11. u Nm 22, 28–33. v Jude 12–13. w Jude 16. x Jn 8, 34; Rom 6, 16–17. y Mt 12, 45. z Ez 3, 20. a Prv 26, 11.

through them by way of reminder I am trying to
stir up your sincere disposition, 2 [b]to recall the
words previously spoken by the holy prophets
and the commandment of the Lord and savior
through your apostles. 3 [c]*Know this first of all,
that in the last days scoffers will come [to] scoff,
living according to their own desires 4 [d]*and
saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?
From the time when our ancestors fell asleep,
everything has remained as it was from the
beginning of creation." 5 [e]*They deliberately
ignore the fact that the heavens existed of old
and earth was formed out of water and through
water by the word of God; 6 [f]*through these the
world that then existed was destroyed, deluged
with water. 7 [g]The present heavens and earth
have been reserved by the same word for fire,
kept for the day of judgment and of destruction
of the godless.

8 [h]*But do not ignore this one fact, beloved,
that with the Lord one day is like a thousand
years and a thousand years like one day. 9 [i]The
Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard
"delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing
that any should perish but that all should come
to repentance. 10 [j]*But the day of the Lord will
come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass
away with a mighty roar and the elements will
be dissolved by fire, and the earth and every-
thing done on it will be found out.

**Exhortation to Preparedness** 11 [k]*Since
everything is to be dissolved in this way, what
sort of persons ought [you] to be, conducting
yourselves in holiness and devotion, 12 [l]*waiting
for and hastening the coming of the day of God,
because of which the heavens will be dissolved
in flames and the elements melted by fire.
13 [m]*But according to his promise we await new
heavens and a new earth in which righteousness
dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you await these
things, be eager to be found without spot or
blemish before him, at peace. 15 [n]And consider
the patience of our Lord as salvation, as our
beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom
given to him, also wrote to you, 16 *speaking of
these things as he does in all his letters. In them
there are some things hard to understand that
the ignorant and unstable distort to their own
destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

**3, 3: Scoffers:** cf Jude 18, where, however, only the passions of the scoffers are mentioned, not a denial on their part of Jesus' parousia.

**3, 4–7:** The false teachers tried to justify their immorality by pointing out that the promised **coming (parousia)** of the Lord has not yet occurred, even though early Christians expected it in their day. They thus insinuate that God is not guiding the world's history anymore, since nothing has changed and the first generation of Christians, **our ancestors** (4), has all died by this time. The author replies that, just as God destroyed the earth by water in the flood (5–6, cf 2, 5), so he will destroy it along with the false teachers on judgment day (7). **The word of God,** which called the world into being (Gn 1; Ps 33, 6) and **destroyed** it by the waters of a flood, will destroy it again by fire on **the day of judgment** (5–7).

**3, 5: Formed out of water and through water:** Gn 1, 2.6–8 is reflected as well as Greek views that water was the basic element from which all is derived.

**3, 6: Destroyed, deluged with water:** cf 2, 5; Gn 7, 11—8, 2.

**3, 8–10:** The scoffers' objection (4) is refuted also by showing that **delay** of the Lord's second coming is not a failure to fulfill his word but rather a sign of his patience: God is giving time for repentance before the final judgment (cf Wis 11, 23–26; Ez 18, 23; 33, 11).

**3, 8:** Cf Ps 90, 4.

**3, 10: Like a thief:** Mt 24, 43; 1 Thes 5, 2; Rv 3, 3. **Will be found out:** cf 1 Cor 3, 13–15. Some few versions read, as the sense may demand, "will not be found out"; many manuscripts read "will be burned up"; there are further variants in other manuscripts, versions, and Fathers. Total destruction is assumed (11).

**3, 11–16:** The second coming of Christ and the judgment of the world are the doctrinal bases for the moral exhortation to readiness through vigilance and a virtuous life; cf Mt 24, 42.50–51; Lk 12, 40; 1 Thes 5, 1–11; Jude 20–21.

**3, 12: Flames . . . fire:** although this is the only New Testament passage about a final conflagration, the idea was common in apocalyptic and Greco-Roman thought. **Hastening:** eschatology is here used to motivate ethics (11), as elsewhere in the New Testament. Jewish sources and Acts 3, 19–20 assume that proper ethical conduct can help bring the promised day of the Lord; cf 9. Some render the phrase, however, "desiring it earnestly."

**3, 13: New heavens and a new earth:** cf Is 65, 17; 66, 22. The divine promises will be fulfilled after the day of judgment will have passed. The universe will be transformed by the reign of God's **righteousness** or justice; cf Is 65, 17–18; Acts 3, 21; Rom 8, 18–25; Rv 21, 1.

**3, 16: These things:** the teachings of this letter find parallels in Paul, e.g., God's will to save (Rom 2, 4; 9, 22–23; 1 Cor 1, 7–8), the coming of Christ (1 Thes 4, 16–17; 1 Cor 15, 23–52), and preparedness for the judgment (Col 1, 22–23; Eph 1, 4–14; 4, 30; 5, 5–14). **Other scriptures:** used to guide the faith and life of the Christian community. The letters of Paul are thus here placed on the same level as books of the Old Testament. Possibly other New Testament writings could also be included.

b Jude 17. c 1 Tm 4, 1; 2 Tm 3, 1; Jude 18. d Is 5, 19. e Gn 1, 2.6.8; Ps 24, 2. f Gn 7, 21. g Is 51, 6; Mt 3, 12. h Ps 90, 4. i Ez 18, 23; 1 Tm 2, 4. j Is 66, 15–16; Mt 24, 29. k Acts 3, 19–21. l Is 34, 4; Heb 10, 27. m Is 65, 17; 66, 22; Rom 8, 21; Rv 21, 1.27. n Rom 8, 19; Jude 24.

## V: Final Exhortation and Doxology

17 *o**Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. 18 *p*But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity. [Amen.]

3, 17–18: To avoid the dangers of **error** and loss of **stability**, Christians are **forewarned** to be **on guard** and to **grow in grace and knowledge** (1, 2) of Christ. The doxology (18) recalls 1 Pt 4, 11. Some manuscripts add **Amen**.

o Mk 13, 5; Heb 2, 1. p Rom 16, 27.

# THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

1 John
See RG
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Early Christian tradition identified this work as a letter of John the apostle. Because of its resemblance to the fourth gospel in style, vocabulary, and ideas, it is generally agreed that both works are the product of the same school of Johannine Christianity. The terminology and the presence or absence of certain theological ideas in 1 John suggest that it was written after the gospel; it may have been composed as a short treatise on ideas that were developed more fully in the fourth gospel. To others, the evidence suggests that 1 John was written after the fourth gospel as part of a debate on the proper interpretation of that gospel. Whatever its relation to the gospel, 1 John may be dated toward the end of the first century. Unlike 2 and 3 John, it lacks in form the salutation and epistolary conclusion of a letter. These features, its prologue, and its emphasis on doctrinal teaching make it more akin to a theological treatise than to most other New Testament letters.

The purpose of the letter is to combat certain false ideas, especially about Jesus, and to deepen the spiritual and social awareness of the Christian community (3, 17). Some former members (2, 19) of the community refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ (2, 22) and denied that he was a true man (4, 2). The specific heresy described in this letter cannot be identified exactly, but it is a form of docetism or gnosticism; the former doctrine denied the humanity of Christ to insure that his divinity was untainted, and the latter viewed the appearance of Christ as a mere stepping-stone to higher knowledge of God. These theological errors are rejected by an appeal to the reality and continuity of the apostolic witness to Jesus. The author affirms that authentic Christian love, ethics, and faith take place only within the historical revelation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The fullness of Christian life as fellowship with the Father must be based on true belief and result in charitable living; knowledge of God and love for one another are inseparable, and error in one area inevitably affects the other. Although the author recognizes that Christian doctrine presents intangible mysteries of faith about Christ, he insists that the concrete Christian life brings to light the deeper realities of the gospel.

The structure and language of the letter are straightforward yet repetitious. The author sets forth the striking contrasts between light and darkness, Christians and the world, and truth and error to illustrate the threats and responsibilities of Christian life. The result is not one of theological argument but one of intense religious conviction expressed in simple truths. The letter is of particular value for its declaration of the humanity and divinity of Christ as an apostolic teaching and for its development of the intrinsic connection between Christian moral conduct and Christian doctrine.

The principal divisions of the First Letter of John are the following:

I. Prologue (1, 1-4)
II. God as Light (1, 5—3, 10)
III. Love for One Another (3, 11—5, 12)
IV. Epilogue (5, 13-21)

# I: Prologue

## CHAPTER 1

Ch 1
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### The Word of Life

1 a *What was from the beginning,
what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes,
what we looked upon
and touched with our hands
concerns the Word of life—
2 b for the life was made visible;
we have seen it and testify to it
and proclaim to you the eternal life
that was with the Father and was made visible to us—
3 c what we have seen and heard
we proclaim now to you,
so that you too may have fellowship with us;
for our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son, Jesus Christ.
4 d We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.

Ch 2–3
See RG
564–565

# II: God As Light

**God is Light** 5 *Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. 6 e If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie and do not act in truth. 7 f But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. 8 g *If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 h If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. 10 i If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

## CHAPTER 2

**Christ and His Commandments** 1 j *My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. 2 k He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. 3 l *The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. 4 m Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 n But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the

1, 1–4: There is a striking parallel to the prologue of the gospel of John (Jn 1, 1–18), but the emphasis here is not on the preexistent Word but rather on the apostles' witness to the incarnation of life by their experience of the historical Jesus. He is **the Word of life** (1; cf Jn 1, 4), **the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible** (2; cf Jn 1, 14), and was **heard, seen, looked upon,** and **touched** by the apostles. The purpose of their teaching is to share that life, called **fellowship . . . with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ,** with those who receive their witness (3; Jn 1, 14.16).

1, 5–7: **Light** is to be understood here as truth and goodness; **darkness** here is error and depravity (cf Jn 3, 19–21; 17, 17; Eph 5, 8). To **walk** in light or darkness is to live according to truth or error, not merely intellectual but moral as well. Fellowship with God and with one another consists in a life according to the truth as found in God and in Christ.

1, 8–10: Denial of the condition of sin is self-deception and even contradictory of divine revelation; there is also the continual possibility of sin's recurrence. Forgiveness and deliverance from sin through Christ are assured through acknowledgment of them and repentance.

2, 1: **Children:** like the term "beloved," this is an expression of pastoral love (cf Jn 13, 33; 21, 5; 1 Cor 4, 14). **Advocate:** for the use of the term, see Jn 14, 16. Forgiveness of sin is assured through Christ's intercession and expiation or "offering"; the death of Christ effected the removal of sin.

2, 3–6: **The way we may be sure:** to those who claim, "I have known Christ and therefore I know him," our author insists on not mere intellectual knowledge but obedience to God's commandments in a life conformed to the example of Christ; this confirms our knowledge of him and is **the love of God . . . perfected.** Disparity between moral life and the commandments proves improper belief.

a 2, 13; Jn 1, 1.14; 20, 20.25.27. b Jn 15, 27; 17, 5. c Jn 17, 21; Acts 4, 20. d Jn 15, 11; 2 Jn 12. e Jn 12, 35. f Mt 26, 28; Rom 3, 24–25; Heb 9, 14; 1 Pt 1, 19; Rv 1, 5. g 2 Chr 6, 36; Prv 20, 9. h Prv 28, 13; Jas 5, 16. i 5, 10. j Jn 14, 16; Heb 7, 25. k 4, 10. l Jn 14, 15; 15, 10. m 4, 20. n Jn 14, 23.

way we may know that we are in union with him: [6]whoever claims to abide in him ought to live [just] as he lived.

**The New Commandment** [7 o]*Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. [8 p]*And yet I do write a new commandment to you, which holds true in him and among you, for the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. [9 q]Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. [10 r]Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall. [11]Whoever hates his brother is in darkness; he walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

**Members of the Community** [12 s]*I am writing to you, children, because your sins have been forgiven for his name's sake.

[13 t]I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one.

[14]I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

[15 u]*Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16]*For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. [17 v]Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever.

**Antichrists** [18 w]*Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. Thus we know this is the last hour. [19]*They went out from us, but they were not really of our number; if they had been, they would have remained with us. Their desertion shows that none of them was of our number. [20 x]*But you have the anointing that comes from the holy one, and you all have knowledge. [21 y]I write to you not because you do not know the truth but because you do, and because every lie is alien to the truth. [22 z]*Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, this is the antichrist. [23 a]No one who denies the Son has the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.

**Life from God's Anointing** [24 b]*Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. If what

**2, 7–11:** The author expresses the continuity and freshness of mutual charity in Christian experience. Through Christ the commandment of love has become the **light** defeating the **darkness** of evil in a new age. All hatred as darkness is incompatible with the light and Christian life. Note also the characteristic Johannine polemic in which a positive assertion is emphasized by the negative statement of its opposite.

**2, 8: Which holds true in him and among you:** literally, "a thing that holds true in him and in you."

**2, 12–17:** The Christian community that has experienced the grace of God through forgiveness of sin and knowledge of Christ is armed against the evil one.

**2, 12: For his name's sake:** because of Christ our sins are forgiven.

**2, 15: The world:** all that is hostile toward God and alienated from him. Love of the **world** and love of God are thus mutually exclusive; cf Jas 4, 4.

**2, 16: Sensual lust:** literally, "the lust of the flesh," inordinate desire for physical gratification. **Enticement for the eyes:** literally, "the lust of the eyes," avarice or covetousness; the eyes are regarded as the windows of the soul. **Pretentious life:** literally, "pride of life," arrogance or ostentation in one's earthly style of life that reflects a willful independence from God and others.

**2, 18: It is the last hour:** literally, "a last hour," the period between the death and resurrection of Christ and his second coming. **The antichrist:** opponent or adversary of Christ; the term appears only in 1–2 John, but "pseudochrists" (translated "false messiahs") in Mt 24, 24 and Mk 13, 22, and Paul's "lawless one" in 2 Thes 2, 3, are similar figures. **Many antichrists:** Mt, Mk, and Rv seem to indicate a collectivity of persons, here related to the false teachers.

**2, 19: Not really of our number:** the apostate teachers only proved their lack of faith by leaving the community.

**2, 20: The anointing that comes from the holy one:** this anointing is in the Old Testament sense of receiving the Spirit of God. The **Holy One** probably refers to Christ. True knowledge is the gift of the Spirit (cf Is 11, 2), and the function of the Spirit is to lead Christians to the truth (Jn 14, 17.26; 16, 13).

**2, 22–23:** Certain gnostics denied that the earthly Jesus was the Christ; to deny knowledge of the Son is to deny the Father, since only through the Son has God been fully revealed (Jn 1, 18; 14, 8–9).

**2, 24:** Continuity with the apostolic witness as proclaimed in the prologue is the safeguard of right belief.

o 3, 11; Dt 6, 5; Mt 22, 37–40. p Jn 13, 34 / Jn 1, 5; Rom 13, 12. q Jn 8, 12. r Eccl 2, 14; Jn 11, 10. s 1 Cor 6, 11. t 1, 1; Jn 1, 1. u Rom 8, 7–8; Jas 4, 4; 2 Pt 1, 4. v Is 40, 8; Mt 7, 21; 1 Cor 7, 31; 1 Pt 4, 2. w 1 Tim 4, 1. x Jn 14, 26. y 3, 19; 2 Pt 1, 12. z 2 Thes 2, 4. a Jn 14, 7–9. b Jn 14, 23.

you heard from the beginning remains in you,
then you will remain in the Son and in the
Father. 25 [c]And this is the promise that he made
us: eternal life. 26 I write you these things about
those who would deceive you. 27 As for you, the
anointing that you received from him remains in
you, so that you do not need anyone to teach
you. But his anointing teaches you about every-
thing and is true and not false; just as it taught
you, remain in him.

**Children of God** 28 *And now, children, re-
main in him, so that when he appears we may
have confidence and not be put to shame by him
at his coming. 29 If you consider that he is
righteous, you also know that everyone who acts
in righteousness is begotten by him.

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 2–3
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1 [d]*See what love the Father has bestowed on
us that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are. The reason the world does not
know us is that it did not know him.
2 [e]*Beloved, we are God's children now; what
we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do
know that when it is revealed we shall be like
him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 [f]Everyone
who has this hope based on him makes himself
pure, as he is pure.

**Avoiding Sin** 4 *Everyone who commits sin
commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.
5 [g]You know that he was revealed to take away
sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who
remains in him sins; no one who sins has seen
him or known him. 7 Children, let no one
deceive you. The person who acts in righteous-
ness is righteous, just as he is righteous.
8 [h]Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because
the devil has sinned from the beginning. In-
deed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy
the works of the devil. 9 *No one who is begot-
ten by God commits sin, because God's seed
remains in him; he cannot sin because he is
begotten by God. 10 In this way, the children of
God and the children of the devil are made
plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness
belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love
his brother.

## III: Love for One Another

11 [i]*For this is the message you have heard
from the beginning: we should love one another,
12 [j]unlike Cain who belonged to the evil one and
slaughtered his brother. Why did he slaughter
him? Because his own works were evil, and
those of his brother righteous. 13 [k]Do not be
amazed, [then,] brothers, if the world hates you.
14 [l]We know that we have passed from death to
life because we love our brothers. Whoever does
not love remains in death. 15 [m]Everyone who
hates his brother is a murderer, and you know
that no murderer has eternal life remaining in
him. 16 [n]The way we came to know love was
that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to
lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 [o]If some-
one who has worldly means sees a brother in
need and refuses him compassion, how can the
love of God remain in him? 18 [p]Children, let us
love not in word or speech but in deed and
truth.

**2, 28–29:** Our confidence at his judgment is based on the daily assurance of salvation. Our actions reflect our true relation to him.

**3, 1–3:** The greatest sign of God's love is the gift of his Son (Jn 3, 16) that has made Christians true children of God. This relationship is a present reality and also part of the life to come; true knowledge of God will ultimately be gained, and Christians prepare themselves now by virtuous lives in imitation of the Son.

**3, 2: When it is revealed:** or "when he is revealed" (the subject of the verb could be Christ).

**3, 4: Lawlessness:** a reference to the activity of the antichrist, so it is expressed as hostility toward God and a rejection of Christ. The author goes on to contrast the states of sin and righteousness. Christians do not escape sin but realize that when they sin they cease to have fellowship with God. Virtue and sin distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil.

**3, 9:** A habitual sinner is a child of the devil, while a child of God, who by definition is in fellowship with God, cannot sin. **Seed:** Christ or the Spirit who shares the nature of God with the Christian.

**3, 11–18:** Love, even to the point of self-sacrifice, is the point of the commandment. The story of Cain and Abel (12–15; Gn 4, 1–16) presents the rivalry of two brothers, in a contrast of evil and righteousness, where envy led to murder. For Christians, proof of deliverance is love toward others, after the example of Christ. This includes concrete acts of charity, out of our material abundance.

c Jn 5, 24; 10, 28; 17, 2. d Jn 1, 12; Eph 1, 5 / Jn 15, 21; 17, 25. e Phil 3, 21. f 2, 6. g Is 53, 9; Jn 1, 29; 8, 46; 1 Pt 2, 22. h Jn 8, 44; 12, 31–32. i 2, 7; Jn 13, 34; 15, 12.17. j Gn 4, 8; Jude 11. k Mt 24, 9; Jn 15, 18; 17, 14. l Lv 19, 17; Jn 5, 24. m Jn 8, 44. n Mt 20, 28; Jn 10, 11; 15, 13. o Dt 15, 7.11; Jas 2, 15–16. p Jas 1, 22.

**Confidence before God** 19*[Now] this is how
we shall know that we belong to the truth and
reassure our hearts before him 20in whatever our
hearts condemn, for God is greater than our
hearts and knows everything. 21Beloved, if [our]
hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence
in God 22 [q]and receive from him whatever we
ask, because we keep his commandments and
do what pleases him. 23 [r]And his commandment
is this: we should believe in the name of his Son,
Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he
commanded us. 24 [s]Those who keep his com-
mandments remain in him, and he in them, and
the way we know that he remains in us is from
the Spirit that he gave us.

## CHAPTER 4

**Testing the Spirits** 1 [t]*Beloved, do not trust
every spirit but test the spirits to see whether
they belong to God, because many false prophets
have gone out into the world. 2 [u]This is how you
can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that
acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh
belongs to God, 3 [v]*and every spirit that does not
acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This
is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is
to come, but in fact is already in the world. 4You
belong to God, children, and you have con-
quered them, for the one who is in you is greater
than the one who is in the world. 5 [w]They belong
to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs
to the world, and the world listens to them.
6 [x]We belong to God, and anyone who knows
God listens to us, while anyone who does not
belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we
know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

**God's Love and Christian Life** 7*Beloved, let
us love one another, because love is of God;
everyone who loves is begotten by God and
knows God. 8Whoever is without love does not
know God, for God is love. 9 [y]In this way the
love of God was revealed to us: God sent his
only Son into the world so that we might have
life through him. 10 [z]In this is love: not that we
have loved God, but that he loved us and sent
his Son as expiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if
God so loved us, we also must love one another.
12 [a]No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one
another, God remains in us, and his love is
brought to perfection in us.

Ch 4–5
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13*This is how we know that we remain in
him and he in us, that he has given us of his
Spirit. 14Moreover, we have seen and testify that
the Father sent his Son as savior of the world.
15Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of
God, God remains in him and he in God. 16We
have come to know and to believe in the love
God has for us.

God is love, and whoever remains in love
remains in God and God in him. 17 [b]In this is
love brought to perfection among us, that we
have confidence on the day of judgment because
as he is, so are we in this world. 18There is no
fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear
because fear has to do with punishment, and so
one who fears is not yet perfect in love. 19We

**3, 19–24:** Living a life of faith in Jesus and of Christian love assures us of abiding in God no matter what our feelings may at times tell us. Our obedience gives us confidence in prayer and trust in God's judgment. This obedience includes our belief in Christ and love for one another.

**3, 19b-20:** This difficult passage may also be translated "we shall be at peace before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for . . ." or "and before God we shall convince our hearts, if our hearts condemn us, that God is greater than our hearts."

**4, 1–6:** Deception is possible in spiritual phenomena and may be tested by its relation to Christian doctrine (cf 1 Cor 12, 3): those who fail to acknowledge Jesus Christ in the flesh are false prophets and belong to the antichrist. Even though these false prophets are well received in the world, the Christian who belongs to God has a greater power in the truth.

**4, 3: Does not acknowledge Jesus:** some ancient manuscripts add "Christ" and/or "to have come in the flesh" (cf 2), and others read "every spirit that annuls (or severs) Jesus."

**4, 7–12:** Love as we share in it testifies to the nature of God and to his presence in our lives. One who loves shows that one is a child of God and knows God, for God's very being is love; one without love is without God. The revelation of the nature of God's love is found in the free gift of his Son to us, so that we may share life with God and be delivered from our sins. The love we have for one another must be of the same sort: authentic, merciful; this unique Christian love is our proof that we know God and can "see" the invisible God.

**4, 13–21:** The testimony of the Spirit and that of faith join the testimony of love to confirm our knowledge of God. Our love is grounded in the confession of Jesus as the Son of God and the example of God's love for us. Christian life is founded on the knowledge of God as love and on his continuing presence that relieves us from fear of judgment (16–18). What Christ is gives us confidence, even as we live and love in this world. Yet Christian love is not abstract but lived in the concrete manner of love for one another.

q 5, 15; Mt 7, 7–11; 21, 22; Jn 14, 13–14. r Jn 13, 34; 15, 17. s 4, 13; Jn 14, 21–23. t 2, 18; Mt 24, 24. u 1 Cor 12, 3; 1 Thes 5, 21. v 1, 22. w Jn 15, 19. x Jn 8, 47; 10, 16. y Jn 3, 16. z Rom 5, 8. a Jn 1, 18; 1 Tm 6, 16. b 2, 28.

love because he first loved us. 20 [c]*If anyone
says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a
liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom
he has seen cannot love God whom he has not
seen. 21 [d]This is the commandment we have
from him: whoever loves God must also love his
brother.

## CHAPTER 5

Ch 4–5
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**Faith is Victory over the World** 1 [e]*Everyone
who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten
by God, and everyone who loves the father loves
[also] the one begotten by him. 2 In this way we
know that we love the children of God when we
love God and obey his commandments. 3 [f]For
the love of God is this, that we keep his
commandments. And his commandments are
not burdensome, 4 [g]for whoever is begotten by
God conquers the world. And the victory that
conquers the world is our faith. 5 [h]Who [indeed]
is the victor over the world but the one who
believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 [i]*This is the one who came through water
and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but
by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that
testifies, and the Spirit is truth. 7 So there are
three that testify, 8 [j]the Spirit, the water, and the
blood, and the three are of one accord. 9 [k]If we
accept human testimony, the testimony of God is
surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this,
that he has testified on behalf of his Son.
10 [l]Whoever believes in the Son of God has this
testimony within himself. Whoever does not
believe God has made him a liar by not believing
the testimony God has given about his Son.
11 [m]And this is the testimony: God gave us
eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever
possesses the Son has life; whoever does not
possess the Son of God does not have life.

# IV: Epilogue

**Prayer for Sinners** 13 [n]*I write these things to
you so that you may know that you have eternal
life, you who believe in the name of the Son of
God. 14 [o]And we have this confidence in him,
that if we ask anything according to his will, he
hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in
regard to whatever we ask, we know that what
we have asked him for is ours. 16 [p]If anyone sees
his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, he
should pray to God and he will give him life.
This is only for those whose sin is not deadly.
There is such a thing as deadly sin, about which
I do not say that you should pray. 17 All wrongdo-
ing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.

18 We know that no one begotten by God sins;
but the one begotten by God he protects, and
the evil one cannot touch him. 19 We know that
we belong to God, and the whole world is under
the power of the evil one. 20 [q]We also know that
the Son of God has come and has given us
discernment to know the one who is true. And
we are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus
Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.
21 Children, be on your guard against idols.

**4, 20: Cannot love God:** some ancient manuscripts read "how can he love . . . ?"

**5, 1–5:** Children of God are identified not only by their love for others (4, 7–9) and for God (5, 1–2) but by their belief in the divine sonship of Jesus Christ. Faith, the acceptance of Jesus in his true character and the obedience in love to God's commands (3), is the source of the Christian's power in the world and conquers the world of evil (4–5), even as Christ overcame the world (Jn 16, 33).

**5, 6–12: Water and blood** (6) refers to Christ's baptism (Mt 3, 16–17) and to the shedding of his blood on the cross (Jn 19, 34). **The Spirit** was present at the baptism (Mt 3, 16; Mk 1, 10; Lk 3, 22; Jn 1, 32.34). **The testimony** to Christ as the Son of God is confirmed by divine witness (7–9), greater by far than the two legally required human witnesses (Dt 17, 6). To deny this is to deny God's truth; cf Jn 8, 17–18. The gist of the divine witness or **testimony** is that **eternal life** (11–12) is given in Christ and nowhere else. To **possess the Son** is not acceptance of a doctrine but of a person who lives now and provides life.

**5, 13–21:** As children of God we have confidence in prayer because of our intimate relationship with him (14–15). In love, we pray (16–17) for those who are in **sin,** but not in **deadly sin** (literally, "sin unto death"), probably referring to apostasy or activities brought on under the antichrist; cf Mk 3, 29; Heb 6, 4–6; 10, 26–31. Even in the latter case, however, prayer, while not enjoined, is not forbidden. The letter concludes with a summary of the themes of the letter (18–20). There is a sharp antithesis between the children of God and those belonging to the world and to the evil one. The Son reveals the God of truth; Christians dwell in the true God, **in his Son,** and have eternal life. The final verse (21) voices a perennial warning about **idols,** any type of rival to God.

c 2, 4. d Jn 13, 34; 14, 15.21; 15, 17. e Jn 8, 42; 1 Pt 1, 23. f Jn 14, 15. g Jn 16, 33. h 1 Cor 15, 57. i Jn 15, 26; 19, 34. j Jn 5, 32.36; 15, 26. k Jn 5, 32.37. l 3, 33. m 1, 2; Jn 1, 4; 5, 21.26; 17, 3. n Jn 1, 12; 20, 31. o 3, 21–22; Mt 7, 7; Jn 14, 13–14. p Mt 12, 31. q Jer 24, 7; Jn 17, 3; Eph 1, 17.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

2 John
See RG
566–567

Written in response to similar problems, the Second and Third Letters of John are of the same length, perhaps determined by the practical consideration of the writing space on one piece of papyrus. In each letter the writer calls himself "the Presbyter," and their common authorship is further evidenced by internal similarities in style and wording, especially in the introductions and conclusions. The literary considerations that link 2 and 3 John also link them with the First Letter and the Gospel of John. The concern with "truth," christology, mutual love, the new commandment, antichrist, and the integrity of witness to the earthly Jesus mark these works as products of the Johannine school. The identity of the Presbyter is problematic. The use of the title implies more than age, and refers to his position of leadership in the early church. The absence of a proper name indicates that he was well known and acknowledged in authority by the communities to which he writes. Although traditionally attributed to John the apostle, these letters were probably written by a disciple or scribe of an apostle. The traditional place and date of composition, Ephesus at the end of the first century, are plausible for both letters.

The Second Letter is addressed to "the chosen Lady" and "to her children." This literary image of a particular Christian community reflects the specific destination and purpose of the letter. Unlike 1 John, this brief letter is not a theological treatise but a reply to problems within the church. The Johannine themes of love and truth are used to support practical advice on Christian living. The Presbyter encourages community members to show their Christianity by adhering to the great commandment of mutual love and to the historical truth about Jesus. The false teaching present among them is a spiritualizing christology that may tempt some members to discount teachings about the incarnation and death of Jesus the Christ; cf 1 Jn 4, 2. For their protection the Presbyter forbids hospitality toward unknown or "progressive" Christians to prevent their infiltration of the community. The Second Letter preserves the Johannine concerns of doctrinal purity and active love in the form of pastoral advice to a threatened community.

1 [a]*The Presbyter to the chosen Lady and to
her children whom I love in truth—and not only
I but also all who know the truth— 2because of
the truth that dwells in us and will be with us
forever. 3*Grace, mercy, and peace will be with
us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ
the Father's Son in truth and love.

4 [b]*I rejoiced greatly to find some of your
children walking in the truth just as we were
commanded by the Father. 5 [c]But now, Lady, I
ask you, not as though I were writing a new
commandment but the one we have had from
the beginning: let us love one another. 6 [d]*For
this is love, that we walk according to his
commandments; this is the commandment, as
you heard from the beginning, in which you
should walk.

7 [e]*Many deceivers have gone out into the
world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus

1: **The chosen Lady:** literally "elected"; this could also be translated "Kyria (a woman's name) chosen (by God)" or "the lady Electa" or "Electa Kyria." The adjective "chosen" is applied to all Christians at the beginning of other New Testament letters (1 Pt 1, 1; Ti 1, 1). The description is of a specific community with "children" who are its members. **The truth:** the affirmation of Jesus in the flesh and in contrast to false teaching (7).

3: **Grace, mercy, and peace:** like 1 and 2 Tm this letter adds **mercy** to the terms used frequently in a salutation to describe Christian blessing; it appears only here in the Johannine writings. The author also puts the blessing in relation to **truth and love,** the watchwords of the Johannine teaching. **The Father's Son:** the title that affirms the close relationship of Christ to God; similar variations of this title occur elsewhere (Jn 1, 14; 3, 35), but the precise wording is not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

4: **Some of your children:** this refers to those whom the Presbyter has recently encountered, but it may also indicate the presence of false doctrine in the community: the Presbyter encourages those who have remained faithful. **Walking in the truth:** an expression used in the Johannine writings to describe a way of living in which the Christian faith is visibly expressed; cf 1 Jn 1, 6–7; 2, 6.11; 3 Jn 3.

6: **His commandments:** cf 1 Jn 3, 23; 2, 7–8; 4, 21; obedience to the commandment of faith and love includes all others.

7: **The antichrist:** see 1 Jn 2, 18–19.22; 4, 3.

a Jn 8, 32; 3 Jn 1. b 3 Jn 3. c Jn 13, 34; 15, 12; 1 Jn 4, 7. d Jn 13, 34; 14, 15; 1 Jn 5, 3. e 1 Jn 2, 22; 4, 2.

Christ as coming in the flesh; such is the
deceitful one and the antichrist. [8]*Look to
yourselves that you do not lose what we worked
for but may receive a full recompense.
[9]*f**Anyone who is so "progressive" as not to
remain in the teaching of the Christ does not
have God; whoever remains in the teaching has
the Father and the Son. [10]*g**If anyone comes to
you and does not bring this doctrine, do not
receive him in your house or even greet him;
[11]for whoever greets him shares in his evil
works.

[12]*h**Although I have much to write to you, I
do not intend to use paper and ink. Instead, I
hope to visit you and to speak face to face so that
our joy may be complete. [13]*The children of
your chosen sister send you greetings.

**8: You** (plural): it is not certain whether this means the Christians addressed or includes the Presbyter, since some of the ancient Greek manuscripts and Greek Fathers have "we."

**9: Anyone who is so "progressive":** literally, "Anyone who goes ahead." Some gnostic groups held the doctrine of the Christ come in the flesh to be a first step in belief, which the more advanced and spiritual believer surpassed and abandoned in his knowledge of the spiritual Christ. The author affirms that fellowship with God may be gained only by holding to the complete doctrine of Jesus Christ (1 Jn 2, 22–23; 4, 2; 5, 5–6).

**10–11:** At this time false teachers were considered so dangerous and divisive as to be shunned completely. From this description they seem to be wandering preachers. We see here a natural suspicion of early Christians concerning such itinerants and can envisage the problems faced by missionaries such as those mentioned in 3 Jn 10.

**12: Our joy:** a number of other Greek manuscripts read "your joy."

**13: Chosen sister:** the community of which the Presbyter is now a part greets you (singular), the community of the Lady addressed.

f Jn 8, 31; 1 Jn 2, 23; 4, 15. g Rom 16, 17; 2 Thes 3, 6. h Jn 15, 11; 1 Jn 1, 4; 3 Jn 13.

# THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

3 John
See RG
568–569

The Third Letter of John preserves a brief glimpse into the problems of missionary activity and local autonomy in the early church. In contrast to the other two letters of John, this work was addressed to a specific individual, Gaius. This letter is less theological in content and purpose. The author's goal was to secure hospitality and material support for his missionaries, and the Presbyter is writing to another member of the church who has welcomed missionaries in the past. The Presbyter commends Gaius for his hospitality and encourages his future help. He indicates he may come to challenge the policy of Diotrephes that is based on evil gossip.

The problems of the Presbyter in this short letter provide us with valuable evidence of the flexible and personal nature of authority in the early church. The Presbyter writes to Gaius, whom perhaps he had converted or instructed, on the basis of their personal links. The brothers have also confirmed him as a loyal Christian in action and belief. Gaius accepted the missionaries from the Presbyter and presumably will accept Demetrius on the Presbyter's recommendation. In contrast, Diotrephes refuses to receive either letters or friends of the Presbyter. Although he is portrayed as ambitious and hostile, he perhaps exemplifies the cautious and sectarian nature of early Christianity; for its own protection the local community mistrusted missionaries as false teachers. Most interestingly, Diotrephes seems comfortable in ignoring the requests of the Presbyter. The Presbyter seems to acknowledge that only a personal confrontation with Diotrephes will remedy the situation (10). The division, however, may also rest on doctrinal disagreement in which Gaius and the other "friends" accept the teaching of the Presbyter, and Diotrephes does not; the missionaries are not received for suspicion of theologi-

cal error. Diotrephes has thus been viewed by some as an overly ambitious local upstart trying to thwart the advance of orthodox Christianity, by others as an orthodox church official suspicious of the teachings of the Presbyter and those in the Johannine school who think as he does, or by still others as a local leader anxious to keep the debates in the Johannine community out of his own congregation.

This brief letter and the situation that it mirrors show us how little we know about some details of early development in the church: schools of opinion existed around which questions of faith and life were discussed, and personal ties as well as doctrine and authority played a role in what happened amid divisions and unity.

1 [a]*The Presbyter to the beloved Gaius whom
I love in truth.
2 Beloved, I hope you are prospering in every
respect and are in good health, just as your soul
is prospering. 3 [b]*I rejoiced greatly when some of
the brothers came and testified to how truly you
walk in the truth. 4 [c]Nothing gives me greater joy
than to hear that my children are walking in the
truth.
5 [d]*Beloved, you are faithful in all you do for
the brothers, especially for strangers; 6 [e]*they
have testified to your love before the church.
Please help them in a way worthy of God to
continue their journey. 7 *For they have set out
for the sake of the Name and are accepting
nothing from the pagans. 8 Therefore, we ought
to support such persons, so that we may be co-
workers in the truth.
9 *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who
loves to dominate, does not acknowledge us.
10 *Therefore, if I come, I will draw attention to
what he is doing, spreading evil nonsense about
us. And not content with that, he will not
receive the brothers, hindering those who wish
to do so and expelling them from the church.
11 [f]*Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate
good. Whoever does what is good is of God;
whoever does what is evil has never seen God.
12 [g]*Demetrius receives a good report from all,
even from the truth itself. We give our testimo-
nial as well, and you know our testimony is true.
13 [h]I have much to write to you, but I do not
wish to write with pen and ink. 14 Instead, I hope
to see you soon, when we can talk face to face.
15 [i]*Peace be with you. The friends greet you;
greet the friends there each by name.

1: **Beloved Gaius:** a frequent form of address for fellow Christians in New Testament epistolary literature.

3: **The brothers:** in this letter, the term may refer to Christians who have been missionaries and received hospitality from Gaius (5–6). **Walk in the truth:** the common Johannine term to describe Christian living; this description presents Gaius as following the teachings of the Presbyter in contrast to Diotrephes.

5: **You are faithful in all you do:** Gaius's aid to the missionaries is a manifestation of his true Christian faith.

6: **Help them . . . to continue their journey:** the Presbyter asks Gaius not only to continue to welcome the missionaries to his community but also to equip them for further travels.

7: **The Name:** of Jesus Christ (cf Acts 5, 41; 1 Jn 2, 12; 3, 23; 5, 13). **Accepting nothing:** not expecting support from the pagans to whom they preach the gospel, so that they will not be considered as beggars; they required support from other Christians; cf Paul's complaints to the Corinthians (1 Cor 9, 3–12).

9: **Who loves to dominate:** the Presbyter does not deny Diotrephes's place as leader but indicates that his ambition may have caused him to disregard his letter and his influence.

10: **If I come:** the Presbyter may visit the community to challenge the actions of Diotrephes toward himself and the missionaries. **Will not receive the brothers:** Diotrephes may have been critical of the teachings of the Presbyter and sought to maintain doctrinal purity; cf 1 Jn 2, 19 and 2 Jn 10–11.

11: **Do not imitate evil:** Gaius should not be influenced by the behavior of Diotrephes.

12: **Demetrius:** because of the fear of false teachers, Demetrius, perhaps the bearer of the letter, is provided with a recommendation from the Presbyter; cf 2 Cor 3, 1; Rom 16, 1. **Even from the truth itself:** this refers probably to the manner of Demetrius's life that testifies to his true belief; cf Gaius above (v 3).

15: **Friends:** although a Johannine term for Christians (Jn 15, 15), the word here may refer to those in the community loyal to the Presbyter and to Gaius.

a 2 Jn 1. b 5; Gal 6, 10; 2 Jn 4. c 1 Thes 2, 11–12; 1 Tm 1, 2; 2 Tm 1, 2; 1 Jn 2, 1; 2 Jn 4. d Rom 12, 13; Gal 6, 10; Heb 13, 2. e Acts 15, 3; Col 1, 10; 1 Thes 2, 12. f 1 Jn 2, 29; 3, 6.10. g Jn 19, 35; 21, 24; 1 Tm 3, 7. h 2 Jn 12. i Jn 20, 19.21.26; Eph 6, 23; 1 Pt 5, 14.

# THE LETTER OF JUDE

Jude
See RG
569–571

This letter is by its address attributed to "Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James" (1). Since he is not identified as an apostle, this designation can hardly be meant to refer to the Jude or Judas who is listed as one of the Twelve (Lk 6, 16; Acts 1, 13; cf Jn 14, 22). The person intended is almost certainly the other Jude, named in the gospels among the relatives of Jesus (Mt 13, 55; Mk 6, 3), and the James who is listed there as his brother is the one to whom the Letter of James is attributed (see the Introduction to James). Nothing else is known of this Jude, and the apparent need to identify him by reference to his better-known brother indicates that he was a rather obscure personage in the early church.

The letter is addressed in the most general terms to "those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ" (1), hence apparently to all Christians. But since its purpose is to warn the addressees against false teachers, the author must have had in mind one or more specific Christian communities located in the unidentified region where the errors in question constituted a danger. While the letter contains some Semitic features, there is nothing to identify the addressees specifically as Jewish Christians; indeed, the errors envisaged seem to reflect an early form of gnosticism, opposed to law, that points rather to the cultural context of the Gentile world. Like James and 2 Peter, the Letter of Jude manifests none of the typical features of the letter form except the address.

There is so much similarity between Jude and 2 Peter, especially Jude 4-16 and 2 Peter 2, 1-18, that there must be a literary relationship between them. Since there is no evidence for the view that both authors borrowed from the same source, it is usually supposed that one of them borrowed from the other. Most scholars believe that Jude is the earlier of the two, principally because he quotes two apocryphal Jewish works, the Assumption of Moses (9) and the Book of Enoch (14-15) as part of his structured argument, whereas 2 Peter omits both references. Since there was controversy in the early church about the propriety of citing noncanonical literature that included legendary material, it is more probable that a later writer would omit such references than that he would add them.

Many interpreters today consider Jude a pseudonymous work dating from the end of the first century or even later. In support of this view they adduce the following arguments: (a) the apostles are referred to as belonging to an age that has receded into the past (17-18); (b) faith is understood as a body of doctrine handed down by a process of tradition (3); (c) the author's competent Greek style shows that he must have had a Hellenistic cultural formation; (d) the gnostic character of the errors envisaged fits better into the early second century than into a period several decades earlier. While impressive, these arguments are not entirely compelling and do not completely rule out the possibility of composition around the year A.D. 80, when the historical Jude may still have been alive.

This little letter is an urgent note by an author who intended to write more fully about salvation to an unknown group of readers, but who was forced by dangers from false teachers worming their way into the community (3-4) to dash off a warning against them (5-16) and to deliver some pressing Christian admonitions (17-23). The letter is justly famous for its majestic closing doxology (24-25).

**Address and Greeting** 1 [a]*Jude, a slave of
Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who
are called, beloved in God the Father and kept
safe for Jesus Christ: 2 [b]may mercy, peace, and
love be yours in abundance.
**Occasion for Writing** 3 [c]*Beloved, although I
was making every effort to write to you about
our common salvation, I now feel a need to
write to encourage you to contend for the faith
that was once for all handed down to the holy
ones. 4 [d]For there have been some intruders,
who long ago were designated for this condem-
nation, godless persons, who pervert the grace of
our God into licentiousness and who deny our
only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
**The False Teachers** 5 [e]*I wish to remind you,
although you know all things, that [the] Lord
who once saved a people from the land of Egypt
later destroyed those who did not believe.
6 [f]*The angels too, who did not keep to their
own domain but deserted their proper dwelling,
he has kept in eternal chains, in gloom, for the
judgment of the great day. 7 [g]*Likewise, Sodom,
Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns, which,
in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual
promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice, serve
as an example by undergoing a punishment of
eternal fire.
8 *Similarly, these dreamers nevertheless also
defile the flesh, scorn lordship, and revile glori-
ous beings. 9 [h]*Yet the archangel Michael, when
he argued with the devil in a dispute over the
body of Moses, did not venture to pronounce a
reviling judgment upon him but said, "May the
Lord rebuke you!" 10 [i]But these people revile
what they do not understand and are destroyed
by what they know by nature like irrational
animals. 11 [j]*Woe to them! They followed the
way of Cain, abandoned themselves to Balaam's
error for the sake of gain, and perished in the
rebellion of Korah. 12 [k]*These are blemishes on
your love feasts, as they carouse fearlessly and
look after themselves. They are waterless clouds
blown about by winds, fruitless trees in late
autumn, twice dead and uprooted. 13 They are
like wild waves of the sea, foaming up their
shameless deeds, wandering stars for whom the
gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.
14 [l]*Enoch, of the seventh generation from
Adam, prophesied also about them when he

1: **Jude . . . brother of James:** for the identity of the author of this letter, see Introduction. **To those who are called:** the vocation to the Christian faith is God's free gift to those whom he loves and whom he safely protects in Christ until the Lord's second coming.

3–4: **Our common salvation:** the teachings of the Christian faith derived from the apostolic preaching and to be kept by the Christian community.

5: For this first example of divine punishment on those who had been saved but did not then keep faith, see Nm 14, 28–29 and the note there. Some manuscripts have the word "once" (**hapax** as at 3) after "you know"; some commentators have suggested that it means "knowing one thing" or "you know all things once for all." Instead of "[the] Lord" manuscripts vary, having "Jesus," "God," or no subject stated.

6: This second example draws on Gn 6, 1–4 as elaborated in the apocryphal Book of Enoch (cf 14): heavenly beings came to earth and had sexual intercourse with women. God punished them by casting them out of heaven into darkness and bondage.

7: **Practiced unnatural vice:** literally, "went after alien flesh." This example derives from Gn 19, 1–25, especially 4–11, when the townsmen of Sodom violated both hospitality and morality by demanding that Lot's two visitors (really messengers of Yahweh) be handed over to them so that they could abuse them sexually. **Unnatural vice:** this refers to the desire for intimacies by human beings with angels (the reverse of the example in 6). Sodom (whence "sodomy") and Gomorrah became proverbial as object lessons for God's punishment on sin (Is 1, 9; Jer 50, 40; Am 4, 11; Mt 10, 15; 2 Pt 2, 6).

8: **Dreamers:** the writer returns to the false teachers of v 4, applying charges from the three examples in vv 5, 6, 7. This may apply to claims they make for revelations they have received by night (to the author, hallucinations). **Defile the flesh:** this may mean bodily pollutions from the erotic dreams of sexual license (7). **Lordship . . . glorious beings:** these may reflect the Lord (5; Jesus, 4) whom they spurn and the angels (6; cf the note on 2 Pt 2, 10, here, as there, literally, "glories").

9: **The archangel Michael . . . judgment:** a reference to an incident in the apocryphal Assumption of Moses. Dt 34, 6 had said of Moses, literally in Greek, "they buried him" or "he (God?) buried him" (taken to mean "he was buried"). The later account tells how Michael, who was sent to bury him, was challenged by the devil's interest in the body. Our author draws out the point that if an archangel refrained from reviling even the devil, how wrong it is for mere human beings to revile glorious beings (angels).

11: **Cain . . . Balaam . . . Korah:** examples of rebellious men and of the punishment their conduct incurred; cf Gn 4, 8–16; Nm 16, 1–35; 31, 16. See the note on 2 Pt 2, 15.

12: **Blemishes on your love feasts:** or "hidden rocks" or "submerged reefs" (cf 13). The opponents engaged in scandalous conduct in connection with community gatherings called **love feasts** (agape meals), which were associated with eucharistic celebrations at certain stages of early Christian practice; cf 1 Cor 11, 18–34 and the note on 2 Pt 2, 13.

14–15: Cited from the apocryphal Book of Enoch 1, 9.

a Mt 13, 55; Mk 6, 3; Acts 12, 17; Rom 1, 7. b Gal 6, 16; 1 Tm 1, 2; 2 Pt 1, 2. c 17.20; 1 Tm 6, 12. d Gal 2, 4; 2 Tm 3, 6; 2 Pt 2, 1. e Nm 14, 35; 1 Cor 10, 5; Heb 3, 16.17. f 2 Pt 2, 4.9. g Dt 29, 22–24; Mt 25, 41; 2 Thes 1, 8–9; 2 Pt 2, 6; 3, 7. h Dn 10, 21; 12, 1. i 2 Pt 2, 12. j Gn 4, 8–16; 1 Jn 3, 12 / Nm 31, 15–16; 2 Pt 2, 15; Rv 2, 14 / Nm 16, 19–35. k 2 Pt 2, 13.17. l Mt 16, 27; Heb 12, 22–23.

said, "Behold, the Lord has come with his
countless holy ones [15]to execute judgment on all
and to convict everyone for all the godless deeds
that they committed and for all the harsh words
godless sinners have uttered against him."
[16] [m]These people are complainers, disgruntled
ones who live by their desires; their mouths
utter bombast as they fawn over people to gain
advantage.

**Exhortations** [17] [n]But you, beloved, remember
the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of
our Lord Jesus Christ, [18] [o]*for they told you, "In
[the] last time there will be scoffers who will live
according to their own godless desires."
[19] [p]These are the ones who cause divisions; they
live on the natural plane, devoid of the Spirit.
[20] [q]But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your
most holy faith; pray in the holy Spirit. [21] [r]Keep
yourselves in the love of God and wait for the
mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to
eternal life. [22]*On those who waver, have
mercy; [23]*save others by snatching them out of
the fire; on others have mercy with fear, abhor-
ring even the outer garment stained by the flesh.

**Doxology** [24] [s]*To the one who is able to keep
you from stumbling and to present you unblem-
ished and exultant, in the presence of his glory,
[25] [t]to the only God, our savior, through Jesus
Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and
authority from ages past, now, and for ages to
come. Amen.

**18:** This is the substance of much early Christian preaching rather than a direct quotation of any of the various New Testament passages on this theme (see Mk 13, 22; Acts 20, 30; 1 Tm 4, 1–3; 2 Pt 3, 3).

**22: Have mercy:** some manuscripts read "convince," "confute," or "reprove." Others have "even though you waver" or "doubt" instead of **who waver.**

**23: With fear:** some manuscripts connect the phrase "with fear" with the imperative "save" or with the participle "snatching." Other manuscripts omit the phrase "on others have mercy," so that only two groups are envisioned. Rescue of those led astray and caution in the endeavor are both enjoined. **Outer garment stained by the flesh:** the imagery may come from Zec 3, 3–5, just as that of **snatching . . . out of the fire** comes from Zec 3, 2; the very garments of the godless are to be abhorred because of their contagion.

**24–25:** With this liturgical statement about the power of God to keep the faithful from stumbling, and praise to him through Jesus Christ, the letter reaches its conclusion by returning to the themes with which it began (1–2).

**m** 18; 1 Cor 10, 10; 2 Pt 2, 10.18. **n** Heb 2, 3; 2 Pt 3, 2. **o** 1 Tm 4, 1; 2 Tm 3, 1–5; 2 Pt 3, 3. **p** 1 Cor 2, 14; Jas 3, 15. **q** 2; Eph 6, 18; Col 2, 7. **r** Ti 2, 13. **s** 2 Cor 4, 14; 1 Pt 4, 13. **t** Rom 11, 36; 1 Tm 1, 17.

# THE REVELATION TO JOHN

Revelation
See RG
571–577

The Apocalypse, or Revelation to John, the last book of the Bible, is one of the most difficult to understand because it abounds in unfamiliar and extravagant symbolism, which at best appears unusual to the modern reader. Symbolic language, however, is one of the chief characteristics of apocalyptic literature, of which this book is an outstanding example. Such literature enjoyed wide popularity in both Jewish and Christian circles from ca. 200 B.C. to A.D. 200.

This book contains an account of visions in symbolic and allegorical language borrowed extensively from the Old Testament, especially Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel. Whether or not these visions were real experiences of the author or simply literary conventions employed by him is an open question.

This much, however, is certain: symbolic descriptions are not to be taken as literal descriptions, nor is the symbolism meant to be pictured realistically. One would find it difficult and repulsive to visualize a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes; yet Jesus Christ is described in precisely such words (5, 6). The author used these images to suggest Christ's universal (seven) power (horns) and knowledge (eyes). A significant feature of apocalyptic writing is the use of symbolic colors, metals, garments (1, 13-16; 3, 18; 4, 4; 6, 1-8; 17, 4; 19, 8), and numbers

(*four* signifies the world, *six* imperfections, *seven* totality or perfection, *twelve* Israel's tribes or the apostles, *one thousand* immensity). Finally the vindictive language in the book (6, 9-10; 18, 1—19, 4) is also to be understood symbolically and not literally. The cries for vengeance on the lips of Christian martyrs that sound so harsh are in fact literary devices the author employed to evoke in the reader and hearer a feeling of horror for apostasy and rebellion that will be severely punished by God.

The lurid descriptions of the punishment of Jezebel (2, 22) and of the destruction of the great harlot, Babylon (16, 9—19, 2), are likewise literary devices. The metaphor of Babylon as harlot would be wrongly construed if interpreted literally. On the other hand, the stylized figure of the woman clothed with the sun (12, 1-6), depicting the New Israel, may seem to be a negative stereotype. It is necessary to look beyond the literal meaning to see that these images mean to convey a sense of God's wrath at sin in the former case and trust in God's providential care over the church in the latter.

The Book of Revelation cannot be adequately understood except against the historical background that occasioned its writing. Like Daniel and other apocalypses, it was composed as resistance literature to meet a crisis. The book itself suggests that the crisis was ruthless persecution of the early church by the Roman authorities; the harlot Babylon symbolizes pagan Rome, the city on seven hills (17, 9). The book is, then, an exhortation and admonition to Christians of the first century to stand firm in the faith and to avoid compromise with paganism, despite the threat of adversity and martyrdom; they are to await patiently the fulfillment of God's mighty promises. The triumph of God in the world of men and women remains a mystery, to be accepted in faith and longed for in hope. It is a triumph that unfolded in the history of Jesus of Nazareth and continues to unfold in the history of the individual Christian who follows the way of the cross, even, if necessary, to a martyr's death.

Though the perspective is eschatological—ultimate salvation and victory are said to take place at the end of the present age when Christ will come in glory at the parousia—the book presents the decisive struggle of Christ and his followers against Satan and his cohorts as already over. Christ's overwhelming defeat of the kingdom of Satan ushered in the everlasting reign of God (11, 15; 12, 10). Even the forces of evil unwittingly carry out the divine plan (17, 17), for God is the sovereign Lord of history.

The Book of Revelation had its origin in a time of crisis, but it remains valid and meaningful for Christians of all time. In the face of apparently insuperable evil, either from within or from without, all Christians are called to trust in Jesus' promise, "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28, 20). Those who remain steadfast in their faith and confidence in the risen Lord need have no fear. Suffering, persecution, even death by martyrdom, though remaining impenetrable mysteries of evil, do not comprise an absurd dead end. No matter what adversity or sacrifice Christians may endure, they will in the end triumph over Satan and his forces because of their fidelity to Christ the victor. This is the enduring message of the book; it is a message of hope and consolation and challenge for all who dare to believe.

The author of the book calls himself John (1, 1.4.9; 22, 8), who because of his Christian faith has been exiled to the rocky island of Patmos, a Roman penal colony. Although he never claims to be John the apostle, whose name is attached to the fourth gospel, he was so identified by several of the early church Fathers, including Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Hippolytus. This identification, however, was denied by other Fathers, including Denis of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen,

and John Chrysostom. Indeed, vocabulary, grammar, and style make it doubtful that the book could have been put into its present form by the same person(s) responsible for the fourth gospel. Nevertheless, there are definite linguistic and theological affinities between the two books. The tone of the letters to the seven churches (1, 4—3, 22) is indicative of the great authority the author enjoyed over the Christian communities in Asia. It is possible, therefore, that he was a disciple of John the apostle, who is traditionally associated with that part of the world. The date of the book in its present form is probably near the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96), a fierce persecutor of the Christians.

The principal divisions of the Book of Revelation are the following:

I. Prologue (1, 1-3)
II. Letters to the Churches of Asia (1, 4—3, 22)
III. God and the Lamb in Heaven (4, 1—5, 14)
IV. The Seven Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues, with Interludes (6, 1—16, 21)
V. The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of Pagan Nations (17, 1—20, 15)
VI. The New Creation (21, 1—22, 5)
VII. Epilogue (22, 6-21)

## I: Prologue

### CHAPTER 1

Ch 1 See RG 573

1 [a]*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must happen soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who gives witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw. 3 [b]*Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near.

## II: Letters to the Churches of Asia

**Greeting** 4 [c]*John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 [d]*and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 [e]who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever [and ever]. Amen.

7 [f]Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him.
All the peoples of the earth will lament him.
Yes. Amen.

8 [g]*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

1, 1–3: This prologue describes the source, contents, and audience of the book and forms an inclusion with the epilogue (22, 6–21), with its similar themes and expressions.

1, 3: **Blessed is the one:** this is the first of seven beatitudes in this book; the others are in 14, 13; 16, 15; 19, 9; 20, 6; 22, 7.14. **This prophetic message:** literally, "the words of the prophecy"; so 22, 7.10.18.19 by inclusion. **The appointed time:** when Jesus will return in glory; cf 1, 7; 3, 11; 22, 7.10.12.20.

1, 4–8: Although Revelation begins and ends (22, 21) with Christian epistolary formulae, there is nothing between chs 4 and 22 resembling a letter. The author here employs the standard word order for greetings in Greek letter writing: "N. to N., greetings . . ."; see the note on Rom 1, 1.

1, 4: **Seven churches in Asia:** Asia refers to the Roman province of that name in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey); these representative churches are mentioned by name in v 11, and each is the recipient of a message (2, 1—3, 22). **Seven** is the biblical number suggesting fullness and completeness; thus the seer is writing for the whole church.

1, 5: **Freed us:** the majority of Greek manuscripts and several early versions read "washed us"; but "freed us" is supported by the best manuscripts and fits well with Old Testament imagery, e.g., Is 40, 2.

1, 8: **The Alpha and the Omega:** the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In 22, 13 the same words occur together with the expressions "the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"; cf 17; 2, 8; 21, 6; Is 41, 4; 44, 6.

a 22, 6–8.20; Dn 2, 28 / 19, 10. b 22, 7 / Lk 11, 28. c 8; 4, 8; 11, 17; 16, 5; Ex 3, 14. d 3, 14; 1 Cor 15, 20; Col 1, 18 / Heb 9, 14; 1 Pt 1, 19; 1 Jn 1, 7. e Ex 19, 6; 1 Pt 2, 9. f Dn 7, 13 / Zec 12, 10; Mt 24, 30; Jn 19, 37. g 17; 21, 6; 22, 13; Is 41, 4; 44, 6; 48, 12.

**The First Vision** 9*I, John, your brother, who
share with you the distress, the kingdom, and
the endurance we have in Jesus, found myself on
the island called Patmos because I proclaimed
God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. 10*I
was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day and
heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet,
11*which said, "Write on a scroll what you see
and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus,
Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadel-
phia, and Laodicea." 12*Then I turned to see
whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I
turned, I saw seven gold lampstands 13 h*and in
the midst of the lampstands one like a son of
man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold
sash around his chest. 14*The hair of his head
was as white as white wool or as snow, and his
eyes were like a fiery flame. 15*His feet were like
polished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice
was like the sound of rushing water. 16 i*In his
right hand he held seven stars. A sharp two-
edged sword came out of his mouth, and his face
shone like the sun at its brightest.
17 j*When I caught sight of him, I fell down at
his feet as though dead. He touched me with
his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am
the first and the last, 18*the one who lives.
Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever
and ever. I hold the keys to death and the
netherworld. 19*Write down, therefore, what
you have seen, and what is happening, and
what will happen afterwards. 20*This is the
secret meaning of the seven stars you saw in
my right hand, and of the seven gold
lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of
the seven churches, and the seven lampstands
are the seven churches.

## CHAPTER 2

Ch 2–3
See RG
573–574

**To Ephesus** 1*"To the angel of the church in
Ephesus, write this:
" 'The one who holds the seven stars in his
right hand and walks in the midst of the seven

**1, 9–20:** In this first vision, the seer is commanded to write what he sees to the seven churches (9–11). He sees Christ in glory, whom he depicts in stock apocalyptic imagery (12–16), and hears him describe himself in terms meant to encourage Christians by emphasizing his victory over death (17–20).

**1, 9: Island called Patmos:** one of the Sporades islands in the Aegean Sea, some fifty miles south of Ephesus, used by the Romans as a penal colony. **Because I proclaimed God's word:** literally, "on account of God's word."

**1, 10: The Lord's day:** Sunday. **As loud as a trumpet:** the imagery is derived from the theophany at Sinai (Ex 19, 16.19; cf Heb 12, 19 and the trumpet in other eschatological settings in Is 27, 13; Jl 2, 1; Mt 24, 31; 1 Cor 15, 52; 1 Thes 4, 16).

**1, 11: Scroll:** a papyrus roll.

**1, 12–16:** A symbolic description of Christ in glory. The metaphorical language is not to be understood literally; cf Introduction.

**1, 13: Son of man:** see the note on Mk 8, 31. **Ankle-length robe:** Christ is priest; cf Ex 28, 4; 29, 5; Wis 18, 24; Zec 3, 4. **Gold sash:** Christ is king; cf Ex 28, 4; 1 Mc 10, 89; 11, 58; Dn 10, 5.

**1, 14: Hair . . . as white as white wool or as snow:** Christ is eternal, clothed with the dignity that belonged to the "Ancient of Days"; cf 18; Dn 7, 9. **His eyes were like a fiery flame:** Christ is portrayed as all-knowing; cf 2, 23; Ps 7, 10; Jer 17, 10; and similar expressions in 2, 18; 19, 12; cf Dn 10, 6.

**1, 15: His feet . . . furnace:** Christ is depicted as unchangeable; cf Ez 1, 27; Dn 10, 6. The Greek word translated "refined" is unconnected grammatically with any other word in the sentence. **His voice . . . water:** Christ speaks with divine authority; cf Ez 1, 24.

**1, 16: Seven stars:** in the pagan world, Mithras and the Caesars were represented with seven stars in their right hand, symbolizing their universal dominion. **A sharp two-edged sword:** this refers to the word of God (cf Eph 6, 17; Heb 4, 12) that will destroy unrepentant sinners; cf 2, 16; 19, 15; Wis 18, 15; Is 11, 4; 49, 2. **His face . . . brightest:** this symbolizes the divine majesty of Christ; cf 10, 1; 21, 23; Jgs 5, 31; Is 60, 19; Mt 17, 2.

**1, 17:** It was an Old Testament belief that for sinful human beings to see God was to die; cf Ex 19, 21; 33, 20; Jgs 6, 22–23; Is 6, 5.

**1, 18: Netherworld:** Greek Hades, Hebrew Sheol, the abode of the dead; cf 20, 13–14; Nm 16, 33.

**1, 19: What you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards:** the three parts of the Book of Revelation, the vision (10–20), the situation in the seven churches (chs 2–3), and the events of chs 6–22.

**1, 20: Secret meaning:** literally, "mystery." **Angels:** these are the presiding spirits of the seven churches. Angels were thought to be in charge of the physical world (cf 7, 1; 14, 18; 16, 5) and of nations (Dn 10, 13; 12, 1), communities (the seven churches), and individuals (Mt 18, 10; Acts 12, 15). Some have seen in the "angel" of each of the seven churches its pastor or a personification of the spirit of the congregation.

**2, 1—3, 22:** Each of the seven letters follows the same pattern: address; description of the exalted Christ; blame and/or praise for the church addressed; threat and/or admonition; final exhortation and promise to all Christians.

**2, 1–7:** The letter to Ephesus praises the members of the church there for their works and virtues, including discerning false teachers (2–3), but admonishes them to repent and return to their former devotion (4–5). It concludes with a reference to the Nicolaitans (see the note on 6) and a promise that the victor will have access to eternal life (7).

**2, 1: Ephesus:** this great ancient city had a population of ca. 250,000; it was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and the commercial, cultural, and religious center of Asia. The other six churches were located in the same province, situated roughly in a circle; they were selected for geographical reasons rather than for the size of their Christian communities. **Walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands:** this signifies that Christ is always present in the church; see the note on 1, 4.

h Dn 7, 13; 10, 5. i Heb 4, 12. j Dn 8, 18 / 1, 8.

gold lampstands says this: [2]*"I know your
works, your labor, and your endurance, and that
you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested
those who call themselves apostles but are not,
and discovered that they are impostors. [3]More-
over, you have endurance and have suffered for
my name, and you have not grown weary. [4]Yet I
hold this against you: you have lost the love you
had at first. [5]Realize how far you have fallen.
Repent, and do the works you did at first.
Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your
lampstand from its place, unless you repent.
[6]*But you have this in your favor: you hate the
works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

[7] *k*** " 'Whoever has ears ought to hear what
the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I
will give the right to eat from the tree of life that
is in the garden of God." '

**To Smyrna** [8]*"To the angel of the church in
Smyrna, write this:

" 'The first and the last, who once died but
came to life, says this: [9] *l***"I know your tribula-
tion and poverty, but you are rich. I know the
slander of those who claim to be Jews and are
not, but rather are members of the assembly of
Satan. [10]Do not be afraid of anything that you
are going to suffer. Indeed, the devil will throw
some of you into prison, that you may be tested,
and you will face an ordeal for ten days. Remain
faithful until death, and I will give you the
crown of life.

[11] *m***" 'Whoever has ears ought to hear
what the Spirit says to the churches. The victor
shall not be harmed by the second death." '

**To Pergamum** [12]*"To the angel of the church
in Pergamum, write this:

" 'The one with the sharp two-edged sword
says this: [13]*"I know that you live where Satan's
throne is, and yet you hold fast to my name and
have not denied your faith in me, not even in the
days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was
martyred among you, where Satan lives. [14] *n***Yet
I have a few things against you. You have some
people there who hold to the teaching of Ba-
laam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling
block before the Israelites: to eat food sacrificed
to idols and to play the harlot. [15]Likewise, you
also have some people who hold to the teaching
of [the] Nicolaitans. [16]Therefore, repent. Other-
wise, I will come to you quickly and wage war
against them with the sword of my mouth.

[17] *o***" 'Whoever has ears ought to hear what
the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I
shall give some of the hidden manna; I shall also

**2, 2: Who call themselves . . . impostors:** this refers to unauthorized and perverse missionaries; cf Acts 20, 29–30.

**2, 6: Nicolaitans:** these are perhaps the impostors of v 2; see the note on vv 14–15. There is little evidence for connecting this group with Nicolaus, the proselyte from Antioch, mentioned in Acts 6, 5.

**2, 7: Victor:** referring to any Christian individual who holds fast to the faith and does God's will in the face of persecution. **The tree of life that is in the garden of God:** this is a reference to the tree in the primeval paradise (Gn 2, 9); cf 22, 2.14.19. The decree excluding humanity from the tree of life has been revoked by Christ.

**2, 8–11:** The letter to Smyrna encourages the Christians in this important commercial center by telling them that although they are impoverished, they are nevertheless rich, and calls those Jews who are slandering them members of the assembly of Satan (9). There is no admonition; rather, the Christians are told that they will suffer much, even death, but the time of tribulation will be short compared to their eternal reward (10), and they will thus escape final damnation (11).

**2, 8: Smyrna:** modern Izmir, ca. thirty miles north of Ephesus, and the chief city of Lydia, with a temple to the goddess Roma. It was renowned for its loyalty to Rome, and it also had a large Jewish community very hostile toward Christians.

**2, 9–10:** The church in Smyrna was materially poor but spiritually rich. Accusations made by Jewish brethren there occasioned the persecution of Christians; cf Acts 14, 2.19; 17, 5.13.

**2, 11: The second death:** this refers to the eternal death, when sinners will receive their final punishment; cf 20, 6.14–15; 21, 8.

**2, 12–17:** The letter to Pergamum praises the members of the church for persevering in their faith in Christ even in the midst of a pagan setting and in face of persecution and martyrdom (13). But it admonishes them about members who advocate an unprincipled morality (14; cf 2 Pt 2, 15; Jude 11) and others who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans (15; see the note there). It urges them to repent (16) and promises them the hidden manna and Christ's amulet (17).

**2, 12: Pergamum:** modern Bergama, ca. forty-five miles northeast of Smyrna, a center for various kinds of pagan worship. It also had an outstanding library (the word **parchment** is derived from its name).

**2, 13: Satan's throne:** the reference is to emperor worship and other pagan practices that flourished in Pergamum, perhaps specifically to the white marble altar erected and dedicated to Zeus by Eumenes II (197–160 B.C.).

**2, 14–15:** Like Balaam, the biblical prototype of the religious compromiser (cf Nm 25, 1–3; 31, 16; 2 Pt 2, 15; Jude 11), the Nicolaitans in Pergamum and Ephesus (6) accommodated their Christian faith to paganism. They abused the principle of liberty enunciated by Paul (1 Cor 9, 19–23).

**2, 17: The hidden manna:** this is the food of life; cf Ps 78, 24–25. **White amulet:** literally, "white stone," on which was written a magical name, whose power could be tapped by one who knew the secret name. It is used here as a symbol of victory and joy; cf 3, 4–5. **New name:** this is a reference to the Christian's rebirth in Christ; cf 3, 12; 19, 12; Is 62, 2; 65, 15.

**k** 11.17.29; 3, 6.13.22; 13, 9; Mt 11, 15. **l** Jas 2, 5. **m** 20, 6.14; 21, 8. **n** Nm 22–24; 25, 1–3; 31, 16; 2 Pt 2, 15; Jude 11. **o** Is 62, 2; 65, 15.

give a white amulet upon which is inscribed a
new name, which no one knows except the one
who receives it." '

**To Thyatira** 18*"To the angel of the church in
Thyatira, write this:

" 'The Son of God, whose eyes are like a fiery
flame and whose feet are like polished brass, says
this: 19"I know your works, your love, faith,
service, and endurance, and that your last works
are greater than the first. 20*Yet I hold this
against you, that you tolerate the woman Jeze-
bel, who calls herself a prophetess, who teaches
and misleads my servants to play the harlot and
to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21I have given her
time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her
harlotry. 22So I will cast her on a sickbed and
plunge those who commit adultery with her into
intense suffering unless they repent of her
works. 23 p*I will also put her children to death.
Thus shall all the churches come to know that I
am the searcher of hearts and minds and that I
will give each of you what your works deserve.
24*But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who
do not uphold this teaching and know nothing of
the so-called deep secrets of Satan: on you I will
place no further burden, 25except that you must
hold fast to what you have until I come.

26 q*" ' "To the victor, who keeps to my ways
until the end,
I will give authority over the nations.
27 He will rule them with an iron rod.
Like clay vessels will they be smashed,
28just as I received authority from my Father.
And to him I will give the morning star.

29" ' "Whoever has ears ought to hear what
the Spirit says to the churches." '

## CHAPTER 3

Ch 2–3
See RG
573–574

**To Sardis** 1*"To the angel of the church in
Sardis, write this:

" 'The one who has the seven spirits of God
and the seven stars says this: "I know your
works, that you have the reputation of being
alive, but you are dead. 2Be watchful and
strengthen what is left, which is going to die, for
I have not found your works complete in the
sight of my God. 3 rRemember then how you
accepted and heard; keep it, and repent. If you
are not watchful, I will come like a thief, and
you will never know at what hour I will come
upon you. 4 sHowever, you have a few people in
Sardis who have not soiled their garments; they
will walk with me dressed in white, because
they are worthy.

5 t*" ' "The victor will thus be dressed in
white, and I will never erase his name from the
book of life but will acknowledge his name in
the presence of my Father and of his angels.

6" ' "Whoever has ears ought to hear what
the Spirit says to the churches." '

**2, 18–29:** The letter to Thyatira praises the progress in virtue of this small Christian community (19) but admonishes them for tolerating a false prophet who leads them astray (20). Her fate is sealed, but there is hope of repentance for her followers (21–22). Otherwise, they too shall die (23). They are warned against Satanic power or knowledge (24–25). Those who remain faithful will share in the messianic reign, having authority over nations (26–27), and will in fact possess Christ himself (28).

**2, 18: Thyatira:** modern Akhisar, ca. forty miles southeast of Pergamum, a frontier town famous for its workers' guilds (cf Acts 16, 14), membership in which may have involved festal meals in pagan temples.

**2, 20:** The scheming and treacherous Jezebel of old (cf 1 Kgs 19, 1–2; 21, 1–14; 2 Kgs 9, 22.30–34) introduced pagan customs into the religion of Israel; this new Jezebel was doing the same to Christianity.

**2, 23: Children:** spiritual descendants.

**2, 24: The so-called deep secrets of Satan:** literally, "the deep things of Satan," a scathing reference to the perverse teaching of the Nicolaitans (15).

**2, 26–28:** The Christian who perseveres in faith will share in Christ's messianic authority (cf Ps 2, 8–9) and resurrection victory over death, symbolized by the morning star; cf 22, 16.

**2, 26: Who keeps to my ways:** literally, "who keeps my works."

**3, 1–6:** The letter to Sardis does not praise the community but admonishes its members to watchfulness, mutual support, and repentance (2–3). The few who have remained pure and faithful will share Christ's victory and will be inscribed in the book of life (4–5).

**3, 1: Sardis:** this city, located ca. thirty miles southeast of Thyatira, was once the capital of Lydia, known for its wealth at the time of Croesus (6th century B.C.). Its citadel, reputed to be unassailable, was captured by surprise, first by Cyrus and later by Antiochus. The church is therefore warned to be on guard.

**3, 5: In white:** white is a sign of victory and joy as well as resurrection; see the note on 2, 17. **The book of life:** the roll in which the names of the redeemed are kept; cf 13, 8; 17, 8; 20, 12.15; 21, 27; Phil 4, 3; Dn 12, 1. They will be acknowledged by Christ in heaven; cf Mt 10, 32.

p 1 Sm 16, 7; Jer 11, 20; 17, 10. q 12, 5; Ps 2, 8–9. r Mt 24, 42–44; Mk 13, 33; 1 Thes 5, 2; 2 Pt 3, 10. s 7, 13–14. t Ps 69, 29; Dn 12, 1 / Mt 10, 32.

**To Philadelphia** 7 u*"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write this:

" 'The holy one, the true,
who holds the key of David,
who opens and no one shall close,
who closes and no one shall open,

says this:

8*" ' "I know your works (behold, I have left an open door before you, which no one can close). You have limited strength, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 vBehold, I will make those of the assembly of Satan who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying, behold I will make them come and fall prostrate at your feet, and they will realize that I love you. 10*Because you have kept my message of endurance, I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. 11 wI am coming quickly. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one may take your crown.

12 x*" ' "The victor I will make into a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never leave it again. On him I will inscribe the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, as well as my new name.

13" ' "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

**To Laodicea** 14 y*"To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write this:

" 'The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God's creation, says this: 15*"I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. 16*So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 z*For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18*I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see. 19 aThose whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.

20*" ' "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. 21 bI will give the victor the

**3, 7–13:** The letter to Philadelphia praises the Christians there for remaining faithful even with their limited strength (8). Members of the assembly of Satan are again singled out (9; see 2, 9 above). There is no admonition; rather, the letter promises that they will be kept safe at the great trial (10–11) and that the victors will become pillars of the heavenly temple, upon which three names will be inscribed: God, Jerusalem, and Christ (12).

**3, 7: Philadelphia:** modern Alasehir, ca. thirty miles southeast of Sardis, founded by Attalus II Philadelphus of Pergamum to be an "open door" (8) for Greek culture; it was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17. Rebuilt by money from the Emperor Tiberius, the city was renamed Neo-Caesarea; this may explain the allusions to "name" in v 12. **Key of David:** to the heavenly city of David (cf Is 22, 22), "the new Jerusalem" (12), over which Christ has supreme authority.

**3, 8: An open door:** opportunities for sharing and proclaiming the faith; cf Acts 14, 27; 1 Cor 16, 9; 2 Cor 2, 12.

**3, 10: My message of endurance:** this does not refer to a saying of Jesus about patience but to the example of Christ's patient endurance. **The inhabitants of the earth:** literally, "those who live on the earth." This expression, which also occurs in 6, 10; 8, 13; 11, 10; 13, 8.12.14; 17, 2.8, always refers to the pagan world.

**3, 12: Pillar:** this may be an allusion to the rebuilding of the city; see the note on v 7. **New Jerusalem:** it is described in 21, 10—22, 5.

**3, 14–22:** The letter to Laodicea reprimands the community for being lukewarm (15–16), but no particular faults are singled out. Their material prosperity is contrasted with their spiritual poverty, the violet tunics that were the source of their wealth with the white robe of baptism, and their famous eye ointment with true spiritual perception (17–18). But Christ's chastisement is inspired by love and a desire to be allowed to share the messianic banquet with his followers in the heavenly kingdom (19–21).

**3, 14: Laodicea:** ca. forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and ca. eighty miles east of Ephesus, a wealthy industrial and commercial center, with a renowned medical school. It exported fine woolen garments and was famous for its eye salves. It was so wealthy that it was proudly rebuilt without outside aid after the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60/61. **The Amen:** this is a divine title (cf Hebrew text of Is 65, 16) applied to Christ; cf 2 Cor 1, 20. **Source of God's creation:** literally, "the beginning of God's creation," a concept found also in Jn 1, 3; Col 1, 16–17, Heb 1, 2; cf Prv 8, 22–31; Wis 9, 1–2.

**3, 15–16:** Halfhearted commitment to the faith is nauseating to Christ; cf Rom 12, 11.

**3, 16: Spit:** literally, "vomit." The image is that of a beverage that should be either hot or cold. Perhaps there is an allusion to the hot springs of Hierapolis across the Lycus river from Laodicea, which would have been lukewarm by the time they reached Laodicea.

**3, 17:** Economic prosperity occasioned spiritual bankruptcy.

**3, 18: Gold . . . fire:** God's grace. **White garments:** symbol of an upright life; the city was noted for its violet/purple cloth. **Ointment . . . eyes:** to remove spiritual blindness; one of the city's exports was eye ointment (see the note on 3, 14).

**3, 20:** Christ invites all to the messianic banquet in heaven; cf Is 25, 6; Lk 14, 15; 22, 30.

u Is 22, 22; Mt 16, 19. v 2, 9 / Is 45, 14; 60, 14. w 2, 25; 22, 7.20. x 21, 2–3; Ez 48, 35 / 19, 13. y 1, 5. z Prv 13, 7; Lk 12, 21. a Prv 3, 11–12; 1 Cor 11, 32; Heb 12, 5–11. b Lk 22, 28–30; Mt 19, 28.

right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself
first won the victory and sit with my Father on
his throne.
22" ' "Whoever has ears ought to hear what
the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

## III: God and the Lamb in Heaven

### CHAPTER 4

**Vision of Heavenly Worship** 1*After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpetlike voice that had spoken to me before, saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards." 2 c*At once I was caught up in spirit. A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat 3one whose appearance sparkled like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald. 4 d*Surrounding the throne I saw twenty-four other thrones on which twenty-four elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads. 5*From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. 6 e*In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal.

In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back. 7*The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight. 8f*The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and who is, and who is to come."

9Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10the twenty-four elders fall down before the one who sits on the throne and worship him, who lives forever and ever. They throw down their crowns before the throne, exclaiming:

11 g"Worthy are you, Lord our God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things;
because of your will they came to be and
were created."

Ch 4–5 See RG 574

### CHAPTER 5

**The Scroll and the Lamb** 1 h*I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. 2Then I saw a mighty angel who proclaimed in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to examine it. 4I shed many tears because no one was found worthy to

Ch 4–5 See RG 574

**4, 1–11:** The seer now describes a vision of the heavenly court in worship of God enthroned. He reverently avoids naming or describing God but pictures twenty-four elders in priestly and regal attire (4) and God's throne and its surroundings made of precious gems and other symbols that traditionally express the majesty of God (5–6). Universal creation is represented by the four living creatures (6–7). Along with the twenty-four elders, they praise God unceasingly in humble adoration (8–11).

**4, 1:** The ancients viewed heaven as a solid vault, entered by way of actual doors.

**4, 2–8:** Much of the imagery here is taken from Ez 1 and 10.

**4, 4: Twenty-four elders:** these represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles; cf 21, 12–14.

**4, 5: Flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder:** as in other descriptions of God's appearance or activity; cf 8, 5; 11, 19; 16, 18; Ex 19, 16; Ez 1, 4.13. **The seven spirits of God:** the seven "angels of the presence" as in 8, 2 and Tb 12, 15.

**4, 6: A sea of glass like crystal:** an image adapted from Ez 1, 22–26. **Four living creatures:** these are symbols taken from Ez 1, 5–21; they are identified as cherubim in Ez 10, 20. **Covered with eyes:** these suggest God's knowledge and concern.

**4, 7: Lion . . . calf . . . human being . . . eagle:** these symbolize, respectively, what is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in creation. **Calf:** traditionally translated "ox," the Greek word refers to a heifer or young bull. Since the second century, these four creatures have been used as symbols of the evangelists Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John, respectively.

**4, 8: Six wings:** like the seraphim of Is 6, 2.

**5, 1–14:** The seer now describes a papyrus roll in God's right hand (1) with seven seals indicating the importance of the message. A mighty angel asks who is worthy to open the scroll, i.e., who can accomplish God's salvific plan (2). There is despair at first when no one in creation can do it (3–4). But the seer is comforted by an elder who tells him that Christ, called the lion of the tribe of Judah, has won the right to open it (5). Christ then appears as a Lamb, coming to receive the scroll from God (6–7), for which he is acclaimed as at a coronation (8–10). This is followed by a doxology of the angels (11–12) and then finally by the heavenly church united with all of creation (13–14).

**5, 1: A scroll:** a papyrus roll possibly containing a list of afflictions for sinners (cf Ez 2, 9–10) or God's plan for the world. **Sealed with seven seals:** it is totally hidden from all but God. Only the Lamb (7–9) has the right to carry out the divine plan.

c Is 6, 1 / Ez 1, 26–28. d Is 24, 23. e Ex 24, 10. f Is 6, 2–3 / 1, 4.8; 11, 17; 16, 5. g Rom 4, 17; 16, 27. h Is 29, 11.

open the scroll or to examine it. 5 *i**One of the
elders said to me, "Do not weep. The lion of the
tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed.
enabling him to open the scroll with its seven
seals."
6 *j**Then I saw standing in the midst of the
throne and the four living creatures and the
elders a Lamb that seemed to have been slain.
He had seven horns and seven eyes; these are
the [seven] spirits of God sent out into the whole
world. 7 He came and received the scroll from
the right hand of the one who sat on the throne.
8 When he took it, the four living creatures and
the twenty-four elders fell down before the
Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold
bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers
of the holy ones. 9 They sang a new hymn:

"Worthy are you to receive the scroll
and to break open its seals,
for you were slain and with your blood you
purchased for God
those from every tribe and tongue, people
and nation.
10 *k*You made them a kingdom and priests for our
God,
and they will reign on earth."

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11 *l**I looked again and heard the voices of many
angels who surrounded the throne and the living
creatures and the elders. They were countless in
number, 12 and they cried out in a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
to receive power and riches, wisdom and
strength,
honor and glory and blessing."

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on
earth and under the earth and in the sea,
everything in the universe, cry out:

"To the one who sits on the throne and to the
Lamb
be blessing and honor, glory and might,
forever and ever."

14 The four living creatures answered, "Amen,"
and the elders fell down and worshiped.

## IV: The Seven Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues, with Interludes

### CHAPTER 6

**The First Six Seals** 1 *Then I watched while
the Lamb broke open the first of the seven seals,
and I heard one of the four living creatures cry
out in a voice like thunder, "Come forward."
2 *m**I looked, and there was a white horse, and
its rider had a bow. He was given a crown, and
he rode forth victorious to further his victories.
3 When he broke open the second seal, I heard
the second living creature cry out, "Come forward." 4 *n**Another horse came out, a red one.
Its rider was given power to take peace away

**5, 5: The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David:** these are the messianic titles applied to Christ to symbolize his victory; cf 22, 16; Gn 49, 9; Is 11, 1.10; Mt 1, 1.

**5, 6:** Christ is the Paschal Lamb without blemish, whose blood saved the new Israel from sin and death; cf Ex 12; Is 53, 7; Jn 1, 29.36; Acts 8, 32; 1 Pt 1, 18–19. This is the main title for Christ in Rv, used twenty-eight times. **Seven horns and seven eyes:** Christ has the fullness (see the note on 1, 4) of power (horns) and knowledge (eyes); cf Zec 4, 10. **[Seven] spirits:** as in 1, 4; 3, 1; and 4, 5.

**5, 11: Countless:** literally, "100,000,000 plus 1,000,000," used by the author to express infinity.

**6, 1—16, 21:** A series of seven disasters now begins as each seal is broken (6, 1—8, 1), followed by a similar series as seven trumpets sound (8, 2—11, 19) and as seven angels pour bowls on the earth causing plagues (15, 1—16, 21). These gloomy sequences are interrupted by longer or shorter scenes suggesting the triumph of God and his witnesses (e.g., chs 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14).

**6, 1–17:** This chapter provides a symbolic description of the contents of the sealed scroll. The breaking of the first four seals reveals four riders. The first rider (of a white horse) is a conquering power (1–2), the second (red horse) a symbol of bloody war (3–4), the third (black horse) a symbol of famine (5–6), the fourth (pale green horse) a symbol of Death himself, accompanied by Hades (the netherworld) as his page (7–8). Verse 8b summarizes the role of all four riders. The breaking of the fifth seal reveals Christian martyrs in an attitude of sacrifice as blood poured out at the foot of an altar begging God for vindication, which will come only when their quota is filled; but they are given a white robe symbolic of victory (9–11). The breaking of the sixth seal reveals typical apocalyptic signs in the sky and the sheer terror of all people at the imminent divine judgment (12–17).

**6, 1–8:** The imagery is adapted from Zec 1, 8–10; 6, 1–8.

**6, 2: White horse . . . bow:** this may perhaps allude specifically to the Parthians on the eastern border of the Roman empire. Expert in the use of the bow, they constantly harassed the Romans and won a major victory in A.D. 62; see the note on 9, 13–21. But the Old Testament imagery typifies the history of oppression of God's people at all times.

**6, 4: Huge sword:** this is a symbol of war and violence; cf Ez 21, 14–17.

i Is 11, 1.10; Rom 15, 12. j Jn 1, 29. k 1, 6; Ex 19, 6; Is 61, 6. l Dn 7, 10; Jude 14–15. m Zec 1, 8–10; 6, 1–3. n Ez 21, 14–16.

from the earth, so that people would slaughter
one another. And he was given a huge sword.
5*When he broke open the third seal, I heard
the third living creature cry out, "Come for-
ward." I looked, and there was a black horse,
and its rider held a scale in his hand. 6 o*I heard
what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the
four living creatures. It said, "A ration of wheat
costs a day's pay, and three rations of barley cost
a day's pay. But do not damage the olive oil or
the wine."
7When he broke open the fourth seal, I heard
the voice of the fourth living creature cry out,
"Come forward." 8 p*I looked, and there was a
pale green horse. Its rider was named Death, and
Hades accompanied him. They were given au-
thority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with
sword, famine, and plague, and by means of the
beasts of the earth.
9*When he broke open the fifth seal, I saw
underneath the altar the souls of those who had
been slaughtered because of the witness they
bore to the word of God. 10*They cried out in a
loud voice, "How long will it be, holy and true
master, before you sit in judgment and avenge
our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?"
11Each of them was given a white robe, and they
were told to be patient a little while longer until
the number was filled of their fellow servants
and brothers who were going to be killed as they
had been.
12 q*Then I watched while he broke open the
sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; the
sun turned as black as dark sackcloth and the
whole moon became like blood. 13*The stars in
the sky fell to the earth like unripe figs shaken
loose from the tree in a strong wind. 14 r*Then
the sky was divided like a torn scroll curling up,
and every mountain and island was moved from
its place. 15*The kings of the earth, the nobles,
the military officers, the rich, the powerful, and
every slave and free person hid themselves in
caves and among mountain crags. 16 sThey cried
out to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us
and hide us from the face of the one who sits on
the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb,
17*because the great day of their wrath has
come and who can withstand it?"

## CHAPTER 7

Ch 6–16
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574–575

**The 144,000 Sealed** 1 t*After this I saw four
angels standing at the four corners of the earth,
holding back the four winds of the earth so that
no wind could blow on land or sea or against any
tree. 2*Then I saw another angel come up from

**6, 5: Black horse:** this is a symbol of famine, the usual accompaniment of war in antiquity; cf Lv 26, 26; Ez 4, 16–17. The **scale** is a symbol of shortage of food with a corresponding rise in price.

**6, 6: A day's pay:** literally, "a denarius," a Roman silver coin that constitutes a day's wage in Mt 20, 2. Because of the famine, food was rationed and sold at an exorbitant price. A liter of flour was considered a day's ration in the Greek historians Herodotus and Diogenes Laertius. **Barley:** food of the poor (Jn 6, 9.13; cf 2 Kgs 7, 1.16.18); it was also used to feed animals; cf 1 Kgs 5, 8. **Do not damage:** the olive and the vine are to be used more sparingly in time of famine.

**6, 8: Pale green:** symbol of death and decay; cf Ez 14, 21.

**6, 9: The altar:** this altar corresponds to the altar of holocausts in the temple in Jerusalem; see also 11, 1. **Because of the witness . . . word of God:** literally, "because of the word of God and the witness they had borne."

**6, 10: Holy and true master:** Old Testament usage as well as the context indicates that this is addressed to God rather than to Christ.

**6, 12–14:** Symbolic rather than literal description of the cosmic upheavals attending the day of the Lord when the martyrs' prayer for vindication (10) would be answered; cf Am 8, 8–9; Is 34, 4; 50, 3; Jl 2, 10; 3, 3–4; Mt 24, 4–36; Mk 13, 5–37; Lk 21, 8–36.

**6, 12: Dark sackcloth:** for mourning, sackcloth was made from the skin of a black goat.

**6, 13: Unripe figs:** literally, "summer (or winter) fruit."

**6, 14: Was divided:** literally, "was split," like a broken papyrus roll torn in two, each half then curling up to form a roll on either side.

**6, 15: Nobles:** literally, "courtiers," "grandees." **Military officers:** literally, "commanders of 1,000 men," used in Josephus and other Greek authors as the equivalent of the Roman **tribunus militum.** The listing of various ranks of society represents the universality of terror at the impending doom.

**6, 17: Their:** this reading is attested in the best manuscripts, but the vast majority read "his" in reference to the wrath of the Lamb in the preceding verse.

**7, 1–17:** An interlude of two visions precedes the breaking of the seventh seal, just as two more will separate the sixth and seventh trumpets (ch 10). In the first vision (1–8), the elect receive the seal of the living God as protection against the coming cataclysm; cf 14, 1; Ez 9, 4–6; 2 Cor 1, 22; Eph 1, 13; 4, 30. The second vision (9–17) portrays the faithful Christians before God's throne to encourage those on earth to persevere to the end, even to death.

**7, 1: The four corners of the earth:** the earth is seen as a table or rectangular surface.

**7, 2: East:** literally, "rising of the sun." The east was considered the source of light and the place of paradise (Gn 2, 8). **Seal:** whatever was marked by the impression of one's signet ring belonged to that person and was under his protection.

o Lv 26, 26; Ez 4, 16–17. p Ez 14, 21. q Jl 3, 4; Mt 24, 29. r Is 34, 4 / 16, 20. s Is 2, 19; Hos 10, 8; Lk 23, 30. t Jer 49, 36; Zec 6, 5.

the East, holding the seal of the living God. He
cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who
were given power to damage the land and the
sea, 3 u"Do not damage the land or the sea or the
trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of
the servants of our God." 4 v*I heard the number
of those who had been marked with the seal,
one hundred and forty-four thousand marked
from every tribe of the Israelites: 5*twelve
thousand were marked from the tribe of Judah,
twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben,
twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, 6twelve
thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thou-
sand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand
from the tribe of Manasseh, 7twelve thousand
from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from
the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe
of Issachar, 8twelve thousand from the tribe of
Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of
Joseph, and twelve thousand were marked from
the tribe of Benjamin.

**Triumph of the Elect** 9*After this I had a
vision of a great multitude, which no one could
count, from every nation, race, people, and
tongue. They stood before the throne and before
the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding
palm branches in their hands. 10*They cried out
in a loud voice:

"Salvation comes from our God, who is seated
on the throne,
and from the Lamb."

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11All the angels stood around the throne and
around the elders and the four living creatures.
They prostrated themselves before the throne,
worshiped God, 12and exclaimed:

"Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and
thanksgiving,
honor, power, and might
be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

13Then one of the elders spoke up and said to
me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and
where did they come from?" 14 w*I said to him,
"My lord, you are the one who knows." He said
to me, "These are the ones who have survived
the time of great distress; they have washed
their robes and made them white in the blood of
the Lamb.

15 "For this reason they stand before God's
throne
and worship him day and night in his
temple.
The one who sits on the throne will shelter
them.
16 xThey will not hunger or thirst anymore,
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.
17 y*For the Lamb who is in the center of the
throne will shepherd them
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,
and God will wipe away every tear from
their eyes."

## CHAPTER 8

**The Seven Trumpets** 1 z*When he broke open
the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for
about half an hour. 2 aAnd I saw that the seven

**7, 4–9: One hundred and forty-four thousand:** the square of twelve (the number of Israel's tribes) multiplied by a thousand, symbolic of the new Israel (cf 14, 1–5; Gal 6, 16; Jas 1, 1) that embraces people **from every nation, race, people, and tongue** (9).

**7, 5–8:** Judah is placed first because of Christ; cf "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (5, 5). Dan is omitted because of a later tradition that the antichrist would arise from it.

**7, 9: White robes . . . palm branches:** symbols of joy and victory; see the note on 3, 5.

**7, 10: Salvation comes from:** literally, "(let) salvation (be ascribed) to." A similar hymn of praise is found at the fall of the dragon (12, 10) and of Babylon (19, 1).

**7, 14: Time of great distress:** fierce persecution by the Romans; cf Introduction.

**7, 17: Life-giving water:** literally, "the water of life," God's grace, which flows from Christ; cf 21, 6; 22, 1.17; Jn 4, 10.14.

**8, 1–13:** The breaking of the seventh seal produces at first silence and then seven symbolic disasters, each announced by a trumpet blast, of which the first four form a unit as did the first four seals. A minor liturgy (3–5) is enclosed by a vision of seven angels (2.6). Then follow the first four trumpet blasts, each heralding catastrophes modeled on the plagues of Egypt affecting the traditional prophetic third (cf Ez 5, 12) of the earth, sea, fresh water, and stars (7–12). Finally, there is a vision of an eagle warning of the last three trumpet blasts (13).

**8, 1: Silence in heaven:** as in Zep 1, 7, a prelude to the eschatological woes that are to follow; cf Introduction.

u Ex 12, 7–14; Ez 9, 4; 2 Cor 1, 22; Eph 1, 13; 4, 30. v 14, 1. w Mt 24, 21. x Is 49, 10. y 21, 4; Is 25, 8. z Hb 2, 20; Zep 1, 7; Zec 2, 17. a 4, 5; Tb 12, 15.

angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets.

**The Gold Censer** 3 [b]*Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel. 5 [c]Then the angel took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the altar, and hurled it down to the earth. There were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

**The First Four Trumpets** 6 [d]The seven angels who were holding the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

7 *When the first one blew his trumpet, there came hail and fire mixed with blood, which was hurled down to the earth. A third of the land was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all green grass.

8 [e]*When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, 9 *a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the ships were wrecked.

10 [f]When the third angel blew his trumpet, a large star burning like a torch fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 [g]*The star was called "Wormwood," and a third of all the water turned to wormwood. Many people died from this water, because it was made bitter.

12 [h]When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them became dark. The day lost its light for a third of the time, as did the night.

13 *Then I looked again and heard an eagle flying high overhead cry out in a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth from the rest of the trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to blow!"

## CHAPTER 9

Ch 6–16
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**The Fifth Trumpet** 1 [i]*Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. It was given the key for the passage to the abyss. 2 [j]It opened the passage to the abyss, and smoke came up out of the passage like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the passage. 3 [k]*Locusts came out of the smoke onto the land, and they were given the same power as scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or any tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 *They were not allowed to kill them but only to torment them for five months; the torment they inflicted was like that of a scorpion when it stings a person. 6 [l]During that time these people will seek death but will not find it, and they will long to die but death will escape them.

7 [m]*The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses ready for battle. On their heads

**8, 3: Altar:** there seems to be only one altar in the heavenly temple, corresponding to the altar of holocausts in 6, 9, and here to the altar of incense in Jerusalem; cf also 9, 13; 11, 1; 14, 18; 16, 7.

**8, 7:** This woe resembles the seventh plague of Egypt (Ex 9, 23–24); cf Jl 3, 3.

**8, 8–11:** The background of these two woes is the first plague of Egypt (Ex 7, 20–21).

**8, 9: Creatures living in the sea:** literally, "creatures in the sea that had souls."

**8, 11: Wormwood:** an extremely bitter and malignant plant symbolizing the punishment God inflicts on the ungodly; cf Jer 9, 12–14; 23, 15.

**8, 13: Woe! Woe! Woe:** each of the three woes pronounced by the angel represents a separate disaster; cf 9, 12; 11, 14. The final woe, released by the seventh trumpet blast, includes the plagues of ch 16.

**9, 1–12:** The fifth trumpet heralds a woe containing elements from the eighth and ninth plagues of Egypt (Ex 10, 12–15.21–23) but specifically reminiscent of the invasion of locusts in Jl 1, 4—2, 10.

**9, 1: A star:** late Judaism represented fallen powers as stars (Is 14, 12–15; Lk 10, 18; Jude 13), but a comparison with 1, 20 and 20, 1 suggests that here it means an angel. **The passage to the abyss:** referring to Sheol, the netherworld, where Satan and the fallen angels are kept for a thousand years, to be cast afterwards into the pool of fire; cf 20, 7–10. The abyss was conceived of as a vast subterranean cavern full of fire. Its only link with the earth was a kind of passage or mine shaft, which was kept locked.

**9, 3: Scorpions:** their poisonous sting was proverbial; Ez 2, 6; Lk 11, 12.

**9, 5: For five months:** more or less corresponding to the lifespan of locusts.

**9, 7–10:** Eight characteristics are listed to show the eschatological and diabolical nature of these locusts.

b Ps 141, 2; Tb 12, 12. c Ez 10, 2; Ps 11, 6 / 4, 5; 11, 19; 16, 18. d 16, 1–21. e Ex 7, 20. f Is 14, 12. g Jer 9, 14. h Ex 10, 21–23. i 20, 1. j Gn 19, 28. k Ex 10, 12–15; Wis 16, 9. l Jb 3, 21. m Jl 2, 4.

they wore what looked like crowns of gold; their
faces were like human faces, 8 [n]and they had
hair like women's hair. Their teeth were like
lions' teeth, 9and they had chests like iron
breastplates. The sound of their wings was like
the sound of many horse-drawn chariots racing
into battle. 10They had tails like scorpions, with
stingers; with their tails they had power to harm
people for five months. 11*They had as their
king the angel of the abyss, whose name in
Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon.

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12The first woe has passed, but there are two
more to come.

**The Sixth Trumpet** 13 [o]*Then the sixth angel
blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming
from the [four] horns of the gold altar before
God, 14*telling the sixth angel who held the
trumpet, "Release the four angels who are
bound at the banks of the great river Euphrates."
15So the four angels were released, who were
prepared for this hour, day, month, and year to
kill a third of the human race. 16The number of
cavalry troops was two hundred million; I heard
their number. 17 [p]*Now in my vision this is how
I saw the horses and their riders. They wore red,
blue, and yellow breastplates, and the horses'
heads were like heads of lions, and out of their
mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. 18By these
three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur that
came out of their mouths a third of the human
race was killed. 19For the power of the horses is
in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails
are like snakes, with heads that inflict harm.

20 [q]*The rest of the human race, who were
not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the
works of their hands, to give up the worship of
demons and idols made from gold, silver,
bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or
hear or walk. 21Nor did they repent of their
murders, their magic potions, their unchastity, or
their robberies.

## CHAPTER 10

**The Angel with the Small Scroll** 1*Then I
saw another mighty angel come down from
heaven wrapped in a cloud, with a halo around
his head; his face was like the sun and his feet
were like pillars of fire. 2*In his hand he held a
small scroll that had been opened. He placed his
right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,
3 [r]and then he cried out in a loud voice as a lion
roars. When he cried out, the seven thunders
raised their voices, too. 4When the seven thun-
ders had spoken, I was about to write it down;
but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up
what the seven thunders have spoken, but do
not write it down." 5Then the angel I saw
standing on the sea and on the land raised his
right hand to heaven 6 [s]*and swore by the one
who lives forever and ever, who created heaven
and earth and sea and all that is in them, "There
shall be no more delay. 7 [t]*At the time when you
hear the seventh angel blow his trumpet, the
mysterious plan of God shall be fulfilled, as he
promised to his servants the prophets."

8Then the voice that I had heard from heaven

**9, 11: Abaddon:** Hebrew (more precisely, Aramaic) for destruction or ruin. **Apollyon:** Greek for the "Destroyer."

**9, 13–21:** The sixth trumpet heralds a woe representing another diabolical attack symbolized by an invasion by the Parthians living east of the Euphrates; see the note on 6, 2. At the appointed time (15), the frightful horses act as God's agents of judgment. The imaginative details are not to be taken literally; see Introduction and the note on 6, 12–14.

**9, 13: [Four]:** many Greek manuscripts and versions omit the word. The horns were situated at the four corners of the altar (Ex 27, 2; 30, 2–3); see the note on 8, 3.

**9, 14–15: The four angels:** they are symbolic of the destructive activity that will be extended throughout the universe.

**9, 17: Blue:** literally, "hyacinth-colored." **Yellow:** literally, "sulfurous."

**9, 20: The works of their hands:** i.e., the gods their hands had made.

**10, 1—11, 14:** An interlude in two scenes (10, 1–11 and 11, 1–14) precedes the sounding of the seventh trumpet; cf 7, 1–17. The first vision describes an angel astride sea and land like a colossus, with a small scroll open, the contents of which indicate that the end is imminent (ch 10). The second vision is of the measuring of the temple and of two witnesses, whose martyrdom means that the kingdom of God is about to be inaugurated.

**10, 1–4: The seven thunders:** God's voice announcing judgment and doom; cf Ps 29, 3–9, where thunder, as the voice of Yahweh, is praised seven times.

**10, 2: He placed . . . on the land:** this symbolizes the universality of the angel's message, as does the figure of the small scroll open to be read.

**10, 6: Heaven and earth and sea:** the three parts of the universe. **No more delay:** cf Dn 12, 7; Hb 2, 3.

**10, 7: The mysterious plan of God:** literally, "the mystery of God," the end of the present age when the forces of evil will be put down (17, 1—19, 4.11–21; 20, 7–10; cf 2 Thes 2, 6–12; Rom 16, 25–26), and the establishment of the reign of God when all creation will be made new (21, 1—22, 5).

n Jl 1, 6. o Ex 30, 1–3. p Jb 41, 10–13. q Ps 135, 15–17; Is 17, 8; Dn 5, 4. r Ps 29, 3–9; Jer 25, 30; Am 3, 8. s Dt 32, 40; Dn 12, 7 / Ez 12, 28. t Am 3, 7.

spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the scroll
that lies open in the hand of the angel who is
standing on the sea and on the land." 9*So I
went up to the angel and told him to give me the
small scroll. He said to me, "Take and swallow
it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your
mouth it will taste as sweet as honey." 10 [u]I took
the small scroll from the angel's hand and
swallowed it. In my mouth it was like sweet
honey, but when I had eaten it, my stomach
turned sour. 11*Then someone said to me, "You
must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

## CHAPTER 11

**The Two Witnesses** 1 [v]*Then I was given a
measuring rod like a staff and I was told, "Come
and measure the temple of God and the altar,
and count those who are worshiping in it. 2*But
exclude the outer court of the temple; do not
measure it, for it has been handed over to the
Gentiles, who will trample the holy city for forty-
two months. 3*I will commission my two wit-
nesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and
sixty days, wearing sackcloth." 4 [w]*These are the
two olive trees and the two lampstands that
stand before the Lord of the earth. 5*If anyone
wants to harm them, fire comes out of their
mouths and devours their enemies. In this way,
anyone wanting to harm them is sure to be slain.
6 [x]They have the power to close up the sky so
that no rain can fall during the time of their
prophesying. They also have power to turn
water into blood and to afflict the earth with any
plague as often as they wish.
7 [y]*When they have finished their testimony,
the beast that comes up from the abyss will wage
war against them and conquer them and kill
them. 8*Their corpses will lie in the main street
of the great city, which has the symbolic names
"Sodom" and "Egypt," where indeed their Lord
was crucified. 9*Those from every people, tribe,
tongue, and nation will gaze on their corpses for
three and a half days, and they will not allow
their corpses to be buried. 10The inhabitants of
the earth will gloat over them and be glad and
exchange gifts because these two prophets tor-
mented the inhabitants of the earth. 11 [z]But after
the three and a half days, a breath of life from
God entered them. When they stood on their
feet, great fear fell on those who saw them.
12 [a]Then they heard a loud voice from heaven
say to them, "Come up here." So they went up
to heaven in a cloud as their enemies looked on.
13*At that moment there was a great earth-
quake, and a tenth of the city fell in ruins. Seven
thousand people were killed during the earth-
quake; the rest were terrified and gave glory to
the God of heaven.

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10, 9–10: The small scroll was sweet because it predicted the final victory of God's people; it was sour because it also announced their sufferings. Cf Ez 3, 1–3.

10, 11: This further prophecy is contained in chs 12–22.

11, 1: The temple and altar symbolize the new Israel; see the note on 7, 4–9. The worshipers represent Christians. The measuring of the temple (cf Ez 40, 3—42, 20; 47, 1–12; Zec 2, 5–6) suggests that God will preserve the faithful remnant (cf Is 4, 2–3) who remain true to Christ (14, 1–5).

11, 2: **The outer court:** the Court of the Gentiles. **Trample . . . forty-two months:** the duration of the vicious persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dn 7, 25; 12, 7); this persecution of three and a half years (half of seven, counted as 1260 days in 3; 12, 6) became the prototype of periods of trial for God's people; cf Lk 4, 25; Jas 5, 17. The reference here is to the persecution by the Romans; cf Introduction.

11, 3: The two witnesses, wearing sackcloth symbolizing lamentation and repentance, cannot readily be identified. Do they represent Moses and Elijah, or the Law and the Prophets, or Peter and Paul? Most probably they refer to the universal church, especially the Christian martyrs, fulfilling the office of witness (two because of Dt 19, 15; cf Mk 6, 7; Jn 8, 17).

11, 4: **The two olive trees and the two lampstands:** the martyrs who stand in the presence of the Lord; the imagery is taken from Zec 4, 1–3.11–14, where the olive trees refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua.

11, 5–6: These details are derived from stories of Moses, who turned **water into blood** (Ex 7, 17–20), and of Elijah, who called down fire from heaven (1 Kgs 18, 36–40; 2 Kgs 1, 10) and closed up the sky for three years (1 Kgs 17, 1; cf 18, 1).

11, 7: **The beast . . . from the abyss:** the Roman emperor Nero, who symbolizes the forces of evil, or the antichrist (13, 1.8; 17, 8); cf Dn 7, 2–8.11–12.19–22 and Introduction.

11, 8: **The great city:** this expression is used constantly in Rv for Babylon, i.e., Rome; cf 14, 8; 16, 19; 17, 18; 18, 2.10.21. **"Sodom" and "Egypt":** symbols of immorality (cf Is 1, 10) and oppression of God's people (cf Ex 1, 11–14). **Where indeed their Lord was crucified:** not the geographical but the symbolic Jerusalem that rejects God and his witnesses, i.e., Rome, called Babylon in chs 16–18; see the note on 17, 9 and Introduction.

11, 9–12: Over the martyrdom (7) of the two witnesses, now called prophets, the ungodly rejoice **for three and a half days,** a symbolic period of time; see the note on v 2. Afterwards they go in triumph to heaven, as did Elijah (2 Kgs 2, 11).

11, 13: **Seven thousand people:** a symbolic sum to represent all social classes (seven) and large numbers (thousands); cf Introduction.

u Ez 3, 1–3. v Ez 40, 3–5 / Zec 2, 5–9. w Zec 4, 3.14. x Ex 7, 17. y Dn 7, 21. z Ez 37, 5.10. a 2 Kgs 2, 11.

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14The second woe has passed, but the third is
coming soon.

**The Seventh Trumpet** 15*Then the seventh
angel blew his trumpet. There were loud voices
in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world
now belongs to our Lord and to his Anointed,
and he will reign forever and ever." 16The
twenty-four elders who sat on their thrones
before God prostrated themselves and wor-
shiped God 17and said:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God almighty,
who are and who were.
For you have assumed your great power
and have established your reign.
18 *b*The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and to recompense your servants, the
prophets,
and the holy ones and those who fear your
name,
the small and the great alike,
and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

19Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and
the ark of his covenant could be seen in the
temple. There were flashes of lightning, rum-
blings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and
a violent hailstorm.

## CHAPTER 12

**The Woman and the Dragon** 1 *c**A great sign
appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the
sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her
head a crown of twelve stars. 2*She was with
child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to
give birth. 3 *d**Then another sign appeared in the
sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads
and ten horns, and on its heads were seven
diadems. 4 *e*Its tail swept away a third of the stars
in the sky and hurled them down to the earth.
Then the dragon stood before the woman about
to give birth, to devour her child when she gave
birth. 5*f**She gave birth to a son, a male child,
destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod.
Her child was caught up to God and his throne.
6*The woman herself fled into the desert where
she had a place prepared by God, that there she
might be taken care of for twelve hundred and
sixty days.

7*Then war broke out in heaven; Michael
and his angels battled against the dragon. The
dragon and its angels fought back, 8but they did
not prevail and there was no longer any place for
them in heaven. 9 *g**The huge dragon, the an-
cient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan,
who deceived the whole world, was thrown
down to earth, and its angels were thrown down
with it.

**11, 15–19:** The seventh trumpet proclaims the coming of God's reign after the victory over diabolical powers; see the note on 10, 7.

**12, 1—14, 20:** This central section of Rv portrays the power of evil, represented by a dragon, in opposition to God and his people. First, the dragon pursues the woman about to give birth, but her son is saved and "caught up to God and his throne" (12, 5). Then Michael and his angels cast the dragon and his angels out of heaven (12, 7–9). After this, the dragon tries to attack the boy indirectly by attacking members of his church (12, 13–18). A beast, symbolizing the Roman empire, then becomes the dragon's agent, mortally wounded but restored to life and worshiped by all the world (13, 1–10). A second beast arises from the land, symbolizing the antichrist, which leads people astray by its prodigies to idolize the first beast (13, 11–18). This is followed by a vision of the Lamb and his faithful ones, and the proclamation of imminent judgment upon the world in terms of the wine of God's wrath (14, 1–20).

**12, 1–6:** The woman adorned with the sun, the moon, and the stars (images taken from Gn 37, 9–10) symbolizes God's people in the Old and the New Testament. The Israel of old gave birth to the Messiah (5) and then became the new Israel, the church, which suffers persecution by the dragon (6.13–17); cf Is 50, 1; 66, 7; Jer 50, 12. This corresponds to a widespread myth throughout the ancient world that a goddess pregnant with a savior was pursued by a horrible monster; by miraculous intervention, she bore a son who then killed the monster.

**12, 2:** Because of Eve's sin, the woman gives birth in distress and pain (Gn 3, 16; cf Is 66, 7–14).

**12, 3: Huge red dragon:** the Devil or Satan (cf 9; 20, 2), symbol of the forces of evil, a mythical monster known also as Leviathan (Ps 74, 13–14) or Rahab (Jb 26, 12–13; Ps 89, 11). **Seven diadems:** these are symbolic of the fullness of the dragon's sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world; cf Christ with many diadems (19, 12).

**12, 5: Rule . . . iron rod:** fulfilled in 19, 15; cf Ps 2, 9. **Was caught up to God:** reference to Christ's ascension.

**12, 6:** God protects the persecuted church in the desert, the traditional Old Testament place of refuge for the afflicted, according to the typology of the Exodus; see the note on 11, 2.

**12, 7–12:** Michael, mentioned only here in Rv, wins a victory over the dragon. A hymn of praise follows.

**12, 7: Michael:** the archangel, guardian and champion of Israel; cf Dn 10, 13.21; 12, 1; Jude 9. In Hebrew, the name Michael means "Who can compare with God?"; cf 13, 4.

**12, 9: The ancient serpent:** who seduced Eve (Gn 3, 1–6), mother of the human race; cf 20, 2; Eph 6, 11–12. **Was thrown down:** allusion to the expulsion of Satan from heaven; cf Lk 10, 18.

b Ps 2, 1.5 / Am 3, 7. c Gn 37, 9. d Dn 7, 7. e Dn 8, 10. f Is 66, 7 / Ps 2, 9. g Gn 3, 1–4 / Lk 10, 18.

10 *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:
"Now have salvation and power come,
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Anointed.
For the accuser of our brothers is cast out,
who accuses them before our God day and night.
11 They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
love for life did not deter them from death.
12 Therefore, rejoice, you heavens,
and you who dwell in them.
But woe to you, earth and sea,
for the Devil has come down to you in great fury,
for he knows he has but a short time."

13 [h]When the dragon saw that it had been thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 [i]*But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and a half-year. 15 *The serpent, however, spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the current. 16 But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth. 17 [j]*Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus. 18 *It took its position on the sand of the sea.

## CHAPTER 13

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**The First Beast** 1 [k]*Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. 2 [l]*The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear's, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. 3 *I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. 4 *They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, "Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?"

5 [m]*The beast was given a mouth uttering proud boasts and blasphemies, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling and those who dwell in heaven. 7 [n]It was also allowed to wage war against the holy ones and conquer them, and it was granted authority over every tribe, people, tongue, and nation. 8 [o]All the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, all whose names were not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, which belongs to the Lamb who was slain.

**12, 10: The accuser:** the meaning of the Hebrew word "Satan," found in v 9; Jb 1—2; Zec 3, 1; 1 Chr 21, 1; he continues to accuse Christ's disciples.

**12, 14: Great eagle:** symbol of the power and swiftness of divine help; cf Ex 19, 4; Dt 32, 11; Is 40, 31.

**12, 15:** The serpent is depicted as the sea monster; cf 13, 1; Is 27, 1; Ez 32, 2; Ps 74, 13–14.

**12, 17:** Although the church is protected by God's special providence (16), the individual Christian is to expect persecution and suffering.

**12, 18: It took its position:** many later manuscripts and versions read "I took my position," thus connecting the sentence to the following paragraph.

**13, 1–10:** This wild beast, combining features of the four beasts in Dn 7, 2–28, symbolizes the Roman empire; the seven heads represent the emperors; see the notes on 17, 10 and 17, 12–14. The blasphemous names are the divine titles assumed by the emperors.

**13, 2:** Satan (12, 9), the prince of this world (Jn 12, 31), commissioned the beast to persecute the church (5–7).

**13, 3:** This may be a reference to the popular legend that Nero would come back to life and rule again after his death (which occurred in A.D. 68 from a self-inflicted stab wound in the throat); cf v 14; 17, 8. Domitian (A.D. 81–96) embodied all the cruelty and impiety of Nero. Cf Introduction.

**13, 4: Worshiped the beast:** allusion to emperor worship, which Domitian insisted upon and ruthlessly enforced. **Who can compare with the beast:** perhaps a deliberate parody of the name Michael; see the note on 12, 7.

**13, 5–6:** Domitian, like Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dn 7, 8.11.25), demanded that he be called by divine titles such as "our lord and god" and "Jupiter." See the note on 11, 2.

**13, 5: Forty-two months:** this is the same duration as the profanation of the holy city (11, 2), the prophetic mission of the two witnesses (11, 3), and the retreat of the woman into the desert (12, 6.14).

h Gn 3, 15. i Ex 19, 4; Dn 7, 25; 12, 7. j Gn 3, 15. k 2 Thes 2, 3–12. l Dn 7, 3–6. m Dn 7, 8.11.25; 8, 14; 9, 27; 11, 36; 12, 7. n Dn 7, 21. o 3, 5; 17, 8; 20, 12.

9 [p]Whoever has ears ought to hear these words.
10 [q]Anyone destined for captivity goes into
captivity.
Anyone destined to be slain by the sword shall
be slain by the sword.

Such is the faithful endurance of the holy ones.

**The Second Beast** 11*Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb's but spoke like a dragon. 12It wielded all the authority of the first beast in its sight and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. 13 [r]It performed great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. 14It deceived the inhabitants of the earth with the signs it was allowed to perform in the sight of the first beast, telling them to make an image for the beast who had been wounded by the sword and revived. 15 [s]It was then permitted to breathe life into the beast's image, so that the beast's image could speak and [could] have anyone who did not worship it put to death. 16 [t]It forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to be given a stamped image on their right hands or their foreheads, 17so that no one could buy or sell except one who had the stamped image of the beast's name or the number that stood for its name.

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18 [u]*Wisdom is needed here; one who understands can calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number that stands for a person. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

## CHAPTER 14

**The Lamb's Companions** 1 [v]*Then I looked and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of rushing water or a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 [w]They were singing [what seemed to be] a new hymn before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn this hymn except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been ransomed from the earth. 4 [x]*These are they who were not defiled with women; they are virgins and these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been ransomed as the firstfruits of the human race for God and the Lamb. 5 [y]*On their lips no deceit has been found; they are unblemished.

**The Three Angels** 6*Then I saw another angel flying high overhead, with everlasting good

**13, 11–18:** The second beast is described in terms of the false prophets (cf 16, 13; 19, 20; 20, 10) who accompany the false messiahs (the first beast); cf Mt 24, 24; Mk 13, 22; 2 Thes 2, 9; cf also Dt 13, 2–4. Christians had either to worship the emperor and his image or to suffer martyrdom.

**13, 18:** Each of the letters of the alphabet in Hebrew as well as in Greek has a numerical value. Many possible combinations of letters will add up to 666, and many candidates have been nominated for this infamous number. The most likely is the emperor Caesar Nero (see the note on 13, 3), the Greek form of whose name in Hebrew letters gives the required sum. (The Latin form of this name equals 616, which is the reading of a few manuscripts.) Nero personifies the emperors who viciously persecuted the church. It has also been observed that "6" represents imperfection, falling short of the perfect number "7," and is represented here in a triple or superlative form.

**14, 1–5:** Now follows a tender and consoling vision of the Lamb and his companions.

**14, 1: Mount Zion:** in Jerusalem, the traditional place where the true remnant, the Israel of faith, is to be gathered in the messianic reign; cf 2 Kgs 19, 30–31; Jl 3, 5; Ob 17; Mi 4, 6–8; Zep 3, 12–20. **A hundred and forty-four thousand:** see the note on 7, 4–9. **His Father's name . . . foreheads:** in contrast to the pagans who were marked with the name or number of the beast (13, 16–17).

**14, 4: Virgins:** metaphorically, because they never indulged in any idolatrous practices, which are considered in the Old Testament to be adultery and fornication (2, 14–15.20–22; 17, 1–6; cf Ez 16, 1–58; 23, 1–49). The parallel passages (7, 3; 22, 4) indicate that the 144,000 whose foreheads are sealed represent all Christian people.

**14, 5: No deceit:** because they did not deny Christ or do homage to the beast. Lying is characteristic of the opponents of Christ (Jn 8, 44), but the Suffering Servant spoke no falsehood (Is 53, 9; 1 Pt 2, 22). **Unblemished:** a cultic term taken from the vocabulary of sacrificial ritual.

**14, 6–13:** Three angels proclaim imminent judgment on the pagan world, calling all peoples to worship God the creator. Babylon (Rome) will fall, and its supporters will be tormented forever.

**14, 6: Everlasting good news:** that God's eternal reign is about to begin; see the note on 10, 7.

p Mt 13, 9. q Jer 15, 2. r Dt 13, 2–4; Mt 24, 24; 2 Thes 2, 9–10. s Dn 3, 5–7.15. t 14, 9; 16, 2; 19, 20; 20, 4. u 17, 9. v Jl 3, 5; Ob 17; Acts 2, 21. w Pss 33, 3; 96, 1; 98, 1; Is 42, 10. x Jer 2, 2; Jas 1, 18. y Zep 3, 13.

news to announce to those who dwell on earth,
to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. 7 [z]He
said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him
glory, for his time has come to sit in judgment.
Worship him who made heaven and earth and
sea and springs of water."

8 [a]*A second angel followed, saying:
"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,
that made all the nations drink
the wine of her licentious passion."

9A third angel followed them and said in a loud
voice, "Anyone who worships the beast or its
image, or accepts its mark on forehead or hand,
10*will also drink the wine of God's fury, poured
full strength into the cup of his wrath, and will
be tormented in burning sulfur before the holy
angels and before the Lamb. 11 [b]The smoke of
the fire that torments them will rise forever and
ever, and there will be no relief day or night for
those who worship the beast or its image or
accept the mark of its name." 12 [c]*Here is what
sustains the holy ones who keep God's com-
mandments and their faith in Jesus.

13 [d]*I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write
this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord
from now on." "Yes," said the Spirit, "let them
find rest from their labors, for their works
accompany them."

**The Harvest of the Earth** 14 [e]*Then I looked
and there was a white cloud, and sitting on the
cloud one who looked like a son of man, with a
gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his
hand. 15 [f]Another angel came out of the temple,
crying out in a loud voice to the one sitting on
the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap the harvest,
for the time to reap has come, because the
earth's harvest is fully ripe." 16So the one who
was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over
the earth, and the earth was harvested.

17Then another angel came out of the temple
in heaven who also had a sharp sickle. 18*Then
another angel [came] from the altar, [who] was in
charge of the fire, and cried out in a loud voice
to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Use your
sharp sickle and cut the clusters from the earth's
vines, for its grapes are ripe." 19 [g]So the angel
swung his sickle over the earth and cut the
earth's vintage. He threw it into the great wine
press of God's fury. 20*The wine press was
trodden outside the city and blood poured out of
the wine press to the height of a horse's bridle
for two hundred miles.

## CHAPTER 15

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**The Seven Last Plagues** 1*Then I saw in
heaven another sign, great and awe-inspiring:
seven angels with the seven last plagues, for
through them God's fury is accomplished.

2 [h]*Then I saw something like a sea of glass
mingled with fire. On the sea of glass were stand-
ing those who had won the victory over the
beast and its image and the number that signified
its name. They were holding God's harps,

**14, 8:** This verse anticipates the lengthy dirge over Babylon (Rome) in 18, 1—19, 4. The oracle of Is 21, 9 to Babylon is applied here.

**14, 10–11: The wine of God's fury:** image taken from Is 51, 17; Jer 25, 15–16; 49, 12; 51, 7; Ez 23, 31–34. Eternal punishment in the fiery pool of burning sulfur (or "fire and brimstone"; cf Gn 19, 24) is also reserved for the Devil, the beast, and the false prophet (19, 20; 20, 10; 21, 8).

**14, 12:** In addition to **faith in Jesus,** the seer insists upon the necessity and value of works, as in 2, 23; 20, 12–13; 22, 12; cf Mt 16, 27; Rom 2, 6.

**14, 13:** See the note on 1, 3. According to Jewish thought, people's actions followed them as witnesses before the court of God.

**14, 14–20:** The reaping of the harvest symbolizes the gathering of the elect in the final judgment, while the reaping and treading of the grapes symbolizes the doom of the ungodly (cf Jl 4, 12–13; Is 63, 1–6) that will come in 19, 11–21.

**14, 18: Altar:** there was only one altar in the heavenly temple; see the notes above on 6, 9; 8, 3; 11, 1.

**14, 20: Two hundred miles:** literally sixteen hundred stades. The **stadion,** a Greek unit of measurement, was about 607 feet in length, approximately the length of a furlong.

**15, 1—16, 21:** The seven bowls, the third and last group of seven after the seven seals and the seven trumpets, foreshadow the final cataclysm. Again, the series is introduced by a heavenly prelude, in which the victors over the beast sing the canticle of Moses (15, 2–4).

**15, 1–4:** A vision of the victorious martyrs precedes the vision of woe in 15, 5—16, 21; cf 7, 9–12.

**15, 2: Mingled with fire:** fire symbolizes the sanctity involved in facing God, reflected in the trials that have prepared the victorious Christians or in God's wrath.

z 2, 10; Mt 10, 28. a 18, 2–3; Is 21, 9; Jer 51, 8 / Is 51, 17; Jer 25, 15–17. b 19, 3. c 12, 17. d Mt 11, 28–29; 2 Thes 1, 7; Heb 4, 10. e 1, 7; Dn 7, 13. f Jl 4, 13; Mt 13, 36–43. g 19, 15; Is 63, 1–6. h 7, 9.14; 13, 15–18.

3 [i]*and they sang the song of Moses, the servant
of God, and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and wonderful are your works,
Lord God almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
O king of the nations.
4 [j]Who will not fear you, Lord,
or glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All the nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

5*After this I had another vision. The temple
that is the heavenly tent of testimony opened,
6 [k]and the seven angels with the seven plagues
came out of the temple. They were dressed in
clean white linen, with a gold sash around their
chests. 7 One of the four living creatures gave the
seven angels seven gold bowls filled with the
fury of God, who lives forever and ever. 8 [l]Then
the temple became so filled with the smoke from
God's glory and might that no one could enter it
until the seven plagues of the seven angels had
been accomplished.

## CHAPTER 16

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**The Seven Bowls** 1*I heard a loud voice
speaking from the temple to the seven angels,
"Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's fury
upon the earth."

2*The first angel went and poured out his
bowl on the earth. Festering and ugly sores
broke out on those who had the mark of the
beast or worshiped its image.

3*The second angel poured out his bowl on
the sea. The sea turned to blood like that from a
corpse; every creature living in the sea died.

4 [m]The third angel poured out his bowl on the
rivers and springs of water. These also turned to
blood. 5 [n]Then I heard the angel in charge of the
waters say:

"You are just, O Holy One,
who are and who were,
in passing this sentence.
6 [o]For they have shed the blood of the holy ones
and the prophets,
and you [have] given them blood to drink;
it is what they deserve."

7 [p]Then I heard the altar cry out,

"Yes, Lord God almighty,
your judgments are true and just."

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the
sun. It was given the power to burn people with
fire. 9 [q]People were burned by the scorching heat
and blasphemed the name of God who had
power over these plagues, but they did not
repent or give him glory.

10 [r]*The fifth angel poured out his bowl on
the throne of the beast. Its kingdom was plunged
into darkness, and people bit their tongues in
pain 11 [s]and blasphemed the God of heaven
because of their pains and sores. But they did not
repent of their works.

12*The sixth angel emptied his bowl on the
great river Euphrates. Its water was dried up to
prepare the way for the kings of the East. 13 [t]*I
saw three unclean spirits like frogs come from
the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the
beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet.
14 [u]These were demonic spirits who performed

**15, 3: The song of Moses:** the song that Moses and the Israelites sang after their escape from the oppression of Egypt (Ex 15, 1–18). The martyrs have escaped from the oppression of the Devil. **Nations:** many other Greek manuscripts and versions read "ages."

**15, 5–8:** Seven angels receive the bowls of God's wrath.

**15, 5: Tent of testimony:** the name of the meeting tent in the Greek text of Ex 40. Cf 2 Mc 2, 4–7.

**16, 1–21:** These seven bowls, like the seven seals (6, 1–17; 8, 1) and the seven trumpets (8, 2—9, 21; 11, 15–19), bring on a succession of disasters modeled in part on the plagues of Egypt (Ex 7—12). See the note on 6, 12–14.

**16, 2:** Like the sixth Egyptian plague (Ex 9, 8–11).

**16, 3–4:** Like the first Egyptian plague (Ex 7, 20–21). The same woe followed the blowing of the second trumpet (8, 8–9).

**16, 10: The throne of the beast:** symbol of the forces of evil. **Darkness:** like the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10, 21–23); cf 9, 2.

**16, 12: The kings of the East:** Parthians; see the notes on 6, 2 and 17, 12–13. **East:** literally, "rising of the sun," as in 7, 2.

**16, 13: Frogs:** possibly an allusion to the second Egyptian plague (Ex 7, 26—8, 11). **The false prophet:** identified with the two-horned second beast (13, 11–18 and the note there).

i Pss 92, 6; 98, 1 / Dt 32, 4; Ps 145, 17. j Ps 86, 9–10; Jer 10, 7. k 19, 8. l 1 Kgs 8, 10; Is 6, 4. m Ex 7, 14–24. n 1, 4. o Ez 35, 6; Mt 23, 34–35. p Dn 3, 27; Tb 3, 2. q Am 4, 6. r Ex 10, 21–23. s Ex 9, 8–11 / Jer 5, 3. t Ex 8, 2–3. u 1 Cor 1, 8.

signs. They went out to the kings of the whole
world to assemble them for the battle on the
great day of God the almighty. 15 v*("Behold, I
am coming like a thief." Blessed is the one who
watches and keeps his clothes ready, so that he
may not go naked and people see him exposed.)
16*They then assembled the kings in the place
that is named Armageddon in Hebrew.
17 w*The seventh angel poured out his bowl
into the air. A loud voice came out of the temple
from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 x*Then
there were lightning flashes, rumblings, and
peals of thunder, and a great earthquake. It was
such a violent earthquake that there has never
been one like it since the human race began on
earth. 19*The great city was split into three
parts, and the gentile cities fell. But God remem-
bered great Babylon, giving it the cup filled with
the wine of his fury and wrath. 20*Every island
fled, and mountains disappeared. 21 y*Large hail-
stones like huge weights came down from the
sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the
plague of hail because this plague was so severe.

## V: The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of Pagan Nations

### CHAPTER 17

**Babylon the Great** 1 z*Then one of the seven
angels who were holding the seven bowls came
and said to me, "Come here. I will show you the
judgment on the great harlot who lives near the
many waters. 2 a*The kings of the earth have
had intercourse with her, and the inhabitants of
the earth became drunk on the wine of her
harlotry." 3 b*Then he carried me away in spirit
to a deserted place where I saw a woman seated
on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphe-
mous names, with seven heads and ten horns.
4 c*The woman was wearing purple and scarlet
and adorned with gold, precious stones, and
pearls. She held in her hand a gold cup that was
filled with the abominable and sordid deeds of
her harlotry. 5On her forehead was written a
name, which is a mystery, "Babylon the great,
the mother of harlots and of the abominations of
the earth." 6*I saw that the woman was drunk
on the blood of the holy ones and on the blood of
the witnesses to Jesus.

**Meaning of the Beast and Harlot** When I
saw her I was greatly amazed. 7The angel said to
me, "Why are you amazed? I will explain to you
the mystery of the woman and of the beast that
carries her, the beast with the seven heads and
the ten horns. 8 d*The beast that you saw existed
once but now exists no longer. It will come up
from the abyss and is headed for destruction.
The inhabitants of the earth whose names have
not been written in the book of life from the
foundation of the world shall be amazed when
they see the beast, because it existed once but
exists no longer, and yet it will come again.
9 e*Here is a clue for one who has wisdom. The
seven heads represent seven hills upon which
the woman sits. They also represent seven kings:
10*five have already fallen, one still lives, and

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16, 15: **Like a thief:** as in 3, 3 (cf Mt 24, 42–44; 1 Thes 5, 2). **Blessed:** see the note on 1, 3.

16, 16: **Armageddon:** in Hebrew, this means "Mountain of Megiddo." Since Megiddo was the scene of many decisive battles in antiquity (Jgs 5, 19–20; 2 Kgs 9, 27; 2 Chr 35, 20–24), the town became the symbol of the final disastrous rout of the forces of evil.

16, 19: **The great city:** Rome and the empire.

16, 20–21: See the note on 6, 12–14. **Hailstones:** as in the seventh Egyptian plague (Ex 9, 23–24); cf 8, 7. **Like huge weights:** literally, "weighing a talent," about one hundred pounds.

17, 1—19, 10: The punishment of Babylon is now described as a past event and, metaphorically, under the image of the great harlot who leads people astray into idolatry.

17, 1–6: Babylon, the symbolic name (5) of Rome, is graphically described as "the great harlot."

17, 2: **Intercourse . . . harlotry:** see the note on 14, 4. The pagan kings subject to Rome adopted the cult of the emperor.

17, 3: **Scarlet beast:** see the note on 13, 1–10. **Blasphemous names:** divine titles assumed by the Roman emperors; see the note on 13, 5–6.

17, 4: Reference to the great wealth and idolatrous cults of Rome.

17, 6b-18: An interpretation of the vision is here given.

17, 8: Allusion to the belief that the dead Nero would return to power (11); see the note on 13, 3.

17, 9: **Here is a clue:** literally, "Here a mind that has wisdom." **Seven hills:** of Rome.

17, 10: There is little agreement as to the identity of the Roman emperors alluded to here. The number seven (9) suggests that all the emperors are meant; see the note on 1, 4.

v Mt 24, 42–44 / 3, 17. w Is 66, 6. x Mk 13, 19. y Ex 9, 22–26. z Jer 50, 38; 51, 13. a Jer 51, 7. b 13, 1. c 18, 16. d 13, 3–4 / 3, 5; 13, 8; 20, 12. e 13, 18.

the last has not yet come, and when he comes
he must remain only a short while. 11 *The beast
that existed once but exists no longer is an
eighth king, but really belongs to the seven and
is headed for destruction. 12 f *The ten horns that
you saw represent ten kings who have not yet
been crowned; they will receive royal authority
along with the beast for one hour. 13 They are of
one mind and will give their power and author-
ity to the beast. 14 g They will fight with the
Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is
Lord of lords and king of kings, and those with
him are called, chosen, and faithful."

15 Then he said to me, "The waters that you
saw where the harlot lives represent large num-
bers of peoples, nations, and tongues. 16 h *The
ten horns that you saw and the beast will hate
the harlot; they will leave her desolate and
naked; they will eat her flesh and consume her
with fire. 17 For God has put it into their minds to
carry out his purpose and to make them come to
an agreement to give their kingdom to the beast
until the words of God are accomplished. 18 The
woman whom you saw represents the great city
that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth."

## CHAPTER 18

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**The Fall of Babylon** 1 i *After this I saw an-
other angel coming down from heaven, having
great authority, and the earth became illumined
by his splendor. 2 j *He cried out in a mighty
voice:

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.
She has become a haunt for demons.
She is a cage for every unclean spirit,
a cage for every unclean bird,
[a cage for every unclean] and disgusting
[beast].
3 k *For all the nations have drunk
the wine of her licentious passion.
The kings of the earth had intercourse with
her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich
from her drive for luxury."

4 l *Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

"Depart from her, my people,
so as not to take part in her sins
and receive a share in her plagues,
5 m for her sins are piled up to the sky,
and God remembers her crimes.
6 n Pay her back as she has paid others.
Pay her back double for her deeds.
Into her cup pour double what she poured.
7 o To the measure of her boasting and
wantonness
repay her in torment and grief;
for she said to herself,
'I sit enthroned as queen;
I am no widow,
and I will never know grief.'
8 Therefore, her plagues will come in one day,
pestilence, grief, and famine;
she will be consumed by fire.
For mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

9 The kings of the earth who had intercourse
with her in their wantonness will weep and
mourn over her when they see the smoke of her
pyre. 10 They will keep their distance for fear of
the torment inflicted on her, and they will say:

"Alas, alas, great city,

**17, 11: The beast:** Nero; see the note on v 8.

**17, 12–13: Ten kings who have not yet been crowned:** perhaps Parthian satraps who are to accompany the revived Nero (the beast) in his march on Rome to regain power; see the note on 13, 3. In 19, 11–21, the Lamb and his companions will conquer them.

**17, 16–18: The ten horns:** the ten pagan kings (12) who unwittingly fulfill God's will against harlot Rome, the great city; cf Ez 16, 37.

**18, 1—19, 4:** A stirring dirge over the fall of Babylon-Rome. The perspective is prophetic, as if the fall of Rome had already taken place. The imagery here, as elsewhere in this book, is not to be taken literally. The vindictiveness of some of the language, borrowed from the scathing Old Testament prophecies against Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh (Is 23; 24; 27; Jer 50—51; Ez 26—27), is meant to portray symbolically the inexorable demands of God's holiness and justice; cf Introduction. The section concludes with a joyous canticle on the future glory of heaven.

**18, 2:** Many Greek manuscripts and versions omit **a cage for every unclean . . . beast.**

**18, 3–24:** Rome is condemned for her immorality, symbol of idolatry (see the note on 14, 4), and for persecuting the church; cf 19, 2.

**18, 4: Depart from her:** not evacuation of the city but separation from sinners, as always in apocalyptic literature.

f Dn 7, 24. g 19, 11–21; 2 Mc 13, 4; 1 Tm 6, 15 / Rom 1, 6; 1 Pt 2, 9; Jude 1. h Ez 16, 37–41; 23, 25–29. i Ez 43, 2. j 14, 8; Is 21, 9; Jer 50, 2–3; 51, 8. k 17, 2; Jer 51, 7. l Is 48, 20; Jer 50, 8. m Jer 51, 9. n Jer 50, 15 / Jer 16, 18. o Is 47, 8–9.

Babylon, mighty city.
In one hour your judgment has come."

11 *The merchants of the earth will weep and
mourn for her, because there will be no more
markets for their cargo: 12 their cargo of gold,
silver, precious stones, and pearls; fine linen,
purple silk, and scarlet cloth; fragrant wood of
every kind, all articles of ivory and all articles of
the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and
marble; 13 *cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh,
and frankincense; wine, olive oil, fine flour, and
wheat; cattle and sheep, horses and chariots,
and slaves, that is, human beings.

14 p "The fruit you craved
has left you.
All your luxury and splendor are gone,
never again will one find them."

15 The merchants who deal in these goods, who
grew rich from her, will keep their distance for
fear of the torment inflicted on her. Weeping and
mourning, 16 q they cry out:

"Alas, alas, great city,
wearing fine linen, purple and scarlet,
adorned [in] gold, precious stones, and
pearls.
17 In one hour this great wealth has been
ruined."

Every captain of a ship, every traveler at sea,
sailors, and seafaring merchants stood at a distance 18 and cried out when they saw the smoke
of her pyre, "What city could compare with the
great city?" 19 r They threw dust on their heads
and cried out, weeping and mourning:

"Alas, alas, great city,
in which all who had ships at sea
grew rich from her wealth.
In one hour she has been ruined.
20 s Rejoice over her, heaven,
you holy ones, apostles, and prophets.
For God has judged your case against her."

21 t A mighty angel picked up a stone like a huge
millstone and threw it into the sea and said:

"With such force will Babylon the great city be
thrown down,
and will never be found again.
22 u No melodies of harpists and musicians,
flutists and trumpeters,
will ever be heard in you again.
No craftsmen in any trade
will ever be found in you again.
No sound of the millstone
will ever be heard in you again.
23 v No light from a lamp
will ever be seen in you again.
No voices of bride and groom
will ever be heard in you again.
Because your merchants were the great ones
of the world,
all nations were led astray by your magic
potion.
24 w In her was found the blood of prophets and
holy ones
and all who have been slain on the earth."

## CHAPTER 19

1 *After this I heard what sounded like the loud
voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying:

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"Alleluia!
Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God,
2 x for true and just are his judgments.
He has condemned the great harlot
who corrupted the earth with her harlotry.
He has avenged on her the blood of his
servants."

3 y They said a second time:

"Alleluia! Smoke will rise from her forever and
ever."

**18, 11:** Ironically, the merchants weep not so much for Babylon-Rome, but for their lost markets; cf Ez 27, 36.

**18, 13: Spice:** an unidentified spice plant called in Greek **amōmon.**

**19, 1.3.4.6: Alleluia:** found only here in the New Testament, this frequent exclamation of praise in the Hebrew psalms was important in Jewish liturgy.

p Hos 10, 5 / Am 6, 7. q 17, 4. r Ez 27, 27–32. s 19, 1–2; Dt 32, 43. t Jer 51, 63–64; Ez 26, 21. u Is 24, 8; Ez 26, 13. v Jer 7, 34; 16, 9; 25, 10. w 16, 6. x Dn 3, 27 / Jer 51, 48–49. y 14, 11; Is 34, 10.

4The twenty-four elders and the four living
creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat
on the throne, saying, "Amen. Alleluia."

**The Victory Song** 5 *z**A voice coming from the
throne said:

"Praise our God, all you his servants,
[and] you who revere him, small and great."

6Then I heard something like the sound of a
great multitude or the sound of rushing water or
mighty peals of thunder, as they said:

"Alleluia!
The Lord has established his reign,
[our] God, the almighty.
7 *a**Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory.
For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,
his bride has made herself ready.
8 *b**She was allowed to wear
a bright, clean linen garment."

(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the
holy ones.)

9 *c**Then the angel said to me, "Write this:
Blessed are those who have been called to the
wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me,
"These words are true; they come from God."
10 *d**I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said
to me, "Don't! I am a fellow servant of yours and
of your brothers who bear witness to Jesus.
Worship God. Witness to Jesus is the spirit of
prophecy."

**The King of Kings** 11 *e**Then I saw the heav-
ens opened, and there was a white horse; its
rider was [called] "Faithful and True." He judges
and wages war in righteousness. 12 *f**His eyes
were [like] a fiery flame, and on his head were
many diadems. He had a name inscribed that no
one knows except himself. 13 *g**He wore a cloak
that had been dipped in blood, and his name was
called the Word of God. 14 *h*The armies of
heaven followed him, mounted on white horses
and wearing clean white linen. 15 *i**Out of his
mouth came a sharp sword to strike the nations.
He will rule them with an iron rod, and he
himself will tread out in the wine press the wine
of the fury and wrath of God the almighty. 16 *j*He
has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh,
"King of kings and Lord of lords."

17*Then I saw an angel standing on the sun.
He cried out [in] a loud voice to all the birds
flying high overhead, "Come here. Gather for
God's great feast, 18 *k*to eat the flesh of kings, the
flesh of military officers, and the flesh of war-
riors, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and
the flesh of all, free and slave, small and great."
19Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth
and their armies gathered to fight against the one
riding the horse and against his army. 20 *l**The
beast was caught and with it the false prophet
who had performed in its sight the signs by
which he led astray those who had accepted the
mark of the beast and those who had worshiped
its image. The two were thrown alive into the
fiery pool burning with sulfur. 21The rest were

**19, 5–10:** A victory song follows, sung by the entire church, celebrating the marriage of the Lamb, the union of the Messiah with the community of the elect.

**19, 7: The wedding day of the Lamb:** symbol of God's reign about to begin (21, 1—22, 5); see the note on 10, 7. **His bride:** the church; cf 2 Cor 11, 2; Eph 5, 22–27. Marriage is one of the biblical metaphors used to describe the covenant relationship between God and his people; cf Hos 2, 16–22; Is 54, 5–6; 62, 5; Ez 16, 6–14. Hence, idolatry and apostasy are viewed as adultery and harlotry (Hos 2, 4–15; Ez 16, 15–63); see the note on 14, 4.

**19, 8:** See the note on 14, 12.

**19, 9: Blessed:** see the note on 1, 3.

**19, 10: The spirit of prophecy:** as the prophets were inspired to proclaim God's word, so the Christian is called to give witness to the Word of God (13) made flesh; cf 1, 2; 6, 9; 12, 17.

**19, 11–16:** Symbolic description of the exalted Christ (cf 1, 13–16) who together with the armies of heaven overcomes the beast and its followers; cf 17, 14.

**19, 12: A name:** in Semitic thought, the name conveyed the reality of the person; cf Mt 11, 27; Lk 10, 22.

**19, 13: Had been dipped in:** other Greek manuscripts and versions read "had been sprinkled with"; cf v 15. **The Word of God:** Christ is the revelation of the Father; cf Jn 1, 1.14; 1 Jn 2, 14.

**19, 15:** The treading of the wine press is a prophetic symbol used to describe the destruction of God's enemies; cf Is 63, 1–6; Jl 4, 13.

**19, 17–21:** The certainty of Christ's victory is proclaimed by an angel, followed by a reference to the mustering of enemy forces and a fearsome description of their annihilation. The gruesome imagery is borrowed from Ez 39, 4.17–20.

**19, 20: Beast . . . false prophet:** see the notes on ch 13. **The fiery pool . . . sulfur:** symbol of God's punishment (14, 10; 20, 10.14–15), different from the abyss; see the note on 9, 1.

z 11, 18; Ps 115, 13. a Mt 22, 9; Eph 5, 27. b 15, 6; Is 61, 10; Mt 22, 11–12. c Mt 8, 11; Lk 14, 15. d 22, 8–9. e Is 11, 4. f 1, 14–16; 2, 18 / Lk 10, 22. g Is 63, 1 / Jn 1, 1. h 15, 6; 19, 8. i 14, 20; Is 63, 3. j 17, 14; 2 Mc 13, 4. k Ez 39, 17–20. l 14, 10.

killed by the sword that came out of the mouth
of the one riding the horse, and all the birds
gorged themselves on their flesh.

## CHAPTER 20

**The Thousand-year Reign** 1 *m**Then I saw an
angel come down from heaven, holding in his
hand the key to the abyss and a heavy chain.
2 *n**He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent,
which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for a
thousand years 3and threw it into the abyss,
which he locked over it and sealed, so that it
could no longer lead the nations astray until the
thousand years are completed. After this, it is to
be released for a short time.

4 *o**Then I saw thrones; those who sat on
them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw
the souls of those who had been beheaded for
their witness to Jesus and for the word of God,
and who had not worshiped the beast or its
image nor had accepted its mark on their fore-
heads or hands. They came to life and they
reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5The
rest of the dead did not come to life until the
thousand years were over. This is the first
resurrection. 6*Blessed and holy is the one who
shares in the first resurrection. The second death
has no power over these; they will be priests of
God and of Christ, and they will reign with him
for [the] thousand years.

7*When the thousand years are completed,
Satan will be released from his prison. 8 *p**He
will go out to deceive the nations at the four
corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather
them for battle; their number is like the sand of
the sea. 9 *q**They invaded the breadth of the
earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones
and the beloved city. But fire came down from
heaven and consumed them. 10The Devil who
had led them astray was thrown into the pool of
fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false
prophet were. There they will be tormented day
and night forever and ever.

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**The Large White Throne** 11 *r**Next I saw a
large white throne and the one who was sitting
on it. The earth and the sky fled from his
presence and there was no place for them. 12 *s**I
saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing
before the throne, and scrolls were opened.
Then another scroll was opened, the book of life.
The dead were judged according to their deeds,
by what was written in the scrolls. 13*The sea
gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up
their dead. All the dead were judged according
to their deeds. 14 *t**Then Death and Hades were
thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is
the second death.) 15Anyone whose name was
not found written in the book of life was thrown
into the pool of fire.

# VI: The New Creation

## CHAPTER 21

**The New Heaven and the New Earth**
1 *u**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.
The former heaven and the former earth had
passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 *v**I also
saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming

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**20, 1–6:** Like the other numerical values in this book, the thousand years are not to be taken literally; they symbolize the long period of time between the chaining up of Satan (a symbol for Christ's resurrection-victory over death and the forces of evil) and the end of the world. During this time God's people share in the glorious reign of God that is present to them by virtue of their baptismal victory over death and sin; cf Rom 6, 1–8; Jn 5, 24–25; 16, 33; 1 Jn 3, 14; Eph 2, 1.

**20, 1: Abyss:** see the note on 9, 1.

**20, 2: Dragon . . . serpent . . . Satan:** see the notes on 12, 3.9.10.15.

**20, 4: Beast . . . mark:** see ch 13 and its notes.

**20, 6: Blessed:** see the note on 1, 3. **Second death:** see the note on 2, 11. **Priests:** as in 1, 6; 5, 10; cf 1 Pt 2, 9.

**20, 7–10:** A description of the symbolic battle to take place when Satan is released at the end of time, when the thousand years are over; see the note on vv 1–6.

**20, 8: Gog and Magog:** symbols of all pagan nations; the names are taken from Ez 38, 1—39, 20.

**20, 9: The breadth of the earth:** Palestine. **The beloved city:** Jerusalem; see the note on 14, 1.

**20, 11–15:** A description of the final judgment. After the intermediate reign of Christ, all the dead are raised and judged, thus inaugurating the new age.

**20, 12: The book of life:** see the note on 3, 5. **Judged . . . scrolls:** see the note on 14, 12.

**20, 13: Hades:** the netherworld; see the note on 1, 18.

**20, 14: Second death:** see the note on 2, 11.

**21, 1—22, 5:** A description of God's eternal kingdom in heaven under the symbols of a new heaven and a new earth; cf Is 65, 17–25; 66, 22; Mt 19, 28.

**21, 1: Sea . . . no more:** because as home of the dragon it was doomed to disappear; cf Jb 7, 12.

**21, 2: New Jerusalem . . . bride:** symbol of the church (Gal 4, 26); see the note on 19, 7.

m 9, 1. n Gn 3, 1. o Mt 19, 28. p Ez 38, 2.9.16. q Ez 38, 22. r 2 Pt 3, 7.10.12. s Rom 2, 6. t 1 Cor 15, 26.54–55. u Is 65, 17; 66, 22; Rom 8, 19–23; 2 Pt 3, 13. v 19, 7–9.

down out of heaven from God, prepared as a
bride adorned for her husband. 3 [w]*I heard a
loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold,
God's dwelling is with the human race. He will
dwell with them and they will be his people and
God himself will always be with them [as their
God]. 4 [x]He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning,
wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed
away."
5 [y]*The one who sat on the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new." Then he said,
"Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true." 6 [z]*He said to me, "They are
accomplished. I [am] the Alpha and the Omega,
the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will
give a gift from the spring of life-giving water.
7 [a]*The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall
be his God, and he will be my son. 8 [b]*But as for
cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshipers, and
deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning
pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second
death."

**The New Jerusalem** 9*One of the seven angels who held the seven bowls filled with the
seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come
here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the
Lamb." 10 [c]He took me in spirit to a great, high
mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 [d]It
gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance
was like that of a precious stone, like jasper,
clear as crystal. 12 It had a massive, high wall,
with twelve gates where twelve angels were
stationed and on which names were inscribed,
[the names] of the twelve tribes of the Israelites.
13 [e]There were three gates facing east, three
north, three south, and three west. 14 [f]*The wall
of the city had twelve courses of stones as its
foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve
names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
15*The one who spoke to me held a gold
measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and
its wall. 16*The city was square, its length the
same as [also] its width. He measured the city
with the rod and found it fifteen hundred miles
in length and width and height. 17*He also
measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four
cubits according to the standard unit of measurement the angel used. 18*The wall was constructed of jasper, while the city was pure gold,
clear as glass. 19 [g]The foundations of the city wall
were decorated with every precious stone; the
first course of stones was jasper, the second
sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the
seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth
topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh hyacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve
gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made
from a single pearl; and the street of the city was
of pure gold, transparent as glass.

**21, 3: People:** other ancient manuscripts read a plural, "peoples."

**21, 3–4:** Language taken from Ez 37, 27; Is 25, 8; 35, 10; cf 7, 17.

**21, 5: The one . . . on the throne:** God himself; cf 4, 1–11.

**21, 6: They are accomplished:** God's reign has already begun; see the note on 20, 1–6. **Alpha . . . Omega:** see the note on 1, 8. **Life-giving water:** see the note on 7, 17.

**21, 7: The victor:** over the forces of evil; see the conclusions of the seven letters (2, 7.11.17.26; 3, 5.12.21). **He will be my son:** the victorious Christian enjoys divine affiliation by adoption (Gal 4, 4–7; Rom 8, 14–17); see the note on 2, 26–28.

**21, 8: Cowards:** their conviction is so weak that they deny Christ in time of trial and become traitors. **Second death:** see the note on 2, 11.

**21, 9—22, 5:** Symbolic descriptions of the new Jerusalem, the church. Most of the images are borrowed from Ez 40—48.

**21, 9: The bride, the wife of the Lamb:** the church (2), the new Jerusalem (10); cf 2 Cor 11, 2.

**21, 14: Courses of stones . . . apostles:** literally, "twelve foundations"; cf Eph 2, 19–20.

**21, 15–17:** The city is shaped like a gigantic cube, a symbol of perfection (cf 1 Kgs 6, 19–20). The measurements of the city and its wall are multiples of the symbolic number twelve; see the note on 7, 4–9.

**21, 16: Fifteen hundred miles:** literally, twelve thousand stades, about 12,000 furlongs (see the note on 14, 20); the number is symbolic: twelve (the apostles as leaders of the new Israel) multiplied by 1,000 (the immensity of Christians); cf Introduction. **In length and width and height:** literally, "its length and width and height are the same."

**21, 17: One hundred and forty-four cubits:** the cubit was about eighteen inches in length. **Standard unit of measurement the angel used:** literally, "by a human measure, i.e., an angel's."

**21, 18–21:** The gold and precious gems symbolize the beauty and excellence of the church; cf Ex 28, 15–21; Tb 13, 16–17; Is 54, 11–12.

w Ez 37, 27. x 7, 17; Is 25, 8; 35, 10. y Is 43, 19; 2 Cor 5, 17. z 22, 17; Ps 36, 8–9; Is 55, 1. a 2 Sm 7, 14. b 22, 15; Rom 1, 29–32. c Ez 40, 2. d Heb 11, 10. e Ez 48, 31–35. f Eph 2, 20. g Is 54, 11–12.

22 [h]*I saw no temple in the city, for its temple
is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. 23 [i]*The
city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it,
for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp
was the Lamb. 24 [j]*The nations will walk by its
light, and to it the kings of the earth will bring
their treasure. 25 During the day its gates will
never be shut, and there will be no night there.
26 The treasure and wealth of the nations will be
brought there, 27 [k]but nothing unclean will enter
it, nor any[one] who does abominable things or
tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are
written in the Lamb's book of life.

## CHAPTER 22

1 [l]*Then the angel showed me the river of life-
giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from
the throne of God and of the Lamb 2*down the
middle of its street. On either side of the river
grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve
times a year, once each month; the leaves of the
trees serve as medicine for the nations. 3 Nothing
accursed will be found there anymore. The
throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and
his servants will worship him. 4*They will look
upon his face, and his name will be on their
foreheads. 5 [m]Night will be no more, nor will
they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord
God shall give them light, and they shall reign
forever and ever.

## VII: Epilogue

6 [n]*And he said to me, "These words are
trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of
prophetic spirits, sent his angel to show his
servants what must happen soon." 7 [o]*"Behold,
I am coming soon." Blessed is the one who
keeps the prophetic message of this book.
8 It is I, John, who heard and saw these things,
and when I heard and saw them I fell down to
worship at the feet of the angel who showed
them to me. 9 [p]But he said to me, "Don't! I am a
fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the
prophets and of those who keep the message of
this book. Worship God."
10*Then he said to me, "Do not seal up the
prophetic words of this book, for the appointed
time is near. 11 Let the wicked still act wickedly,
and the filthy still be filthy. The righteous must
still do right, and the holy still be holy."
12 [q]"Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with
me the recompense I will give to each according
to his deeds. 13 [r]*I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last, the beginning and the
end."
14 [s]*Blessed are they who wash their robes so
as to have the right to the tree of life and enter
the city through its gates. 15 [t]Outside are the
dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers,
the idol-worshipers, and all who love and prac-
tice deceit.
16 [u]*"I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this
testimony for the churches. I am the root and
offspring of David, the bright morning star."
17 [v]*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let
the hearer say, "Come." Let the one who thirsts
come forward, and the one who wants it receive
the gift of life-giving water.
18 I warn everyone who hears the prophetic
words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God
will add to him the plagues described in this
book, 19 [w]and if anyone takes away from the

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**21, 22:** Christ is present throughout the church; hence, no temple is needed as an earthly dwelling for God; cf Mt 18, 20; 28, 20; Jn 4, 21.
**21, 23: Lamp . . . Lamb:** cf Jn 8, 12.
**21, 24–27:** All men and women of good will are welcome in the church; cf Is 60, 1.3.5.11. **The . . . book of life:** see the note on 3, 5.
**22, 1.17: Life-giving water:** see the note on 7, 17.
**22, 2: The tree of life:** cf v 14; see the note on 2, 7. **Fruit . . . medicine:** cf Ez 47, 12.
**22, 4: Look upon his face:** cf Mt 5, 8; 1 Cor 13, 12; 1 Jn 3, 2.
**22, 6–21:** The book ends with an epilogue consisting of a series of warnings and exhortations and forming an inclusion with the prologue by resuming its themes and expressions; see the note on 1, 1–3.
**22, 7.12.20: I am coming soon:** Christ is the speaker; see the note on 1, 3.
**22, 7.14: Blessed:** see the note on 1, 3.
**22, 10: The appointed time:** see the note on 1, 3.
**22, 13:** Christ applies to himself words used by God in 1, 8.
**22, 14: The city:** heavenly Jerusalem; see the note on 21, 2.
**22, 16: The root . . . of David:** see the note on 5, 5. **Morning star:** see the note on 2, 26–28.
**22, 17: Bride:** the church; see the note on 21, 2.

h Jn 2, 19–20. i Is 60, 1–2.19–20. j Is 60, 11. k Is 35, 8; 52, 1; Zec 13, 2 / Rv 3, 5; 20, 12. l Ez 47, 1–12. m Is 60, 20. n 1, 1. o 12.20 / 1, 3. p 19, 10. q 7.20 / Ps 62, 12; 2 Tm 4, 14. r 1, 8; 21, 6; Is 41, 4; 44, 6. s 7, 14–15; 22, 2. t 21, 8; Rom 1, 29–32. u 1, 1.11–12; 22, 6 / 2, 28. v 21, 6; Is 55, 1. w Dt 4, 2.

words in this prophetic book, God will take
away his share in the tree of life and in the holy
city described in this book.

20 *x* ★The one who gives this testimony says,
"Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord
Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

**22, 20: Come, Lord Jesus:** a liturgical refrain, similar to the Aramaic expression **Marana tha**—"Our Lord, come!"—in 1 Cor 16, 22; cf the note there. It was a prayer for the coming of Christ in glory at the parousia; see the note on 1, 3.

x 7.12 / Acts 3, 20–21; 1 Cor 15, 23; 16, 22.

# GLOSSARY

**ACROSTIC** a poetic form in which the first letter of each new line or series of lines within a larger group follows the order of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The supreme example in the Bible is Psalm 119 and, outside the psalter, the Book of Lamentations.

**ALLEGORY** an extended comparison in which persons or objects stand for abstract ideas, moral qualities, or spiritual realities. Some people read the Song of Songs, which uses the language of a passionate love affair, as an allegory of God's love for the people of God, or of Christ's love for the church. Allegorical: characterized by allegory; symbolic.

**ALLELUIA** a Greek and Latin form of a Hebrew verb, meaning "praise the Lord." *See* hallelujah.

***ANAWIM*** the Hebrew word for "the poor," "the afflicted," "the meek or humble." Often used in the Psalms for the group to which the Psalmist belongs.

**APHORISM** a short memorable saying. Many of the Proverbs are aphorisms, and so are many of Jesus' statements. Aphorisms are easy to remember.

**APOCALYPSE** the Greek word for "revelation." It is also used as the name for a type of literature that contains mysterious revelations, usually veiled in symbolic language and interpreted by an angel. The subject matter of an apocalypse deals with the heavenly world and with the future, especially the final judgment. Biblical examples are found in Daniel 7–12 and in the Book of Revelation.

**APOCRYPHA** a Greek word meaning "hidden." Pious literature, related to the Scriptures but not included in the canon. Protestants regard several books of the Catholic Old Testament as apocryphal because they are not found in the Hebrew Bible (Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith). *See* canon; deuterocanonical.

**APOLOGIA** Greek, "explanation." A defense of one's actions or beliefs, usually given in a formal speech or written document.

**APOSTASY** the act of abandoning a set of beliefs, or the position of having abandoned them.

**BASE COMMUNITY** a translation of a Spanish term, *comunidad de base:* "basic or foundational society," for certain popular church groups in Central and South America that are empowering cultural, educational, and political organizations among the oppressed—particularly peasants.

**BASILICA** a church built according to an ancient Roman plan, with a rectangular nave and a semicircular apse at one end; also, a Catholic church with certain ceremonial or liturgical privileges.

**BOOTHS, FEAST OF** the final harvest festival of grapes and olives, falling within our month of October. It was called "Booths" because the harvesters lived in the field in makeshift tents or booths. *See* Tabernacles; *Sukkoth.*

**CANAAN** the land infiltrated by the Israelites after the Exodus. It was more extensive than biblical Israel. Canaanite: an inhabitant of that land.

**CANON** a Greek word meaning "measuring rod," and later the rule by which something was judged. Christian tradition uses the word for the official list of the individual books that make up the Scriptures. The canon of the Catholic Church is more extensive than that of the Protestant churches, but less extensive than that of the Orthodox churches. *See* apocrypha; pseudepigraphy. Canonical: conforming to the canon.

**CANONICAL CRITICISM** a way of reading the text of the Bible that tries to understand its final form, rather than working only with the parts that make it up or trying to reconstruct earlier versions of it. *See* form criticism; historical-critical method; literary criticism; redaction criticism.

**CASEMATE** two parallel walls that are joined by short cross walls. They form small rooms that are used for storage or are filled with earth to strengthen fortifications.

**CERAMIC TYPOLOGY** a way of dating different levels of an archaeological site by classifying the pieces of pottery found in them according to the approximate eras in which they were made.

**CHAOS** complete lack of order. In the mythology of the ancient Near East, chaos was sometimes personified as divine beings who had to be conquered by other gods in order to establish an orderly and habitable universe.

**CHARISMA** a gift of spiritual grace, particularly a gift of one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament church, such as speaking in tongues. Charismatic: gifted with charisma.

**CHRIST** the Greek word for the Hebrew *masiah* (*see* messiah). Both words mean anointed, that is, blessed by having oil poured over the head. By applying this title to Jesus, the early Christians expressed their belief that he was the messiah of Israel.

**CHRISTOLOGY** the theological doctrines covering the nature of Jesus as the Christ. High christology emphasizes the divinity of Jesus; low christology stresses his humanity.

**CHRONICLER** scholarly name for the author, or group of authors, of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

**CIRCUMCISION** the ritual removal of the foreskin of the penis in male infants. It symbolized, for Jews, the membership of the infant in the people of God (Genesis 17,9-14). It came to have spiritual significance, an image of repentance (Jeremiah 4,4). In Paul's writings (see in particular Galatians 5,2-6), it means the reliance upon one's own good deeds, rather than on God's mercy, for salvation.

**CISJORDAN** Latin for "this side of Jordan," that is, the western bank of the river Jordan ("this side" as viewed from Jerusalem). *See* Transjordan.

**CODEX** a manuscript made up of separate leaves of writing that are bound into a unit along one edge. Our modern books are a development of the codex form. *See* scroll.

**COSMOS** Greek for "order, regularity." The cosmos is the created world of order, stability, and relative permanence, as opposed to the impermanence and disorder of chaos.

**COUNCIL OF TRENT** the twenty-ninth ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, held 1545–1563, after the Protestant Reformation had begun. Among other things, it defined the books that are part of the Catholic canon of Scripture.

**COVENANT** an agreement between two parties. There are several important covenants in the Old Testament. After the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah not to destroy the earth again. The covenants with Abraham and David have the character of unconditional promises by God. The most central covenant is that made with Moses on Mt. Sinai, and described in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. That covenant has specific requirements (the commandments) and resembles the international treaties of the ancient Near East.

**CULT** the rituals and religious practices at a temple or other place of worship. For instance, the cult of the

Jerusalem Temple means the religious practices observed there, with no judgment about their value implied in the term.

**DEAD SEA SCROLLS** a group of manuscripts that were found in 1947 in caves near the Dead Sea, at a place called *wadi Qumran* (Qumran gulch). The scrolls appear to have been the library of an Essene settlement, which flourished at the site from the late second century B.C. until it was destroyed by the Romans in 68 A.D. The importance of the scrolls for biblical studies is twofold. They include Hebrew manuscripts of biblical books that are several centuries older than those previously known, and they shed new light on Jewish beliefs and practices around the time of Jesus. *See* Essenes.

**DECALOGUE** Greek, "ten words." The traditional name for the list of commandments given in Exodus 20,1-17 and Deuteronomy 5,6-21.

**DEMON** a spiritual or nonphysical being, generally hostile to human beings, but in most Old Testament passages still under God's control (*see* Job 1 and 2). A common Hebrew name was *satan,* meaning "adversary." By the time of the New Testament demons were generally regarded as hostile to God as well, and therefore evil, or the cause of bad influences—disease, mental distress—on human beings. Demonic: marked by spiritual evil, like a demon.

**DEUTEROCANONICAL** Greek, "second canon." The name for those books in the Catholic Old Testament that are not in the Hebrew canon, but were added in the Greek translation, the Septuagint, and taken over into the Latin versions. The deuterocanonical books (and additions) are: Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, and additions to Esther and Daniel. *See* canon.

**DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY** the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, giving a history of Israel from the conquest of the land to the exile. The Book of Deuteronomy serves as a sort of preface to this work.

**DEUTERONOMIC REFORM** the religious reform and revival that took place under King Josiah beginning in 621 B.C. Scholars generally assume that the book from which the religious instructions were read to the people was the newly rediscovered Book of Deuteronomy (see 2 Kings 22,8—23,25). During this reform the Temple worship was purged of many pagan influences that had crept in under the political overlordship of the Assyrian Empire.

**DEUTERONOMIST** the scholarly name for the author or authors of the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, which form a continuous history of Israel from the conquest of the land to the exile in Babylon. *See* Deuteronomic History.

**DISCERNMENT** the ability to distinguish between what is valuable and what is not, especially in the spiritual or moral realms.

**DISCIPLE** a follower. The disciples of Jesus were those who followed, or tried to follow, his teachings.

**ECCLESIOLOGY** the theology of the meaning of the church or the study of the church's forms, structures, importance, etc.

**ECUMENISM** from the Greek *oikoumene,* "the whole inhabited world." Any attempts to deal with the relations between different Christian groups, or to think about ways in which divisions might be overcome. Since the Second Vatican Council (1963–65) ecumenical activity has become a major goal of the Catholic Church. Ecumenical: aimed at fostering ecumenism, or characterized by ecumenical aims; having the character of ecumenism.

**ELOHIST** the scholarly name for the author of one of the source documents for the Pentateuch. The Elohist's writing is marked by the use of Hebrew *'elohim* (God) rather than the proper name *yahweh* (Lord) in the period before Moses. *See* Yahwist.

**EPHRAIM** the most important tribe of the Northern Kingdom. *See* Northern Kingdom.

**EPICUREAN** a follower of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, who taught (among other things) that more permanent pleasures should be preferred to passing ones, and that one should remain unaffected as far as possible by the changes and passions of everyday life.

**EPIGRAPH** an inscription, usually carved or etched in stone. Epigraphs, which can be recovered from archaeological sites, provide information about the language and customs of the time when they were written.

**EPISTLE** a letter, generally intended for public reading and written according to a set literary style. Epistolary: having the form of a letter.

**ESCHATOLOGY** teaching about "the end." In the Hebrew prophets, the end in question is that of Israel or Judah as independent nations. In later apocalyptic writings it came to mean the end of the world.

**ESSENES** a Jewish sect around the time of Jesus. They are described by the first-century Jewish authors Philo and Josephus, and by the Roman Pliny. The Dead Sea Scrolls are believed to be the documents of an Essene community. *See* Dead Sea Scrolls.

**ETHNOLOGY** the study of races or ethnic groups.

**ETIOLOGY** an account or story that gives the cause of something. Many stories in the Bible may have originated in this way; for instance, the story of Lot's wife (Genesis 19,26) may have been told to explain the existence of a pillar of salt.

**EXEGESIS** the explanation of a text.

**EXILE** removal from one's own country. In the context of the Old Testament, "the Exile" refers to the period between 586 and 539 B.C. when the upper classes of Judah were exiles in Babylon. A previous exile, from the northern kingdom of Israel, had been enforced in 722-721 B.C. Exilic: taking place during the Exile, or dealing with it.

**FESTIVAL** a religious celebration.

**FORM CRITICISM** an approach to a text that focuses on the smaller literary forms contained in a larger work (for instance, parables or miracle stories in the Gospels) and tries to discover the historical settings in which they might have originated, before they were incorporated in the larger work.

**FORMER PROPHETS** the name in the Hebrew Scriptures for the first part of the larger section called the Prophets. The Former Prophets consist of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. *See* Latter Prophets; Prophets; Writings.

**FUNDAMENTALIST** in its narrow meaning, a fundamentalist is a conservative Protestant who believes in the five fundamentals: the sole authority of Scripture; the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ; the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of the death of Christ; the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ; and the literal Second Coming of Christ to judge the world. In its larger meaning, fundamentalist has come to mean any rigidly conservative adherent to a belief system, who regards all those outside the belief system as without hope of salvation, and who treats the sacred text of the tradition as an infallible guide to belief and action.

**GEMARA** *see* Talmud.

**GENRE** a literary form or type. Biblical genres include oracles, laments, hymns, parables, letters, gospels, and apocalypses.

**GENTILE** a non-Jew.

**GNOSTICISM** from the Greek word *gnosis,* "knowledge." A kind of religion that claims secret knowledge about the real nature of the universe. Gnosticism flourished in the second to fourth centuries A.D., but tendencies to it can also be found in New Testament times. Gnostic philosophies differ greatly in their

actual beliefs, but all claim to have and impart secret knowledge to those who join their group. Some New Testament writings, such as the letters of Paul and John, may be combatting forms of gnosticism in some of their passages. Gnosticism was denounced as heretical by the early theologians of the church. A major library of gnostic documents was discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1946. Gnostic: an adherent of gnosticism, or a person or writing with characteristics of gnosticism.

***HAGGADAH*** Jewish tales, anecdotes, and other materials in the Talmud that are distinguished from the legal traditions that also became part of the Talmud. *See* Talmud.

***HALAKAH*** Jewish laws and regulations, other than those found in the Bible, that make up the legal part of the Talmud. *See* Talmud.

**HALLELUJAH** a Hebrew word meaning "praise the Lord." The Greek and Latin spelling of it, alleluia, is more familiar in the liturgy.

**HASMONEAN** the name given to the dynasty descended from the Maccabee brothers. It ruled Israel from 135 to 36 B.C.; the last Hasmonean was overthrown by Herod the Great.

**HELLENIC** conforming to, or characterized by, the ideals of Greek culture. The Greek conquest of the countries of the eastern Mediterranean by Alexander the Great, during the years 333–323 B.C., was followed by the adoption of the Greek language and educational practices in the areas under Greek political influence. Hellenistic: having this Greek cultural character or idealizing it. Hellenization: the process of adopting Greek culture and practices.

***HEREM*** the practice of sacrificing all the spoils of war to God.

**HERODIAN** followers and members of the court of the dynasty of Herod the Great and his sons (about 40 B.C. to A.D. 40).

**HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD** any method of reading a text that tries to understand it in its historical context, that is, its original setting and what it meant to its original hearers or readers. For example, a historical-critical reading of Isaiah 7:14 ("the virgin shall be with child") asks what this prophecy meant to the people of Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C., not what it later came to mean for the Christian faith. The method uses the tools of historical research to understand the conditions of the past, and critical tools to understand the traditions and development that lie behind the surface of the text. Historical criticism is an umbrella term that includes such methods as form criticism and redaction criticism.

**HOLOCAUST** a sacrifice entirely consumed by fire, a whole burnt offering. This sacrifice was one of adoration of God.

**HOLOCAUST, THE** the European persecution of the Jews, 1938–1945, that culminated in the death-camp slaughter of up to six million European Jews.

**HOLOCAUSTS, ALTAR OF** in the Temple, the altar on which the whole burnt offerings were made.

**HUMANIST** one who upholds the value and dignity of the human person and human culture. Some humanists believe in God; others do not, but believe that human endeavors and accomplishments are the highest ones we know of. Some scholars have thought that humanism marks some of the passages in Ecclesiastes and other wisdom materials.

**HYMN** a religious poem set to music and sung as part of worship.

**HYPOSTASIZATION (OR HYPOSTATIZATION)** speaking of an abstract quality as if it were a living being, for instance, Wisdom in Proverbs 8 or Sirach 24.

**HYKSOS** Egyptian dynasty (1850–1500 B.C.) that may have been of Semitic origin, and therefore have provided the historical basis for the stories of the Israelite patriarchs in Egypt (Genesis 37–50).

**INERRANCY** the doctrine that the biblical materials are without error. In its strict form, as held, for instance, by Protestant fundamentalists, inerrancy includes the assertion that in the original manuscripts of the biblical books there are no errors of fact, whether theological, historical, or scientific. A more restrained version of the doctrine would claim that the Bible is an inerrant guide in matters of faith, but that it may contain historical errors or assertions that cannot be reconciled with present-day science. Vatican II expressed it this way: "Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation" (Document on Revelation, *Dei Verbum,* n. 11). The final phrase, "for the sake of our salvation"—that is, not for the sake of giving us historical or scientific information—establishes the limits of inerrancy.

**INSPIRATION** the belief that words uttered by a human being are really the words of a divinity. In the ancient world, prophets and oracles were thought to be inspired. In Christian tradition, the notion of inspiration was eventually applied to the whole Bible. Inspiration in a more expanded sense speaks of an inspired tradition, in which numerous authors, anonymous contributors, editors, and others all worked together more or less consciously to create the biblical materials; in this view, God used all these people and their human traditions to express the Bible's teachings. The Second Vatican Council affirms the inspiration of Scripture, but warns that God speaks "through men in human fashion" so that careful attention must be given "to what the sacred writers really intended" (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,* III.12).

**ISRAEL** the name for both the kingdom of twelve tribal groups, of which David and Solomon were kings, and for the northern section of this kingdom, which split off after the death of Solomon and began a separate political existence under Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12). *See* Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom.

**JAHVIST** the author of one of the source documents of the Pentateuch (German spelling). *See* Yahwist.

**JOSEPHUS** a Roman Jewish historian of the first century A.D., whose works of Jewish history were written partly to make the Jewish religion and people more acceptable to the Roman government. His two major works are the *Jewish Wars* and the *Jewish Antiquities,* which provide valuable information about the background of the later Old Testament writings and the New Testament.

**JUDAH** the major tribal group of the Southern Kingdom. *See* Southern Kingdom.

***KOSHER*** according to specific regulations; fit or proper. Food that is *kosher* does not fall into any of the forbidden food groups and has been prepared according to the cleanliness regulations.

**LAMENT** a Hebrew verse form that is used for poetic elegies, psalms of suffering or anguish, and other treatments of painful parts of the human condition. The Book of Lamentations and many psalms are in the form of laments. See *qinah.*

**LATTER PROPHETS** the name given in Jewish tradition to the second part of the section of the Hebrew Scriptures called the Prophets. The Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). *See* Prophets.

**LAW** the usual English translation of the Hebrew word *Torah,* which means "guidance" or "teaching." The Torah in the narrower sense of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) is the first of the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures (followed by the Prophets and the Writings). It is often called the "Law of Moses" although it contains much else besides legal material.

Despite Paul's attacks on attempts to win salvation through the Law, the dominant biblical attitude to law sees it as a gift of God and source of joy. It is the opportunity to show faithfulness to God in one's daily activities. *See* Pentateuch; Prophets; Torah; Writings.

**LEVITE** a member of the tribe charged with responsibility for Israel's worship. The Levites owned no land of their own, but rather lived on the offerings of the Temple sacrifices.

**LEVIRATE MARRIAGE** from Latin *levir,* "husband's brother." A practice in the earlier stages of Judaism in which a man had to take his dead brother's wife as his own if his brother had died before fathering any children who could carry on his name. The children that would result from the union of the widow and her brother-in-law would be treated as if they were the dead man's offspring, inheriting his property and carrying on his name. It is generally agreed that the practice died out well before the time of Jesus (along with the practice of polygamy), but it forms the basis of the question that the Sadducees present to Jesus (Matthew 22,23-33; Mark 12,18-27; Luke 20,27-40): in the next life, which of seven brothers will be the husband of a woman whom they all successively married under the levirate law.

**LIBATION** from the Latin for "pour." Pouring out a liquid (such as wine or oil) onto the ground as a sacrifice to a deity.

**LITERAL MEANING** the plain sense of a text, whether historical, instructional, or otherwise. The literal meaning was traditionally treated in opposition to the allegorical meaning. *See* allegory.

**LITERARY CRITICISM** in older usage literary criticism meant what is now called "source criticism," that is, the search for the underlying documents in a biblical text. The isolation of the Yahwistic, Elohistic, and other basic documents in the first four books of the Bible is an example of this. More recently, a form of literary criticism has arisen which accepts the text in its final form and does not try to reconstruct earlier stages of it. This more recent type of criticism is concerned with the meaning of the text for the modern reader rather than with its historical context. *See* canonical criticism; historical-critical method; source criticism.

**LITURGY** originally a term for a public good work, paid for by a wealthy citizen but intended to benefit everyone. Liturgy now means the official public worship of the church. "The Liturgy" is increasingly used, following Orthodox writers, to mean the celebration of the Eucharist.

**LOVE FEASTS** early Christian celebrations, perhaps held together with the Eucharist or as part of it, that included a full meal for the whole church community. Paul criticizes some of the church members in Corinth for the fact that in their assemblies they do not share food and drink, but rather the wealthy bring their own and consume it, while the poor have nothing extra to eat (1 Corinthians 11,17-22). Perhaps because of such abuses, the institution of the love feast seems to have disappeared at a relatively early date.

**MATRIARCH** Greek "mother-ruler," a female leader, elder, or ruler. *See* patriarch.

***MEGILLAH,* (PLURAL *MEGILLOTH*)** Hebrew, "scroll," a long strip of parchment or papyrus on which the text of a book was written. The festal *megilloth* are the books of Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Lamentations, each of which is read in the synagogue at a specific special feast.

**MESSIAH** Hebrew for "anointed." It could be applied to various officials, including priests, but came to refer especially to the king who was descended from David. (As part of the ritual when a king was enthroned, his head was anointed with oil.) In the period after the Exile, when there was no longer a king in Judah, the "messiah" came to mean an ideal figure who would restore the kingdom of Israel in the future. *See also* Christ (the Greek translation of Messiah).

**METAPHOR** a direct comparison, one that does not use the words "like" or "as," between two things. Jesus used a metaphor when he said, "I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10,7). *See* simile.

***MIDRASH*** Hebrew, "explanation." A method of interpretation, developed among Jewish teachers before the time of Christ, in which a biblical passage is quoted up to the point of contemporary application. At that point the passage is discontinued and the explanation or application is given. A New Testament example is found in Matthew 2,16-23. Matthew alludes to Jeremiah 31,15-17, but quotes only Jeremiah 31,15 (the tears of Rachel). Whereas Jeremiah goes on to announce the reward of those tears and the return of the Israelites from Exile, Matthew writes of the return of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph from Egypt.

**MILLENNIUM** a thousand years. In Revelation 20,1-5, the thousand-year reign of Christ is predicted, and this reign has been called "the Millennium" because it is supposed to bring in an era of peace and well-being. A millennarian is one who takes this passage as predicting a literal, physical reign of Christ on Earth (as opposed to treating it as a metaphor for heaven, for example) and who tries to identify the events that will occur in order to bring the Millennium about.

**MISHNAH** *see* Talmud.

**MOTIF** a characteristic image or theme in a work.

**MYSTERY** a spiritual reality that can never be fully understood. A mystery is not opaque to reason, but rather has a character that human reason cannot fully comprehend. The love of God for us is a mystery, not because we cannot understand what love is, but because we cannot comprehend the fullness of God's love, no matter how hard we try.

**MYTH** a story that expresses a spiritual truth or basic conviction of a culture through narrative. In particular, myths give explanations of origins, often through the struggles of divine beings or superhuman creatures. Because the Bible firmly believes in only one God, in biblical myths the presence of multiple deities has faded out, but the titantic struggle between good and evil is still maintained, as in the story of Paradise in Genesis 2—3, or the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11,1-9. (For an alternate form of the Paradise myth, see Ezekiel 28,11-19.) Such stories, for example, express the impossibility of human efforts to attain the level of God.

**NAZIRITE** one who takes a religious vow of strict observance to dedicate himself or herself to the Lord, as explained in Numbers 6,1-21. The vow involves keeping purity laws very strictly, abstaining from alcoholic drink, and refraining from cutting one's hair. Samson, whose story is told in Judges 13–16, was a Nazirite, though his observance was marked by a number of relapses. Paul took the Nazirite vow (Acts 18,18; 21,23-24).

**NORTHERN KINGDOM** the political assembly of tribal groups that split off from the kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death (1 Kings 12). This newly-formed kingdom was itself called Israel, and in some of the prophets (for instance, Hosea 8,11), Ephraim, after its most important tribe.

**ORACLE** a message from God to a priest or prophet, and by the prophet to others, often in response to an inquiry. The content and style vary, from a call to prophesy to a message of salvation or a statement of threat and condemnation. Prophetic books are often made up of a series of oracles, usually in poetical form, which were collected and written down later, not necessarily in the order in which the prophet originally spoke them.

**OSTRACA** pieces of pottery with writing scratched on them. Ostraca are recovered from archaeological digs and provide evidence about the language at the time they were written; their existence reflects the fact that paper was a relatively rare and valuable substance, and was not used for casual writing, such as messages intended to be read once and thrown away, lists, and the like. Instead, people scratched a few words on a piece of broken pottery—useless for anything else—and thousands of these casual messages have been discovered.

**PALAEOGRAPHY** the study of ancient forms of writing. Palaeography can be used to date manuscripts, since writing styles changed over the years and different manuscripts of the same book can be arranged in the likely order in which they were written. Palaeography can also classify the writing in inscriptions (epigraphs) and scratched on broken pieces of pottery (ostraca).

**PARAENESIS** moral exhortation, urging the reader or hearer to better behavior or a better mode of living, usually accompanied with or in the form of proverbial wisdom. The Letter of James contains much of this sort of moral exhortation.

**PAROUSIA** Greek, "presence," by extension "appearance." The second coming of Christ.

**PASSOVER** the Jewish feast commemorating the Exodus from Egypt.

**PATRIARCH** Greek, "father-ruler," a male leader, elder, or ruler. *See* matriarch.

**PATRISTIC** (from the Greek word for "father"). Having to do with, or in the period of, the early theologians of the Christian church, usually referred to as "the fathers." The patristic period begins with the close of the New Testament writings, sometime after 100 A.D., and continues for several centuries. During this time creeds and many classic Christian doctrines, such as the Incarnation, were worked out and put in final form.

**PENTATEUCH** a Greek word meaning "five scrolls" that is used to designate the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). Modern scholars now hold that the first four of these books are a later compilation (perhaps assembled during or after the Exile) of earlier independent sources, which are distinguished by various literary characteristics. The oldest of these, the "J" source (from the German name for it, Jahvist), uses the Hebrew word *Yahweh* as the name of God from the beginning, and may be connected to the court of King David. Another source, "E," uses *'elohim* instead of Yahweh before the time of Moses, and reflects traditions (about sites of worship, for instance) that probably derive from the northern tribes of the kingdom of Israel rather than from the southern sources of the kingdom of Judah that are contained in "J." A third source, "P," is a compilation of laws and Temple practices that the priests developed. The fourth source, "D," is found almost exclusively in the book of Deuteronomy. *See* Law; source criticism; Torah.

**PERSONIFICATION** a literary device that takes an abstract quality or spiritual reality and speaks of it in human terms. The Book of Proverbs, 3,16 says of Wisdom, "Long life is in her right hand,/ in her left are riches and honor." Speaking of wisdom as if it were a human being is personification.

**PHARISAISM** a reform movement in Judaism that probably began in the century before the birth of Jesus and, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., became an increasingly important influence in the religious life of Judaism. Essentially a lay movement, Pharisaism sought to invigorate Jewish life by emphasizing fidelity to Jewish law. Its base was the local synagogue with its study of the Jewish Scriptures and traditions and its strong sense of piety. Although Jesus may have shared many of the goals of Pharisaism, the gospels report him in conflict with it over interpretation of the religious law. *See* Pharisee.

**PHARISEE** Hebrew, "separatist." One of a group of observant Jews, beginning before the time of Jesus and continuing with important leadership roles afterwards. They helped to develop an elaborate system of oral laws to apply the written law of Moses to Jewish life after the destruction of the Temple and the Roman conquest of their homeland. They were influential in the evolution of the synagogue and staunchly defended new doctrinal developments, such as belief in angels, bodily resurrection, and life after death. Some of the negative image of Pharisees in the Gospels may reflect later clashes between these Jewish leaders and the early church. *See* Pharisaism; Torah.

**PLATONISM** a philosophical system, derived in part from Plato but going beyond what he taught, that (among other things) saw a distinct separation between the worlds of the spirit and of material things, and that regarded the material world as inferior. There has certainly been Platonic influence on

Christianity, though how much is difficult to say; but the Christian doctrine of the goodness of creation has helped to moderate the harshness of the Platonic judgment about the evil of material existence in and of itself.

**POGROM** the organized killing of a group, especially of Jews.

**POLEMIC** a denunciation or condemnation of an opponent.

**POTSHERD** a broken piece (sherd or shard) of pottery. By studying decoration, shape, materials, etc., archaeologists can tell the level of pottery-making in a given era by examining the broken pieces from archaeological sites. *See* ceramic typology; ostraca; stratigraphy.

**PRE-EXILIC** before the Exile of the Jewish people, that is, either before 721 B.C., when the Northern Kingdom (Israel) went into exile, or before 587–86 B.C., when the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was exiled by the Babylonians.

**PRIESTLY SOURCE** the source that scholars assume was put together by the remains of the Israelite priesthood in Exile, containing the rules and regulations for worship in the Temple and other genealogical and legal information. This source, usually abbreviated "P," is one of the documents assumed to make up the Pentateuch (*see*).

**PRIMEVAL HISTORY** the term for the first ten chapters and part of the eleventh chapter of Genesis, dealing with events before the time of Abraham, who was regarded as the direct ancestor of the Israelites. "Primeval" designates the long stretch of time before literary documents enable us to reconstruct historical data.

**PROPHET** Greek, "one who speaks out." A prophet, called by God to speak the truth no matter what the cost, was one of the main participants in classical Israelite religion. The prophet was charged with the role of delivering God's message to the rulers, whether religious or political, and, as a result, many prophets were unpopular with the kings and priests. Prophets did not specialize in predicting the future, but rather in analyzing the present and announcing the consequences of current behavior. Most prophets spoke in a very memorable poetic form, delivering their statements orally in the streets or sanctuaries; only later were these written down, and still later put in some sort of order.

**PROPHETS** the second of the three divisions of the classical Hebrew Scriptures (the other two divisions are the Law and the Writings). The Prophets, in turn, are divided into the Former Prophets—Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings—and the Latter Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. *See* canon; Former Prophets; Latter Prophets; Law; Writings.

**PROVERB** a statement of traditional wisdom, supported by long experience and expressed in memorable form. Generally the second line repeats or develops, sometimes by contrast, the thought of the first line. This feature is called parallelism, and is common in Hebrew poetry. Proverbs are quoted in many books of the Bible, but the major collection is in Proverbs. There are also proverbs in Wisdom and, in a longer "essay" form, in Sirach. *See* wisdom.

**PSALM** from the Greek, a song accompanied by musical instruments. In the Bible these songs cover a wide variety of style and content; psalms appear in many places, but the principal collection of them is found in the Book of Psalms. The Hebrew name for this book is *Tehillim,* meaning "praises," even though the majority of the psalms are not hymns of praise but spread over many other categories such as laments, prayers of thanksgiving and confidence, wisdom, and psalms of royalty.

**PSEUDEPIGRAPHY** Greek, "false writing," meaning a false claim to authorship. The term is used for those ancient writings, Jewish and Christian, which went under the name of an important or fascinating biblical person, like Solomon or Enoch, or the apostles Thomas or James. Such works purported to be of equal status with works whose authority was already accepted. Some found their way into the Bible, at least in the Catholic and Orthodox canon: for instance, the Wisdom of Solomon. *See* apocrypha; canon; deuterocanonical.

**PSEUDONYMOUS** under a false name. A pseudonymous writing is one that is published under the name of a well-known figure (usually long dead) in order to establish its authority or to continue the traditions of a revered but now dead leader. In the ancient world this was an accepted literary device. *See* pseudepigraphy.

**Q** the abbreviation of the German word *quelle,* "source." It designates one of the original sources of Matthew and Luke, containing sayings of Jesus that they added to material they took from Mark's gospel. *See* synoptic gospels.

***QINAH*** a Hebrew poetical form (the lament) usually characterized by a two-line structure in which the first line has three stresses and the second line has two stresses. Normally in Hebrew poetry, each line of a strophe has the same number of stresses.

***QOHELETH*** the Hebrew name, meaning "one who leads the assembly," of Ecclesiastes.

**RABBI** a teacher of the Jewish laws and traditions. Some of the followers of Jesus called him "rabbi"; in the time after Jesus, and after the Romans had destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D., the rabbis reconstituted the Jewish religion as one of study and meditation on the Scripture.

**READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM** a method for analyzing a literary text that focuses on the relationship between the text and its reader, paying attention to the literary clues in the text that guide the reader in drawing meaning from it.

**REDACTION CRITICISM** the analysis of how a text was put together by an editor (or redactor) from already existing sources. The editor sometimes adds bridging sentences, uses characteristic language, adds or subtracts material, or uses the sources in a particular way, that reveal the concerns of the author and the audience at a point later in time than the original sources. Chapter 5 of Vatican II's document on Revelation speaks of the Gospels as the product of redactors: "The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating some things in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation, but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus" (*Dei Verbum,* n. 19).

**REVELATION** Latin, "taking away the veil" (a translation of Greek, *apokalypsis*). The Book of Revelation in the Bible is an example of the apocalyptic genre (*see* apocalypse), which explains current happenings by means of a heavenly interpreter so that the reader understands the real importance of what is going on. The idea of revelation in theology is that what is revealed either could not have been discovered by unaided human reason or would take the reason too long to discover.

**RHETORICAL CRITICISM** analysis of a text that shows how it uses literary devices to achieve its aims and effects.

**ROSH HASHANAH** Hebrew, "head of the year." The Jewish New Year.

**SACRIFICE** the practice of giving something of value to God, in order to show one's devotion or commitment. In Israelite religion, sacrifice, usually of an animal or bird (though grain was also offered), was carried out by the ritual destruction of part or all of it by fire on an altar. This symbolized the bonding of oneself with God or the reunion with God after a sinful or unclean person received forgiveness and purification. Christianity took over this idea of sacrifice and applied it to the death of Jesus Christ, teaching that Christ's sacrifice was in atonement for human sin. In modern-day Christianity, sacrifice usually entails doing without things of value (money, material possessions, or time) by giving them away, to the church to promote its work of worship and service, to any organization engaged in the service of others, or directly to those in need.

**SADDUCEE** a member of the priestly family descended from Zadok, one of the two high priestly families under King David (2 Samuel 8,17). They were granted supreme control over the Temple by King Solomon (1 Kings 2,35) and were further secured in their position by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 44,10-31). The Sadducees formed one of the ruling parties of Judaism from the time of the Hasmonean Dynasty (around 146 B.C.) to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. They believed in the religious authority only of the Torah, or first five books of the Bible, and opposed the new interpretations advanced by the Pharisees, especially belief in the resurrection, life after death, and the existence of angels (*see* Acts 23,6-11). The Sadducees, despite their religious conservatism, were strongly influenced by the secular aspects of Greek culture and may have been willing to sacrifice strict Jewish ideals to maintain their power and wealth. *See* Pharisees.

**SAGA** a popular account of the prehistory or early heroic period of a people. Sagas are usually tales about the ancestors of a particular group, or the founders of a country. Many of the stories in the early chapters of Genesis are sagas.

**SAMARITAN** a member of a group resident in Israel at the time of the New Testament, and descended from the survivors in the land at the time of the Exile, who had intermarried with non-Israelites brought into the land by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17,24). After the restoration of the nation of Israel under Ezra and Nehemiah, they had not been reassimilated into the Hebrew nation. The Jews of Jesus' time looked down on Samaritans as not being true adherents of the Jewish religion, though the Samaritans themselves thought otherwise. Jesus, characteristically, treated the Samaritans with respect (John 4,4-42), and told one of his best-known parables using a Samaritan to illustrate true neighborliness, against two presumably religious characters who do not stop to help someone in need (Luke 10,30-37).

**SCROLL** a long strip of parchment or papyrus on which a manuscript was written. A scroll was difficult to handle and refer to, since in order to be read it had to be unrolled and it could be thirty or more feet long. It was replaced, some time after the first century A.D., by the bound book, or codex (*see*), but synagogues even today have scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures for religious use.

**SECOND TEMPLE** the reconstruction of Solomon's Temple, after the return from Exile, under the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Second Temple period began at the end of the sixth century B.C. and lasted through the extensive reconstruction of the Temple under Herod the Great's initiative until the fiery destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D.

**SEPTUAGINT** from the Latin for "seventy," therefore abbreviated LXX, the Latin numeral for seventy. It is the name of the main ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (with additions originally in Greek), undertaken by the Jewish community in Greek-speaking Egypt beginning about 250 B.C. This version included a larger number of books than was eventually accepted by the Jews for their collection of the Scriptures. It became very popular among Christians and was in fact their premier edition of the Bible. (The name "seventy" derives from a legend that Ptolemy II (285–247 B.C.) commissioned seventy (or seventy-two) learned elders to prepare this translation, a task they accomplished in seventy-two days.) Because the Septuagint is not a literal translation, but rather introduces modifications and explanatory remarks, it witnesses to Jewish interpretation of the Bible in the one or two centuries before Christ.

**SIMILE** a comparison between two things, using "like" or "as." Malachi speaks of the Lord as "like the refiner's fire" (3,2) and the Psalms say the soul longs for God "as the hind longs for the running waters" (42,1). *See* metaphor.

**SOTERIOLOGY** from the Greek word for "savior." The study of the theology of salvation, or the explanation of different understandings of salvation.

**SOURCE CRITICISM** the isolation and study of the different sources that go to make up a text. The most famous hypotheses of source criticism include the theory that the Books of Genesis through Numbers are made up of three sources ("J," or Yahwist, "E," or Elohist, "P," or Priestly) that were combined by later editors or redactors. Another source hypothesis is that Matthew and Luke used the gospel of Mark and another source (called "Q") when they wrote their gospels. *See* redaction criticism.

**SOUTHERN KINGDOM** the remaining part of the undivided kingdom of Israel, after the northern tribes withdrew from Israel at Solomon's death (1 Kings 12). It is also called Judah. *See* Northern Kingdom.

**STOA** a covered walkway or portico.

**STRATIGRAPHY** the analysis of the sequence of layers, or strata, of a tell, or mound, at an archaeological site formed by successive periods of human occupation.

***STROPHE*** (Greek, "turning"). Two or more lines of poetry that are treated as a unit; a stanza.

**STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS** a critical method that studies a text by looking for recurring patterns of meaning or imagery common to all languages and cultures. It wrestles with the text itself and is not concerned with the meaning intended by the original author nor with the historical context of the first composition.

***SUKKOTH*** Hebrew, "booths" or "tents," temporary structures built in the fields for the laborers to live in while the crops were being harvested. The Feast of *Sukkoth* is the major harvest festival. *See* Booths; Tabernacles.

**SYNOPTIC GOSPELS** Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are called "synoptic" because they can be "viewed together" or compared in parallel fashion. Similarities in the order of events, material, and even language, suggest that the Synoptics have a literary interrelationship. Scholars have theorized that Matthew and Luke are based on Mark and on another source, a list of Jesus' sayings, that is called "Q" (from the German word *Quelle,* "source"). This common basis would account for their similar character.

**TABERNACLES, FEAST OF** the Hebrew harvest festival. *See* Booths; *Sukkoth.*

**TALMUD** from the Hebrew, "learning" or "instruction." A collection of laws, regulations, and other material that, after the Hebrew Scriptures, is the authoritative religious document of Judaism. It consists primarily of the Mishnah, a collection of legal and procedural interpretations and practices from the Pharisees and other respected teachers. These materials themselves were further explained and expanded in the Gemara, which is a commentary on the Mishnah. All these materials were handed down orally until they were given a written form in what is called the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud (fourth century A.D.). A century later, the scholars of Judaism living outside the land of Israel put together the longer and more authoritative version called the Babylonian Talmud (which contains over two and a half million words, more than twice as many words as are in the entire Bible, and about four times as many words as are in the Hebrew Scriptures). See *haggadah, halakah.*

**TEMPLE** a place of worship. The Temple in Hebrew religion was a permanent structure in Jerusalem, built by Solomon as a substitute for the tent of worship that the Israelites had used in the wilderness and continued to use through David's reign. This Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587–86 B.C. A Second Temple was constructed under Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century, after the return from Exile. *See* Second Temple.

**TESTAMENT** a documentary witness or testifier to something; in the Bible, specifically, the two Testaments are witnesses, respectively, to the relations between God and Israel, and to the work of God in Jesus Christ and in the beginnings of the Christian church.

**TEXT** any unit of writing that is the subject of critical reading. It can be as small as one word (in the case of determining misprints, copying errors, etc.) or as large as an entire section or book. In biblical studies

the term strictly applies only to editions of the Bible in the original language; very early renditions into another language are called versions; modern language versions are called translations. *See* Septuagint; Vulgate.

**TEXTUAL CRITICISM** the examination of the written text (usually in a number of different manuscripts) in order to determine what its accurate form is. Textual criticism compares one manuscript with another, to choose the variant form that is preferable in cases where the manuscripts disagree about a particular word. In translations, textual variations are sometimes explained in footnotes. *The New American Bible* says that it is "Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources" (*see* the title page).

**THEODICY** the theological effort to "justify God," that is, to explain the existence of evil while maintaining the goodness and power of God. The Book of Job is a long argument in theodicy.

**THEOPHANY** a Greek word meaning "appearance of God," that is, the manifestation of the divine to human perception in some way.

***TOLEDOTH*** Hebrew, "generations, descendants, offspring"; a list of descendants; a genealogical account. There is a list of generations in Genesis 5,1-32 or in the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles. Biblical genealogies generally, like the ones for Jesus in Matthew 1,1-7 and Luke 3,23-38, communicate a religious message within the list of names.

**TORAH** a Hebrew word meaning "guide" or "teaching." The Torah consists of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and is the most important part of the Hebrew Scriptures for the Jewish religion. *See* Law; Pentateuch.

**TRADITION** the means by which beliefs, customs, stories, laws, religious practices, and other cultural phenomena are handed down from one generation to the next. The Bible is in part a record of traditions, first among the Hebrew people and then among the Christians. The Bible itself was first represented in tradition: in traditional stories and beliefs, in religious practices, and so on; only later was it written down and handed on in that form. The study of tradition—of how things are handed on, and how they change or stay the same during the process—is of great importance for understanding the Bible and the beliefs that are based upon it. *See* redaction criticism.

**TRANSCENDENCE** the quality of going beyond ordinary experience. In theology, transcendence teaches that God is not contained in creation, or identical with it, but surpasses it in an absolute sense.

**TRANSJORDAN** Latin for "the other side of the (river) Jordan" as seen from Jerusalem. *See* Cisjordan.

**TRANSMISSION HISTORY** the account of how a text came down to us from its originator. The transmission can begin in spoken form: a story told to others, a proverbial saying. It may then result in a written document, which is copied and combined with other documents or oral traditions, until it is in the form in which we have it. Scholars studying the text of the books of the Bible have assumed that, because of such things as two different accounts of the same event, or different names for God, the text as we have it is the result of a complicated process. Their efforts to understand this process are transmission history.

**TRENT, COUNCIL OF** *see* Council of Trent.

**TYPOLOGY** from the Greek word *typos,* the raised design on a seal for imprinting in wax, then a pattern or model; a theological way of understanding persons, events, or explanations, especially in the New Testament, by referring back to Old Testament "types." A type can be an event, like the Exodus from Egypt (1 Corinthians 10,1-6); a real person, like Solomon (Luke 11,31); or a story or parable like that of Jonah (Luke 11,29-30).

**TYPOLOGY, CERAMIC** *see* ceramic typology.

**VATICAN II** the council of the Church held in the Vatican from 1962–65. The Second Vatican Council made many far-reaching decisions about the life of the Church, such as putting the liturgy into the

language of the people. The Council also promoted the study and reading of the Scriptures and encouraged new Catholic translations and commentaries to help the understanding of nonexperts.

**VULGATE** the Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome, made in the fifth century A.D. Jerome went back to the original languages, Greek and Hebrew, in making his translation; it is called the Vulgate (from the Latin meaning "of the common people") because Latin was the language that most people spoke at that time.

**WISDOM** the tradition of human learning, handed down from teacher to pupil and from parent to child. Wisdom relied on seeing recurring patterns in human behavior and in moral consequences of action, and in presenting these in a memorable form, usually a proverb. Wisdom Literature: the collection of wisdom writings in the Bible, consisting of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, and Sirach, and including parts of Job and Psalms as well.

**WRITINGS** the third part of the Hebrew Scriptures, after the Law (Torah) and Prophets. The Writings consisted of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

**YAHWEH** the Hebrew name for God. It is usually explained as based on the Hebrew verb for "to be or become," but it is not easy to translate. "The one who is" or "who causes to be" are possibilities. *The New American Bible,* following a tradition of English-language translations, uses the word Lord (or occasionally God) to indicate when the word Yahweh appears in the text. Yahweh is given as God's name to Moses in Exodus 3,14.

**YAHWIST** the name for the author of one of the source documents of the Pentateuch. The Yahwist, from the beginning of his work (Genesis 2,4), habitually uses the name Yahweh for God (as opposed to the author of another of the documents, the Elohist, who uses the Hebrew word *'elohim,* or God). It is generally agreed among scholars that the Yahwist's account is the oldest of the documents. *See* Elohist; Pentateuch; Priestly.

**YOM KIPPUR** Hebrew, "Day of Atonement." The Jewish holy day of fasting and repentance.

**ZEALOT** a Jew who was commited to the violent overthrow of the Roman rulers of Israel. Zealots were not a unified party or group but formed a number of sometimes conflicting factions, united only by their aversion to Roman oppression. They practiced assassination and other terror tactics, as well as engaging in political agitation. Although Zealots may have been active during Jesus' lifetime, there is little evidence of their emergence as a significant movement and force in Judaism until the time of the Jewish revolt that began about thirty years after the death of Jesus. Zealots captured by the Romans Romans were usually crucified as a deterrent to their followers. The Zealot-inspired revolt in 66–70 A.D. was crushed by the Romans and the Temple in Jerusalem was pulled down.

**ZION** original meaning uncertain. It is sometimes spelled according to its Greek form, Sion. The name refers to the fortification within ancient Jerusalem conquered by David or to the entire city (2 Samuel 5,6-10). Still later Zion designated the area immediately north of this original city where Solomon built the Temple (Psalms 2,6; 48,2), and in some prophetical writings it stood for the heavenly Jerusalem (Isaiah 60,14; see Hebrews 12,22). From the fourth century A.D. the name has been attached to the southwest part of Jerusalem, where the tomb of David was relocated and the upper room of the Last Supper is pointed out. At the present time it is outside the medieval walls of Jerusalem.

# THE BIBLE IN THE LECTIONARY

EILEEN SCHULLER

One of the enduring results of the Second Vatican Council has been a renewed emphasis on the place of the Bible within Catholic life, and greater attention to its use in worship, study, and devotion. As a Church and as individuals we are discovering anew the truth of St. Jerome's insight that "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Most Catholics now own a Bible; there are Bible study groups in many parishes; children are introduced to biblical stories and actual biblical texts from the first stages of their religious education; many new hymns and much contemporary folk music are biblically based; Services of the Word (which often include a solemn enthronement of the Bible) and parish celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours are slowly finding a place in Catholic piety.

Still, for most Catholics, their main exposure to the Bible comes at those times when the Church gathers for liturgy, to offer together praise and worship to God through Jesus. Each time the Mass is celebrated there are two or three readings from the Bible, always one from the Gospel and others from the Book of Acts, the Epistles, or the Old Testament. Whenever the sacraments are celebrated (even when baptisms, marriages, and the sacrament of penance are celebrated apart from the Mass) readings from the Word of God are an integral part of the ritual. The first reading from Scripture is regularly followed by a psalm so that we might give our response in the words of Scripture. The Gospel Acclamation, the Entrance and Communion antiphons are usually taken directly from Scripture, and other prayers and texts of the Mass reflect or are based on scriptural sources (for instance, the Glory to God in the Highest, the Lamb of God, the Lord's Prayer).

It is instructive to reflect on why the Christian tradition is so insistent that we read the Word of God whenever we gather to pray as Church. The *Constitution on the Liturgy,* one of the foundational documents of the Second Vatican Council, puts it this way: "Christ is present in His Word since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church" (*Constitution on the Liturgy,* 7). The *Eucharistic Instruction* of 1967 elaborates at greater length "the principal modes by which the Lord is present to his Church in liturgical celebrations. First of all, Christ is present in the assembly of the faithful gathered in his name; He is also present in his word for it is He who is speaking as the sacred Scriptures are read in the Church; in the eucharistic sacrifice, He is present both in the person of the minister . . . and above all under the eucharistic elements" (9).

Roman Catholicism has traditionally placed primary emphasis (at times, almost the sole emphasis) on the eucharistic presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. More recent theological reflection has emphasized that Christ is present from the moment when the people gather together in the Christian Assembly, and that He is present especially during the proclamation of the Word of God, both in the reading of Scripture and in its unfolding in the homily. The *Eucharistic Instruction* brings this all together with the beautiful imagery of food: "The Church is nourished by the bread of life, which she finds at the table both of the Word of God and the Body of Christ" (10).

## The Revision of the Lectionary

Very early on in the Second Vatican Council, the Bishops of the Church, recognizing that "Sacred Scripture is of paramount importance in the celebration of the liturgy" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* 24), called for certain reforms and changes so that this truth might become a living and pastoral reality in the Church. They said there should be "more reading from holy Scripture" and it should be "more varied and suitable" (*CSL,* 35); or, to put it in more poetic fashion, "the treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word" (*CSL,* 51). Thus, one of the first major reforms following on the Council was a revision of the Lectionary, that is, the biblical readings that are set down for each Sunday and weekday of the year, and also for use in the celebration of the sacraments, on Feast Days, at funerals, and for Votive Masses and Masses for Special Occasions.

The reforms envisaged by the Council meant not only that the readings would be in English, but that new and previously unheard sections of the Bible would need to be introduced both on Sundays and at weekday Masses. In the centuries since the Council of Trent, the *Roman Missal* of Pius V (1570) had prescribed a set series of Gospel passages on a yearly basis, and a second reading usually from the Epistles; very few passages from the Old Testament were ever heard at Sunday Mass.

To fulfill the Council's mandate, a committee was established by Rome in 1964; liturgical, scriptural, and pastoral experts, along with bishops around the world, were consulted. The work was completed in 1969 with the publication of the *Lectionary for Mass,* and introduced in all churches throughout the world on the First Sunday of Advent, 1971. In January of 1981 a second edition of the Lectionary was published with a few minor additions and changes, plus an expanded and very helpful Introduction which explains more fully the goals and purpose of the Lectionary.

The revision of the Lectionary has been one of the most extensive and significant reforms of the Council. Unfortunately, it has not always been given the attention it deserves, nor are some of its fundamental principles always well understood, either by the clergy who preach on these readings or by the laity who hear them. Our appreciation of the Scriptures in the liturgy can be greatly enriched by a more careful examination of the Lectionary.

## Why a Lectionary at All?

Before we look at more specific questions about how the Lectionary is put together and exactly what passages are chosen, it is helpful to step back and ask the more fundamental questions: "Why a lectionary at all? What do we gain by using a lectionary?"

The decision to use a lectionary means that the readings for a given Sunday or weekday are predetermined; they are a given, and therefore they are the starting point for the planning of the liturgy as a whole and the homily. On certain other occasions (for instance, celebrations of marriages, funerals) there are more options given for Scripture readings, and a choice is to be made of what is most appropriate to the pastoral needs of a given congregation. When a special group gathers for a one-time occasion (a Retreat Day, a meeting), it is recognized that the given readings for the day may not be appropriate, and provision is made for using readings "that are more suited to the particular celebration, provided that they are chosen from the texts of an approved lectionary" (*Masses with Special Groups,* 6e). Interestingly, the greatest flexibility is allowed in choosing readings for Masses with children, although a reading from the Gospels is always to be included (*Directory for Masses with Children,* 43).

The norm in the Roman Catholic tradition is that the Scripture readings are set; they are not the choice of the priest or anyone else in the congregation. Certainly a case can be made (and has been made in the Reform and Free Church traditions) for the freedom and spontaneity to choose readings suitable to a specific community on this occasion. But the Catholic tradition has opted for a structured and planned system of readings that "provides the faithful with a knowledge of the whole of God's Word, in a pattern suited to the purpose" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Introduction,* 60).

The imposition of a lectionary seeks to lessen the temptation (although it can never remove it entirely!) to pick and choose, to listen only to those parts of the Bible which we find readily helpful and to omit those which we find difficult to understand or accept—but which may be the ones we most need to hear. For instance, if I am readily inclined to look upon God as one who is loving, merciful, kind, and forgiving, the Lectionary will certainly read my favorite passages, but it will also force me to read those difficult passages (from both the Old and the New Testament) which speak of the wrath of God, judgment, and punishment. Or again, if I am a person with a strong social-justice orientation, firmly convinced that "actions on behalf of justice . . . are a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel" (1971 Synod of Bishops), the Lectionary will read many of the key biblical texts both from the prophets and the Gospels; but it will also include passages that speak of the personal dimension of union with God, of a world which is passing away, even passages in praise of the monarchy and the established realm. The gift and challenge of the Lectionary is that it places before each of us passages that we might otherwise not choose to read; unrelentingly it nudges us to open ourselves to the totality of God's Word.

## Foundational Principles of the Lectionary

On a first examination of the Lectionary, it is easy to get bogged down in a mass of details about different cycles and lists of what is read when, so that the whole thing can seem somewhat intimidating. Rather than trying to determine why certain texts are read on a certain day, it is more important to get an overall sense of the arrangement and rationale of the whole. The general principles and foundational decisions that have determined the basic shape and ordering of the Roman Lectionary will then be clear.

## The Paschal Mystery

The focal point of the whole Lectionary is Jesus Christ, especially "the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension" (*CSL,* 5). Throughout the cycle of the Church's Year, the Lectionary sets before us the totality of this central mystery of the Christian life, a mystery that was not only accomplished in Jesus, but a mystery in which we now share through Baptism and faith.

Thus, primacy is given to readings from the Gospels, which speak most directly of the person of Jesus. Furthermore, we read these texts not as individuals but as a people gathered for praise and thanksgiving. "Within the Christian assembly the proclamation of the word inevitably has a Christian aura . . . the God whom we worship in our liturgy is not, first of all, the God of the Book (which is why we freely interpret the Book by arranging it in a lectionary). Our God is the God of the Gathering" (R. Keifer, *To Hear and To Proclaim,* p. 115). At Mass, every passage of Scripture, whether from the Old or New Testament, is set in relationship to the passion and resurrection of Jesus as made present to us in the Eucharist.

## The Church Year

Not everything in the Lectionary is of equal importance. The Lectionary is divided into six parts: the major section (and the one that will be the main focus of our attention) is the Temporal Cycle, that is, the readings for Sundays and weekdays throughout the Church Year; the rest of the Lectionary contains the readings for special occasions (Proper of the Saints, Commons, Ritual Masses [for examples, readings for sacraments, funerals], Masses for Various Occasions, and Votive Masses).

Within the Temporal Cycle, not all days of the year are of equal importance. Sundays have special importance, since they are the weekly celebration of the Lord's resurrection and the occasion for the gathering of the whole community; thus, "the more important biblical passages" (*CSL: Introduction,* 65) are assigned to Sundays and the Solemnities of the Lord. The Sunday cycle is set up independent from the weekday cycle which, in a sense, complements it.

The Church Year as a whole has its own rhythm. "The solemnity of Easter has the same kind of preeminence [in the year] . . . that Sunday has in the week" (*Norms for the Liturgical Year,* 18); there are six Sundays in Easter season, followed by Pentecost and Trinity Sundays. Then, next to Easter, the Church "holds most sacred the memorial of Christ's birth and early manifestation" (*Norms,* 32). There are two Sundays after Christmas, followed by Epiphany and the Sunday after it. These two major feasts, each with their preparatory period (Lent, with six Sundays, before Easter, and Advent, with four Sundays, before Christmas) are the primary seasons of the Church Year; the other thirty-four Sundays, which celebrate "the mystery of Christ in all its aspects" (*Norms,* 43), form what is called simply "Ordinary Time." (The Lectionary provides for more than fifty-two Sundays to allow for variations in the length of time after Easter, since Easter can fall anywhere from March 22 to April 25.)

## Lectio Semicontinua and Lectio Electa

There are many different ways in which we could go about reading the Bible in a systematic fashion. We could start with the story of Creation and work through the events of the Old Testament chronologically, then move on to the New Testament and conclude with the Book of Revelation; this would be a kind of salvation-history approach. Another option would be to organize the Scripture readings around certain great themes (grace, salvation, forgiveness,

creation) or moral principles; the traditional name for this approach is *lectio electa,* "readings chosen" to suit a predetermined theme. Or, we could adopt *lectio continua,* a "continuous reading" of the Bible from beginning to end. This is the system of the Jewish synagogue in which the Torah, the first five books, are read continuously through a year; on the day that the last chapter of Deuteronomy is finished, on that same day the first chapter of Genesis is begun so that the reading of Torah is unceasing.

The Roman Lectionary has opted for a combination of *lectio electa* (particularly in the major seasons of the Church Year) and *lectio continua* (particularly during Ordinary Time and in the weekday cycle); in fact, it is really more correct to talk of *lectio semicontinua* since no biblical book is read through in its entirety.

Although a "harmony" (to use the term from the *CSL: Introduction,* 66) exists between the different readings during Advent, Lent, and Easter, for most Masses there is no one theme in the three (Sunday) or two (weekday) readings. Thus, attempts (whether by a homilist or by musicians) to discover or impose a theme for every Mass can result in a misleading or artificial approach to the Scriptures.

### Readings of Suitable Length; Omission of Difficult Sections

In the early church the custom was to read "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets as long as there is time" (Justin Martyr, *Apol* 67). That, however, is not the norm today; within the Mass, particularly when there are three readings, none can be too long. Narrative texts (Gospel stories, parables) are often longer (ten to fifteen verses) so that they can be complete and because they more easily hold people's attention. Other texts, particularly Sunday readings from the Epistles, are shorter (between four and eight verses) "because of the profundity of their teaching" (*CSL: Introduction,* 75). Occasionally an option is given for reading either a long or a short version of a text (for example, the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman on the Third Sunday of Lent, A).

The Roman Lectionary also recognizes that not every passage in the Bible is either suitable or helpful for public reading in the liturgy. Decisions were made to omit entirely certain passages with "complex literary, critical, or exegetical problems" (*CSL: Introduction,* 76) that would make them difficult for most people to understand. Similarly, following the long-established practice in Roman lectionaries, at times selected verses within a reading are omitted because the passage would otherwise be too long or because a verse is "unsuitable pastorally or . . . involves truly difficult problems" (*CSL: Introduction,* 77).

## Basic Arrangement of the Sunday Lectionary

After examining the possibility of spreading the readings over as little as two years or as many as four, the planners of the Sunday Lectionary decided on a three-year cycle. That is, there are different readings for each Sunday in Years A, B, and C (as they are commonly designated) and then the cycle begins over again. (Years where the sum of all the digits are divisible by three, for instance, 1989, 1992 are always Year C. The year begins on the First Sunday of Advent.)

For each Sunday there are three readings: one from the Old Testament (with a few exceptions, as we will note in the Sundays after Easter), one from the Epistles or the Book of

Revelation, and one from the Gospels. Although provision is made for an individual Conference of Bishops to allow only two readings "for pastoral reasons" (*General Instruction,* 318), three is clearly the norm.

Since there is considerable divergence in the shape of the Lectionary during the major seasons of Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter as compared with the Sundays of Ordinary Time, it is easier and less confusing to look at each separately, beginning with Ordinary Time.

## The Gospels in Ordinary Time

One of the three Synoptic Gospels forms the central focus of each of the thirty-three (occasionally thirty-four) Sundays of each year of Ordinary Time. Year A is always the Gospel of Matthew; Year B, the Gospel of Mark; and Year C, the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is not neglected, even though it does not form the core of a specific year. In accord with an ancient tradition of the Church, John has always been read during the Lent and Easter seasons "because it is the 'spiritual' Gospel in which the mystery of Christ is sounded out to greater depths" (*CSL: Introduction,* 1969, 7); in addition, because of the shortness of the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6 of John (the Bread of Life discourse) is taken up on five Sundays during Year B.

This particular arrangement of the Lectionary allows us to hear each of the Gospels in its own right; over the course of a year, we come to know the distinctive picture of Jesus presented by Matthew or Mark or Luke.

## The Epistles in Ordinary Time

Over the Sundays of Ordinary Time, passages are selected from the Epistles for the second reading, according to the following outline:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Year A*** | 1 Corinthians 1-4 | (Sundays 2-8) |
| | Romans | (Sundays 9-24) |
| | Philippians | (Sundays 25-28) |
| | 1 Thessalonians | (Sundays 29-33) |
| ***Year B*** | 1 Corinthians 6-11 | (Sundays 2-6) |
| | 2 Corinthians | (Sundays 7-14) |
| | Ephesians | (Sundays 15-21) |
| | James | (Sundays 22-26) |
| | Hebrews 2-10 | (Sundays 27-33) |
| ***Year C*** | 1 Corinthians 12-15 | (Sundays 2-8) |
| | Galatians | (Sundays 9-14) |
| | Colossians | (Sundays 15-18) |
| | Hebrews 11-12 | (Sundays 19-22) |
| | Philemon | (Sunday 23) |
| | 1 Timothy | (Sundays 24-26) |
| | 2 Timothy | (Sundays 27-30) |
| | 2 Thessalonians | (Sundays 31-33) |

Though individual passages are quite short and there is no attempt to read the Epistles in their entirety, over the three years the Lectionary gives a "rich and varied" exposure to the main themes and emphases of this part of Scripture. As already noted, in the Sundays in Ordinary Time there is no direct correlation between the Gospel reading and the Epistle reading; although at times they may touch on similar aspects of the Christian mystery, they have not been picked to provide a common theme.

## The Old Testament Reading in Ordinary Time

In contrast to the selection of the Epistle, the first reading from the Old Testament has been carefully chosen to correlate with the Gospel text of the day. Although the intent is to highlight the unity between the Old and New Testaments, in fact there is considerable variety in how this "harmony" (*CSL: Introduction,* 67) is achieved. Sometimes it is a common theme that binds the two readings together; at other times the Old Testament will foreshadow or suggest something that is more fully developed in the Gospel (for example, on Sunday 16, Year C, the story of Martha and Mary giving hospitality to Jesus is paired with the story from Genesis of Abraham receiving his three guests). Often, if the Gospel quotes a verse from the Old Testament or refers to a specific incident, this passage will be the first reading (for example, on the Third Sunday, Year A, Matthew quotes Isaiah 8,23—9,1, and that Isaianic text services as the first reading). At times, the single lines given before the readings in the Lectionary are most helpful (though they are not meant to be read publicly) to indicate the point of correspondence which led to the choice of a particular reading.

While the desirability of a weekly Old Testament reading is undisputed, it is probably fair to say that the selection of Old Testament passages has been the single most controversial aspect of the Lectionary. The decision to link the first reading so closely with the Gospel imposes certain limitations. Many of the most important Old Testament passages simply do not readily lend themselves to correlation with a particular Gospel passage, and so are never heard in the Sunday assembly; often, such a brief or peripheral section of a major Old Testament story is read that it is difficult to get a sense of the whole picture. Furthermore, relatively little ever appears from the corpus of Wisdom literature (only three selections from Proverbs and two, both truncated, from the Book of Job). The passages selected from the prophets are those that are readily seen to be fulfilled in Jesus, or which at least have christological implications, but other aspects of the prophetic message are given less prominence (for example, the relatively few "social justice" passages read over the three years).

## The Lent-Easter Season

As noted above, the seasons of Lent-Easter and Advent-Christmas form independent units; both cycles (the Advent even more so than the Lent) are carefully crafted so that through the Scripture readings we may be more closely initiated into the Church's understanding of these great feasts.

Easter, especially the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil on Saturday), is "the culmination of the entire liturgical year" (*Norms for the Liturgical Year,* 18); Lent serves as a time of preparation, especially as a period of "closer attention to the Word of God" (*CSL,* 109). During Lent, "those important passages from the Gospels which were read to catechumens in the early centuries to prepare them for Baptism are proclaimed. These readings are directed to *all* the faithful because during Lent the whole Church, along with those about to

be baptized, calls to mind the mystery of its initiation into Christ." Though it is not possible to examine closely all the readings for the Lent-Easter season, a few examples will illustrate the care and theological insight that finds expression in the arrangement of the Lectionary for this season.

The baptismal thrust is seen most clearly in Year A on the final three Sundays of Lent, where the great themes of water, light, and life are proclaimed through the reading from John's Gospel of the Samaritan woman at the well (Third Sunday), the curing of the man born blind (Fourth), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Fifth); so pivotal are these particular texts to the process of Christian initiation that they can be used in any of the three years, especially when there are candidates preparing for Baptism.

The readings for the first two Sundays of Lent are always the account of the Temptation and the Transfiguration respectively, read according to the Gospel being followed in a given year. In Year B, the Gospels for the rest of Lent focus on the cross and Resurrection; in Year C, on the process of conversion.

At first glance, the choice of Old Testament readings for the Sundays of Lent might look entirely diverse and random; certainly they are not specifically linked to the Gospel. Rather, each year, they are meant to lead us through the Old Testament, presenting "the main elements of salvation history from its beginning until the promise of the New Covenant" (*CSL: Introduction,* 97):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Year A*** | First Sunday: | Creation and fall |
| | Second Sunday: | The call of Abraham |
| | Third Sunday: | Water from the rock in the desert |
| | Fourth Sunday: | The anointing of David as king |
| | Fifth Sunday: | Promise of the restoration |
| ***Year B*** | First Sunday: | Flood and covenant |
| | Second Sunday: | Abraham's sacrifice of his son |
| | Third Sunday: | The ten commandments |
| | Fourth Sunday: | Exile and destruction of the Temple |
| | Fifth Sunday: | Promise of the new covenant |
| ***Year C*** | First Sunday: | Retelling the deliverance from Egypt |
| | Second Sunday: | The covenant with Abraham |
| | Third Sunday: | The call of Moses |
| | Fourth Sunday: | The Passover celebrated in the Promised Land |
| | Fifth Sunday: | Promise of a new exodus |

The Epistle readings during Lent highlight themes such as faith, repentance, baptismal motifs, and often are related to the first reading (for example, on the First Sunday of Lent, A, the passage from Romans about Christ as the Second Adam corresponds to the reading about the sin of Adam in Genesis 2).

The reading of the Gospel of John continues on most of the Sundays after Easter in all three years with texts about the Good Shepherd (Fourth Sunday) and from John's presentation of the Farewell Discourse and Prayer of Jesus (the Fifth to Seventh Sundays). This is the only time when there are no Old Testament readings; in keeping with a very ancient tradition, the Church turns to the Acts of the Apostles in all three years so that we ponder the work of the Spirit in the early Church. For the second reading, semicontinuous selections are taken from 1 Peter in Year

A, 1 John in Year B (both rich in baptismal allusions), and from the Book of Revelation (with its emphasis on heavenly worship) in Year C.

### Advent-Christmas Season

The Lectionary for Advent is very carefully planned, with a definite movement as we progress toward the celebration of Christmas. The First Sunday emphasizes the Second Coming of Christ, picking up on a theme already sounded in the final Sunday of the Church Year (the feast of Christ the King). On the Second and Third Sundays, the Gospel is always about John the Baptist, so that the focus of attention moves more to the historical coming of a Messiah. On the Fourth Sunday, we turn to the first chapters of Matthew and Luke for events immediately prior to the birth of Jesus (the Annunciation to Mary and Joseph, and the Visitation).

In keeping with a long tradition in the Church, the Book of Isaiah with its messianic prophecies has a special place in both the Advent and Christmas readings. The Epistle readings are more general, offering exhortations and reflections; often, as the Advent focus moves to the birth of Jesus in time, the second reading serves to remind us of the Coming which still awaits us in the future.

Throughout the Christmas season, the Lectionary preserves many of the readings that have been traditional in the Roman Church. On the Octave of Christmas, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (New Year's Day), the first reading is the priestly blessing from Numbers 6, and the other two speak more specifically of Mary.

## The Lectionary for Weekdays

The readings for weekdays throughout the year form a separate cycle, independent of the Sunday cycle. Even with only two readings, obviously more of the Bible can be covered on weekdays, although still only portions of many of the longer Old Testament books are included. The seasons of Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter follow an annual cycle, that is, the readings are repeated every year; in Ordinary Time, the same Gospel passages are read every year, while the first reading follows a two-year cycle (designated as Year I and Year II).

The following will give a brief outline of the weekday cycle:

### Advent-Christmas Season

During the first nine days of Advent, the Lectionary follows a very ancient custom of the Church and reads (in sequence) selected passages from the prophet Isaiah; on these days, contrary to usual practice, the Gospel is chosen to relate to this first reading. After the Thursday of the Second Week of Advent, the Gospel consistently speaks of John the Baptist, while the first reading is still from Isaiah or chosen to relate to the Gospel. From December 17–24, passages are selected from the first chapters of Matthew and Luke of events leading up to the birth of Christ; the first reading presents some of the major Old Testament messianic prophecies.

From December 27 on throughout the Epiphany season, there is a virtually continuous reading of 1 John. The Gospels relate various manifestations of Jesus; the whole of the first chapter of John's Gospel is read between December 31 and January 5.

### Lent-Easter Season

Throughout Lent, the Gospel and Old Testament are rather closely related to each other and present to us different aspects of the major Lenten themes of Baptism and penance. In accord with an ancient custom in the Church, the Gospel of John is read from the fourth week on; in Holy Week the focus is more specifically on Christ's passion.

During the Easter season, on weekdays as on Sundays, the Lectionary maintains the ancient custom of reading semicontinuously from the Acts of the Apostles. During the Octave of Easter, the Gospel selections recount the different occasions on which Christ appeared; over the next weeks there is semicontinuous reading of the teaching and prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper from John 13–17.

### Ordinary Time

Over the course of the year, the Gospels are read on a semicontinuous basis: Mark 1–12 in Weeks 1–12, Matthew 5–25 in Weeks 10–21, and Luke 4–21 in Weeks 22–34. The Church Year ends with those passages from Luke that talk specifically of the Second Coming.

The first reading is completely independent from the Gospel and provides the opportunity to read selections from the majority of the Old Testament books and Epistles. Longer books are sometimes divided (for example, Genesis 1–11 is read in Weeks 5–6 of Year I, Genesis 12–50 in Weeks 12–14). At the very end of the Church Year, we read from Daniel in Year I and the Book of Revelation in Year II with their eschatological themes.

## The Responsorial Psalm

The Lectionary also introduces us to the psalms in the Bible; in fact, more than eighty psalms (or verses thereof) are used in the Sunday Lectionary and some 130 of the 150 psalms appear somewhere in the complete Lectionary. The psalm comes between the first and second reading, and is considered as "an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word" (*General Instruction,* 36).

The psalms are poetry, the majority of them certainly originally composed to be sung with musical accompaniment. The *Introduction* to the Lectionary strongly encourages singing the psalm at Mass, preferably by a soloist (cantor) with the congregation joining in with a refrain; if the psalm is spoken, it is "to be recited in a manner conducive to meditation on the Word" (*CSL: Introduction,* 22).

Although the psalm always serves in some way as a response to the Word of God, there is considerable diversity in terms of its precise relationship to other readings. If the first reading or the epistle or even the Gospel quotes a particular psalm verse, that psalm is usually taken up as an echo or anticipated response (for example, the use of Psalm 91 on the First Sunday of Lent, C, when a verse from this psalm, "He has put his angels in charge of you," is quoted during the temptation story in the Gospel). Often a psalm simply picks up and carries on the mood of the first reading, whether lamentation, thanksgiving, or praise. Some psalms have a long tradition of usage on particular feasts (Psalm 47, "God goes up with shouts of joy" for the Ascension; Psalm 72, "the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute. All Kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him." for Epiphany). According to Lucien Deiss (a member of the committee involved in the choice of psalms when the Lectionary was compiled), some psalms that would not otherwise be used were introduced primarily so that the Christian community could become more familiar with the entire psalter (*Spirit and Song of the New Liturgy,* pp. 110–11).

## Ecumenical Import of the Lectionary

One of the unexpected and unforeseen results of the revision of the Roman Lectionary has been its adoption (with some modifications) by many Protestant churches, including Anglican/Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and United Church of Canada. James White, a Methodist minister, in a much-quoted statement remarked that the Lectionary has become "Catholicism's greatest gift to Protestant preaching, just as Protestant biblical scholarship has given so much impetus to Catholic preaching" (*Christian Worship in Transition,* 1976, p. 139).

In recent years, many of these Churches came together under the auspices of the Consultation on Common Texts and developed the *Common Lectionary,* an order of readings for use on Sundays and a few special days of the Christian year. The *Common Lectionary* basically follows the Roman Lectionary, with some significant changes in the choice of Old Testament passages in order to deal with some of the problem areas noted above.

Although Catholics and Protestants do not share exactly the same Lectionary, tremendous progress has been made toward common reading of Scripture. The ecumenical import, even on a practical level, is significant; already, in many places ministers of different churches gather together to reflect and prepare their Sunday sermons. And, although we are still not at the point of being able to be united at the table of the Lord's banquet, we can be united and nourished at the common table of his Word.

## Using the Lectionary for Prayer and Study

Many people, both clergy and lay, today use the Lectionary as a basic resource for daily prayer, whether or not they are able to celebrate liturgy with the Christian community every day. Consisent use of the Lectionary over a period of years will necessarily expose us to a broad expanse of Scripture and protect us against the subjective reading of the Bible spoken about earlier. The Lectionary puts us in touch with the Church's understanding of the mysteries of our faith as presented through the Church year, helping us to recover dimensions which may have been lost in popular piety (for example, the baptismal dimension of the season of Lent as opposed to a solely ascetic focus).

Many religious educators are discovering the Lectionary as a valuable resource in catechetics; reflection on the readings as appropriate to various age groups provides a common focus when the whole community gathers in prayer. Parish study groups or Bible studies often take the Gospel of a given year as their text for study. More and more the Lectionary is being used as the core of the RCIA program to introduce the new catechumens to the life of faith and community.

Though the Lectionary contains the Word of God, the particular selection of material is a human endeavor and thus only more or less perfect. It is recognized that some choices of specific readings could have been more auspicious, and certainly revisions will probably be made in time.

In particular, two areas are surfacing that seem to call for further discussion and reflection. As we ponder the role of women today in church and society, we bring certain questions to the Lectionary; we need to ask why certain texts have been omitted (for example, the story of courageous midwives who defy Pharoah and ensure the survival of the Hebrew people in Egypt) and whether it is either necessary or helpful pastorally to include other texts which are open to being interpreted in a way derogatory to women (for example, Ephesians 5, 20). The second

concern is in the area of our relationship to the Jewish people; as we become more aware of "the continuity of our faith with that of the earlier covenant" (*Vatican Guidelines,* 1974), we are more sensitive to the fact that the Lectionary must "promote among the Catholic people a genuine appreciation of the special place of the Jewish people as first chosen in the history of salvation, and in no way slight the honor and dignity that is theirs" (*American Bishops' Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations,* 1975).

The revision of the Lectionary stands as one of the most tangible and permanent implementations of the vision and challenge of the Second Vatican Council. In the Lectionary, "the treasures of the Bible are . . . opened up more lavishly so that a richer share in God's Word may be provided for the faithful" (*CSL,* 51). The Lectionary has the potential to shape the life of the Christian community, not only as the Word of God is proclaimed in the celebration of the liturgy, but also as it is broken open for us in the homily, in catechetics, and in private and group study and prayer which is rooted in Scripture. As the Lectionary is used over the cycle of years, and even generations, "there is reason to hope for a new awakening of the spiritual life deriving from an increased dedication to God's word which 'abides forever' (Isaiah 40,8)" (*Dei Verbum,* 26).

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For discussion of some of the issues around the Bible and our relationship to the Jewish people, see John J. Pawlikowski and James A. Wilde, *When Catholics Speak About Jews* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Program, 1987).

# THE NEW 3–YEAR CYCLE OF READINGS FOR SUNDAY MASS

[*See p. 459 for Readings of Feasts that displace the Sunday Readings.*]

Year A 1993 1996 1999 2002 2005 2008 2011 2014

Guide 1 *refers to Reading I* 2 *refers to Reading II* 3 *refers to Gospel*

## ADVENT SEASON

**1st Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 2, 1–5
2 Rom 13, 11–14
3 Mt 24, 37–44

**2nd Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 11, 1–10
2 Rom 15, 4–9
3 Mt 3, 1–12

**3rd Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 35, 1–6a. 10
2 Jas 5, 7–10
3 Mt 11, 2–11

**4th Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 7, 10–14
2 Rom 1, 1–7
3 Mt 1, 18–24

## CHRISTMAS SEASON

**Christmas Vigil**
1 Is 62, 1–5
2 Acts 13, 16–17. 22–25
3 Mt 1, 1–25

**Christmas (At Midnight)**
1 Is 9, 1–6
2 Ti 2, 11–14
3 Lk 2, 1–14

**Christmas (At Dawn)**
1 Is 62, 11–12
2 Ti 3, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 15–20

**Christmas (During the Day)**
1 Is 52, 7–10
2 Heb 1, 1–6
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Sunday After Christmas (Holy Family)**
1 Sir 3, 3–7. 14–17a
2 Col 3, 12–21
3 Mt 2, 13–15. 19–23

**January 1 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)**
1 Nm 6, 22–27
2 Gal 4, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 16–21

**2nd Sunday After Christmas**
1 Sir 24, 1–4. 12–16
2 Eph 1, 3–6. 15–18
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Epiphany**
1 Is 60, 1–6
2 Eph 3, 2–3a. 5–6
3 Mt 2, 1–12

**Sunday After Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord)**
1 Is 42, 1–4. 6–7
2 Acts 10, 34–38
3 Mt 3, 13–17

## LENTEN SEASON

**Ash Wednesday**
1 Jl 2, 12–18
2 2 Cor 5, 20—6, 2
3 Mt 6, 1–6. 16–18

**1st Sunday of Lent**
1 Gn 2, 7–9; 3, 1–7
2 Rom 5, 12–19
3 Mt 4, 1–11

**2nd Sunday of Lent**
1 Gn 12, 1–4a
2 2 Tm 1, 8b–10
3 Mt 17, 1–9

**3rd Sunday of Lent**
1 Ex 17, 3–7
2 Rom 5, 1–2. 5–8
3 Jn 4, 5–42

**4th Sunday of Lent**
1 1 Sm 16, 1b. 6–7.10–13a
2 Eph 5, 8–14
3 Jn 9, 1–41

**5th Sunday of Lent**
1 Ez 37, 12–14
2 Rom 8, 8–11
3 Jn 11, 1–45

**Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)**
Procession: Mt 21, 1–11
1 Is 50, 4–7
2 Phil 2, 6–11
3 Mt 26, 14—27, 66

## EASTER TRIDUUM AND EASTER SEASON

**Mass of Lord's Supper**
1 Ex 12, 1–8. 11–14
2 1 Cor 11, 23–26
3 Jn 13, 1–15

**Good Friday**
1 Is 52, 13—53, 12
2 Heb 4, 14–16; 5, 7–9
3 Jn 18, 1—19, 42

**Easter Vigil**
1 Gn 1, 1—2, 2
Gn 22, 1–18
Ex 14, 15—15, 1
Is 54, 5–14
Is 55, 1–11
Bar 3, 9–15. 32—4,4
Ez 36, 16–17a. 18–28
2 Rom 6, 3–11
3 Mt 28, 1–10

**Easter Sunday**
1 Acts 10, 34a. 37–43
2 Col 3, 1–4
or 1 Cor 5, 6b–8

3 Jn 20, 1–9
or Mt 28, 1–10
Evening: 3 Lk 24, 13–35

**2nd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 2, 42–47
2 1 Pt 1, 3–9
3 Jn 20, 19–31

**3rd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 2, 14. 22–33
2 1 Pt 1, 17–21
3 Lk 24, 13–35

**4th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 2, 14a. 36–41
2 1 Pt 2, 20b–25
3 Jn 10, 1–10

**5th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 6, 1–7
2 1 Pt 2, 4–9
3 Jn 14, 1–12

**6th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 8, 5–8. 14–17
2 1 Pt 3, 15–18
3 Jn 14, 15–21

**Ascension of Our Lord**
1 Acts 1, 1–11
2 Eph 1, 17–23
3 Mt 28, 16–20

**7th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 1, 12–14
2 1 Pt 4, 13–16
3 Jn 17, 1–11a

**Pentecost Vigil**
1 Gn 11, 1–9
or Ex 19, 3–8a. 16–20b
or Ez 37, 1–14
or Jl 3, 1–5
2 Rom 8, 22–27
3 Jn 7, 37–39

**Mass of the Day**
1 Acts 2, 1–11
2 1 Cor 12, 3b–7. 12–13
3 Jn 20, 19–23

## SOLEMNITIES OF THE LORD DURING ORDINARY TIME

**Trinity Sunday**
**(Sunday after Pentecost)**
1 Ex 34, 4b–6. 8–9
2 2 Cor 13, 11–13
3 Jn 3, 16–18

**Corpus Christi**
1 Dt 8, 2–3. 14b–16a
2 1 Cor 10, 16–17
3 Jn 6, 51–58

**Sacred Heart of Jesus**
1 Dt 7, 6–11
2 1 Jn 4, 7–16
3 Mt 11, 25–30

## ORDINARY TIME

**1st Sunday**
(*See Baptism of the Lord, above*)

**2nd Sunday**
1 Is 49, 3. 5–6
2 1 Cor 1, 1–3
3 Jn 1, 29–34

**3rd Sunday**
1 Is 8, 23b—9, 3
2 1 Cor 1, 10–13. 17
3 Mt 4, 12–23

**4th Sunday**
1 Zep 2, 3; 3, 12–13
2 1 Cor 1, 26–31
3 Mt 5, 1–12a

**5th Sunday**
1 Is 58, 7–10
2 1 Cor 2, 1–5
3 Mt 5, 13–16

**6th Sunday**
1 Sir 15, 16–21
2 1 Cor 2, 6–10
3 Mt 5, 17–37

**7th Sunday**
1 Lv 19, 1–2. 17–18
2 1 Cor 3, 16–23
3 Mt 5, 38–48

**8th Sunday**
1 Is 49, 14–15
2 1 Cor 4, 1–5
3 Mt 6, 24–34

**9th Sunday**
1 Dt 11, 18. 26–28. 32
2 Rom 3, 21–25a. 28
3 Mt 7, 21–27

**10th Sunday**
1 Hos 6, 3–6
2 Rom 4, 18–25
3 Mt 9, 9–13

**11th Sunday**
1 Ex 19, 2–6a
2 Rom 5, 6–11
3 Mt 9, 36—10,8

**12th Sunday**
1 Jer 20, 10–13
2 Rom 5, 12–15
3 Mt 10, 26–33

**13th Sunday**
1 2 Kgs 4, 8–11. 14–16a
2 Rom 6, 3–4. 8–11
3 Mt 10, 37–42

**14th Sunday**
1 Zec 9, 9–10
2 Rom 8, 9. 11–13
3 Mt 11, 25–30

**15th Sunday**
1 Is 55, 10–11
2 Rom 8, 18–23
3 Mt 13, 1–23

**16th Sunday**
1 Wis 12, 13. 16–19
2 Rom 8, 26–27
3 Mt 13, 24–43

**17th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 3, 5. 7–12
2 Rom 8, 28–30
3 Mt 13, 44–52

**18th Sunday**
1 Is 55, 1–3
2 Rom 8, 35. 37–39
3 Mt 14, 13–21

**19th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 19, 9a. 11–13a
2 Rom 9, 1–5
3 Mt 14, 22–33

**20th Sunday**
1 Is 56, 1. 6–7
2 Rom 11, 13–15. 29–32
3 Mt 15, 21–28

**21st Sunday**
1 Is 22, 19–23
2 Rom 11, 33–36
3 Mt 16, 13–20

**22nd Sunday**
1 Jer 20, 7–9
2 Rom 12, 1–2
3 Mt 16, 21–27

**23rd Sunday**
1 Ez 33, 7–9
2 Rom 13, 8–10
3 Mt 18, 15–20

**24th Sunday**
1 Sir 27, 30—28, 7
2 Rom 14, 7–9
3 Mt 18, 21–35

**25th Sunday**
1 Is 55, 6–9
2 Phil 1, 20c–24. 27a
3 Mt 20, 1–16a

**26th Sunday**
1 Ez 18, 25–28
2 Phil 2, 1–11
3 Mt 21, 28–32

**27th Sunday**
1 Is 5, 1–7
2 Phil 4, 6–9
3 Mt 21, 33–43

**28th Sunday**
1 Is 25, 6–10a
2 Phil 4, 12–14. 19–20
3 Mt 22, 1–14

**29th Sunday**
1 Is 45, 1. 4–6
2 1 Thes 1, 1–5b
3 Mt 22, 15–21

**30th Sunday**
1 Ex 22, 20–26
2 1 Thes 1, 5c–10
3 Mt 22, 34–40

**31st Sunday**
1 Mal 1, 14b—2, 2b. 8–10
2 1 Thes 2, 7b–9, 13
3 Mt 23, 1–12

**32nd Sunday**
1 Wis 6, 12–16
2 1 Thes 4, 13–18
3 Mt 25, 1–13

**33rd Sunday**
1 Prv 31, 10–13. 19–20. 30–31
2 1 Thes 5, 1–6
3 Mt 25, 14–30

**34th Sunday (Christ the King)**
1 Ez 34, 11–12. 15–17
2 1 Cor 15, 20–26. 28
3 Mt 25, 31–46

Year B 1994 1997 2000 2003 2006 2009 2012 2015

Guide 1 *refers to Reading I* 2 *refers to Reading II* 3 *refers to Gospel*

## ADVENT SEASON

**1st Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 63, 16b–17. 19b; 64, 2b–7
2 1 Cor 1, 3–9
3 Mk 13, 33–37

**2nd Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 40, 1–5. 9–11
2 2 Pt 3, 8–14
3 Mk 1, 1–8

**3rd Sunday of Advent**
1 Is 61, 1–2a. 10–11
2 1 Thes 5, 16–24
3 Jn 1, 6–8. 19–28

**4th Sunday of Advent**
1 2 Sm 7, 1–5. 8b–12. 14a. 16
2 Rom 16, 25–27
3 Lk 1, 26–38

## CHRISTMAS SEASON

**Christmas Vigil**
1 Is 62, 1–5
2 Acts 13, 16–17. 22–25
3 Mt 1, 1–25

**Christmas (At Midnight)**
1 Is 9, 1–6
2 Ti 2, 11–14
3 Lk 2, 1–14

**Christmas (At Dawn)**
1 Is 62, 11–12
2 Ti 3, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 15–20

**Christmas (During the Day)**
1 Is 52, 7–10
2 Heb 1, 1–6
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Sunday After Christmas (Holy Family)**
1 Gn 15, 1–6; 21, 1–3
2 Heb 11, 8.11–12. 17–19
3 Lk 2, 22–40 or 22. 39–40

**January 1 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)**
1 Nm 6, 22–27
2 Gal 4, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 16–21

**2nd Sunday After Christmas**
1 Sir 24, 1–2. 8–12
2 Eph 1, 3–6. 15–18
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Epiphany**
1 Is 60, 1–6
2 Eph 3, 2–3a. 5–6
3 Mt 2, 1–12

**Sunday After Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord)**
1 Is 55, 1–11
2 1 Jn 5, 1–9
3 Mk 1, 7–11

## LENTEN SEASON

**Ash Wednesday**
1 Jl 2, 12–18
2 2 Cor 5, 20—6, 2
3 Mt 6, 1–6. 16–18

**1st Sunday of Lent**
1 Gn 9, 8–15
2 1 Pt 3, 18–22
3 Mk 1, 12–15

**2nd Sunday of Lent**
1 Gn 22, 1–2. 9a. 10–13. 15–18
2 Rom 8, 31b–34
3 Mk 9, 2–10

**3rd Sunday of Lent**
1 Ex 20, 1–17
2 1 Cor 1, 22–25
3 Jn 2, 13–25

**4th Sunday of Lent**
1 2 Chr 36, 14–16. 19–23
2 Eph 2, 4–10
3 Jn 3, 14–21

**5th Sunday of Lent**
1 Jer 31, 31–34
2 Heb 5, 7–9
3 Jn 12, 20–33

**Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)**
Procession: Mk 11, 1–10 or Jn 12, 12–16
1 Is 50, 4–7
2 Phil 2, 6–11
3 Mk 14, 1—15, 47

## EASTER TRIDUUM AND EASTER SEASON

**Mass of Lord's Supper**
1 Ex 12, 1–8. 11–14
2 1 Cor 11, 23–26
3 Jn 13, 1–15

**Good Friday**
1 Is 52, 13—53, 12
2 Heb 4, 14–16. 5, 7–9
3 Jn 18, 1—19, 42

**Easter Vigil**
1 Gn 1, 1—2, 2
Gn 22, 1–18
Ex 14, 15—15,1
Is 54, 5–14
Is 55, 1–11
Bar 3, 9–15. 32—4,4
Ez 36, 16–28
2 Rom 6, 3–11
3 Mk 16, 1–7

**Easter Sunday**
1 Acts 10, 34a. 37–43
2 Col 3, 1–4 or 1 Cor 5, 6b–8
3 Jn 20, 1–9 or Mk 16, 1–8
Evening: 3 Lk 24, 13–35

**2nd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 4, 32–35
2 1 Jn 5, 1–6
3 Jn 20, 19–31

**3rd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 3, 13–15. 17–19
2 1 Jn 2, 1–5a
3 Lk 24, 35–48

**4th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 4, 8–12
2 1 Jn 3, 1–2
3 Jn 10, 11–18

**5th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 9, 26–31
2 1 Jn 3, 18–24
3 Jn 15, 1–8

**6th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 10, 25–26. 34–35. 44–48
2 1 Jn 4, 7–10
3 Jn 15, 9–17

**Ascension of Our Lord**
1 Acts 1, 1–11
2 Eph 1, 17–23 or 4, 1–13
3 Mk 16, 15–20

**7th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 1, 15–17. 20a. 20c–26
2 1 Jn 4, 11–16
3 Jn 17, 11b–19

**Pentecost Vigil**
1 Gn 11, 1–9
or Ex 19, 3–8a. 16–20b
or Ez 37, 1–14
or Jl 3, 1–5
2 Rom 8, 22–27
3 Jn 7, 37–39

**Mass of the Day**
1 Acts 2, 1–11
2 1 Cor 12, 3b–7. 12–13
3 Jn 20, 19–23

Pentecost-Optional
2 Gal 5, 16–25
3 Jn 15, 26–27; 16, 12–15

## SOLEMNITIES OF THE LORD DURING ORDINARY TIME

**Trinity Sunday (Sunday after Pentecost)**
1 Dt 4, 32–34. 39–40
2 Rom 8, 14–17
3 Mt 28, 16–20

**Corpus Christi**
1 Ex 24, 3–8
2 Heb 9, 11–15
3 Mk 14, 12–16. 22–26

**Sacred Heart of Jesus**
1 Hos 11, 1. 3–4. 8c–9
2 Eph 3, 8–12. 14–19
3 Jn 19, 31–37

## ORDINARY TIME

**1st Sunday**
(*See Baptism of the Lord, above*)

**2nd Sunday**
1 1 Sm 3, 3b–10. 19
2 1 Cor 6, 13c–15a. 17–20
3 Jn 1, 35–42

**3rd Sunday**
1 Jon 3, 1–5. 10
2 1 Cor 7, 29–31
3 Mk 1, 14–20

**4th Sunday**
1 Dt 18, 15–20
2 1 Cor 7, 32–35
3 Mk 1, 21–28

**5th Sunday**
1 Jb 7, 1–4. 6–7
2 1 Cor 9, 16–19. 22–23
3 Mk 1, 29–39

**6th Sunday**
1 Lv 13, 1–2. 45–46
2 1 Cor 10, 31—11, 1
3 Mk 1, 40–45

**7th Sunday**
1 Is 43, 18–19. 21–22. 24b–25
2 2 Cor 1, 18–22
3 Mk 2, 1–12

**8th Sunday**
1 Hos 2, 16b. 17b. 21–22
2 2 Cor 3, 1b–6
3 Mk 2, 18–22

**9th Sunday**
1 Dt 5, 12–15
2 2 Cor 4, 6–11
3 Mk 2, 23—3, 6

**10th Sunday**
1 Gn 3, 9–15
2 2 Cor 4, 13—5, 1
3 Mk 3, 20–35

**11th Sunday**
1 Ez 17, 22–24
2 2 Cor 5, 6–10
3 Mk 4, 26–34

**12th Sunday**
1 Jb 38, 1. 8–11
2 2 Cor 5, 14–17
3 Mk 4, 35–41

**13th Sunday**
1 Wis 1, 13–15; 2, 23–24
2 2 Cor 8, 7. 9. 13–15
3 Mk 5, 21–43

**14th Sunday**
1 Ez 2, 2–5
2 2 Cor 12, 7–10
3 Mk 6, 1–6

**15th Sunday**
1 Am 7, 12–15
2 Eph 1, 3–14
3 Mk 6, 7–13

**16th Sunday**
1 Jer 23, 1–6
2 Eph 2, 13–18
3 Mk 6, 30–34

**17th Sunday**
1 2 Kgs 4, 42–44
2 Eph 4, 1–6
3 Jn 6, 1–15

**18th Sunday**
1 Ex 16, 2–4. 12–15
2 Eph 4, 17. 20–24
3 Jn 6, 24–35

**19th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 19, 4–8
2 Eph 4, 30—5, 2
3 Jn 6, 41–51

**20th Sunday**
1 Prv 9, 1–6
2 Eph 5, 15–20
3 Jn 6, 51–58

**21st Sunday**
1 Jos 24, 1–2a. 15–17. 18b
2 Eph 5, 21–32
3 Jn 6, 60–69

**22nd Sunday**
1 Dt 4, 1–2. 6–8
2 Jas 1, 17–18. 21b–22. 27
3 Mk 7, 1–8. 14–15. 21–23

**23rd Sunday**
1 Is 35, 4–7a
2 Jas 2, 1–5
3 Mk 7, 31–37

**24th Sunday**
1 Is 50, 5–9a
2 Jas 2, 14–18
3 Mk 8, 27–35

**25th Sunday**
1 Wis 2, 12. 17–20
2 Jas 3, 16—4, 3
3 Mk 9, 30–37

**26th Sunday**
1 Nm 11, 25–29
2 Jas 5, 1–6
3 Mk 9, 38–43. 45. 47–48

**27th Sunday**
1 Gn 2, 18–24
2 Heb 2, 9–11
3 Mk 10, 2–16

**28th Sunday**
1 Wis 7, 7–11
2 Heb 4, 12–13
3 Mk 10, 17–30

**29th Sunday**
1 Is 53, 10–11
2 Heb 4, 14–16
3 Mk 10, 35–45

**30th Sunday**
1 Jer 31, 7–9
2 Heb 5, 1–6
3 Mk 10, 46–52

**31st Sunday**
1 Dt 6, 2–6
2 Heb 7, 23–28
3 Mk 12, 28b–34

**32nd Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 17, 10–16
2 Heb 9, 24–28
3 Mk 12, 38–44

**33rd Sunday**
1 Dn 12, 1–3
2 Heb 10, 11–14. 18
3 Mk 13, 24–32

**34th Sunday (Christ the King)**
1 Dn 7, 13–14
2 Rv 1, 5–8
3 Jn 18, 33b–37

## Year C 1992 1995 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Guide 1 *refers to Reading I* 2 *refers to Reading II* 3 *refers to Gospel*

### ADVENT SEASON

**1st Sunday of Advent**
1 Jer 33, 14–16
2 1 Thes 3, 12—4, 2
3 Lk 21, 25–28. 34–36

**2nd Sunday of Advent**
1 Bar 5, 1–9
2 Phil 1, 4–6. 8–11
3 Lk 3, 1–6

**3rd Sunday of Advent**
1 Zep 3, 14–18a
2 Phil 4, 4–7
3 Lk 3, 10–18

**4th Sunday of Advent**
1 Mi 5, 1–4a
2 Heb 10, 5–10
3 Lk 1, 39–45

## CHRISTMAS SEASON

**Christmas Vigil**
1 Is 62, 1–6
2 Acts 13, 16–17. 22–25
3 Mt 1, 1–25

**Christmas (At Midnight)**
1 Is 9, 1–6
2 Ti 2, 11–14
3 Lk 2, 1–14

**Christmas (At Dawn)**
1 Is 62, 11–12
2 Ti 3, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 15–20

**Christmas (During the Day)**
1 Is 57, 7–10
2 Heb 1, 1–6
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Sunday After Christmas (Holy Family)**
1 1 Sm 1, 20–22. 24–28
2 1 Jn 3, 1–2. 21–24
3 Lk 2, 41–52

**January 1 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)**
1 Nm 6, 22–27
2 Gal 4, 4–7
3 Lk 2, 16–21

**2nd Sunday After Christmas**
1 Sir 24, 1–2. 8–12
2 Eph 1, 3–6. 15–18
3 Jn 1, 1–18

**Epiphany**
1 Is 60, 1–6
2 Eph 3, 2–3a. 5–6
3 Mt 2, 1–12

**Sunday After Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord)**
1 Is 40, 1–5. 9–11
2 Ti 2, 11–14; 3, 4–7
3 Lk 3, 15–16. 21–22

## LENTEN SEASON

**Ash Wednesday**
1 Jl 2, 12–18
2 2 Cor 5, 20—6, 2
3 Mt 6, 1–6. 16–18

**1st Sunday of Lent**
1 Dt 26, 4–10
2 Rom 10, 8–13
3 Lk 4, 1–13

**2nd Sunday of Lent**
1 Gn 15, 5–12. 17–18
2 Phil 3, 17—4, 1
3 Lk 9, 28b–36

**3rd Sunday of Lent**
1 Ex 3, 1–8a. 13–15
2 1 Cor 10, 1–6. 10–12
3 Lk 13, 1–9

**4th Sunday of Lent**
1 Jos 5, 9a. 10–12
2 2 Cor 5, 17–21
3 Lk 15, 1–3. 11–32

**5th Sunday of Lent**
1 Is 43, 16–21
2 Phil 3, 8–14
3 Jn 8, 1–11

**Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)**
Procession: Lk 19, 28–40
1 Is 50, 4–7
2 Phil 2, 6–11
3 Lk 22, 14—23, 56

## EASTER TRIDUUM AND EASTER SEASON

**Mass of Lord's Supper**
1 Ex 12, 1–8. 11–14
2 1 Cor 11, 23–26
3 Jn 13, 1–15

**Good Friday**
1 Is 52, 13—53, 12
2 Heb 4, 14–16; 5, 7–9
3 Jn 18, 1—19, 42

**Easter Vigil**
1 Gn 1, 1—2, 2
Gn 22, 1–18
Ex 14, 15—15, 1
Is 54, 5–14
Is 55, 1–11
Bar 3, 9–15. 32—4,4
Ez 36, 16–28
2 Rom 6, 3–11
3 Lk 24, 1–12

**Easter Sunday**
1 Acts 10, 34a. 37–43
2 Col 3, 1–4
or 1 Cor 5, 6b–8
3 Jn 20, 1–9
or Lk 24, 1–12
Evening: 3 Lk 24, 13–35

**2nd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 5, 12–16
2 Rv 1, 9–11a. 12–13. 17–19
3 Jn 20, 19–31

**3rd Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 5, 27b–32. 40b–41
2 Rv 5, 11–14
3 Jn 21, 1–19 or 1–14

**4th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 13, 14. 43–52
2 Rv 7, 9. 14b–17
3 Jn 10, 27–30

**5th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 14, 21b–27
2 Rv 21, 1–5a
3 Jn 13, 31–33a. 34–35

**6th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 15, 1–2. 22–29
2 Rv 21, 10–14. 22–23
3 Jn 14, 23–29

**Ascension of the Lord**
1 Acts 1, 1–11
2 Eph 1, 17–23 or Heb 9, 24–28; 10, 19–23
3 Lk 24, 46–53

**7th Sunday of Easter**
1 Acts 7, 55–60
2 Rv 22, 12–14. 16–17. 20
3 Jn 17, 20–26

**Pentecost Vigil**
1 Gn 11, 1–9
or Ex 19, 3–8a. 16–20b
or Ez 37, 1–14
or Jl 3, 1–5
2 Rom 8, 22–27
3 Jn 7, 37–39

**Mass of the Day**
1 Acts 2, 1–11
2 1 Cor 12, 3b–7. 12–13
or Rom 8, 8–27
3 Jn 20, 19–23
or Jn 14, 15–16. 23b–26

## SOLEMNITIES OF THE LORD DURING ORDINARY TIME

**Trinity Sunday**
**(Sunday After Pentecost)**
1 Prv 8, 22–31
2 Rom 5, 1–5
3 Jn 16, 12–15

**Corpus Christi**
1 Gn 14, 18–20
2 1 Cor 11, 23–26
3 Lk 9, 11b–17

**Sacred Heart of Jesus**
1 Ez 34, 11–16
2 Rom 5, 5b–11
3 Lk 15, 3–7

## ORDINARY TIME

**1st Sunday**
(*See Baptism of the Lord, above*)

**2nd Sunday**
1 Is 62, 1–5
2 1 Cor 12, 4–11
3 Jn 2, 1–12

**3rd Sunday**
1 Neh 8, 2–4a. 5–6. 8–10
2 1 Cor 12, 12–30
3 Lk 1, 1–4; 4, 14–21

**4th Sunday**
1 Jer 1, 4–5. 17–19
2 1 Cor 12. 31—13, 13
3 Lk 4, 21–30

**5th Sunday**
1 Is 6, 1–2a. 3–8
2 1 Cor 15, 1–11
3 Lk 5, 1–11

**6th Sunday**
1 Jer 17, 5–8
2 1 Cor 15, 12. 16–20
3 Lk 6, 17. 20–26

**7th Sunday**
1 1 Sm 26, 2. 7–9. 12–13. 22–23
2 1 Cor 15, 45–49
3 Lk 6, 27–38

**8th Sunday**
1 Sir 27, 5–8
2 1 Cor 15, 54–58
3 Lk 6, 39–45

**9th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 8, 41–43
2 Gal 1, 1–2. 6–10
3 Lk 7, 1–10

**10th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 17, 17–24
2 Gal 1, 11–19
3 Lk 7, 11–17

**11th Sunday**
1 2 Sm 12, 7–10. 13
2 Gal 2, 16. 19–21
3 Lk 7, 36—8, 3

**12th Sunday**
1 Zec 12, 10–11
2 Gal 3, 26–29
3 Lk 9, 18–24

**13th Sunday**
1 1 Kgs 19, 16b. 19–21
2 Gal 5, 1. 13–18
3 Lk 9, 51–62

**14th Sunday**
1 Is 66, 10–14c
2 Gal 6, 14–18
3 Lk 10, 1–12. 17–20

**15th Sunday**
1 Dt 30, 10–14
2 Col 1, 15–20
3 Lk 10, 25–37

**16th Sunday**
1 Gn 18, 1–10a
2 Col 1, 24–28
3 Lk 10, 38–42

**17th Sunday**
1 Gn 18, 20–32
2 Col 2, 12–14
3 Lk 11, 1–13

**18th Sunday**
1 Eccl 1, 2; 2, 21–23
2 Col 3, 1–5. 9–11
3 Lk 12, 13–31

**19th Sunday**
1 Wis 18, 6–9
2 Heb 11, 1–2. 8–19
3 Lk 12, 32–48

**20th Sunday**
1 Jer 38, 4–6. 8–10
2 Heb 12, 1–4
3 Lk 12, 49–53

**21st Sunday**
1 Is 66, 18–21
2 Heb 12, 5–7. 11–13
3 Lk 13, 22–30

**22nd Sunday**
1 Sir 3, 19–21. 30–31
2 Heb 12, 18–19. 22–24a
3 Lk 14, 1. 7–14

**23rd Sunday**
1 Wiz 9, 13–19
2 Phlm 9b–10. 12–17
3 Lk 14, 25–33

**24th Sunday**
1 Ex 32, 7–11. 13–14
2 1 Tm 1, 12–17
3 Lk 15, 1–32

**25th Sunday**
1 Am 8, 4–7
2 1 Tm 2, 1–8
3 Lk 16, 1–13

**26th Sunday**
1 Am 6, 1a. 4–7
2 1 Tm 6, 11–16
3 Lk 16, 19–31

**27th Sunday**
1 Hb 1, 2–3; 2, 2–4
2 2 Tm 1, 6–8. 13–14
3 Lk 17, 5–10

**28th Sunday**
1 2 Kgs 5, 14–17
2 2 Tm 2, 8–13
3 Lk 17, 11–19

**29th Sunday**
1 Ex 17, 8–13
2 2 Tm 3, 14—4, 2
3 Lk 18, 1–8

**30th Sunday**
1 Sir 35, 15b–17. 20–22a
2 2 Tm 4, 6–8. 16–18
3 Lk 18, 9–14

**31st Sunday**
1 Wis 11, 23—12, 2
2 2 Thes 1, 11—2, 2
3 Lk 19, 1–10

**32nd Sunday**
1 2 Mc 7, 1–2. 9–14
2 2 Thes 2, 16—3, 5
3 Lk 20, 27–38

**33rd Sunday**
1 Mal 3, 19–20a
2 2 Thes 3, 7–12
3 Lk 21, 5–19

**34th Sunday (Christ the King)**
1 2 Sm 5, 1–3
2 Col 1, 12–20
3 Lk 23, 35–43

# READINGS FOR THE MAJOR FEASTS OF THE YEAR

**Feb. 2: Presentation of the Lord**
1 Mal 3, 1–4
2 Heb 2, 14–18
3 Lk 2, 22–40

**Mar. 19: Joseph, Husband of Mary**
1 2 Sm 7, 4–5a. 12–14a. 16
2 Rom 4, 13. 16–18. 22
3 Mt 1, 16. 18–21. 24a or Lk 2, 41–51a

**Mar. 25: Annunciation**
1 Is 7, 10–14
2 Heb 10, 4–10
3 Lk 1, 26–28

**June 24: John the Baptist Vigil**
1 Jer 1, 4–10
2 1 Pt 1, 8–12
3 Lk 1, 5–17

**Mass of the Day**
1 Is 49, 1–6
2 Acts 13, 22–26
3 Lk 1, 57–66. 80

**June 29: Peter and Paul Vigil**
1 Acts 3, 1–10
2 Gal 1, 11–20
3 Jn 21, 15–19

**Mass of the Day**
1 Acts 12, 1–11
2 2 Tm 4, 6–8. 17–18
3 Mt 16, 13–19

**Aug. 6: Transfiguration**
1 Dn 7, 9–10. 13–14
2 2 Pt 1, 16–19
3 (A) Mt 7, 1–9
(B) Mk 9, 2–10
(C) Lk 9, 28b–36

**Aug. 15: Assumption Vigil**
1 1 Chr 15, 3–4.15; 16,1–2
2 1 Cor 15, 54–57
3 Lk 11, 27–28

**Mass of the Day**
1 Rv 11, 19a; 12, 1–6a. 10ab
2 1 Cor 15, 20–26
3 Lk 1, 39–56

**Sept. 14: Triumph of the Cross**
1 Nm 21, 4–9
2 Phil 2, 6–11
3 Jn 3, 13–17

**Nov. 1: All Saints**
1 Rv 7, 2–4. 9–14
2 1 Jn 3, 1–3
3 Mt 5, 1–12a

**Nov. 2: All Souls First Mass**
1 Jb 19, 1. 23–27
2 1 Cor 15, 51–57
3 Jn 6, 37–40

**Second Mass**
1 Wis 3, 1–9
2 Phil 3, 20–21
3 Jn 11, 17–27

**Third Mass**
1 2 Mc 12, 43–46
2 Rv 14, 13
3 Jn 14, 1–6

(*Other Readings may be chosen*)

**Nov. 9: Dedication of St. John Lateran**
1 2 Chr 5, 6–10. 13—6, 2
2 1 Cor 3, 9–13. 16–17
3 Lk 19, 1–10

(*Other Readings may be chosen*)

**Dec. 8: Immaculate Conception**
1 Gn 3, 9–15. 20
2 Eph 1, 3–6. 11–12
3 Lk 1, 26–38

# WEEKDAY LECTIONARY

ADVENT SEASON

**1st Week of Advent**
Monday: Is 2, 1–5 (Year A Is 4, 2–6); Mt 8, 5–11
Tuesday: Is 11, 1–10; Lk 10, 21–24
Wednesday: Is 25, 6–10a; Mt 15, 29–37
Thursday: Is 26, 1–6; Mt 7, 21.24–27
Friday: Is 29, 17–24; Mt 9, 27–31
Saturday: Is 30, 19–21. 23–26; Mt 9, 35—10, 1.6–8

**2nd Week of Advent**
Monday: Is 35, 1–10; Lk 5, 17–26
Tuesday: Is 40, 1–11; Mt 18, 12–14
Wednesday: Is 40, 25–31; Mt 11, 28–30
Thursday: Is 41, 13–20; Mt 11, 11–15
Friday: Is 48, 17–19; Mt 11, 16–19
Saturday: Sir 48, 1–4.9–11; Mt 17, 10–13

**3rd Week of Advent**
Monday: Num 24, 2–7.15–17a; Mt 21, 23–27
Tuesday: Zep 3, 1–2.9–13; Mt 21, 28–32
Wednesday: Is 45, 6b–8.18.21b–25; Lk 7, 18b–23
Thursday: Is 54, 1–10; Lk 7, 24–30
Friday: Is 56, 1–3a.6–8; Jn 5, 33–36

December 17: Gn 49, 2.8–10; Mt 1, 1–17
December 18: Jer 23, 5–8; Mt 1, 18–24
December 19: Jgs 13, 2–7.24–25a; Lk 1, 5–25
December 20: Is 7, 10–14; Lk 1, 26–38
December 21: Sg 2, 8–14 or Zep 3, 14–18a; Lk 1, 39–45
December 22: 1 Sm 1, 24–28; Lk 1, 46–56
December 23: Mal 3, 1–4.23–24; Lk 1, 57–66
December 24: 2 Sm 7, 1–5.8b–11.16; Lk 1, 67–79

CHRISTMAS SEASON

**Octave of Christmas**
Second day (St Stephen): Acts 6, 8–10; 7, 54–59; Mt 10, 17–22
Third day (St. John): 1 Jn 1, 1–4; Jn 20, 2–8
Fourth day (Holy Innocents): 1 Jn 1, 5—2, 2; Mt 2, 13–18
Fifth day: 1 Jn 2, 3–11; Lk 2:22–35
Sixth day: 1 Jn 2, 12–17; Lk 2, 36–40
Seventh day: 1 Jn 2, 18–21; Jn 1, 1–18
January 2: 1 Jn 2, 22–28; Jn 1, 19–28
January 3: 1 Jn 2, 29–3, 6; Jn 1, 29–34
January 4: 1 Jn 3, 7–10; Jn 1, 35–42
January 5: 1 Jn 3, 11–21; Jn 1, 43–51
January 6 (if Epiphany not celebrated): 1 Jn 5, 5–13; Mk 1, 6b–11 Readings may vary slightly depending on when Epiphany is celebrated

**Week After Epiphany**
Monday after Epiphany: 1 Jn 3, 22—4, 6; Mt 4, 12–17.23–25
Tuesday after Epiphany: 1 Jn 4, 7–10; Mk 6, 34–44
Wednesday after Epipany: 1 Jn 4, 11–18; Mk 6, 45–52
Thursday after Epiphany: 1 Jn 4, 19—5, 4; Lk 4, 14–22a
Friday after Epiphany: 1 Jn 5, 5–13; Lk 5, 12–16
Saturday after Epiphany: 1 Jn 5, 14–21; Jn 3, 22–30

LENTEN SEASON

Ash Wednesday: Jl 2, 12–18; 2 Cor 5, 20—6, 2; Mt 6, 1–6.16–18
Thursday after Ash Wednesday: Dt 30, 15–20; Lk 9, 22–25
Friday after Ash Wednesday: Is 58, 1–9a; Mt 9, 14–15
Saturday after Ash Wednesday: Is 58, 9b–14; Lk 5, 27–32

**First Week of Lent**
Monday: Lv 19, 1–2.11–18; Mt 25, 31–46
Tuesday: Is 55.10–11; Mt 6, 7–15

Wednesday: Jon 3, 1–10; Lk 11, 29–32
Thursday: Est C, 12.14–16.23–25; Mt 7, 7–12
Friday: Ez 18, 21–28; Mt 5, 20–26
Saturday: Dt 26, 16–19; Mt 5, 43–48

**Second Week of Lent**
Monday: Dn 9, 4b–10; Lk 6, 36–38
Tuesday: Is 1, 10.16–20; Mt 23, 1–12
Wednesday: Jer 18, 18–20; Mt 20, 17–28
Thursday: Jer 17, 5–10; Lk 16, 19–31
Friday: Gn 37, 3–4.12–13a.17b–28; Mt 21, 33–43.45–46
Saturday: Mi 7, 14–15.18–20; Lk 15, 1–3.11–32

**Third Week of Lent**
Monday: 2 Kgs 5, 1–15a; Lk 4, 24–30
Tuesday: Dn 3, 25.34–43; Mt 18, 21–35
Wednesday: Dt 4, 1.5–9; Mt 5, 17–19
Thursday: Jer 7, 23–28; Lk 11, 14–23
Friday: Hos 14, 2–10; Mk 12, 28b–34
Saturday: Hos 6, 1–6; Lk 18, 19–24

**Fourth Week of Lent**
Monday: Is 65, 17–21; Jn 4, 43–54
Tuesday: Ez 47, 1–9.12; Jn 5, 1–3a.5–16
Wednesday: Is 49, 8–15; Jn 5, 17–30
Thursday: Ex 32, 7–14; Jn 5, 31–47
Friday: Wis 2, 1a.12–22; Jn 7, 1–2.10.25–30
Saturday: Jer 11, 18–20; Jn 7, 40–53

**Fifth Week of Lent**
Monday: Dn 13, 1–9.15–17.19–30.33–62; Jn 8, 1–11 (Year C: Jn 8, 12–20)
Tuesday: Nm 21, 4–9; Jn 8, 21–30
Wednesday: Dn 3, 14–20.91–92.95; Jn 8, 31–42
Thursday: Gn 17, 3–9; Jn 8, 51–59
Friday: Jer 20, 10–13; Jn 10, 31–42
Saturday: Ez 37, 21–28; Jn 11, 45–56

**Holy Week**
Monday: Is 42, 1–7; Jn 12, 1–11
Tuesday: Is 49, 1–6; Jn 13, 21–33.36–38
Wednesday: Is 50, 4–9a; Mt 26, 14–25
Thursday Chrism Mass: Is 61, 1–3a.6a.8b–9; Rv 1, 5–8; Lk 4, 16–21

## EASTER SEASON

**Octave of Easter**
Monday: Acts 2, 14.22–32; Mt 28, 8–15
Tuesday: Acts 2, 36–41; Jn 20, 11–18
Wednesday: Acts 3, 1–10; Lk 24, 13–35
Thursday: Acts 3, 11–26; Lk 24, 35–48
Friday: Acts 4, 1–12; Jn 21, 1–14
Saturday: Acts 4, 13–21; Mk 16, 9–15

**Second Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 4, 23–31; Jn 3, 1–8
Tuesday: Acts 4, 32–37; Jn 3, 7–15
Wednesday: Acts 5, 17–26; Jn 3, 16–21
Thursday: Acts 5, 27–33; Jn 3, 31–36
Friday: Acts 5, 34–42; Jn 6, 1–15
Saturday: Acts 6, 1–7; Jn 6, 16–21

**Third Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 6, 8–15; Jn 6, 22–29
Tuesday: Acts 7, 51—8, 1a; Jn 6, 30–35
Wednesday: Acts 8, 1–8; Jn 6, 35–40
Thursday: Acts 8, 26–40; Jn 6, 44–51
Friday: Acts 9, 1–20; Jn 6, 52–59
Saturday: Acts 9, 31–42; Jn 6, 60–69

**Fourth Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 11, 1–18; Jn 10, 1–10 (Year A: Jn 10, 11–18)
Tuesday: Acts 11, 19–26; Jn 10, 22–30
Wednesday: Acts 12, 24—13, 5a; Jn 12, 44–50
Thursday: Acts 13, 13–25; Jn 13, 16–20
Friday: Acts 13, 26–33; Jn 14, 1–6
Saturday: Acts 13, 44–52; Jn 14, 7–14

**Fifth Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 14, 5–18; Jn 14, 21–26
Tuesday: Acts 14, 19–28; Jn 14, 27–31a
Wednesday: Acts 15, 1–6; Jn 15, 1–8
Thursday: Acts 15, 7–21; Jn 15, 9–11
Friday: Acts 15, 22–31; Jn 15, 12–17
Saturday: Acts 16, 1–10; Jn 15, 18–21

**Sixth Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 16, 11–15; John 15, 26—16, 4a
Tuesday: Acts 16, 22–34; Jn 16, 5–11
Wednesday: Acts 17, 15.22—18, 1; Jn 16, 12–15
Thursday: Acts 18, 1–8; Jn 16, 16–20
Friday: Acts 18, 9–18; Jn 16, 20–23a
Saturday: Acts 18, 23–28; Jn 16, 23b–28

**Seventh Week of Easter**
Monday: Acts 19, 1–8; Jn 16, 29–33

Tuesday: Acts 20, 17–27; Jn 17, 1–11a
Wednesday: Acts 20, 28–38; Jn 17, 11b–19
Thursday: Acts 22, 30; 23, 6–11; Jn 17, 20–26
Friday: Acts 25, 13–21; Jn 21, 15–19
Saturday: Acts 28, 16–20.30–31; Jn 21, 20–25

SEASON OF THE YEAR
*(I is the reading for Year I; II is the reading for Year II; the Gospel is the same each year)*

**Week One**
Monday: I – Heb 1, 1–6; II – 1 Sm 1, 1–8; Mk 1, 14–20
Tuesday: I – Heb 2, 5–12; II – 1 Sm 1, 9–20; Mk 1, 21–28
Wednesday: I – Heb 2, 14–18; II – 1 Sm 3, 1–10.19–20; Mk 1, 29–39
Thursday: I – Heb 3, 7–14; II – 1 Sm 4, 1–11; Mk 1, 40–45
Friday: I – Heb 4, 1–5.11; II – 1 Sm 8, 4–7. 10–22a; Mk 2, 1–12
Saturday: I – Heb 4, 12–16; II – 1 Sm 9, 1–14.17–19; 10, 1a; Mk 2, 13–17

**Week Two**
Monday: I – Heb 5, 1–10; II – 1 Sm 15, 16–23; Mk 2, 18–22
Tuesday: I – Heb 6, 10–20; II – 1 Sm 16, 1–13; Mk 2, 23–28
Wednesday: I – Heb 7, 1–3.15–17; II – 1 Sm 17, 32–33.37.40–51; Mk 3, 1–6
Thursday: I – Heb 7, 25—8, 6; II – 1 Sm 18, 6–9; 19, 1–7; Mk 3, 7–12
Friday: I – Heb 8, 6–13; II – 1 Sm 24, 3–21; Mk 3, 13–19
Saturday: I – Heb 9, 2–3.11–14; II – 2 Sm 1, 1–4.11–12.19.23–27; Mk 3, 20–21

**Week Three**
Monday: I – Heb 9, 15.24–28; II – 2 Sm 5, 1–7.10; Mk 3, 22–30
Tuesday: I – Heb 10, 1–10; II – 2 Sm 6, 12b–15.17–19; Mk 3, 31–35
Wednesday: I – Heb 10, 11–18; II – 2 Sm 7, 4–17; Mk 4, 1–20
Thursday: I – Heb 10, 19–25; II – 2 Sm 7, 18–19.24–29; Mk 4, 21–25
Friday: I – Heb 10, 32–39; II – 2 Sm 11, 1–4a.5–10a.13–17; Mk 4, 26–34
Saturday: I – Heb 11, 1–2.8–9; II – 2 Sm 12, 1–7a.10–17; Mk 4, 35–41

**Week Four**
Monday: I – Heb 11, 32–40; II – 2 Sm 15, 13–14.30; 16, 5–13a; Mk 5, 1–20
Tuesday: I – Heb 12, 1–4; II – 2 Sm 18, 9–10.14b.24–25a.30—19, 3; Mk 5, 21–43
Wednesday: I – Heb 12, 4–7.11–15; II – 2 Sm 24, 2.9–17; Mk 6, 1–6
Thursday: I – Heb 12, 18–19.21–24; II – 1 Kgs 2, 1–4.10–12; Mk 6, 7–13
Friday: I – Heb 13, 1–8; II – Sir 47, 2–11; Mk 6, 14–29
Saturday: I–Heb 13, 15–17.20–21; II – 1 Kgs 3, 4–13; Mk 6, 30–34

**Week Five**
Monday: I – Gn 1, 1–19; II – 1 Kgs 8, 1–7.9–13; Mk 6, 53–56
Tuesday: I – Gn 1, 20—2, 4a; II – 1 Kgs 8, 22–23.27–30; Mk 7, 1–13
Wednesday: I – Gn 2, 4b–9.15–17; II – 1 Kgs 10, 1–10; Mk 7, 14–23
Thursday: I – Gn 2, 18–25; II – 1 Kgs 11, 4–13; Mk 7, 24–30
Friday: I – Gn 3, 1–8; II – 1 Kgs 11, 29–32; 12, 19; Mk 7, 31–37
Saturday: I – Gn 3, 9–24; II – 1 Kgs 12, 26–32; 13, 33–34; Mk 8, 1–10

**Week Six**
Monday: I – Gn 4, 1–15.25; II – Jas 1, 1–11; Mk 8, 11–13
Tuesday: I – Gn 6, 5–8; 7, 1–5.10; II – Jas 1, 12–18; Mk 8, 14–21
Wednesday: I – Gn 8, 6–13.20–22; II – Jas 1, 19–27; Mk 8, 22–26
Thursday: I – Gn 9, 1–13; II – Jas 2, 1–9; Mk 8, 27–33
Friday: I – Gn 11, 1–9; II – Jas 2, 14–24.26; Mk 8, 34—9, 1
Saturday: I – Heb 11, 1–7; II – Jas 3, 1–10; Mk 9, 2–13

**Week Seven**
Monday: I – Sir 1, 1–10; II – Jas 3, 13–18; Mk 9, 14–29

Tuesday: I – Sir 2, 1–11; II – Jas 4, 1–10; Mk 9, 30–37
Wednesday: I – Sir 4, 11–19; II – Jas 4, 13–17; Mk 9, 38–40
Thursday: I – Sir 5, 1–8; II – Jas 5, 1–6; Mk 9, 41–50
Friday: I – Sir 6, 5–17; II – Jas 5, 9–12; Mk 10, 1–12
Saturday: I – Sir 17, 1–15; II – Jas 5, 13–20; Mk 10, 13–16

**Week Eight**
Monday: I – Sir 17, 19–27; II – 1 Pt 1, 3–9; Mk 10, 17–27
Tuesday: I – Sir 35, 1–12; II – 1 Pt 1, 10–16; Mk 10, 28–31
Wednesday: I – Sir 36, 1.5–6.10–17; II – 1 Pt 1, 18–25; Mk 10, 32–45
Thursday: I – Sir 42, 15–25; II – 1 Pt 2, 2–5.9–12; Mk 10, 46–52
Friday: I – Sir 44, 1.9–13; II – 1 Pt 4, 7–13; Mk 11, 11–26
Saturday: I – Sir 51, 12b–20; II – Jude 17, 20b–25; Mk 11, 27–33

**Week Nine**
Monday: I – Tb 1, 1a–2; 2, 1–9; II – 2 Pt 1, 2–7; Mk 12, 1–12
Tuesday: I – Tb 2, 9–14; II – 2 Pt 3, 12–15a.17–18; Mk 12, 13–17
Wednesday: I – Tb 3, 1–11.16; II – 2 Tm 1, 1–3.6–12; Mk 12, 18–27
Thursday: I – Tb 6, 10–11; 7, 1.9–17; 8, 4–7; II – 2 Tm 2, 8–15; Mk 12, 28b–34
Friday: I – Tb 11, 5–17; II – 2 Tm 3, 10–17; Mk 12, 35–37
Saturday: I – Tb 12, 1.5–15.20; II – 2 Tm 4, 1–8; Mk 12, 38–44

**Week Ten**
Monday: I – 2 Cor 1, 1–7; II – 1 Kgs 17, 1–6; Mt 5, 1–12
Tuesday: I – 2 Cor 1, 18–22; II – 1 Kgs 17, 7–16; Mt 5, 13–16
Wednesday: I – 2 Cor 3, 4–11; II – 1 Kgs 18, 20–39; Mt 5, 17–19
Thursday: I – 2 Cor 3, 15—4, 1.3–6; II – 1 Kgs 18, 41–46; Mt 5, 20–26
Friday: I – 2 Cor 4, 7–15; II – 1 Kgs 19, 9a.11–16; Mt 5, 27–32
Saturday: I – 2 Cor 5, 14–21; II – 1 Kgs 19, 19–21; Mt 5, 33–37

**Week Eleven**
Monday: I – 2 Cor 6, 1–10; II – 1 Kgs 21, 1–16; Mt 5, 38–42
Tuesday: I – 2 Cor 8, 1–9; II – 1 Kgs 21, 17–29; Mt 5, 43–48
Wednesday: I – 2 Cor 9, 6–11; II – 1 Kgs 2, 1.6–14; Mt 6, 1–6.16–18
Thursday: I – 2 Cor 11, 1–11; II – Sir 48, 1–15; Mt 6, 7–15
Friday: I – 2 Cor 11, 18.21b–30; II – 2 Kgs 11, 1–4.9–18.20; Mt 6, 19–23
Saturday: I – 2 Cor 12, 1–10; II – 2 Chr 24, 17–25; Mt 6, 24–34

**Week Twelve**
Monday: I – Gn 12, 1–9; II – 2 Kgs 17, 5–8.13–15a.18; Mt 7, 1–5
Tuesday: I – Gn 13, 2.5–8; II – 2 Kgs 19, 9b–11.14–21.31–35a.36; Mt 7, 6.12–14
Wednesday: I – Gn 15, 1–12.17–18; II – 2 Kgs 22, 8–13; 23, 1–3; Mt 7, 15–20
Thursday: I – Gn 16, 1–12.15–16; II – 2 Kgs 24, 8–17; Mt 7, 21–29
Friday: I – Gn 17, 1.9–10.15–22; II – 2 Kgs 25, 1–12; Mt 8, 1–4
Saturday: I – Gn 18, 1–15; II – Lam 2, 2.10–14.18–19; Mt 8, 5–17

**Week Thirteen**
Monday: I – Gn 18, 16–33; II – Am 2, 6–10.13–16; Mt 8, 18–22
Tuesday: I – Gn 19, 15–29; II – Am 3, 1–8; 4, 11–12; Mt 8, 23–27
Wednesday: I – Gn 21, 5.8–20; II – Am 5, 14–15.21–24; Mt 8, 28–34
Thursday: I – Gn 22, 1–19; II – Am 7, 10–17; Mt 9, 1–8
Friday: I – Gn 23, 1–4.19; 24, 1–8.62–67; II – Am 8, 4–6.9–12; Mt 9, 9–13
Saturday: I – Gn 27, 1–5.15–29; II – Am 9, 11–15; Mt 9, 14–17

**Week Fourteen**
Monday: I – Gn 28, 10–22a; II – Hos 2, 16.17b–18.21–22; Mt 9, 18–26
Tuesday: I – Gn 32, 22–33; II – Hos 8, 4–7.11–13; Mt 9, 32–38
Wednesday: I – Gn 41, 51–57; 42, 5–

7a.17–24a; II – Hos 10, 1–3. 7–8.12; Mt 10, 1–7
Thursday: I – Gn 44, 18–21.23b–29; 45, 1–5; II – Hos 11, 1.3–4. 8c–9; Mt 10, 7–15
Friday: I – Gn 46, 1–7.28–30; II – Hos 14, 2–10; Mt 10, 16–23
Saturday: I – Gn 49, 29–33; 50, 15–24; II – Is 6, 1–8; Mt 10, 24–33

**Week Fifteen**
Monday: I – Ex 1, 8–14.22; II – Is 1, 10–17; Mt 10, 34—11, 1
Tuesday: I – Ex 2, 1–15a; II – Is 7, 1–9; Mt 11, 20–24
Wednesday: I – Ex 3, 1–6.9–12; II – Is 10, 5–7.13–16; Mt 11, 25–27
Thursday: I – Ex 3, 13–20; II – Is 26, 7–9.12.16–19; Mt 11, 28–30
Friday: I – Ex 11, 10–12.14; II – Is 38, 1–6.21–22.7–8; Mt 12, 1–8
Saturday: I – Ex 12, 37–42; II – Mi 2, 1–5; Mt 12, 14–21

**Week Sixteen**
Monday: I – Ex 14, 5–18; II – Mi 6, 1–4.6–8; Mt 12, 38–42
Tuesday: I – Ex 14, 21—15, 1; II – Mi 7, 14–15.18–20; Mt 12, 46–50
Wednesday: I – Ex 16, 1–5.9–15; II – Jer 1, 1.4–10; Mt 13, 1–9
Thursday: I – Ex 19, 1–2.9–11.16–20b; II – Jer 2, 1–3.7–8.12–13; Mt 13, 10–17
Friday: I – Ex 20, 1–17; II – Jer 3, 14–17; Mt 13, 18–23
Saturday: I – Ex 24, 3–8; II – Jer 7, 1–11; Mt 13, 24–30

**Week Seventeen**
Monday: I – Ex 32, 15–24.30–34; II – Jer 13, 1–11; Mt 13, 31–35
Tuesday: I – Ex 33, 7–11; 34, 5b–9.28; II – Jer 14, 17–22; Mt 13, 36–43
Wednesday: I – Ex 34, 29–34; II – Jer 15, 10.16–21; Mt 13, 44–46
Thursday: I – Ex 40, 16–21.34–38; II – Jer 18, 1–6; Mt 13, 47–53
Friday: I – Lv 23, 1.4–11.15–16.27.34b–37; II – Jer 26, 1–9; Mt 13, 54–58
Saturday: I – Lv 25, 1.8–17; II – Jer 26, 11–16.24; Mt 14, 1–12

**Week Eighteen**
Monday: I – Nm 11, 4b–15; II – Jer 28, 1–17; Mt 14, 13–21 or Mt 14, 22–36
Tuesday: I – Nm 12, 1–13; II – Jer 30, 1–2.12–15.18–22; Mt 14, 22–36 or Mt 15, 1–2.10–14
Wednesday: I – Nm 13, 1–2a.25—14, 1.26–29. 34–35; II – Jer 31, 1–7; Mt 15, 21–28
Thursday: I – Nm 20, 1–13; II – Jer 31, 31–34; Mt 16, 13–23
Friday: I – Dt 4, 32–40; II – Na 2, 1.3; 3, 1–3.6–7; Mt 16, 24–28
Saturday: I – Dt 6, 4–13; II – Hb 1, 12—2, 4; Mt 17, 14–20

**Week Nineteen**
Monday: I – Dt 10, 12–22; II – Ez 1, 2–5.24–28c; Mt 17, 22–27
Tuesday: I – Dt 31, 1–8; II – Ez 2, 8—3, 4; Mt 18, 1–5.10.12–14
Wednesday: I – Dt 34, 1–12; II – Ez 9, 1–7; 10, 18–22; Mt 18, 15–20
Thursday: I – Jos 3, 7–10a.11.13–17; II – Ez 12, 1–12; Mt 18, 21—19, 1
Friday: I – Jos 24, 1–13; II – Ez 16, 1–15.60.63; Mt 19, 3–12
Saturday: I – Jos 24, 14–29; II – Ez 18, 1–10.13b.30–32; Mt 19, 13–15

**Week Twenty**
Monday: I – Jgs 2, 11–19; II – Ez 24, 15–24; Mt 19, 16–22
Tuesday: I – Jgs 6, 11–24a; II – Ez 28, 1–10; Mt 19, 23–30
Wednesday: I – Jgs 9, 6–15; II – Ez 34, 1–11; Mt 20, 1–16a
Thursday: I – Jgs 11, 29–39a; II – Ez 36, 23–28; Mt 22, 1–14
Friday: I – Ru 1, 1.3–6.14b–16.22; II – Ez 37, 1–14; Mt 22, 34–40
Saturday: I – Ru 2, 1–3.8–11; 4, 13–17; II – Ez 43, 1–7a; Mt 23, 1–12

**Week Twenty-one**
Monday: I – Thes 1, 2b–5.8b–10; II – 2 Thes 1, 1–5.11b–12; Mt 23, 13–22
Tuesday: I – 1 Thes 2, 1–18; II – 2 Thes 2, 1–3a.13–17; Mt 23, 23–26

Wednesday: I – 1 Thes 2, 9–13; II – 2 Thes 3, 6–10.16–18; Mt 23, 27–32
Thursday: I – 1 Thes 3, 7–13; II – 1 Cor 1, 1–9; Mt 24, 42–51
Friday: I – 1 Thes 4, 1–8; II – 1 Cor 1, 17–25; Mt 25, 1–13
Saturday: I – 1 Thes 4, 9–12; II – 1 Cor 1, 26–31; Mt 25, 14–30

**Week Twenty-two**
Monday: I – 1 Thes 4, 13–18; II – 1 Cor 2, 1–5; Lk 4, 16–30
Tuesday: I – 1 Thes 5, 1–6.9–11; II – 1 Cor 2, 10b–16; Lk 4, 31–37
Wednesday: I – Col 1, 1–8; II – 1 Cor 3, 1–9; Lk 4, 38–44
Thursday: I – Col 1, 9–14; II – 1 Cor 3, 18–23; Lk 5, 1–11
Friday: I – Col 1, 15–20; II – 1 Cor 4, 1–5; Lk 5, 33–39
Saturday: I – Col 1, 21–23; II – 1 Cor 4, 9–15; Lk 6, 1–5

**Week Twenty-three**
Monday: I – Col 1, 24—2, 3; II – 1 Cor 5, 1–8; Lk 6, 6–11
Tuesday: I – Col 2, 6–15; II – 1 Cor 6, 1–11; Lk 6, 12–19
Wednesday: I – Col 3, 1–11; II – 1 Cor 7, 25–31; Lk 6, 20–26
Thursday: I – Col 3, 12–17; II – 1 Cor 8, 1b–7.11–13; Lk 6, 27–38
Friday: I – 1 Tm 1, 1–2.12–14; II – 1 Cor 9, 16–19.22b–27; Lk 6, 39–42
Saturday: I – 1 Tm 1, 15–17; II – 1 Cor 10, 14–22a; Lk 6, 43–49

**Week Twenty-four**
Monday: I – 1 Tm 2, 1–8; II – 1 Cor 11, 17–26.33; Lk 7, 1–10
Tuesday: I – 1 Tm 3, 1–13; II – 1 Cor 12, 12–14.27–31a; Lk 7, 11–17
Wednesday: I – 1 Tm 3, 14–16; II – 1 Cor 12, 31—13, 13; Lk 7, 31–35
Thursday: I – 1 Tm 4, 12–16; II – 1 Cor 15, 1–11; Lk 7, 36–50
Friday: I – 1 Tm 6, 2c–12; II – 1 Cor 15, 12–20; Lk 8, 1–3
Saturday: I – 1 Tm 6, 13–16; II – 1 Cor 15, 36–37.42–49; Lk 8, 4–15

**Week Twenty-five**
Monday: I – Ezr 1, 1–6; II – Prv 3, 27–34; Lk 8, 16–18
Tuesday: I – Ezr 6, 7–8.12b.14–20; II – Prv 21, 1–6.10–13; Lk 8, 19–21
Wednesday: I – Ezr 9, 5–9; II – Prv 30, 5–9; Lk 9, 1–6
Thursday: I – Hg 1, 1–8; II – Eccl 1, 2–11; Lk 9, 7–9
Friday: I – Hg 1, 15b—2, 9; II – Eccl 3, 1–11; Lk 9, 18–22
Saturday: I – Zec 2, 5–9a.14–15a; II – Eccl 11, 9—12, 8; Lk 9, 43b–45

**Week Twenty-six**
Monday: I – Zec 8, 1–8; II – Jb 1, 6–22; Lk 9, 46–50
Tuesday: I – Zec 8, 20–23; II – Jb 3, 1–3.11–17.20–23; Lk 9, 51–56
Wednesday: I – Neh 2, 1–8; II – Jb 9, 1–12.14–16; Lk 9, 57–62
Thursday: I – Neh 8, 1–4a.5–6.7b–12; II – Jb 19, 12–27; Lk 10, 1–12
Friday: I – Bar 1, 15–22; II – Jb 38, 1.12–21; 40, 3–5; Lk 10, 13–16
Saturday: I – Bar 4, 5–12.27–29; II – Jb 42, 1–3.5–6.12–17; Lk 10, 17–24

**Week Twenty-seven**
Monday: I – Jon 1, 1—2, 1.11; II – Gal 1, 6–12; Lk 10, 25–37
Tuesday: I – Jon 3, 1–10; II – Gal 1, 13–24; Lk 10, 38–42
Wednesday: I – Jon 4, 1–11; II – Gal 2, 1–2.7–14; Lk 11, 1–4
Thursday: I – Mal 3, 13–20a; II – Gal 3, 1–5; Lk 11, 5–13
Friday: I – Jl 1, 13–15; 2, 1–2; II – Gal 3, 7–14; Lk 11, 15–26
Saturday: I – Jl 4, 12–21; II – Gal 3, 22–29; Lk 11, 27–28

**Week Twenty-eight**
Monday: I – Rom 1, 1–7; II – Gal 4, 22–24.26–27; Lk 11, 29–32
Tuesday: I – Rom 1, 16–25; II – Gal 5, 1–6; Lk 11, 37–41
Wednesday: I – Rom 2, 1–11; II – Gal 5, 18–25; Lk 11, 42–46

Thursday: I – Rom 3, 21–29; II – Eph 1, 3–10; Lk 11, 47–54
Friday: I – Rom 4, 1–8; II – Eph 1, 11–14; Lk 12, 1–7
Saturday: I – Rom 4, 13.16–18; II – Eph 1, 15–23; Lk 12, 8–12

**Week Twenty-nine**
Monday: I – Rom 4, 20–25; II – Eph 2, 1–10; Lk 12, 13–21
Tuesday: I – Rom 5, 12.15b.17–19.20b–21; II – Eph 2, 12–22; Lk 12, 35–38
Wednesday: I – Rom 6, 12–18; II – Eph 3, 2–12; Lk 12, 39–48
Thursday: I – Rom 6, 19–23; II – Eph 3, 14–21; Lk 12, 49–53
Friday: I – Rom 7, 18–25a; II – Eph 4, 1–6; Lk 12, 54–59
Saturday: I – Rom 8, 1–11; II – Eph 4, 7–16; Lk 13, 1–9

**Week Thirty**
Monday: I – Rom 8, 12–17; II – Eph 4, 32—5, 8; Lk 13, 10–17
Tuesday: I – Rom 8, 18–25; II – Eph 5, 21–33; Lk 13, 18–21
Wednesday: I – Rom 8, 26–30; II – Eph 6, 1–9; Lk 13, 22–30
Thursday: I – Rom 3, 31b–39; II – Eph 6, 10–20; Lk 13, 31–35
Friday: I – Rom 9, 1–5; II – Phil 1, 1–11; Lk 14, 1–6
Saturday: I – Rom 11, 1–2a.11–12.25–29; II – Phil 1, 18b–26; Lk 14, 1.7–11

**Week Thirty–one**
Monday: I – Rom 11, 29–36; II – Phil 2, 1–4; Lk 14, 12–14
Tuesday: I – Rom 12, 5–16a; II – Phil 2, 5–11; Lk 14, 15–24
Wednesday: I – Rom 13, 8–10; II – Phil 2, 12–18; Lk 14, 25–33
Thursday: I – Rom 14, 7–12; II – Phil 3, 3–8a; Lk 15, 1–10
Friday: I – Rom 15, 14–21; II – Phil 3, 17—4, 1; Lk 16, 1–8
Saturday: I – Rom 16, 3–9.16.22–27; II – Phil 4, 10–19; Lk 16, 9–15

**Week Thirty–two**
Monday: I – Wis 1, 1–7; II – Ti 1, 1–9; Lk 17, 1–6
Tuesday: I – Wis 2, 23—3, 9; II – Ti 2, 1–8.11–14; Lk 17, 7–10
Wednesday: I – Wis 6, 1–11; II – Ti 3, 1–7; Lk 17, 11–19
Thursday: I – Wis 7, 22—8, 1; II – Phlm 7–20; Lk 17, 20–25
Friday: I – Wis 13, 1–9; II – 2 Jn 4–9; Lk 17, 26–37
Saturday: I – Wis 18, 14–16; 19, 6–9; II – 3 Jn 5–8; Lk 18, 1–8

**Week Thirty–three**
Monday: I – 1 Mc 1, 10–15.41–43.54.57.62.64; II – Rv 1, 1–4; 2, 1–5a; Lk 18, 35–43
Tuesday: I – 2 Mc 6, 18–31; II – Rv 3, 1–6.14–22; Lk 19, 1–10
Wednesday: I – 2 Mc 7, 1.20–31; II – Rv 4, 1–11; Lk 19, 11–28
Thursday: I – 1 Mc 2, 15–29; II – Rv 5, 1–10; Lk 19, 41–44
Friday: I – 1 Mc 4, 36–37.52–59; II – Rv 10, 8–11; Lk 19, 45–48
Saturday: I – 1 Mc 6, 1–13; II – Rv 11, 4–12; Lk 20, 27–40

**Week Thirty–four**
Monday: I – Dn 1, 1–6.8–20; II – Rv 14, 1–3.4b–5; Lk 21, 1–4
Tuesday: I – Dn 2, 31–45; II – Rv 14, 14–19; Lk 21, 5–11
Wednesday: I – Dn 5, 1–6.13–14.16–17.23–28; II – Rv 15, 1–4; Lk 21, 12–19
Thursday: I – Dn 6, 11–28; II – Rv 18, 1–2.21–23; 19, 1–3.9a; Lk 21, 20–28
Friday: I – Dn 7, 2–14; II – Rv 20, 1–4; 20, 11—21, 2; Lk 21, 29–33
Saturday: I – Dn 7, 15–27; II Rv 22, 1–7; Lk 21, 34–36

# BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

PHILIP J. KING

Archaeology, originally a treasure hunt, is a branch of historical research defined as the scientific study of the material remains of past human life and activities. Biblical archaeology, a special category, deals with material evidence as it bears on the biblical text. Correlating archaeological data with the biblical record is the essence of biblical archaeology, although it is not so simple as it sounds. In reality the artifacts are often mute, and the biblical text is at times ambiguous. Archaeology contributes to biblical studies by "providing a physical context in time and place which was the environment of the people who produced the Bible or are mentioned in it" (G. Ernest Wright).

Archaeology includes both unwritten and written discoveries. Among the unwritten discoveries are artifacts such as pottery, tools, jewelry, weapons, and fortifications. Written remains, usually discovered through excavation, include inscriptions, texts, seals, and ostraca (inscribed potsherds; that is, broken fragments of pottery with words scratched on them). Ordinarily, archaeologists consign the study of literary remains to epigraphists and paleographers, specialists in ancient written sources.

The most extraordinary textual discovery of modern times is the Dead Sea Scrolls, unearthed beginning in 1947 from caves along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. These scrolls and fragments, composed of biblical and nonbiblical documents, date from the end of the third century B.C. to 70 A.D. In addition to providing background information for the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls bridge a gap of a thousand years in the manuscript tradition of the Old Testament; that is, they are a thousand years earlier than previously known manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible.

Biblical archaeology is concerned mainly with ancient Syria-Palestine, including modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria; for this reason, biblical archaeology is sometimes called Syro-Palestinian archaeology. The scientific study of Syro-Palestinian archaeology dates from the second half of the nineteenth century, although some preparatory steps were taken earlier. The American biblical scholar Edward Robinson gave great impetus to biblical archaeology in the course of two historic journeys to the Holy Land in 1838 and 1852 when he studied the historical topography (the surface features of a region) of Palestine, and in the process identified many biblical sites. His explorations resulted in the establishment in 1865 of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), a British society for the systematic and scientific exploration of Pales-

tine. In addition to sponsoring a detailed survey and limited excavation of Jerusalem, by means of shafts and tunnels, under Charles Warren and Charles Wilson, the PEF supported the topographical surveys on both sides of the Jordan River that produced the first modern scientific map of Palestine.

## Beginnings of Systematic Archaeology

In 1890, W. M. Flinders Petrie, fresh from excavations in Egypt, conducted the first systematic excavation in Palestine at Tel el-Hesi in the northern Negeb. The Arabic word *tell* (*tel,* in Hebrew) is used to designate the artificial mounds in the shape of truncated cones that dominate the landscape of Palestine. They are sites of ancient settlements, built up by successive levels of human occupation and destruction over the centuries. The oldest occupancy, of course, is at the bottom of the mound, and the most recent at the top. At Tell el-Hesi, Petrie laid the foundations of stratigraphy and ceramic typology, which are the basic interpretative principles of archaeological field method. Stratigraphy is the technique of excavating a mound (tell) layer by layer, and at the same time isolating the contents of each occupational layer (stratum). Typology is the study and classification of groups of objects (artifacts) on the basis of shared characteristics (shape, material, decoration). By correlating stratigraphy and typology archaeologists can construct a relative chronology. Using distinctive types of pottery as his dating tool, Petrie constructed a chronological framework for Palestine.

The American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), a professional society established in 1900 to promote biblical, linguistic, archaeological, and historical studies in the Middle East, has encouraged and supported almost all the American scholars working in these disciplines during the twentieth century. Except for a few excavations like George Reisner's at Samaria (Sebaste) in 1909–1910, digs in Palestine before World War I resembled treasure hunts. Between World Wars I and II there was a significant advance in field techniques, due in large measure to William F. Albright, distinguished American biblical archaeologist. He refined pottery chronology through excavation and survey; he identified several mounds as biblical sites; he related many of the biblical episodes to archaeological contexts; in short, he contributed to every dimension of archaeology and biblical studies, establishing biblical archaeology as a discipline in its own right.

## Archaeology after World War II

The field method used in Syro-Palestinian archaeology advanced rapidly after World War II. Three archaeologists contributed meaningfully to this development: the British Kathleen Kenyon, the Israeli Yigael Yadin, and the American G. Ernest Wright. Kenyon dug at Old Testament Jericho in the Jordan valley, the earliest known city in the world; by means of precise stratigraphic method she clarified the chronology of the fortification walls which had been dated wrongly to the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.). Yadin directed the first large-scale dig in modern Israel at Hazor in Upper Galilee, the largest biblical city in Palestine. In keeping with the Israeli method, Yadin concentrated on the monumental architecture of the site. G. Ernest Wright excavated Shechem in central Palestine, the first capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Wright gave special attention to the pottery of the site as one of the most accurate indicators of ancient chronology; also, he trained a new generation of archaeologists at Shechem.

## Jerusalem, the Holy City

Since the Six-Day War of 1967, Israeli archaeologists have been conducting intensive excavations in Jerusalem, which has a popular appeal because of the holy city's centrality to the three great monotheistic religions. Although Jerusalem is perhaps the most excavated city in the world, the modern Israeli digs are yielding more information about Jerusalem than all earlier projects combined. Human settlement in Jerusalem appears to date as early as the Chalcolithic period (3500 B.C.).

The three most prominent modern excavations in Jerusalem are the following: Benjamin Mazar's on the periphery of the Temple Mount, close to the retaining walls (digging being prohibited on the Temple Mount, a Muslim holy site); Nahman Avigad's in the Jewish Quarter, which had never been excavated before; Yigal Shiloh's in the City of David, the original site of Jerusalem on the southeast spur of the present Old City.

Digging in the southwestern area of the Temple Mount, Mazar uncovered monumental Herodian structures. He was able also to make a limited investigation of the royal stoa (a covered porch or walkway) over the southern part of the Temple court. The royal stoa, according to the historian Josephus, was a long rectangular hall of columns, shaped like a basilica. Mazar's study of the royal stoa concurred with the descriptions of Josephus.

Avigad proved that during the First Temple period (in the latter part of the eighth century B.C.) Jerusalem's boundaries included not only the eastern hill (City of David) but also the western ridges (Upper City) of today's Old City. Avigad's richest discoveries pertain to Herodian Jerusalem; we can now see that, on the basis of the remains of well-decorated houses, colorful mosaics, and beautiful stone objects (tables, bowls, and purification jars), it was an era of great affluence. Avigad also uncovered the *cardo maximus* or colonnaded main street of Byzantine Jerusalem, just as it is depicted on the sixth-century Madeba map from Transjordan. He also located the foundations of the Nea church built by the emperor Justinian in the sixth century A.D.

Shiloh continued Kenyon's work of the 1960s on the southeastern hill, called the City of David. In this 15-acre area Shiloh identified twenty-five occupational strata extending from the Chalcolithic period to medieval times. (See the discussion of Archaeological Periods below for the dates of these eras.) Among his achievements he clarified the three interconnected water systems emanating from the Gihon spring, namely, Hezekiah's tunnel, the Siloam channel, and Warren's shaft (named after its discoverer). In preparation for Sennacherib's attack on Jerusalem in 701 B.C.,Hezekiah protected the city's water supply by constructing a 1,750 foot tunnel that brought water from the Gihon spring to the Siloam pool within the walls of the City of David. The famous Siloam inscription on the tunnel wall, dating from the time of Hezekiah, describes how the tunnel was dug, although it does not mention Hezekiah's name. Shiloh also discovered a hoard of fifty-one clay sealings or bullae, dating from the late seventh to the early sixth century B.C., used to seal papyri. Unfortunately Shiloh died at the age of fifty, before completing his excavation of the City of David.

## New Approaches to Archaeology

Since 1970 there has been a striking change in field method as archaeologists borrow from both the natural and the social sciences. In the first place, almost all excavations staffs are interdisciplinary: such specialists as paleobotanists, zooarchaeologists, geologists, ecologists, and, especially, physical and cultural anthropologists collaborate with archaeologists in the field. Also, the technologies of modern science, such as carbon-14 (for dating), thermoluminescence (for dating

pottery), magnetometry (for detecting the presence of metal objects), potassium argon (for dating geological samples), and neutron activation analysis (for tracing the origin of clay), are being used to analyze the data with greater precision. The purpose of this comprehensive approach, at least in theory, is to reconstruct the daily life of biblical people, including their social structure and economic development, as well as their religious practices. Until the 1970s, Syro-Palestinian archaeologists concentrated on the reconstruction of political history (for example, kings and wars). The more recent concern for reconstructing the social history of biblical times complements the earlier concentration on chronology.

Archaeologists' earlier interest in digging isolated tells is now combined with regional surveys as a way of studying a tell's relationship with the surroundings. Regional study is indispensable in determining town planning, settlement patterns, and population expansion, to mention some of the concerns of modern archaeologists.

## Archaeological Periods

Biblical archaeologists do not confine their interests to the biblical period (the Iron Age), but are concerned about all the archaeological periods, including prehistory. The prehistorical and historical periods are distinguished by the advent of written documents, which dates from about 3000 B.C. in the Near East. According to scientists, ancient human remains found in Lower Galilee are roughly 92,000 years old. Palestine has ample evidence of the Neolithic (8000–4500 B.C.) and Chalcolithic (4500–3200 B.C.) periods.

The Early Bronze Age (3200–2000 B.C.), spanning the third millennium, is divided into four periods. Early Bronze I, II, III are represented by large fortified cities. Early Bronze IV (2400–2000 B.C.), an intermediate period between Early Bronze and Middle Bronze, is characterized by a seminomadic material culture, a shift from urban to nonurban.

The Middle Bronze Age (2000–1550 B.C.) marks the height of prosperity and power in Palestine, characterized by town planning, impressive walled cities, and international trade. As this era came to an end, the Middle Bronze sites suffered destruction. Sites typical of this period are Dan, Hazor, Shechem, Gezer, and Taanach.

The Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.), sometimes called "Canaanite," is important for biblical studies because, from this time on, the archaeological evidence has a direct bearing on the Bible. The end of this period coincides with the arrival of the Philistines and the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan. From the excavations in the 1980s at the Philistine cities of Ekron and Ashkelon, light is being shed on Philistine culture. At Ekron the excavators have uncovered the industrial area used for producing olive oil, which was an important export; over a hundred Iron Age II (1000–586 B.C.) olive-press installations, composed of crushing basins flanked on either side by presses, have come to light. Also, excavations at Hazor and Lachish, to mention two sites, have helped in the understanding of the Israelite entrance into Palestine, although much remains to be learned about the manner of the Israelite settlement.

During Iron Age I (1200–1000 B.C.), settlements throughout Palestine, unoccupied in the Bronze Age, were settled peacefully. Evidence at many of these sites indicates that the Israelite settlers were people who already had a building tradition dating from the Bronze Age. They were also experienced in hill-country farming. The Iron Age I culture shows continuity with that of the Late Bronze Age.

The Iron Age, known as the Israelite period, was the era of kingship in Israel. The

transition from bronze to iron tools and weapons is not to be fixed precisely at 1200 B.C. In fact, iron was not in common use in Palestine before the tenth century B.C. Despite the prominence of King David, archaeology provides no precise information about him.

In spite of Solomon's elaborate building enterprises in Jerusalem, little evidence remains; for example, there are no traces of the First Temple. Among the extant Solomonic monuments are the characteristic casemate walls (chambers within parallel walls) adjoining the magnificent city gates with four entryways at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer (1 Kgs 9,15).

Iron Age II is approximately coterminous with the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah (922–586 B.C.). On the basis of remains of fortresses and towers, it is safe to say that defense was a concern during this period. The excavations at Samaria afford an insight into Israelite life in Iron Age II. Omri and Ahab were responsible for the building of the palace, which must have been decorated with the ivoried inlays found at the site. These luxury items explain the railing of the eighth-century prophets, especially Amos, against the affluence of Samaria.

Archaeological discoveries from Iron Age II illuminate the practice of cult or worship. At Tel Beer-sheba in the northern Negeb, archaeologists uncovered four stones belonging to a horned altar of eighth-century date, which had been reused in the wall of a storehouse. At Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teiman), a way station in the Sinai desert, crude drawings and religious inscriptions came to light. The so-called "Yahweh-Asherah" inscription has occasioned speculation about the significance of Asherah, a principal goddess of the Canaanite pantheon. The Israelites, despite the tirades of the prophets, practiced the cult of Asherah in connection with sacred trees.

## New Testament Period

Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee has been the scene of intensive excavations. Archaeologists disagree about the date of the synagogue there. The Franciscan excavators date the structure to the fourth or fifth century A.D., but the Israelis favor an earlier date, in the late second or third century A.D. The architectural remains lying beneath probably belong to the synagogue of Jesus' time.

In the 1970s renewed excavations were conducted at Herodian Jericho, in the vicinity of Old Testament Jericho. This is the site of Herod the Great's luxurious winter resort, furnished with a sunken garden, pool, amphitheater, and hippodrome.

In addition to New Testament sites, archaeologists have excavated several synagogue sites, especially in Galilee, including Khirbet Shema, Meiron, Gush Halav (Giscala), and Khirbet en-Nabratein (Nevorraya). Until the 1970s, information about the dates and architectural style of synagogues was limited. These excavations are also illuminating Jewish life in Galilee during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (135–640 A.D.).

Concerning the manner of crucifixion, the remains of a crucified Jewish male were found in a tomb northeast of Jerusalem. Apparently the victim's wrists were tied to the crossbeam, his legs straddled the upright, with each heel affixed by a nail to the side of the cross; asphyxia would have caused death.

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# GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND

PHILIP J. KING

## Introduction

Among the various titles for the land of the Bible are Canaan, Palestine, Land of Israel ("Eretz Israel"), and Holy Land. The ancient name, dating from the fifteenth century B.C., is Canaan, whose origin is uncertain; this is the common designation in the Old Testament. Palestine, derived ironically from the name of Israel's enemies, the Philistines, goes back to the Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth century B.C.; the Romans officially adopted the name Palestine after A.D. 138. *Palestine* designates the territory of the twelve tribes of Israel, situated on both sides of the Jordan River. Modern archaeologists use the term Palestine as a geographical, not a political, designation because it is sufficiently broad to include all the archaeological periods, as well as the regions west and east of the Jordan River.

## Boundaries

The land of the Bible is bounded roughly on the east by the Arabian peninsula, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the north by Mesopotamia, and on the south by Egypt. The heartland of Palestine is divided by the Jordan River, with Cisjordan (this side of the Jordan) to the west, and Transjordan (across the Jordan) to the east. The modern nations of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria comprise the land of the Bible. Encompassing about 10,000 square miles, ancient Palestine was approximately the size of the state of Vermont. Always important from the biblical perspective, Palestine derived a great deal of significance from the fact that it formed a bridge between Egypt and Mesopotamia; it linked the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe via military and trade routes.

## Climate of Palestine

Climate and geography interact, with both affecting the daily life of the inhabitants of a land. Palestine has really only two seasons: winter and summer. Rainfall is concentrated in the winter, when there are the early (autumn) and the late (spring) rains, with the heaviest rainfall between December and March; in contrast, the summer is rainless and hot. Rainfall decreases from north to south, and there is less rain near the coast than in the highlands. Rainfall varies

significantly from one part of Palestine to another. The annual rainfall in Jerusalem averages 26 inches, in Upper Galilee 47 inches, at the southern end of the Dead Sea two inches, and 15 inches on the coast. Dew, so important during the dry season, is heaviest in the summer.

## Natural Divisions of Palestine

In four bands that each run from north to south, the physical geography of Palestine forms four climatic zones: the coastal plain, the central hill country, the Jordan valley, and the hill country of Transjordan.

### Coastal Plain

The coastal plain, described as flat and undulating, extends about 125 miles from the border of Lebanon in the north to Gaza in the south. Among the prominent features along the coast is the Carmel mountain range which rises 1,650 feet above sea level. The modern city of Haifa lies at the foot of Mount Carmel on the bay. South of Carmel is the luxuriant plain of Sharon, stretching 40 miles to the city of Joppa (modern Jaffa) on the seashore of Palestine. Caesarea Maritima is located on the coast of the Mediterranean between Dor and Joppa; a seaport, it was the capital of the Roman province of Judea for 600 years.

Between the higher mountains to the east and the coastal plain to the west is the gently sloping Shephelah, meaning "plain" or "lowland," guarded by the fortress of Lachish. This sloping plain really is a series of low foothills rising to a height of 1,000—1,200 feet. Lachish, 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem, played an important role in the history of Judah. The Philistine plain is situated between modern Tel Aviv to the north and Gaza to the south. It is named after one of the Sea Peoples, the Philistines, who migrated from Crete before settling in the southern coastal plain of Palestine about 1150 B.C. Located there was the famous Philistine Pentapolis (five cities), including Ashdod (called Azotus in the New Testament), Ashkelon, Gaza, Gath, and Ekron. All have been located with certainty except Gath; of these cities only Ashkelon had a port. In modern times archaeologists have been concentrating on the Philistine cities because of their importance in biblical history. Thus far no significant Philistine written material has come to light. The Bible makes it clear, however, that the Philistines competed with Israel for possession of the same land.

### Central Hills

The central hill country, often described as the backbone of western Palestine, was the region where much of biblical history was enacted. Considered a rugged range, the central hills are divided into three sections: Galilee, Samaria, and Judah. Galilee, a prosperous region in the northern part of Palestine, divides naturally into Upper and Lower Galilee. The highest peak in Palestine is in Upper Galilee at Jebel Jermaq, which reaches an altitude of 3,962 feet. Among the notable cities in Upper Galilee are Hazor and Dan. Hazor, located 10 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, dominates the plain of Huleh. Dan is a 50-acre site on the northern border of Israel, situated in a fertile valley near a spring. Lower Galilee, a fruitful region rising about 1,500 feet, figures prominently in the New Testament as the principal location of Jesus' public ministry.

Samaria designates either the administrative district of which Samaria (*shomron*) was the capital city, or the capital itself situated strategically on a hill about 300 feet above the fertile valley and built in the early ninth century B.C. The district of Samaria is bounded by the

Mediterranean on the west, the valley of Jezreel (plain of Esdraelon) on the north, the Jordan River on the east, and the valley of Aijalon on the south. Samaria is ideal for agriculture, producing wheat, barley, grapevines, and olives. The valley of Jezreel (later known as the plain of Esdraelon), separating Galilee from Samaria, links the coastal plain to the west with the Jordan valley in the east. The valley of Jezreel was the scene of many battles in the course of biblical history. Beth-shean is located between the Jezreel and Jordan valleys, and Megiddo overlooks the valley of Jezreel. According to Rv 16,12-16, the final battle on earth is to be fought at Armageddon ("mount of Megiddo").

One of the principal cities in the district of Samaria is Shechem, which also served as a capital of the Northern Kingdom. Shechem is strategically located on the trade routes; 40 miles north of Jerusalem, it controlled the pass between Mount Gerizim (2,900 feet above sea level) and Mount Ebal (3,100 feet above sea level).

The southern part of western Palestine was called Judah ("Judea" in Greek and Roman times) after the tribe which settled in that region; it extended roughly from Bethel in the north to Beer-sheba in the south, but boundaries fluctuated from period to period. Bethel, 14 miles north of Jerusalem, was a cult place of significance throughout biblical history. Beer-sheba, the principal city of the northern Negeb, was also the site of a sanctuary. Agriculture did not flourish in Judah because half the region is desert, nor were the hills conducive to vegetation; on the other hand, there were agricultural terraces in Judah. The Negeb ("dryness") designates the region extending southward from the border of Judah.

The principal city of Judah and also its capital was Jerusalem, situated 2,600 feet above sea level. Despite its importance in history, Jerusalem was not advantageously located on the trade routes. Jerusalem is first mentioned in the Egyptian Execration (curse) texts of the nineteenth century B.C. The original site (called Ophel) was on the southeastern spur of modern Jerusalem, bounded by the Kidron valley on the east, and the Hinnom valley on the west and south. The north-south valley running through the middle of Jerusalem was known as the Central or Tyropoeon (Cheesemakers) valley. The original site, well protected by valleys on all sides but the north, was chosen because of its proximity to the Gihon spring, the main source of water.

## Jordan Valley

The Jordan valley is 65 miles long, extending from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This great cleft in the earth is also called the Rift valley or Ghor (Arabic for "lowland"). Several well-known geographical features belong to the Jordan valley, including the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and the Arabah.

The Sea of Galilee is a large freshwater lake, 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, and about 680 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The early ministry of Jesus is associated with the shores of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Lake of Tiberias after the name of the city on its western shore. In New Testament times Tiberias was the capital of Galilee. Capernaum, one of the places most frequently mentioned in the Gospels, is situated on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Flowing through the center of the Rift valley, the River Jordan (meaning "that which goes down") meanders for almost 200 miles. It is the largest river in Palestine, but not very useful. Conducive neither to irrigation nor navigation, the Jordan has been more of an obstacle than a conduit between Cisjordan and Transjordan. Jericho, the city of palm trees, is in the Jordan valley, located 6 miles north of the Dead Sea.

The lowest depression on earth is the Dead Sea, its surface being 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and its bottom 1,300 feet lower again. Fifty-three miles long and 10 miles across at its greatest width, the Dead Sea has no outlet. It is known in the Old Testament as the Salt Sea; its salt content is six times greater than that of other seas. The high mineral content of the Dead Sea, precluding plant and animal life, accounts for the traditional name of this body of water.

Used in the general sense of "desert," the Arabah ("arid") designates the valley south of the Dead Sea, joining the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah, a northern arm of the Red Sea. In the Old Testament the Arabah meant the entire Rift valley extending from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqabah.

## Transjordan

The highlands between the Jordan valley and the Syrian desert are identified as Transjordan. The Yarmuk (the largest river in Transjordan), the Jabbok (Zerka), the Arnon, and the Wadi el-Hesa (the brook Zered), the four main rivers in this eastern region, serve as natural boundaries separating the various territories, namely, Bashan, Gilead, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Of course boundaries changed from time to time as these territories fluctuated in size. Bashan, the region northeast of the Jordan River, is a fertile plateau, good for wheat, barley, and pasture. In the New Testament the land of Bashan, situated northeast of the Sea of Galilee between Galilee and Damascus, is known as Trachonitis; it is so called because this Greek name describes the black basalt covering the region. Caesarea Philippi and Bethsaida are two New Testament towns in this region. The fishing village of Bethsaida is identified with et-Tell, a small mound just north of where the Jordan River empties into the Sea of Galilee. Iturea was also part of Bashan.

The Yarmuk river is the boundary between Bashan and Gilead. Mountainous and wooded, Gilead extends from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. Gilead produced olive, vine, oak, pine, and grain. The Jabbok divided Gilead into two parts.

Ammon, situated east of southern Gilead, is a plateau bounded by the Jabbok river on the north and the Arnon on the south. Rabbath Ammon, later known as Philadelphia, now modern Amman, was the capital of Ammon. After the conquest of Palestine in 63 B.C. the Romans formed a federation of ten cities of hellenistic culture; known as the Decapolis, they extended from Damascus in the north to Philadelphia in the south.

Moab, a relatively small area, is located between Ammon and Edom, with the Arnon river to the north and the Wadi el-Hesa (Zered) to the south. This plateau was noted for the cultivation of wheat and barley, as well as for the pasture of sheep and goats. Madeba (modern Medeba), Dibon (modern Dhiban), and Kir (modern el-Kerak), are among the well-known cities of Moab.

Edom, situated east of the Arabah, is at the extreme south of Transjordan. The Edomites mined copper and also controlled the caravan routes from the Gulf of Aqabah. The King's highway, the famous international route from the Gulf of Aqabah to Damascus, went through the eastern part of Edom. Bozrah (Buseirah) was the principal royal city of the Edomites. Idumea, the Greek name for Edom, designates the region from Beth-zur to Beer-sheba, including the southern hills of Judah, where the Edomites settled after 586 B.C.

## Neighboring Empires

Egypt and Mesopotamia, two great civilizations, were rival empires in the biblical period, playing a determining role in biblical history. Lying along the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean, Egypt is situated between Libya on the west and the Red Sea on the east. Its most characteristic feature is the Nile River, flowing south to north the entire length of the country, and originating even farther south. Egypt is divided into two parts: Lower Egypt in the north, including the Delta, and Upper Egypt in the south. On various occasions Egypt occupied Palestine; at times (in both Old and New Testaments) Egypt was a place of refuge; it was also a place of enslavement.

Mesopotamia ("between the rivers"), as its Greek name suggests, designates the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Aram-naharaim (Aram of the rivers) is one of the biblical terms for this region. Assyria was located to the north, along the Tigris River. Babylonia (Hebrew, *babel*) was in the southern region of Mesopotamia, extending from north of modern Baghdad to the Persion Gulf. Ancient Mesopotamia is roughly coterminous with modern Iraq. The name Babylonia is derived from the city of Babylon, situated along the Euphrates, which became both the religious and political capital of the Babylonian empire.

Asshur, located on the west bank of the Tigris River, was the first capital of the Assyrian empire. The Hebrew Bible uses "Asshur" with reference to both the land of Assyria and its people. Nineveh, on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite modern Mosul, was the last capital of Assyria. Calah, identified with Nimrud, about 20 miles south of Mosul, was another important Assyrian city.

## Neighboring Nations

Aram is usually called "Syria" in the English Old Testament, although it is not an exact equivalent. Located on the west bank of the Euphrates, the land of Aram is difficult to define since it was not a geographical unit. It was roughly the equivalent of modern Syria, with Damascus as its center. The modern Damascus is on the site of the ancient capital. A large oasis, Damascus is a crossroad; it was an important caravan center and also controlled the trade routes.

Ancient Phoenicia (it may mean "red-purple") can be equated geographically with modern Lebanon on the east Mediterranean coast. It extended from Arvad in the north to Acco in the south. Sidon and Tyre are among the principal city-states of Phoenicia. Unlike Palestine, Phoenicia's location and its natural harbors were conducive to maritime trade, a fact that played a key role in its economy. Phoenicia's soil is also good for the production of grain and fruit.

Persia, roughly coterminous with modern Iran, was a plateau with mountains and deserts, extending from the Tigris and Euphrates on the west to the Indus river on the east. In 539 B.C., under Cyrus the Great, Persia replaced the empires of Assyria and Babylonia.

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